JOHN STEARNE'S *CONFIRMATION AND DISCOVERY OF WITCHCRAFT*

TEXT, CONTEXT AND AFTERLIFE

Scott Eaton

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Between 1645 and 1647, John Stearne led the most significant outbreak of witch-hunting in England. As accusations of witchcraft spread across East Anglia, Stearne and Matthew Hopkins were enlisted by villagers to identify and eradicate witches. After the trials finally subsided in 1648, Stearne wrote his only publication, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft*, but it had a limited readership. Consequently, Stearne and his work fell into obscurity until the 1800s and were greatly overshadowed by Hopkins and his text.

This book is the first study which analyses Stearne's publication and contextualises his ideas within early modern intellectual cultures of religion, demonology, gender, science, and print in order to better understand the witch-finder's beliefs and motives. The book argues that Stearne was a key player in the trials, that he was not a mainstream 'puritan', and that his witch-finding availed from contemporary science. It traces *A confirmation*'s reception history from 1648 to modern day and argues that the lack of research focussing on Stearne has resulted in misrepresentations of the witch-finder in the historiography of witchcraft. This book redresses the imbalance and seeks to provide an alternative reading of the East Anglian witch-hunt and of England's premier witch-hunter, John Stearne.

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Introduction

In March 1645, two witch-finders emerged from the town of Manningtree, Essex, and began a systematic pursuit of witches. Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne were minor gentlemen from the same locality and both had a puritan ethos. Their shared religious outlook may have inspired them to begin witch-hunting, in an attempt to restore harmony to communities that had been impacted by the experience of the First Civil War. Their method was to identify and eject witches from local communities, using scripture as guidance. They did so while operating within a traditional discourse of supernatural activity, and in their pursuit of witches they solicited testimonies of familiar spirits that sat uneasily with the Biblicist trajectory of mainstream puritan culture.[1] Nonetheless, the confessions extracted from suspected witches provided sufficient evidence for conviction in many cases: from 1645 to 1647, Hopkins and Stearne aided in the investigation of 240 individuals who were suspected of witchcraft – half of whom were executed.[2] The activities of the witch-finders were recorded in several contemporary pamphlets, which circulated widely in the expanding print culture of south-east England. Two of these pamphlets were authored by Hopkins and Stearne, and these texts illuminate the witch-finders' convictions and motives. They are especially useful for constructing a picture of John Stearne, whose sole publication, *A confirmation and discovery witchcraft* (1648), is the focal point of this book.

   Little is known of John Stearne before his witch-hunting days. Much what we do know has been summarised and expanded by Malcolm Gaskill's *Witchfinders* (2005) – a popular history of the East Anglian witchcraft trials. The manuscripts Gaskill used to construct a biography of Stearne are scattered across south-east England and can be found in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), the West Suffolk Record Office (Bury St Edmunds), the East Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich), the Public Record Office (National Archives, Kew), and the Essex Record Office (Chelmsford).[3] Although information on Stearne's biography is fragmentary, it is certain that he was born around 1610 and died in January 1670. Stearne came from a family of gentry and divines that can be traced to Cambridge during the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the Stearnes branched

out from Cambridge into Norwich, Norfolk, Essex, and eventually Suffolk. Stearne's sister, however, did not travel far and was still living in Fordham, Cambridge, in 1662.[4] During Stearne's life he had a wife named Agnes Cawston (or Causton) with whom he had seven children. Their first child, a girl, was born early in 1644 and their second, named Mary, was born in January 1648. Stearne and his family lived in Lawshall, Suffolk, near Bury St Edmunds, may have rented out a house in nearby Manningtree and held land in Little Clacton, Essex.[5] Historians have tended to describe him as a man of the lower gentry who was a staunch puritan with a 'censorious manner', the latter partially due to his involvement in legal trials in the 1640s and 1650s.[6] Unfortunately his occupation in the 1640s is unknown, but by 1662 he was a scribe or 'sometymes servant to Mr Cabeck of Herringswell', the long standing Presbyterian minister of St James Church, Bury St Edmunds (now St Edmundsbury Cathedral).[7] In the 1640s, however, Stearne was held in esteem by the locals of Manningtree and was a politically significant individual who had connections to the local magistrates Sir Harbottle Grimston, 1st Baronet of Bradfield, Essex, and Sir Thomas Bowes. According to Stearne's account, the first woman suspected of being a witch, Elizabeth Clarke, was interrogated by townsmen until she confessed. The locals then approached Stearne and asked him to corroborate their findings with his own investigation. The evidence gathered by Stearne and the locals was taken to the magistrates, Bowes and Grimston, who readily gave Stearne permission to search for additional witches. It is interesting to note that both witch-finders claim to have been the instigators of the hunt, providing two possible scenarios. Hopkins maintained that he discovered a witches' gathering near his house, where he heard a witch talking to her imps. Hopkins implied that he reported this to the magistrates and started the hunt. The historian Frances Timbers, however, believes Stearne was the initiator of the investigations, not Hopkins, based on a critical piece of textual evidence. Timbers points out that Elizabeth Clarke threatened to kill Stearne with a toad-shaped familiar because he 'would have swome her' – her anger was clearly directed towards Stearne.[8] According to Timbers's argument, Stearne would have encountered Clarke during his preliminary investigation, which took place without Hopkins. This hypothesis is strengthened by extant legal records. Although these records are not complete, as far as we can tell, a tailor from Manningtree named John Rivet was the first to accuse Elizabeth Clarke of witchcraft, and of bewitching his wife to death. In this light Hopkins seems less instrumental in beginning the East Anglian witch-hunt; the onus for that rests upon others, such as Rivet, Stearne, and the local magistrates. Throughout the trials, Hopkins and Stearne played their part in extracting confessions from suspected witches, but communities had already identified local witches prior to their arrival. In many cases the witch-finders confirmed pre-existing suspicions and made attempts to secure successful prosecutions at the assizes. The witch-hunt was therefore a collaborative

effort to eject witches from local communities, not the will of an individual or a small group of individuals.

At the beginning of the witch-hunt, two magistrates gave witch-finding their approval, and therefore credence. But the magistrates Bowes and Grimston were by no means credulous Justices of the Peace (JPs). In 1638 Grimston condemned three women to death for practicing witchcraft, and Bowes had been involved in a witchcraft trial in 1642. When the official trials did begin in July 1645, Grimston, Bowes, and Robert Rich, the Earl of Warwick, sentenced nineteen to death (see Chapter 1 for more detail).[9] But some of the local population shared the magistrates' concerns over witchcraft. Indeed, in Essex in the summer of 1645, over ninety individuals came forward to testify against suspected witches; therefore, it is not surprising that the magistrates passed a warrant enabling Stearne to investigate others since it elicited popular enthusiasm.[10] Effective witch-hunting required participation from many individuals from all levels of society, to identify and testify against suspects. Such support was readily found in East Anglia.[11]

Once the witch-finding warrant was enacted, Hopkins appeared and offered Stearne his aid. Then the witch-hunt quickly branched out from Manningtree.[12] After Stearne, Hopkins and their female searchers successfully discovered local witches, they moved on to Great Wenham and went their separate ways. Hopkins headed east and Stearne went west, never straying too far from his family in Lawshall. The witch-hunters met each other when they were summoned to court to testify against witches at the assize courts, which probably amounts to a few occasions, but otherwise they worked independently.[13] Hopkins eventually died of 'consumption' (tuberculosis) on 12 August 1647.[14] In the same year Hopkins published his pamphlet *A discovery of witches*, which was designed to defended his witch-finding against the assize judges in Norfolk who called his techniques into question. Hopkins's text was first printed in Norwich in May 1647 and then printed in London in the same month. *A discovery* was printed by Richard Royston in Ivy Lane, and was intended to be sold at a shop in Norwich owned by Edward Martin.[15] Following Hopkins's death, Stearne conducted one final hunt in the Isle of Ely, after which he retired and wrote his own retrospective work entitled, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft* (1648), which was printed by William Wilson, from 'Little Saint Bartholomewes neare Smithfield' in London. Like Hopkins, Stearne turned to print to clear his name and defend his actions against his detractors. In his text Stearne claimed that he had been labelled as a swindler, had been sued by two anonymous men in Colchester for his witch-finding, and therefore could not or would not return to his house in Essex. Stearne found this ironic as he was still awaiting payment for his witch-finding from many villages, which he threatened with further litigation. By publishing *A confirmation*, Stearne may have wanted to fix his version of the witch-hunt in print, and prove to his critics that he had operated within the law and according to Scripture – ultimately, he was not successful in the

latter.[16] Despite the similarities between the two witch-finders, Stearne also highlighted the distance between himself and Hopkins in his text: Stearne seemed to be unaware of Hopkins's pamphlet that was published the previous year, believing, in 1648, that 'we never printed anything until now'.[17] *A confirmation* is evidently a valuable text, particularly since archival sources on Stearne's life are lacking. His pamphlet provides us with an insight into his mind, and the minds of those who confessed to witchcraft. Throughout *A confirmation* Stearne presents witches' confessions as irrefutable evidence for the existence of malefic witches, testimonies which he corroborated with biblical and historical precedents to convince his readers of the veracity of his conclusions.

This book is the first full-scale study of Stearne and his *Confirmation*. It provides an analysis of Stearne's pamphlet and demonstrates how the witch-finder's beliefs related to and interacted with other intellectual frameworks during the English Civil War. It is a micro-history which seeks to contextualise Stearne's work within the social and intellectual environment which produced it, reconstructing the readership for which it was produced, and its transmission in succeeding centuries. Stearne's pamphlet was not widely circulated in the 1640s, and it remained unknown to most scholars until the twentieth century. This, coupled with a paucity of research focussing on Stearne, has resulted in misrepresentations of him in the historiography of witchcraft, which has portrayed him as Matthew Hopkins's assistant, a staunch puritan, and as an opportunist whose sole motivation for witch-hunting was monetary gain.[18] Although Stearne has not been completely overlooked by historians, he is often overshadowed by his partner, Hopkins, whose role in the episode historians have exaggerated. This book will redress this imbalance and investigate the beliefs articulated by Stearne in *A confirmation* to enhance our understanding of the witch-hunter and his sole publication. While some of Stearne's ideas were analogous to mainstream seventeenth-century intellectual and puritan cultures, others deviated from these standards. The various ideas presented by Stearne in *A confirmation* do not correspond to those of a homogenous body of beliefs upheld by popular, learned or puritan cultures in East Anglia. This complicates attempts to use Stearne as a symbol for a larger group of people in south-east England or nationwide. Studies on Stearne and the driving forces behind the witch-hunt therefore need to be more nuanced and should view the trials in their local contexts. This book will provide an alternative reading to the traditional historiography relating to the East Anglian witch-hunt. In order to do so it will rely on a variety of primary and manuscript sources, and will also make use of the evidence and interpretive frameworks of English, Scottish, and European scholars. The following section will give a very broad overview of modern historiographical trends related to the study of English witchcraft, the East Anglian witch-hunt, and John Stearne to aid students and researchers unfamiliar with the topics.

Literature Review

In the early twentieth century, Wallace Notestein, C. L. Ewen, and R. Trevor Davies published influential works on Stearne and Hopkins.[19] Notestein's traced *The history of witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1716* (1911), relying on a wealth of printed primary sources to provide a synopsis of the topic. According to Notestein's research, English witchcraft beliefs were not domestic but foreign in origin. Protestant members of Edward VI's court had been exiled to Geneva during Mary's reign, where they learned European demonology. Once Elizabeth ascended to the throne, the Marian exiles returned to England, bringing their European ideologies with them – hence the passing of an act against witchcraft in 1563.[20] The exiles were primarily concerned with conjurers, but ordinary people also became involved in prosecutions by identifying witches within their communities and demanding their punishment.[21] These events formed the basis for English witch-hunting, which peaked under the reign of Elizabeth I and declined until the outbreak in the 1640s.[22] Notestein claims that Stearne and Hopkins capitalised on the 'judicial anarchy' caused by the Civil War. While there was disruption to the assize courts, 'anarchy' is an exaggeration.[23]

In 1947, R. Trevor Davies attributed the East Anglian witch-hunt to an exogenous ideology by following Notestein's line of thought, producing the most convincing argument for the Marian exiles' role.[24] Davies argued that the introduction of the persecution of witches gained its impetus from returning Protestant refugees who had been living in 'cities where the witch-burnings were taking place on a most extensive scale'.[25] In *Four centuries of witch-beliefs* Davies cited sources to link the development of the English social elite's theories of witchcraft to those of Calvinist Europe, and suggested a top-down process through which witchcraft belief was disseminated to the lower orders in the form of 'sensational popular pamphlets'.[26] When concentrating on the 'witch-mania' in East Anglia, Davies concluded that

> the influence of the returned exiles was by no means the only cause of the growth of witch-belief. The south-east of England was at this time the most highly developed industrially and commercially. Consequently, economic as well as geographical reasons brought it into the closest communication with the Continent.[27]

He continued by claiming that Calvinism 'would be likely to spread most readily in an industrial and commercial community'.[28] Davies argued that mercantile trading in East Anglia, with its close proximity and ideological links to the continent, made Calvinist doctrine likely to spread in its commercially orientated community; industrial areas attracted more European commerce and this increased the prevalence of continental witchcraft beliefs.[29] According to Davies, by the seventeenth century the European

belief in demonic witches was widespread in England, and the prosecution of witches was only mitigated by Charles I, who suppressed witch-trials. Davies noted that by the outbreak of the Civil War, witchcraft belief had combined with anti-Catholic and anti-Royalist sentiments, literally demonising these groups in the minds of many puritans and supporters of Parliament. In this light, the witch-hunt undertaken by Hopkins (Stearne is mentioned twice in passing) in the puritan heartland of East Anglia was an attempt to eradicate the demonic influences of Royalist supporters, Catholics, and Laudians. Davies suggested that once puritans gained the upper hand in the Civil War, they began to systematically investigate those believed to be witches, after decades of repression.[30]

Both Davies and Notestein overstate their arguments, primarily because they suggest a top-down process that was applied by the social elite. This neglects the fact that witchcraft accusations operated at a village level and so came from 'below', rather than 'above'. Even in the East Anglian trials, locals accused their neighbours of *maleficia*, and if suspects were found guilty by Justices of the Peace they were hauled before the courts.[31] This is how Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne found suspected witches: they were invited to villages and aided by locals in their search for witches. While some of Davies's arguments are valid, the impetus behind the East Anglian witch-trials cannot be solely attributed to puritanism, as Laudians and religious radicals engaged with witch-hunting at a local level. Puritans were also divided on their religious beliefs and on witch-hunting: some supported the practice, while others tried to suppress it.[32] Indeed, Stearne's beliefs were not fully compatible with 'orthodox' puritanism (Chapter 2), and he therefore cannot be said to represent a group of East Anglian puritans intent on rooting out witches. Notestein and Davies's argument that seventeenth-century witchcraft trials are indicative of the Protestant exiles' imported European demonology is problematic when we consider the lack of the witches' sabbat and the prominence of familiar spirits in English witchcraft beliefs. Familiars were supernatural agents that, as a concept, were almost unique to England and they sat uneasily alongside 'orthodox' Protestant beliefs – they were heavily referenced in Stearne's pamphlet.[33]

More attention was paid to these native English traditions in C. L. Ewen's book, which suggested that English demonology gradually developed, with some influences from Europe, without being directly imported from the continent.[34] Ewen, however, is better known for his outstanding archival work. For his first publication, Ewen collected and edited all the extant witchcraft indictments for the Home Circuit from 1559 to 1736 in 1929.[35] This was soon followed by *Witchcraft and demonianism* (1933), which contained the depositions and confessions of indicted witches.[36] Both of these publications relied heavily on Stearne's work when discussing the East Anglican witchcraft trials. Unfortunately Ewen's work did not gain much recognition during his lifetime. For modern researchers, though, his work is indispensable and scholars now regard it as 'pathbreaking'.[37]

Other scholars did achieve notoriety for their flawed methodology and literal readings of primary texts. Margaret Murray, author of *The witch-cult in western Europe* (1921), used English and Scottish sources to speculate that witches were members of a pre-Christian religion who worshiped a horned god.[38] When these covens met to worship, a male leader impersonated their god and performed sexual rites with attendees. In this respect, Murray was influenced by the anthropologist George Frazer and his multivolume work, *The golden bough* (1890).[39] Frazer's account of the ritual killing of a priest-king appealed to Murray, leading her to believe that the witch-coven's leader, or a substitute, would be sacrificed cyclically to ensure the fertility of their crops.[40] Because the coven's god was horned, she argued, Christian theologians demonised and subsequently persecuted the 'witches' for their heterodox beliefs. But Murray expounded this to suggest that the 'chief female' of these congregations was the 'Elfin Queen', thus merging fairy and witchcraft beliefs. The fairy queen was not part of folklore; instead the figure emanated from the memory of real people – an ancient dwarf race of humans from northern and western Europe who sheltered in earth mounds. According to Murray, witches were identified with 'fairies' and were demonised by theologians. To Murray, this explained why fairy-lore featured in Scottish witchcraft trials: both were remnants of a pre-Christian religion and were still active in popular religion.[41] Although Murray was innovative in attempting to study the witch-hunts dispassionately, her work has been completely discredited by historians due to her unsubstantiated theories; however, the concept of an ancient pagan cult has found purchase with modern Wiccans, for whom it is of central importance.[42] The scholar most effective at demolishing Murray's methodology was Norman Cohn in his seminal work, *Europe's inner demons* (1976). He applied 'historical criticisms' to *The witch-cult* and convincingly showed how Murray had manipulated the evidence by misquoting texts, which were taken out of context. In the same publication he demonstrated how the idea of demonic witchcraft emerged in the later middle ages out of pre-existing conceptions and concerns of magic and heretical sects – not from a pre-Christian fertility ritual.[43]

Montague Summers did not share Murray's sentiment of a wrongly persecuted cult, calling her work 'radically and wholly erroneous' because it suggested that the Dianic cult may have rivalled the Christian Church.[44] When Summers wrote *The history of witchcraft* (1926) and *The geography of witchcraft* (1927), he had an explicit agenda: 'I have endeavoured to show the witch as she really was – an evil liver; a social pest and parasite; the devotee of an obscene creed'.[45] To him, witchcraft was a not past threat but remained a very real one that still threatened to disrupt society in his time.[46] His analysis did not gain much credence among scholars, most of whom he viewed with contempt.[47] Both Murray and Summers treated witchcraft as a modern reality and sought to prove this using primary materials. This resulted in biased interpretations, as well as selective readings

of their sources. With regard to the East Anglian witch-hunters, Summers labelled Hopkins as a swindler whose primary concern was money, and only referred to Stearne when calling him 'Hopkins' satellite'.[48] Likewise, Murray used Stearne's text as a source but said little of the author, except when calling him 'Hopkins's co-worker'.[49] Murray used Stearne's *Confirmation* in her narrative about the witch Joane Wallis. Stearne recorded that Wallis confessed, 'the Devill came to her in the likenesse of a man, in blackilish cloathing, but had cloven feet'.[50] Murray used this passage as evidence of 'the Devil's costume' – that is, how the leader of the witch-coven dressed in a black suit and cleft shoes when its members met.[51] Despite its flaws, her interpretation of witchcraft gained popular acceptance, even appearing in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Murray's argument was not seriously challenged until the 1970s by Norman Cohn, Alan Macfarlane, and Keith Thomas.[52]

   In an attempt to understand and reinterpret John Stearne's world, Keith Thomas and his student Alan Macfarlane revolutionised English witchcraft studies by utilising social anthropology, based on E. E. Evans-Pritchard's findings in *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande* (1937).[53] Macfarlane used legal records and printed pamphlets to study witchcraft in Essex, whereas Thomas used the same 'history-from-below' approach to investigate a variety of supernatural beliefs in early modern England. Macfarlane's work took the form of a micro-study while Thomas's focus was much wider in scope.[54] Both historians linked witchcraft accusations to socio-economic tensions at the village level – this became known as the 'charity-refused-model'. In the refused-charity paradigm, those relying on charity may have acted aggressively and cursed an individual who refused to provide it. If, after a curse was muttered, something happened to the person who refused the beggar charity, they could be accused of *maleficia* (harmful magic). As the population increased and the richer members of society became commercially orientated, the gap between them and the poor widened, leading to increased interpersonal tensions. This clashed with ideals of charity and neighbourliness, which were fundamental aspects of everyday life either side of the Reformation.[55] However, some members in English society may have already viewed local beggars and the vagrant poor with distain, regarding them as potential burdens to their community, therefore adding to their suspicion. The charity-refused-model theorises that individuals were torn between public (the poor law) and private charity, creating feelings of guilt. Apart from ascribing unexplainable misfortune to the witch, Thomas and Macfarlane suggested that accusations may also have been the manifestation of psychological guilt. Witchcraft accusations served to alleviate their guilty conscience by construing the beggar as a malefic witch.[56]

   By exploring this functionalist model of English witchcraft accusations, Thomas and Macfarlane highlighted the popular impetus behind trials and contested the paradigm of imposed European demonological thought.[57]

They also shed light on the cunning-folk of England, who operated as counter-witches, healers, and diviners for the public. For this, Macfarlane and Thomas took inspiration from Evans-Pritchard's anthropological study of the African Azande tribe. Evans-Pritchard separated African sorcerers from witches and magic (*ngwa*) from witchcraft (*mangu*). The Azande believed that witchcraft was everywhere; it was hereditary and part of daily life. In contrast, sorcery was voluntary, relying on spells and rituals. If witchcraft was suspected, the Azande tribe had a complicated system of oracles to consult, in order to locate witches and cure a bewitched individual. Macfarlane and Thomas applied this conceptual framework of counter-witchcraft to England to locate and examine cunning-folk, and to identify village social-strains present in the early modern period. One early English example similar to the Azande's methods of consultation and discovery can be found in the 'Witches of Warboys' case, in Huntingdonshire. From 1589 to 1595, the Throckmorton family's servants and children were stricken by bouts of illness, which were eventually attributed to witchcraft. Before witchcraft was diagnosed and prosecutions were brought against the Samuel family by the Throckmortons, the latter consulted two physicians (who prescribed medicine four times), two divines, neighbours, family members, and friends, including Lady Susan and Sir Henry Cromwell (Oliver Cromwell's grandfather).[58] But a simple example directly related to this study involves John Rivet, who we encountered earlier. He suspected that Elizabeth Clarke had bewitched his wife and so he consulted a cunning-man who confirmed this: Stearne's help was then sought and the East Anglian witchcraft investigations were initiated.

   Thomas's and Macfarlane's publications remain influential. To date, Macfarlane is the only scholar to have produced a regional study of witchcraft and magic beliefs in Essex. In the introduction to the second edition of Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (1999), the lack of historiography on this area led James Sharpe to remark that 'we need a new doctoral thesis on Essex witchcraft'.[59] Despite being influential since publication, Macfarlane's and Thomas's theories are not without issue and cannot be used as blanket explanations for Europe as a whole or, more narrowly, the English witch-trials of the 1640s. As scholars applied their model to other countries (primarily in the 1990s), it appeared that England was not as idiosyncratic as its scholars had assumed; rather, it was like many other parts of Europe. It was discovered by researchers such as Robin Briggs that, like England, European witchcraft prosecutions were sporadic and were usually driven by the villagers, not by the ruling elite.[60] As Briggs noted, stimulus from the higher orders or socio-economic tensions at a localised level were certainly factors, but they were a few explanations within a nexus of many.[61] Nonetheless, Thomas and Macfarlane created a heightened awareness of the popular impulse behind English accusations and this led to further research into the beliefs underpinning them. Although Thomas regarded the witches' confessions of the 1640s as completely atypical because

of Hopkins and his reading of European demonology, James Sharpe challenged this by re-examining the witchcraft beliefs presented in these trials.[62] Sharpe argued that popular English witchcraft theory, although not as diabolic as its European counterpart, did contain demonic content (familiar spirits, sex with demons, the witch's mark and even hints of the witches' sabbat), therefore suggesting a blend between learned and popular beliefs (this has been recently reinforced by Charlotte-Rose Millar's work).[63] A combination of these is evident in the mid-seventeenth century witch-trials, which John Stearne detailed in his pamphlet.

One constant between learned and popular beliefs in both England and mainland Europe was that the vast majority of witches were women. In *A confirmation* Stearne recorded that it was 'evident' that 'of Witches in general, there be commonly more women then men'.[64] But this was not only evident to Stearne and his contemporaries. In the 1970s feminist historians turned their attention to the European witch-hunts and interpreted them as women-hunts. One of the most radical historians asserting this was Mary Daly, who viewed the European witch-craze as one of many historical episodes that clearly highlighted the brutal suppression and domination of females by the ruling male elite.[65] Others, like Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English in *Witches, midwives and healers* (1973), saw witch prosecutions as an attempt to root out female healers. According to Ehrenreich and English, women were persecuted as witches by the ruling elite in order to ensure a male monopoly on medical practice. Female healers were by no means ignorant of medicine nor did they solely rely on 'magic'; instead, their knowledge threatened to usurp their male counterparts. Ehrenreich and English claimed that 'it was witches who developed an extensive understanding of bones and muscles, herbs and drugs, while physicians were still deriving their prognoses from astrology'.[66] These are exaggerations and the alleged role of women healers is unfounded, as David Harley has shown, but the question of woman-hunting is more complex.[67] As Clive Holmes has demonstrated, some witch-hunting may have been driven by misogyny, but in English witch trials women were directly involved in witch-finding, contributing to at least half of all witchcraft accusations by the early seventeenth century.[68] Nonetheless, feminist historians in the 1970s forced scholarship to consider the role of gender in witchcraft more seriously. Some of the earliest researchers to do so were E. William Monter and Jeffrey B. Russell. Monter recognised the preponderance of female witches, and concluded that 'misogyny was a basic force underlying these trials'.[69] Working with earlier sources, Russell, like Monter, identified a connection between witchcraft, women, and subversive heretical groups.[70] According to Monter, it was only in the fifteenth century, with the publishing of the *Malleus Maleficarum,* when witchcraft became an activity particularly identified with women.[71]

In a similar vein, Sigrid Brauner and Christina Larner noted links between state-building, heresy, and witchcraft. In 1995, Brauner attributed

witch-hunting to the changing status of women, as defined 'by influential members of the early modern urban elite in Germany', before 'the great wave of witch-hunts' occurred in the 1560s.[72] Rather than examining German witchcraft trials per se, Brauner examined some well-known figures, including Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger (authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*), Martin Luther, and the plays of Paul Rebhun and Hans Sach. Based on these sources, Brauner's work asserted that the reformers' witch-hunting was designed to force adherence to Protestant, patriarchal views of marriage and society. While the *Malleus* linked witchcraft to female sexuality, Lutherans linked it to the concept of being a bad housewife – a woman who failed submit to their husband's control, manage the household or represent moral virtue.[73] Larner, on the other hand, maintained that Scottish governmental authorities took measures to eliminate witchcraft and heresy, both of which involved the prosecution of women. But Brauner's and Larner's interpretations are problematic in relation to England, since there was no state-led witch-hunt. Witchcraft prosecutions did rise in the early reign of James VI and I in Scotland but they declined markedly after his accession to the English throne. James VI and I even attempted to actively subdue witchcraft and investigated cases of suspected fraudulent bewitchment himself.[74] Returning to the role of gender, Larner reached a conservative conclusion: witch-hunting was sex-related, not sex-specific. In this way, the attributes of a witch were sex-related because of the specificities of the witch-figure stereotype, but these characteristics could be, and were, applied to males a well.[75] This interpretation is congruent with that of John Stearne, who, when speaking of witchcraft, remarked that 'one may fall into this sinne as well as into any other (if God prevent it not) and therefore whether men or women'.[76]

By the 1990s, historians were also developing another conceptual framework that concentrated on the emotions behind witchcraft accusations in an attempt to further our understanding. One such study was Lyndal Roper's, *Oedipus and the devil* (1994), which considered witch-hunting and gender. Roper's research focussed on early modern Germany, and used a psychoanalytical approach to investigate masculinity, femininity, and the body, in relation to the human psyche. Roper construed witchcraft accusations as projections of fear stemming from motherhood. Based on the sources studied, the victims of such accusations were mostly lying-in-maids. Maids lived with and were employed by families during the lying-in period to feed and care for the new-born child until the mother recovered. Roper argued that this led to ambiguity in the mother's role, which could result in anxiety and envy towards the maid. According to Roper, the mother became confused as to her role in the household while the maid stayed with the family to care for the child. During this period the infant was vulnerable and its mother was physically weak. Concerned with the potentially dangerous and envious old woman, the new mother projected her fears onto the maid. The maid was thus conceptualised as the antithesis of

motherhood and witchcraft accusations soon followed.[77] In a similar line of thought to Roper, Deborah Willis highlighted that, in England, accusations arose from 'specific anxieties about maternal power (and related aspects of women's roles)'.[78] Recently, John Durrant has modified these arguments to locate witchcraft accusations within a web of gender-based social networks, which interacted with the domestic sphere and ideals of a patriarchal society.[79] Likewise, Diane Purkiss presented the witch-figure as an inversion of the mother-figure – early modern society conceptualised the witch-figure as the antithesis of the mother-figure, and as a polluted version of the female body.[80] Another important finding by studies such as Roper's was the relationship between a suspect and an interrogator. She suggested that the witch was not simply fed information to create seemingly outlandish stories; rather 'the fantasy of witchhood was created in a project of collaboration between questioner and accused'.[81] Roper's idea of witchcraft confessions forged through a reciprocal discourse is relevant to the practices employed by Stearne and Hopkins in the mid-seventeenth century – especially the concept of familiar spirits.

By focussing on gender, scholarship is now beginning to explore both male and female relationships to witchcraft trials and accusations. Male witches have recently been recognised and incorporated into the research of Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, Rolf Schulte, E. J. Kent, Alison Rowlands, and Brian Levack's collection of essays.[82] Such studies are a reaction to the feminist historiography which downplayed the presence of male witches, who constituted an estimated 20–25% of those executed for witchcraft in Europe. Recent work has explored witch-trials in Normandy, Russia, Estonia, Iceland, and Finland, where the majority of witches were men.[83] In sixteenth-century Finland, '60 per cent of those accused, and 75 per cent of those convicted for witchcraft were men'.[84] And in some European witch-hunts like the 'Sorcerer Jack' trials of Salzburg (1678–80), where 140 people were tried and executed, men constituted 70% of all tried and executed witches.[85] Although the male witch-figure is an alternative mode of analysis to the traditional historiography, it is still investigated under feminist theories. What constituted a male witch-figure and what led to men being accused of witchcraft has not yet reached a scholarly consensus. Lara App and Andrew Gow have argued, in *Male witches in early modern Europe* (2003), that a male witch was labelled as 'the other' in society, and was accused and conceptualised as a feminised man, for they were weak-minded, like their female counterparts who also fell for Satan's deception. To App and Gow, early modern society failed to differentiate between male and female witches based on their sex; both male and female witches were imagined as being identical, and all witches were persecuted for having the feminine characteristic of weak-mindedness.[86]

The inflexibility of this theory is problematic when we examine the trials of the 1640s in relation to John Stearne's text. In the cases of John Bysack and John Scarfe, detailed in Stearne's pamphlet, the creation of an intimate

blood covenant with Satan and allowing familiar spirits to feeding from their witch-marks, has led Malcolm Gaskill to perceive these acts as being homosexual. Bysack claimed that Satan's claw penetrated his jacket to obtain his heart's blood, and when Bysack's imps arrived at night, in the form of six snails, he would tell his wife he was uncomfortable, get up, and then settle by the fire to nurse his familiars. Scarfe, on the other hand, kept a rat in a box, which he would place on his stomach and allow it to feed from his witch-marks. This would support App and Gow's theory of a male witch being construed as a feminised man, and being accused of witchcraft.[87] For Stearne, however, both male and female witches could be guilty of witchcraft, entertaining familiar spirits and making pact with Satan – two central pieces of pre-trial evidence in the East Anglia. It is even possible that Stearne and Hopkins primarily searched men for demonic marks, rather than women (Chapters 5 and 6).[88] The crime of witchcraft was therefore not necessarily sex-specific to contemporaries, as Larner remarked. However strong the link between witchcraft and women seems to us, 'witchcraft constituted its own historical category' and consequently, male witches should be viewed as 'witches in their own right'.[89]

One final theme in recent scholarship that is central to Stearne's theorising of witchcraft is the prevalence of familiar spirits, which combines the previously covered subjects of popular beliefs, emotions, and gender. Although familiar spirits have been widely recognised by scholars, most have only noted their peculiarity. James Sharpe has remarked 'the familiar in early modern English witchcraft has not been given thorough analysis, although both trial records and pamphlets about trials contain a wealth of detail, sometimes contradictory, about them'.[90] To-date, only Emma Wilby has published a monograph on the topic. Building on previous scholars' work on witchcraft and its links to folklore – mainly that of Carlo Ginzburg, Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs – Wilby's *Cunning folk and familiar spirits* (2005) discusses the shamanistic origins of the English familiar.[91] Wilby draws comparisons between the familiar spirits of early modern cunning-folk and witches, and the descriptions of encounters with familiar spirits given by shamans from Siberia and Native America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before the dominance of Christianity. To Wilby, the presence of the familiar spirit in the early modern and modern world is a clear indication that it is linked to a form of British, pre-Christian animism. Wilby seems to suggest a universal human belief in familiar-like creatures when she rules out the possibility of any transcultural transportation of beliefs from Europe to Siberia and America. In summary, she describes her premise as follows:

> if an early modern familiar belief can be found to resemble a familiar belief found in a traditional non-European animist culture then this resemblance will be seen to support the likelihood that the former was rooted in pre-Christian British animism, that is, that it was of folkloric origin.[92]

In the early modern period this pre-Christian animism took the form of the 'fairy-faith' which, not Christianity, was the main religion for the vast majority of people.[93] It was, moreover, fairy-lore that underpinned the whole construction of familiar spirit belief.[94] Her emphasis on a widespread fairy belief as a 'faith' underpinning popular religious practices and magical beliefs is overstated, and is strikingly similar to Murray's ideas.[95] Parallels between fairies and familiars are evident in some cases, and such comparisons can be helpful. Indeed other scholars suggest that beliefs in familiar spirits may have roots in traditional folklore, ceremonial magic, cunning-folk or learned demonology. Like Wilby, Diane Purkiss argued that the descriptions of familiars closely resembled those of the early modern fairy, specifically the household brownie. In early modern accounts, similarities between familiars and fairies range from their behaviour to their reliance on humans for food as a type of appeasement and an offering.[96] James Sharpe, in *Authority and consent in Tudor England* (2002), suggested that familiars may have been folklorised versions of demons which learned magicians of the middle ages were supposed to have raised or drawn from cunning-folk who were believed to employ spirits to foretell the future, locate treasure, and heal sickly clients.[97]

Parallels between these supernatural creatures exist, but they are not so similar that familiars, fairies, and shamanistic spirits can be reduced to being the same supernatural entities. As Julian Goodare pointed out,

> English familiars lived *with* their witches, whereas Scottish fairies lived elsewhere, in hills or other remote liminal spaces. English familiars also acted on behalf of their human owners, being sent out almost as doubles of the witch or representatives of their malice. This was surely the crucial feature of the familiar – and the fairy did not share it.[98]

Wilby's assessment of the shamanistic elements of English witchcraft has also been questioned in recent scholarship. Owen Davies's work has demonstrated that Siberian shamans used innate abilities and public rituals to transport themselves to the spirit world and interact with animal-like spirits. But in England, cunning-folk relied on books to contact supernatural entities and, in the majority of cases, if they saw spirits like familiars or fairies during their life it was by chance, not through rituals. Davies pointed out that when individuals claimed to be transported to fairyland, as far as we can tell, in the British Isles this was reported as happening corporeally rather than spiritually – while spiritual appearances were more common in Europe, in shaman-like tribes such as the *benandanti*.[99] Similarities between shamans and practitioners of English low magic contacting supernatural spirits can be detected; however, due to their differences, Davies concluded that the term shaman 'loses its relevance in a European context'.[100]

This monograph will not draw comparisons between familiar spirits and shamans, but will be based on the contents of Stearne's *Confirmation*. It will treat familiar spirits as demons and narratives pertaining to them as parodies of social norms, following Stuart Clark's concept of inversion.

This book will also incorporate the psychoanalytical approach taken by Lyndal Roper and Deborah Willis, who relate the feeding of familiars to bad motherhood, and Diane Purkiss, who proposed the concept of a polluted female body.[101] Since blood was drawn from the witch's mark, which was often located near a witch's genitals, the sexual connotations of witchcraft will also be investigated.[102] Rather than utilising Emma Wilby's interpretive framework, this book will consider familiar spirits as products of English demonology, for this was the context in which Stearne viewed them.[103] Likewise, this monograph will engage in the scholarship surrounding witchcraft, sex, and gender, but the latter themes were not of critical concern to Stearne's witchcraft theory. In early modern English witchcraft prosecutions the bulk of witches identified within the Home Circuit, particularly in Essex, were women.[104] Overall, an estimated 7% were men, totalling around thirty individuals.[105] Following the work of Rowlands, Durrant, and E. J. Kent, witchcraft will be treated as a social construct (the concept of a bad neighbour, masculinity, and femininity) that included fears, tensions, and deviancies from the religious, political, and domestic spheres of life.[106] The early modern construction of the witch-figure cannot be solely attributed to sex or to male/female weakmindedness because it cut across and interlinked with gender-roles. The intellectualisation of witchcraft was more complex and far-reaching since it was an inversion of an entire culture.[107] For this reason weakmindedness will be considered as a factor working alongside other possible explanations. The theories and methods discussed above will be used when analysing *A confirmation* to draw out specific themes in each chapter and contextualise Stearne's ideas.

Overview of Book

John Stearne's biography and his only publication, *A confirmation,* have been not been sufficiently studied by scholars, most of whom have focussed on Hopkins and his *Discovery of witches*. To contextualise Stearne's work, the first chapter of this book presents an overview of the economy, courts, and the religious and political environment in which Stearne wrote *A confirmation*, focussing on Essex and Suffolk, the two areas he resided in. This chapter provides background information on the community from which Hopkins and Stearne emerged, and the Presbyterian network which supported their witch-finding agenda.[108] The second chapter continues with these themes to investigate Stearne's religious beliefs. Stearne has been labelled as being staunchly puritan by scholars, yet his articulation of religious belief has not been sufficiently investigated. Chapter 2 examines the applicability of this descriptor to the beliefs Stearne articulated in *A confirmation* and compares them to the 'orthodoxy' imposed by the Westminster Assembly. In order to situate Stearne's text in mid-seventeenth-century print cultures, Chapter 3 examines other contemporary pamphlets, many of which reported supernatural happenings inspired by the Civil War, while some directly relate to the East Anglian witch-trials. These sources are

discussed in relation to the ideas found in *A confirmation* and how his text was constructed, disseminated, and received after publication. Chapter 4 concerns familiar spirits. These supernatural entities featured heavily in witches' confessions and in Stearne's *Confirmation*. This chapter explores early modern demonology and the development of the concept of familiars. Familiar spirits functioned as a symbol for a variety of medieval and early modern concerns over human-animal boundaries, morality, and sexuality, which influenced Stearne's ideas on familiars, both directly and indirectly. Stearne was able to prosecute witches effectively because he assimilated the ideas of previous demonologists pertaining to familiars and by using the 1604 Jacobean witchcraft act – which made owning familiars a felony – he extracted from suspects damning confessions of *maleficia* and ownership of familiars. The following chapter deals with the links between sex and gender in Stearne's witchcraft theory. In the early modern period, witches were predominantly represented as women, for they were believed to be the weaker sex and thus more prone to Satan's temptations. But Stearne noted that witches could be men or women, and he 'searched' and prosecuted both sexes, making little distinction. This chapter attempts to situate his ideas among his contemporaries' to explore seventeenth-century concepts of gender. Chapter 6 explores the scientific nature of Stearne's witch-finding. The chapter relates *A confirmation* to early modern scientific thought and examines how his 'searching' for witch-marks availed from seventeenth-century empiricism. But the demonological theories that Stearne adopted incorporated natural philosophy, medicine, the law, and theology, and were contested throughout the early modern period. The emergent scientific community did not directly engage with Stearne's work; however, from the 1650s to the early eighteenth century the witchcraft theories underpinning Stearne's witch-finding practices regained intellectual vitality and featured in the debates over the reality of the world of spirits. In the aftermath of these debates, the mid-1700s, witchcraft beliefs had declined in educated circles and it became impossible to prosecute and execute witches through the courts. However, scepticism did not hinder the transmission of Stearne's text in the following centuries for, as Chapter 7 demonstrates, antiquarians, ministers, and historians continued to collect *A confirmation* for its rarity. Chapter 7 attempts to reconstruct the collection, ownership, and readership of all extant copies of Stearne's *Confirmation* from 1648 to modern day. Because his text was not widely disseminated in the 1640s, his text was unknown to scholars until the mid-1800s and, subsequently, did not enter historiography until the twentieth century. This has resulted in under- and misrepresentation of Stearne in scholarship. Still, Stearne's *Confirmation* has not been sufficiently studied by researchers. This book therefore seeks to enhance our understanding of Stearne and his text, both of which have been historically overshadowed by Hopkins and his pamphlet. Stearne's lengthier pamphlet provides more information on the witch-hunt than Hopkins', and is our primary means to investigate the witch-hunter's

various beliefs and ideas. This study seeks to redress the historiographical imbalance by situating Stearne's text within its wider environment to enhance our understanding of one of the key actors in the East Anglian witchcraft trials (Figure I.1).

A

CONFIRMATION

And Discovery of

WITCH CRAFT,

Containing these severall particulars;

That there are Witches called bad Witches, and Witches untruely called good or white Witches, and what manner of people they be, and how they may bee knowne; with many particulars thereunto tending.

Together with the Confessions of many of those executed since May 1645. in the severall Counties hereafter mentioned. As also some objections Answered.

By *John Stearne*, now of *Lawshall* neere *Burie* Saint *Edmonds* in *Suffolke*, sometimes of *Manningtree* in *Essex*.

PROV. 17. 15. *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.*
DEVT 13. 14. *Thou shalt therefore inquire, and make search, and aske diligently, whether it be truth, and the thing certaine.*

LONDON,
Printed by *William Wilson*, dwelling in Little Saint *Bartholomewes* neere *Smithfield*. 1648 —

Figure I.1 John Stearne, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft* (London, 1648), Houghton Library, Harvard University, GEN 24244.74.

Notes

1 Nathan Johnstone, *The devil and demonism in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2006), pp 75–6; for an overview see Darren Oldridge, *The devil in early modern England* (Stroud, 2004).

2 Jim Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia: the Matthew Hopkins trials reconsidered' in, Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe: studies in culture and belief* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 237–8; James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in early modern England* (London, 2001), p 71. Though, John Stearne's, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft* (London, 1648), p 11, suggests a much higher figure of over 200 executions.

3 Bod. Rawl., B.393, f. 384v; WSRO, IC 500/2/65/9; WSRO, FL 600/4/1-2; ESRO, B105/2/3, ff. 30v, 38v, 39, 45v, 89; ESRO, B105/2/4, f. 29; PRO, E/179/246/20; PRO, E/134/2/Chas2/Mich5; PRO, SP24/10, ff. 102v–3r, 159r; PRO, SP24/78; PRO, PROB11/307; ERO, Q/RT41/526. For a facsimile of a handwritten deposition by Stearne, in which he details a discovery of witchmarks see Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: a seventeenth century tragedy* (London, 2005), pp 261–2; for the manuscript see the Ely Diocesan Records at Cambridge University Library, EDR, E12 1647/21. For transcribed legal documents pertaining to Stearne and the witch-hunt see C. L' Estrange Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials* (London, 1929); C. L' Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism* (London, 1933).

4 Bod. Rawl., B.393, f. 384v; CUL, VCCt.III 38, 1; PRO, PROB11/307/45; Rev. G.H. Dashwood (ed.), *The visitation of Norfolk in the year 1563* (Norwich, 1878), i, pp 25–7, 448; Brig-General Bulwer (ed.), *The visitation of Norfolk in the year 1563* (Norwich, 1895), ii, pp 254–5.

5 WSRO, FL600/4/1-2; WSRO, IC500/1/122/13; WSRO, IC500/2/65/9; PRO, E/179/246/20; PRO, E/134/2/Chas2/Mich5; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 38–9, 270. When I contacted the record offices in Essex and Suffolk in 2016 to enquire about John Stearne I was informed by archivists that the county archives held no material outside of those cited here.

6 For his puritanism see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 38; Ivan Bunn and Gilbert Geis, *A trial of witches: a seventeenth century witchcraft prosecution* (London, 1997), p 142; Wallace Notestein, *A history of witchcraft in England from 1558–1718* (Washington, 1911), p 166; Robin Briggs, *Witches & neighbours: the social and cultural context of European witchcraft* (London, 1996), p 53. For Stearne's social status see Jim Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Richard Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft: the western tradition* (4 vols, Santa Barbara, 2006), iv, p 1084; Malcolm Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh: the English witch-panic of 1645–7' in, Claire Walker and David Lemmings (eds), *Moral panics and the media in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2009), p 82; for Stearne's involvement in legal trials before the witch-hunt see ERO, Q/SR 320/59; for the 1650s see PRO, SP24/10, ff. 102v–3r, 159r; PRO, SP24/78; Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics in early modern England* (Oxford, 2016), p 126; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6.

7 Cabeck held rectorship from 1614 to his death in 1665, after which it is unknown where Stearne went for work; see NRO, DN/SUB/2/1; NRO, DN/INV 51A/52; NRO, NCC will register Stockdell 19, MF/RO 237/4; S.H.A.H. (ed.), *Bury St. Edmunds. St. James parish registers: marriages, 1562–1800* (Woodbridge, 1916), xvii, p 57.

8 Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh', p 83; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 41; ERO, T/A 418/127/10; ERO, T/A 418/127/11; ERO, ASS 35/83/1/10; ERO, ASS 35/86/1/11; H. F., *A true and exact relation* (London, 1645), p 1; Matthew

Hopkins, *The discovery of witches* (London, 1647), Querie 4; Stearne, *A confirmation*, pp 14–5; Frances Timbers, 'Witches sect or prayer meeting?: Matthew Hopkins revisited', *Women's History Review,* xvii, no. 1 (2008), pp 27–8.

9 R. Trevor Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief: with special reference to the Great Rebellion* (London, 1947), pp 126–8; Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials' in, James Sharpe and Richard Golden (eds), *English witchcraft, 1560–1736* (6 vols, London, 2003), iii, pp 331, 489–94; ERO, T/A 418/127/96-7.

10 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (New York, 1985), p 545.

11 See, for example, Clive Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', *Past & Present*, cxl (Aug., 1993), pp 45–78.

12 Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xiv; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 41.

13 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 80; Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 494.

14 ERO, D/P 343/1/1.

15 For dating of Hopkins's death see John Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins: Witch Finder General* (London, 1976), pp 193–6; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 495; Stearne, *A confirmation*, p 61. For the printing of Hopkins's pamphlet see Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, pp 317–8, 485.

16 Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh', p 86; S. F. Davies, *The discovery of witches and witchcraft: the writings of the witchfinders* (Brighton, 2007), p xiv; Stearne, *A confirmation*, sig. A1, pp 58–60; cf, Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 14. Stearne's, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft* will hereafter be referred to as *A confirmation* or Stearne's *Confirmation* in the main text, and as Stearne, in notes.

17 Stearne, p 23.

18 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 38; Bunn and Geis, *A trial of witches*, p 142; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 164–6, 201; James Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness: witchcraft in early modern England* (Philadelphia, 1997), pp 140–1; Montague Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology* (London, 1926), pp 4, 102; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 126; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331; Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 66–7.

19 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*; Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*; R. Trevor Davies, *Four centuries of witch-beliefs*.

20 For brief biographies of 800 known Marian exiles see Christina Garrett, *Marian exiles: a study in the origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938).

21 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 14–28.

22 Ibid., pp 93, 105, 110, 120.

23 Ibid., pp 164, 201.

24 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, pp 2–57.

25 Ibid., p 15.

26 Davies attributes this influx of pamphlets to the Calvinist, George Abbot. An act of the Star Chamber gave Abbot, the Bishop of London (1609–33) and Archbishop of Canterbury (1611–33), control of the printing press. See Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, p 43, and, Kenneth Fincham, 'Abbot, George (1562–1633)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/4) (Accessed: Dec., 2015). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* referenced in abbreviated form as *ODNB* hereafter.

27 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, p 19.

28 Ibid.

29 Its 'industrial' nature is questionable considering its modern connotations, especially in a period when farming was still predominant; for example, see Joan Thirsk, *The rural economy of England: collected essays* (London, 1984).

30 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, pp 147–61.

31 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 545; Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 45–78.

32 These divisions can be illustrated in Colchester, in 1645, where Stearne and Hopkins were invited by the Laudian mayor and supported by a group of moderate puritans. But Stearne and Hopkins were quickly expelled by another group of puritans who were supported by radicals: on this see Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 131–2.

33 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 595–8; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 130–1.

34 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 44–7.

35 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*.

36 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*.

37 Sharpe, *Witchcraft in early modern England*, p 11.

38 Margaret Murray, *The witch-cult in western Europe: a study in anthropology* (London, 1921). Besides Murray's work on this, the French writer Jules Michelet also purported this view. He maintained that the witches' sabbat was a nocturnal, canivalesque meeting of rebellious peasantry, during which they danced, feasted and performed fertility rituals. For the English translation see Jules Michelet, *La sorcière: the witch of the middle age,* trans. L. J. Trotter (London, 1863), pp 143–56.

39 Sir James Frazer, *The golden bough: a study in magic and religion* (abridged edn, London, 1950).

40 In the 1950s Murray expanded her theory of ritual sacrifices to the 'Old Religion' to include English royalty and prominent political figures; see Ronald Hutton, *The pagan regions of the ancient British Isles: their nature and legacy* (Oxford, 1998), pp 303–6, and pp 284–341 for a critique.

41 Murray, *The witch-cult*, p 14; Jacqueline Wilson, 'Murray, Margaret Alice (1863–1963)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, pp 796–7; A. D. J. Macfarlane, 'Murray's theory: exposition and comment' in, Max Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and sorcery* (Middlesex, 1970), pp 201–3. For fairy beliefs in Scottish witch-trials see Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller (eds), *Witchcraft and belief in early modern Scotland* (Basingstoke, 2008).

42 For an account of contemporary Wiccan and pagan practices see Ronald Hutton, *The triumph of the moon: a history of modern pagan witchcraft* (Oxford, 1999); also see John Callow, *Embracing the darkness: a cultural history of witchcraft* (London, 2018).

43 Norman Cohn, *Europe's inner demons: the demonization of Christians in medieval Christendom* (2nd edn, London, 1993), pp 155–160, 200–10.

44 Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology*, p 32, see pp 31–45 for the debate in its entirety.

45 Montague Summers, *The geography of witchcraft* (London, 1927); quotation from Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology*, p xiv

46 Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology*, p 32.

47 For a contemporary review see George Lincoln Burr, 'Review of The history of witchcraft and demonology; Geography of witchcraft; Malleus Maleficarum; Demoniality', *The American Historical Review,* xxxiv, no. 2 (Jan., 1929), p 321.

48 Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology*, pp 4, 102.

49 Murray, *The witch-cult*, p 214.

50 Stearne, p 13.
51 Murray, *The witch-cult*, pp 31–4.
52 R. S. Simpson, 'Murray, Margaret Alice (1863–1963)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/35169) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).
53 Thomas, *Religion and the decline* (London, 1971), pp 675–6; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: a regional and comparative study* (London, 1970, 2nd edn, 2008); E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande* (London, 1937).
54 For criticisms see E. P. Thompson, 'Anthropology and the discipline of historical contexts', *Midland history*, i, no. 3 (1972), pp 41–55; and, Hildred Geertz, 'An anthropology of religion and magic, I', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vi, no. 1 (Summer, 1975), pp 71–89.
55 Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480–1642* (New York, 2nd edn, 2012), pp 155, 159–60, 207; Christopher Marsh, *Popular religion in sixteenth century England: holding their peace* (Basingstoke, 1998).
56 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 554–7, 673–8. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 196.
57 For example see Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 595–7.
58 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 551–4; Anon., *The most strange and admirable discouerie of the three witches of Warboys* (London, 1593). James Sharpe, 'Warboys, Witches of (1593)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, pp 1179–80. For a list of all the actors see Philip C. Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: an extraordinary story of sorcery, sadism and satanic possession* (London, 2008), pp xv–xvi.
59 James Sharpe, 'Introduction' in, Macfarlane, *Witchcraft* (2nd edn, 1999), p xx.
60 In Christina Larner's *Enemies of God: the witch-hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981) and *Witchcraft and religion: the politics of popular belief* (Oxford, 1984), she provides evidence to suggest that Scottish witch-hunts were stimulated from above.
61 For an in-depth discussion see Briggs, *Witches & neighbours*, *passim*, especially pp 140–6, which situates the Macfarlane-Thomas model with Briggs's analysis of Europe.
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63 James Sharpe, 'In search of the English sabbat: popular conceptions of witches' meetings in early modern England', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, ii (2013), pp 161–83; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 70–79; Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia', pp 244–50; Sharpe, 'Familiars' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft: the western tradition*, ii, pp 347–8; Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions in early modern England* (London, 2017).
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68 Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 45–78.
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82 Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male witches in early modern Europe* (New York, 2003); Rolf Schulte, *Man as a witch: male witches in Central Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009); E. J. Kent, 'Masculinity and male witches in Old and New England, 1593–1680', *History Workshop Journal*, lx, no. 1 (Autumn, 2005), pp 69–92; Alison Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and masculinities in early modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009); Brian Levack (ed.), *New perspectives on witchcraft, magic and demonology: gender and witchcraft* (6 vols, London, 2001), iv.

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84 Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and masculinities*, pp 5–6.

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86 For an overview of this historiography see, Katharine Hodgkin, 'Gender, mind and body: feminism and psychoanalysis' in, Johnathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds), *Palgrave advances in witchcraft historiography* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp 194–6.

87 Malcolm Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft in seventeenth-century England' in, Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and masculinities*, pp 177–8; Stearne, pp 41–2.

88 Marion Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft* (New York, 2018), p 19; Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', p 71; Stearne, pp 14–25; Hopkins, *Discovery*; EDR, E12 1647/21; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 223–8, 230–1, 292, 294, 300, 313; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 232–3, 251, 254–5, 261–2.

89 Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft', pp 173, 180. Callow, *Embracing the darkness*, p 18, suggests using the concept of a 'familial noun' when thinking of the witch-figure, whereby accused witches bear traits that resemble an ideal witch-archetype.

90 Sharpe, 'Familiars', p 347. Also see, Sharpe, *Witchcraft in early modern England*, pp 62–4; and, Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 70–2.

91 Emma Wilby, *Cunning folk and familiar spirits: shamanistic visionary traditions in early modern British witchcraft and magic* (Brighton, 2005); also see, Wilby, 'The witch's familiar and the fairy in early modern England and Scotland', *Folklore,* cxi, no. 2 (Oct., 2000), pp 283–305; Carlo Ginzburg, *The*

night battles: witchcraft and agrarian cults in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Baltimore, 1983); Éva Pócs, *Between the living and the dead: a perspective on witches and seers in the early modern age* (Budapest, 1999); Gábor Klaniczay, *The uses of supernatural power: the transformation of popular religion in medieval and early-modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1990).

92 Wilby, *Cunning folk*, p 126.
93 Ibid., pp 14–25.
94 Wilby, 'The witch's familiar', p 283.
95 Ibid., p 24, and Murray, *The witch-cult*, p 14.
96 Diane Purkiss, 'Fairies' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, ii, pp 345–6.
97 James Sharpe, 'The witches' familiar in Elizabethan Essex' in, G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn (eds), *Authority and consent in Tudor England* (Aldershot, 2002), pp 219–32. These concepts are reiterated in, Sharpe, 'Familiars', pp 347–9. Millar's work on witchcraft pamphlets also treats familiars as demonic entities and applies a psychoanalytical approach to these narratives; see, Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions.*
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100 Davies, *Popular magic*, p 18.
101 Willis, *Malevolent nurture*, pp 52–9.
102 For its sexual element see Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'Sleeping with devils: the sexual witch in seventeenth-century England' in, Marcus Harmes and Victoria Bladen (eds), *Supernatural and secular power in early modern England* (Farnham, 2015), pp 207–31.
103 For a similar approach see Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 137–141; and, Fredrick Valletta, *Witchcraft, magic and superstition in England, 1640–70* (Farnham, 2000).
104 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 131.
105 Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft', p 175; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft* (1999), p xix.
106 E. J. Kent, *Cases of male witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592–1692* (Turnhout, 2013), pp 159–66. On this also see Durrant, *Witchcraft, gender and society*, pp 197–8, 251–4.
107 Alison Rowlands (ed.), 'Not "the usual suspects"? Male witches, witchcraft and masculinities in early modern Europe' in, Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and masculinities*, pp 18–9; Durrant, *Witchcraft, gender and* society, pp 249–54; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1999), *passim.*
108 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 37–8.

1 The Background of the East Anglian Witch-Hunt

The Economy, Courts, Religion, and the Beginnings of the Trials

By the time Stearne composed *A confirmation* in late 1647, the population of England had experienced the First Civil War. Its debilitating effects continued to be felt well beyond 1648, when *A confirmation* was published. Within Stearne's text he does not make explicit references to the Civil War, except on one occasion when commenting on a witch he discovered, 'not long before the Assizes, the first since these warres'. His comment was probably a reference to the end of the First Civil War in 1646, when the suspected witch he was discussing was arraigned.[1] However, it would be difficult to believe that such a momentous event did not impact upon Stearne or influence his thinking to some degree. This chapter will therefore explore the environment that facilitated the witch-hunt and in which Stearne wrote his pamphlet. It will foreground Stearne's theories with a thick description of other contemporary systems of beliefs and intellectual frameworks present in East Anglia, in order to enhance our understanding of the author, the text and the witchcraft trials in which he was so heavily involved. This chapter will include a discussion on the themes of the economy, the courts, religion, local political figures, and their links to Stearne and Hopkins. East Anglia was situated on the periphery of the war but it was affected indirectly. Local government continued to function during the Civil War and godly men in positions of power found their offices strengthened. Many of these men gave their assent to Stearne's witch-hunting agenda in 1645 in an attempt to cleanse their communities of sinners.[2] Because not much is known about Stearne's background prior to the witch-hunt, it is essential to reconstruct parts of the culture from which he came to further contextualise *A confirmation*.

The Economy of Essex and Suffolk

During the First English Civil War, East Anglia remained a stronghold for Parliament.[3] This area was not a frontier and so it was not directly affected by warfare. Stearne's home county of Suffolk experienced little fighting but was used as a recruiting ground for the Parliamentarian army. So many soldiers were enlisted from Suffolk, and were consequently killed during the

conflict, that the county was said to have had a dearth of men.[4] Likewise, the neighbouring county of Essex, in which Stearne held land, remained largely unscathed by war, except for the Siege of Colchester in 1648.[5] Essex villagers also enlisted in large numbers, and by July 1645, 500 men were recorded as being 'away', 'dead' or 'in the service of Parliament'.[6] East Anglian communities could not, however, escape the war's effects on society or the effects of nature – both of which negatively influenced the economy. Unfortunately, Stearne provides little information on this situation. For another account of these events, though, we can turn to the diary of Ralph Josselin, minister in the village of Earls Colne, who recorded that from the early 1640s poor weather was destroying the harvest through flooding and heavy frost. In February 1645 he remarked that the grounds were 'so hard they could scarce be ploughed. No old man could ever remember the like'.[7] Josselin noted in August 1644 and 1646 that plague was spreading in London and Colchester, and that price of bread and meat was rapidly growing.[8] According to scholars J. A. Goldstone and W. G. Hoskin, Josselin was correct: food doubled in price, and as the price went up, living wages fell.[9] Michael Chrisholm further explained that poor weather and harvests affected the inland river trade as it forced retail prices to fluctuate considerably. Besides the corn trade, the Civil War made coal prices rise exponentially – up to 87% in some places. Newcastle was the main source of coal for London and the entire eastern coast of England. Coal was transported through waterways, stopping at various ports, eventually arriving at the capital. However, during the Civil War this did not always run smoothly, and by May 1643 London was quickly running out.[10] The King controlled the coalfields of Newcastle and was willing to supply London to generate an income that would help fund his forces – for Londoners, this was an unacceptable trade-off who, instead, 'shivered self-sacrificingly'.[11]

To add to the economic difficulties of the 1640s, money was being levied by Parliamentarian forces in East Anglia, which was providing a yearly total of perhaps £330,000 by 1645. The citizens of Colchester contributed £30,000 to the Parliamentary cause in 1644, and within a single month £90,000 was collected in Suffolk.[12] Other financial strains came from the army's troops, who were becoming burdensome due to their free quarter (arrears for this were growing). Yet taxes and free quarter were not completely separate: if payment of taxes was refused, the allocation of a house or parish to soldiers for free quarter was used as a threat, since hungry soldiers were prone to pillaging. Many villagers attempted to petition their superiors to relieve the amount of taxation on their parishes. In general, as John Morrill commented, 'taxation was at a terrifying level', especially with excises imposed on basic commodities such as beer and bread.[13] The war clearly impacted all levels of society through the economy, and negatively affected Stearne's finances: he claimed that many villages had failed to pay him for his witch-finding services during the Civil War and he was facing financial difficulties shortly after the witch-hunt, in 1651.[14]

The witchcraft confessions recorded by Stearne in *A confirmation* can be informative as they mirror concerns over income. Witches like Alice Wright and Joan Ruce confessed to making pacts with the Devil for monetary gain, whereas accusers blamed witches for damaging livestock.[15] In this sense, witchcraft accusations can be seen as a reflection of contemporary economic concerns. For some people in East Anglia, their incomes were already being strained, so that any further damages to their livelihoods could be disastrous. Livestock and milk produce had to be protected, but dairy could be unexplainably spoiled and its loss attributed to magic. The alleged bewitching of cattle, butter, and milk was common in early modern English witchcraft accusations, primarily because society was largely based on agrarian farming.[16] While most communities survived off farming, we do not know if Stearne was a farmer producing goods for market in the land he held near Little Clacton, Essex. Stearne's vocation in the 1640s is uncertain, but based on extant records it appears that he supplemented his income by renting out a house to tenants in Manningtree, Essex. Between 1645 and 1648, this income was enhanced by fees from witch-hunting, and it has been suggested by Gaskill and Elmer that money might have been Stearne's motive for writing his retrospective pamphlet.[17] Stearne was classed as a minor gentleman, but he was not a man on secure financial standing. As noted above, in 1648 he was still awaiting payment from villages for identifying witches, was under threat of being sued by two anonymous men in Colchester, Essex, and by 1654 was facing financial difficulties which forced him to be demoted to the status of a yeoman.[18] Financial uncertainty would have been widespread in East Anglia since locals relied on agriculture to provide income for their families. Any disruption to the crop yield therefore had the potential to be catastrophic. Events such as the Siege of Colchester in 1648, plague outbreaks in 1655–56, poor weather, new crops, and a slight downturn in agricultural work by the end of the century all impacted farmers' produce in the 1600s. But the effect of food shortages went beyond nucleated families living just above the subsistence level and could have disrupted the supply of food to London – much like the coal trade. In the seventeenth century, East Anglian farmers were exporting much of their produce to the London markets to sell, or to export even further afield to the Netherlands.[19] Trading with foreign markets was relatively minor whereas trading with London was crucial, so much so that clothiers in Essex and Suffolk described Londoners as those 'in whom the breath of our Trade and livelyhood consisteth'.[20]

Essex and Suffolk specialised in manufacturing high-demand products, such as saffron (which was used for medical purposes) and flax (which was destined for the cloth trade).[21] Commercially, small ports like Manningtree, where Matthew Hopkins was employed, were important.[22] Manningtree was a small parish of twenty-two acres, situated on the River Stour and surrounded by marshlands. Due to the area's topography, the agrarian farming which was practiced in the north-west of Essex was not as prevalent in

Manningtree. However, the village did have easy access to inland rivers and the ocean through the River Stour. This gave locals the ability to create and sustain a fishing industry that enabled them to export its goods to London. Since the fourteenth century the locals had capitalised on their environment by establishing an economy that revolved around brewing, malting, selling corn and, most importantly, shipping. This included shipbuilding and the transportation of goods to the capital and the Netherlands, especially oysters – Manningtree's most valued product. The southern end of neighbouring Suffolk also had access to waterways but they were used to augment its distribution of dairy produce, which the central and northern parts of Suffolk were renowned for. These areas produced large quantities of butter and cheese that were much sought after by London cheesemakers. And, like other parts of East Anglia, it also had strengths in cloth-making, although small villages like Manningtree paled in comparison to the manufacturing hub of Colchester, which relied on a stock of skilled Dutch workers.[23] Clive Holmes noted that by 1633, Colchester was sending £3,000 worth of bays and says (cloths which were woven from wool) to London per week. However, its dependence on the city left it vulnerable. In 1637 the bankruptcy of London merchants ruined many Stour valley clothiers, and in the summer of 1642 locals' financial concerns – along with deeply rooted anti-Catholicism – resulted in rioting.[24] These riots and the iconoclasm that accompanied them formed the background to the witch-hunt. Both of these events set a precedent among locals for taking forceful action to uphold shared ideas of justice, and were used by members of the puritan majority to remove subversive demonic influences from communities. This pattern was repeated a few years later when Stearne and Hopkins emerged to purge villages of dangerous sinners once again.

The Courts

Areas of Essex and Suffolk may have been economically significant, but Colchester and Chelmsford surpassed them in their legal importance, and these towns functioned as the hubs in which the first wave of witches was tried in 1645. Chelmsford was one of the largest towns in Essex with a population of 3,000 out of the entire county's population of 10,000. Due to its size and prominence, it held the assize courts as they passed through the county biannually, as they had done since the twelfth century. The two judges touring the Home Circuit were usually highly trained professionals, often coming from the royal courts of Westminster where they sat during the rest of the year. Moreover, to keep their assessments impartial, judges were not allowed to hold sessions in counties where they had been born or lived – although this failed to happen during the witch-trials in Essex, 1645. Assize judges mainly dealt with felonies, and due to the amount of cases which had to be heard in each circuit, these hearings were kept brief. An average Home Circuit might have consisted of visiting five towns in different

counties and travelling 170 miles over a seventeen-day period. When sus-
pected cases of witchcraft needed to be examined, they were presented at
the assizes by JPs so that the death penalty could be served or withheld.
Lesser crimes were reserved for the quarter sessions, church courts or the
manorial courts of baron and leet.[25] Quarter sessions were lower criminal
courts that were held for each county at least four times a year. They were
conducted by JPs, many of whom were fully trained barristers or students
from the Inns of Court, and were local men who could be influenced by
local affairs and politics.[26] Quarter sessions judged cases relating to inter-
personal disputes – petty theft, poaching, assault – and other minor crimes,
such as drunkenness, vagrancy, and individual's failures to fulfil obliga-
tions.[27] And, as Ewen observed, quarter sessions were sometimes used to
certify examinations of suspected witches to the justices of gaol delivery.[28]
Conversely, church courts operated under ecclesiastical law and they essen-
tially policed the laity's morality. With regard to witchcraft prosecutions,
they had played a minor role since the passing of the Elizabethan Act of
1563, which made witchcraft a secular crime. However, it seems that Eng-
lish church courts were relatively unconcerned with witchcraft during the
early modern period, and when cases did arise, usually involving white
magic or cunning-folk, mild punishment was preferred in order to reinte-
grate the individual back into the community.[29] Suspected witches were not
treated as subversive heretics but as sinners who could repent. Clergymen
dealt with witchcraft as they would any immoral action by a layman, such
as sexual immorality, which was the most persistent and pervasive offence
for the clergy to regulate.[30] Manorial courts were, likewise, uninterested
in witchcraft, and were more concerned with local misdemeanours such as
fines for individuals responsible for dangerous stiles, the blocking of drains,
failing to repair a hazardous chimney, or for farmers who allowed their
beasts to water from the town well. In general, manorial courts regulated
agriculture and the living conditions of the people, in order to maintain
a degree of social harmony among neighbours.[31] By the mid-1640s, after
the outbreak of civil war and riots, this harmony was precarious, and the
instability created facilitated the rise of the witch-finders. For Stearne and
Hopkins, the assizes were by far the most important legal court, for they
were able to effectively gather and present crucial evidence to its bench and
successfully prosecute witches.

   During the Civil War, all courts were not as organised as they had pre-
viously been, particularly the assizes. The Chelmsford sessions in Janu-
ary 1643 were well attended with the Earl of Carlisle, three baronets and
twenty-one JPs being present on one bench. However, from Epiphany 1643
to Easter 1644, Essex failed to hold any courts due to the responsibilities
placed on the gentry involved in war effort.[32] Attempts were made to keep
the courts going to maintain order and proper judicial practice. Eventu-
ally the courts did resume in Colchester in the summer of 1645, but the
usual, trained judges were not present during the witchcraft trials and were

instead replaced by local men, who were more biased – these men were the Earl of Warwick, Sir Harbottle Grimston (senior), Sir Thomas Bowes, Samuel Fairclough, and Edmund Calamy.[33]

The Home Circuit was under strain in the 1640s, yet it was maintained and continued to function. Local gaols did not receive sufficient maintenance and were brimming with prisoners. The latter was an issue in August 1646 at Bury St Edmund when the gaols could not house all those accused of witchcraft. To solve the problem, eighteen condemned witches were sequestered in a barn on the outskirts of the town, and guards were posted.[34] The precaution of added security was deemed necessary, not because of the threat of the witches, but rather to prevent suspects escaping, as another prisoner had a few months prior to the trials. This was recorded by Stearne, who noted that 'in Burie Goale, not long before the Assizes, the first since these warres, the Goaler missing a Prisoner in the morning, which he had over night, a notorious offender, whom he kept double shackled'.[35] In Essex, similar events had occurred. Prisoners awaiting trial or re-trial before the assizes were held in Colchester Castle, which functioned as a gaol. By the 1640s, however, it was not fit for purpose and was in a severe state of disrepair. Despite the fact that some inmates were shackled, prison breakouts were not uncommon. According to James Sharpe, between 1620 and 1650 approximately one-hundred prisoners escaped from the castle because of holes and gaps in the building's structure. The most dramatic incident occurred just before the witch-trials, in 1644, when forty-four prisoners escaped custody before being tried. Because of the gaol's structural damage, when heavy rain fell prisoners could be submerged up to their knees in water.[36] The lack of general hygiene in gaol, the plague, and exposure to weather took its toll on some of the prisoners. Indeed, four elderly witches who were held at Colchester Castle after the assizes in 1645 are listed in a 'Calendar of Prisoners in Gaol' as dying, from what was probably gaol fever (dysentery). For Stearne and his contemporaries, this 'visitation from God' was merely the manifestation of His displeasure towards the witches.[37]

Religion and Witchcraft Beliefs in the 1640s

In early modernity, the providentialist belief that God was the source of all strange, even mundane, happenings in the world was pervasive. Calvinist theologians stressed the fact that He could influence humans in their daily lives, but under His permission so could the Devil. Satan ruled over the physical world and could affect the human body and mind if he desired. The concept of a personalised Devil which emerged in the seventeenth century was attributed to the ability to manipulate the senses and thoughts of humans to blaspheme or kill, for example. It was believed that Satan and his legions were ethereal beings that could manifest themselves through illusions. William Perkins (1558–1602) argued that the Devil could delude humans by creating illusions 'wherby he makes a man to thinke that he

heareth, seeth, feeleth or toucheth such things as indeede he doth not...
by corrupting the instruments of sense, as the humor of the eye, &c. or by
altering and changing the ayre'. Perkins supported his statement by refer-
encing Saul's encounter with the spirit of Samuel – described in 1 Samuel
28 – referring to it as evidence of demonic delusion.[38] In strict theological
terms the Devil could not become physical and metamorphose into human
or animal forms for, as Perkins noted,

> it is not in the power of the devill, thus to change substances into other
> substances...His power is not so large, as to create a bodie, or bring
> againe a soule into a bodie, yet by his dexteritie and skill in naturall
> causes he can worke wonderfully.[39]

However, in popular culture the lines between incorporeal and corporeal
demonic entities could become blurred.[40] This was the case for popular
beliefs, which posited that the early modern world was filled with super-
natural beings both within and outside of Christian theology.[41] While the-
ologians like Perkins and George Gifford (a minister in Maldon, Essex)
believed that Satan could only be warded off by faith in God, some of
the laity used other methods to combat evil, such as charms, prayers, and
rituals.[42] Instead of a comprehensive proselytisation by English reformers,
many ordinary people continued to hold popular ideas in the 1600s, as
they did pre-Reformation, with minor changes. In this respect, the Devil of
the late medieval world continued into the early modern period under the
rubric of a 'crude providentialism'. In popular culture this form of Satan
could even be defeated through physical violence, by trickery, prayer or
apotropaic magic.[43] Learned and popular concepts of Satan were not dia-
metrically opposed, but were enmeshed, as can be seen in cases of demonic
possession or obsession and in the East Anglian witchcraft trials.[44]

The East Anglian trials also demonstrate how some of the population
still struggled with the complexities of religion, especially predestination,
despite the clergy's efforts.[45] Stearne, for example, recorded the confessions
of witches who were concerned over their salvation, which they believed
they could not obtain. A suspected male witch, Payne, may have under-
stood the concept of predestination but was distraught by his dissolute life,
which in Calvinist soteriology suggested that he was among the reprobate
and was therefore damned.[46] While preachers explained how adversity
could befall the ungodly and godly alike (using the biblical typology of
Job for the latter), in popular culture temporal punishment and eternal
torment were often confused.[47] Indeed, Payne was so troubled by this that
he considered suicide. But the Devil appeared to him and promised an al-
ternative, definite way to salvation, provided that he made a diabolic pact
and renounced God. Payne was not alone in this respect: Stearne records
the confessions of many other witches who claimed to have made diabolical
pacts to save their souls.[48] While popular and elite theories on theology

and witchcraft differed, both agreed that the Devil had become rampant in mid-seventeenth England. As Stearne commented, Satan was 'without doubt the devil [that] is busie in deceiving of Nations'.[49]

During the English Civil War signs indicating the presence of the supernatural were multiple and are evident in printed literature (see Chapter 3). Portents of the demonic and apocalyptic ranged from the act of waging civil war, the number of witches, accounts of familiar spirits, to portentous monstrous births and comets.[50] Although cheap pamphlets helped to disperse these ideas, the renewed fascination with the supernatural extended beyond the laity, and was not confined to witchcraft belief. Apocalyptic speculation was particularly widespread. John Owen, for instance, feared that 'The end of those "ends of the world" which began with the gospel is doubtless coming upon us'.[51] John Davenport, in a letter to Lady Vere, wrote that the stirrings of the apocalypse were upon England: 'the most high shaketh heaven, earth & seaes [sic], & all hearts'. But he claimed it was not yet to occur because the slaughter of the witnesses in Rev. 11 had not happened, nor had 'the light which is now discovered in England, concerning church order & government' reached an acceptable level of conformity.[52] Stearne, similarly, did not agree with Owen's apocalypticism, for his eschatological stance was millennialism: Stearne believed that Christ had not yet returned, and that the Devil still had to be imprisoned for a thousand years. For Stearne, the preponderance of witches in his localities meant that Christ's Second Coming was far away, commenting that

> it is undeniably true, that there was, is, and shall be Witches, till Christs conquest there spoken of, agreeable with that in Revel. 20, 1, 2, 3 which as yet cannot be: for without doubt the devil is busie in deceiving of Nations... And therefore everyone must conclude with me, that of witchcraft (as yet) there is no end.[53]

The termination of Satan's earthly rule may have seemed to be very far away indeed, since hundreds of witches had been identified in East Anglia within a few years. Fear of the diabolical was exacerbated by Royalist and Parliamentarian propagandists who helped foster such sentiments by demonising each other using the language of witchcraft. In the pamphlet *A most certain, strange, and true discovery of a witch* (1643), an alleged witch was executed by Parliamentarian forces after the battle of Newbury for being a Royalist spy. In other Parliamentarian pamphlets, such as *A Dog's elegy* (1644), Prince Rupert's dog, named Boy, was recast as a familiar spirit that protected the Prince and was even able to catch bullets in its mouth.[54] In Suffolk, 1645, this ability was mentioned in a deposition given by 'Jacobus More', who allegedly sent familiars to help Prince Rupert in 1642.[55] By involving supernatural agents, the Civil War was partially conceptualised in terms of the continuous war between God and Satan.[56] Peter Elmer and Darren Oldridge have argued that a puritan religious world-view combined

firmly with anti-Catholicism (including anti-Laudianism or anti-Arminianism) during the Civil War: this may help explain why cases of witch-hunting increased so dramatically in East Anglia, where, many levels of society, politics, religion and 'superstition' coalesced to some degree in an attempt to restore order, and to make sense of the war.[57] As Stuart Clark argued, the language of demonology, based on the theory of contraries (*concordia discors*), provided a theoretical framework to do so.[58] Supporters of the Royalist and Parliamentarian causes considered themselves to be fighting for God in an effort to restore the 'true religion' and to reach stability within governmental structures. The Civil War was therefore not conceptualised purely as a battle between opposing religious or political factions. Parliamentarian propagandists used a 'just war' (rather than a holy war) resistance theory to defend their actions against the King, for the pre-Laudian church had been established by law and could thus be defended by the State. As Glen Burgess remarked, Parliament's resistance theory made it 'possible to defend religion under the color of law'.[59] At a local level, however, communes sought to root out sin in order to appease God, whose anger was clearly being demonstrated during the 1640s, culminating in the Civil War.[60] For many in East Anglia it was a war for which 'the spiritual sword of church discipline ought to be unsheathed in the political struggle for English liberties'.[61] Until England's future was secured, action had to be taken to restore political, religious, and moral order at a local and national level. For Stearne, this meant pursuing and expelling witches from East Anglia.

In a worldview saturated by God and other supernatural entities, it was difficult to separate religion from any aspect of life. For this reason, the demonization that was directed at political opponents was also extended to those with different tenets of faith. Although English reformers had partial success in converting the population to 'orthodoxy', they did succeed in linking Catholicism with diabolism – as was the case in other parts of Europe.[62] By the 1640s, Laudian reforms to the Church had troubled the godly because they viewed these changes as a potential crypto-Catholic takeover. These fears were not entirely unfounded, and for Protestants evidence of a diabolical Catholic conspiracy was mounting.[63] In Stearne's home county of Suffolk, the anti-puritan Bishop Wren had targeted non-compliant clergy in the 1630s, rousing much anger. As a result Wren and his supporters were deprived of their livings and Wren was forced from his residency in neighbouring Ely.[64] Concerns of Catholicism were heightened once news of an Irish rebellion in November 1641 reached England, in which Irish Catholics were said to have ruthlessly slaughtered thousands of Protestants.[65] Within the next few years, once civil war broke out, popular Protestant reforms were undertaken in East Anglia, both legally and extra-legally. Perhaps the most famous occurred in 1642 when William Dowsing carried out large-scale iconoclasm in East Anglia – commissioned by the Earl of Manchester – to remove church ornaments and decorations that were

perceived to be exceedingly Catholic. Much like Stearne, Dowsing was 'an obscure seventeenth-century layman' who resided in Essex and Suffolk, and was connected to local, powerful men such as the Earls of Manchester and Warwick, Harbottle Grimston and other members of Parliament. Dowsing was also a strict Biblicist whose convictions spurred him into action to execute the iconoclastic commandments he identified in the Pentateuch. By destroying the religious images that had multiplied in the 1630s, Dowsing hoped to please God by eradicating the 'popish' sin of idolatry and thereby defend both church and nation. Throughout his campaign he was supported by many villagers, but he also encountered opponents, particularly in Cambridge where he was forced to defend his actions by the Fellows of Pembroke College. Initially, iconoclasm had a large support base yet pockets of resistance slowed Dowsing's mission, which only lasted a brief ten months before it was terminated (20 December 1643–October 1644). Dowsing's intense campaign augured the trajectory of the witch-hunt that Stearne spearheaded early in 1645. These types of popular reforms set a precedent, which Stearne and Hopkins followed – both metaphorically and literally – for the route taken by Dowsing during his campaign in Suffolk was closely followed by the witch-finders a few years later.[66]

In an effort to further reform communes, The Suffolk Committee for Scandalous Ministers was established in in 1644 to hear charges against clergy who were accused of immorality and of being Royalist or Laudian sympathisers. But Stearne and Hopkins presented an alternative method to remove unwanted clergy – puritan ministers included. During the Suffolk witch-hunt, the local vicar John Lowes was accused and executed for witchcraft after being interrogated by the witch-finders.[67] Church reform also took place on a much grander scale in the mid-1640s, as the Presbyterian-dominated Parliament and the Westminster Assembly strove to abolish the Episcopalian Church structure in favour of a Presbyterian system.[68] It was a network of powerful East Anglian Presbyterians who supported the witch-finders' mission and helped the witch-hunt expand from Essex into neighbouring counties.

Godly reformers feared for their religion's future, which they believed was currently being assailed by demonic forces. As Elmer and Oldridge have argued, this viewpoint heightened awareness of the Devil during the Civil War, for he was thought to be a primary agent in it. Satan's reach was extensive, influencing all aspects of life and was creating many witches to further his cause. This helps explain why Stearne and Hopkins received much support from the communities they were invited to and visited. In a period of unrest and religious fracturing, witch-hunting united local communities: the witch-finders empowered communities with another means to remove potentially subversive diabolic influences, as well as those who had long been suspected as witches within their community (such as Rev. John Lowes).[69] Curbing sin was a matter of 'personal safety and national security', for it was believed that a single sin could endanger everyone by

incurring the wrath of God.[70] In this sense, the moral and religious purging of communities was of great importance to individuals holding this concept. Alexandra Walsham has argued that this outlook was central to Calvinists who believed in God's providence, while Timothy Bridges, more narrowly, has demonstrated that iconoclasts upheld a similar rationale.[71] Peter Elmer has highlighted another example of a man who held such beliefs, sought religious reform and was involved in witchcraft accusations: Edward Parsley, a bricklayer from Manningtree, became embroiled in religious riots against bishop Wren, whom he directly challenged in public, but thanks to local godly sympathisers Parsley escaped punishment by the law. After disappearing from the historical record, he appeared in court nine years later testifying alongside Hopkins and Stearne against Ellen and Elizabeth Clarke, who were accused of bewitching his child to death (among other acts of *maleficia*). Not only did he testify in court against Elizabeth Clarke, but he was one of Elizabeth's 'watchers', and his wife Mary Parsley searched her body for witch-marks, discovering three of them.[72] According to Elmer, Parsley is but one example of many ordinary people within the Eastern counties who were involved in religio-political disturbances prior to the witch-hunts, and later became involved in the trials. For Elmer, this type of action is indicative of popular support for widespread moral and ecclesiastical reform, which was encouraged by zealous middle class individuals, most of whom initially welcomed the witch-hunters.

Stearne and the Beginnings of the Witch-Hunt

In the mid-seventeenth century, Essex and Suffolk were hotbeds of puritanism and of Parliamentarian support.[73] Political figures within these counties were well aware of the various threats posed to their communities, both secular and supernatural. In the parish of Manningtree, however, the lord of the manor Paul, Viscount Bayning had died in 1638, leaving the manor to his two young daughters. Additionally, in 1643, the long-standing rector Thomas Witham left the parish for London, dying soon after – it is unclear if a clergyman had replaced Witham by 1645. Gaskill has argued that these deaths created a temporary vacuum of clerical and seigneurial leadership within the Essex areas of Manningtree and nearby Mistley. In 1645, this lack of guidance was also mirrored in the judicial system, where the traditional leaders, the assize judges, were not operating as they usually did.[74] As a result, the godly men who were in control readily gave support to the witch-finders once they emerged. This was beneficial for Stearne who already had personal connections with local magistrates.

In *A confirmation*, Stearne noted that after he gathered evidence from Elizabeth Clarke, he presented his findings to the local magistrates Sir Harbottle Grimston (senior) and Sir Thomas Bowes. Both of these Justices of the Peace had encountered witches before during their tenure.[75] In 1638, Grimston had condemned three women to death for witchcraft,

and in 1645 Bowes had testified against Anne West in court – the latter was a dubious testimony, for Bowes was a judge who resided close-by and had not personally witnessed West's crime.[76] Grimston was a respectable, wealthy man in his mid-seventies who owned land in Essex and Suffolk. He had been knighted in 1611 and was elected sheriff for Essex and MP for Harwich in 1614. He was a staunch Presbyterian who was later elected as an elder of Bradfield in 1646 and was also active in the Long Parliament (as was his son of the same name). But Grimston was not averse to conflict: in the 1620s he ardently opposed Charles I's forced loans, for which he was imprisoned, and was also against Laud's reforms.[77] Overall, Grimston was a man of influence in East Anglia and in the Essex witch-trials of 1645. Indeed, many of the accusations of witchcraft originated within his jurisdiction and his personal estates. Therefore Grimston's endorsement of these accusations, and of witch-hunting in general, added much veracity to them in Essex, so much so that Gaskill has remarked that without him, the witch-finders' 'mission may never have gotten off the ground'.[78]

Grimston's fellow JP, Sir Thomas Bowes, was also an important figure. Bowes's deposition against Anne West in 1645 was not his first encounter with the alleged witch. Prior to West's arrival in the parish of Lawshall in 1638, she had been suspected of witchcraft. It seems Anne remained an outsider in her new environment due to this stigma which shadowed her, and in 1640 and 1641, West was once again suspected of bewitching a child and a pig. She was arraigned for these crimes but fortunately escaped punishment. Bowes, however, was the magistrate who organised West's transport to and from the assizes in March 1642, and therefore knew of her reputation as a witch prior to 1645. Bowes lived a mere five miles from Lawshall, Suffolk, in Great Bromley Hall, only adding to his familiarity to West and Stearne, who also lived in Lawshall. In this context, the JP's testimony against West is not too surprising: he seized the opportunity convict a witch who had previously eluded justice in his district – an attitude that was adopted by many other villagers.[79]

When the assizes resumed in July 1645 at Chelmsford, Bowes, Grimston, and six other Justices were joined by the prominent Presbyterian and Parliamentarian Robert Rich, the 2nd Earl of Warwick and Lord Lieutenant of Essex, who presided over the trials. Grimston and Bowes were official JPs (Grimston having over forty years' experience); however the Earl of Warwick had no clear judicial status or training. In the summer of 1645, the Royalist army began marching east, which, as Stearne noted, caused alarm and prevented the assize judges leaving London to start touring the Home Circuit. Instead of sending the normal assize judges, the Earl was dispatched to preside over the assizes at Chelmsford in July as a representative of military and judicial authority in the lack of any from Westminster.[80] When the official trials began in July 1645, the Earl of Warwick sat alongside Grimston and Bowes, and sentenced nineteen people to death. Although the Earl's witchcraft theory is not clear, it is possible that he was

familiar with key ideas within Stearne's *Confirmation*. While writing his pamphlet, Stearne relied heavily on Richard Bernard's influential work *Guide to grand jury-men with respect to witches* (London, 1627). Bernard (b.1568–d.1641) was a product of Christ's College, Cambridge, and was a puritan with a ministry in the Somerset parish of Batcombe. After participating in a witchcraft trial at the Taunton assizes in the summer of 1626, he decided to write his *Guide*.[81] Bernard's work not only advised JPs how to judge witchcraft as a secular crime but also functioned as a summary of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English demonological theory. Additionally, it incorporated some elements of European demonology, for English demonologists, like George Gifford and Reginald Scot were familiar with their European counterparts' work, such as Martin Del Rio and John Bodin. Another source of Bernard's witchcraft theory came from printed pamphlets. Bernard used printed works detailing the Witches of Warboys case, the Lancashire witchcraft trials, the Earl of Rutland's bewitchment, and other trials that occurred in Bedfordshire and Northampshire – all which were referenced by Stearne too. Using learned demonologists alongside more popular printed works, Bernard created what Sharpe has termed a 'practical demonology', which combined theology with lessons garnered from the actual trials, thus creating seventeenth-century English witch-craft theory.[82] Bernard's *Guide to grand jury-men* was crucial in guiding Stearne's witchcraft beliefs, but Bernard's work was only made possible by the Earl of Warwick's family who had given the young lawyer their patronage, paying for his Cambridge education and supporting him throughout his life. It is evident from Stearne's pamphlet that Bernard's *Guide* played a critical role in shaping his thoughts, but it may also have influenced the Earl of Warwick as well, since his family took great interest in the lawyer's education.[83] And while the Earl of Warwick's family had supported Bernard, the Earl extended his personal patronage too: he was the political patron of his fellow judge Sir Harbottle Grimston (senior), and had over twenty benefices in Essex. One of these benefices was given to Edmund Calamy (another actor in the witch-trials) who had been appointment to his living by the Earl himself. Warwick had clear political and religious ties in East Anglia and he played a part in its politics, more so after he was appointed head of the Eastern Association in August 1645.[84] Although the Earl of Warwick had connections, so did Grimston who had been born near Manningtree and held manors within the Tendering Hundred where many witches had been uprooted. Bowes, likewise, was located nearby, living five miles from Manningtree.[85] Therefore three of the central magistrates who judged the suspects at Essex had some experience with witchcraft trials, knew of each other, and were all strict Presbyterians. In fact, when we examine some of the key political players in the East Anglian witchcraft trials, we uncover a network of middle-class Presbyterians who came to power to fill the local and national power vacuums which had opened in the 1640s – a group that was concerned with the growing witchcraft problem.[86] These men lent

judicial and political support to those making witchcraft accusations that had flourished among the laity in East Anglia and to Stearne and Hopkins's subsequent investigations.

Although we do not know what religious group (loosely defined) John Stearne was inclined towards, based on his writing in *A confirmation*, he was familiar with Scripture, 'practical demonology', and was determined to enact his ideas of reform in East Anglia in the 1640s (see Chapter 2). Stearne's witch-finding was enabled by his connections with Bowes and Grimston, and the support he garnered from local clergy, magistrates, and lay-folk who sympathised with and aided his cause. The puritan minister, Samuel Fairclough, was another high-profile agent in the witch-hunt. Fairclough was the rector of Kedington and was regularly called to Parliament to preach sermons.[87] In August 1645, Parliament assigned him to a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer to ensure that proper judicial procedure was being followed at the witch-trials in Bury St Edmunds. Like Bowes and Grimston, Fairclough became embroiled in the trials due to his local connections and had even met John Stearne before the assizes took place to hear a witch confess.[88] Stearne records how 'Binkes of Haverill in Suffolk' told him that she was guilty of witchcraft (though she revoked this soon after) and requested 'to speak with one Maister Fairecloth who lived not above two miles, or thereabouts, from the Town, being an able Orthodox Divine; who was immediately sent for, and came'.[89] Stearne did not note Fairclough's reaction to this episode, but the 'staunchly godly' Commission Fairclough was part of did prosecute witches and did not condemn witch-hunting as a practice – nor did Parliament for that matter since they formed the commission to control, not stop, the witchcraft trials.[90] R. Trevor Davies cites evidence of Fairclough's witch-belief, though, drawing upon two sermons Fairclough delivered before the assizes at Bury in a nearby church. During these lectures, Davies claims that he illustrated the reality and sinfulness of witchcraft – this is uncertain for the material is no longer extant.[91] The same viewpoint can be attributed to Edmund Calamy, who was also part of this Special Commission. He was one 'of the most rigid Presbyterian clergy' in England who was involved in politics at a high level, attending the Westminster Assembly and frequently giving sermons at Parliament, possibly even preaching against witchcraft at Bury during the trials.[92]

Presbyterian involvement in the East Anglian trials was not confined to judging the veracity of witchcraft accusations. Some Presbyterians were involved in making and supporting witchcraft accusations before and during the trials. In Essex, Edward Parsley made accusations against suspected witches, as did other clergymen including: John Edes, the rector of Lawford; Robert Taylor, an elder of the Presbyterian Classis; George Eatoney; and Richard Edwards.[93] Edes made accusations against Anne and Rebecca West, and Eatoney against Rebecca Jonas, Susan Cocke and Joyce Bones – both clergymen testified that they had seen the witches' familiar spirits.[94]

Robert Taylor was a principal witness in Manningtree who gave evidence against Elizabeth Gooding, Elizabeth Clarke, and Anne West – the latter two women were at the centre of the majority of the Essex accusations.[95] The most interesting characters in these accusations are Richard Edwards and his wife Susan, who was also a witness and was Matthew Hopkins's step-sister. The Edwards gave testimony against Elizabeth Clarke, Elizabeth Gooding, and Anne Leech. Richard Edwards was a powerful individual: he was the third wealthiest landowner near Manningtree and had been chief constable of the Tendring Hundred since 1642. He was married to Susan Witham, daughter of the pastor Thomas Witham.[96] Shortly after the death of his first wife Free-Gift in 1633, Thomas Witham married Marie Hopkins. According to Frances Timbers's research this Marie Hopkins, whose husband John had died in 1634, was in fact Matthew Hopkins's mother. John Hopkins (Matthew's father) and Thomas Witham lived five miles from each other; they were both clergymen and had been contemporaries at Cambridge University, so, according to Timbers, it is likely that they knew each other. It also creates an intimate connection between Susan Edwards and Matthew Hopkins, for Susan would have been Matthew's step-sister. Susan Edwards's motive for accusing Clarke, Leech, and Gooding stemmed from the death of her son John in August 1644. Susan had had been very unlucky in childbirth, losing at least three out of four children within five years, and suspected witchcraft to be the source of her misfortune. Richard's reasons were undoubtedly the same, but, in addition, he testified that Clarke had bewitched two of his horses to death. As for Hopkins's motives, Timbers believes he became involved in the emergent witchcraft trials to defend a family member and to further his own prestige within the community at the same time. One of Matthew's brothers had died in 1641, and his mother and step-father had left Manningtree by 1645. Therefore, the only family close to Hopkins was his step-sister and her family. Hopkins, moreover, was still in his twenties and had not established himself. But by supporting Richard Edwards's witchcraft accusations, Hopkins could earn the favour of an influential member of the community, compete at his level, and could 'bolster his personal place in the patriarchal scheme' by continuing the search for witches.[97]

While this may elucidate the motives of some actors in the witchcraft trials, unfortunately Stearne's motives remain elusive. He had connections to the local magistrates; lived in the epicentre of the witchcraft accusations; and was, apparently, a godly man. At a time when England was strained by the economic, social, and political pressures of civil war, and when East Anglian communities were vying for religious reform, Stearne's reason for acting upon witchcraft accusations may have been ideological rather than personal or financial. While sharing a drive for a reform with Presbyterians in his locality, the theological ideas Stearne articulated in his *Confirmation* were not fully compatible with the, then, orthodox puritanism of the Westminster Assembly. His witchcraft theory and witch-finding methods articulated in *A confirmation* were known in mid-seventeenth century England,

and were controversial, but the systematic manner in which he deployed them to successfully prosecute witches was innovative. English demonologists had crafted a 'practical demonology' which combined theology with lessons garnered from English witchcraft trials. From the mid-sixteenth century these ideas were disseminated widely through oral and print cultures using pamphlets, ballads, and legal treatises, and they influenced the witch-theory Stearne articulated in his pamphlet in 1648. But other influences can be discerned within his publication, which shed light on the witch-finder's religious beliefs.

Notes

1 Stearne, p 20; Davies, *The discovery of witches*, p 56.
2 Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 131–8.
3 Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English civil war* (New York, 1974), pp 33–68.
4 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 118. For a contemporary example, on 8 July 1645, Parliament attempted to levy 500 men in Suffolk and execute all those who deserted; see Robert Ashton, 'From Cavalier to Roundhead tyranny, 1642–9' in, John Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English civil war 1642–1649* (London, 1982), p 188.
5 Diane Purkiss, *The English civil war: a people's history* (London, 2007), pp 534–7.
6 ERO, Q/SR 326/1-10.
7 Cited and explained in Alan MacFarlane, *The family life of Ralph Josselin a seventeenth-century clergyman: an essay in historical anthropology* (London, 1970), pp 71–4.
8 Ibid., pp 75–6; *The diary of Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683*, ed. E. Hockliffe (London, 1908), pp 16, 34; A. G. E. Jones, 'Plagues in Suffolk in the seventeenth century', *Notes & Queries*, cxcviii (Sept., 1953), pp 384–6.
9 J. A. Goldstone, 'The demographic revolution in England: a re-examination', *Population Studies*, xl, no. 1, (March, 1986), pp 5–33; W. G. Hoskins, 'Harvest fluctuations and English economic history, 1620–1759', *Agricultural History Review*, xvi (1968), pp 15–31.
10 Michael Chisholm, 'Navigation and the seventeenth-century draining of the Fens', *Journal of Historical Geography*, xxxii, no. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp 733–40.
11 Purkiss, *The English civil war*, p 280.
12 Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, p 65; Donald Pennington, 'The war and the people' in, Morrill (ed.), *Reactions*, p 130.
13 ERO, Q/SBa 2/45-6; ERO, D/DMs O32; ERO, T/A 391/8, pp 3–6; ERO, D/DBa/O19; ERO, Q/SBc 2/25-6; John Morrill (ed.), 'Introduction' in *Reactions*, p 22; Pennington, 'The war and the people', *idem*, pp 128–9.
14 Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, p 1085; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6; Stearne, pp 58, 60.
15 Stearne, p 27; for examples of bewitched livestock during the 1640s see Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 225, 229, 232; and Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 268–9, 277.
16 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, *passim*; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 3–4, 519, 774–7; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 59–62.
17 PRO, E/179/246/20; PRO, E/134/2/Chas2/Mich5; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics,* p 126; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', p 331; also

see, Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 66–7, who considers monetary gain to be Stearne and Hopkins's motivation for witch-hunting. Stearne, p 60, refuted these allegation stating:

> And as for taking any money, or other things, by way of bribe or gift, I never did, to the value of one penny, neither one way nor other, but what I openly took in the view of the Townsmen where I came.

18 PRO, SP24/10, ff. 102v–3r, 159r; PRO, SP24/78; PRO, PROB11/307/45; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, pp 331, 488; Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, p 1085; Stearne, pp 58, 60; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics,* p 126.
19 Eric Schneider, 'Real wages and the family: adjusting real wages to changing demography in pre-modern England', *Explorations in Economic History*, l, no. 1 (Jan., 2013), pp 99–115; Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp 7–10; Patrick Wallis, Justin Colson, and David Chilosi, 'Structural change and economic growth in the British economy before the Industrial Revolution, 1500–1800', *Journal of Economic History*, lxxviii, no. 3 (2018), pp 862–903; Janet Cooper and C.R. Elrington (eds), *A history of the county of Essex: volume 9, the borough of Colchester* (10 vols, London, 1994), ix, pp 67–87.
20 Anon., *The clothiers petition…of Suffolke, and the townes of Dedham and Langham in Essex* (London, 1642).
21 Thirsk, *The rural economy of England*, pp 199, 209–10.
22 Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 19–20; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 27; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xiv.
23 J. A. Sharpe, *Crime in seventeenth-century England: a county study* (Cambridge, 1983), pp 15–9; Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 59–60; Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, pp 7–10.
24 ERO, T/Z 597/1; Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, p 7; John Walter, *Understanding popular violence in the English Revolution: the Colchester plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 64–8.
25 Sharpe, *Crime in seventeenth-century England*, p 25; Gregory Durston, *Witchcraft & witch trials: a history of English witchcraft and its legal perspectives, 1542 to 1736* (Chichester, 2000), pp 191–8.
26 For an example of a JPs manual from the 1640s which contains excerpts from and annotations of printed legal texts (including Dalton's *Countrey justice*) see Folger Shakespeare Library, 'Legal notebook of Thomas Birch [manuscript]', V.a.395.
27 Durston, *Witchcraft & witch trials*, pp 189–92.
28 C. L' Estrange Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials* (London, 1929), p 46.
29 Durston, *Witchcraft & witch trials*, pp 186–7; G.R. Quaife, *Godly zeal and furious rage: the witch in early modern Europe* (Kent, 1987), pp 42–3; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 120, 187; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 292–4, 551.
30 Marsh, *Popular religion*, p 110; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 120; J. S. Purvis, *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), p 1. For example, John Betson was given public penance for practicing divination (an act that came under the umbrella term 'witchcraft' for contemporaries) in 1563, while William Maykins was given the same punishment for suffering 'certain persons to drinke in his house [during] service tyme'; see Purvis, *Tudor parish*, pp 54, 198.
31 G.R. Quaife, *Wanton wenches and wayward wives: peasants and illicit sex in early seventeenth century England* (London, 1979), pp 18–9.

32 Anthony Fletcher, 'The coming of war' in, Morrill (ed.), *Reactions*, pp 44–5.
33 ERO, T/A 418/127/97; John Walter, 'The impact on society: a world turned upside down?' in, John Morrill (ed.), *The impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p 112; Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh', p 83; Davies, *Four centuries of witch-beliefs*, pp 126–8.
34 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 158–9; Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene witches* (London, 1645).
35 Stearne, p 20.
36 Ibid., p 55; Sharpe, *Crime in seventeenth-century England*, pp 32–3.
37 ERO, T/A 418/127/98; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 55; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 222–3. Sharpe, *Crime in seventeenth-century England*, p 32, estimates that 100 prisoners died of gaol fever between 1620 and 1650.
38 William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art* (Cambridge, 1610), pp 22–4.
39 Ibid., pp 27, 30–1; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp 84–224.
40 H.C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch hunting in southwestern Germany, 1562–1684* (Stanford, 1972), p 11; Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 81–3. For a contemporary account of demonic possession see, John Darrell, *A true narration of the strange and grevous vexation by the Devil* (London, 1600). For familiar spirits see, Stearne, *passim*.
41 Robin Briggs, '"By the strength of fancie": witchcraft and the early modern imagination', *Folklore*, cxv, no. 3 (2004), p 268.
42 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 33, 42, 83, 590–3; Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art*, pp 229–31; George Gifford, *A dialogue concerning witches and witchcrafts* (London, 1593), sigs D4v, F3v.
43 On the devil-figure and the Reformation see: Marsh, *Popular religion*, pp 153–4; Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 58–68; Patrick Collinson, 'England' in, Bob Scribner, Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds), *The Reformation in a national context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp 80–94; Edward Bever, 'Popular witch beliefs and magical practices' in, Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 56–9; Walsham, *Providence*, pp 84–95, quote from p 95.
44 Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 134–160; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 70–5; Levack (ed.), 'Introduction' in, *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 7–8.
45 On witchcraft and soteriology see, Stearne, pp 26–7, 30–2; Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, emotion and imagination in the English civil war' in, John Newton (ed.), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden, 2006), pp 173–4; Laura Kounine '"The devil used her sins": despair, confession and salvation in a seventeenth-century witch-trial', *History of emotions: insights into research* (Jan., 2014), pp 1–4 (doi: 10.14280/08241.20). Though some preachers tried to avoid the topic since it made the promotion of moral responsibility more complicated; on this see Susan Hardman Moore, 'Reformed theology and puritanism' in, Paul Nimmo and David Ferguson (eds), *The Cambridge companion to reformed theology* (Cambridge, 2016), pp 202–9.
46 Timbers, 'Witches sect', p 37; Stearne, pp 26–7, 30–2; Gaskill 'Witchcraft, emotion and imagination', pp 170–4.
47 Walsham, *Providence*, p 95.
48 BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 108; Stearne, pp 26–32.
49 Stearne, p 60.
50 Judith Maltby, 'Suffering and surviving: the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the formation of "Anglicanism", 1642–60' in, Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp 170–1; Valletta, *Witchcraft, magic and superstition in England, 1640–70*, pp 6, 63–93.

51 Cited in Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: experiences of defeat* (Oxford, 2016), p 57.
52 BL, Add. MS 4275, f. 173 (1647).
53 Stearne, p 60.
54 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 147–9; Diane Purkiss, 'Desire and its deformities: fantasies of witchcraft in the English civil war', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxvii, no. 1 (1997), pp 103–32; Valletta, *Witchcraft, magic and superstition*, pp 54–7,147–8.
55 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 310–11; Mark Stoyle, *The black legend of Prince Rupert's dog: witchcraft and propaganda during the English Civil War* (Liverpool, 2011).
56 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 145–50; Peter Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft in early modern England' in, Stuart Clark (ed.), *Languages of witchcraft: narrative, ideology and meaning in early modern culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 108–11; Peter Elmer, 'Saints or sorcerers: Quakerism, demonology and the decline of witchcraft in seventeenth-century England' in, Barry, Hester and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, pp 162–7.
57 For more on this with regards to providentialism and puritanism see, Walsham, *Providence*.
58 Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 49–53.
59 Glen Burgess, 'Was the English Civil War a war of religion? The evidence of political propaganda', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, lxi, no. 2 (1998), pp 173–201.
60 On this see, Walsham, *Providence*, pp 135–42.
61 Gribben, *John Owen*, pp 53–4, quote on p 53; in contrast to Burgess' argument, John Owen seems to have viewed the Civil War as a 'holy war' and urged fellow Puritans to crusade against the threat of Arminianism. Also see, Elmer, 'Saints or sorcerers', pp 162–6; Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 62–4.
62 Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 84–9; C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* (Oxford, 2002), pp 178–80; Stuart Clark, 'Protestant demonology: sin, superstition, and society (c.1520-c.1630)' in, Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early modern European witchcraft: centres and peripheries* (Oxford, 1990), pp 45, 53–4.
63 Gribben, *John Owen*, pp 44–54; William Shiels, 'English Catholics at war and peace' in, Durston and Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England*, pp 137–8.
64 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 23, 104, 191, 242–3; Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft', p 109.
65 John Morrill (ed.), *The impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), pp 10–2; Shiels, 'English Catholics at war and peace', p 137.
66 Timothy Bridges, '"Down with it, even to the ground": William Dowsing's reception of the iconoclastic rationale' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009), pp 28–76, quote on p 125; Trevor Cooper (ed.), *The journal of William Dowsing: iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2001); Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft', pp 109, 117; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 142; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 24–5, 78, 82; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xxvi; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 126. Dowsing can be located in Laxfield, Suffolk, and in Lawford, Essex, through parish records, which note his wife's death and his child's baptism in May 1640: ERO, D/P 347/1/1. This is supported by annotations in his copy of, John Fit, *A diamond most precious* (London, 1577), sig. O2v, in which he wrote: 'I R[ead] this Booke June 6 [and] 7 1640 a month want 2 days after my wives death I have cause to eat my bread with ashes'; see Folger Shakespeare Library, STC 10929, item note: HH87/3.

67 Lowes had been in conflict with his parishioners since 1614, and had been suspected of witchcraft since then, too; see, R.H., *A magazine of scandall* (London, 1642); BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 114; C. L'Estrange Ewen, *The trials of John Lowes, clerk* (London, 1937); Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 291–2.

68 Elements of this can also be seen in, BL, Add. MS 4275, f. 173. Cooper (ed.), *The journal of William Dowsing*; Holmes (ed.), *The Suffolk Committee for Scandalous Ministers* (Ipswich, 1970); Elliot Vernon, 'A ministry of the gospel: the Presbyterians during the English Revolution' in, Durston and Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England*, pp 116–8; F. D. Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1985), p 35, and *passim*, for an overview of radical religious movements.

69 Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 131–8; Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 161–2; Peter Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft', pp 101–18. Oldridge and Davies argue that in the 1640s anti-Catholicism was a factor, not the sole cause. There is no concrete evidence to directly link witch-hunting with 'priest-hunting'; for this argument see Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 187–80.

70 J.C. Davis, 'Living with the living God: radical religion and the English Revolution' in, Durston and Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England*, pp 22–3.

71 Walsham, *Providence*, pp; 138–41; Bridges, 'William Dowsing', pp 28, 76, 122–9, 159.

72 ERO, T/A 418/127/10-1; ERO, T/A 418/127/60; ASS 35/83/1/10; ASS 35/86/1/11; ASS 35/86/1/60; Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft', pp 109–11; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 223–4, 227; Stearne, pp 14–6; Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 266–7; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 48.

73 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 195–7.

74 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 140–1; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 41; ERO, T/P 51, Mistley and Manningtree records compiled by W.K.S. King.

75 Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh', p 83; Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, pp 126–8; Stearne, pp 14–5.

76 ERO, T/A 418/116; ASS 35/80/3; ERO, T/A 418/120; ERO, ASS 35/84/2; ERO, T/A 418/127; ASS 35/86/1; Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, pp 126–8; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 35, 127; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 175.

77 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 35–6; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 167; Christopher W. Brooks, 'Grimston, Sir Harbottle, second baronet (1603–1685)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/11640) (Accessed: May, 2016); although this article is for Sir Grimston's son of the same name, biographical information on the first baronet is included. For Grimston's involvement in government during 1640s see ESRO, D/Y 2/8, Morant manuscripts, Volume 8, 'C.XLVII', 1550–1688, pp 23, 27, 31–2, 37–8, 51, 62, 67, 73, 109, 232; for evidence of his financial clout his see, ESRO, D/DH VIA64; ESRO, D/DH VIB20.

78 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 36.

79 On failure to reintegrate into society due to witchcraft see, Mary Douglas, *Purity and danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo* (London, 1966, reprint 2001), pp 99–100. For details on Bowes and West see, ERO, T/A 418/120; ASS 35/84/2; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 37. The Hart family is an example of others who seized the opportunity to convict witches. They believed that the Wests had bewitched them in 1638 and made a formal accusation which failed. The Harts tried again in in 1645, providing testimony against the Wests; see, ERO, T/A 418/127/19 and 33; ASS 35/86/1/19 and 33; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 175.

80 ERO, T/A 418/127/97; ESRO, HD 36/A/163; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 545; Durston, *Witchcraft & witch trials,* p 200; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 120–1, 124; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 172; Stearne, p 25.

81 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief,* p 97.
82 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 82, 100–2, 139; for references to earlier pamphlets see Stearne, p 11.
83 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, pp 126–8; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, pp 331, 489–94.
84 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 172.
85 ESRO, D/DH VIA64; ESRO, D/DH VIB20; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 144; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 35–6.
86 Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 143; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, pp xxvii–xxviii; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 142–3; ESRO, D/Y 2/8, Morant manuscripts, Volume 8, 'C.XLVII', 1550–1688. For Bowes and Grimston's relationship see for example, ESRO, Q/SR 335/81; ERO, T/A 418/127; ERO, T/A 418/120; ERO, T/A 418/116.
87 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 152.
88 Ibid., pp 152–3; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 141.
89 Stearne, pp 54–5.
90 Valletta, *Witchcraft, magic and superstition*, p 5; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xxviii.
91 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, p 145; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 178; Davies does not provide a reference for this evidence. On Fairclough also see Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 126–8; Deacon admits that the content of Fairclough's sermon is not extant, but suggests that it may have been moderate in tone. This is reiterated in Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xxviii, where Fairclough and Calamy were said to hold moderate beliefs, with regards to witchcraft prosecution.
92 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 178; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 153–4; Andrew Hopper, *Black Tom: Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp 101–2; John Coffey, 'The toleration controversy during the English Revolution' in, Durston and Maltby (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England*, p 46. For an example of Edmund Calamy's sermons, *An indictment against England* (London, 1645).
93 ERO, T/A 418/127; ASS 35/86/1; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 137, 142–4.
94 Ibid., p 137; ERO, T/A 418/127/12-3, 33 and 82; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 224, 229–30.
95 ERO, T/A 418/127/10; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 143; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials,* p 223; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p xxviii.
96 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 37; Frances Timbers, 'Witches sect', p 25; ERO, D/P 343/1/1-12.
97 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 37, 60; Timbers, 'Witches sect', pp 25–7; Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, p 73, disagrees with Timbers, stating that it is unlikely that Hopkins was related to Thomas Witham, although he seems uncertain commenting, 'but nevertheless the dates fit in'.

2 Puritanism

A Comparison of Stearne's Religious Beliefs to the Orthodoxy of the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of faith*

A confirmation recounted Stearne's experiences of the East Anglian witchcraft trials that had taken place over the previous three years. By the end of the witch-hunt, in 1647, he and his colleague Matthew Hopkins had been accused of using torture to extract confessions and condemn innocent people to death, and of being extortionists whose motivation for witch-finding was financial gain. Stearne addressed these accusations through print, retorting that he had followed proper judicial procedure, that his theological basis for witch-hunting was sound, and that he had been driven not by the prospect of profit but by concern 'for the good of the commonwealth'.[1] In the process of articulating these arguments, he also indicated some aspects of his theological outlook.

Apart from sparse data in legal records, *A confirmation* is our only source of information on Stearne and his views on witchcraft and religion. Scholars, however, have not previously examined Stearne's religious beliefs, preferring to label him as a 'Puritan' without considering the appropriateness of this descriptor. Malcolm Gaskill, Ivan Bunn, and Richard Geis have described Stearne as a 'staunch'[2] and 'rigid Puritan',[3] while Wallace Notestein has asserted that he 'was clearly a Puritan' because of his 'incessant use of scripture and the stamp of his Calvinist theology'.[4] Robin Briggs has been more cautious, remarking that the puritanism of both Stearne and Hopkins 'has often been exaggerated', without expanding upon his observation.[5] Historiography of the East Anglian witchcraft trials has generally neglected Stearne in favour of Hopkins.[6] Few scholars have investigated Stearne's role in the witch-hunt or studied his pamphlet. Consequently, little research has been published on the nature of Stearne's religious beliefs due to a historiographical focus on Hopkins, and a paucity of evidence outside of *A confirmation*. Stearne's publication therefore represents an historical problem: it is a text without much context, for little is known about the pamphlet's production or its author's background or his convictions, particularly regarding religion. In an attempt to address the issue, this chapter will closely examine Stearne's work and will situate his religious ideas alongside those of contemporaries in order to theologically triangulate Stearne within seventeenth-century intellectual cultures.

Building upon the works of Briggs, Gaskill, and Frances Timbers, who have revised Stearne's role in the witch-hunt and raised questions about the identification of his puritanism, this chapter will examine Stearne's *Confirmation* to compare his religious views to the orthodoxy articulated by the Westminster Assembly (1643–52) and its *Confession of faith* (1647). The Westminster Confession was the defining text of mainstream puritanism in the period after the First Civil War, and, during the Presbyterian ascendency of the late 1640s, it was operating as the barometer of orthodoxy.[7] Stearne's theological outlook was largely congruent with that of the *Confession of faith* but his views on salvation, eschatology, and witchcraft theory represented a significant deviation from its claims. His theories regarding the salvation of witches – and Matthew Hopkins's assured salvation – were unusual. The millennial theory he adopted had a relatively short history in seventeenth-century England, having arrived from Europe in the 1620s before flourishing in the 1640s.[8] Stearne's witchcraft theory was based on Scripture, historical precedents from popular tradition and the writings of puritan demonologists published since the late sixteenth century. While some of his theories were analogous with those of the Westminster Assembly, others indicate his religious radicalism.[9] *A confirmation* demonstrates Stearne's proximity to and distance from the theology advanced by the Westminster *Confession of faith*. It complicates attempts to represent Stearne as a cipher for a larger puritan movement, whether in East Anglia or nationwide.[10] Instead, Stearne's form of puritanism should be viewed in its local context and should be considered as representative of a small group of individuals centred in Essex and Suffolk who were united by their determination to reform their communities. This study of Stearne's ideologies illustrates that puritanism in mid-seventeenth-century England could be varied, contested, and fluid before it became a fixed entity associated with a published and politically approved confession of faith.[11]

Witch-Hunting and Puritanism

From late March 1644, when rumours of witchcraft began to circulate around East Anglia, Stearne played a key role in the region's notorious witch-hunt.[12] With his colleague, Matthew Hopkins, Stearne led the initial investigations in Manningtree, Essex, by obtaining a warrant for witch-hunting from local magistrates.[13] The witch-finders provided the impetus for villagers to identify potential witches using the judicial system and remove these subversive individuals from their communities. Their campaign was zealously supported by villages within Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire. In Essex, the magistrates Sir Harbottle Grimston and Sir Thomas Bowes, clergymen and the high-ranking Parliamentarian, Robert Rich all assisted the witch-finders in condemning witches.[14] But the witch-hunt was also controversial, and by 1648 the East Anglian trials had been suppressed.

During the First Civil War, the populations of these counties were largely puritan and supportive of Parliament. Essex was described by John Hampden in 1643 as 'the place of most life of religion in the land', and, by a Royalist, as 'the first born of Parliament'.[15] Although East Anglian communities experienced little direct warfare in the First Civil War, the conflict did affect them indirectly – socially, economically, politically, and ideologically.[16] Throughout England the Civil War was conceptualised in religious terms, as a preternatural battle waged between the forces of God and Satan.[17] This interpretation was common among mid-seventeenth-century puritans, and it was adopted extensively in East Anglia. It gave impetus to apocalyptic speculation, which reflected an acute fear of the anti-Christ and inspired puritans to push for more ecclesiastical, political, and moral reform, both locally and nationally.[18] The intellectual culture fostered by civil war provided the ideological fuel for witch-hunting in East Anglia, as anxiety grew about the impact of the diabolic. The conflict further enabled the programme of witch-finding through its destabilising effect on the assize courts and Church government: because of fear of approaching Royalist forces the London-based Assize judges did not tour the Home Circuit in 1645 and were replaced by local officials with puritan and Parliamentarian leanings, who were sympathetic to the witch-finders' mission.[19]

Taking advantage of widespread suspicions of witchcraft in East Anglia, Stearne and Hopkins managed to push their witch-hunting agenda beyond the peripheral village of Manningtree.[20] They were facilitated by a small, mainly Presbyterian, network of supporters, including Grimston, Bowes, and Robert Rich, who, as the 'the temporal head of the Puritans' provided substantial patronage to godly clergy.[21] The search for witches was sustained by Stearne and Hopkins as they liaised with like-minded locals determined to protect their communities' religious beliefs by enforcing moral boundaries and rooting out sin.[22] Some East Anglian puritans understood their drive for social purity as part of the war against Royalist forces, which were in league with Satan.[23] As Gaskill remarked, 'the sense that victory in the field depended on godliness at home made hunting them [witches] feel like part of the war effort'.[24] Grimston (junior) also knew it would be difficult to purge the country of its enemies, but he assured Parliament in a speech against Archbishop Laud that godly order could be achieved throughout England if the 'filth that hath infected the State and Government of the Church and Common-wealth' was removed.[25] The Parliamentarian gentleman George Smith concurred in 1645, hoping that Parliament would 'purge out the dregs of antichristian doctrines' and oust 'the devil and his antichristian brood', who were 'stirring up agents of all sorts…to breed dissension and to tyrannize'. In East Anglia, puritan men like the Grimstons, Bowes, and Stearne considered witch-hunting to be a method of removing this 'antichristian brood' and a means to expedite the development of a reformed community.[26] Stearne pursued these godly aspirations, crafting his innovative and idiosyncratic puritanism from his readings in the Bible and print culture.

Stearne's Biblicism

Stearne published *A confirmation* to argue that his witchcraft theory and witch-finding had biblical support. Like many of his Protestant contemporaries, Stearne was a Biblicist.[27] The Bible provided its readers with a plethora of historical and theological precedents that they could debate and relate to their lived experience, particularly in the political sphere. For the godly, the Bible functioned as 'the sole and complete repository of doctrinal and moral truths'. Through meticulous study puritans internalised immense quantities of Scripture: some of their number had a 'legendary' ability to 'refer to, and quote at length, obscure Old and New Testament texts in defence of their views and actions'.[28] Consequently, Stearne's extensive display of biblical citations led Wallace Notestein to identify him as a staunch puritan.[29] But Notestein's claim needs to be qualified, for Stearne's interpretation and deployment of some scriptural passages differed from the theological position of the Westminster Assembly, the official arbiter of orthodoxy in the late 1640s. Since the Bible was his warrant and authority, his text is littered with scriptural references pertaining to witches. Comparatively, in the minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly witchcraft is hardly mentioned.[30] Stearne's work reflected a much less hesitant agenda than that of the Westminster Assembly: on the first page of *A confirmation* alone, Stearne referred to nine biblical passages to argue that witches did exist and that they ought to be punished.[31] His commitment to the pursuit and prosecution of witches distinguished his brand of puritanism from that of the Assembly yet both Stearne and the Assembly's Divines have been identified as 'Puritan'. Therefore, to further locate Stearne within seventeenth-century religious cultures, his theological arguments and biblical exegesis should be compared to other contemporary printed works by English Protestant theologians.

Stearne turned to his copy of the King James Bible to corroborate the demonological theories that he had largely lifted from Richard Bernard's *Guide to grand jurymen* (1627), and discovered that Scripture provided plenty of evidence to support his ideas.[32] He used a range of proof texts to demonstrate the existence of witches and to list God's laws against them, including Deuteronomy 13.9 and 18.10–12; 2 Chronicles 33.6; and Exodus 22.18, which famously stipulated that 'thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'.[33] Stearne used Deuteronomy 18. 10–2 to demonstrate how God was firmly set against witches: 'There shall not be found among you... an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits'.[34] This was a frequently referenced passage: John Bastwick, Immanuel Bourne, John Downame, and Thomas Edwards also cited this verse in their respective publications to argue that witches should be executed.[35] Stearne scoured his Bible to identify archetypes for the activity of witches, including Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus 7.8–12, Simon Magus in Acts 8, Elymas in Acts 13.5–12 and the demoniac in Acts 16.16–9.[36] But puritan culture

did not support a single, stable reading of these archetypes. Some authors, including Stearne, Thomas Edwards, and Richard Allen, regarded Simon Magus as a witch and 'father of all heretics'.[37] Other theologians, including Thomas Cobbet, Walter Bridges, John Eachard, John Gaule, and the Westminster divines, identified Simon Magus as an example of how individuals could receive the sacrament of baptism without benefitting from the grace with which it was associated.[38] Scripture provided a wealth of historical precedents that could be appropriated for multiple arguments.

Stearne advanced upon the commonly received conclusions of puritan witch-theory when he deployed Scripture to prove the existence of familiar spirits (which were primarily represented as animal-like demons) by citing 2 Chronicles 33 and Deuteronomy 18.[39] He also supported his theory of familiars by referring to the serpent in Genesis 3, and Mark 5 and Luke 8, where a demon named Legion possessed a herd of swine.[40] For Stearne, this was yet another diabolic mimicry of God's powers: as 'the Lord spake by a beast unto a Witch, Numb. 22. 28 so Satan speaketh to Witches'.[41] He confidently informed his readers 'that the Devill may enter into a dumb creature, & come out of the same, utter a voice intelligible, & offer conference (if any will hearken) to deceive as our Witches now a dayes confesse'.[42] This was not an entirely idiosyncratic position as Sir Thomas Browne, the celebrated physician, was also convinced of the existence of familiars. In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) Browne theorised that the serpent from the Garden of Eden and witches' familiars demonstrated that animals could be taught how to speak to humans.[43] John Gaule, the minister of Great Staughton in Huntingdonshire, who was vehemently opposed to Hopkins, questioned the witch-finders' methods of discovering witches but did not reject the concept of witches' familiars.[44] Later in the 1600s, Richard Baxter was more sceptical of these claims, declaring that many reports of possessed animals were probably 'delusions', though he conceded that familiar spirits could exist because 'The frequent Apparitions of Satan in several shapes, drawing men, or frighting them into sin, is a discovery undeniable'.[45] To Stearne, it was also irrefragable that Satan was devious, as illustrated by the account of the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28.13–7, which detailed how a diviner was approached by Saul and was asked to conjure up a spirit. This was perhaps the most famous biblical example of a witch using familiar spirits in seventeenth-century England mentioned by Stearne.[46] The passage taught him that familiars or the Devil could take human form and 'counterfeit the habit and words of an holy man'.[47] Similarly, for puritan biblical commentators like Joseph Caryl and Arthur Jackson, the passage illustrated how Satan could easily trick humans by manifesting as an 'Angel of light', for, they argued, while the spirit raised by the witch of Endor resembled the prophet Samuel, it was actually the Devil in disguise.[48] Caryl and Jackson's interpretation of 1 Samuel was akin to Stearne's but their parabolic application of this verse was political and was often used to describe Charles I or one of the emergent radical religious groups, rather than witches.[49]

The theological and demonological arguments articulated by Stearne were a peculiar mixture of his readings of Scripture, popular seventeenth-century puritanism, and his experience of witch-hunting. But Stearne's beliefs were not shared by all puritans. As noted earlier, recent research by Nathan Johnstone, Ian Bostridge, and Peter Elmer has demonstrated that during the 1630s and 1640s English politics became saturated with the language of demonology, as Royalists and Parliamentarians sought to demonise each other to rally support. As Satan and witches became increasingly politicised rhetorical devices, a desire to eradicate widespread, subversive demonic influences also surged.[50] Influenced by this intellectual current, Stearne and Hopkins identified and pursued what they believed to be witches, in order to address local concerns. This created opposition: the witch-hunt started losing support from 1645, and some of its participants in Essex, including Stearne, were later sued.[51] For some puritans, such as Gaule and Baxter, the type of witch-theory disseminated by Stearne was suspect, but had enough biblical and experiential evidence that it could not be rejected outright. Others, like the Earl of Warwick's steward, Arthur Wilson, thought that the witches at the Essex trials in 1645 were simply deluded.[52] Despite sharing a bibliocentric epistemology, East Anglian puritans were not in agreement over the nature of witchcraft or the legitimacy of witch-hunting. Stearne's publication demonstrates that his witch-theory was not representative of the puritanism disseminated by Westminster, but had roots in popular lay Protestantism (Figure 2.1).

Stearne's Soteriological Beliefs

In *A confirmation* Stearne shuttles between religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The sheer range of theories presented in his text highlight the variety of ideas circulating within the numerous discourses in the puritan heartland of East Anglia – not all of which followed the new orthodoxy being promoted by the Westminster Assembly. *A confirmation* demonstrated Stearne's acceptance of God's providence, as he assured his readers that 'No man shall neede to feare Witches or Devills; knowing ever this, that they cannot doe the very least harme unto any of the least creatures of God without leave from him'.[53] This was a common Reformed belief,[54] as was the 'internalizing of the demonic' which located the battle with Satan's temptations in 'the human heart and mind'.[55] Underpinning Stearne's theodicy were the doctrines of predestination, original sin, total human depravity, and God's grace, all of which can be identified in *A confirmation*. The Calvinist thinkers who dominated English puritan culture emphasised God's omnipotence and holiness, and the inability of sinners to obtain salvation through works. Salvation was only dispensed to the elect through the grace of God. Adherents of Calvinism considered themselves to be innately and perpetually sinful beings who could never please God through their actions. Moreover, they were constantly engaged in a battle
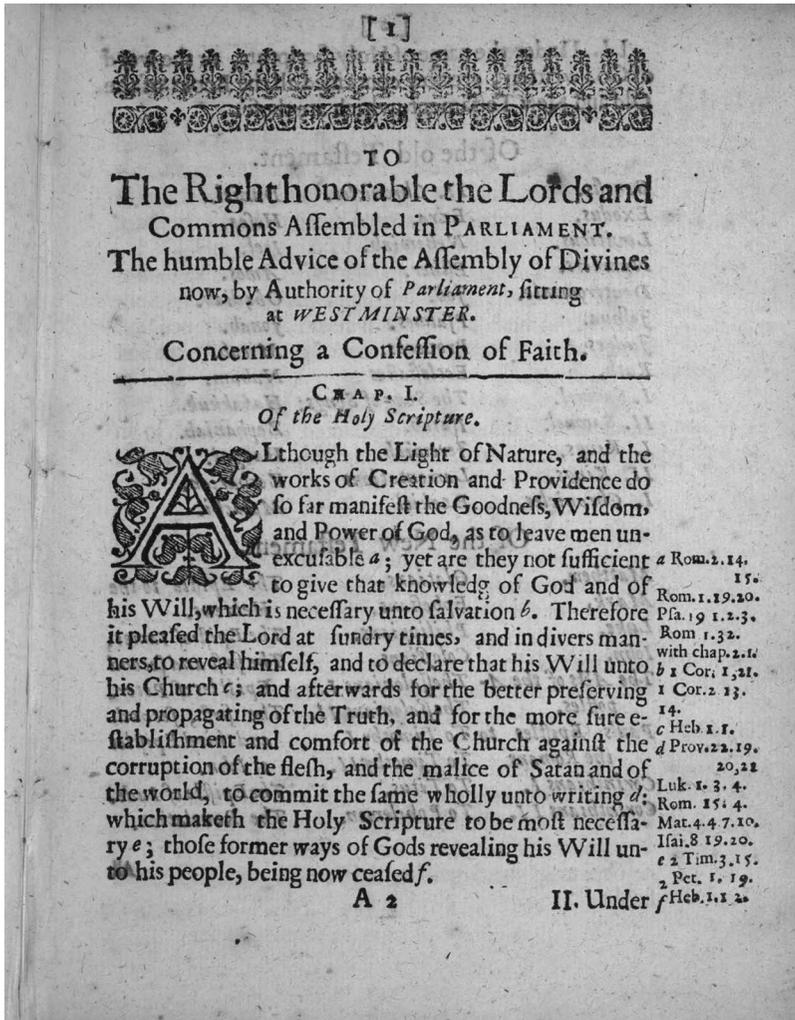
Figure 2.1 Westminster confession of faith ([Edinburgh] 1647), Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, call number: W1430 (CC BY-SA 4.0).

against Satan, both mentally and physically.[56] Stearne set out his concept of original sin on the first page of his *Confirmation*:

> Man being borne in sinne, hath thereby since the Fall of our first parents lost the Image of God in which he was created, through the temptation of Satan, and is naturally, wholy polluted with sinne and corruption, whereby he is become of very neere kin unto the Devill… being his child, he will doe the lusts of his Father.[57]

Stearne clearly demonstrated his understanding of total depravity, which was consistent with the position outlined in the Westminster Confession:

> Our first Parents being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit…By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin…From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, dis-abled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. This corruption of nature during this life doth remain in those that are regenerated.[58]

Stearne maintained an orthodox stance by arguing that the 'unregenerate', 'naturall man' cared not for his 'spiritual condition', but sought 'to obtaine what he liketh for the body and natural estate in this world'. Galatians 5 had instructed Stearne that the godly would have to face a constant struggle between their spirit and their flesh, between following God's teachings and resisting the Devil's temptations. To Stearne, an unregenerate man pursued 'His desired ends, by what meanes soever he can attaine them; which maketh him seeke meanes of the Devill'.[59] What concerned Stearne was that 'Witchcraft being as Saint Paul saith, Amongst the fruits of the flesh, Gal.5.20 one may fall into this sinne, as well as into any other'.[60]

Stearne's classification of witchcraft as a temptation that could be experienced by all was not atypical in puritan cultures. Nathan Johnstone and Elizabeth Reis have argued that seventeenth-century puritans made little distinction between the perpetration of sins and of witchcraft – 'simply to sin implied the forging of an implicit covenant with Satan, a spiritual renunciation of God'.[61] Because witchcraft was rendered a serious sin akin to murder, Stearne maintained that some witches could still be saved through God's grace. He argued that

> though they be left of God for a time, yet not all so left, nor so dreadfully catched by Satan, but that they may, through the mercy of God, be his servants, and converted, as none can deny but Manasseh was.[62]

Stearne was invoking 2 Kings 21 which told the story of Manasseh, a king of Judah who established polytheism within his kingdom, led God's people astray and 'gave himself to witchcraft'. Despite his lapse in faith, 2 Chronicles 33 narrated how Manasseh eventually returned to God to receive his grace. This could explain why Stearne spent time proselyting some suspected witches: he hoped to save their souls by convincing them of their sinful nature and their need to accept God.[63] Stearne believed that this was achievable,

> if honest godly people discourse with them [witches], laying the hainousnesse of their sins to them, and in what condition they are in without

Repentance, and telling them the subtilties of the Devil, and the mercies
of God, these ways will bring them to Confession without extremity, it
will make them break into Confession hoping for mercy.[64]

This was the first step to salvation for witches who had sinned.[65]

Stearne's soteriological hypothesis that witches' souls could be saved was
unconventional, but was not isolated: it was anticipated by Richard Ber-
nard, Nehemiah Wallington, the Arminian theologian George Langford,
and John Gaule, who considered that God could spare witches as he had
spared Manasseh.[66] Stearne's statements also resembled the Westminster
Confession's ninth chapter, which declared: 'God doth continue to forgive
the sins of those that are justified and, although they can never fall from the
state of Justification; yet they may by their sins, fall under Gods fatherly dis-
pleasure'. 'The light of his countenance' could not be 'restored unto them,
untill they humble themselves, confesse their sins, beg pardon, and renew
their faith and repentance'. Stearne closely followed this theory, believing
that some of the people he interrogated as witches had strayed in their faith
and were guilty of sin – albeit the heinous sin of witchcraft. In practice, his
role was to loosen Satan's hold on suspects, probe them to reveal their sins
and then convince them to repent and accept God's grace.[67] For Stearne,
the prospect of helping to restore a lost soul to grace was a worthy cause, as
he declared 'I had rather be an instrument (if any such thing ought to be) to
save one who should confesse and humble himself, as Mannesseh did, then
any of those who, being found with the marks upon them, shall deny'.[68]

Stearne's argument about the possible salvation of witches was not part
of orthodox Protestantism and it sat uneasily with the puritan concept of
predestination. His grasp of Calvinist soteriology appears further chal-
lenged when discussing Hopkins's death (d.1647) in the latter pages of *A
confirmation*. Stearne was certain that 'he died peaceably at Manningtree,
after a long sicknesse of a Consumption',[69] and explained that Hopkins
'was the son of a godly Minister [Rev. James Hopkins], and therefore with-
out doubt within the Covenant'.[70] If a literal reading of his latter comment
is deployed, then Stearne was suggesting that Matthew Hopkins's salva-
tion was inheritable and assured because of his father's godliness, rather
than his own faith. It is, however, likely that Stearne's phraseology was
merely polemical. 'The Covenant' Stearne is referring to is the covenant of
grace which promised God's elect salvation – a doctrine that was systemat-
ically explained in the Westminster *Confession of faith* in chapters seven to
eighteen. Rather than emphasising an individual's need to provide evidence
of their salvation through deep, sustained introspection, Stearne assumed
that Hopkins's salvation was guaranteed because of his father, who, as a
godly man, inevitably tried to raise his son to be 'within the Covenant'.[71]
Rev. Hopkins would have done this by catechising Matthew throughout his
childhood and through infant baptism. The latter was 'a sign and seal of
God's favour' that functioned socially as 'a public attestation of covenant

membership', but it did not remove sin, only condemnation of it.[72] Regardless of Rev. Hopkins's efforts and Stearne's observations of Matthew's godliness, in Calvinist theology, only God truly knew who was elect and part of his invisible church – believers had to search for and find evidence of their election.[73] Stearne's comments are remarkable considering that he and Hopkins were apart for the majority of the witch-hunt.[74] Stearne's soteriological beliefs were idiosyncratic. His comments on Hopkins's afterlife challenged the assumptions of 'orthodox' puritanism, as absolute assurance of salvation was reserved for the exceptionally devout.[75] Stearne's rendering of covenant theology contested chapters within the Westminster *Confession of faith.*

Though Stearne displays some basic elements of puritanism, more complex theology seems, at times, beyond him. In the geographical epicentre of mid-seventeenth-century English puritanism, Stearne demonstrates how heterogeneous and advanced 'Puritan' religious beliefs could be among the laity – particularly in such a rapidly diversifying decade, which birthed numerous radical religious groups. While Stearne's hold on Calvinist theology may be questionable, it must be borne in mind that he was not a theologian, but 'a plaine countryman' turned witch-hunter.[76] His task was not to explore the intricacies of theology but to rid East Anglia of witches. Stearne knew clandestine cabals of devil-worshipping witches were legion and his goal, working with Matthew Hopkins, was to root them out.[77]

Late in 1644, a group of witches were found to be practicing their religion in the puritan heartland of Essex. Matthew Hopkins remembered that

> he had some seven or eight of that horrible sect of Witches living in the Towne where he lived…who every six weeks in the night (being always on the Friday night) had their meeting close by his house and had their severall solemne sacrifices there offered to the Devill.[78]

Stearne also detailed the discovery of this group of witches in Essex. Rebecca West, one of their number, confessed that her mother Anne took her to meet a group of women. During the course of these meetings, Rebecca encountered and had sexual contact with the Devil and familiars. Another member of the group, Anne Leach, confessed under interrogation that some attendees read from a book 'wherein shee thinks there was no goodnesse'.[79] After being coerced into becoming an informer for the Crown by her interrogators and promised freedom, Rebecca continued to elaborate her account, telling the witch-finders that her mother prayed constantly to the Devil.[80] The witch-finders clearly perceived this meeting to be evidence of a witches' sabbat – an exceptionally abhorrent sin for Stearne, who was Sabbatarian.[81] Timbers argued that it was an organised Anglican prayer meeting centred on the Book of Common Prayer that was being described in the language of demonology. While possible, the women's religious outlook is uncertain for puritans and Laudians continued to use the prayer-book into

the 1650s.[82] Nonetheless, a 'sect' of women privately gathering to explore their spirituality outside of male supervision would have been unnerving for local church authorities that were striving for conformity.[83] Indeed Stearne categorically warned his audience to 'take notice, where such meetings be, there are just grounds of suspicion', reasoning that witches 'cannot always do their mischiefs according to their desires, without their meetings, and the help one of another'.[84] The witch-finders investigated further and elicited condemning oral testimonies from Rebecca West, Anne West, and Anne Leach.[85] In his recollection of these confessions, Stearne also signified elements of his puritanism.

Timbers concluded that the women had continued to follow Anglicanism instead of conforming to puritan ideals or exploring new theological ideas forwarded by radical religious groups.[86] According to Timbers, the women met in secrecy to pray and read from the Book of Common Prayer (in which Leach thought 'there was no goodnesse'). But the Book of Common Prayer had been suppressed by Parliament in 1645 as being excessively 'popish'. Despite its prohibition, though, adherents continued to use it throughout the 1640s, resulting in riots in London in June 1649.[87] Proscription of the prayer-book failed to eliminate devotion to it, even in puritan Essex. Stearne's comments help substantiate Timbers's claims, for he followed the conventional trajectory of puritan thought by condemning the prayer-book. Stearne regarded it as a demonic similitude of godly worship, remarking that 'the devil imitates God in all things as he can, much after the book of Common-prayer'.[88] In his account of these events, Stearne demonstrated his agreement with the Westminster Assembly's *Confession* by condemning the Book of Common Prayer as diabolic. Likewise, his views on the covenant of grace and original sin were consonant with the Westminster Assembly's. However, the peculiar soteriological theories he articulated about Hopkins and witches represent a significant deviation from the Assembly's standard.

Stearne's Eschatological Beliefs

By late 1647 Stearne had also adopted radical millennialist theories. These ideas rapidly gained intellectual currency during the Civil War as individuals pursued concepts that enabled them to make sense of current events.[89] Theologically, the conflict was interpreted as a battle between God and Satan, and as a result eschatological speculation increased throughout England.[90] Stearne was clearly influenced by this ideological current as he included references to the eschaton in the final pages of *A confirmation*. In an attempt to prove 'that there was, is, and shall be Witches till Christs conquest', he cited Micah 5, Revelations 20.1–3 and 21.8.[91] These passages must have had great resonance with Stearne for they augured the condition of England during the 1640s. Micah 5 foretold of a war between God's people and their enemies, and in verses 12–13 stated that God would 'cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.

Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee'. This was complemented by Revelations 21.8, which stated that, 'sorcerers and idolaters…shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire'.[92] By the time Stearne completed his *Confirmation*, the prophecies he had located in Micah and Revelation were being fulfilled on English soil: in 1644 William Dowsing led, what he believed to be, a scripturally sanctioned campaign of iconoclasm in East Anglia, the First Civil War had ended in 1646, and by 1648 the witch-hunt had run its course.[93] This scriptural paradigm that had been used to attack demonic forces in England (iconoclasm, war, and the purging of sinners and witchcraft) was destined to hasten Christ's Second Coming.[94] But because witchcraft was still present in Stearne's world, he believed that Christ's victory had not yet been realised: 'everyone must conclude with me, that (as yet) of Witchcraft there is no end'. His reasoning for this lay in Revelations 20.1–3:

> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Revelations 20 described a millennium in which the Devil would be imprisoned and would herald Jesus's return. Stearne commented that

> as yet [it] cannot be: for without doubt the devil is busie in deceving of Nations, and that not onely such as know Christ, but others also; which could not be, if he were bound; nor the Jews or other Nations.

Stearne reckoned that the millennium had not ended because a mass conversion of Jews to Christianity had yet to transpire, and demonic forces were still very active on Earth. Unfortunately, due to Stearne's reticence on millennial theories, it is unclear whether he held pre- or post-millennial beliefs – that is, whether he believed that Christ would return before or after the millennium.[95] His expectation of the millennium is only revealed in one sentence: 'it is undeniably true, that there was, is, and shall be Witches, till Christs conquest there spoken of, agreeable with that in Revel. 20'.[96]

When Stearne was writing his text late in 1647, millennialism was a radical idea in England that was not accepted by the Westminster Assembly.[97] Indeed one member of the Assembly, Robert Baillie, was anxious about the growing number of 'Millenaries' in his age, describing their eschatological beliefs as 'ane errour so famous in antiquities, and so troublesome among us'.[98] Although millennial beliefs had been present in the medieval period, they were violently suppressed by church authorities and remained

so into the early sixteenth century, particularly after the militant uprising in Münster.[99] From the mid-1500s, though, some Protestant authors began to deviate from orthodox Calvinism and espoused millennial ideas in their writings, such as John Foxe, Thomas Brightman, and William Perkins.[100] But many sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century theologians located the beginning of the millennium in the past and therefore expected Jesus to return within the next 1,000 years, often during the latter half of seventeenth century.[101] Others predicted the Second Advent to be imminent, such as the polymath Samuel Hartlib and the radical Suffolk preacher William Sedgwick, who declared in April 1647 that 'the day of Doome is even now at hand, and that the second coming of Christ is each day and houre to be expected'.[102] The form of millennialism posited by Joseph Mede and Johann Alsted, and adopted by Stearne – the anticipation of a future millennium – was atypical, but was gaining traction in the early 1640s due to its dissemination in the newly uncensored print culture.[103]

Stearne's eschatological theories, like those of many others, were influenced by Johann Heinrich Alsted, a German Calvinist, and Joseph Mede, an Essex-born Professor of Greek at Cambridge, whose publications became seminal seventeenth-century millennialist texts. Alsted published his *Diatribe: de mille annis apocalypticis* (Frankfurt am Main) in 1627 and in the same year Mede's *Clavis apocalyptica* (Cambridge) reached the printing press. The authors' treatises were reprinted numerous times and underwent multiple editions, but their impact on English culture peaked in 1643 when their texts were translated into English.[104] Although Stearne failed to indicate the source of his eschatology, his interpretation of Revelation 20 was predicated upon the writings of Alsted and Mede, both of whom helped renew English interest in millennial theories.[105] Stearne's exegesis of the eschaton did not portray it as a cataclysmic, apocalyptic event, but verged on being perfunctory. During his discourse on the future millennium he could only inform his readers that 'Christs conquest…as yet cannot be', because '(as yet) of witchcraft there is no end'.[106] His millennial theories helped him identify witchcraft as a practice that had to be obliterated. By actively pursuing witches and attempting to 'cut off witchcraft', Stearne was cleansing East Anglian communities of sin in preparation for Christ's Second Coming.

Fluid Puritanism

John Stearne was an East Anglian puritan whose ideas did not wholly conform to the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of faith*. While some of his theories were analogous with those of the Westminster Assembly, others indicate his religious radicalism. His millennialism, soteriology, and witch-theory were built upon and developed from his readings of Scripture, contemporary printed literature, historical precedents, and his own lived experience. His witchcraft beliefs were largely congruent with the treatises

of puritan demonologists who, like Stearne, emphasised the demonic pact, the need to execute obstinate witches and the substantial role of the Devil, while also stressing God's providence and omnipotence.[107] There was little deviance among this body of literature, as John Webster observed in 1677 how English demonologists had 'for the most but borrowed from one another or have transcribed what others had written before them'.[108] Stearne continued this tradition, relying heavily on his puritan predecessors, notably Richard Bernard.[109] Stearne also demonstrated traits common among mid-seventeenth century puritans through his espousal of the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, his Biblicism, Sabbatariansim and religiosity, and his contempt for the Book of Common Prayer. However, Stearne's concepts of salvation regarding witches and Matthew Hopkins were atypical. His eschatological views, likewise, were not part of the orthodox puritanism supported by the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of faith*, and were quite advanced for a lay puritan to hold so soon after being disseminated in print in 1643. Stearne had a puritan ethos and maintained ideas that were part of mainstream puritan cultures, but some of his theories deviated from the orthodoxy articulated by the Westminster *Confession of faith*. This case study of Stearne helps to demonstrate how fluid seventeenth-century 'puritanism' could be before it became a fixed entity associated with a published and politically approved confession of faith. This complicates attempts to make Stearne a cipher for a larger puritan movement in East Anglia and, consequently, studies on the witchcraft trials should be more nuanced when examining Stearne or the driving forces behind the trials. *A confirmation* provides evidence of the plethora of ideas being circulated in the late 1640s, as well as the idiosyncratic ideologies underpinning the relationship between puritanism and witch-hunting in seventeenth-century East Anglia. Many of these ideas were being disseminated through England's rapidly expanding print culture.

Notes

1 Stearne, p 42.
2 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 38.
3 Bunn and Geis, *A trial of witches*, p 142.
4 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 166.
5 Briggs, *Witches & neighbours*, p 53; for Hopkins's religious belief, see Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 140, 144, 186.
6 Timbers, 'Witches sect', pp 27–8; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 41; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331.
7 Coffey, 'The toleration controversy', p 47; Chad Van Dixhoorn (ed.), *The minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652* (5 vols, Oxford, 2012), i, p xiv.
8 Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism in the trans-Atlantic world, 1500–2000* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp 37–50.
9 The printed literature on demonology was authored by puritan clergymen well versed in English and European texts, including Richard Bernard, William Perkins, George Gifford and Richard Baxter. Stearne undoubtedly

absorbed and engaged with their ideas prior to disseminating his own theories in print; see Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 569–80; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 193–6, 239–41; Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 533–4.

10 Davies, *Four centuries of witchcraft belief*, attributes English witch-hunting to zealous puritanism.

11 Dixhoorn, *Westminster Assembly*, i, pp x, xvi, 28–9; John Coffey and Paul Lim (eds), 'Introduction' in, *The Cambridge companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), pp 1–11; Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and predestination: grace in English Protestant theology* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp vii–viii.

12 Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia', pp 237–8; ERO, T/A 418/127; ERO, ASS 35/86/1; ASS 35/83/1.

13 Stearne, pp 14–5.

14 Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 137, 140–4, 190; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 119–24.

15 William Hunt, *The Puritan moment: the coming of revolution in an English county* (Massachusetts, 1983), p x.

16 Malcolm Gaskill, 'Fear made flesh'; Morrill (ed.), *The impact*.

17 Andrew Bradstock, *Radical religion in Cromwell's England: a concise history from the English Civil War to the end of the Commonwealth* (London, 2011), pp 118–9; Fredric Baumgartner, *Longing for the end: a history of millennialism in western civilisation* (London, 1999), pp 103–8; Edwin Tay, 'Puritan demonology in the culture of "the Godly"', *Church & Society in Asia Today*, xv, no. 3 (Dec., 2012), pp 145–50. Glen Burgess, however, stresses that this has been exaggerated and that it was conceptualised as a just-war rather than a religious one; see, Burgess, 'Was the English Civil War a war of religion?', pp 173–201.

18 Coffey, 'The toleration controversy', pp 46–7; Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in seventeenth century England* (revised edn., London, 1990); Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 62–5.

19 ERO, T/A 418/127/97; ESRO, HD 36/A/163; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 545; Durston, *Witchcraft & witch trials*, p 200; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 120–4; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 172.

20 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 141–4.

21 Kenneth Shipps, 'The "Political Puritan"', *Church History*, xlv, no. 2 (June, 1976), pp 196–205, quote on p 204.

22 Quaife, *Godly zeal*, p 182; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 164, 201.

23 Hill, *Antichrist*, p 157.

24 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 73.

25 Sir Harbottle Grimston (junior), *Mr. Grymstons speech in Parliament upon the accusation and impeachment of William Laud* (London, 1641).

26 Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 117; for Smith, see Hill, *Antichrist*, pp 87–8. For an interesting parallel, compare the backdrop to the East Anglian witch-hunt to a witchcraft case in seventeenth-century Rye, Sussex; see, Annabel Gregory, 'Witchcraft, politics and "good neighbourhood" in early seventeenth-century Rye', *Past & Present*, cxxxiii, no. 1 (1991), pp 31–66.

27 See, Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds), 'Introduction: the Puritan ethos, 1560–1700' in, *The culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp 16–7.

28 Ibid.; see, Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: a study in the sociology of deviance* (New York, 1966), p 49; Kevin Killeen, *The political Bible in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2017).

29 Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 166.

30   Dixhoorn, *Westminster Assembly*. The Assembly's members were far more interested in discussing Scripture and their Confession of Faith.

31   Stearne, sig. A2v; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 269–70.

32   Bernard, *Guide to grand-jury men* (London, 1627); for a brief description of Bernard see, Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 82, 100–2. All of the verses Stearne quoted are analogous to those found in the AKJV rather than the Geneva Bible, which was popular in seventeenth-century England.

33   Stearne, sig. A2, pp 4, 9. For a list and brief contextualisation of stock-verses used by sixteenth-century theologians see, Stuart Clark and P.T.J. Morgan, 'Religion and magic in Elizabethan Wales: Robert Holland's Dialogue on Witchcraft', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxvii, no. 1 (Jan., 1976), pp 33–5.

34   Stearne, p 48.

35   John Bastwick, *The utter routing of the whole army of all the Independents* (London, 1646), pp 573–4; Immanuel Bourne, *A light from Christ* (London, 1646), p 513; John Downame, *Annotations upon all the books of the Old and New Testaments* (London, 1645), pp 75–6; Thomas Edwards, *A treatise against toleration and pretend liberty of conscience* (London, 1647), pp 44–5, 48–9.

36   Stearne, sig. A3. For alternative uses of these passages in the 1640s see, Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 95,106.

37   Stearne, p 7; Thomas Edwards, *The third part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), p 260; quote from Richard Allen, *An antidote against heresy* (London, 1648), preface.

38   Thomas Cobbet, *A just vindication of the covenant* (London, 1648), pp 93, 227; John Eachard, *The axe, against sin and error* (London, 1646), p 35; Walter Bridges, *A catechisme for communicants*, (London, 1645), p 58; John Gaule, *Select cases of conscience* (London, 1646), pp 203–4; *The humble advice of the Assembly of Divines now by authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, concerning a confession of faith* (London, 1647), chap. 28. Hereafter referenced as *Confession of faith*.

39   For a discussion on the translation of 'familiar spirits' from Hebrew to English in the context of witchcraft see, P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Astrology, magic and witchcraft' in, Andrew Hatfield (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of English prose, 1500–1640* (Oxford, 2013), pp 377–8.

40   Stearne, sig. A3, p 3.

41   Ibid., p 52.

42   Ibid., p 6.

43   Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (London, 1646), p 107; see also Thomas Browne, *Religio medici* (London, 1642), pp 56–7; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 237; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 227–8.

44   Gaule, *Select cases*, pp 10, 62–7, 106–8; HA, AH16:dated 1687/29; see Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 135, 158–9.

45   Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest* (London, 1650), pp 237–8.

46   Maxwell-Stuart, 'Astrology, magic and witchcraft', pp 337–8; Stearne, sig. A3, pp 4, 40, 57.

47   Stearne, sig. A3.

48   Also see the 1599 Geneva Bible's annotations for Gen. 3, 1 Sam. 28, Mark 5; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in early modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp 73–82; Arthur Jackson, *Annotations upon the remaining historicall part of the Old Testament* (London, 1646), pp 326–7; Joseph Caryl, *An exposition with practical observations* (London, 1648), p 243.

49   Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 5–6. Compare to, Hill, *Antichrist*, pp 78, 85–95, 131–8.

50 Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*; Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its transformations, c.1650-c.1750* (Oxford, 1997).

51 Stearne, pp 58–9.

52 Arthur Wilson, 'Observations of God's providence in the tract of my life' in, Francis Peck (ed.), *Desiderata curiosa* (London, 1779), pp 475–7.

53 Stearne, p 3.

54 Edward Leigh, *A treatise of divinity* (London, 1646), pp 8–10; Gaule, *Select cases*, p 123; see Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 90–134, for a list of more sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theologians with this outlook; for a general overview see, Walsham, *Providence*.

55 Michelle Brock, 'Internalizing the demonic: Satan and the self in early modern Scottish piety', *Journal of British Studies*, liv (Jan., 2015), pp 23–43.

56 Durston and Eales, 'Introduction', pp 8–13; *Confession of faith*, chap. 9.

57 Stearne, p 1.

58 *Confession of faith*, chap. 6.

59 Stearne, pp 1–2. For contemporary references on demonic covenants see, Bourne, *A light from Christ*, p 513; Leigh, *A treatise of divinity*, pp 112–5; Edwards, *A treatise against toleration*, pp 48–9; Downame, *Annotations*, pp 75–6. Numerous trial pamphlets also provide examples: see, Anon., *The examination, confession, triall, and execution, of Joane Williford* (London, 1645); Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of thirty witches at Chensford* (London, 1645); H. F., *A true and exact relation*. On demonic pacts and covenanting theology see Elizabeth Reis, 'Witches, sinners and the underside of Covenant theology' in, Brian Levack (ed.), *New perspectives on witchcraft, magic and demonology: demonology, religion, and witchcraft*, i, pp 271–86.

60 Stearne, p 2.

61 Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 142–74; Reis, 'Witches, sinners', pp 271–3, 273, 283–4.

62 Stearne, p 56; on parallels with crime narratives see, Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 142–74.

63 See, *Confession of faith*, chaps 5, 10–1, 15, 18; Vernon, 'A ministry of the gospel: the Presbyterians during the English Revolution', p 116.

64 Stearne, p 14.

65 Seventeenth-century murder and witchcraft pamphlets narrated moralistic tales of penitent sinners who were sermonised by ministers while in prison, resulting in conversion experiences. This ensured their salvation before execution; see Bernard Capp, *England's culture wars: Puritan reformation and its enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2013), pp 74–5.

66 Bernard, *Guide*, pp 237–41; National Trust, Tatton Park (Cheshire), Nehemiah Wallington, *Great marcys continued* (London, 1645–58), p 181, Tatton Park MS 68.20 (Available at: http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~91~1~241032~116993:Of-the-witches-in-Essex) (Accessed: June, 2018); Gaule, *Select cases*, pp 197–203; George Langford, *Manassehs miraculous metamorphosis* (London, 1621); also see, BL, Royal MS, 17 C.XXIII, 'Touchstone of witches'. Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 72, 105–6, notes that Langford's view was consonant with the Arminian doctrine of universal salvation.

67 Rita Voltmer, 'The witch in the courtroom: torture and the representation of emotion' in, Laura Kounine and Michael Ostling (eds), *Emotions in history of witchcraft* (London, 2016), pp 97–116.

68 Stearne, p 48.

69 Ibid., p 61.

70 Ibid.
71 Wallace, *Puritans and predestination*, pp viii–ix; *Confession of faith*, chaps 7, 10.
72 Michael Allen, 'Confessions' in, Nimmo and Ferguson (eds), *Reformed theology*, p 42; Paul Nimmo, 'Sacraments' in, *idem*, pp 84–5; *Confession of faith*, chaps 27–8; Folger Shakespeare Library, 'Letters to and from the Lenthall and Warcupp families [manuscript]', X.d.375 (7).
73 *Confession of faith*, chaps 18, 28; Peter Optiz, 'Huldrych Zwingli' in, Nimmo and Ferguson (eds), *Reformed theology*, p 126.
74 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 80; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 494.
75 *Confession of faith*, chap. 8.
76 Stearne, sig. A3v.
77 Stearne, p 34.
78 Hopkins, *Discovery*.
79 Stearne, pp 38–9; H .F., *A true and exact relation*, pp 9–12; ERO, T/A 418/127/9 and 19; ERO, ASS 35/86/1/9 and 19.
80 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 57–8.
81 Stearne accused a neighbour of working on the Sabbath in 1651, resulting in a counter-accusation against him which took three years to resolve; see, Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 126; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6. Consequently, Stearne attended the Suffolk Quarter Sessions numerous times, see; ESRO, B 105/2/3, ff. 30v, 38v, 39, 45v, 89; ESRO, B105/2/4, f. 29.
82 Capp, *England's culture wars*, pp 119–20; Judith Maltby, 'Suffering and surviving: the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the formation of "Anglicanism", 1642–60' in, Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds.), *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp 162–5.
83 Hopkins, *Discovery*, p 2; Timbers, 'Witches sect', pp 29–32; Coffey, 'The toleration controversy', p 45.
84 Stearne, p 39.
85 Timbers, 'Witches' sect', pp 31–2; Stearne, p 38; ERO, T/A 418/127; ERO, ASS 35/86/1.
86 Timbers, 'Witches' sect', pp 29, 32.
87 Capp, *England's culture wars*, pp 119–20; Maltby, 'Suffering and surviving', pp 162–5.
88 Dan Beaver, 'Parish communities, civil war, and religious conflict in England' in, R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *A companion to the reformation world* (Oxford, 2004), pp 317–8; Maltby, 'The formation of "Anglicanism"', pp 160–74; Stearne, p 38.
89 Bradstock, *Radical religion*, pp xiv–xv.
90 Ibid., pp 118–9; Baumgartner, *Longing for the end*, pp 103–8; Tay, 'Puritan demonology', pp 145–50; Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 62–5.
91 Stearne, pp 4, 58, 60.
92 Ibid., pp 58, 60; see also, Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', p 494.
93 Bridges, 'William Dowsing', pp 125–59.
94 Gribben, *John Owen*, p 106; Howard Hotson, *Paradise postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the birth of Calvinist millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2000), p 14.
95 Stearne, p 60; Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism*, pp xiii–iv; Jeffrey K. Jue, 'Puritan millenarianism in Old and New England' in, Coffey and Lim (eds), *The Cambridge companion to Puritanism*, pp 259–63.
96 Stearne, p 60.
97 *Confession of faith*, chaps 32–3.
98 Robert Baillie, *The letters and journals of Robert Baillie, 1637–1662*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1841), p 313.

99 Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism*, pp 20–2, 28.
100 Ibid., pp 28–35; Robert Clouse, 'Johann Heinrich Alsted and English millennialism', *Harvard Theological Review*, lxii (1969), pp 193–6.
101 Hotson, *Paradise postponed*, pp 18, 20; Baumgartner, *Longing for the end*, pp 103–4; Richard Bauckham, *Tudor apocalypse: sixteenth century apocalypticism, millenarianism and the English Reformation* (Appleford, 1978), pp 208–9; Hill, *Antichrist*, pp 25–30.
102 Samuel Hartlib, *The Hartlib Papers*, papers 64/20/5A-6B, ed. by Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Michael Hannon (Sheffield, HRI Online Publications, 2013) (Available at: www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib); [William Sedgwick] *Doomes-day: or, the great day of the Lords judgement, proved by Scripture* (London, 1647), p 6. On attribution of this text to Sedgwick see, Eugene Weber, *Apocalypses: prophecies, cults & millennial beliefs through the ages* (Toronto, 1999), pp 42, 144.
103 Timothy Weber, 'Millennialism', in Jerry Walls (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of eschatology* (Oxford, 2008), p 375; also see, BL, Add. MS 4275, f. 173 (1647).
104 Hotson, *Paradise postponed*, pp 4, 9; Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism*, pp 42–4, 49–50; Bauckham, *Tudor apocalypse*, p 210.
105 Robert Clouse, 'Rebirth of millenarianism' in, Peter Toon (ed.) *Puritans, the millennium and the future of Israel: Puritan eschatology* (reprint, Cambridge, 2002), pp 48–53.
106 Stearne, p 60.
107 Stearne, p 3.
108 John Webster, *The displaying of supposed witchcraft* (London, 1677), preface.
109 George Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, 1929), p 273; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', pp 488–95; also compare Bernard to William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608).

3   Print Culture

The Literature of the Supernatural and the Reception of *A confirmation*

The mid-seventeenth-century crisis facilitated an unprecedented increase in the quantity of publications produced by English printing presses. The erosion of the Stationers' Company's ability to effectively censor the press led to a dramatic rise in the production of cheap print and the formation of a fiercely contested print culture. Print was used as a medium through which individuals and political factions could disseminate their views to a wide readership in order to shape public opinion and mobilise citizens.[1] John Stearne was part of this culture: he was influenced by it, and directly engaged in it, publishing *A confirmation* in 1648 when the production of print had peaked.[2] Between 1640 and 1649, approximately 22,600 texts were printed (averaging around six publications every day), but this figure could be dramatically enlarged if reprints, multiple editions, the volume of print runs, and illegal printing are considered. Most publications in the 1640s focussed on religious themes, news, and politics, but a smaller, overlapping category of pamphlets reported on strange and supernatural events.[3] This subgenre comprised of accounts of monstrous births, prodigies, 'wonders', and sightings of demons and angels, all of which were largely interpreted as signs of God's providence and displeasure.[4] Stearne's text, with other witchcraft pamphlets, was part of this supernatural genre, but he transcended its discourse through his detailed discussion of the crime of witchcraft. His publication was neither timely nor topical, as newsbooks were, but was a collation of information that he had been gathering for several years as he travelled across East Anglia. The detail and accuracy of his account, when compared to legal records, have led Gaskill to suggest that Stearne kept notes, perhaps in the form of a journal.[5] When composing *A confirmation*, Stearne shaped it into a polemic by recounting his experience as a witch-finder, by expressing religious arguments, and by bolstering these with oral and textual references.[6]

Print culture was influential for Stearne when conceptualising and rationalising the supernatural. This chapter will consider how print was disseminated during this period, particularly during the 1640s, and will focus its discussion on those pamphlets reporting supernatural occurrences. It will argue that pamphleteers developed and politicised this literature of the

supernatural in response to changes in popular and intellectual cultures during the civil wars. Through this discussion of cheap print, this chapter will contextualise supernatural phenomena that were seen or believed to have been seen by Stearne and his contemporaries in the East Anglian witch-hunt. Throughout, the chapter will proceed to use the term 'supernatural' not to describe phenomena that were beyond the realms of nature and thus miraculous but in a modern sense to define the 'occult' contents of pamphlets concerning prodigies, monstrous births, and witchcraft.[7] After outlining 'supernatural' print, the chapter will examine why Stearne's text had no immediate impact by comparing it to the content, construction, and dissemination of a variety of mid-seventeenth-century publications concerning the supernatural. Stearne failed to achieve a wide readership for his polemical pamphlet, which likely produced little in the way of monetary gain. He published *A confirmation* at an inopportune moment – after the witch-hunt and when King and Parliament were in discussions to end the Second Civil War – and did not disseminate his pamphlet through a bookseller (one is not mentioned on his title page). Stearne's polemical text was not formatted for a learned or popular audience and he consequently isolated his work from the, already saturated, mainstream of print culture. In the succeeding centuries Stearne and his text were forgotten, while Hopkins became immortalised as England's sole witch-finder.[8]

The Circulation of Print

An unprecedented amount of publications were produced in England during the 1640s. In that decade, 1640–50, more than 24,000 texts were printed – a third of which were published between 1642 and 1648. Forty percent of all known English publications, between 1473 and 1650, were printed during the 1640s.[9] In this decade, printed works concerning witchcraft grew in number, too, but they still remained a marginal genre that only amounted to less than 2% of all published material.[10] The sudden increase in publications in the 1640s was partially due to the collapse of licensing and censorship over the printing press and public demand for news relating to the Civil War, which facilitated the growth of the English newsbook from 1641 onwards.[11] The transmission of printed literature across England was extensive.[12] London was the epicentre of print, from which publications were transported to the provinces, Scotland, Wales, and overseas by booksellers, hawkers, chapmen and -women, carriers, personal correspondences, and the public postal service (which had been established in 1635). The south-east of England was particularly well supplied, but other areas were easily reached.[13] Some of the distribution routes of carriers are adumbrated in John Taylor's *Carriers Cosmographie* – published in London, in 1637, and updated in 1642 – which alphabetically lists when and where carriers could be located. Carriers departing from London could reach Essex villages within a day: Taylor records that carriers could be found in the

villages of Saffron-Walden on Tuesdays, Ingastestone on Wednesday, and in Braintree, Bocking, Dunmore, Malden, Stock, and Epping on Thursdays. Similarly, London carriers could reach villages in Suffolk within a few days and could be found in Hadleigh on Wednesdays and in Sudbury 'at the Saracens head in Gracious street on thursdayes'.[14] Taylor also noted that ships transported goods to London weekly from Colchester (see Chapter 1), Ipswich, and Kings Lynn, and that letters could be sent to any part of England, Scotland, or Ireland from the 'Generall Post-Master at the Stocks by the Exchange' in London.[15] Post could be delivered from London to Essex within a few days, and could reach Scotland in a week.[16] Trade routes ensured that the distribution of books and pamphlets was widespread, and that the means of sending and receiving print was readily available to the public. Stearne, therefore, would have had access to a significant amount of printed literature in East Anglia. However, this also meant that his text faced substantial competition.

Once texts were printed and disseminated in London, they spread to other counties and radiated further outward from certain focal points: the local marketplace, the parish church, godly households, inns, and alehouses.[17] Clients interested in print could buy, read, hear narrations from and discuss books held within a bookseller's inventory. Beyond the shop, printed texts could transverse oral, aural, and visual cultures, and could be circulated within a nexus of social networks.[18] Pamphlets could be posted in public places where they were read aloud by literate individuals for the semi- or non-literate. The practice of reading print aloud extended to circles of friends and family within the household. Friends and acquaintances could share texts with each other, annotating and returning them, thus enhancing their understanding of a specific subject.[19] But texts were transmitted further, particularly among the clergy, through the establishing of libraries such as Sion College Library in London and Samuel Harsnett's library in Essex.[20] Although clergy had access to these libraries, many bought their own books and pamphlets and formed personal libraries. A minister from Bury St Edmunds, Thomas Cabeck, had collected a small library during his lifetime, which was estimated to be worth £3 upon his death in 1664/5.[21] The Essex minister Ralph Josselin expressed a love of books in his diary, visiting Lord Mandeville's library in 1637 and eventually buying his own library in 1646 for £16. Josselin evidently purchased a variety of cheap and expensive print, amassing a small collection, which he bequeathed to his grandsons: 'My library I give as it now stands…I give to one or two of my Grand-children who shall first divote to the Ministry.'[22] Ministers like Josselin played an integral part of disseminating news to the laity, not only through monthly meetings but also through sermons. The pulpit 'was an important medium for the broadcasting of news': it was common practice for preachers to interweave current events into homilies to strengthen their message.[23] Old and New Testament typologies were extended by preachers to relate to current events, thereby appealing to

their audience and spreading news.[24] Indeed the Earl of Clarendon wrote of May 1646,

> It was an observation of that time, that the first publishing of extraordinary news was from the pulpit; and by the preacher's text, and his manner of discourse upon it, the auditors might judge, and commonly foresaw, what was like to be next done in the Parliament.[25]

Hugh Trevor-Roper argued that this was particularly evident in the fast sermons that were preached before Parliament on the last Wednesday of every month from 1642 until 1649. High-profile sermons, such as these, had the potential to influence politics at the highest level. After fast sermons were delivered, they were often printed and used as Parliamentarian propaganda. Notable preachers included Stephen Marshall, minister of Finchingfield, Essex, Edmund Calamy and Samuel Fairclough, a clergyman from Kedington, Suffolk. All of these preachers were clients of the Earl of Warwick, who, along with Calamy and Fairclough, became involved in the East Anglian witch-hunt (see Chapter 1).[26] Ministers also relayed news of strange phenomena and the punishment of criminals (murders or witches) for they provided preachers with an opportunity to render these events as moralizing tales that could explore elements of theology.[27]

Print, written, and oral cultures were independent of each other, but they were also symbiotic, influencing, and feeding into each other.[28] This is evident in the composition of Stearne's publication. Although Stearne made reference to a few printed works concerning witchcraft, oral tradition undoubtedly shaped his witchcraft theory, particularly the popular beliefs identifiable in *A confirmation and discovery*.[29] Likewise, he depended upon oral culture for information to aid in the identification of witches, and when compiling his narrative of events, as indicated by his frequent use of the phrase 'I have heard' throughout the text.[30] Reliance on an oral tradition, or gossip, was the foundation for most popular forms of printed works in seventeenth-century England, and was the primary means through which potential publishers learnt of news relating to the Civil War.

The Supernatural in Print Cultures

Newsbooks were the most popular publications of the 1640s, becoming a 'runaway commercial success' within the first year of their creation (1641–2).[31] But pamphlets narrating tales of extraordinary, supernatural, and prophetic phenomena also appealed to a mass readership. Print culture recognised and addressed the supernatural during the turbulent civil war period. Publications that described supernatural events gained resonance in the 1640s and were interpreted through a providentialist and increasingly apocalyptic lens.[32] Some anonymous authors reported that ethereal battles had been seen by groups of people, and they incorporated apocalyptical

speculation into their text. One such work was *A signe from Heaven, or, a fearefull and terrible noise heard in the ayre at Alborow in the county of Suffolk* (1642). It begins by glossing the prophecy of Luke 21 and suggests that England had, by August 1642, entered 'the latter dayes'.[33] According to the author, the most recent apocalyptic sign came from Woodbridge and Aldeburgh in Suffolk, where 'a wonderfull noyse [was] heard in the ayre, as of a Drum beating most fiercely'. This was followed by the noise of 'a long peale of small Shot' and then a larger volley of gunfire, which continued for ninety minutes. The event was purportedly seen and heard by people 'of good worth' – unnamed members of the House of Commons and of the Aldeburgh Corporation – who had initially feared it was a Royalist incursion.[34] Of similar tone and content is *A new yeares wonder* (1643). In its preamble the author, a Royalist, prayed for their 'distracted kingdom' and that God 'would call back his destroying Angell' and 'sheath up the sword of his vengeance'. It reported that villagers near Edgehill, Warwickshire, had seen and heard an ethereal battle between 1 and 4 January 1642 that was reminiscent of the Battle of Edgehill between Royalist and Parliamentarian troops, which had taken place three months earlier. Those present witnessed 'strange apparitions of spirits as sounds of drums, trumpets, with the discharging of canons muskies, carbines pettronels, to the terrour and amazement, of all'. The author ended by noting that seven gentlemen had verified the incident and notified and discussed it with the King.[35] The pamphlet *Severall apparitions seene in the ayre…in the counties of Cambridge, Suffolke, and Norfolke* (1646) reiterated similar tropes: battling soldiers, naval fleets, and a ball of fire were all seen in the sky by contemporaries. Like other pamphlets in this genre, *Severall apparitions* interpreted these happening as a manifestation of God's displeasure, describing the event as 'tokens of his anger shewed unto us by strange and fearfull Apparitions seen in the Ayre'.[36] While these apparitions could be indicative of God's anger towards some breach of 'the moral order', they could also portend military defeat or a larger national disaster.[37] The above mid-seventeenth-century pamphlets that addressed sightings of supernatural phenomena were heavily influenced by the ongoing civil war.[38] The conflict provided the imagery discussed in the pamphlets, while a providentialist interpretation provided explanations of theodicy and eschatology.[39] Indeed, Stearne could have been directly influenced by the aforementioned texts or the events they chronicled, for although Stearne made minimal reference to the Civil War in *A confirmation*, he did articulate an advanced form of millennialism in its latter pages.[40] Texts detailing supernatural occurrences during the Civil War were not the only genre of popular publication to utilise and disseminate news of portentous events.

Accounts of monstrous births were numerous and they too were prognostic, propagandist products of their time.[41] This literary genre, however, was undergoing a transition by the mid-seventeenth century. In the wake of the emergent 'Baconian scientific revolution', according to Robert Hole,

attempts were made to scientifically describe and investigate monstrous births in scientific and print cultures, rather than assigning portentous meanings to them.[42] Regardless, in the 1640s, the core purpose of pamphlets concerning monstrous births continued: to deliver a sensational tale and to relay a prophetic or moralistic warning to readers. *A declaration, of a strange and wonderfull monster…in Lancashire* (1642), detailed an account of a Royalist, 'popish gentlewoman' who gave birth to a child that had its face on its chest and was headless – the child was visually depicted as a *Blemmye* on the title page.[43] The author, who clearly had puritan and Parliamentarian leanings, used the story to attack Catholicism and Royalist sympathisers. The anonymous author told their readership that God had demonstrated his displeasure with the woman through the headless child, for she once said: 'I pray God, that rather than I shall be a Roundhead, or bear a Roundhead, I may bring forth a child without a head'.[44] The small pamphlet *Signes and wonders* (1645) described another monstrous birth, and depicted the child in a woodcut. The midwives who witnessed the birth exclaimed that it was 'the strangest misshapen Monster that ever they lookt on' as it had been born without a nose, hands, feet, legs, bones, or joints, and had one eare, 'and where the legs and armes should have beene, there grew pieces of flesh'.[45] In an addendum to the text the author noted further reports, this time of 'a Cat [that] brought forth a monstrous Kitnen [sic], which was partly shapen like a humane creature, and the other part Monster'.[46] Monstrous creatures, witches, spirits, and familiar spirits populated the mental landscapes of Stearne's contemporaries. Pamphlets reporting on such portentous events in the 1640s increased in number and were inspired by the Civil War and its side effects: within the Calvinist, providentialist paradigm, it was widely believed that moral, religious, or social disorders would incur the wrath of God or were occurring because of his displeasure.[47] The latter sentiment was aptly summarised in *Signes and wonders*. The text attributes the burgeoning reports of supernatural phenomena to the spiritual transgressions of the nation, commenting:

> The Lord is angry with us for our sins. Have there not beene strange Comets seen in the ayre, prodigies, fights on the seas, marvellous tempests and stormes on the land…have not nature altered her course so much, that women framed of pure flesh and blood, bringeth forth ugly and deformed Monsters; and contrariwise Beasts bring forth humane shapes contrary to their kind.
>
> Have not the Lord suffered the Devill to ramble about like a roring Lyon seeing to devoure us: have not a crew of wicked Witches, together with the Devils assistance done many mischiefes, in *Norfolke, Suffolke, Essex,* and other parts of our Kingdome, whereof some were executed at *Chensford* in Essex last to the number of fourteen, and many more imprisoned to this day.[48]

The author of the pamphlet *Signes and wonders* (1645) had, evidently, acquired information on the East Anglian witch-hunt and supernatural occurrences through oral and print cultures. In the same year of its publication, a number of works addressing witchcraft emerged in print, and even more had been produced by the time Stearne printed his text in 1648. Newsbooks contain the briefest references to the witch-trials, but they demonstrate how rapidly news of the trials spread. While discussing other news relating to the Civil War, *A perfect diurnall* stated that forty witches had been arraigned and that twenty had already been executed in the Norfolk witch trials.[49] It also revealed that the some of their number had prophesised the downfall of the King's Army and of Prince Rupert. Another newsbook, *A diary or an exact Journal* (1641), lamented that a minister's wife in Little Clacton, Essex, named Waite was among the first to be apprehended as a witch, cautioning its readers that the Devil was still busy 'in the end of times'.[50] The *Parliaments post* was equally appalled by rumours of Rebecca West's marriage to the Devil in Lawford, Essex, fearing that the 'spirit of the Cavaliers' was proselyting women sympathetic to Parliament and turning them into witches.[51] Newsbooks were periodical, short, succinct, and often partisan publications, designed to reach a wide audience and convert that audience to a specific political cause. Therefore, when discussing the witch-trials, newsbook authors stressed the connection between the Devil, witches, and Royalists, who were depicted in sharp contrast to the godly Parliamentarians.[52]

Witchcraft pamphlets reporting on the recent trials devoted more time to explicating examinations and confessions, and less on politics.[53] In wake of the outbreak of witchcraft accusations and prosecutions in Essex, six short pamphlets were printed concerning the trials. Three of these were 'published by authorite' but all six pamphlets communicated detailed depositions against and examinations of witches, based on court records.[54] *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late Witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex* (1645), *A true relation of the arraignment of thirty witches at Chensford in Essex* (1645), H. F., *A true and exact relation…of the late witches…in county Essex* (1645), and *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene vvitches… at St. Edmunds-bury* (1645) provided much detail on the protagonists in the trials, particularly those held in Essex. Depositions from Stearne, Hopkins, Sir Bowes, John Rivet, Elizabeth Clarke, Anne Leech, and Rebecca and Anne West were included in the texts. Similarly, the mayor of Faversham in Kent, Robert Greenstreet, had examined four witches, condemned three, and assented to the printing of *The examination, confession, trial and execution of Joan Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott* (1645).[55] The following year, John Davenport published *The witches of Huntingdon* (1646) for the Justices of the Peace (JPs) of Huntingdon. After a brief dedicatory epistle to the JPs, his publication presented court records from the trials – for which he was in attendance – replete with deponents' signatures.

Then, in 1647, Hopkins wrote *The discovery of witches* to address queries that were raised by assize judges in Norfolk. His work answered fourteen questions in an attempt to absolve the witch-finders of accusations of torture, fraudulence, and extortion. When compared to other contemporary witchcraft pamphlets, Hopkins's work differed in its format: it was structured as a dialogue and was the only witchcraft publication of the trials to be accompanied with a (now notorious) woodcut, depicting witches, familiars, and himself as the 'Witch Finder Generall'.[56] Its succinct format, popularity, and wide distribution meant that *The discovery of witches* was consulted for future witchcraft cases, even in New England in May 1648, soon after its publication: the court of Massachusetts Bay stated that it 'desire[d] the course which hath been taken in England for the discovery of witches, by watching them a certeine time. It is ordered, that the best & surest way may forthwith be put in practice'. The court even considered locating and hiring a witch-finder like Stearne from England.[57] Inspired by this ruling, the infamous trials at Salem in 1692 also relied upon the witch-finder's methods, mostly extracted from Hopkins's text whose family had connections with the Massachusetts colony.[58] Stearne's *Confirmation* did not have the same reach, but his actions as a witch-finder, when working with Hopkins, had a lasting impact.[59]

Hopkins's and Stearne's texts are unique in that they are the only two works authored by seventeenth-century English witch-finders. But in all of the witchcraft pamphlets the confessions and examinations of witches were analogous to those discussed within Stearne's *Confirmation*, centring on malefic acts, diabolical covenants, and familiar spirits. However, Stearne's text was significantly different from other supernatural texts discussed in this chapter.

Stearne's Failure to Disseminate *A confirmation*

A confirmation made no perceivable impact on local or print cultures when it was published in 1648, as it was not mentioned by Stearne's contemporaries. Consequently, it faded into obscurity – this is evident by the lack of references to *A confirmation* in the centuries following its publication (see Chapter 7) – but has permitted a window into mentalities during the Civil War to remain. A small readership was not Stearne's intention. Gaskill has suggested that Stearne wrote for a limited audience and that he intended to personally distribute his text after printing.[60] Certain phrases within his text, however, suggest that he wrote with a wide readership, rather than a few individuals, in mind. Stearne wrote 'to give all satisfaction' that his witch-hunting theory and practice was sound, but he was wary of the risks of printing and publishing for the public (criticism and plagiarism, for example), stating that 'I am not ignorant how dangerous it is for me to put myselfe so farre forth into the Sea of common opinion', and 'leave myself to the censure of the world'.[61] Moreover, it would make sense for Stearne

to endeavour to clear and defend his recently besmirched reputation by appealing to the largest possible audience, and to permanently fix his account of the trials in printed text. Stearne had identified the channel through which he wanted to disseminate his ideas, but he failed to effectively utilise the medium of print and its surrounding culture.

Unlike the other supernatural texts discussed in this chapter, Stearne distributed his work without the aid of a bookseller, thus limiting the potential readership of his text. Stearne did, however, make an excellent choice of printer by selecting William Wilson. He was a London-based printer who dealt in a variety of genres from his printing shop 'in Little Saint Bartholomewes neere Smithfield'. Andrew Cambers described this area as being 'on the fringes of the book trade' and of 'dubious character' for it was packed with illicit printers, counterfeiters, and non-conformists.[62] Wilson, however, was an experienced printer who had produced other witchcraft pamphlets: Davenport's *Witches of Huntingdon* (1646) and John Gaule's *Select cases of conscience* (1646).[63] Stearne's *Confirmation* must have appealed to Wilson intellectually or financially for he produced the witch-finder's work and registered it with the Stationers' Company on 16 October 1648.[64] Printers, like Wilson, seeking to keep their businesses legal, registered their publications with the Stationers' Company at the cost of six pence. This was also an attempt to safeguard both men's copyright over *A confirmation* – to fix Stearne's narrative of the witch-hunt in print, and to secure Wilson's right to print the text. Further expenditure was needed in order to have *A confirmation* produced: Stearne would have paid Wilson around one pence to print a copy, and if he decided to sell his work at market-price, he, and Wilson, could have profited at a few pence per unit.[65] The number of copies Wilson printed for Stearne is unknown, but a single run of print could produce as little as 50 copies to 1,000 or even 10,000, depending on the author's demands – the number of copies printed for Stearne was probably on the lower end of this scale, as *A confirmation* is not mentioned by contemporary authors and few copies of his text are extant.[66] Wilson may have considered the printing of witchcraft pamphlets as profitable because he had printed Gaule's *Select cases*, which was an attack on witch-finding directed at Matthew Hopkins. Gaule had launched a series of sermons against witch-finding after he became aware of Hopkins's letter to local magistrates proposing a witch-hunt within Gaule's parish of Great Staughton, Huntingdon. Gaule included this letter in *Select cases*, thus boosting its popularity and Hopkins's *Discovery*, which entered print the following year.[67] Gaule's commonality with the witch-finders rested on a shared belief that witches did exist; however, he was sceptical about the efficacy of methods used by Hopkins and Stearne, especially the swimming tests used in the Essex trials. Davenport, on the other hand, was more credulous. He was present at the Huntingdon assizes in May 1646 – probably in some official capacity as he worked with JPs – enabling him to record and publish the confessions

he heard in his pamphlet.[68] Davenport sought to cast doubt upon the veracity of the assize court's verdicts. His discontent was not aimed directly at the witch-finders – both of whom can be placed in Huntingdon in the summer of 1646 – but was rather directed at those JPs who had examined and condemned suspected witches on the flimsy evidence provided by witnesses. With Gaule's and Davenport's publications already circulating by 1648, Stearne's work provided Wilson with an opportunity to imprint his name on a pro-witchcraft pamphlet that represented another side of the witchcraft debate, one which responded to Gaule's criticisms and defended the witch-finders' actions. Stearne stressed the practical and theoretical caveats of witch-finding, but he also explored the theological and legal foundations for the persecution of witches and recorded the extraordinary confessions of the witches he had examined. Despite having the same printer, Gaule's and Davenport's publications were more accessible for they were dispensed by the bookseller Richard Clutterbuck.[69] Stearne missed an opportunity to further disseminate his text by failing, or refusing, to secure a bookseller in the commercial hub of London. Other publishers who produced witchcraft pamphlets between 1645 and 1647 did not make the same mistake. Three of the anonymous witchcraft pamphlets of 1645 were published 'by authority', while *The examination, confession, trial and execution of Joan Williford*, Davenport's *Witches of Huntingdon* and Hopkins's *Discovery* were published for JPs. These publications were couched within the legal context of the witch-hunt, providing more veracity to their texts and perhaps an increase in potential readership. The two pamphlets entitled *A true and exact relation* were printed for Benjamin Allen and Henry Overton, a prolific printer and bookseller, while *The examination…of Joan Williford* was produced by the renowned printer J.G. This printer had also produced a number of publications for R. Royston, who helped to sell Hopkins's *Discovery*.[70] With printers, booksellers and names of authority ascribed to them, these pamphlets could be extensively transmitted through print networks. Stearne's omission of a bookseller sharply reduced the audience *A confirmation* could reach and rendered it unable to compete in a marketplace that was littered with politically inspired and government-sponsored publications.[71]

Stearne did not consider other aspects of popular print which directly led to the success of Hopkins's pamphlet. As previously noted, Hopkins's *Discovery* was augmented by Gaule's public assault on the witch-finder in print, and verbally, through sermons. Hopkins managed to further enhance his work by including an illustrative woodcut. This raised the cost of production but the fee was mitigated by the size of the small quarto pamphlet. Visuals effectively increased the pamphlet's desirability and accessibility in popular print culture. Woodcuts appealed to illiterate or semiliterate individuals who would have been familiar with short pamphlets or ballads that reported supernatural events – involving apparitions, monstrous births, witches, angels, and demons – and utilised imagery. Stearne did not include

any images in his lengthier and more expensive sixty-one page publication. Despite his hopes, *A confirmation* was not a text that appealed to the masses as it was formatted incorrectly for a large, popular audience. Nor was it tailored to an English or European learned audience for it was not in Latin; his arguments were not too theologically complex; and in comparison to learned authors (both within and outside of the same genre), whose treatises could number hundreds of pages in length, *A confirmation* was fairly short. In this respect, Stearne's publication was somewhere between a popular and a learned text, but was closer to the former. It was, in essence, a polemical pamphlet on witchcraft that was bolstered by Scripture and examples from his experiences of witch-hunting in East Anglia. Hopkins's and Stearne's publications were unique to mid-seventeenth-century English print culture because they were the only pamphlets authored by active witch-finders and, to some extent, form their own literary category. Stearne therefore had no strict literary precedents to follow when crafting his exceptional text. He may also have had a limited market, for, by 1648 the bulk of Stearne's potential customers were more interested in reading of recent events of the Civil War, not a witch-finder's polemical pamphlet on a past witch-hunt.

When Stearne's text reached the printing press in October 1648 the witch-hunt had been terminated. His retrospective pamphlet was no longer a timely piece of work like a newsbook or the other supernatural pamphlets published between 1645 and 1647. Prior to the East Anglian trials, desire to prosecute witches and read of witchcraft appears to have been diminishing from the 1620s, but interest was renewed in wake of the witch-finders' mission.[72] By 16 October 1648, interest in the witch-finder's printed defence would have dwindled, and national events were quickly overshadowing his work in the proceeding months of its publication.[73] Literate members of society who could have afforded Stearne's pamphlet, and were interested in its content, were more likely to focus their attention and money towards the acquisition of news on the disintegrating political negotiations between Royalists and Parliamentarians. Between September and November 1648, King and Parliament were locked in political discussions to forge the Treaty of Newport and end the Second Civil War.[74] But radicals within the New Model Army feared that Parliament would unconditionally restore the King to power, without punishment. To circumvent this, they drafted *The Remonstrance of the Army* – a document that was designed to purge Parliament of Royalist sympathisers. When Parliament refused to renege on negotiations with Charles I, the Army marched into London on 2 December and purged Parliament on 6 December. After much debate and coercion, the King was tried by Parliament, and executed on the 30 January 1649.[75] The immediacy and impact of these events eclipsed Stearne's retrospective pamphlet, as news of the King's execution spread rapidly across England – indeed, news of Charles's beheading reached Ralph Josselin in Essex within one day.[76]

In October 1648, a year after the East Anglian witch-hunt was terminated, Stearne had an opportunity to personally distribute *A confirmation* to a limited readership within his locality. Without a bookseller or public curiosity concerning the witch-trials, the success of his work was reduced. Furthermore, by the end of November 1648, national events severely encumbered Stearne's ability to transmit his text through potential networks of print. In the immediate aftermath of the witch-hunt, Stearne returned to his normal life in Suffolk. The lowly gentleman maintained hold of his land and eventually became employed as a scribe, but his finances were dwindling.[77] His witch-finding career collapsed more rapidly, and Stearne and his publication were forgotten in the proceeding centuries. But his text has preserved a window into some of the ideas and mentalities present during the Civil War period, and the driving forces behind the East Anglian witch-hunt. As society began to break apart in the 1630s and 1640s, magistrates who had suffered under Caroline rule sought to enforce conformity and to establish their powerbase. On a more popular level, the Civil War inspired apocalyptic speculation and increased fear of demonic forces.[78] Royalist and Parliamentarian propaganda reflected these concerns, which fed into and influenced the East Anglian witch-hunt. As Mark Stoyle has recently argued, the preponderance of references to familiars in witches' confessions may be in part due to Parliament's propaganda concerning Prince Rupert's dog called Boy and his pet 'she-monkey', both of which were alleged to be familiars.[79] The witch-finders elicited support from magistrates across the eastern counties because they were helping to eject subversive influences within communities to create a more cohesive, godly society. After the period of Presbyterian ascendancy to government subsided, civil war ended, and the Independents assumed power in the 1650s, witch-hunting lost judicial support and English society became progressively more cohesive under the Protectorate. Indeed, fewer successful witchcraft trials were held between 1650 and 1660, demonstrating that the JPs and the assizes judges had become sceptical towards the evidentiary basis of witchcraft.[80] A few years after Stearne's *Confirmation,* educated men such as Sir Robert Filmer (1653) and Thomas Ady (1656) undermined the biblical basis of English witchcraft theory in their respective sceptical publications (but did not mention Stearne's work), illustrating the backlash created by the witch-hunt.[81] Literary and scholarly interest in witchcraft was only renewed in the later part of the seventeenth century, during another period of political crisis. This, however, was linked to a polemical drive to prove the existence of spirits in the face of growing 'atheism' (see Chapter 6).[82] By the late 1600s Stearne, and his text, had all but lapsed from memory. With the termination of the witch-hunt and, later, the Protestant republic, the Restoration linked zealous puritanism and witch-beliefs to the radical elements of society which had fomented in East Anglian during the Civil Wars.[83] This is most prosaically, and sardonically, presented

in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* in which he mocked the 'Godly' and their witch-hunting, saying:

> And to the Dev'l himself may go
> If they have motives thereunto.
> For, as there is a war between
> The Dev'l and them, it is no sin,
> If they by subtle stratagem
> Make use of him, as he does them.
> Has not this present Parliament
> A Ledger to the Devil sent
> Fully impowr'd to treat about
> Finding revolted witches out
> And has not he, within a year,
> Hang'd threescore of 'em in one shire?
> Some only for not being drown'd,
> And some for sitting above ground,
> Whole days and nights, upon their breeches,
> And feeling pain, were hang'd for witches.[84]

Eighteenth-century politicians maintained this sceptical outlook. Whig MPs, who assumed power in 1715, were incredulous towards witchcraft, viewing such beliefs as 'superstitious'. In educated circles, beliefs in witchcraft were seen backwards and were associated with popular culture, eventually ending in Parliament's repealing of the Jacobean witchcraft act in 1736.[85] In this political and intellectual environment, texts like Stearne's *Confirmation* received little scholarly attention.

   Interest in the history of witchcraft was revived in the nineteenth century. As scholars, such as Robert Pitcairn, rediscovered previously lost legal documents of early modern witchcraft trials, researchers, and antiquarians collected literary materials pertaining to witchcraft cases.[86] Stearne's *Confirmation* came to the attention of a few English and Scottish antiquarians who were fascinated by the history of witchcraft and by the supernatural print culture discussed in this chapter. These men were primarily interested in Stearne's pamphlet because of its rarity and its sensational content (see Chapter 7). The work published by these authors slowly introduced Stearne and his text to scholars of witchcraft, and led to the reassessment of established representations of the witch-finder. Although Stearne's publication failed to gain purchase within contemporary seventeenth-century print culture it is now recognised as a seminal text. Indeed, Gaskill commented that Stearne's 'account remains the most informative printed work recording their witch-finding campaign'.[87] It has preserved a window into an exceptional decade of English history and into Stearne's mind, for it is the sole publication of an obscure, unlearned gentleman of whom we would know even less of without *A confirmation*. His publication sheds

light on various aspects of the witch-finder's convictions, his religious be-
liefs, print culture, early modern concepts of gender, and an insight into his
ideas on familiar spirits.

Notes

1 See this chapter's, Appendix, Figure A3.1; Jason Peacey, 'Revolution in print'
in, Michael Braddick (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the English Revolution*
(Oxford, 2015), pp 277–98; Joad Raymond (ed.), 'The development of the book
trade in Britain' in, *The Oxford handbook of popular print culture in Britain
and Ireland to 1660* (9 vols, Oxford, 2011), i, pp 60–1, also has an excellent
graph displaying the quantity of early modern English printed literature.
2 Raymond (ed.), 'The development of the book trade', pp 60–1.
3 Ibid., p 63; Joad Raymond, 'News Writing' in, Andrew Hadfield (ed.), *The
Oxford Handbook of English Prose,1500–1640* (Oxford, 2013), pp 401–5.
Calculations based on Appendix, Figure A3.1.
4 Walsham, *Providence*, pp 125–224; David Hall, *Worlds of wonder, days of
judgement: popular religious belief in early New England* (Massachusetts,
1990), pp 71–116.
5 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p.231.
6 Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan pamphleteers: popular moralistic pamphlets,
1580–1640* (London, 1983), p 24, noted that while witchcraft pamphlets re-
ported on news of a trial, they differed from conventional newsbooks because
'the material took some time, months or years, to collect'.
7 For a slightly different rendering of this see Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 71–2,
in which he defines these events as wonders 'betokening the presence of the
supernatural'.
8 See the woodcut in Hopkins's *Discovery* where he is named as 'Witch Finder
Generall'; on this trend in historiography, see Chapter 7.
9 An EEBO search was performed by deselecting 'variant spellings' and 'variant
forms', entering the above dates and rounding them to the last three digits to
the nearest hundred. Between 1473 and 1639, EEBO catalogues approximately
34,900 publications. Also see Raymond (ed.), 'The development of the book
trade', pp 59–75.
10 See Appendix, Figures A3.1 and A3.2. The marginality of witchcraft beliefs is
suggested by Marsh, *Popular religion*, pp 151–2.
11 Joad Raymond, *The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks 1641–
1649* (Oxford, 1996), pp 5–10, 80–126; Ralph Frasca, 'Newspapers in Europe
before 1500' in, Shannon E. Martin and David A. Copeland (eds), *The function
of newspapers in society: a global perspective* (Westport, 2003), pp 79–88;
Tamara Kay Baldwin, 'Newspapers in Europe after 1500' in, *idem*, pp 89–102;
Raymond (ed.), 'The development of the book trade', pp 59–75; Raymond,
'News Writing', pp 396–414.
12 Jason Peacey, *Print and public politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge,
2013); Raymond, *Invention of the newspaper*, pp 232–68; Tessa Watt, *Cheap
print and popular piety 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991).
13 Raymond, *Invention of the newspaper*, pp 238–40.
14 John Taylor, *A brief director for those that would send their letters to any parts
of England, Scotland, or Ireland* (London, 1642).
15 Ibid., pp 7–8.
16 J. C. Hemmeon, *The history of the British post office* (Cambridge, 1912),
pp 97–103.
17 Watt, *Cheap print*, p 5.

18 Adam Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, reprinted 2003), pp 32–45; Robert Darnton, 'What is the history of books?', *Daedalus*, cxi, no. 3 (Summer, 1982), pp 65–83, especially pp 76–81; Andrew Cambers, *Godly reading: print, manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720* (Cambridge, 2011), pp 180–211; Peacey, *Print and public politics*; Carla Suhr, *Publishing for the masses: early modern English witchcraft pamphlets* (Helsinki, 2011), pp 18–22, 25–6.

19 Elizabeth Yale, 'Marginalia, commonplaces, and correspondence: scribal exchange in early modern science', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, xlii (2011), pp 193–202.

20 'The Library of Archbishop Samuel Harsnett: a report', *Research Tools*, no. 3 (Colchester, University of Essex, Department of History, December 2012), pp 1–51 (Available at: www.essex.ac.uk/history/research/papers.aspx) (Accessed: Feb., 2016); Frank Walsh Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (London, 1993), pp 57–8; Sion College Library, *Catalogus universalis librorum omnium in bibliotheca Collegii Sionii apud Londinenses* (London, 1650).

21 NRO, DN/INV 51A/52; NRO, NCC will register Stockdell 19, MF/RO 237/4. The contents of his library were not itemised in the probate inventory.

22 Macfarlane, *The family life of Ralph Josselin*, pp 15, 22–4, quote on p 213.

23 Raymond, *Invention of the newspaper*, pp 188–93, quote on p 189; Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The crisis of the seventeenth century: religion, the Reformation and social change* (New York, 1967), pp 273–316.

24 For a review of recent publications of early modern English sermons see Rosamund Oates, 'Sermons and sermon-going in early modern England', *Reformation*, xvii, no. 1 (2012), p 205.

25 Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The history of the rebellion and civil wars in England, begun in year 1641*, ed. W. Dunn Macray (6 vols, Oxford, 1888), iv, p 194.

26 Trevor-Roper, *The crisis of the seventeenth century*, pp 273–316; Oates, 'Sermons and sermon-going', pp 200–1; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 119–24, 151–4. Fast sermons greatly influenced the iconoclast William Dowsing; see Bridges, 'William Dowsing'. For fast sermons see: Stephen Marshall, *A sermon preached before the House of Commons* (London, 1640); Samuel Fairclough, *The troublers troubled* (London, 1641); Edmund Calamy, *England's looking-glass* (London, 1641). Robert Rich, the second Earl of Warwick, was extremely influential, particularly in his home county of Essex; he 'was the undoubted leader of the body politic of Essex, one of the greatest landowners and clerical patrons of the county'; see Sean Kelsey, 'Rich, Robert, second earl of Warwick (1587–1658), colonial promoter and naval officer', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/23494) (Accessed: July, 2018).

27 Raymond, 'News writing', pp 404–6; Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 71–116.

28 Ibid., pp 413–4.

29 See Stearne, pp 16–7, 34, on burning items to unwitch; p 29 for 'scratching'; *passim* for familiars.

30 Stearne, pp 2, 11, 18–9, 23–5, 31, 33, 38, 41, 53–4, 58–9.

31 Raymond, 'News writing', pp 412–3.

32 Walsham, *Providence*, pp 218–24; Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 76–80.

33 Anon., *A signe from Heaven, or, a fearefull and terrible noise heard in the ayre at Alborow in the county of Suffolk* (London, 1642), p 1.

34 Ibid., pp 2–4.

35 Anon., *The new yeares wonder* (London, 1642). The pamphlet may have been printed in 1643, thus placing the recorded apparition fifteen months after the Battle of Edgehill. On the battle, see Michael Braddick, *God's fury, England's fire: a new history of the English civil wars* (London, 2009), pp 241–9.

36 Anon., *Severall apparitions seene in the ayre...in the counties of Cambridge, Suffolke, and Norfolke* (London, 1646), p 2.
37 Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, p 79.
38 However, sightings of spiritual battles in the sky did not stop after the Civil War; see Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 104–5, 124–5.
39 Walsham, *Providence*, pp 169–224.
40 Stearne, pp 3, 18, 20, 58–60. Stearne mentioned the bewitching of five horses in 'Colonell Rochesters Troope'. It is likely he was referring to Colonel Edward Rossiter and his Regiment of Horse (1645–8); see *Parliaments post* (29 July–5 August, 1645), p 6; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 91, 300; Davies, *The discovery of witches*, p 56; M. W. Helms and J. S. Crossette, 'Rossiter, Edward (1618–69), of Somerby, Lincs' in, *The history of Parliament: British political, social and local history* (The History of Parliament Trust, 1964–2018) (Available at: www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/rossiter-edward-1618-69) (Accessed: Jan., 2018).
41 For examples of earlier pamphlets see: Anon., *The true reporte of the form of a monstrous childe borne at...Colchester* (London, 1562); Anon., *The true description of two monstrous chyldren [sic]...in Kent* (London, 1565).
42 Robert Hole, 'Incest, consanguinity and a monstrous birth in rural England, January 1600', *Social History*, xxv, no. 2 (May, 2000), pp 192–3. Hole examines the first seventeenth-century English pamphlet that attempts to scientifically explain a monstrous birth. Also see Walsham, *Providence*, p 222.
43 Asa Mittman, *Maps and monsters in medieval England* (New York, 2006), pp 95–101; Asa Mittman and Susan Kim, 'Monsters and the exotic in medieval England' in, Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker and William Greene (eds), *The Oxford handbook of medieval English literature* (Oxford, 2010), pp 677–706; Jennifer Spinks, *Monstrous births and visual culture in sixteenth-century Germany* (London, 2009), pp 15–20; Jack Hartnell, *Medieval bodies: life, death and art in the Middle Ages* (London, 2019), pp 29–34; for imagery of *Blemmyae* see the *Hereford Mappa Mundi* (c.1300), digitalised by Hereford Cathedral (Available at: www.themappamundi.co.uk/) (Accessed: Jan., 2018).
44 Anon., *A declaration, of a strange and wonderfull monster...in Lancashire* (London, 1642), p 6.
45 Anon., *Signes and wonders* (London, 1645), p 5.
46 Ibid. For human-animal hybrids of this type see for example, Anon., *Certaine secrete wonders of nature* (London, 1569); Edward Topsell, *The history of four-footed beasts and serpents* (London, 1658); and, BL, Lansdowne MS 101/6 (22 Jan–12 Feb 1568).
47 Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 125; Matlby, 'Suffering and surviving', pp 170–1; Valletta, *Witchcraft, magic and superstition*, pp 6, 63–93; Walsham, *Providence*, pp 169–224; Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 71–116.
48 *Signes and wonders*, p 2.
49 *A perfect diurnall of some passages in Parliament* (21–8 July 1645), p 830.
50 *A diary or an exact Journal* (24–31 July 1645), esp. pp 5–6. On Henry Waite's wife see Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 131.
51 *Parliaments post* (29 July–5 August, 1645), pp 1–4.
52 Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, p 95, notes that 'portent-watching' intensified during the Civil War period as Royalists and Parliamentarians used these tales to garner support from the public, and that both sides employed astrologers to provide them with favourable portents; on witchcraft, Royalist and Parliamentarian propaganda see Stoyle, *The black legend of Prince Rupert's dog*.
53 Anon., *A most certain strange and true discovery of a witch* (London, 1643) is an exception, associating Royalists with witches. The pamphlet recounts how the Earl of Essex's army discovered a witch at Newbury, when she was sailing

upriver on a plank of wood. The witch was eventually killed, but not before she predicted that 'the Earle of Essex shall be fortunate and win in the field'. For an examination of this pamphlet see Purkiss, 'Desire and its deformities', pp 103–32.

54 The other text published by authority, *Lawes against witches* (London, 1645), outlines how witches should be prosecuted – the author seems to have obtained their knowledge from the Jacobean witchcraft act, judicial precedence set by previous witchcraft trials and Richard Bernard's, *Guide.*

55 Local politics played a role in the execution of Joan Cariden by Robert Greenstreet. Cariden had been an affluent, outspoken critic of authority during Greenstreet's previous stint as mayor in 1635. Within two weeks of becoming mayor in September 1645, Greenstreet had Cariden hanged. See Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and mentalities in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2003), p 55.

56 *Signes and wonders* (1645) could be considered as a witchcraft pamphlet, but its woodcut and text focus on prognostic events and only briefly mentions witches.

57 Nathaniel Shurtleff (ed.), *Records of the governor and company of Massachusetts Bay in New England* (5 vols, Boston, 1853), ii, p 242; Samuel Drake (ed.), *Annals of witchcraft in New England* (Boston, 1869), pp 58–61; Samuel Drake (ed.), *The history and antiquities of Boston, from its settlement in 1630 to the year 1770* (Boston, 1856), pp 308–10; Stacy Schiff, *The witches, Salem, 1692: a history* (Croydon, 2016), pp 189–95.

58 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 20–1, 272, 331.

59 ESTC listings demonstrate that fewer copies of Stearne's *Confirmation* have survived in comparison to all other witchcraft publications of the 1640s discussed above.

60 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 332. For other examples of this see Peacey, *Print and public politics*, pp 252–7.

61 Stearne, p 23, sig. A3, p 61; page numbers correlate to order of citation above.

62 Cambers, *Godly reading*, p 196.

63 George Thomason collected these publications within a few weeks after they were printed, annotating the date of 'June 30th' on Gaule's work and 'July 7th' on Davenport's; see Thomason's annotated title pages of Davenport and Gaule's on EEBO or in Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 99. These dates signify when Thomason acquired the literature, not when they were printed. The Stationers' Company, *A transcript of the registers of the worshipful Company of Stationers, from 1640–1708, A.D.* (3 vols, 1913), i, pp 231, 235, shows that Gaule's text was registered on '3 June', and Davenport's on '25th June'.

64 Stationers' Company, *A transcript of the registers*, i, p.303. The entry is as follows: 'Master Wilson. Entered…under the hands of Master Downham and Master Lee warden a booke called *A confirmacon & discovery of witchcraft*, by John Sterne…vjd [6 pence]'. Gaskill gives different dates which do not correlate to Wilson's date of registration with the Stationers' Company. Gaskill states that 'The manuscript was probably ready by January 1648', and suggests that it was given to Wilson at the end of January; see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 270. Elsewhere he is vaguer: 'it was written some time between mid-1647 and mid-1648'; see Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331.

65 These figures are estimations based on Peacey's research. The cost of printing eight sheets, which were folded in quarto to create a sixty-four page unbound pamphlet, like Stearne's, could range between a penny and thirty-two pence, for the more expensive texts. In the mid-1640s, pamphlets with the same page count as *A confirmation*, sixty-four including the blank pages, were sold between one to four pence. Considering this data, per unit, Stearne's pamphlet would only have cost a few pence to print; see Peacey, *Print and public politics*,

pp 57, 245–6. It is possible that Wilson could have increased or decreased the cost to produce Stearne's work, but specifics cannot be known and these figures are estimates.

66 Peacey, *Print and public politics*, pp 244–5.

67 Gaule, *Cases of conscience*, sigs A4–5.

68 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 78; HA, CON 3/9/10; HA, CON 2/4/3/9 and 10; HA, TORK: 15/105.

69 Ibid., p 77; Stationer's Company, *A transcript of the registers*, i, pp 231, 235.

70 Data acquired by searching the ESTC and EEBO for printers' names. On EEBO 'variant spellings' and 'variant forms' were selected, and the date range set between 1640 and 1660.

71 Amos Tubbs, 'Independent presses: the politics of print in England during the late 1640's', *The Seventeenth Century Journal*, xxvii, no. 3 (2012), pp 291–2.

72 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 105–127; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 71; the same applies to witchcraft on stage, see Anthony Harris, *Night's black agents: witchcraft and magic in seventeenth-century English drama* (Manchester, 1980), pp 24–32, 90, 149–172.

73 Stationers' Company, *A transcript of the registers*, i, p 303.

74 Purkiss, *The English civil war*, pp 546–8; Braddick, *God's fury*, pp 553–62.

75 Braddick, *God's fury*, pp 556–80; Martyn Bennett, *The civil wars in Britain and Ireland, 1638–1651* (Massachusetts, 1997), pp 310–4; Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645–1653* (Oxford, 1992), pp 266–314; Philip Baker, 'The regicide' in, Michael Bradick (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2015), pp 154–69.

76 Entry for 31 Jan. 1648, in *The diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683*, pp 62–3. Josselin also recorded remarkably accurate information on the Battle of Dunbar five days after it had taken place; see entry for 8 Sept. 1650, in ibid., p 78; Gribben, *John Owen*, p 119.

77 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6; PRO, E/179/246/20; PRO, E/134/2/Chas2/Mich5; PRO, PROB11/307/45.

78 Kelsey, 'Rich, Robert, second earl of Warwick (1587–1658)'; Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 161–5; Elmer, 'Towards a politics of witchcraft', pp 101–18; Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1991); Hill, *Antichrist*; Weber, 'Millennialism', p 375; Jue, 'Puritan millenarianism', pp 259–276; see Walsham, *Providence*, pp 138–41, for a comparison to other 'communal emergencies'.

79 Stoyle, *The black legend of Prince Rupert's dog*, pp 142–62; see Anon., *An exact description of Prince Rupert's malignant She-Money* (London, 1643); Anon., *A parley between Prince Ruperts dogge* (London, 1643); Anon., *A dog's elegy, or Rupert's teares for…his beloved dog named Boy* (London, 1644); also see Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 94–5; Walsham, *Providence*, pp 220–2.

80 John Miller, 'The long term consequences of the English Revolution: economic and social development' in, Michael Braddick (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2015), pp 501–17. For a contemporary sceptic see Sir Robert Filmer, *An advertisement to the jury-men of England* (London, 1653), pp 2–7; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 272, 279; Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence in early modern England', *Past & Present*, cxcviii (Feb., 2008), pp 59–62, 67–70; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 109–12, 146–7, 220–2; John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: witchcraft and the culture of early New England* (updated edn., Oxford, 2004), pp 11–3; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, pp 13–18. The majority of prosecutions in the 1650s originated from a witch-panic in Kent; see Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 144–54; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 206. For another example from 1650s

London, see Anon., *The witch of Wapping* (London, 1652); and the Folger Shakespeare Library, 'Letters to and from the Lenthall and Warcupp families [manuscript]', X.d.375 (30), for a warrant of the witch of Wapping's arrest.

81 Filmer, *An advertisement*; Thomas Ady, *Candle in the dark* (London, 1656). On Filmer and witchcraft see Cesare Cuttica, *Sir Robert Filmer (1588–1653) and the patriotic monarch: patriarchalism in seventeenth-century political thought* (Manchester, 2012), pp 33–47.

82 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 243–7; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 254, 284–312.

83 Beaver, 'Parish communities', pp 324–8; Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, magic and culture 1736–1951* (Manchester, 1999), pp 50–1, 76–7; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, p 13; Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, p 106; Gribben, *John Owen*, pp 207–9. One mention of Stearne was made at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Francis Hutchinson in his sceptical tract on the history of witchcraft. He indicated that he was aware of Stearne as an agent in the trials: 'You must know then, that…Matthew Hopkins of Manningtree in Essex, and one John Stern, and a woman along with them went round from town to town…to discover witches'. See Francis Hutchinson, *An historical essay concerning witchcraft* (London, 1718), p 61. Hutchinson knew of Hopkins's pamphlet as it is mentioned in a letter from Suffolk preacher, William Wilson, no relation to the printer of Stearne's work; see ibid., pp 50, 69. Hutchinson may also have 'borrowed a copy of Hopkins's *Discovery of witches* from a senior judge in London to see for himself the rationale of the witchfinder', see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 282.

84 Samuel Butler, *Hudibras in three parts written in the time of the late wars*, ed. Ludwig Gantter (Stuttgart, 1855), part II, canto III, pp 133–48 (Available at: https://archive.org/stream/hudibrasinthree10butlgoog#page/n4/mode/2up).

85 Davies, M*agic and culture,* pp 9–11,15–16, 46, 52, 76–77; Andrew Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs: the life of Bishop Francis Hutchinson, 1660–1739* (Manchester, 2008), pp 1–3, 93–128; Hall, *Worlds of wonder*, pp 94–116. The 1604 witchcraft act was finally repealed in 1736 under George II (it was passed in 1735 but not implemented until 1736), see 'The witchcraft act', 9 Geo. II, c. 5 (1735/6).

86 Davies, M*agic and culture,* p 76; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 278, 292–3; Fox, *Oral and literate culture*, p 5; Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, pp 40–57.

87 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331.

Appendix: Print Culture

	1530 -9	1540 -9	1550 -9	1560 -9	1570 -9	1580 -9	1590 -9	1600 -9	1610 -9	1620 -9	1630 -9	1640 -9	1650 -9	1660 -9	1670 -9	1680 -9	1690 -9	1700 -9
▪ Actual number	1233	1537	1663	1666	2256	2826	3122	4238	4844	5642	6313	22615	13200	11606	11570	18804	16316	3619
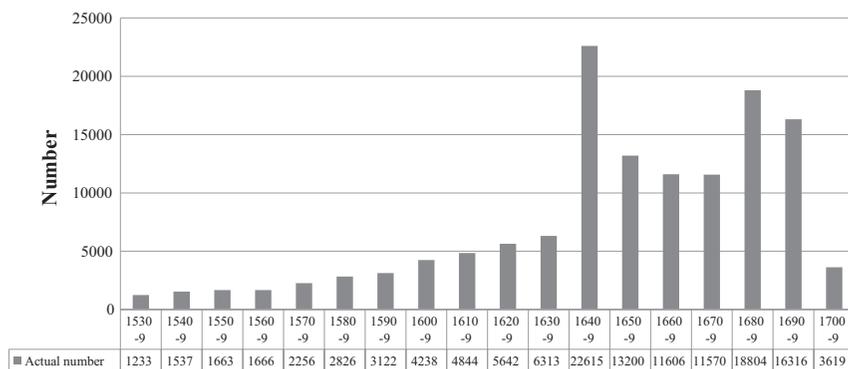
Figure A3.1 Number of printed texts in early modern England.
Data obtained by searching EEBO with 'variant spelling' and 'variant forms' selected and repeating this for each decade.
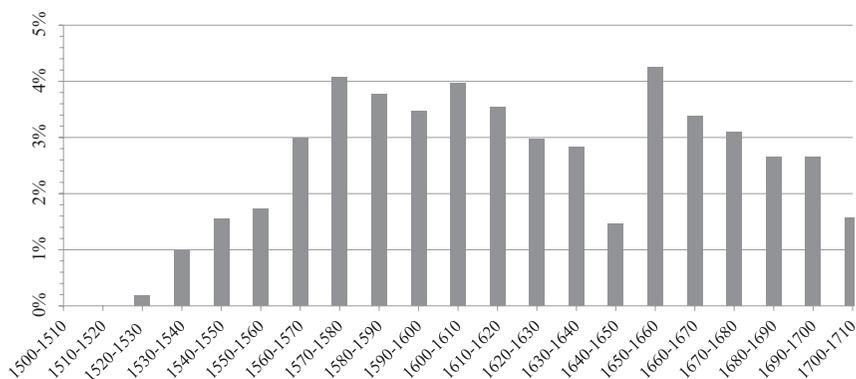
Figure A3.2 Percentage of publications mentioning 'witchcraft' (both for and against) in relation to all printed texts.

The above data was acquired by searching EEBO for the keyword 'witchcraft' with 'variant spellings' and 'variant forms' selected. The date range was set for each decade, for instance '1500–1510', and the keyword search re-entered. The number of publications mentioning witchcraft given by the EEBO search was divided into the total amount of printed works for the selected decade.

Inevitably the percentages are flawed because the EEBO database is not comprehensive and some of the publications listed were registered twice or existed in multiple editions. Nonetheless, the data gives an impressionistic view of the percentage of publications dealing with witchcraft – a surprisingly low figure. The percentage of publications mentioning 'witchcraft' (including publications that attacked and defended witchcraft belief) in '1640–1650' is approximately 1.5%. This low figure reflects the huge output of printed material during the Civil War, which swamped the market with recent news of the conflict and marginalised witchcraft related pamphlets for that decade. From '1650–1660', the percentage of publications mentioning 'witchcraft' rose to 4.2% perhaps because of ongoing witchcraft trials (in 1650s Kent and London, for example) and the backlash from sceptics caused by the East Anglian witch-hunt. This encouraged intellectuals to debate the reality of witchcraft and, eventually, the spirit world; authors who had such works printed in this decade include Thomas Ady, Robert Filmer, Reginald Scot, and Henry More.

4   Familiar Spirits
The Origins of Stearne's Concept of Familiars and Its Symbolisms

Familiar spirits were central to Stearne's witchcraft theory. However, the concept of familiars served as an icon for numerous medieval and early modern concerns, including human-animal boundaries, morality, and sexuality. Familiar spirits made English witches distinct from their European counterparts, for they lived with their owner and enacted *maleficia* on their owner's behalf.[1] The existing printed literature and legal documents of the witch-trials depict familiar spirits as commonly appearing in the form of animals, such as cats, dogs, hedgehogs, birds, and bears, as well as insectoid and humanoid guises.[2] It was believed that someone could receive such a creature through family or friends in the form of a gift, or familiars could appear to an individual at a time of distress to offer help in return for their soul. If accepted, the familiar would live with the witch and carry out malefic magic on their behalf, as long as they continued to receive blood from the witch.[3] The blood was drawn from a supernumerary teat on witch's body known as the witch's mark – a satanic stigmata.[4] Demonic pacts, witch-marks, and familiar spirits were all key motifs of English witchcraft; however, in the East Anglian witch-hunt, they were greatly emphasised.[5] Some historians have attributed the prevalence of these ideas to the witch-finders' demonological beliefs and their use of torture to extract confessions.[6] While the latter is true to some degree, it does not explain all of the witchcraft confessions of the 1640s as some individuals seem to have freely confessed that they were witches and that they had caused harm through magic.[7] Moreover, the witch-finders were not involved in every case of alleged witchcraft, as many of the accusations came from locals from all social classes.[8] Indeed, Sharpe has warned historians that it is tempting to 'write off the Hopkins trials as an aberration, in which "continental ideas" temporarily unsullied the English witch's normally peculiarly non-demonic nature', and that it is unhelpful to dismiss the trial documents' superficially 'unusual features as untypical and probably generated by Hopkins's alleged familiarity with Continental witch beliefs'.[9] Despite the perceived oddities of the East Anglian trials in which Stearne was involved, his text demonstrates that much of content produced during the trials was recognisable in the context of early modern English witchcraft theory.

In the past few decades research into the concept of familiar spirits has highlighted the importance and prevalence of these supernatural creatures in English witchcraft beliefs.[10] But the intellectual origins of familiars are debated by historians: explanatory theories range from fairy-lore, paganism, and shamanism to demonism.[11] The concept of animal familiar spirits was dynamic and expansive, incorporating an astounding variety of medieval and early modern concerns over human-animal boundaries, morality and sexuality – as this chapter will illustrate. Regardless of its source, familiar spirits were undoubtedly a key feature of the East Anglian witchcraft trials and in Stearne's publication. *A confirmation* is an invaluable source for this research as it is packed with details on these demonic entities, which are only mentioned in a small percentage of publications in early modern England.[12] It provides insight into Stearne's views on familiar spirits and the popular ideas surrounding witchcraft and familiars, which he mediates and reflects through his text. There was not, however, a homogenous definition of familiar spirits in early modern England. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witchcraft pamphlets theories surrounding familiars were common and elaborate, while in learned treatises references to familiars were strictly biblical.[13] Extant legal documents of the Home Circuit pertaining to witchcraft are also largely silent on familiars and are primarily concerned with acts of *maleficia*. There is a notable change in the records between 1645 and 1649 in which familiars are recurrent. James Serpell has calculated that out of the 322 English witchcraft cases he identified as involving evidence of familiars, nearly half (150) of them were generated during the 1640s, due to Stearne and Hopkins's activities.[14] This peak in references to familiars is perhaps because of the magnitude of the witch-hunt, which left a rich body of historical evidence. It may also be due to a delayed, and methodical, implementation of the 1604 witchcraft legislation by actors in the East Anglian trials, for few witchcraft trials were presented at the assize courts between the 1620s and 1640s. After the passing of the 1604 witchcraft act, simply owning or consulting with familiars was a felony. The law stated that any person who should use 'any invocation or conjuration of any evil and wicked spirit, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feede or rewarde any evil an wicked spirit…shall use, practice or exercise witchcraft …shall suffer pains of death as a felon'.[15] After decades of witchcraft trials, coupled with rising fears of Catholicism and the looming eschaton, many villagers aided the witch-finders in the identification and extermination of witches.[16] With local support, scriptural and legal knowledge, and Bernard's witch-hunting manual, *A guide to grand jury-men* (1627), Stearne set out to prosecute witches. Once the trials had finished, Stearne recorded his discoveries in *A confirmation* using the same literature and interwove his experiences of the witch-hunt into his text.

Few scholars have directly discussed the epistemological basis of the witch-theories articulated by Stearne in his pamphlet.[17] The East Anglian trials were written off by most twentieth-century historians as an anomaly

fuelled by witch-finders who were inspired by European demonologies and other, more atavistic, impulses.[18] But Kittredge, Sharpe, and Gaskill have noted that Stearne relied heavily on Bernard's work when constructing his narrative, and that neither Bernard nor Stearne used European demonologies extensively, preferring to rely upon English authors and past witchcraft trials instead. Stearne's concept of familiars can thus be explored further by extending research beyond Bernard's work. By following references to external publications, both learned and popular sources, in Bernard and Stearne's work, we can begin to map the literary influences underpinning Stearne's witch-theory, particularly his ideas on familiar spirits and its ideological functions. To further theologically locate Stearne's theories on familiars, his ideas will be contextualised among those of his contemporaries by utilising printed material, diaries, and legal documents. This chapter will argue that Stearne's rendering of familiars was the effect of the 'practical demonology' created by the theological and legal writers of the early seventeenth century, such as Thomas Potts, Michael Dalton, and Richard Bernard. The concept of animal familiar spirits was an emblem for numerous medieval and early modern concerns; however, the symbolism of the animal familiar has not been extensively studied by historians despite its importance in the history of English witchcraft, particularly during the 1640s. The witch-hunters were effective in indicting witches as they combined learned and popular understandings of familiar spirits with the law, thus securing the necessary legal proofs for conviction. The East Anglian witch-hunt was the apogee for English witchcraft trials. But Stearne's witch-hunting proved to be controversial even in puritan Essex, as two powerful men at Colchester attempted to expel the witch-finders from the county in 1645 and the trials eventually halted in 1647.[19] Though the trials have been labelled as atypical due to the witch-finders' influence and witches' elaborate confessions containing tales of the Devil and familiars, similar confessions can be found in succeeding witchcraft publications and trials, even in the 1700s. The ideas about demonic familiar spirits articulated by Stearne in *A confirmation* were contentious to some of his contemporaries yet they are prevalent in early modern demonologies. However, these concepts also had much older roots. This chapter will explore the various influences underpinning Stearne's concept of familiar spirits. It will argue that he was able to synthesise various strands of English demonological thought and applied it to the law to effectively prosecute witches during his witch-finding campaign.

Late Medieval Demonology

In *A confirmation* Stearne referenced published trial pamphlets and works by English demonologists, whose ideas were founded upon even earlier traditions. The precise origins of the concept of familiar spirits are uncertain.[20] Jeffrey Russell suggested that familiars were originally folkloric,

pagan spirits that were demonised in Christian discourse. In the late medieval period entities similar to familiar spirits (fairies, for example) were associated with conjurors, necromancers, sorcerers, and sorceresses. Magical practitioners believed that these supernatural creatures could solve personal or financial problems, carry out *maleficia* and grant magical powers once summoned. As witch-theory developed the popular perception of many folkloric spirits shifted to recognise these supernatural agents as demons firmly associated with malefic witchcraft. [21] In a similar vein, Emma Wilby and Diane Purkiss have argued that witches' demonic helpers present in early modern Scottish and English trial narratives are indicative of a widespread popular belief in fairies. As interrogators pressed suspects for witchcraft confessions they elicited accounts of fairies and subsequently demonised them to fit into a Christian cosmology.[22] This paradigm is true in some instances, particularly in Scotland, but in the seventeenth-century East Anglian trials the concept of familiar spirits rested upon popular ideas of the demonic.[23] Similar conclusions have been reached by Oldridge, Sharpe, Johnstone, and Carr, who attribute the prevalence of familiars in English witchcraft trials to popular conceptions of the Devil or demons.[24] During the East Anglian witch-trial narratives, confusion arose as to whether a familiar was an animal inhabited by a demon or if the Devil had assumed animal form. This is evident in Stearne's text and in other contemporary narratives of the 1640s, which described these creatures as familiars, evil spirits, demons, imps or the Devil.[25] Demonological taxonomies could be vague and easily elided by the laity when discussing witchcraft in the seventeenth century.[26]

Popular and learned demonological beliefs are the most plausible way to explain the early modern concept of familiar spirits – an argument proffered by Sharpe, Oldridge, and Johnstone.[27] Demonology is also most applicable to the seventeenth-century witch-theory articulated by Stearne, who did not mention fairies or shamanic practices. The background to early modern demonology and 'diabology' has been explored by historians Robert Muchembled and Norman Cohn, who, like Russell, have demonstrated that in the medieval period theological and popular beliefs of the diabolic were a mix of pagan and Judeo-Christian ideas. Demonology only began to form as a cohesive Christian doctrine in Europe between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By the late 1300s, demons were no longer considered to be external enemies that could be easily defeated through trickery, magic or piety but were extremely powerful supernatural agents that invaded every part of daily life.[28] Fourteenth-century demonological thought contained many features identifiable in Stearne's pamphlet and, more generally, early modern witchcraft trials. Some medieval scholars believed demons and Satan could take human and animal form, make pacts with humans, influence thoughts and emotions, have sexual intercourse with humans and even produce offspring.[29] It is also around the fourteenth century that the idea of the familiar spirit – a central part of Stearne's witch-theory – emerged.

The idea that sorcerers consulted demons was prevalent during the late medieval period, but the concept of a small pet demon, a familiar, that lived with its owner and helped them perform magic gained purchase among the higher orders in the 1300s.[30] English trials which included accusations of relationships with demons were sporadic, infrequent, and confined to the aristocracy.[31] The earliest example of a familiar-like creature can be found in one of the first European witchcraft trials that combined the crimes of heresy and sorcery. The trial occurred in 1324 in County Kilkenny.[32] Although it unfolded on Irish soil, its main protagonists were wealthy aristocrats and churchmen who came from a 'society that associated itself with English law and customs'.[33] Dame Alice Kyteler and ten others were accused by the Bishop of Ossory, Richard de Ledrede, a Franciscan friar from London, of conjuring demons, committing heresy and apostasy, attending sabbats, *maleficia* and of having sex with a personal demon to receive money and magical power. One of Kyteler's alleged co-conspirators, Petronilla of Meath, elaborated further, confessing that this demon was named 'Robin, Son of Art' and that it had appeared to Kyteler as a cat, a shaggy black dog, a black man or as three black men bearing iron rods (tridents) in their hands.[34] These tropes are remarkably similar to those confessions recorded by Stearne three centuries later, thus showing a continuation of medieval demonological beliefs. Stearne told his readers the Essex witch Elizabeth Clarke confessed to having a familiar 'in the likeness of a Cat' and 'a red or sandie spotted dog' called Jermarah.[35] Alice Wright's familiar promised her 'she should have money, and should never misse or want anything'; Anne Hammer confessed she had a familiar in the form of a 'dorr' (flying insect) called Robin;[36] and Anne Boreham claimed to have been visited by three humanoid demons in the guise of 'uglie men', who fought over 'the use of her body'.[37] Therefore, even in 1324 when the discourse of witchcraft was still developing, supernatural creatures similar to familiar spirits can be identified in witchcraft trials involving members of the English elite.[38]

Although thematic links exist between Stearne's witch-belief and those present in medieval English trials, the latter primarily dealt with sorcery and heresy and were political, often involving kings or high ranking officials.[39] As demonology and witchcraft theory spread and developed throughout Europe, connections between sorcery, heresy, and apostasy were strengthened, eventually merging into the diabolic witch-figure. This continued after the Reformation, for the various emergent Protestant churches assimilated the Catholic demonology of medieval Europe.[40] By the time Stearne wrote his pamphlet many forms of 'superstition' had been officially demonised in England; Protestant theologians believed Satan's temptations were 'internalized', unfolding in 'the human heart and mind'; and a dynamic, pervasive belief in demonic witchcraft had firmly taken root.[41] This is evident in the published literature, which fundamentally influenced perceptions of witchcraft, familiar spirits, in particular, through its dissemination across

print, aural, and oral cultures.[42] Stearne directly contributed to and was influenced by these cultures, as is clear from his engagement with previously printed demonological works.

Familiar Spirits in Print Cultures

The theories underpinning Stearne's concept of familiar spirits were mentioned in the trial records of a few sixteenth-century witchcraft cases, but the concept of familiars was most fully articulated in the earliest, extant, printed English witchcraft trial pamphlet of 1566, which narrated the trial of witches in Essex, Chelmsford.[43] In the existing sixteenth-century Home Circuit records, familiars are explicitly mentioned in the trial of a Yorkshire man, John Steward, who, in 1510, fed his bee familiars on blood, and in the case of Margery Barnes of St Osyth, Essex, 1584, who 'governed and maintained' three familiars 'to the great damage of the public'.[44] Six other individuals were indicted for attempting to invoke evil spirits to locate treasure.[45]

In contrast to the paucity of details in the legal records, the author of the 1566 pamphlet, John Philips, explicitly engaged with the concept of familiars within his publication. Philips did not attempt to explain these supernatural creatures, indicating that the concept of witches' familiar spirits was well established and was widely known among the populace before 1566.[46] The Queen's Attorney who presided over the Chelmsford trial did not dismiss the corroborative evidence of familiars; rather, he asked Agnes Waterhouse to summon her familiar spirit during her examination in court – which she usually kept in a pot.[47] The supernatural agent described in the pamphlet was a cat called 'Sathan' (Satan) which allegedly enacted *maleficia* for Agnes. The suspected witches Elizabeth Francis and Agnes Waterhouse confessed to renouncing Christ, giving their bodies and souls to the Devil, and of using their familiar to destroy neighbours' livestock, for which it received blood in return. Like the familiar spirits in Stearne's recorded confessions, 'Sathan' appeared as a cat; a toad; and a hybrid, horned ape-like dog.[48] Though the demonism of the familiar was not explicitly stated by the author, the diabolic undertones in the text are clear: 'Sathan' drew blood from the women, signifying an implicit pact with the Devil, incited Francis to have pre-marital sex with a suitor and promised the witches a better life. These promises were never fulfilled and the witch's life deteriorated.[49] As Carr has noted, these motifs closely resemble accounts from the seventeenth century, particularly the witchcraft narratives of the 1640s, which heavily emphasised the role of the Devil. Indeed, Stearne claimed he had encountered witches who were promised fortunes by their familiars, yet he knew of only two witches whose lives benefitted from demons. Stearne thought their experience was exceptional, 'For the Devill cannot performe his promises'.[50] Although Satan and familiars allegedly helped some witches, in most of the narratives involving a

familiar the entity is portrayed as malicious and deceitful, and 'as an emissary of the devil in his role as the father of lies'.[51] The witchcraft pamphlet published in 1566 set a precedent for future publications and witch-trials, articulated and further disseminated the idea of a witch's demonic familiar throughout England.[52]

The integral place of familiars in witchcraft lore, narratives, and trials was further cemented through the hugely influential witchcraft trial at St Osyth, Essex, 1582, during which fourteen women were tried and two were executed. The lengthy pamphlet by W.W., *A true and just record… of the witches, taken at S. Oses [sic]* was constructed using pre-trial documents, examinations, and confessions. It details confessions extracted by the local JP Brian Darcy, who helped turn Grace Thurlow's initial accusations of witchcraft against Ursula Kempe into a witch-hunt, eagerly pursuing evidence and promising Ursula leniency in return for incriminating evidence. Ursula eventually confessed to Darcy that she had four familiars: two were male cats, Titty and Jack, that could cause death to her enemies, and two were females, Piggin, a black toad, and Tiffin, a white lamb, that could bewitch humans and cattle. In her second interview with Darcy, Ursula implicated Alice Newman, to whom she gave her familiar spirits in a pot, echoing Waterhouse in the 1566 witchcraft pamphlet. According to Ursula, after she had an altercation with Grace, she asked Alice to bewitch the latter. Alice dispatched the familiar Tiffin and, once its task was successfully completed, it sucked Ursula's blood before returning to Alice. In another instance she rewarded the spirit by giving it blood from her thigh, showing that the ideas articulated in 1566 had gained purchase. Ursula incriminated even more women, including Elizabeth Bennett and Alice Hunt who kept colt-like familiar spirits in pots, and Agnes Glascock who vehemently denied accusations against her. However, Darcy had Glascock searched for witch-marks, and spots were found on the left side of her thigh and shoulder.[53] It is evident that the witchcraft trials in Essex during the late 1500s were crucial in reflecting and disseminating popular witchcraft beliefs, setting precedents for prosecutions and circulating this information in print. The subsequent printed literature, influenced by earlier narratives, informed the theories expressed by Stearne in his *Confirmation*.

Stearne made reference to both popular and learned works on witchcraft in his pamphlet. He was most reliant upon Bernard's *Guide to grand jury-men* (1627, 1629, 1630). Despite copying large portions of text from Bernard's publication verbatim, Stearne failed to reference him anywhere in *A confirmation*. This was certainly not uncommon in seventeenth-century print culture, before the adoption of modern assumptions about copyright and authorship.[54] Through his knowledge of Bernard's text, Stearne would have been introduced to the ideas of learned English demonologists, including James VI and I, Thomas Cooper, Reginald Scot, and George Gifford. But Stearne may have also

taken independent reading, outside of Bernard's work, explaining that, 'as my leisure hath permitted me', he had given himself 'to the reading of some approved relations touching the arraignment and condemnation of Witches; As also treatises of learned men concerning the devilish art of Witch-craft; adding withall some few things which otherwise I have learned and observed since'.[55] In *A confirmation*, Stearne explicitly referenced the witchcraft pamphlets reporting on the Witches of Warboys (1593), Lancashire (1613), and Lincolnshire (1618–19), and mentioned James VI and I's *Daemonologie* (1597) and Thomas Cooper's *Mystery of witchcraft* (1617) within his text.[56] These publications were popular seminal texts, which mentioned familiar spirits and diabolic covenants. They were impactful texts that had multiple print runs. They were therefore widely circulated in print, oral, and aural culture, and would have been known to Stearne in some capacity. Indeed, Kittredge has argued that the Warboys case was, at the time, 'the most momentous witch-trial that had ever occurred in England' because it 'produced a deep and lasting impression on the class that made laws'.[57] Its legacy survived not only through print but also through a yearly commemorative sermon that was preached at Huntingdon on the topic of witchcraft.[58] King James VI and I's *Daemonologie* was, understandably, extensively read in England and Scotland. At least four editions were commissioned between 1597 and 1603, placing the total number of official copies printed between 5,000 and 40,000.[59] In 1613, Thomas Potts immortalised the Lancashire witches in his much-cited publication, which disseminated ideas of demonic pacts, familiars, night flying, and witches' sabbats.[60] Cooper's *Mystery of witchcraft* was not as popular as the other tracts discussed above, but it was widely known to subsequent demonologists.[61] Similar to the Witches of Warboys case, the Lancashire trials (1618–9) involved aristocracy, the Earl of Rutland's family, who spread the tale of their suffering to academic and popular audiences by printing three pamphlets and a ballad.[62] The demonological texts cited by Stearne were far-reaching in influence and circulation in England. Through his reading of the printed literature Stearne was able to combine these sources with information garnered from Scripture, oral culture, and his personal experience of the witch-trials to construct his own text and articulate his views on familiar spirits. His ideas on familiars were not new, but he was able to synthesise various strands of English demonological thought and implement them through the Law: what was innovative was the central place Stearne allotted to familiar spirits in his witch-theory and his ability to secure prosecutions based on evidence of familiars.

The Scriptural and Legal Basis of Familiars

For Stearne, animal familiars were indisputably demonic. He regarded animal bodies as vessels that could be possessed by an evil spirit and used to

interact with and harm humans. This theory was reiterated by Hopkins, who argued that Satan

> doth really enter into the body, reall, corporeall, substantiall creature, and forceth that Creature (he working in it) to his desired ends, and useth the organs of that body to speake withall to make his compact up with the Witches, be the creature Cat, Rat, Mouse, &c.[63]

Stearne supported his belief in familiars by referring to the account of the serpent in Genesis 3, and to Mark 5 and Luke 8, in which, following the exorcism of Legion, demons possessed a herd of swine.[64] He informed his readers how

> in Gen. 3 we may learne there that the Devill may enter into a dumb creature, & come out of the same, utter a voice intelligible, & offer conference (if any will hearken) to deceive as our Witches now a dayes confesse.[65]

To Stearne, this was yet another form of diabolic mimicry of God's powers: as 'the Lord spake by a beast unto a Witch, Numb. 22. 28 so Satan speaketh to Witches'.[66] Stearne's biblical interpretation of familiar spirits as the Devil or a demon was not an idiosyncratic opinion, but the concept of familiars was dynamic and controversial to learned authors.

Sir Thomas Browne, the celebrated physician, was convinced of the reality of familiars. In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) Browne theorised that the serpent from the Garden of Eden and witches' familiars demonstrated that animals could be taught how to speak to humans.[67] John Gaule, the Presbyterian minister of Great Staughton in Huntingdonshire, who was fervently opposed to Hopkins, questioned the witch-finders' methods of discovering witches but did not fully reject their concept of familiar spirits.[68] Richard Baxter, Arthur Wilson, and Sir Robert Filmer, however, were more sceptical of familiars. Baxter declared that many reports of possessed animals were probably 'delusions', though he conceded that familiar spirits could exist because 'the frequent Apparitions of Satan in several shapes, drawing men, or frighting them into sin, is a discovery undeniable'.[69] Wilson exuded incredulity in his account: he thought the Essex witches of 1645 to be merely deluded women, and considered sightings of familiars to be a result of fear. He lamented that some individuals 'make every shadow, an apparition, and every rat or cat, an imp or spirit'.[70] Filmer was more aggressive in his refutation. He used the account of the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28 to challenge the existence of familiars and a demonic pact.[71] He believed 1 Samuel 28 to show how an incident with

> a familiar spirit…may seeme a strong evidence that the Devill covenanted with witches; But if all be granted that can be desired, that

this familiar spirit signifies a Devill, yet it comes not home to prove the maine point, for it is no proofe that the familiar spirit enter'd upon Covenant, or had or could give power to others to kill the persons, or destroy the Goods of others.[72]

Using his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, Filmer asserted that witches described as having familiars in Scripture were termed 'Consulters of Ob' (in Hebrew, *ba'alath obh*). He then undermined scriptural justification for the existence of animal familiars by demonstrating that the Hebraic phrase had been mistranslated and had no etymological link to its seventeenth-century usage – instead, it referred to a demoniac or a ventriloquist.[73] Though Stearne referenced the account of the witch of Endor to prove the existence of witches and to show how Satan could manifest as an 'Angel of Light', he did not use it to demonstrate the reality of familiar spirits.[74] Like Stearne, learned seventeenth-century writers relied more upon preceding authors and witch-trials to inform their theories and bolster their arguments because the scriptural basis of familiar spirits was scant and under-developed.[75] For more substantial evidence Stearne turned to the physical traces of familiars he uncovered during his witch-finding activities.

The discovery of witches' familiars provided firm evidence of a pact with the Devil. The most effective way to detect these sometimes invisible beings was by 'watching' suspects – that is, stripping a suspect naked, tying them to a stool positioned in the middle of a room and then keeping them awake. The witch-finders thought watching to be 'a great meanes (under God) to bring them to confession' for they could spot familiars feeding from the witch's mark over the course of several nights, and this increased the propensity of witches to confess.[76] After obtaining countless confessions, Stearne was able to describe the process by which a demonic pact was agreed upon: the Devil 'appeares in severall shapes, and then maketh the league, and confirmes it with bloud, and then sends them Familiars'.[77] Those who confessed to having familiars were, to Stearne, guilty of 'the greatest Apostacie from the faith for they renounce God and Christ and give themselves by a covenant to the Devill, the utter enemy to God and all mankind'.[78] The idea that a witch could channel harmful magic by signing a covenant with the Devil was not a new concept. As George Kittredge noted in *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, the idea of demonic pacts was circulating in England during the eleventh century through the popular legend of Theophilus and in stories of bishops covenanting with Satan to ascend to the papal office, such as Gerbert of Aurillac, who allegedly made a pact with the Devil in 999 to become Pope Silvester II. These motifs were reiterated in plays and tales of fiddlers, carpenters, and victims, who turned to the Devil to achieve their desires.[79] The sixteenth-century legend of Dr Faust, which was popularised in England by Christopher Marlowe, also widely disseminated the idea that some scholars sought diabolic pacts to enhance their knowledge.[80] Stearne was familiar with the

Faustian trope: he encountered it in the various discourses of popular cul-
ture, particularly through a substantial body of printed literature, includ-
ing plays and broadside ballads, which widely circulated the story of Faust
from the late sixteenth century. Print disseminated accounts not only of
Faust but also of similar individuals, such as Dr Lamb and Lewis Gaufredy
(a French witch whose trial account was translated and published in Eng-
land), thus reinforcing the Faustian trope in England. Indeed, some of the
male witches Stearne discovered, such as John Lowes and Henry Carre,
were seen as Faustian figures who had compacted with the Devil to gain
preternatural powers or knowledge.[81] The notion of a pact or covenant was
widely accepted by theologians and it played a central part in seventeenth-
century English witchcraft theories, and its related literature.[82]

   The authors upon whom Stearne relied provided discussion on the de-
monic pact. In those cases of witchcraft in which hard evidence was scarce,
the discovery of familiars exposed the witches' covenant with the Devil,
for Stearne believed the covenant preceded the bestowal of familiars. Both
Stearne and Bernard emphasised the importance of a demonic pact: 'To
convict any one of witchcraft, is to prove a league made with the Devil. In
this only act standeth the very reality of a Witch'.[83] The pact is also evi-
dent in the other literature Stearne claimed to have read. The demonic pact
was alluded to by the authors of the Witches of Warboys pamphlets, who
accused three suspected witches of keeping familiars, feeding them blood
and causing *maleficia*, primarily through possession/obsession.[84] James VI
and I was aware of the pattern, noting that for witches who 'plainelie begin
to contract with him [Satan]', he appeared 'at their calling upon him, by
such a proper name which he shewes vnto them, either in likenes of a dog,
a Catte, an Ape, or such-like other beast'.[85] Thomas Potts's *Wonderful
discovery* contained witches' confessions that detailed the pact and were
identical to those recoded by Stearne. For instance, Potts tells us Elizabeth
Southerns confessed that she covenanted with

> a Spirit or Devill…who bade this Examinate stay, saying to her, that if
> she would give him her Soule, she should have anything that she would
> request… this Examinate in hope of such gaine as was promised by the
> sayd Devill or Tibb, was contented to give her Soule to the said Spirit.[86]

The connection between Stearne's and Potts's publications is perhaps both
literary and epistemological, for, as Kittredge noted, Potts's tract heavily in-
fluenced Bernard's work and disseminated more demonic witchcraft beliefs
to the public.[87] This was also true of Cooper's *Mystery of witchcraft*, in
which he lucidly explicated the necessary proofs to convict a witch. Cooper
stressed that a suspect's free confession to witchcraft (that is, no coercion
was used to elicit it) was preferable for prosecutors as it was instantly damn-
ing for the suspect. But investigators could also achieve conviction if they
obtained the testimony of two witnesses and could prove the witch 'hath

made a league with Satan; or hath done some knowne practise of Witch-craft'. Two of Cooper's proofs were 'That the Witch hath called upon the devill for helpe' and 'That she entertaines a familiar spirit, and had con-ference with it in any Forme, or likenesse'.[88] Cooper explained the theory behind these discoveries: finding evidence of familiars uncovered witches' pacts, for witches 'let themselves blood in some apparant place of the body, yeelding the same to be sucked by Satan, as a sacrifice unto him, and testi-fying thereby the full subjection of their lives'.[89] It is no coincidence that the vital proofs concerning familiars and the demonic pact outlined by Cooper, and later Bernard, were pursued by Hopkins and Stearne in the 1640s.[90]

Proving that a witch had made a pact with Satan hinged upon the con-cept of familiar spirits, for it could provide physical evidence in the form of the witch's mark. As noted above, familiars were believed to feed from this mark – a supernumerary teat located on the body. The theory of the Devil branding witches was well established. Stearne was able to ratify and ad-vance his understanding of the witch's mark using passages in Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 7 and 13.16, particularly the latter, which stated that the Beast 'causeth all to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads'.[91] Although the notion of the Devil's mark was deeply rooted, the enthusi-asm with which Stearne, Hopkins and their female searchers examined sus-pects for these protuberances was new to England.[92] Stearne asserted that witches' marks could be discerned 'by the insensiblenesse of them' or, if 'inward', by 'a little bit of skin, which may be extended and drawn out'. He claimed that these 'may be known from natural marks several ways; for it hath no scar, but at the very top a little hole, where the blood cometh out. But if it be inward, then it is beyond all natural marks'.[93] It was believed that familiars drew blood from these teats: discovering marks proved a witch's pact and their subservience to Satan. By searching for these physical anomalies Stearne followed Bernard's contention that 'where this marke is, there is a league and a familiar spirit'.[94] But Stearne had also embraced a peculiar belief of Bernard's regarding the morphology of the witch's mark. For both men, two distinct forms of the demonic branding were to be ob-served: the witch's mark of the malefic witch and the Devil's mark of the white witch.[95] Contrary to William Monter's claim, both types of marks were found on male and female witches in England, as Stearne argued in *A confirmation* and demonstrated through his witch-hunting.[96] The concept of the Devil's mark was part of Continental witchcraft theory, as was the practice of searching for it. From the early sixteenth century, local judges in Western Europe sanctioned extensive examinations for the Devil's mark.[97] In contrast to the teat-like appearance of the witch's mark, the Devil's mark was a red or blue disfigurement of the witch's skin, which visually resem-bled claw marks across their body or the imprint of a hot iron.[98] In Eng-land, investigations aimed at uncovering the witch's mark were undertaken in late sixteenth-century witchcraft trials and continued thereafter.[99] Un-der the witch-finders' guidance, both the Devil's and witches' marks were

found frequently and used as legal evidence. Indeed, out of the 110 surviving testimonies from the East Anglian witch-hunt, 78 mention marks and familiars.[100] Stearne was therefore following a well-established legal and literary tradition by searching witches' bodies diligently for indicative marring of the skin.[101] However, the systematic, scientific method that Stearne described in *A confirmation* and deployed in his witch-finding was innovative (see Chapter 6).

Familiars and Concerns Over Human-Animal Boundaries

The East Anglian witch-hunters helped search for and discover hundreds of witches, many of whom were found to have marks and familiar spirits. Although individuals gave testimony of personally witnessing witches' familiars appear, these animals were not presented to judges or juries as evidence of the suspect's guilt. Animal trials were not practiced in England as they were in Continental Europe, but beasts could be unofficially tried and hanged for a perceived crime.[102] Due to a paucity of animal trials in England, Barbara Rosen and Walter Stephens have argued that the role of the familiar in English witchcraft trials was purely theological. Rosen observed that 'it is notable that the indispensable familiars…are never produced in court as evidence, or even found…the idea [of familiars] is more important than the actuality'.[103] Similarly, Stephens suggested that the familiar's function was to

> demonstrate the reality of the interaction with demons, there was no reason why an animal could not have been produced as evidence. Conversely, to have brought the demonic familiar into court would have exposed it to scepticism and scorn by revealing how little it could possibly differ from ordinary cats, dogs, or toads.[104]

Part of the familiar's theoretical function was to prove the diabolic pact and thus the witch's guilt – this was made legally viable with the passing of the 1604 witchcraft act. But familiars were also emblematic of the animalisation of witches. The familiar helped symbolise the animality of the witch's thoughts and actions, which were portrayed as unreasoned, sinful, impulsive, and bestial. This element of the familiar has been largely overlooked by historians. Boria Sax, Charlotte Rose-Millar, and Keith Thomas have mentioned this function of familiars, but they did not probe it further (much research has to be undertaken in this area).[105] These studies, in conjunction with others, demonstrate that the idea of the familiar was an extensive, syncretic blend of English, European, elite, and popular cultures. Familiar spirits were a cipher for concerns about human-animal boundaries, sexuality, and the diabolic.[106] The amorphous nature of the concept rendered it easy to appropriate for writers like Stearne, who could elaborate upon it and reconcile it with local traditions. Therefore, in order to further

comprehend Stearne's perception of familiar spirits, the wider ideological trends influencing his understanding of these entities should be considered.

Confessions containing animal-like familiars can be found throughout *A confirmation*. A typical example recorded by Stearne came from Elizabeth Finch, who confessed that a familiar in the form of a dog sucked from her marks and that Satan had used her blood to seal a covenant.[107] But neither Stearne nor other early modern English demonologists discussed the significance of such animals, which were increasingly seen as emissaries of the Devil or as being the Devil himself. Stearne's rationale for the corporeality of animal familiars was diabolic possession, and for their chosen guises explained that Satan 'chooseth the subtilest creature to deceive by...he chooseth such creatures as they [witches] themselves are most addicted to'.[108] Stearne's fear of diabolic animals was a continuation and development of medieval thought. Joyce Salisbury has shown that during the late medieval period human-animal boundaries became blurred due to widespread beliefs in, and concerns about, theriomorphic demons, hybridized species, and shapeshifting animals. Concurrently, as demonology advanced, the alterity and demonism of animals were used to reaffirm cultural ideals of behaviour. In an attempt to forge clear dividing lines between humans and beast, behaviour became the defining criterion as to what was truly human and animal.[109] Thomas noted that beasts 'provided the most readily-available point of reference for the continuous process of human self-definition...animals offered an almost exhaustible fund of symbolic meaning'.[110] Scripture provided further guidance on human-animal boundaries.

The presentation of an animal, albeit a demonic one, as an agent of harm against humans demonstrated the inversion of God's natural order. In early modernity it was believed that God's law, stated in Genesis 1.28, gave humans control of the animal kingdom and placed animals on a lower level of creation. By using animal familiars to carry out *maleficia* against humans, witches helped represent the Devil's aping of God, and marked a direct breach of God's natural order. The witch-figure also signified diabolical inversion through her actions. An animal's natural behaviour exemplified the bodily, sinful urges Christians were to avoid. Such base emotions included lust, violence, and impulsiveness or irrationality, which stood in contrast to the rational, moralistic mind.[111] Animal-like emotions were also traits of a stereotypical witch and were often attributed to women, who, Salisbury claimed, 'had been reduced to the bestial' by the sixteenth century.[112] English witchcraft included anxieties over demons, women, morality, and animals. However, female English witches had another conceptual layer related to animals which highlighted their otherness and incorporated concerns over beasts – that is, witches' intimate relationships with animal familiars.[113]

The witchcraft narratives recorded by Stearne included confessions of familiars suckling from witch-marks that were located near the witch's genitalia, thus introducing a sexual element that verged on bestiality and which

threatened to transgress human-animal boundaries.[114] Some of the most vivid accounts of this came from the witches Stearne examined in Suffolk. Goody Smith confessed 'that her imps hang in her secret parts in a bag and her husband saw it and that these imps sucked on her'; Margaret Bayts confessed that 'when she was at work she felt a thing come upon her legs and go into her secret parts and nipped her in her secret parts where her marks were found'; Anne Usher told her examiners that after encountering a cat which scratched her, 'she felt 2 things like butterflies in her secret parts with witchings dansings and sucking & she felt them with her hands and rubbed them'.[115] Such narratives described witches engaging in oral sex with animal-like demons. By confessing to this the suspects indicted themselves for witchcraft and suggested participation in acts akin to bestiality, both of which were capital crimes. Courtney Thomas has argued that the legal standing of witchcraft and bestiality were closely linked in late sixteenth-century England because both were considered 'horror crimes' that were jointly legislated against, appearing together in a single Elizabethan Bill of 1563. Courtney Thomas maintained that 'the 1563 timing of the statues is neither accidental nor coincidental', for it was part of a 'harsh stance against irreligious crimes' designed to further the Protestant Reformation.[116] Millar took a different approach to Thomas, but she also emphasised the alterity of witches' familiars. Millar argued that sexual practices, such as cunnilingus and anilingus, attributed to animal-like familiars served to illustrate sexual practices that were regarded as deviant. Millar has suggested that cunnilingus was 'less common than other sorts of sexual practices' and that

> its frequent inclusion in witchcraft pamphlets would seem to emphasise the unnaturalness of sexual acts between witches and devils. Of all possible illicit sexual practises, it was cunnilingus, an act designed for female pleasure, which was referred to and incorporated into witchcraft print.[117]

The suspected activities of witches were made further abhorrent by their demons' 'animalistic form [which] made their deviancy even more unnatural and disturbing', for it breached human-animal boundaries.[118]

By the time Stearne began writing *A confirmation*, possibly in the summer of 1648, bestiality had been a capital crime in England for over a century (since 1534), but it had been denounced by preachers long before and would be long after this date. Bestiality was viewed as a crime that breached God's natural order, polluted both parties and was ultimately sinful.[119] This is reflected by Henry Ainsworth, who, in his exegesis on the Pentateuch, described bestiality as a sin of 'confusion'.[120] Lancelot Andrews elaborated further on its severity in his posthumously published *Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (1650):

> Bestiality an abomination not to be named, buggery with a beast, forbidden by the law, and punished with death both of man and beast; and

not onely with the death of the body, but with that of the soul too… They which make a confusion (as it is called) between themselves and beasts, shall be brought to worse than a beastly confusion in the end.[121]

In a similar vein, William Slayter's *The Compleat Christian* (1643) deemed it an unnatural, monstrous pollution of body and soul.[122] Although bestiality was not explicitly mentioned in English witchcraft narratives, it was suggested through descriptions of familiar spirits' actions. Stephens has concurred, contending that a familiar's 'corporeal contact involved a suckling that is about as intimate as sexual intercourse. Although the physical sensations may be more sedate, they are still sensuous and there is an exchange of bodily fluids'.[123] The primary bodily fluid being referred to was blood, which Stearne told his readership 'is fetched to seal the Covenant'.[124] The reasons why this was sought, though, were not fully explained in Stearne's *Confirmation*.

Blood held an ambiguous, quasi-mystical status in early modern thought. It was a mixture between the

physical and spiritual substances inside man, which it represented as a liquid, that is a matter between the gassy and the solid state, and as the carrier of both the body's and Christian's soul life. It was the Devil's required source which helped him act in the world through the witches' subordination.[125]

Francis Mattenoini suggested that some demonologists believed that blood contained the human soul, 'the unique, real object craved and attacked by the Devil'.[126] Therefore, when animal familiars drew blood from the witches' mark, they renewed the demonic covenant. In the process, familiars could entice witches further into sin.[127] As Hopkins put it, demons sucked from the witches' mark 'to aggravate the Witches damnation, and to put her in mind of her Covenant'.[128]

Temptation could be communicated through physical contact by demons, for the body was believed to be porous and vulnerable to external pollutants.[129] A few decades after the witch-hunt, Joseph Glanvill argued in *Saducismus triumphatus* (1681) that 'the familiar doth not only suck the witch, but in the action infuseth some poysonous ferment into her, which gives her imaginations and Spirits a magical tincture, whereby they become mischievously influential'. He continued, saying that it was

plain to conceive that the evil spirit having breath'd some vile vapour into the body of the Witch, it may taint her blood and spirits with a noxious quality, by which her infected imagination, heightened by melancholy and this worse cause, may do much hurt upon bodies.[130]

Familiar spirits were therefore working inside witches, through their blood.[131] In this sense, familiars were doubly effective, for it was believed

that their animal form also had this intrinsic ability. Close relations with animals were discouraged due to the anxiety of breaching human-animal boundaries – even pets, according to Keith Thomas.[132] Richard Capel (1633), for example, warned that 'over familiar usage of any bruite creature is to bee abhorred', and that any sexual contact with animals would turn 'man into a very beast' and make 'a man a member of a bruite creature …by all meanes this soule corruption must be avoided'.[133] In 1667 Dr Edmund King's experiment, which intended to transfuse lamb's blood into a man, was hindered after concerns over his subject's potential animalisation were raised.[134] Finally, in a sermon to the House of Commons in Westminster in 1644, John Langley spoke of man's sinful, beast-like nature, preaching that 'all bestiality seems to have run into man, and to concenter in him. The nature of the beast is the vice of man; so that the beast, if it could speak, might say, the man is become like one of us'.[135] The symbol of the animal familiar conceptually demonstrated to some intellectuals how witches forged a blood pact with Satan, and how witches' sinful behaviour was demonically inspired and bestial. The theoretical foundation of the familiar was strong and legally damning for confessed witches. Stearne did not have to develop the concept of familiar spirits much further because it functioned as an icon that had assimilated centuries of diverse demonological beliefs.

Stearne's Concept of Familiars in Context

Stearne's concept of familiar spirits stemmed from numerous authors and intellectual traditions. The idea of demonic animal familiars spread far beyond early modern English witchcraft theory and demonology, for it included European, classical, and medieval perceptions of animals and medical theory. The East Anglian witch-trials were atypical in the volume of witchcraft accusations and prosecutions recorded, largely due to fears of the demonic inspired by the Civil War. The theoretical construct of the witch's familiar was a culmination of many strands of early modern thought that was mediated to Stearne through oral and print culture. Stearne did exhibit some peculiarities such as the conflation of and systematic searching for witches' and devil's marks; the witch-finders' practice of 'watching' witches to locate familiars; his unrelenting pursuit of witches' confessions and their subsequent demonization and sexualisation. Although these ideas were not new to English witchcraft, the emphasis Stearne placed on them was new, as was his ability to synthesise the demonological literature and apply it to the law for successful witchcraft prosecutions. Between the lapse in successful witchcraft trials early in the seventeenth century and the upsurge of trials in the 1640s, English witch-theory was widely disseminated through learned print and popular culture. The concepts proffered by earlier demonologists were assimilated by Stearne and made manifest in the witch-hunting techniques and theories he articulated in *A confirmation*. While Stearne's witchcraft theory was based on influential puritan demonologies and legal

tracts, and was supported by many locals, his witch-hunting proved to be contentious in East Anglia, resulting in the termination of the trials in 1647. Central to Stearne's witch-theory was his complex belief in animal familiar spirits, which he used as critical evidence to prosecute witches. Stearne's ideas of witches and familiars drew as much from demonological tradition as from early modern concepts of sex and gender.

Notes

1 Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, p 48; Goodare, 'Scottish witchcraft in its European context', pp 35–6.

2 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, *passim*; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, *passim*; Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of thirty witches at Chensford*; Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene vvitches*; H. F., *A true and exact relation*; Hopkins, *Discovery*.

3 Wilby, 'The witch's familiar', pp 283–305; Stearne, *passim*, especially pp 16–33. Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 34–9, 74, 79. For an early trial pamphlet see John Philips, *The examination and confession of certaine wytches at Chensforde in the countie of Essex* (London, 1566).

4 Vincenzo Lavenia, 'Witch's mark' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, pp 1220–1; Orna Darr, *Marks of an absolute witch: evidentiary dilemmas in early modern England* (Farnham, 2011), pp 111–40; Russell, *Witchcraft in the middle ages*, p 218; Boria Sax, 'The magic of animals: English witch trials in the perspective of folklore', *Anthroös*, xxii, no. 4 (2009), p 320.

5 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, compare pp 223–236 which contain legal documents on the East Anglian witch-hunt, to pp 128–222 and 237–63, which contain sporadic references to familiars in other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witchcraft trials.

6 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, p 52; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 139; Keith Thomas, 'The relevance of social anthropology to the historical study of English witchcraft' in, Mary Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft confessions and accusations* (reprinted, London, 2004), p 50.

7 See for example, Stearne, p 26; Wallington, *Great marcys continued*, p 177; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 294, 297, 301, 305, 308–12.

8 Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 45–78; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 545; Sharpe, 'The devil in East Anglia', p 250.

9 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 130–1.

10 Sharpe, 'Familiars', ii, p 347; James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in early modern England* (London, 2001), pp 62–4; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 70–2; Purkiss, 'Fairies', ii, pp 345–6; Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 2–3; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, pp 48–9.

11 Sharpe, 'Familiars', p 347; Wilby, *Cunning folk*, pp 14–25; Purkiss, 'Fairies', pp 345–6.

12 See Appendix to this chapter for a tabulation of the following: EEBO search for 'familiar spirit' with 'variant spelling' and 'variant forms' selected returned the following results: 1500–9: 0; 1510–19: 0; 1520–9: 0; 1530–9: 1; 1540–9: 0; 1550–9: 5; 1560–9: 9; 1570–9: 9; 1580–9: 15; 1590–9: 17; 1600–9: 23; 1610–9: 40; 1620–9: 39; 1630–9: 29; 1640–9: 58; 1650–9: 147; 1660–9: 73; 1670–9: 76; 1680–9: 75; 1690–9: 80; 1700–10: 8.

13 See, for example, Filmer, *An advertisement*. Discussed above and in Chapter 6.

14 James Serpell, 'Guardian spirits or demonic pets: the concept of the witch's familiar in early modern England, 1530–1712' in, Angela Creager and William

Jordan (eds), *The animal/human boundary: historical perspectives* (New York, 2002), pp 162–4, 168.

15 'An Act against conjuration witchcrafte and dealinge with evil and wicked spirits', 1 Jac. I, c. 12 (1604) in, *The statutes of the realm* (11 vols, London, 1819; reprint 1963), iv, part 2, p 1028.

16 For a wider context see Gary Waite, 'Sixteenth-century religious reform and the witch-hunts' in, Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 485–505.

17 Some exceptions are, Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, pp 273, 564; Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia', pp 251–2; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, pp 489–94.

18 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, p 52; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p 139; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, p 544.

19 Stearne, p 58; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 131–2.

20 For an outline of the debates see Wilby, *Cunning folk*; Serpell, 'Guardian spirits', pp 157–84; Purkiss, 'Fairies', pp 345–6; Sharpe, 'Familiars', p 347; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 71–5; Robert Muchembled, *A history of the Devil from the middle ages to the present* (Cornwall, 2003).

21 Russell, *Witchcraft in the middle ages*, pp 190–3; Sax, 'The magic of animals', pp 317–332. For an example of such a summoning spell, see Folger Shakespeare Library, 'Spell to bind the seven sister fairies', X.d.234.

22 Purkiss, 'Fairies', pp 345–6; Emma Wilby, *Cunning folk*; Wilby, 'The witch's familiar', pp 283–305.

23 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 84–5, 206–8; Goodare, 'Scottish witchcraft in its European context', pp 32–8.

24 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', p 79; James Sharpe, 'The witch's familiar in Elizabethan Essex', pp 219–32; Sharpe, 'Familiars', pp 347–9; Darren Oldrige, 'Fairies and the Devil in early modern England', *The Seventeenth Century Journal*, xxxi, no.1 (2016), pp 1–15.

25 Stearne, pp 12–32, 36–44; Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene witches*, *passim*; H. F., *A true and exact relation*, preface; Gaule, *Select cases*. They were also called 'Genius', according to J. B., *An English expositor teaching the interpretation of the hardest words used in our language* (London, 1641), sig. H1r.

26 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 111–41; Sharpe, 'The witch's familiar in Elizabethan Essex', p 226.

27 Sharpe, 'The witch's familiar in Elizabethan Essex', pp 219–32; Sharpe, 'Familiars', pp 347–9; Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 59–63 152–9; Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 75–6, 143, 148.

28 Cohn, *Europe's inner demons*, pp 17–34; Muchembled, *A history of the Devil*, pp 9–34; also, see Conie Saunders, *Magic and the supernatural in medieval English romances* (Cambridge, 2010), pp 59–86.

29 Muchembled, *A history of the Devil*, pp 9–34, 108–11; Saunders, *Magic and the supernatural*, pp 74–86; for numerous illustrations of demons with animal features see Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *Devils, demons and witchcraft: 244 illustrations for artists* (New York, 1971).

30 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', p 79; Russell, *Witchcraft in the middle ages*, pp 187–8.

31 Saunders, *Magic and the supernatural*, pp 73–77.

32 Ibid., pp 189–90; Sax, 'The magic of animals', pp 319, 322; John Bradley, 'Kyteler, Alice (ca. 1260/1265–after 1324)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, pp 613–5; Esther Liberman-Cuenca, 'Belief and practice: ideas of sorcery and witchcraft in late medieval England' (MA thesis, California State University, 2007), pp 48–55; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the middle ages* (Cambridge, 1989), p 180.

33 Quote from, Andrew Sneddon, *Witchcraft and magic in Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2015), p 16; also see Russell, *Witchcraft in the middle ages*, pp 190–1.

34 Russell, *Witchcraft in the middle ages*, pp 191–3; Bradley, 'Kyteler, Alice', p 614; John Seymour, *Irish witchcraft and demonology* (Dublin, 1913), pp 25–30; L.S. Davidson and J.O. Ward (eds), *The sorcery trial of Alice Kyteler: a contemporary account (1324) together with related documents in English translation, with introduction and notes* (Asheville, 2004), pp 26–30; William Riddell, 'First execution for witchcraft in Ireland', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vii, no. 6 (1917), pp 828–37. The blackness of the men in Petronilla's confession denotes their demonic nature, 'in conformity with Christian tradition and almost worldwide symbolism', but it might be a reference to the colour of their clothing, rather than their skin colour, as the former was common in medieval folktales; see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: the devil in the middle ages* (New York, 1984), pp 68–9, and, Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, p 67.

35 Stearne, p 15.

36 Ibid., p 31; Samuel John, *A dictionary of the English language* (3rd edn, London, 1768).

37 Stearne, p 32.

38 Liberman-Cuenca, 'Belief and practice', p 38.

39 Kieckhefer, *Magic in the middle ages*, pp 187–8,190

40 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, pp 2, 29–35; Gerhild Williams, 'Demonologies' in, Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 77–81.

41 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, pp 29–35; Kieckhefer, *Magic in the middle ages*, pp 184–6, 191, 196–7; P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witchcraft: a history* (Stroud, 2004), p 12; Brock, 'Internalizing the demonic', pp 23–43; Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 60–141; Tay, 'Puritan demonology', pp 145–51.

42 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 60, 141. Also see Fox, *Oral and literate culture* (Oxford, reprinted 2003).

43 Philips, *The examination and confession of certaine wytches*. For the trial records pertaining to the 1566 trial see Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 119–20. Suhr, *Publishing for the masses*, pp 106–7, suggests that between 1566 and 1579, or perhaps before 1566, another witchcraft pamphlet was printed based on the woodcuts used by printers. The image used to depict familiars in a 1579 witch–trial pamphlet does not match the text's narrative, meaning that it was reused from another printed work that has since been lost.

44 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism,* p 73; Serpell, 'Guardian spirits', p 177; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, p 150. No additional details are given for Barnes's familiars.

45 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 128, 131, 135, 186.

46 Sharpe, 'The witch's familiar in Elizabethan Essex', p 288.

47 Briggs, *Witches & neighbours*, pp 29–30; for a reprint of the trial pamphlet see Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England, 1558–1618* (Amherst, 1991) pp 81–2; Suhr, *Publishing for the masses*, pp 86, 104–7, 180, 234–6.

48 Stearne, pp 15, 21 32, for example; see the woodcut in Hopkins's *Discovery* (1647) depicting familiars.

49 Briggs, *Witches & neighbours*, pp 29–30; Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 58, 101. Also see Marion Gibson, *Reading witchcraft: stories of early English witches* (London, 1999), pp 25–6, 196.

50 Stearne, pp 10, 27.

51 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', p 101.

52 Ibid., pp 58–61; Suhr, *Publishing for the masses*, pp 21–6.

53 W.W., *A true and just record…of the witches, taken at S. Oses* [sic] (London, 1582); Willow Winsham, *England's witchcraft trials* (Barnsley, 2018), chap. 1.
54 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 4; Kate Narveson, *Bible readers and lay writers in early modern England: gender and self-definition in an emergent writing culture* (Farnham, 2012), pp 45–7, 63–5; Fox, *Oral and literate culture*, pp 5, 19, 36–50; Peacey, *Print and public politics*, pp 117–22, 241, 248; Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, p 273 refers to Stearne's pamphlet as a piece of 'extensive and peculiar plagiarism', and on p 295 notes that Thomas Cooper borrowed much from William Perkins without due acknowledgement. For a contemporary example related to copyright and authorship see Harvard University, Houghton, 'Joseph Glanvill, letter to Henry More, 13 March [1666/7]', MS Eng 855.
55 Stearne, sig. A2r.
56 For references see Stearne, sigs A2v-3r, pp 11, 26; Sharpe, 'The devil in East Anglia', p 251; Davies, *The discovery of witches*, pp x–xxiv.
57 Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, pp 304–5.
58 Francis Bragge, *A full and impartial account of the discovery of sorcery and witchcraft* (London, 1712), preface. The annual sermon on witchcraft continued into the nineteenth century, see Joseph Gray, *The Queen's college of St. Margaret and St. Bernard in the University of Cambridge* (London, 1899), pp 128–9. The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) shows that two versions of the Warboys publication exist, of which five are extant.
59 Peacey, *Print and public politics*, pp 244–5, states that such print runs could produce anywhere between 1,000 and 10,000 books. Equally remarkable is that the ESTC lists sixty-one surviving copies for King James's *Daemonologie*.
60 James Sharpe, 'Introduction' in, Robert Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire witches: histories and stories* (Manchester, 2002), pp 1–18. Although Potts's *Wonderful discovery* had a single print run, the ESTC records fifteen copies that have survived.
61 Only one edition of Cooper's *Mystery* was printed, thirteen copies of which are extant, according to the ESTC.
62 Anon., *The wonderful discoverie of the witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (London, 1619), there may have been a 1621 reprint; see the ballad, Anon., *Damnable practises of three Lincolne-shire witches* (London, 1619); and Anon., *Witchcrafts strange and wonderful* (London, 1635), which reiterates the Flowers's witchcraft case. Combined, the ESTC records fourteen publications concerning the Earl's bewitchment. The Earl also erected a monument to their sons, explicitly stating that he had died from bewitchment; see William Andrews (ed.), *Bygone Leicestershire* (London, 1892), pp 90–1.
63 Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 7.
64 Stearne, sig. A3, p 3.
65 Ibid., p 6.
66 Ibid., p 52.
67 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p 107; see also Browne, *Religio medici*, pp 56–7; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 237; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 227–8.
68 Gaule, *Select cases*, pp 10, 62–7, 106–8; see Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 135, 158–9.
69 Baxter, *The saint's everlasting rest*, pp 237–8.
70 Arthur Wilson, 'Observations of God's providence', pp 475–7.
71 Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 174–81; Maxwell-Stuart, 'Astrology, magic and witchcraft', pp 337–8; see Stearne, sig. A3, pp 4, 40, 57, for references to this passage.
72 Filmer, *An advertisement*, p 18.

73 Ibid., pp 16–21; Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', pp 178–9. For a discussion on the Hebrew phrase and its translation see Maxwell-Stuart, 'Astrology, magic and witchcraft', pp 337–8. For Filmer's scepticism towards witchcraft see Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, pp 13–20.

74 Stearne, sig. A3, pp 4, 40, 57. See the 1599 Geneva Bible's annotations for Gen. 3, 1 Sam. 28, Mark 5, for a brief discussion see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp 73–82. Also see Arthur Jackson, *Annotations upon the remaining historicall part of the Old Testament*; Joseph Caryl, *An exposition with practical observations*, p 243. For a parabolic, political use of 1 Samuel see Johnstone, *The devil and demonism*, pp 5–6; Hill, *Antichrist*, pp 78, 85–95, 131–8.

75 Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, p 30; Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', p 180

76 Stearne, pp 13–4, 16, 54. Stearne tries to distance himself from the practice of watching by claiming that suspects were not deprived of food, water or sleep before confessing, but were kept in relative comfort. He stated that Elizabeth Clarke was watched for three days and nights 'but how she was kept I know not, for I came not at her during that time' (pp 13–4). Similarly, in Hopkins', *Discovery*, Querie 9 and 11, he retorted that watching was not abused and used to forcibly extract confessions. Despite the witch-finders claims, watching was semi-torturous as suspected witches could be held for days – eight days, in one case; see transcribed depositions in, Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 294–5.

77 Stearne, p 33.

78 Stearne, sig. A2v.

79 Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, pp 239–41; see Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (London, 1612). The demonic pact was also represented in sculpture in East Anglia: a depiction of the legend of Theophilus was constructed in Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel, around the 1320s. Most of the sculpture can still be seen today but it was badly damaged by iconoclasts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; see Francis Young, *Witches and witchcraft in Ely: a history* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 5–9.

80 Christopher Marlowe, *The tragicall history of D. Faustus, as it hath bene acted by the right honorable the Earle of Nottingham his servants* (London, 1604); Christopher Marlowe, *The tragicall history of the horrible life and death of Doctor Faustus* (London, 1609); Christopher Marlowe, *The tragicall history of the life and death of Doctor Faustus* (London, 1620, 1624, 1631); Williams, 'Demonologies', pp 77–8.

81 For ballads see: Anon., *The just judgment of God shew'd upon Dr. John Faustus. To the tune of, fortune my foe* (London, 1640); Anon., *The Judgment of GOD shew'd upon Dr. John Faustus* (London, 1600s, Printed by C. Brown and T. Norris); L.P., *Strange and wonderfull news of a woman which lived neer unto the famous city of London who had her head torn off from her body by the Divell* (London, 1630). Broadside ballads narrating the alleged history of Doctor Faustus were circulating at the end of the sixteenth century and proved to be extremely popular. The tune to which these ballads were set is also significant. Sarah Williams has argued that ballad tunes were versatile and often linked similar crimes together, making the genre instantly recognisable to contemporaries. She maintained that the majority of witchcraft ballads were set to 'fortune my foe', a tune which signified magic, misfortune and moralising advice – the same melody was used for ballads about unruly women, crimes, Catholics and verbal excess. Faustian ballads influenced the genres encapsulated under the tune 'fortune my foe' so much that subsequent ballads, later in the century, were set 'to the tune of Doctor Faustus'; see Sarah Williams, *Damnable practices: witches, dangerous women, and music in seventeenth-century English broadside ballads* (Farnham, 2015), pp 10–6,

58–89; and, Sarah Williams, '"Living past monuments": memory, music and theatre in the seventeenth-century English broadside ballad' in, Linda Austern, Candace Bailey and Amanda Winkler (eds), *Beyond boundaries: rethinking music circulation in early modern England* (Bloomington, 2017), pp 96–113; Christopher Marsh, 'Review of Sarah Williams, Damnable practices: witches, dangerous women, and music in seventeenth-century English broadside ballads', *The Seventeenth Century*, xxxi, no. 1 (2016), pp 112–3, cautions that 'the manner in which tunes gathered associations was perhaps rather more complex and subtle', than Williams acknowledges, for 'there was sympathy as well as condemnation in these melodies' too.

For plays and pamphlets, see: Stearne, pp 23–5; Anon., *The second report of Doctor John Faustus* (London, 1594); P.F. [alternatively P.P. or R.P.], Gent., *The historie of the damnable life and deserved death of Doctor John Faustus* (London, 1592, 1608, 1610, 1622 1636, 1648); Anon., *The devill seen at St. Albons* (London, 1648), p 6, marginalia; Anon., *Look to it London, threatned to be fired by wilde-fire-zeal* (London, 1648), pp 13, 16; Bernard, *Guide*, pp 94, 100; Anon., *A briefe description of the notorious life of John Lambe* (London, 1628); Anon., *The tragedy of Doctor Lambe…to the tune of Gallants come away* (London, 1628); Sébastien Michaelis, *The admirable history of the possession and conversion of a penitent woman* (London, 1613); Anon., *The life and death of Lewis Gaufredy a priest of the Church of the Accoules in Marceilles in France* (London, 1612).

82 This was also true of European and Arabic theologians, according to, Laura Saif, *The Arabic influences on early modern occult philosophy* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp 27–9, 84–5, 184.

83 Bernard, *Guide*, p 212; Stearne, p 40.

84 Anon., *Most strange and admirable discouerie*, pp 43–6, 59–60; on the tract's providence see James Sharpe, 'Warboys, witches of (1593)'.

85 James VI and I, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), p 19.

86 Potts, *The wonderfull discoverie of witches* (London, 1613), sig. B2r. For additional references to a demonic pact and the witches' sabbat see sigs B2v, F2r-3v, M2-3, P3-Q3.

87 Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, pp 269, 274.

88 Cooper, *The mystery of witchcraft* (London, 1617), pp 277–8.

89 Ibid., pp 90–2.

90 For additional examples of demonic pacts in early seventeenth-century demonologies and legal tracts see Anon., *A rehearsall both straung and true* (London, 1579); George Gifford, *A discourse of the subtill practises of devilles by witches* (London, 1587), sig. C3r; Gifford, *A dialogue concerning witches*, sigs E1-4; Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art*, pp 108–9, 119–23; Michael Dalton, *Countrey Justice* (London, 1618), pp 242–3.

91 Stearne, p 42; Lavenia, 'Witch's mark', p 1220.

92 Idem.

93 Stearne, p 43.

94 Bernard, *Guide*, p 214.

95 Stearne, pp 42–3; Bernard, *Guide*, pp 214–6.

96 William Monter, 'Devil's mark' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, i, pp 275–7; Stearne, pp 34–7, 41–2; Anon., *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene witches*, p 4.

97 Monter, 'Devil's mark', pp 275–7.

98 Rosemary Guiley, *The encyclopaedia of witches, witchcraft and wicca* (New York, 3rd edn, 2008), p 100; Lavenia, 'Witch's mark', pp 1220–1.

99 W. W., *A true and just Record*, sigs C2-3; Anon., *Most strange and admirable discouerie*, sig. P4r; Henry Goodcole, *The wonderfull discoverie of Elizabeth*

Sawyer (London, 1621), sig. B1; CA, P30/11/1 (1648); Anon., *Doctor Lambs darling* (London, 1653), pp 7–8.

100 Monter, 'Devil's mark', pp 276–7.

101 James VI and I, *Daemonologie*, p 36; Dalton, *Countrey justice*, pp 242–3; Cooper, *Mystery*, pp 274–6; Edward Fairfax, *Daemonologia: a discourse on witchcraft,1621*, ed. William Grainge (Harrogate, 1882), p 78.

102 Keith Thomas, *Man and the natural world: changing attitudes in England, 1550–1800* (London, 1984), pp 97–9; Darren Oldridge, *Strange histories: the trial of the pig, the walking dead, and other matters of fact from the medieval and renaissance worlds* (London, 2007), pp 40–55; E.P. Evans, *The criminal prosecution and capital punishment of animals* (London, 1906).

103 Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, p 26.

104 Stephens, *Demon lovers: witchcraft, sex and the crisis of belief* (Chicago, 2002), p 104.

105 Sax, 'The magic of animals', pp 317–332; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, pp 128–9; Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, pp 36–40.

106 For relevant discussions on these themes see Julia Garrett, 'Witchcraft and sexual knowledge in early modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, xiii, no. 1 (Winter, 2013), pp 32–72; Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, pp 35–50; Sax, 'The magic of animals', pp 317–332; Clive Holmes, 'Popular culture? Witches, magistrates and divines in early modern England' in, Steven Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding popular culture: Europe from the middle ages to the nineteenth century* (Berlin, 1984), pp 85–112; Carr, 'The witch's animal familiar', *passim*; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 70–5.

107 Stearne, p 16; also see BL, Add. MS, 27402, ff 104–21.

108 Stearne, p 6.

109 Joyce Salisbury, *The beast within: animals in the middle ages* (London, 1994), pp 141–66; Oldridge, *Strange histories*, pp 46–8; Esther Cohen, 'Law, folklore and animal lore', *Past & Present*, cx (Feb., 1986), pp 28–35. For depictions of such preternatural creatures see Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *Devils, demons and witchcraft*; Damien Kempf and Maria Gilbert, *Medieval monsters* (London, 2015); John Crabb, *Graven images: the art of the woodcut* (London, 2017).

110 Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, p 40.

111 Salisbury, *The beast within*, pp 77–101, 146–66; Oldridge, *Strange histories*, pp 45–6; Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, p 41.

112 Salisbury, *The beast within*, p 158; Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, pp 43–4.

113 See Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, p 32, who described the dynamic between a witch and her familiar(s) as a 'cosy, slightly perverted relationship'.

114 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, p 129; Julia Garrett, 'Witchcraft and sexual knowledge', p 48.

115 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 295, 305–6; BL, Add. MS, 27402, ff 104–21.

116 Courtney Thomas, '"Not having God before his eyes": bestiality in early modern England', *The Seventeenth Century*, xxvi, no. 1 (2011), pp 158–9. The statutes against buggery and witchcraft initially appeared in a single bill that was passed by the Commons. It was then broken into two separate bills in the upper house, both of which were passed. Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, pp 40–1, commented that bestiality and witchcraft were linked because they both functioned as the antithesis of social norms, and therefore functioned as props to established human values.

117 Quotes from, Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, pp 123–4. On these ideas also see Quaife, *Wanton wenches*, pp 38–41, 165–9, 254; Garrett,

'Witchcraft and sexual knowledge', pp 40–1, 48–9; Michael MacDonald, *Mystical bedlam: madness, anxiety, and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp 90–4.

118 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*, p 129.

119 Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, p 39.

120 Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations upon the five bookes of Moses, the booke of the Psalmes, and the Song of Songs* (London, 1627), p 88.

121 Lancelot Andrews, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large* (London, 1650), p 488.

122 William Slayter, *The Compleat Christian* (London, 1643), pp 393–4.

123 Stephens, *Demon lovers*, p 103; also see Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, pp 30–2.

124 Stearne, p 49.

125 Francesca Matteoni, 'Blood beliefs in early modern Europe' (PhD, University of Hertfordshire, 2009), p 44, also see pp 20–1.

126 Ibid., p 53.

127 Ibid., pp 174–5; Erica Fudge, 'The animal face of early modern England', *Theory, culture & society*, xxx, no. 7 (2013), pp 179–80; Stearne, pp 20, 59.

128 Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 7.

129 Matteoni, 'Blood beliefs', p 178; Purkiss, *The witch in history*, pp 119–39.

130 Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus* (London, 1681), p 17.

131 Matteoni, 'Blood beliefs', p 180.

132 Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, pp 38–9.

133 Richard Capel, *Tentations [sic] their nature, danger, cure* (London, 1633), p 356.

134 Thomas, *Man and the natural world*, p 39.

135 John Langley, *Gemitus columbae: the mournfull note of the dove* (London, 1644), p 8.

Appendix: Familiar Spirits

	1530-9	1540-9	1550-9	1560-9	1570-9	1580-9	1590-9	1600-9	1610-9	1620-9	1630-9	1640-9	1650-9	1660-9	1670-9	1680-9	1690-9	1700-09
■ Total Pub	1233	1537	1663	1666	2256	2826	3122	4238	4844	5642	6313	22615	13200	11606	11570	18804	16316	3619
■ No of publications mentioning familiar spirits	1	0	5	9	9	15	17	23	40	39	29	58	147	73	76	75	80	8
■ % of mentions out of that decade's total	0.08%	0%	0.30%	0.50%	0.39%	0.53%	0.54%	0.54%	0.82%	0.69%	0.45%	0.25%	1.11%	0.62%	0.65%	0.39%	0.49%	0.22%

Figure A4.1 Mentions of 'familiar spirits' in print.
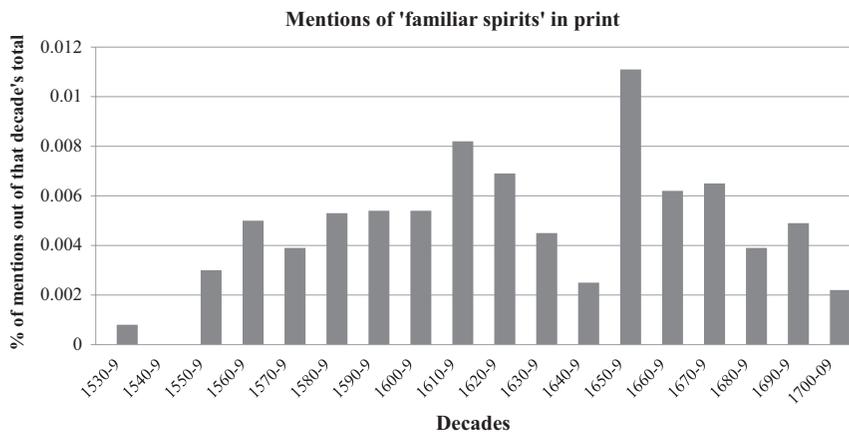
Figure A4.2 Mentions of 'familiar spirits' in print as a percentage of each decade's total printed works.

From 1560 to 1609 the average percentage of the use of the phrase 'familiar spirits' out of all printed literature from that time period averaged 0.5%. From 1610 to 1619, use of the term increased to 0.82% and gradually dropped between 1620–9 to 0.69%, and between 1630–9 to 0.45%.

The mid-1640s, when the East Anglian witch-hunt occurred and Parliamentarian propaganda targeted Prince Rupert and his dog-familiar 'Boy', one might expect references to increase. But witchcraft publications seem to have been swamped in the, then, booming print culture. From 1640 to 1649, use of the phrase dropped to 0.25%.

From 1650 to 1659 the amount of references to familiar spirits reached its apogee, amounting to 1.11%. This was short lived and declined thereafter: in 1660–9 to 0.62%; in 1670–9 to 0.65%; in 1680–9 to 0.39%; in 1690–9 to 0.49%; in 1700–9 to 0.22%. The latter statistic from 1700 to 1709 may represent a slightly lower figure than it should because the EEBO database has less material for the early eighteenth century, which is the domain of the Text Creation Partnership's (TCP) related database, ECCO (Eighteenth Century Collections Online).

5 Witchcraft, Sex, and Gender

Witchcraft Confessions in *A confirmation* as a Reflection of Seventeenth-Century Gender Roles

Long before the East Anglian witch-hunt, and possibly before the fourteenth century, the crime of witchcraft had become strongly associated with women.[1] The demonologist Jean Bodin noted in 1580 that 'women were fifty times more likely than men to succumb to the temptation of witchcraft'.[2] Nearly seventy years later, in 1648, Stearne remarked that 'of Witches in general, there be commonly more women then men [sic]. This is evident'.[3] But Stearne also used John 3.6 and Galatians 5.20 to argue that 'one may fall into this sinne as well as into any other (if God prevent it not) and therefore whether men or women'.[4] Throughout *A confirmation*, Stearne provides examples of male witches, some of whom were accused of *maleficia*, keeping familiars, signing demonic pacts, and were searched for witch-marks, much like their female counterparts. Stearne considered witchcraft to be sex-related, not sex-specific, because his demonological theories allowed for the concept of male witches. This ambiguity within witchcraft theory was not addressed by modern scholars until the twentieth century. It is still a debated topic, for it is irrefutable that the majority of witches who were executed were women – around 80% in Europe and 90% in East Anglia.[5] But some scholars maintain that the concept of a male witch was untenable in early modernity. In *Thinking with demons*, Stuart Clark argued that 'it was literally unthinkable…that witches should be male'.[6] This overlooks the 10–25% of prosecuted witches who were men.

The emergence of women's studies in witchcraft historiography stems from the legacy of feminist historians who, in the 1970s, began to examine the European witch-hunts, and interpreted them as women-hunts. Mary Daly, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Deirdre English were among the earliest historians who advanced feminist theories of the phenomenon, and represented all witch-finders as misogynists.[7] For Daly, the European witch-hunt numbered one of many historical events that demonstrated the brutal suppression and domination of women by the ruling male elite.[8] Ehrenreich and English saw witch prosecutions as an attempt to root out female healers. They argued that women were persecuted as witches by male medical practitioners, who considered female healers as a threat that had to be controlled in order to

ensure that men maintained their monopoly on power.[9] Although Ehren-reich and English played an important role in linking women's history and gender studies with witchcraft, their theories were quickly discredited as they were unsubstantiated.[10] Modern scholarship is more nuanced in its approach. Stuart Clark, for example, explored early modern concepts of gender in relation to demonological writers. He argued that early modern people ordered their world using a binary classificatory system. Within this system, 'women complemented men in their inferiority and defined them by their difference. Like other negative items in the moral and social world, they were normally encompassed by their positive opposites'. Clark described the ideal woman of seventeenth-century England as being

> pious, patient, silent, acting in conformity to male standards of female sexuality, domesticity, and religiosity...Represented in this way, women could only transgress by inversion...what was feared and condemned in transgressive women was simply the opposite of what was eulogized in their submissive sisters – the latter's willingness to accept things the "right way".[11]

Witchcraft was largely defined as a form of deviancy and disorder linked to women, and this connection was accepted by most early modern women. As late-twentieth-century scholarship noted, women could assent to gender norms and policed them by becoming directly involved in witch-finding. Women functioned as arbiters of neighbourly activity in their communities: they attempted to maintain order by disciplining sexual or moral deviants through church or secular courts.[12] The majority of English witchcraft accusations originated from women and were directed against other women, who provided testimony against one another in court. Although the process of prosecuting was reliant upon male-dominated legal machinery (JPs, judges), witchcraft was identified by and mediated through women, thus firmly locating the crime within a female sphere of influence.[13] But witchcraft accusations also spilled into male, political and public, domains. Men made accusations of witchcraft against other men who, far from being marginal, were prominent in their localities.[14] The mechanisms which led to certain men being labelled as witches remains a relatively understudied topic within English witchcraft historiography. However, based on current scholarship, divergences from established gender roles and violations of social relations in early modern communities could lead to accusations of witchcraft against women and men (see the case of John Lowes below).

The remainder of this chapter will use 'sex' to denote the biological sex of an individual, while 'gender' will refer to the perception or performance of an individual's masculinity or femininity. The chapter will continue to outline early modern concepts of sex and gender by examining a variety of printed literature to contextualise Stearne's ideas. Throughout *A confirmation* Stearne asserted that witches could be male or female. He was one of the few

demonologists who explicitly stated that malefic witches were mainly women and that 'good' witches were primarily men, and he searched both sexes for evidence of witch-marks.[15] Stearne's construction of gender was analogous to that of his contemporaries; by describing witches as the antithesis of a godly society, *A confirmation* reinforced gender norms and identified deviancy.[16]

Women and Witchcraft

In early modern England, women were part of 'an overtly patriarchal society' in which they, and children, were subordinate to men who held social and political dominance. This was reinforced through 'a fully articulated political theory of patriarchy in which the function of men as heads of households and as fathers was believed to be analogous to the role of the monarch'. The authority of fathers and monarchs was thought to be God-given; any disobedience 'to either political or paternal jurisdiction was seen as unnatural' and threatened to lead to 'widespread disorder'. Jacqueline Eales observed that the nuclear family was regarded as the most important unit of social organization and was seen 'as both the origin of civil society and as a microcosm of the state itself'.[17] Witches inverted this paradigm of order.[18] To individuals like Stearne, witches were characterised as ungodly, blasphemous, aggressive, materialistic, lustful, and threatening because they operated outside of the systems which maintained social order – patriarchy, the household, marriage, and the Church. These negative traits exemplified the figure of the witch – one that was intrinsically linked to women.

According to Stearne, the Devil often chose 'the subtilest creature to deceive by, and the weaker vesell to confer with'.[19] Women were thought to be susceptible to the Devil's influences and prone to witchcraft since they were the 'weaker sex'. Their alleged inferiority to men took many forms.[20] Stearne noted that some people, such as Richard Bernard (1627), believed that the Devil targeted woman 'because of his …prevailing with Eve'.[21] The biblical narrative of Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) demonstrated to theologians that women were innately inclined towards depravity, and were thus morally weak. In his *Daemonologie* (1597), James VI and I commented that women were

> frailer then man…so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Devill, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving of *Eva* at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe.[22]

This was iterated by Bernard and the eminent seventeenth-century theologian William Perkins, whose *Discourse of the damned art of witchcraft* (1608) argued that

> the woman being the weaker sexe, is sooner intangled by the devills illusions with his damnable art than the man. Hence it was, that the

Hebrues [sic] of ancient times, used it for a proverb, *The more women, the more witches*.[23]

Stearne could find scriptural support for his axiom that women were inferior to men: Genesis 3.16, and 1 Peter 3.1, Ephesians 5.22–24 and 1 Corinthians 14.34–5 stipulated that wives should submit themselves to their husbands. Drawing from Scripture, William Gouge, in his popular conduct book *Domesticall duties* (1622), devoted an entire chapter to discussing the place of women in early modern society. Gouge argued that since God 'placed an eminencie in the male over the female', man's rule over the 'weaker vessel' was divinely sanctioned: men were to fulfil this commandment by governing women through marriage and by ruling their households as patriarchs.[24] Because women were considered morally weaker than men (as well as physically and perhaps even spiritually), the latter were to be extremely vigilant 'to keep the devil from tempting the woman and causing her to fall – yet again' and to prevent women descending into witchcraft.[25]

Stearne maintained that anyone could fall into the sin of witchcraft, but he also included the opinions of other, anonymous, thinkers who emphasised that witchcraft was a crime specific to women. When discussing their views, he attempted to reconcile his witchcraft theory, which argued for the possibility that witches could be men, with his experience as a witch-finder, in which the witches that he discovered were almost exclusively women. Stearne knew from reading demonology and witch-hunting that women were predominately witches, recording that 'of about two hundred executed since the said May, 1645, in the severall Counties aforementioned, the women farre exceed the men in number'.[26] Despite this remark, he refused to assert that it was a crime specific to women due to the scriptural references to male witches he had identified and those he encountered.[27] However, Stearne did recognise that women had a 'credulous nature', were impatient, malicious, vengeful and 'ready to be teachers of Witchcraft to others, and to leave it to Children, servants, or to some others'. This rendered them 'more fit instruments for the Devill'.[28] He believed that women would be better teachers of witchcraft because of their position within a household and a community. Witchcraft, or ideas pertaining to the practice of it, could be transmitted through oral discoursing among family and neighbours and spread as a diabolic counter-religion.[29] What was difficult to articulate was the accused's personal desires and fantasies, some of which we can glimpse through witchcraft confessions that are preserved in the extant legal documents and printed sources.

Witchcraft Confessions and Contemporary Gender Roles

In *A confirmation*, Stearne explained that witches covenanted with the Devil in order to obtain their desires – and, for some, their objective was financial gain. Strikingly, nearly all of the women's confessions Stearne records

concern fears of poverty, perhaps because many witches were young women or widows who struggled to obtain a consistent income during the tumultuous civil war period.[30] Poverty was thus a pressing issue for East Anglians in the 1640s, and some witches wished that they could militate against it through demonic aid.[31] Their confessions grant insight into some aspects of the lives of these accused women, and into contemporary gender roles.[32]

Women's wages were not the main source of income within family units in early modern England: husbands were supposed to be the household's primary earners (this was not a reality for all families), and were economically aided by wives who supplemented their husbands' wages and helped manage family finances.[33] In 1571, Edmund Tilney wrote that 'the office of husband is, to go abroad in matters of profite: of the wyfe, to tarye at home, and see all be well there. The office of husbande is, to provide money'.[34] Fifty years later, Gouge argued that husbands and wives were both responsible for their family's wealth, but gender roles still had to be maintained – wives managed the running of households yet remained subordinate to their husbands, as outlined in Proverbs 31.[35] Unmarried women and widows diverged from this hierarchy and were subsequently considered masterless and 'inherently disorderly'.[36] The 'Statue of Artificers' of 1563 had tried to circumvent this: it stipulated that any unmarried woman between the age of fourteen and forty could be forced into service within a household, and could be imprisoned if they refused.[37] The Statue did not affect older widows, some of whom were financially independent. Many widows, however, were poor and reliant upon financial aid from poor relief or personal, charitable donations from locals.[38]

The widows who confessed to signing demonic pacts for wealth in Stearne's account may have been expressing their hopes of escaping poverty. Stearne recorded that Thomazine Ratcliffe and Mary Bush of Barton averred they had signed a pact with the Devil, who promised 'that they should never misse [want] anything'.[39] Elizabeth Hubbard was guaranteed the same by her familiars, who promised that 'he wold [sic] furnish her with money', so that she 'should never misse or want anything'.[40] Stearne remarked that Elizabeth Clarke was regularly given up to six shillings of 'perfect money' by her familiars and that she had presented this money to her interrogators.[41] He included further examples, explaining that it was through Elizabeth Gurrey's 'wilfulnesse, and poverty, with desire of revenge, [that] she denied God' and signed a demonic pact.[42] In Anne Boreham's confession, Stearne narrated that she was asked by the Devil

> to deny God and Christ, and to serve him, but she said she told him she was a poore widdow, and then he said if she woud serve him she should never want, but have her desire, and then she consented.[43]

Had these widows prospered from their dealings with demons, as they anticipated, they would have been financially independent and not subject to

traditional patriarchal hierarchies. Michelle Dowd has noted that this type of self-governing woman unnerved local authorities who believed that they had the potential to become disorderly residents.[44] Unfortunately for the witches, the Devil did not fulfil his promises, and, as Ratcliffe lamented, they 'found him a lyer'.[45] Stearne ratified Ratcliffe's assertion, commenting that, aside from Elizabeth Clarke, 'I never knew any that had any money'.[46] But he also maintained that those, like Ratcliffe, who chased after worldly wealth or feared poverty were categorically greedy and sinful, and were likely to seek demonic aid.[47] The widows who confessed to witchcraft were believed to have gained access to demonic powers through a pact, and, in the process, to have subverted conventional gender roles, for such power was considered a masculine trait.[48] These women failed to better their socio-economic positions via witchcraft and diabolism; instead, their circumstances deteriorated further, cumulating in their convictions for witchcraft.

In *A confirmation*, Stearne described how some witches sold their bodies and souls to the Devil in a bid to escape poverty and improve their place in the social hierarchy. Diane Purkiss has suggested that the witch-finders viewed this trade as a 'commodification of the female body', as it was considered the only recourse left for poor women who had failed to attract husbands.[49] Not only were some of the witches seeking financial gain, they also sought demonic lovers. In lieu of a normal marriage, witches who covenanted with the Devil entered into an inverted or 'perverted patriarchy', in which the Devil acted as a husband-like figure to whom witches were subordinate – an act that re-inscribed rather than inverted traditional gender roles.[50] Mary Bush, for example, 'confessed that about three weekes after her husbands decease…the Devil appeared to her in the shape of a young black man'. After agreeing to a pact, the Devil had 'the use of her body two or three times a weeke, and then us'd to kisse her'. In Bush's narrative of her fifteen-year relationship with Satan, he replaced her husband and they formed a lasting relationship based on affection and mutual desire.[51] But in Bush's account (and in others') we see the Devil himself being aestheticized in accordance with contemporary notions of male beauty and gender roles. In this narrative Bush defines the ideal male as young, affectionate, able to support her and was beautiful; however the Devil's dark skin remained indicative of his otherness, defining him from white English men. In another similar instance, Rebecca West claimed that the Devil appeared as 'a proper young man, who desired of her', and subsequently married her – for Stearne this was 'a fearful thing to declare'.[52] According to *A confirmation*, West 'confessed how the devil took her by the hand, and the manner and words were used at her Marriage'.[53] Another contemporary pamphlet, *A true and exact relation* (1645), which was published by authority and contains trial depositions, provides additional information: West said that the Devil appeared,

> and told her, he would marry her, and that shee could not deny him; she said he kissed her, but was as cold as clay, and married her that night,

in this manner; He tooke her by the hand and lead her about the Chamber, and promised to be her loving husband till death, and to avenge her of her enemies; And that then shee promised him to be his obedient wife till death, and to deny God and Christ.[54]

This appears to have been a secretive, verbal marriage declaration between West and the Devil. If such a verbal agreement was made between a man and a woman, it legally constituted a valid marriage in seventeenth-century England – despite the Church of England's attempts to abolish the practice.[55] Moreover, as Millar has noted, 'Rebecca's promise of obedience draws directly on post-Reformation marriage vows, in which the woman swears the previously unused vow "to obey". This vow of obedience was understood as a woman's way of demonstrating her love for her husband'.[56] In the Devil's marriage vows, he promised to love Rebecca and to be a 'loving husband till death'. Together, their vows were typical of seventeenth-century Protestant marriages, as was their clandestine ceremony for some chose to stage privately for speed, to save money, and to remain outside of the Church's purview.[57] As previously noted, men were expected to demonstrate their love by providing for and protecting their wives, whereas women were to show their love through obedience.[58] West's diabolic marriage conforms to conventional gender roles of male authority and female subordination but also represents a 'perverted patriarchy' which ideologically opposed it. This dynamic identified West's marriage to the Devil as an aberration, while simultaneously reasserting and reinforcing social norms.[59] Likewise, by particularising Bush and Rebecca West's confessions in *A confirmation*, Stearne gives voice to women's desires of marriage and helps illustrate what the expected gender roles were within marriages in seventeenth-century England – roles that witches did ultimately fulfil in their narratives.

Other relationships with the Devil were not nuptial. Stearne glossed many confessions in which witches claimed to have had carnal relationships with the Devil or familiar spirits. Confessions of sexual intercourse with demons provided a chance for women to articulate their sexual fantasies through demonological discourse.[60] Louise Jackson has argued that the witchcraft confessions made by Suffolk women in 1645 'indicate that, in many cases, accused women were contextualising their own experiences within a wider demonological framework', and that, for these women, 'Satan was everything you did not want to admit to'. In this sense, confessions represent a manifestation of repressed thoughts, fantasies, and desires of those questioned – thoughts and feelings which otherwise may have been difficult to comprehend and were difficult to articulate to themselves and others through the medium of language.[61]

The narratives of sexual encounters with demons elicited by the witchfinders were symptomatic of concerns surrounding licentious women. Stevens observed that in the seventeenth century 'men presumed that women's sexuality was both insatiable and passive, with females eagerly receiving

or undergoing sexual actions performed by men'.[62] The sexual voracity of women was considered axiomatic; however, Fraser has noted that widows were considered to be particularly 'lusty' and more prone to witchcraft accusations.[63] Indeed, Richard Burton (1621) wrote of lust, 'worse it is in women then in men, when she is so old a crone'. But he also explained that from the age of fourteen women 'begin to offer themselves, and some to rage....of womens unnatural, insatiable lust, what countrey, what village doth not complaine'.[64] Reformers' fears were not unfounded: studies by Ingram and Quaife have shown that extra-marital and illicit sexual activity was common in early modern England – and that men were as responsible as women for its perpetration.[65] Although the secular and church courts proscribed sexual misconduct, they did little in the way of preventing it. This did not stop moralists, such as John Downame (1609), airing their views through print, for they feared that if widespread 'whoredom' continued unfettered, God would punish the nation.[66] Licentious women accused of witchcraft were thought to be subverting the patriarchal family structure since they were not controlled by husbands or bound by Christian morals.[67] For reformers intent on establishing thoroughly godly communities in the 1640s, the unbridled sexuality of witches was yet another obstacle to overcome.

The intersection of Stearne's witchcraft theory, popular conceptions of female sexuality, and the accused women's life-experience, desires, and fantasies formed an ideological pool from which the highly sexualised confessions were drawn during interrogations. In *A confirmation*, Stearne wrote that Elizabeth Clarke confessed to sleeping with the Devil on numerous occasions, describing him as 'a tall, proper, black haired gentleman'.[68] Anne Boreham said that after waking from a dream, she saw demons in the form of ugly men fighting each other for her affection. One emerged victorious and then 'had use of her body'.[69] Similarly, Joan Wallis affirmed that

> the Devill came to her in the likenesse of a man, with blackish clothing, but had cloven feet...who used to lie with her and have the use of her body...Yet she confessed that he was more uglier than man, and not as her husband.[70]

Stearne remained relatively conservative when narrating witches' demonic sexual encounters, the details of which he was sometimes 'ashamed to express'.[71] More explicit information on the confessions Stearne helped to extract were detailed in court records. Mary Wyard claimed that the Devil 'came to her in the shape of handsome yonge gentleman with yellow hayre and black cloaths & often times lay with her and had the carnall use of her'. Margaret Benet told her interrogators that 'the divell in the shape of a man … carried her body over a close into a thicket of bushes and there lay with her'.[72] As discussed in Chapter 4, women also confessed to sensual experiences with familiars: Margaret Bayts disclosed that 'when she was at work she felt a

thing come upon her legs and go into her secret parts and nipped her in her secret parts'; Goody Smith confessed 'that her imps hang in her secret parts in a bag and her husband saw it, and that these imps sucked on her'; finally, Anne Usher told her examiners that 'she felt 2 things like butterflies in her secret parts with witchings dansings and sucking & she felt them with her hands and rubbed them'.[73] The women who confessed to marrying and having sex with humanoid demons were, perhaps, creating fantasies in which they married a man who could sustain them financially and satisfy them emotionally and physically. In a patriarchal society where married women were more valued than most spinsters or widowed women, it is not surprising they still fantasised about becoming obedient wives and mothers – even to the patriarchal devil-figure.[74] Gaskill has also contended that in the cases of Clarke, Wyard, and Boreham, we see elderly women trying to reshape their identity, to re-establish themselves as objects of desire, and to recount their courting days using the language of demonology imposed by interrogators.[75] In doing so, the witches' narratives mimicked early modern concepts of gender roles – witchcraft theory drew the accused into affirming traditional gender roles but framed this within a demonological discourse.[76]

Female witches were also represented as the antithesis of the godly mother. During the seventeenth century, a godly mother was a pious woman, a good wife, a mother, and a manager of her nuclear family within a patriarchy-based household.[77] In Stearne's account of events, an inversion of the mother-figure can be identified in the narratives of witches who confessed to sustaining familiar spirits. In these accounts, the suckling of familiars from the witch's mark, a supernumerary teat, represents an inversion of breast feeding and a parody of the 'good mother' figure.[78] While mothers sustained children with breastmilk, witches fed familiars with their blood. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century physicians hypothesised that breastmilk was made from the blood which had been sustaining the foetus in the womb. To nourish a child, blood was transported to the breasts through veins and purified into milk. The clean blood was thus separated from the impure fluid, which stayed in the womb.[79] A stereotypical witch (an old, postmenopausal woman), however, was believed to produce polluted blood to feed their demonic familiars.[80] Based on humoral medical theory, witches had putrid blood which could not be purified by childbirth nor cured by a rebalancing of humours.[81] The physical bodies of witches were assumed to be inherently sinful and stood in stark contrast to the idealised good mother. Outside of medical discourses, theologians attached significance to the mother-figure, portraying her as an exemplar of womanhood. Marylynn Salmon has noted that occasionally in sermons, clergy used breastfeeding as a metaphor to describe the relationship between themselves, the laity, and God. When attending church, the believer was metaphorically said to suck from the bosom of Christ, in order to absorb His love and His Word. God's love was akin to that of a mother's, and the Word was likened to a good mother's milk.[82] A pregnant or postnatal mother symbolised the purity of

God, while the witch functioned as an icon for the Devil's corruption. This epistemological system of contraries was fundamental to Stearne's thinking. But neither Stearne nor the accused witches specifically mentioned concepts surrounding the mother-figure, even though some witches styled themselves as mothers of demonic children. Dialogue on the mother- and witch-figure was unnecessary because such binaries had been assimilated into late medieval demonological thought and witchcraft theory, and operated at a subconscious level by the 1640s.[83] Stearne was, however, conscious of the dichotomy between God and the Devil, for he repeatedly stated 'that the devil imitates God in all things that he can'.[84]

Although the women who confessed to witchcraft were emblematic of the anti-mother-figure, when confessing, they still defined themselves using contemporary paradigms of motherhood and intertwined these with the demonological discourse presented to them. In *A confirmation*, Elizabeth Hubbard, Margaret Moore, and Clarke identified themselves as mothers by referring to their familiars as their children.[85] Stearne recorded that Hubbard 'had three things [that] came to her in the likeness of Children, which asked her whispering to deny God, Christ, and all his workes'.[86] Similarly, Alice Wright confessed to having two familiars in the shape of boys. According to Stearne's narrative, one of them 'spoke to her with a great whorce voyce, as if he had been griev'd…and asked her to deny God, and Christ, and to curse God two or three times'.[87] The witchcraft theory articulated by Stearne posited that familiars suckled from witch-marks: the feeding of familiars could therefore be an imitation of a child being breastfed by its mother. As discussed earlier, some of the women who were accused of and confessed to witchcraft during the East Anglian trials were widows. Clarke was an aged spinster, Hubbard an elderly widow, as was Margaret Moore who had lost three of her four children in their infancy.[88] During interrogation, these women may have conceptualised familiars as their surrogate children because they wanted dependent children but could not have any, for they were too old and could not attract partners.[89] Subsequently, they constructed their confessions from their own desires and personal experience. Their confessions, couched within the language of demonology, were congruent with the identity of an anti-mother that sustained demonic children – a stereotype which corresponded with the witch-hunters' concepts. The confessions Stearne helped to elicit can shed light on some of the witches' emotions and life-experiences, and can be contextualised to illustrate accepted gender roles and norms in seventeenth-century cultures (Figure 5.1).

Male Witches and Contemporary Gender Roles

The witchcraft theory adopted by Stearne considered both men and women liable to become witches. This tenet was not uncommon among seventeenth-century demonologist: Alexander Roberts (1616) and Thomas

Figure 5.1 Witches giving babies to the devil (1720). Credit: Wellcome Collection, London (CC BY).

Cooper (1617) observed that both sexes 'are subject to the State of damnation, so both are liable to Satans snares'.[90] Even John Gaule (1646) shared Stearne's convictions, despite reservations about other aspects of the witch-finders' methods.[91] In practice, male witches were anomalous figures in English witchcraft trials, and what inspired accusations against them was subject to scholarly debate. App and Gow have asserted that men accused of witchcraft were implicitly feminised due to their weakmindedness, whereas E. J. Kent and Gaskill have argued that the accused 'were witches first and women second'.[92] To Gaskill, male witches constitute their own historical category, for they were 'witches in their own right'.[93] He observed that witchcraft accusations against men stemmed from case-specific factors, and pre-existing tensions within localities.[94] Kent tackled the methodological problems when studying male witches: she maintained that historians should not solely use femininity (weakmindedness, sexuality, and motherhood) as a barometer with which to judge male witches, because some men were of accused for failing to meet masculine ideals. If historians, like App and Gow, implicitly feminise all witches, then it establishes a normative form of deviancy, and equates deviancy with femininity. Instead, Kent proposes the implementation of a dynamic interpretive framework that allows scope for multi-relational models of masculinity and gender; this model could be applied to specific English witchcraft cases to examine social interactions between actors and perceivable gender relations, which

constituted 'a significant determinant of behaviour'.[95] Despite these proposed solutions to historical, methodological issues, there still appears (to us) to be a discrepancy between early modern witchcraft theory and practice: both men and women could be conceptualised as being witches, yet it was predominately women who were accused. Following the methodologies proposed by Gaskill and Kent, this section will use narratives of male witches in *A confirmation* as case studies to investigate instances of male witches during the East Anglian witch-hunt, in order to explore concepts of witchcraft, masculinity, and gender.

Stearne's *Confirmation* mentions eleven male witches. Printed literature, biblical proof texts and his experience in the East Anglian witch-hunt had taught Stearne that women, 'without question exceed men, especially the hurting witch; but as for the other [the white witch]…almost generally they be men'.[96] His observations were accurate, for recent research bears out this claim. Macfarlane calculated that 70% of white witches in Essex were male, and, more recently, Owen Davies has arrived at a similar figure for early modern England as a whole.[97] White witches, or cunning-folk, were magical practitioners who offered their clients a vast array of services, including curing ailments, finding lost goods or treasure, scrying, love potions, protective and injurious spells, and 'unwitching' humans or animals. They were particularly prevalent in Essex where villagers were never more than ten miles away from a cunning-person's house, but some individuals frequently travelled considerable distances (over twenty miles) to consult reputable white witches.[98] Stearne was aware of the ubiquity of white witches, noting with distain that few 'good witches' were arraigned because 'men rather uphold them, and say, why should any man be questioned for doing good'.[99] Indeed, Macfarlane discovered that 'out of 400 people accused of witchcraft in Essex only four are identifiable as cunning-folk'.[100] Stearne evidently did not differentiate between white and malefic witches: he completely rejected the popular idea of good witches, commenting that, 'I say all witches be bad, and ought to suffer alike being both in league with the Devill: for so is the good, untruly called'.[101] Stearne's *Confirmation* makes references to one white witch from Acton, Suffolk. A man called King was accused by and confessed to one of his clients that he had bewitched them, but 'told her he could not undo what he had done'.[102] King was the only cunning man discussed, somewhat perfunctorily, in *A confirmation*, and Stearne's reticence reflects Macfarlane's findings: cunning-folk were rarely reported for witchcraft because their services were desired.[103] But good witches, such as King, could fall under suspicion of malefic witchcraft, for they consulted magical books or grimoires to solve their clients' issues.[104] With an ontology rooted in medieval magic, it was widely believed that men desperately seeking knowledge could acquire it by forging diabolic pacts and studying books containing demonic magic – this trope was obtained from and perpetuated through the popular story of Dr Faust, whose quest for knowledge led him into a demonic pact. Although knowledge

itself was considered morally ambiguous, its obtainment was subject to an individual's ethics.[105] The morals of some learned men appeared to contemporaries as dubious, thus providing circumstantial evidence for specific witchcraft accusations. Educated men had access to literacy and learning, both of which formed part of the masculine sphere.[106] Some of the male witches in *A confirmation*, however, abused their privileged social positions of authority and inverted the masculinities attached to them. These witches represented the potential chaos that might ensue when 'diabolic masculinities colonized educated civility'.[107]

Stearne provides an example of a man who was suspected of witchcraft because of his academic background and knowledge. Stearne told his readership that he had heard the confession of Henry Carre, who he described as 'a Scholler fit for Cambridge, (if not a Cambridge Scholler) and was well educated'. Although Stearne may not have directly read material concerning Faustus, he did learn of this trope indirectly through similar figures in Bernard's *Guide* (1627) which discussed Lewis Gaufredy, through stories of Dr John Lambe (1628) and through references to Faustus in popular culture (see Chapter 4).[108] In Stearne's narrative, he continued, presenting Carre as a contemporary Faustian figure: he postulated that Carre had covenanted with the Devil for monetary gain or his 'pride of heart, which was the first originall cause, by reason of his knowledge'.[109] Stearne believed Carre's desire for esoteric knowledge led him to the Devil. Similarly, he noted that John Lowes, the octogenarian vicar of Brandeston, Suffolk, confessed that 'pride of heart' had caused him to covenant with the Devil.[110] A scathing critique of Lowes appeared in *A magazine of scandall* (1642) corroborating Stearne's account. The publication alleged that Lowes declared 'himselfe to have more knowledge in the lawes of the Kingdome then the best Lawyer of them all' as well as expertise in business, medicine, and ministry.[111] Lowes was also an abrasive character to his neighbours, who said they 'were dayly vexed and troubled by him'.[112] By 1645, Lowes had been relentlessly hounded with litigation from his parishioners for over thirty years. Lowes was forced to appear at the quarter sessions, the assize courts, the King's Bench, and even the Star Chamber as his laity attempted to charge him with assault, barratry, disrupting the peace, and malefic witchcraft.[113] With the advent of the witch-hunt, Lowes's parishioners seized the opportunity to rid themselves of their diabolic vicar. One villager later recounted that 'they were glad to take the opportunity of those Wicked Times, to get him hanged, rather than not get rid of him'.[114] They obviously succeeded: Lowes was subjected to swimming, walking, and searching at Framlingham in Suffolk, and was executed for witchcraft at the assizes held at Bury St Edmunds in 1645.[115] While Lowes's neighbours may have used the witch-hunt as a means to remove a subversive resident, Stearne was convinced that Lowes was guilty of witchcraft, as evident in accounts of his *maleficia* but also in his quest for 'vaine Knowledge'. For Stearne, Lowes's 'pride of heart to goe beyond others, to understand secret and hidden things, to

know things to come' meant that he was actively trying to circumvent 'the limits of reason…of Gods revealed will'. Stearne believed that Lowes, and Carre, were destined to 'fall fowle unawares upon the Devil, and…in great danger to be intrapped by him'.[116] Lowes was accused of witchcraft because he was perceived as being aggressive, disruptive, evil, self-interested, and as a non-conformist minister whose preaching was branded as irreligious.[117] Kent has asserted that these negative traits present Lowes in the image of a subverted masculinity and patriarchy.[118] As a minister, Lowes's role was to be the spiritual fatherhood of his community. Ideally, he had a paternal duty to teach and spiritually nurture his congregation, be an exemplar of morality and uphold the peace in his parish. In the same way a good mother's breastmilk was deployed as a metaphor for God's love and Word, mammillary imagery was also used to symbolise a preacher's role. With reference to passages such as Isaiah 66.11–2 and 1 Peter 2.2, ministers were said to be the 'breasts of god', dispensing spiritual sustenance to their congregation. Lowes, however, was a non-conformist minister accused of barratry (the action of persistently bringing lawsuits for little reason) and was in constant conflict with his laity. Moreover, he confessed to owning and sustaining familiars from his blood, thus nurturing demonic animals rather than his godly parishioners. Despite the usage of the language of maternity and the implicit feminising of Lowes, Kent maintains that he remained an inversion of the masculine cultural domains of academia, ministry, and patriarchy.[119] In contrast to the image of Lowes, Stearne advised that godly men should labour to 'bring forth fruits worthy of the Gospell' (Matthew 3.8), pray continually to God (1 Thessalonians 5.17) and, as patriarchs, fulfil religious duties for their families to bless and protect their households.[120] For Stearne, however, inversions of masculinity were ultimately ancillary: John Lowes was a witch because he sinned by searching for knowledge, encountering the Devil, and signing a diabolic covenant – precisely like all the other witches he discovered.[121]

In *A confirmation*, Stearne provides additional explanations as to why men were accused of and turned to witchcraft. In doing so the narratives of the following male witches mirror elements palpable in women's confessions. Alexander Sussums and a young boy from Rattleston averred that they had little choice but to be witches, for their mothers had been accused and convicted of witchcraft.[122] Stearne added that the boy was silly, ignorant, and credulous (traits often attributed to women) and was therefore are 'most apt to be [a] Witche'.[123] Other male witches were said to be overly aggressive, malicious, and vengeful, like their female counterparts. Nicholas Hempsted verbally attacked Stearne – reminiscent of Elizabeth Clarke's rebuttal – before confessing to him that he had enacted *maleficia* and was in league with Satan.[124] Stearne also related that John Wynnick was enraged at the loss of his purse so he aligned himself with the Devil to retrieve his money – in return Wynnick worshiped Satan, revoked God, and sustained familiar spirits.[125] Cherrie, an old man, and John Bysack made pacts

to avoid hell's torments in an attempt to circumnavigate God's will.[126] But Bysack and, another witch, John Scarfe sealed covenants with the Devil and allowed familiars to feed from their witch-marks, which were located near their genitalia.[127] Bysack professed that when his imps arrived at night, he told his wife he was uncomfortable, got up, and let his familiars feed from him. Similarly, Scarfe kept a familiar in the shape of a rat in a box, which he placed on his stomach and allowed to suckle from his witch-marks. Gaskill has noted that these accounts introduce a sexual element to the men's confessions, which was also a trope in accounts of women's witchcraft confessions during the 1640s. Bysack and Scarfe's narratives also support App and Gow's idea of feminised male witches, who were weak-minded and subservient to Satan.[128] Stearne, however, did not actively feminise male witches; instead he maintained that the Devil only discoursed with those who were already drifting from God towards sin, and were in 'some kind of preparedness' for him.[129] Men accused of being witches were contacted by the Devil because of their recent or current moral and religious misdemeanours. Stearne presupposed that all witches who admitted to having any form of contact with the Devil had grievously sinned. For him, witches, whether male or female, were typically culpable of ungodliness, blasphemy, being aggressive, materialistic, lustful, and disorderly.

Despite the vagaries surrounding the role of gender in witchcraft trials, it is undeniable that fewer men were prosecuted than women. But the witch-hunters were not 'sex-specific' when scouring East Anglia for witches, as is evident from Stearne's publication. However strong the link between witchcraft and women seems to us, male witches were believed to have been a reality and some men were prosecuted accordingly. Scholarship has to contend with the elusive figure of the male witch, which evades firm taxonomies.[130] Witches of either sex should be contextualised within a variety of gender-based social networks to better understand litigation brought against them. Accused witches were represented as having violated early modern ideals of masculinity, femininity, and neighbourliness, after amassing sufficient animosity within a locality to be arraigned. The witch-hunt spearheaded by Stearne and Hopkins was not symptomatic of misogyny, but of godly communities experiencing civil war and seeking to expel subversive demonic forces. *A confirmation* provides insight into Stearne's witchcraft theory and his perception of sex and gender. The ideas articulated in his publication have been contextualised within wider seventeenth-century intellectual cultures in this chapter. Stearne's conceptualisation of sex and gender was congruent with that of his contemporaries, and with the English demonological tradition. For him, it was evident that witches could be of either sex. His main idiosyncrasy was the direct manner in which he argued that white and good witches were primarily men and his searching of numerous men for witch-marks.[131] His thorough descriptions and investigations of these marks availed from seventeenth-century science.

Notes

1 Monter, *Witchcraft in France*, pp 23–7; Heidi Breuer, *Crafting the witch: gendering magic in medieval and early modern England* (London, 2009).

2 Alison Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and gender in early modern Europe' in, Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, p 449.

3 Stearne, p 10. See James VI and I, *Daemonologie* (1597), p 44; Stearne quotes, Bernard, *Guide*, p 87.

4 Stearne, pp 2, 12.

5 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 169; Apps and Gow, *Male witches*; Malcolm Gaskill, 'The devil in the shape of a man: witchcraft, conflict and belief in Jacobean England', *Historical Research*, lxxi, no. 175 (June, 1998), p 145.

6 Clark, *Thinking with demons*, p 130.

7 Daly, *Gyn/ecology*; Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, midwives and healers* (1973).

8 Daly, *Gyn/ecology*, pp 178–222.

9 Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, midwives and healers*, *passim*.

10 Hodgkin, 'Gender, mind and body', pp 182–8; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 169–70; See Harley, 'Historians as demonologists', pp 1–26.

11 Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 130–2.

12 Jacqueline Eales, *Women in early modern England, 1500–1700* (London, 1998), p 15.

13 Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 45–78; Peter Rushton, 'Women, witchcraft and slander in early modern England: cases from the church courts of Durham, 1560–1675', *Northern History*, xviii, no. 1 (1982), pp 130–1; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 173–4, 178, 181; Frances Dolan, *Dangerous familiars: representations of domestic crime in England, 1500–1700* (London, 1994), pp 235–6; Bernard Capp, *When gossips meet: women, family and neighbourhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p 283; Marianne Hester, 'Patriarchal reconstruction and witch hunting' in, Barry, Hester and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, pp 300–1; Purkiss, *The witch in history*, p 92.

14 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 3–5; for the role of men within society see Susan Amussen, *An ordered society: gender and class in early modern England* (Oxford, 1988), pp 41–7.

15 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 189; Stearne, pp 7, 11. For a case in which men and women were treated exactly the same when investigated for witchcraft see Ian Miller, 'A witchcraft accusation in 17th century Reading', *Berkshire Family History Society Journal* (2018), pp 1–2.

16 On witchcraft as an inversion of various elements of society, see, for example, Clark, *Thinking with demons*; Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, misrule and the meaning of witchcraft', *Past & Present*, lxxxvii (May, 1980), pp 98–127; Purkiss, *The witch in history*; Dolan, *Dangerous familiars*; Kent, *Male witchcraft*; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*.

17 All quotations from, Eales, *Women*, p 4; Davis, *Society and culture*, pp 126–8; Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (eds), 'Childless men in early modern England' in, *The family in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp 159–60. Kent, *Male witchcraft*, p 19, states that patriarchy was not a monolithic model because, in practice, it was malleable and was subject to local variations to serve local ways. The links between fatherhood and sovereignty, however, remained constant. Class was one variable through which women of higher status could hold more power than men; see Amussen, *An ordered society*, pp 3–4.

18 Dolan, *Dangerous familiars*, pp 229–30. Witchcraft inverted social and cultural norms, but by defining and condemning disorder in this way it

simultaneously reaffirmed accepted customs; see Clark, 'Inversion, misrule and the meaning of witchcraft', pp 98–127.

19 Stearne, p 6.

20 Antonia Fraser, *The weaker vessel: women's lot in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), pp 1–6.

21 Stearne, p 11; Bernard, *Guide*, pp 87–90; also see Gaule, *Select cases*, pp 10–1.

22 James VI and I, *Daemonologie*, p 44.

23 Bernard, *Guide*, p 88; Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art* (1608), pp 168–9. Italics from the original.

24 Eales, *Women*, pp 22–30; William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises…III particular duties of wives* (London, 1622), pp 270, 283.

25 Fraser, *The weaker vessel*, pp 2–5, quote on p 2.

26 Stearne, p 11; Bernard, *Guide*, pp 87–9.

27 Stearne, pp 6–8, 11–2. Demonology allowed for this discrepancy, but the constructed concepts of gender in most areas of early modern Europe posited that females were more susceptible to demonic forces. This can help to explain why it was primarily women who were accused of witchcraft at a grassroots level; see Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 129–32.

28 Stearne, pp 11–2.

29 On witchcraft and domesticity, see Dolan, *Dangerous familiars*, pp 169–236. On oral culture see Capp, *When gossips meet*; Fox, *Oral and literate culture* (2000).

30 Anne Laurence, 'Women's work and the English Civil War', *History Today*, xlii (June, 1992), pp 20–5; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 164, 166, 205–6; also see Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 620–1, 669–77, 695–6.

31 See for example: ERO, Q/SBa 2/45-6; ERO, T/A 282/2; ERO, T/Z 597/1; ERO, Q/SBc 2/25-6.

32 Roper, *Oedipus and the devil*, pp 207, 229, 242; Briggs, '"By the strength of fancie"', pp 269–70; Diane Purkiss, 'Sounds of silence: fairies and incest in Scottish witchcraft stories' in, Clark (ed.), *Languages of witchcraft*, pp 81–98; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil, and emotions*.

33 Amussen, *An ordered society*, pp 41–4; Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987, reprinted 2003), p 156; Fraser, *The weaker vessel*, pp 426–7; Laurence, 'Women's work and the English Civil War', pp 20–5. Preliminary findings from the ongoing 'Women's work' project suggest that early modern women did 80% of all housework and carework, and, in addition, did over 40% of the work in almost every major sector of the economy (such as agriculture, commerce and craftwork); see Jane Whittle, Mark Haliwood, Charmian Mansell and Imogene Dudley (eds), *Women's work in rural England, 1500–1700: a new methodological approach* (Leverhulme Trust, University of Exeter, 2015–8), an up-to-date summary of the project's findings is available at: https://earlymodernwomenswork.wordpress.com/2018/03/09/the-projects-findings-what-work-did-women-and-men-do-in-early-modern-england/ (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

34 Edmund Tilney, *A briefe and pleasant discourse of duties in marriage* (London, 1571), sig. C5v.

35 Gouge, *Domesticall duties*, pp 255–6.

36 Michelle Dowd, *Women's work in early modern English literature and culture* (New York, 2009), p 40.

37 'Statute of Artificers, 5 Eliz. 1 c. 4 (1563)' in, Alexander Luders (ed.), *The statutes of the realm: printed by command of his majesty King George the third* (11 vols, London, reprint 1965), iv, part 1, pp 418–9.

38 Fraser, *The weaker vessel*, pp 110–31; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 660–80, 695–6.

39 Stearne, pp 22, 29; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 300–1; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 114.
40 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, p 292; Stearne, pp 26–7; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 107.
41 Stearne, p 27; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 492. 'Perfect money' refers to rare, new silver coins which did not have clipped edges.
42 Stearne, p 31. Stearne incorrectly states that Gurrey's (or Currey's) residence was at Risden, Bedfordshire – he meant the nearby village of Rushden, North-amptonshire; see Peter Elmer, 'East Anglia and the Hopkins trials, 1645–1647: a county guide', p 53 (Available at: http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Eastanglianwitchtrialappendix2.pdf) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).
43 Stearne, p 32.
44 Dowd, *Women's work*, p 40.
45 Stearne, p 22; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 114r.
46 Stearne, p 27.
47 Ibid., p 19.
48 Greg Warburton, 'Gender, supernatural power, agency and the metamorpho-ses of the familiar in early modern pamphlet accounts of English witchcraft', *Parergon*, xx, no. 2 (2003), pp 98–9.
49 Purkiss, 'Desire and its deformities', pp 121–3.
50 Willis, *Malevolent nurture*, pp 89–91; Warburton, 'Gender', pp 95–118.
51 Stearne, p 29; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, p 132; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 114v.
52 H. F., *A true and exact relation* (1645), p 11; Stearne, p 38; ERO, T/A 418/127/19; ERO, Ass 35/86/1/19.
53 Stearne, p 38.
54 H. F., *A true and exact relation*, pp 11, 15; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, p 224. Compare, to Ellen Driver who 'confessed she had 2 imps did suck on her and that devill appeared to her like a man & that she was married to him…and that he lived with her 3 years and that she had 2 children by him'; see Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 303–4; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 116.
55 Ingram, *Church courts*, pp 132–4, 155; Quaife, *Wanton wenches*, pp 38–40, 43–7, 59–63.
56 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, p 131. She argues that Protes-tant reformers deviated from Catholicism by denying that marriage was a sac-rament, that celibacy was more desirable than marriage and that all sexual activity, even within marriage, was potentially sinful. Instead, Protestant cler-gymen openly discussed sexual pleasure within a marriage to their laity; see Eales, *Women*, pp 25–6.
57 See John Gillis, 'Conjugal settlements: resort to clandestine and common law marriage in England and Wales, 1650–1850' in, John Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and settlements: law and human relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983), pp 261–86. In the 1650s, the Church lost its ability to regulate marriages and its power was bestowed upon civil magistrates instead by the newly ascended, godly government – this practice did not survive the Interregnum period.
58 Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, pp 130–2.
59 Compare West's marriage to, *Confession of faith*, chap. 24, 'Marriage and divorce'.
60 Brian Levack, *The witch-hunt in early modern Europe* (Harlow, 3rd edn, 2006), pp 155–7.
61 Quotations from Louise Jackson, 'Witches, wives and mothers: witchcraft per-secution and women's confessions in seventeenth-century England', *Women's*

History Review, iv, no. 1 (1995), pp 63, 73; Garrett, 'Witchcraft and sexual knowledge', pp 34–5, 39; Briggs, '"By the strength of fancie"', pp 269–70; Purkiss, 'Sounds of silence' in, Clark (ed.), *Languages of witchcraft*, pp 81–98.

62 Walter Stephens, 'Sexual activity, diabolic' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, p 1026. Also see Stephens, *Demon lovers*.

63 Fraser, *The weaker vessel*, pp 4–6, 110–31, especially pp 4–6, 112–3.

64 Ibid., p 113; Richard Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), pp 540–1.

65 Ingram, *Church courts*, pp 68, 159–63; Quaife, *Wanton wenches*, *passim*; also see Marsh, *Popular religion*, pp 109–11.

66 Ingram, *Church courts*, p 154; John Downame, *Foure treatises tending to disswade all Christians from foure no lesse hainous then common sinnes* (London, 1609), pp 128–9.

67 Breuer, *Crafting the witch*, pp 110–6; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 170–2.

68 Stearne, p 15; ERO, T/A 418/127/10-1.

69 Stearne, p 32.

70 Ibid., p 13.

71 Ibid., p 38. Hopkins is equally reticent in his *Discovery of witches*.

72 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 301–6; BL, Add. MS, 27402, ff 114v–115r, 116v. Also see H. F., *A true and exact relation*, *passim*.

73 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 293, 305–6; BL, Add. MS, 27402, ff 108r, 117.

74 Levack, *The witch-hunt*, pp 155–7; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, pp 130–2.

75 Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, emotion and imagination', p 172.

76 Willis, *Malevolent nurture*, pp 88–91; Warburton, 'Gender', pp 95–118.

77 Anne Hughes, 'Puritanism and gender' in, Coffey and Lim (eds), *The Cambridge companion to Puritanism*, pp 296–7.

78 Willis, *Malevolent nurture*; Jackson, 'Witches, wives and mothers', pp 63–84; Purkiss, *The witch in history*, pp 102–5; Roper, *Oedipus and the devil*, pp 20–6; Levack, *The witch-hunt*, p 148.

79 Purkiss, *The witch in history*, pp 130–4; Marylynn Salmon, 'The cultural significance of breastfeeding and infant care in early modern England and America', *Journal of Social History*, xxviii, no. 2 (1994), pp 251–2; Patricia Crawford, 'Attitudes towards menstruation', *Past and Present*, xci, no. 1 (1981), pp 47–73, especially p 52.

80 Stephens, *Demon lovers*, pp 102–5; Millar, 'Sleeping with devils', pp 207–32; Millar, *Witchcraft, the devil and emotions*, pp 116–47; Salmon, 'The cultural significance of breastfeeding', p 252; Crawford, 'Attitudes towards menstruation', pp 47–73; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 174–7; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 161–2; Levack, *The witch-hunt*, pp 149–53; Fraser, *The weaker vessel*, pp 110–31.

81 Ulinka Rublack and Pamela Selwyn, 'Fluxes: the early modern body and the emotions', *History Workshop Journal*, liii (2002), p 6.

82 Examples cited in Salmon, 'The cultural significance of breastfeeding', pp 252–4. Richard Bernard's, *Contemplative Pictures* (London, 1610), pp 67–71, uses similar imagery when describing sin. For an examination of the practice of drawing 'mental pictures' from Scripture in seventeenth-century puritan culture see Susan Hardman Moore, 'For the mind's eye only: puritans, images and "the gold mines of Scripture"', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, lix, no. 3 (2006), pp 281–96.

83 Breuer, *Crafting the witch*, pp 88–9, 94–5, 109–114, 125–38; Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 80–93, 106–33; Purkiss, *The witch in history*, pp 119–44.

84 Stearne, pp 48, 50, 52.

85 Ibid., pp 15, 26, 21–2; also see Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and power in early modern England: the case of Margaret Moore' in, Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (eds), *Women, crime and the courts in early modern England* (London, 1994), pp 138–9, for additional information on Margaret Moore who confessed the same.

86 Stearne, p 26; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f. 107.

87 Sterane, pp 26–7.

88 Ibid., p 26; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, p 223; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and power', p 136.

89 Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and power', pp 138–41.

90 Alexander Roberts, *A treatise of witchcraft* (London, 1616), pp 4–5; quote from, Thomas Cooper, *Mystery*, pp 180–1.

91 Gaule, *Select cases*, pp 52–3.

92 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, p 4; quote from, Gaskill, 'The devil in the shape of a man', p 161.

93 Apps and Gow, *Male witches*, *passim*, but especially pp 151–8; Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft', pp 173, 80.

94 Gaskill, 'The devil in the shape of a man', p 163; Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 3–8.

95 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 159–66. On this also se, Durrant, *Witchcraft, gender and society*, pp 197–8, 251–4.

96 Stearne, p 11; see Bernard, *Guide*, p 126.

97 Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 115–8; Owen Davies, *Cunning-folk: popular magic in English history* (London, 2003), pp 68–9; see Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and gender in early modern Europe', pp 452–3.

98 Davies, *Cunning-folk*, pp 93–118; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 252–300; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 115–6, 121.

99 Stearne, p 11.

100 Quote from Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p 13; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 127–8.

101 Stearne, p 7.

102 Ibid., p 37.

103 Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 127–8; also see Davies, *Cunning-folk*, *passim*.

104 Davies, *Cunning-folk*, pp 119–45; Owen Davies, *Grimoires: a history of magic books* (Oxford, 2009), pp 66–7, 70–2.

105 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 77–9; Williams, 'Demonologies', pp 77–8; Anon., *The second report of Doctor John Faustus*; P.F. [alternatively P.P. or R.P.], Gent., *The historie of the damnable life and deserved death of Doctor John Faustus*; Christopher Marlowe, *The tragicall history of D. Faustus* (London, 1604); Anon., *The just judgment of God shew'd upon Dr. John Faustus*.

106 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 71–88; also see Davies, *Grimoires*, pp 82–4.

107 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, p 82.

108 Bernard, *Guide*, pp 94, 100; Anon., *A briefe description of the notorious life of John Lambe*; Anon., *The tragedy of Doctor Lambe…to the tune of Gallants come away*; Sébastien Michaelis, *The admirable history of the posession and conuersion of a penitent woman*; Anon., *The life and death of Lewis Gaufredy a priest of the Church of the Accoules in Marceilles in France*; Williams, 'Demonologies', pp 77–8.

109 Stearne, p 25.

110 Ibid., p 23; see Ewen, *The trials of John Lowes*.

111 R.H., *A magazine of scandall*, n.p.

112 Ibid.

113 Ewen, *John Lowes*, pp 1–6; Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 67–71.

114 J.H. Rivett-Carnac, 'Witchcraft: the Rev. John Lowes', *Notes & Queries* ix, series 8 (London, 21 March, 1896), p 223.

115 Stearne, pp 23–4; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 65, 300–1, 307; BL, Add. MS, 27402, f.114; ESRO, FC105/D1/1, Hutchinson's notes; Rivett-Carnac, 'Witchcraft', pp 223–4; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 134–44, 160.

116 Stearne, pp 23, 33. Compare this to Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 25–44, 76–7, in which she demonstrates how witchcraft could be used in court to break deadlocks in interpersonal disputes which could not be solved by evoking patriarchal authority or by superior social rank.

117 R.H., *A magazine of scandall*, n.p.

118 Kent, *Male witchcraft*, pp 73–5.

119 Ibid., pp 84–8.

120 Stearne, pp 2–3.

121 Ibid., pp 23–4.

122 Ibid., pp 36, 19–20.

123 Ibid., p 19.

124 Ibid., pp 14–6,18, 20; compare to his account of a young man of Denford, Northamptonshire, Stearne, pp 20, 23.

125 Stearne, pp 20–1.

126 Ibid., pp 23, 34–6, 41–2; Thomas, *Religion and the decline*, pp 620–4.

127 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 178–9.

128 Stearne, pp 33, 41–2; Apps and Gow, *Male witches*, *passim*; Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft', pp 177–8.

129 Stearne, pp 32–3, 40.

130 See Gaskill, 'Masculinity and witchcraft', pp 173, 180.

131 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 189; Stearne, pp 7, 11.

6   Science and the Decline of Witchcraft Beliefs
Evidence for the Scientific Basis of Stearne's Witch-Finding

A confirmation was a scientific text. In his detailed guide on how to accurately identify witch-marks on men and women, Stearne relied upon the empirical method, which was by then established as the hallmark of Baconian science and the 'new philosophy'.[1] In the past few decades, scholars have challenged the strict dichotomy between early modern scientific thought and beliefs in magic and religion. As Peter Elmer has observed, the new science did not progress at the expense of religion and witchcraft beliefs; rather, there was an interplay between these discourses.[2] But few publications focus specifically on the development of science in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England in relation to witchcraft, and none have examined Stearne's text and attempted to situate his witchcraft theories within scientific and medical discourses.[3] This is a lacuna in witchcraft studies, for, as James Sharpe wrote, 'The medical dimensions of the history of witchcraft still remain one of its great uncharted areas'.[4] Scholars have questioned the applicability of the term 'science' to seventeenth-century empiricism and some have suggested the term is an anachronistic descriptor.[5] Arguments have been made that modern scholarship should use the contemporary labels of 'natural philosophy' or 'the experimental philosophy' for these terms better describe the scope of the intellectual framework which encapsulated empiricism and its application to the study of the supernatural and the occult. This chapter will use the terms 'science' and 'natural philosophy' interchangeably.[6] The remainder of this chapter will explore how Stearne's ideas relate to seventeenth-century scientific thought and will argue that his 'searching' for the witch's mark availed from seventeenth-century empiricism. The demonology and witchcraft theory that Stearne utilised did not operate in an intellectual vacuum: it incorporated natural philosophy, medicine, the law, and theology. This is evident in Stearne's discussion of familiars and the witch's mark, which had informed his witch-finding techniques. His descriptions of witch-marks and how to discern them were exceptional in early modern England and were not part of mainstream intellectual thought. In the decades after the witch-hunt Stearne's text was forgotten, but his witch-finding practices created a backlash in some elite circles: his procedures and theories were

(indirectly) scrutinised, and as scepticism increased, much larger questions were raised concerning the nature of spirits and the physicality of witch-craft.[7] The chapter will conclude by discussing the impact of scientific theories on the decline of English witchcraft beliefs and will engage with the raging debates that began in the latter part of the seventeenth century and eventually led to the abolition of witchcraft theory in educated circles by the nineteenth century.[8]

Early Modern Empiricism and Witch-Finding

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a new 'Scientific Revolution' was spreading throughout Europe. At the heart of the experimental philosophy was the idea of empiricism.[9] Followers of the new science questioned the axioms of classical and medieval philosophy, and began to seriously contest these ideas by postulating new theories, which they supported with innovative experiments.[10] Pioneering the new natural philosophy, scholars like Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) were challenging medieval scholastic thought. Collectively, their theories eroded the geocentric concept of the universe and forwarded heliocentric theories, which were later absorbed by astronomers and applied to the study of dynamics.[11] René Descartes (1596–1650) was influenced by these arguments, and used them to form his own laws of movement: he believed that God had imbued the cosmos with a finite quantity of motion, which was constantly conserved, governed, and set in motion by God.[12] But Descartes's theories of mechanical philosophy had much wider intellectual implications for he posited that human and animal bodies were automata, and that the human mind was synergistic with, but ultimately separate from, the body.[13] The impact of Cartesian mechanical philosophy on seventeenth-century witchcraft beliefs will be discussed later in this chapter, alongside other developments in English intellectual cultures.

English scientists gave great impetus to the so-called 'scientific revolution'. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) is often regarded as the founder of the scientific empirical philosophy. He was a devout Calvinist who criticised the Aristotelian method for stagnating the progress of knowledge, believing that it led followers to haphazardly collect data, generalise too hastily, and to rely on induction by enumeration without any deduction. Moreover, Bacon averred that some practitioners 'short-circuited' Aristotle's method 'by beginning, not with induction from observational evidence, but with Aristotle's own first principles', thereby 'cutting off science from its empirical basis'.[14] But, as John Losse and Michael Hunter have stressed, Bacon's role has been overestimated: he was not solely responsible for the conceptualisation or dissemination of a new scientific method as other natural philosophers, such as William Gilbert (1544–1603) and William Harvey (1578–1657), were also important in its development.[15] Nonetheless, Bacon did give a

systematic statement of an approach to science that was influential for the founding of the Royal Society and its members' concepts of science.[16] His method stressed the need for inductive reasoning, which can be defined as a type of logical thinking that involves forming generalisations based on specific instances, observations or facts, then creating axioms from the data and testing the hypotheses again under different circumstances. The process of collecting empirical data and forming axioms was to be repeated to establish the validity of the experiment(s), and, more generally, to forge a new, concrete, foundation from which scientific knowledge could expand.[17]

In the context of this culture of empiricism, Stearne's process of searching for the witch's mark can be viewed as a scientific investigation, for it relied upon knowledge Stearne gained through experience and experimentation.[18] He understood that most witches had familiars and therefore must have the accompanying marks on their bodies. From his own experience and his reading of Bernard's text, Stearne knew what witch-marks should look like, how to search for them and how to discern them from natural skin deformities or blemishes. To establish whether the initial findings were correct, Stearne, following legal recommendations, carried out the search multiple times to be certain.[19] These recommendations were strengthened by seventeenth-century empirical thought. Stearne executed his experimental method of 'searching', assessed the evidence he discovered and then diagnosed the suspected witches' marks based on the evidence he had accumulated.[20] Empirical science provided the method that underpinned Stearne's witch-finding.

The Scientific Investigation of Witch-Marks

In his polemic, Stearne gave an elaborate description of how to identify and locate witch-marks, drawing heavily from his involvement in witch-hunting and from Bernard's *Guide to grand-jury men*. For Stearne, the successful discovery of the witch's mark was crucial because it provided concrete evidence of 'a league and familiar spirits'.[21] The printed literature surrounding the witch's mark from which Stearne could draw from was primarily legal and steeped in theology. In early modern England, investigations into the physical manifestations of witchcraft were scientifically marginal.[22] As Norman Gevitz noted, witchcraft was generally viewed as being occult by medical practitioners and was left to theologians to discuss.[23] Moreover, medical practitioners were not a homogeneous group; instead, they consisted of university-trained and unlicensed physicians and surgeons, ministers, astrologers, and cunning-folk. Michael Macdonald wrote that in early modern medical practice, 'Professional eclecticism and therapeutic pluralism continued to characterise the treatment of physically ill and mentally disturbed people'.[24] Scientific investigations into witchcraft and subsequent medical publications on the subject were therefore few until the latter decades of the seventeenth century. Stearne's text provides insight

into the medical knowledge available to a minor county gentleman in the 1640s, prior to the dissemination and institutionalisation of the new science in England. Stearne's defence of the physicality of witchcraft incorporated elements of theology, the law, and scientific investigation: his detailed writing and systematic testing of the witch's mark renders *A confirmation* an idiosyncratic text.

The first printed tract devoted to exploring dermatology – particularly skin diseases – was Girolamo Mercuriale's (or Hieronymus Mercurialis's) *De morbis cutaneis* (1572). Mercuriale's publication was a printed version of his lectures at the University of Padua, Italy, that were based on classical and medieval epistemology.[25] Hippocratic and Galenic humoral medicine posited that the skin had no other function but to hold the body together and sweat it. This view was still upheld by anatomists, physicians, and surgeons in the early seventeenth century. Meineke te Hennepe has commented that anatomists were not interested in studying skin and only considered it as a protective, removable integument which concealed a human's true anatomy.[26] These concepts of skin were eventually amended in the latter part of the 1600s, when the microscope was used to study the ultrastructure of cells. Robert Hooke (1635–1703) used the microscope to analyse plants and animals, publishing his findings under the title of *Micrographia* in 1665. Such scientific investigations revised earlier theories of skin, conceptually rendering it as a tegument that maintained the integrity of the body, was porous, breathable, and functioned as an interchange between body and environment.[27] Stearne did not access this information in the 1640s but he did use what Craig Koslofsky has termed the 'sacred' understanding of the body and skin, which contended that both were 'deeply mutable and subject to divine intervention, from disfiguring curses to healing miracles', but 'were also subject to specifically diabolical interventions'.[28] Indeed, Stearne referenced Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 7 and 13 to establish a scriptural basis for the reality of witch-marks, arguing that 'it is the devils custom', for 'God will have his mark for his…the beast will have his mark'.[29] This tenet was also articulated through seventeenth-century legal writers who recommended that judges, Justices of the Peace, and jurymen conduct examinations on suspected witches to search for diabolic marks.

By pursuing the physical proof of witchcraft, Stearne and his fellow searchers followed the guidance of the punitive witchcraft act of 1604: it stipulated that anyone who was found guilty of conjuring, consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding or rewarding familiars were to 'suffer pains of death as a felon'.[30] The Jacobean act resulted in the development of the procedures necessary to identify witch-marks, and it generated literature discussing these methods. This piece of legislation helped to formalise practices that were becoming increasing prevalent in pre-trial investigations for witchcraft. By the mid-seventeenth century, the law decreed that witchcraft had to be conclusively proven but this was problematic, for evidence was often circumstantial. Some lawyers, such as Richard Bernard

and Michael Dalton, maintained that discovery of the witch's mark was the irrefutable evidence needed to prove a defendant's guilt.[31] As a result of increased judicial scepticism and judges' desire for hard, physical evidence of a witch's culpability, witch-finders appropriated the empiricism of the nascent experimental philosophy. As Gaskill has suggested, developments in legal and scientific thought did not terminate witchcraft trials, but fuelled the systematic investigations for the material proof of witches' guilt that were utilised by Stearne and Hopkins.[32] Stearne's search for witch-marks was therefore aided by a burgeoning intellectual culture centred on empiricism.[33]

The precise origin of the witch's mark is unknown, but it seems to have been a concept developed from Revelation 7:3–4, 13:16 and 14:9 which narrated how God and the Beast mark their servants.[34] The practice of systematically searching witches' bodies for demonic brands was not used until the sixteenth century. By the 1540s, the practice was being frequently used in the Swiss cantons of Geneva and Vaud.[35] In England, the concept of the witch's mark is evident from the first printed witchcraft trial pamphlet (1566) onwards: systematic investigations for witch-marks were, however, slower to develop. The pamphlet literature discussed in Chapter 4, which described familiars, also contributed to elaborate the concept of the witch's mark. Although searching for marks was extensively used during the East Anglian witch-hunt, the procedure had not been widely practiced in England until the 1630s.[36] Prior to then, it was only sporadically invoked. In 1566, in Essex, Margaret Waterhouse was condemned for witchcraft after judges perceived suspicious spots on her face and nose.[37] In 1579, the first bodily search for the witch's mark by a jury of matrons was demanded by a Southampton leet jury, and it was requested again by magistrates in 1582 in Essex, and in 1597 in Derbyshire.[38] The theory behind witch-marks continued to be bolstered and the practical means to identify them glossed by legal writers. Thomas Potts's narration of the 1612 Lancashire witchcraft trials was replete with descriptions of familiars suckling from marks. He told his readers, for example, that Alison Device said that a 'Blacke-Dogge did with his mouth (as this Examinate then thought) sucke at her breast, a little below her Paps, which place did remaine blew halfe a yeare next after'.[39] Michael Dalton, in his guidebook for Justices of the Peace, *The Countrey Justice* (1618), used Potts's account of the Lancaster trials as a basis when writing on witchcraft: he stated that witches had familiars that appeared to them and that they had a place on their body in the form of a teat from which familiars could suck.[40] His text set judicial precedents for future witchcraft trials, establishing the discovery of familiars and marks as part of pre-trial procedure. Bernard's *Guide*, published 1627, was the first text to fully articulate the theory of witch-marks and to stress the mark's significance in proving a witch's guilt. Bernard's text proved influential and his ideas can clearly be seen in Dalton's revised edition of *Countrey justice* (1635).[41] In the revised editions of Dalton's text he asserted that witch-marks would be

located near the witch's genitalia, stating that 'the Devil's marks… be often in their secretest parts, and therefore require diligent and careful search'.[42] By following Bernard's text, Stearne was practicing the recommended and recognised judicial procedures. He echoed Bernard by emphasising the centrality of the witch's mark, commenting that 'where this mark is, there is a league and familiar spirits' which proved a suspect's guilt.[43] Despite his assertions, Stearne noted how difficult it was difficult to discern the marks and demonstrate the physical manifestations of witchcraft.[44] The need to prove witchcraft was necessitated by the law but it relied upon a degree of empiricism. The physiology of these marks was not, however, discussed in medical discourse.[45] Bernard briefly discussed the appearance of the witch's mark, but Stearne greatly elaborated upon this. Stearne's vivid descriptions of witch-marks and how they differed from natural skin deformities was exceptional (Figure 6.1).

The witch's and Devil's marks took on various forms and could be found on men and women. Clive Holmes and Marion Gibson have commented that the 'searchers' Priscilla Briggs and Mary Phillips conducted examinations for marks on women, while Hopkins and Stearne investigated men.[46] The evidence for this assertion is not conclusive, but it seems that Stearne and Hopkins primarily searched men for demonic brands.[47] In his *Discovery*, Hopkins asserted that his skill in searching was honed 'by seeing diverse of the mens Papps, and trying ways of hundreds of them, he gained this experience'.[48] Although he and Stearne did not distinguish between diabolic protuberances found on men or women, Stearne conceded that malefic witches, women, were more likely to have marks than white witches, who were primarily male. White witches' marks were, he wrote, 'not so easily found'.[49] The reason for this rested upon their implicit pact with Satan, which sometimes resulted in witches being branded with the Devil's mark. This mark was thought to be made when Satan raked his claw(s) across a witch's flesh or by using hot iron, leaving a burn on the skin. In contrast, a form of the witch's mark is described in *A confirmation* as an outward piece of skin 'which may be extended or drawn out, and wrung, much like the finger of a glove, and is very limber'. It characteristically had 'at the very top a little hole, where the blood cometh out', from which familiars fed. Stearne asserted that the mark could also resemble a red or blue spot.[50] According to him, the red spot resembled a 'flea-bite', had a circle around it, 'a whitish end at the top' and it bled: this mark 'was beyond all natural marks'.[51] Red or blue spots also indicated to the witch-finders that a suspect could have excised their demonic mark – some even resorting to pulling out witch-like marks with their nails before being searched.[52] But, like the Devil's mark, it could still be identified by testing its sensitivity by pricking the lesion(s), usually with a bodkin – a knife.[53] Alternatively, patience would reveal the true nature of this mark: Stearne recorded that they 'will grow or be drawn [out] again by the suckling of their imps…for they cannot hide them always'.[54] He cautioned his readers 'here you may

Figure 6.1 Matthew Hopkins, *The discovery of witches* (London, 1647), Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC, call number: 144–461q (CC BY-SA 4.0).

observe, that the diligentnesse of searching is a great matter, and one of the chiefest points of their discovery'.[55] Due to the importance attributed to the witch's and Devil's mark, he recommended searching witches multiple times to militate against inaccurate diagnosis.[56] He echoed Hopkins by assuring his audience that witch-marks were not: 'Wens' (boils or cysts),

pieces of loose skin, warts, moles or 'Emrod-marks'. He was aware that haemorrhoids were 'upon the veins', that they could protrude and be of a different colour (usually dark blue). The primary difference between these and witch-marks was, he reasoned, their sensibility: 'it cannot be conceived that any should be insensible upon their veins'.[57] By entering into medical discourse and elaborating upon the diabolic marks, Stearne attempted to distinguish between natural and diabolic marks to prove the efficacy of searching and the veracity of its results. Indeed, when Stearne searched a suspected witch, Robert Ellis, at the Isle of Ely, the man rejected that he had witch-marks, attributing their presence to physical strain (haemorrhoids).[58] Stearne remained confident in his own expertise, however, and he submitted an account of the marks he found on Thomas Pye's body to the physician and magistrate Dr. Richard Stane when witch-hunting in Ely, July 1647.[59] Others were not so convinced with Stearne's evidence: Pye was imprisoned but was later declared not guilty by a jury at his trial.[60]

Medical practitioners who investigated phenomena attributed to witchcraft in the seventeenth century were divided on their findings. Edward Jorden (1569–1633) was one of these sceptics. After matriculating from Cambridge and then Padua, Jorden returned to England where he became a renowned physician, his clientele including Queen Anne of Denmark. Due to his expertise, he was called to investigate the alleged bewitching of Anne Gunter around 1605, and to present his diagnosis to the Star Chamber and James VI and I. According to a later account by Thomas Guidott, Jorden carried out his examination and concluded 'that he thought it was a Cheat…the King was confirmed in what he had suspected before, and the Doctor had suggested'.[61] A contemporary of Jorden's, John Cotta (1575–1627/8), considered these events in *A short discoverie* in 1612 and *A triall of witchcraft* in 1616. In the former, he plainly stated his opinion on witchcraft:

> I denie not that the divell by covenant may sucke the bodies and bloud of witches, in witnesse of their homage unto him; but I denie any marke (of never so true likenesse or perfect similitude) sufficient condemnation unto any man.[62]

Cotta did not deny the existence of familiars or witch-marks, but he did argue that the detection of demonic activities should be left to professionals. He asserted that learned professionals, like himself, were the only group that were able to accurately differentiate between natural and unnatural illnesses, not unlicensed medical practitioners or itinerant witch-finders.[63]

Two decades later, in 1634, Charles I employed the famous medic William Harvey to search four women from Lancashire who had been arraigned for *maleficia* against locals and the King.[64] Harvey was an obvious choice for the task: not only had he discovered the circulation of blood, but he had also dissected a toad which was believed to be a witch's familiar

at Newmarket and had deemed it to be 'a plain natural' amphibian.[65] In 1634, aided by a team of seven surgeons and ten midwives, Harvey examined the suspects' bodies for physical signs of witchcraft, while Bishop John Bridgeman of Chester examined their spiritual condition.[66] On three of the witches Harvey and his team found 'nothing unnatural nor anything like a teat or a mark'. On Mary Johnson's body, however, they discovered 'two things which may be called teats' near her genitalia. They determined that one mark was completely natural because it was not hollow and did not issue blood or other fluid when compressed; for the second mark, Harvey's team thought it was merely indicative of piles. The women were subsequently acquitted of charges of witchcraft.[67] The descriptions of the witch's mark given in Harvey's report mirror Stearne's account in *A confirmation*. In their respective publications, Stearne and Hopkins wrote against the assessments of physicians like Harvey who diagnosed witch-marks as natural protuberances, thus demonstrating how some physicians militated against the reality of the witch's marks. Indeed, scepticism among some learned medical practitioners persisted, for Harvey's findings were reiterated by John Webster (1611–82) – another physician who had detected imposture in a witchcraft case in the 1630s.[68] In his publication, *The displaying of supposed witchcraft* (1677), Webster categorically denied the existence of witch-marks, noting 'that there are divers Nodes, Knots, Protuberances, Warts, and Excrescences that grow upon the bodies of men and women, is sufficiently known to learned Physicians and experienced Chirurgions…. if all these were Witch-marks, then few would go free'.[69] From the 1630s to 1680s, scepticism towards the witchcraft theories Stearne espoused can be perceived among medical practitioners.

All physicians did not take a hard-line stance against such beliefs. Thomas Willis (1621–73) published a tract discussing epilepsy and convulsions in which he cautioned physicians against diagnosing patients as being possessed or bewitched too frequently. For Willis, other explanations for the perceived increase in a demoniac's strength or their convulsions were likely and could be cured through natural remedies.[70] MacDonald observed that the popular physician and clergyman Richard Napier (1559–1634) struggled to distinguish between symptoms of mental disorders and bewitchment in his clients. Although Napier diagnosed these afflictions and prescribed curative amulets and exorcisms for them, he remained 'quite sceptical about individual claims of bewitchment'.[71] On one occasion he was called to investigate the bewitching of Elizabeth Jennings in 1622: initially Napier said the girl had been cursed by a witch but he later reneged on his assessment and ascribed her illness to hysteria.[72] Despite physicians' reservations, they were forced to concede that diabolic witchcraft and possession were possible. Willis wrote:

> by some means he [the Devil] enters himself into the humane body, and as it were another more mighty soul, is stretched thorow [sic] it,

actuates all the parts, and members, inspires them with an unwonted force, and governs them at his pleasure, and incites to the perpetrating of most cruel, and supernatural wickednesses.[73]

In doing so, Willis restated the hallmarks of demonic possession which were referenced and given scriptural support by Stearne.[74] William Drage (1637–69), physician, unknowingly followed Stearne in this respect, for he also used these stock biblical passages to 'shew that the witches send their Imps, or young spirits, into some, sometimes in form of mice, sometimes of flies'. Though Drage considered the existence of witch-marks and familiars to be questionable, he reasoned that they must exist because 'The chief thing that makes a witch, is a solemn bargain and covenant with infernal spirits'.[75] Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82) concurred: writing in 1642, he stated that 'the Devill really doth possess some men', and 'for my part I have ever beleeved, and doe now know, that there are Witches; they that doubt of these do not onely deny them, but Spirits; and are…Atheists'.[76] After the East Anglian witch-hunt transpired, Browne still maintained this position. At Bury St Edmunds, in 1662, he was summoned to court as an 'expert witness', where he provided evidence against Rose Cullender and Amy Dunny, who were accused of bewitching three children. In his medical assessment, Browne diagnosed the accusers' fits as hysteria but he attributed their primary causation to a demonic force.[77]

In New England, where the witch-finders' methods were adopted wholesale, physicians also explained illnesses as demonic obsessions in cases such as Abagail Williams's and Betty Parris's. Physicians maintained that a skilful practitioner could discern between witches' marks and natural blemishes, and this was supported by ministers such as Cotton Mather. In Salem, 1692, the suspected witch Bridget Bishop and five others were searched for marks – as Stearne's *Confirmation* directed. The female examiners and male surgeon could not fully agree on their findings but were certain they located on three witches 'a preternatural excrescence of flesh between the pudendum and the anus'. Bishop was one of the three witches with a protuberance, and this evidence resulted in the court declaring a guilty verdict for her. However this decision had its detractors: the Harvard-educated, wealthy merchant Thomas Brattle thought the Salem trials were remarkable for their credulity, questioning 'Who did not have an unusual mark somewhere on his body?' and lambasting the court for its 'hellish design to ruin and destroy this poor land'.[78] Opinions on witch-marks and the procedures outlined by Hopkins and Stearne were evidently contentious among physicians and ministers in Old and New England.

While none of the medics discussed above denied the existence of witches, some held reservations towards the physical evidence of a witch's pact that was so crucial for the witch-finders.[79] Physicians who disproved the presence of witchcraft in the legal cases they examined helped increase the uncertainty in one's ability to determine a suspect's guilt.[80] From the

beginning of the seventeenth-century, scepticism towards the evidentiary basis of witchcraft was common among physicians and lawyers, for they considered it to be a 'serious-but-hard-to-prove crime' that rested on the collation of circumstantial evidence.[81] The East Anglian witch-hunt marked the apogee for the systematic searching of witches, which was necessitated by judges' need for condemning evidence and was facilitated by an embryonic scientific intellectual culture based on empiricism.[82] To Stearne, searching for and discovering demonic marks provided inconvertible truth of witches' guilt: for him, searching was 'the most ready and certain way, and such a way, as that, if they which undertake it be careful, there can be no mistake'.[83] In his efforts to convince his readership of the validity of his methods, he provided one of the most thorough scientific discussions of the witch's mark by outlining how it differed from natural marks.

The Decline of Stearne's Witchcraft-Theory, 1650s–1700s

By 1648, Stearne's arguments on and evidence of familiars and witch-marks were conceptually tenuous to physicians and lawyers. The intense prosecution of the East Anglian witch-hunt had increased judicial scepticism towards the provability of the crime and was remembered as a by-product of 'superstition' and religious fanaticism in the proceeding decades.[84] It was not long after Stearne's publication that his witchcraft theory was criticised (indirectly) by sceptics who voiced their opinions through print. In 1653, Sir Robert Filmer (a distant relative of the famous witchcraft sceptic Reginald Scot (d. 1599)) wrote *An Advertisement to the jury-men* in which he systematically undermined the biblical basis for witchcraft theory: he compared English translations of biblical verses to their original Latin and Hebrew to demonstrate that English witchcraft beliefs were unscriptural. Filmer (1588–1653) asserted that the witchcraft act of 1604 was founded upon biblical definitions of witchcraft, which were incorrect as they did not correlate to the crimes for which contemporary witches were convicted. He continued, arguing that those accused of witchcraft were deluded by the Devil; that a diabolic 'covenant' was erroneous for it could be breached by God, Satan or a witch; and that witches could not be convicted for an impossible crime, particularly since they were merely accessories to the Devil who was the source and principal agent of witchcraft. For Filmer, these flawed witchcraft beliefs were given credence by the law and were based on traditional approaches to nature: he insisted that such ignorance and credulity should be eschewed and replaced by the new empirical science and its discoveries.[85] A few years later, in 1656, the physician Thomas Ady argued along similar lines as Filmer and stated that demonic pacts, witch-marks, familiar spirits, and witches' *maleficia* were unscriptural; witches and their accusers suffered from overactive imaginations; and natural explanations could account for cases of witchcraft, but suspects were often misdiagnosed by 'ignorant witchmongers'.[86]

In the aftermath of the East Anglian witch-hunt, witchcraft theory was being further undermined in intellectual circles by the changing views of nature, which were symptomatic of the scientific framework of the new philosophy. In the Restoration period, scepticism regarding the proof of witchcraft remained in educated circles, and the number of witchcraft trials diminished further. But the idea of witchcraft and demonology maintained vitality as subjects worthy of theological and scientific investigation.[87] Natural philosophers of this period who were proficient in new scientific methodologies – Joseph Glanvill, Henry More, Richard Boulton – sought to investigate and defend the existence of witches and demons within these paradigms to refute the growing number of individuals who rejected the possibility of such spirits.[88] These intellectual debates between believers and sceptics were not quickly resolved and continued to be waged from the 1650s to the 1720s, gradually eroding the respectability of witchcraft theory.[89] The intellectual milieu that emerged in the 1650s scrutinised the ideas Stearne and his ilk forwarded on the corporeality of spirits in *A con-firmation* and challenged them using the new philosophy.

As we seen in Chapter 4, Stearne regarded animal bodies as vessels that evil spirits could possess. Using his witch-finding experience and drawing upon biblical precedents, he explained how

> in Gen. 3 we may learne there that the Devill may enter into a dumb creature, & come out of the same, utter a voice intelligible, & offer conference (if any will hearken) to deceive as our Witches now a dayes confesse.[90]

Sir Thomas Browne concurred, and further speculated that the serpent from the Garden of Eden, witches' familiars and other animals could speak to humans.[91] Stearne shared similar views to Hopkins, who argued that

> in this case of drawing out of these Teats [Satan] doth really enter into the body, reall, corporeall, substantiall creature, and forceth that Crea-ture (he working in it) to his desired ends, and useth the organs of that body to speake withall to make his compact up with the Witches, be the creature Cat, Rat, Mouse.[92]

He added that the Devil could appear to and tempt witches 'in any shape whatsoever, which shape is occasioned by him through joyning of con-densed thickned aire together, and many times doth assume shapes of many creatures'.[93] For Stearne and Hopkins, these tenets were at the heart of their witchcraft beliefs. From the aftermath of the witch-hunt, these the-ories were being corroded by opposing modes of thought, particularly by mechanical philosophers.

Mechanical philosophy proposed that nature operated in a regular way, in accordance with immutable laws. This interpretation of nature

questioned the belief that witches or evil spirits could use the Devil's power to intervene in the natural world, and asserted that only God could do such supernatural feats: lesser spirits could only operate preternaturally. This view was most forcefully forwarded in the seventeenth century by the Dutch Cartesian and clergyman Balthasar Bekker (1634–98) in *The world bewitch'd* (1695), where he maintained that the Devil could not operate in the natural world because he had been chained in hell, as foretold in Revelation.[94] Thoroughgoing adherents of the mechanical philosophy rejected the possibility that witches or demonic spirits had agency in the world and this increasingly 'made belief in witches and spirits…extremely difficult'.[95] Cartesianism was not fully absorbed and accepted in seventeenth-century English intellectual cultures because many feared it precluded God's involvement in the world, but some of its tenets were assimilated.[96] One of the most notable witchcraft sceptics was Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who, in *Leviathan* (1651), presented a materialistic philosophy that precluded the existence of spirits and witches.[97] While Hobbes used Cartesianism to this end, the Cambridge Platonists, Henry More and Joseph Glanvill, adapted its principles to argue against a growing disbelief in spirits and atheism, leading them to investigate cases of witchcraft in the 1660s as a way to prove the reality of all spirits.[98] Henry More (1614–87) feared that the scepticism posited by Hobbes was 'a dangerous prelude to Atheism', and pithily remarked: 'For assuredly that Saying was nothing so true in Politicks, No Bishop, no King; as this is in Metaphysicks, no Spirit, no God'.[99] More engaged with Hobbes, and Descartes, to try and prove that the concept of incorporeal spirits and their agency in the world was an intelligible and core part of mechanical philosophy, for the latter could not explain all phenomena, especially cases of witchcraft.[100] Joseph Glanvill (1636–80) was also a leading natural philosopher of his time, becoming a fellow of the Royal Society in 1664.[101] Despite his intellectual pedigree, his arguments differed little from Stearne's. In the first few pages of *A confirmation*, Stearne utilised scripture, his experience, and the history of witchcraft to refute those who believed 'that there are no witches at all'.[102] Similarly, in *A blow at modern sadducism* (1668), Glanvill used his learning, historical and legal precedents, and the Old Testament to assert that witches were real.[103] Against 'Sadducees' he wrote that if witchcraft was nothing but an individual's delusion then it is 'somewhat strange that imagination which is the most various thing in all the world, should infinitely repeat the same conceit in all times and places'.[104] Unlike the witch-finders, however, Glanvill used mechanical philosophy to support his arguments for, he believed, it could not explain the effects of occult forces in the world: rather than expelling the agency of all spirits, demonic and divine intervention was thought to operate through nature, not outside it. As Levack pointed out, Glanvill's arguments were at the forefront of seventeenth-century scientific when he incorporated a mechanical philosophy that included Robert Boyle's (1627–91) concept of

corpuscularianism – or atomism – into his defence of witchcraft.[105] When discussing familiars he pointed out that

> the evil spirit having breath'd some vile vapour into the body of the witch, it may taint her blood and spirits with a noxious quality, by which her infected imagination, heightened by melancholly, and this worse cause, may do much hurt upon bodies that are impressible by such influences.[106]

For Glanvill, the power of witches was demonic in origin but it took effect by emanating from the witch and spreading like an airborne virus, 'through subtil streams and aporhaea's of minute particles, which pass from one body to another [sic: archaea's – primitive single-celled organisms]'. A witch directed their power towards a victim, subsequently making 'dangerous and strange alterations in the person invaded by this poysonous influence'.[107] Here, Glanvill applied early modern science to present a mechanical reason for witchcraft, explaining that the corpuscularian texture of the witch's power was sufficient to negatively affect its recipient.[108] Glanvill also used the experimental method to support his claims, noting that although many cases witchcraft involved counterfeits, 'a single relation for an Affirmative, sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a thousand tales of forgery and imposture, from whence cannot be concluded an universal Negative'.[109] Glanvill's emphasis on various tests to ascertain proof is akin to Stearne's endorsing of multiple searches for witch-marks – even if none were initially found – to be absolutely certain of a suspect's innocence or guilt. But neither Glanvill nor Stearne's arguments maintained much intellectual validity in the proceeding century.

Seventeenth-century science and medicine had an indirect impact on the decline of witchcraft beliefs. Science did not progress linearly at the expense of traditional beliefs in the supernatural, as they worked under the same conceptual framework. Even at the beginning of the eighteenth century, most intellectuals did not deny the existence of spirits, but many were sceptical of the evidentiary proofs used by authors like Stearne.[110] James Sharpe and Barbara Shapiro have noted that the most commonly held view on demonic spirits and witchcraft was succinctly expressed by Joseph Addison (1672–1719), an influential politician and writer who helped create and contributed to the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. In the latter journal, in 1711, Addison stated, 'My mind is divided between the two opposite Opinions…I believe in general that there is, and have been such a thing as Witchcraft: but at the same time can give no Credit to any particular instance of it'.[111] It created an impossible position where one had to assert the reality of evil spirits but could not effectively prove their existence. The 'final witchcraft debate' between Richard Boulton (1674–1724) and Francis Hutchinson (1660–1739) illustrates this paradox and contestation between belief and scepticism in the early eighteenth

century. Boulton, in *A compleat history of magick* (1715), defended the reality of the spirits by asserting that the existence of witchcraft was indisputable for it was well attested to 'by the Testimony of Eye-witnesses, and the undoubted Authority of both ancient and modern Authors': he restated this argument in his *Vindication* (1722) and stressed the primacy of scripture, which spoke of and condemned witches.[112] Boulton was a man of 'considerable medical knowledge' and understanding of advances in early modern science, both of which he deployed to bolster his arguments: he validated the efficacy of swimming witches by using theories of force and gravity, and he mirrored Stearne's detailed discussion on witch-marks when he excluded the possibility that they were natural protuberances and professed that they 'are easily distinguishable from what are natural'.[113] Hutchinson, in his *Historical essay concerning witchcraft* (1718), conversely, demonstrated that he believed in the existence of spirits, good and bad, but denied the existence of witchcraft, dismissing all evidence as highly improbable.[114] After reading over twenty publications on witchcraft, including Hopkins's *Discovery*, Hutchinson took the stance of past sceptical authors and claimed that references to witchcraft in scripture had been mistranslated, that all cases of witchcraft could be attributed to natural causes, and that spectral evidence was nonsensical. When referring to Hopkins's and Stearne's witch-finding methods, he commented that 'the witch-finders had kept the poor people without meat or sleep, till they knew not well what they said', and that he thought it 'a very necessary thing to fence against the mischiefs that may be again, if such bloody superstition and madness should ever again get ahead'.[115] Boulton, in response to Hutchinson's claims, defended the witch-finders, saying that they had operated legally and that witches' confessions were not forcibly extracted for many eyewitnesses were present and could corroborate this. Boulton accused Hutchinson of being 'willing to believe anything that favours his cause'.[116] The debate between Hutchinson and Boulton demonstrates that Stearne and Hopkins's theories and actions during the East Anglian witch-hunt remained controversial seventy years later – but still lingered in intellectual discourse – and that early modern science had yet to kill the 'superstition' of witchcraft.

The 'final witchcraft debate' differed little in content from earlier authors' arguments. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, demonology had been expelled from scientific explanations of the world's workings. As Brian Levack observed, once it was denied that 'the Devil could intervene in the operation of the material world … the possibility that a human being could commit the crime of witchcraft vanished'.[117] Scepticism had already been prevalent among lawyers, physicians, the London virtuoso, and the elite in the higher echelons of society (courtiers of Charles II), but it garnered impetus from the changing views of nature brought by the scientific revolution.[118] In elite cultures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, witchcraft came to be viewed as a superstitious belief of a more primitive

society, whereas in popular cultures witchcraft accusations continued to be levelled at suspected individuals but were infrequent.[119]

A confirmation was an idiosyncratic, scientific text that was not fully consonant with mainstream intellectual or puritan cultures. In his *Confirmation*, Stearne was able to provide a detailed discussion on the theological and medical aspects of familiars and witch-marks. His 'searching' techniques availed from the empirical science which enabled him to convince judges and juries of witches' guilt, to prosecute them legally and in accordance with his religious beliefs. In the aftermath of the witch-hunt, Stearne's witch-finding theories and methods (not his text) were indirectly criticised by sceptical authors and were discussed in the debates over the nature of the spirit world. These philosophers, such as Boulton and Hutchinson, focussed on Hopkins and his *Discovery*, rather than Stearne and his *Confirmation*. It seems that Stearne's publication was only engaged with obliquely because it was not disseminated efficiently and therefore could not effectively contribute to discourses within these fields. His text was largely ignored until mid-nineteenth century romanticism inspired scholars to conduct research into the history of witchcraft and consequently led to the rediscovery of Stearne's *Confirmation*.

Notes

1 Stearne, pp 42–9 see Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 299–300, 310–2; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence', pp 67–70. On seventeenth-century science see Jill Kraye, 'British philosophy before Locke' in, Steven Nadler (ed.), *Blackwell companion to early modern philosophy* (Oxford, 2008), pp 283–95; Sarah Hutton, 'The Cambridge Platonists' in, *idem.*, pp 308–18.
2 Elmer, 'Science, medicine and witchcraft' in, Barry and Davies (eds), *Witchcraft historiography*, pp 31–51.
3 For a discussion of the broader literature see ibid.; Oscar Di Simplicio, 'Medicine and Medical Theory' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, pp 742–7. A notable publication on science and demonology is, Brian Easlea, *Witch-hunting, magic and the new philosophy: an introduction to the debates of the scientific revolution, 1450–1750* (Sussex, 1980).
4 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 271.
5 This debate is discussed in Michael Hunter, *Science and society in Restoration England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp 8–9.
6 For a discussion and justification of using 'science' see Hunter, *Science and society*, pp 8–9.
7 Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft trials in England' in, Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 295–9; Ian Bostridge, 'Witchcraft repealed' in, Barry, Hester and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, pp 309–13.
8 Bostridge, 'Witchcraft repealed', pp 309–34; Willem de Blécourt, 'The continuation of witchcraft' in, Barry, Hester and Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, pp 340–7, 351.
9 Stephen Gaukroger, 'Francis Bacon' in, Nadler (ed.), *Early modern philosophy*, pp 298–307.
10 Nadler (ed.), *Early modern philosophy*; Hunter, *Science and society*, pp 1–31.

11 Bertrand Russell, *History of western philosophical thought and its connection with political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day* (London, 1946), pp 547–62; Hiro Horai, *Medical humanism and natural philosophy: renaissance debates on matter, life and the soul* (Leiden, 2011).

12 Helen Hattab, 'Concurrence or divergence? Reconciling Descartes's physics with his metaphysics', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, xlv, no. 1 (Jan., 2007), pp 49–78; Geoffrey Gorham, 'Cartesian causation: continuous, instantaneous, overdetermined', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, xlii, no. 4 (Oct., 2004), pp 389–423; See John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (eds.), *The philosophical writings of Descartes* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1984), vols i–ii.

13 Peter Harrison, 'Descartes on animals', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, xlii, no. 167 (Apr., 1992), pp 219–27; also see Easlea, *Witch-hunting*, pp 89–153; Michael Rocca, 'René Descartes' in, Nadler (ed.), *Early modern philosophy*, pp 60–78.

14 John Losse, *A historical introduction to the philosophy of science* (Oxford, 1972), pp 5–15, 29–69, quotation from p 63.

15 Russell, *History of western philosophy*, pp 563–7; Hunter, *Science and society*, pp 13–15; Losse, *The philosophy of science*, pp 60–2. See Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (London, 1620), ed. and trans. by Thomas Fowler (Oxford, 1878); William Harvey, *On the motion of the heart and blood in animals* (Frankfurt, 1628), trans. Robert Willis, in, Charles Eliot (ed.), *Scientific papers; physiology, medicine, surgery, geology, with introductions, notes and illustrations* (New York, 1910), xxxviii, pp 63–147.

16 Losse, *The philosophy of science*, p 61.

17 Ibid., pp 62–9; Russell, *History of western philosophy*, pp 565–7; also see Gaukroger, 'Francis Bacon', pp 298–307.

18 Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 295–300; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence', pp 67–70; also see Scott Eaton, 'Witch-finding: from 17th century science to 21st century superstition', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, cxii, no. 5, (May, 2019), pp 385–6 (Available at: doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcz047).

19 Stearne, sig. A1v, pp 44–5; Bernard, sig. A1v, pp 204, 219–20, 230–2.

20 Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence', pp 67–70.

21 Stearne, p 42.

22 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 258, 265.

23 Garfield Tourney, 'The physician and witchcraft in Restoration England', *Medical History*, xvi, no. 2 (1972), pp 153–5; Norman Gevitz, '"The Devil hath laughed at the physicians": witchcraft and medical practice in seventeenth-century New England', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, lv, no. 1 (2000), p 35. Brian Levack asserts the same for diagnosing demonic possession; see Levack, *The Devil within: possession & exorcism in the Christian West* (Cornwall, 2013), p 74.

24 MacDonald, *Mystical bedlam*, pp 7–9; Hartnell, *Medieval bodies*, pp 12–21, 82–8.

25 Nancy Siraisi, 'Medicina practica: Girolamo Mercuriale as teacher and textbook author' in, Emidio Campi, Simone de Angelis, Anja-Silvia Goeing and Anthony Grafton (eds), *Scholarly knowledge: textbooks in early modern Europe* (Geneva, 2008), pp 287–305, especially pp 289–92; Meineke te Hennepe, 'Of the fisherman's net and skin pores. Reframing conceptions of the skin in medicine, 1572–1714' in, H. F. J. Horstmanshoff, Helen King and Claus Zittel (eds), *Blood, sweat, and tears: the changing concepts of physiology from antiquity into early modern Europe* (Leiden, 2012), pp 526–7. For a discussion

of medieval texts, primarily Henri de Mondeville's *Chirurgia* (1306), which briefly consider skin see Hartnell, *Medieval bodies*, pp 81–92.

26 Craig Koslofsky, 'Knowing skin in early modern Europe, c. 1450–1750', *History Compass*, xii, no. 10 (2014), p 797; Hennepe, 'Of the fisherman's net', pp 526–9. The divisions between the professions of anatomists, physicians and surgeons were not as lucid in the early modern period as today's classificatory systems; on this, see Helen King, 'Introduction', in Horstmanshoff, King and Zittel (eds), *Blood, sweat, and tears*, pp 3–5.

27 Hennepe, 'Of the fisherman's net', pp 526–46; Koslofsky, 'Knowing skin', pp 798–9; Hartnell, *Medieval bodies*, pp 84–90. See Robert Hooke, *Micrographia: or some physiological descriptions of minute bodies made by magnifying glasses* (London, 1665).

28 Koslofsky, 'Knowing skin', pp 795, 801.

29 Stearne, p 42; see Bernard, *Guide*, p 218; also see Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 424–6.

30 Matthew Hopkins, Priscilla Briggs and Mary Phillips also searched suspects for signs of the Devil's and witch's mark; see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 48–9, 63–9; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 223–31. 'An Act against conjuration witchcrafte and dealinge with evil and wicked spirits, 1 Jac. I, c. 12 (1604)' in, *The statutes of the realm* (11 vols, London, 1819; reprint 1963), iv, part 2, p 1028; see Stearne, p 42.

31 Orna Darr, 'The devil's mark: a sociocultural analysis of physical evidence', *Continuity and Change*, xxiv, no. 2 (Aug., 2009), pp 362–4.

32 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 46–8. On this also see J.O. Jones, 'Matthew Hopkins, witchfinder (d.1647)' in, Thomas Seccombe (ed.), *Lives of twelve bad men: original studies of eminent scoundrels by various hands* (London, 1894), p 58. This is a modification to the theory forwarded by Charles Webster's, *The great instauration: science medicine and reform, 1626–1660* (London, 1975), in which he argued that seventeenth-century puritanism enabled science. In Stearne's case, empirical science aided him in prosecuting and subsequently executing witches in accordance with his religious beliefs.

33 Easlea, *Witch-hunting*, pp 207–8. From 1644, this culture was centered in London and revolved around an educated clientele who frequented coffee houses – namely, merchants, professionals, 'pseudo-gentry', and natural philosophers; see Hunter, *Science and society*, pp 5, 70–4.

34 See relevant commentary in the 1599 Geneva Bible.

35 Monter, 'Devil's mark', pp 275–7; Julian Goodare, 'Pricking of suspected witches', *idem*, iii, pp 930–2.

36 Darr, 'The devil's mark', p 362; Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 70–1; Miller, 'A witchcraft accusation'.

37 Darr, 'The devil's mark', p 364; Philips, *The examination and confession of certaine wytches*; ERO, T/A 418/10/22; ERO, ASS 35/8/4/22.

38 Darr, 'The devil's mark', p 362; Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', p 70; ERO, T/A 418/37; ERO, ASS 35/24/H.

39 Potts, *The wonderfull discouerie of witches*, sig. R3v.

40 Michael Dalton, *The countrey Justice* (London, 1618), pp 242–3.

41 Michael Dalton, *The countrey justice*, (London, 1635), p 277.

42 Discussed in Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', pp 70–1; quotation of Dalton, *The countrey justice* (1630), p 273.

43 Stearne, p 42.

44 Ibid., p 48.

45 Bernard's, *Guide*, pp 218–20, briefly noted that the marks resembled teats or red or blue spots, were insensible to pain and could not bleed. Stearne greatly elaborated upon Bernard's descriptions in *A confirmation*.

46 Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, p 19; Holmes, 'Women: witnesses and witches', p 71. Holmes references two examples in Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, p 300, to illustrate this point. For additional examples see the searching of Suffolk witches in, BL, Add. MS, 27402, ff 104–21.

47 See for example, Stearne, pp 14–25; Hopkins, *Discovery*; Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*, pp 223–8, 230–1, 292, 294, 300, 313; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 232–3, 251, 254–5, 261–2; ERO, T/A 418/127; ERO, ASS 35/86/1. Similarly, at Reading Borough Court in 1634, the suspected witch Edith Walls was searched for demonic marks by a group of 'local respectable women', while William Walls was searched by a group of men; see Miller, 'A witchcraft accusation'.

48 Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 4.

49 Stearne, pp 7, 11, 42; see Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp 115–8; Davies, *Cunning-folk*, pp 68–9; Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and gender in early modern Europe', pp 452–3.

50 Guiley, *The encyclopaedia of witches*, p 100; Stearne, pp 43–5, 49, quotes from p 43.

51 Stearne, p 43.

52 Ibid., pp 45–6.

53 Goodare, 'Pricking of suspected witches', pp 930–2.

54 Stearne, pp 44–6.

55 Ibid., p 45.

56 Ibid., pp 45–6.

57 Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 5–6; Stearne, pp 46–8. On contemporary medical explanations of the witch's mark, see S.W. McDonald, 'The Devil's mark and the witch-prickers of Scotland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, xc (Sept., 1997), pp 507–11; Eric Laurent Maranda, Victoria Lim, Richa Taneja, Brian Simmons, Penelope J. Kallis and Joaquin Jimenez, 'Witches and warts', *Journal of American Medical Association, Dermatology*, clii, no. 8 (Aug., 2016), p 877; Eaton, 'Witch-finding'. For technical language and other possible diagnoses see Judith Collier, Murray Longmore, and Keith Amarakone, *Oxford handbook of clinical specialities* (Oxford, 9th edn, 2013), pp 582–611, especially p 584. I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Spence for this reference and for discussing potential modern diagnoses of witch-marks.

58 Gaskill, *Crime and mentalities*, pp 50–1; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence', p 58.

59 EDR, E12 1647/21. This deposition is discussed, partially transcribed and reprinted in Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 261–2, 328.

60 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 261, 266, 330.

61 James Sharpe, *The bewitching of Anne Gunter: a horrible and true story of football, witchcraft, murder and the King of England* (Bury St Edmunds, 2000), pp 183–6; quotes from the preface of Edward Jorden, *A discourse of natural bathes, and mineral waters* (London, 1669). This text was originally published in 1631, but this edition, the fourth, included a biography by Guidott, who was another eminent physician.

62 Cotta, *A short discoverie of the… practisers of physicke in England* (London, 1612), p 57.

63 For a discussion of this and a biography see Peter Elmer, 'Cotta, John (1575?–1627/8), physician', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6393) (Accessed: May, 2018).

64 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 46–7.

65 Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 134–5.

66 H.A. Clowes, 'Harvey and the Lancashire witches', *British Medical Journal*, ii, no. 3428 (Sept., 1926), pp 543–4.

67 Ibid., p 544; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 46–7; Geoffrey Keynes, 'William Harvey and the witches' in, John Carey (ed.), *Eyewitness to science* (Massachusetts, 1997), pp 17–22. According to William Drage, *A physical nosonomy* (London, 1664), p 316, another witch was examined in London in the mid-1600s. He inserted the following anecdote: 'A gentleman told me an old woman, a witch, was dissected some few years since in London, and had a large teat, like a sow's'.

68 Antonio Clericuzio, 'Webster, John (1611–1682), schoolmaster and polemicist', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/28944) (Accessed: May, 2018); also see Peter Elmer, *The library of Dr John Webster: the making of a seventeenth-century radical* (*Medical History Supplement*, no. 6, London, 1986).

69 Webster, *The displaying of supposed witchcraft*, pp 82–3. For a brief discussion of Webster's views on witchcraft see Tourney, 'The physician and witchcraft', pp 150–3. Compare Cotta's and Webster's scepticism to another physician's, Ady, *A candle in the dark*, pp 99–100, 127–9. On Cotta's classification as a physician see Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 68.

70 Thomas Willis, *An essay of the pathology of the brain and nervous stock*, trans. Samuel Pordage (London, 1681), pp 39–42.

71 MacDonald, *Mystical bedlam*, pp 32, 200, 211–2.

72 Ibid., p 211. Also see Ofer Hadass, *Medicine, religion, and magic in early Stuart England: Richard Napier's medical practice* (Pennsylvania, 2018).

73 Ibid., pp 48–9.

74 Stearne, pp 5–6.

75 Harvard University, Houghton, 'William Drage, *Daimonomageia*: manuscript', STC 21075; Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665), pp 15–6, 24–7. To remove any bewitchment, Drage recommended praying, consuming herbs or convicting a witch; see pp 20–2.

76 Browne, *Religio medici*, pp 54–6.

77 Browne's role in the trial is fully discussed in, Bunn and Geis, *A trial of witches*, pp 81–6, 147–55, 198–203; see also, *A tryal of witches at the assizes held at Bury St. Edmunds* (London, 1682).

78 Schiff, *The witches, Salem*, pp 20–5, 189–200, 335–8.

79 For additional reading on medical practitioners' views on witchcraft see Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*, pp 130–6; MacDonald, *Mystical bedlam*, pp 198–217.

80 Tourney, 'The physician and witchcraft', pp 143–55.

81 Darr, 'The devil's mark', pp 370–82; Gaskill, *Crime and mentalities*, pp 80–119, 285–6.

82 Ibid., pp 367–8; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 46–8; Jones, 'Matthew Hopkins', p 58; Easlea, *Witch-hunting*, pp 207–8.

83 Stearne, p 53.

84 James Sharpe (ed.), *English witchcraft, 1560–1736: the final debate* (6 vols, London, 2016), vi, pp vii–xxiv; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft trials in England', pp≈295–9.

85 Filmer, *An advertisement*; Cuttica, *Sir Robert Filmer*, pp 33–8. Filmer wrote this text in reaction to the witchcraft trials he witnessed at Maidstone in 1652: see John Callow, 'Filmer, Robert Sir' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, ii, pp 372–3; and, Cuttica, *Filmer*, pp 33, 47.

86 Ady, *Candle in the dark*, passim. When recounting John Lowes case of 1645, Ady suggests that witch-marks were natural and could have been caused by haemorrhoids, warts or tumours; see Ady, *Candle in the dark*, pp 127–9.

87 Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and evidence', pp 33–70.

88 Clark, *Thinking with demons*, pp 295–312.
89 Oldridge, *The devil*, pp 161–5; Robin Attfield, 'Balthasar Bekker and the decline of the witch-craze: the old demonology and the new philosophy', *Annals of Science*, xlii, no. 4 (1985), pp 383–95; Stephen Snobelen, 'Lust, pride, and ambition: Isaac Newton and the Devil' in, J. E. Force and Sarah Hutton (eds), *Newton and Newtonianism: new studies* (Dordrecht, 2004), pp 151–81; Michael Hunter, 'The Royal Society and the decline of magic', *Notes & Records of the Royal Society*, lxv (Jan., 2011), pp 103–19.
90 Stearne, sig. A3, pp 3, 52, quote from p 6.
91 Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, p 107; see also Browne, *Religio medici*, pp 56–7; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 237; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 227–8.
92 Hopkins, *Discovery*, Querie 7.
93 Ibid.
94 Brian Levack, 'Mechanical philosophy' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iii, pp 73–8; Levack, *The Devil within*, pp 77–8.
95 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 263.
96 Ibid., pp 261–4; Levack, *The Devil within*, pp 71–2.
97 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), pp 7–8; Tourney, 'The physician and witchcraft', p 143; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 264.
98 Johnathan Barry, 'Glanvill, Joseph (1636–1680)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, ii, pp 445–6; also see Kraye, 'British philosophy', pp 290–5.
99 Henry More, *An antidote against atheisme* (London, 1653), p 164. More glosses the witchcraft narrative of John Wynnick and uses it to argue that witches, witch-marks, pacts, familiars and the devil were real and to assert that it would be 'incredible' if all witches were delusional; see More, *An antidote*, pp 124–51, especially pp 124–7.
100 Hutton, 'The Cambridge Platonists', pp 312–5.
101 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 244–5.
102 Stearne, pp 2–10.
103 Joseph Glanvill, *A blow at modern sadducism* (London, 1668), p 73.
104 Ibid., p 13.
105 Levack, *The Devil within*, p 77; Lisa Downing, 'Robert Boyle' in, Nadler (ed), *Early modern philosophy*, pp 338–52, defines corpuscularianism as a theory which claims that 'there are ultimate unsplittable particles from which all bodies are composed' and 'that there is empty space, a void or vacuum, through which these atoms move'.
106 Glanvill, *A blow at modern sadducism*, pp 19–21; Thomas Willis, physician, made a similar point; cited in Gevitz, '"The Devil hath laughed at physicians"', p 11.
107 Glanvill, *A blow at modern sadducism*, pp 28–9.
108 On a description of this theory see Downing, 'Robert Boyle', pp 343–5.
109 Stearne, pp 43–6; Glanvill, *A blow at modern sadducism*, p 39. Compare to Bernard, *Guide*, pp 219–20.
110 Levack, *The Devil within*, pp 75–8; Barbara Shapiro, *A culture of fact: England, 1550–1720* (London, 2000), pp 19, 179–82.
111 Shapiro, *A culture of fact*, p 182; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 289–90; *The Spectator*, 14 July 1711, in Henry Morley (ed.), *The Spectator: a new edition reproducing the original text* (3 vols, London, 1891), i; Pat Rogers, 'Addison, Joseph (1672–1719)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/156) (Accessed: May, 2018).
112 Richard Boulton, *A compleat history of magick, sorcery and witchcraft* (London, 1715), pp 1–9.

113 Richard Boulton, *A vindication of a compleat history of magick, sorcery and witchcraft* (London, 1722) pp xiv–xv, 119–28; Sharpe (ed.), 'The final debate' in, Sharpe and Golden (eds), *English witchcraft, 1560–1736* (6 vols, London, 2003), vi, pp xviii–xix.

114 David Wootton, 'Hutchinson, Francis (1660–1739)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, ii, pp 531–2.

115 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 284–5; Hutchinson, *An historical essay*, pp v–xv, 59–72, 144–57, quotation on pp 69–70; also see Hutchinson's notes in, ESRO, FC105/D1/1.

116 Boulton, *Vindication*, pp 57–66.

117 Levack, 'Mechanical philosophy', p 738.

118 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 265–6.

119 Ibid., pp 273–302; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 279–86; Brian Levack (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft*, pp 430–447.

7 The Afterlife of *A confirmation*

The Circulation and Rediscovery of Stearne's Text in the Nineteenth Century

Stearne's *Confirmation* is now widely recognised as an indispensable source for researchers of English witchcraft. Sharpe has commented that 'Stearne's tract provides us with a substantial body of information about the mass trials in which he was so heavily involved'.[1] And Gaskill has stated that 'Stearne's sixty-one page account remains the most informative printed work recording their witch-finding campaign'.[2] But *A confirmation* seems to have had little impact upon seventeenth-century literary culture and it did not become prominent within its genre until the late nineteenth century when antiquarian collectors and scholars took notice of its importance and its rarity. Building on the discussion of *A confirmation*'s situation in contemporary print culture, this chapter will argue that Stearne's text was not widely known in the succeeding centuries after its publication, resulting in misunderstandings or misrepresentations of Stearne. Although we cannot reconstruct *A confirmation*'s circulation in the 1640s, we can examine its transmission from the eighteenth to the twentieth century by examining library catalogues, lists of library holdings, and references to Stearne's work in printed auction catalogues. There are six extant copies of Stearne's *Confirmation*, though only one is represented on the 'Early English Books Online' (EEBO) database. By considering the histories and provenances of these copies, this chapter will discuss the transmission, ownership, reception, and collection of Stearne's text by antiquarians and scholars during the modern period, and will adumbrate the intellectual and cultural shifts which rescued witchcraft studies and *A confirmation* from the peripheries of academic discourse. This chapter demonstrates that although Stearne's work had a limited impact when it was published, in the following centuries it was collected by antiquarians, theologians, and historians of witchcraft who recognised its rarity. Subsequently, knowledge of Stearne's *Confirmation* and his role in the witch-hunt began to spread through English witchcraft historiography from the mid-1800s. But while Stearne's witch-hunting has recently received scholarly attention, his pamphlet and its dissemination have not been examined. Consequently, the (mis)representations of Stearne that were developed by scholars between the mid-1800s and the early 1900s have persisted in witchcraft historiography.

The Rarity of *A confirmation*

It is difficult to trace the transmission of *A confirmation* from 1648 to the present day. Stearne's work was not widely known in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century England, for he was not successful in distributing or marketing his work in the 1640s.[3] The 'eagle-eyed and obsessive George Thomason' collected other contemporary pamphlets dealing with witchcraft – such as Hopkins's and Gaule's – but he missed Stearne's pamphlet, suggesting that it was not sold by London-based booksellers nor was widely circulated within the capital.[4] Indeed, out of all the witchcraft publications from 1645 to 1648, fewer copies of Stearne's *Confirmation* have survived. In the aftermath of the East Anglian trials, Hopkins became synonymous with witch-hunting and was remembered as the 'Witch-finder General', his popular image being further augmented through the successful publication of Gaule's *Select cases* and, later, Hutchinson's *Historical essay concerning witchcraft*, of which a staggering 190 copies are in modern library holdings.[5] As this chapter demonstrates, scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were familiar with Hopkins and his text, but most were unaware of Stearne and his *Confirmation* until the late 1900s.

The first mention of Stearne's pamphlet appears in an appendix of the Middle Temple's *Catalogus librorum bibliothecæ* (1734).[6] Stearne's work is named within a volume containing other literature printed in London between 1644 and 1648, and the reference provides the authors' names, the titles of their work, and the place and date of their publication.[7] A decade later, in 1744, a printed catalogue of the contents of the Harleian Library was compiled by Samuel Johnson and William Oldys. The catalogue lists *A confirmation* as being within the collection and provides some basic bibliographic information in its record.[8] It is not known why or how the Middle Temple acquired Stearne's pamphlet in 1734 or how the Harleian Library came to possess a copy in 1744. It is certain, however, that the Middle Temple obtained a copy of Stearne's *Confirmation* before 1734.

There is little contextual information available regarding the Middle Temple's and Harleian Library's acquisitions of Stearne's publication. Prior to the Middle Temple's acquisition of *A confirmation* in the 1700s, it had accumulated a small collection of books by 1540. This was greatly enlarged in 1641 after a member of the Temple, Robert Ashley, donated his library of over 4,000 books and £300 to employ a library keeper, all 'for the publique benefit'.[9] The following year, an executor of Ashley's will, William Cox, was assigned to this post, which he held until 1655.[10] With Cox as the library's custodian, the Temple continued to buy literature throughout the 1650s and a library catalogue was made in 1655, but has not survived. The next printed catalogue was produced by Sir Bartholomew Shower in 1700 and it does not list *A confirmation*.[11] Between 1700 and 1734, the Middle Temple gained a copy of Stearne's pamphlet. The catalogue of 1734,

in which *A confirmation* first appears, had its origins in 1717 when Henry Carey, the clerk in the chapel of Lincoln's Inn, painstakingly surveyed and catalogued the library's collection, which he described as 'a perfect chaos of paper, and a wilderness of books'.[12] Little attention was given to the library or its holdings over the course of eighteenth century (during which period it gained a reputation for being filthy, dark, and cramped), and during this period Stearne's work was somehow removed from its holdings.[13] Similarly, while the Harleian Library listed a copy of *A confirmation* in its catalogue of 1744, the text was not mentioned within its 1808 catalogue, which reflected the state of the library after its merger with the British Museum in 1753. Therefore, by the early nineteenth century, Stearne's publication was no longer within the library's collection.[14] But it was still being circulated, if infrequently, in England for the London auctioneers Thomas Puttick and William Simpson sold a copy for twenty-three shillings on Friday 3 June 1859,[15] as did Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge on Thursday 11 June 1885[16]; an original copy of Stearne's publication re-entered the British Library on '17 Nov 1908', after possibly being bought at auction (as '£4.4.0.' is written in pencil on an inside page).[17] The archivist in the British Library who curated *A confirmation* in 1908 was aware that it was 'of extreme rarity', noting that he had collected 'a very scarce tract which seems to have been unknown to the Writers on Witchcraft'.[18] The book's rarity was also recognised by others: the historian Thomas Wright called it an 'excessively rare book' in 1851, as did Rev. Walter Begley in the 1890s and John Ferguson in 1902.[19] The historian of witchcraft and bibliophile James Crossley admired his edition of Stearne's work for its rarity but also because of its author. In 1852, he wrote that Stearne 'has the subject so perfectly at his fingers' ends, and discusses it so scientifically, that Hopkins sinks into insignificance by the side of him'.[20] Crossley was one of the first historians to recognise the importance of *A confirmation*'s contents for the history of English witchcraft.

When tracing the history of *A confirmation*'s acquisition using digitalised sources, only a few references can be found between 1717 and 1744. However, further editions can be located in modern libraries. Library catalogues show that Queen's College, Oxford collected *A confirmation* in 1798; James Crossley had an edition in his library before 1845, which was posthumously auctioned in 1885; John Ferguson purchased copies in 1857 and 1902; Harvard University's Houghton Library attained an edition in 1904; the British Library acquired *A confirmation* in 1908; and that the Huntington Library's copy had successive owners from the early nineteenth century until it permanently entered its collection in 1920. From the dates listed above it is evident that Stearne's publication was known to few people until the end of the nineteenth century. It was circulated among antiquarians – lawyers, historians, theologians – who were interested in witchcraft studies and collected the work for its importance and rarity. Remarkably, eleven copies of Stearne's work were in circulation between

1648 and 1920, yet the text remained obscure. Only six extant copies of Stearne's *Confirmation* are known, and they can be found in America, England, and Scotland. Each copy has its own unique history, an afterlife which can provide context as to how the witch-finder's publication was received, read, and viewed by its owners. As *A confirmation* changed ownership and entered library repositories, awareness of his text and his role in the witch-hunt slowly increased among scholars, leading to a change in perception of the witch-hunter.[21]

The Ownership of Extant Copies of *A confirmation*

Queen's College, Oxford, houses the earliest, extant, acquisition of Stearne's *Confirmation*. The pamphlet is contained within a larger three-volume collection, entitled the 'Tracts on Witchcraft', which contain twenty-seven texts that were printed in England between 1590 and 1715. The three volumes were given to the Queen's College library in 1798 and were rebound in the nineteenth century in quarter leather with paper covered boards. Stearne's pamphlet was presented to the library by a Fellow of Queen's College and Doctor of Divinity, Lancelot Ion (b.1761), who signed the first page of each volume as 'D.D. Lan: Ion A. M. Socius/1798'. Before attending Oxford, Ion lived in Morland, Westmorland. He matriculated in 1779, took his BA in 1783 and MA in 1786, and eventually became a fellow of Queen's College in 1793.[22] But Ion was deprived of his fellowship on 30 December 1800 by the provost and fellows as he was suspected of being married and of having children.[23] When Ion failed to come to the College to answer the charges, he was deprived. Ion clearly had a keen interest in witchcraft publications, collecting, collating, and binding them together during his tenure at Oxford, between 1780 and 1798. The volumes contain key texts such as King James's *Daemonologie* (1603), Pott's *Wonderful discoverie* (1613), Cotta's *Trial of witchcraft* (1625), Hopkins's *Discovery* (1647), Stearne's *Confirmation* (1648) and Glanvill's *Philosophical considerations touching...witchcraft* (1667). There is only one piece of marginalia within this copy of Stearne's work, which shows that a reader, possibly Lancelot Ion, had knowledge of medieval witchcraft. Against Stearne's observation that witches were numerous, as evidenced by 'the stories and relations even from these in our owne Kingdome',[24] a reader noted, in secretary hand, their own story of witchcraft from 'Leicestersh[ire]: east goscot[e] Hundr[ed]'.[25] This was an obscure reference to Lord William Hastings, who had lived in Gascote and been executed for witchcraft in 1483, when Richard III brought charges against him.[26] The marginalia and traceable provenance of Oxford's copy suggest that it was owned and read by educated individuals from the eighteenth century: it was possessed by someone with an awareness of a fifteenth-century witchcraft trial and was collected by Ion, an Oxford theologian, who evidently had an interest in early modern witchcraft pamphlets.

John Ferguson (1838–1916) was another academic who collected two copies of Stearne's *Confirmation* during his lifetime, and they are now held within the University of Glasgow's Special Collections. Ferguson was a bibliophile with an interest in the early modern period, particularly the history of science and witchcraft. He collected early modern English, Scottish, and European witchcraft treatises, pamphlets, and demonologies, creating an impressive collection that included the works of nearly all major authors on these subjects.[27] His library contained an estimated 18,000 volumes, which were auctioned after his death. The principal part of his library – the approximately 11,000 volumes that concerned alchemy, chemistry, metallurgy, and witchcraft – was preserved from dispersal when the University of Glasgow purchased it in 1921.[28] Ferguson acquired his first copy of Stearne's work on 20 June 1857, buying it from an auction house in London.[29] This copy of *A confirmation* sports a quarto binding dating from the mid-eighteenth century to early nineteenth century and an armorial bookplate, which indicates that the previous owner was James Comerford (1807–81), a notary in London and member of Society of Antiquaries. From 1830 Comerford began to amass a significant collection of county histories and local topographies, which he housed at his residences in London and Sussex. Following his death in March 1881, Sotheby's sold his library at auction for £8,327 13s.[30] At some point between 1830 and 1857, Comerford obtained and then sold his copy of *A confirmation*, thus providing the newly matriculated Ferguson with a chance to purchase the book.[31] But it was not his last opportunity, for *A confirmation* continued to be circulated among antiquarians long after the 1850s. On 21 May 1902 Ferguson bought a small collection of nine witchcraft pamphlets – titled 'Witchcraft and witches' – containing printed texts dating from 1616 to 1699 and included H. F.'s *True and exact relation* (1645). Through this purchase Ferguson acquired his second copy of *A confirmation*.[32] There are no annotations on this version of Stearne's work except for the Latin phrase 'liber dominus quintus' (the fifth book), which is written on the top right corner of its title page in a seventeenth-century hand, indicating its previous ownership. During the 1800s the collection was bound together in panelled calf and the pages were mounted on wide borders. It was then sold by J. T. (possibly a bookseller), who wrote on the rear cover that he had collated the publications on 19 May 1902.[33] Both copies of Stearne's 'extremely rare' work would have appealed to Ferguson for their scarcity and for the information they provided on the East Anglian witch-hunt.[34] But when Ferguson purchased *A confirmation* in 1857, at the age of nineteen, it was among his first books on witchcraft, and its contents shocked him: he remarked, 'This is a fearful book / such ignorance and superstition'.[35] The impact of Stearne's text on Ferguson did not dissuade him from reading and collecting additional, rare witchcraft tracts, for he maintained his interest in these endeavours until his death.

The provenance of the two copies Stearne's *Confirmation* held in the British Library and the Houghton Library, Harvard University, is harder to trace. Both of these texts were evidently rebound in the nineteenth century, as their bindings are indicative of this. The British Library's is a Cambridge panel-style calf binding, which was more common in the late 1600s and early 1700s, while the binding of the Houghton copy can be dated to the end of the nineteenth or early twentieth century.[36] The British Museum acquired its *Confirmation* in November 1908, possibly from auction. It has no marginalia but was read through by one owner who left small ink marks in the outer margins to highlight certain passages on witches' confessions and Stearne's witch-finding methods of swimming and searching.[37] One of the Museum's librarians was aware of *A confirmation*'s 'extremely rarity' and provided additional paratext, writing on the inside cover that 'Manningtree where the author resided was infested with Witches several of whom were condemned + executed'. The librarian then directed readers to James Crossley's (who will be discussed later) short article in *Notes and Queries*, 1852, which they quoted at length.[38] The Harvard library acquired its edition of Stearne's pamphlet in 1904 through a gift in memorial of George Augustus Nickerson (1854–1901), an alumnus of the College.[39] Nickerson matriculated in 1876 and graduated with a degree in law in 1879.[40] He lived near Harvard University his entire life, and he was the wealthiest businessman-cum-politician in the area upon his death in September 1901.[41] His widow, Ellen Floyd Nickerson, donated to Harvard College Library five annual payments of $200 each 'for the purchase of books on Folk-lore in memory of her husband' and an engraved bookplate.[42] With these donations the library purchased material that George Nickerson had an interest in, such as seventeenth-century English witchcraft trials and its related literature – possibly because of the abundant history of witchcraft in Salem and the wider Massachusetts area. Harvard University used Ellen's funding to obtain an original edition of Hopkins's *Discovery of witches* and a rare manuscript in 1905 containing original depositions of a witchcraft case from Devonshire in 1601.[43] Harvard's librarians, P.H. Tufts and William Lane, buying in memory of Nickerson, collected Stearne's *Confirmation*, Hopkins's *Discovery*, and the witchcraft depositions for the texts' 'folkloric' content and unique nature but also the legal contents of the documents, which would have probably appealed to Nickerson due to his background in law. While Harvard's copy of *A confirmation* made it available to American researchers, the British Museum's was crucial in disseminating knowledge of Stearne and his text to British scholars who pioneered research into the East Anglian witch-hunt, particularly in the late 1900s.

The final extant edition of John Stearne's *Confirmation* is held in the Huntington Library. The Huntington's copy shows that, after having successive owners from the early nineteenth century, Stearne's publication entered the library on 3 May 1920.[44] Huntington Library's *Confirmation* was sought after by antiquarians in England and America for its rarity.

The first mark of provenance indicates that it was formerly owned by 'J. Ritson', whose name is inscribed on the back cover. This is possibly Joseph Ritson (b.1752-d.1803), the antiquarian, trained lawyer of Gray's Inn and ballad collector, who might well have been eager to obtain a copy of Stearne's rare work.[45] Upon Ritson's death in 1803, his library was sold by Sotheby's and it is clear from the auction catalogue that he collected witchcraft pamphlets.[46] Stearne's *Confirmation* was not in Sotheby's sale catalogue of 1803, meaning that Ritson had departed with it before this date. According to his biographer, Henry Burd, Joseph Ritson spent so much money on old books that he was unable to pay the cost of his lodgings in 1773. As a result of his bibliophilism, his living expenses became negligible, leaving him 'almost constantly in want'. Ritson's incompetence in handling his finances eventually forced him to sell all his property and parts of his library, including Stearne's text.[47]

Sometime in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the copy of *A confirmation* that is now in the Huntington Library entered the possession of Rev. Walter Begley (b.1845-d.1905). Begley was a graduate of Corpus Christi, Cambridge (BA received in 1867), and was ordained as a deacon in 1868 and as a priest in 1869.[48] In his later years, he became a prolific author, writing books on religious history, early modern literature, and science by relying upon 'unexplored sources and from books of the greatest rarity'.[49] The witch-finder's publication certainly appealed to Begley's interests. He knew that Stearne's work was not in the British Museum or the Bodleian Library at that time, writing on his copy of *A confirmation* that it was an 'important work by Matthew Hopkins's coadjutor' and was 'extraordinarily rare'. In 1891, he contacted a fellow distinguished scholar and minister, Alexander Gordon (1841–1931), to discuss Stearne's pamphlet. Both men had a keen scholarly interest in the witch-hunters, for Gordon had written an entry in the *Dictionary of national biography* for Matthew Hopkins in the same year. Begley's description of Stearne's *Confirmation* made Gordon reconsider the emphasis he had placed on Hopkins's role in the witch-hunt. Gordon replied to Begley in a letter: 'Your account of Stearne's book makes me regret exceedingly that I did not contact you respecting Matthew Hopkins. I hope sometime or other you will let me see Stearne'.[50] It is uncertain whether this wish was fulfilled before Begley's death in 1905. But his copy of *A confirmation* did remain in the possession of another divine and acquaintance of Gordon. The Huntington's copy of Stearne bears the inscription of 'John C. Foster', who noted that his acquisition had previously belonged to Begley. No additional information on Foster is given, but other titles within the Huntington Library obtained from him show that he lived in '37 Westbourne Road, Forest Hill, S. E.', London.[51] This is the same address of Rev. John Charles Foster (1854–1916), a committee member of the Baptist Historical Society, who sat on the Society's board with Alexander Gordon.[52] Like Begley and Gordon, Foster researched and published articles on early modern history and collected rare seventeenth-century

texts, including a first edition of John Bunyan's *Barren fig-tree* (1673) and Stearne's *Confirmation*.[53] In the early twentieth century, this copy of Stearne's work was being circulated among, collected, and read by ministers from multiple denominational backgrounds who shared antiquarian interests. At some point between Foster's death in 1916 and May 1920, this edition of Stearne's book was obtained by the booksellers William Heffer and Son (est. 1876), Cambridge, who attached a description of Stearne's work and noted its provenance.[54] The Huntington Library acquired this copy of *A confirmation* shortly thereafter, at a time when it was actively seeking to purchase rare books for its growing collection.

The rarity of Stearne's work must have appealed to the library's founder Henry E. Huntington (1850–1927), and its librarians. In the early twentieth century, Huntington was determined to collate a library of rare books, primarily of pre-1640 titles, to rival established English collections such as those in the British Museum, and Oxford and Cambridge universities.[55] In the 1910s, George D. Smith, 'the Napoleon of Booksellers', actively purchased books on behalf of Huntington, and 'they completely dominated the British auction rooms' from 1914 to March 1920, when Smith died.[56] In July, Smith's role was taken up by Clarence Brigham, who toured England and Scotland from 1920 to 1925, purchasing over 2,600 titles from bookstores for Huntington.[57] In the short gap between Smith and Brigham's tenure, on 3 May 1920, a copy of Stearne's *Confirmation* was obtained by the library.[58] It is not certain whether Huntington's copy was bought directly from a bookseller, specifically from Heffer and Son, or at an auction; regardless, it crossed the Atlantic, from England to America. And although it was not a pre-1640 book and thus not befitting of Huntington's primary collecting agenda, it was an attractive purchase for his library: it was clear that Stearne's text was an extremely rare publication, which was only available in Queen's College, Oxford, and the British Museum, placing the Huntington Library on par with elite English repositories in this respect. *A confirmation* was identified as a unique text by educated nineteenth- and twentieth-century antiquarians. Consequently, it was collected not only for its rarity but also for the information it provided on Stearne's witch-finding techniques and the events of the East Anglian witch-trials. The cultural and intellectual shifts of the early eighteenth century were superseded by those which occurred at the start of the nineteenth century in Britain. These changes altered perceptions of the supernatural, fostering the growth of witchcraft studies.[59] It led to the rediscovery and recognition of the history of witchcraft and, consequently, of Stearne and his *Confirmation*.

The Rediscovery of *A confirmation* in the 1800s

Nineteenth-century rationalism and Romanticism led to the 'denying-yet-documenting' of witchcraft in Scotland and England. Scholars denied the reality of witchcraft but used it to illustrate how society was progressing

from a medieval past into scientific enlightenment. In the early 1800s a new-found cultural appreciation for the countryside, its peasantry, and their folklore emerged throughout Europe.[60] In Britain, the Romantic movement was a reaction to scientific rationalism and was accompanied by an exaltation of the irrational and a heightened sense of the supernatural.[61] As Ronald Hutton remarked, the response to scientific rationalism was accompanied by 'a recognition that humanity could at last be suffering from too much civilisation'.[62] Hutton also observed that Romanticism was strong in the British Isles, particularly in Scotland, where urbanisation, industrialisation, and a heightened sense of the supernatural (including millennialism) had taken root.[63] As Gibson has argued, for some, Scottish witchcraft belief was intrinsically linked to national identity from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, imbuing it with cultural vitality and resonance.[64] Subsequently, during the early 1800s, the supernatural was explored in the fictional literature of Romantic authors, and it found its way into non-fictional prose.[65] Scottish antiquarian authors were among the first to begin exploring the historical subject of witchcraft in Britain.[66] As they researched the East Anglian witch-hunt, they emphasised Matthew Hopkins's role and either ignored Stearne or considered him to be little more than Hopkins's assistant. This trend persisted in historiography until the twenty-first century, when Stearne's role in the witch-hunt was reconsidered.

In 1830, Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) published his *Letters on demonology and witchcraft*. The work was ambitious in its scope for it explored the history of witchcraft from biblical times to 1814 and included chapters devoted to both Scottish and English prosecutions. When writing of the East Anglian witch-hunt, Scott signalled his knowledge of Hopkins and his pamphlet, centring his entire discussion on the witch-finder. He mentions Stearne only once, referring to him as Hopkins's assistant.[67] A few years later, in 1834, John Dalyell's *Darker superstitions* was more reticent in its discussion of Stearne, omitting any mention of him in his discourse on Hopkins's role.[68] In John Mitchell and John Dickie's *Philosophy of witchcraft* (1839), however, Stearne's activities in Essex, in 1645, were described in full. Mitchell and Dickie identified Stearne as an important character in the trials. The authors relied upon court depositions and H. F.'s *True and exact relation* (1645) to construct and narrate Stearne's encounter with Elizabeth Clarke: *A confirmation* seems to have been unknown to them.[69] The Scottish journalist and novelist, Charles Mackay, failed to mention Stearne in his *Popular delusions* (1841), basing his account on the 'Witch mania' of the 1640 on Hopkins's narrative. Mackay did indicate that Hopkins was not the sole agent in the trials, but did not name those he described as 'coadjutors'.[70] Like other early nineteenth-century authors, Mackay probably did not know of Stearne's text, but he could have been emphasising the sinister figure of Matthew Hopkins, the Witch-Finder General, as a literary device to create pathos for the executed witches.[71] These Scottish

authors were the pioneers of modern witchcraft studies, laying the ground-work for English scholars whose research highlighted the rarity and utility of Stearne's *Confirmation*.

As discussed earlier, English antiquarians took an interest in witchcraft studies around the mid-1800s when antiquarians such as Comerford, Beg-ley, and Foster began to collect early modern witchcraft tracts and demo-nologies. Thomas Waters has observed that in this period, mid-1800s, the growth of spiritualism, rural nostalgia, sensational entertainments, 'and the emergence of a more permissive mood all combined to create a cultural climate that gave more latitude to occult outlooks'.[72] This cultural climate not only stimulated antiquarian interest in witchcraft but also attracted scholarly attention: interest in the East Anglian trials began to grow from the 1830s onwards, but was confined to a small network of academic anti-quarians. In 1837, however, the Essex-born publisher Charles Clark (1806–80) reprinted H. F.'s pamphlet *A true and exact relation* (1645), containing the examinations of the Essex witches and the oral testimonies given by the witch-finders.[73] James Crossley was the first to interrogate and write of Stearne's publication in detail and to reassess the witch-finder's role. Crossley was an author, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (1852), and a bibliophile, who amassed a library that contained an estimated 50,000 volumes, including rare tracts and manuscripts.[74] In his edited edition of *Potts's Discovery of witches* (1845), Crossley outlined the witch-finding techniques of Stearne and his role in the witch-hunt, directly quoting from *A confirmation*. He described it as a 'curious and scientific' tract, in which Stearne dealt 'with the subject undoubtedly like a man whose extensive experience and practice had enabled him to reduce the matter to a complete system'. Crossley demonstrated sympathy for Stearne when he complained that he had not received full payment for his witch-finding and expressed that 'he was doubtless well deserving of a recompense'. In comparison to the work of Walter Scott 'and several other writers' who focussed on Hop-kins, he lauded Stearne's text for being 'a very different, no doubt more correct account; which, singularly enough, has hitherto remained unno-ticed'.[75] Crossley's publication drew scholarly attention to Stearne's role in the witch-hunt and to his text, slowly spreading *A confirmation*'s no-toriety among a network of scholars. Crossley's work also helped to bring witchcraft histories to a larger modern audience, for his friend William Ainsworth (1805–82) published his 'phenomenally popular novel' *The Lancashire witches: a romance of Pendle Forest* (1849), which relied heav-ily on Crossley's research.[76]

In the following decades, awareness of Stearne's publication and his role in the East Anglian witch-hunt continued to spread among English historians of witchcraft. In 1851, Thomas Wright wrote his *Narratives of sorcery and magic*, in which he provided an overview of Hopkins and Stearne's activities during the trials, primarily relying on information from H. F.'s *True and exact relation* (or Clark's reprint of it), Sir Walter Scott's,

Letters, and Crossley's publication. From Scott's *Letters*, Wright learnt of Hopkins's pamphlet and from Crossley's work he learnt of Stearne's text. Wright commented that *A confirmation* was 'an excessively rare book' in James Crossley's library and that he only knew of 'it through the extracts given in that gentleman's recent edition of Pott's Discovery of Witches'.[77] Wright's anecdote caught attention of Charles Clark (who had reprinted H. F.'s work), prompting him to write a letter to *Notes and Queries* in 1852. He asked the editors whether

> any of the numerous readers of your valuable journal can inform me where a copy of Hearne's [sic] work is to be found, as it appears to be wanting in the British Museum, and several other of the public libraries.[78]

Clark received a quick response from Crossley, a regular contributor to the journal,[79] who informed Clarke that he should search for 'Stearne's (not Hearne's) Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft' and emphasised its rarity: it is 'certainly one of the most extraordinary of all the treatises on Witchcraft, the only copy I ever saw is the one I possess'. Like his earlier account, Crossley continued to heap praise on Stearne, 'a philanthropic individual', remarking that he discussed witchcraft 'so scientifically, that Hopkins sinks into insignificance by the side of him'.[80] But this view of Stearne was slow to permeate through English scholarship. Eliza Linton (1822–98), a prolific and controversial author, used seventeenth-century court depositions and printed literature to write a chapter on the East Anglian witch-hunt in her *Witch stories* (1861). Linton seems to have been unaware of *A confirmation* and, in contrast to Crossley, described Stearne as Hopkins's 'friend and comrade' but also as his 'slavey or attendant'.[81] Alexander Gordon's excerpt on Hopkins, in 1891, considered Stearne to be merely Hopkins's assistant; however Gordon was forced to reconsider this conclusion when Begley informed him of Stearne's *Confirmation* in a letter later that year.[82] J. O. Jones followed this historiographical trend, writing in his brief biography of Hopkins (1894) that Stearne was only his aid. And while Crossley praised Stearne as the most important and scientific witch-finder, Jones attributed Hopkins with these traits, commenting that he was the 'first to reduce the practice of witch-finding to a science and to systematise the methods in vogue'.[83] Jones quoted large sections from Hopkins's 'quaint and naif' *Discovery*, but his knowledge of *A confirmation* was confined to what Crossley wrote in 1845.[84] By reconstructing the transmission of Stearne's text and examining the nineteenth-century historiography pertaining to *A confirmation*, it is evident that it was known to few historians of witchcraft. This is perhaps because research on the East Anglian witch-trials was in its infancy and because the vast majority of public and university libraries did not have copies of *A confirmation*. Stearne's publication was available to few collectors worldwide. It was not until the early

1900s that libraries secured all (known) extant copies of Stearne's publication from antiquarians' collections and thereby allowed a greater number of scholars to make full use of the rare text and to build on the work of earlier witchcraft historians. As outlined in the introductory chapter, in the 1920s, *A confirmation* was primarily used as a referential source by scholars such as C. L. Ewen, Wallace Notestein, and Margaret Murray, while others, including Kittredge, dismissed it as a work of 'peculiar plagiarism' due to Stearne's reliance on Bernard's *Guide*.[85] The figure of Hopkins continued to be exaggerated and to overshadow Stearne in witchcraft historiography until relatively recently, as publications by authors including James Sharpe, Malcolm Gaskill, and Frances Timbers have sought to redress the imbalance by highlighting and reassessing Stearne's substantial impact upon the East Anglian witch-hunt.[86] This scholarship has not, however, examined *A confirmation* as a piece of literature with a material history in the form of its dissemination, transmission, and ownership. The legacy of Stearne and his rare text, from the 1640s to present day, illustrates the complex history of the witch-finder, including the challenges encountered during his witch-hunting and that of *A confirmation*, in its afterlife.

Notes

1 Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, p 1084.

2 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331.

3 Francis Hutchinson, for example, indicated in 1718 that he was aware of Stearne's agency in the East Anglian witch-trials, commenting that, 'You must know then, that…Matthew Hopkins of Manningtree in Essex, and one John Stern, and a woman along with them went round from town to town…to discover witches'. While Hutchinson was familiar with Gaule's and Hopkins's publications, Stearne's text seems to have been unknown to him. See Hutchinson, *An historical essay*, p 61. Hutchinson knew of Hopkins's pamphlet as it is mentioned in a letter from Suffolk preacher, William Wilson, no relation to the printer of Stearne's work; see pp 50, 69. He may also have 'borrowed a copy of Hopkins's *Discovery of witches* from a senior judge in London to see for himself the rationale of the witchfinder'; see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 282.

4 Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 332. For Hopkins's *Discovery*, see the British Library, Thomason Tracts, E.388(2), in which Thomason wrote 'May 18', the date he purchased it.

5 Data gathered from searching the ESTC.

6 Middle Temple, *Catalogus librorum bibliothecæ Honorabilis Societatis Medii Templi Londini. Ordine dictionarii dispositus* (London, 1734), p 459.

7 Ibid., pp 458–9.

8 Thomas Osborne, *Catalogus bibliothecæ Harleianæ , in locos communes distributus cum indice auctorum* (4 vols., London, 1744), iv, p 441, catalogued within section entitled 'Magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Quatro'.

9 C. E. A. Bedwell, *A brief history of the Middle Temple* (London, 1909), pp 82–3 (Digital copy also available at: http://www.middletemple.org.uk/library-and-archive/library/history-of-the-library); PRO, PROB 11/187/248.

10 Ibid., pp 84–5; *Register of admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple (from the fifteenth century to 1944)*, ed. H.A.C. Sturgess (3 vols, London,

1949), i, p 109 (Digital copy also available at: www.middletemple.org.uk/library-and-archive/archive-information-and-contacts/register-of-admissions).

11 See Sir Bartholomew Shower, *Bibliotheca illustris Medii Templi Societatis* (London, 1700); Wilfrid Prest, 'The unreformed Middle Temple' in, Richard Havery (ed.), *The history of the Middle Temple* (Oxford, 2011), pp 232–3.

12 Ibid.; Bedwell, *A brief history of the Middle Temple*, pp 85–92, quotation from p 92.

13 Ibid., pp 94–5; Raymond Cocks, 'The Middle Temple in the 19th century' in, Havery (ed.), *The history of the Middle Temple*, p 334.

14 British Museum's Department of Manuscripts, *A catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum: with indexes of persons, places, and matters* (4 vols, London, 1808–12).

15 [Thomas] Puttick and [William] Simpson, *Catalogue of a very extensive, curious and valuable library comprising a larger collection than has hitherto ever been offered in one sale of rare, curious, and important works in Anglo-American literature* (London, 1859), p 224.

16 Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, *Catalogue of the second portion of the library of rare books and important manuscripts, of the late James Crossley* (1885), p 32, records an imperfection: 'title slightly cropped'.

17 The British Library's copy of Stearne's, *A confirmation* is currently housed in the General Reference Collection, Shelfmark C.54.e.6.

18 The archivist directly quotes James Crossley, *Potts's Discovery of witches in the county of Lancaster…with an introduction and notes by James Crossley, Esq* (Manchester, 1845), Notes, pp 4–5. Also see his comments in 'Stearne's (not Hearne's) confirmation and discovery of witchcraft', *Notes and Queries*, v, series 1, no. 139 (26 June, 1852), p 621, where he describes Stearne's text as 'one of the most extraordinary of all the treatises on Witchcraft, the only copy I ever saw is the one I possess'.

19 Thomas Wright, *Narratives of sorcery and magic, from the most authentic sources* (2 vols, London, 1851), ii, p 163; Huntington Library, Rare Books, no. 147825; University of Glasgow, Special Collections, Ferguson, shelfmark Al-x.57.

20 Crossley, 'Stearne's (not Hearne's) confirmation and discovery of witchcraft', p 621.

21 See Appendix to Chapter 7.

22 University of Oxford, Queen's College Library, Vault: Sel.b. 138, 139, 140. Stearne's work is in the third volume, Sel.b. 140 (4). I would like to thank the College's librarian and archivist for their help with this collection.

23 Oxford University's statutes stipulated that fellows had to remained celibate. The statutes which demanded chastity and proscribed marriage were not revised until 1882; see Bridget Duckenfield, *College cloisters – married bachelors* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013).

24 Stearne, p 11.

25 Queen's College, Sel.b. 140 (4, p 11).

26 Rev. John Curtis, *A topographical history of the county of Leicester* (London, 1831), p 4; Marion Gibson and Jo Ann Esra (eds), *Shakespeare's demonology: a dictionary* (London, 2014), pp 109–10.

27 A sample of Ferguson's collection can be viewed at the University of Glasgow's virtual exhibition, 'The damned art: the history of witchcraft and demonology' (Available at: www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/specialcollections/virtualexhibitions/damnedart/#d.en.187382) (Accessed: Dec., 2019). Also see University of Glasgow, *Catalogue of the Ferguson Collection of books mainly relating to alchemy, chemistry, witchcraft and Gipsies* (Glasgow, 1943; Supplement, 1955).

28 David Weston, 'Ferguson, John (1838–1916)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/53857) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

29 University of Glasgow, Sp. Coll., Ferguson, Ag-d.30. Ferguson wrote these details on the inside cover.

30 George A. Leavitt & Co., auctioneers, *Catalogue of the library, manuscripts and prints of Rushton M. Dorman, esq., of Chicago, Illinois: the whole to be sold by auction … April 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, 1886* (New York, 1886), pp 1–7, 67, 127; John Ashdown-Hill, 'The Bosworth Crucifix', Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, lxxviii (2004), pp 85, 88; Samuel Rogal (ed.), *The Rushton M. Dorman, Esq. library sale catalogue (1886): the study of the dispersal of a nineteenth-century American private library* (New York, 2002), pp 4–5; Henry Wheatley, *Prices of books: an inquiry into the changes in the prices of books which have occurred in England ay different periods* (London, 1898), p 169.

31 Weston, 'Ferguson', *ODNB*.

32 Glasgow, Sp. Coll., Ferguson, Al-x.57.

33 Glasgow, Sp. Coll., Ferguson, Al-x.57(5), see the title page and the inside of front and back cover for provenance. The observation concerning 'J.T.' was suggested by the Special Collection's staff.

34 Ibid.

35 Glasgow, Sp. Coll., Ferguson, Ag-d.30.

36 British Library, General Reference Collection C.54.e.6. Information on the binding is from email correspondence with British Rare Books Reference Team in October 2016 and then in person in June 2017.

37 See British Library, C.54.e.6, pp 13, 19, 22, 24, 26–9, 31–2, 48.

38 British Library, C.54.e.6, inside cover; Crossley, 'Stearne', p 621.

39 Harvard University, Houghton, John Stearne, *A confirmation and discovery* (1648), shelfmark 24244.74. Acquisition information from email correspondence with Houghton librarians.

40 Harvard University, *Quinquennial catalogue of the officers and graduates of Harvard University, 1636–1895* (Massachusetts, 1895), p 328.

41 Anthony Sammarco, *Milton: a compendium* (Charleston, 2010), 'The Touzalin-Pierce Estate'.

42 The Harvard Graduates' Magazine Association, *The Harvard Graduates Magazine*, xiv (Boston, 1905–6), p 664; Harvard University, *Annual reports of the president and the treasurer of Harvard College, 1903–1904* (Cambridge, 1905), treasurer's statement, p 21, president's report, p 218.

43 Harvard University, Houghton, Hopkins, *Discovery*, Gen. 24245.17; Harvard University, Houghton, 'Depositions in a witchcraft case: manuscript, 1601', MS Eng 925; Harvard University, *Annual reports…1903–1904*, president's report, pp 234–5.

44 Huntington Library, Rare Books, no. 147825.

45 Henry Alfred Burd, *Joseph Ritson: a critical biography* (Illinois, 1916), pp 11, 25–9, 40–2.

46 The catalogue lists the following: *Tryal of witches* (1664), *Trial of Jane Wenham for witchcraft* (1712), *A pleasant treatise of witches their imps* (1673), *The kingdom of darkness or history of daemons, spectres, witches* (1705) and Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus* (1726, edn); see Leigh, Sotheby and Son, auctioneers, *A catalogue of the entire and curious library and manuscripts of the late Joseph Ritson, Esq. of Gray's Inn* (London, Monday 5 Dec., 1803), pp 3, 10, 12, 27.

47 Burd, *Joseph Ritson*, pp 20, 40–3.

48 Cambridge University, *A Cambridge Alumni Database: all alumni of the University of Cambridge, 1200-1900* (Available at: http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/Documents/acad/enter.html) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

49 Walter Begley (ed.), *Nova Solyma, the ideal city; or, Jerusalem regained* (2 vols, New York, 1902), incorrectly attributed this text to John Milton, rather than to Samuel Gott (1614–71); Begley, *Is it Shakespeare? The great question of Elizabethan literature* (New York, 1903); Begley, *Biblia cabalistica: the cabalistic Bible* (London, 1903); Begley, *Biblia anagrammatica: the anagrammatic Bible… from unexplored sources and from books of the greatest rarity* (London, 1904); Begley, *Bacon's nova resuscitation: the unveiling of his concealed works and travels* (3 vols, London, 1905); Begley, *Breviarum anagrammaticum: the Latin hymns* (London, 1906).

50 Alan Ruston, 'Gordon, Alexander', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/37470) (Accessed: Dec., 2019); Alex Gordon, 'Hopkins, Matthew' in, Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of national biography* (63 vols, London, 1891), xxvii; 'Letter from Alex Gordon to Rev. Walter Begley', in Huntington Library, Rare Books, no. 147825.

51 See marks of provenance in the following in the Huntington Library: Benjamin Whichcot, *Select sermons of Dr. Whichcot* (London, 1698), Rare Books, no. 201876; Stearne, *Confirmation*, no. 147825; and Richard Baker, *Meditations and disquisitions* (London, 1640), Rare Books, no. 30013.

52 'Officers and members', and 'Annual Reports', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, iii, no. 4 (Sept., 1913), pp 257–62; *The Angus Library and Archive: Baptist History Project* (Oxford) (Available at: http://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/?candidate=john-charles-foster) (Accessed: Dec., 2019); Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Baptist handbook for 1896* (London, 1896), p 235.

53 See John Charles Foster, 'An unrecorded first edition of Bunyan', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, i, no. 2 (April, 1909), pp 92–4, 99; Foster, 'Early Baptist writers of verse', *idem*, iii, no. 2 (Oct., 1912), pp 96, 103–7.

54 Huntington Library, Stearne, no. 147825.

55 James Thorpe, *Henry Edwards Huntington: a biography* (Berkely, 1994), especially pp 271–305; Donald Dickinson, 'Mr. Huntington and Mr. Brigham', *The Book Collector*, xlii, no. 4 (Winter, 1993), pp 509–13.

56 Dickinson, 'Mr. Huntington', p 511.

57 Ibid., pp 512–21.

58 Huntington Library, Stearne, no. 147825.

59 Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs*, pp 53–126; Thomas Waters, 'Magic and the British middle classes, 1750–1900', *Journal of British Studies*, liv, no. 3 (July, 2015), pp 632–53; Bostridge, 'Witchcraft repealed', pp 309–34; Marion Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, pp 41–3.

60 Christa Tuczay, 'The nineteenth century: medievalism and witchcraft' in, Barry and Davies (eds), *Witchcraft historiography*, pp 58–60; Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, p 46; Ronald Hutton, 'Modern pagan witchcraft' in, Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and magic in Europe: the twentieth century* (6 vols, London, 1999), vi, pp 21–31; John Lindow, 'The challenge of folklore to medieval studies', *Humanities*, vii, no. 1 (Feb., 2018), pp 1–9.

61 Hutton, 'Modern pagan witchcraft', p 21; Crawford Gribben, 'Scottish Romanticism, evangelicalism and Robert Pollok's The course of time (1827)', *Romanticism*, xxi, no. 1 (2015), pp 32–3.

62 Hutton, 'Modern pagan witchcraft', pp 21–2.

63 Ibid., pp 21–2, 26–31; Gribben, 'Scottish Romanticism', pp 32–3; Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, pp 40–4.

64 Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, pp 40–7; for a wider European perspective on this see Lindow, 'The challenge of folklore to medieval studies'.

65 Gibson, *Rediscovering renaissance witchcraft*, pp 40–4; Tuczay, 'The nine-teenth century', pp 52–68. For an early English fiction that was loosely based on the East Anglian witch-hunt and included Hopkins as a character see Thomas Gaspey, *The witch-finder, or the wisdom of our ancestors: a romance* (3 vols, London, 1824).

66 Goodare, Martin and Miller (eds), 'Introduction' in, *Witchcraft and belief*, p 16.

67 Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on demonology and witchcraft* (Edinburgh, 1830), p 248. He also noted that Hopkins's *Discovery* was 'a very rare tract', p 218.

68 John Dalyell, *The darker superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), p 685, for example.

69 John Mitchell and John Dickie, *The philosophy of witchcraft* (Paisley, 1839), pp 257–60; compare to Stearne's information against Clarke in, H. F., *A true and exact relation*, pp 3–4.

70 Charles Mackay, *Memoirs of extraordinary popular delusions* (3 vols, London, 1841), ii, pp 207, 240–7.

71 Angus Calder, 'Mackay, Charles (1812–1889)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/17555) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

72 Waters, 'Magic and the British middle classes', p 653.

73 Charles Clark (ed.), *A true and exact relation…reprinted verbatim from the original edition* (London, 1837). Clark later expanded this with other seventeenth-century witch-trial pamphlets under the title *A collection of rare and curious tracts, relating to witchcraft…between the years 1618 and 1664. Reprinted verbatim from the original editions* (London, 1838). Clark's publications reflect his keen interest in local history and poetry; see James Bettley, 'Clark, Charles (1806–1880)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/5457) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

74 Stephen Collins, 'Crossley, James (1800–1883)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6808) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

75 Crossley, *Potts's Discovery of witches*, Notes, pp 4–5.

76 Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire witches* (Manchester, 2002), pp 166–187, quote on p 124.

77 Wright, *Narratives of magic*, ii, pp 145–64, quote p 163.

78 Charles Clark, 'Hearne's Confirmation', *Notes and Queries*, v, series 1, no. 131 (1 May 1862), p 416.

79 Collins, 'Crossley, James (1800–1883)', *ODNB*.

80 Crossley, 'Stearne', p 621.

81 Eliza Linton, *Witch stories* (London, 1861), pp 310–44, quotes from pp 317, 330; Nancy Anderson, 'Linton, Elizabeth [Eliza] Lynn (1822–1898)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) (Available at: doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/16742) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

82 Gordon, 'Hopkins, Matthew'; 'Letter from Alex Gordon to Rev Walter Begley', in Huntington Library, Stearne, no. 147825.

83 Jones, 'Matthew Hopkins', pp 57–8; Crossley, 'Stearne', p 621; Crossley, *Potts's Discovery of witches*, Notes, pp 4–5.

84 Jones, 'Matthew Hopkins', pp 63–6; Crossley, *Potts's Discovery of witches*, Notes, pp 4–5.

85 Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials*; Ewen, *Witchcraft and demonianism*; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 164–205; Murray, *The witch-cult*, pp 31, 34, 48, 153,181; Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, p 273. Notestein was an avid book collector who amassed a large collection of rare seventeenth-century publications and used them as primary sources for his own research; even he could not acquire a copy of Stearne's rare work and was forced to consult a copy in the British Library or the Houghton Library. For

Notestein's collection see The College of Wooster, 'English historical library of Wallace Notestein' (Available at: www.wooster.edu/academics/libraries/collections/collections/notestein/english/) (Accessed: Dec., 2019).

86 See, for example, Gaskill, *Witchfinders*; Timbers, 'Witches sect', pp 21–37; Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, p 1084; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii.

Appendix

Table A7.1 Extant copies of Stearne's *Confirmation*

Extant copies of A confirmation *in modern libraries*	*Ownership of* A confirmation
British Library, General Reference Collection, C.54.e.6.	Entered British Library in November 1908.
Harvard University, Houghton Library, shelfmark 24244.74.	Entered Houghton Library in 1904. It was purchased as a gift in memorial of George Augustus Nickerson (1854–1901), an alumnus.
Huntington Library, Rare books, no. 147825.	Owned by: Joseph Ritson between 1752 and 1803; Rev. Walter Begley between 1845 and 1905; Rev. John Charles Foster between 1905 and 1916; William Heffer and Son, booksellers, between 1916 and April 1920. Entered Huntington Library on 3 May 1920.
University of Glasgow, Special Collections, Ferguson, Ag-d.30.	Owned by James Comerford between 1830 and 1857. Acquired by John Ferguson on 20 June 1857.
University of Glasgow, Special Collections, Ferguson, Al-x.57.	Owned by J. T., bookseller (?), prior to May 1902. Acquired by John Ferguson on 21 May 1902.
University of Oxford, Queen's College, Sel.b. 140.	Owned by Lancelot Ion, Fellow of Queen's College and Doctor of Divinity, between 1780 and 1798, who donated it as a gift to the College. Entered Queen's College library in 1798.

Conclusion

Stearne published his *Confirmation* after systematically hunting witches across East Anglia for two years, resulting in the execution of approximately 110 individuals. He returned to his normal life in 1647.[1] Stearne lived with his family in Lawshall, Suffolk, and continued to hold land in Essex until the 1660s. But his involvement with the courts did not cease. As Elmer and Gaskill have noted, Stearne accused a neighbour of working on the Sabbath in 1651, resulting in a counter-accusation that he was a thief. Stearne successfully defeated this claim in 1654; however, his neighbours brought more litigation against him, and he was bound over for disturbing the peace in 1657.[2] Stearne received little in the way of monetary gain by publishing *A confirmation* in 1648 and years of court cases further impacted his finances: he declared that he was worth less than £5 in 1651, was declassed from a gentleman to a yeoman, and was forced to seek employment as a scribe. In the last decade of his life, his finances were dwindling, but he appears to have lived peacefully in Lawshall until his death on 20 January 1670, aged around sixty.[3] His *Confirmation* did not have much success after his death, remaining relatively unknown to all but a few scholars and antiquarians until the mid-1800s. It was Stearne's actions that had a more immediate impact: the trials and reportage on them were transmitted through print and oral culture, spreading knowledge of the witch-hunters' techniques, familiar spirits, diabolic compacts, and the prevalence of witches in England. Witchcraft trials continued to be held throughout the 1650s, particularly in Kent, in 1652, where eighteen witches were tried, and six were executed.[4] As discussed in previous chapters, the witch-finders' ideas were engaged with by scholars in the latter part of the 1600s, but witchcraft beliefs declined among the middle and upper classes: judges became increasingly sceptical and witchcraft ceased to be a crime worthy of death.[5] In the proceeding centuries, Stearne and his *Confirmation* were forgotten, and emphasis was placed on Hopkins's role in the witch-hunt and his *Discovery*. Scholarship has only recently noted the importance of Stearne's witch-hunting; however *A confirmation* has not been fully investigated as a text that has its own history, which can illuminate Stearne's wider beliefs.[6] This study has addressed the historiographical lacuna by

contextualising Stearne's *Confirmation* within various seventeenth-century English cultures and tracing its transmission and reception history from the 1640s to present day. It has been argued that the rarity of *A confirmation* and the lack of historiography concerning John Stearne have resulted in misrepresentations of the witch-finder. Stearne's ideas were not fully consonant with mainstream puritan culture and this complicates attempts to use him as a cipher for a large group of people in East Anglia or nationwide. Future work should be more nuanced when examining Stearne, his ideas, and the driving forces behind the witch-hunt.

Stearne's *Confirmation*: A Summary

This monograph is the first full-scale study of John Stearne and his sole publication, *A confirmation*. Stearne was a critical player in starting and sustaining England's largest witch-hunt, but he has been overshadowed by his partner Matthew Hopkins since the 1640s. This micro-study of Stearne has sought to redress the historiographical imbalance. Little is known of Stearne, an obscure minor gentleman, outside of the witch-hunt. By studying his pamphlet and contextualising his concepts within wider seventeenth-century intellectual cultures we can begin to construct, and better understand, the ideas underpinning his witch-hunting programme, which swept across East Anglia. This book has situated Stearne and his text within a variety of early modern contexts, including witchcraft theory, demonology, religion, sex and gender, science, print culture, book history and, more widely, seventeenth-century English cultures, particularly in East Anglia. It has emphasised the importance of the witch-finder and his text, and has addressed various misrepresentations of Stearne, which have occurred due to the rarity of *A confirmation* and the lack of scholarship on it.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the economic, religious, and political landscape in Essex and Suffolk in the seventeenth century in order to construct the backdrop to the witch-hunt that Stearne spearheaded. In East Anglia during the 1640s, the Civil War fostered anxiety among villagers. There were concerns over the economy and worries over the incoming apocalypse, witches, Laudians, and Catholics, which gave local Protestants in government impetus to prosecute witches. Two of these men were Grimston (senior) and Bowes, who had already prosecuted witches and to whom Stearne had political connections. Another powerful player was the Earl of Warwick – the financial, religious, and political head of the Essex puritans – who was linked to the witch-hunt, and who sentenced witches to death in 1645 with the help of Edmund Calamy and Samuel Fairclough. The chapter demonstrated that Stearne was not merely Hopkins's assistant; rather, he was a central figure in the trials and was involved in a network of puritans, many of whom were Presbyterians, striving for local reform. Stearne was part of this generation that had become increasingly discontent with the Caroline regime and, while the

government was weakened, they sought to implement and enforce their own ideas of a godly society.[7]

Chapter 2 continued on the theme of religion. Stearne has often been labelled as a 'Puritan' by historians but the applicability of this descriptor has not been questioned, and his religious ideas have not been investigated. Chapter 2 attempted to address this issue by examining Stearne's religious beliefs, based on *A confirmation*. It compared his ideas to those of the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of faith*, which was operating as the barometer of orthodoxy in the mid-1640s. *A confirmation* contains ideas that were analogous to the Assembly's, but some of his theories, namely millennialism, soteriology, and witchcraft, diverged from its standard. Stearne was a puritan in the broad sense but his text highlights the vagaries of this term and the varieties of religious beliefs circulating among the laity in mid-seventeenth-century oral and print cultures. The latter was the focus of Chapter 3. In the 1640s official censorship over the printing press collapsed, and the volume of material being published increased. The distribution of print across south-eastern England was extensive, so Stearne would have had access to much of this material. This chapter analysed some of the supernatural literature being circulated in print during the 1640s. Pamphleteers recognised and addressed such literature in response to changes in popular and intellectual cultures inspired by the civil wars. Print culture informed and helped Stearne rationalise his ideas, but his *Confirmation* was not widely read. Through an examination of print, this chapter suggested why Stearne's text had no immediate impact by exploring and comparing *A confirmation* to a variety of contemporary literature concerning the supernatural. Chapter 3 argued that Stearne's *Confirmation* was not ideal for a large, popular audience; that it was published at a poor time; and that it was not disseminated through a bookseller thus limiting its audience. This led to the rarity of Stearne's text in subsequent centuries and to misinterpretations of the witch-finder in historiography. In the 1640s, Stearne's potential readership was accustomed to supernatural literature and had been exposed to ideas of familiar spirits in print since the 1560s.

Chapter 4 explored printed works of early modern demonology and the development of the concept of familiars, which served as an icon for a variety of medieval and early modern concerns over human-animal boundaries, morality, and sexuality. These themes influenced Stearne's concept of familiars, both directly and indirectly. By synthesising pre-existing ideas of familiar spirits and enacting his witchcraft theories, Stearne was able to pursue and prosecute witches effectively. He was not an unscrupulous witch-finder for he followed the recommendations of legal texts to extract from suspects confessions of *maleficia* and ownership of familiars. The following chapter applied modern scholars' theories and methods to *A confirmation*. This chapter dealt with Stearne's conceptualisation of sex and gender, which were congruent with that of his contemporaries and with English demonological thought. His *Confirmation* demonstrates that

misogyny did not propel his witch-finding for he held the belief that a witch could be female or male and that both could be suspected of witchcraft after transgressing social norms. The witchcraft confessions he recorded ultimately reflect and reinforce early modern gender norms through demonic inversion. Stearne's main idiosyncrasy regarding the sex and gender roles of witches was the direct and sustained manner in which he argued that white and good witches were primarily male, and that he predominately searched men for witch-marks. His thorough descriptions and investigations of these protuberances were, by early modern standards, scientific in nature.

Chapter 6 explored the scientific status of Stearne's *Confirmation*, the witch-finder's impact on the debates in the latter half of 1600s, and the subsequent decline of witchcraft beliefs. *A confirmation* demonstrates that Stearne's 'searching' techniques were not backwards and 'superstitious' because they availed from the empirical science, which enabled him to convince judges of witches' guilt, to prosecute them legally and in accordance with his religious beliefs. His vivid descriptions of witch-marks and how they differed from natural skin deformities were exceptional, for it was not discussed in contemporary medical discourse. From the decade after his text's publication, however, Stearne's witch-finding methods of the 1640s were indirectly criticised by sceptical authors and were discussed in the scientific debates over the nature of the spirit world. *A confirmation* was not referenced by these authors because it was not widely disseminated and therefore could not contribute to discourses within these fields. Stearne's text was overlooked until the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 7 attempted to trace references to *A confirmation* from 1648 to modern day within printed texts to chart its history, its afterlife. The chapter argued that Stearne's text was not widely known in the succeeding centuries after its publication, resulting in misunderstandings or misrepresentations of Stearne. It examined the histories and provenances of the six extant copies of Stearne's work. The chapter detailed the transmission, ownership, reception, and collection of *A confirmation* by antiquarians and scholars during the modern period. It also outlined the intellectual and cultural shifts which brought witchcraft studies back into academic discourse. The antiquarians, theologians, and historians of witchcraft who collected Stearne's text recognised its rarity and were instrumental in disseminating knowledge of *A confirmation* and Stearne's role in the witch-hunt, which began to spread through English witchcraft historiography from the mid-1800s. This was a slow process as Stearne's witch-hunting career has only recently received attention in publications by Sharpe, Gaskill, and Timbers.[8]

Much work on the history of English witchcraft still has to be undertaken, as gaps still exist in the historiography of English witchcraft. Alan Macfarlane published the only regional study of witchcraft in Essex in 1970 and, to date, no scholar has attempted to follow in his footsteps, appraise

his ideas in light of modern scholarship, and produce a new regional study of witchcraft and magic beliefs in Essex. In the introduction to the second edition of Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (1999), the lack of historiography on this area led Sharpe to remark 'that we need a new doctoral thesis on Essex witchcraft'.[9] Other aspects are still under-represented: Malcolm Gaskill's *Witchfinders* (2005) remains the only monograph dedicated to examining the East Anglian witch-trials, while Emma Wilby's *Cunning folk and familiar spirits* (2005) is the sole publication that has familiars as its focus. The intersection between seventeenth-century science, medicine, and witchcraft awaits sustained scholarly attention,[10] as does the transmission, reception, and histories of English witchcraft and demonological texts outside of the early modern period. This book has attempted to address these gaps in our knowledge while exploring and locating Stearne's concepts within seventeenth-century cultures. It has illuminated major ideas propelling England's largest witch-hunt and Stearne's witch-finding career. Stearne was a crucial agent in initiating the persecution of witches in Essex. In its aftermath, he produced a key text that was ignored for centuries, but it is now indispensable for researchers interested in the 1640s.

Only basic information exists on John Stearne, but his *Confirmation* demonstrates that he was a man with a godly ethos who had engaged with and synthesised a variety of ideas, which were being circulated in numerous discourses in East Anglia. With the advent of the witch-hunt, Stearne focussed his efforts on the pursuit and expulsion of witches from his locality to reform society. His mission found support in East Anglia, for many communes wanted to be cleansed of 'moral, spiritual and political apostates'.[11] In Stearne's retrospective polemical pamphlet, he indicated his beliefs in and knowledge of witchcraft, religion, and popular cultures. By placing *A confirmation* in a variety of seventeenth-century contexts and tracing its dissemination, this book has deepened our understanding of Stearne and his text. The rarity of *A confirmation* and the lack of historiography concerning Stearne have resulted in misrepresentations of the witch-finder: he has been labelled as Hopkins's assistant, a misogynist, a staunch puritan, and as an opportunist whose sole motivation for witch-hunting was monetary gain.[12] While addressing these claims, this monograph has demonstrated that Stearne's beliefs were not fully consonant with mainstream puritan culture and, consequently, this complicates attempts to use him as a cipher for a larger group of people in East Anglia. Further research should be more nuanced when examining Stearne, his ideas, *A confirmation* and the driving forces behind the East Anglian witch-hunt. They should view the trials in their local contexts by considering various factors, including politics, witchcraft beliefs, religion, and popular cultures. Future studies should recognise Stearne's importance as East Anglia's premier witch-finder and that of his sole publication's, *A confirmation and discovery of witchcraft.*

Notes

 1 Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia', pp 237–8; Sharpe, *Witchcraft in early modern England*, p 71.
 2 Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 126; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 275–6; ERO, Q/RTh1/526; PRO, E/179/246/20; PRO, SP24/10, ff. 102v–3r, 159r; PRO, SP24/78; PRO, E/134/2/Chas2/Mich5; ESRO, B 105/2/3, ff. 30v, 38v, 39, 45v, 89; ESRO, B105/2/4, f. 29.
 3 Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, pp 38, 275–6; Stearne, p 60; PRO, PROB11/307/45; WSRO, FL600/4/1-2.
 4 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 109–11; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 273; see E.G., *A prodigious and tragic history…of six witches at Maidstone in Kent* (London, 1652).
 5 Bostridge, 'Witchcraft repealed', pp 309–34.
 6 Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)' in, Golden (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of witchcraft*, iv, pp 1084–5; Davies, *The discovery of witches*, p xi.
 7 Gribben, *John Owen*, p 272.
 8 See, for example, Gaskill, *Witchfinders*; Timbers, 'Witches sect', pp 21–37; Sharpe, 'Stearne, John (D. 1671)', p 1084; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii.
 9 James Sharpe, 'Introduction' in, Macfarlane, *Witchcraft* (2nd edn, 1999), p xx.
10 Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, p 271.
11 Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, pp 114–38, quote on p 136.
12 On his puritanism, see Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p 38; Bunn and Geis, *A trial of witches*, p 142; Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, p 166. On the misogyny of witch-hunters see Daly, *Gyn/ecology*; Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, midwives and healers* (1973). For the argument that the witch-finders capitalised on the 'judicial anarchy' of the 1640s see Notestein, *A history of witchcraft*, pp 164, 201; Sharpe, *Instruments of darkness*, pp 140–1. On monetary gain see Summers, *The history of witchcraft and demonology*, pp 4, 102; Elmer, *Witchcraft, witch-hunting and politics*, p 126; Gaskill, 'The Matthew Hopkins trials', iii, p 331; Deacon, *Matthew Hopkins*, pp 66–7.

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