

YOUNG JESTERS AND OLD FOOLS:
JESTING AND MALE YOUTH MASCULINITY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLAND

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

YOUNG JESTERS AND OLD FOOLS: JESTING AND MALE YOUTH MASCULINITY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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During the seventeenth century, compilations of short, witty jokes emerged as a popular form of entertainment among male youth in England. These collections, known as jest-books, contained jests that mocked the social tensions that young men faced in regards to their masculine identity. Excluded from the patriarchal masculine ideal through marriage, young men bonded with one another by laughing cathartically at the anxious state of married manhood. Utilizing this unique source, this thesis examines the tensions that male youth addressed through jesting. Examining the comical navigation of tensions between different masculine identities provides a complex picture of ways in which male youth contested patriarchy, subjugated women, and maintained their own culture in a changing political climate, eventually forming their own exclusive masculine identity by the end of the seventeenth century.

In the early modern era, married men comprised the dominant masculine ideal within

a patriarchal system, and historians frequently focus on examining this definition of manhood. The seventeenth century is a critical era in the history of masculinity because it was a transition period between a primarily social construction of identity and more personal agency in determining a subjective masculine identity. However, there has been little consideration of the subordinate masculinity of young men and how their definition of manhood changed throughout the century. Therefore, the principal aim of this thesis is to address this gap in the historiography by examining how unmarried men navigated the compounding tensions that they faced in regard to their masculine identity and the changing nature of the masculine ideal throughout the seventeenth century, particularly through the use of jesting humor. Drawing on theories about humor, masculinity, and youth identity, this thesis argues that unmarried men developed an exclusive male youth masculine identity over the seventeenth century that challenged and excluded the dominant married masculine ideal, and that jesting was an integral component in both forming and maintaining that identity.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, Rick and Susie Harville, for their unfailing advice and support.

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INTRODUCTION

“THE BUBLING UP OF WIT”

A Jest is the bubling up of wit. It is a Baum which beeing well kindled maintaines for a short time the heate of Laughter. It is a weapon wherewith a fool does oftentimes fight, and a wise man defends himselfe by. It is the foode of good companie, if it bee seasoned with judgement: but if with too much tartnesse, it is hardly digested but turne to quarrel. A jest is tried as powder is, the most sudden is the best. It is a merrie Gentleman and hath a brother so like him, that many take them for Twins: For the one is a Jest spoken, the other is a Jest done. Stay but the reading of this book some halfe an houre, and you shall bee brought acquainted with both.¹

-Thomas Dekker, *Jests to make you merie*

Jesting was a popular pastime among male youth in seventeenth-century England, and jest-books were an essential tool of this social activity.² Compilers collected short tales and jokes full of crude wit, double-entendres, and comical punch-lines from the public and published them in cheaply bound chap-books that were affordable to nearly every member of society. This type of humor particularly appealed to male youth, and compilers targeted this demographic with claims that their jests originated from the mouths of young men in taverns and universities, and other young men could improve their wit by reading them.³ Laughter at these jests was a cathartic, male-bonding experience for youth facing tensions about their

¹ Thomas Dekker, *Jests to make you merie with the coniuring vp of Cock Watt, (the walking spirit of Newgate) to tell tales* (London: By Nicholas Okes for Nathaniell Butter, dwelling neere to St. Austins Gate, at the signe of the pide Bull, 1607), 1.

² I use the hyphenated spelling of “jest-book” throughout this thesis because this is the standard spelling listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. See Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “jest-book.”

³ Archie Armstrong, *A Banquet of Jeasts*. (London: Printed for Richard Royston, 1630), A4r; Chaucer Junior [pseud.], *Canterbury tales composed for the entertainment of all ingenious young men at their merry meetings* (London: Printed for J. Back, 1687); A1r; William Hicks, *Oxford Jestes, Refined and Enlarged; Being a Collection of Witty Jestes, Merry Tales, Pleasant Joques* (London: Printed for Simon Miller, 1684).

masculinity in a patriarchal society. Far from a trivial aspect of seventeenth-century culture, jesting allowed subjugated masculinities, such as unmarried, male youth to negotiate and address the loss of manhood and power that they experienced at various times throughout the century as emerging dominant masculine ideals created new tensions.

In order to examine the complete role of gender within history, it is important to study the different roles and interactions, not only between women and men, but also within each gender. Masculinity, in particular, was inherently unstable and a source of anxiety during the early modern period due to its precarious reliance on the behavior of others, especially the sexual control of women. Additionally, masculinity has never been a uniform ideal – applicable to all men – at any point in history, and the interaction between different men could also challenge a society's dominant ideal masculine identity. Examining the comical navigation of tensions between different masculine identities provides a complex picture of ways in which male youth contested patriarchy, subjugated women, and maintained their own culture in a changing political climate, eventually forming their own exclusive masculine identity by the end of the seventeenth century.

Throughout the seventeenth century, an underlying tension existed between married men, as the dominant masculine ideal, and unmarried men, as a subordinate masculine group. During the early modern period, marriage was a rite of passage into manhood, and cultural norms dictated that most unmarried men were youth who could not reap the full benefits of being a male in a patriarchal society. Gender is embedded in all aspects of a society, and therefore, as political and cultural changes occurred throughout the century and shifted masculine ideals, additional layers of gender tension arose and compounded the already

precarious situation of male youth manhood.⁴ From 1642 to 1660, civil war and political upheaval redefined the political landscape of the patriarchal commonwealth and its associated married, and now additionally Parliamentary, masculine ideal. After the Restoration in 1660, despite a courtier counter-masculinity of youthful behaviors and promiscuity, a refined (and still married) masculine ideal arose out of emerging bourgeois values and polite society. The complexity of these overall tensions accompanied the shift from an unstable, socially-determined manhood to a subjective masculine identity, and the status of male youth correlated with this trend, facilitating the development of an exclusive male youth definition of masculinity. Through examining this shift and the use of jesting humor to navigate the resulting tensions, I argue that unmarried men developed an exclusive male youth masculine identity over the seventeenth century that challenged and excluded the dominant married masculine ideal, and that jesting was an integral component in both forming and maintaining that identity.

AIMS AND CONTEXT

Research Aims

The principal aim of the following chapters is to examine how unmarried men navigated the compounding tensions that they faced in regard to their masculine identity and the changing nature of the masculine ideal throughout the seventeenth century, particularly through the use of jesting humor. In doing so, it is my hope that this investigation will address several gaps in the study of masculinity in seventeenth-century England, particularly among non-elite male youth, and reveal the contextual purpose of jest-books and humor as a

⁴ John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop*, no. 38 (1994): 180.

source for examining social tensions. Arising out of the study of women's history, the study of masculinity has gained popularity among gender historians searching for a holistic understanding of gender relations in recent years. However, as a consequence of its origins, historians tended to focus on the existence of masculinity only in relation to women and the question of female agency. In the past several years, so as to reveal a more complete picture of the ways in which gender operates within a society, gender historians have begun to ask questions about relationships within masculinity and how men defined manhood in relation to other men. Addressing this, Alexandra Shepard argues that in order "to discern the full complexity of the workings of gender in any society we need to be as aware of the gender differences within each sex as of those between them."⁵ One way of doing this is to examine the negotiation of masculinity between dominant definitions of manhood and subordinate ones.

In the early modern era, married men comprised the dominant masculine ideal within a patriarchal system, and historians frequently focus on examining this definition of manhood. Therefore, there is a need in the field of gender history to address youth as a subordinate masculinity and examine the differences between married and unmarried ideals. Few historians currently attempt to address this gap. Even those who study the different perceptions of manhood between ages, such as Alexandra Shepard, treat the differences as static conditions of a particular moment in history, and fail to pursue an explanation of how these differences and tensions evolve as dominant definitions of masculinity change.⁶ In

⁵ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

⁶ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 246-252. In her conclusion, Shepard reiterates the ability of different masculinities to challenge and shape the hegemonic masculinity, but fails to explain how these changes occur over time, especially in relation to cultural and political shifts within society.

particular, this area lacks an understanding of the ways in which male youth negotiated and navigated these tensions. Additionally, studies of non-elite manhood and masculinity in general tend to divide between the study of early modern patriarchal manhood until 1650 and the study of polite masculinity after 1660. Few encompass the seventeenth century in its entirety, and none of them examine the chronological shifts among different culturally dominant masculinities by framing them in the context of the numerous changing cultural norms of this period.

A secondary aim of this study is to provide a thorough analysis of the use and purpose of jesting and jest-books in the seventeenth century. In recent works, several gender historians have drawn from scattered jests as one of their myriad sources, but few examine the cultural context of these sources. For example, Laura Gowing notes the presence of the “leaky body” characterization of women in early modern jests, and uses this as evidence of the male belief that women could not control themselves and therefore must be cured either through sex or physical beating.⁷ Although her assumptions prove plausible, Gowing is only concerned with the representation of women here, and ignores jests in which men are also portrayed as “leaky” as well as jests in which they use this to defame another male.⁸ This raises questions about the contextual purposes of these jests and whether or not this changes their meaning depending upon the people involved in the jest. Understanding the reasons that

⁷ Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Sex, and Reproduction in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 22-24.

⁸ E.g., see: Humphrey Crouch, *England's jests refin'd and improv'd being a choice collection of the merriest jests, smartest repartees, wittiest sayings, and most notable bulls yet extant...* (London: Printed for John Harris, 1693), 20; John Frith, *The witty jests and mad pranks of John Frith commonly called, the merry-conceited-mason, brother and fellow-traveller: with Captain James Hinde the famous high-way-man.* (London: Printed for Tho. Passenger, at the Three Bibles upon the middle of London-Bridge, 1673), 13; Richard Head, *Nugae venales, or, Complaisant companion being new jests, domesick and forreign, bulls, rhodomontados, pleasant novels and miscellanies* (London: Printed by W.D., 1675), 72.

male youth jested and how they used misogynist jests to negotiate tensions over their own masculine identity can help shed light on the overall social issues that jests reveal. Therefore, a historical understanding of jest-books as part of a male youth culture that used jesting to negotiate and maintain their masculine identity is vital before their continued use as a textual source.

Historiography

The current study of masculinity as a sub-field within gender history is largely based upon the seminal work of R.W. Connell, first published in 1995, on the sociological construction of masculinity. He argues for the historicity of gendered terms such as “masculine” and “feminine” and a focus on the gender relations among men that relies on the understanding of a hegemonic model. In this model, there is a masculine ideal, always contestable, that occupies a hegemonic position, and all gender relations interact in response to this hegemonic masculinity. In much of the early modern period, varying models of the patriarchal male occupied this position in society. This leads to elements of subordination and dominance between groups of men, as well as marginalization and complicity. Complicity denotes the acceptance of another phrase that Connell coined – the “patriarchal dividend” – that encompasses the overall advantages that men gain from the subordination of women, and those men who are complicit benefit from this even if they are not a member of the hegemonic masculinity.⁹ Many of the unmarried men who participated in jest-book culture followed this model of gender relation and fell under the category of a subordinate masculine identity.

⁹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). For a discussion of the particular relations that shape patterns of masculinity in Western gender order, see pages 76-80. For an in-depth discussion of the historicity of gender, see pages 81-86 as well as chapter 8.

Several historians have taken different aspects of this theory and applied it to a historical understanding of patriarchy and gender relations in early modern England. Judith Bennett defined patriarchy as a type of society that required the maintenance of a balanced equilibrium in order to function.¹⁰ Historian Ann Hughes observes this equilibrium in the gender and power relationships between men and women, and argues that outside factors, such as the English Civil War, could cause cultural upheavals and shift gender dynamics and roles. Specifically, the Civil War and Revolution made distinctions between men (especially young and old) even more important as these events upset patriarchal standards.¹¹ Elizabeth Foyster also identifies a patriarchal gender equation that should be studied in order to fully understand how the patriarchal masculinity was “negotiated and challenged, as well as adopted and accepted.”¹² Specifically, Foyster persuasively argues that men attempted to attain an idealized patriarchal standing within society through exclusive marital relationships.¹³ She views jests as a type of cathartic release that neutralized married men’s fears about cuckoldry and a threatened patriarchal ideal. However, her view of jests lacks an understanding of how those who were excluded from the patriarchal ideal through marriage utilized jesting. Examining the attitude of these subordinate men is necessary to a holistic understanding of jests pertaining to masculinity.

In addition to gender, historians have also studied how age played a role in the concept of manhood. Seventeenth century men and women did not define age merely by numbers, but also by social standing, particularly in relation to marriage. In her study of

¹⁰ Judith Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 54-55.

¹¹ Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3; 29.

¹² Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (New York: Longman, 1999), 1.

¹³ Foyster, *Manhood*, 6.

manhood and its role in patriarchy, Alexandra Shepard pays particular attention to the differences in the representations of manhood between different ages while studying how those excluded from patriarchal power reacted. She argues that “apart from gender, age was the most directly acknowledged difference to inform constructions of normative manhood.”¹⁴ In fact, manhood was limited to only a minority of men in the middle ten to twenty years of their life at any one time, which defined manhood in relation to youth and old age. In addition, these concepts of manhood coincided with patriarchal ideals that led not only to the subjugation of women, but also of men who did not qualify for the status of manhood due to restrictions in age. Consequently, society most often assigned the patriarchal ideal – and the power associated with it – to middle-aged, married and house-holding, financially stable men, and all others were excluded.¹⁵ Of those excluded, Shepard further argues that the fraternal bonds of young men facilitated their efforts to invert the patriarchal norms that excluded them, and these youthful efforts were, in fact, the boldest resistance to patriarchal concepts of order.¹⁶

Several historians agree that male bonding among unmarried men could create a unique culture that excluded both women and patriarchal authority. Merry Wiesner-Hanks examines male bonding amongst unmarried men in her work on journeymen in early modern Germany and suggests that journeymen impacted the gender boundaries of work through a misogynist attitude that increasingly excluded women from the workplace. Eventually, this created a negative stigma surrounding any association with the female sex and bred hostility

¹⁴ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 21.

¹⁵ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 246.

¹⁶ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 93.

toward the concept of marriage and married men.¹⁷ However, not all young men belonged to journeymen's guilds in seventeenth-century England, and they did not exclude women to the point of a complete lack of contact. In fact, sexual promiscuity played a large part in their contestation of the hegemonic married masculine identity.¹⁸ Nevertheless, her argument largely supports elements of Paul Griffiths's findings in early modern England that distinctly youthful elements existed in a culture separate from (and reactionary to) that of adults.¹⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis found in her work on the French "Lords of Misrule" that this male youth culture not only excluded patriarchal authority, but could also ridicule it by inverting the established hierarchy in order to both alleviate social tensions and criticize political order.²⁰ Building off of these works on male youth culture and male bonding, jest-books reveal that a unique unmarried male culture existed in seventeenth-century England which excluded and ridiculed the given dominant masculinity and patriarchal authority through jest.

Studies reveal that humor can be an important tool in the formation and maintenance of male youth culture by facilitating male bonding and excluding outsiders. Peter Lyman's sociological case study of the role of sexist jokes in the group bonding of college-age males acknowledges that "jokes indirectly express the emotions and tensions that may disrupt everyday life by 'negotiating' them, reconstituting group solidarity by shared aggression and

¹⁷ Merry E. Wiesner, "Guilds, Male Bonding and Women's Work in Early Modern Germany," *Gender and History* 1, no. 2 (1989): 125-137.

¹⁸ The use of cuckoldry to defame married men will be discussed in the following chapter. Weisner-Hanks asserts that journeymen even spurned sexual contact with women as a threat to their all-male subculture.

¹⁹ Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 16. Griffiths's work refutes the argument of Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos that a distinctly youth culture could not exist in early modern England because unstable living conditions and mobility prevented it. Likewise, my findings largely support Griffiths's. For Ben-Amos's argument, see: Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

²⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 97-123.

cathartic laughter.”²¹ In relation to the seventeenth-century, Tim Reinke-Williams is one of the few historians who studies this particular unmarried male jesting culture, and argues that this primarily created an antagonistic attitude toward women and marriage that ultimately discouraged men from marrying. His article on the relationship between jest-books and male youth culture provides some valuable insight on the development of a uniquely male youth jesting subculture. However, his argument that the misogynist humor of jest-books reveals an anti-marriage culture similar to that of German journeymen is too simplistic because it makes a singular blanket statement for the whole of the turbulent seventeenth century.²² The changes that occurred in the values of manhood and patriarchy during this time must be examined in order to truly understand the meaning behind these jests and their purpose as a male bonding experience.

Concepts of gender identity and how individuals forged them changed over the course of the seventeenth century. In order to examine how this affected male youth and how they used jesting in order to address it, the definition of identity and its implications for youth and masculinity must be understood. Gary Barker, who has conducted extensive research on excluded male youth and masculine identity in present-day, impoverished societies, proposes a simple definition of identity as the “public projection of self.”²³ However, this phrase requires some deconstruction. Identifying who creates this projection is vital to

²¹ Peter Lyman, “The Fraternal Bond as a Joking Relationship: A Case Study of the Role of Sexist Jokes in Male Group Bonding,” in *Changing Men*, ed. Michael Kimmel (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), 170.

²² Tim Reinke-Williams, “Misogyny, Jest-Books and Male Youth Culture in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Gender and History* 21, no. 2 (2009): 328.

²³ Gary T. Barker, *Dying to be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 21. Barker’s sociological work examines the stereotyped versions of masculinity among present-day, socially excluded youth, and seeks to understand how to “promote versions of manhood based on respect, non-violence, and a culture of care rather than on violence and discrimination” by looking beyond the stereotypes to examine alternative “voices of resistance” and explore the reasons behind certain stereotypical behaviors.

understanding the type of tensions that one faces in the development and maintenance of a personal identity, particularly a masculine identity. This changed over the course of the century from a socially-constructed identity to a personally-determined, subjective identity.

According to historian Ruth Karras, masculine identity in the medieval period was primarily a social construction, referring to “the meanings that society puts on a person with a male body.”²⁴ Furthermore, this identity was constructed differently within each society and in accordance with particular everyday situations, which allowed individuals to have conflicting ideas about what constituted manhood that may not conform to the hegemonic, socially constructed masculinity.²⁵ However, historian John Tosh claims that, although still socially constructed, nineteenth-century masculine identity was also subjectively determined by a personal psychic identity.²⁶ Every man thus negotiated between the two determining forces, which lead to insecurity and tension between what social norms dictated as manly and an internalized masculinity that may not have conformed to society’s view. The difference between the two perspectives of Karras and Tosh is due to the different periods they study. Karras’s work focuses on social constructions of medieval masculinity, while Tosh’s research involves masculine identity in the nineteenth century.

Anthony Fletcher claims that there is a marked difference in the construction of the masculine ideal prior to the mid-seventeenth century and the construction of this ideal after the Restoration. The seventeenth century was a transition period between a primarily social construction of identity and more personal agency in determining a subjective masculine

²⁴ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 3.

²⁵ Karras, 8.

²⁶ Tosh, 194-198.

identity.²⁷ Specifically, Fletcher identifies the turbulence of the civil war and Interregnum years as the catalyst for the backlash that occurred after 1660 and altered the construction of gender identity.²⁸ However, not all historians agree that concepts of masculinity changed during the seventeenth-century. Historian Elizabeth Foyster disagrees and argues that the overarching permanence of the patriarchal ideal in the seventeenth-century ensured that manhood was “characterized by neither sudden transformation caused by crisis, nor by stasis.”²⁹ However, this view is fundamentally flawed since it does not take into account the existence of multiple layers within the hegemony of masculinity. Although the patriarchal married man remained the dominant masculine identity throughout the century, political upheavals caused society to incorporate additional qualifying factors into the masculine ideal that caused tension for male youth.

Beginning in the middle of the century with an examination of definitions of manhood during the English Civil War and Interregnum, Dianne Purkiss disagrees with Foyster and argues that the English Civil War was a period of crisis for masculinity in seventeenth-century England. Competing notions of masculinity created “psychic pressures” for men as they were forced to choose a side, each of which had its own unique criteria for manhood, and caused a complete upheaval of former patriarchal ideals. However, Purkiss goes too far in her contradiction of Foyster and relies too much on sensational stories of violence and revolution, overemphasizing the psychological effect of choosing sides for

²⁷ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 283-296.

²⁸ Fletcher, *Gender*, 283.

²⁹ Foyster, *Manhood*, 210.

average, individual males.³⁰ Ann Hughes, on the other hand, convincingly views this period as one of transition rather than crisis. She argues that war both challenged and reinforced understandings of what it meant to be a man because it made the contradictions in an inherently unstable manhood apparent.³¹ Men did not contest masculinity only during the Civil War, but the use of propaganda to emasculate political figures while redefining certain masculinities as a stereotype brought these contestations to the forefront of public discourse. Contrasting ideals of manhood became politically affiliated and remained a central aspect of the hegemonic masculinity and culture until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.³² However, Hughes does not extend her study to discuss the impact of this transitional period on the rest of the century and future concepts of masculine identity.

In fact, few historians examine the overall changes throughout the century while emphasizing an important shift in the construction of masculine identity. Nonetheless, historians frequently use the middle of the seventeenth century as a dividing line because they either view manhood as the social construction of a patriarchal society earlier in the century, or identify the emergence of masculinity as an internalized subjective identity sometime after the Restoration.³³ Those who do acknowledge a shift after 1660 view it as a civilizing process for masculinity because they primarily observe the dominant masculine ideal, which became increasingly civilized and polite toward the end of the century. Karen Harvey calls this overall difference a shift from the “anxious patriarch” to the “more assured

³⁰ Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics During the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-31.

³¹ Hughes, 90-91.

³² Hughes, 122.

³³ Fletcher, *Gender*, 283-296, 322; Karen Harvey, “The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 296-311. Even Elizabeth Foyster deliberately referred to the study of “manhood” rather than “masculinity,” but this was due to the fact that “masculinity” did not emerge as a term until the mid-eighteenth century, Foyster, *Manhood*, 5.

polite gentleman,” and perceives it as the rise of modern man in conjunction with Norbert Elias’s “civilizing process.”³⁴ However, this view, as well as that of many other historians who view this shift as a “male civilizing process,” fails to incorporate the complex nature of masculinity as a hegemonic system, and either ignores competing subordinate masculine identities or views them as insignificant anomalies in the overall process.³⁵ Harvey admits this flaw, admonishing historians for finding polite masculinity after 1660 only because they fail to look for anything else, and calls for historians to examine alternative definitions of manhood during this time.³⁶ Examining male youth as a subordinate masculinity can reveal an alternative definition of manhood after 1660. More importantly, however, examining the ways in which these young men navigated the tensions surrounding their subordinate status reveals how they created and maintained their own masculine identity in response to the changing nature of masculine identities in the seventeenth century as a whole.

SOURCE CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Humor can be a source that reveals social tensions. By examining the jokes of a particular group, it is possible to determine the dominant and subordinate relationships and

³⁴ Harvey, 305-306. The civilizing process is a term coined by Norbert Elias to explain the progression of Western society from the lawless nature of medieval aristocrats to self-restrained behavior defined by the manners of modern civilization. For Elias’s discussion of this, see Norbert Elias, *The development of manners: changes in the code of conduct and feeling in early modern times* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

³⁵ Carter termed it the “male civilising process.” Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2001), 116. Carter also explores the subordinate masculine identity of the eighteenth-century fop, but only in relation to the polite man. Similarly, Bryson spares a section in her book for the alternative masculine identity of the Libertine in the late seventeenth century, but presents them as nothing more than an “ironic commentary” on civil society. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 275.

³⁶ Harvey, 311.

how these are navigated within that group.³⁷ Furthermore, jokes, due to their humorous nature, often allow members of a subordinate group to invert the dominant-subordinate relationship, and thus profess their attitude toward a certain topic that, if directly expressed, could challenge the authority of the dominant subject. In serving this function, jokes exclude those whom the jest ridicules and foster a bonding relationship and group solidarity through shared aggression and cathartic laughter. Lyman uses this understanding of humor to examine the sexist jokes of college-age males and reveal the latent social tensions inherent in their laughter.³⁸ I apply the same framework to the jests of seventeenth-century male youth in order to discover the gender tensions that they faced throughout the century and how they navigated these tension using the humor that was an integral part of their mirthful masculine identity.

In order to do this, I first establish that jest-books were primarily aimed at male youth throughout the seventeenth century and these young men were the primary participants of jesting culture. Although not a common source, several scholars have examined jest-books for their valuable information on culture, although some mistook their intended audience or purpose. For example, Linda Woodbridge assumed that educated readers read jest-books to laugh at and degrade the poor. This was simply not true. Since Woodbridge looked at primarily elite authors and assumed that only elite men and women could read, she naturally concluded that the target audience of this type of literature must have been comprised of only the literate elite.³⁹ However, the authors were not all wealthy. In fact, one author, William

³⁷ In support of this, Lyman claims that “jokes are not just stories, they are a theater of domination in everyday life,” Lyman, 170.

³⁸ Lyman, 170.

³⁹ Linda Woodbridge, “Jest Books, the Literature of Roguery, and the Vagrant Poor in Renaissance England,” *English Literary Renaissance* 33 (2003), 201-210.

Hicks, was a poor copycat of an actual Oxford graduate who penned his two jest-books “meerly to get bread, and make the pot walk.”⁴⁰ Also, the jest-books were meant to be read aloud to masses of people.⁴¹ Therefore, these were texts meant for the masses. This is further evidenced by the haphazard production, the cheap cost, and the “puffing techniques” that publishers used such as inflated edition numbers, which were techniques obviously aimed at mass production rather than the quality associated with elite publications.⁴²

Jest-books’ contribution to understanding culture, in particular youth culture, is invaluable. Several historians have associated jest-books with culture. P.M. Zall claimed that jest-books provided a rising middle-class with instant culture, as these publications became a solidified industry during the rise of the middle class in the seventeenth century.⁴³ Simon Dickie also ascribed the jest-books of the eighteenth century to the culture of the masses that continued the crude humor of the seventeenth century in order to undermine the middle-class “sensibility” of the eighteenth.⁴⁴ Pamela Allen Brown, David Turner, Bernard Capp, and Chris Holcomb also saw the value of jest-books in addressing social concerns and differences. These jests could break the rules of realism and propriety, insult the privileged, and address cultural concerns about the limits of patriarchal authority.⁴⁵ Most importantly,

⁴⁰ Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses an exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford...* Vol. 2 (London : Printed for Tho. Bennet at the Half-Moon in S. Pauls Churchyard, 1692), 157.

⁴¹ Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 3.

⁴² Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), xii. “Puffing techniques” included: wildly inflated edition numbers; inaccurately attributing the books to a famous author; and falsely claiming to contain a store of new jests.

⁴³ P.M. Zall, ed. *A Nest of Ninnies and other English Jestbooks of the Seventeenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), ix.

⁴⁴ Dickie, 1-4.

⁴⁵ Brown, 48; Turner, 114; Bernard Capp, “Popular Literature,” in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 217.

“social difference may be seen as the circumstance giving rise to jesting, as the subject matter of jests, and as the problem that jesting may regulate.”⁴⁶ By understanding the jest-books in this light, they are extremely useful in understanding the male youth culture that comprised their primary audience.

I examine multiple popular jest-books from the seventeenth century, with first known editions of each book printed from 1604 to 1700. I define these books as popular because they have multiple editions and reprints, suggesting that they were popular enough to motivate the printer to reprint them. Many jests were even repeated amongst different publications, indicating that they had an oral reputation that transcended print. This is important because the value of studying jests is that they can provide historians with an understanding of the sentiment of the culture and how that culture interpreted the world around them. Therefore, these books must necessarily be qualified as “popular” in order to suggest an accurate representation. Reprints of the same books are also examined and compared to the originals and previous editions in order to determine how some popular jests changed. Multiple editions of a few select jest-books, as well as new ones, continued to be printed well into the eighteenth century. This study ends at 1700 because only a very few select jest-books from the seventeenth century continued to be printed after this dividing line, and 1697 saw the first publication of a jest-book “for the pleasant diversion of both sexes,” which broadened the primary audience beyond unmarried men.⁴⁷ Spelling and italics could indicate a certain way of saying the jest aloud or emphasize the punch-line; consequently, original spelling is maintained. Emphasis is also maintained when it is applicable.

⁴⁶ Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making: The Rhetorical Discourse on Jest in Early Modern England* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), vii.

⁴⁷ Guy Miede. *Delight and pastime, or, Pleasant diversion for both sexes* (London: Printed for J. Sprint and G. Conyers, 1697).

As a literary source, jest-books have limitations in their use as research material. Jests alone do not offer accurate representations of society, and one must interpret them using evidence grounded in contextual evidence. Therefore, I also consult supplemental sources in order to provide this context. The marital statistics and cause records from Defamation (particularly sexual slander) cases from the Diocese of York frame the tensions that unmarried men expressed in jests in chapter one. Chapter two examines biographical information in order to explore the way that jests represented the masculinity of a jesting hero and a jesting buffoon based on their political identity. Chapter three contains multiple supplemental sources, including pamphlets and sermons that stereotyped and attempted to reform the mirthful youth culture to which jest-books belonged. It also uses autobiographical sources in order to examine the place of jesting and its related behaviors within the lives of young men. Overall, I employ a wide variety of sources in order to examine the cultural representations within jests and identify the existence of societal tensions and how male youth addressed them with culture. Chapter three also explores how this cultural representation affected men as they constructed their own male youth masculine identity based upon the wit and mirth that alleviated their tensions.

CHAPTER LAYOUT

The following chapters each examine the continuing build-up of tensions between masculinities that led to the creation of an exclusive male youth identity. Chapter one examines the overarching tension that existed throughout the century between married and unmarried men. In particular, it explores the social purpose of jests about cuckoldry to defame married men. The act of cuckoldry itself could defame a married man by bringing his

masculine control over his wife and his household into question, rendering him an emasculated fool in the eyes of young men. Therefore, unmarried men used jesting to alleviate the tensions that they felt from being excluded from the dominant masculine ideal through marriage. A comparison of the publication of jest-books with the rise in the number of men who never married and an increase in the number of defamation cases reveals a correlation between the rise in tensions between married and unmarried men and jesting. Therefore this chapter also establishes jesting as a method through which young men addressed and alleviated rising tensions about the status of their manhood.

Chapter two specifically addresses the jest-book humor of the Interregnum period – the years when political upheaval and regicide brought the patriarchal order briefly into question. Patriarchal tensions continued throughout the century between married and unmarried men; however, events from about 1640-1660 added another layer of political tension to the hegemonic model of masculinity. Men began to associate masculinity with political identity, and each side attacked the other as effeminate on the basis of their political decision and associated characteristics, rather than their sexual credit. Jestings appears to have been a decidedly cavalier characteristic, and jest-books from this period depicted a well-known cavalier hero as the ideal, jovial man, and a Parliamentary minister and regicide as an effeminate buffoon. After the Restoration, manhood continued to be defined increasingly by subjective behaviors and characteristics rather than sexual credit alone. The division between the jovial royalist masculine identity and the staunch Puritan masculine identity continued to exist into the late seventeenth century, as young men adopted a jovial masculinity in response to the strict moral reforms of the dominant refined masculinity.

Chapter three explores this final set of tensions between unmarried men and polite society. Society began to define masculinity through a set of behavioral traits believed to represent an internalized identity of manhood. For the dominant masculinity, this set of traits encompassed refinement, restraint, and a concern for the moral well-being of others, as well as the requirement of marriage. Stereotyped as the opposite of these characteristics, male youth faced exclusion due not only to their inability to marry, but also due to the assumption that all young men were immoral and licentious. The resulting loss of manhood often led to issues with melancholy, a disposition that young men viewed as effeminizing, and mirth was the only cure. Therefore, the creation of a male youth identity revolved around the pursuit of mirth and pleasure through exclusive male camaraderie, drinking, carousing, and the sexual exploitation of women.

CHAPTER ONE

“TO PLEASE THE WISER SORT:”

JESTING AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL ELEVATION

These harmless lines that have no ill intent,
I hope shall pass in mirth as they were meant,
What I intend, is but to make you sport,
By telling truth to please the wiser sort:
And what it is, that I have aym'd at now,
The Wise may judge, for Fools I care not how.¹

-*Pasquil's Jests*, 1629

In 1629, a popular jest circulated among the youth of England that told the tale of a “devil’s” visit to the world of the living. Curious about all of the men in Hell who denied themselves to be cuckolds, this “devil” was determined to find “this strange and uncouth creature” and bring him back alive for the amusement of the underworld. But through some witty maneuvers on the part of the man who had been falsely accused of cuckoldry, the “devil” ultimately brought home a mastiff in his bag. Hell itself was so terrorized that “ever since that time the name of Cuckold hath been so terrible unto them, that they had rather

¹ Anon., *Pasquils Jests: With the Merriments of Mother Bunch, Wittie, pleasant, and delightfull* (London: Printed by Miles Flesher, 1629), A3r. The author is speculated to be William Fennor. Editions of this jest-book were also printed in the years: 1604, 1609, 1632, 1635, 1650, and 1669. Large additions were made after 1609, but few changes occurred until the book lost popularity in the 1660s.

entertaine into their sad dominions twenty of their wives, then any that so much as hath the name of a Cuckold.”²

This early seventeenth-century jest illustrates the power behind the use of the word “cuckold,” which seventeenth-century culture viewed as a man whose inability to sexually control his wife led her to adultery with another, more sexually-competent man.³ Not even Hell itself was prepared to accept a “cuckold” into its society. This was a very real fear for many married men in the early modern period; without a scientific means of paternity testing, there was never any way to be completely certain that the child a man raised was his own. Yet it was also a common topic of ridicule within seventeenth-century English jest-books. This naturally leads to the question: why was such a fear-invoking concept appropriate material for a jest? In order to answer this, these jests must be examined within their social and historical context.

Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold: to identify the primary target audience who participated in laughing at these jests, and to explain the first purpose that these jests served and how it changed throughout the seventeenth century. The use of jesting as a means of social interaction was common throughout the century, but it would be incorrect to assume that it remained a stagnant concept over several generations. Therefore, it is crucial for this topic to not only identify how individuals used jests in a social and gendered context, but also identify how the social purpose of everyday humor changed over time. By examining jest-books in this context, it becomes apparent that unmarried men were

²Anon. *Pasquils Jestes*, 54-55.

³According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “cuckoldry” in the seventeenth century was the act of “dishonouring a husband by adultery with or on the part of his wife.” This concept easily correlated with jests, which were jokes that were short stories and pranks (sometimes including riddles and word-plays) in which someone came out on top and someone else was mocked as the “butt of the joke.” Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “cuckoldry.”

their primary audience. Although they were certainly not the only audience of these jest-books, the subject matter and context of the jests suggest that they were a target demographic and the most likely ones to find these jests humorous. In fact, this chapter will prove that not only were unmarried men the primary audience of jest-books, they actively participated in the social purpose of these jests, particularly jests about cuckoldry.

These jests were a way to negotiate the tensions that unmarried men faced in response to their exclusion from the dominant masculine ideal through marriage. This underlying layer of tension between married and unmarried men remained constant throughout the century as notions of what defined a man shifted from a social construction to a subjective identity. Thus male youth laid the foundation for the development of a male youth masculine identity based on mirth, wit, and jesting because they relied on jesting to alleviate these tensions throughout the century and demonstrated their social superiority over married men in response to the increasing patriarchal tensions of the seventeenth century.

For this chapter, I examine jest-books from throughout the century, rather than a particular time period, because young men's inability to marry created undertones of tension throughout the century. By comparing the nature of jests from before the English Civil War to ones after the Restoration, one can identify an overall shift in how unmarried men reacted to the patriarchal ideal of masculinity that lays the foundations for the following chapters. This chapter compares thirteen different popular jest-books and their reprints from 1604 to 1642 to those from 1663 to 1700 in order to illustrate the changes in patriarchal tensions from before the English Civil War to after the Restoration. However, jests alone do not offer accurate representations of society. They have to be interpreted using evidence grounded in context. Accordingly, marital statistics and cause records from Defamation (particularly

sexual slander) cases from the Diocese of York are examined as a sampling of the larger trends of tensions between unmarried and married men throughout the seventeenth century.

Tim Reinke-William's central argument that the jests' misogynist humor discouraged men from marriage loses ground when considered in light of the cultural pressure to marry, marital statistical data, and a closer examination of the jest-books themselves.⁴ In ignoring the jesting connection to patriarchy, he ignores one of the central features and the mentality of male culture. The changes that occurred in the values of manhood and patriarchy during this time must be examined in order to truly understand the meaning behind these jests. Nonetheless, his briefly mentioned idea that "unmarried men might laugh because such tales provided them with a rare sense of superiority to married men" deserves further investigation because it may provide a view into the social tensions between married and unmarried men.⁵

Many of these jests revolved around insults of cuckoldry, and several historians have approached the topic of cuckoldry as a tool of defamation in seventeenth-century England. Laura Gowing addresses the claim that women exercised their agency through cuckoldry, and correctly asserts that the literary sources, such as jest-books, that historians use to make this claim conservatively represented women as always winning. However, court records indicate that this was not the case in real life.⁶ Jestings accusations of cuckoldry served a purpose other than providing women with a mechanism of agency, especially in light of the fact that jest-book compilers were all men and targeted an audience of young men.

Nonetheless, cuckoldry and accusations of cuckoldry could damage a married man's social

⁴ Reinke-Williams, 328; 335.

⁵ Reinke-Williams, 331.

⁶ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 178. For a discussion of the ways in which insults and claims of cuckoldry were tools in the struggle for gender agency, also see: Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Laura Gowing, "Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London," *History Workshop*, no. 35 (Spring 1993): 1-21.

standing of manhood. David M. Turner explored this label in his book about adultery in late seventeenth-century England, in which he identified an entire culture of cuckoldry. This cultural concept was used in humor to explore a wide range of social tensions, for it exposed the fragile control that men had over not only their wives, but their entire household and selfhood.⁷ In addition, Turner identified the historicity of cuckoldry, particularly its increasingly complex portrayals of cuckoldry that were congruent with the political arguments attacking the patriarchal legitimation of the monarchy in the latter seventeenth century. However, in stating that cultural portrayals of cuckoldry was a bonding experience that united all men, Turner ignored the men who were excluded from this patriarchal ideal of manhood and how they may have used cuckoldry as a way to undermine men of higher status rather than as a bonding experience with them.

LAUGHTER AS A RESPONSE TO INCREASING TENSIONS AMONG UNMARRIED MALES

In order to determine why unmarried men found jests about subjects such as cuckoldry appropriate subject matter for jest-books, it is necessary to understand contemporary humor theory. Thomas Hobbes was the foremost theoretical mind on the subject of humor during the seventeenth century. Although *Leviathan* was better known for its political commentary, Hobbes also mentioned his “sudden glory” theory of humor, which humor theorists have studied and expounded on for more than three centuries.⁸ According to

⁷ David M. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex, and Civility in England, 1660-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 84-85.

⁸ Hobbes’s “sudden glory” theory falls into the category of humor known as “Theories of Hostility,” which include philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero. Generally, these theories suggest that funniness consists of attaining a feeling of superiority over something. Other theories are categorized as: Incongruity Theory, which suggests that humor derives from a result of understanding the incongruity between the expected and reality; and Theories of Liberation, which argues that humor is a release of a type of “psychic energy” that

Hobbes, “those grimaces called laughter” were caused by either “some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves.”⁹ Therefore, in order for a jest to cause laughter, it needed to both be sudden and make the recipient realize a momentary sense of superiority over the person or subject being ridiculed.

Jest-book compilers agreed that the best jest was short and sudden while maintaining a social purpose. Thomas Dekker’s 1607 collection of “Jests to Make you Merrie” began with a simple definition of what constituted a good jest:

A Jest is the bubling up of wit. It is a Baum which beeing well kindled maintaines for a short time the heate of Laughter. It is a weapon wherewith a [fool] does oftentimes fight, and a wise man defends himselfe by. It is the [foode] of good companie, if it bee seasoned with judgement: but if with too much tartnesse, it is hardly digested but turne to quarrel. A [jest] is tried as powder is, the most sudden is the best.¹⁰

Both the suddenness and wit of a jest caused laughter. This was the case for two reasons: 1) the listener took little time to connect the elements of the jest to figure out why it was funny, thus resulting in a more intense feeling of sudden triumph at making the connection; and 2) the wit of a jest was often the element that allowed it to ridicule someone or something without having “too much tartnesse.”¹¹ Ideally, the wit of a well-told jest addressed a social

“liberates man from a certain amount of restraint.” Although primarily exemplary of the Hostility theories of humor, jest-books also illustrate the other two theories through both the inconsistency of jest tales with everyday life and the liberation that laughter at jests offered young men who felt the tensions of patriarchal struggle. For more information on humor theory, see: Igor Krichatovich, *Humor Theory: Formula of Laughter* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, Inc., 2006). Krichatovich’s formula for laughter combines these different theories to create a comprehensive theory of humor that suggests laughter requires both the deprecation of someone else and one’s own perceived social elevation through wit, as well as an element of suddenness.

⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London: Printed for Andrew Crooke, 1651), 27.

¹⁰ Dekker, 1.

¹¹ Krichatovich, 86. Krichatovich also argued in his study of humor theory that the greatest laughter derived from the narrator and listener both receiving some sort of an advantage over others. Likewise, listeners increase their status by demonstrating their ability to solve intellectual problems.

imbalance or difference without necessarily offending anyone present, thus making it a “weapon wherewith... a wise man defends himself by.” Nearly every jest-book began with an appeal to the wit, discernment, or intelligence of the reader, suggesting that the appreciation of a witty jest indicated an intelligent person. This allowed the jest-teller to momentarily feel a sense of social elevation caused by the resulting laughter and positive attention, and the listeners (or readers) to feel a similar sense of social elevation at having wittily resolved the elements of the jest. Thus jests often covered topics of social difference and addressed cultural concerns about patriarchy because these were the areas in which even a momentary and imagined sense of social elevation mattered.¹² Jest humor most often appealed to unmarried men due to their subordinated status and increasing need to address the growing tensions surrounding patriarchy and gender relations in the seventeenth century.

Within a gendered context, Hobbes’s “sudden glory” theory applies to those individuals who were subordinated by the patriarchal ideal while simultaneously affected by the tensions that the threatening of this ideal created. Hobbes also admitted that young men were the most susceptible to “vain-glory,” a close relation to “sudden glory.”¹³ In seventeenth-century England, many of these were unmarried men who felt excluded from the patriarchal ideal. Marriage in seventeenth-century England was not a stand-alone institution. Rather, it was an exclusionary practice that served as the argument for the basis of all of societal structure and patriarchy, connected most importantly to the relationship between king and commonwealth.¹⁴ Sir Robert Filmer argued in 1638 that the domestic and political

¹² Holcomb, vii.

¹³ Hobbes, 27.

¹⁴ John Witte, Jr. *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 130-193; 171.

commonwealths were essentially the same model that granted the male head natural, absolute authority.¹⁵

However, this patriarchal political model struggled in the later seventeenth century. The royalists used this analogy as an argument for keeping the increasingly unpopular king in power by suggesting that the contract between a king and his subjects was as unbreakable as that between a husband and wife.¹⁶ The entrance of this analogy into a turbulent political dialogue had widespread effects for the patriarchal model. After mid-century, the commonwealth model no longer held considerable intuitive appeal as the start of war in 1642 led to rebellion against the excesses of the king, a brief period without a king, a tense Restoration period, and finally the abdication of King James II and a new Parliament-picked king in 1688.¹⁷ Patriarchal tensions riddled this period of English political history, spilling over into the other areas of society that were maintained by this ideology.

The inability of young men to marry until they acquired financial stability caused tensions between male youths and married men in society, which rose throughout the seventeenth century during times of economic or political turmoil. Marriage reinforced patriarchy through exclusion at the community level. Not only did a domestic hierarchy exist within each household, which placed the head male as the leading authority figure, but a patriarchal hierarchy also existed between men within society. Although many factors played a role in determining one's place within the social hierarchy, the primary determining factor that divided an authority figure from a youth was marriage. Marriage served as the dividing

¹⁵ Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or, The natural power of Kings*. Reprint. (London: Printed and are to be sold by Walter Davis, 1680).

¹⁶ Foyster, *Manhood*, 3.

¹⁷ Witte, 176-177.

line that determined whether a male was a “man” or simply a youth.¹⁸ Foyster has shown that men had to acquire a status of manhood in early modern England, and boys were often described as possessing both male and female attributes until they married. Men even feared courtship to be a period when women ruled men and caused them to be prone to effeminate behaviors to please their love-interest.¹⁹ On the other hand, manhood was expected to be a period of reason, strength, and control over sexuality, household, finances, and self. Therefore, marriage was the ultimate symbol of being prepared for this responsibility and standing in society, and only married men were granted the social credit and standing associated with patriarchy.

Gaining and maintaining social credit was an important privilege of manhood, and it was determined primarily by a man’s sexual control over his wife. Alexandra Shepard defined credit as a type of reputation that was “a composite of social and economic appraisal, incorporating a wide spectrum of definitions of honesty ranging from chastity to plain-dealing.”²⁰ The primary method of appraisal for a man’s credit was the sexual control that he exercised over his wife, so a man would necessarily need to be married in order to acquire this social credit. It was popularly believed that if a man could gain sexual control over his wife, then authority in all other areas of his life would follow. If a man did not demonstrate his control over the women in his household, then he was considered by his community to lack the reason and strength that would make him a good businessman and a contributing

¹⁸ Susan Brigden, “Youth and the English Reformation,” *Past and Present*, no. 95 (May 1982): 37; Ben-Amos, 6.

¹⁹ Foyster, *Manhood*, 31; 104.

²⁰ Alexandra Shepard, “Manhood, Credit, and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580-1640,” *Past & Present*, no. 167 (May 2000): 77.

member of society.²¹ In addition, the family was a unit of production within society, and if a man did not have control over his household, then he was deemed to be financially unstable.²² Consequently, the credit that men relied heavily on during this time period could be damaged by their lack of sexual control, but most importantly, men had to be married in order to partake in this type of credit at all.

However, many men were unable to marry during the seventeenth century, primarily because they were not financially stable enough to support a household. Once a man reached the age of marriage and found some financial stability, he was expected to find a wife. However, the proportion of male youth (unmarried men) to married, adult men increased dramatically during the seventeenth century.²³ According to Figure 1, the seventeenth

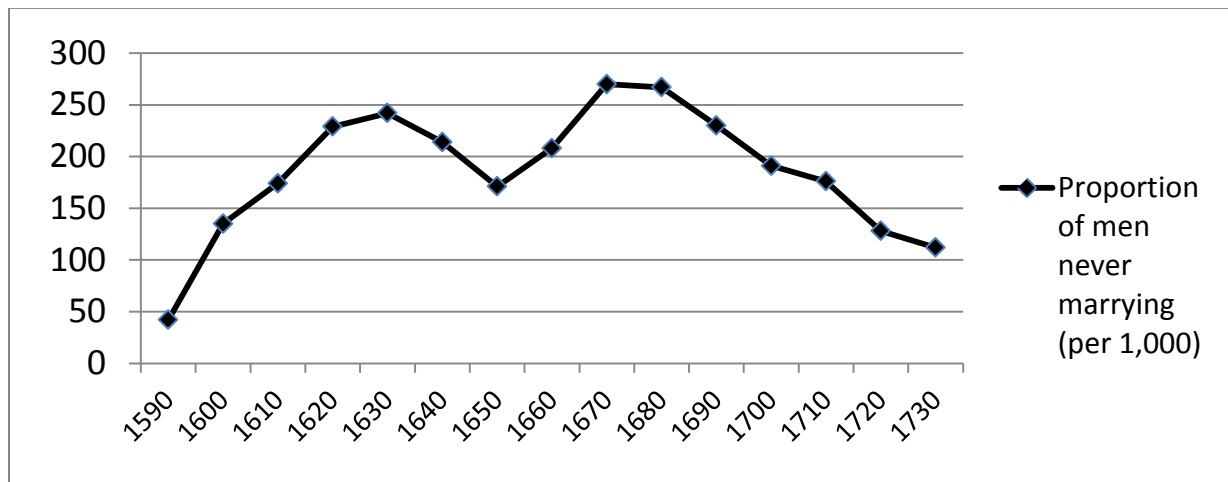


Figure 1. Proportion of men never marrying when they were at the average age to marry (per 1,000). Data adapted from E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), table 7.28.²⁴

²¹ Foyster, *Manhood*, 38; 195.

²² Ben-Amos, 5.

²³ The average age of marriage for a man in seventeenth-century England was approximately 27-28.

²⁴ The dip around the middle of the century is not necessarily indicative of a momentary reversal in the trend of men not marrying. This was a brief era of Parliamentary rule which took away the control of marriage from the Anglican church, thereby allowing marriages that would have normally been irregular to be counted. See E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 260-263 for more information.

century experienced a rise in the proportion of men not married by age 40 to 44, which was markedly higher than that of the previous century or the following. The dates shown are those for when the unmarried men would have been of marrying age in their late twenties. This increase in men not marrying peaked around the post-Restoration period at approximately twenty-seven percent. The points at which the proportions of unmarried men are the highest are also the periods of greatest economic distress during the century, and it is safe to assume that this was a key factor preventing men from marrying at these times.²⁵

The inability of men to get married created tensions between what was available to youth and what they wanted, for it would be incorrect to assume that young men did not ever want to get married. As previously mentioned, “male youth” in this study refers broadly to anyone who had not achieved the full patriarchal status of “manhood” because they were unmarried. However, this is not an arbitrary designation. Society labeled men who were unmarried as “youth,” despite their age.²⁶ This was not a label that most men desired to have throughout their lifetime. Men still attempted to achieve the patriarchal ideal, even if it was not available to them in actuality.²⁷ In fact, the majority of men still married throughout the seventeenth century, despite the jokes in jest-books and other literature. The mean percentage of men who had not married by ages forty to forty-four from 1556 to 1821 was only about seven percent.²⁸ In addition, many twenty-year-old men opted not to begin an apprenticeship because they feared that by the time the obligatory seven years of service was complete, it

²⁵ Wrigley and Schofield, 263.

²⁶ Ben-Amos, 9.

²⁷ Foyster, *Manhood*, 4.

²⁸ Wrigley and Schofield, 260.

would be too late for them to become financially stable enough to marry.²⁹ Marriage was mocked, but it was still desirable; it was the gateway to manhood and what most men spent their youth being prepared for.

A disconnect between what society expected of youth and what their environment forced them to be also created more tension between expectations and a harsh social reality for male youth trying to attain a patriarchal standing in their communities. In early modern society, adults expected youth-hood to be a period spent in preparation for manhood. However, this contrasted with the unstable environment that male youths found themselves in, which led to mounting tensions between expectations and reality. Adults expected youth to be a period in which young men obtained the experience and reason necessary to manage financial resources and a household.³⁰ This was apparent in many sermons and conduct literature of the seventeenth century, and was an important aspect of becoming a member of society, “for upon the wel-doing of them, that are in the flower of their youth, depend’s the hope of future ages.”³¹

However, the turbulent seventeenth century did not provide a stable environment for youth to accomplish this ideal. Economic hardships and an overall fall in real wages plagued the first few decades of the seventeenth century and the period following the Restoration, and youths were more likely to become unemployed because they were the most expendable.³² Therefore, these economically-difficult periods especially affected youth and made it more difficult for them to attain the stability of manhood and marry. This is illustrated by the

²⁹ Ben-Amos, 226.

³⁰ Ben-Amos, 20.

³¹ U.H., *Counsel for youth; delivered in two sermons upon Psalm 119. vers 9* (London: Printed by William Dugard, 1650), 2.

³² Wrigley and Schofield, 263; Ben-Amos, 193.

number of jests in jest-books that pitted an unemployed man against a lady, a gentleman, or a married man, such as one popular jest in which a maid accused a vagrant youth of having raped her. However, when she appeared in court to make her claim, the youth outwitted her by convincing her to admit that he had been with her six or seven times before, thereby proving (according to the jest's standards) that she was not raped while simultaneously attesting to his sexual prowess.³³ In addition, high levels of migration, especially to unfamiliar urban areas, and sometimes even physical abuse by masters, only served to aggravate the delicate situation that most male youths found themselves in.³⁴ Consequently, they reacted against these pushes toward reason and control in an era that was not conducive to these attributes by valuing the wit, such as that illustrated in the aforementioned jest, that would serve their unstable lifestyle well.

The value that male youth placed on wit contrasted sharply with the value of reason adults placed on manhood and was an important element in the social elevation of jests. This tension increased during times of economic stress and corresponded with the overall increase of patriarchal tension within society during this time period. Society considered the disruptive youth who arose from this tension to be as dangerous to patriarchal control as women because their wit and nonchalant, flamboyant attitudes represented everything that contrasted with the reason of manhood and patriarchy. This caused society to view male youth as a group of people to be supervised and controlled just as much as women in order to preserve the patriarchal order.³⁵ The tension that arose among youth trying to balance the

³³ Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], *Cambridge Jestes, or Witty Alarums for Melancholy Spirits* (London: Printed for Samuel Lowndes, 1674), 69. This particular jest was one of the few which were so popular that a version of it appeared in nearly every jest-book over the entire century.

³⁴ Ben-Amos, 193.

³⁵ Foyster, *Manhood*, 8.

control and reason forced on their lives with their own youthful tendencies made jests such as the following not only cathartically humorous, but also relatable:

A Scrivener's Man reading a Bill of Sale to his Master, said, *I do demise, grant, and to farm let all my Lands, &c.* but on a sudden the Cough took him, that at present he could read no further: At which his Master being angry, bid him read on *with a Pox*; at which Words he went on, *To you, your Heirs, and their Heirs for ever.*³⁶

This jest portrayed the wit of youth as overcoming the impatient reasoning of adulthood.

Other jests also portrayed the sexual prowess of youth outdoing that of the married man, thereby limiting the control he had over his wife and household. In such a jest, a new bride tells a young man that she is afraid her husband's "age is too frigid to spur on like Youth."³⁷

These jests frequently pitted youth against "age," and portrayed the young man as the sexually vibrant and witty hero and the married man as a sexually incompetent fool.

Therefore, this assault on authority seemed to hold a special appeal to the young.³⁸

Taking the assault on authority to an extreme, some jests idealized the position and wit of "masterless young people."³⁹ Community authorities expected youth to be in some sort of apprenticeship or service from approximately ages 14 to 26, and if found "out of work" or "at their own hand," they considered these young people vagrants who, in the most extreme

³⁶ Hicks, *Oxford Jest*s, 66. This jest-book was also printed in 1671, and the jests were the same in both editions.

³⁷ William Winstanley, *Poor Robin's Jest*s or, *The Compleat Jester. Being A Collection of several Jest*s not heretofore published (London: Printed for Francis Kirkman, 1673), 17. This jest-book was also printed in 1668 and 1679, and aside from differences in page numbers and a few insignificant additional jests, the three versions are the same.

³⁸ Capp, 217. In addition, the appeal to this targeted demographic may explain why jest-books become such a popular form of popular literature in the seventeenth century, for as the rest of this essay will continue to explain, the seventeenth century was an incredibly suitable breeding ground for the anti-patriarchal jests of youth.

³⁹ Masterless young people is a term used by Paul Griffiths to describe the youth who did not belong to an apprenticeship or related training, and roamed from town to town, sometimes in search of work, and often disruptive. For a thorough study on the social and gender implications of masterless youth, see: Paul Griffiths, "Masterless Young People in Norwich, 1560-1645," in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 146-186.

of cases, should be sent to gaol.⁴⁰ Yet, it appears that many young men idealized the idea of no master to answer to, and jests could comment on the desire for this sort of freedom and outwitting of authority, such as the following jest from Thomas Dekker's collection:

A Yong man, being taken by a watch in the day time, for an idle fellow, was by a Constable brought before one of the Sheriffes of London, and being examined what he was, and whom he had served, it was found that hee had bin in diverse services, but had shifted his Maisters, almost every yeere wherupon the Sheriffe sayd, hee should goe to bridewell, and there grind chalke. I am contented to doe so, answered the fellow but doe me Justice good Maister Sheriffe, let all your officers bee sent to grind chalke too, for I am sure they shift their Maisters, every yeere as well as I.⁴¹

The insolence of the youth toward the authority of the Sheriff directly appealed to unmarried men who likely resented not only the authority of symbols of a disadvantageous system of law, but also the authority of their masters. The idealizing of the youth's wit and his ability to mock the sheriff also further illustrate the purpose of many of these jests: to address social tension and elevate one's subordinated status through wit.

Cuckoldry was also a common theme in jests involving the wit of youth against the reason of age. The concept of cuckoldry especially appealed to youth because it could address some of the societal tension between patriarchs and male youths. According to David M. Turner, cuckoldry was a cultural concept that subordinate individuals could use to address social tensions because it exposed the fragile control that patriarchs held over their wives and themselves.⁴² Excluded from their full patriarchal power, unmarried men could jest about the sexual dishonor of those men who held the coveted and seemingly untouchable role of

⁴⁰ Griffiths, "Masterless Young People in Norwich," 146-186.

⁴¹ Dekker, 10-11.

⁴² Turner, 84-85. Turner has also studied the historicity of a "culture of cuckoldry" in which the increasingly complex portrayals of cuckoldry were congruent with the political arguments attacking the patriarchal legitimization of the monarchy throughout the seventeenth century. A similar trend is evident in the use of cuckoldry to address patriarchal tension through jest.

patriarch. It was common, in fact, for men to try to boost his social standing by comparing their sexual honor to that of other men.⁴³ Sexual dishonor was a subject that could affect men from across the social spectrum, despite their standing in society, and had dire consequences on their credit and honor. The worst type of sexual dishonor for a man was cuckoldry.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Foyster describes the seventeenth century definition of a cuckold as someone “whose lack of sexual dominance had led their wives to adultery.”⁴⁵ This illustrated a man’s lack of control not only over his wife and household, but also over himself. Therefore, the community saw the man as threatening to the natural order of things and undeserving of his position in society as the patriarchal head of a unit.⁴⁶

In addition, there were differing degrees of cuckoldry, and the reactions of men to this insult could determine just how much society ostracized them. The following portion of text from *Poor Robin’s* almanac illustrates these different levels:

What’s a Cuckold? Learn of me,
Few do know his Pedigree;
Or his sulxle Nature conster,
Born a man, but dies a monster...

The Patient Cuckold he is first
The Grumbling Cuckold one o’th’ worst,
The Loving Cuckold he is best,
The Patient Cuckold lives at rest,
The Frantick Cuckold giveth blows,
The Ignorant Cuckold nothing knows,
The Jealous Cuckold double twang’d.
The Pimping Cuckold would be hang’d,
The Skimmington Cuckold he is one,
And so I think their number’s done.⁴⁷

⁴³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 152.

⁴⁴ Foyster, *Manhood*, 7-9.

⁴⁵ Foyster, *Manhood*, 5.

⁴⁶ Foyster, *Manhood*, 109.

⁴⁷ William Winstanley, *Poor Robin, 1699: An Almanack Of the Old and New Fashion* (London: Printed by J. Leake for the Company of Stationers, 1699), A8.

A patient or loving cuckold who took the insult to his honor in stride could at least find community amongst other cuckolds and men who may even themselves be ignorant of their cuckolded status. However, a pimping cuckold (one who sold his wife's infidelity) or a grumbling or jealous cuckold was scorned even by his own kind because he caused the most harm to the natural order by reacting in a non-reasonable manner.⁴⁸ This illustrated an even further lack of control and deprived these men of their credit and standing within society more than anything else.

Thus, the accusation of cuckoldry provided an ideal mechanism for ridding oneself of a rival or challenging a man's position within early modern society. For example, in 1600, a man named William Eure put Sir Thomas Hoby's political career in danger when he instructed a band of male youths to conduct a charivari in Hoby's home and accused him of being a cuckold.⁴⁹ Hoby brought a defamation case against Eure before the Star Chamber in an effort to clear his name and protect his political standing. Hoby was not the only man to do this; sexual slander was a popular type of defamation case brought before ecclesiastical courts in the seventeenth century. Of the 1,103 defamation cases recorded in the Cause Papers of the Diocese of York ecclesiastical courts, 819 of them (74.25 percent) were classified as "sexual slander" or "cuckoldry."⁵⁰ In addition, when broken down by decade, the 1620s and 1630s saw a marked increase in the percentage of cases with male plaintiffs

⁴⁸ Foyster, *Manhood*, 177.

⁴⁹ Foyster, *Moanhood*, 116. For a more detailed and comprehensive account of this case, see the information compiled from multiple contemporary sources in: Felicity Heal, "Reputation and Honour in Court and Country: Lady Elizabeth Russell and Sir Thomas Hoby," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series 6 (1996), 169-170.

⁵⁰ Cause Papers in the Diocesan Courts of the Archbishopric of York, CP.H.22 – DC.CP.1699/3, Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York, York, UK. The plaintiff and defendant information was taken from the Borthwick Institute's on-line catalogue for this collection. It is also worth noting that the exact classification of "cuckoldry" was not used until after the Restoration in these court documents.

from thirty-six percent in the 1610s to fifty-two percent and fifty-six percent, respectively. This period of increase coincides with the first spike in the proportion of unmarried men, and further illustrates the connection between male youth and tensions about patriarchal reputation. As tensions between unmarried men and married men rose, married men became more vulnerable to the accusations of cuckold that gave their rivals and subordinates (such as male youths) the power to undermine their social standing.

Because of this vulnerability, jests about cuckoldry provided unmarried men with a way to address this tension through a perceived social superiority. The seventeenth century was an incredibly suitable breeding ground for anti-patriarchal jests amongst a growing demographic of unmarried men. Jest-books not only held a special appeal to male youth; they also targeted them with titles such as “*Youth’s treasury*” and “*The Cambridge jests being youth’s recreation*.”⁵¹ And in some cases, they were likely collected from the unmarried men found in the “tavernes, ordinaries, innes, bowling greenes, and allyes, alehouses, tobacco shops, highwaies, and water-passages” where John Taylor claimed he collected his compilation of jests.⁵² Early in the century, jest-books were primarily used as a cathartic way to release the tension that male youths felt between the patriarchal ideal and their reality – between reason and wit. The apparent misogyny embedded was more likely to create universal male bonding than those in the jests that appeared after 1660. As tensions increased throughout the century, the use of cuckoldry in jests to attack married men became more prominent, and male bonding among unmarried men became a more exclusive experience.

⁵¹ Anonymous, *Youth's treasury; or, A store-house of wit and mirth* (London: printed for I. Blare, on London-bridge, 1688), title page; W.B., *Ingenii fructus, or, The Cambridge jests being youth's recreation...* (London: Printed for William Spiller, 1700), title page.

⁵² John Taylor, *Wit and mirth chargeably collected out of tauernes, ordinaries, innes, bowling greenes, and allyes, alehouses, tobacco shops, highwayes, and water-passages*. (London: Printed for Henrie Gosson, and are to be sold at Christ-Church gate, 1628), title page.

There are several reasons for this, and this chapter will explore them in further detail as it analyzes the jest-books from each period.

Jesting about cuckoldry followed the overall sentiments about patriarchy in society, and as tensions increased, so did the jesting. Pre-revolutionary seventeenth-century England was much more comfortable with the patriarchal legitimation of the king's role in the commonwealth than the England that emerged from years of civil war and Cromwellian rule. This no doubt had an effect on the male youth of each period and the sorts of jests that they found humorous, as well as their attitudes toward their patriarchal superiors. First edition jest-books printed from 1604 to 1638 indicate a male youth culture experiencing less tension and resentment toward patriarchy than those printed from 1669 to 1688. This is not to say that tension did not exist, for the proportion of men never marrying still spiked for the first time in over a century at twenty-four percent, and patriarchal issues obviously played out in the struggles between king and parliament leading up to the Civil Wars.⁵³ Jest-books during the Interregnum period even took sides between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians. However, jests about cuckoldry, as a tool of release of patriarchal tensions, suggest that these conditions only increased.

1604-1642: CATHARTIC LAUGHTER, UNIVERSAL MISOGYNY, AND SOCIAL BONDING

Early century jest-books paid less attention to the dividing line of marriage than the later books. They focused on universal wit and cathartic mirth rather than punishing certain men. In addition, these jest-books were more universally misogynistic than their later

⁵³ Wrigley and Schofield, 260; Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), xix-xxx.

counterparts. The jests published in these books revolved around stories of women outwitting married and unmarried men alike. Also, a woman did not have to be married to outwit a man; she could simply be a maid. Many writers included one such popular early jest with only slight variations in multiple pre-1640 jest-books; however, they did not publish it again with the same characters after the Restoration. It read:

A young scoffing Gentleman would have kissed a Maid that had somewhat a long nose, to whom he said, How shall I kiss you, your nose is so long that our lips cannot meet; The Maid waxing angry in minde, said, If Sir you cannot kiss my mouth for my nose, you may kiss me behind, whereas I have never a nose. And so she departed.⁵⁴

Here, a maid outwitted and insulted an unmarried man, rather than a married woman outwitting a married man. These sorts of jests were typical of the early seventeenth-century jest-books. They were generally about matching wit for wit. Even when a woman bested her husband, he would take it in stride and match her quip with a return jest. One popular jesting character, Tarlton, often told several jests in sequence. In one, he relayed the tale of the time that he was made a cuckold, and in the next jest he offered to throw his wife overboard a ship in distress because “She is the heaviest thing I haue, and I can best spare her.”⁵⁵ This jest not only illustrated the ability of a married man to match his shrewish wife’s wit, but also portrayed Tarlton as the best kind of cuckold. Since he took his wife’s infidelity in stride and matched her wit, he regained his status as a beloved jesting character. Of the jests that mentioned cuckoldry in the early jest-books, the men were not entirely shamed, for they

⁵⁴ Anon., *Pasquils Jestes*, 22.

⁵⁵ Anon., *Tarlton’s Jestes, Drawne into these three parts. 1. His court-witty Iests. 2. His sound City Iests. 3. His Countrey pretty Iests. Full of delight, Wit, and honest Mirth* (London: Printed by I.H. for Andrew Crook, 1638), 28. This jest-book was also printed earlier, in 1613 and 1620, and few changes were made. Tarlton was a popular jesting character, however, and he appeared in several jests. A real jester in the sixteenth century, it is doubtful that any of these jests were actually his own or from earlier than 1613.

reacted in the best possible manner and often redeemed themselves. Therefore, the early jest-books were not as anti-patriarchal as the post-Restoration jest-books would prove to be.

Early seventeenth-century youth culture reacted more against the threat of a woman's wit than married men. In fact, the early jest-books more closely aligned to Tim Reinke-Williams's characterization of misogynist. Characters frequently made a jest at the expense of women. In one jest, a young bride told her older, scholarly husband that she wished she was a book so that he would pay attention to her. When he replied that he wished the same thing because it would give him the opportunity to choose which book she was, she asked which book he would make her. He replied, "an Almanacke, so I might have every yeer a new one."⁵⁶ Many jests also portrayed women as fools, such as one in which a "maid being askt how long she had kept maidenhead," responded that she had kept it only as long as her sister had been married.⁵⁷ And even in the jests in which women were portrayed as witty, they were marked as undesirably shrewish and indecent, such as a young maid who told two passing young men to eat her excrement.⁵⁸ Early century jests portrayed women as foolish individuals who could only use wit to harm, which is why one jester proclaimed, "I desire that the wife whom I am to marry should have no more wit then to bee able to distinguish her husbands bed from another mans."⁵⁹ This misogynist attitude was not as simple as the hatred of women, however. Through these jests, a different attitude toward the social purpose of jest

⁵⁶ Armstrong, *A Banquet of Jeasts*, 44. This jest-book was also printed multiple times from 1630 through 1665. However, the style of these jests was early century and they lost appeal in the 1660s, which probably serves as an explanation for the last date of publication.

⁵⁷ Robert Chamberlain, *The Booke of Bulls, Baited with two centuries of bold Jests, and nimble-Lies* (London: Imprinted for Daniel Frere, 1636), 65. Chamberlain published two sequels to this jest-book in 1637 and 1639, and although they contained several new jests, the key characteristics were the same throughout the three books.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Pasquils Jests*, 27.

⁵⁹ Armstrong, *A Banquet of Jeasts*, 32.

is apparent before 1642 than the attitude that existed after the increasing tensions of the mid-century and the Restoration.

Although jests before the civil war were used as a means of social superiority, and the concept of “sudden glory” still applied, the groups to whom it applied appear to be slightly different. Chiefly, a misogynistic attitude and fewer blatantly anti-patriarchal jests suggest that males in general were more likely to bond over the exclusion of women before the divisive effects of the English Civil War. Of course, the difference is not black and white. Certain early-century jests still contained anti-patriarchal elements, but overall these were less blatant and less frequent, indicating, as with any cultural change, a gradual shift toward the exclusionary social practices of unmarried men as a response to patriarchal tensions. Nevertheless, evidence of a concern with male bonding as a unification of both married and unmarried men against women is apparent in early-century jests. For example, in one jest from 1607, an “old man” reminisced about a bygone age with his son, lamenting that “now the world was cleane found upside downe.” The boy objected to his claim, arguing that “if it were so, women should goe with their heeles upwards.”⁶⁰ No matter what happened to the world, the common goal of father and son was keeping the female gender in its proper place.

Returning to humor theory, this sort of jest would have evoked laughter from men who felt superior to women, suggesting that both married men and unmarried men alike could benefit socially from this jest. This supports Connell’s concept of the patriarchal dividend. Even the subordinate unmarried men benefitted from misogynist practices and the control of women, and thus they worked equally to maintain the patriarchal control of power. This also made the inability to accomplish this equilibrium suitable jesting material. Another

⁶⁰ Dekker, 10.

jest from Dekker's collection realized the impossibility of any man to control an unruly wife. Upon asking a justice of the peace to bind over his wife to her good behavior or to the peace, the exasperated justice sarcastically replied "Seeke but out a Scrivener...that can make such a bond, and thou shalt have my furtherance."⁶¹ The unification of men against a female threat to patriarchy appears to have been a more prevalent and relevant issue to jest compilers before 1642, which begs the question: what changed after 1642? Although many of these elements continued to be visible in the later seventeenth century jest-books, several significant changes indicate a growing anti-patriarchal and exclusionary attitude amongst male youths after the turbulent period of the Civil War through the Restoration.

1663-1700: MOCKING LAUGHTER, ANTI-PATRIARCHY, AND EXCLUSION

In the second half of the seventeenth century, tensions between male youth and patriarchy intensified and affected the attitude of these unmarried men toward men in authority. The changing political attitudes toward patriarchy and the monarchy explain one reason that these tensions intensified. The English Short Title Catalogue shows a brief hiatus on the printing of new traditional-style jest-books between 1642 and 1660.⁶² Coincidentally, this was also the period of the English Civil War and the Protectorate, which attacked the patriarchal legitimization of the monarchy. A new concept of manhood began to emerge as thousands of common men saw battle under the revolutionary concept of the New Model Army. This Parliamentarian attitude toward manhood stated that men should be especially

⁶¹ Dekker, 16-17.

⁶² A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, *A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English books printed abroad, 1475-1640*, 2nd ed. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1926); Donald Wing, *Short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America, and of English books printed in other countries, 1641-1700* (New York: Index Society, 1945-1951).

sober, restrained, rational, godly, and even military in their style and behavior.⁶³

Increasingly, the concept of manhood clashed with the flamboyance of male youth, and created tensions that combined with anti-patriarchal sentiments.

These anti-patriarchal sentiments continued into the Restoration period, with the restoration of the Stuart dynasty occurring only out of political necessity rather than a patriarchal claim to legitimacy.⁶⁴ Parliament and the commonwealth, who once represented the subjects of a patriarchal head, eventually pressured the monarchy to the point of abdication and chose their own head of state.⁶⁵ The symbolic “marriage as commonwealth” model no longer held any credence in the political sphere, and men began to define their masculinity through a subjective set of characteristics that did not rely only on the complacency of outside factors, such as women, in order to remain stable. As this concept of masculinity shifted, male youth also began to create their own qualifications for a subjective masculine identity based upon the mirth that threatened the hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, tensions began to rise and jests attacking married men’s position of masculine authority correspondingly increased.

Although the political atmosphere certainly contributed, the changing trends in marriage had an even more profound and personal effect on the attitudes of male youths. The social tension created between unmarried and married males is apparent in jests after 1660, and helped to create an exclusionary anti-patriarchal, unmarried male culture. Returning to Figure 1, an increasing number of men of marrying age (around twenty-seven to twenty-eight) were not getting married throughout the century. In fact, the statistical methods of

⁶³ Hughes, 123.

⁶⁴ Lacey Baldwin Smith, *This Realm of England, 1399-1688*, 8th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 322.

⁶⁵ Smith, 349.

Wrigley and Schofield indicate that these men were still not married by the ages of forty to forty-four, making the likelihood that they never married quite plausible.⁶⁶ As previously mentioned, the periods in which these proportions spiked aligned with the most economically difficult times of the seventeenth century, and it was not until the 1680s that the trend of constant increase began to taper off.⁶⁷ Therefore, this unstable environment and lack of financial security most likely kept these men from marriage, and increasingly created tensions between them and the married men who exercised authority over them. However, the rise in proportion of unmarried men did not reach its peak until the period following the Restoration. Marriage excluded a greater number of men from their patriarchal positions in society during this period than it did at any other point from 1580 to 1845.⁶⁸ Tensions about patriarchy between unmarried men and married men reached its peak at this point in the seventeenth century, and this caused a similar shift in the anxieties of men about their sexual reputation.

Anxieties over sexual reputation continued to play out in the defamation cases brought before the church courts. An increase in these anxieties also aligned with the increasing political patriarchal tensions as well as the growing proportion of unmarried male youths in Restoration England. By the 1670s, the percentage of male plaintiffs in sexual slander cases rose to sixty-two percent of all plaintiffs, which marked the highest percentage during the century of men claiming that they had been sexually slandered.⁶⁹ In fact, the specific fear of cuckoldry became such an issue for married men that the multiple courts under the Diocese of York began to classify cases that involved a man being called a cuckold

⁶⁶ Wrigley and Schofield, 260.

⁶⁷ Wrigley and Schofield, 263.

⁶⁸ Wrigley and Schofield, 260.

⁶⁹ Cause Papers in the Diocesan Courts of the Archbishopric of York, CP.H.22 – DC.CP.1699/3.

under the label of “cuckoldry” rather than just the broad umbrella of “sexual slander.” The first case in which this is included as a classification in the cause papers occurred in 1663.⁷⁰ Additionally, all of these cases involved a male defendant, which further suggests that accusations of cuckoldry were primarily used by other men to attack one’s position within society.⁷¹ Although it is impossible to know how many men actually hurled the insult of cuckold at another man, the Reformation-era increase in male plaintiffs of sexual slander cases and the emergence of “cuckoldry” as a classification suggest that a growing number of men were anxious enough about their sexual reputation (particularly involving cuckoldry) to bring forward a case in the church courts.

Jest-books published after 1660 reflected the growing obsession with cuckoldry that arose from these increasing tensions over patriarchal control. The upsetting of the patriarchal equilibrium by the war and Interregnum period caused a new concept of manhood to emerge in which male bonding existed exclusively among unmarried males and patriarchal authority was meant to be challenged. Similar to earlier in the century, anxieties about sexual reputation provided male youths with the chance to use the jests of jest-books as a way to mock the married men who reaped the benefits of the patriarchal control and status of manhood that they desired. The cathartic laughter caused by these comical situations relieved some of the tension that male youths felt over the disjunction between reality and the patriarchal ideal. However, jest-books published after the restoration of Charles II targeted married men and defamed them through cuckoldry more than ever. The proportion of cuckoldry jests to other topics rose significantly, and in some jest-books, jests involving

⁷⁰ Cause Papers in the Diocesan Courts of the Archbishopric of York, CP.H.4841.

⁷¹ Cause Papers in the Diocesan Courts of the Archbishopric of York, CP.H.5471; CP.H.4841; CP.H.2683; DC.CP.1669/3.

cuckoldry accounted for over half of the total jests.⁷² For example, jests such as the following were extremely popular and multiple versions of the same tale appeared in several different jest-books:

A man brought home a sheeps-head with the horns on: says his wife, and why Husband the Horns on? Is there not one in the house already of that sort? But *like to like; I see your humour is to have something like yourself.*⁷³

These jests specifically mocked married men and the control that society expected them to exercise over their wives and themselves. Several additional characteristics of the jests found in the first editions of jest-books printed from 1663 to 1688 illustrate the changing attitude of youth toward these married men and the tension that their patriarchal control created.

First, these jests were more anti-patriarchal than blatantly misogynist like those from the first half of the seventeenth century. This does not equate to a decrease in the misogynist attitude of young men, but it indicates a shift in who they perceived to be the greater threat to their masculinity. Thus male youth focused on the exclusion of married men, and even aimed their objectification of both women's bodies and wit on excluding the men who associated with them. They often referred to female characters in positive terms such as "good and virtuous woman" and "witty young woman."⁷⁴ Although jests admittedly used these phrases sarcastically in some cases, most of the jests used them in a positive manner. These later jests did not always consider women with wit negatively. One even depicted a "batchelor" thanking a "gentle sister" for teaching him wit.⁷⁵ Even if a jest did depict a woman as a fool, a married man rarely outwitted her; instead, a young, unmarried man was usually the superior

⁷² Hicks, *Oxford Jestes*; William Hicks, *Coffee-house Jestes, Refined and Enlarged* (London: Printed for Hen. Rhodes, 1688). Horns were a popular symbol used to signify a cuckold.

⁷³ Hicks, *Oxford Jestes*, 19.

⁷⁴ Hicks, *Coffee-house Jestes*, 133; 187.

⁷⁵ Samuel Rowlands, *A crew of kind London gossips, all met to be merry* (London: to be sold at the Greyhound in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1663), 41.

wit. Some jests also made a point of shifting focus from a woman's faults to discrediting a man's patriarchal rule. For example, one stated:

At a feast, where many Citizens and their wives were met, the chief of their discourse being about Cuckolds; one asked the reason why the men wore the horns, when the women onely were in fault? *That is, said another, because the man is the head, and where would you have the horns grow else.*⁷⁶

This represented the shift in jests from attacking women to specifically attacking patriarchal tensions through cuckoldry.

Restoration-era jest-books also addressed patriarchal tensions by depicting youthful wit as superior to that of married men, specifically in situations of cuckoldry. Additionally, jests no longer elicited light laughter at the tension that no man could ever be sure of not being a cuckold. Rather, the cuckolds described in these later jest-books were the worst kinds of cuckolds who deserved to be ostracized from society: jealous, grumbling, and pimping.⁷⁷ Although humorous, the language and attitude of these jests were much harsher toward the cuckolded characters than earlier jests about patient and ignorant cuckolds had been. For example, one jest portrayed an impotent gentleman as unable to please his wife. However, the jest not only portrayed him as sexually incompetent; it also portrayed him as a pimping cuckold who paid a gallant to sleep with his wife. In turn, the gentleman's waiting man offered to do the deed for half the price, thereby insulting the man as a pimping cuckold.⁷⁸ In yet another jest, a jealous man made a fool of himself when he posed as a priest taking his wife's confession. The woman, knowing all along that this "priest" was her husband, proclaimed that she had only been with three men throughout her life: an old man, a young man, and a priest. The next day, the husband grumbled to the community that he was a

⁷⁶ Lover of Ha, ha, he, 73.

⁷⁷ Winstanley, *Poor Robin*, 1699, A8.

⁷⁸ Lover of Ha, ha, he, 66.

cuckold, until finally the woman explained that she only meant that she had been with him when he was posing as the priest, when he was young, and now that he was old. Of course, the final joke was on the husband, for the woman slept with the priest (thinking he was her husband), and made him a cuckold anyway.⁷⁹ Jests such as these specifically attacked the self-control that patriarchal status required married men to have over their lives, and provided a method for the increasing numbers of men excluded from this status to mock their superiors.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the patriarchal tensions of the seventeenth century increasingly affected male youth – both in politics and in their social ties with their communities – and that jest-books responded to this growing tension by allowing unmarried men to laugh at the anxieties of married men over cuckoldry. Thus, jests served a social purpose among unmarried men by momentarily alleviating tensions through ridiculing patriarchal authority and giving subordinated men a sense of superiority. Marriage excluded male youths from patriarchal roles in their communities and the benefits of credit and honor that accompanied them. Since cuckoldry represented a loss of control for the married men who held a patriarchal status in society, laughing at men who were cuckolds momentarily eased the loss of control that unmarried men felt over their lives. Economic hardships, an unstable environment, tensions between expectation and reality, and the endangered future of patriarchal control in politics increased the tensions and anxieties of male youths who wanted to have the control and reputation that marriage afforded them. Jest-books from 1660 to 1688

⁷⁹ Hicks, *Coffee-house Jests*, 49-50.

responded accordingly to these increases by including more jests about cuckoldry that specifically attacked married men than earlier jest-books had.

However, this leads to a question of why the period of the English Civil War and Interregnum appears to be a pivotal turning point in the way that male youth reacted to tensions arising from a loss of masculine identity. The added tensions of choosing between two different masculine ideals during wartime caused subjugated masculinities, such as Royalist male youth during the Interregnum, to rely on jesting to alleviate the anxiety arising from added threats to their manliness without becoming political targets. Nonetheless, these jest-books suggest that underlying tensions existed between male youth culture and patriarchy throughout the seventeenth century, providing the catalyst for later additional sources of masculine anxiety, and jests about cuckoldry provided male youths with a way to address these tensions through the laughter of “sudden glory.” So let Hell fear the cuckold, for it made male youths feel mightier than Lucifer himself to mock him.

CHAPTER TWO

“WHEN JESTERS RISE AND ARCHBISHOPS FALL:” JESTING AS A MEANS OF DISPUTING POLITICAL MASCULINITY

Englishmen during the English Civil War and Interregnum found themselves facing competing ideals of masculinity that emerged in a political environment that contested and inverted traditional patriarchal legitimacy. Unmarried men were not isolated from this; and the added tension of competing political masculinities added to the pre-existing patriarchal tensions. One anonymous satirist summed up the entire period when he foreshadowed, “Changes of Times surely cannot be small, when Jesters rise and Archbishops fall.”¹ Roughly from 1640-1660, political upheavals brought the legitimacy of patriarchy into question, and men began to apply additional qualifications to manhood in order to legitimize their own masculine identity and effeminize others. Masculine identity became linked to political identity, and humor played a large role in one side’s attack on the masculinity of another. The role of humor in negotiating the additional, behavioral qualifications for

¹ Archie Armstrong, *Archy’s dream, sometimes iester to His Majestie, but exiled the court by Canterburies malice with a relation for whom an odd chaire stood voide in hell* (1641), 6. Although attributed to Archie Armstrong, this publication was likely by an anonymous author, as Archie retired shortly after 1641, and his name was often used to boost publications related to jesting. Referring to the Stuart court jester, the author was not only amazed at, but reveled in, the inversion of authority that allowed a lowly court jester to rise above the unpopular Archbishop Laud. Jesters traditionally had a “fool’s privilege” that allowed them to insult and joke about people of rank, and Archie made full use of this inversion of authority with Archbishop Laud while he was at court. Yet the thing which amazed the aforementioned author was that Archie’s inversion of authority had come true. Archie, rumored to have been of lowly birth and a sheep thief, retired from court life with a sizeable amount of land and a new family which secured him within the patriarchal ideal. Archbishop Laud, on the other hand, lost his position of traditional, ecclesiastical authority as well as his life.

manhood continued to impact the concept of masculinity even after the Restoration quelled the political turbulence of the mid-century between Cavaliers and Roundheads. The correlation between jesting, concepts of manhood, and the inversion of patriarchal authority was not new in the seventeenth century, but after the English Civil War, competing masculine ideals created additional tensions under a new Parliamentary regime that continued to play a role in the creation of an exclusive male youth masculine identity.

Throughout the seventeenth-century male youth used jesting to assert ideals of wit, flamboyance, violence, misogyny, and subversion of patriarchal authority. Similarly, stereotyped cavalier masculinity was defiant, aggressive, and prone to drunkenness, swearing, and sexual excess. However, parliamentary masculinity valued the opposing characteristics of rationality, discipline, restraint, and soberness. The competing masculinities of royalists and parliamentarians contrasted sharply in civil war propaganda, and impacted the culture so much that masculine ideals would divide along the lines of restraint and licentiousness for the rest of the century.² However, by 1651, Parliament was firmly in control, and those men who did not adhere to parliamentary manhood were left with the need to address tensions between the new, politically-approved hegemonic masculinity and their own. Surely, these “changes of times” were not small, and jesting was a method through which male youth who did not adhere to the Parliamentary masculine ideal responded to and addressed these changes.

The years of the English Civil War and Interregnum constituted an essential period of transition for early modern formations of masculine identity. The fundamental division between the dominant masculine ideal of the married patriarch and the subordinate masculine

² Hughes, 90-99.

identity of male youth continued to exist throughout the century. However, the regicide in 1649 brought the traditional legitimization of the commonwealth model of patriarchy into question, and thus forced men to seek additional qualifiers to legitimize their masculinity.³ In this volatile political climate, society began to associate manhood with political sides, and each side accused the other of effeminacy. With the Parliamentarians in control of the government and imposing strict regulations on the licentious behaviors of youth, the parliamentarian family man came to represent a new dominant masculinity, which excluded youth not only through marriage, but also through their jovial behavior that became politically stereotyped as royalist. Nevertheless, these subordinate men turned to jesting to address these tensions and used jests to assert the authority of their masculinity over the married, parliamentarian buffoon. The use of humor to attack others and build an exclusive bonding relationship among a political faction rather than foster universal male bonding shifted the use of jesting as well. This turning point created the cultural identity of the jovial, mirth-seeking unmarried man whose masculinity was legitimized through his own behavior rather than his ability to marry, and thus included him in the transition from a socially constructed ideal of manhood to a subjective masculine identity.

Although unlike traditional jest-books that appeared on the market at other times in the century, compilers collected and printed eight new collections of jests and jovial stories from 1651-1660.⁴ However, these compilations were distinct from others printed throughout the seventeenth-century in that they revolved around the lives of two contemporary and politically-relevant public figures rather than generalized jests about cuckoldry. These two

³ For further discussion of the multiple factors that caused men to associate their masculinity with a political side during the war, see Purkiss, 32-51.

⁴ Pollard and Redgrave; Wing.

jesting characters epitomized the ideal characteristics of non-Parliamentarian masculinity, as well as the behaviors that these men considered emasculating and effeminate. The first, Captain James Hind, was a highway robber who supported Charles II in his failed invasion of England, and was executed for treason in 1652. Represented as the ideal man and a jesting hero, jest-books published mostly fabricated, short tales of his exploits – both prior to his capture and following his execution – as jesting pranks that often portrayed representatives of parliamentarian rule, such as committee men, justices of the peace, lawyers, and gentlemen in general, as fools. The second jesting character, Hugh Peters, was the well-known parliamentarian Independent minister, blamed for delivering sermons that radicalized the New Model Army and prompted the Rump Parliament to execute King Charles I. Upon the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, the new regime executed Peters for treason as well. However, instead of being remembered in jest-books as a hero, two publications printed shortly after his execution portrayed him as a buffoon who exhibited feminine characteristics and mistakenly used jesting to make a fool of himself. Male youth who did not adhere to the Parliamentarian masculine ideal during the Interregnum used this form of jesting to defend their values of manhood as well as to attack the masculinity – and thus the political credibility – of Parliamentarians. Therefore, the cases of Hind and Peters as jest-book characters reveal an attempt to use jesting to deal with and eventually dispel the tensions that arose from a new, Parliamentarian hegemonic view of masculinity in the years following the English Civil War.

BACKGROUND

Several gender historians study manhood during the English Civil War and Revolution, and the key debate revolves around whether masculinity changed during this period or remained a stagnant ideal throughout the seventeenth-century. Elizabeth Foyster does not point out the Civil War era as a period of any particular changes. However, Diane Purkiss disagrees and argues that the English Civil War was a period of crisis for masculinity in seventeenth-century England.⁵ Competing notions of masculinity created “psychic pressures” for men as they were forced to choose between two sides, each of which had its own unique criteria for manhood. As each side asserted its own masculine identity because it felt threatened, the gap between the two widened, resulting in the intertwining of gender and politics, as well as physical violence.⁶ Neither of these views fully explains the complexities of manhood at this time. Purkiss overemphasizes the psychological effect of choosing sides for average, individual males; while Foyster underestimates the effect that war and the upsetting of political ideals can have on masculinity by allowing competing ideals of manhood to emerge.

Returning to the historiographical question of the change or stasis of a single masculine ideal, the issue is not as straightforward as both Foyster and Purkiss argue. Many layers of masculinity existed at once, and even individual men sometimes found themselves facing multiple ideals of manhood during their lifetime. This was no more evident than during the mid-seventeenth century when political and social spheres inseparably overlapped, and unmarried men – who already ascribed to a male youth ideal – found themselves facing

⁵ Purkiss, 6.

⁶ Purkiss, 6; 230.

the additional choice between royalist and parliamentary masculinities. Thus, although elements of a male youth ideal remained constant throughout the century, the addition of royalist and parliamentary stereotypes added a layer of change that the mid-century generations had to address. Consequently, the question should not be whether the masculine ideal changed during the English Civil War and Interregnum, because there was never a single masculine ideal. Instead, historians need to ask how new masculinities further revealed the tensions among others, and further complicated the constant competition for a hegemonic masculine position.

Ann Hughes addresses these shortcomings in her book *Gender and the English Revolution*, and argues that war both challenged and reinforced understandings of what it meant to be a man because it made the contradictions in an inherently unstable manhood apparent.⁷ Men did not contest masculinity only during the Civil War, but the use of propaganda to emasculate political figures while redefining certain masculinities as a stereotype brought these contestations to the forefront of public discourse. Hughes continues to observe competing masculine ideals into the Interregnum period, arguing that these “contrasting royalist and republican styles of manhood remained central to political culture from the regicide to the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.”⁸ Facing a parliamentary government that advocated their version of masculinity, broad groups of royalist men adopted the defiant cavalier stereotype throughout the 1650s in order to console their loss and ease the tensions of competing masculinities.⁹

⁷ Hughes, 90-91.

⁸ Hughes, 122.

⁹ Hughes, 123.

The study of Hind's and Peters's jest-books largely supports Hughes's argument while adding further explanation of how men coped with this tension through uniting with the male youth culture of jesting, and offering a continuation of the narrative into the Restoration. Neither the royalist nor the parliamentary ideals of masculinity disappeared; direct parallels continued between the earlier wit of Hind and Peters's Restoration buffoonery. However, those men who needed a jesting hero in order to ease the tension of belonging to a subjugated masculinity during the Interregnum found themselves established as the politically correct, hegemonic masculinity upon the restoration of Charles II. At this point, how they addressed tensions changed from grasping for a royalist hero in order to represent their masculine ideal, to characterizing competing parliamentary masculine ideals as foolish, effeminate buffoonery.

In order to examine this shift, I compare the masculine virtues presented in jest-books about the heroic James Hind to those in the jest-books about the foolish Hugh Peters. Publishers printed multiple editions of Hind's jest-books from 1651-1657, but Peters's jest-books only appeared in 1660. This presents a snapshot of the ways that adherents to royalist masculinity used jesting to address and alleviate tensions during the Interregnum, and how their rise to hegemonic status in 1660 changed this. Pre-existing patriarchal tensions did not disappear with the competition created by the English Civil War; instead, they were made more complex by the appearance of separate royalist and parliamentary masculine ideals. For example, the uniquely male youth value based on exclusion from women and male camaraderie continued as themes in Hind's jest-book, but combined as a part of this royalist

masculine ideal.¹⁰ By examining the ideal masculine characteristics of a royalist jest-book hero, and the unfavorable and effeminate characteristics of a jest-book buffoon, it is possible to identify the ideal qualities of this complex masculinity and understand how they connected to and changed with political transitions.

COMPETING POLITICAL MASCULINITIES

As Hughes mentions, as men faced choosing a political identity between contrasting political principles, they also had to choose a correlating ideal of manhood. Throughout the 1640s, a slew of pamphlets bombarded men with a choice between masculinities based on political allegiance, which defined new competing masculinities of the Parliamentarian and the Royalist. Thus, masculinity was not inherent. Men defined their own terms of manliness in relation to other men, whom they denounced as effeminate, cuckolds, and women.¹¹

Hughes identifies several characteristics that royalists used to support a fellow royalist as an ideal man, as well as several characteristics that they used to denounce a parliamentarian as less than a man or effeminate.

An ideal royalist concept of manhood consisted of qualities such as bravery, straightforwardness, control, and generosity.¹² Self-control, in particular, was important to the royalist masculine ideal because it contrasted sharply with the stereotypical feminine tendencies to over-indulge or become prone to emotion and passionate outbursts. It also defended royalist men against parliamentarian accusations that the typical cavalier was effeminately obsessed with trivial matters such as fashion, only concerned with over-

¹⁰ Reinke-Williams, 324-339.

¹¹ Hughes, 90-94.

¹² Hughes, 92.

indulgences of swearing, women, food, and drink, and prone to violent outbursts.¹³

Pamphlets about Hind's life depicted him as a self-controlled man who played jests on men prone to these sorts of excessive behavior; therefore, he defended royalist manhood against these accusations.¹⁴ Royalist manhood also included qualities of classic stoicism and defiance to absurd parliamentary rule, especially during the Interregnum period. If faced with defeat or death in the face of parliament, a royalist man was supposed to accept his fate with stoic resignation that defied the parliamentary attempt to subdue them. Thus, like Charles I, royalist men would become martyrs for their cause.¹⁵ Hind was therefore not only a jest-book hero, but a hero and defender of royalist masculinity, as he portrayed many of these characteristics that will be examined below.

In contrast, men who adhered to an ideal royalist masculinity defended their male identity against traits that they considered parliamentary and effeminate. These traits characterized parliamentary men as dishonest, hypocritical, and cowardly upstarts who could easily be emasculated through cuckoldry. Their cowardice subjected them to temptations to sacrifice the public good for their own private gains, such as wealth and political favors.¹⁶ Because of their greed and hypocrisy, jests depicted these men as more prone to over-indulge in female company. Even acts such as undue devotion to one's wife and family could emasculate a man, as his association with women quickly influenced his

¹³ Hughes, 95.

¹⁴ E.g., see Anon., *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Captain Hind: Wherein is set forth a more full and perfect Relation of his several Exploits, Strategems, Robberies, and Progress, both in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Holland: the like never heard of throughout all Ages. Together with his Letter to the King of Scots...* (London: Printed for George Horton, 1651).

¹⁵ Hughes, 123.

¹⁶ Hughes, 95; 99.

behavior. Oliver Cromwell was a common target of this characterization.¹⁷ Hugh Peters was no exception to this rule, and jests depicted his constant and inappropriate association with women as a cause for his many effeminate behaviors, which will also be discussed below. Therefore, Hind defended royalist masculinity when it was at its most vulnerable, and Peters was used to ensure a hegemonic position after the Restoration by drawing on the effeminate stereotypes of parliamentary masculinity.

JESTING HERO: THE INTERREGNUM AND THE CASE OF CAPTAIN JAMES HIND

In 1644, a royalist cleric described the ideal royalist man as exhibiting the following traits: “honour...piety, prudence, justice, liberality, goodness, honesty,” as well as behaving in an “amiable . . . courageous . . . discreet and gallant” manner.¹⁸ It seems difficult at first glance to imagine a highway robber whom Parliament executed for treason in 1652 as a royalist hero who epitomized these qualities. However, the character of Captain James Hind was a unique case of a man who, through appropriate jesting, became a royalist jest-book hero. He was a popular public figure who, despite his seemingly morally-questionable activities, represented not only ideal characteristics of a royalist cavalier, but the ideal qualities of unmarried manhood. Although he missed the mark on qualities such as honesty, he epitomized characteristics that unmarried men had long valued as important, such as wit.¹⁹ One jest-book compiler described him not only as the ideal man, but also as “the only Man,”

¹⁷ Hughes, 99.

¹⁸ Edward Symmons, *A militarie sermon wherein by the word of God, the nature and disposition of a rebell is discovered, and the Kings true souldier described and characterized : preached at Shrewsbury, May 19. 1644, to His Majesties army there under the command of the high and most illustrious Prince Rupert* (Oxford : Printed by Henry Hall, 1644), 16.

¹⁹ George Fidge, *Hind's Ramble, Or, The Description of his manner and course of life* (London: Printed for George Latham, 1651), 42. Published shortly before his capture, the date “October 27” is written on the original. The last line states “Many of his actions favoured of Gallantry; Most of Wit; but least of Honesty.”

due to his ability to “neatly jest.”²⁰ At first, Hind was primarily a non-partisan jest-book hero. Although known for his connection with the royalist camp, jest-books initially portrayed him as a man primarily concerned with self-preservation rather than fighting for monarchy.²¹ However, by his capture in 1651, Hind’s exploits were given a royalist cause that earned him a place as a hero and a martyred symbol for defeated royalist men. Hind himself admitted that the stories about his life were mostly untrue, but they captured a depiction of an ideal masculinity characterized by the love of a good jest and a vigor for life; moderation and forbearance supplemented by the use of wit; loyalty, camaraderie, and a master-less existence; and the control and exclusion of women and other men tainted by female association.

Notoriety: Exploits as a Highwayman

Little is known about the true events of Hind’s life until his capture, other than he was a highwayman who briefly served in the royalist army and accompanied Charles II on his invasion into England.²² The responses he gave at his first trial suggest that he was with Charles II at Worcester and Warrington, and despite the title of “captain” he was merely a common trooper.²³ He claimed the jests published about his many exploits were fiction even though he admitted that “some merry Pranks and Revels I have plaid, that I deny not.”²⁴ Nevertheless, the validity of his jesting pranks bears little weight on this story, for jest-book readers admired the character of James Hind for his masculine traits and his ability to jest,

²⁰ Anon., *We have brought our Hogs to a fair Market: Or, Strange Newes from New-Gate* (London: Printed for George Horton, 1652), 8. The date “Jan. 14” is written on the original.

²¹ Fidge, 14-15.

²² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, s.v. “Hind, James,” (hereafter noted as ODNB).

²³ Anon., *The Trial of Captain James Hind on Friday last before the Honourable Court at the Sessions in the Old-Bayley* (London: Published for general satisfaction, 1651), 4. The date written on the original states “Decemb. 15th,” ODNB, “Hind.”

²⁴ Anon., *The true and perfect Relation Of the taking of Captain James Hind* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651), 6. The date written on the original states “November 14.”

whether or not this character was true to the man himself. And the character of James Hind's story began as the epitome of master-less youth – a trait admired by many unmarried men – and continued as a life of constant jest, freedom, masculinity, and eventual martyrdom.²⁵

According to one jest, Hind was bound as an apprentice to a butcher, but ran away at the age of seventeen and joined a band of highwaymen.²⁶ He quickly gained control of the band and became its leader, took on the title of “Captain Hind,” and gained notoriety as a witty highwayman.²⁷

Prior to Hind's capture in 1651, a series of jest-books published short, witty, and humorous tales of Hind's exploits as a highwayman. These were aimed at a wider audience than the books to be printed after his imprisonment and the accusation of treason. Lacking any straightforward political aims, these books claimed to be published purely as “a book full of delight and fit for vacant hours.”²⁸ Although Hind had royalist sympathies that clearly existed in these jests, the portrayal of Hind as a royalist hero was entirely absent. Instead, compilers, such as George Fidge, implied that although they did not agree with his political affiliation, they admired him “as a man notable in his art.”²⁹ Certain publications even went so far as to mislead their readership by suggesting that Hind knew the whereabouts of the exiled Charles II, and that by purchasing a jest-book, the reader could discover news of these whereabouts. Of course, the books never delivered on this promise, and this was simply a marketing ploy in order to trick anyone (parliamentarian or royalist) interested in Charles'

²⁵ Reinke-Williams, 328.

²⁶ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest: Being a Compendious Record of the Merry Life, and Mad Exploits of Capt James Hind...Septemb. 24 1652*. (London: Printed for J. Deacon, at the Sign of the Angel in Guiltspur-Street, without Newgate, 1657), A2r.

²⁷ ODNB, “Hind.”

²⁸ Fidge, 6.

²⁹ Fidge, 5.

location into purchasing this cheap print.³⁰ This, along with the characteristic traits of male youth masculinity portrayed throughout the jest-books on Hind, suggest that there was an enduring unmarried male notion of masculinity that persisted into the Interregnum period. This masculine ideal did not disappear, but was simply complicated by other notions of competing masculinities from the period. The character of Hind exemplifies the merger of male youth and royalist concepts of manhood during this complex period. Jestings not only served to ease the mounting tensions between competing masculinities by creating an outlet for them, but also consolidated differing masculine ideals against a common enemy: the effeminate agents of Parliament.

Heroism: Capture, Imprisonment, Trials and Execution

During his imprisonment, the publications about Hind's life – both jest-books and accounts of his trial and stay in Newgate – began to depict him as not merely a popular jesting figure who exhibited masculine qualities, but as a royalist hero. Much of this was due to his outbursts of royalist pride and loyalty to the king. Accounts of the events surrounding his capture, imprisonment, trials, and execution tended to be more accurate than previous accounts of his exploits, but they also white-washed his criminal activity. After briefly abandoning the life of a highwayman for a stint in Charles II's army in the third civil war, Hind fled to London to regain his old life, where parliamentary authorities captured him at a barbershop on November 9, 1651.³¹ At this point, Hind's celebrity status certainly became obvious to the parliamentary regime as people flocked to see him at Newgate and

³⁰ Publications which included the suggestion of Charles's whereabouts on their title page include: Fidge, 1; Anon., *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Captain Hind*, 1. There is not a specific date on this last publication, but the lack of any mention of his capture suggests it was printed before November 11, 1651.

³¹ ODNB, "Hind."

publications quickly answered the public's desire for news of his capture.³² After two days of examination by a committee in Whitehall, news of Hind's capture spread rapidly. By the time the committee handed him over to Newgate, a curious crowd gathered to see him. Despite orders "to let no persons whatsoever to have access to him," many managed to get close enough to ask him questions and salute him.³³ Even a Parliamentarian sincerely offered to raise his glass to his health, signifying the popularity that Hind maintained on both sides to this point. However, it was also at this point that Hind securely established himself as a royalist prisoner rather than a mere criminal, as he passionately rebuked the parliamentarian for refusing to reciprocate his toast with one to the king's health, exclaiming, "The Devill take all Traytors: Had I a thousand lives, and at liberty, I would adventure them all for King Charles; and pox take all Turn-coats."³⁴ Becoming an outspoken royalist advocate and hero may have cost him his life.

Hind's trials quickly became complicated affairs. Initially, he appeared at the Old Bailey on December 12, 1651 for treason, but officials did not indict him because, noting his rapidly increasing popularity as a royalist hero, they did not want to make him a martyr. Instead, they chose from a slew of other possible crimes for which to put him to death, and decided to send him to Reading to stand trial for the murder of one of his associates, a man named Poole, over a disputed wager.³⁵ An Act of General Pardon and Oblivion, passed a month earlier, greatly narrowed the list of crimes with which Hind's parliamentarian enemies could see him executed. It stated that in an effort to restore peace, all English citizens:

³² Within a year of his capture, four new publications appeared on the market to recount his experience as a prisoner.

³³ Anon., *The true and perfect Relation*, 2-3.

³⁴ Anon., *The true and perfect Relation*, 3.

³⁵ ODNB, "Hind."

shall be and are by the Authority of this present Parliament, Acquitted, Pardoned, Released and Discharged (as against the Parliament, the Keepers of the Liberty of England by Authority of Parliament, or any or either of them) of all maner of Treasons, Felonies, Offences, Contempts, Trespasses, Entries, Wrongs, Deceits, Misdemeanors, Forfeitures, Sequestrations, Penalties and Sums of Money, Pains of Death, Pains Corporal and Pecuniary, and generally of all other things, Causes, Quarrels, Suits, Judgements and Executions, had, made, committed, suffered or done before the third day of September, in the year One thousand six hundred fifty one, in this present Act hereafter not excepted nor foreprized.³⁶

There were few exceptions, and only one option, other than possibly treason, could be applied to Hind: “voluntary murthers.”³⁷ However, Hind was only found guilty of manslaughter, and though sentenced to death, the Act of General Pardon and Oblivion saved Hind and left his parliamentarian enemies with the problem of silencing this upstart character.³⁸

Since Hind was not a witch, rapist, or smuggler, only one exception in the Act could apply to him at this point:

Excepted and always foreprized out of this General and Free Pardon, all and all maner of High Treasons (other then for words onely) and all levyng of War, Rebellions, Insurrections, and all Conspiracies and Confederacies, Traiterously had, committed or done against the Parliament or the Keepers of the Liberty of England, either within or without the Limits of this Commonwealth, sithence the thirtieth day of January, in the year of our Lord God, One thousand six hundred forty and eight.³⁹

This left Hind’s enemies with only two options: free Hind to continue his rambunctious and illegal behavior as a rallying point for the only recently defeated royalist forces, or execute him and risk making him a royalist martyr. They opted to try and execute him for treason, although he had only been a lowly soldier in Charles II’s invading army. In addition, nearly a

³⁶ “February 1652: An Act of General Pardon and Oblivion,” C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London: Published by His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1911), 565.

³⁷ “February 1652: An Act of General Pardon and Oblivion,” 565-577.

³⁸ ODNB, “Hind.”

³⁹ “February 1652: An Act of General Pardon and Oblivion,” 565-577.

year had passed since Parliament punished any other participants for this invasion with either imprisonment or execution.⁴⁰ What was it about Hind that made him so dangerous to Parliament that he was better off a dead martyr than a royalist highwayman?

Jest-books and accounts of Hind's life reveal possible explanations: readers admired his character not only as a royalist, but as a man, an "artist," and a jester.⁴¹ Essentially, he made fools of agents of the fledgling parliamentary government. Satire about parliamentarians, Cromwell, and the republican government were not uncommon, but Hind posed a particular and unusual threat because his character had become an idealized public hero who through actual acts of lawlessness subverted the parliamentary government. Had he been permitted to live, Hind's story may have been one of actual subversion rather than fictional tales of subversion told to ease masculine and royalist tensions. Nonetheless, by the time of his execution, Hind was no longer merely a notorious highwayman, nor a royalist hero, but a royalist martyr. As previously mentioned, masculinity was closely associated with one's political status during this turbulent period, and Hind's ideal masculine qualities may have been one reason that royalists overlooked his questionable criminal history and idealized him as a royalist martyr.⁴² The qualities of masculinity portrayed in Hind's jests allowed an outlet through which men could vent frustrations at the loss of monarchical political control. It also eased tensions about competing masculinities by portraying their royalist hero, who displayed their version of masculine qualities, coming out on top of those

⁴⁰ ODNB, "Hind."

⁴¹ Fidge, 5. "Artist" in this case refers to the description many jest-book compilers bestowed on him, which in context most closely aligned with the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "A person who practices artifice, deception, cunning, etc.; a schemer, rogue." Oxford English Dictionary, s.v., "Artist."

⁴² Authors who published accounts of Hind's exploits seemed particularly impressed by his courage in the face of death, and characterized him as a martyr because of this. E.g., see Anon., *The Declaration of Captain James Hind* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1651), 6.

who, in actuality, currently controlled both the political arena and the new hegemonic notion of masculinity.

Hind's Jestings and Masculine Characteristics

As previously mentioned, royalist manhood valued qualities such as joviality, self-control, the exclusion and control of women, defiance, generosity, and stoicism, and closely linked them to one's credibility as a political figure. Facing competing masculinities during the Interregnum period, and finding themselves in the subordinate masculinity position, royalists needed an ideal masculine character to publically portray and defend their concept of manhood. They found this character in James Hind, who embodied five overarching characteristics of royalist manliness in response to parliamentary masculine ideals. Royalist men then centered jests on his life in order to alleviate the tensions that they felt as the subordinate masculinity and political group.

Hind possessed the ability to appropriately jest. A 1607 jest-book described the appropriate motivations for jesting in the first line, which stated: a jest "is a weapon wherewith a [fool] does oftentimes fight, and a wise man defends himself by."⁴³ Hind never used jesting with the intent of causing insult or harm. He jested either for the sake of pure merriment or for the greater purpose of robbing an undeserving gentleman. In the case of robbery, Hind always acted in a defensive manner. The men who Hind robbed were all undeserving of their "ill-gotten" money and often represented parliamentary treachery, such as the committee man whose financial demands for Parliament made him a worse thief than Hind.⁴⁴ Jest-books portrayed Hind as merely taking back what had been stolen from royalists

⁴³ Dekker, 1.

⁴⁴ Anon., *A Pill to purge melancholy: or merry newes from Newgate: wherein is set forth, the pleasant jests, witty conceits, and excellent couzenages, of Captain James Hind, and his associates.* (London: Printed by

in the first place. For example, one jest told the tale of a usurer taking money from a poor innkeeper. Hind then retrieved the money and returned it to the innkeeper.⁴⁵ Aside from jesting for a cause, Hind jested merely for the sake of mirth and the enjoyment of life. This trait, very much in line with the stereotype of the jovial cavalier, was in fact a better use of jesting than using it to rob, even for a defensive cause. In one jest, Hind, “seeing he should be disappointed of the mirth he intended to have had,” settled for taking a lawyer’s money, illustrating the primary purpose of jesting: to have mirth.⁴⁶ The ability to jest appropriately and with the proper motive was a characteristic of royalist masculinity, and directed Hind’s interactions with other men, women, and representatives of Parliamentary manhood.

Hind’s ability to jest directly correlated to the second overarching characteristic of his masculine identity: the use of quick-thinking wit and moderation over pure reason and “excessive masculinity.”⁴⁷ This trait was appreciated by male youth, and commonly appeared in older jest-books, because it was a necessary aspect of their unstable lifestyle. Hind frequently out-witted his victims in jests such as one in which “Hind’s head being not idle,” he robbed a gentleman of one hundred pounds by suggesting that he slow his coach down to see which horse ran the fastest. The gentleman, over-applying reason that by stopping his coach he would thus see which horse took the longest to slow down, then slowed down long enough for Hind to ride by and snatch his purse.⁴⁸ Those who correctly used wit knew when

Robert Wood, 1652), 14. The date on the title page reads “Jan. 26,” placing this publication before his execution, but after his arrest; Another jest, in which Hind discovered that the beggar he gave money was actually a committee man in disguise, proclaimed all committee men’s money as “ill got” appeared in: Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, B1v.

⁴⁵ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, A7r-A7v.

⁴⁶ Anon., *A Pill to purge melancholy*, 6.

⁴⁷ This term refers to Hughes’s concept that a man who exhibited loss of all self-control could be portrayed as being overly masculine and therefore unfit to rule. In other words, over-compensating for feelings of inadequate masculinity further emasculated a man. For more information, see Hughes, 124.

⁴⁸ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, B2v.

a strict use of reason was inappropriate, and when to use common sense instead. The over-application of reason could indicate that a person was a victim of “excessive masculinity,” implying that his attempt to prove himself masculine by over-relying on a masculine characteristic actually emasculated him.⁴⁹ Hind, on the other hand was not excessively masculine, nor excessively feminine. He applied moderation to his actions.

Moderation applied to the use of reason, as well as to behaviors from eating to displaying emotions. The closing remarks of one jest-book boasted that Hind was “no great spender or ranter in taverns.”⁵⁰ Although jests often portrayed Hind eating a meal with a victim or an informant, they never portrayed him as gluttonous. Constantly keeping his wits about him, he never sacrificed this skill to pleasure or emotion. Rather than eating for pleasure, he always supped with other people in an attempt to gain information from them that he could later use to either rob or mock his target.⁵¹ Likewise, Hind never lost his wit to overly feminine displays of emotion and passion. After his mentor and leader of his gang died, Hind admitted that “his Masters misfortune grieved him much,” but he “quickly cast it out of his mind.”⁵² In another instance, when Hind became “moved to passion” and rebuked the parliamentarian who would not toast to Charles II with him with the exclamation, “The Devill take all Traytors,” the guard pleaded with him to “forbear...and be not in passion.” Hind replied, “Not in the least, I am free from it,” implying that, although he allowed a momentary outburst in order to prove a point, he was a not slave to his passion, but well in control of it.⁵³ This sense of moderation was a key characteristic of the masculine balance

⁴⁹ Hughes, 124.

⁵⁰ Fidge, 42.

⁵¹ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, A8v-B1r.

⁵² Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, A2v.

⁵³ Anon., *The true and perfect Relation*, 3.

between excessive masculinity and the danger of femininity, both of which royalists considered parliamentary traits.

A prominent feature of male youth manliness, as noted by Reinke-Williams, was the misogyny that encouraged complete female exclusion. These men believed that association with women, including in marriage, effeminized a man as he became accustomed to female behaviors.⁵⁴ Hind's masculinity and his success as a jest-book hero hinged on the third overarching masculine characteristic: his separation from women, and his ability, when he did come in contact with one, to control and manipulate her feminine characteristics to his advantage. Only two jests portrayed Hind associating with women. The first drew on a common jest-book plot, and depicted him cuckolding not one, but two rival men simultaneously.⁵⁵ The second recounted his experience as a youth when he sent a "wench" to seduce a lawyer. By controlling her innate deceitfulness, Hind manipulated her into distracting the lawyer so that he could rob his trunk.⁵⁶ Both Hind's relative lack of association with women and his ability to control their femininity when they were in his presence depicted him as the ideal man, untainted by feminine characteristics.

Fourthly, Hind's interaction with other men also determined his masculinity, and his values of loyalty and male camaraderie aligned with similar royalist ideals. Jests about Hind emphasized an exclusive, subjugated male camaraderie that he both belonged to and protected. Known for his sociability, witty discourse, and conversational skills, Hind was the

⁵⁴ Reinke-Williams, 328; 335. For an in-depth analysis of the ways in which all-male groups, such as journeymen, excluded women, also see Wiesner, 125-137. In her study of journeymen and the exclusion of women in early modern Germany, she found that journeymen avoided all contact with women, especially in the workplace. Although Hind had little contact with women, he did not completely exclude them and still maintained contact with them in the form of control and objectification in order to achieve his own ends.

⁵⁵ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, A3r-A3v.

⁵⁶ Anon., *A Pill to purge melancholy*, 7-11.

ideal comrade, but he only favored men who were subjugated by patriarchy and economic social order.⁵⁷ For example, Hind claimed that “Neither did I ever take the worth of a penny from a poor man.”⁵⁸ His victims always included either a gentleman or a wealthy agent of the parliamentary government, such as a committee man or justice of the peace. One could argue that Hind was merely being pragmatic by always going after the most promising targets. However, Hind not only abstained from robbing poor men, he also protected and facilitated a male, royalist camaraderie with them. If a poor man was for Parliament, he would simply let him pass on his way, but if the man was for the king, Hind gave him money. However, he not only looked after poor royalists, but also male youth. In the jest-book *No Jest like a true jest*, Hind hired a master-less youth, incorporated him into his band, and mentored him in the deceitful ways of his trade.⁵⁹ Valuing the camaraderie he maintained with these subjugated men, Hind remained loyal to them even when committee members offered him the modern-day equivalent of a plea bargain if he would admit to their whereabouts. He responded, “No, no, sir! I defie such treachery and persidiousness: no man living shall by me be impeached; if I die, I’le die alone; I am resolved to keep my Conscience cleer and untainted of that bloody Fact, or guilt of sin.”⁶⁰ However, Hind was not only loyal to his men. Inherent in the likely double-meaning of Hind’s response, he also professed loyalty to the king and the royalist cause. The concept of loyalty was central to royalist identity, and became a key element of their masculine ideal. That Hind was loyal to both his fellow men and his King was evident in his jests and his attitude toward agents of the new republican government.

⁵⁷ Anon., *The Pleasant and Delightful History of Captain Hind*, 6.

⁵⁸ Anon., *The Declaration of Captain James Hind*, 2. The date written on the title page states “Nov. 18.”

⁵⁹ Anon., *No Jest Like a true jest*, A8v-B1r.

⁶⁰ Anon., *The Declaration of Captain James Hind*, 6.

The final characteristic of an ideal royalist masculinity that Hind exhibited was the most politically connected, and was actually an amalgam of traits used to show loyalty to the king and defy the republican government. As a royalist, Hind did not passively accept the new regime; he actively defied and mocked it. As previously mentioned, Hind only attacked agents of the republican government or those gentlemen who prospered from the new regime at the expense of the impoverished “cottage-keeper.”⁶¹ However, Hind not only stole money from them, he emasculated them, and therefore discredited their political credibility. For example, in one jest a young Hind robbed a lawyer by dressing as a woman and pretending to be a whore. He asked the lawyer to pay for his services in advance, and then immediately pulled out his pistol, robbed him, and left the lawyer alone and penniless.⁶² The lawyer was not only emasculated by his association with women and being fooled by who he thought was a woman, but by his failure to recognize the woman as Hind in disguise. Readers would have associated the loss of both his money and his desired sexual encounter with connotations of impotence and incompetence. Thus, Hind emasculated his victims by portraying them as incompetent buffoons, unable to find the ideal balance between excessive masculinity and the dangers of femininity. This trend continued in royalist jest-books after the Restoration.

JESTING BUFFOON: THE RESTORATION AND THE CASE OF HUGH PETERS

After the Restoration, it appeared that the parliamentary masculine ideal was no longer in favor. With the return of a flamboyant, courtly, and cavalier-like king, the formerly subjugated royalist masculinity was now the hegemonic masculinity within the political

⁶¹ Anon., *The Declaration of Captain James Hind*, 6.

⁶² Anon., *A Pill to purge melancholy*, 4-6.

arena. However, competition between the former cavalier concept of masculinity and the staunch Puritan, parliamentary masculinity still existed. The return of another series of jest-books, which focused on attacking a single parliamentary character, suggests that these tensions certainly still existed among male youth. The attempt to restore political stability with monarchy did not reverse the indoctrination and ease the tensions that still existed among those who had grown up in this tense social and political climate. Once again, these men resorted to jesting humor to address the renewed struggle between the former political masculine ideal and the new. Yet rather than centering the jest-book on a central, heroic, and masculine character, anonymous jest-book compilers centered their tales of mirth on a parliamentary buffoon: Hugh Peters.

Hugh Peters's Involvement in the Civil War and Interregnum

Hugh Peters the man, as well as the jest-book character, was vastly different from James Hind. In fact, the only thing they had in common was their execution for treason, and even then it was treason against two very different government regimes, a mere eight years apart. Certainly not the persona of a soldier or a notorious highwayman, the real Hugh Peters was an independent minister. Rather than confidence in his own abilities and a love of life and mirth, he struggled with feelings of inadequacy and fits of religious melancholy his whole life. The masculine fear of female distraction played out in his life as he was forced to marry a second wife whom he did not care for. Soon after their marriage, she became mentally ill and was a constant distraction to him and his work throughout the remainder of his life. In addition, rather than taking from the rich to give to the poor, former royalists viewed Peters as one of the men gaining ill-gotten wealth from Parliament's rule. Parliament frequently rewarded Peters with gifts for his services and satirists and newsbooks portrayed

this as enriching himself through the suffering of others.⁶³ These qualities all classified Peters as the antithesis of the jovial character so valued by royalist masculinity.

Peters was also at the center of the emergence of Parliamentary factions soon after the first civil war. Closely associated with the New Model Army as a military preacher, popular polemic blamed him for the radicalization of the Army. His support of the Army's refusal to disband in 1647 consolidated his reputation as a radical independent. Peters also earned a reputation for buffoonery because he effectively preached so often to the common men in the Army, and simplified his sermons for their benefit.⁶⁴ This reputation as a buffoon would become essential to his jest-book character, but until then, his association with Cromwell earned him a prominent place in Parliamentary politics while Cromwell was alive. His sermons were famous for not only rallying troops, but also rallying Parliament, and his sermons to the Rump Parliament surrounding the decision in favor of regicide earned him another reputation as a regicide conspirator.

By 1660, Peters was mostly disliked by the population at large. Several publications appeared in 1660 that condemned his actions and mocked him for his state of disgrace and "disfavour at that barbarous Court."⁶⁵ Former royalists blamed him as a conspirator in the regicide. One rumor even placed him as the masked executioner, since Peters was conspicuously absent due to illness that day.⁶⁶ He also earned many enemies in Parliament. Throughout the Interregnum, Peters openly criticized the Republic and felt misgivings about its conversion to a Protectorate. His close relationship with Cromwell earned him leniency

⁶³ All information about the biography of the real Hugh Peters was gathered from ODNB, s.v. "Hugh Peter."

⁶⁴ ODNB, "Peter."

⁶⁵ Anon., *Don Pedro de Quixot, or in English the right reverend Hugh Peters* (London: Printed for T. Smith, 1660), 1.

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Robertson, *The Tyrannicide Brief: The Story of the Man Who Sent Charles I to the Scaffold* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 198; ODNB, "Peter."

during Cromwell's rule, but after the fall of the Protectorate, the popular press reviled him for being associated with Cromwell. By the time he was put on trial as a regicide, and faced a traitor's execution in 1660, Peters's reputation was as an unpopular traitor to both causes and an effeminate buffoon.⁶⁷ The two jest-books printed about him in 1660 revolved around this characterization, and illustrate the shift from a subordinate masculinity to a hegemonic masculinity that could now mock the previous regime's characters as effeminate and foolish.

Peters's Jest-ing and Effeminate Characteristics

The jest-books which emerged surrounding the character of Hugh Peters were not entirely original works. Plagiarism was common, and all of the jests included in *Hugh Peters figaries* were, despite being advertised as new, included in *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*.⁶⁸ However, both of these books also borrowed extensively from the jests of John Taylor's traditional-style jest-book, *Wit and Mirth*, published in 1628, and simply substituted the character of Hugh Peters in the jests.⁶⁹ These traditional jest-books were part of a misogynist male youth culture made up of an exclusive, subjugated masculinity. The inclusion of these sorts of jests in a jest-book about Peters illustrates the continuity of earlier themes of subjugated masculinity, such as that of male youth or Interregnum-era royalists, that they used to effeminate and discredit those who represented a rival political or masculine ideal. Even the title page of *Hugh Peters figaries* contained an illustration depicting him with

⁶⁷ ODNB, "Peter."

⁶⁸ Anon., *Hugh Peters figaries* (London: Printed for George Horton, living in Fig-Tree Court, 1660); Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters* (London: Printed for S.D., 1660). Despite both of these books being attributed to Hugh Peters as the author, these jests were written by an anonymous author who used the name of Peters to establish the validity of his tales. Because all of the jests in *Hugh Peters figaries* also appeared in *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, future citations will be from the later source.

⁶⁹ For example, see jests numbers 32, 40, 63, and 69 in Taylor, compared to Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 10-14.

horns, the common symbol of a cuckold.⁷⁰ Thus, these jests about Peters were a comment both on his masculinity as well as his status as a politically unpopular buffoon. Once again, the five overarching characteristics of masculinity that Hind displayed are lacking in Peters's character, and his overarching effeminate and foolish characteristics portray him as the antithesis of ideal masculinity.

Jests mocked Peters's ability to jest as inappropriate because it lacked the correct intent and purpose. Unlike Hind's joviality, Peters jested in order to insult and mock those around him. This malignant jesting was inappropriate because it only harmed others and made the jester himself look like a fool. In fact, Peters often did not even intend to jest with an individual; instead his own foolishness often served to hurt those around him. For example, in a jest entitled "How Mr. Peters broke a jest upon a Lady," Peters asked her, "how she did, and how her good husband fared; at which words weeping, she answered, her husband had been in Heaven long since." This social mistake would not have smudged the character of Peters too badly had he not been foolish enough to continue the conversation with a response of "In Heaven...it is the first time that I have heard of it, and I am sorry for it with all my heart."⁷¹ Thus, Peters's inability to even recognize a jest and foolishly answer in a manner that suggested he was sorry to hear that the Lady's husband was in Heaven rather than Hell characterized him as a buffoon.

Likewise, his lack of wit and over-use of reason, which correlated with attributes such as gluttony and boasting, characterized his acts of buffoonery as part of an excessively masculine character. Ann Hughes identified the excessive masculine persona as a negative

⁷⁰ Anon., *Hugh Peters figaries*, title page.

⁷¹ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 5.

characterization used by royalists, often against members of Parliament like Cromwell, which they associated with illegitimate rule and the tyrannical power of the Protectorate.⁷² Representative of this stereotype, Peters's over-reliance on reason often got him into scrapes in which his logic was ill-applied. For example, one jest portrayed him as a fool outwitted by a youth's use of wit. When he tried to rebuke the boy for the careless act of herding his father's sheep over a narrow bridge, the youth gave a quick and witty response that it was the sheep's fault rather than his if any drowned because he could not be blamed for their clumsiness. This left Peters "well-pleased with these clownish answers."⁷³ Accepting the boy's witty response as logical reason illustrated the excessiveness of his reliance on the patriarchal masculine quality of reason.

Additionally, jests often portrayed Peters as a slave to other excessive behaviors, such as gluttony and boasting. His gluttony not only portrayed him as excessive, but also likely commented on the hypocrisy of his famous fast-day sermons and his ability as a preacher. For example, one jest depicted Peters visiting the Earl of Pembroke, where he stated upon arrival, "My Lord, I am come to see you, and intend to dine with you, and because you should not want company; I have brought one of the 7 deadly sins along with me," referring, of course, to gluttony.⁷⁴ Peters's excessive boasting also revealed him as hypocritical, such as one jest in which the "punch-line" recounted Peters commenting on his own horse, "and I am sure he is the best, and yet I swear I have one in my stable worth ten of him."⁷⁵ These excessive and hypocritical qualities connected the masculinity of Peters with the hyper-

⁷² Hughes, 124.

⁷³ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 7.

⁷⁴ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 17.

⁷⁵ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 7.

masculine and tyrannical manhood of the royalists' characterization of Cromwell and an illegitimate Protectorate.

However, jests depicted Peters not only as excessively masculine, but also as overly feminine. As previously mentioned, subjugated masculinities commonly believed that if a man spent too much time with women, he would begin to exhibit feminine characteristics. This was certainly the case for Peters's jest-book character. First of all, jests depicted him having a negative relationship with women that put him in close contact with them and allowed them to rule over him. Jest portrayed him as frequently indulging in female company, such as one in which he was "ingratiating himself with a butcher's wife," who exposed him by catching his hand in a trap.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Peters's attentiveness to his mentally-ill wife was also a subject of jest, and called him "a fool" who "is drawn away by his wife."⁷⁷ Thus any sort of contact with women, whether indulging in another man's wife or attending to his own, placed Peters in danger of being a fool who was emasculated by female control over him.

This fraternization with women also gave Peters feminine characteristics, which further discredited his masculinity. For example, Peters used objects that should have carried a masculine connotation and defiled them with a feminine use, such as one jest in which he used his sword to measure a length of cloth.⁷⁸ Other jests depicted him as the antithesis of Hind's emotional control, and made him a slave to his emotions and passionate, foolish outbursts. One of the most common causes for these outbursts stemmed from Peters's problem with becoming easily affronted, such as one instance in which he mistook a parson's

⁷⁶ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 26.

⁷⁷ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 28.

⁷⁸ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 28.

quotation from the Bible as a personal attack on his character.⁷⁹ These outbursts characterized him as a man who was not in control of himself, and self-control was a trait of masculinity common throughout the seventeenth-century.⁸⁰ Thus, Peters was depicted as lacking both the control over women and the self-control necessary to establish his masculinity.

However, Peters's interaction with other men also portrayed characteristics that were not considered part of the royalist masculine identity that Hind exemplified. Rather than exhibiting camaraderie, charity, and loyalty, Peters's jesting character manipulated for personal gain, insulted and alienated his friends, his flock, and the poor and disabled, and betrayed his fellow man in exchange for material gains, such as food.⁸¹ The first jest in *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters* told the tale of Peters lodging in a hospitable miller's home and accidentally catching the miller's wife *in flagrante delicto*. However, Peters waited until he could manipulate a meal out of the miller before disclosing this information by pretending to practice witchcraft. And finally, as the miller set out to look for the man who was making him a cuckold, Peters, ignoring his debt of hospitality, deceived the miller as to the man's whereabouts and allowed the man to escape. This tale of treachery and deceit suggested that Peters would betray a friend for the nothing more than the price of a "capon."⁸² This further suggests that the attack on Peters's masculinity in these jests were not only an attack on Peters the man, but an attack on the traitorous parliamentarians and their masculinity.

⁷⁹ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 4.

⁸⁰ Foyster, *Manhood*, 109.

⁸¹ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 1; 11; 17; 19.

⁸² Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 1-3.

Finally, Peters's faults and lack of masculinity culminated in his interaction with political authority, which both stood in stark contrast to Hind's ideal masculinity and portrayed the parliamentary cause negatively. Jests depicting his lack of respect for the newly re-established monarchy, such as one in which he foolishly and accidentally compared the king to Barabbas, established him not just as a parliamentarian rebel, but as a foolish man who did not even know what he was doing.⁸³ In addition, Peters did not stand for a cause or principles, as Hind did. Instead, jest-books portrayed him as a traitor to both sides for the sake of wealth and political favor. For example, one jest depicted Peters playing the role of St. Peter at Heaven's gate. He foolishly allowed a committee-man into Heaven, but sent both a parliamentarian and a royalist to Hell.⁸⁴ This likely connected with the king's supporters who perhaps felt that the majority of parliamentarians did not respectably fight for a cause, but rather, men such as both Hind's and Peters's committee-men only supported Parliament because their wallets could benefit. And men such as Peters encouraged and enabled them by supporting the parliamentarian cause and participating in the regicide. The tensions that still existed between the former parliamentarian representation of masculinity and the newly dominant royalist representation of masculinity continued to be addressed, along with political tensions, in jest-books that depicted masculine jest-books heroes and effeminate jest-book buffoons against one another.

⁸³ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 29.

⁸⁴ Anon., *The tales and jests of Mr. Hugh Peters*, 13.

CONCLUSION

As men faced competing masculine and political identities during the English Civil War and Interregnum period, they needed a way to alleviate the tensions that arose and protect their concept of manhood. For royalist men during the Interregnum and Restoration, one way to address these issues was to jest about other masculinities and portray their masculine ideal as always coming out on top. Jest-books centered on the characters of James Hind, the masculine hero and royalist martyr, and Hugh Peters, the effeminate parliamentarian buffoon. During the Interregnum, jests about Hind were used to invert the actual order and place royalist masculinity on top. These jests portrayed royalist masculine characteristics as the only way to be a man. Immediately following the Restoration, jests about Hugh Peters portrayed the foolishness of attempts to jest and subvert the restored order and masculinity. Thus, jesting was no longer only a way to question patriarchal manhood by challenging the sexual credit of a married man. It also defined an individual's masculinity through his characteristics and personal choices, indicating a shift in the concept of masculinity from a social construction to a subjective identity that allowed men more autonomy in forming and maintaining their masculine identity.

After the dust from the Restoration settled, the tensions between royalist masculinity and parliamentarian masculinity disappeared; however, the tensions between these two types of manhood did not. Society attached the behaviors that defined royalist masculinity with the libertine courtier lifestyle of Charles II, and the strict moral reforms of the former Puritan Parliament became the platform of Religious Societies championing restrained behavior and manners. The idealization of joviality, wit, male camaraderie, and the avoidance of women (when they could not be controlled) that royalist masculinity embodied continued into the

later seventeenth century as these ideals were adopted by male youth. Young men, stereotyped as the subjective masculinity through their behaviors as well as their unmarried status, once again addressed these tensions through jesting.

CHAPTER THREE

“THEY’LL MAKE MELANCHOLICUS FROLICK:”¹

JESTING AS A MEANS OF CREATING A MIRTHFUL MALE YOUTH IDENTITY

Now all you brave Blades,
Leave your shops and your Trades,
Your lying and solemn protesting;
And if ever you’ll thrive,
Cease to drink, swear, and strive,
And study the Science of Jestings.²
-*Oxford Jests*, 1684

Following the Restoration of the English monarchy, two competing masculine ideals once again emerged as reactionary mutations of the royalist, cavalier ideal and the parliamentarian, puritan ideal. Although the return of a Stuart court brought a licentious culture that happily unraveled the tightly woven fabric of the Interregnum’s Puritan regulations, it also brought a heightened concern with the reform of morals. Moral reform attempted to control the outbreak of libertinism throughout society with emerging middling values of purity, chastity, sobriety, and productivity. Each end of this cultural spectrum carried its own criteria for the ideal masculine identity, and male youth found themselves at the center of a societal battle over what sort of man they would become. Admonitions aimed at reforming their behavior bombarded young men, such as the satirically-intended rhyme admonishing youth to study the “science of jesting” above. This plea to the reader from a

¹ Hicks, *Oxford Jests*.

² Hicks, *Oxford Jests*.

popular jest-book compiler highlights the tensions male youth faced in Restoration-era England surrounding society's perception of their behaviors and masculine identity. With the emergence of a polite and civil society, social, rather than sexual, conditions became the primary determinants of hegemonic masculinity. So when society perceived all young men as inherently immoral and promiscuous, yet expected them to behave with moral refinement and civility in order to be manly, these youth once again turned to jesting to alleviate these tensions and navigate the formation of their own, distinct identity. Thus, an exclusive, distinctly male youth culture and masculine identity formed in the late seventeenth century in reaction to the moral reformation attempts of an emerging civil society.

As earlier in the century, jesting helped to alleviate the societal pressures that attempted to impact the identity of male youth. However, by the end of the century, jesting and the ability to appreciate and create mirth became an integral part of an exclusively male youth identity. Religious Societies aimed at correcting the vices of youth began to associate inappropriate mirth-making and jesting with the libertine behavior of youth.³ At the same time, young men themselves viewed jesting as a means of restoring masculinity from the effeminizing effects of melancholy without having to resort to the dangerously extravagant behaviors of upper-class libertines and rakes. Young men viewed melancholy as effeminizing and disempowering, and believed that mirth was the only cure.⁴ Libertines and rakes – stereotypes for notorious young men who terrorized the taverns and streets of towns with their carousing, swearing, promiscuity, and violent behavior – sought mirth in these raucous

³ Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 111-114.

⁴ Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a discussion of the ways in which anxious masculinity results in melancholy, see Breitenberg's analysis of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in chapter one.

behaviors in order to counteract melancholy with pleasure. They were extravagant spenders who were renowned for depleting their inheritances and shirking all responsibilities in favor of enjoying pleasures throughout the night.⁵ However, these were habits that most young men could not afford, and instead used jesting to create the same necessary mirth. In doing so, they formed a uniquely male youth culture that incorporated jesting as a part of their masculine identity.

BACKGROUND

Historians such as Anthony Fletcher and Karen Harvey argue that understandings of masculinity in this period, from the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, transitioned from an inherently anxious, patriarchal social construction of manhood to a more stable, internally constructed masculinity of refinement.⁶ Fletcher claims that by the eighteenth century, masculinity was “an internalized identity – an interiority of the mind and emotions – as opposed to a sense of role playing.”⁷ Philip Carter adds that the dominant identity that arose in the late seventeenth century was that of the polite man, “a behavioural style which, in theory at least, placed greater emphasis on explicitly interactive qualities.”⁸ However, not all masculine identities adhered to this polite definition of manhood and adopted behaviors of refinement. This chapter will complicate historians’ understanding of this period as a “male civilising process” by presenting the development of a significant

⁵ Bryson, 245; G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 45-47.

⁶ Fletcher, *Gender*; Harvey, 296-311.

⁷ Fletcher, *Gender*, 322.

⁸ Carter, 60.

alternative masculine identity among male youth that arose out of the identity of the jovial cavalier and defied civility.⁹

Furthermore, the transition from a social construction of manhood to a subjective identity was not an immediate transition, and the tensions between the two threatened male youths' masculinity as they attempted to construct their own masculine identity contrary to society's expectations of manliness. The negotiation between personal and socially-imposed masculine identity caused tension, termed by sociologist Gary T. Barker as "psychic frustration," among young men for several reasons.¹⁰ First, social recognition played a large role in the negotiation process between society's masculine ideal and individual identity, and male youth were often socially excluded from this recognition. This caused masculinity to be inherently insecure because social recognition was often dependent upon either sexual or material accomplishments that may not have been attainable.¹¹ Male youth particularly validated their masculinity by the recognition of their peers, and in the later middle ages, young men established their masculine identity by testing themselves against other men in the areas that they defined as the criteria for becoming a man.¹² Barker defines these criteria universally as financial independence, earning a wage, and being sexually active, which were represented in the early modern era by marriage.¹³ However, as discussed in chapter one, marriage also served as a method of social exclusion for unmarried men, which according to Barker, is universally the primary cause of "psychic frustration" about identity. Additionally,

⁹ For a discussion of the "male civilising process," see Carter, 116.

¹⁰ Barker, 10.

¹¹ Tosh, 184-192.

¹² Tosh, 184; Karras, 11.

¹³ Barker, 20. Here, Barker is referencing the lower classes. Criteria such as earning a wage may not be as applicable to an upper class individual. Additionally, although these criteria are universally applied to the modern era in Barker's study, the same criteria have been supported by the research of this thesis, as marriage represented financial security through the attainment of a way to earn that money, thus earning the man the right to be sexually active within marriage.

this was compounded by the inability to acquire material goods that represent the hegemonic masculinity in a consumer culture, a problem that became an increasing source of tension among late seventeenth-century male youth in the midst of a rising polite middle class society that began to place masculine significance upon material goods.¹⁴

Tension also arose from the conflict between the version of manhood being forced upon young men and their own definition of masculinity.¹⁵ Not only were young men excluded from the hegemonic position of masculinity due to its unattainability, but they were also negatively stereotyped. In fact, any identity is constructed and maintained “in juxtaposition to a demonized ‘other,’” which in the early modern era, created a constant source of tension between what male youth considered the “other” masculinity and how they were stereotyped as the “other.”¹⁶ For example, in the eighteenth century, proponents of the dominant, patriarchal form of masculinity consistently criticized unmarried youth because they viewed young men’s version of masculinity as a threat to the patriarchal order.¹⁷ This same condemnation of male youth existed in Restoration-era England in the form of the stereotype of the unrefined, immoral, and effeminate libertine. Nevertheless, male youth remained aware of the creation of their own masculine identity, one which may not have conformed to the stereotype placed upon them. Certain factors – such as particular spaces dominated by male youth like university towns, certain sections of taverns, and for a while, coffee-houses in Restoration England – helped to facilitate an alternative masculine identity

¹⁴ Barker, 7-10; Carter, 61. Carter adds that fashion and, more importantly, presentability became a mark of masculine politeness.

¹⁵ Barker, 21.

¹⁶ Tosh, 196.

¹⁷ Tosh, 192-193.

based upon male youth culture.¹⁸ It is this identity that can be found in the jest-books of a distinctly male youth culture formed in male youth spaces that one can identify in opposition to the stereotypes and expectations of the hegemonic, married, and refined masculinity of Restoration England.

Jesting became an integral part of this young masculine identity because of the tension, or “psychic frustration,” that arose from unmarried men negotiating between the socially imposed masculinity and their personal identity. Jest-book compilers considered the mirth that jesting evoked to be a cure for melancholy. Among male youth during the seventeenth century, jest-book compilers used the term “melancholy” to describe the psychic frustration caused by the navigation and loss of masculine identity.¹⁹ Considered by early moderns to be a medical disorder – an imbalance of the humors in which the individual was too cold and dry, resulting in an over-abundance of black bile – melancholy was also culturally understood as an effeminate affliction caused by a loss of masculinity.²⁰ An illustration by Leonhart Thurneisser, in his work *Quinta Essentia*, depicted the four humors as either a man or a woman. It portrayed melancholy as the lower half of a woman – the opposite of the hot, dry, pleasure-seeking passion of sanguinity illustrated as the upper half of a man (see fig. 2).²¹ However, despite being a feminine affliction, melancholy was only ascribed to males because early modern society often used the term to describe the emotions

¹⁸ See Barker, chapters 6-9, for a discussion of the important role that particular spaces play in the role of forming alternative masculine identities.

¹⁹ E.g., see J.S., *England's merry jester* (London: printed by J. Wilde, for N. Boddington, at the Golden Ball, in Duck-Lane, 1693), A2r. For the relationship of psychic frustration and melancholy, see Breitenberg, 35-68.

²⁰ Juliana Schiesari, *The gendering of melancholia : feminism, psychoanalysis, and the symbolics of loss in Renaissance literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 234. Schiesari argues that melancholy was primarily a culturally understood affliction which was merely legitimated through a medical discourse.

²¹ *The Four Humours*, in Leonhart Thurneisser, *Quinta Essentia* (1574), 162.

associated with a loss of manliness.²² In early modern plays, melancholy described the internalization of loss, particularly a loss of self. Specifically, early modern writings portrayed the disruption of masculine identity either as melancholy or an associated state of “inconsolable grief.”²³

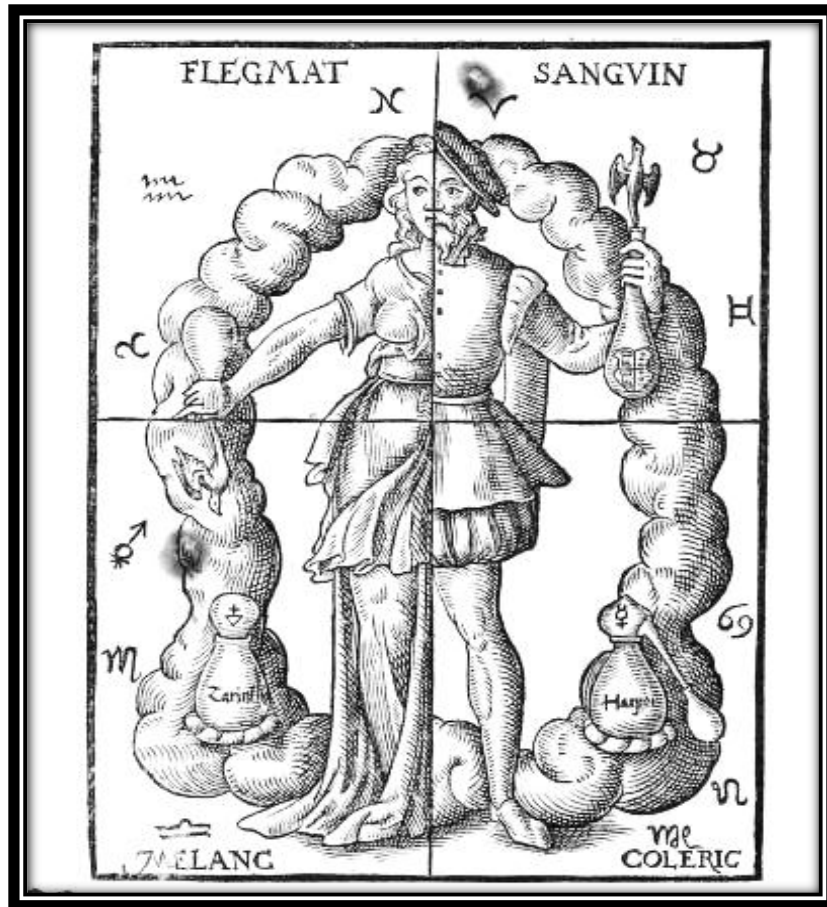


Figure 2. *The Four Humours*, from Leonhart Thurneisser, *Quinta Essentia* (1574), 162.

²² Schiesari, 236.

²³ Lynn Enterline, *The tears of Narcissus: melancholia and masculinity in early modern writing* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 4; 18. Enterline discusses this loss of self as a melancholy movement within early modern plays and other literature, specifically using the example of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* in her Introduction to connect early modern writings with Freud's description of melancholic grief as a loss of ego and self-regard.

Furthermore, this state of grieving further emasculated the man who portrayed symptoms of melancholy. Juliana Schiesari argues that Renaissance melancholy was both the internalization of the loss of an object of desire (such as the figurative and literal loss of the phallus) and driven by an effort to deny this emasculation.²⁴ Thus, melancholy represented a vicious cycle of emasculation for early modern men, one that they were eager to escape through a correction of the bodily fluids associated with the four humors by seeking the passionate pleasures of a sanguine disposition.²⁵ Faced with the loss of the societally expected masculinity of a refined gentleman, late seventeenth-century male youth sought to correct the melancholy that this caused through mirth and pleasure-seeking. Society labeled men who exhibited an excessive pursuit of pleasure as libertines and rakes, and this label became a stereotype for young men in general.²⁶

SOCIALLY-IMPOSED MALE YOUTH MASCULINE IDENTITIES

The Cultural Implications of the Restoration

In 1660, after a unique period of parliamentary, Puritan rule, King Charles II returned to England as the newly-restored Stuart monarch. This famously ignited a promiscuous cultural explosion that had generally been repressed during the stringent Puritan rules of the Interregnum. Restoration culture initially returned like a child escaping parental supervision after years of strict control, and jest-books accompanied this return like many other means of bawdy humor and culture, with the first known new jest-book of this era being printed in

²⁴ Schiesari, 236-237. Also see chapter four for an in-depth discussion of melancholy driven by a *horror vacuus* in an effort to cover up the loss of phallus.

²⁵ Schiesari, 159. Schiesari suggests that suffering was not something which all early modern men felt the need to indulge in as a noble malady representative of court life, but rather a curse which needed to be alleviated and overcome.

²⁶ E.g., see Anon., *The town-rakes: or, The frolicks of the Mohocks or Hawkubites* (London: Printed for J. Wright in Fleet-street, 1712).

1665. Notably, the fuel for this cultural licentiousness existed in court life itself. Charles and his courtiers were renowned for their sexual promiscuity and ample supply of sexually available women, which fueled a courtly praise of the “sexually voracious male,” and contempt for marital fidelity.²⁷ Popular jests even quipped about this promiscuous courtier lifestyle, such as one in which: “Nell’s husband complained, that his wife brought him nothing: You lye like a Rogue, says she, for I bring you boys without your help.”²⁸ Nell Gwyn was a well-known mistress of King Charles II, and had two sons by him. Even Charles’s entourage was notoriously libertine, and formed bands who fostered the stereotyped label of the “rake.”

Unmarried, wealthy men typically comprised the idea of libertine masculinity. Known almost interchangeably as libertines and rakes, these men were infamous for their blatant disregard for morals and promiscuous behavior. The description of a libertine character in a 1676 play described him as “a rash, fearless man guilty of all vice.”²⁹ Generally considered unmarried, unproductive, and irresponsible, these men represented the antithesis of the married family man and reformed society.³⁰ Anna Bryson terms their behavior “anti-civility” since these men were not just living a reprehensible lifestyle, but openly defying the values and efforts of the reformers advocating a culture of civility and reformed morals. The stereotype further characterized them as “predators” who were “bent on humiliating and ridiculing the innocent or sober” just to find the pleasures that would save

²⁷ N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 171.

²⁸ Hicks, *Oxford Jests*, 17.

²⁹ Thomas Shadwell, *The libertine a tragedy* (London: Printed by T.N. for Henry Herringman, 1676), 8.

³⁰ Barker-Benfield, 42. Society widely assumed that even those Rakes who did marry, like Lord Rochester, married purely for money and remained separated from their wives while they continued their youthful, libertine lifestyle in the city.

them from a melancholy state.³¹ Furthermore, the literature that contained these stereotyped descriptions based them on true stories. Men such as John Wilmot, Lord of Rochester, courtier, and poet, and Richard Ames, another poet, openly professed themselves to be libertines and rakes. Their lifestyle also largely matched these descriptions, and Rochester admitted to a life spent drinking, carousing, denying religion and good manners, attacking watchmen, and squandering his fortune, all for the sake of personal pleasure.³² He was also a well-known courtier, living at times in his youth with King Charles II, and when he finally married for money and title, he abandoned his wife and child in the country to continue a life of promiscuity at court.³³ However, not everyone welcomed this lifestyle, and the Reformation of Manners came into existence in part to counteract courtier culture.

The moral push to reform culture was not a new phenomenon; as early as the Interregnum period, Puritans passed Acts of Parliament, which limited behaviors that they considered destructive to society: festivals, adultery, fornication, and profanity. By the 1670s, however, these political reforms became a part of organized social movements with the emergence of Religious Societies – drawing primarily from Nonconformist congregations – seeking to counteract Restoration courtier culture throughout the population. By the 1690s the attack on moral corruption and vices became focused on an overall reformation of manners concerned with ideals of courtesy, and later, civility and sensibility.³⁴ In the last two decades of the century, the regulation of alehouses became a particular issue for these societies, and for the first time, an organized movement ensured stricter regulation and

³¹ Bryson, 247; 252. See chapter 3 for a full discussion of “anti-civility.”

³² Gilbert Burnet, *Some passages of the life and death of the right honourable John, Earl of Rochester who died the 26th of July, 1680, written by his own direction on his death-bed* (London: Printed for Richard Chiswel, at the Rose and Crown in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1680), 23-24.

³³ ODNB, s.v. “Wilmot, John.”

³⁴ Barker-Benfield, 56; Bryson, 43-74.

enforcement. Mainly aimed at the middling and lower sorts in town centers and urban areas, the reformers focused their efforts upon the restraint of “undisciplined, disrespectful artisans and apprentices,” especially youth, from vices such as profane language, drinking, and promiscuity.³⁵ With a special care for eradicating stereotypical youthful vices, Keith Thomas speculates about whether the reformation of manners was not just an “attempt to suppress all the great obstacles to the subordination of youth.”³⁶ They encouraged middling values, such as productivity, appropriate conduct, and civility. Ironically, secularization was also a by-product of this movement as these values began to supplant church doctrine. Religious life became increasingly identified with the Reformation of Manners as a type of social gathering aimed at building morals and manners.³⁷ These values soon became connected to masculine ideals and definitions of manhood, and as the hegemonic masculinity by the 1670s, refined society tried to force its masculine identity upon male youth.

Attempts to Reform the Behavior of Male Youth

Those who desired a refined society based upon civility and manners held clear expectations for young men’s masculine values, and thus their identity. In fact, the fear that young men would become financial liabilities to their parents or guardians caused adults to place a disproportionate amount of blame on male youth for any financial vulnerability. They encouraged unmarried men to join Religious Societies in order to establish good social credit, avoid spending money on pleasures and extravagances, and find a respectable wife.³⁸

Refined society advocated the values of sexual chastity, monogamy in marriage, refined

³⁵ Barker-Benfield, 56.

³⁶ Keith Thomas, “Age and Authority in Early Modern England,” (Raleigh Lecture on History, British Academy, London, 1976), 19.

³⁷ Hunt, 104; 107.

³⁸ Hunt, 47.

conversation, and establishing productivity in order to show that a young man would make a good patriarchal head of household. As masculinity became less socially-constructed, men also began to define it by chastity and social qualifications rather than sexual prowess.³⁹ Religious Societies considered unbridled sexuality an effeminate trait, and believed camaraderie among men should be focused on supporting each other on a virtuous path designed to lead to marriage.⁴⁰ The belief that “Vice is Contagious” even led them to exclude young men who did not meet their moral expectations, so that they would not tarnish their pursuit of edification.⁴¹ In fact, they encouraged like-minded, virtuous camaraderie as a replacement for a young man’s family or his master’s household, since this encouraged a refined male youth culture unclouded by older definitions of masculinity based on sexual prowess.⁴² Camaraderie was also meant to be dominated by genteel conversation, which became a social determinant of masculinity.⁴³

Conduct literature and sermons frequently called for the condemnation of “foolish talking,” which included profanity and jesting. Nonconformist preachers likened “filthy speaking” to “the disease which brings up the worst of Excrements through the mouth,” and “foolish talking” as “the rupture of speech from reason.”⁴⁴ Both of these social actions were not only “unrighteous” and “intolerable,” but they rendered a man emasculated and powerless, declaring “unsanctified” men as different from “saintly” men as swine from all of

³⁹ Foyster, *Manhood*, 10; Fletcher, *Gender*, 330-331.

⁴⁰ Hunt, 111-112.

⁴¹ Roger L’Estrange, *Seneca's morals abstracted in three parts : I. of benefits, II. of a happy life, anger, and clemency, III. a miscellany of epistles* (London: Printed by T.N. for Henry Brome, 1679), 231; Hunt, 107.

⁴² Hunt, 113-114.

⁴³ For more about the impact of language and conversation on culture and the formation of identity, see Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ Daniel Burgess, *Foolish talking and jesting described and condemned* (London: Printed for Andrew Bell and Jonas Luntley, at the Pestle and Mortar, over against the Horse-shoe-Tavern in Chancery-Lane, 1694), 3.

mankind.⁴⁵ Thus, pure speech, morally edifying camaraderie, and sexual chastity aimed at monogamous marriage were qualities that defined the masculine identity that society expected young men to maintain. Since social interaction was such an important part of this masculine ideal, reformers focused on eradicating any behaviors that created an inappropriate social environment, such as the carousing behavior of rakes and the foolish jesting of unmarried men.

Libertine Behavior

It is important to keep in mind that the label of “libertine” and “rake” were socially constructed stereotypes because reformers’ stereotyping of the libertine or rake character was itself a method of attempting moral reform. Emphasizing the negative behavior of youth was one way in which reformers attempted this. Although they certainly based the stereotype on elements of truth, they were only concerned with portraying a shocking image of the worst types of behaviors. For instance, they emphasized acts that led to an untimely death shortly after an overwhelming realization of wrong-doing and repentance. Several biographical publications appeared on the market during the last two decades of the seventeenth century that claimed to be the first-hand deathbed accounts of former libertines and rakes following their repentance.

An account of the life of the infamous rake, Lord Rochester, was one of the most shocking of these penitent publications. A prominent Anglican minister, Gilbert Burnet, claimed to take the deathbed confession of the Earl after he had contracted syphilis. Although the poems of Lord Rochester support the evidence of the extremely rakish lifestyle described in this pamphlet, Burnet certainly harbored his own aims in the wording and publication of

⁴⁵ Burgess, 5.

the rake's life story. He claimed that Rochester himself wanted Burnet to exhibit his death as a lesson for others. It is not a coincidence that approximately ten years later, he published a sermon entitled *The libertine overthrown, or, A mirror for atheists wherein they may clearly see their prodigious follies, vast extravagancies, notorious impieties and absurdities* in which he repeatedly used the example of Rochester as the "mirror" by which to see the follies of the libertine.⁴⁶ In the pamphlet about Rochester's life story, he emphasized his emasculating misery while living in immorality, in contrast to his joyous life after repentance.

Interestingly, he emphasized the difference between these two states using the presence of Rochester's wife, stating that "one of the joyfullest things that befel him in his Sickness, that he had seen that Mischief removed . . . and expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his Lady, that as it easily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible."⁴⁷ This sharply contrasted with his promiscuous behavior prior to his conversion, in which Burnet described Rochester and rakes like him as "the least of men."⁴⁸ Burnet portrayed them in such a low status of manhood because they constantly lived in melancholy, particularly a state of religious melancholy, in which they did everything "what is in their power to make Damnation as sure to themselves as possibly they can."⁴⁹ Burnet claimed that the laughter and mirth with which they attempted to relieve their melancholy was only "borrow'd Wit and their mimical Humour," making them a plague upon society that

⁴⁶ Burnet, *Some passages*, See the Preface for Burnet's discussion of his personal motivations for this publication. Frequently republished, including in 1681, 1692, 1693, and 1700; Gilbert Burnet, *The libertine overthrown, or, A mirror for atheists wherein they may clearly see their prodigious follies, vast extravagancies, notorious impieties and absurdities...* (London: Printed and sold by J. Bradford, 1690).

⁴⁷ Burnet, *Some passages*, 143-144.

⁴⁸ Burnet, *Some passages*, 172.

⁴⁹ Burnet, *Some passages*, 170.

endangered “the Bonds of Nature, Wedlock, and all other Relations.”⁵⁰ Thus, despite his penitence, Rochester had to pay the consequences of his actions in the form of the untimely death of himself and his wife and child a year later from syphilis.⁵¹

Another example of these penitent publications was the self-scribed eulogy of Richard Ames, published posthumously by an anonymous reformer who described aims of reform similar to those of Burnet in his preface.⁵² Similar to Rochester, Ames’s story followed the pattern of a libertine lifestyle interrupted by penitence, followed by an early death – he was most likely twenty-nine – as the consequence of his lifestyle. He died as a “sacrifice to the bottle,” and a friend wrote in 1705 that “wine and women were the great bane of his life and happiness.”⁵³ Stereotypically libertine, Ames was young and unmarried, and sought after the pleasures of “A fair kind She, a Bottle, and a Friend,” while viewing the concerns of good morals and manners as a thing for hypocritical married men.⁵⁴ Like Rochester, Ames called libertines “so lewd, they’ve even beyond Damnation sinn’d,” emphasizing the dire situation of the libertine’s soul and the wickedness of his actions.⁵⁵ These were not stereotypes of youth occasionally gone awry, but ones of youth who were inherently so sinful that they were beyond the state of damnation to the point of being “fond of Hell.”⁵⁶ Additionally, the penitent portion of Ames’s poem claims that the vices of these young men turned them powerless because having no purpose but pleasure leads to an

⁵⁰ Burnet, *Some passages*, 172; 170.

⁵¹ Barker-Benfield, 41.

⁵² Anon., preface to *The rake, or, The libertine’s religion a poem*, by Richard Ames (London: Printed for R. Taylor near Stationer’s Hall, 1693).

⁵³ ODNB, s.v. “Ames, Richard;” John Dunton, *The life and errors of John Dunton* (London: Printed for S. Malthus, 1705), 247.

⁵⁴ Richard Ames, *The rake, or, The libertine’s religion a poem* (London: Printed for R. Taylor near Stationer’s Hall, 1693), 3.

⁵⁵ Ames, 6.

⁵⁶ Ames, 18.

unhappy and unfulfilling life. Being informed that their souls have “no Power to act, no Power to rise” only served to reinforce a stereotype of powerless youth who did not have the control over their own lives necessary to being a man in seventeenth century society.⁵⁷ Surely, not all male youth were thus consumed by vice, and the typical male youth was likely affected by society’s consistent perception of him as the powerless “least of men” who deserved a fate worse than damnation.

Foolish Jestings

Throughout the seventeenth century, young men dealt with the tension of being unable to conform to the dominant masculinity through jesting. However, reformers in Restoration society also sought to control the more common unfavorable behaviors of male youth, such as what they coined “foolish jesting.” One prominent Presbyterian minister, Daniel Burgess, delivered and published a sermon on the iniquities of “foolish jesting” that outlined and defined seven different types of inappropriate jesting that young men participated in.⁵⁸ This sermon illustrates that society considered jesting an inherent element of male youth culture, and was a cause for concern for reformers. For Burgess, the issue was widespread, stating that in regards to “the Law against Foolish Talking and Jestings . . . No Man stands by it: All Men forsake it.”⁵⁹ However, he also acknowledged that some men jested more foolishly and frequently than others, and young men were among the worst of these offenders because they sought pleasures that failed to create a “Carnal empty Mind.”⁶⁰ He argued that these pleasures, including the “Pleasure of a Laugh and a Giggle” were merely “transient,” and that a man’s “Disease” – referring to melancholy – “should be rather

⁵⁷ Ames, 19-20.

⁵⁸ Burgess, 52-69.

⁵⁹ Burgess, 6-7.

⁶⁰ Burgess, 64.

Cured, than Pleased.”⁶¹ Therefore, Burgess’s concern for the reform of jesting behavior was a part of a larger concern for the behavior of male youth.

These licentious behaviors were apparent in many of the jests that Burgess preached against, and jest-books frequently offended the regulations against each of the seven types of “foolish jesting.” The first of these, profane jesting, was a jest that mocked or trivialized religion. Burgess claimed that this sort of jesting made men worse than devils, “for though Profane Men Believe and Jest, Devils do Believe and Tremble.”⁶² Jests that trivialized religious matters such as damnation and religious figures were prevalent in jest-books aimed at male youth. This perhaps arose from the religious apathy that gripped many after the religious strife of the century resulted in war and regicide.⁶³ Real-life religious figures such as Hugh Peters continued to be portrayed as buffoons. One jest from a 1671 publication highlighted this religious apathy with a story in which Hugh Peters foolishly asked a man who left in the middle of his sermon if he would stay for a story, then immediately reprimanded him for staying in order to hear the story.⁶⁴ Not only did this tale make Peters look like a buffoon, but it also alluded to the atheistic perception of these youth that sermons were merely a time for fictional story-telling and ministers were foolish hypocrites. A similar jest mocked ministers such as Hugh Peters as hypocritical buffoons, and ended with a punch-line in which Peters instructed his parishioners: “You Women must take up your Coats, and you Men must let down your Breeches.”⁶⁵ Religious conviction was a crucial dividing line

⁶¹ Burgess, 59; 64.

⁶² Burgess, 55-56.

⁶³ Bryson, 256-258.

⁶⁴ Hicks, *Oxford Jests*, 130.

⁶⁵ Hicks, *Oxford Jests*, 132.

between reformers' version of a well-mannered man, and the jesting culture that portrayed male youth questioning religious matters and religious authority entirely.

The next type of jesting, unclean jesting, that Burgess preached against was among the most prevalent type of jokes found in jest-books. They contained obscenities, "forbidden words," and "words of Smut."⁶⁶ Obscene words changed throughout the centuries, so it is difficult to pinpoint which words Burgess meant to refer to here. However, Burgess relates an obscene tongue elsewhere in his sermon with any discussion of the violation of the seventh commandment – adultery – and fornication.⁶⁷ Jests about cuckoldry, pre-marital fornication, and men's adulterous relations with mistresses were perhaps the most prevalent of the jests found in jest-books throughout the century; however, in the years following the Restoration, their prevalence actually increased. They also became much more descriptive with jests, such as the following commonly recurring one, blatantly using the names and appearance of genitalia to make a pun:

A Lass espying a young man's testicles hang out of his breeches, that were broken in the seat, askt him with a seeming or real ignorance what it was? It is my Purse quoth he, thy Purse quoth she, then I am sure my Purse is cut.⁶⁸

A repeat of this jest added the line: "Prithee, lend me your Pack-thread to mend it," emphasizing the sexual nature of the punch-line.⁶⁹ Another jest similarly used the slang names of genitalia to imply sexual innuendo through the use of double-entendre, which named a woman "Mrs. Cunny" and a man who took up lodging with her "Parsley." When

⁶⁶ Burgess, 54; 56.

⁶⁷ Burgess, 6-7.

⁶⁸ Head, 18; also in Archie Armstrong, *A choice banquet of witty jests* (London: Printed for Peter Dring, 1665), 74. Although attributed to Archie, he was in retirement at this point, and likely did not compile these jests. Jest-book compilers often published their works under the name of famous jesters, such as Archie, in order to boost sales. This jest-book does not resemble the book titled *A Banquet of Jeasts* and published under his name in 1630.

⁶⁹ J.S., 31.

asked how the lodger liked her, he replied, "...I like her much better were Mrs. Cunney stuft with Parsley."⁷⁰ Here, "cunny" meant both a rabbit and female genitalia while parsley referred to the spice as well as an allusion to the shape and color of the parsley root's resemblance to male genitalia.⁷¹ Jests based on double entendre frequently occurred in jest-books, and appear to have been a way for youth to joke about inappropriate topics; nevertheless, Burgess did not approve of their use, and condemned attempts to veil obscenity.⁷²

Burgess also listed unnatural jesting and immoral jesting as unacceptable forms of entertainment. Unnatural jesting included those which evoked cruel laughter at the miseries, sins, or infirmities of other men, and immoral jesting lacked the honor and respect toward others that good manners dictated.⁷³ For the purpose of jesting among male youth, these two often coincided with one another. They used men's infirmities, such as implications of impotency, or their misfortunes, such as cuckoldry, to dishonor them. In another popularly repeated jest, "an impotent Gentleman" could not satisfy his young wife, so he overpaid "a young lusty Gallant Fifty pounds a year to do the work" when his waiting man "would have done it for half the money."⁷⁴ Disempowered within his own home and emasculated not only by his impotency, but also by his characterization as a pimping cuckold, this jest evoked laughter at the loss of honor of the married man to both the young gallant and his young servant. Many other jests also revolved around the theme of disrespect toward the person that the joke was aimed at. A few frequent plots to jests involved an individual telling a man to go

⁷⁰ Head, 17-18.

⁷¹ For the potential meanings of the double-entendre in this jest, see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "coney;" and "parsley."

⁷² Burgess, 64-65.

⁷³ Burgess, 57-59.

⁷⁴ Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], 174.

hang himself for his buffoonery, a maid telling a man to “kiss my Arse,” and someone pouring the contents of a piss-pot on another’s head as they walked by.⁷⁵ All of these acts were meant to shame, humiliate, and disempower the individual that they were aimed at. And the laughter that these acts evoked among men jesting about such matters in order to enhance their personal feelings of pride were precisely the sort of jesting that Burgess believed to be morally corrupt.

Not only the subject matter, but also the manner and degree of jesting mattered to Burgess. He viewed what he termed as unprofitable, immoderate, and ostentatious forms of jesting as additional immoral behaviors. According to Burgess, jesting should only be used to uplift one’s companions in a spiritual manner and glorify God. Any jesting that did not have a religious motivation was like “an unaccountable Delight taken in grinding for nothing. A practice which would soon so sensibly and notoriously grind them to the Dust and Depth of Poverty, and Scorn among Men.”⁷⁶ Likewise, immoderate jesting – a half an hour spent jesting was too long – was a waste of time because it was unprofitable. Burgess expected young men to use jesting to sharpen the wit of one another’s minds. However, he claimed that a man who continually jested without speaking of serious matters as well was like one who “spends more Hours in Tuning of his Instrument, than Using it.”⁷⁷ Therefore, the motivation for jesting was a primary determinant in the morality of it: jesting was meant to edify oneself and those around one. However, if the motivation was impure – such as the

⁷⁵For hanging jests see Head, 8 and Anon., *Youth's treasury* 12. For “kiss arse” jests see Oxford, 36, 49. For piss-pot jests, see Hicks, *Oxford Jest*, 37. The OED states that to kiss or lick someone’s buttocks was a sign of extreme servitude, and likewise, throwing a piss-pot on someone could be a sign of defamation. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “arse-licking;” “pisspot.”

⁷⁶ Burgess, 60.

⁷⁷ Burgess, 66.

prideful motivation of ostentatious jesting – then jesting could reduce a man’s status rather than build him up.

These concerns were not restricted to Burgess’s sermon. In order to sell their books, jest-book compilers felt that it was necessary to address concerns about the subject matter and usefulness of jesting in their addresses to the reader, suggesting that these were common concerns within society and ones that compilers feared would sway their readers from purchasing their books. Although their jests still violated the principles of Burgess’s sermon, compilers made claims that one could not “deny the usefulness of any...especially since they do not interfere with Religion, or good Manners.”⁷⁸ Compilers were not truly concerned with good manners, however, and even included jests that mocked and satirized society’s obsession with the strict control of manners. Of the opinion that manners could be overdone in order to make a person look foolish rather than refined, jests such as the following were popular: “A silly Fellow hearing a Ladys servants call her Madam, at every word, he thought to be more mannerly than they, and therefore made an Addition of Mistress to it, saying, Mistress Madam, an’t please your Ladiship.”⁷⁹ Another jest satirized the argument that the acts in jesting encouraged immoral behavior in young men, in which a comical poet charged with setting a bad example for young men with one of his characters replied, “Truly, Sir, said he, I brought such men on, but I hang’d him before he went off, and so gave them a good example.”⁸⁰ Other compilers defended the subject matter of their jests claiming that, if too innocent and concerned only with religious edification, they would no longer be effective in curing melancholy – what they viewed as the sole purpose of jesting – because they would be

⁷⁸ Crouch.

⁷⁹ Crouch, 25.

⁸⁰ Crouch, 15.

the same as “Old Men’s Bibles” or “Children’s Catechisms.”⁸¹ Ultimately, jest-book compilers argued that their jests were not meant to offend, but simply to provide the mirth necessary to relieve the melancholy of male youth.

MALE YOUTH CULTURE AND MASCULINE IDENTITY

An Aversion to Melancholy

Late seventeenth-century jest-book compilers believed that the primary purpose of the jests they collected was to relieve the melancholy of the male youth who would read and repeat their contents. Early modern melancholy carried several connotations: in its initial state it was simply one of the four humors that correlated with the dryness and coldness of the body. However, an imbalance of this humor led to a physical disease of melancholy.⁸² For young men, several things could cause this. Burton focused on both lovesickness and religious melancholy as causes for this distemper in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, but essentially anything that created an excessive amount of tension in one’s life could upset the body’s natural humors, leading to melancholy.⁸³ Jest-book compilers attributed this disposition to: “thoughts disturb’d with Grief,” “Dullness,” “faux wit,” and “the late Frost.”⁸⁴ Because the personal and collective anxiety over masculinity was internalized in young men, this tension was often found at the root of their melancholy.⁸⁵ Although male youth did not have a monopoly on melancholy, they were especially vulnerable to its effects as an excluded

⁸¹ Anon., *London jests* (London: printed for Dorman Newman, at the Kings-Arms in the Poultry, 1685), A2v; A4r.

⁸² Breitenberg, 37. For a full discussion of Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the relation of melancholy to the tensions of anxious masculinity, see chapter one of Breitenberg.

⁸³ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy, what it is. With all the kindes, causes, symptomes, prognostickes, and severall cures of it* (Oxford: Printed by John Lichfield and James Short, for Henry Cripps, Anno Dom. 1621); Breitenberg, 37.

⁸⁴ J.S., A2r-A2v; *London Jest*s, A2v.

⁸⁵ Breitenberg, 37-39.

and subordinated masculine identity. In order to combat this, male youth strove to find the amorous and mirthful pleasures of the opposite humor of melancholy, sanguinity.

Jest-books suggest that male youth viewed melancholy as unacceptable to their sense of masculine identity. For these young men, a lack of manhood was exhibited in the form of foolishness and buffoonery, and melancholy made men foolish. One “Foolish melancholly Gentleman” made himself a fool by embracing the pain in his foot simply for the sake of being in pain. When his servant tried to help him out of his boot and found nothing, the man told his servant to take off the other boot because he was sure something must be paining one of them.⁸⁶ This claim of pain simply for the sake of saying he was in pain exhibited a loss of the wit that male youth considered a vital feature of true masculinity, and laughing at this sort of buffoonery made them feel more stable in their own masculine identity. Laughter and mirth thus provided a relief to the melancholy of male youth. The concept of a healing power in the creativity of language and words was not unique. Burton believed that in writing his monumental work on melancholy, he not only relieved himself of the affliction, but also provided his readers with relief.⁸⁷ Likewise, jest-book compilers claimed that their collections of jests had the power to remove the pain of melancholy cheaply and effectively for the majority of male youth without the need of a physician. Addresses to the reader frequently stated variations of the following:

O'er Melancholy you a Triumph gain,
And do with little Cost, remove the Pain:
Mirth here springs up, as from its native source;
Here needs no Doctors Fees, nor Physick's Course,
To cure the Patient: It's but to peruse

⁸⁶ Anon., *Youth's Treasury*, 14.

⁸⁷ Burton, 382-386; For a full discussion of Burton's belief in the curative powers of his work, see Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion in Early Modern England: Reading The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

What [the author has] writ, and that that pleases, chuse.⁸⁸

Thus, jests contained the cure to male youth's melancholy. And the subject matter of these jests helps explain why male youth -- whose behaviors that defined their sense of masculine identity were constantly under attack from reformers attempting to define a dominant masculinity based upon appropriate social behaviors -- found that mirth cured their melancholy afflictions.

A Culture of Curative Mirth

The pleasures and mirth that male youth sought, both in jesting and in libertine behavior, relieved their melancholy dispositions because they used these behaviors to create their own exclusive culture and masculine identity, which helped them to secure their own sense of manhood against the societal exclusion and tension they faced under the hegemonic masculinity of marriage and good manners.⁸⁹ Although not all men could afford to partake in the extravagant pleasures that characterized libertines and rakes, most men could afford to purchase a cheap jest-book and partake in the mirth of jests based on the same themes as libertine behaviors. As an unmarried mercer's apprentice in a small town, Roger Lowe was more characteristic of the majority of male youth than of wealthy libertines. Concerned with running his Master's shop and eventually earning his freedom from his apprenticeship status, Lowe was interested in maintaining a frugal lifestyle with a sense of morality that would earn him some respect in the community and one day possibly a wife. Busy with tasks he despised such as sitting in the shop all day and tutoring young boys in the town, he had little time for

⁸⁸ J.S., A2r.

⁸⁹ Barker's study showed that creating uniquely male youth spaces and cultural activities facilitated the creation of an alternate masculine identity. For his findings on this, see chapters 6-9 of Barker.

raucous behaviors.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Lowe still experienced bouts of melancholy and turned to the diversions – although more subdued than those of rakish bands – of frolics in the street, camaraderie, jesting, and drinking in the local tavern, and the company of a pretty girl. Lowe’s jests were just as inappropriate as those in jest-books, and rather than focusing on religious edification, his tales were about his outwitting “hott women, hott pottage, and angry tuppis,” who sought to humiliate him.⁹¹ These unmarried men, such as Lowe and libertines alike, created their own masculine identity, based on the joy of jesting or extravagant pleasures. They created male youth space in public places, employed peer-pressure with an emphasis on the need for camaraderie, and defined a sense of exclusivity against women and married men.

Male youth carved out distinct spaces in which they exhibited a jesting culture based upon the attainment of pleasure and mirth. These were all public spaces, in which they could assert their dominance over others. Libertines and rakes were notorious for their appropriation of public spaces such as streets and taverns. Characterized as “predators,” their frolics – a common term for promiscuity and public pranks – and carousing stole the use of public streets from well-mannered citizens and even the authority of the law. Bands of rakes specifically attacked and intimidated watchmen, and Ames portrayed libertines “scowring the Watch” as a common practice that they sought to outdo with even more raucous and memorable frolics.⁹² The Mohocks were an infamous band of rakes, and an anonymous writer published an account of their frolics, which described them slitting the noses of several

⁹⁰ Roger Lowe, *The diary of Roger Lowe, of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, 1663-74*, ed. William L. Sachse (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 37-38.

⁹¹ Lowe, 40.

⁹² Anon., *The town-rakes*; Ames, 6. The OED defines “scowring” as moving about with a hostile purpose, such as roistering through the streets. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., “scowring.”

men and women (a sign of disrespect), cudgeling and ridiculing passers-by, abusing the watchman, and particularly misusing women as they “rowl’d a Woman in a Tub down Snow-hill, that was going to market, set other women on their Heads, misusing them in a barbarous manner.”⁹³ Similarly, jests mocked the watch charged with keeping the streets orderly, and implied that a sense of mobility afforded by street life was better than a sense of permanence with rogues often outwitting shopkeepers and frequent jests against professions. For example, one jest mocked a butcher:

A Barbers boy passing through the Shambles, fell to snapping his fingers, saying, they were all Cuckolds that could not do so: a butcher hearing him, went to try to snap his fingers, but being greazie they would not do, wherefore he went and wash’d them, and then came out snapping of them as the boy had don: to whom the boy said, *O Gaffer, ‘tis too late now, you should have don so before.*⁹⁴

In this case, the jest evoked humor not because the apprentice outwitted the butcher, but because the butcher’s own occupation mocked him by leaving him with perpetually greasy hands.

Aside from the streets, youth also carved out particular spaces renowned for wit where they could assert their dominance, such as universities and coffee-houses. With jest-book titles such as “Coffee-house jests,” “Oxford jests,” and “Cambridge jests,” aimed at male youth, and compilers’ claims that the jests in these collections came from those locations, one can assume that the wit of male youth was dominant in these spaces, and particular jests support this. For example, when a “poor but witty lad” was admitted to college, he was unable to afford new shoes. So he capped his old ones with leather, and when

⁹³ Anon., *The town-rakes*.

⁹⁴ Democritus Junior [pseud.], *Versatile ingenium, The wittie companion, or, Jestes of all sorts* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, Anno 1679), 53-54. Although attributed to Robert Burton because he often used the pen-name “Democritus Junior,” his death in 1640 makes this unlikely.

others at the university jeered at him, he responded, “Why . . . must they not be capt, are they not fellows?”⁹⁵ Despite his low status, the young man’s use of wit illustrated that he belonged at the university. Lord Rochester also learned his rakish lifestyle, particularly the love of drink, from an unmarried, notoriously libertine scholar at Oxford University.⁹⁶ Universities were places that the witty, mirth-seeking culture of unmarried men dominated. Although coffee-houses would eventually become known as a space for polite society, initially they were places of anti-refinement, and male youth dominated these as well shortly after the Restoration.⁹⁷ Jests such as the following emphasized the importance of wit in the space of coffee-houses as well:

Some gentlemen sitting at a Coffee-house together, one was asking what News there was? T’other told him, There was forty thousand Men, rose to day, which made them all stare about, and asked him to what end they rose, and what they did intend? Why faith, says he, only to go to bed at Night again.⁹⁸

These spaces were important because they were areas where wit was esteemed, which allowed male youth to assert the dominance of their masculine identity in these areas.

Taverns were another space in which male youth attempted to carve out their own masculine identity based upon wit and mirth. Rakes’ carousing took them from tavern to tavern, and Lowe frequented taverns with his friends, sometimes specifically with the intention of relieving the melancholy that plagued him.⁹⁹ Additionally, many jests took place in taverns and always emphasized the occurrence of wit, and one jest claimed that “The

⁹⁵ Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], 30.

⁹⁶ ODNB, s.v. “Wilmot, John.”

⁹⁷ Lawrence E. Klein, “Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1996): 32-33.

⁹⁸ Hicks, *Coffee-house Jests*, 12.

⁹⁹ Ames, 11-12; Lowe, 41-43.

Alehouse was the onely place to thrive in.”¹⁰⁰ Another also claimed that the tavern was a place where “men are Drunk with more credit,” and a place of “more Jestes than News.”¹⁰¹ However, in order to thrive within this space, another aspect that affected the masculine identity of male youth formed: guidelines to a drinking culture. Many male youth claimed that a good drink was part of the mirthful cure for melancholy; rakes were notoriously intoxicated during their frolics, and even Lowe regretted spending entire afternoons in the tavern and suffered from hangovers.¹⁰² Multiple jests claimed that beer comforted one’s spirits and corresponded with the act of jesting.¹⁰³ Yet despite the allure of a good drink to solve their problems, male youth maintained that drunkenness should not interfere with one’s wit, or else he would lose his masculine identity to the buffoonery that drunkenness could cause. Men were especially at risk of being made fools by their drunken behavior when they were outside of these male-youth spaces. Jestes such as the following frequently evoked laughter at the expense of the drunkard’s foolishness:

A Gentleman coming drunk to Bed over-night, in the morning he could not find his Breeches, then he knock’d for the Chamberlain: *Sir, says he, if you are sure you brought them in with you, you had best search your Pockets for them, for you lost all your Money last Night out of your Pockets, it may be your Breeches are got in there.*¹⁰⁴

Although the gentleman in this jest may not have been a youth, other jests specifically depicted youth as foolish for allowing drunkenness to affect their wit, and Ames reiterated this with the point that drink was never supposed to compromise one’s wit, for “it must not

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong, *A choice banquet*, 58.

¹⁰¹ Crouch, 147.

¹⁰² Ames, 7-8; *The town-rakes*; Lowe, 26; 41; 80-81.

¹⁰³ Hicks, *Coffee-house jests*, 12; Armstrong, *A choice banquet*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Hicks, *Coffee-house jests*, 10.

then be said, that we, By Drink were overcome.”¹⁰⁵ Although taverns were a space in which male youth could form and assert their own masculine identity, the mirth that drinking evoked was only secondary to the importance of wit in creating a pleasurable atmosphere.

Wit was an important aspect of male youth identity, and was the main means through which they attempted to assert the dominance of their masculine identity over others. Unlike the foolish drunkenness of the man in the previous jest, jests portrayed wit as bestowing fortune among young men, even if they failed at all else.¹⁰⁶ Lowe used witty conversation to ease distempers, and called the wit that he exhibited when jesting “manly.”¹⁰⁷ Wit was “manly” because it not only relieved feelings of melancholy, but because it was the method through which young men could assert their masculine identity over others. Jests frequently portrayed the wit of youth overcoming the reason, foolishness, or stubbornness of age, such as one in which a young man outwitted a wealthy married man in order to marry his daughter.¹⁰⁸ Significantly, jests also portrayed the youth attacking the manhood of older men through the use of wit, such as an Oxford jest that depicted a young man, who had heard of a man recovering “his Manly shape” after eating roses, advising his uncle to “have a Sallad of Roses every Morning.”¹⁰⁹ Insults such as this were a prominent use of wit in jests and among male youth because they asserted their masculinity over the ideal manhood of other men.

Public displays of aggression generally subsided to the art of the wittily composed insult after 1660. As discussed in chapter one, the number of defamation cases based on sexual slander between men and the frequency of cuckoldry as a jesting topic both increased

¹⁰⁵ Ames, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Crouch, 66-67.

¹⁰⁷ Lowe, 33; 38.

¹⁰⁸ Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], 52.

¹⁰⁹ Hicks, *Oxford jests*, 39.

after 1660. Historians such as Robert Shoemaker and Elizabeth Foyster attempt to explain this inconsistency by linking the rise of insult with an overall decrease in violence and cultural feminization of an overabundance of passions, particularly the passion of anger. As polite manliness became linked with restraint, men associated any public outburst of anger with a loss of control and emasculation.¹¹⁰ This may have been the case among male youth as well, and the use of a witty insult allowed them to maintain their masculinity while avoiding the physical violence associated with outbursts of anger. One jest indicated that challenges to duel were foolish, and a similar one advocated the use of insult over violence to respond to challenges to one's manhood.¹¹¹ However, it is important to keep in mind that this was a slow transition over time, and insults did not wholly replace the violent response. Lowe, for one, was so incensed by the accusation that he was a bastard, he travelled to another town to track down the man who defamed him and after gathering a group of friends to aid him, he "buffeted hime very mery."¹¹²

Nonetheless, wit was a prized attribute of male youth because it afforded them an advantage over other men. As such, jests often portrayed youth using wit to escape situations that they considered unfair constraints on their behavior or character. For example, one jest told of a servant who was stopped by the Watch while walking through the streets, and when "they ask'd him what was his Name, and he said *Adultery*: Then, Sir, I'll commit you, Sir,

¹¹⁰ Robert Shoemaker, "Male honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London," *Social History* 26, no. 2 (May 2001): 190-208; Robert Shoemaker, "Reforming Male Manners: Public Insult and the Decline of Violence in London, 1660-1740," in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michelle Cohen (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 133-150; Elizabeth Foyster, "Boys will be Boys? Manhood and Aggression, 1660-1800," in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michelle Cohen (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 151-166.

¹¹¹ Crouch, 19-20; 33-34.

¹¹² Lowe, 105.

says he, if you do, your Wife will be angry with you, *to commit Adultery in your Watch*.¹¹³ Although threatened with a loss of control and power by the Watch, the young man in this jest alluded to his would-be captor's henpecked nature and used this wit to argue for his freedom. Other jests suggest that youth could also employ a witty insult in these situations to show their lack of respect for those who held power over them, such as one in which a Parson wittily insulted a Justice of the Peace attempting to insult him, with the retort that he was not riding an ass like Christ did because "the King had made so many Asses Justices, that a Clergy-man could not get one to Ride one."¹¹⁴ However, this wit served a greater purpose than simply insulting those who exercised power over them or those who defamed them. In response to threats to their manhood, male youth used the mirth evoked through wit to build camaraderie among other male youth, and to socially exclude those who they determined as "other," such as women and married men, in order to create and assert the dominance of their masculine identity over them.

Male youth spaces and the use of wit fostered the development of a sense of camaraderie that was essential to the existence and survival of a male youth culture and exclusive masculine identity. Friendship with other unmarried men was an essential part of the libertine lifestyle and the creation of an exclusive male youth identity, as illustrated by the line, "Who can describe the Pleasures, which attend A fair kind She, a Bottle, and a Friend," as well as the example of rakish bands and men such as Lord Rochester.¹¹⁵ Rakes, in particular, fit this profile, as they often congregated in small bands. Camaraderie was equally important to these men as to refined society, but for purposes of creating mirth and

¹¹³ Hicks, *Oxford Jests*, 30.

¹¹⁴ Crouch, 8.

¹¹⁵ Ames, 3.

amusing themselves rather than edification. According to the anonymous reporter of the rakish band, the Mohocks, “the watch in most of the Out-parts of the Town stand in awe of them, because they always come in a Body, and are too strong for them.”¹¹⁶ These youth were empowered by camaraderie, partially because they demanded an audience for their acts against civility and partially because peer pressure played a role in the encouragement and continuation of this lifestyle.

Lord Rochester succumbed to this peer pressure, which he claimed kept him ensnared in his male youth, libertine lifestyle of excessive drinking and pleasure. He claimed that at several points during his life, he reformed himself and gave up drinking and women, only to be pulled back into a rakish lifestyle by his friends. In one instance, “he had so entirely laid down the Intemperance that was growing on him before his Travels, that at his Return he hated nothing more. But falling into Company that loved these Excesses, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many steps, brought back to it again.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Rochester’s own mirthful nature fueled the desire of his comrades to engage him in this type of behavior, for the “natural heat of his fancy” – a reference to the counteracting heat of sanguinity in contrast to cold melancholy – “made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many to be more diverted by that humor, studied to engage him deeper and deeper in Intemperance.”¹¹⁸ Rochester’s companions viewed him as a diversion from their melancholy because he would “go far in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a Jest.”¹¹⁹

This perception of camaraderie as a necessary aspect of diverting oneself from the effects of melancholy was not unique to rakes. Although perhaps not the exact disease of

¹¹⁶ Anon., *The town-rakes*.

¹¹⁷ Burnet, *Some passages*, 11.

¹¹⁸ Burnet, *Some passages*, 12.

¹¹⁹ Burnet, *Some passages*, 13.

melancholy, Lowe frequently made it a point to express any feelings of personal doubt, guilt, grief, and general depression caused by things as mundane as a change in the weather or as important as anxiety over when he would have the funds to free himself, marry, and attain the hegemonic masculine ideal. And these instances were always followed by an outing to visit with friends either at their home or the tavern.¹²⁰ Jests also depicted the importance of companions in overcoming a melancholy disposition. John Frith, an entirely fictional associate of Captain James Hind who earned his own short jest-book in 1673, noticed that Hind had fallen “into a great Melancholy.” When drink and music did not alleviate his suffering, Frith “all turd” some nearby musicians’ instrument cases in order to make Hind laugh and restore his sense of merriment.¹²¹ Jestings was not intended to be a solitary activity. In order for jests to alleviate melancholy, one had to share them with companions. However, this also meant that male youth chose companions based upon their ability to create mirth through wit and jesting. Like Lord Rochester’s friends pressuring him to continue his rakish behavior in their group because of his ability to create mirth among them, the fictional Frith also chose his companions based upon whether or not they were his equals in wit.¹²² Therefore, since wit was used to measure the quality of one’s companions, it could also be used for exclusionary purposes.

Excluding Others from Male Youth Culture

The exclusion of the “other” was an integral part of forming and maintaining a male youth masculine identity and unique culture. The exclusion of women, in particular, was an important factor in the maintenance of a subculture of masculinity and the development of

¹²⁰ Lowe.

¹²¹ Frith, 12-13. Although attributed to Frith, it is unlikely that he compiled and wrote the book.

¹²² Frith, 16-19.

male bonding.¹²³ Aggression toward women and men who belonged to other masculine identities, especially by mocking or laughing at them, also served as a way to establish them as outsiders and build internal group solidarity.¹²⁴ As briefly examined in chapter one, Restoration-era male youth attacked the social standing of married men by excluding them through jesting about cuckoldry. The jests in jest-books generally valued female wit over that of married men, and unmarried male wit over that of both. Although at first glance this appears to indicate a decrease in misogynist attitudes among male youth, in fact, the value that they placed on womanly wit merely reinforced the attempt to emasculate and exclude married men from their wit-infused culture. The pleasurable company of women was an important aspect of the mirth culture of male youth, as evidenced by their promiscuousness. However, this company was only deemed pleasurable when it centered on witty conversation and sexual exploitation. Otherwise, associating with women could lead to both defamation and melancholy, and thus male youth mocked the idea of spending too much time with them, especially in the form of marriage. Even after the Restoration, male youth separated themselves from the effeminizing effects of association with women and only associated with them when they could dominate them with either wit or sexual conquest. This helped them contrast their masculinity with the hen-pecked married men whom they viewed as a threat to their mirthful masculine ideal, and exclude them from their jesting culture in order to define their own, separate masculine identity.

¹²³ R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (Dec., 2005), 844.

¹²⁴ Lyman, 170. For a full discussion of the psychological place of humor within social interactions and its use to socially exclude, see Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1960).

Unlike earlier jest-books, female wit was not absent in the majority of Restoration-era jests, indicating that male youth began to value wit in women to an extent. Jests often revolved around a witty repartee between a man and a woman, although who emerged the victor from the conversation usually depended on the age of the male.¹²⁵ Lowe frequently indicated enjoying witty conversation with girls, both those he courted and mere acquaintances.¹²⁶ However, this value only extended to the pleasure that having a witty conversation afforded young men; it did not sway their attitude of objectifying and sexually exploiting women. Ames described the wit of a woman as equally seductive as a pretty face, yet claimed that women existed only to bring him pleasure; he could not be attached to a single one for more than a day.¹²⁷ Similarly, Lord Rochester's poetry often praised the wit of women, yet labeling him as "proto-feminist" is inaccurate because valuing their wit and ability to have a pleasurable time only served to justify the objectification of women that led to his frequent rendezvous, abuse of whores, and attacks on bawdy houses.¹²⁸

Male youth used a method of objectification and commodification to control and suppress women. Specifically, they viewed all women as purchasable for the sake of their personal pursuit of pleasure. Rakes, including Rochester, notoriously viewed all women as "whores."¹²⁹ In one frolic, seeking the "handsomest woman in Epsom," he and his band broke into a constable's house, and when the constable asked "what they came for, they told

¹²⁵ Jests involving a married or older man usually ended with the woman winning the battle of wits, whereas jests involving a young man, a gallant, or an unmarried man typically concluded with the man emerging as the victor of the conversation.

¹²⁶ E.g., see Lowe, 23-24, where Mary proves herself witty and a "wise wench" to Lowe.

¹²⁷ Ames, 11.

¹²⁸ Burnet, *Some passages*, 23-24. Barker-Benfield, 39-41. Barker-Benfield also asserts that Rochester's awareness of the public emergence of feminism was tarnished by his objectification of women.

¹²⁹ Bryson, 271-272.

him a whore.”¹³⁰ Additionally, Rochester and his band of rakes claimed that they frequently made “Oaths and Imprecations in their Addresses to Women, which they intended never to make good,” which likely alluded to promises of marriage in exchange for sexual favors.¹³¹ Objectifying and labeling women as “whores” was also a common practice in jests, such as a jest in which, “One told his Lady of Pleasure she was very fruitful” because she did “bear many,” despite never having children.¹³² Urban areas were also notoriously full of “whores” and several jests varied on this theme. For example, when a man on a horse attempted to insult a woman near him by saying that his “Horse always stumbles when he sees a Whore,” she responded with, “*Have a care then, Sir, for if you ride into the City, you will break your neck.*”¹³³ Frequently labeling women as whores was both a method of defamation and of justification for sexual exploitation that male youth used to illustrate sexual dominance, and thus masculine dominance, over married men.

Jests that labeled a woman as a whore could also defame a married man in opposition to the virility of male youth. For example, in one jest:

A Company of Roaring Blades coming into a House, called for Wenches, but there happened to be but one that time in waiting; at which they began to bluster; saying, What a Pox, have you no more Whores, Landlord? No Sirs, (*reply'd he*) not at present, but by and by I shall; and in the mean time if you please, I'll send you up my own Wife.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Christopher Hatton to Charles Hatton, 29 June 1676, in *Correspondence of the family of Hatton, chiefly letters addressed to Christopher first viscount Hatton, A.D. 1601-1704*, ed. E.M. Thompson ([London]: Printed for the Camden Society, 1878), 1:133.

¹³¹ Burnet, *Some passages*, 23-24. A notorious practice of the early modern era that led to several marriage reforms, men and women would engage in pre-marital sexual acts with the promise of marriage. This led to countless disputes involving women's and their families' attempts to restore her sexual honor through retribution or forcing the man to honor his original agreement, whether he had actually made it or not. For more on this and the marriage reform that arose in response to the disputes it created, see: Jeffrey R. Watt, *The Making of Modern Marriage: Matrimonial Control and the Rise of Sentiment in Neuchatel, 1550-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), part I.

¹³² Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], 70.

¹³³ Lover of Ha ha he [pseud.], 134.

¹³⁴ J.S., 30-31.

In this case, the landlord defamed himself when he offered the blades the company of his own wife, thereby submitting to the sexual dominance of the youth over himself and suggesting his own inability to both control and satisfy his wife. Slandering a married woman could therefore also defame her husband; however, this jest and many others also reveal an attitude about women in general held by unmarried men. This jest mocked the landlord because it suggested that he was a pimping cuckold who lacked any sexual control over his wife; therefore, it correspondingly suggested that he would not be able to force her to entertain the blades. Society assumed that pimping cuckolds' wives would cheat on them whether their husbands profited from the action or not.¹³⁵ The further assumption in this jest that the wife would have therefore consented illustrates the attitude of male youth that all women were not only “whores,” but that they existed in a constant state of lust for pleasure, particularly sexual pleasure, which justified the rakish exploitation and abuse of women.

This assumption about the lustful mindset and desires of the opposite sex frequently fueled the content of jests, and, giving young men a sense of power over women, justified their exploitation for the sake of pleasure and mirth-making. In one jest, a maid claimed that a man “refresh” her, meaning to say that he ravished her; in another, even a nun desired the company of a man, when “reading at the bottom of a Book, it is good to know all things, was resolv'd to try a Man; but turning over she found, but not to use them, at which she was not a little troubled to be so soon depriv'd of her so delectable enjoyment.”¹³⁶ Furthermore, jests often showed that this constant state of desire made women foolish, and therefore allowed young men to dominate them both mentally and sexually. When a justice asked a “foolish

¹³⁵ Winstanley, *Poor Robin*, 1699, A8. For a more extensive discussion of this, refer back to chapter one of this thesis.

¹³⁶ Democritus Junior [pseud.], 121.

wench” complaining that a young man raped her to explain what happened, she replied “he tied my hands so fast I could not stirr them; and...*He would have tied my legs too, but I had the wit to keep them far enough a sunder.*”¹³⁷ Her actions both revealed her foolishness and suggested her sexual consent. Thus young men believed that they could dominate women through sex because their lustful nature made them foolish.

Sexual domination was an important part of reclaiming a masculine identity for male youth, especially in response to the emergence of the social criteria for manhood that moral reformers and refined society began to use. Society still excluded male youth from manhood through marriage, as well as the added criteria of refined, moral behavior. Young men now faced exclusion from the dominant ideal of masculinity both as unmarried men and as the stereotype of a libertine or rake. Therefore, sexual dominance remained the one aspect of masculinity that young men could still use to assert their own manhood over those who belonged to the dominant masculine ideal. The pleasurable company of a woman could both restore masculinity and create mirth among male youth. Ames even proclaimed that the best way to pass the time was “with Women, Wits, and Soul-inspiring Drink.”¹³⁸ However, this hinged upon the ability of young men to control their female companions, for they believed that the company of women could also be a source of the effeminizing effects of melancholy if they became too attached to their company.

In particular, women could cause love melancholy, a disease that Robert Burton claimed young men were the most vulnerable to.¹³⁹ Describing love itself as a species of melancholy, Burton devoted a large portion of his *Anatomy of Melancholy* to the discussion

¹³⁷ Head, 40.

¹³⁸ Ames, 3.

¹³⁹ Burton, 529.

of what he termed love melancholy, which he further broke down into two distinct types. The “heroicall” type affected the liver and concerned men’s desire for the company of women, and when this company was “in defect, or (which is most ordinary and common) immoderate and in excesse, it causeth Melancholy.”¹⁴⁰ Lowe frequently recounted days in his diary when he felt consumed by a melancholic disposition due to both being in love and the loss of love. His first love, as far as the diary reveals, was Mary Naylor, and if he did not see her for several days, he would become “very sad in spirit.”¹⁴¹ After their romance fell apart, Lowe began to court Emm Potter, the girl he would eventually marry. Likewise, he was frequently “sadly troubled” over his “effection” for her, and many of these episodes were brought on by quarreling, particularly during occasions when Emm was angry with him and he did not know why.¹⁴² Several entries varied on a similar expression of “I was in a very sad afflicted estate, and all by reason of her,” referring in this instance to Emm, and at one point it even brought him, reluctantly, to tears.¹⁴³ Lowe does not appear to have been unusual in his melancholic state over love. On several occasions, he recorded entries about comforting and aiding friends who were in similar states.¹⁴⁴ Even Ames described being “with the little Disappointment sick” when he no longer found a woman desirable, while he later admitted that likewise, being with a woman too much would cause “a sullen damp” ailment to seize him.¹⁴⁵ Thus, although the pleasurable company of women was necessary in order to exhibit a sense of manly control, their company could also lead to a melancholy disposition, which

¹⁴⁰ Burton, 495; 527; 498.

¹⁴¹ Lowe, 43.

¹⁴² Lowe, 84.

¹⁴³ Lowe, 68.

¹⁴⁴ Lowe, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Ames, 10; 15.

could only be cured through the exclusion of women and the mirth of male camaraderie and jesting.

In order to alleviate the melancholy disposition that association with women could cause, male youth sought comfort in camaraderie and jesting, and avoided permanent contact with women. Ames claimed that the pleasurable company of other young men, a good drink, and laughing at “pious fools” could cure his sullenness, stating, “With honest Ned or Tom, or who I find, With a full Glass, I ease my Mind, And think of Jilting Woman-kind no more.”¹⁴⁶ Once this restored his mirth, he could return to “amorous combat,” but he must never become tied to any one woman, claiming that, “Not a *Womans Slave* I e’re will be...But none of all the *Female Train*, Did to a Month e’re yet extend her Reign...And I will Revel in my dear Belov’d Variety.”¹⁴⁷ Likewise, Lowe’s diary entries reveal that a trip to the tavern and some time with male friends, including drinking and jesting, often followed a bout of lovesickness. For example, in one entry, Lowe claimed to be in another “sadd Fitt” concerning Mary, and he and John Hasleden went to the neighboring village of Bamfurlong – which they frequented for the purpose of drinking “Botle Ale and Common Ale” and general merriment – where they “ware very wellcomly entertained, and as we came home we talked of wenches.”¹⁴⁸ Another entry on the 12th of October, 1663 contained a brief record that considering Mary’s love toward him left him in a state of sadness. According to the following entry, on the 13th, he spent his free time jesting with Hasleden and Thomas Rosbothom, who both frequently appeared as unmarried companions throughout the diary.¹⁴⁹ Spending time with other unmarried male companions in an exclusive male youth

¹⁴⁶ Ames, 15; 11.

¹⁴⁷ Ames, 15; 11-12.

¹⁴⁸ Lowe, 41; 43.

¹⁴⁹ Lowe, 38.

environment was the cure that these young men sought to relieve their melancholy dispositions, and jesting appears to have been an integral part of the process of restoring mirth.

Male youth viewed the long-term exposure of men to women as particularly effeminizing, and perceived marriage as the worst case of this. Tainted by the effeminizing effects of marriage and perceived as threatening to the unmarried male identity, married men were therefore also excluded from male youth's masculine ideal and labeled as fools and slaves to morals. One jest described marriage as the "bane of all business, the end of all Pleasure, Consumption of Youth, Wit, Virtue, and Treasure," adding that it was worse than a sexually transmitted disease because at least diseases carried the hope of a cure.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Ames described the libertine attitude toward marriage as "bondage," a "cursed noose," the "Antidote to Love," and a "dull trot," all of which were only fit for fools and "the Plodding Sot."¹⁵¹ However, Ames was not merely against marriage; in fact, he created a sense of exclusion and reaction against married men and the threat that they posed to his way of life because they were married. He claimed that these men might be unmarried, if only it were not for religious and moral restrictions, exclaiming, "I pity those poor Slaves, Doom'd to the *Drudgery* of a Wife; Who, when they might be free, by pious *Knaves*, Are sentenc'd to Confinement, during Life."¹⁵² These men were slaves not of marriage, but of the moral concerns of society that dictated they must marry, and Ames felt that they were a threat to his way of life, fearing those "Who Youthful Joys perswade me to forbear," and admitting "How

¹⁵⁰ Head, 54.

¹⁵¹ Ames, 13-14.

¹⁵² Ames, 12.

all their *crabbed Lectures* I despise!”¹⁵³ Therefore, male youth excluded married men, as messengers of morally refined behavior that could damage their pursuit of mirth and pleasure, and mocked them for their effeminizing long-term association with women.

Male youth used jests in Restoration-era England not only to defame the married men who identified with the masculine ideal that they could not attain, but they also used jests to exclude these married men from their own masculine ideal. In fact, defamation was a method of exclusion, and male youth created and laughed at jests about cuckoldry, as well as jests that discredited marriage, described women as undesirable, and mocked religion. These jests excluded any men who might try to challenge a male youth’s manhood based upon the pursuit of pleasure and wit for the sake of moral reform and marriage. For example, jests such as the following defamed the sexual honor of married men, discredited their wit, and alluded to the idea that they could not comprehend and gracefully accept a jest:

An Arch Wagg put a great many Rams-horns in a Basket, and went up and down and cryed New Fruit, in the Winter time; at last a Lawyer bid him let him see his Winter Fruit, which when he saw them, said, *You Fool, who d’ye think will buy Horns? O Sir, says he, though you are provided, yet I may meet with some that are not.*¹⁵⁴

Jest-books also particularly excluded men who could not comprehend jokes, especially under the pretense of good manners and moral behavior. Jest-book compilers adamantly defended their work against people who would feel offended by their contents and pleaded with them to simply not purchase the collections. One jest-book cover attempted to deter anyone who did not approve of a youthful and pleasurable lifestyle with a wood-cut illustration of youth dancing naked in a field around a jovial-looking reader of the book.¹⁵⁵ One compiler claimed

¹⁵³ Ames, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Hicks, *Coffee-house jests*, 16.

¹⁵⁵ Anon., *London Jest*s, A3v; Anon., *Youth’s Treasury*, title page.

that if a man could not laugh at the rude jests – which men like Burgess termed “foolish” – that told stories of farting and “arses” and were popular entries in jest-books, then he was an “ass . . . it being supernatural to that creature to laugh.”¹⁵⁶ Male youth not only viewed married men concerned with morals as excluded from their masculine identity, but they believed that they were unable to participate in it. Therefore, jests that mocked the lack of wit or sexual control of married men over their wives excluded those who young men viewed as a threat to their own mirthful masculinity.

CONCLUSION

Following the restoration of the monarchy and a licentious courtier masculine identity, many men defined a new, yet mostly familiar, hegemonic masculinity based upon emerging bourgeois values, such as marriage for the sake of a productive family unit and religiously influenced manners. In the midst of this, the use of jesting to relieve melancholy became a part of a larger discourse on the reformation of morals among young men. Reformers argued that the pleasures that young men sought, including laughter at “foolish jesting,” were mere transient attempts to relieve melancholy, and in fact, only led to more effeminizing melancholy. However, young men viewed the pleasures of good company, a fair maiden, a drink, and a good laugh at the local tavern as an essential cure to the melancholy brought on by the constant pressures to conform to the unattainable ideal of the married and well-mannered masculine identity. Thus, an exclusive, distinctly male youth culture and masculine identity based upon the pursuit of mirth and pleasure and the exclusion of married men formed in the late seventeenth century in reaction to the moral reformation

¹⁵⁶ Anon., *London Jest*s, A4r.

attempts of an emerging civil society. This culture revolved around the pursuit of pleasure, and society stereotyped the men who adhered to this behavior as rakes and libertines; however, few young men could afford what was essentially a courtier lifestyle. Jestings afforded young men, such as Roger Lowe, who intended to one day purchase their freedom from apprenticeship and marry, a cheaper and safer option of mirth while they were young and unmarried. Reflective of their attitudes toward women and their exclusion of married men, jesting, in the words of one jest-book compiler, was a way to remove the pain of melancholy with “little cost.”¹⁵⁷ Therefore, jesting became an essential element of forming and maintaining a mirthful male youth masculine identity after the Restoration.

¹⁵⁷ J.S., A2r.

CONCLUSION

Humor is a way to navigate social tensions; it grants individuals the opportunity to invert the traditional order and voice opinions that they otherwise may not. Thus, social and cultural tensions are inherently embedded in the organization and tone of a joke. For young men in seventeenth-century England, these tensions revolved around masculinity, and jests helped them address the tensions surrounding their own status as members of a subjugated masculinity. The seventeenth-century was a turning point in the construction of masculinity, which allowed male youth to form their own, exclusive masculine identity by the end of the century based on elements of ideal, manly characteristics developed during the political upheaval of the English Civil War and Interregnum. Jest itself was an important part of both forming and maintaining the masculine identity of male youth because it helped young men address the threats to their manhood that patriarchy, political upheaval, and polite society posed. It both facilitated male bonding among youth and excluded those men and women whom young men perceived as a threat to their manhood. Therefore, male youth used jesting to negotiate the loss of manhood and power that they experienced at various times throughout the century as emerging dominant masculine ideals created new tensions, resulting in the development of an exclusive youth masculine identity that challenged and excluded the dominant patriarchal masculine ideal.

By examining the progression of youth masculinity from a subordinate, unmarried social status to an internalized, exclusive masculine identity, I have tried to address a gap in the study of masculinity in the history of the seventeenth century. The evidence examined in this thesis shows that a distinctly male youth subculture and definition of masculinity existed in seventeenth-century England. Furthermore, these young men were not just members of a passive subordinate masculinity caught up in the overall progression toward a civilized hegemonic masculine identity. Instead, they negotiated their position in society through jesting. They elevated their own social position through the use of wit, and defamed married men with jests about cuckoldry throughout the century. During the political upheaval of the middle of the century, they asserted the masculinity of an ideal based on personal characteristics rather than a man's sexual credit. And finally, as the dominant, married masculine ideal began to define masculinity through morally refined behaviors, male youth responded by asserting their own, alternative masculine identity based upon the creation of mirth and the exclusion of women and married men. This alternative notion of manhood embodied an ideal of "anti-civility" and forces historians to question the development of a "male civilising process."¹ While the dominant masculinity may have moved toward a more civilized understanding of what it meant to be a man, male youth actively resisted this movement and formed an alternative masculine identity.

Several characteristics reveal the emergence of a male youth identity throughout the seventeenth century. The use of jesting to alleviate tensions and restore mirth is an interesting phenomenon that seemed to be unique to male youth, or at least subordinate masculinities. It suggests that humor served a special function within a hierarchical society by allowing a

¹ Carter, 116.

subordinate individual to challenge authority in ways that would be unacceptable if not cloaked in humor. Natalie Zemon Davis finds that this could reinforce the authority of the patriarchal order; however, this study suggests that, in this case, the humor of patriarchal inversion eventually became a way to actually subvert the authority of the dominant masculinity.² This may be explained by the additional uses of jesting to build male camaraderie within a subordinate masculinity and exclude other males. Nevertheless, some elements of patriarchy continued to be reinforced, such as misogyny and the subordination and exclusion of women.

Jests portrayed women in a purely misogynist light earlier in the century. Even as their anecdotes began to allow women more wit toward the end of the century, the actions and overall attitude of young men suggested that women were to be avoided unless they could be controlled and used for sexual pleasure. The male youth perception of women and how they interacted prior to marriage is an area into which jest-books only offer a superficial view, and could benefit from further study using additional sources. Additionally, I chose to end this study at 1700 because the first jest-book for the “Pleasant Diversion for Both Sexes” arrived on the market in 1697. This collection claimed that it consisted of “morality” and was “ageeable to Civil and Genteel Conversation.”³ Indeed, its jests lacked any of the blue humor or sexual innuendo of young men’s jest-books; however, those earlier jest-books did not disappear. Simon Dickie identifies their reprints well into the eighteenth century, further bringing the notion of an all-encompassing civilizing process into question. What does the emergence of jest-books for “both sexes” while compilers continued to reprint ones meant

² Davis, 97-123.

³ Miede, title page.

only for young men indicate about humor, civility and gender in the eighteenth century? It perhaps suggests that as men and women became more aware of the differences between the sexes, jest-books also separated into two separate spheres: polite humor for young women and blue humor for young men. However, this is another area that could benefit from further research.

Jesting both encouraged male camaraderie among unmarried men, and excluded outsiders, such as women and married men. Therefore, it formed an essential element in the creation of an exclusively male youth identity. The existence of this understudied alternate masculinity suggests that historians need to examine not only the dominant trends within society, but also the alternative ones because these help contest and form the hegemonic model of masculinity and gender.⁴ Faced with mounting tensions and threats to their manhood, male youth used jesting to maintain their masculinity through the bolstering of their own wit over others'. As society moved from a social construction of masculinity to a subjective construction, male youth protected their concept of manhood by forming a masculine identity based on exclusion and the pursuit of pleasure.

⁴ In his reconceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, Connell acknowledges that subordinate masculinities need to be studied in order to understand their impact on the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Connell, "Hegemonic Masculinity," 844.

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