

Introduction

THIS book traces the varied meanings of manhood in England between 1560 and 1640 in order to explore their complex relationship with patriarchal norms. Its central argument is that manhood and patriarchy were not equated in early modern England, and should not be elided by gender historians. While men were often better placed to benefit from them, patriarchal imperatives nonetheless constituted attempts to discipline and order men as well as women. Men, like women, might have experienced such imperatives in one or more of three ways: as beneficiaries; as subordinates; and as opponents. In addition, for some men and in certain contexts, patriarchal ideals were largely irrelevant—a point often neglected by gender historians, not least because it is the most difficult to demonstrate. There was no neat scheme to all this: patriarchal ideology itself was muddled, contradictory, and selectively invoked rather than a monolithic system which simply received adherence or rejection. Similarly, the social practice of manhood was enormously diverse, contingent, and contradictory, influenced by and informing distinctions of age, social status, marital status, and context. Access to patriarchal privilege was varied for men as well as women (albeit on profoundly different grounds), and the competing forms of manhood asserted by early modern men could and did undermine patriarchal ideals. By mapping the age-related, class-related, and context-related ways in which early modern men gained from, were subordinated by, resisted, or simply ignored patriarchal dictates, it is possible to assess the distribution of patriarchal benefits not just between men and women, but also between men themselves, in order to comprehend the complex interaction of gender with other determinants of status and identity in early modern society.

A book about manhood no longer needs to begin with a lengthy justification of why we need yet more history written about men. The last decade has witnessed a prolific response to earlier calls for a history of both sexes in general and for a history of masculinity in particular to complement pioneering research in women's history.¹ Many studies are now

¹ e.g. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History" in *Transition: The European Case*,

in print, collectively surveying a broad chronological, geographical, and thematic expanse.² Aiming to particularize male experience (rather than assuming a generically male subject) the history of masculinity contributes an important corrective to the 'sex-blindness of traditional historiography'.³ In addition, it rejects approaches to male experience as the norm or standard against which female experience is judged, refuting the implication that only women's lives are gendered on account of being variant. That men too are 'carriers' of gender has been firmly established, and the history of masculinity is now an essential sub-field of gender history.⁴

Imbalances of focus still remain, however. One of the most important recent developments to which the history of masculinity can contribute is an appreciation of the multifaceted nature of gender identities beyond the binary opposition of men and women. As Elsa Barkley Brown has argued, we need 'to recognize that all women do not have the same gender'.⁵ Such an approach admits the plurality of women's experience rather than viewing women's lives as solely, or even always primarily, determined by gender.⁶ Conversely, while the plurality of men's experience has always been assumed, the ways in which this variation was influenced, if not determined, by gender is still only beginning to be understood. 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. Gender means different things for different men and women, and different things during the different stages of the life course. This was particularly true of early modern England where stark hierarchies of age, social status, and marital status were deeply ingrained, interacting with gender hierarchies to produce a complex multidimen-

Feminist Studies, 3 (1976); Harry Brod (ed.), *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (London, 1987).

² e.g. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993); George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996); D. M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (Harlow, 1999); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 1999); Hans Turley, *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality and Masculine Identity* (New York, 1999); Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago, 2001).

³ Gisela Bock, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate', *Gender and History*, 1 (1989), 11.

⁴ John Tosh, 'What should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), 180.

⁵ Elsa Barkley Brown, 'Polyrhythms and Improvization: Lessons for Women's History', *History Workshop Journal*, 31 (1991), 88. See also Nancy Jay, 'Gender and Dichotomy', *Feminist Studies*, 7 (1981); Mary Poovey, 'Feminism and Deconstruction', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988).

⁶ For an excellent recent example, see Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

sional map of power relations which by no means privileged all men or subordinated all women.

Such a movement away from a concept of gender defined exclusively in terms of a male–female dichotomy has considerable implications for our understanding of the workings of patriarchy in the early modern period, not least because it requires us to rethink definitions of patriarchy itself. This is by no means a new issue. The historicization of patriarchy has been central to the concerns of both women’s history and gender history from their inception, although there has been perennial conflict over its meaning and usage.⁷ For many feminist theorists and historians, the defining feature of patriarchy is men’s systematic domination of women.⁸ Such an approach does not allow for the generational dimension of patriarchy when it is more specifically defined as the government of society by male household heads, involving the subordination of younger men as well as women.⁹ In early modern England, patriarchy was literally understood to signify rule by fathers. In one of the earliest dictionaries to be published, Robert Cawdrey defined a ‘patriarcke’ as the ‘chiefe father’.¹⁰ Patriarchy in this sense was central to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century political thought which approached kingship in terms of paternal rule, through analogy with the household. As a result, the household itself was viewed as a ‘little commonwealth’ and categorized as the primary unit of society, within which all individuals should be placed.¹¹ The maintenance of three basic hierarchies was deemed essential to an ordered household—and, by implication, an ordered society: ideally, husbands should govern wives; masters and mistresses their servants; and parents their children. Such a system privileged male householders, but also accorded married women authority over their servants and children, and subordinated those men as well as women excluded from householding status. While there is no doubt that males were the primary beneficiaries of this model, women were not wholly or unilaterally subordinated by it, and men’s gains were by no means uniform.

An emphasis on the consequent multiplicity of gender identities need

⁷ For a classic statement of the central arguments see Sheila Rowbotham, ‘The Trouble with Patriarchy’, and Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, ‘In Defence of “Patriarchy”’, both in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People’s History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981). See also Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge, 1988), ch. 2.

⁸ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford, 1990); Judith M. Bennett, ‘Feminism and History’, *Gender and History*, 1 (1989); Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), 4–5.

⁹ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 19–21.

¹⁰ Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabetical of English Words*, 4th edn. (London, 1617), sig. G3.
¹¹ Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation and Attitudes Especially in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1975); Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), ch. 2.

not sacrifice analysis of relations of power.¹² Both feminist and early modern definitions of patriarchy are necessary if we are to comprehend the complex distribution of authority both between and within the sexes and the ways in which this was mediated by gender. To understand the social practice of patriarchy in early modern England, we need to be far more aware of precisely *which* men stood to gain, *which* women stood to lose, and in *which* contexts. Conversely, we need to identify instances both when women benefited from, and men were barred access to, patriarchal privileges. Finally, it is important to ask whether gender was ever eclipsed by other determinants of status and identity in ways which rendered it temporarily irrelevant.

Recent work on early modern women has made considerable inroads in this respect, looking beyond the ways in which women were victims of patriarchal oppression, and the many ways in which they found agency through active resistance to it, in order to demonstrate how many women themselves exercised, and even benefited from, patriarchal authority in its early modern sense. Demographic reality meant that many women headed households (for example 16 per cent of those listed in the Ealing census of 1599) and so, to a certain extent, occupied patriarchal positions.¹³ However, women did not need to act as ‘honorary men’ to exercise authority. This was particularly true, for example, of the aged wives who were more readily employable than their husbands,¹⁴ or of the respectable matrons and midwives who policed the bodies of unmarried women for signs of illegitimate pregnancy, deriving particular authority from ‘the gulf’ identified by Laura Gowing between ‘married and single, orderly and disorderly, matrons and virgins’.¹⁵ While women’s authority in these circumstances may have carried less overall cultural weight than that wielded by the many men in positions of patriarchal privilege, it is

¹² For an extreme statement of such concerns, see Joan Hoff, ‘Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis’, *Women’s History Review*, 3 (1994). Cf. Joan Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986).

¹³ K. J. Allison, ‘An Elizabethan Village “Census”’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 36 (1963).

¹⁴ Margaret Pelling, ‘Old Age, Poverty and Disability in Early Modern Norwich: Work, Remarriage and Other Expedients’, and ‘Older Women: Household, Caring and Other Occupations in the Late Sixteenth-Century Town’, both in ead., *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (London, 1998); ead., ‘Who Most Needs to Marry? Ageing and Inequality among Women and Men in Early Modern Norwich’, in Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2001).

¹⁵ Laura Gowing, ‘Ordering the Body: Illegitimacy and Female Authority in Seventeenth-Century England’, in Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 61. See also ead., ‘The Haunting of Susan Lay: Servants and Mistresses in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Gender and History*, 14 (2002); Ulinka Rublack, ‘The Public Body: Policing Abortion in Early Modern

possible that these context-related differences between women were as important in determining women's experiences and access to authority as the differences between the sexes.

The differences between men were similarly stark, along many of the same lines. However, their implications have been less well explored by gender historians of the early modern period, who have primarily approached masculinity as a product of relations between men and women.¹⁶ The ground-breaking work of the sociologist R. W. Connell has called for a recognition that 'at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted', alerting us to the fact that many variant masculinities existed (and exist) in tension with each other. Consequently men, like women, can be subordinated and marginalized by 'hegemonic' gender constructions which deliver the 'patriarchal dividend' only to the complicit.¹⁷ As John Tosh has emphasized, masculinity 'makes socially crippling distinctions not only between men and women, but between different categories of men—distinctions which have to be maintained by force, as well as validated through cultural means'.¹⁸ However, early modern historians have tended to focus less on the multiplicity of masculinities suggested by such arguments than on the numerous ways in which men too suffered from the demands of patriarchal dictates, even when occupying positions of patriarchal privilege. The early modern period as a consequence has been characterized as one abounding with anxious patriarchs: men dogged by fears that they would fail to achieve patriarchal expectations that were, moreover, arguably impossible.¹⁹

Germany', in Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (eds.), *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996); Linda Pollock, 'Childbearing and Female Bonding in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 22 (1997); ead., 'Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Family History*, 23 (1998). Cf. Pamela Sharpe, 'Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England', *Gender and History*, 11 (1999).

¹⁶ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500–1800* (London, 1995); Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (Harlow, 1999). Such an approach is also generally implicit in histories of early modern women.

¹⁷ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 1995), 77–81. See also ead., *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge, 1987), 183–8.

¹⁸ Tosh, 'What should Historians do with Masculinity?', 192.

¹⁹ David Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985); Katharine Hodgkin, 'Thomas Wythorne and the Problem of Mastery', *History Workshop Journal*, 29 (1990); Anthony Fletcher, 'Men's Dilemma: The Future of Patriarchy in England, 1560–1660', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser. 4 (1994); Alan Bray, 'To be a Man in Early Modern Society: The Curious Case of Michael Wigglesworth', *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996); Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996); Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*.

While it would be wrong to suggest that early modern men were never anxious about proving or asserting their manhood, there is nonetheless a danger of assuming that there were only two options for early modern men: they either achieved manhood in the normative—or hegemonic—mode as dominant patriarchs (in terms of effectively managing a household through controlling themselves and their subordinates) or they failed in this endeavour. Such arguments are often accompanied by two unsettling implications. The first is that men who failed to achieve the dictates of patriarchal manhood were themselves oppressed by patriarchal ideology. At extremes, the men in such accounts are represented as competing with women for victimhood at the hands of patriarchy. Kenneth Lockridge, for example, has argued that even the most consummate patriarchs in early New England suffered acutely from the demands of domestic patriarchy, claiming that ‘patriarchy could be a prison for the patriarchs as well as for their women’.²⁰ The second and related assumption is that men who failed to live up to normative or patriarchal ideals of manhood consequently somehow failed to be men.

The problem with such approaches is that they tend to equate manhood with patriarchy, rendering it impossible to appreciate the full range of male responses to patriarchal imperatives. The men who failed to be patriarchs, either because they did not live up to the expectations of the patriarchal position they occupied (such as the archetypal lazy, thriftless, drunken, wife-beating householder), or because they did not have access to patriarchal manhood (such as the journeyman who never moved beyond dependence on wage labour), nonetheless found plenty of ways in which to assert their manhood. Such men, like unruly women, could be ‘domestic dangers’, but that did not stop them being men; instead they pursued different codes of manhood which often existed in tension with patriarchal imperatives. It is necessary, therefore, to open up the potential gaps, and tensions, between patriarchy and different varieties of manhood, rather than simply colluding with the normative evaluative schemes of early modern social commentators. While relations between the sexes were a primary site for its definition, manhood was often most resonantly worked out between men. Exploring such contests affords insight into the ways in which meanings of manhood (patriarchal and otherwise) were socially embedded, and, as this book will suggest, increasingly socially specific over the course of the early modern period.

Issues of periodization pose particular difficulties for gender

²⁰ Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), 90.

historians.²¹ It is difficult both to scrutinize the complex workings of gender in early modern society and to chart more general currents of long-term change. The period between 1560 and 1640 is the main focus here, for both practical and historiographical reasons. A wider time-frame would have precluded a sufficiently detailed survey of a broad range of material pertaining to the construction of varied meanings of manhood. In addition, 1560 to 1640 was a time of rapid, and often unsettling, demographic and economic change which had a profound impact on social—and, as it will be argued here, gender—relations.²² While 1640 was by no means the end point to these changes, they were most acute in the period between 1560 and 1640 when access to resources was fundamentally realigned and the tenor of social relations began to be redrawn. Although largely contained within the chronological parameters of 1560 and 1640, therefore, the details of this study are nonetheless suggestive of much longer-term patterns of change, in which the distribution of patriarchal dividends became increasingly related to distinctions of social position rather than divisions of age or marital status.

What follows comprises two parts, derived from two main bodies of source material. Part I offers a rereading of some of the didactic literature—such as domestic conduct books, guides to health, sermons, and father–son advice—that has been the starting point for so much of the period’s gender analysis. Gender constructions were central to the ways in which early modern moral, political, and social commentary made sense of things. Whether explicitly discussed (for example in defences of women or debates over cross-dressing) or whether implicitly suggested by the employment of gender metaphors to discuss wider issues, the different traits expected of women and men provided constant points of reference in prescriptive discourse.²³ While ideals of womanhood contained in such sources have been closely analysed, the ways in which normative codes of manhood were constructed warrant further scrutiny. Despite being littered with words referring to masculinity (such as ‘manish’, ‘manly’, ‘masculine’) and its antitheses (such as ‘womanish’, and

²¹ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993).

²² The now classic account is Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (London, 1982).

²³ For explicit debates, particularly concerning women, see Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475–1640* (San Marino, Calif., 1982); Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540–1620* (Brighton, 1984); Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540–1640* (Urbana, Ill., 1985). For gender as a signifier of relationships of power in political debate, see Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category’; Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London, 1996), ch. 2.

‘effeminate’), concepts of manhood in advice books rarely received any explicit definition. The prescriptive literature of this period was largely written by and for a comparatively elite group of men, and, unless stated otherwise, it was generally assumed by authors that the reader was male and reasonably well educated.²⁴ As a result, the bulk of references to manhood and their accompanying associations remained implicit, suggesting shared assumptions between author and reader that are often difficult to discern, and that moreover we should not assume were universally held. Even within the comparatively narrow context of prescriptive literature, manhood was associated with a broad array of attributes, the varied selection of which was shaped by the agenda of different authors, with considerable diversity of emphasis even between works by the same author.²⁵ Although such works generally laboured to define manhood in patriarchal terms, its meanings were manipulated to serve a range of interests, and prescriptive codes were by no means uniform.

Common themes were undoubtedly present, however. Normative manhood was primarily defined through comparison with a broad range of deviant ‘others’. The starkest definitions were usually a product of male/female comparisons, and unsurprisingly these bald assertions of a hierarchy which placed men above women have received the most attention from gender historians. Such formulae claimed reason and strength as the defining attributes of manhood and classed women as comparatively weak and unstable.²⁶ This basic dichotomy was widely invoked to justify male superiority and to command female obedience. Unlike ideals of femininity, however, most constructions of manhood emerged from comparisons along axes of difference besides gender, and normative meanings were substantially modified, and sometimes considerably undermined, through distinctions drawn between an assortment of

²⁴ e.g. William Guild, *A Yong Mans Inquisition, or Triall. Whereby All Young Men (as of All Ages) may Know how to Redresse and Direct their Waies, According to Gods Word* (London, 1608). Some works which might be expected to have appealed to a unisex audience were sometimes nonetheless exclusively directed to men, such as Alexander Nicholes, *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (London, 1615), which he addressed to ‘the Youth and Batchelary of England, hote blouds at high Revels’, and *A Discourse of the Married and Single Life. Wherein, by Discovering the Misery of the One, is Plainly Declared the Felicity of the Other* (London, 1621), the preface of which was addressed to ‘the Masculine Reader’, sig. A3. See also Ann Rosalind Jones, ‘Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-Century Women’s Lyrics’, in Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (eds.), *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* (New York, 1987).

²⁵ Cf., e.g., William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622) and id., *The Dignity of Chivalry; Set Forth in a Sermon Preached before the Artillery Company of London* (London, 1626).

²⁶ Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, ch. 2; Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, ch. 1.

different male stereotypes. Although male/female comparisons implied that patriarchal manhood (in its feminist sense of male superiority over women) was extended to all men, they were extensively qualified by comparisons between men which suggested that many were excluded from its benefits. Despite differences of emphasis, conduct writers identified three principal gateways to patriarchal privilege: age, marital status, and, more obliquely, social status.

Apart from gender, age was the most directly acknowledged difference to inform constructions of normative manhood. Besides being a qualitative set of attributes, manhood was approached in advice literature as a distinct stage in the life cycle. Chapter 1 explores the ways in which accounts of the ages of man placed ‘man’s age’—or ‘man’s estate’—at the summit of the life course and defined manhood in relation to youth and old age. Parenting manuals, father–son advice, sermons, and tracts on ageing approached manhood as an ideal to which young men should aspire and from which old men would decay. Manhood was thereby portrayed as the golden mean of existence, although it was also deemed a fleeting phase. Theoretically limited to a mere ten or twenty years of the life cycle it was, as a consequence, restricted to a minority of men at any one time. Chapter 2 focuses on medical representations of manhood which were founded upon a broader range of distinctions between men. Guides to health similarly excluded younger and older men from the bodily equilibrium ideally expected of manhood, but they also appear to have subtly mapped temperamental deviations from the norm onto contours of social status. Emphasizing just how difficult it was to achieve the moderation expected of manhood, such works tended to elide the temperate ideal with concepts of civility and virtue which were implicitly associated with elites. Chapter 3 surveys the domestic conduct literature and advice on marriage in order to re-examine the ways in which manhood was defined along the axis of gender. Although stark male–female dichotomies were frequently invoked to uphold assertions of male superiority (particularly in discussions of the duties of wives), they were considerably qualified by discussions of husbands’ duties which primarily emphasized mutuality and the limits of their authority. Normative models of manhood in domestic advice were also drawn from comparing two further sets of male stereotype: the unmarried and the married, and the good and the bad husband, with conduct writers often conceding that bad husbands were more prevalent than good.

Despite their different emphases, all these works sought to define manhood in broadly patriarchal terms of discretion, reason, moderation, self-sufficiency, strength, self-control, and honest respectability. More

importantly, they all expressed considerable concern about the ubiquity of male tendencies antithetical to the ordered, rational ideal. At the heart of these representations of manhood lay misgivings that, far from being self-contained exemplars, many men constantly worked against the patriarchal goals of order and control. Advice literature therefore conveyed both assurance and anxiety. The assured tone stemmed from the supposition of men's general capacity for rational, self-governed action superior to that of women which was the foundation for the normative concepts of manhood propagated by these authors. Yet this was overlaid by a dirge of concern about men's failure to live up to patriarchal ideals, which was either attributed to fundamental flaws in men's nature, or to the inadequacies of particular groups of men on the grounds of their age, marital status and, more remotely, social status. While maleness as cultural category was automatically celebrated in terms of superiority, men as a group of people were far less confidently endorsed.

Such anxieties have been ascribed to a general set of male fears about both attaining manliness and sustaining the patriarchal order, particularly through controlling women.²⁷ As a result the implications of such commentary for relations between men themselves have remained comparatively neglected in preference for consideration of men's subjective experience of patriarchal norms. There is no doubt that didactic literature both drew upon and informed a highly powerful language of social description that was suffused with patriarchal logic. Yet, to presuppose that all men somehow measured their manliness according to a commonly accepted patriarchal gauge risks simply replicating, rather than questioning, the conduct writers' perspective. Their greatest fear appears not to have been that men were failing to be men *per se*, but that they were failing to be men *on the right terms*. Advice writers' anxiety stemmed less from the presence or absence of manliness than from concerns about the terms of manhood itself and the degree to which they coincided with the patriarchal agenda for an ordered society. Just as exhortations to chastity, silence, and obedience for women were primarily prescriptive, so the attributes expected of men were more a rhetorical device than straightforwardly illustrative of early modern manhood. Rather than simply describing commonly held expectations of manhood and womanhood, conduct writers attempted to fix their meanings in patriarchal terms and to coach men as well as women in their corresponding duties.

The degree of contest over meanings of manhood is therefore indirectly revealed by prescriptive attempts to secure them. Both the ways

²⁷ Fletcher, 'Men's Dilemma'; id., *Gender, Sex and Subordination*; Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*. See also Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, 1981).

in which man's nature was deemed to undermine the normative ideal and the ways in which certain types of men were described as deviating from it are illustrative of fissures in concepts of manhood and of limits to the authority of patriarchal norms. Part II traces such fissures further by investigating the ways in which different men variously asserted, maintained, and defended their manhood in the course of routine social practice. It is not intended as an investigation of 'reality' to be measured against the ideals outlined in advice books, but is designed to provide a broader perspective on the complexity of early modern meanings of manhood and their relation to patriarchy. Already plagued by dualism, the 'ideal/reality' paradigm is one more dichotomy that gender history can well afford to lose.²⁸ The advice literature discussed in Part I was a product of reality, rather than somehow separate from and comparable with it. Besides ascribing greater influence and coherence to normative codes than is warranted, attempts to compare them with 'reality' also neglect what Konstantin Dierks has usefully identified as the 'prescriptive force of social practice'.²⁹ Especially given their own inherent contradictions, conduct books merely articulated strands of identity which might be selectively invoked rather than a comprehensive set of morals for internalization.³⁰ Men primarily sought validation of their manhood from each other, and the responses of peer groups, superiors, and subordinates were arguably far more influential than the paper images constructed by moralists, however much they chimed or clashed with particular contexts and circumstances.

Gender identities in early modern England were neither static nor given, but the product of social interaction. Part II is therefore concerned with the social processes which conferred, contested, or diminished manhood in its varied meanings. The range of discernible male identities were regularly associated with patriarchal notions of manhood, either as claims to patriarchal authority, or as forms of explicit resistance to its dictates. Yet there is also more fragmented evidence of alternative codes of manhood that were not primarily defined in relation to patriarchal principles, but were instead shaped by expedience and social context. While the contingency of meanings of manhood (and the potential for overlap between

²⁸ Gisela Bock, 'Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History', in Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (Basingstoke, 1991).

²⁹ Konstantin Dierks, 'The Social Practice of Letter Writing in America, 1750–1800', unpublished paper, presented to the Graduate Seminar in History 1680–1815, University of Oxford, Mar. 1999. I am grateful to the author for his permission to cite it here.

³⁰ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 1–12.

them) should not be neglected, early modern articulations of masculinity can nonetheless be broadly categorized as patriarchal, anti-patriarchal (in terms of deliberate counter-codes), or as loosely configured alternatives.

The social practice of manhood in its varied forms is pieced together primarily from court records, ranging in scope from the regulatory activities of London livery companies, quarter sessions, and borough courts, to the disputes brought before ecclesiastical courts, the university courts, and the Court of Exchequer. Although they are not straightforwardly representative of everyday life, court records nonetheless provide the broadest access to a wide range of historical actors, especially given the intensity of litigation (petty, criminal, and civil) in England between 1560 and 1640. It is clearly important to be alert to the ways in which such records were shaped by jurisdictional and procedural demands; depositions (the formal account of witnesses' statements) in particular principally supply evidence of the ways in which stories were narrated in the context of a courtroom rather than direct statements of fact or fixed values.³¹ Yet the ideals and identities invoked by men and women in court are nonetheless suggestive, and depositions also contain a wealth of incidental detail pertaining to routine existence, thus providing the closest available point of contact with the lived experience of many early modern English men and women whose voices would not otherwise have entered the historical record.³²

At the heart of Part II lies a case study of Cambridge, primarily derived from the court records of the university. These neglected sources are extraordinarily rich owing to the extent of the university's jurisdiction in Cambridge and to the civil law procedure employed by its courts.³³ By the later sixteenth century the university's jurisdiction was at its broadest, stretching far beyond its own members into the moral, commercial, and criminal lives of many townspeople. In addition to upholding its regulatory authority over the market and various petty crimes, the university was entitled to hear all personal pleas (except felony or mayhem, and in suits involving landed property) brought by or against its members and its servants. The cases heard by the university courts therefore spanned a wide cross-section of business that elsewhere would have been separately administered by several different courts. In addition, because, like church

³¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1988); Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, chs. 2, 7.

³² Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 1.

³³ For a detailed account of the university's jurisdiction, the legal procedures it employed, and levels of litigation see Alexandra Shepard, 'Legal Learning and the Cambridge University Courts, c.1560–1640', *Journal of Legal History*, 19 (1998); ead., 'Litigation and Locality: The Cambridge University Courts, 1560–1640', *Urban History* (forthcoming).

courts, they employed civil law procedure, cases were tried on the basis of written rather than oral evidence. This means that depositions were generated not only in defamation and testamentary disputes (elsewhere similarly produced by church courts) but also in cases of debt and assault (elsewhere heard orally—and thus never recorded—in borough courts and quarter sessions). Witnesses' statements therefore provide unusually rich detail of a broad range of disputes all heard within a single legal setting. From the 1580s the vice-chancellor and his commissary, each holding weekly sessions, were handling hundreds of cases every year. The bulk were suits of debt or injury brought by or against Cambridge inhabitants who were in some way (often tenuously) connected to the university. By the 1630s, biennial levels of one case per household are not implausible. Although households were not evenly represented, plaintiffs were nonetheless drawn from a broad social spectrum, in proportions which, apart from the under-representation of labourers, roughly matched the overall occupational structure of the town.³⁴

The extent to which any case study is representative is an inherent problem, but it is perhaps an especially pressing issue with Cambridge. The presence of the university generated structural and social peculiarities which were unmatched except in Oxford and parts of London. A disproportionate number of comparatively elite young men created an abnormally top-heavy social structure, a greater-than-usual demographic preponderance of youths, and a distorted sex-ratio. University men (except heads of colleges) were expected to be celibate, and they lived in an almost exclusively male world. Furthermore, it could be argued that their presence and behaviour in the town, particularly in regard to the university's extensive powers, generated levels of conflict unparalleled in degree or kind. While all of this might seem to offset the merits of the university's exceptionally rich archive, Cambridge's peculiarities are actually extremely informative. By comparing the concerns of town and gown brought before the university courts, it is possible to discern ways in which meanings of manhood were linked to differences of age

³⁴ Of 716 cases entered in the act books of the vice-chancellor's and commissary's courts between 1632 and 1634, roughly 10% were brought by university members. If the estimated population of the town in the early 1630s (7,750) is divided by Nigel Goose's estimate of the average household size in Cambridge (4.13), and the number of cases entered in the act books excluding 10% is divided by this figure, the result is 0.33. The university's jurisdiction extended over roughly one-third of the households in Cambridge, suggesting biennial levels of one case per household. In this sample, approximately 450 households were involved in initiating the 716 suits. For population figures in Cambridge see Nigel Goose, 'Household Size and Structure in Early-Stuart Cambridge', *Social History*, 5 (1980), 353, 363. For comparable levels of litigation in borough courts, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), 216–42.

and social status. The presence of scholars amongst litigants and witnesses provides a highly visible status differential which, when systematically traced, reveals how different notions of manhood both competed and overlapped according to context. In addition, the importance of the universities in early modern England should not be overlooked. Expanding rapidly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries they became the training ground of the country's political and clerical elite, whose consequent bearing and attitudes were carried far beyond the city limits of Oxford and Cambridge.³⁵ Finally, the state had a vested interest in the universities and their products. Directives from the Crown treated the universities as 'nurseries to bringe up youthe in the knowledge and feare of God and in all manner of good learnynge and vertuous education . . . where by the state and common wealthe maie receive hereafter greate good'.³⁶ The universities were thus treated as bastions of idealized manhood whose orderly government held national significance.

Even though they were not always typical, the experiences of university men cannot therefore be written off as insignificant. They should also not be allowed to obscure the many ways in which Cambridge was similar to other early modern urban communities. Categorized as a 'second-rank' town it was an important centre of trade situated at the meeting point of major highways and served by the river Cam.³⁷ Linked to London, King's Lynn, York, Coventry, Newmarket, and Huntingdon, and with a favourable agricultural hinterland, it was a regional centre for the exchange of grain, fish, coal, hogs, and horses. It also hosted two important annual fairs: Barnwell Fair, which drew traders from a regional level, and Sturbridge Fair, which was of national significance. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a period of expansion for Cambridge, as elsewhere in England. Between the 1560s and 1620s

³⁵ Mark H. Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1588–1642* (Oxford, 1959); Lawrence Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England, 1560–1640', *Past and Present*, 28 (1964); id. (ed.), *The University in Society*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1974), vol. i, ch. 1. For the social status of students during this period of expansion see Joan Simon, 'The Social Origins of Cambridge Students, 1603–1640', *Past and Present*, 26 (1963); David Cressy, 'Education and Literacy in London and East Anglia 1580–1700', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1972), ch. 7. For subsequent careers, see John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1922–54).

³⁶ Privy Council to the University of Cambridge, 29 July 1593, in *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, ed. Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1989), i, 348. See also Hugh Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Universities and Society in Pre-industrial Britain, 1500–1700* (London, 1970).

³⁷ Goose, 'Household Size and Structure', 351, with reference to the classification of towns outlined in Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (Oxford, 1976), 25–32.

the town's population roughly trebled, largely as a consequence of rapid immigration, which generated acute concerns about overcrowding, poverty, and plague typical of this period.³⁸ Cambridge should not therefore be regarded as fundamentally different or cut-off from the rest of early modern England: it shared similar economic and social circumstances with other provincial towns, and its place within extensive trading networks permitted its citizens broader—sometimes national—horizons.

Many of the resultant preoccupations of Cambridge inhabitants were represented in the litigation they brought to the university courts. The majority of litigation heard by the vice-chancellor and commissary involved townsmen and women who were disproportionately represented (in comparison to university members) amongst the large numbers of litigants resorting to the university courts for relatively cheap and speedy justice.³⁹ Admittedly, some of these cases were born of tensions between town and gown, although the nature and extent of town–gown conflict has been both oversimplified and exaggerated, and was secondary to most disputes.⁴⁰ The vast majority of actions brought before the university involved petty wranglings between townspeople typical of day-to-day community relations that would have been clearly recognizable to men and women throughout England.⁴¹ As corroboration, evidence from a broad geographical spread and a wide range of different courts has been consulted and is included alongside the Cambridge case study in order to test its findings and to set them into wider relief. Nonetheless, the Cambridge material occupies the foreground, since it affords the sort of rich and intricate detail necessary to reconstruct the mundane processes of asserting identity within a local context.

The meanings of manhood implicit in social practice were enormously

³⁸ M. C. Siraut, 'Some Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Cambridge under Elizabeth I', unpublished M.Litt. thesis (Cambridge, 1978); Nigel Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects of Provincial Towns: A Comparative Study of Cambridge, Colchester and Reading, c.1500–1700', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1984); id., 'Household Size and Structure'.

³⁹ University members were involved in 16.7% of cases heard by the university courts between 1580 and 1640, while the university comprised roughly one-third of the total population of Cambridge. For a precise breakdown of the distribution of suits, see Shepard, 'Litigation and Locality'.

⁴⁰ Rowland Parker, *Town and Gown: The 700 Years' War in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1983). Cf. Alexandra Shepard, 'Contesting Communities? "Town" and "Gown" in Cambridge, c.1560–1640', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000).

⁴¹ For general accounts of comparable litigation in early modern England see, e.g., J. A. Sharpe, "'Such Disagreement betwix Neighbours': Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England', in John Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987); Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*.

varied, and contingent upon age, status, and context in ways which often competed with each other and clashed with patriarchal expectations of order. The most explicit counter-codes of manhood were expressed in the rites of youthful misrule. Chapter 4 examines the ways in which young men contested patriarchal notions of manhood rooted in thrift, moderation, and self-control with a culture of excess. Youthful rioting, drinking, gambling, and sexual prowess was largely performed for and validated by their peers, and this chapter will focus on the fraternal bonds which facilitated young men's inversions of patriarchal norms. While these links were sufficiently important to overcome distinctions of social status, they were also brittle and fleeting because of fears surrounding male intimacy. An element of competition was therefore present between men even at this most homosocial phase of the life course. Context-related tensions between codes of manhood that were more incidental, but no less complex, are suggested by the broader patterns of male violence explored in Chapter 5. Violence was both a tool for enforcing the patriarchal imperatives of household and social order and one of the primary means of undermining them, either by lending weight to counter-codes of manhood, or, more commonly, featuring in assertions of manhood claimed independently of (and without reference to) a patriarchal agenda. As a form of regulation and correction, as a demonstration of male strength and authority, and as a method of territorial demarcation, violence conferred manhood in ways which both bolstered and countered patriarchal codes of order and which also served alternative codes of manhood according to the status and context of those involved.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the ways in which men asserted and disputed honesty, credit, and worth in the course of slander and debt litigation. While the insults alleged in defamation suits suggest that reputation was more multifaceted for men than for women, there was nonetheless a considerable degree of overlap in their respective concerns, with the substance of suits depending on age and status as well as gender. It is also clear that male litigants were less concerned with proving their honesty either in purely sexual or economic terms than with disputing their social standing through various points of comparison with other men. Evidence from debt litigation confirms the extent to which male status was competitively gauged between men. Patriarchal imperatives of male provision and self-sufficient mastery were regularly invoked, suggesting that appraisals of manhood rooted in economic independence, and heading and maintaining a household, were commonplace. However, evidence of women and children's extensive (and sometimes primary) contributions to the household economy suggests that patriarchal manhood in these

terms was a privilege which many men could not afford, if not a chimera. In addition, from the later sixteenth century, increasing numbers of men and women were either excluded from householding positions or chose to adopt alternative family strategies. For these men and women patriarchal behavioural codes were irrelevant, except as the substance of social critiques levelled by their 'betters', suggesting the emergence of deepening fissures between concepts of manhood along class lines.

The final chapter returns to questions of age. Old age often compounded class distinctions, and, in contrast with youth, it was more likely to be a period of gender convergence than a leveller of social status. The experiences of old men, and their continued access either to patriarchal dividends or to competing codes of manhood, varied considerably according to means and physical capacity. There is considerable evidence of older men continuing to hold office, and to support themselves and their households, into very advanced years. Others pursued alternative survival strategies in common with younger men of limited means. Many, however, resumed positions as dependants, either through retirement arrangements with kin, or by resorting to charity and poor relief, limiting, if not precluding, access to the autonomy commonly associated with manhood.

There was, then, enormous variation in men's experiences and assertions of male identity. This book seeks to assess the associated meanings of manhood in early modern England and their complex relationship with patriarchy. It pursues a multi-relational model of gender identities that goes beyond the male–female dichotomy and which does not assume that men failed to achieve manhood if they did not reap the full patriarchal dividend. This enables a fuller exploration of the ways in which gender interacted with other determinants of status to shape the social distribution of power. While there is no denying that men were the primary beneficiaries of patriarchal dictates, many also claimed manhood in ways which actively resisted, indirectly undermined, or simply ignored them. The consequent disparities between meanings of manhood were most clearly linked to variables of age and marital and social status, although they were also profoundly contingent on context and therefore often contradictory. Tracing such links affords a fuller assessment of the impact of patriarchy in early modern England, as well as the considerable scope for manoeuvre beyond its dictates. And by identifying the variations in meanings of manhood, and their relation to the uneven distribution of patriarchal dividends, it becomes possible to construct a more sophisticated model of early modern social change which takes account of the variations within, as well as between, the sexes.