

Inevitably, the size and complexity of Millar's project means that some areas require further investigation. Much of her interpretation rests on the nature of the evil spirits, or "familiar," that feature in the pamphlets. In the chapter on these creatures she acknowledges their fluid and problematic representation, while suggesting that they originated in the belief that the devil could appear in animal form. This may be true, but questions and ambiguities remain. It is hard to explain why this very particular manifestation of the demonic—small animals that suckled on human bodies—existed only in the context of witchcraft. Prudently, Millar points out that the precise nature of witches' spirits was less important to contemporaries than it is to historians. Her broader argument that these unpleasant creatures had diabolical characteristics is well made.

Ultimately, this book points to the messy and complicated relationship between learned ideas about evil spirits and the beliefs of ordinary people. By reassessing one of the major sources for English witch beliefs, Millar also offers an important and refreshing addition to scholarship on the subject. For this she must be commended, and deserves to be widely read.

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*Love, Madness, and Scandal: The Life of Frances Coke Villiers, Viscountess Purbeck.*  
Johanna Luthman.

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This fluently written, well-researched, and thoroughly enjoyable book tells the remarkable story of Frances Coke, daughter of the lawyer Sir Edward Coke, and unfortunate wife of John Villiers, Viscount Purbeck, elder brother of the royal favorite Buckingham. Frances's story reads like a lurid Jacobean tragedy—a tale of marital discord and financial chicanery, mental disturbance and illicit magic, adulterous sex and political intrigue. And it is a story dominated by tenacious aristocratic women who flouted patriarchal norms to assert an embattled agency, exploiting all that custom, privilege, or law would allow.

In 1617, Sir Edward Coke tried to buy his way back into royal favor by marrying his fifteen-year-old daughter Frances to the brother of James I's beloved favorite. It proved a disastrous match. It cost Sir Edward thousands of pounds and what remained of his volatile relationship with his second wife, the formidable Lady Elizabeth Hatton. It left their daughter with a husband who was already in precarious health. By the early 1620s, John Villiers had succumbed to a crippling melancholy punctuated by fits of manic frenzy, and his illness left Frances to the tender mercies of his family, who were eager to protect John but keener still to protect the huge dowry they had extorted from Coke. Forcibly separated from her ailing husband, Frances began an affair with Sir Robert Howard, a younger son of the Earl of Suffolk, and late in 1624 she gave birth to his son. When news

of the affair became public, and whispers circulated of the lovers' dealings with the witch John Lambe, Buckingham intervened. Determined to avenge his family's honor—and to ensure that the child never inherited the Villiers fortune—Buckingham hauled his sister-in-law and her lover before the ecclesiastical High Commission on charges of adultery and bastardy. Sir Robert refused to swear the *ex officio* oath in court and was excommunicated. Frances denied the affair and insisted the child was Purbeck's.

When the High Commission eventually issued its verdict in November 1627, Frances was found guilty of adultery and sentenced to make a public penance. Determined to avoid the humiliation, Frances fled London, eventually retiring to her lover's isolated estate. When Frances returned to London in 1634, Buckingham was long dead but neither Charles I nor his archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, was ready to forgive her brazen defiance of ecclesiastical and moral order. Early in 1635, the High Commission reopened the case, but Frances refused to leave her cell to attend proceedings; before she could be punished, she bribed her jailer and escaped, disguised in men's clothing. This time she reached Paris, where she remained until 1641. On her return to England, Frances petitioned the House of Lords for redress and to establish her son's legitimacy, but her petition was lost in the unfolding political crisis. Frances would die in Royalist Oxford in 1645.

Luthman very skillfully pieces together the many moving parts of this convoluted story; her engrossing book, intended for a general audience, deserves to find one. But the Purbeck case still cries out for a more fully realized microhistorical analysis. Luthman recognizes the case's rich gender politics, but never undertakes the kind of in-depth gendered analysis that has enlivened studies of other early Stuart aristocratic scandals. She treats Purbeck's madness sympathetically, but does not explore contemporary understandings of mental illness, and apparently misses the notes on his case in the papers of his physician, Richard Napier. The Purbeck scandals also demand richer political contextualization. Luthman is attuned to some aspects of public commentary on the scandal, but she does not fully explore how the case inflected (and was inflected by) the vicious 1620s debates around Buckingham. Verse libelers satirized both the Coke-Hatton and the Coke-Villiers marriages, exploiting their discord for political ends, and Purbeck's madness and wayward wife significantly damaged Buckingham's reputation in the crisis years of 1622–23 and 1626–28. The scandal's protagonists understood these broader political resonances: Frances's attempts to present herself as a victim of Villiers's greed surely played upon contemporaries' familiarity with other allegations about the rapacious "Villierian tribe." Scandals are fun to read about because they upend norms. Because they upend norms, they also open windows onto neglected corners of the past.

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