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## A War on Women? The Malleus Maleficarum and the Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe

Morgan L. Stringer

*University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College*

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**A War on Women? The *Malleus Maleficarum* and the  
Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe**

by

Morgan L. Stringer

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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Approved by

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Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey R. Watt

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Reader: Dr. Marc H. Lerner

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Reader: Dr. Debra Brown Young

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the topic of gender and witchcraft, specifically why women were so heavily represented in witchcraft trials. The demonology text, *The Malleus Maleficarum* was analyzed. Several other demonological texts were also analyzed and then compared to one another regarding their statements about women, men, and witchcraft. Then historiography pertaining to gender and witchcraft were analyzed and critiqued. The *Malleus Maleficarum* contains a high degree of misogyny, but it presents an extreme misogynistic view that is not present in other demonology texts. The argument that the Early Modern European Witch-Hunts were a war on women fails to account for these texts' lack of extreme misogyny and other aspects of the witch-hunts, such as the men, who were accused of witchcraft. Early Modern European witch-hunts were not a war on women. Western European witchcraft beliefs made it more likely that a woman would be accused of witchcraft.

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## Introduction: A Background to the *Malleus Maleficarum* and Witch-Hunts

According to the latest estimates, 45,000 people were executed for witchcraft in Early Modern Europe.<sup>1</sup> The peak of the witch hunts continues to fascinate historians after decades of debate. Many questions arise from this period. What caused the witch-hunts? From this field of study another important question arises. Why were women so heavily represented in witchcraft persecutions? Eighty percent of people charged with witchcraft in Early Modern Europe were women.<sup>2</sup> Women were four times more likely to be executed for witchcraft than men.<sup>3</sup> These staggering figures demand an explanation. Historians argue the witch craze was a result of socioeconomic inequalities, envy, as a way to make sense of unexplainable tragedy, or the result of religious and political conflict.<sup>4</sup> Each of these interpretations should be studied in conjunction with gender studies to find answers. Most historians agree that there is no single answer why or how the witch-hunts began or for that matter an answer to the question: why women were targeted.

Some feminist historians argue that the witch craze was a systematic war on women. These historians point to the *Malleus Maleficarum* as one of the main influences on witchcraft beliefs. The *Malleus Maleficarum* was published in modern-day Germany in 1487 by two Dominican monks: Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. Since the work is saturated with misogynistic views, it is easy to see how this argument emerged. Therefore, a historian must

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<sup>1</sup> "The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe," *Magic, Ritual & Witchcraft*, 2 no. 1 (Summer 2007): 101-103.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey R Watt. "Witchcraft." Class Lecture, Reformation Europe, 1517-1648. From University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS. April 28, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Niek Koning, "Witchcraft Beliefs and Witch Hunts," *Human Nature* 24, no. 2 (June 2013): 158-181.

analyze the work's true impact in order to determine what degree the *Malleus's* misogyny played in the witch-hunts. Was the *Malleus Maleficarum* an accurate reflection of Early Modern European authorities' worldview, or did this treatise represent an extremist view even for the time period? In order to answer this question the *Malleus Maleficarum* must not only be analyzed but also compared with other influential demonological treatises. By comparing Kramer's views on women to those of other demonological treatises' views, we can evaluate the degree, of misogyny found in the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the witch-hunts. Analysis alone will not answer the questions about the role gender played in the witch-hunts. It is necessary for historians to examine the evidence in historical context. The argument that the witch-hunts were a systematic war on women falls flat when these historians fail to give credence to the Early Modern belief in witchcraft. Early Modern Europeans truly believed agents of the Devil lived among them. These historians also dismiss men prosecuted for witchcraft as anomalies. I argue that the misogynistic views of the *Malleus Maleficarum* represent an extreme worldview about women, because in no other treatise does an author emphasize that witches were women as much as the *Malleus* did. Furthermore, I propose that women were overrepresented in the witch-hunts, because Western European witchcraft beliefs provided a framework in which women were statistically more likely to be accused of witchcraft due to their gender roles.

## Chapter 1: The *Malleus Maleficarum*

The *Malleus Maleficarum* was published in 1487 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. It is widely believed that Kramer was the main author of the work, and Sprenger is listed as a co-author due to his higher reputation.<sup>5</sup> The work was written after Pope Innocent VIII wrote a bull, giving the men permission to prosecute witches in northern Germany as heretics.<sup>6</sup> The work is saturated with misogynistic views and the idea that witches are almost invariably women. This work led to a debate amongst historians. Did these misogynistic views reflect the attitudes of Early Modern Europe, or was this misogyny extreme? Was the *Malleus Maleficarum* the reason why so many women were prosecuted in Western Europe?

In order to answer these questions, one must examine the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The *Malleus Maleficarum* was certainly misogynistic; however, other factors were involved in the disproportionate accusations against women. Social changes, religious tensions, philosophical debates on the very nature of women, and Biblical doctrine all played a role. The *Malleus Maleficarum* influenced other inquisitors, but its extreme misogynistic views were rarely replicated in other works on witchcraft. Also, in areas with an Inquisition, such as Spain and Italy, Kramer's influence was not nearly as influential as it was in Germany, where local courts with little to no oversight had jurisdiction over witchcraft trials.<sup>7</sup> Also, it is evident that not all areas prosecuted women more than men for witchcraft. In some areas, such as Estonia and

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<sup>5</sup> Watt, "Witchcraft."

<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Ellen Guiley, "*Malleus Maleficarum*," in *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1999), 220.

<sup>7</sup> Watt, "Witchcraft."



Iceland, men were more likely to be prosecuted.<sup>8</sup> Historians have often ignored male witches in their studies; however, by examining texts to determine what they said about men and women, historians can gain a new perspective on how gender related to witchcraft. The issue of witchcraft is far too complex to be explained as merely a war on women. The *Malleus Maleficarum* contains a plethora of sexist views. Kramer had an obsession with the sexual purity of women, their “inherent evil nature,” and their inferiority to males. Examining the misogyny within the *Malleus* in the context of the time period is key to understanding just how prevalent these ideas about women were. Kramer claimed there were more female witches than male witches based on his own personal experience prosecuting witches in Germany.<sup>9</sup> Kramer stated different people gave various reasons as to why women were more likely to practice witchcraft than men.<sup>10</sup> Many historians point to Kramer’s misogyny and belief that witches were women as evidence that the idea of a male witch was not possible.<sup>11</sup> However, Kramer stated witches were *more likely* to be women, not that witches were exclusively women. Also, it is clear that late medieval and early modern people believed in the existence of male witches, because many male witches were indicted, tried, and executed for witchcraft. In Stuart Clark’s analysis of witchcraft trials, he proposes that the idea of a male witch was an impossible concept for early modern theorists.<sup>12</sup> Clark argues that male witches were only targeted by association to female witches.<sup>13</sup> However, even Kramer, an extreme misogynist, believed male witches could act as independent agents, or he would have never used the phrase *most likely*, nor would he devote an entire section

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<sup>8</sup> Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Heinrich Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, Trans. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 74.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Apps and Gow, *Male Witches*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

of *The Malleus* to the issue of male witches. All of these facts must be considered, but by no means can Kramer's misogyny be downplayed.

Throughout the text, Kramer listed reasons for his belief that women were more likely to be witches, including his claim that women cannot practice moderation; they are either all evil or all good. He also insists they are also more superstitious. This superstitious nature caused weak faith, which the Devil could easily prey on.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the first woman, Eve, was made from a curved bone, a rib; she is “an unfinished animal, she is always being deceptive.”<sup>15</sup> This passage marks a clear bestialization of women. Bestializing women is a common theme throughout works of all types during this time period.<sup>16</sup> There was a serious debate during this time on whether women were human in the same way as men or if they were even a completely different species.<sup>17</sup> Kramer took this debate to extremes when he said that, woman is not only an animal, but an unfinished one. This makes woman distinctly lower than even the animals in the Great Chain of Being. Kramer mentioned witch-midwives who devour children or sacrifice them to evil spirits. When Kramer referred to devouring children, he wrote: “those who are indisputably witches are accustomed, against the inclination of every animal (at least with the exception of the wolf) to devour and feast on young children.”<sup>18</sup> Once again women are bestialized when they are compared to animals, but Kramer says the witch-midwife is even more bestial than actual animals, which suggests that animals, with the exception of the wolf, are considered less bestial than these midwives.

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<sup>14</sup>Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 74.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Karen Raber, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Honors Shakespeare Lecture, University of Mississippi, September 18, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 92.

Kramer cited other scholars for his belief in the moral failings of women. He cited Theophrastus who stated women's memories fail, so they are impulsive and have no loyalty. He also referred to the works of St. Jerome, Cicero, and Seneca, who illustrated what happens when women are in positions of authority over men. Among the examples are the fall of Troy due to Helen and the fall of Judea and Rome, for which Kramer also blamed women. Cato and Valerius Maximus asserted that the world would be more improved and secure without women. Kramer went on to compare a woman's voice to a siren that kills men by spending their money, stealing their strength, and forcing them to abandon their faith. Kramer cited Scripture again to support his views on why women are inherently evil and sexually licentious. He quoted Proverbs, saying "there are three things which are never satisfied etc., and a fourth which never says 'Enough,' namely the mouth of the womb." Kramer used this verse to argue that witchcraft is the result of women's insatiable lust. This is why women who are "particularly hot to fulfill their corrupt lusts, such as adulteresses, fornicators, and the mistresses of rich and powerful men" are most likely to practice witchcraft.<sup>19</sup>

The Biblical passage used by Kramer, actually the text reads, "There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!' the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, 'Enough!'"<sup>20</sup> As one can see, Kramer has taken it upon himself to reinterpret the scripture. The "entrance to the womb" is not even listed among things that are never satisfied; instead it is the barren womb, because it is unable to produce offspring. In fact, the fourth thing which never says "Enough!" is fire, not the female sexual organs, as Kramer claimed. Kramer used an unreliable Biblical translation in

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<sup>19</sup> Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 76.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

defending his views. It is quite possible Kramer's contemporaries noticed this error in Biblical translation. It may not have thrown out the *Malleus* as an unreliable source entirely, but it is quite possible that this would cause skepticism toward some of his views.

Kramer used language to perpetuate his views as well. He analyzed the nature of women through the origin of the word *femina*, and he traced it to the words *fe*, meaning "faith" and *minus*, meaning "less," concluding that it meant "less faith."<sup>21</sup> (It is possible Kramer came to this conclusion, because of the *Summa Moralis* written by St. Antonius of Florence in 1477. St. Antonius wrote false faith was possibly where the word *femina* derived, since *femeno* means less in faith.)<sup>22</sup> Kramer stated women are so named *femina*, because they inherently have less faith than men, which causes women to deny their faith more readily.<sup>23</sup> Denying faith became an important theme in witchcraft trials. During the early modern period, witchcraft was a crime not only because of the harm involved in *maleficia*, or malicious magical acts,<sup>24</sup> but more importantly it was an act of apostasy as witches supposedly renounced God and worshipped the Devil. I propose that through this line of thought witchcraft became a crime of heresy because of the repeated theme of witches renouncing God in favor of the Devil. Kramer's other language choices throughout the text also reveal his extreme misogyny.

Kramer did not believe witches should be called *maleficorum*, which is a masculine and gender neutral noun, but rather *maleficarum*, because women had the "better claim to it."<sup>25</sup> The title of the treatise itself, *Malleus Maleficarum*, indicates Kramer believed witchcraft was a female

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 75, n. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 76

<sup>24</sup> Rosemary Ellen Guiley. "Maleficia," in *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1999), 219.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 75

crime. In Latin, the masculine plural is used when describing a mixed group, even if the majority of the group is female.<sup>26</sup> Using a feminine plural indicates the entire group of witches is entirely female. In several parts of the text, Kramer defended his belief that witchcraft was a female crime. Kramer thanked God for saving males from the “great disgrace” of practicing witchcraft.<sup>27</sup> He believed males were granted this “immunity and exemption,” because Jesus was born and suffered as a man.<sup>28</sup> *Maleficia*, in Kramer’s view, is an exclusively female crime. Men could resist the temptations of demons, because men use reasoning, “in which men are far superior to women.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, women are allegedly eager to make diabolical pacts.<sup>30</sup> However, Kramer did believe that men practice a form of witchcraft. This certainly does not downplay the extreme misogyny throughout the treatise, but according to Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, historians have largely neglected this section. The fact that Kramer, the author of possibly one of the most misogynistic texts ever written, was writing about males practicing witchcraft speaks volumes. I argue that male witches were seen as a possibility by demonologists. However, Kramer did believe the types of magic practiced tended to be different according to gender.

Kramer’s word choices also belittled women. He gave an account of one woman, who provoked her husband into hitting her. Once he touched her, he was struck to the ground, lost all senses, and became deathly ill. Kramer believed that this woman was justly hit, because he hit her, and that she used witchcraft as retaliation. It is clear that Kramer believed so called “querulous” women were capable of witchcraft. One reason a woman may use witchcraft against another is that “women are silly when they quarrel with one another.” Kramer uses the phrase,

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<sup>26</sup> Apps and Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 76.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

*mulierculae*, a Latin phrase meaning “silly young girls,” when he refers to young girls and witchcraft. “Evil spirits can observe silly, young girls who are more given to curiosity, and so more easily led astray by elderly workers of harmful magic.”<sup>31</sup> Old and young women alike are criticized. Kramer states that elderly women cause these “silly, young girls” to practice magic. Kramer states one way these elderly women lead these girls astray is by corrupting their sexual purity. Two witches in Ravensburg confessed the Devil instructed the women to “convert” as many “holy virgins and widows” as possible, claimed Kramer.<sup>32</sup> Witches, according to Kramer, especially had power over sexuality and procreation, because God permitted this due to the high corruptibility with procreation as opposed to “other human acts.”<sup>33</sup> Kramer claimed evil spirits could cause a man to freeze, so that he could not have sex, or conversely, could “inflame someone to the act.”<sup>34</sup> Evil spirits are also blamed for impotence and “blocking the channels of the semen.” Kramer claimed men were more affected sexually by evil spirits because blocking movement from one place to another and obstruction was easier for evil spirits to do in men. Kramer also said that, since more women are superstitious, it is possible that evil spirits are more eager to target men, because men are more difficult to tempt. He also said this spurned married women, so both partners committed adultery.<sup>35</sup> This passage makes it very clear that witches can be male, but Kramer still makes the argument that women are more immoral and sexually immoral than men, especially in regard to sexuality, which is a reoccurring theme in the *Malleus*.

Kramer did acknowledge that women’s fertility can be harmed by acts of *maleficia*, but he stressed the harm a witch can do to male sexuality even more. Kramer recognized there are

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 83.

natural causes of impotence, but he stated if a man is erect and cannot perform then the cause was *maleficia*. He also affirmed that it was possible for one man to perform with one woman and not another. Citing the Canons he maintained that harmful magic when he states harmful magic can cause bareness and miscarriages in women. Kramer declared that anyone responsible for this type of magic is a murderer.<sup>36</sup> He also argued that the Devil chooses particular women to punish, and God offers his protection from the Devil to certain women. Kramer was now subtly shifting the blame from evil spirits to the women affected. By contrast, it is likely Kramer could see certain women being afflicted, because they are being tested in their faith, or being attacked due to their righteousness, so the Devil will work harder to turn them from God. Nevertheless, this still means that certain women are protected by God, while God allows other women to be afflicted in Kramer's view. This heavily implied that women, who were not pious enough, were indirectly responsible for their affliction. Though, it appears that even pious women were not safe from *maleficia* in Kramer's opinion.

One of the more bizarre claims made in *The Malleus Maleficarum* is that witches can trick men into believing that their penises have disappeared. Kramer introduces this idea by stating that God punishes people, especially in procreation.<sup>37</sup> Kramer concludes that through demons, witches can cause men to believe that their penis has disappeared in one of two ways. The first way is the Devil can deceive man's senses and perception. The second is a conjuring trick, whereby a man's eyes can be used to delude him into thinking something is other than it actually is. Kramer added that this phenomenon often happens to adulterers and fornicators. These statements reveal that Kramer believed a man's sexual sins can cause them to be afflicted,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 84.

rather than Kramer simply placing all the blame for the affliction on the “inherent evil nature” of one’s sex. This belief also reveals Kramer’s fear that a witch could destroy masculinity and upset patriarchal authority through castration. This idea is further supported, because Kramer believed this castration could be permanent. Kramer’s best remedy for this condition is for the afflicted man to show penance, and then God could send an angel to constrain the demon to heal the afflicted man, but the angel cannot prevent the witch from exerting her powers. It is interesting that while the angel can constrain an evil spirit, it cannot constrain a witch.<sup>38</sup> This also speaks to why Kramer thought it was absolutely necessary to eradicate witches. Even angels were powerless to stop witches, so it was the courts’ responsibility to purge witches from Christian society.

Kramer wrote that he knew of a man, who was cursed with this ailment. The man sought advice from a woman who told him that his former lover had cursed him, and that he should react violently. Later the cursed man found his former lover, assaulted her, and “wound a towel around her neck until her face turned black.” Afterwards, “the witch” agreed to heal him.<sup>39</sup> This approval of violence against women reveals Kramer’s extreme sexism. The woman, who gave the afflicted man the advice to use violence against the witch, shows women approving violence against other women. Women’s support of the patriarchal system, by violence if necessary, is ideal for Kramer’s perspective.

It is clear that Kramer did not just hate witches because they were enemies of Christianity, but because they threatened masculinity and patriarchal authority. But we must keep in mind that this was Kramer’s perspective, not a mainstream idea.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 150.



Kramer further obsessed over female sexuality in his passages about midwives. According to Kramer, evil spirits take action against fetuses within the womb and babies usually through women, not men, according to Kramer.<sup>40</sup> Not only is prevention of sex an act of *maleficia*, but it is *maleficia* to prevent conception or to cause a miscarriage.<sup>41</sup> Kramer said the majority of those who performed this type of *maleficia* were midwives. Kramer claimed penitent witches and many others had told him, “No one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives. When they don’t kill the children, they take the babies out of the room, as though they are going to do something out of doors, lift them up in the air, and offer them to evil spirits.”<sup>42</sup> Childbirth, sexuality, and conception were highly misunderstood in this time period. Women were considered head of the affairs of childbirth and the rearing of children. Any mysterious happenings in these spheres would have been blamed on women. Midwives were responsible for ensuring a healthy birth and ensuring no witchcraft was involved in the birthing process. If anything were to happen to the infant or mother, the midwife would serve as an easy target for accusations. I argue that since these women, who were closest to the child, were blamed when a child became unexpectedly sick or died, a pattern emerged. People took notice of the number of women connected with the death of these infants, which led to the creation of the stereotype of the female witch. Kramer blamed midwives because of their role in female fertility and sexuality, since infants often died in infancy for unknown reasons, the explanation that a midwife cursed the infant seemed feasible. In fact, witches killing infants is a consistent theme throughout the *Malleus* and other treatises.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 93.

Kramer claimed the Devil ordered witches, especially midwives, to kill as many children as possible.<sup>43</sup> Witches also reportedly made ointments out of babies' bodies and ate children. One man testified that his wife drank liquid, which was used to boil babies. This, the man claimed, gave her "knowledge of all evil magic."<sup>44</sup> So, not only did Kramer believe that witches killed infants, but he also accused witches of cannibalistic practices, which in turn, increased their own evil powers.

Witches were considered evil not only for allegedly killing or even cannibalizing babies. It was believed that unbaptized infants went to Hell. Therefore, a witch who killed an infant was directly responsible for sending that infant to Hell. The afterlife was an extremely important aspect of religion. The belief in an afterlife gave one hope of being in presence of God, being rewarded for the good deeds performed on earth, and of there being a better place than Early Modern Europe. Heaven had no mortality, plagues, or famines. The death of an unbaptized infant meant this child had no hope for salvation, but rather faced an afterlife of anguish, condemnation, and separation from God for all eternity. The witch was even more heinous, because she sent babies to Hell and eternal punishment.

Kramer gave another example of witches killing infants based on an investigation by the Inquisitor of Como of a case of a child taken from its cradle. The father searched for the child, and he saw some women gathered at night. The father believed the women were killing a child, drinking its bodily fluids, and eating the child's flesh. As a result, the inquisitor burned forty-one witches in one year, according to Kramer. The rest of the witches fled to Lord Sigismund, Archduke of Austria, described as one of the skeptics about witches' activities in Ulrich

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 130.

Molitor's *De laniis et phitoconis mulierbus*.<sup>45</sup> While Molitor portrayed him as a skeptic, Kramer described him as a protector of witches. This heavily implies that Kramer desired to instill his belief that a ruler who does nothing about witches, or is skeptical about witchcraft is on the witches' side. He presented a dualistic line of thought that one is either on the side of witches and the Devil or on the side of Christians and God. I argue that Kramer also presents dualistic thought in his gendering of witchcraft. Witches are females, sexually immoral, stupid, and sinful. Men are largely immune from this crime because their sexuality is more positive, and they are logical and are made in the true image of God. However, he did contradict himself when he stated that male witches existed, which undercuts this false dichotomy. Therefore, one cannot argue that the reason women were so heavily prosecuted was because of a dualistic worldview that women were evil and men were good. Rather, there was a dualistic view between the Catholic Church and heresy.

Kramer's obsessiveness with female sexuality and fertility does not stop there. Kramer clearly believed that sexually immoral women were more likely to be witches. He wrote that young girls were more likely to be tempted towards witchcraft because evil spirits would use their carnal desires to tempt them to witchcraft. Sexually immoral women were not the only females who could be tempted to witchcraft, according to *The Malleus Maleficarum*. The Devil also allegedly tempted virgins because of their purity. Corrupting a maiden's purity would be an even greater affront to God. So, the Devil would transform himself into a young man to seduce these young women.<sup>46</sup> By seducing these virgins into performing sexual acts, the Devil would then seduce them into performing witchcraft and worshipping him. This passage further

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Footnote on 93.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 123.

demonstrates Kramer's extreme misogyny. He believed all women had the desire and capability to become sexually immoral.

These witches were not believed to be sexually immoral only with humans. Kramer believed witches had sexual intercourse with evil spirits, a belief shared by other demonologists. Kramer wrote, "The Inquisitor of Como burned forty-one witches in 1485, and all had sex with evil spirits and confessed."<sup>47</sup> Witches had sex with evil spirits, who took on a male form, an incubus, or a female form, a succubus.<sup>48</sup> According to Kramer, demons could not actually procreate with humans, but an evil spirit could assume the form of a succubus, have sex with a man and store his semen, then be transformed into an incubus. Then the incubus could have sex with a woman and impregnate her with the collected semen.<sup>49</sup> This means that first the demon had to have sex with a man, which clearly indicates that male witches existed. Accordingly, witches should not be looked at as anomalies. In fact, when men were accused of witchcraft, it was not uncommon for them to be accused of having sexual relations with demons and the Devil. Kramer still maintains an extremist position on women, as evidenced in the third part of the treatise.

In the third part of his treatise, Kramer wrote about interrogation methods and forms of punishment. Once again Kramer's sexism is clear Kramer stated a woman's "bad reputation" could be used as evidence against her.<sup>50</sup> There is no such provision for men. Later in the treatise, Kramer writes that if a woman is accused of nothing, but her bad reputation, then a board of "good, Catholic men" should vouch for her reputation."<sup>51</sup> If a woman could not have such men

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>48</sup> Watt, "Witchcraft."

<sup>49</sup> Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 143.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 241.

to vouch for her reputation, then she must have a bad reputation, concluded Kramer. If a woman used the defense that she “only said certain words under womanly emotion,” then she was to be imprisoned for a year, interrogated, and possibly tortured during this time, and if she also had a bad reputation, she can be burned.<sup>52</sup> So, if a woman used stereotypes that were formed by men, such as Kramer, as a defense, she was still not immune from persecution. Some historians may point to these practices as evidence that the witch-hunts were a war on women, especially against women acting outside of the social norms threatened the patriarchy. I argue that the patriarchy was only one part of a moral, Christian society. Witches did not just threaten patriarchy rather; they threatened the entire moral fabric of Christian society. The witch was a social threat in many ways. They purportedly renounced Catholicism, dedicated their bodies and souls to the devil, had sex with demons, and offered children as sacrifices to evil spirits.<sup>53</sup> All of these practices violated Christian ideals. According to Kramer, Catholicism was the only true faith, and renouncing it threatened Early Modern society. All of Western European society during this time was Christian. Magistrates who did not persecute witches, insulted God, because those magistrates allowed the very adversaries of God and Christianity to live.<sup>54</sup> Witches threatened the fabric of Christianity, and so threatened European society. The witch-hunts were a war on the “enemies of Christianity,” not women. This argument is further supported by the emergence of the idea of the witches’ Sabbat in witchcraft trials and treatises.

The Witches’ Sabbat is not mentioned in *The Malleus Maleficarum*, but the idea emerged in later treatises. Later authors described this ceremony as a diabolical worship service.<sup>55</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>55</sup> Watt, “Witchcraft.”

Sabbat is an inverted mass where witches worship the Devil. While Kramer did not specifically mention a witches' Sabbat, Kramer did describe other practices that parallel and invert Christian traditions. A witch made vows very similar to a nun's vows. These vows were made before an assembly of witches on a previously determined date.<sup>56</sup> An evil spirit in human form promised the witch "worldly prosperity and a long life."<sup>57</sup> The evil spirit then asked the witch, "...if she would remain faithful to him, and if she will deny the Faith, and the most Christian form of worship and deny the woman who is more than woman."<sup>58</sup> A nun's vow was one of poverty and sacrifice, a vow made by, a holy, chaste woman. The witch reputedly was a diabolical, sexually perverse woman. Also, the witch must deny the ultimate ideal woman, the Virgin Mary, who is ideal to Kramer, because she is "more than woman." By stating the Virgin Mary was more than woman, he was able to justify his own hatred for mere mortal women. Part of denying the faith was disobeying religious rules. A witch, who denied the faith only in part, only disobeyed religious 'rules.'<sup>59</sup> The evil spirit expected the witch eventually to deny the faith entirely.<sup>60</sup> Witches would also insult the Virgin Mary's purity and strike crucifixes with whips and knives.<sup>61</sup> It was believed that a witch who denied the faith in its entirety would have the ability to remain silent during torture.

Torture was not used in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Western Europe as a punishment, but as a means of eliciting confessions.<sup>62</sup> Kramer believed witches, who completely deny the Faith, could remain silent during torture, because the Devil protected them.<sup>63</sup> The Devil

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<sup>56</sup>Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 128-129.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 129

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>62</sup> Watt, "Witchcraft."

<sup>63</sup> Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 130.

allegedly allowed a witch to suffer, if she only vocally denied the faith, but had not done so “in her heart” within a set time period.<sup>64</sup> This system enabled Kramer to declare that witches, who confessed, did so because they actually practiced witchcraft. It also enabled Kramer to declare women who did not confess under torture are witches, because they had protection from the Devil. Most of Kramer’s contemporaries believed the Devil granted special protection to those who denied the faith. However, this belief does not apply just to women or witches; all heretics who denied the Faith were thought to have the Devil’s protection. So, it is evident that while other treatise writers read Kramer’s work, not all voiced his extremist opinions. While other demonological authorities agree with Kramer on many issues, accounts from Kramer’s life reveal his contemporaries disagree with his extreme misogynistic views.

Before Kramer wrote *The Malleus Maleficarum* he authorized the arrest of fifty women and charged with witchcraft in Upper Germany. He did not allow the accused to have any legal counsel, and he ordered their immediate torture to elicit confessions. Helena Scheuberin of Innsbruck had a reputation for being outspoken and independent. When Kramer arrived in Innsbruck to persecute witches, she spat at his feet and cursed him. She may have done this to show defiance against Kramer, if he should accuse her. This could have also been her way of protesting his zealous witch-hunts. Scheuberin not only insulted Kramer, she openly told neighbors to ignore his sermons. She went even further when she declared that Kramer’s obsession with witchcraft was heresy.<sup>65</sup> Kramer next charged Scheuberin with witchcraft. Kramer’s interrogation of Helena Scheuberin consisted of questions about her morality, sexual

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>65</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.

experience, and virginal status.<sup>66</sup> Bishop Golser of Brixen, another judge, thought the questions were out of line and not relevant to the witchcraft charges. He asked him to cease the interrogation and halted the trial. Later, the court requested legal counsel for the defense, who challenged the court's validity and the case's judicial procedure.<sup>67</sup> The court dropped the case and released all suspects of witchcraft.<sup>68</sup> Other church officials and secular judges believed Kramer's emphasis on female sexuality unwarranted. They did not see all women as witches, and they were not concerned about a woman's sexuality or moral standing. The clergy and ruling class's only main interests lied in correcting heresy, not correcting women's behavior.

The *Malleus* is extreme in its misogyny. Even during a time when women's rights were virtually unheard of it is not possible that this work accurately represents Early Modern European thought. Certainly, by today's standards Europeans were misogynistic, but this does not mean that they all held the views of Kramer. Robert W. Thurston claimed the *Malleus Maleficarum* was supported in its views by prevalent stereotypes of the time.<sup>69</sup> However, while there were prevalent misogynistic views of the time, it is quite obvious that these views are extreme, even for contemporaries. Thurston's conclusion still does not address why women were so prosecuted in some areas, and certainly does not account for the heavy prosecutions of men in other areas. Even so, the influence of the *Malleus Maleficarum* must be further examined through an analysis of publishing records.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* was important. Eight editions of the treatise were published by 1500. In 1505, most judicial literature collections and libraries in Western Europe contained a

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Robert W. Thurston, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil," *History Today* 56, no. 11 (2006). *Historical Abstracts*. Accessed May 19, 2014



copy. By 1520, five more editions were published. Then there was a gap between publications of new editions that must be addressed. Between 1520 and 1580, no new editions of the *Malleus Maleficarum* were published.<sup>70</sup> Some historians may see this as a sign of its waning or even its limited influence over witch-hunts. However, the Protestant Reformation gained traction throughout Western Europe during this time period. The clergy's concerns switched from hunting witches to correcting heresy. Peasant revolts and other conflicts also gained the attention of the ruling classes. The majority of Western Europe was no longer focusing intently on hunting and prosecuting witches. This explains the lack of new editions printed throughout this period. By contrast, between 1576 and 1670, sixteen new editions of the *Malleus Maleficarum* were published.<sup>71</sup> Once the intense conflicts over heresy, revolts, and religious wars died down, the clergy and magistrates were once more able to focus on witch hunts.

This evidence seems to support the idea that the misogyny in the *Malleus Maleficarum* caused women to be heavily prosecuted for witchcraft. I argue that certain sections of the *Malleus*, such as the passages about torture and trial procedure were vastly influential, but its extreme misogyny was not. It is evident that the *Malleus Maleficarum* contains extremely misogynistic views about women. Kramer presented an idea that women are inherently evil. Therefore, women are actually eager to make diabolical pacts. Kramer demonized midwives as women eager to use their position to kill infants and cause infertility. Kramer also stressed the sexual immorality of witches and women obsessively. The *Malleus Maleficarum* is frequently treated by historians as “the demonological position on witchcraft and women.”<sup>72</sup> . To further

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<sup>70</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Apps and Gow, *Male Witches*, 3.

prove this point, I will analyze other influential witchcraft treatises' ideas about women and witchcraft. An examination of the ideas found in the *Malleus Maleficarum* and other treatises is necessary. Only when historians examine what these works say about both genders can we begin to understand the true Early Modern European consensus on witchcraft and women.

## Chapter 2: A Comparison of Misogyny in Other Treatises

In order to understand the *Malleus Maleficarum* and its importance, one must examine other witchcraft treatises written before and after the *Malleus*. An examination of treatises, sermons, and papal bulls reveals ideas about witchcraft and how it related to women. Some ideas present in the *Malleus* came from previous treatises, while others were concepts present in local folklore. Treatises written afterwards help determine if the *Malleus* set the standard for the idea that a witch was almost always a woman. This comparative analysis reveals that some demonologists did believe that women were more likely to be witches, but these authors usually attributed this to woman's "weak nature" and proneness to superstition. No other demonological treatise claimed that women are all evil and sexually immoral. In fact, several of these treatises either have passages dedicated to male witches, or they at least, imply that men can be witches. It is evident that the *Malleus Maleficarum* represents an extreme misogynistic worldview and not the collective consensus on women and witchcraft.

Nicolau Eymeric became the inquisitor of Aragon in 1356.<sup>1</sup> In 1376, he published a handbook for inquisitors, which was the most commonly used inquisitorial manual until the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> This work does not emphasize the carnal appetite of a witch: in fact, this work offers a stark contrast: "Witches observe chastity out of reverence for the demon or abstain

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolau Eymeric, "Nicolau Eymeric: The *Directorium Inquisitorium*," in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, eds. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

upon his instructions or they lacerate their own flesh.”<sup>3</sup> Here, the witch is compared to a pious virgin or nun, who shows repentance for breaking vows of chastity. In this stark contrast, the witch makes these vows to demons, instead of to God or the saints. This is certainly not the promiscuous witch portrayed in the *Malleus*.

Eymeric did use language, that implied that women are the more likely to commit witchcraft than men:

And from this appears that the said evil women, persevering in their wickedness, have departed from the right way and their faith and the devils delude them. If, therefore, these women, concerning whom it is not contested that they offer sacrifices to the demons they invoke, are perfidious and faithless and deviate from the right way...since for a Christian to deviate from the right way and faith and to embrace infidelity is properly to hereticize.<sup>4</sup>

This passage implies that Eymeric believed women are more likely to be witches, but he did not believe women were inherently evil, or that only women could be witches or heretics. In fact, some of Eymeric’s statements about witches contradicted Kramer’s. Kramer claimed that witches were all sexually licentious, whereas Eymeric opined that witches mimicked the chastity of nuns.

Like treatises, sermons can provide insight into European thought on witchcraft,. Bernardino of Siena lived from 1380 until 1444, a Franciscan preacher, who focused on sin and the resulting wrath of God.<sup>5</sup> Bernardino preached on sorcery, especially by women. He executed witches in Rome in 1424, but he was not able to have the same success in Siena in 1427.<sup>6</sup> Like Kramer, through his language, Bernardino referred to women as more likely to be witches. “O you who have used the charm for broken bones, to you, and to *him or her* who says that *she* is a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 125-126.

<sup>5</sup> Bernardino of Siena, “Bernardino of Siena Preaches Against Women Sorcerers,” in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, eds. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 133.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

witch, and who makes you believe *she* is-to all these I say take heed!<sup>7</sup>” Bernardino certainly believed that witches could be male or female, but like Eymeric, he did acknowledge that women are more likely to be witches.

“...and it was determined that the most important of *these women*-that is those who had done the worst-would be taken into custody. One of them told and confessed, without being put to torture, that she had killed thirty children by sucking their blood...<sup>8</sup>”

The female witch sucking the blood of children symbolizes the witch as an inversion of the mother, which is also used in the *Malleus*. The witch takes nourishment from children, instead of nourishing them, as determined by a woman’s gender role. The fear of a witch comes from her horrific crimes but also from her rejection of her role in a patriarchal society. However, the issue is even further complicated by what the expected gender role is tied to and supported by. The Church supported a patriarchal society, which was the basis for many foundations of Western European society at this time. The witch threatened not only patriarchal society, but the very foundation of society.

Infant mortality rates were high during this period, so thirty children dying mysteriously in Rome would not be unusual. The accused witch could have easily known how these children died and who they were. The accused might have confessed without being tortured, because she wanted to avoid torture, and she possibly hoped for a more lenient punishment. It appears she received some mercy, albeit limited, because the executioner strangled her before she was burned at the stake, instead of being burned alive.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,135.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*,136.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

In the end of his sermon, Bernardino preached the judgment and wrath of God on those who do not prosecute witches. He pleaded with the congregation to think of the innocent children being killed by witches. Presenting the witch as the enemy of children is not only a symbol of gender role rejection but also as the enemy of the growing Christian society of Western Europe. Infanticide is connected to witchcraft in several other works as well.

Johannes Nider's *Formicarius* was an influential witchcraft treatise written from 1435 to 1438. Nider previously attended the Council of Constance from 1415 to 1418 and the Council of Basel from 1431 to 1434.<sup>10</sup> So, Nider was an influential church leader. The *Formicarius* included several other recurrent themes later discussed in the *Malleus* and other witchcraft treatises. Cannibalization of children by witches is a theme present in both the *Malleus* and the *Formicarius*. Nider claimed he heard testimonies of witches killing unbaptized infants or infants not protected by the sign of the cross. He also avowed that witches made the infant's death look accidental, as if the parents crushed the baby in bed during the night.<sup>11</sup> It is probable that in many cases the baby was crushed to death, or the infant died from sudden infant death syndrome. The explanation that a witch killed the infant could certainly be a way for the parents to displace their own guilt onto a scapegoat, but parents really did believe that witches killed infants. So, this inexplicable, tragic event would be explained by witchcraft. Nider also claimed that witches later dug up the infant's corpse, and made a magical liquid from the body, anyone who drank it, would become a member of the witches' sect.<sup>12</sup> Nider spoke of a man who testified to drinking

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<sup>10</sup> Johannes Nider, "Johannes Nider: The *Formicarius*," in *Witchcraft in Europe: Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, eds. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 155

<sup>11</sup> Nider, "*Formicarius*," 157.

<sup>12</sup> Nider, Johannes. "Johannes Nider: An Early Description of the Witches' Sabbat," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* ed. Brian P. Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 53.

such a potion. The accused man also implicated his wife, who he believed would never confess, because she was so evil, though they were both guilty.<sup>13</sup> The man's wife never confessed but was certainly a witch, according to Nider, because she "cursed" at her death.<sup>14</sup> Since both the man and his wife were burned at the stake, it is apparent that Nider did not believe that witchcraft was a solely feminine crime. Also, Nider believed the woman was a witch because she cursed at her death, not because she was a woman. Nider was not alone in believing that witches could be male or female.

The *Errores Gazariorum*, or the *Errors of the Cathars*, was anonymously published in 1437. This treatise points out that Satan tempts people of both sexes to practice witchcraft. The treatise contains parallels to the *Malleus Maleficarum* as well. One theme present in both works is the sexual promiscuity among witches. "They join themselves carnally, a single man with a woman or a single man with another man, and sometimes father with daughter, son with mother, brother with sister..."<sup>15</sup> The author was not just describing the wanton sexual behavior of women as Kramer later did; rather, he emphasizes the carnal nature of both male and female witches. These orgies represented not just a resistance to patriarchal authority, but also the natural order established by the Church. Later the author claimed people who enjoy sex above all else become witches so they can perform sexual acts when they please. The *Errores* stressed the promiscuity and sexual depravity of witches. However, the author affirmed that witches were sexually promiscuous, regardless of their sex. Another parallel between the *Malleus* and the *Errores* is the idea that witches can use magic to harm the act of sexual intercourse between a man and a

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<sup>13</sup> Nider, "Formicarius," 157-158.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>15</sup> "The *Errores Gazariorum*," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* ed. Brian P. Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 155.

wife.<sup>16</sup> This means that the idea of a witch impeding sexual intercourse was present before the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, but the author does not state that this act is perpetuated by “jealous women,” as Kramer did.

The *Errores* also stated that witches kill children, devour them, and use their victims’ bodies to create a magical powder, which is used to poison both children and adults. (Interestingly, men and women are blamed for killing infants.) According to the author, this powder causes a lengthy illness or death. The author claimed that this was why there are high mortality rates in some regions and bad weather in other areas.<sup>17</sup> This is an insight into how people in the fifteenth century saw their world. High mortality rates and bad weather meant that the Devil waged a war against Christians and Western European society with the aid of his servants, witches. There are several likenesses between the *Errores* and the *Malleus*, but one key difference is that the author of the *Errores* believed that witchcraft is a crime committed by both genders and that sexual depravity is present in both genders as well.

Not all demonological texts were written by the clergy. In fact, a lay magistrate, a senior judge in the Brianconnais by the name of Claude Thosolan, wrote the recently rediscovered treatise, *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores*, in 1437. Thosolan witnessed 268 witchcraft executions between 1425 and 1450. This means Tholosan witnessed large scale hunts, which makes this source incredibly valuable. It is vital to examine this treatise, because one can compare this work of a lay magistrate and his ideas of women and witchcraft to those of rulers and the clergy.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,160.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,161



*Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores* contains many similarities to other treatises.

Thosolan believed witches kill their own children, usually the firstborn, and later exhume the corpse to make a magical powder out of the body. Thosolan also stated that these witches offer their firstborn as a sacrifice to Satan.<sup>18</sup> This means that Thosolan also truly believed witchcraft to be a diabolical cult and witches are a moral and social threat. Like Kramer, Thosolon states witches can cause infertility in women and make men insane. He also made note of a certain ingredient witches use in their craft: "...and with menstrual blood, contact with which can kill trees, they make an ointment with the help of the devil that makes men wild with sexual passion."<sup>19</sup> Similar to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Tholoson believed through witchcraft men can be controlled and turned lustful. So, through witchcraft, women could control the passions of men through love magic. Witches could turn men from civilized, pious beings into ravenous, lustful, and sinful ones. The witch upset the traditional patriarchal society by controlling the men. Thosolan clearly saw the witch as a threat to masculinity and as an affront to traditional gender roles. Thosolan clearly made sexist arguments, but the patriarchal order was supported by the Christian society, so first and foremost the witch was an enemy to Christians, not only to men. Many of these treatise authors made sexist arguments, but they did not make the extreme claims that Kramer did.

The majority of treatise writers did not believe women are more likely to be witches because of their inherent evil nature, as Kramer did, but rather because they are weaker than men. King James I's *Daemonologie* is one example of such a treatise. According to James I women are more likely to be witches because they are more prone to temptation due to the initial

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<sup>18</sup> Claude Tholosan, "*Ut magorum et maleficorum errores*," in *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700*, 164.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

deception of Eve by the Serpent. The idea of women being frailer than men was a common belief during the times of Kramer and King James I. However, King James I did not constantly refer to witches as the feminine, and he did not believe that women were inherently evil because of the sins of Eve.<sup>20</sup>

James I also never mentioned that witches have sex with evil spirits. He claimed witches' devotion to the Devil is similar to a Christian's devotion to God.<sup>21</sup> This reference to devotion was also found in Eymeric's work. James I also never mentioned witches using ointments made from dead children. It is clear that King James I held certain misogynistic views by today's standards, but he never demonized females as a whole. In fact, James I recognized that men and women could both practice witchcraft, though that men and women practiced different types of witchcraft. For example, James discussed the differences between necromancers, who were usually male, and witches, who were usually female. The main difference was necromancers appeared to control the Devil to do their will, but this was the Devil's ploy to steal the soul of the necromancer.<sup>22</sup> This type of magic was considered more learned or higher form of magic. According to Lyndal Roper, necromancers used spell books and animal relics. Witches, on the other hand, were thought to practice "lower" magic. Witches used spoken spells and properties of the body to cast curses and spells.<sup>23</sup> Lara Apps and Andrew Gow argue that these gendered generalizations did not create a dichotomy between male and female witches. The authors claim that male witches were feminized, so the male witch transcended the male/female dichotomy. I argue that some treatise writers believed the crimes of male witches

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Mack, "The *Malleus Maleficarum* and King James: Defining Witchcraft," *Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review* 1, no. 1, (2009), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Apps and Gow, *Male Witches*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 59.

and female witches were considered equally evil; however, “lower magic” was considered by some to be more inherently sinful, because a witch was a willing servant of the devil, rather than his supposed master. I propose that since women typically practiced this “lower magic,” which was seen as the worst type of magic, this contributed to the higher percentage of women accused of witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. This was not the case in all areas of Europe, though.

In Finland no association of lower and higher magic between genders existed. Magic of all kinds was considered a male trade and witchcraft was almost an exclusively male crime in Iceland. One hundred twenty people were accused of which only ten were women, and among the twenty-two who were burned at the stake only one was a woman.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that Finland and Iceland’s different witchcraft beliefs accounted for more men being prosecuted than women. Conversely, the reason more women were prosecuted than men in the majority of Western Europe can be attributed to Western European witchcraft beliefs.

One treatise, which used the *Malleus Maleficarum* as a source is the *Compendium Maleficarum*, which was published in 1608 by Mario Guazzo. The same distinction is made between types of magic that is seen in other treatises. One type of magic, which Guazzo called natural magic, is just a more exact knowledge of secrets of nature. He said this type of “magic” is how Tobias, in the Apocrypha, cured his father’s blindness with a fish’s gallbladder.<sup>25</sup> The cure is given to Tobias by the angel Raphael, and they all praise God for the cure,<sup>26</sup> so this action

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<sup>24</sup> Bengt Ankarloo, “Witch Trials in Northern European 1450-1700,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, eds. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 71.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Maria Guazzo. *Compendium Maleficarum*. Trans. Montague Summers. (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *The Apocrypha: Translated out of the Greek and Latin Tongues, Being the Version Set Forth in A.D. 1611 Compared with the Most Ancient Authorities and Revised A.D. 1894*, Trans. Thomas Nelson. (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1895), Scanned book, *Hathi Trust Digital Library*, 43.

clearly was not seen as witchcraft, but rather as a miracle or natural science, according to Guazzo. He also maintained that there are ‘natural’ occurrences like a chalk which is set on fire by water, but will not burn if oil is poured on it. By contrast, he claimed that this magic, which includes astronomy and mathematics, which are simply natural applications. Guazzo claimed the other types of “magic” are not evil, except when they are used for evil purposes, cause scandal, use the aid of demons, or cause physical or spiritual harm. Guazzo did not emphasize a gendering of these types of magic, but he stated those who practice natural magic are more likely to be men, since they were more educated. This means that Guazzo did not believe that women practiced this magic because they were evil. He simply stated women tended to be less educated, so they tended to practice the “lower” form of magic.

Guazzo gave several examples of conjurers, such as a woman who threw a glass against a wall and then mended it.<sup>27</sup> He referred to this woman as a virgin of Cologne. Kramer emphasized that witches are all sexually immoral, whereas here Guazzo gave an example of a virgin witch. He also gave several more examples of conjurers, such as a man known as Liodorus, who changed men into animals.<sup>28</sup> All of his other examples in this passage are male conjurers. It is evident that Guazzo believed both men and women could be witches. Guazzo also noted that witches are heretics.

The *Compendium Maleficarum* also affirmed that witches make pacts with the Devil and must deny the faith. Witches must also “repudiate the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, heaping the vilest of insults on her and calling her Harlot, etc.”<sup>29</sup> The witches also participate in

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<sup>27</sup> Guazzo, *Compendium*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

a mock baptism, at which they give up their name and are given a new one. Next, witches deny their godparents and are given new ones. The Devil also takes an article of clothing from the witch to make his own. The Devil takes something that symbolizes the witch's every aspect of themselves as an individual. He takes their faith and baptism from their spiritual aspect, blood from their physical body, and their children as a claim to the witch's natural goods, and clothing from their acquired goods.<sup>30</sup> It is simple to see why taking faith, blood, and children are particularly significant, but why clothing? The late medieval and Early Modern people understood one another through material goods,<sup>31</sup> so the Devil is essentially also taking a symbol of the witch's identity. By doing this, the Devil essentially enslaves witches. According to the gendering of witchcraft theory, women practice a magic where they were directly enslaved, while men have the appearance of the ability to control the Devil. However, there is no indication that the Devil enslaves only women. This passage indicates both sexes must clearly become enslaved to the Devil. In regard to the rituals the Devil makes a witch perform, it is evident that these are mock religious rituals, an inversion of the Catholic Mass. These "masses" also allow witches to show their reverence to the Devil. This passage indicates witchcraft is a crime of heresy, and witches are hostile enemies to the Church.

Witches, allegedly, further attacked Christian society by killing infants. Child sacrifice, as in many treatises, is also a recurrent theme. Guazzo asserted, "...they [witches] promise to sacrifice to him: and certain fiendish hags, as Bartholomew Spina tells, vow to strangle or suffocate for him one child every month or two weeks."<sup>32</sup> It is clear that witches killing children

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>31</sup> Amanda Bailey, *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Guazzo *Compendium*, 14-15.

is not unique to the *Malleus*. Guazzo here cited Bartholomew Spina (1475-1546), a Dominican theologian and author of the treatise, *Tractatus de Strigibus et Lamiis*.<sup>33</sup> Guazzo gave several examples of witches, who allegedly kill children. First, he presented the case of Catherine Praevotte of Freising, who tried several times to poison the only daughter of her neighbor, Michael Cocus, but the child's mother guarded the child with prayers. After so many failed attempts, the Devil demanded that Catherine poison her own son in his cradle. This same account is also in the 1595 treatise, *Demonolatriy*, written by Nicolas Remy. Remy stated that Catherine had to poison her own child, because anytime witches failed in a task to harm someone, "they must themselves become the victims of their intended violence."<sup>34</sup> Remy calls the mother "heartless," but nonetheless, it is clear that Remy did not believe that all women desired to kill their children.

Guazzo asserted that "certain hags" kill children more often.<sup>35</sup> Guazzo's use of the word "hags" is gendered, but his use of "certain," means that Guazzo did not believe that all women were witches or killed children. Even Kramer did not believe that all women killed infants or practiced witchcraft. I propose that Guazzo believed these "certain hags" have more opportunities to be near children, which is why they supposedly kill children more often than other witches. Later, Guazzo even pointed out that *all* witches, not just women, are required by Satan to sacrifice children. Guazzo stated that men and women can be witches, but he made highly misogynistic arguments in later passages, which cannot be ignored.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Footnote on p.14.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolas Remy, *Demonolatriy: An Account of the Historical Practice of Witchcraft*, ed. Montague Summers, trans. E.A. Ashwin, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2008), 45.

<sup>35</sup>Guazzo, *Compendium*, 16-17.

As in the *Malleus*, bestialization of women is a theme present in the *Compendium Maleficarum*. Guazzo gave examples of women who give birth to monsters or animals. This differs from the *Malleus* in that Kramer said that witches who devour children are below animals and that women are unfinished animals.<sup>36</sup> Instead, Guazzo focused on the possibility of women procreating with animals. He cited Alexander ab Alexandro who claimed that in 1278, a Swiss woman gave birth to a lion.<sup>37</sup> Guazzo gave more examples of women giving birth to beasts, including the case of a woman imprisoned for life after she escaped from an island where she had two children by an ape who imprisoned her.<sup>38</sup> Guazzo admitted he is skeptical of these accounts but that “if there is any truth in what we have just told,” he believed demons used animal semen to impregnate these women. This passage not only bestializes women, as the *Malleus* does, but it also presents the idea that witches fornicate with demons, which is also in the *Malleus*.<sup>39</sup> At first glance, it may appear as if Guazzo’s ideas about women are in line with the misogyny in the *Malleus*. However, another passage in the *Compendium* reveals that men were also believed to engage in similar behavior.

Guazzo next gave an example of a Belgian man, who had sex with a cow, which gave birth to a male child. Guazzo proposed that the Devil knew the man’s sin, so he stole a human fetus and implanted it in the cow.<sup>40</sup> This example illustrates Guazzo’s belief that women were not the only gender who could be regarded as sexually licentious. Also, in a way this example is far worse than the other ones he gave. In his example of the woman who was imprisoned by an ape, it is implied that the woman was raped. She did not consent to having sex with an animal,

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<sup>36</sup> Kramer, *Malleus*, 74, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Guazzo. *Compendium*, 28.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Kramer, *Malleus*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> Guazzo, *Compendium*, 29-30.

but in the latter case the Belgian man forced himself on a cow. Also, Guazzo did not state that the cow was a demon in the shape of a cow. Rather, it is implied that the Belgian man actually committed bestiality. This is further supported by the statement that the Devil stole a human fetus to implant in the cow to cover the man's sin. Guazzo not only believed that people have sex with animals or demons in the shape of animals but that also witches have sex with demons in human form as well.

Guazzo wrote, "Almost all the theologians and learned philosophers are agreed...that witches practice coition with demons, the men with Succubus devils and the women with Incubus devils."<sup>41</sup> It is evident from this passage that most demonological authors did agree that witches had sex with demons, but Guazzo did not blame women exclusively for these relations. He made it very clear that both sexes fornicate with demons. Like Kramer, Guazzo claimed these demons can take on a male or female form, and the demons who take on the male form bring semen with them, which they take from some man.<sup>42</sup> Guazzo also believed children could be born in this way. Guazzo claimed a demon in Spanish America, lay with women, who gave birth to children with two horns. (He also uses these claims to make a jab at Martin Luther, when he stated, "Nor are there wanting those who place Luther in this class."<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, another jab is made later in the text where the author states demons fled from the bodies of the possessed to attend Luther's funeral.<sup>44</sup> These statements were made literally to demonize Luther and Protestantism.) This is another way in which witchcraft was a war against heretics, not women.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 112.



It is clear that there is still debate among demonological theorists at this time, especially in the issue of whether demons can impregnate women. Remy wrote: “no semen can be fertile unless it comes from a living man.”<sup>45</sup> Since demons can only appear as if they are a living man or occupy the corpse of a dead man, then, according to Remy, copulation with demons cannot result in procreation.<sup>46</sup> Guazzo agreed with Kramer by stating the vital source of life remains in the semen that the demon took from a man, so procreation is possible.<sup>47</sup>

Guazzo and Remy disagreed on this point, but it is clear that the *Compendium* was greatly influenced by *Demonolatriy*. For example, the same account of a sexual encounter between a man and a demon in the form of a young woman is in both works. A herdsman saw a girl letting cattle out of the stables, and he became infatuated with her. The herdsman then stated, “there appeared one like her coyly hiding behind a bush.” The herdsman wooed her “and at last embraced her although against her will.” She continued to reject him, but later relented if he “acknowledged her as my Mistress and behaved to her as if she was God himself.” The herdsman accepted, but at that time she “possessed” him, and he was miserable unless submitting to her will.<sup>48</sup> Both the *Compendium* and *Demonolatriy* give this account. It is evident that both of these influential demonologists believed men were capable of copulating with demons and becoming subservient to them. Some historians may point to the herdsman submitting to the demon as evidence that men accused of witchcraft are feminized. However, the beginning of this account stated the herdsman “wooed her” and embraced her against her will. These actions are associated with male aggression, not feminization. By the end of the account, the herdsman is

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<sup>45</sup> Remy, *Demonolatriy*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Guazzo, *Compendium*, 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

feminized through his submission, but this feminization results from his stereotypically masculine violence. There certainly is the fear that the herdsman is dominated by a woman; a clear violation of the social order. His submission threatens Christian society, which disapproves of men being dominated by women, but this is a direct attack on Christianity, since he submitted to a demon. Demon copulation is present in many witchcraft treatises, but it is evident that most authors view demon copulation and sexual licentiousness as a characteristic of first and foremost of witches be they women or men. So, Kramer's ideas that all women are sexually immoral were not supported by other theorists.

Another recurring theme of demonological texts present in the *Compendium Maleficarum* is witches' ability to cause infertility. Witches could hinder copulation either by making the man and his wife unable to consummate physically, making the man impotent, preventing the emission of semen, using drugs to prevent a woman from conceiving, or closing up the female genitals. In some cases witches could retract, hide, or remove a man's penis,<sup>49</sup> as seen in the *Malleus Maleficarum*. It is clear that Guazzo shared ideas with Kramer about how witches could inhibit procreation. But, how did Guazzo explain witches' motives for prohibiting consummation? Like, Kramer, Guazzo believed many witches act out of jealousy. Guazzo gave an account of a woman, who wished a couple to divorce. She tried several methods, but she was finally successful when she gave the husband and wife halves of a blackened chicken, which previously she sacrificed to the Devil. After eating the chicken, they hated each other.<sup>50</sup> Another witch desired revenge so much that she set another woman's house on fire.<sup>51</sup> In both of these cases the witches are both women, so while it is almost certain Guazzo believed women to be

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 95.

more emotional, and therefore more likely to be motivated by jealousy, he did not believe women alone performed this type of magic; rather they were just more likely to do so. In fact, in one account, a priest prevents a man from consummating his marriage.<sup>52</sup>

If Guazzo believed witches could prevent couples from conceiving; therefore decreasing Christians, so did Guazzo like Kramer, believed that witches could increase their number? Guazzo was also similar to Kramer in that they both believed that the Devil's goal is to perpetuate the "race of witches." Guazzo claimed that children of witches were likely to become witches themselves, a common view among demonologists. Guazzo concluded that the Devil knew he could easily gain more followers by using witches to corrupt their own children. Guazzo gave accounts of children being taken to Sabbats or meeting with demons at night. For example, in Gebweiler in July 1568, a couple, Henry and Catherine, gave a Succubus to their son, Hanzel, as a wife.<sup>53</sup> Parents taking children to get married and people marrying one another at the Sabbats were a common theme in these accounts. In an account of a very Sabbat-like ritual, a human-like figure appeared to a girl and her mother. The man slept with the girl in the sight of her mother, and then the mother slept with the man in the sight of her daughter. Afterwards, they all joined hands and danced around a circle. The man also gave them what "seemed to be money, but afterwards it crumbled to dust."<sup>54</sup> The dancing and marriages may have been a remnant of older fertility cults.<sup>55</sup> The woman and daughter having sex with a man could have also been part of a fertility cult practice, but the exchange of money also could signify this was prostitution, especially because the money crumbling into dust could symbolize any guilt the young girl felt

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>55</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 27-28

afterwards. Regardless, of the money, I propose that these Sabbats were a remnant of a pagan fertility cult. As Catholicism became the true religion, anything outside of Catholicism was demonized. This created a dichotomy of religion, wherein Catholicism was the side of the true God and good, and anything outside of that, such as paganism, became associated with the adversary of Catholicism, the Devil. Some people legitimized their visions associated with these Sabbats as not Satanic, but Divine, in order to legitimize their practices to themselves, as Catholics, but also to the authorities. However, authorities increasingly saw these claims as heretical.<sup>56</sup> Guazzo addressed the issue of people claiming that their visions were sent from God, not the Devil, as a defense from accusations of witchcraft.

In discussing how to determine if an apparition is sent by the Devil, not God, Guazzo stated the sex of the person who saw the vision must be taken in account: “The feminine sex is more foolish, and more apt to mistake natural or demoniacal suggestions for ones of Divine origin.” He goes on to state women are more imaginative, but more stubborn in their “holdings of their imaginings...and since women have less power of reasoning and less wisdom, it is easier for the Devil to delude them with false and deceptive apparitions.” He adds, “Further, since women are lascivious, luxurious, and avaricious in their manner of life... women of this sort not only deceive themselves, but drag even learned men to destruction.”<sup>57</sup> The language of this passage is misogynistic, as he claims women are more emotional, women deceive men but are also themselves deceived. This means he did not, like Kramer, believe women, for the most part, intentionally deceive men.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., ix-x.

<sup>57</sup> Guazzo, *Compendium*, 138.

Guazzo provided an example of a priest, who put his faith into a woman, whom he believed was an oracle. Guazzo described her as a woman of little intelligence, except in constructing lies.<sup>58</sup> The priest began to preach things which opposed Catholic doctrine, such as abolishing the celibacy of priests, confession, and taking multiple wives.<sup>59</sup> Guazzo also described a Belgian nun, who was possessed, and would speak as if she was the Devil at times and like Christ at another time.<sup>60</sup> The woman then consecrated Communion bread and venerated candles at the altar. Guazzo saw this as a twofold atrocity, because she was doing all these things while she was possessed and secondly, because she was a woman: “She dared to usurp the priestly office which belongs to men, not women. But God deliver us from the like.” Guazzo also blamed women for Tertullian’s embrace of Montanism, whose prophetesses were Maximillia and Priscilla. “For he, most profound scholar of his time, trusting in the visions of women as concerning the quantity and color of the soul, forgot all that he had most learnedly and truthfully written against such women and fell into gross and ridiculous errors.”<sup>61</sup> Guazzo’s description of women was very similar to those given in the *Malleus*. These accounts reveal a fear that male authority will be upset by the influence of women, or by their usurpation of traditionally male positions of authority. I argue that there is also a concern about the stability of Catholicism. The influence these women have is over theologians or church authority. Guazzo is very clear that the doctrine of Catholicism cannot be challenged through the usurpation of church authority.

I argue that while there were concerns of women resisting patriarchal authority, there was also great concern that the Catholic Church’s authority was in danger. Western Europe was a

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Christian society, and if a group threatened the Church, then by default, it threatened the society as a whole which also was a patriarchy. Witches represented the inverse of Catholicism, and therefore, Western Europe feared they would destroy the Church and society along with it. Women were more likely to be prosecuted for witchcraft in Western Europe, partially because women were more controlled than men in this society, and a controlling group certainly fears the resistance of that controlled group. Witchcraft trials cannot be explained away as a systematic war on women. The complex themes throughout these treatises alone show this issue as far more complicated than a gender war.

Demonologists addressed the issue of women as witches, but no treatise contained the degree of sexism that is in the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Nicolau Eymeric asserted that witches imitated nuns in chastity and devotion to the Devil. This is a stark contrast to the sexual wantonness of witches described in the *Malleus*. Bernardino of Siena's sermons contained the connection between witchcraft and infanticide, and he also claimed women were more likely to be witches, yet he acknowledged the existence of male witches. Infanticide was seen as a rejection or an inversion, of the traditional mother role. However, infanticide was foremost a direct attack on Christian society. The *Errorres* also claimed witches commit infanticide, and, like Kramer, that witches were sexually wanton. However, the *Errorres* stressed that this promiscuity is prevalent among both male and female witches. King James's *Demonologie* also acknowledged the existence of male and female witches. Guazzo and Remy agreed with Kramer that witches fornicate with demons, but Remy differed by stating that procreation by demonic copulation is not possible. So, it is clear that even Kramer's basic ideas were disputed by other theorists. Both Remy and Guazzo also connected the witch with infanticide and sexual licentiousness, but they also connected the crime of witchcraft to heresy. Female witches upset

the patriarchal social order, but men also participated in this. This is not because male witches were feminized, but rather because witches are the enemies of Christians. Since the *Malleus Maleficarum*'s sexism did not have a large impact on the witch-hunts, then the question remains: why women? In order to answer this question, one must examine historical context and different arguments historians make for why women were overrepresented in the witch hunts of Early Modern Europe.

### Chapter 3: Historiography of Gender and Witchcraft

Historians have debated why women were so heavily prosecuted for the crime of witchcraft for decades. Christina Lerner, Carol Karlsen, and Marianne Hester agree that describing the witch hunts as a war on women is “simplistic.”<sup>1</sup> However, some historians still maintain that the witch hunts were a war on women. Other historians say this is too simplistic, yet imply that the witch hunts were a war against women by dismissing male witches as outliers, unworthy of study, and failing to account for other factors. Bengt Ankarloo stated that historians make three main arguments for the causes of witch hunts: an increasingly militant church, increasing government control, social conflict, and gender relations. Ankarloo believes that each of these arguments must be criticized, because they cannot be fully understood in any of these explanations.<sup>2</sup> One must examine these topics in conjunction with one another, while examining these issues in historical context. I argue that the witch-hunts were not a war on women, but witchcraft beliefs tended to mark women as likely witches.

Some historians theorize that witchcraft was a fantasy of power created by the dramatic economic and social changes in patriarchal Early Modern Europe.<sup>3</sup> In his essay “The Taming of the Scold,” David Underdown claims a gender relations crisis emerged in Early Modern England. Local court records contained a preoccupation with women who were seen as threats to the male dominated society, including women who were seen as scolds. Underdown argues that

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<sup>1</sup> Clive Holmes, “Women, Witnesses, and Witches” in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology, Vol IV: Gender and Witchcraft*, ed. Brian Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 119.

<sup>2</sup> Ankarloo, “Witch Trials,” 73.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Ingram, “Scolding Women Cucked or Washed: A Crisis in Gender Relations in Early Modern England?” in *Women, Crime, and the Courts in Early Modern England*, ed. Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 49.



scolding was a way for the poor to voice their frustrations, and this problem became more evident during the expansion of capitalism and social changes. Scolding in the Early Modern period was not simply reprimanding, but rather associated with violence and turmoil. Scolds could be of either sex, but scolding became associated with women almost exclusively. In fact, unmarried widows and single women made up the majority of convicted scolds.<sup>4</sup> Scolding was a crime which indicated a person was violent, so scolds could become associated with another violent crime: witchcraft. Scolding was not the only reason why unmarried women and widows were viewed with suspicion.

In 1972, Erik Middlefort proposed that marriage patterns could be a cause for the overrepresentation of women among the accused. In sixteenth and seventeenth century Western Europe, people married later in life, due to limited land resources. Men could join the army, and participate in other male institutions. The European continental wars also caused the male population to decrease drastically, but women banded together in a “spinster” community, which raised patriarchal suspicion.<sup>5</sup> Early Modern Europeans believed that a woman’s God given duty was to marry and raise a family, so this patriarchal suspicion largely arose out of Christian teachings. These suspicions about women living without the authority of a man made them prone to accusations of witchcraft. Women also became more involved with the legal process during this time.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 50-51, 65.

<sup>5</sup> William Monter, “Witch Trials in Continental Europe 1560-1660,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, Eds. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 70-71.

Between the Elizabethan witchcraft statute of 1563 and the abolition of witchcraft statutes in 1736, women comprised 90 percent of those accused of witchcraft in England.<sup>6</sup> Christina Lerner stated that women became increasingly responsible for their own actions in European penal codes. Simultaneously prostitution, infanticide, and adultery were criminalized. Women's behavior was now considered a social concern.<sup>7</sup> Also, due to European continental wars, the male population decreased dramatically<sup>8</sup>, so female crime took more precedent, which led to more witchcraft trials.

Not only were women accused of witchcraft, they were also called to testify. In fact, the Home Circuit Assizes called 1,207 witnesses for witchcraft trials between 1600 and 1702; 52 percent of these witnesses were men and 48 percent of these were women.<sup>9</sup> Women were obviously becoming more active in the legal process, at least in witchcraft cases. Midwives were called upon to testify about the tell-tale marks of a witch, such as extra nipples or genital irregularities.<sup>10</sup> Having a midwife search for irregularities or a "Devil's Mark" could also prove innocence. For example, in 1687 in Oxfordshire, Joan Walker of Bicester requested that twenty-four women search her for a "Devil's mark," in hopes that she could clear her name.<sup>11</sup> The number of women being called as witnesses in witchcraft trials increased over the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> In England, from 1596 to 1602, 38.2 percent of witnesses in witchcraft trials were women. This increased to 43.4 percent during the reign of James I, but women became the majority of witnesses in witchcraft trials after the Restoration, with 52.9 percent of women

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Sharpe, "Women, Witchcraft, and the Legal Process," in *Women, Crime, and the Courts*, Eds. Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 106.

<sup>7</sup> William Monter, "Witch Trials," 70.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Sharpe, "Women, Witchcraft," 112.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

serving as witnesses in witchcraft trials.<sup>13</sup> One reason given for this is the testimony women could give as caretakers of the mysteriously ill as courts began to examine seriously only claims of witchcraft involving mysterious death or illness,<sup>14</sup> which were often indicators of witchcraft. Women's testifying in witchcraft trials gives rise to another question: Why did women testify against other women?

Women often testified against other women without any coercion.<sup>15</sup> Some historians state this proves women were an active part of these persecutions; therefore, witch-hunts were not a systematic oppression of women. I agree with the conclusion of the first argument, but its premise is problematic. The opposing argument states that women accused other women so they could maintain a safe place within a patriarchal society. Women needed to adapt as members of a marginalized group in society. However, the second argument is also invalid. I argue that women saw witches as their enemies, because witches were the inversion of the ideal Christian woman. There certainly was a patriarchal system in place in Early Modern Europe, but this patriarchal society was first and foremost a Christian one. This society was patriarchal, because Biblical teachings supported patriarchy. This was not a systematic prosecution of women, but rather a systematic prosecution of the perceived enemies of Christianity, who threatened European society. Furthermore, witchcraft trials between 1560s and 1630s reveal twenty-nine percent of men were accused before the Archdeacon of Essex. Two thirds of these men were "cunning folk," or practitioners of white magic.<sup>16</sup> J.A. Sharpe is correct in his conclusion that witchcraft trials cannot be explained as a male system designed to oppress and persecute

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<sup>13</sup> Holmes, "Women, Witnesses," 121.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>15</sup> Sharpe, "Women, Witchcraft," 112.

<sup>16</sup> Holmes, "Women, Witnesses," 107.

women.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, one argument is that witchcraft was a way for women to wield power, instead of being a systematic belief used to oppress women.<sup>18</sup> Older, poor, widowed women were especially able to use witchcraft beliefs to their advantage. Women could blackmail their neighbors by threatening to cast a curse, while other women would be sought out and paid for using their powers to heal an illness. In this way, the disadvantaged were able to wield power over the more advantaged by using the belief in witchcraft to their advantage. Sharpe also claims that belief in witchcraft allowed Early Modern Europeans to make sense of tragedies. Certainly witchcraft could be used to explain the unexplainable famines, wars, plagues, and sudden deaths in the Early Modern era. However, belief in witchcraft cannot be explained as simple scapegoats for misfortunes. This argument dismisses Europeans' beliefs in witchcraft. Women who claimed to possess magical powers and the people who blamed catastrophes on witches truly believed people possessed supernatural abilities. Women who claimed to possess magical powers made up a minority of those accused but are still worthy of analysis. If these women were a minority of those accused, the question still remains: Why were women so heavily prosecuted in Western Europe?

Selma R. Williams claimed that the witch crazes were a massive killing of women.<sup>19</sup> Williams does acknowledge that this mass killing of women was not a coordinated effort, but she clearly sees the witch craze as a war on women. In the first part of her work, *Riding the Nightmare*, Williams asserts that women were seen positively in society. Women were considered images of the Earth Mother, a deity responsible for nature, food, fertility, and peace.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 107-108.

<sup>18</sup> Sharpe, "Women, Witchcraft," 112.

<sup>19</sup> Selma R. Williams, *Riding the Nightmare: Women & Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1978), 3.

Williams' argument is that women transitioned from models of a positive goddess to that of the diabolical witch figure in the Middle Ages. However, Williams fails to take into account that women were considered as inferior to men in the ancient world. She is imposing her own view of an enlightened classical society on the people of that era. She also states in many eras equality between the sexes seemed imminent, due to the political achievements of women in history. She gives examples of the Abbess Hilda, renowned for her wisdom, and queens such as Eleanor of Aquitaine. She then states that then power remained controlled by men and was reinforced by the executions for witchcraft as a response to the approaching equality between sexes.<sup>20</sup> Williams' argument that witchcraft persecutions were a response to approaching gender equality is absurd. While the Abbess Hilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine were renowned and politically adept women, this was not the norm for women. Examples of great women in history are present, but they were overshadowed by men. Men simply had more opportunities and were better educated. There is no evidence anywhere to support the notion that gender equality was on the verge of becoming a social norm. Therefore, the witch craze could not have been a response to women's increasing political power, simply because their political power was not increasing. Williams states that women's ability to give birth, midwives' ability to bring mother and child safely from childbirth (or have them die) demonstrated supernatural aid. She also refers to women's long lifespans, assertive women, and rampant superstition.<sup>21</sup>

Williams is correct in her proposal that famines, war, plague, and rampant infant mortality escalated hunts.<sup>22</sup> Women's ability to give birth and the midwife's ability to safely bring mother and child from birth (or have them die) suggested they possibly wielded

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<sup>20</sup> Williams, *Riding the Nightmare*, 6-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

supernatural powers. Women were seen as having a special connection with childbirth and nature. I argue that this was an indirect cause of women being the majority of witches. People saw sudden, unexplainable deaths as being the obvious fault of the healer, midwife, or wet-nurse. Women made up the majority of these professions due to their traditional role as caretakers and nurturers; therefore, statistically a woman was more likely to be accused of witchcraft. The ideas about witchcraft made it more likely for women to be accused of witchcraft...<sup>23</sup>

On the issue of midwives, Williams claims that as a midwife delivered a baby, she “threw in a good-sized mumbo jumbo-extremely beneficial to their reputations and their pocketbooks...”<sup>24</sup> She further states that when all went well, the midwife’s actions were called miracles, but when the infant, mother, or both died, she was accused of being a witch.<sup>25</sup> Stating that midwives made up a few spells to increase their profits once again dismisses the Early Modern belief in witchcraft. A few midwives may have claimed supernatural powers to enhance their reputation and income, but by far, these women would have actual faith in their powers. This became an increasingly dangerous power to possess, since it was believed that one who could supernaturally heal could also supernaturally harm. Demonologists were clear that any act of magic went directly against the teachings of the Church, so it would matter little if one claimed to do only white magic in the eyes of the Church.

Williams overstates the true impact of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. She claims that language barriers and religious differences were not an issue, and therefore, the text was widely distributed. She gives the figures of thirteen editions printed in Germany, eleven in France, and

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<sup>23</sup> Stuart Clark, “The Gendering of Witchcraft in French Demonology: Misogyny or Polarity?” in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, Vol. IV: Gender and Witchcraft, Ed. Brian Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 57.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, *Riding the Nightmare*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Riding the Nightmare*, 18.

two in Italy. She then states six English editions were printed between 1584 and 1669.<sup>26</sup> Just because the text was published in these various countries does not mean it had a major impact on all witchcraft trials. As earlier stated, there is no evidence that the *Malleus Maleficarum* caused a chain of witch hunts. The work certainly later became influential, but the degree of sexism, I argue, had minimal impact. No other treatise comes close to demonizing women the way that the *Malleus Maleficarum* does. Williams further claims that Sprenger and Kramer fabricated gossip and hearsay for their argument that all females are evil. While it is true that Kramer's work is remarkably sexist, one cannot say that this is what all of Early Modern Europe believed was based on the work of one man. Also, Williams once again dismisses the Early Modern belief in witchcraft. While it is possible that Kramer made up portions of his text, or more likely exaggerated portions, it is likely that he reported on actual trials and testimony, since Early Modern Europeans, for the most part, truly believed in witchcraft. There is further debate on the issue of whether women truly were accused of witchcraft because they were women, or if the predominant beliefs about witchcraft caused women to be the majority accused.

Williams is not alone in her conclusion that the witch-hunts were a war on women. For example, Evelyn Heinemann claimed, "The explanation of why women became the major victims of witch persecutions can be seen in the Church's misogynistic attitude. The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* considered the equation 'woman=witch' to be self-evident and easy to prove."<sup>27</sup> Heinemann claims the *Malleus* was the official position on witchcraft and women, but this was not the case. While the *Malleus* was influential in some ways such as inquisitorial procedure when prosecuting witches, its sexism is unparalleled in any other work. While

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Note on p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Evelyn Heinemann, *Witches: A Psychoanalytical Exploration of the Killing of Women*, trans. Donald Kiraly, (London: Free Association Books, 2000), 19.

Kramer's position was the witch was a woman, this was certainly not the position of all or even a majority of demonologists. Heinemann also claimed that the witch-hunts were a way to deny female healers power.<sup>28</sup> I argue that women known as healers were occasionally prosecuted because of the belief that if one could heal, one could harm. This made these women likely targets during witch-hunts.

Carol F. Karlsen also claims that witchcraft was a war against women, but she also believes that witchcraft was a war among women as well. In her work on Colonial New England, Carol F. Karlsen stated that only by understanding witchcraft as mainly women's history can we analyze the deep feelings about women. She further avows that if these deep feelings towards witches vanished then we could understand the witch crazes further. Karlsen says that the idea of a woman as a witch has not vanished, but rather has been transformed by popular culture.<sup>29</sup> While the idea of a woman as a witch may have roots in the Early Modern period and women's history is an important aspect of the study of witchcraft, but a historian must be careful not to frame the witch hunts as a "war on women." Karlsen argues that witchcraft is a struggle "within women," but also a "struggle against women."<sup>30</sup> Karlsen claims that witchcraft is an internally feminine issue, because women often accused other women. In her study, Karlsen examines female accusers, who claimed they were "possessed" as a result of witchcraft. She finds many of these accusers were young women, and often were daughters of ministers.<sup>31</sup> Karlsen concludes that these accusations possibly resulted from these young women subtly challenging Puritan

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), XIII.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., XV.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 231.



beliefs and practices. These women turned their own feelings of guilt inwards, but also outwards at other women through their accusations.<sup>32</sup>

She further backs up this claim by arguing the violent convulsions of the possessed symbolized the release of sexual and emotional tension.<sup>33</sup> While these claims are fascinating, “possessed” accusers account for only ten percent of accusers in New England.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, non-possessed accusers, the majority of accusers, were made up of men and women. Male accusers accused witches more of bodily or property harm, while female accusers usually made accusations relating to the illness or death of children.<sup>35</sup> Cases of possession caused by witchcraft merit further study, but it is clear that “possessed” accusers did not take center stage in the narratives of Early Modern European witchcraft trials. Therefore, it is far more likely that women did not accuse one another because of internal conflicts with religion and patriarchal society. Accusations between women involving harming children are a more familiar narrative to the European cases. Therefore, women accused other women due to the belief that these alleged witches were the enemies of Christianity who were destroying what the accusers held dear, as well as destroying their God-given role as mother.

Germany, where the *Malleus* was first published, by far had the most witch hunt activity. 75% of witches executed in Europe between 1560 and 1660 spoke a German dialect, and six out of seven died in pre-1648 Holy Roman Empire, which contained only 20% of Europe’s population.<sup>36</sup> However, this cannot be blamed on the *Malleus Maleficarum*. At the end of the fifteenth century Germany was not the hub of witch hunting which it later became. In fact,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 16.

Kramer faced resistance from Alpine Austrians, and there is no evidence anywhere to suggest the *Malleus* inspired a chain of witch hunts.<sup>37</sup> Between 1520 and 1560 there were sporadic, small scale trials in the Spanish Pyrenees, northern Italy, and some in Denmark. The largest ones occurred in Switzerland and the Low Countries. The Gelderland craze was the worst where twenty witches were executed in 1547. There were twenty nine trials in Zurich between 1500 and 1539.<sup>38</sup> So, in this context it is clear that while the *Malleus* was influential, it did not spark a panic.

Economic inequalities are also reasons historians give as to why women were so heavily prosecuted in Western Europe. Alan Macfarlane believes accusations were mainly directed at the elderly, due to increasing economic tensions. However, he was unable to prove this due to the age of only fifteen out of thirty of those accused had recorded ages.<sup>39</sup> Naess studied trials in seventeenth century Norway and concluded the trials were caused by poverty and disruptions in the social structure. These could possibly serve as reasons why poor, elderly women were so heavily represented in witchcraft accusations. However, Bengt Ankarloo points out that out of 60 women accused in the Mora parish of Sweden, the majority came from local middle- and upper-class agricultural families.<sup>40</sup> Obviously, Sweden does not represent all of Europe; however, this case study proves that women were not overwhelmingly prosecuted because of their socioeconomic status alone.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Ankarloo, "Witch Trials," 73.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Another argument made on why women were so heavily prosecuted was that there was a growing desire in the 1560s to control women's sexual and reproductive choices.<sup>41</sup> Barstow believes this desire came from the patriarchal concept of family, attacks by trained doctors on midwives and folk healers and by religious leaders to enforce traditional social norms. Barstow says the men prosecuted were accused only because they committed other crimes or were related to accused female witches.<sup>42</sup> However, as discussed in chapter two, male witches cannot just be dismissed as an anomaly, especially when those accused in places such as Finland and Iceland were predominantly male. One cannot dismiss certain aspects of history as anomalies in order to fit a theory. Atypicality helps to expand our understanding of the early modern period, so male witches should be examined as well.<sup>43</sup> One can see through these individual cases how communities believed and how these beliefs were put into practice.

Barstow correctly criticizes other theories that those accused were all outsiders, crazy, egotistical, or simply wanted desperately to believe in their own self-importance.<sup>44</sup> Despite this, Barstow makes an extreme argument when she states that historians deny women as a social group and ignore misogyny in the sixteenth century. She goes on to compare historians not studying misogyny in witch-hunts to historians not studying the effects of Ant-Semitism in the Holocaust, even though most Holocaust victims were Jewish. This argument is an extreme parallel. While certainly women did not have anything resembling equal rights in sixteenth-century Europe, we cannot study misogyny and gender relations in the same context that we have

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<sup>41</sup> Barstow, "On Studying Witchcraft as Women's History: A Historiography of the European Witch Prosecutions," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology, Volume IV: Gender and Witchcraft*, ed. Brian P. Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, "The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict, and Belief in Jacobean England." In *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology, Volume IV: Gender and Witchcraft*, Ed. Brian Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 88.

<sup>44</sup> Barstow, *New Perspectives*, 11.

in modern times. By comparing an event which happened centuries ago under different circumstances to another horrific event in modern history, Barstow makes a flawed argument.

Barstow also claims that historians cannot put witches in the category of “hags”: rather, they were often important members of society, often healers and midwives, which made them suspects of witchcraft.<sup>45</sup> Barstow also claims that the patriarchal system explains why women accused other women of witchcraft. She claims that if a woman sensed another woman threatened the men of the community, whom she depended on and had community ties with, she would accuse them. Barstow also makes an economic argument when she claims that people accused those even poorer than themselves, yet no empirical evidence is offered. Barstow also claims that the European treatment of women illuminates the racism and imperialism that Europeans spread throughout the world. While economic inequalities and instability escalated the witch-hunts, this does not explain how these conflicts resulted in witch hunts. Once again, Early Modern Europeans believed they truly lived among witches.

Marianne Hester’s *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches* published in 1992 embodies the radical standpoint which I argue against. Hester theorizes that witch-hunts were a systemized form of sexualized violence against women by men.<sup>46</sup> Anne Barstow in her 1994 work, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, particularly emphasized the eroticization of torture and punishments of witches. Both works emphasize that women were “tried, judged, jailed, examined, and executed by men.”<sup>47</sup> There may have been elements of sexualized violence in torture of women, but this does not explain why women were accused. It

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>47</sup> Elspeth Whitney, “The Witch ‘She’/The Historian ‘He’: Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch Hunts,” in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology, Volume IV: Gender and Witchcraft*, ed. Brian Levack, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 24.

is a simplistic argument to say women were accused of witchcraft so men could satisfy sexual violent urges. Demonologists show a genuine concern for purging society of the Devil's servants, not for punishing women. However, the sexuality of witches was a huge concern among demonologists, and this point must be addressed.

The sexuality of witches is also a way in which the witch was allegedly an enemy to Christian society. By the sixteenth century, "outsider groups," such as Jews and heretics were rumored to commit infanticide, cannibalism, and deviant sexual activities. They were also said to have an association with the Devil. Elspeth Whitney states this means that the witch-hunts, while a new phenomenon, were also a continuation of this tradition of ostracization. Whitney goes on to say that women were not particularly seen as deviant in particular even among these other groups.<sup>48</sup> All of these groups were considered enemies of Christianity, so it is likely that these beliefs about witches emerged as they became an ostracized group, who were considered heretics. These beliefs were not formed solely because witches were women.

The patriarchal role, although not new, became emphasized in both Reformation and Counter-Reformation societies. Biblical teachings emphasized the role of the male as a guardian and leader in the home and in society. Simultaneously, sexual guilt became emphasized. Also asylums, prisons, and convents were designed for these "masterless" people. The prosecution of midwives, nurses, and mothers was a direct and indirect attack on sexuality as well. The fear of witches affecting sexual matters also points to this. The depiction of a woman witch enslaved to a male Devil was still clearly under some male authority. However, the female witch was not under the Church-mandated Christian male authority, so she was still not conforming to the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

patriarchal Christian society.<sup>49</sup> So, the witch was dangerous, but first and foremost the female witch represented an attack on Christian society, not the patriarchal society. The female witch's subservience to the improper male authority is also shown through her sexual deviance. She is a witch, but through sex she is a servant to the Devil. Female purity was an essential quality of the ideal, Christian woman. So the witch portrayed as a sexual deviant further reinforces the idea of a witch as a servant of the Devil.

Whitney does acknowledge that men and children were also prosecuted for witchcraft. However, she also states that the majority of these cases occurred because they were relatives of a female witch, and the prosecutions reaching men and children were a marker of a witch hunt that "was out of control."<sup>50</sup> Whitney states that one also cannot point to women accusing women, and use this to dismiss the gender issue of witchcraft. Patriarchy is a social system in which women are encouraged to enforce patriarchy in order to secure their own social status within a system that is against them. Whitney rightly concludes that this reduces gender relations into a simplistic "war against women" mentality.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Whitney correctly concludes that regional beliefs played a role in areas with more equal rates of males and females accused of witchcraft.<sup>52</sup> Male sorcerers were thought to be more in contact with the supernatural than women in those areas. For example, Finland had a more shamanistic tradition which associated men with witchcraft more than women. Whitney claims Finland "had to be taught that women were witches."<sup>53</sup> However, I argue that they were not taught women were witches, but rather they learned Western European ideas of what a witch was, and these ideas happened to apply more to

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<sup>49</sup> Whitney, "The Witch 'She,'" 25

<sup>50</sup> Whitney, "The Witch 'She,'" 25.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 28.

women. For example, the Western European idea that witches devoured and killed children would change the demographics of who was blamed. Wet nurses and midwives would be most likely to blame; therefore, women would be accused of witchcraft more. Lyndal Roper's research on the Augsburg trials in the late sixteenth-century led her to conclude that post-partum mothers often made accusations against lying-in maids.<sup>54</sup> Dead children and accusing mothers are a consistent theme throughout witchcraft trials in early modern Germany.<sup>55</sup> Sudden, tragic deaths of infants invited gossip and speculation. The witch was an inverse of motherhood, so she took life from those who gave it. This was certainly a way in which mothers could place blame and guilt outside of themselves, but these women believed that the Devil and his servants existed, and they were there to destroy the products of a Christian society.

Christina Lerner claimed that witches were not accused because they were women, but because they were supposedly witches. Women's conformation to patriarchal gender roles supported the social order. A woman who defied this social order was not an enemy of not just men but of all society.<sup>56</sup> Lerner also points out that men were accused of witchcraft. While male witches merit study, this does not mean that historians can overlook the overrepresentation of women in Western European witch-hunts. Authorities did not randomly select witches. Rather, particular characteristics such as a woman cursing, was considered a trait of a violent female. Lerner makes this parallel between males, who were not randomly selected for prosecution of physically violent crimes. Witch-hunts, in other words, were sex-related, but not sex-specific.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>55</sup> Lyndal Roper, "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology, Vol IV: Gender and Witchcraft*, ed. Brian Levack. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 306.

<sup>56</sup> Christina Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), 84-85.

<sup>57</sup> Lerner, 87.

Demonologists did not emphatically claim that women were witches but rather that women were weak in character and more prone to superstition. Some historians claim that these demonological texts prove that the witch-hunts were a war on women.<sup>58</sup> In Stuart Clark's analysis of French texts, he found that references to women mainly referred to their lesser morality, not that they were necessarily witches. In other French texts, no references to gender in witchcraft were found at all.<sup>59</sup> Jean Bodin's *De la démomanie des sorciers* in 1580, failed to answer why women were witches; Sebastian Michaelis's *Pneumalogie, ou discours des esprits* in 1587 blamed women's inferiority to men and that women's behavior came in two extremes of good behavior and bad.<sup>60</sup> Clark says that these failures to address why women were witches could be due to the way in which people thought of women culturally. It was more assumed that women were prone to witchcraft, and so why women were often accused was never a topic that needed addressing. This is because witchcraft beliefs resulted in women's prosecution as witches, not because witchcraft beliefs formed to blame women for *maleficia*.

Historians continue to ask many questions about the witch-hunts of Early Modern Europe. Eighty percent of the accused in this era were women.<sup>61</sup> This staggering figure warrants the question: why were women so heavily represented in these witch-hunts? In order to answer this complex question, some feminist historians claim these hunts broke out as a way for a patriarchal society to wage a war on women, especially women who acted outside of the social order. Many of these historians, such as Heinemann, point to the *Malleus Maleficarum*'s sexist views as proof that women were considered evil, sexually immoral beings, who naturally desired

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<sup>58</sup> Clark, "The Gendering," 57.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>61</sup> Watt, "Witchcraft."



to become agents of Satan. However, when one examines other treatises, if a treatise contains any passages about women, they pale in comparison to the sexism of the *Malleus*. The *Malleus* was influential, but its sexist ideas were not. Historians have looked outside these documents to explain why women were so heavily prosecuted. For example, Eric Middlefort maintained that the higher proportion of women to men caused men to grow suspicious when women made “spinster societies.” This certainly could be a factor, but it is far too simple of an explanation.

Other historians, such as Elspeth Whitney, dismiss male witches as merely associated with their female relatives were also accused in several cases. However, male witches are still worthy of study, and they cannot be dismissed in answering such a gender-specific question. Selma R. Williams makes the argument that midwives used people’s beliefs in witchcraft to fill their own purses. This argument dismisses the Early Modern European belief in witchcraft. The Early Modern Europeans truly believed in magical abilities to heal or harm. They did not pretend to do so in order to hunt women. The claim to have the ability to heal also implied that one had the ability to harm, so this became a dangerous power when the Church and (even more so, local courts) grew suspicious of these claims when heresy became a major concern.

Demonological treatises may not have introduced sexism in witchcraft trials, but they certainly shaped what defined witchcraft. One of these influential ideas was the Sabbat. The Sabbat connected witchcraft to heresy, according to Carlo Ginzburg. These Sabbats were remnants of ancient pagan fertility cults which, literally, became demonized. These “masses” also supported the idea of a witch as the inverse of everything Christian society represented. Folklore beliefs and theology merged to describe masses where the Sacraments were mocked, orgies with demons occurred, and the Devil was worshipped. Here, witches practiced the very inverse of the Catholic Mass. The ideal Christian was chaste, so sexual immorality among

witches symbolized this inversion. The *Malleus Maleficarum* certainly emphasized women's sexual immorality, but it is clear in other treatises that this is a trait of a witch, not of a woman. In general, witches were the antithesis of good mothers. Witches killed infants as demanded by demons or in order to make potions. Instead of nurturing the child, as the woman's gender role mandated, the witch took nourishment. The prevalence of this idea could support that the witch-hunts were a women-hunt. However, witches served as a scapegoat for the mysterious and sudden deaths of infants. The ones closest to the child-the mother, the wet-nurse, the midwife, or even elderly neighbors had the most opportunity to commit *maleficia* against the child, accordingly, they were considered the most likely culprits. Beliefs about women did not form the beliefs about witchcraft; instead beliefs about witchcraft marked women as easier targets for accusations. The witch-hunts of Early Modern Europe were not a woman hunt. Rather, all of these concerns- the heretical Sabbats, the sexual immorality, and the murder of children- point to witches as the enemy of Christianity. Western Europe was a Christian society. The Devil, the adversary of Christianity, was believed to have agents acting on his behalf on Earth. These agents would allegedly help the Devil destroy this Christian society by inverting the social order, of which a large part was the patriarchy. The witch was not an enemy of just patriarchy; rather, the witch was the destroyer of society itself, the enemy of all Christians. The witch-hunts were not a war against women, but a perceived war against the Devil and his servants.

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