

A GOBBER TOOTH, A HAIRY LIP, A SQUINT EYE:
CONCEPTS OF THE WITCH AND THE BODY
IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE
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This thesis discusses early modern European perceptions of body and soul in association with the increasing stringency of civilized behaviour and state formation in an effort to provide motivation for the increased severity of the witch hunts of that time. Both secondary and primary sources have been used, in particular the contemporary demonologies by such authors as Bodin, and Kramer and Sprenger. The thesis is divided into five chapters, including an Introduction and Conclusion. The body of the thesis focuses on religious, scientific, and secular beliefs (Ch. 2), appearance and characteristics of witches (Ch. 3), and the activities and behaviours/actions of witches, (Ch. 4). This study concentrates on the similarities found across Europe, and, as the majority of witches persecuted were female, my thesis emphasizes women as victims of the witch hunts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the human body has become the subject of dynamic scholarship in the field of history. An increasing number of scholars, such as Diane Purkiss and Roy Porter, have turned their attention to the study of the body, exploring the history of how it has been conceptualized through time. Considerable research has focused on the “perception and representation of physicality in a myriad of arenas” (Stearns 1994, 80). The arena for the endeavor offered here is witchcraft in early modern Europe.

The early modern European era, comprising broadly the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, was host to an epidemic of fear and a plague of murderous activity in which thousands were persecuted, tortured and killed for their supposedly supernatural and evil behavior. While realizing that these witch hunts differed somewhat over time and place, there were also great similarities of thought, belief and behavior. It is on these similarities that this study is based.

Early Modern Europe: The Context For This Study

Europe in the early modern period was in a state of turmoil and transition. Economic, social, geographical and demographic developments occurring during this time and place were underlying anxieties that intensified the fears of the populace with regard to witchcraft. After a long period of stagnation and decline, the population of Europe rose spectacularly, resulting in an increase in poverty and an accompanying pressure on a limited supply of resources; prices of all commodities escalated at a previously unheard-of rate; towns grew in size and number; and both mercantile and

agricultural capitalism were introduced in many areas. In addition, recurrent outbreaks of the plague and other epidemic diseases swept the area, along with many years of bad harvests and famine. At the same time, family life was changing, the number of unattached older females within the population was growing, and new moral and social values were being initiated to accommodate a changing world. In many areas of Europe, particularly Germany, Switzerland, France, Poland and Scotland, religious divisions and conflicts instigated political instability and violence. In France, the religious wars of 1560-98 created political chaos and in Scotland, religious differences between Presbyterians and Episcopalians led to revolution in the 1640's and prolonged conflict afterwards (Levack 1995, 115-16, 127, 157).

While there were many transitions and causes for conflict during this time in Europe, the religious changes and State-building had the most effect on issues pursued in this thesis. With regard to religious changes, the Reformation, spanning the years between 1520 and 1650 (Levack 1995, 100), was the most important, splintering the seeming unity of Christendom. Early Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther, Jean Calvin and Huldreich Zwingli, fervently wished to restore the Catholic Church to its earlier Christian purity. In that attempt, they denied the usefulness of indulgences, altered the Roman Catholic mass and changed the role of clergy. Removing many of the clerical and angelic intermediaries between God and humankind that medieval Catholicism had established, they declared a direct relationship with God. With the split from the Catholic Church came the notion that each Christian was a priest of sorts who could read the Bible and acquire faith, that faith alone could bring him salvation. These irreconcilable differences led millions of Europeans to break with Rome and establish independent

Protestant Churches and Protestantism became the dominant religion in many parts of Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, England, Scotland, Scandinavia, Switzerland and the Low Countries (Levack 1995, 100).

In response to the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church began its own reform movement known as the counter-Reformation or the Catholic reformation. It met a long-held demand by Catholic clerics and laymen to accomplish change within the Church, without destroying its structure. Their main goals were to eliminate corruption within the Church, to educate the clergy, inspire and strengthen the faith of the laity and reclaim the loyalty of those individuals and communities who had flocked to Protestantism. In these goals, they achieved a significant measure of success (Levack 1995, 101).

The results of the Reformation and the counter-Reformation included a number of internal and international conflicts. Military forces from Catholic countries clashed with Protestants in combats such as the civil wars in France in the late sixteenth century and the Thirty-Years War which eventually enveloped nearly the whole of Europe in the early seventeenth century. The aftermath was that parts of Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and the Low Countries returned to the Catholic fold, while many other areas remained Protestant (Levack 1995, 101).

During the age of reform, Europeans experienced an increased awareness of Satan's presence in the world and became more determined to wage war against him (Levack 1995, 103). In addition, the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demanded a more stringent emphasis on personal piety and sanctity and instructed the people to lead a more exacting and morally rigorous life. Communities became more

fearful of religious and moral decay and increasingly anxious to rid their homes and neighborhoods of corrupting and subversive influences, the most obvious and vulnerable of whom were witches—or women who were perceived as most susceptible to the temptations of witchcraft (119).

The changes that took place during the early modern era of Europe were more vital, quick and all-encompassing than at any other time in European history before the commencement of the Industrial Revolution and they took a heavy psychic toll. They may have produced the mood of distrust, suspicion and melancholy that both early modern contemporaries and later historians have uncovered in early modern Europe. The dominance of a deep fear in all social classes, among those not able to cope with the instability of the new world, has led to the designation of this period as the “age of anxiety” and as one of the “most psychically disturbed periods in human history” (Levack 1995, 157-58). This anxiety contributed to the turmoil and confusion the populace found all around them and they attributed that instability to the influence of Lucifer in the world; that process, in turn, indicated the activity of witches. Many of the concrete signs of social disruption such as religious dissent and the apparent spread of poverty, were very frequently attributed to Satan and his allies, his witches (158).

In the age of the Reformations, the State, often acting under clerical pressure, became a guardian of individual morality (Levack 1995, 112). As such, governments became more and more powerful in terms of controlling physical appearances and functions. The body became a kind of exhibition site on which religious and civil authorities could display their power, hence the punishment of citizens for improper physical behaviors such as public urination. Corporeal punishment of witches through

torture and death served as a reminder to the populace of the dangers of defying the new morality and rules of behavior.

Bryan LeVack believes that the rise of the modern state in western Europe can be construed as a necessary precondition of the witch hunts. “It is no coincidence,” he states, “that the great witch hunt occurred during a period of extensive state-building throughout Europe.” That process of state-building included a transformation of communal arrangements, creating tensions that found expression in witch-hunting (LeVack 1995, 98-99). The early modern period of Europe encompassed a surging movement from rural to urban areas.

To understand the early modern European witch hunts, one must also attempt to comprehend the world-view of the populace at the given time and locale. Combined with a “mind over matter” ideology, or concept of being, was a growing new cosmology. This new world-view introduced a turning-away from the past closeness with Nature in the form of a living being (tree or water gods, for example), toward a new allegiance, the growing hierarchical State. Norbert Elias, author of The Civilizing Process, notes that “the structure of civilized behavior is closely interrelated with the organization of Western societies in the form of states” (Elias 1983, xv).

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the medieval city-states became organized into recognizable nation-states. These nation-states differed from the medieval city-state in several ways: they possessed well-defined geographic borders with a common language and government within those boundaries; they were ruled by hereditary national dynasties, usually one family that dominated and became that nation’s royalty, responsible for maintaining political and economic stability; alliance between that

ruling dynasty and the monied merchant classes allowing for the emergence of capitalism. In order to maintain these nation-states, governments required a uniformity of behavioral patterns from its citizenry. The connection between State formation and proper behavior is that, as the State incorporated more diverse populations, it developed mechanisms to control their behavior, thus, informal rules of polite behavior became law.

The fear of rebellion, sedition and disorder haunted members of the ruling classes during these years. Educated belief in organized witchcraft spread through Europe during this period of acute instability and recurrent rebellion. These disturbances terrified members of the ruling classes throughout Europe and those fears were “reflected in the imagery of the Sabbat.” The witch was the archetypal rebel and, as the servant of Satan, she was part of a subversive political conspiracy. As a lower-class peasant, her goal was to turn the world upside-down—to invert the divinely-inspired hierarchical order of society, rejecting all its moral norms (Levack 1995, 64-65).

In a further refinement, because most of the victims of the witch hunts were female, this investigation focuses primarily on witchcraft as it affected women. Early modern demonologies and treatises speak of the intellectual inferiority and superstitiousness of women, as well as their moral weakness, emphasizing their sexual passion and concluding that “all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable” (Levack 1995, 137). Henri Boguet, a Burgundian secular judge and author of Discours des Sorciers (1612), claimed that Satan had sexual relations with all witches because he knew that “women love carnal pleasures” (137).

While men are not completely disregarded here, the fact is that women comprised seventy-five to ninety percent of witchcraze victims (Williams 1995, 68). Though

approximately twenty percent of the accused were male, most of those were related to women who were already convicted of sorcery—husbands, sons, grandsons and such, and not recognized as originators of witchcraft. Of those few who were unrelated, most had prior criminal records for offenses such as theft, highway robbery, murder, heresy and sexual crimes consisting of rape, incest, fornication, adultery or sodomy. For these, witchcraft was not the original charge, but tacked on afterward to make the initial accusations more heinous. Witchcraft was perceived for the most part as a female offense (Barstow 1994, 24-25), hence the concentration here on women as early modern European witches.

The Relevant Literature

A considerable body of work on differing aspects of witchcraft exists, spanning centuries of study. Primary works on witchcraft covering the time period in question have been utilized here, as well as secondary sources. However, in order to bring together the elements in this thesis, research into three distinct, but frequently overlapping, areas, in addition to witchcraft, was undertaken. Those areas include: the early modern understanding of the body, its structure, composition and capabilities, and how they could be utilized to condemn the witch; the rise of mannerly behavior and how it contributed to the growth and strength of state systems; early modern beliefs with regard to spirituality versus physicality; as well as witchcraft in general—identification of witches, their practices, habits, characteristics, appearances, allegiances, etc. These different elements have been brought together to construct a theory that, I believe, is fairly original.

Early modern demonologies written by Jean Bodin, sixteenth-century French

political philosopher, Joseph Glanville, seventeenth-century English clergyman and philosopher, Francesco Maria Guazzo, seventeenth century Milanese friar, and Nicolas Remy, a sixteenth-century judge from the Duchy of Lorraine, were helpful in consolidating an understanding of European witchcraft—its purpose, how to identify witches, their capabilities and magical powers, the harm they supposedly perpetrated upon the populace and the wards and protections that could be used against them. Frequently, these demonologies included case studies of accused witches, which were also of much assistance in forming this thesis. Guazzo included in his book, The Compendium Maleficarum, Italy's most comprehensive guide to witchcraft, a series of illustrations of witches concluding a pact with the Devil, thereby providing his audience with an important visual supplement to the fantasies he was describing (Levack 1995, 57). Remy claimed to have executed more than eight hundred witches in sixteen years, publishing a treatise, Demonolatry, one of the main sources of information regarding the work of Satan on earth. It contained descriptions of the activities at the Sabbat, the obscene kiss, the feasting on horrid foods and human flesh and the ritual dancing to unpleasant music (56).

The Malleus Maleficarum, a fifteenth-century seminal work also known as The Hammer of Witches, was a source of inspiration and information to the above-mentioned demonologists, as well as hundreds of other authorities. Written by Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, it was especially helpful in researching the supposed capabilities of and atrocities committed by witches, as well as punishments inflicted upon them. Kramer, the principal author, was an elderly and possibly emotionally disturbed theologian who was appointed as an inquisitor for southern

Germany in 1474. Sprenger was a professor of theology who received a similar appointment for the Rhineland in 1470. Using examples from the cases they had adjudicated, they produced the Malleus, their handbook or manual for witch hunters. The book is exceptional in its misogynistic overemphasis on the supposed weakness and inherent evil nature of women as regards copulation with devils. It served as an encyclopedia of witchcraft and in that form transmitted an entire set of learned beliefs to a larger audience (Levack 1995, 54).

Secondary sources for this section include works by twentieth-century authors such as Anne Barstow, whose book, Witchcraze, was helpful in the overall study of the early modern European witch hunts, Rossell Hope Robbins, whose Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology was extremely useful, especially in locating certain definitions and researching particular events. The works by Norman Cohn, Mildred Boyd, Joseph Klaits and Gerhard S. Williams provided much general information on several aspects of witchcraft, i.e., how it was practiced, how witches could be identified, spells that could be cast.

Information regarding women, specifically, as witches and victims of witches was located in the works of twentieth-century authors Diane Purkiss, Anne Barstow, Londa Schiebinger, Linda Hults and Laura Weigert. Their publications in the field of women's studies were particularly enlightening in terms of reasons why females were so often cast as witches, their alleged weak and evil natures and their supposed perverted carnal desires.

Modern scholars such as Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, and Londa Schiebinger conducted studies and published their findings in the area of early modern

conceptions of the body. Based on earlier postulations by such great thinkers as Galen and Aristotle, reaffirmed by early modern demonologists and philosophers and writers such as Montaigne and Erasmus, their findings were of invaluable assistance.

In the area of the rise of manners and state formation, I depended heavily upon the massive study undertaken by Norbert Elias. His The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners, published in 1978, was essential. His work chronicled the beginnings and development of how mannerly behavior was instigated and enforced. Further assistance in this realm of proper behavior was obtained from works by other modern scholars such as Roy Porter, Jonathan Clark and J. A. Sharpe. Primary sources consulted in the area of manners included Bodin's work outlining the ideal state, as well as Erasmus' publications on the proper behavior and display of manners.

Witchcraft and religion are so irreversibly connected that I was able to glean information on the spiritual beliefs of the early modern populace from everything I read. Again, in terms of primary sources, the demonologists' works mentioned earlier were of great help. Modern authors Roy Porter and Lyndal Roper provided much assistance in this respect, and in the area of the general European mind-set regarding the body and witchcraft; however, Jean Delumeau's amazing work, Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th-18th Centuries, published in 1989, was invaluable. His insights into early modern perceptions of sin, its expiation and the damnation sinners faced, were indispensable in comprehending how an event such as the early modern European witch hunts could occur.

The Scope of This Thesis

The conclusions reached in this thesis are based on religious and secular beliefs of

the European populace regarding the body, God and Satan, the rise of manners in the form of “proper” behavior, its contribution to State formation, and how these three elements mingled to foster a hatred for and persecution of witches.

This analysis of the body and early modern European witchcraft could not be accurately conducted without the inclusion of the religious and secular beliefs held and taught with regard to the strict separation of spirit and body. The tenets of the people, handed down from much earlier times, stressed the importance of the soul and the degradation of the body. The spirit was “good” and the physical “bad.” The material world itself was viewed as inferior and such physical activities as sexual intercourse debasing to the participants. For example, “the sexual act is sin.” That sin “sullies the ensuing child who is born dirty into a dirty world” (Delumeau 1989, 16).

Human law, based on God’s law, also promoted the spiritual to the detriment of the physical. As a result, along with the rise of the state systems and civic organization came an increase of proper physical attitude and behavior in the form of manners. Church and science both taught that the body was of negligible importance or interest and that it should be concealed, its functions restricted as much as possible. In Elias’s account of the rise of civilité, he finds that a major part of same is the “progressive disciplining of the unruly body,” and a “curbing of natural human drives.” Domination over natural physical functions through the utilization of manners was required, and “societal mores gradually began to demand the suppression of the positive pleasure component in certain functions more and more strongly by the arousal of anxiety” (Roper 1994, 5-6). The populace was manipulated and controlled through the mores and laws and expected to assume a uniformity of appearance and behavior that would ensure an

orderly society.

From the late fifteenth century, secular, as well as religious, authorities disseminated a “literature of discipline” that included ordinances, proclamations and mandates indicating the baseness of humanity’s physical nature. “Culminating in the Devil books of the mid-sixteenth century, this literature conceives of vices as a kind of “inner fluid, constantly threatening to burst the bounds of discipline” (Roper 1994, 24). Elias, quoting from the 1729 text, On the Parts of the Body That Should Be Hidden, and on Natural Necessities, demonstrates the beliefs of the time.

On nakedness: it is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands.

On fornication: as far as natural needs are concerned, it is proper to satisfy them only where one cannot be seen.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should always be hidden, or of certain bodily necessities to which nature has subjected us, or even to mention them (Elias 1978, 133). (Note here that with the existence of witches and the witch trials, repressed people could mention and hear the unspeakable without censure).

In this required repression of the physical, the body becomes the link between self and society. In order to be an acceptable member of society, one must do as the rules require—restrain one’s physical nature, hide as much of one’s body as possible, use mind over matter to disguise one’s physicality.

In a world where good Christians, neighbors and citizens were defined by restraint, respect for modesty and repudiation of the corporeal aspects of self, the witch and her presumed disdain for the morals and rules of loyal citizens created turmoil throughout society. As the witch’s behavior, defined by her attacks on people, her disregard for proper grooming and behavior and, above all, her flagrant and perverted

sexuality, generated chaos, so too did her victims' conduct beget upheaval around them.

Bewitched persons, especially children, tended to exhibit vehemently improper behavior. Refusing nourishment, twisting and trembling, suffering from convulsions and from being thrown about by a seemingly invisible compulsion, these victims of the witch's curse were no longer socialized. Possibly losing the power of speech, such a person might make strange animal sounds, curse those around them, and be unable to join in family prayers, distancing him or herself from the family of mannerly and modest humanity (Purkiss 1996, 109).

Stereotypically, the witch was an individual who caused harm via occult means and was bound to the Devil as his servant (Cohn 1975, 147). She was associated with wild and desolate places and a member of a society or sect that held meetings or Sabbats where the Christian religion (and therefore the hierarchical order of things) was parodied. She worshiped Satan and had sexual intercourse with him, his demons and his other servants.

In an age where spiritual purity, untarnished by the carnal, was the ideal state, witchcraft and its trappings celebrated the physical and gloried in the carnal aspects of humanity. From the degradation contained in copulation with Satan, to the baseness found in spells that altered her victim's body, to the incantations that transformed the physical environment, the witch was gloriously and unabashedly corporeal, devoid of the redeeming qualities of spiritual dominance.

Chapter One

To comprehend the debasement of the physical body, one must achieve an understanding of the contemporary concepts of the spiritual versus the carnal aspects of

humankind. Thus, Chapter One is a study of early modern European religious and scientific doctrines regarding the spirit and the body. How a culture defines the physical aspect of self is one of its most integral and betraying elements and the early modern European world can be evaluated in part by its views of the body (Roper 1994, 171).

Why were bodily things depraved and corrupt? God was spirit, unburdened with the demands of a physical nature and since humankind strove to be as like Him as possible, it was necessary to scorn that carnal nature. Beliefs such as this, regarding the spirit and soma, or corporeal, had been handed down from much earlier teachings and were followed as vigorously during early modern times as they had ever been.

Chapter One continues with a discussion of the inaccurate beliefs regarding the biological constructions of the body, both male and female, and how they induce sin. Along with the increasing formation of the nation-state, the tendency toward physical sin and the revulsion prevalent concerning the body and its functions, apparently impelled members of society to distance themselves from the “natural” through the imposition of proper behavior via manners, rules and laws.

The first Chapter concludes with an explanation of how witches and their art emphasized the degradation of the physical. Because of their supposed disregard for propriety, their proclivity for forbidden sexual activities and their evil intentions toward society at large, witches became the target of anger and hatred for civilized society. Succeeding chapters further discuss witches and their role in early modern Europe.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two is an analysis of the accepted contemporary notions of the witch’s physical appearance, along with the physical characteristics she supposedly possessed,

such as her “Evil Eye.” The witch could be youthful and lovely to see, but, for the most part, she was “an old, weather-beaten crone, leaning on a staff, hollow-eyed, untoothed, going mumbling in the streets” (Robbins 1973, 3). She was most frequently an older woman who was “firm and steadfast” in her convictions and not the least inhibited about sharing them (Barstow 1994, 29). Wise and experienced, a healer, mid-wife, advice-giver and more, people tended to listen to her. As such a person, she was a danger to men because she was “like” them in thought and behavior and thus pictured as a menace to male superiority, threatening the status quo with disorder .

The second Chapter delves deeper into the beliefs regarding bodily composition and the characteristics of the physical body and how those beliefs pertain to the witch. The physical bodies of humanity in Renaissance accounts were still very much those of the Galenic reports (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 12), themselves going back at least as far as Pliny. An example of such an inherited belief was the notion that female could transform to male. Accounts continued to abound regarding the “structural similarities and thus the mutability of male and female bodies.” Sir Thomas Brown, author of Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors, 1646, dedicated an entire chapter to the subject of whether or not “every hare is both male and female.” He concluded his study with the statement that “as for the mutation of sexes, or transition of one into the other, we cannot deny it in Hares, it being observable in Man” (12-13).

Ambroise Pare, the great sixteenth-century surgeon tells the tale of

Germain Garniere, born Marie, who served in the retinue of a King. He was a well-built young man with a thick red beard who had lived and dressed as a girl until he was fifteen, showing ‘no mark of masculinity.’ In the heat of puberty as he was in the fields and was rather robustly chasing his swine, which were going into a wheat field, [and] finding a ditch, he

wanted to cross over it, and having leaped, that very moment the genitalia and the male rod came to be developed in him, having ruptured the ligaments by which they had been held enclosed.

Montaigne tells the same story and states that it was “attested to by the most eminent officials of the town” (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 13). Such curious beliefs as this could very well have aggravated fears of witches, for what could apparently be done accidentally by a human being could, then, also be deliberately accomplished by a witch, as well as any number of other horrific actions.

Chapter Three

A discussion of those physical abilities and activities of the witch is contained in Chapter Three. Early modern society believed witches to be powerful incarnations of will that threatened orderly communities. Witches behaved in ways that countered normal life. They harmed instead of helped, they acted through the power of Satan, not the will of God, they destroyed families, killed children and engaged in wanton sexual activity. A witch could bring illness and death to any life with only a glance. She could steal milk from a cow by pulling a rope from miles away, brew potions for any purpose, such as to bind love, sow discord and hate, drive people to insanity, to kill or to cure. Anyone who annoyed a witch ran the risk of watching his or her children waste away, the crops wither, the stock drop dead in the fields. One could not escape the witch for she could transform herself into a cat, dog, toad or hare, or assume any human shape she chose, nor could locks and bars keep her out (Boyd 1969, 67). The witch flew to Sabbats, Satanic celebrations which featured cannibalism and copulation with devils and other human servants of Lucifer, arriving on rams, goats, pigs, oxen, black horses, sticks, shovels, spits or broomsticks, all given the power of flight by demonic power. “In every respect,

witches represented a collective inversion of Christianity” (Cohn 1975, 101-102).

All the above activities of the witch are researched in this Chapter. Each and every action of the witch was performed with one intent—to fulfill Satan’s goal of destroying God’s work by bringing about the downfall of humanity.

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt, from an anthropological and historical standpoint, to research the similarities in various European cultures that produced the early modern European witch hunts; to achieve an understanding of how those cultures perceived and felt about physical bodies and their abilities, with respect to witches, their Lord and his minions; and to unpack the images of those fanciful and lustful creatures who exhibited forbidden desires and animal instincts. With the rise of a more rigid and proper mode of behavior, the need for those images becomes even more urgent.

Witchcraft studies usually deal with the belief in and fear of the supernatural. I have tried to deal with the unconscious need of human beings, expressed through their concepts of body, to maintain order out of chaos. In this attempt, it seems evident that the witchcraft persecutions of the early modern era in Europe revealed a need of the populace to distance itself from the disorder of nature via the quickly escalating rules of civic organization. Witchcraft exposed the dread possibility that an individual could attack paternal authority, whether it be God’s or man’s, thereby achieving the destruction of society, the community of Christians of which the mannered State was formed (Roper 1994, 239).

The trappings of witchcraft, such as the phallic transporting brooms associated with night flying, also symbolized domestication, obedience and maintenance of a clean

and ordered household. Used outside that role, they become symbols of escape and of female domination and feminine association with evil. “They acquire a magical force, just as women outside the home are viewed as trying to achieve power, a power most closely associated with sexuality. The forks, brooms and goats can be seen as symbols of male masculinity held in the power of women” (Clark 1991, 123). Such a portrait exhibits the fear of the overthrow of order. Witchcraft promoted discord, thus preventing unity within the State, and, the ultimate goal, union with the Divine, resulting in the true death of humanity. Witchly behavior was unacceptable, threatening as it did the rise of civilization and the accelerating evolution of the State.

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CHAPTER TWO

BODY AND SOUL

Man is formed of dust, mud, ashes, and, what is even viler, of foul sperm...Who can ignore the fact that conjugal union never occurs without the itching of the flesh, the fomentation of desire, and the stench of lust? Hence, any progeny is spoiled, tainted, and vitiated by the very act of its conception, the seed communicating to the soul that inhabits it the stain of sin, the stigma of fault, the filth of iniquity, in the same way that a liquid will corrupt if it is poured into a dirty vessel...

“De Contemptu Mundi”
future Innocent III
(Delumeau 1990, 16)

Many scholars have advanced varying hypotheses, both religious and secular, regarding the genesis of the early modern European witch hunts that occurred during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. One promising approach associates the early modern conceptions of the body—the physical nature of humanity—with contemporary religious teachings and beliefs and with the impact of the period’s increasingly inflexible codes of proper behavior and appearance. These three intermingling elements, the body, church beliefs and practices, and the rise of civilité in the form of proper social behavior and manners, created a near-perfect arena for the enactment of the tragedy that was the early modern European witch hunts.

Witches, defined here as people who use or attempt to use magical methods to heal or hurt, have existed in virtually every society. Across time, space, and cultural barriers, feelings toward witches ran the gamut from tolerance of a necessary evil to reverence of those who were reputedly in touch with the gods. In medieval Europe,

society identified and accepted witches who worked, or tried to work, both good and evil through the use of spells, potions, or herbs. Witches, persons who practiced magical arts, sorcery and healing, had always been a part of the European cultural landscape, but it was not until the fifteenth century that prosecution of them began to reach panic proportions (Reineke 1990, 57). For the most part, the populace accepted witches' supposed physical capabilities, such as shape-changing, and their other alleged supernatural powers and activities, albeit warily in many instances; however, in the early modern era, the fear, antipathy, and persecution of witches became atypically intense. Why then, in this period, did witches become anathema?

The Body, The Witch, and Society

The answer is a complex one. A complete and thorough history of early modern witchcraft requires the inclusion of the history of the development of order and civic organization in Europe from its beginnings (Robbins 1973, 1)—a study of the steps taken by Europeans away from the ancient natural world toward the more structured societies leading to state formation. With the continuing rise of refined behavior and the attendant move away from what was perceived as primitive, the physical body and its functions became more and more offensive. The ever-escalating power of the Church and the intensification of an uncompromising hierarchical social system compounded this distaste for the physical. Many believed the “natural” body, often seen as bestial in nature, to be disgusting. Natural acts, such as urination, spitting, defecation and sexual intercourse, were reviled as shameful and public indulgence in such could easily be comprehended as chaotic behavior that threatened the world order.

The early modern era was a time of turmoil and change, and most people sought

stability

at all costs. The process of organizing and ordering behavior required control, conformity and constancy from its citizens, while denigrating chaos and individualism. Concepts of civil behavior precluded the public performance of bodily functions that had previously been considered normal and natural. Mannerly people mastered their bodies. Persons who indulged in rude public displays of private bodily functions, or who too openly enjoyed those acts, threatened the status quo with their impudent and immodest behavior. Society, in return, marginalized and rejected those who did not conform to the new ways, all too frequently labeling them as witches.

Because of their use of magic, their supposed association with the Devil, and particularly their alleged love of the corporeal aspects of being, early modern witches defied the social order, rejected conformity, and relished chaos. They used bodily fluids in their ceremonies and spells and were sexually promiscuous; in short, they refused to submit to the "civilizing" influences of Church, State, and Society. Their love for and flaunting of bestial physicality, together with their lack of souls (having sold them to Satan), put witches outside the circle of "civilization," making them fair game for ostracism, imprisonment and execution.

Soma Versus Spirit

The early modern period was a time of stringent dualities: body versus soul, man versus woman, good versus evil. Most subjects were seen as all one thing or all another. During the age of the European witch hunts, the prevailing attitudes toward body and soul were a continuation of much earlier beliefs regarding the nature of soul and soma or the carnal. Men and women had long believed that theirs was a dualistic nature,

incorporating the merely physical with the more transcendental spirit. The mind or spirit, being canonically superior to matter, was designated as the guardian and governor of the body, and the body assumed a subservient position to that mind, will, consciousness—the spiritual aspect of the whole person. When the body satisfied its demands by breaking the rules of proper behavior, it was not the distasteful body or its parts that were held culpable, but the higher faculties of mind and spirit that were responsible for its loss of control. The hierarchical subordination of body to mind degraded the body. Its unrestrained physical desires and its natural functions were perceived as anarchic and, within Christianity, as unforgivably wicked (Porter 1992, 213).

This emphasis on the primacy of the spiritual nature of humankind over the more inconsequential corporeal aspects can be seen in many writings of the time. Historian Roy Porter quotes Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (206) in a description of humanity as “men cloathed with bodies, and governed by our imaginations,” leaving the reader with an impression of the physical body as almost a necessary evil, required only to house the soul. The emphatic division between body and soul, the latter profiting from all that is denied to the former, logically led to the contempt and even condemnation of life on earth (Delumeau 1989, 15).

The early modern European populace had inherited a way of discerning the world through a synthesis of classical and Judaeo-Christian components, both of which taught a fundamentally dualistic vision of humans. This vision was “understood as an often uneasy alliance of mind and body, psyche and soma” (Porter 1992, 206). Further, both traditions, in different ways and for differing reasons, emphasized the importance of the soul, devaluing the body in the process.

The spirit was of primary importance in its closeness to the incorporeal nature of God, while the body was equated with Nature—the earth and its denizens. In short, Christians, ideally, would find little meaning in the material world, concentrating rather on the spiritual. Functions and actions that were contingent to man’s earthly condition belonged to a “vacuum of anti-values” (Delumeau 1989, 15). Because God was spiritual, his children should strive to be as like Him as possible. This concept meant that physicality and bodily pursuits were depraved, sinful, and corrupt. For example, in his City of God, book 15, chapter 23, St. Augustine refers to coition as an “unclean practice” (Sinistrari 1972, 34).

Another early influence on early modern cosmology might be found in the writings of the Catharist religious sect. Though they were condemned as heretics, it is possible, perhaps even likely, that their beliefs lingered in the minds of succeeding generations. Catharist writings also promulgated a dualistic universe. In their view, God and the Devil were equal and forever at war with one another. The material universe was created by an evil spirit—Satan—who dominated it. Souls, created by God, longed to escape from the bonds of their material bodies and return to a Heaven of pure spirituality. Those human beings who contrarily enjoyed their fleshly existence, accepting and even welcoming the world of matter, proved themselves to be servants of the Devil and incapable of salvation.

The French monk, Rudolf Ardent, summarized the beliefs of the Cathars: they thought that God created all invisible things and the Devil all visible ones and so worshiped the Devil as the creator of their bodies (Cohn 1975, 58). Bono Giaboni, in his prologue to the “De Contemptu Mundi,” written by the future Pope Innocent III (1198-

1216), stated that “the world is naught but misery, created by God for man in order that he suffer torment and tribulations and there undergo punishment for his sins” (Delumeau 1989, 22).

Physical being was seen as animalistic in nature. The only thing separating humankind from the beasts was the soul. According to interpretations of Scripture, animals did not possess souls, but humans did. Though their bodies were made from the “grossest of all elements, namely, slime, a gross mixture of water and earth,” the human frame was the most perfect of all the works of God. All other animals “stoop to the ground, because their soul is mortal. Men do not, man’s soul having been made immortal for his heavenly home” (Sinistrari 1972, 35-38). What an ingenious explanation for the human upright posture!

Naturally, the soul, to a devout Christian populace, was a vital concern. Accordingly, the early modern European culture regarded undue attention to the body, or to its inappropriate urges, as sinful. Witches, with their lives firmly rooted in the physical, suffered from the beliefs of the time. They were damned and cast from society, not only for the religious treason of their souls in rejecting God (through the barter of soul for power), but for their physical sins as well. The scholarly practice of the time damned witches as beasts. Demonologist, Joseph Glanville, refers to witches as “those who will stupidly believe that they shall dye like Beasts, that they might live like them” (Glanville 1966, 58). This sentence contains a reason for witches to become what they are. Consumed with the desire to concentrate on purely bodily enjoyments, witches rejected the one thing which would prevent them from doing so—God—and they embraced his Opposite, who reveled in the flesh.

Thirteenth-century religious scholar and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas, in a section of his Summa Theologica entitled “Of the Assault of Demons,” Third Article, discusses his thoughts on the instincts of the physical body and its inherent tendency toward sin. He perceives some sins as being instigated by the Devil, but others as originating solely from man’s physical nature. Men and women, even without Satanic influence, crave food, love, comfort, and other such pleasures. Because of those innate cravings, human beings commit sins against God in their search for those commodities. Aquinas goes on to say that, unless “these desires be curbed by reason,” meaning the rational mind or soul, excesses would occur. Such excesses were sins caused by the “corruption of our natures,” or the physical aspect of humankind (Kors and Peters 1972, 68).

These concepts of the material body instilled in the populace a hatred of self. Along with that self-disgust and stemming from it, rose a fear of one’s inability to overcome the temptations resulting from the needs and desires of the flesh. Such failure of spirit over soma condemned the soul to everlasting death, barred from Heaven by one’s own inability or unwillingness to overcome a base nature (Delumeau 1989, 1-2). The hatred of self underwent a transference to the abhorred witch, who supposedly gloried in her carnality. She personified what the populace feared in themselves and, further, she could be punished for their sins, becoming their scapegoat.

This self-hatred is exemplified in the writings of St. Catherine of Genoa, who wrote that if God should ever turn away from her, she “would be capable of all the crimes committed by the demon.” She judged herself to be worse than Satan and his demons because while they were bodiless spirit, and thus somewhat limited, man without

grace was “a like demon clothed in a physical body, capable of any atrocity.” A further example of this self-loathing is seen in Philotée’s confession to St. Francis de Salas: “I am but an excrescence of the world, a sewer of ingratitude and iniquity” (Delumeau 1989, 1-2).

The secondary status of the body in early modern Europe can be seen, not only through writings, but also through art. The attached Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the idea that bodily attentions were sinful. Both portraits depict women who have succumbed to the sins of pride and vanity, paying more attention to the outward physical appearance of their bodies than to the state of their inner spirituality (Kors and Peters 1972, 55, 58).

Claude Levi-Strauss, the noted structural anthropologist, believes that human behavior and attitudes, displayed in ritual, art, and writings, reflect the western human mind's predisposition to think and behave in terms of binary oppositions, or contrasts and opposites between one thing and another (Ember and Ember 1990, 40). According to this structuralist model, it is a fundamental predisposition of the human mind to construct rational classifications through the use of these binary contrasts. For Levi-Strauss, such oppositions or dualities account for much sociocultural phenomena (Harris 1968, 492-93). This tendency of the human cognitive process to divide ideas and concepts into opposites, i.e., love/hate, life/death, good/bad, God/Satan, applies to the early modern perception of spirit versus corporeality. Thus, if spiritual is "good" (as it must be, since God is Spirit), then carnality must be "bad." Add to this the male/female dichotomy: women were associated with physicality and sexuality, while men were identified with rationality and spirituality.

The Body: Composition, Functions, and Capabilities

Through the gifts of God, human beings possessed the ability to reason and were expected to utilize that rationality to control their polluting bodies, however difficult that control might prove to be. Men and women were

always breaking through the boundaries of their own bodies; volcanoes of drives and fluids which constantly threatened to erupt, spilling outwards to dirty the environment through bloodshed, vomiting, defecation and ejaculation, to the point that they threatened the social order (Roper 1994, 112).

The body of a human being, without the dominating mastery of the soul, was likely to succumb to its need to degenerate into “an irrational pig-like creature.” At their most natural, human beings were “savages who enjoyed, exploited, and polluted their surroundings without compunction” (Roper 1994, 112).

Prevailing beliefs regarding the composition and operations of the body contributed to the early modern concepts of witchcraft and how it functioned. Religious and scientific thought at the time postulated the fungibility of human bodily fluids (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 9). Excretions could be substituted one for the other, as in the case of breast milk and blood. The blood of a woman’s menses ceases at conception, leading to the belief that the discharge was transformed from blood to nutrition for the embryo and, as menstruation rarely resumed while a mother was lactating, as milk for the infant. Since the body was capable of these transformations naturally, the notion that witches could intentionally accomplish the same (for example, change breast milk to blood) through spells and enchantments would be, it would seem, eminently believable.

The Body: Heat—Superior Men and Inferior Women

While women’s menstrual blood was transformed into nutrition for her child, men

generally “rid themselves of nutritional excesses without bleeding,” through ejaculation. For many early moderns, this fact “bore witness to the superior heat and greater perfection of the male” (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 9). Second century A.D. Greek physician and medical writer Galen’s learned text, On the Seed, and the sections on the reproductive organs in On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body, elaborate on the supposed superior “heat” of the male. The belief that “heat is the sign of perfection, of one’s place in the hierarchical great chain of being” was critical in the Galenic body of work (4). Works of early modern demonologists such as Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, and anatomists including Alessandro Achillini and Jacopo Berengario da Capri, demonstrated that Galen’s promulgations were still prevalent in the early modern period (Clark 1991, 102-103). Jonathan Clark and Thomas Laqueur, among other twentieth-century scholars and authors have taken such accounts of the physical nature of humanity into account in their own studies of the early modern body.

Considered the greatest and most perfect of God’s animals, men were “more perfect” than women because of their “excess of heat.” Men and women, in this model, were similar in kind, but different in the configuration of their organs. The male was a “hotter” version of the female. More appropriately, in the hierarchical order of things, females were the cooler, less perfect version of the male (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 4).

The Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C.E., Aristotle, also argued that women were colder and weaker than men, stating that “women do not have sufficient heat to cook the blood and thus purify the soul” (Schiebinger 1987, 46). This internal quality, according to both Galen and Aristotle, resulted from the female fetus's lack of heat in

generation. Her sexual organs, having remained inside the body, conferred upon woman an incompleteness, a coldness and moistness “in dominant humors and the inability to concoct perfect semen from blood.” From this assumption came the notion that males were produced in the right, or hotter, testicle and developed in the right, hotter, side of the uterus, “for the right is traditionally associated with God” (Clark, J. 1991, 117).

Therefore, not only was woman an inferior version of man, she was also further from God due to her “left” conception and ominous left-sided uterine placement. Most witches were female. Tradition and common belief promoted the idea that feminine inferiority was the basis for the ease with which the weaker sex could be influenced by evil and thereby fall to Lucifer’s enticements.

Theories found in the works of early Greeks like Galen and Aristotle, and still extant in early modern thought, expounded on body heat (or lack thereof) and how it contributed directly to typical masculine and feminine characteristics. The hotter male was gifted with such attributes as courage, liberality, moral fortitude and honesty. The female, however, conceived and carried in colder surroundings, is burdened with less praiseworthy characteristics. Women were, for the most part, believed to be inherently deceitful, flighty, overly imaginative and morally lacking. Medical thought at the time taught that the cold, damp quality of the uterus contributed to “excessive imaginative impulses” and many other female ailments such as garrulity, an unquenchable and voracious desire for sexual intercourse (*furor uterinus*), melancholia, listlessness and irrational behavior (Clark, J. 1991, 118). Biological notions of feminine physical structure provided "evidence" that any problems manifested by women could be traced to uterine maladies and to their "consequently sex-driven natures." The culture of early

modern Europeans perceived women as irredeemably mired within the web of their physical failings and victim to a sexual fervor that frequently impaired their sanity and health. Further, women were believed to possess smaller brains than men, limiting the female intellectual faculty to such a degree that independent and rational action became impossible (Williams 1995, 51). This being so, women could not escape the domain of the carnal and, consequently, that of Satan. (Roper 1994, 191).

The Hippocratic doctrine of the four humors, authored by the Greek Hippocrates, known as the Father of Medicine (460-377 B.C.E.), and followed by Galen, also taught that women were cold and moist, while men were warm and dry. Men were active, women indolent. Modern author, Londa Schiebinger, states that the medical assumptions of these ancients were incorporated into medieval thinking with few revisions and lasted well into the seventeenth century (Schiebinger 1987, 46).

The Body: Women as Reproductive Inversions of Men

The female, then, was subordinate to the male because of her cooler physical nature. This supposed lack of heat in women encouraged the belief that the female's internal reproductive system was an inferior replication of the male's, turned inward as it was. For several thousand years, people had believed that women had the same genitals as men. Nemesius, sixth century Bishop of Emesa, stated that "Theirs are inside the body and not outside of it." An ancient doggerel verse reads: "though they of different sexes be, yet on the whole they are the same as we, for those that have the strictest searchers been, find women are but men turned outside in." For example, ovaries were thought to be and were called testicles. Even as late as 1819, the London Medical Dictionary referred to ovaria as "that which was formerly called female testicles" (Gallagher and

Laqueur 1987, 2).

Galen's supposition that if one could "turn outward the woman's, turn inward and fold double the man's," Figure 3, one would "find the same in both in every respect" (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 5). Under this rubric, the penis becomes the cervix and vagina and the prepuce becomes the female pudenda. Should the uterus be projected outward, the male testes (equivalent to the female ovaries) would then be inside it, enclosed as by the scrotum. The neck of the uterus, the cervix, previously concealed inside the perineum, but now pendant, would then be recognized as the penis (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 5).

A further common misconception of the time dealt with women who were capable of becoming men. Gallagher and Laqueur quote Ambroise Paré, sixteenth-century French surgeon often called the father of modern surgery, who stated that women lacked the heat possessed by men and because of that lack, they were unable to "push out what by the coldness of their temperament is held bound to the interior." However, should the female's warmth be "rendered more robust, vehement, and active," and be accompanied by some violent physical movement, then it was not unheard of for the female to be capable of pushing outward the reproductive organs that were previously hidden within (Paré, in Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 13-14). Such transformations only seemed to work up the great hierarchical chain of being, however. No tales exist of men, for example, losing their heat and becoming women, "because Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should be imperfect" (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 14).

If the female is only a replica of the male, one wonders why they do not transform

to men. The answer, according to Galen, is that “women have insufficient heat to extrude the organs.” Wise Nature made women cooler, thus allowing their organs to remain internally placed in order to provide a safe place for conception and gestation. Further, if the female were possessed of as much heat as the male, the semen planted in the womb would “shrivel and die, as would the nutriment needed by the fetus” (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 5). Should a woman, mature, strong, independent, get “hot” enough, she could literally transform into a man. It follows then, that what a woman might accomplish accidentally, a witch could effect deliberately. Here is the basis for the insidious fear of the capability of witches turning into men.

Galenic accounts equated ovaries with testicles and women were also thought to emit semen in orgasm which was necessary for reproduction. While there was homology between sexes here, the male hierarchy also existed in that womens’ ejaculations were believed to be less powerful and their semen “pale and watery compared to mens’” (Weigert 1995, 38).

Orgasm in both partners was an example of this “heat of life itself” and it required the orgasm of both participants to induce ample heat to kindle creation (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 9). A lack of fervor in either partner, therefore, could prevent conception. Should a woman be unable to conceive, the explanation could be that she was unable to engender enough enthusiasm within herself for the task, or was incapable of stimulating her husband to the proper level of excitement. He, of course, was not to blame because of his obvious superiority via his male “heat.” Society scorned and reviled women who “turn from men and do not pay attention to them; forgetting about lovemaking. . .fleeing men. . .hiding, wanting to be alone. . .not wanting to cook. .

.lying alone, shutting themselves in, refusing [men's] advances. . .not looking men in the eye, refusing a man." These "marginalizing and asocial behaviors" were interpreted by the mores of the time as aberrant sexuality and therefore "potent indices" of Satanic influence (Williams 1995, 59).

Contrarily, an excess of lust (on the part of the woman) could likewise block impregnation (Williams 1995, 10). Thus, overly seductive and lusty ladies, as well as their frigid counterparts, could be (and frequently were) perceived as witches who thwarted society by not providing heirs—the next generation—while making a mockery of God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

Although women were ostensibly the "cooler" sex, and therefore (it would logically seem) less sexual than men, early modern scholars, such as the German alchemist and physician Paracelsus (1493-1541), shared a belief that the female was ruled by her sexuality, much more so than was the male. Perceptions of early modern women presented them as being hard-put to lead virtuous lives. Further, since the laws of God, man, and nature intended women to marry and bear children, Paracelsus always advised that girls should be married immediately upon physical maturity, apparently to keep their sexual urges under proper male control. Both unchecked female sexuality and sexual indifference were dangerous traits and one was judged to be as perverse as the other (Williams 1995, 59). Women's roles were narrow and confining. Any woman who went to an extreme of any kind, stepping outside her boundaries, was likely to be perceived as a witch (Schiebinger 1987, 46).

The corporeal body, whether male or female, offended, yet because of its imperfect (even beast-like) nature, it could be pardoned for its inability to resist the baser

carnal urges. Conversely, the mind/soul/will, because of its higher station in the order of things, was obligated to insure victory over the disobedient body. If the body triumphed over the soul, quenching its needs or desires, the will, “ideally free and noble, seems all the more guilty of offence” (Porter 1992, 213)

Control of the Body Through Manners, Law, and the State

Broadly, then, the early modern European societal attitude was one of reverence for the soul at the expense of the "beastly" nature of the corporeal body. It logically follows that society would take steps to distance itself from Nature and animalistic behaviors. From the sixteenth century, both religious and civil leaders wrote manuals that outlined proper behavior and taught the unqualified necessity of unswerving submission and obedience of the body and on the cultivation of manners (Porter 1992, 217). The third element in explaining the early modern European witch hunts, in addition to the body and the religious and scientific beliefs of the era, is the rise of *civilité*. In keeping with the religious attitudes of the sinfulness of the physical aspect of life, notable historians of early modern France such as Robert Muchembled, Jean-Louis Flandrin, and Jean Delumeau, stress the attempts of religious and civil authorities to regulate the bodies of the common people through “persuasion, prescription and ultimately physical coercion” (Porter 1992, 218). Religious leaders suggested proper modes of physical behavior, then demanded same. Those who would not comply could find themselves looked upon with contempt and ostracized. Eventually, civil behavior was legislated and enforced by “whip, pillory and gallows” (218).

As Christian ideologies became more refined, authorities began to place a heavier emphasis on moral purity and moral control, leading inevitably to a newer and more

stringent consciousness of law and, particularly, order. This increasing new attention to uniformity and proper behavior paralleled and facilitated state formation. Now "a good citizen was equated with a good Christian, as officially defined" (Sharpe 1991, 182). During the sixteenth century, members of the aristocracy gradually acquired a new set of manners and "began to hedge their natural drives about with social taboos and inner disciplines, a process which was mimicked by their social inferiors" (Elias 1978, 152).

As people began to develop "good manners," they began to conceal bodily functions that were once freely exposed, such as urination and defecation. Simultaneously with the use of tableware at meals new forms of etiquette regarding spitting, sneezing, and farting evolved. Erasmus's treatise, De civilitate puerilium (On Civility in Children) is a primer for proper behavior for boys. Erasmus discussed the way people should look—their appearance, posture, carriage, gestures, their dress, their facial expressions—in short, the "outward behavior which is the expression of the inner person." He describes how to properly lay a table and how to serve oneself and eat "so as not to show oneself as a wolf or glutton or peasant" (Elias, 1978, 53-56).

The results of this growth of civilité included a "decline of aggressive behaviors and—more broadly—a significant elevation of the power of the modern state" (Stearns 1994, 81). Enforcement of uniform mannered behavior was a tool used by the state to control the populace, thus ensuring an increasingly orderly society. Demands for moral and ideological purity and for law and order often reveal the presence of those who refuse to follow the status quo. Among those criminals who flouted the new mores were witches (Sharpe 1991, 182).

In the process of escalating order and civic organization, behavior gradually

became more disciplined. As a part of the social control required for political authority to exist, it became necessary to conceal the bodily functions (Roper 1994, 148). The members of society were taught that bodies and their functions were "unclean"—unfit for public display. Thus the "rules" for physical appearance and behavior became increasingly uniform and those who were in some manner different, who did not fit the proper pattern, could frequently be seen as sinful, uncivilized, and animal-like, and easily cast into the role of witch. Further, physical functions such as urination, spitting, and nose-blowing, while not ignored, were at least relegated to a private corner, hidden in the closet, so to speak. Deviation from the norm, in any arena of living, was a threat to the body politic and to the order of the state.

In addition to the increasing control exhibited by the imposition of mannerly modes of behavior, other modifications occurred. A major change during the Reformation concerned marriage and sexual regulation (Roper 1994, 40). Purifying reformers were particularly concerned with taboo sexual activities and such behavior came to be viewed as a symptom of religious deviation. Since state government was based on the same hierarchical model of governance as the church, (i.e., God rules both church and government, they, in turn, rule the populace according to God's law), both religious and secular courts sternly and energetically punished forbidden sexual behavior. Appropriate sexual behavior could be practiced only within the bounds of marriage. Proper marital intercourse supported the body politic. In the binary dynamic then, it followed that improper sexual behavior, whether marital or otherwise, could harm that body politic. Both excessive sexual appetite and apparent indifference were condemned equally, "as much for their antisocial impulses as for their implicit self-indulgence"

(Williams 1995, 59). Church leaders and lawkeepers industriously tried to root out "sinful sex" (sex outside of marriage or for purposes other than procreation), associating such behavior with supposed diabolical practices and frequently attributing it to members of the lower-class and most often to women (Klairs 1985, 4-5). Such degenerate sexual behavior as proscribed by church and law could easily be equated with deviation from church and state through devil worship and it was usually the women who suffered from that equation.

Government: The Patriarchal Hierarchy

The first half of the sixteenth century witnessed a "more securely patriarchal ordering" of gender relations that dominated European thinking until the eighteenth century (Roper 1994, 37). The rigidity of this patriarchal system allowed for no divergence of women from their role as subservient housekeeper and mother, since such deviation menaced the smooth progression of life within the state. This gender hierarchy could be jeopardized by female insubordination.

Financially independent women posed a threat because neither they nor their finances were controlled directly by a male authority figure. As such, they challenged the political structure, which enforced its jurisdiction in the domestic sphere through the control of husband or father. Autonomy in the social sphere was recognized and feared as autonomy in the sexual sphere. That independence was then defined as sexual deviance (Weigert 1995, 41).

When women did not remain in their places, everyday categories and hierarchies were inverted to the detriment of the structured State. Sausages and spoons, items most frequently in the hands of, and under the control of, women, were commonly used to refer

to penises. Artistic renderings of women handling such items or of a woman holding a man's pants on a stick was a common motif for the "world turned upside down," when women appeared to possess powers over men to which they had no right. (Weigert 1995, 42).

The cultural stereotype of the scolding wife also exemplified the disturbing vision of the rebellious and therefore dangerous woman. (Sharpe 1991, 183). Further, elderly women who were widows or otherwise outside the conventional hierarchy were also to be feared. Under the control of no man and usually poor, they were anomalies in the patriarchal order and thus excellent targets for the hostility that could and often did result in an accusation of witchcraft (182).

Early Modern Europe: The Search for Order

During the seventeenth and the second half of the sixteenth centuries, Catholic and Protestant alike believed God had created a world of order and harmony. Since early Christianity, Greek and Roman times, great thinkers conjectured as to the order of the Cosmos, pondered their beliefs regarding heaven and hell and reflected on the order in realms of God and of the Devil. New ideas arose in the sixteenth century that affirmed those early beliefs. Johannes Kepler, Jakob Bohme and others tried to reveal the ordered pattern they believed God had created in all areas of history and nature, on a microcosmic scale as well as a macrocosmic level. From the largest to the least, every aspect of life was believed to be strictly structured according to God's plan and it was humanity's duty to incorporate such structure into their own lives (Lehmann 1988, 109). Consequently, theorists and scholars among Kepler's contemporaries believed that the writing of poetry must follow strict rules, music must express laws of harmony, just as architecture must be

based on the right proportions. Society was conceived as being strictly hierarchical. Differing styles of poetry and rhetoric and different manners were imposed upon the body politic according to which were best suited for members of each class. The members of each class then remained within those styles allotted them (Lehmann 1988, 109).

Society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries underwent acute anxieties regarding orderliness. Many educated contemporaries felt they were living in a period when traditional, social, and political hierarchies were vulnerable to imminent collapse. The anonymous sixteenth-century author of The Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund wrote that “the world is afflicted and there is no longer any order.” The De concordantia catholica, a treatise by Nicholas of Cusa presented to the Council of Basel in 1433 A. D., states that Nicholas “saw around him universal destruction, total depravity, overturned order, mortal illness, and deviancies.” The world, as he saw it, was “falling into decadence, sinking, going under, declining, becoming perverse, and had lost its center.” Ship of Fools, written by a layman, Sebastien Brandt, in 1494, describes the sword of papal and imperial power as rusted. He declared justice to be blind or dead and that avarice, the mother of all vices, impelled Christians to work on Sunday or to revel. On holidays, he continued, the people “spend their time frivolously instead of praying. Blasphemy triumphs” (Delumeau 1990, 119-120). Artists and writers emphasized this degradation in their work. Wars and plagues ravaged the land and the populace feared the return of a more lawless age.

Conclusion

In the last analysis, fear precipitated the early modern European witch hunts—fear of someone whose appearance differed from the norm, who behaved outside the bounds

set down by Society, the Church and the State, and who, thereby and above all, threatened the world order. Such a person was very often relegated to the role and fate of witch.

The cosmic threat posed by witches, the Devil's minions, to the ordered world fitted neatly into such patterns of thought (Sharpe 1991, 183). For the witch hunts to occur, the populace had to have believed in the reality of harmful magic and the witch's ability to inflict it. Further, those within the power structure had to believe that the devil and his servants were attacking the Christian world in an attempt to overthrow order and return mankind to the chaos of Nature (Barstow 1994, 31). Witchcraft was a function of a particular view of nature (Clark, S. 1991, 224), and the person, particularly the woman, who dared step outside the boundaries of accepted appearance and behavior caused disruption in orderly society and ran the risk of being accused of witchcraft. That accusation was an attempt to place blame for disruptive events and to return society to an orderly progression and the person to blame—the scapegoat—was the witch.

History was and is an unfolding tapestry depicting the continuing process of civic organization; the tale of humankind's war to separate itself from its natural beginnings (Porter 1992, 225). In the early modern period, people saw nature and the physical body as chaotic, primitive, unpredictable and potentially uncontrollable.

Early modern German culture furnished a variety of ways to understand the body. Collective, albeit rather radical views depict the physical body as a

container for a series of processes; defecation, vomiting, sexual pollution. Fluids course about within the body, erupting out of it, leaving their mark on the world outside. The body is not so much a collection of joints and limbs, or a skeletal structure, as a container of fluids, bursting out in every direction to impact on the environment. But the accent is not so much on the badness of the fluids contained in the body as in the pleasure of release of these fluids (Roper 1994, 22).

One's control over the release or repression of these fluids, to as maximum a degree and as frequently as possible, kept the boundary between human and nature inviolable. It divided the civilized man or woman from the excess of nature, the chaos of non-control.

Humanity tried to disconnect itself from its origins through the imposition of civilization. The elements of changing perceptions of the body, teachings of the church, and the rise of civilité worked together to form a setting for tragedy. Those persons such as witches whose physical appearance was unacceptable, whose comportment was questionable, and whose commitment to God and the church was suspect did not conform. They were feared, scorned, and cast out of society through ostracism, persecution and death.

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CHAPTER THREE

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND CHARACTERISTICS

HUMAN (AND OTHER) BODIES

...every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furr'd brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice, or a scolding Tongue, having a ragged coate on her back, a skullcap on her head, a spindle in her hand, and a dog or cat by her side; is not only suspected, but pronounced for a witch.

English Preacher, John Gaule,
1646 (Sharpe 1991, 182)

At a time when most popular beliefs, mores, and rules were aligned with those of the Church's, witches epitomized rebellion in both behaviour and appearance. As in her abilities and actions, the witch's appearance mirrored Nature. In her transformative states, she always chose to portray lesser lifeforms. Her "everchanging monstrosities never managed to be more than a sum of so many parts, a mass of fragments that could never be resolved into a unity" (Hoak 1992, 26). She and her many faces were always the embodiment of dissonance, in complete opposition to the demands of cultivated behaviour and attitude. Her reversions to animal or insect forms indicated her inner chaotic nature, offending and frightening the members of an orderly society as she exposed the truth of how few layers comprised the difference between orderly and mannered humanity and its primordial beginnings. Human bodily characteristics and functions, and the witch's manipulation of them, as well as her physical appearance, both natural and assumed, were outside the pale of courteous and well-bred precepts and thus to be feared. Witches obeyed none of the rules set down by God or man. Their bodies

did not properly submit to nor obey natural laws—they were capable of invisibility; they had powers to pervert their bodily functions and those of others; certain spots on their bodies were insensitive to pain; they changed form; they flew—in short, they were the most aberrant and frightful of God’s creatures.

The hardships of life in the early modern period instilled within the population the need to find a way to feel somewhat in control of their lives. This need, of course, was not a new one then, nor is it out of fashion now. For all of humankind's existence, men and women have required an explanation for the wonders and disasters that surrounded them, manifesting an innate need for answers to the questions of why things happen and for methods to control those events. When disasters happened, “those in charge of explaining God’s wise regime” were constrained to find an answer (Lehmann 1993, 110). Why was order and harmony unsettled? Why was the symmetry of living shattered? The inability to control, then, compelled a search for the reason why. That reason, that scapegoat, was very frequently the witch, possessed as she was with her extraordinarily infernal gifts. However, without the erroneous ideas of society regarding the body, the perceived physical attributes and capabilities of human beings, the witch may not have been as successful at her trouble-making ventures.

Bodily Fluids

From ancient medical beliefs, Renaissance society saw the body as a “physiology of flux and corporeal openness.” Blood, mother’s milk and semen were “fungible fluids, products of the body’s power to concoct its nutriment” (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 8). Stemming from this notion of corporeal flexibility arose the assumptions that women could turn into men (as writers from Pliny to Montaigne attested), humans could

transform into animals, and bodily fluids could easily replace one another. In this way, the absence of menses in pregnant and nursing women could be explained. The fluid of menstruation transmuted itself into the substances required to nourish a growing fetus and a nursing infant. From this concept of the body's functions and fluids as interchangeable, it was but a short step toward the witch's supposed ability to deliberately induce physical changes in her own body and, further, to force such changes upon a defenseless and unwilling victim, causing illness, deformity and death.

Early modern thought, in both elite and popular cultures, perceived the body as "flowing with humors or liquids—a bag full of potentially polluting substances." This line of reasoning was further delineated by fears that bodies might not be fully confined within their shells of flesh, separate from one another. Such a condition would result, it was believed, in "problematic contacts and impingements." To the early modern citizen, one way to understand these impingements was witchcraft (Purkiss 1996, 119).

Fantasies of witchcraft could stem from concepts of a body that had lost its organization—its structural integrity—and in which liquids within the body became poisonous, killing instead of nourishing, states Lyndal Roper. Such fantasies usually clustered around the ideas of feeding and nourishment of babies in the first six weeks of life (Roper 1994, 25). This explains the many references to the cursing and killing of unbaptised infants, as well as the accompanying stories of new mothers whose breast milk curdled, soured, dried up, or even turned to blood.

A young mother, Janet Murfin, died soon after her child was born, saying that she was "never well since the Saturday that Jurdie wife was here." Joan Jurdie had come to visit during Janet's lying-in and had refused to share food with Janet, after which Janet

could not eat at all. Accused of bewitching the new mother, Joan was put on trial. Peter Murfin testified that, before her death, his wife's milk had turned to blood. Joan's crime, aside from the murder of Janet, revealed itself to be the pollution of her victim's body as a source of nutrition for her newborn child (Purkiss 1995, 420). Not only did Joan turn food into blood, thus putting an infant at risk of starvation, but she also transformed Janet from loving mother to vicious anti-mother, from giver of life to bringer of death. This alteration of the mother's role threw the family structure into turmoil, endangering society with threatened chaos.

Body Parts

Sorcery included a form of power involving not only exchanges between bodies, but the use of bodies and various of its parts in spell-casting as well. Nail and hair trimmings, cauls, afterbirth, and bodily fluids were all incorporated with spoken chants to effect the witch's desires. A corpse could become a "collection of magical talismans, the pieces invested with supernatural power akin to the healing potential which relics (body parts of dead saints, in particular) contained" (Roper 1994, 190). Male sorcerers often tended to employ magic through the use of more exotic bodily relics, such as a piece of a suicide's colon. Leonhard Nadler took "a little piece" of the big toe of a hanged man and Thomas Trummer looted the corpse of a man who had been broken on the wheel, ransacking the entire body for magical segments such as the man's penis and his finger and toenails (Roper 1994, 189).

Women also utilized body parts, but most often practiced their arts using verbal spells along with the "natural magical properties of the body" (Roper 1994, 190).

Because of their gender, they were naturally informed about childbirth and assisted their

laboring sisters. In such a situation, women had access to a wealth of potentially magical bodily substances: cauls, dead infants, navel cords, and placental material. Women, further, were closely associated with mourning and care of the bodies of the dead, also an important source of magical objects. Bath maids did the work of scratching, delousing, and manicuring, and therefore had access to the waste products of the body through which magic could be used to control health, desires, and affections (189).

General Appearance: Hair, Eyes, Hands

As well as through her knowledge of the body, a witch could often be identified by her manipulation of bodily functions through her spell-casting, but her chaotic nature was also frequently betrayed by her physiognomy. More often than not, her hair is rendered as very long, wildly waving or curling and disordered, displaying her contemptuous disregard for proper grooming. Hans Baldung Grien's artistic rendering of "Weather Witches," Figure 9, pictured in Chapter 3, displays women whose wild enchanted hair is blown in different directions though their draperies remain motionless. This conveys a sense of the witches' uncanny powers (Hults, 1982, 124). In sympathy with that indeterminate magical force which causes flames to issue from a Sabbat cauldron in Grien's "Three Witches" (1514), Figure 4, the long hair of the witches is swept upwards and away from their bodies (Weigert 1995, 29). Because of its supposed magical power, the hair of a suspected witch was frequently shaved at her trial (129). Any woman with plentiful, curly or dark hair could be marked as a virago, the virile unnaturally warm woman (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, 10), and such a woman was also marked as susceptible to witchcraft leanings.

The witch is frequently pictured with wickedly squinting eyes that are in keeping

with the animal world of Nature. Utilizing those evil eyes, she attracts and binds her victim just as the snake's gaze mesmerizes the rabbit. Anyone suffering from a visible eye problem, then, could easily become suspect. A "wandering eye," a cast in one eye, even something as simple as an infection such as a stye or pink-eye, could bring about an accusation of witchcraft.

Another surmised mark of a witch was the condition of her hands. Generally, a witch's hands were often warm and lacking any chill, yet her touch inflicted an enduring numbness on a victim, even through layers of protective clothing (Remy 1974, 10).

Appearance: The Beauty and the Crone

The witch further simulates Nature in the normal face she presents to the world. She, like the natural world, could appear hideous and menacing or enchantingly and seductively fair. Though the relevant literature, both contemporary and modern, indicate that witches were of all ages, including children, much of the art of the time depicts them as either young or elderly. The German artists whose work centered on the depiction of witches and their rather nasty habits emphasized the tangible authenticity of these servants of the demon. By displaying the perceived "accurate" descriptions of the activities, paraphernalia, demon associates and physiognomy of the witch, her "real and true" presence in the world was confirmed (Davidson 1992, 45). Davidson states that contemporary art and literature of the early modern period affected the populace just as photographs impact on today's society (46).

Figures 4 and 5 depict artists' renditions of witches, both young and old. Interestingly, there seem to be few middle-aged or ordinary-looking witches. As these plates suggest, they are either young and lovely or elderly and not so comely. Further,

they are pictured in the nude, in the midst of sinful witchly endeavors. Figure 5, an eighteenth-century etching by Francisco de Goya entitled "Pretty Teacher," depicts two witches riding their suggestively sexual broom, most probably to a Sabbat (Reprinted from Barstow 1994, 56). The young one hiding her face is presumably the protege of the older teacher/mentor. The etching exhibits not only the surmised depravity of the relationship between the older and younger women, but their comportment and lewd state of undress flaunt their evil intent as well.

Figure 4, Grien's sixteenth-century concept of witches, two young and one old, depict them playing leapfrog (Reprinted from Levack 1992, 148-49). However, the artist's conception of leapfrog is rather erotic with respect to the positioning of the bodies and the places of the body where one witch touches another. The kneeling witch appears to be looking, not through, but up her own legs.

The Beauty

It seems that a dual concept of the witch's appearance was the norm—her evil nature could assert itself visibly in her sinister outward appearance, or she could hide her depravity behind guileless eyes and an innocent lovely face. A witch was not always filthy and ugly outwardly. The youthful beauty, as well as the ancient hag, could be a member of the devil's flock. The fair young temptress could, in fact, be accused of trying to steal men's souls. According to the seventeenth-century demonologist, Richard Bovey, there was:

...no reason that any person (by reason of deformities which may be only the effects of old age or a product of some disease should be Indicted and trust up for a witch. There have been some whose Insides have been blackened with as foul and damnable Confederacies as others; who have notwithstanding appeared with Faces very Charming

and Angelical (Kors and Peters 1972, 282-83).

Nonetheless, irrespective of her outward aspect, whether young and lovely or ancient and hag-like, early modern people knew that:

...evil spirits are foul-smelling, as are the places they frequent. The ancients called witches “foententes” and “fetilleres” because of their likewise foul smell, caused by copulation with devils, who perhaps take the bodies of the hanged, or other ones like those for carnal and corporal acts. Thus, one can conclude that women, who naturally have a sweet breath very much more than men, by intimacy with Satan become hideous, doleful, ugly and stinking to an unnatural degree (Bodin 1979, 155).

The Crone: Her Appearance

Lovely as some of them might be, early modern society nevertheless perceived and portrayed the witch most commonly as aged and homely. Frequently depicted as an ancient hag, the witch was often wrinkled, growth-spotted, stooped and sagging; her mouth generally a cavity displaying broken, decayed or missing teeth. This snaggle-toothed look was reminiscent of the fangs of many wild creatures.

Even Reginald Scot, early modern skeptic of English witchcraft, began his definition of witches by describing them as "women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles" (Barstow 1994, 16). He continues with his observation, stating that the witches he had seen were "lean and deformed, showing melancholy in their faces to the horror of all who see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, and possessed with spirits" (Morgan 1973, 10). Modern medical expert, Letitia Fairfield, testifies that these characteristics are typical of a person suffering from senile dementia and osteomalacia, a starvation disease (10). Though in bad health, it is fortunate for such persons today that they are not attempting to survive four hundred years ago.

Hans Baldung Grien's woodcut, "The Bewitched Groom," Figure 6, is one of the

first Renaissance portraits to equate evildoers with older, lower-class and thus inferior, women. Generally dressed in the clothing of an unassuming provincial, this representation of a poverty-stricken elderly peasant or displaced urbanite, alone in the world, distinctly characterized a woman who was potentially exposed to, and dangerously defenseless against, accusations of witchcraft (Hoak 1992, 21).

Mother Sawyer, accused witch executed in England on April 19, 1621,

soliloquizes:

And why on me? Why should the envious world throw all their scandalous malice upon me? 'Cause I am poor, deform'd and ignorant, and like a Bow buckl'd and bent together by some more strong in mischiefs than myself? Must I for that be made a common sink, for all the filth and rubbish of Men's tongues to fall and run into?

from a Drama in "The Wonderful Discoveries of Elizabeth Sawyer as a witch," by Henry Goodcole, Chaplain, Newgate Prison (Comensoli 1992, 151).

Mother Sawyer, like so many other elderly and helpless early modern women is shown here to be a victim of a solidly entrenched social code that dismisses old and penurious spinsters, banishing them to the devil's dubious keeping.

One explanation for this persecution of the elderly woman might be the accumulation of skin disorders which tend to afflict people at more advanced ages. Warts, moles, age spots and other skin growths begin to appear and sharp-eyed observers frequently recognized these as marks applied by the Devil upon his chosen disciples. Further, these older women were often widowed and the poorest of the poor. Their destitute situation would not allow for an abundance of personal hygiene. Since

The devil takes immoderate delight in external filth and uncleanness...

His presence is always betrayed by some notably foul and noisome stench. So the devil for the most part has for his servants filthy old Hags whose age and poverty serve but to enhance their foulness; and these he instructs in all impurity and uncleanness (Remy 1974, 38).

This concept of the old witch as physically unclean could be another reason “swimming” was used to detect the guilt or innocence of the accused. Not only was the witch foul within, she was filthy without as well. Water, from ancient times revered for purity, refuses to accept the witch, and she floats.

The Crone’s Independence: Outside Her Gender Role

Barstow states that the “uppity” air of middle-aged and older women was the basis for the accusations of witchcraft levied against them. Older women were often predisposed toward speaking their minds and were more self-reliant, inclined to be notoriously independent and unafraid of invective (Barstow 1994, 28). Note that these are all stereotypical masculine qualities.

At that time, the family was understood to be a microcosm of the government, which was itself based on the accepted spiritual hierarchy. Just as God occupied the top position in religious orderings, the Town Council supervised governance, and the patriarch ruled his family. Endeavors to more firmly entrench this patriarchal rule resulted in ever-increasing suspicions of “spinsters.” Living outside the accepted familial unit left them open to public misgivings regarding their possible witchly natures and such unmarried women were categorized as aberrations (Reineke 1990, 59). Thus, unmarried women disrupted the patriarchal rule, and by extension the communal government and even God’s plan for an ordered society (Weigert 1995, 39).

In many instances it was not only her features, such as hair and eyes, that were

animalistic and chaotic (though not necessarily repulsive to the early modern observer), but her refusal to be contained by her given gender role as well. Her demeanor often proved her to be, unlike the model early modern woman, headstrong, assertive and autonomous.

Beyond the physical and economic aspects, age frequently bestowed upon a woman a lifetime of experience that blessed her with wisdom. The early modern "cunning woman" or "wise woman" was very frequently a victim of the witch hunt. Her knowledge of how the world operated, coupled with her unmarried, widowed, or otherwise lone status in life often meant that the older woman exhibited (or flaunted) an unseemly independence and unwillingness to submit to the dominance of men. In fact, the case often proved to be that maturity gave women a "measure of wisdom and authority," so that "their femininity could no longer be so readily tamed and chastened" (Roper 1994, 192).

Note here the difference in the artistic depictions of femininity between young and old women. Interestingly, the young witches are usually lovely, soft and rounded, womanly. When the witch is older, however, she appears to assume a vaguely masculine quality. Though her face may present her as an old woman, her body appears strong, almost male in its musculature. Age is often viewed as the wellspring of wisdom. As people grow older, gaining in knowledge and experience, they are frequently perceived as also accumulating power. It seems reasonable to assume that a patriarchal society such as existed in early modern Europe would fear the "wise old woman" and the possibility that she might try to usurp male power, overturning the natural order of things; hence the image of the older witch threateningly in possession of masculine characteristics to which

she had no right. One of those characteristics was her supposed aggressive sexuality.

The Crone: Sexuality and Depravity

Older women, no longer hampered by the timidity and submissiveness of youthful early modern women, did not hesitate to assert their wants or needs—including, according to common belief, sexual ones. The tale "Die Hexe Als Pferd, or "The Witch in the Guise of a Horse," relates a "familiar theme of the taming of the shrew: like a wild horse finally shod by a farrier, an ungovernable woman is at last brought to heel" (Hoak 1992, 19). Further, the use of the horse as a disguise denoted that woman's brazen sexuality. From ancient times in Europe, animals such as the horse or bull have often symbolized rampant sexuality.

The older woman, like the witch, was not shy about displaying a lecherous and wanton boldness (verbal or physical) in sexual matters, mightily offending society. Grien's woodcut, "The Bewitched Groom," includes the depiction of an indecent torch-bearing hag. Her presence provides the explanation for the disturbing condition of the apparently entranced unconscious groom—demonic women seduce men. Her flaming phallic torch insinuates the lust that could be induced by sorcery. "Since it was commonplace to conceive of heresy in terms of sexual sin, writers such as Sir Thomas More used such a torch or firebrand to signify the damnable nature of a lascivious passion" (Hoak 1992, 17-19).

Because of their supposed sexual habits, older women often attracted witchcraft accusations to themselves. Mature widows were believed to have the power to ruin young men sexually, and youths were warned against marrying such women because they were "sexually ravenous and would suck out their seed, weakening them with their

insatiable hunger for seminal fluid and contaminating them with their own impurities” (Roper 1994, 208). Their lecherous practices unmasked women as the fearsome creatures they were believed to be. As they grew older, their intense sexual desires supposedly raged higher, even though their child-bearing years were past.

After 1560 the belief that older women were the most probable origin of physical injury to others began to escalate. They were the witches who could banish love, destroy health and life, consume limbs, and castrate (Roper 1994, 194). Witches, of course, during their close associations with Satan and his demons, would have gained even more knowledge and experience in sexual matters, and such knowledge would certainly be of a depraved and corrupt nature.

Whether young or old, all witches were presumed to possess certain characteristics in common. In addition to the Evil Eye, other such commonalities included the Witch’s Mark or extra nipple and the capacity to withstand pain.

The Witches’ “Mark” of Pact

An infallible sign of witchcraft was found in the mark supposedly placed upon a novitiate witch by her new Master. Anyone could be a follower of Lucifer; however, an infallible way of identifying such a one was the presence of the Devil’s Mark, a pain-resistant spot or anesthetic scar with which Satan branded his novitiate (Klairs 1985, 56). As each witch made her pact with the Devil, he marked her in some manner as his own, often with his cloven hoof. Bodin quotes Lambert Daneau, a French Protestant minister who, in 1574, published a witchcraft treatise entitled Les Sorciers, in which he discusses this witchmark. “If the Devil distrusts those who give themselves to him, so that they will not leave his service, he is not content to have them formally renounce God...minions

such as these he marks.” On the other hand, continues Daneau, those of his converts whom he “believes to be true and firm in their dedication to him, are left unbranded” (Bodin 1979, 112). The prevailing belief, however, was that all witches were marked by their Master.

The imprint was always made by the Devil’s Claw, on a hidden part of the body. For a man, this could be under the eyelids, the armpits, lips, shoulder, fundament, etc., but women were virtually always branded on their breasts or “privy parts” (Sinistrari 1972, 11) in yet another demonstration of the obscene sexuality of witches in particular and women in general.

At any rate, the Witch’s Mark was imprinted by the demon during the ceremony of pact between the devil and the novice witch, usually as part of the Sabbat festivities when the novitiate witch was accepted into the Devil’s Clan. Wherever the site, the Mark was of varying shapes and sizes, resembling any number of forms such as a hare, toad’s foot, spider, puppy, or dormouse (Sinistrari 1972, 10). In actual practice, such ordinary things as warts, scars, unusual bodily protuberances, moles and the like, including what some might judge to be an oversized clitoris, could be and often were identified as witchmarks.

Joan Peterson, healer and suspected witch, was captured and subjected to a thorough bodily search. She was found to be marked with “a teat of flesh in her secret parts more than other women usually had” (Barstow 1994, 15). This discovery was enough to identify her unconditionally as a witch.

Master Claude Dessay, the King’s Prosecutor at Ribemont, told Bodin that he himself had seen the marks of the witch Jeanne Harvillier. On the following day, the

mark had been erased—an effort, apparently, by Satan to protect his handmaiden (Bodin 1979, 113).

Desensitivity of the Witchmark

To whomever the mark was applied, wherever it was placed, witchmarks had one thing in common. They could be identified without doubt by their insensitivity to pain. It was a “strange and marvelous feat” that witches could supposedly undergo the “deepest wounding” in the witchmark without feeling any pain. Further, such a wounding produced no blood. Pierced by needles, the witchmark proved to be not only immune to feeling, but bloodless as well (Remy 1974, 9).

The desensitized witchmark was almost always used to determine the guilt of the witch through a process called “pricking.” The witchfinder, using a large pin or bodkin, repeatedly pricked the whole body of the witch in an attempt to find a spot that was without feeling. When he located that spot, he had found the witchmark, the visible sign of the witch’s pact with her master.

Remy gives one reason for the insensitivity of the witchmark. “The Devil forms a body for himself which is more than icy cold. Matters brought into contact or surrounded by extreme cold are usually dull and insensitive. Those parts in living animals with the least heat have also the least power of feeling like hair, bones, and teeth” (Remy 1974, 10). Therefore, the witchmark, fashioned by the icy claw of Satan, retains that frigid numbness.

A second explanation for the ability of the witch to withstand pain lies in the psychological realm. A soul communing with a supernatural being is sometimes so completely transported from the body by that contact that the physical self feels neither

blows nor pricks. Occasionally, both body and soul are transported “and this ecstasy is common with witches who have a formal pact with the Devil. They are sometimes transported in spirit, with the body remaining insensate” (Bodin 1979, 65). In a more modern setting, most of us have observed, at one time or another, this type of phenomenon during a hypnosis demonstration wherein the hypnotized person apparently feels no pain though his or her outstretched arm is pierced with needles.

The Witchmark and Familiars

Closely allied to, and often identified as, the Witchmark, was the extra teat often possessed by the witch, through which she suckled her Familiar or her Incubus (Klairs 1985, 56). In many areas of early modern Europe, a woman was frequently proven to be a witch via her association with her Familiars. The Familiar was a creature of some sort, assigned to a witch by the Devil, to do her bidding. It generally took the form of animals, commonly dogs and cats, although it was also known to assume the shapes of ants, spiders, mice, flies and the like. The witch had full control over her Familiars and sent them on malicious missions. She could magically transform her helper(s) into different shapes when necessary to expedite their assignments. Ursley Kempe, the St. Osyth Witch, had four Familiars: Tyffin, Jack, Pagine, and Tyttey, and taught them to specialize. The first pair were ruthless punishers and killers. The second pair, female, caused "minor inflictions such as lameness and lesser bodily ailments" (384).

In 1681, Master of Arts at Cambridge University, Henry Hallywell, attempted a “scientific” explanation of demons and Familiars. The demons, said Hallywell, “being so mightily debouched...wear away by a continual deflux of particles, and therefore require some nutriment to supply the place of the fugacious atoms.” This replacement required

sucking the blood and spirits of those “forlorn wretches [witches]...and no doubt but these impure devils may take as much pleasure in sucking the warm blood of men or beasts, as a cheerful and healthy constitution in drawing in the refreshing gales of pure and sincere air” (Robbins 1973, 6). The witch nourished her familiar by allowing him to suck from her, just as a child is nourished through the suckling of its mother. She fed her Familiar with her blood, obtained by the Familiar's sucking from the witchmark, or the extra teat.

Milk and cream were critical to the early modern diet. Certain economic and political pressures in the early modern period worsened the situation of the rural poor. They became increasingly dependent upon a limited diet of “pulses, grain and bread, chickens, pigs and ‘white meats’,” or dairy products. The latter were particularly crucial, as they provided the only ongoing sources of protein and fat. “In this context, the strong association of bewitchment with the dairy is significant” (Purkiss 1995, 413). Is this preoccupation with dairy products also associated with the concentration on and fear of the demon’s suckling? At a time when milk may have been in short supply, could the concept of demonic sucking have become associated with infant suckling, the witch’s milk transforming to blood, the demon thereby robbing a child of sustenance?

In witch fantasies, teats are not always confined to the breast, but can be found anywhere upon the body as the Devil's Mark. Frequently found near the anus or vagina, the teat instilled the idea that bodily orifices could become interchangeable (Roper 1994, 25).

Many religious leaders and scholars believed that a Familiar (or Magistellus) was in fact an Incubus. This Incubus, formerly an angel who fell because of its lust for women, became a "lewd demon or goblin which seeks sexual intercourse with human

women." When such a creature became associated with one particular witch, it became known as a Familiar (Robbins 1973, 254).

When a witch was caught, authorities bound and imprisoned the suspect, refusing her rest, food and drink, and watched her carefully for the appearance of her familiar who they believed would come to help. Any approaching creature, even a tiny insect, could be fatal to the imprisoned person. One such suspect, Elizabeth Clark, was held in this manner. Her "visitors" included a kitten, two dogs, a rabbit, a toad, and a polecat (Boyd 1969, 63).

As stated earlier, the witch's familiar or her Incubus drew energy and nourishment from suckling the witch. Here again we have an example of a disorganized body indicating the chaotic and uncivilized physical nature of the witch. Not only does she profane the sacred task of providing nourishment to a child by using said act to strengthen demons, but she accomplishes that perversion through aberrant teats concealed in unnatural places.

Alteration of Appearance: Shapeshifting

The witches' power to control and transform her Familiar was, of course, understood to have been granted her by Lucifer. However, God's Opposite Number, like the Lord Himself, also possessed the capability of physically altering his own shape into any number of other forms, usually bestial. Satan bestowed that gift of shapeshifting upon his followers, as well.

Not only could witches transmute men into eunuchs and housewives into witch-like women, but they could also transform their own appearances and those of others, whether in mind or in fact. They could appear, or cause others to appear, as any manner

of creature or object. Transformations, whether of the witch herself or of her victim, virtually always ensued from a higher order of being (human) to a lower order (animals, reptiles, insects) or to an inanimate object such as a rock, indicating the witch's predilection to turn her back on civilization, relishing rather the perceived advantages of the primitive. Tales abounded with regard to ordinary folk finding themselves altered by a witch into such creatures as cats, toads, hares and the like.

While she was not limited in her choice of transformations, the witch very frequently chose the dreaded shape of a wolf. Pierre Mamor, in a brief report about witches, stated that he, himself, had witnessed this transformation of humans into wolves when he was in Savoy. Henry of Cologne, in his De lamiis, declared the possibility of such transformation to be beyond doubt (Bodin 1979, 124).

Demonologists such as Henri Boguet reported "behaviour" of wolves or dogs, not physical alterations such as those that are available for viewing at the neighborhood movie theatre. The question is whether those afflicted actually believed themselves to have been transformed. Other reports, nevertheless, told of true physical transformations and many believed that bodily alterations, as well as strictly imaginary changes, were common.

Master Bourdin, a general prosecutor, spoke to Bodin of a case from the Low Countries concerning a werewolf, wounded in the thigh by an arrow, who was later found in his bed (in his own man-form), with the arrow still in place. At Padua, a lycanthrope was caught and his wolf paws cut off. Immediately, he found himself in his human shape with arms and feet severed (Bodin 1979, 123).

One legend of witchly transformation comes from the region of Alsace where a

man in Buchsweiler awakened to a strange noise from his stable. Going to investigate, he found a strange black horse with a disheveled mane standing between his own two horses. When he tried to lead it out of the stable, it bolted and disappeared from view. Several nights later, the man heard the same noises coming from the stable. Once again, he found the black horse next to his own. Seeing that it had not been shod, he fetched the blacksmith from next door to shoe the horse. The following morning a woman's screams resounded from a neighboring house. Rushing in, the man found his neighbor woman confined to her bed, horseshoes on her hands and feet (Hoak 1992, 5).

Hans Baldung Grien's "The Bewitched Groom," Figure 6, displays this idea of the interchangeableness of horse and witch (Hoak 1992, 5). It can be interpreted in several ways. Has the old hag perhaps attacked the insensible groom with her evil eye? Has the horse, either in a state of bewitchment by the hag or, itself a transformed witch, placed the man in his unconscious state? Possibly the witch entranced the stableman in order to slip into the shape of the horse. For whatever reason, the man, lying across a pitchfork, is certainly unconscious and the old woman at the window, grinning and bearing her flaming torch, is surely the picture of evil intent. According to twentieth-century scholar, Dale Hoak, the pitchfork, the horse, and the torch have long been symbols of sexuality. Their presence indicates the belief in the perverted sexuality of witches (Hoak 1992, 5).

The Witches' Master, His Many Faces

The witch patterned her physical alterations on those of her Master, Satan, who, himself, is under no restriction with regard to the shapes he may choose to simulate. Pope Gregory IX issued a Bull in 1233 that contained a description of Satan as he appeared at heretical gatherings in Germany. The Devil, according to the Bull, appeared

as a “toad or a furry man” (Marshall 1995, 64).

Once known as the beloved and most beautiful of God’s angels, Lucifer met his fall from grace with rage, resentment and rebellion. Those emotions he unleashes against his Maker and mankind. Having degenerated to a state of fury and madness, he now chooses to manifest himself most frequently in ugliness and fragmented horror, often assuming the physiognomy of ancient and long-gone gods. Hoak comments that the “Prince of Darkness lives on what he can borrow from the faces of God’s creatures.” In his wrathful passion, Lucifer “combines various features in the most absurd manner, creating his monsters from shattered remnants of creatures” (Hoak 1992, 27). For example:

The devil presiding at the Sabbath took on the shape of a monstrous being, half man and half goat; a hideous black man with enormous horns, a goat’s beard and goat’s legs, sometimes also (appearing) with bird’s claws, instead of hands or feet. Light streamed from his huge eyes. His voice is harsh and terrible to hear and his expression one of immense gloom (Cohn 1975, 101).

Agnes Sampson, described the Berwick Witches’ Grand Master during her trial. She stated that his body was “hard like iron. His face was terrible, his nose like the beak of an eagle, great burning eyes. His hands and legs were hairy with claws upon his hands and feet like a griffon” (Boyd 1969, 63).

A wagoner, according to Guazzo, met a woodman in a fenny copse. When he looked more closely the wagoner saw that the stranger’s nose kept “shooting out to the length of a stick and then quickly contracting to its former shape and size.” Further, his feet were cloven hooves and his whole body was “of immoderate size.” The wagoner, very frightened, made the sign of the cross, whereupon he found himself alone. Other

woodmen had seen from a distance that “in that place the air had become thick and wrapped in a dense cloud” (Marshall 1995, 48).

Satan, His Demons and Their Offspring

Satan’s hordes have their own physical attributes. In describing the Incubus/Succubus, Sinistrari states that “There are such demons, Succubi and Incubi, endowed with senses and subject to the passions thereof...more noble than man by reason of the greater sublimity of their bodies” (Sinistrari 1972, 81). Would intercourse between what appears to be a nobler, thus higher, form of life and human men and women be considered bestiality? Apparently so, for there are many accounts of monsters, half human and half animal, born of the union between Incubus and human, which bolster the bestiality theory (Robbins 1973, 258).

One of the major and most frightful accusations against witches was their supposedly perverted and undeniable lust, characterized by their desire to couple with demons. People believed that such copulation was possible and that, further, progeny could issue from such a union; that issue, however, differed in nature from that of infants born of a more mundane coupling. The Malleus Maleficarum, or Hammer of Witches, by Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, describe such children, called “Vechselkind” or “changelings” as being very much heavier than others, but always thin and “would dry up three nurses without getting fat. These are devils in the form of children, who copulate with their witch nurses, and often one does not know what they become” (Bodin 1979, 131-32).

Highly charged debates took place as to whether such fornication with the demon(s) could actually result in pregnancy of the witch. Aristotle’s Masterpiece, a

popular handbook, described sexual intercourse as “essentially the action of bodies, in accord with the urges and appetites of nature, primarily designed to secure the perpetuation of the species” (Porter 1991, 222). According to early modern demonologist, Ludovico Sinistrari, the populace firmly believed that the Devil desired the increase of his flock by impregnating his witches. Such conception occurred, so it was said, only at the express wish of the woman concerned (222). One would think that the Devil would impose his will here, but apparently he did not or could not. A witch became pregnant by her Master only if she desired to do so—an example of the age-old practice of attributing the responsibility of pregnancy to the woman. Even Lucifer could not claim credit, for he could not place her with child without her consent.

An explanation known as the “theory of inheritance” described how such an impregnation could take place. “Demon seed,” states Remy, is cold, so lacking in warmth that nothing can be more unfit or unsuitable for procreation” (Remy 1974, 12). The demon’s seminal fluid, then, unsuitable for human reproduction, had to be replaced or improved in some way. To accomplish this, the prospective demon father transformed himself into a succubus. During coition with a human male, the devil

...receives therefrom human semen...and then he preserves the spilt semen at its natural heat, conserving it with the vital essence. This, when he has connexion with the woman, he introduces into her womb, whence follows impregnation (Sinistrari 1974, 12).

Two late sixteenth-century writers, Franciscus Valesius and the Dominican Thomas Malvenda, wrote:

What incubi introduce into the womb is not any ordinary human semen in normal quantity, but abundant, very thick, very warm, rich in spirits and free from serosity. ...they merely have to choose ardent, robust men, whose semen is naturally very copious, with whom the succubus has relations; and

then the incubus copulates with women of a like constitution, taking care that both shall enjoy a more than normal orgasm, for the greater the venereal excitement the more abundant the semen (Robbins 1973, 255).

The Devil could also assume and animate the corpse of another human being, male or female, for the purposes of copulation. The terror and abhorrence inherent in the idea of sexual violation by an animated but lifeless body must have been overwhelming for the early modern citizen, as it would be for anyone who believed such a thing to be within the realm of possibility.

Further, Lucifer could “shape himself a body and endow it with motion” (Robbins 1973, 91). Satan could steal the semen emitted in nocturnal emissions or masturbation and create from it new bodies for himself (Robbins 1973, 255). As one might imagine, this theory led to a number of side debates as to the actual paternity of a child who was so conceived, as well as to its status as human or monster!

Other scholarly and theological writings on demoniacal copulation include descriptions of the demon himself and of the act, which is commonly reported as a painful and horror-filled experience for the witch. His phallus is most commonly described as very large, extremely cold, frequently scaly, and almost always the instrument of pain for the accommodating witch. Pain associated with satanic intercourse is a common theme in the literature. DeLancre relates the confession of sixteen-year-old Jeanette d’Abadie:

The Devil often made her kiss...his member, then his behind... As for coupling...she saw everybody having incestuous intercourse against all the dictates of nature... She shrank from intercourse with the Devil because, as his member was covered with scales, it caused extreme pain, besides which his seed is extremely cold (Clark, J. 1991, 126).

One description of intercourse with Satan included the confession of a woman

who declared that the huge size of the satanic member caused her sheets to be constantly bloody. Remy supports these stories of penile size with experts such as Zeno and Galen, who explain the need for a lengthy penis in intercourse as necessary to ensure conception. Such experts, however, also declare dual orgasm to be vital to conception (Clark, J. 1991, 126).

By one account, the devil's organ extended 23 inches, while Henri Boguet, in his Discours des Sourcieres, 1590, relates the story of Jacquema Paget, who "had several times taken in her hand the member of the demon which lay with her and that it was as cold as ice and a good finger's length, but not so thick as that of a man" (Clark, J. 1991, 126). As can be observed, reports vary—one witch may describe a huge penis, while another relates the size as being only a finger's length and thinner than a mortal man's.

Marguerite Bremont confessed that a devil had relations with her after dancing. One who had led her in the dance made love to her twice, but he ejaculated extremely cold semen. Jeanne Guillermin, also present at Marguerite's confession, confirmed these statements (Bodin 1979, 130). Most accounts of copulation with devils include the description of extremely cold semen and the discomfort caused the witch—"...it [the devil's semen] is so cold that the witches recoil with horror on receiving it" (Remy 1974, 12).

The Witch: Her Sexuality and Perversions

Sexual, or even sensual, matters were seen as sinful in all but extremely restricted situations. Women who played together, rode to Sabbats together, in just their bare skins, would have been seen as animalistic in their rejection of the modesty prevalent at the time. Their freedom with their bodies (as when they flew naked, for example) would

have damned them, regardless of any other witchly activities of which they might have been accused.

Weigert discusses Grien's "Three Witches," Figure 4, with regard to the issue of that bodily freedom. The older witch's right hand touches the back of one woman, her left on the back of another. She straddles the back of the bent woman and her pubic area is covered or touched by the leg of the woman holding the cauldron. The left hand of the woman holding the cauldron is placed over her own genitals, with the thumb and first two fingers straight. Between those two straight fingers and the bent last finger, the woman's third finger is turned inward, disappearing at the location of her genitals. "The organization of the figures puts this gesture of digital clitoral manipulation at the focus of the composition" (Weigert 1995, 29).

Another drawing, "Female Witches Preparing for Flight," Figure 7, by sixteenth-century artist Urs Graf, depicts a group of women who have "become a co-ordinated sexual machine" (Weigert 1995, 30). One woman snugly grips a broomstick between her legs. The broom handle juts phallically forward, apparently stimulating the second woman. A third woman, older, is hidden behind the first. Only her head and one hand resting upon one of the slack sausages hanging from the broomstick are visible (30). Sausages were frequently a symbol for the penis and the limpness of those pictured indicate the witch's presumed contempt for the male's supposed sexual prowess.

Figure 8, a 1510 work by Urs Graf entitled "The Witches' Sabbath," depicts a Sabbat scene in which liquid billows around the witches during a ritual. That liquid or steam is evidence of the sexual climax attained by the women stimulating themselves and

one another. The power of their ejaculations gives the lie to the claims of medical authorities regarding the weakness of womens' and the strength of mens' ejaculations. Therefore, these women are, for their practices, condemned as anatomically deviant (Weigert 1995, 38).

These erotic depictions threatened the male hierarchy in that they signified the women's unspoken assertion that men are, in terms of sexual satisfaction, superfluous and dispensable. Such women as these are sexually self-sufficient and their pleasure is magnified and potentially unlimited (Weigert 1995, 38). Further, their touching, sexual or otherwise, hints at a "combining or pooling of, or passing of power amongst themselves" (Weigert 1995, 29)—women together, excluding the non-essential male.

Witchcraft, it was believed, stemmed from the "unbridled sexual nature of women" (Davidson 1992, 46). This voracious and irrational sexual appetite is symbolized in Grien's depiction of "Weather Witches" by the display of Eve's apple on the top of the jar that encloses a demon (Hults 1982, 124). Women in league with Satan seduced or bewitched the thoughts of men, inclining them to carnality and illicit sexuality. Under the influence of the sorceress, men found it difficult to resist the urge to indulge in unlawful and immoral sexual acts. Pity the woman, unknowingly inspiring lust in her neighbor and accused then of intentional seduction through witchcraft, thereby explaining and condoning her victim's "unnatural urge." This sort of behaviour, obviously, would not be conducive to the orderly progression of society.

With these prevailing beliefs regarding the capabilities and characteristics of the witch, it is understandable that Kramer and Sprenger find carnality to be a central issue, albeit their beliefs went to extreme limits. They devoted separate chapters to: "witches

who copulate with devils; the obstruction of the venereal act and the power of generation; and the illusion of the removal of the male member, a power first exercised by witches in the Malleus” (Clark, J. 1991, 121). Hulst writes that the witch hunters’ relentless fascination with witch-induced impotence or genitalia theft reveals their fear of female sexuality (Hulst 1982, 124).

Roper states that “manhood was experienced as a fragile achievement” and that the superior status of males was perceived as being constantly under attack. A major symbol of that superiority was the penis and women who threatened male sexual abilities with such curses as “he should neither go up nor down with any love,” were horrifying creatures, deserving of condemnation as witches (Roper 1994, 188).

Sabbat images of the sixteenth-century by Grien and Graf illustrate sausages hanging on witches’ forked sticks. Resembling penises, they all hang limply. In the Graf drawing, Figure 7, an older witch touches one of the sausages and as she does so, it shrivels in her hand—a graphic portrait of her supposed manipulation of the male’s sexual potency. At a time when reproduction was considered essential in maintaining the social order, this motif, slyly indicating the male’s inability to perform, was singularly notable (Weigert 1995, 36).

Graf’s print, produced in Grien’s workshop, entitled “Three Witches Preparing for Flight,” (Figure 7), illustrates Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg’s sermon against witches. A man who has lost his pants, obviously the victim of a spell, huddles behind a tree, peeking at a group of women who are gathered around a scattering of animal bones. One of the witches, who is clothed, holds a stick on which hangs the man’s pants. Loss of those pants alludes to the witches’ reputed ability to cause impotence, and by extension

their expropriation of male authority and power. (Weigert 1995, 22). Possessing, as they did, power to castrate or to restore potency, witches literally manifested their command of life and death.

Conclusion

Early modern civilization was based on man's law, itself rooted in God's law. As Bodin states

Now Satan's ruse is not only to dazzle the eyes and deprive men of a knowledge of the true God, but also to uproot from the human spirit all religion, all conscience and even that which everyone believes to be the true God, to make himself revered, or at least to make men worship what they know is not God, and to rely on animals, revering them and expecting a cure or salvation from them, even the most filthy creatures (139).

This passage could be interpreted to demonstrate Satan's desire to fling humanity back into a past of savagery, a past lacking God's love and teachings, possessing no rules of civilized and orderly behaviour and appearance.

The modern concept of how a witch should look is very little changed from that of ancient times. She is a beautiful, but consummately evil creature. Conversely, she is gaunt and stooping, elderly, frequently tall. Her normal outward appearance notwithstanding, her transmigrations invariably revealed her brutish and barbarous character.

Portraits, both literary and visual, bequeathed to us by contemporary early modern European artists, scholars and writers, show us that witchcraft—witches, their Master, demons, Familiars, and frequently offspring—was a return to the past. Witches and all their trappings, in one way or another, always remind us of the primal world, of beasts, of a world commanded by Nature as opposed to a society ruled by civil governance.

Witches were inhuman, insofar as humanity is defined by civilité. They were thoroughly physical and carnal beings, devoid of the finer sentiments bestowed upon human beings by spirituality and the escalating state system.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ABILITIES, ACTIVITIES AND BEHAVIOURS

The woman in bed in her husband's arms, with doors closed, goes out and with other women, traverses the spaces of earth and without arms slays men, baptized and redeemed with Christ's blood, and eats their cooked flesh and replaces their hearts with straw and wood or other things and then revives them and gives them further life.

Burchard, Bishop of Worms
1020 AD (Marshall 1995, 44)

Just as their physical appearance and characteristics betrayed the witches' desire for chaos, so did the atrocities she committed via her magical abilities upon a more than suspicious populace. The activities in which she indulged offended, frightened and even mortally endangered anyone she might choose to attack with her spells, causing upheavals in the orderly progression of early modern society.

In its hierarchy of good and evil, early modern thought placed woman closer to the Devil than man, in large part because of her supposed enslavement to her baser physical nature; therefore societal norms condemned her as more naturally suited to house Devils and to consort with them. Contrary to the modern reaction to witchcraft of delicious, shivery, "pretend" fear, the early modern witches' activities as a protege of Satan infused their society with very real fright and horror. According to contemporary belief, the witch indulged in a range of appalling activities, from storm-raising to murder. Irrational and volatile, the witches' behaviour was diametrically opposed to early modern precepts of proper social behaviour. The legendary iniquities of witches included sexual excess and

all manner of cultural taboos such as incest, cannibalism and infanticide (Hults 1982, 125). Jennet Hargraves, for example, caused the death of a fetus within its mother's womb. Another suspect witch instructed her familiar to "nip out the brains of an unborn child" (Purkiss 1995, 417). Witches certainly did not exhibit any understanding of good manners. They cast harmful spells, killed others' cows and ate infants—these actions did not make for a good Christian neighbor or an upright citizen.

In their zealous ambition to overthrow society, witches replicated and executed Satan's will in all things, including his supreme goal: the destruction of humanity through the murder of body and soul. To accomplish this end, Satan bestowed certain superhuman physical capabilities upon his chosen helpers. What were some of these supernatural abilities? According to popular belief, there were three kinds of witches: those who could cure, those who could cause injury, and those who could do both. The Malleus Maleficarum lists the capabilities of witches. With God's permission, they could

Eat unbaptised children of their own species.
Throw children walking by the waterside into the water.
Make horses go mad under their riders.
Cause sterility in men and animals.
Offer children who are not killed to the Devil.
Transport themselves through the air, either in body or in imagination.
Affect Judges and Magistrates so they cannot hurt them.
Cause themselves and others to keep silence under torture.
Bring about great trembling in the hands and horror in the minds of arresters.
Show to others occult things and certain future events, by the information of the Devil.
See absent things as if they were present.
Turn the minds of men to inordinate love or hate.
Make of no effect the generative desires and even power of copulation.
Cause abortion.
Kill infants within the womb with only a touch.
Bewitch men and women with only a look and cause death.
Engage in carnal copulation with the Devil (Kramer and Sprenger 1928, 99).

By her own free will, the witch joined with Satan in a pact and became his lover. In exchange, she received extra-mortal powers, including the ability to move bodiless from place to place, to transform from human to another form, to utilize magical lore to injure and kill people, animals, and crops. Demonologists reported that midwives were especially menacing, killing babies at birth as they did or pledging them, unbaptized, to the Devil. With her sorcerous arts, the witch could alter the minds and souls of her prey; sacrifice children to her master; prevent conception or force spontaneous abortion; perform symbolic and actual castrations; and incite lascivious and licentious cravings within her victims (Williams 1995, 72-73).

Causing Sexual and Reproductive Havoc

The cosmology of early modern populations included two opposing concepts; the survival of the much earlier belief in sexual renunciation as a state of holiness, and the new Reformation ideas regarding marriage as the state most pleasing to the Almighty. Church reformers taught chastity and celibacy, while at the same time regarding marriage as sacred to God. In either instance, churches condemned sexual activity outside of marriage, and consummated for any reason other than procreation. Non-procreative intercourse was believed to be totally against God's order of things. The witch who caused dissension in a marriage, and was herself defiantly promiscuous, then, was doubly a pariah.

Witches had the ability to come between couples, or bring them together, and to cause sterility. She manipulated human fertility, inducing sexual impotence, barrenness, or uncontrollable lust in certain chosen victims by concocting potions and casting spells. Witches could upset the order of things by causing a married couple to turn from each

other, falling obsessively in love with others, thus interfering with the sacred child-bearing aspect of marriage.

One frightening sorcerous practice was commonly known as “codpiece-tying,” a method of obstructing intercourse or preventing conception and dividing a married couple by tying knots in a string or cord to the accompaniment of a verbal spell. Tying cod-piece knots could cause a good husband to become impotent—but, if the witch elected, only with his wife. This act was so common that even children were able to perform it. Thomas Aquinas, in the fourth book of the Sentences, wrote that one could be tied with respect to one woman and not to others (Bodin 1979, 99).

A witch who wished to cast such a spell tied three knots in lace or a string—her intent being to block the way to orgasm (Cohn 1975, 151). The spell worked by repeating various words particular to each ligature or knot, and by the specific leather and/or color of the codpiece string (Bodin 1979, 100).

A witch who was accused of casting such a spell reported that while the codpiece string remained tied, one could see swellings come out along the length of the cord, like boils. These lumps were purported to be the signs of the children who would have been conceived had the parents not been bound by witchcraft (Bodin 1979, 100). This

act is diabolical. The Practicer is a transgressor of the law of God and of nature, preventing the consequence of marriage ordained by the law of God. The result of it is that it is necessary to dissolve the marriages, or at the least it binds them in sterility, which in plain terms is a sacrilege. It is also murder—for one is not less a murderer who prevents the procreation of children than if he had cut their throats. Also, he removes the mutual friendship of marriage, which is the sacred hearth of nature and of human society, and he puts there a great hatred, for normally these codpiece-tiers instill a violent hatred between two partners (Bodin 1979, 212-213).

The witch who cast the codpiece-tying spell, could accomplish several things,

depending on how she tied the cord and the accompanying words she used. She could prevent conception, but, further, she could turn the harried couple against one another.

Bodin relates a conversation he had with a young noblewoman who said there were more than fifty ways to tie the cod-piece string; "one to impede only the husband, another to impede only the wife, so that one, frustrated with the impotence of his partner, will commit adultery with others" (Bodin 1979, 99-100). Should a woman so cursed enter into a physical relationship with someone other than her husband, the paternity of any children born would automatically be called into question. Obviously, this could cause great strife and upheaval within a society. The question of paternity could affect not only the single afflicted family, but also the entire community. Normal inheritance practices could be called into question, as well as the rights to and of a child conceived in such a way. Bodin's conversation with the noblewoman continued as she stated that one could bind for a day, a year or forever, at least as long as the cod-piece string held out. In any relationship where love existed, one could be made to despise the other (Bodin 1979, 99-100).

There was an even more horrific way to ensure sterility. The Devil's protege could not only precipitate impotence in men, but could also remove his outward sign of masculinity. She possessed the capability of concocting spells to remove a man's reproductive organ. "The dread of being sexually vulnerable to witchcraft—to satanically induced castration—was intensified by the image of the disgendered male, whose sexual organs may have been pulled inside his body, making him appear female" (Williams 1995, 73). Imagine the panicked horror of the man who looked down at his body and saw only a smooth surface where his phallus had once been.

One of the most explicit references to the penis in the Malleus Maleficarum describes the illusion of wishing away the male member: “It is to be said that it is all done by devil’s work and illusion, for the senses of those who see them are deluded in the way we have said” (Clark, J. 1991, 128). Apparently, such a spell affected not only the victim—he was not the only person deceived into thinking his penis had disappeared. It would appear that the curse enveloped him so that others, observing his body, were also absorbed into his delusion, unable to perceive the penis. Was this a form of mass hallucination?

A certain man tells that, when he had lost his member, he approached a known witch to ask her to restore it to him. She told the afflicted man to climb a certain tree, and that he “might take which he liked out of a nest in which there were several members.” When the gentleman chose a particularly large one, the witch said that he could not take that one, “for it belonged to a parish priest” (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 121).

Other methods used to divide a married couple included certain love charms that turned loving couples against one another. Frequently using spells that included the use of sacred items such as holy water and prayers, the witch could arrange for the man to be impotent or the wife barren. Such a love charm could cause a man to be impotent only with his wife, not with other women. Human nature would dictate that such a man, finding himself unable to perform with his wife, yet fully capable with another woman, would place the fault with his wife, destroying their family unit and upsetting the societal order. The witch could implant within one or both an abiding hatred of the other. A different charm or spell, inflicted upon a couple who ardently loved one another, caused them, when they became intimate, "to claw at each other and struggle wildly," though

their love for one another was unaffected (Bodin 1979, 66).

Witches could also induce a state of love or lust between partners who otherwise would have no interest in one another. An example of such a "love charm" is found in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (11.1:169-176), wherein Oberon tells Puck, also known as Robin Goodfellow, long identified as a consort of witches, to fetch a plant:

Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell
it fell upon a little western flower.
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
will make a man or woman madly dote
upon the next live creature that it sees (Marshall 1995, 106).

She could cause lust for another (even one's own blood relative) to enter the heart of a person. Anyone caught committing adultery or fornication could try to protect oneself by placing accountability for the transgression on a witch.

The Anti-Mother: Murder of Infants and Children

A witch's actions often attacked marriage, not only through impotence or infertility, or by diverting a couple's attention away from one another, but also through inducing stillbirth or by the murder of children, often as a sacrifice to Satan. These actions damaged marriage in its role as the most important agency for the control of social and moral behaviour, threatening the whole of the body politic (Williams 1995, 74). This consort of the Devil killed—most horrifically, she killed children and frequently ate them. The witches' primary goal was to destroy order, to turn the world upside down. She committed acts such as infanticide that were the opposite of what was deemed seemly, fitting and ethical.

The witch betrayed the tenets of appropriate behaviour. She was required to be the opposite of her designated role in society, thus becoming the persona of the anti-wife or anti-mother. She could, further, through her machinations, turn obviously good women into apparently bad. For this reason, the anti-wife/anti-mother witch was doubly dangerous—not only did she damage individuals, but she conspired to turn unsuspecting and innocent women involuntarily into anti-wives and anti-mothers themselves, thereby causing disruption and overturning an otherwise orderly and hierarchical society.

Perverting the female capacity to nourish and heal, the witch could poison an infant through the breast milk of her victim, the child's mother (Roper 1994, 207). Here, in the example of poisonous or noisome breastmilk, one finds the instances where the anti-mother witch turns her victim unwillingly into an anti-mother herself. In these earlier times, a woman who could not nurse her baby put that child at risk of death by starvation at worst and, at best, caused family members consternation, grief, financial problems, and confusion as they tried to find an alternate way to nourish the child. In January, 1669, Anna Ebeler, accused of murdering a woman for whom she had worked as a lying-in-maid in Augsburg, Germany, allegedly served the woman a bowl of soup she had made of malmsey and brandy. This soup increased the newly-delivered mother's fever and she became delirious, though she was deemed to be of sound mind when she accused Anna of poisoning her. As the news spread, other women came forward to state that Anna had poisoned their young children also. One child had lost its baby fat and become piteously thin and dried out; another was unable to nurse from its mother, even though it was greedy for milk and able to suck vigorously from other women. Shortly afterward, the child died in agony (Roper 1994, 199).

In a third household, an infant had died after its body became suddenly covered in "hot poisonous pustules and blisters which broke open." This baby's seven-year-old brother also suffered from aches and pains caused by sorcery. He saw strange visions, his mother suffered from headaches, and the whole household began to notice "strange growths on their bodies". A fourth woman discovered her baby covered with red splotches and blisters, the skin drying out until it "could be peeled off like a shirt". That child suffered a painful and pitiful death and the mother's menstruation ceased. All these families had employed Anna as their lying-in-maid. Two months after the first accusation, sixty-seven-year old Anna Ebeler was executed and her body burned. She had been interrogated six times, confessing to the crimes of which she had been accused at the end of the second interrogation when threatened with torture (Roper 1994, 199).

Whether they were killed as food, for their body parts to be used in spells, or as revenge upon their families, children were often the victims of witches' attentions. Bodin speaks of Stadlin, whom Johann Nider tried in the diocese of Lausanne. Stadlin confessed to having killed seven children in their mother's womb. He had also caused all the livestock of that same household to abort by burying a certain animal beneath the sill of the door. With the removal of that mysterious animal, the miscarriages stopped in the whole household (Bodin 1979, 138).

The Anti-Wife: Disrupting the Household

The witch was not only an anti-mother. For the ordinary housewife, the witch was also an opposite, an anti-wife, a dark Other who polluted the household order, disrupted the food supply, and wasted necessary goods. Domestic labor is all about maintaining order, ensuring that matter does not become wrongly placed and witches transformed

cleanness and orderliness into the “dirt of bewitchment.” Witchcraft characteristically produced an estranging and shaming effect of utter disorder, filth, and pollution. “Under the attentions of the witch, milk behaves like the white of egg; ale turns sour and smells vile; cows produce blood instead of milk and pease, becoming odorous and inedible” (Purkiss 1995, 414).

Jill Dubisch states that "women function as transformers of natural products and processes into cultural ones," and, as such transformers they work to change "matter out of place" into "matter in place," or into cultural order. “Good” women, those who contain and rise above their instinctively chaotic and contrary natures, are, through their societal position, burdened with the responsibility of sustaining the patterns of social and cultural life (Purkiss 1995, 414). (Note that in the fairy tale, "Rumpelstiltskin," the little man demanded that a woman change his straw into gold). Simple women's chores, such as spinning, churning, skimming, washing, and cooking are examples of these kinds of transformations. Each of these activities are acts of acculturation, in that they turn natural materials into clean and orderly, culturally acceptable and useful items. Thus, witches, disregarding their given roles and rejecting their proper places in society, who caused milk to curdle and ale to spoil were, in effect, preventing culturation and striving to return productive civic organization to a chaotic past.

The witch’s supernatural activities directly threatened the innocent housewife’s and mother’s authority and her image of herself as capable and competent, endangering her role, her position as order-maker and food-provider. Under the witch’s ministrations, she became the opposite of what she believed herself to be. She herself becomes the anti-wife/anti-mother, contributing in her small way to the downfall of the hierarchical

state. “A witch loitering near the house should be warned off, cites one contemporary caution, lest she be placing an object near the threshold or in the bedstraw.” Note that the “threshold is a liminal space—the boundary between inside (culture) and outside (nature), while bedstraw is a good example of a natural material being domesticated” (Purkiss 1995, 416).

To the early modern woman, in her role as housewife, food assumed an importance beyond the obvious. It represented her productive labor and her means of nourishing, sustaining, and protecting the bodies into which it is fed. The witch, however, in her usual topsy-turvy wicked manner, reversed this positive charge. Instead of sustaining, food destroyed (Purkiss 1995, 424). “Jane Brooks gave an apple to a small boy, stroked his right side and shook his hand; her touch alone sent him into a violent convulsion, but he became much worse when he unwisely ate the apple she had given him.” Jane, in her role as witch, used a gift of food to control the child’s body, much as the wicked stepmother did in “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” (423).

It is small wonder that the cause behind such a role reversal—the witch—would be universally hated and feared. Her master’s goal, and therefore hers, was to destroy the cleanliness and order of civilized society, returning it to the dirt and chaos of Nature from whence it rose—Nature, wherein the Devil and the material rule supreme and the purity of the spiritual vanishes.

The Power to Hurt: Reality or Imagination

The witch inflicted all sorts of hurts upon her victim, either psychologically or somatically (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 3). Many scholars and writers of the early modern era perceived certain powers of the witch as occurring only within the mind and

believed that abilities such as physical transformations were caused by the Devil using his ability to induce visions (Kors and Peters 1972, 70). In other words, actions such as night flying and turning an enemy into a toad did not take place in the "real" world, but only within the victim's or the witch's imagination. How would such a spell work within the mind? Joseph Glanville states in his demonological work that souls can be separated from "gross and slaggish" bodies without resulting in death. Yet pains suffered by souls in their "airy vehicles" are nevertheless felt by the body (Glanville 1966, 74-75).

Diseases and injuries inflicted upon the mind, consequently, did indeed possess the potential to physically harm the victim and even bring about his demise. Now, of course, this phenomenon is easily observable in the individual who becomes ill right before an important meeting, or in the child who develops an allergy before attending a new school.

The case of "the fancy of the Mother which wounds the Foetus," (Glanville 1966, 74-75) illustrates this curious marvel of the imagination imposing physical afflictions upon the body. Early modern medical science argued that birth defects or the death of a child could result from the expectant mother's own thoughts or feelings about her coming infant. "The mother must avoid unfeminine feelings of rage, frustration, and fury if she is to avoid 'marking' her child or miscarrying" (Purkiss 1995, 417). With the assertion of doctors and healers that a mother's thoughts and emotions could shape her unborn child, came the concept of the witch who could usurp that capability. The witch (or her familiar) possessed the ability, through magic, to effect those same injuries to the baby or to cause miscarriage. Again, in this context, the witch appears as the opposite of what early modern woman should be. Negative feelings of rage often characterized her and she became the normal woman's "Other," or the anti-mother, whose goal is to destroy the

order of family, and thus of society (417).

Though many scholars and religious leaders concluded that the witches' powers were strictly psychological, many others firmly believed that the witches' actions, while occasionally happening within the realm of imagination, also transpired in actuality—in the flesh, so to speak. In fact, witches frequently took the blame for just those natural and man-made disasters that plagued the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Kors and Peters 1972, 176). Needing an explanation for calamities such as food shortages caused by, for example, the destruction of crops by hail, and milk curdling, the populace often found it reassuring to blame witchcraft. Present-day author, Glyn Morgan, recounts the story of Marjory Staunton. Englishman, John Cornell accused Marjory of bewitching his cows so that they yielded blood instead of milk, causing her to be tried for witchcraft by Judge Gawdy (Morgan 1973, 20).

Means of Causing Harm: Touching, Poisoning, Spells, and the “Evil Eye”

Whether the effects were real or imagined, the witch’s malevolent intent and ability to harm were well-known. Her vicious acts were legion, consisting of such practices as casting her “evil eye” upon an intended victim causing him to perish or to become ill; poisoning or simply touching another for the same purpose; killing an enemy’s livestock; and raising tempests producing hail, lightning, rain, and thunder to ruin her victim’s crops (Guazzo 1974, 19).

A witch could injure others via her “Evil Eye,” through which she utilized her demon to exact her vengeance (Glanville 1966, 80). Known also as “Fascination,” the evil eye was (and, in some areas, still is) one of the most ancient and extensive folk

beliefs to be included into the structural framework of witchcraft. The concept that harm can be perpetrated upon another through hostile looks exists in many cultures, and a word exists for that concept in many known languages, both European and non-European. Fascination, very simply, means bewitching or enchanting, from the Latin, “fascinum.” The same word is also used for the counter charm against the evil eye (Robbins, 1973, 193-94). Twentieth-century author, R. H. Robbins (1973, 194), cites Christian Bible verses that provide evidence of this ability to cause harm to another through a glance.

From within, out of the heart of men,
Proceed evil thoughts...an evil eye.

Mark 7:21,22

If thine eye be evil, thy whole body
Shall be full of darkness.

Matthew 6:22

Casting her eye upon the victim unleashed her imp, who penetrated the unfortunate quarry and effected interior damage. “For the pestilential spirits being darted by a spiteful and vigorous imagination from the eye, and meeting with those that are weak and passive in the bodies which they enter...” (Glanville 1966, 80).

The “Evil Eye” was but one way a witch could inflict harm. Her nauseous potions poisoned or killed her victim, and, further, she could impose pain and even death by the laying on of hands. Witches could safely anoint their hands or entire bodies with unguents they had prepared, usually of vile ingredients. The recipe for one such unguent required

A red-haired man...tie him down, have him stung to death by venomous animals; then he is hung by his feet and vessels are placed under all his orifices to catch all the venomous matter that drops from him; this is

mixed with the fat of a hanged man, the intestines of children and the venom of animals, and with the aid of the Devil an ointment is made which kills all whom it touches (Lea 1957, 274).

These poisonous ointments would do the witch no harm whatsoever, but should they even “touch the edge of a Person’s Garment, it will prove fatal to such a One, provided it is the witch’s intent to hurt. For otherwise, such contact is harmless and does not injure” (Remy 1974, 6). Note the facility contained in this description of the witch’s act. Should she harmlessly touch several people to no effect and yet cause the next person to fall at her feet, her accusers have a ready-made explanation for why one particular person was harmed, yet not the witch herself or the others she may have touched.

How did the early modern European determine whether a person’s illness occurred naturally or was prompted by the desire of the sorceress? The difference between normal illnesses and those caused by spells was simple. One often sees bewitched victims die in a kind of languor, occasionally casting out hair, iron fittings, pieces of cloth or broken glass. The English doctor of the Palatine Princes writes that in 1539 there was a man in Ulrich named Nenssesser, a bewitched ploughman. The doctor pulled out an iron nail from under his skin and “he felt such great pain in the bowels that he cut his throat in desperation. He was opened up in the presence of all the people of Ulrich and there was found a rod, steel knives, two horseshoes, and a ball of hair” (Bodin 1979, 139).

Witch-fashioned poisons also functioned against animals. The followers of Satan could command demons to enter the bodies of animals in herds or flocks, throw them down and strangle them or tear them to pieces, or they could scatter poison among the livestock (Guazzo 1974, 22). One witch, tried by inquisitors, confessed that she had

hidden the consecrated host in her handkerchief instead of swallowing it. Along with other powders given her by the Devil, she placed the host into a jar in which she had been keeping and feeding a toad. Then she concealed everything beneath the doorway of a sheepfold while she spoke certain words—all done in an effort to kill the flock (Bodin 1979, 138).

Witches cast spells that were varied, far-reaching, and could be general or victim-specific. Barbe Dore, condemned to be burned by decree of the Parlement of Paris on January 11, 1577, confessed to murdering three men by tossing a bit of powder wrapped in paper on a spot by which they would be passing. During the act, she prayed in the name of God and of all the devils. When she wanted to keep others from being touched by the spell, she prayed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that when “such a one passed by there, that one would not be harmed” (Bodin 1979, 139). This use of God through prayer to cast a spell inflicting harm raises interesting questions. It testifies to the witch’s supernatural power, in that she is able to usurp power belonging only to God, although she receives her powers from God’s archenemy. According to theologians, nothing can happen without God’s permission, thus she must be doing God’s will. Does this make the witch a sort of partner in the dispensing of God’s wishes? If so, then her master, the Devil, must also be a partner, albeit behind the scenes. (In fact, there is some basis for this concept in writings depicting Satan and God as two sides of the same coin, or as a sort of employee/employer duo). The dichotomies here are baffling and reveal the convolutions through which logic must pass in order for early modern people to accept the alleged powers of the witch.

Storm-Bringing

Endowed also by their demons with the power of weather control, witches were capable of raising clouds and being carried up in them. Witches could “steer” the clouds, so to speak, to the destination of their choice, where the cloud contents could be dumped to the best effect (Remy 1974, 6). Witches could pollute the air with unspeakably foul substances. By stirring a pond with fingers or twigs, they created a corrupt stream of water which would then disperse into the atmosphere, producing storms (Hults 1982, 125).

Alternatively, to influence weather a witch could urinate into a hole or furrow in the earth. Then, as depicted in Hans Baldung Grien’s work, “Weather Witches,” Figure 9, she would dip a broom into the liquid and shake it at the sky as she intoned an incantation (Davidson 1992, 51).

There were many and varied methods to control the weather:

With a wand given by the Demon, the water of some pool or river was stirred until a dense vapor arose in the midst of which they (the witches) are borne on high. They form the vapor into a thick cloud and shake it Down upon the earth as hail. Some place stones sized as they wish the hail to be within an earthen jar and place the jar into the water before stirring (Remy 1974, 74).

In 1488, in the diocese of Constance, a violent storm of hail, lightning and rain occurred, ruining the fruit for miles around. The peasants blamed witchcraft and accused two women, Anne of Mindelen and Agnes. On being put to the question, they first denied their involvement, then separately confessed that they had been in the fields that day. Ignorant of the presence of one another, they had each made a trench and stirred up the water in their individual trenches at noon, simultaneously invoking the Devil with

their chants. As soon as they were back home, a doubly ferocious storm arrived (Bodin 1979, 140).

Another witch proved her allegations that she could bring storms by going alone (with permission from her accusers) to a thickly wooded area. There she supposedly dug a hole with her hands, filled it with water and kept stirring it with her finger until "a thick cloud grew up and around from it, which was at once pierced through with thunder and lightning" (Remy 1974, 74).

Having determined to destroy King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England), as well as his proposed bride, preferably before they even met, the North Berwick witches chose a spell incorporating a christened cat. They bound strips of human flesh cut from a recently buried corpse to the helpless cat's limbs and threw it into the ocean with the intent of raising a storm at sea to prevent the Queen's arrival in Scotland. They indeed raised the storm, but in this case the spell was only partly efficacious, as the Queen was only "partly drowned." Further methods used to rid themselves of James included image-melting spells and the poisoning of his cast-off clothing (Boyd 1969, 136-37).

A further recipe for raising tempests comes from a witch who confessed that a demon had given her black candles. She carried these to a pool and, holding the flame downward over the water, allowed drops of wax to fall into the pond. She then scattered drugged powder on the water, beating it lightly with black wands with which the demon had also provided her. At the same time, she chanted certain words, after which the "whole air grew thick and finally there fell a heavy rain or hail upon those places which

she had named" (Remy 1974, 74).

One can see the components of Imitative or Sympathetic magic at work in these weather spells. These are a form of magic in which items associated in some way with the intended recipient of the spell are used to obtain the desired results. For example, the witch utilizes stones to simulate hail, associating the spell with weather. In the same way, she stirs liquid to "stir up" the atmosphere. What parallel, however, could have been drawn between black candle wax and thunderstorms? Possibly the black wax, symbolizing dark clouds, was sprinkled over water to symbolize rain-filled clouds.

Destruction of Crops

Another fearsome activity of the witch revolved around her tendency to interfere in the growing of crops. Witches could promote or destroy fertility with their spells. This latter process was sometimes called "blasting." A Devil's servant could make a powder for this purpose, using "a flayed cat, a toad, a lizard and a viper which they lay upon live coals until reduced to ashes." This ash, sowed in the ground to the accompaniment of an incantation focusing on a given crop, destroyed the so-designated crop. The incantation specified the crop, be it wheat or apples and "to the grapes they say, 'you will come in as flowers and not fruit'" (Boyd 1969, 66). An alternative spell used to ensure the barrenness of the land involved filling the skin of a cat with barley, rye, oats, grapes and other vegetable matter. Placed for three days in a spring, then dried with the aid of the Devil, a powder was then made. On a windy day, that powder was scattered in the air from a mountaintop to "bring sterility on fruitful districts" (Lea 1957, 274).

Transformations

One of the most fearful and awe-inspiring powers of the witch was her ability to

transform her shape, as well as that of others. She could give apparent life to inanimate objects. With or without the use of an ointment or salve, she could cause a goat, a pig, a stick or a broom to carry her through the skies. Frightening stories told the tale of witches who could change themselves for purposes of maleficia or for simple revelry. Demons had given their witches the power of

penetrating into houses, so that they could easily make their way in through the narrowest crack after shrinking to the shape of locusts, mice, rats, or some other small animal of that sort, and, once in, resume their proper form (Remy 1974, 104).

This ability to enter where they wished at will allowed the witch to perpetuate her evil, i.e., spell her victim into a deep sleep for the purpose of poisoning him or her, and perform any other harm she might care to inflict.

In December, 1521, at Besancon, Inquisitor Jean Boin accused Pierre Burgot and Michel Verdun of witchcraft. They confessed to having renounced God and swearing to serve the Devil. According to the confession, Verdun took Burgot to the edge of the Chatel-Charlon, where each one “had a candle of green wax which gave dark blue flame and they performed dances and sacrifices to the Devil.” After then spreading an ointment on themselves, they were “turned into wolves who ran with incredible swiftness.” They found themselves capable of alternating between man and beast. As wolves, they coupled with she-wolves “with the same pleasure they normally had with women.” Burgot also admitted to having killed a young seven-year-old boy with his wolfish paws and teeth and “would have eaten him except that the peasants gave chase to him.” Verdun confessed further to having killed a young girl and being pursued by the Seigneur de la Cuvee. Both had eaten four other girls besides (Bodin 1979, 123).

Boguet, while interrogating suspected witches with regard to their actions, heard a voluntary confession from one Big Jacques Bocquet. Bocquet stated that he and several others went out at night in the form of wolves, for the purpose of catching and eating children. Several of the accused freely admitted to being werewolves. Boguet himself “had seen them go down on all fours as they did when they were in the fields,” noting that they were “all scratched on the face and hands—one so much disfigured by this that he bore hardly any resemblance to a man” (Garrett 1977, 128).

In 1573, the Parlement of Dôle tried Gilles Garnier from Lyons. While in the form of a werewolf, he had seized a young girl of ten or twelve years near the Serre woods in a vineyard in the wine country of Chastenoy. He “killed her with his paw-like hands and his teeth and ate the flesh of her thighs and arms, and took some home to his wife.” A month later he attacked and killed another girl while in his wolf form. He confessed that he had intended to consume her, but was prevented by three people. Fifteen days later, he strangled a ten-year-old in the vineyard of Gredisans and ate the flesh of the child’s thighs, legs, and abdomen. Later, as a man, he killed another boy, aged twelve or thirteen, in the woods of the village of Perouse, intending to make a meal of him as well. Bystanders, he acknowledged, prevented this intent without using force or constraint (Bodin 1979, 122). The witches of Vernon assembled themselves in an old ruined chateau. In the guise of cats, they attacked four or five men who had decided to spend the night there. The cats killed one and severely scratched the others, several of their number, in turn, being wounded by the men. Later, those cats were found severely injured, but in their original woman-form (Bodin 1979, 124).

Flight

Still another physical ability of the witch inspired terror in the populace; she could fly. Her time aloft generally occurred during the hours of darkness as she soared to her Sabbat meeting. In the story of the witch of Loches, a man noticed that his wife sometimes disappeared at night. When he asked her where she went, she replied that she tended to her chores or went to her neighbor's to do the wash. The husband, convinced she was engaged in some sort of debauchery, suspected her of lying and threatened her life if she did not take him to where she went. Admitting her guilt, she offered to take him with her on her next trip. She gave him some ointment with which they both oiled themselves. After a few words, the Devil transported them from "Loches to the Landes of Bordeaux," at least fifteen days travel away. The man discovered himself in the company of a large number of "unfamiliar sorcerers, witches and devils hideous to behold in human form." He started to say, "My God, where are we?" Unable to bear the name of God, the company immediately disappeared and he found himself naked, wandering through the fields until the morning, when he met some peasants who directed him to the road. Upon returning to Loches, he went straight to the criminal magistrate who, after hearing his story, arrested the man's wife. She confessed everything point by point and acknowledged her crime without duress (Bodin 1979, 114-115).

To bring this capability to the fore, the witch most often applied to her body an ointment or unguent composed of secret, usually disgusting ingredients frequently including the blood of infants, imparted to her by her master. One recipe included soot, bat's blood, parsnips, the fat of a baby, and, most importantly, aconite, belladonna and hemlock—all virulent poisons. Witches spread these ointments on their bodies,

empowering them to fly great distances. Absorbed through the skin, these may have had powerful effects on the recipient, such as mental confusion, irregular heartbeat, dizziness, wild excitement, and delirium. Such a mental state could very well have caused the professed witch to believe herself to be flying (Boyd 1969, 60).

This “ability” to fly allowed women to escape from the drudgery of the household into a new realm where they held power given by Satan (Clark, J. 1991, 124). According to modern scholars such as Roy Porter and Norbert Elias, as civic organization grew stricter, rules for proper behaviour grew in number and severity, hedging the populace in all round, as indicated by the number of early modern manuals describing correct modes of behaviour. People likely became more and more in need of escape from their increasingly rigid society. The structure of consciousness in adults includes a psychological level that is subject to increasing censorship, resulting in a need for some outlet that is frequently found in the dream state (Elias 1978, xiv). Night flying, accompanied as it must have been by a sense of soaring freedom, might have been one such dream. Human beings are blessed with the ability to find release and wish-fulfillment in dreams. Who of us has not traveled to a longed-for place or found vengeance against some enemy in dreams?

Although the ointments may have precipitated hallucinations, many perceived them as actually bestowing the control of physical flight upon their users. The early modern populace believed that witches could imbue objects such as sticks, brooms, shovels and animals with the ability to carry them through the skies, or, should she choose, fly on only her own inclination. The witch, via her demon-given command, flew to Sabbats, where she met with her sisters and her master. Night flying seems to have

been one of the witches' activities that inspired much horror and loathing, possibly because a human being soaring in the air infringed upon those attributes belonging only to beings inhabiting the spiritual realm. Contemporary descriptions of night flying by various scholars and theologians agree on certain points.

One such common point revolves around witchly flight as symbol for the aberrant sexual aspect of witchcraft. Aside from the suggestively phallic broom or pitchfork, witches also rode devils transformed into goats, the very symbol of carnal lust (Clark, J. 1991, 121), as in Figure 10, "The Witch," by Albrecht Dürer, about 1500 (Reprinted from Davidson in Levack). Before she left for her revelry, the witch could put her husband into a charmed sleep from which he could not easily be aroused (Remy 1974, 43). Alternatively, she would often place a stick in her bed. The stick, assuming her appearance, replaced her and deceived her spouse, should he awaken while she was away (Cohn 1975, 101). These two practices allowed the witch to go about her nefarious business under cover of darkness or to attend the Sabbats without her husband being any the wiser. She proved herself incapable of appreciating a good man when she placed her frigid facsimile in the marriage bed while she crept away to frolic with her sister witches and their Master (Marshall 1995, 69).

While the stereotypical image of the witch was that of an ugly elderly spinster or widow, many tales also speak of the married witch. An early modern wife, required to submit to her husband in all ways, assuredly signified her unwillingness to fulfill her conjugal duty when she refused his sexual advances. Assuming that the contrary wife was, in fact, a double, makes for a facile explanation of the frigid, unsatisfying (and/or unsatisfied), wife. Of course, a good and innocent woman would not betray her husband

in such a way; she must, then, be allied with the Devil. One of the earlier sources describing witches that was still believed, The “Canon Episcopi” of the fourth century, describes those

...wicked women, perverted by the Devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves, in the hours of the night, to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of their mistress...and to be summoned to her service on certain nights (Kors and Peters 1972, 29).

The Sabbat: Dancing, Feasting, Fornicating, and the Pact

Flying was most closely associated with the witches’ Sabbat, wherein “witches worshiped the Devil as their God, in large nocturnal assemblies to which they often flew” (Levack 1995, 8). Participating in obscene dances, gorging herself on tidbits served at grotesque banquets, she finished off the party by copulating with anyone and everyone present, including the Devil and his minions.

Known first as “synagogues,” these “sacrilegious and orgiastic gatherings” later became identified as Sabbats. Ordinary Sabbats were small local affairs, held usually on Fridays for the witches of a given neighborhood. The ecumenical Sabbats were held with great pomp and circumstance three or four times a year and attended by witches from all areas (Cohn 1975, 100-101). Coven members held Sabbats for three purposes: general business meetings, religious ceremonies of worship, and feasts. Coven leaders who made the major decisions of the group did so at smaller meetings called Esbats. Only the leaders attended these and the rank-and-file did not participate (Boyd 1969, 68). The majority of night flying occurred for the purpose of attending those witchly gatherings described by Remy as

...monstrous assemblies of the witches...their banquetings, dancings, charms and spells, their journeyings through the air, the horrid practices of their carnal relations with the Demon, their frequent transmutations into other shapes and forms, and all the crimes and blasphemies with which it is well-known that their lives are polluted and utterly defiled (Remy 1974, ix).

The witches' Sabbat became a projection by those in a position of authority, states Clark, of a topsy-turvy world where power is quite literally in the hands of women (Clark, J. 1991, 129).

The Sabbat Dance

One major Sabbat activity was dancing. Dancing, considered the cause of unnatural carnal impulses, symbolized sexuality in the depictions of the Sabbat. Early modern demonologists such as Kramer and Sprenger, and Bodin, describe the participants as being most often naked. Twentieth-century author, Jonathan Clark, furthers the descriptions by stating that they usually turned their backs, both to avoid recognizing one another and to "heighten the sexual experience by rubbing up against each other's buttocks" (Clark, J. 1991, 124).

The participants performed the Sabbat dances in a ring, facing outwards around a central witch "standing bent over with a candle stuck in her anus for illumination" (Cohn 1975, 60). Remy speculates that, aside from the need for anonymity, the explanation for their backward positions lies in their naturally contrary natures. Witches always do everything in a "ridiculous or unseemly manner." Anything they do, such as holding their hands out in supplication, palms facing downward instead of up, is done in an opposite manner from that of good Christians. Believed almost universally to be a "begetter of sin among men," an interest in or passion for dancing led to "luxury and vice or to fanatical frenzies and madness" (Remy 1974, 61).

What role did dancing play in the lives of witches and their persecutors? Most accounts of the Sabbats agree in their descriptions of dancing as lewd and obscene.

Bodin describes the dancing as including the raising of hands and brooms high into the air to “testify and give a sure witness of gladness and that willingly they serve and worship the Devil and also to mimic worship which is due God.” Witches’ dances, he continues, “make men frenzied and women abort so that besides the insolent and lewd movements, the dance is a curse in that a countless number of murders and abortions result from it. This is a matter of the highest consequence for a state” (Bodin 1979, 120).

Many accounts of Sabbats witnessed mention dancing naked. Is the lewdness ascribed to the activity of dancing itself or to the nudity of the dancer or both? It is true that dancing, by the very looseness of its movement, could be seen as calling undue attention to the body; possibly the explanation for the rigidity of the upper-class dances such as the minuet. Those dances tended to be very formal, stiff and stylized; little more in some cases than ritualized walking. Such dances did not especially draw attention to the physical aspect of the self, nor to its moving parts. Perhaps the dances of the common folk (who constituted a large number of the tribe of witches), entailed a more natural and fluid way of moving, displaying a grace and a lack of self-awareness also seen in animals. Endowing dancing with such an animalistic attribute would most certainly have been offensive to those persons who tried to concentrate on spiritual matters, or to those who perceived such physical looseness as a return to a more fearful and primal time.

The witches danced always in a circle, to the left, and received no pleasure, “only labor and fatigue and the greatest toil” (Marshall 1995, 67). We see again the concept of the destruction of order. Not only were the witches’ activities a reversal of the norms of

societal behaviour, but some of those normally pleasurable activities produced, contrarily, negative results. This kind of perverse effect is also seen in the highpoint of the Sabbat, the banquet.

The Sabbat Banquet and Cannibalism

Sabbat feasts left much to be desired. Food items included dishes made from the flesh of dead animals and from other substances that people considered garbage. Possible entrees at a Sabbat banquet could include a cat, a black kid, a dunghill-cock, along with other items not usually considered fit for human consumption. On occasion, the banquet table even offered human flesh (Remy 1974, 58-59).

Whether the menu included human flesh or no, the Sabbat banquets “in no way satisfied their [the witches’] hunger or thirst, but that their appetite for food and drink remained just as great after they had eaten as before” (Remy 1974, 59). In other words, analogous to their dancing, their sin brought them no pleasure, yet they persisted in their actions—why? Did early modern people believe that these witches, in their attachment to primitive Nature, had lost the intelligence of civilized humanity, thus reverting to a more savage history? Logically, human beings learn through experience and reason not to repeat mistakes. Does the witch breed’s inability or unwillingness to do so remove them to a past of unreasoning barbarity, where animal behaviour reigns?

Certain animals consume their own kind. Cannibalism was one of the most horrific behaviours in which witches indulged, displaying the “gluttony of pigs who devour their own brood” (Cohn 1975, 65). Common belief was that some witches, turning their backs on human decency and the instinct of the preservation of the species, made it a practice to devour infant children. According to the Malleus Maleficarum, the

inhabitants of a certain locality summoned an inquisitor to investigate a certain situation. It seemed that a local citizen had one night stumbled across a “congress of women,” most likely a Sabbat gathering. The individual, so the story went, had watched the witchly gathering “kill his own child, drink its blood and devour it” (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 66).

Grien’s portrait of a “Witches Sabbath,” (Figure 8, pictured in Chapter Two), depicts the revel occurring amidst a scattering of animal and human bones (Weigert 1995, 24). Even in this century, in many areas of the world, cultures exist such as the Zande, the Trobriand Islanders, and the Gimi of the New Guinea Highlands, who believe witches eat the bodies of other human beings (Lehmann and Myers 1993, 222-23). One motive for this cannibalism is that the consumption of another human being allows the devourer to assimilate the deceased person’s strengths and abilities. It seems likely, however, that in the case of witches, the purpose of cannibalism was not to assimilate, but to destroy.

Witches ate human flesh, especially of small children and infants, and drank their blood. “It is a vile belief the Devil puts into the hearts of men in order to make them kill and devour each other, and destroy the human race” (Bodin 1979, 207). The Devil and his witches wished nothing more than the total destruction of humanity’s hardwon order and uniformity.

Witches, according to magical lore, believed they could use children to accomplish great magic. These witches, most frequently during the course of the Sabbat celebration, “receive children, offer them to the Devil, and immediately put them to death before they have been presented to God, either after birth or in the womb” (Bodin

1979, 138). Purported to be rich in supernatural power, the flesh of infants was utilized as an ingredient in magical concoctions. Used to murder others, such a formula also empowered a captured witch to remain mute though tortured, and, blended in a salve and applied to the witch's body, enabled her to fly (Cohn 1975, 100).

Most accounts of infant sacrifice or murder contain the descriptor “unbaptised,” or “not yet consecrated to God.” Was this unbaptised state a question of usefulness or of power? Did this need for an unbaptised infant exist because a child already consecrated to God was protected or immune in some way from the attentions of the witch? It would seem that claiming a soul already promised to God would be a coup for Lucifer. Alternatively, was this unbaptised state necessary because the unchristened infant possessed inherent qualities not available in one who had been baptised? If the evil power of the witch could not overcome the protection bestowed upon a baptised infant, why would that protection not extend to baptised adults?

Robert Muchembled, tying the practice of cannibalism to an ancient pagan belief system, argues that “within traditional quasi-pagan peasant culture, the body enjoyed high status as a potent instrument,” and that its parts and products—blood, feces, the penis and the womb—possessed magical powers (Porter 1991, 218). A baker in Paris supposedly baked pies incorporating the flesh of people who had been hanged. He was burned and his house razed to the ground (Bodin 1979, 207).

Pieces of a person's body, living or otherwise, such as nails, hair, and cauls were used to protect from harm, bring good luck (or bad), and aid in magical transformations of objects, people, and animals. Discarded or stolen pieces of a body (as well as clothing imbued with the owner's aura) could be used to dominate that individual. Seldom used

alone, but rather in tandem with prayers, spells and chants, these pieces could cause inordinate and irreparable harm (Roper 1994, 74). The evocation of pain could intensify a given spell and such spells could bring harm to the body of the victim. The vitality of the physical body was also the force that propelled riot and orgiastic excess and it could be used for magical purposes in several different ways.

The Sabbat Pact and After-Dinner Entertainment

In many witchcraft trial records and demonologies, there are at least three behaviours that describe the witch. Cannibalism, promiscuity, and incestuous orgies seem to go hand-in-hand and each was a major part of the Sabbat assemblies. Female witches consumed human flesh, were licentious and sexually perverted in their attachments to orgies, bestial, incestuous, and otherwise. Nowhere was her sexual perversion more apparent than in the tales of Sabbat activities.

Presiding over the Sabbat festivities, Lucifer appeared in the

shape of a monstrous being, half man and half goat; a hideous black man with enormous horns, goat's beard and goat's legs, sometimes also with bird's claws instead of hands and feet. Light streamed from his horns and flames spouted from his huge eyes. His voice harsh and terrible to hear and his expression one of immense gloom (Cohn 1975, 101).

During or after the feasting and dancing, a main component of the Sabbat ensued: the acceptance into the fold of the novice witch. This compact between a witch and her Master, states early modern demonologist, Richard Bovet, was "managed like the filthy intrigues betwixt a Fornicator and his strumpet, in secret" (Bovet 1975, 281). The pact between witch and Lucifer allowed the witch to receive powers and support in return for rejecting God and His church. The Devil further required his witches to do his will in causing harm and hurt wherever possible, and to do his bidding when directed. The

novitiate was introduced to Satan, who, as discussed earlier, was usually in the form of an imperfect man or animal, often a black cat (Lea 1957, 273). The ceremony concluded with the ritual kissing of the hindparts of the Devil by the new witch. The newly-admitted member was then “assigned to himself a devil called Magistellus or Little Master, with whom he or she retires aside for carnal satisfaction.”

The Magistellus assumed the shape of a woman if the newly-initiated was a man, and the form of a human male, a satyr, or a buck-goat if a woman” (Sinistrari 1974, 11). Interestingly, a male witch seems to have always been given a demon in the shape of a woman. Research has not yet yielded any stories of male witches fornicating with goats or other animals, though such partnerings abound for the female witch. Afterward, Satan, if he so chose, copulated with every man, woman, and child present (Cohn 1975, 102).

While sexual intercourse at the Sabbat was a ritual part of the festivity, it also occurred for strictly recreational purposes. Such sexual encounters could be consummated with other demons or imps, with any and all members of the nocturnal gathering, or with Lucifer himself in animal form, the most common shape being that of the he-goat.

In addition, Bodin states that witches, wickedly lascivious, were also incestuous from earliest times, “for Satan gives them to understand that there was never a perfect sorcerer or enchanter who was not born from father and daughter or mother and son” (Bodin 1979, 206). Witches, with the powers given them by Satan, were capable of directing human beings into one of the most forbidden of behaviours: incest. Through the desecration of this inviolate and seemingly inherent prohibition, the Devil and his women hoped to achieve their goal of the destruction of humanity.

Many works of art by renowned artists of the time depict the sexual perversions and overindulgences of the witch's coven—the orgies at which witches enjoyed the attentions of Satan, his demons (in whatever form), and each other. The sexual depravity of the witch accompanies the concepts of monsters and night ghosts that “might seem terrifying, but were merely the inevitable result of abnormal, immoral sexuality” (Williams 1995, 60).

Though some believed such copulations took place only in the mind, others such as Sinistrari believed that an actual physical act occurred. Witches, they believed, were truly present in body at Sabbats and had “actual carnal and corporeal connection” with a demon (Sinistrari 1974, 7). Hans Baldung Grien's “Die Hexe,” depicts a woman erotically engaged with the Devil, a “dragon-like monster whose tongue extends to the woman's privates” (Clark, J. 1991, 122).

Conclusion

The witch, via her wanton sexuality and her supernatural power to maim and murder, destroyed order. Through her ability to pervert the sexual activities of her victims by rendering them impotent, barren, or attracted to forbidden partners, she created chaos. Her devilish sexual nature broke down societal norms and created havoc wherever she practiced her art.

The efforts of the witch were all aimed at accomplishing Lucifer's primary goal, that of undermining God's authority and plan for humankind. With her corrupt powers, she attempted to complete the destruction of humanity by overturning the hierarchical order of early modern Europe in every way imaginable. She made pacts with Satan and attended Sabbats to worship him, to receive his instructions and carry them out, and to

revel with her sister witches and their demons.

She dispatched hailstorms to destroy crops in the field, she sterilized the land to prevent fruitful agriculture, she killed or otherwise harmed livestock, she poisoned her victims, both for murderous purposes and also to instill fear and confusion among the populace. She injured and murdered her victims and frequently ate them, particularly children.

One of the witch's most hurtful practices was her habit of destroying the sanctified relationship of the family. With spells that transformed the hearts and souls of her victims, she could compel adulterous behaviour and destroy marriages. She could transpose the face of the anti-mother and anti-wife upon a previously God-fearing and upright woman and, through her perverted and lawless sexuality, unleash devastation upon an orderly society.

Contemporary beliefs regarding the body included such concepts that required a kind of closing-in of self. Rules of civilized behaviour dictated a concealment of necessary bodily functions and even elimination of practices that might emphasize the physical nature of humanity. Thus, the witch who freely and frequently indulged in carnal relationships with many different partners was in direct defiance of the rules of civilité. Her unbridled and uninhibited lust placed her solidly and steadfastly on the side of those unpleasant and obscene excesses of nature. It is no wonder that many methods of torture incorporated sexuality in one way or another, such as the utilization of a "ram, possessing an upward curving edge that came to a point, upon which the woman would be so placed that she, through her own body weight, the edge deeper and deeper into the genitals cut" (Clark, J. 1991, 123).

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Early modern European concepts of the witch presented her as firmly entrenched within the corporeal nature of human life. Her supposed sexual exploits, physical capabilities, her power to inflict pain and suffering, and even her very appearance isolated her from her fellow humans, placing her outside the bounds of human socialization.

For hundreds of years prior to 1550, folk healers, diviners and “wise women” were useful, sought-after members of society (Barstow 1994, 9). Why, after a long history of wary acceptance of and respect for these “wise women,” or witches, did a sudden intensification of fear and hate, leading to persecution and death for many thousands, occur? There are many possible explanations, but no single theory seems to completely answer the question. One possible factor could very well be found in the contemporary beliefs regarding the biology of the body; its composition, abilities and functions. Such beliefs, stemming from long-held scientific and religious teachings, combined with the rise of manners and proper behaviour via the rules of civic organization through State formation, could have created a lethal social atmosphere. That atmosphere, possibly combined with other factors not touched upon here, could have helped create the arena of fear and loathing that allowed for the existence of the European witchcraze.

In this study, I have attempted to explain and describe the early modern European beliefs regarding the physical appearances, characteristics, abilities and behaviours of the witch. Tying those beliefs to the tenets of spirituality versus physicality, impacted by the

escalation of rigid social regulations and the State also discussed here, I found what I believe to be an environment of fear—fear of difference, of change, of nonconformity—allowing for the hatred, persecution and murder of anyone who exhibited those elements; such a person was very often branded a witch.

Religious teachings regarding humanity had, for hundreds of years, stressed the importance of the soul, devaluing the physical body. Within the religious, moral and social value systems of traditional European culture, the body was assigned a subordinate position and “being human meant being an embodied mind” (Porter 1991, 212), de-emphasis on the body. Those conceptions of soul versus body incorporated beliefs regarding the foulness of the physical. Bodies were corrupt, constructed from vile materials, but most importantly, they were material and therefore unlike God. In the attempt to be more like the Heavenly Father, human beings found it necessary to stress the spiritual aspects of their characters and to downplay the material body and its functions. Witches did neither.

How people perceived their somatic envelopes and the degree to which they understood their bodies’ composition and its capabilities is important, I believe, in comprehending the illogic of witchcraft beliefs of the time. Assertions such as those which state that women could turn into men or that breast milk could transmute to blood, allowed for the existence of the mind-set of those who could then believe that such happenings were brought about deliberately by the witch.

In the early modern belief system, witchcraft was part of both the theological and secular systems. Man’s law was based on spiritual law, itself founded on God’s plan of an ordered society. That order was being accomplished through increasing governmental

control through State formation. Anything that disrupted that orderliness was perceived as sinful, crimes against not only humanity, but God, Himself. Satan's tool, the witch, created chaos through her manipulation of the physical, which ultimately could destroy the soul.

In a setting where spiritual purity was to be admired and sought, and physicality hidden and scorned as much as possible, the witch was perceived as a freakish being who refused to conform. Witches, by their behaviour and very appearance, flouted convention and ignored the new societal demands for propriety and good manners displayed by the concealment of the body and suppression of its gross physical functions.

Norbert Elias writes on the process of regulating behaviour, commenting on the manner in which an individual's deportment and feelings slowly changed in the direction of a gradual mannerly sophistication. He found that a very specific change in feelings of shame and delicacy, resulting in greater attempts to control and conceal the body, played a large role in that process (Elias 1978, xii-xiii). In the early modern belief structure, the witch symbolized the loss of societal control of and authority over the body. The witch was doubly dangerous; not only was she herself out of control via her flaunting of proper behaviour and appearance, but her actions against others, housewives in particular, caused their social and cultural lives to fall (Purkiss 1995, 424).

Witches were enemies of the State, of the rules of order. Michel Foucault has written comprehensively on the body. His findings indicated that the body constituted an "exhibition site" where State power was acted out. Punishment of the deviant members of society, the socially marginal, indicated the "centrality of body control in the enhancement of State power (Stearns 1994, 81). In other words, the state system required

uniformity from its citizens in order to function properly and control of the body provided a large part of that uniformity. Witches, in their perceived attachment to the physical and their goal of overturning societal and godly rule were anathema.

During this time of upheaval, unrest, unease and fear, people clung ever more tenaciously to their self-imposed abstract world of order. Behaviour outside the norm was dangerous to that order and a person who caused problems could very well be labeled witch and cast out. At the same time, when bad things happened, people needed a scapegoat—a witch to blame for the ills of humankind, one whose behaviour or appearance signified a reversion from the orderliness of civilization to the chaos of nature. Witches could represent society's innermost fears and desires. Psychology tells us that a fantasy is a story in which people both express and relieve their unconscious and sometimes their conscious fears, conflicts and anxieties (Purkiss 1995, 411). The witch's body could be a sort of stand-in for the punishment of those fears and anxieties. When people experienced this kind of guilt, they naturally sought to relieve it in any way possible. Transferring that guilt to the witch—punishing her body—very often could relieve the anxieties of the populace (Levack 1995, 107). Thus the fantasy of witchcraft is a fine example of how the fears of early modern Europeans could be projected onto a scapegoat.

Roper states that we need to understand witchcraft accusations and confessions as “mental productions with an organization that is in itself significant.” We need to analyze the themes of the early modern European witch hunts to tell us, not only about the “genealogy of magical beliefs, but about the conflicts and fears of the actors” (Roper 1994, 202). Dread of one's own body, of succumbing to its temptations, loathing of its

physical processes was one such fear, one such cause of apprehension and dissension.

There have been many studies that attempt to unearth the source of the early modern European witch hunts. While no single explanation satisfactorily determines the witchcraze's origins, one theory could be the way the physical body was viewed at that time and place. It is important to note the "otherness" of early modern society in Europe, putting that society's thoughts, beliefs and actions into the context of their world, and not ours. Moral categories, what was "natural" and what was supernatural, and conceptions regarding the body were all dissimilar in many ways to modern thinking. Physicality, perceived as bestial and disgusting, was the antithesis of the orderliness of civilization. Coupled with the religious beliefs of the time, and fueled by the rise of an increasingly rigid state system, those concepts of the body and its secondary status to the soul, could very well have provoked the attitudes leading to the purgings that occurred in Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1. Pride and the Demon. Fifteenth-Sixteenth century woodcut by Albrecht Dürer illustrating "The Ship of Fools," by Sebastian Brandt, a popular compendium of human follies. (Reprinted from Kors and Peters, 1972).



Figure 2. Fallen Human Nature and Observant Demons. One of Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts, expressing the late medieval sense of woman's particular proneness to temptation and sin. (Reprinted from Kors and

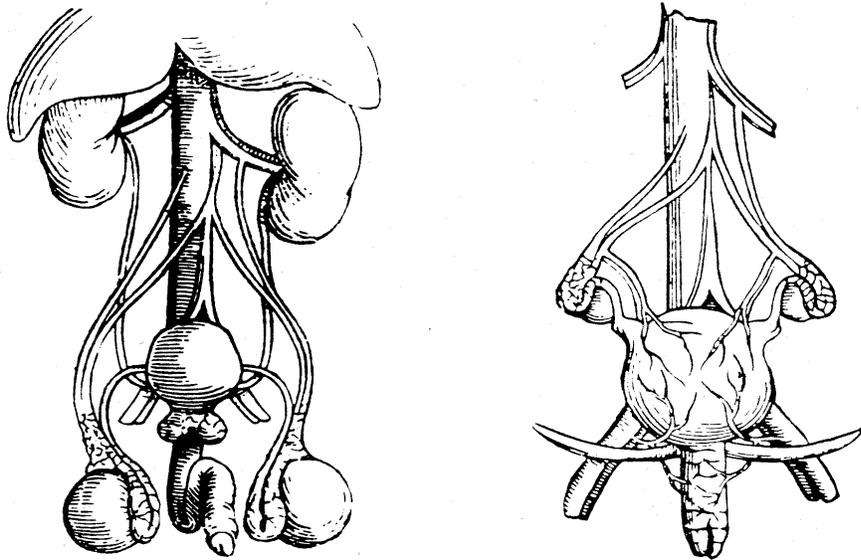


Figure 3. Andreas Vesalius, sixteenth century male and female reproductive organs, "Tabulae Sex," from "The Anatomical Drawings of Andreas Vesalius." (Reprinted from Gallagher and Laqueur, 1987).

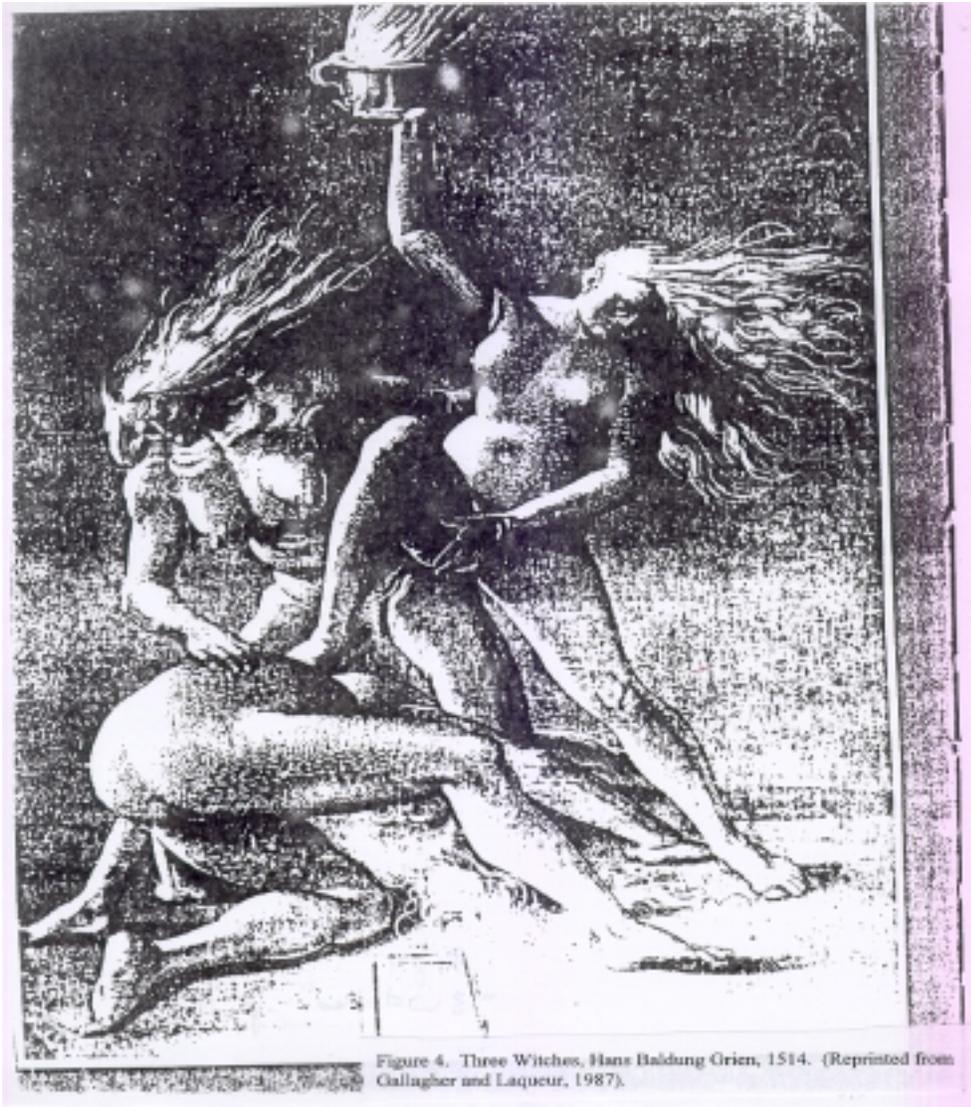


Figure 4. Three Witches, Hans Baldung Grien, 1514. (Reprinted from Gallagher and Laqueur, 1987).



Figure 5. Pretty Teacher, Francisco de Goya, eighteenth century example of popular imagery that fueled negative public opinion toward women throughout the witchcraze. (Reprinted from Barstow, 1994).



Figure 6. Bewitched Groom, Hans Baldung Grien, 1544. (Reprinted from Hoak in Levack, 1992).



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Figure 7. Urs Graf, Female Witches Preparing for Flight, 1514. Copy after Hans Baldung Grien. (Reprinted from Weigert, 1995).

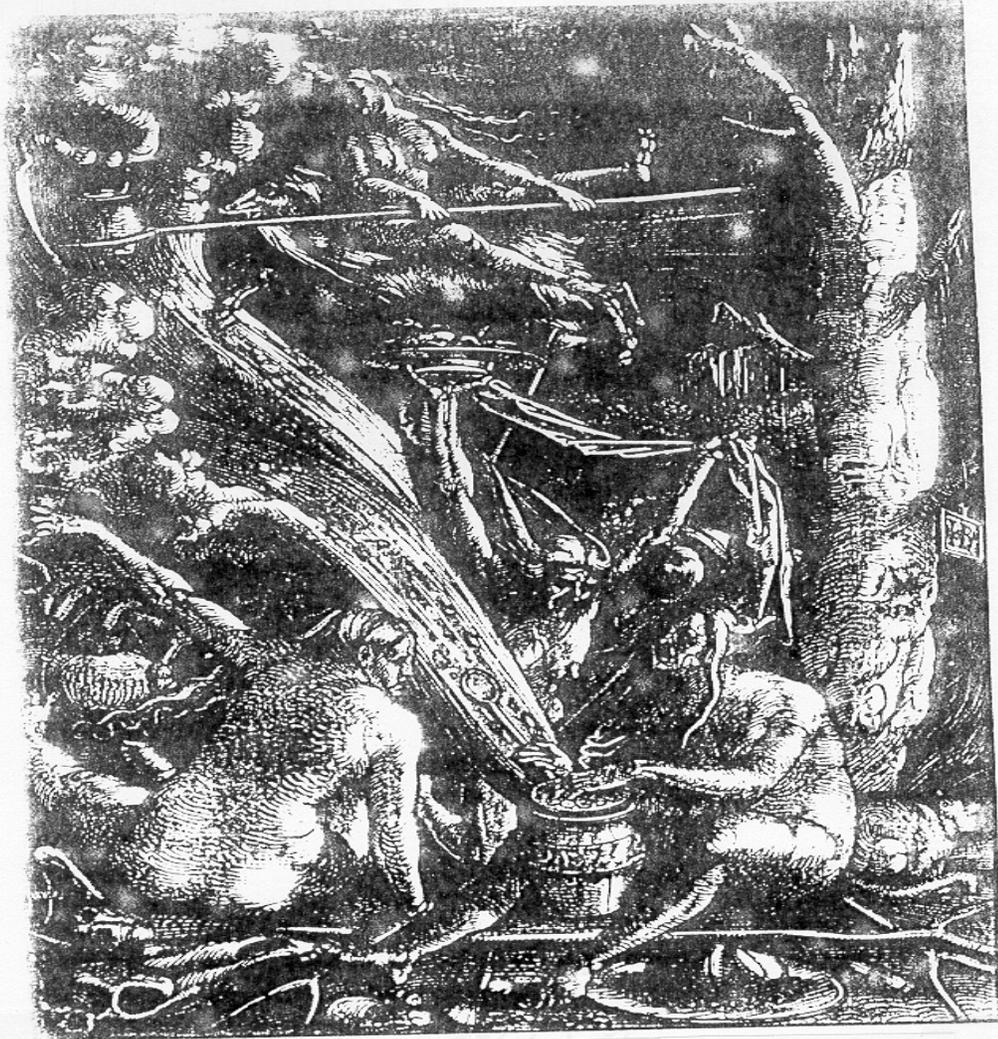


Figure 8. The Witches' Sabbath, Hans Baldung Grien, 1510. (Reprinted from Weigert, 1995).



Figure 9. Weather Witches, Hans Baldung Grien, sixteenth century.
(Reprinted from Davidson in Levack, 1992).



Figure 10. The Witch, engraving by Albrecht Dürer, about 1500.
(Reprinted from Davidson in Levack, 1992).

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