

# The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period

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One day in the early decades of the seventeenth century, a farmhand and a shepherd in Rheden, a village north-east of Arnhem in the Dutch province of Gelderland, performed divination by sieve and shears. They let their contraption turn around while naming the women of Rheden one by one by their name and nickname. Whoever was named when the sieve turned and came to a full stop was proven to be able to bewitch. In this way they discovered that every woman in the village qualified as a witch, with the exception of three. This caused quite a stir and the two men were heavily fined.<sup>1</sup>

This brief event has come down to us in an account of fines, which is not the most usual source for studying early modern witchcraft. Together with witnesses' depositions, the reports of trials against cunning folk and slander cases, entries of fines for slandering nevertheless contain a wealth of information that is vital for an understanding of the topic, especially its gendering. The introductory example stems from one province of the Republic of the United Netherlands. It is not atypical and other more or less similar cases can be found all over Europe right into the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> What is worth pointing out is that the incident occurred at a time when witch burnings had ceased in the Netherlands, while elsewhere, in nearby German lands and in the Spanish Netherlands, the pyres were still

burning. But the absence of criminal prosecutions of maleficent witches in the Republic does not by itself explain the existence of slander fines and suits; by slander trials people had in fact attempted to clear their name and to regain their honour right through the period of the prosecutions. There existed thus an underlying culture of witchcraft accusations whose importance has been seriously underestimated.

The example represents only one of a number of social constellations in which witchcraft accusations could occur. Nevertheless it shows the normal reaction to bewitchments. To counteract a witchcraft spell, sufferers had to find a human cause and the turning of the sieve and the shears was one of the trusted ways to do so.<sup>3</sup> Most of the time the cause turned out to be female. When witch-doctors were consulted as experts (they could be men as well as women), they may have mentioned 'evil folk' in general, but in practice they looked for women and any woman could qualify. The main question I will try to answer in this paper is, why were women singled out as the perpetrators of bewitchments, both in everyday life and in criminal trials? I do not pretend to provide the final solution and can only contribute some considerations towards it. In the search for answers, I will assess recent witchcraft literature critically and refer to a few other archival examples from the Netherlands.

The Dutch case is of specific interest for a general discussion about witchcraft and gender not because it is exceptional or because it could be regarded as an 'anomaly',<sup>4</sup> but rather because it fits neatly into the European patterns. Robin Briggs has recently pointed to the reluctance of 'many writers' to consider non-English material, which in his view has 'encouraged an error of perspective' in the question of the numerical relation between witches and women. These writers assume, according to Briggs, that the situation in England and New England, with its 'overwhelming predominance of female suspects' and its 'low rates of persecution', was typical for the whole of Europe and the colonised parts of America, whereas the specific quantitative combination of women and trials was only to be found in countries like Hungary, Denmark and England.<sup>5</sup> Although ostensibly underlining the difference between the central and the peripheral areas of witch persecution, Briggs also indicates a common pattern that seems to apply to the Netherlands. Olwen Hufton has observed the same kind of similarity between England and the Netherlands, for instance in respect of the lack of torture in both countries. This should have resulted in 'a simpler, more prosaic witch; one who could not fly or

mysteriously transport herself to a hidden place for a coven or witches' sabbath'.<sup>6</sup> If one follows Christina Lerner, however, 'Holland' should be classified alongside Sweden, the Basque country and New England because of its 'serious isolated outbreaks'.<sup>7</sup> It shows that, regardless of whose portrayal most matches the past as we know it, 'the Dutch variant' (as Gijswijt-Hofstra termed it)<sup>8</sup> was not uncommon and is relevant to a debate with a much wider geographical scope. But before we can turn to more Dutch witchcraft material, we have to consider the theoretical implications of the gendering of witchcraft.

'Witchcraft was not sex-specific but it was sex-related', according to a much quoted statement by Christina Lerner.<sup>9</sup> Since it is problematic in several ways, this can serve as a useful starting point for a discussion about witchcraft and gender.<sup>10</sup> To summarise: there are some inconsistencies in Lerner's thesis and her conclusions are often quoted out of context. Both problems have contributed to an (intentional) misunderstanding between (predominantly male) witchcraft scholars and feminist witchcraft theorists, with the result that a feminist approach has not been sufficiently integrated into witchcraft research. The central aim of this research is (or at least should be) to discover how the overall male hegemony<sup>11</sup> and subsequently the subordination of women in European and North American society was (and sometimes still is) articulated through witchcraft discourse. I will argue that this is less a matter of evidence than of interpretation. This is not to advocate writing history without archival substantiation. Feminist witchcraft theory would certainly profit from showing more awareness of the developments and failures in the empirical dimension of witchcraft research. But it is necessary to acknowledge the almost complete absence of any connection between arguments and evidence on both sides of the debate on women and witches. While the historical events staged in this debate may be irrefutable (discounting sheer nonsense, of course) and while interpretive positions may be of great value, together they often do not add up.

By outlining my argument in terms of an opposition between male research and female thinking I am taking an extreme position. Especially in the context of the recent upsurge in serious archival research by women witchcraft scholars,<sup>12</sup> the opposition is as much a distortion of the whole field of historical witchcraft studies as, for instance, the view that men are more interested in the judicial aspects of witch trials and their links to the economy and state formation, whereas women

pay more attention to socially sympathetic micro-history. Larner's work is one of those instances that contradict the latter divide. The explanation for this could be simple, however. As some feminists would claim, she may have been too much influenced by 'androcentric methods of analysis'.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding these reservations, I want to maintain the opposition, since the theoretical feminist approach is the most marked distinction between male and female witchcraft researchers.

At the end of her book, after having contemplated the 'sex-specific' elements of the trials, Larner found the differences between witch hunting and women hunting more significant than their similarities; 'the link is indirect and the two cannot be completely identified'.<sup>14</sup> Since the notion of women hunting is rather ahistorical (no society hunted women *per se*), the stress on witch-hunts as witch hunts seems to be reasonable and avoids the hodiecentrism that lurks so much in present-day feminist writing. For the equation of witch hunting with women hunting ultimately negates witchcraft; it originated from the disbelief in witchcraft. If witchcraft was a nonexistent crime and witch trials the 'massive killing of innocent people',<sup>15</sup> the argument goes, then the reasons for accusations and prosecutions must lie elsewhere, preferably in the gender of the people so falsely suspected. If, on the other hand, it is accepted that witchcraft was a reality for those involved, then gender can easily become a tautology. Although the question 'Is witch hunting woman hunting?' seems an obvious one to ask, by separating gender from crime it confuses rather than clarifies understanding.

Behind Larner's differentiation lies another one between the witch stereotype and witch 'hunting'. While she found the stereotype defined by femaleness, she considered the practice of criminal prosecution to be concentrated on witches and not on women. Thus the latter was only 'sex-related'. As she phrased it herself: 'Witches were hunted in the first place as witches'. This contrast between actual witches and stereotypical women is artificial. The power of stereotypes, witch stereotypes included, lies chiefly in their application. As part of people's repertoires they only make sense when they are made manifest, when they are situated in particular circumstances. In spite of all the stress Larner put on the indigenous 'rationality' of witchcraft, at this particular point she failed to recognise the priority of praxis. In Marianne Hester's words: 'What Larner does not allow for, however, is the material implication of such beliefs'.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore essential to look at the production of historical witches and to take

into account the different types of settings in which women (and men) were turned into witches.

If the witch–woman opposition is recognised as a historian’s construct, it can subsequently be abandoned. The alternative has also been offered by Lerner when she remarked that ‘all women are potential witches’. This line of thought seems much more fruitful to pursue although Lerner herself hesitated to follow it to its radical conclusion. The question why so many women were accused of witchcraft should thus be rephrased as a question: What transformed a woman from a potential into an actual witch, into ‘the stereotypical opposite of the good wife’?<sup>17</sup> As this opposition implied not merely bad wives, but irredeemable, anomalous women, the question should finally run as follows: When and how was a woman turned into her contrast, into a non-woman?

Feminist witchcraft theory provides an important part of the answer but it is often criticised for having neglected archival sources. Feminist historians are by no means missing from this chorus of disapproval.<sup>18</sup> ‘Much of this work has not relied on empirical evidence’, Olwen Hufton conceded.<sup>19</sup> This is particularly serious because it has provided the opponents with an excuse for ridiculing feminist theories or for ignoring gender issues altogether. It is indeed frustrating to read Anne Barstow referring to having ‘searched the European records’, when there is no indication that she ever visited an archive.<sup>20</sup> It is also true that Hester’s bold assertions are only based on published source material. Diane Purkiss, to mention another example, even scorns serial research.<sup>21</sup> And there is also the predicament that none of the three authors is a historian in the first place. But, I would argue, lack of primary research is only half the story. After all, Merry Wiesner as well as Olwen Hufton, both historians of considerable reputation, based their overviews also on selected secondary material, neglecting, for instance, German publications in the process. The reception of Lerner’s work, to which I will return below, shows that historical evidence mainly served to illustrate pre-ordained positions anyhow. As a reviewer remarked about Hester’s book: it ‘will offend male historians with its seemingly global attack on the “male supremacist society” and the “male sexuality”, which are seen as means of controlling women sexually in the interest of men’.<sup>22</sup> For some witchcraft researchers, to accept patriarchy in the past seems tantamount to accepting that it continues today. Would that imperil their own identity?

Most of the adversaries of feminist witchcraft theory fail to appreciate that its predicaments are related to the reception of academic work and that they are in fact criticising their predecessors. Feminists have often adapted popularised relicts of former male witchcraft research uncritically. Especially male demonologists like the alleged authors of the *Malleus Malificarum* (it was solely Kramer's work) rank high in feminist quoting, which also means that Kramer's way of thinking was copied inadvertently.<sup>23</sup> The notion of the witch as victim is directly derived from the nineteenth-century view.<sup>24</sup> Equally the images of witches as midwives, healers, adherents of pre-Christian cults, or secret revolutionaries can all be located in male witchcraft historiography before having been taken up by feminists. In this sense, the theorists looked backwards instead of setting out directives for new and creative approaches. A revealing example is to be found in the reactions to Clarke Garret's article in *Signs*, in which he introduced the anthropological concept of 'feminine space' in witchcraft studies. In this way he followed Thomas and Macfarlane by shifting the focus from witch hunts to witchcraft.<sup>25</sup> One of Garret's critics, Claudia Honegger, countered that the 'notion of feminine space cannot help us to distinguish between the fourteenth century, when there were almost no witch persecutions, and the end of the sixteenth century, when the craze was reaching its climax'. Like historians before the anthropological turn, she was mainly interested in the prosecutions, 'the massacre of thousands and thousands of women' and 'the oppression of nature'. The 'fears and fantasies of rural populations were not the main source of the phenomenon', she assured, repeating Norman Cohn.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, the powers of church and state, even when not overestimated, are insufficient to account for the patchy temporal and geographical distribution of the witch trials. Patriarchal pressure in general presupposes a widespread and almost unchanging phenomenon. While economic trends and climatological influences may explain some of the occurrence of the trials in time,<sup>27</sup> and while judicial organisations and political struggles may clarify some of the differences between regions and countries, the inference that patriarchy is thus superfluous in any explanation is too far-fetched. Witchcraft accusations on the local level, on the other hand, do display a more or less continuous presence and can therefore furnish a clearer mechanism through which male authority manifested itself. Though in some areas men were also at risk to be socially constructed as

witches, as I will show, their witchcraft was usually of a different, less malevolent kind and hardly susceptible to prosecution.

The 'heartland of the witchcraze' is to be found in Germany and adjacent French regions such as the Duchy of Lorraine.<sup>28</sup> Anglo-Saxon writers who ignore this do so at their peril, particularly when they also miss out on important recent advances in continental witchcraft research. North Americans, in addition, can be at a loss with European regionalism. But the argument that the neglect of continental research has resulted in an underrepresentation of male witches is, in my opinion, debatable. The trial statistics have been freely available, if not through Larner's writings then through other authors.<sup>29</sup> Pointing to continental cases in which men constituted twenty per cent or more of the condemned merely serves as an excuse to ignore gender issues, those concerning male witch-stereotypes as well. It also reveals more a wish to refute the feminist position than a new understanding of past meanings and motives. Thus it should rather be asked why the making of the male witch is as neglected as his female counterpart.<sup>30</sup> One possible answer is that women historians spent more energy on empathising with neglected women of the past than on the femininity or masculinity of these women. If this is the case, it suffices to state that the 'vast majority' of those prosecuted as witches were women.<sup>31</sup> Apparently matters of quantity are still persuasive on the political agenda.

Trial statistics are first and foremost a means of rationalising an irrational phenomenon. As such they are only useful in the initial stages of a discussion, as a preliminary mediation between historical understanding and present-day presentation. To focus on them exclusively can easily lead to a neglect of more relevant features. As Carol Karlsen remarked about New England: 'Statistics can establish the extent to which New Englanders considered witchcraft the special province of women, but they cannot convey the vindictiveness that characterized the treatment of female suspects'.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, they obscure issues of contested gender attributes. Counting women is misleading precisely because they were accused of behaving as non-women, of failing to adhere to the social norm of femininity.

Larner's 'neat distinction' (as Hufton labelled it)<sup>33</sup> between the 'sex specific' and 'sex related' interpretation of witchcraft prosecution has become popular among opponents of feminist views. Using the contrast as a starting point, some of them have reached questionable conclusions, as if they needed to steer clear from the obvious. Brian

Levack, for instance, remarked: 'There was nothing in the definition of a witch that excluded males'.<sup>34</sup> This supposes an improbable gender neutral frame that could be turned either way. In the same vein, the Dutch historian Pieter Spierenburg described the witch stereotype as a 'fatal spin-off' from the prosecutions which 'can not be explained by the changes in the male-female relationships'.<sup>35</sup> The statistical basis of Lerner's distinction is undoubtedly one of the reasons for her appeal to non-feminist writers. But more important, I would suggest, is that as a woman she seemingly expressed non-feminist arguments. Dividing your enemy is a proven strategy in warfare and Lerner has been instrumentalised by many male historians for their own ends. Consequently, she is quoted very selectively. For example, her statement 'women are feared as a source of disorder in patriarchal society' appears on the following page to her much quoted sentence above, yet it is rarely referred to. The same applies to her observation that 'witch-hunting *is* woman-hunting or at least it is the hunting of women who do not fulfil the male view of how women ought to conduct themselves'.<sup>36</sup>

The debate is also carried on at a qualitative level. Clearly stung by the feminist critique, several English witchcraft researchers have launched a counter-attack asserting that women were less the victims of male oppression than the perpetrators of witchcraft accusations since it was mainly women who blamed other women. The development of this kind of anti-feminist argument is clearly seen in the recent publications of Jim Sharpe. In a 1990 review of Lerner's *Witchcraft and Religion* he still ignored gender issues altogether.<sup>37</sup> A year later he described (rather unoriginally) witches as operating in a 'complex zone of female power', 'within the female domain', 'a female social context', 'female social space', or 'the female sphere'.<sup>38</sup> Having thus neglected male authority, he elaborated his argument a few years later by asserting 'a distinctive female contribution to the prosecution of witches', which would discourage an interpretation in terms of 'the oppression of women by a male-dominated legal system'. Sharpe is at his most extreme when he regards the incidence of women speaking up defiantly in court and cursing their executioner as a failure of male hegemony.<sup>39</sup> In his book, finally, Sharpe acknowledges the existence of 'a male-dominated society', of 'a social and cultural framework whose values may well ultimately have been patriarchal'. But he discards it in the same breath, as in his view the framework 'left ample room for women to interact, to argue, to come

to friction with each other, to develop and to follow their own social strategies'. Witchcraft accusations thus remain 'a struggle between women for the control of female social space'. When, as an afterthought, he remarks that most of the cunning folk (in their role as professional 'popular' accusers) were men and that there is thus the possibility (but not more than that) of a 'popular misogyny', he again portrays patriarchy as abundant.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to Sharpe, Clive Holmes took careful account of the contexts of women participating in the persecution of other women. He thus arrived at the likely conclusion that 'the machinery in which (female witnesses) became involved, often at the instigation of men, was created, controlled, and ultimately discarded by the magisterial and clerical élite'. But he remained ambiguous about the importance of 'gender' and 'misogyny' as 'key categories'.<sup>41</sup>

Larner had already offered an explanation for women's involvement in the accusation of other women. This was, she wrote, 'because women who conformed to the male image of them felt threatened by any identification with those who did not'.<sup>42</sup> In a slightly elaborated version, Anne Barstow echoed this: 'women ... sometimes try to outdo their oppressors in scorning persons perceived as outsiders, in hope of being accepted, or tolerated, themselves'.<sup>43</sup> Hufton perhaps approached the concept of domain the closest as she suggested that women 'in some cases saw the alleged witch as a poacher on their territory, threatening their precarious livelihood or taking an unfair share of the frail charitable or other pickings of the village'.<sup>44</sup> Lyndal Roper, concentrating on childbirth as an implicit female event, sought to understand the conflict between women as a social safety-valve of the individual psyche; the 'intolerable feelings' of the accusing woman were projected on to the witch in case of misfortune.<sup>45</sup> The deliberations and specifications of these authors, however, were hardly taken up in the discussion. Somewhat in accordance with Sharpe, Diane Purkiss denounced arguments which posited 'a simplistic opposition between patriarchy and femininity'.<sup>46</sup> For Elspeth Whitney, the author of a rather undifferentiated overview of English works on witch prosecution and gender, it is 'a commonplace of women's history that "patriarchy divides women," that is, patriarchy functions so as to encourage women to enforce patriarchal norms against other women in order to strengthen their own precarious positions in that order'.<sup>47</sup> Briggs merely thought the prevalence of patriarchal norms 'very hard to test'.<sup>48</sup> Of course he has

a point as far as it is not a matter of testing but of interpreting (how does one test the historian's explanations?). Extra evidence is hardly needed.

Self-accusation, as the next logical step from conflicts between women, is of course so blatantly produced by patriarchal constraints that Sharpe disregarded it totally. Yet extreme circumstances, void of even the meagre prospects open to early modern women, could lead to women naming themselves as a witch.<sup>49</sup> Since in most European legal systems self-accusation (called 'confession') was the only sure and acceptable evidence of the crime of witchcraft (here: a pact with the devil), all the other characteristics and findings being only indications, male force was applied to elicit it.<sup>50</sup> Some women, however, confessed voluntarily, using the demonological language provided to pass judgement on themselves as "bad" mothers, "bad" wives, and "bad" neighbours'.<sup>51</sup> Cynically speaking, torture was also one of the few occasions in which women exercised male power to implicate other people of witchcraft.<sup>52</sup> As in cases of possession, the naming of unlikely witches who did not correspond to the current stereotype contributed to distrust of the denunciations and thus to the end of the trials. This takes us back to the Dutch case.

Dutch witchcraft research suffers from a contradiction. As has often been noted, witchcraft prosecution was relatively lenient and came to an early end in the decades around 1600. Yet the percentage of women among the persecuted was extremely high, close to 100 per cent. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra has denied that this is a paradox: 'Would it not be plausible to suggest, that, given a belief in the possibility of bewitchments, those who were most concerned with these matters ran more risk of being suspected of witchcraft if anything went wrong?'<sup>53</sup> As this implies a preoccupation with witchcraft within the female domain, it does not really explain witch prosecutions and by its inconclusiveness this remark offers little incentive to engage in the problem of the gendering of witchcraft, still so sorely neglected by Dutch academics.<sup>54</sup>

The discrepancies in the presentations of Dutch witchcraft prosecution derive at least partly from the different emphases in Dutch witchcraft historiography. Confusion also arises from the changing political borders of the Netherlands. The best-known mass trial, for instance, occurred in Roermond in 1613, within an area that at the time was under Spanish rather than Dutch influence, which is why Dutch researchers tend to disregard it when considering matters of

intensity.<sup>55</sup> But even without Roermond, the witch trials in the northern Netherlands actually resemble those in the neighbouring continental countries much more than those across the North Sea and the Atlantic. In the Netherlands, witches were burned rather than hanged, familiars were absent and cases of possession were rare (and not always ascribed to witchcraft) – to name but the most striking differences with English trials. Furthermore, the geographical and temporal distribution of the trials constituted a seamless transition to what transpired on the other side of the borders with the southern Netherlands and the German lands.<sup>56</sup> Dutch courts may have stopped prosecuting witches before the next wave of trials hit the German bishoprics in the 1620s and 1630s, but other German regions like Bavaria and Bremen also experienced a sharp decline or even an end to the prosecutions one generation earlier.<sup>57</sup> Huge trials with over a hundred victims may not have transpired in the northern Netherlands, but in the sixteenth century the concept of the witch sabbath, with the accompanying mechanism of denunciations, elicited through torture, was certainly present. Dutch witches may not have flown to their sabbaths or even have preferred an individual pact with Satan, but neither was the full demonological image prevalent everywhere in Germany.<sup>58</sup> The Netherlands, one can conclude, provide most of the types of witches that were prevalent in Europe, regional particularities notwithstanding.

Why female witches turned up more in Dutch witchcraft prosecutions than, for instance, in some German trials is only one of many possible questions to do with gender. These questions concern the gender relations between accusers and accused as well as the gendered domains of bewitching and unwitching. Moreover, they are not restricted to the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when witches could end up at the stake, but extend to the present times. The advantage of working in a region with relatively few criminal witch trials is that it affords more opportunity to look at material concerning the manifestations of witchcraft rather than witch trials and thus to gain insight into witchcraft discourse at a village level that has hardly been infiltrated by demonological theories. This also brings the Dutch male witches into focus.

Among the handful of men who ended their lives as witches on the stake in the Netherlands was a criminal who had committed many a theft, had threatened arson and was also rumoured to be a werewolf. At his own request he underwent the water test. When he kept

floating (which only hinted at his guilt) this apparently convinced him to such an extent that he admitted to a flood of fantastic crimes.<sup>59</sup> This specific type of criminal cum male witch has also been unearthed in German lands. The comparison with Germany may help to explain the small number of men involved in Dutch witch trials. Whereas in Germany men could become implicated through the mechanism of denunciation in mass trials which had gone out of control,<sup>60</sup> the few trials in the northern Netherlands of a similar structure were invariably checked before they could yield many male suspects.

The contention that the existence of male witches, whatever the quantity, undermines the image of the witch as a female figure actually confuses the issue. Within a gendered society the idea of an ungendered witch was unimaginable. A witch was either male or female and a male witch stereotype will by its contrast have strengthened rather than weakened the female one. To comprehend this fully, we have to realise that men could be classified under the female stereotype and women under the male one. The first possibility has already been noticed in witchcraft research. Men were often prosecuted along with their wives or mothers; they were thus swept along in the definition of hereditary female witchcraft.<sup>61</sup>

The line of approach I am advocating here at first separates analytically the gendered witchcraft stereotyping from the way the different genders were perceived, only to reconnect the two later. In my mind there is no doubt that the people involved could distinguish men from women. They also, I contend, recognised (dependent on the specific occasion) the traditional dominance of either male or female stereotype (that is, when both were available in the cultural repertoire), and applied it to both men and women. The whole process of labelling suggests, of course, fairly strict gender norms and certainly no bending of genders. The male and female domains were fairly separated, at least in the early modern European countryside. It also appears that gender was still taken into account when witchcraft was ascribed to someone, even when the opposite witch stereotype prevailed.

A case in point from the Netherlands is that of Folkert Dirks from Hoogland in the province of Utrecht, who was executed at Utrecht town in 1595. He was a man who had married into a line of women witches.<sup>62</sup> This alone would sufficiently explain why he was accused in the first place. The bewitchments he was deemed to have perpetrated were nevertheless partly situated in the male domain. Among the

witnesses who testified against him was a woman who stated that when he had visited her the previous summer, he had said about her son 'What a nice boy that is. God bless him', a comment usually attributed to female witches. But after he had made this remark, the child had drowned. This was quite a peculiar way for children to die when bewitched and it does only make sense when we realise that to be able to get into the water, the boy would have escaped female supervision and entered the outside male domain. Folkert was also accused of having bewitched horses, whom he was then required to bless together with all the other men of the neighbourhood; women were absent here.<sup>63</sup>

If Folkert was drawn into witchcraft discourse because of his conjugal affiliation, the way people regarded his actions concerning the boy and the horses was still determined by maleness, albeit in the harmful sense (which in his case was probably transmitted through the female line). Evil deeds could rank under the male definition of witchcraft as well, though to a much lesser extent than when women were involved. Half a century earlier another male inhabitant of Hoogland, by the name of Lambert Pot, had been jailed after he had blessed the animals he was said to have bewitched. In his defence he declared the cause of his troubles to be slander and scandalmongering by neighbours, who were jealous of him because he worked so hard in his fields, saved his money and did not drink it away in the pub. Lambert was only interrogated (not tortured, and eventually released) and thus reveals a fairly clear picture of the male stereotype of the profitable witch. This was by no means a positive figure. The stereotypical male witch was the epitome of individual gain and achievement in a surrounding that valued the communal.

Under the pressure of an unrestrained judicial system that allowed water tests and denunciations, however, stereotypical images could waver and gender boundaries blur. In 1593 it was rumoured that Lambert's daughter Jannetje was a *melchetoverster*, who could churn butter out of a ditch. Then insinuations were restricted to the male sphere of the acquisition of profit. No allegation was made about the disappearance of milk elsewhere, which was the harmful female variant. Her witchcraft was also situated outside her hamlet, at the Utrecht market where she was in conflict with a buyer of corn. Only in the course of the 1595 prosecutions she was said (among others by Folkert Dirks's children who were submitted to trial along with their father) to have caused harmful bewitchments of women and children.

Of one of her sons it was said in turn that he boasted of being able to tap milk from a willow.<sup>64</sup>

In the eastern regions of the Dutch Republic an 'inexplicable prosperity' (as Heide Wunder termed it)<sup>65</sup> was a constitutive part of the male witch figure. Harmful male witchcraft was extremely rare. The label of the profitable witch was attached to families defined by the male line and included women as well. Contemporaries seem to have differentiated between these women and those who conformed to the female witch stereotype; the former were described by outlandish names like *motte* in the case of Jannetje Pot and *hexe* in seventeenth-century Drenthe cases.<sup>66</sup> The male-designated female witch was thus doubly designated as an outsider, as failing to subscribe to 'her culture's model of virtuous womanhood'.<sup>67</sup> In the west of the Netherlands, in the province of Holland, male witches have not been encountered and women were found to be accused of exercising their evil powers over male-run business such as fishing. Possibly the male stereotype was constricted to the more inland, partly self-supporting agricultural areas, it was also to be found across the eastern border.<sup>68</sup> But a gender divide similar to the one in the east can be noticed among those few men or women who had entered into a pact with the devil (and who were never called witches or sorcerers, nor accused of causing harm). Men did so as equal partners to the devil and expected monetary gain, whereas women were regarded as having been sexually subjected by him.<sup>69</sup>

Among others the devil can be read as symbolising male supremacy over women (God's counter-image was also the guardian of social norms, the eternal dupe and the indicator of the amount of Christian orthodoxy). Instead of eroding the femaleness of the witch stereotype (as Larner surmised), he raised it to the level of male ideology. Locally he may have played his part. But he hardly figured within everyday witchcraft discourse, either in the Netherlands or elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> Only in very few Dutch slander depositions have I come across demonologically derived hearsay evidence. Thus in 1613 in Nederhemert (near Nijmegen) there was talk about copulation with the devil and about dancing cats on the dyke (the local variant of the sabbath; the cat was the metaphor of sexually active women). As in this particular case the two elements were related by different witnesses, it was clearly not a coherent tale for them. And because the place was ranked a seignury, which had almost certainly conducted witch prosecutions before,<sup>71</sup> demonological images will have filtered down

and been adapted. The fully developed demonological witch concept, as it occasionally manifested itself during torture sessions in the Netherlands, did not contain flying witches (and in this way effectively constricted the geographical range of a trial). Women confessed to having gone to a 'dance' nearby, for instance at a local meadow. Typically they appear to have done so in situations where local lords tried to prove their judicial powers in disputes over legal competence with regional high courts.<sup>72</sup> The centripetal image of the sabbath-visiting witch seems to have been produced in opposition to centralising tendencies, which in the Netherlands were restricted to the regional level. Elsewhere in the Netherlands women only confessed to having had sex with the devil, the prerequisite of any criminal witch trial. But although this witch image conformed to its regional political application, its initial basis (on which the demonological superstructure was built and with which it could interact occasionally) was provided for locally.

In the Netherlands, women's potential prospect of becoming stamped as a witch is apparent from the divination techniques with sieve and shears or from the cunning folks' advice to nail the first woman to enter the victim's house after certain identification rituals had been performed. Since only a witch could undo her own spell, her victim's reaction to a blessing was considered conclusive. This was the stereotype in action. It was known how a witch would behave (and if not, there was always an annunciating neighbour or an expert around to provide the necessary information), but at the same time, the witch was always the other woman. Sure of their own good standing late sixteenth-century Dutch women thus quite happily took the risk of blessing bewitched people. If it came to the worst, they could always purge themselves before the court by having their friends and relatives deliver a declaration of good conduct.<sup>73</sup> Patriarchy protected women who stuck to the norms. The making of the witch was a social process and the ties a woman had within her community determined whether an incidental accusation could stick. If poor, old and widowed women figured prominently among prosecuted witches, it was not only because as post-menopausal women they were likely witches, but also because they had less access to the defence mechanisms present in common law.

An example of the communal female blessing is found in the testimony of Grietgen, the wife of Jan Henricxz, before the magistrates of Amersfoort in 1593. She declared to have entered the house of Gerrit

Have, where she found more women present. Then Gerrit's wife said to them: 'You women, I am ill and I would like you to bless me'. Thereupon the wife of Wulpher Jans (Willempje) said: 'I shall be the first one, if only I knew how to do this'. Grietgen answered her: 'I will prompt you'. When this was done and Willempje had repeated the blessing, she had kept talking and laughing, to which Gerrit's wife had said: 'Now her blessing won't help me'. Grietgen then called Willempje back and told her to bless the patient again and to leave the house in silence so as to avoid any bad presumptions. Any tiny breach in the ritual could arouse suspicion. A year and a half later Maria Christiaens had been among the neighbours pronouncing a blessing over the sick IJtgen Wouters. Maria had shaken the woman's hand upon leaving, whereupon the whole ritual had to be done anew.<sup>74</sup> Maria's and Willempje's unintended mistake suggested another social blunder (i.e. witchcraft), produced on the communal level. In this way the ritual confirmed the witch to have trespassed normative boundaries and in the process her past behaviour was reinterpreted.

The question 'Is witch hunting woman hunting?' cannot, according to Uschi Bender-Wittmann, be rendered into research strategies, as it invokes unjustifiable simplifications of complex historical processes.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the focus on witch trials itself is full of pitfalls. Although prosecutions offer a strong historical focal point, can capture the historian's imagination and feed the awareness of shame, they distorted the initial local witch image, for instance by introducing the devil into witchcraft discourse and by replacing magic with violence.

From an everyday point of view criminal trials produced odd witches.<sup>76</sup> This happened when most of the profit-making men were left out, when socially vulnerable women were targeted and especially when overzealous torturers were active, denunciations were admitted and the range of usual suspects had become exhausted (which, among others, raised the amount of men becoming involved). Of course local opinion could adapt to demonological views (as demonology incorporated concepts from some localities) and it would be careless to write off such changes as a result of 'elitist' influences. But, however strong or weak mutual influences and interactions were, witches were still mainly made locally. Or, we should at least differentiate between witches produced locally and those unfortunates who only required the label through judicial procedures which allowed for denunciations as sufficient indication of devil-worship.

Further differentiation should concern the specific kinds of bewitchments and consider the different food-producing processes that were hampered. It should concern the different victims: the men, women, children or animals who were deemed to have been bewitched. We should also make a distinction between individual and communal calamities and pay attention to the gendered domains the bewitched people or objects belonged to.<sup>77</sup> Should it still be necessary to count the 'victims' of the witch-trials, then at least this should be preceded by qualitative categorising.

In early modern European society the option of witchcraft as a convincing explanation of misfortune was generally available; it was ingrained in people's outlook by the language learned as a child. Provisionally this society can be characterised as dependent on communal values and neighbourly assistance but also one which recognised individual households and gendered lineage. Religion helped to justify witchcraft discourse and to keep it operative. It was the social organisations and the ideas about community, however, that provided the necessary conditions. On account of having to raise children and manage households women were more attentive to interpersonal behaviour and neighbourly conflict and thus more involved in witchcraft accusations.<sup>78</sup> The concept of female space as one of the main settings of witchcraft accusations is surely important here. It expresses woman's place in the processes of production and reproduction.<sup>79</sup> Conceptualised in this way, it demonstrates that it never was an autonomous female space (as Sharpe and Purkiss imply); it was always defined by male authority. Moreover, the concept has little explanatory value. When (harmful) witchcraft was a female characteristic and when women were largely confined to their allotted places, it would be surprising not to find many witchcraft cases set in there. It could be more revealing to regard female space not only in relation to male space but also in relation to (kinds of) household, to community, to lineage and to (changing) boundaries between public and private. A witchcraft accusation, I would suggest, articulated the crossing of male-designated boundaries rather than being restricted to a specific female space. 'When someone trespassed the threshold, then she threatened illness'.<sup>80</sup> This applied in the material as well as in the temporal and metaphorical sense.

Whether the witch image was actually implemented, and to whom, depended on a range of factors which historians are only beginning to chart. We surely need more precise descriptions and analyses of the

continuity and discontinuity of the various local or regional witchcraft discourses and of the way they were embedded in social relations. We also need to know more about the development of the characterisation of witches within a community: how their behaviour was classified as abnormal, how this predisposed them for the label 'witch' and, once applied, how the label attracted further elaborations of their abnormality. Depositions of witnesses, slander trials, as well as trials against cunning folk and trials against people who had maltreated 'witches' are the obvious sources for this kind of investigation. For the moment, I would like to point out that identification procedures relied for a large part on chance. This may have been slightly less the case with communal (though male- or female-restricted) blessings than with techniques that were supposed to draw the witch to her victim, but the latter were more popular. Because of its haphazard and contingent nature an actual (but not necessarily formal) witchcraft accusation was an ever lurking threat that could strike a woman at any time. When it did, it corrupted her position as neighbour (everyone within the household was usually safe for her) and it transformed her role as giver of nutrition and life. The mere possibility of losing her gender identity compelled her to comply with patriarchal communal norms of womanhood, a transgression of which made it only more probable to incite an accusation of witchcraft. In economic and social terms women who conducted an independent trade or owned their own land<sup>81</sup> were more vulnerable and also those who had moved to new communities<sup>82</sup> (although in a virilocal society every woman was deemed to change households upon marriage). But in principle it sufficed to cross a boundary at the wrong moment. As women were restricted in their actions anyhow, the likelihood of becoming a witch was ever present.

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### Notes

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1. Rijksarchief in Gelderland, Archief Rekenkamer, nr. 6488, fol. 23v–24. The three exceptions probably concerned women who were related to the occasional diviners.
2. Cf. Inge Schöck, 'Das Ende der Hexenprozesse – Das Ende des Hexenglaubens?', in *Hexenverfolgung: Beiträge zur Forschung* ed. Sönke Lorenz and Dieter R. Bauer (Köningshausen & Neuman, Würzburg, 1995), pp. 375–89; Willem de Blécourt, 'On the Continuation of Witchcraft', in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), pp. 335–52.

3. Cf. the pictures from northern Spain and Denmark in Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, *Sorcellerie, structure sociale et symbolisme en Galice* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1994), nr. 4; Gustav Henningsen, 'Witch Persecution after the Era of the Witch Trials: A Contribution to Danish Ethnohistory', *Arv. Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 1988, 44 (1989), pp. 103–53, esp. p. 144.
4. Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (Pandora, San Francisco, 1994), p. 88.
5. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (HarperCollins, London, 1996), p. 261.
6. Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (Harper Collins, London, 1995), pp. 346–7.
7. Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1984), p. 88.
8. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'The European Witchcraft Debate and the Dutch Variant', *Social History*, 15 (1990), pp. 181–94.
9. Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1981), p. 92.
10. Cf. Marianne Hester, 'Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch Hunting', in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 288–306.
11. Throughout this paper I refer to 'patriarchy' as the undifferentiated collection of social structures and processes of male domination and their cultural legitimations. Whether different forms of patriarchy resulted in different kinds of witchcraft accusations has yet to be established.
12. Paradigmatic here is Carol F. Karlson, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New-England* (Norton, New York and London, 1987).
13. Ursula Bender-Wittmann, 'Frauen und Hexen – feministische Perspektiven der Hexenforschung', in *Hexenverfolgung und Frauengeschichte: Beiträge aus der kommunalen Kulturarbeit*, ed. Regina Pramann (Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, Bielefeld, 1994), pp. 11–32, cit. p. 21.
14. Larner, *Enemies of God*, p. 197.
15. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (Granada, St Albans, 1976) p. 255.
16. Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (Routledge, London and New York, 1992), p. 113.
17. Louise Jackson, 'Witches, Wives and Mothers: Witchcraft Persecution and Women's Confessions in Seventeenth-Century England', *Women's History Review*, 4 (1995), pp. 63–83, cit. p. 72.
18. German feminist historians seem to distance themselves more readily from speculation than their Anglo-Saxon colleagues. See among others: Heide Dienst and Edith Hörandner, 'Die Hexen kommen wieder: Zum feministischen Hexenbegriff, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Österreichs', in *Hexen und Zauberer: Die große Verfolgung – ein europäisches Phänomen in der Steiermark*, ed. Helfried Valentinitzsch (Leykam, Graz/Wien, 1987), pp. 391–5; Daniela Müller, 'Procès de sorcellerie et répression féminine', *Heresis*, 12 (1989), pp. 33–51; Dagmar Unverhau, 'Frauenbewegung und historische Hexenverfolgung', in *Ketzer, Zauberer, Hexen: Die Anfänge der europäischen Hexenverfolgungen*, ed. Andreas Blauert (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1990), pp. 241–83.
19. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, p. 336.
20. Barstow, *Witchcraze*, p. 201, n. 19.
21. Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (Routledge, London and New York, 1996), pp. 71–2.
22. Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "'Feminist Consciousness" and "Wicked Witches": Recent Studies on Women in Early Modern Europe', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 20 (1994), pp. 152–75, cit. p. 170.
23. Dagmar Unverhau, 'Frauenbewegung und historische Hexenverfolgung', p. 252. See, for a thoughtful evaluation of the influence of the *Malleus*, Gerd Schwerhoff, 'Hexerei,

- Geschlecht und Regionalgeschichte: Überlegungen zur Erklärung des scheinbar Selbstverständlichen', in *Hexenverfolgung und Regionalgeschichte: Die Grafschaft Lippe im Vergleich*, ed. Gisela Wilbertz, Gerd Schwerhoff and Jürgen Scheffler (Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, Bielefeld, 1994), pp. 325–53. For insights into the practice the *Malleus* was based on, see Heide Dienst, 'Lebensbewältigung durch Magie: Alltägliche Zauberei in Innsbruck gegen Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts', in *Alltag im 16. Jahrhundert: Studien zu Lebensformen in mitteleuropäischen Städten*, ed. Alfred Kohler and Heinrich Lutz (Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, Wien, 1987), pp. 80–116.
24. Ingrid Ahrendt-Schulte, 'Hexenprozesse als Gegenstand historischer Frauenforschung', in *Hexenverfolgung und Regionalgeschichte: Die Grafschaft Lippe im Vergleich*, pp. 199–210, esp. p. 202.
  25. Clarke Garret, 'Women and Witches: Patterns of Analysis', *Signs*, 3 (1977), pp. 461–70.
  26. Claudia Honegger, 'Comment on Garret's "Women and Witches"', *Signs*, 4 (1979), pp. 792–8; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 252: 'Left to themselves, peasants would never have created mass witch-hunts – these occurred only where and when the authorities had become convinced of the reality of the sabbat and of nocturnal flights to the sabbat'.
  27. Wolfgang Behringer, 'Weather, Hunger and Fear: The Origins of the European Witch Persecutions in Climate, Society and Mentality', *German History*, 13 (1995), pp. 1–27.
  28. The concept was coined by Erik Midelfort. See his contribution to *History Today*, 31 (1981), pp. 27–31.
  29. E.g. Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Longman, London and New York, 1995), p. 134.
  30. But see Eva Labouvie, 'Männer im Hexenprozeß: Zur Sozialanthropologie eines "männlichen" Verständnisses von Magie und Hexen', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 16 (1990), pp. 56–78.
  31. As in Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), p. 219.
  32. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, p. 50.
  33. Olwen Hufton, 'Christina Larner and the Historiography of European Witchcraft', *History Workshop*, 21 (1986), pp. 166–70, esp. p. 169.
  34. Levack, *The Witch-hunt*, p. 135.
  35. Pieter Spierenburg, *De verbroken betovering: Mentaliteitsgeschiedenis van preindustriële Europa* (Verloren, Hilversum, 1988), pp. 135–8.
  36. Larner, *Enemies of God*, pp. 83, 100. My observations parallel those of Hester, 'Patriarchal Reconstruction', p. 291.
  37. J. A. Sharpe, 'Witches and Persecuting Societies', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 3 (1990), pp. 75–86.
  38. J. A. Sharpe, 'Witchcraft and Women in Seventeenth-century England: Some Northern Evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991), pp. 179–99. In his pamphlet *Witchcraft in Seventeenth-century Yorkshire: Accusations and Counter-measures* (York, 1992), Sharpe suffices with a reference to his 1991 paper.
  39. Jim Sharpe, 'Women, Witchcraft and the Legal Process', in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, ed. Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (UCL Press, London, 1994), pp. 106–24, cit. pp. 107–8.
  40. James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1996), Citations from pp. 183–5, 189.
  41. Clive Holmes, 'Women, Witnesses and Witches', *Past and Present*, 140 (1993), pp. 45–78, esp. pp. 77–8.
  42. Larner, *Enemies of God*, p. 102.
  43. Anne Llewellyn Barstow, 'On Studying Witchcraft as Women's History: A Historiography of the European Witch Persecutions', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 4 (1988), pp. 7–19, cit. p. 18.
  44. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, p. 358.

45. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Routledge, London and New York, 1994) p. 215.
46. Diane Purkiss, 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child', *Gender & History*, 7 (1995) pp. 408–32, cit. p. 409. Purkiss acknowledges women's subjugation to the 'dominant discourses', which 'were largely male constructs'. But this remark only stages a ritual exorcism of male influence from the rather timeless female witchcraft narratives whose treatment primarily echoes a present-day psycho-analytic session between women. 'Feminist historians', Purkiss asserts, 'have generally moved away from' 'a simplistic opposition between patriarchy and femininity' (Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, pp. 92–3).
47. Elspeth Whitney, 'The Witch "She" / the Historian "He": Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-hunts', *Journal of Women's History*, 7 (1995), pp. 77–101, cit. p. 88.
48. Robin Briggs, 'Women as Victims? Witches, Judges and the Community', *French History*, 5 (1991) pp. 438–50, cit. p. 443, and *Witches and Neighbours*, p. 267.
49. Cf. Karlsen, *The Devil*, p. 228.
50. See Roper, *Oedipus*, pp. 203–6, for a penetrating analysis of the changing relation between witch and hangman.
51. Jackson, 'Witches, Wives and Mothers', p. 80. Cf. Gudrun Gersmann, 'Auf den Spuren der Opfer – zur Rekonstruktion weiblichen Alltags unter dem Eindruck frühneuzeitlicher Hexenverfolgung', in *Vergessene Frauen an der Ruhr: Von Herrscherinnen und Hörigen, Hausfrauen und Hexen 800–1800*, ed. Bea Lundt (Böhlau, Köln, 1992), pp. 243–72, esp. p. 260. Spontaneous self-accusation only seems to have occurred at a later stage of the prosecutions, see Heide Wunder, *Er ist die Sonn', Sie ist der Mond': Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Beck, München, 1992) p. 198.
52. See also Julian Goodare, 'Women and the Witch-hunt in Scotland', *Social History*, 23 (1998), pp. 288–308, esp. p. 299.
53. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Witchcraft in the Northern Netherlands', in *Current Issues in Women's History*, ed. Arina Angerman, (Routledge, London, 1989), pp. 75–92, cit. p. 90.
54. See also Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Six Centuries of Witchcraft in the Netherlands: Themes, Outlines, and Interpretations', in *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (Rotterdam University Press, Rijswijk, 1991), pp. 1–36, esp. pp. 33–34.
55. Cf. Willem de Blécourt, 'Mangels Beweise: Über das Ende der Verfolgung von Zaubereinen im niederländischen und spanischen Geldern während der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', in *Das Ende der Hexenverfolgung*, ed. Sönke Lorenz and Dieter R. Bauer, (Steiner, Stuttgart, 1995), pp. 77–95.
56. Willem de Blécourt and Hans de Waardt, 'Das Vordringen der Zaubereiverfolgungen in die Niederlande: Rhein, Maas und Schelde entlang', in *Ketzer, Zauberer, Hexen*, pp. 182–216.
57. Alfred Soman, 'Decriminalizing Witchcraft: Does the French Experience Furnish a European Model?', in *Witch Beliefs and Witch-hunting in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1992), pp. 379–400; Wolfgang Behringer, 'Witchcraft Studies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland', in *Witchcraft in Early-Modern Europe*, pp. 64–95, esp. pp. 75–7.
58. Richard van Dülmen, 'Die Dienerin des Bösen: Zum Hexenbild in der frühen Neuzeit', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, 18 (1991), pp. 385–98.
59. It concerns a case in Arnhem in 1595, see Hans de Waardt and Willem de Blécourt, 'De regels van het recht: Aantekeningen over de rol van het Gelderse Hof bij de procesvoering inzake toverij, 1543–1620', *Bijdragen en mededelingen Gebr.*, 80 (1989), pp. 24–51, esp. p. 36.
60. H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562–1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford University Press, Stanford 1972) p. 95, p. 179. Cf. Larner, *Enemies of God*, p. 92. Apparently there was no male witch stereotype current in Scotland.

61. For instance, Lerner, *Enemies of God*, p. 94; Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 173, 188. In Gelre a certain man named Vaes was executed as a werewolf in 1609, after he and his mother had been apprehended for witchcraft (the woman died in prison). Rijksarchief in Limburg, Archief Rekenkamer Roermond, nr. 646A, fol. 16–16v, 23v–24v.
62. The female line is described in Hans de Waardt, 'At the Bottom a Family Affair: Feuds and Witchcraft in Nijkerk in 1550', in *Witchcraft in the Netherlands*, pp. 132–48; cf. Barstow, *Witchcraze*, pp. 33–8.
63. Cf. Malcolm Gaskill, 'The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict and Belief in Jacobean England', *Historical Research*, 71 (1998), pp. 142–71. The accusations of bewitchments against William Godfrey of New Romney (Kent) can be interpreted within the parameters of Godfrey's reputation as a thief of sheep. Most of the bewitchments attributed to men that Gaskill describes can be discerned from female forms and can be situated within the male domain. Cf. also Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent: Stereotypes and the Background to Accusations', in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 257–87, esp. pp. 272–8.
64. On the trials in the province of Utrecht, see Joke Spaans, 'Toversters voor het gerecht: Enkele opmerkingen naar aanleiding van de Amersfoortse procesreeks 1590–1595', in *Kwade mensen: Toverij in Nederland*, ed. Willem de Blécourt and Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra (Meertens-Instituut, Amsterdam 1986), pp. 31–49; Janny Steenhuis, "'In een quaad geruchte van toverye": Toverij voor de Utrechtse rechtbanken, ca. 1530–1630', in *Nederland betoverd: Toverij en hekserij van de veertiende tot in de twintigste eeuw*, ed. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 40–56. I would like to thank both authors for sharing their original material with me.
65. Heide Wunder, 'Hexenprozesse im Herzogtum Preussen während des 16. Jahrhunderts', in *Hexenprozesse: Deutsche und skandinavische Beiträge*, ed. Cristian Degn, Hartmut Lehmann and Dagmar Unverhau (Wachholtz, Neumünster, 1983), pp. 179–202, cit. p. 195; Eva Labouvie, *Zauberei und Hexenwerk: Ländlichen Hexenglaube in der frühen Neuzeit* (Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 197.
66. Willem de Blécourt, 'Werwölfe und Zauberer in den östlichen Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert: eine andere (männliche?) Art Zauberei?', in *Hexenverfolgung: Frauenverfolgung? Fachtagung mit dem Arbeitskreis Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung (AKIH) Stuttgart-Hohenheim, 22.–24. Februar 1989* (AKIH, Stuttgart, 1995) pp. 73–6.
67. Karlsen, *The Devil*, p. 241.
68. Cf. Rainer Walz, *Hexenglauben und magische Kommunikation im Dorf der frühen Neuzeit: Die Verfolgungen in der Grafschaft Lippe* (Schöningh, Paderborn, 1993).
69. Hans de Waardt, 'Met bloed ondertekend', *Sociologische Gids*, 36 (1989) pp. 236–7. Cf. Goodare, 'Women', 305; Luise Accati, 'The Spirit of Fornification: Virtue of the Soul and Virtue of the Body in Friuli, 1600–1800', in *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Johns Hopkins, Baltimore and London, 1990), pp. 110–40, esp. p. 136.
70. Cf. Susanna Burghartz, 'The Equation of Women and Witches: A Case Study of Witchcraft Trials in Lucerne and Lausanne in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in *The German Underworld. Deviants and Outcasts in German History*, ed. Richard J. Evans (Routledge, London and New York, 1988), pp. 57–74. See Labouvie, *Zauberei und Hexenwerk*, pp. 194–5, about generational differences in the reception of demonological imaginary.
71. Records from seigneuries are rather scarce; there is no direct evidence in the case of Nederhemert. See, for the wave of trials in the middle of the sixteenth century at Nijmegen and the nearby seigneuries, De Waardt and De Blécourt, 'De regels van het recht', pp. 29–32.
72. The Dutch evidence is summarised in Willem de Blécourt, 'Typen van toverij', in *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland 1500–1850: Een historisch antropologisch perspectief*, ed. Peter te Boekhorst, Peter Burke and Willem Frijhoff (Boom, Amsterdam/Meppel, 1992), pp. 319–63. Cf. Heide Wunder, 'Hexenprozesse und Gemeinde', in *Hexenverfolgung und Regionalgeschichte*, pp. 61–70, esp. p. 68.

73. Cf. De Blécourt, 'Mangels Beweise', p. 81.
74. See note 64.
75. Bender-Wittmann, 'Frauen und Hexen', p. 24.
76. Similarly, the Church's involvement in witchcraft resulted in warped witches. In their clients' eyes the healers who the Church demonised mainly practised magic for laudable purposes; bewitchments were usually not ascribed to them. See Willem de Blécourt, 'Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests: On Cunning Folk in European Historiography and Tradition', *Social History*, 19 (1994), pp. 285–303.
77. Love magic, for instance, was primarily practised by women. See Heide Dienst, 'Zur Rolle von Frauen in magischen Vorstellungen und Praktiken – nach ausgewählten mittelalterlichen Quellen', in *Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter: Lebensbedingungen – Lebensnormen – Lebensformen*, ed. Werner Affeldt and Ursula Vorwerk (Jan Thorbecke, Sigmaringen, 1990) pp. 173–94.
78. Wunder, 'Er ist die Sonn', *Sie ist der Mond*, p. 199.
79. Wunder, 'Hexenprozesse im Herzogtum Preussen', p. 189; 'Er ist die Sonn', *Sie ist der Mond*, p. 199.
80. Ahrendt-Schulte, 'Hexenprozesse als Gegenstand historischer Frauenforschung', p. 352.
81. Karlsen, *The Devil*, passim; Ahrendt-Schulte, 'Hexenprozesse als Spiegel von Alltagskonflikten'. See also Ingrid Ahrendt-Schulte, *Zauberinnen in der Stadt Horn (1554–1603): Magische Kultur und Hexenverfolgung in der frühen Neuzeit* (Campus, Frankfurt and New York, 1997).
82. Sabine Alfing, 'Die "Hexen" von Münster – Ein Blick auf die Biographien und die soziale Einbettung der Opfer', in *Van Hexen un Dävelslüden*, ed. Marielies Saatkamp and Dick Schlüter (Landeskundliches Institut Westmünsterland, Vreden, 1995), pp. 63–73; Burghartz, 'The Equation', p. 66.

The modern, free "western body" is no less than the product of complex significations, premised on our valuations of presentability, ideals of beauty, categories of "sexual liberation", technologised intervention and enhancement, norms of pleasure and gratification, significations that would utterly baffle those of another era, and indeed those of many another countries nowadays. The two historical case examples to follow, concern representations of female nature in early modern Europe and are associated with the abject and the ideal; they are

Â No singular mode of explanation of witchcraft will suffice and, in the understated

Â Amongst the many complexities is the relationship of witchcraft to gender and/or sexuality.