So far, we have concentrated on constructing the male witch as a valid historical subject. In this final chapter, we wish to change gear and attempt to answer the question of how early modern Europeans, specifically witchcraft theorists, made sense of male witches. Given that they generally associated witchcraft more strongly with women than with men, it seems at first rather odd that early modern authors did not address explicitly the (to us) apparent anomaly of the male witch. However, as we have suggested so far, the nonchalance with which early modern Europeans approached the concept of the male witch suggests his existence was taken for granted. Although it is somewhat problematic to approach the question this way, asking why early modern witchcraft theorists did not regard male witches as anomalous – in other words, why there was no conceptual barrier to them – provides a useful starting point for developing an integrative interpretation of the gendering of witchcraft.

In this chapter, we argue, first, that early modern theorists were unperturbed by male witches because they were already familiar with them in the guise of ancient and medieval heretics and sorcerers. Our second, more speculative, argument concerns the feminisation of the witch. The most essential feature of the early modern witch (as understood under the ‘elaborated concept’ of witchcraft) was her or his servient relationship with the Devil, who duped men and especially women into worshipping him. The witch was thus by definition weak-minded, a trait that had been associated from antiquity with
women. A man accused of being a witch was also, therefore, implicitly feminised. In one sense, this feminisation lends support to Stuart Clark’s argument for a binary structure underlying the gendering of witchcraft; on the other hand, it cautions us against allowing that binary structure to become too rigid to accommodate flexible gender constructions.¹

Ancient and medieval antecedents

What did medieval and early modern Europeans think about witches? There was a vast array of ideas, many of them indeed drawn from pre-Christian sources. Their origins can be suspected in ancient magic, love-spells, and the cults of various gods and goddesses; in the religious and magical practices of pre-Christian Europeans of the most varied ethnicities (Celts, Teutons, Slavs, Basques, Etruscans, Latins, Greeks, etc.); in European folklore, perhaps also dating from pre-Christian times, about spirits, fairies, goblins, demons, banshees, imps, elves, kobolds, and spirits in animal form; in shamanistic ideas and practices such as those of the benandanti,² which seem to arise from the deep past of some common or widely diffused Eurasian heritage; in particular Scriptural passages that seem to refer to what Europeans think of and we refer to in English as witches or sorcerers (‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’,³ Exodus 22, 17–18).

Edward Peters has argued that the classic early modern witch ‘was a distinct type’ that should not be confused with earlier types of magician.⁴ However, historians of witchcraft and witch-beliefs, including Peters, agree generally that the night-flying witch who made a pact with the Devil and worshipped him in exchange for supernatural powers was a learned, cumulative construct that developed over centuries of Christian demonisation of heretics and sorcerers. If we trace these two elements in the witch’s heritage, we see that early modern authors would have been thoroughly familiar with the idea that both men and women could be Devil-worshippers and magicians. There was, therefore, no
reason for witchcraft theorists to be surprised or confused by the existence of male witches.

One of the central aspects of learned early modern witch-belief was the witches’ Sabbath, where witches gathered to worship the Devil, dance, feast, indulge in sexual orgies, and practise cannibalism and infanticide (see figure 10). The Sabbath myth and its components have occupied the attention of many scholars, who have attempted to demonstrate, variously, either elite or folk origins. The debate over origins need not concern us here; what is important, for the present purpose, is that learned ideas about the witches’ Sabbath correspond very closely to traditional stereotypes concerning heretics.

Norman Cohn has argued that the early modern notion of the Sabbath evolved from much older fantasies about various dissenting groups. Early Christian apologists encountered widespread beliefs that
Christians engaged in cannibalism, infanticide and incest; Jews were ridiculed in the ancient world for supposedly worshipping a donkey-god; and the Catiline conspirators were believed by Dio Cassius to have practised ritual murder. Christianity survived such accusations, of course, but over the centuries, tales of erotic debauches, infanticide and cannibalism were revived and applied to various religious outgroups in medieval Christendom. In the process they were integrated more and more firmly into the corpus of Christian demonology. ... the powers of darkness loomed larger and larger in these tales, until they came to occupy the very centre of the stage. Erotic debauches, infanticide and cannibalism gradually took on a new meaning, as so many manifestations of a religious cult of Satan, so many expressions of Devil-worship.

Montanists, Paulicians, Bogomils, Waldensians, Cathars, and other groups were all believed by Catholic authorities to engage in these practices.

When early modern authors described the activities of witches, they incorporated these stereotypical charges against heretics. Johannes Nider, for instance, explained that in Lausanne certain witches cooked and ate infants, and Guazzo wrote that at their gatherings witches ‘sing in honour of the Devil the most obscene songs ... and then in the foulest manner they copulate with their demon lovers.’ Given that so many of the early witchcraft theorists were inquisitors (Jacquier, Nider, Institoris, and Nicolas Eymeric, to name a few), their incorporation of these elements is not surprising. Inquisitors would, presumably, have been familiar with these alleged activities of heretics, and, since witches were Devil-worshippers, it makes sense that they would believe them to engage in similar practices.

The important thing about the similarity between witches and heretics is that, as William Monter has pointed out, ‘heresy itself was not sex-linked’. Both men and women participated in heretical
movements, and both men and women were thought to participate in the traditional depravities. Therefore, theorists who believed that witches practised similar evil acts would have had no reason for surprise at the notion that men took part, despite their view that women were especially susceptible. In short, there were precedents for the participation of men in Devil-worship.

Monter made a similar connection in his 1976 study of the Jura region in the fifteenth century, where the authorities in three dioceses – Geneva, Lausanne and Sion – prosecuted more male than female witches. Monter found that these exceptions ‘to the fifteenth-century trend to equate witchcraft with women’ were also those dioceses ‘which first popularly identified sorcery with heresy’, specifically, with Waldensianism. He suggests that because heresy was not sex-linked, ‘in a region where heresy and witchcraft were closely connected in the popular mind, witchcraft was not originally sex-linked either.’ The corollary of Monter’s argument is that in regions where heresy and witchcraft were not closely connected, witchcraft was sex-linked. Although we have reservations about Monter’s causal correlations, his evidence suggests that a conceptual link between witches and heretics could have kept the door open, as it were, for male witches.

Early modern witchcraft theorists incorporated stereotypes about heretics into their beliefs about witches, but they rarely discussed particular heretics as simple heretics (that is, without the suggestion that they were also sorcerers). Demonological texts are chock-full of references to famous magic-users from classical, biblical, and secular sources. Such references were usually included to support the authors’ views concerning witches’ powers. For instance, when Institoris and Sprenger argue that witches have the power to transform men into animals, they cite the example of Circe, the sorceress who transformed Odysseus’ companions into swine. Many of these references describe male magic-users, who seem to have been in abundant supply in the ancient and medieval world. These figures, more so than medieval heretics, provided precedents that prevented witchcraft theorists from
developing a conceptual barrier to the idea of male witches. In addition, the consistent presence of male magic-users over such a long period indicates a wider degree of acceptance of the notion that access to magical power was not limited to women.

The evidence of Greek and Latin curse tablets indicates that the practice of magic was widespread and that men participated in it in large numbers. In a recent essay, Daniel Ogden states that over 1,600 curse tablets, or *defixiones*, are currently known to scholars. These tablets, which were usually made of lead, bore written curses of various kinds, regarding litigation, politics, competition, trade, erotic matters, and prayers for justice. They have been found in Britain and in every country around the Mediterranean, and date from the early fifth or even sixth century BCE to the eighth century CE.

Ogden suggests that ‘many curse tablets were probably made, activated and deposited by amateurs on an ad hoc basis.’ Specialists may have assisted in the manufacturing of tablets, for instance by inscribing a curse text, but, as Ogden points out, these specialists were not necessarily magicians. On the other hand, long and complex curse texts requiring magical formulae must have depended on magical handbooks. In addition, ‘since obscurity and difficulty were important sources of “power” for ancient magic, it may have been more satisfying to visit a professional, one of supposedly arcane knowledge and mysterious skills, for the text of a tablet.’

Whether or not the author of a curse tablet was a professional, ‘the vast majority of all curse tablets, including erotic ones, [were] written by men.’ Furthermore, Ogden cautions, ‘it is possible that some of the curse tablets contain the actual words of women, but we must remember that they are largely formulaic, and we can never be sure that even an apparently personally worded text was not composed with the aid of or simply by a male (professional or otherwise).’ Although this evidence does not necessarily show that men were more active participants in magic than women, it indicates clearly that men were ‘everyday’ magic-users. Similarly, the sexual spells contained in a collection of early Christian
Coptic texts suggest that men used magic; several of the spells are designed to cause a woman to love a man, and one is an erotic spell for a man to obtain a male lover. As both Daniel Ogden and Fritz Graf have pointed out, the evidence of curse tablets and magical papyri does not match up with literary representations of magic as a female activity: ‘In Theocritus as well as Virgil, or in the elegiac poets, and generally in the great majority of the literary texts, it is women who practice magic, whether erotic or of another kind. This situation amounts to an astonishing reversal of what we find in the epigraphic texts and the [magical] recipes on the papyri.’ We shall return to this important point later in the chapter. For now, we wish merely to note that this evidence demonstrates that the literary emphasis on female practitioners of magic does not tell the whole story about magic use in the ancient world.

Considering this overemphasis on women in ancient literary texts, which are far more likely to have been known to early modern authors than curse tablets, it is all the more striking to find Jean Bodin citing many ancient examples of male magic-users. In his preface to De la démonomanie des sorciers, Bodin lists, as sorciers, Orpheus, Aristeas the Proconnesian, Cleomedes the Astypalian, Hermotimus of Clazomenae, Apollonius of Tyana, and Romulus. None of these ancient sorciers corresponds very closely to the early modern witch, but Bodin evidently believed that they were of the same breed. He mentions them in order to counter the arguments of sceptics, and refers to Orpheus as a ‘maistre Sorcier’.

Biblical texts, including the Acts of the Apostles, furnished additional examples of male magic-users. The female Witch of Endor was cited very frequently in demonological texts, but so were the Pharaoh’s magicians and Simon Magus. Ulrich Molitor, for instance, discusses Simon Magus at some length in De laniis. In a section dealing with whether malefici and strigae could transform men into animals with the aid of the Devil, Molitor describes Simon’s deception of the Emperor Nero: ‘Sic symon magus perstrinxit oculos neronis & carnifices qui
decollando arietem. credidit se symonem decollasse. in oculis suis ministerio dyaboli perstrictis deceptus. Nero’s executioners beheaded a ram, but because Simon, with the aid of the Devil, ‘bound’ the Emperor’s eyes, Nero believed that Simon had been beheaded.

In addition to the various ancient literary sources at early modern authors’ disposal, medieval sources and society provided many examples of male magic-users. Valerie Flint and Richard Kieckhefer have both argued that magic was widespread in medieval Europe, despite official prohibitions against it. Of the early medieval period, Flint says that it ‘was remarkably well supplied with influential and respected harioli, auspices, sortilegi, and incantatores’; in the later medieval centuries, Kieckhefer says, ‘we find various types of people involved in diverse magical activities.’ These people and their activities are described in a range of medieval sources. For example, Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* provided an encyclopedic summary of magic-users and their special powers. His work was incorporated in later tracts against magic, including those by Rabanus Maurus and Burchard of Worms, who wrote in the ninth and early eleventh centuries, respectively.

Specific references to male magic-users are not difficult to find. In his *The History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours describes a man named Desiderius, who, Gregory says, ‘practised the foul arts of necromancy’. Another man, who claimed to possess holy relics, turned out to own ‘a big bag filled with the roots of various plants; in it, too, were moles’ teeth, the bones of mice, bears’ claws and bear’s fat’, which the Bishop Ragnemod ‘recognised … as witchcraft’. Gervais of Tilbury wrote in his *Otia Imperialia* (c. 1215) about an English magician at the court of Roger II of Sicily; this magician found the burial place of Virgil, unearthed the poet’s bones, and took his book of magic.

Other male figures appear in accounts of prosecutions for magic use. In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, many of these men were ritual magicians or necromancers. Early in the fourteenth century, three men – Bernard Délicieux (1319) and Matteo and Galeazzo Visconti (1320) – were tried for using necromancy against Pope John
XXII. At the court of Charles VI of France, at least four men were charged with practising sorcery after claiming to be able to cure the king’s illness with magic. The second of the four men, Jehan de Bar, confessed to invoking demons, engaging in Devil-worship and practising ritual magic. He was condemned and burned in 1398. In 1403, two men, named Poinson and Briquet, presented themselves to the king ‘with the pretense of being able to discover the cause of the king’s disease’. They set themselves up in the woods outside the town gate, where they built a magical circle of iron and made ‘magical invocations, which apparently produced no results whatsoever’. Both men were arrested and later burned.

Books of magic, such as the Munich handbook, offer further evidence that magic was both widespread and practised by men. Ritual demonic magic of the kind found in such books was a masculine preserve; more specifically, it seems to have been the specialty of a ‘clerical underworld’. Richard Kieckhefer asserts that necromancy ‘was not a peripheral phenomenon in late medieval society and culture’, and that fears concerning such magic were ‘grounded in realistic awareness that necromancy was in fact being practised, and in an almost universally shared conviction that it could work’.

If this was indeed the case, then it helps explain why, despite their general understanding that women were more prone than men to witchcraft, early modern authors never claimed that witchcraft was wholly sex-specific. Witchcraft theorists and their readers, especially in the fifteenth century, were not only the heirs of a long intellectual and cultural heritage that recognised the existence of male magic-users. They were also likely to have been familiar with necromancy and to have known that its practitioners were men. It would have been difficult, to say the least, to construct the argument that men could not be witches, since evidence to the contrary was all around.

Having said that, one is forced to ask why witchcraft theorists persisted in stating that women had a greater natural propensity to witchcraft than men did. The situation in the early modern period is
analogous to that of the Greek and Roman worlds; as we have seen, ancient authors represented magic as something practised by women, despite the fact that men also practised magic. Early modern authors did not, as we have argued in chapter 4, exclude male practitioners from their discussions; however, explicit statements such as Pierre de Lancre’s comment that ‘la femme a plus d’inclination naturelle à la sorcellerie que l’homme. C’est pourquoi il y a plus de femmes Sorcières que d’hommes’ (woman has a greater natural inclination to witchcraft than man. That is why there are more female witches than male) represented witchcraft as a predominantly female activity. The fact that witchcraft theorists could hold this view and, at the same time, discuss male witches in their texts, suggests that the gendering of witchcraft was a complex affair.

Gendering witchcraft

In the previous section, we attempted to demonstrate that the lack of a conceptual barrier to the idea of male witches can be explained in part by witchcraft theorists’ familiarity with various ancient and medieval prototypes. In this final section, we shall address the question of what it meant, in conceptual terms, to label a man as a witch within a framework that both explicitly and implicitly feminised witchcraft.

On one level, the feminisation of witchcraft is obvious. The claims of Nider, Institoris and Sprenger, and de Lancre, among others, that witchcraft was practised mostly by women identified it clearly as a female activity. Did this mean that men who practised witchcraft were regarded as feminine? Not really – or not in any overtly sexed way. Male witches were not depicted explicitly as feminine; however, they were associated with certain traits that feminised them implicitly.

Fritz Graf’s explanation of the ‘mismatch’ between ancient literary representations of magic and the reality of magical practice suggests one avenue of exploration. He argues that magic, especially erotic magic, was a ‘secret weapon’ in male social competition, a weapon that
was ‘unworthy of the ideal warrior of the world of men’. Men who used magic stepped ‘over the borderlines of male behavior’, because ‘a true man does not need … magic – the only male sorcerers are those funny foreign specialists.’ If we adopt Graf’s interpretation of ancient men’s attitudes toward male magic use, we can read early modern statements about the predominance of female witches as implicit warnings to male readers that practising magic was womanish behaviour. This is an intriguing line of thought, and suggests a depth to fears about witches that goes beyond what other scholars have had to say on the subject. Early modern anxieties concerning (female) witches’ powers to interfere with men’s minds and bodies, and especially with their procreative abilities, have been addressed by various scholars; but the idea that authors of demonological treatises may have been, on some level, trying to dissuade men in particular from becoming witches has not been explored.

Unfortunately, early modern authors do not come straight out and make convenient statements about ‘real’ men not needing witchcraft. They do not even attempt to portray male witches as effeminate in any obvious sense. The male witches described in demonological texts are not homosexual; indeed, even their demon lovers are female. They are not described as wearing women’s clothing, working in women’s occupations, or having feminine habits. So far, the idea that male witches were feminised looks like a red herring. However, this is the case only if one seeks nothing but examples of overt feminisation that correspond to modern views on masculinity and femininity. When we broaden our perspective to accommodate earlier concepts and less overt means of feminising men, we find several clues.

For instance, there are tantalising hints that some male witches may have had certain physical attributes associated with women. In her book *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination*, Constance Classen explores the embodiment of gender codes and hierarchies through the senses. According to Classen, ‘along with being assigned different sensory qualities’, such as ‘hot’ or ‘cold’, ‘men and
women were associated with different sensory domains. At a fundamental level, women were associated with the physical body and the senses, while men were associated with the mind and soul. Further gendered distinctions operated within the domain of the senses. Each sense was considered to have superior and inferior uses, which were assigned to men and women respectively, but different values were also imparted to each of the senses. Sight and hearing were held to be more closely associated with the “higher” functions of the mind, and the other senses with the “lower” functions of the body.

Two of these associations are of particular interest. Smell, a ‘lower’ sense, was associated with women, who were ‘held to be especially productive of odors’, both good and bad. Sight, on the other hand, was a ‘higher’ sense associated with men because the eyes and the male sexual organs were thought to share a ‘seminal nature’. According to Classen, ‘women, who were symbolically castrated or incomplete men, could be imagined as exhibiting the weak sight and intelligence attributed to eunuchs.’

With these associations in mind, the physical descriptions of Trois- eschelles and Staedelin, two male witches, take on new significance. Trois-eschelles, who appears several times in Bodin’s *Demonomanie*, was hanged at Paris in 1571 after denouncing over 150 others as witches. He was supposed to have received immunity, but seems to have angered the king while giving a ‘command performance’ of his powers, and was condemned after all. Apparently, Trois-eschelles was blind; Bodin refers to him once as ‘l’aueugle’, or ‘the blind one’, another time as ‘l’aueugle Sorcier’, the blind witch. Staedelin, the ‘grandis maleficus’ of the *Formicarius* and subsequent works, was immortalised by Johannes Nider in several descriptive passages. In one, Nider tells the reader that when Staedelin was arrested, he gave off a great stench: ‘cum sepe dictus iudex petrus antefatum scadelem [Staedelin] capere vellet per suos famulos tantus tremor manibus eorum incussus est & corporibus & naribus illapsus tam malus fetor vt se fere desperarent an maleficum inuadere auderent.’ (When the said judge..."
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Peter wished his servants to arrest the aforementioned Staedelin, their limbs and bodies were seized by such trembling, and their nostrils assailed by such a great stench, that they doubted whether they would dare to grab the witch.)

Admittedly, these are only two instances of male witches possessing what Bodin and Nider may or may not have thought were feminine attributes. As evidence of the gendering of witchcraft, this is too scanty to permit one to draw solid conclusions. On the other hand, it is not entirely implausible, in our view, that early modern authors and their readers may have regarded such traits as signs that male witches were, if not overtly feminine, at least not unquestionably masculine. In any case, the question of how early modern Europeans perceived the body of the male witch ought to be explored. According to Lyndal Roper,

How a culture imagines the body is one of its most fundamental and revealing elements ... Theories of the body, whether explicit or implicit, may assume a sharp division between the body and the mind, or they may articulate a profound interconnection between what is mental, physical and spiritual. Among the issues which cluster around concepts of the body are questions of individuation, how we define the boundaries of a person and his or her bonds with other people, living or dead; the causal links between illness or other kinds of physical harm and psychic, emotional or spiritual powers; and the nature of what we might call a ‘person’ and his or her relation with the divine.

The body of the witch, a person who crosses many boundaries, including that between the physical and spiritual realms, is a critical site for examining early modern culture. There are some studies that deal with the body of the witch, but they focus on female witches only. A serious study of the early modern perceptions of the body of the male witch would add to our understanding not only of witch-beliefs, but also of the ways in which the relationships described by Lyndal Roper were constructed.
There is one element of the gendering of witchcraft that may be tackled with more confidence. When explaining the reasons for women’s greater susceptibility to becoming witches, both sceptics and believers attributed it first and foremost to women’s intellectual fragility. The misogyny of learned witch-beliefs has been much reviewed by scholars, and there is no need to cover the same ground again here, except to recall Stuart Clark’s remarks that ‘the association of witchcraft with women was … built on entirely unoriginal foundations’: Aristotelian physiology, a ‘deeply entrenched Christian hostility to women as the originators of sin’, and many commentaries by the Church fathers and medieval writers on the faults and vices of women. Clark also points out that ‘the experts on witchcraft … were entirely representative of their age and culture’ in terms of their views about women, and that ‘they showed little interest in exploring the gender basis of witchcraft or in using it to denigrate women.’

There are several valuable studies of demonological views of women, including Clark’s own elegant and illuminating analysis of the binary structure underlying such ideas (see chapter 1). However, this subset of witchcraft historiography lacks an exploration of the conceptual relationship between male witches and the association of women with witchcraft. We have already touched on perceptions of the body. We shall now turn to the connection between witchcraft and weak-mindedness. The starting point for this investigation is the learned view of women’s susceptibility to witchcraft. Discussions of why most witches were women are not only expressions of learned misogyny; they are also definitions of the most essential characteristic of the early modern witch.

In the *Malleus maleficarum*, Institoris and Sprenger furnish a detailed explanation for the predominance of female witches. This discussion hinges on their association of women with mental weakness; over and over again, they explain the greater number of female witches in terms of the intellectual feebleness of women. To begin with, women are more credulous than men, which is why the Devil, whose chief aim
is to corrupt faith, prefers to approach them instead of men. Institoris and Sprenger elaborate on this point by drawing on various authorities to demonstrate that women are impressionable, intellectually childlike, quick to abjure their faith, excessively emotional, have weak memories, and lack discipline. The statement that “all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable” is notorious; however, the key to Institoris and Sprenger’s view of women’s susceptibility to witchcraft is reflected more accurately in the following remark: ‘quod in omnibus viribus tam anime quam corporis cum sint defectuose non mirum si plura maleficia in eos quos emulantur fieri procurant.’ (Because they are defective in all essences, as much of the mind as of the body, it is no wonder if they endeavour to cause more misfortunes in those whom they envy.) Their insatiable carnal lust derives from women’s fundamental weaknesses, which also form the basis of witchcraft. If women were not so weak, they would not be such inviting targets for the Devil’s temptations, nor would they fall prey to them and abjure their faith, which, the authors of the Malleus say, ‘est fundamentum in maleficis’. At no point do Institoris and Sprenger say that all witches are women, or suggest that abjuration of faith is not common to all witches, whether male or female. We can infer from their arguments that the explanation concerning female witches is based not only on traditional stereotypes of women, but also on a prior conceptual link between weakness, particularly intellectual weakness, and witchcraft. This link constitutes the heart of the early modern concept of the witch and of the feminisation of witchcraft. According to the logic of Christian perceptions of magic as demonic (the ‘elaborated concept’), witches were necessarily weak-minded, because they sought out the Devil, or were tricked or seduced by him, and willingly became his servants. Both men and women could be intellectually weak, and therefore both could be ensnared by the Devil; however, because this sort of weakness had been regarded since antiquity as a particularly feminine failing, witchcraft was inevitably feminised.
In later antiquity, early Christians, confronted not only by the ‘omnipresence’ of magic in the pagan world, but also with accusations that they themselves practised magic, fought back. They identified the pagan deities and daimones as the evil demons of the Bible, and characterised magic, which involved invoking the gods and daimones, as the worship of demons. Valerie Flint summarises the process as follows:

The characterisation of ‘magic’ as the work solely of wicked demons, and of ‘sorcerers’ and ‘magicians’ as their servants, stemmed from two convergent developments. In the first place, the concept of the ‘daimon’ changed … In the second, ‘magia’, or ‘magic’, became the chief term whereby the most powerful of the emerging religions described, and condemned, the supernatural exercises of their enemies. … [The] ‘daimon’ was translated … into the evil demon of Judaic and Christian literature – a figure who could never help or co-operate with man for his good, but was instead his most bitter foe. Thus, those humans who looked to obtain supernatural help in the older ways and through an older or different ‘daimon’, came to be viewed by many as terminally deluded … Sorcerers and magicians were then ‘demonised’ by being declared subject only to the demonic forces of evil, and were described as offering reinforcement to the most wicked of these forces’ designs [original italics].

There were two major consequences of this demonisation process. First, ‘early Christian writers tended to see all forms of magic, even ostensibly harmless ones, as relying on demons.’ This perception of magic persisted through the medieval and early modern period. Natural philosophy admitted two branches of magia: natural magic and demonic magic. Both were occult, because their processes were secret and hidden from human intellect, but natural magic was not the work of demons. The men known as magi in Renaissance circles, such as Cornelius Agrippa, Marsilio Ficino, or Pico della Mirandola, defended natural magic, which rose in prominence as a subject of natural philosophy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
Demonic magic, however, did not disappear. In the *Malleus maleficarum*, for instance, Institoris and Sprenger insisted that witches and the Devil must always work in conjunction.\(^77\) Jean Bodin states in the *Demonomanie* that ‘without the pact with Satan, even if a man had all the powders, symbols, and incantations, he could cause neither man nor beast to die.’\(^78\) In addition, the defenders of natural magic were sometimes condemned as witches themselves. Both Jean Bodin and Pierre de Lorraine, for example, call Cornelius Agrippa a master-witch.\(^79\) To those who believed that all magic required the assistance of demons, anyone who engaged in it, in any form, was in fact practising Devil-worship.

From a Christian perspective, the logical consequence of the association of magic with demons and Devil-worship was that magic-users were fools. Augustine expressed an early version of this idea in *The City of God*:

> What foolishness it is, then, or, rather, madness, to submit ourselves to demons, … when by the true religion we are set free from those vices [anger, passivity of the soul, vanity, disquietude] in respect of which we resemble them! … What reason is there, … apart from folly and miserable error, for you to humble yourself to worship a being whom you do not wish to resemble in your life?\(^80\)

Close to eleven centuries later, Jean Bodin explained that ‘evil spirits tricked people in ancient times, as they still do now, in two ways: one openly, with formal pacts, by which usually only the *greatest simpletons* [masculine], and *women* were snared. The other way was to deceive virtuous but *very foolish men* by idolatry, and under a veil of religion [*italics added*].’\(^81\) In his preface to *De la demonomanie des sorciers*, he counters sceptical objections to the epistemological value of witches’ confessions with the statement that the witches whose testimonies are in question ‘for the most part are completely ignorant people or old women.’\(^82\) In essence, as the *Malleus maleficarum* also suggests, people become witches because of an intellectual lack or failing (as well as a moral failing).
In these two passages, Bodin makes explicit a set of conceptual connections that more often operate only implicitly within early modern demonology.83 The first connection, witch/weakness, is a binary construct that, within the logical framework of Christian demonology, seems to have been necessary and indivisible. The second connection, femininity/weakness/masculinity, is an asymmetrical triad. Both men and women share the trait of weakness, but it is linked far more strongly with women than with men.

When these two sets come together in early modern ideas about witches, they create a web of associations in which a person thought to be a witch is necessarily also thought, on some level, to be weak-minded. When that person is a woman, the associations link up in what we might visualise as a circle: each element—witch, weakness, woman—reinforces the other, creating, in essence, a stable system. If, however, the witch is a man, the associative dynamic is somewhat different. There is nothing in the web of associations, or in the intellectual traditions and past experiences, to prevent male witches. However, because the conceptual link between women and weakness is stronger than that between men and weakness, witches are associated more strongly with femininity. As a result, a male witch causes conceptual ‘reverberations’ within the web that associate him not only with weakness, but also with femininity.84

Does this feminisation of witchcraft and male witches mean that Stuart Clark is correct to argue that the early modern gendering of witchcraft was based on binarism? Clearly, his view that male witches were ‘literally unthinkable’ within early modern demonology is incorrect. At first glance, male witches appear to flatly contradict Clark’s carefully worked-out system of correspondences between witches and women; one might, therefore, be tempted to dismiss his interpretation as fatally flawed. However, there is too much evidence of binary thinking both in early modern culture generally and in demonology in particular for us to indulge in a facile rejection of Clark’s thesis. Furthermore, our examination of male witches and the way they made
sense to early modern witchcraft theorists offers evidence of binarism at work on an implicit level.

What it also shows, though, is that Clark’s interpretative scheme is too rigid. Early modern witchcraft theorists did not construct an exclusive conceptual correspondence between witches and women; indeed, it would have made very little sense for them to do so, given their experience with actual male witches. What they did construct was a web of associations similar in some respects to Clark’s binary framework, but not so rigidly polarised as to prevent ‘leakage’ across the gender boundary. It is important to remember that although demonology feminised male witches, it never made them female. To put it another way, male witches were never reconstructed in such a manner as to make them unrecognisable as males.

The feminised male witch has important implications for the way we speak of gender and its construction in early modern Europe. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne have written that the portrayal of the social construction of masculinity and femininity as strictly relational rests on ‘a number of questionable assumptions, among them the idea that these qualities cannot be ascribed to a single individual at the same time’. They argue that although ‘an important aspect of many hegemonic discourses is their focus on an absolute, naturalised and, typically, hierarchised male/female dichotomy whereby men and women are defined in terms of the differences between them’, it is necessary to consider not only ‘the relation between maleness and female­ness’, but also ‘how hierarchical relations between men and women reproduce differences within those categories [original italics]’.

The feminised male witch is an excellent example of the construction of difference within a gender category, and forces us to rethink the binary model of early modern gender.

The male witch also highlights the feminisation of subordinates in early modern European culture. Witches were feared for their power, but they were also understood to be subservient to the Devil in a very literal sense. Bodin once again furnishes explicit statements of this idea,
describing witches as Satan’s slaves. However, other signs of this sub-
ordinate relationship were extremely common within demonological 
literature: the anal kiss, signifying homage; the Devil’s sexual use of 
female witches, often described as painful to the witch; the necrom-
amic practice of making offerings to demons; the physical beatings 
inflicted on disobedient witches by the Devil; and finally, the funda-
mental role of the witch as the Devil’s instrument for spreading evil. Like 
mental weakness, this subordination to the Devil bears a strong con-
ceptual association with femininity via powerlessness and passivity.

This chapter began by posing the question of how learned early 
modern Europeans made sense of male witches. On one level, the 
answer is fairly simple: male witches existed, so authors of witchcraft 
treatises incorporated them in their demonologies. Such a conclusion is 
not very rewarding; however, probing more deeply into the conceptual 
associations at work in early modern demonology uncovers a complex 
web that reflects not only ideas about witches but also how learned 
European men constructed gender.

**Gender and witchcraft: popular knowledge**

In times and in places where the ‘elaborated concept’ was not the dom-
inant understanding of witchcraft and magic as necessarily a result of 
a pact with the Devil, all manner of traditional, ‘pre-demonological’, 
perhaps even ‘pre-Christian’ magic seems to have been in regular use: 
weather magic, either to bring about rain or to avert (or cause) frost 
or hail; healing magic; the ritual battles of the male and female benan-
danti against the forces of evil, described by Ginzburg; spells to cure 
or damage livestock or crops; harm to infants (frequently by 
women); charms that produced impotence; love potions; curses 
that crippled or killed, and the like. Ideas about magic and its prac-
tice seem to have existed well before and continued to exist in parallel 
with the elaboration of a logical, coherent Christian theory that 
identified the supernatural motive force behind all attempts at
witchcraft or perceived bewitchment as the Devil – despite Jeffrey Burton Russell’s argument in his book *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*\(^9^4\) that witchcraft was, throughout the Middle Ages, Devil-worship. That certain Christians nourished *fantasies* about other people – Templars, heretics, Jews – worshipping the Devil is beyond question, but as Behringer has shown, the ‘elaborated concept’ of witchcraft did not prevail in the vast and disjointed European market place of ideas about witchcraft until the fifteenth century. The substance and content of charges of witchcraft did not change much as the ‘elaborated concept’ spread; in fact, in general, the local forms of magic from the pre-‘elaborated concept’ or pre-demonological period were retained but reinterpreted, as in the famous example of the *benandanti*, as the result of diabolical intervention or, more properly, as delusions produced by the Devil in those who served him. The *benandanti* studied by Carlo Ginzburg were, he claims, practitioners of ancient, pre-Christian shamanism, including shamanistic out-of-body travel experiences in a trance state. Although they were able to persuade the inquisitors at the beginning of the sixteenth century that they not only battled witches (using sorghum stalks as weapons), and even managed to persuade authorities that they could detect victims of witchcraft, a hundred years later, they had been persuaded that, at least according to the inquisitors’ categories, they were themselves witches.\(^9^5\) This example has been used to argue that ‘the persecution of witches is an effect of the acculturation of rural areas by the religious and political elite’,\(^9^6\) that is, of the *reinterpretation* of magical lore, such as healing knowledge and various kinds of rituals, as *diabolical*. In many cases, when ideas about what witches did and who they were encountered coherent theories of ‘diabolical witchcraft’, individuals and institutions both accommodated popular discourse to learned demonology and resisted or modified specific aspects of the ‘elaborated concept’.

The opposite was also true. Sometimes the ideas of learned elites had to accommodate popular belief. An early example of what would later become a widespread opinion among Protestant churchmen was
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that of Johannes Brenz, the Reformer of the city of Schwäbisch-Hall and the leading churchman of the Duchy of Württemberg (in south-western Germany). Brenz argued, well before Johannes Weyer developed a complete theory along these lines, that ‘misfortunes such as hailstorms were sent by God, while the witches were merely deluded by Satan into thinking they had caused them’.97 This suggests that the learned elites of Reformation Germany had reason to acknowledge that those accused of witchcraft sometimes believed that they had in fact practised magic (whether with or without the help of the Devil).

The main question regarding popular ideas about witchcraft that presents itself in the context of this book is to what extent such conceptions were gendered. In Witches and Neighbors, Robin Briggs notes that ‘early’ (meaning pre-sixteenth-century) images of witchcraft activities contained not only old women (‘hags’), but also ‘nubile young women, men and children’, and that while some confessing witches asserted that women were more numerous than men at the witches’ Sabbath, ‘a fair number’ insisted that the sexes were equally represented, or even that there were more men,98 suggesting that these witches were introducing witchcraft ideas that were to some extent at odds with ‘orthodox’ demonology regarding the greater susceptibility of women to the Devil’s lures.99 Regarding gender, Briggs states that ‘[a]lthough no area of magical power was totally or consistently gendered, large parts of folk medicine and love magic tended to become feminine specialties’,100 though the benandanti of the Friuli were certainly popular healers, and most were men. Indeed, Briggs suggests that the widespread idea, especially in the English-speaking world, that most or almost all witches were women has to do with the fact that very few men were accused or executed in England, and that the English demonologists were guilty of an extreme misogyny that has called forth an equal and opposite reaction among many scholars. This last point is worth examining; it seems to us that English demonologists were no more or less misogynistic, say, than the authors of the Malleus maleficarum. It is by looking beyond England and in leaving behind the dated ‘sociogenesis argument’ (i.e.,
the notion that witches were quintessentially weak/poor/old women), which Briggs has rightly critiqued, that we can begin to understand both learned and popular concepts of witchcraft and their complexly gendered nature. In certain parts of Europe, such as sixteenth-century Finland, the stereotype sorcerer was a man, probably due to Finnish folk traditions and the ancient Finnish religion, in which supernatural powers were not associated with women but with men. The majority of those accused of witchcraft in Iceland were men, and unlike in English, the generic term for witch in Icelandic was masculine. The grammatical gender of a word cannot, on its own, have caused the preponderance of men among those accused; although for the English-speaking world, the effects of the (implicitly) gendered word ‘witch’ on both the popular imagination and on scholarship should not be underestimated.

The Icelandic witch trials of the seventeenth century, as in the Basque country studied by Henningsen, coincide with ‘a temporary syncretism of the witch-beliefs of the common people with those of the specialized or educated classes’. Briggs and others have noted that the majority of accusations were produced at the local level, and motivated by ‘fear of witchcraft in the most direct sense.’ Here we must look not for a belief that old, strange, poor women were, somehow, a priori, witches, but for belief in witchcraft and local, temporally specific and quite dynamic and flexible ideas about who might be a witch, ideas that included all manner of popular lore about medicine, healing, and especially *maleficium*, and which, by the sixteenth century at the latest, were interacting with learned demonology in unpredictable and explosive ways. It is this last point that is crucial for understanding the complex relationship between popular and learned ideas: they were not unrelated, but when they came into conjunction, and other external factors (whether inquisitorial zeal, large-scale agrarian crises, a local crop failure, or small-scale (perceived) damages in the village or countryside) provided the impetus, either cases of ‘low-level’ or ‘endemic’ persecution or episodes of intensive or even ‘epidemic’ witch-hunting could
ensue. It is hard to say whether learned demonologists were more or less disposed than everyone else to think that witches were more likely to be women than men, since both did think this – though not exclusively. The only real answer is that it depends where, and when. The vexed question as to whether or not learned writers accommodated their universalising demonological discourses to local conditions and ideas, or were influenced by those ideas, in order to produce this ‘syncretism’ – or if some other, much less straightforward process of ‘influence’ was afoot – is the core issue here, but it falls outside the scope of the present work and remains as a fascinating agenda for further research based on specific historical situations.

Notes

1 We have borrowed this image of the procrustean binary structure from Christopher A. Faraone, Ancient Greek Love Magic (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix.

2 The benandanti of the Friuli were healers and ‘shamans’ who went out in dreams to fight witches, they said, and to ensure the fertility of the crops; by the seventeenth century, they were being forced to confess to diabolical witchcraft. See Ginzburg, Night Battles.

3 The meaning of m’chashefa is actually unclear; the Septuagint translates the word m’chashefa as ‘poisoner’. In rabbinic literature, the term is glossed as to referring to magical activities that are typically female; yet the Talmud makes it clear that these people can be men or women (Palestinian Talmud, Sanhedrin 7:19, 25d; Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 67a); cf. Leviticus 20, 27, which prescribes the death penalty for a man or a woman who practises divination through a ghost or a familiar spirit. See the Hertz Chumash (The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, ed. Rabbi J.H. Hertz. London: Soncino, 1947), commentary to Exodus 22, 17, p. 313, which amounts to a polemic against Christian scholars’ attempts to pin the blame for witch persecution on Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures. Hertz notes that the odd wording of the injunction (such commandments are usually phrased as a direct commandment to put such a person to death) led some Jewish commentators to suggest that it is a prohibition against using the services of a sorceress/diviner, and thereby allowing her to make a living. The importance of this passage to
early modern demonologists can be gauged by the reference to it in the *Daemonologie* of James I and VI as proving the existence of witchcraft: *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue* [1597], ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 5.


6 Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*, 1–4.


10 See *ibid.*, 35–78 for detailed discussions of the accusations against these groups. Similar stereotypes extend to the present day, with belief in covert groups that practise Devil-worship ‘spread very widely through the Western world’. The alleged practices of such groups ‘include human sacrifice, cannibalism and depraved sexual orgies.’ Jean La Fontaine, ‘The history of the idea of Satan and Satanism’, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Twentieth Century*, 88–93: 87.


12 Guazzo, *Compendium maleficarum*, 38.


14 *Ibid.*, 22–24. Monter bases his hypothesis of a connection between witchcraft and heresy on linguistic evidence: in Geneva, Lausanne and Sion, ‘the earliest vernacular words for “witch” [e.g. *vaudois*] were distinctly derived from words for “heretic”’. In other areas, where most witches were women, vernacular terms rooted in sorcery, such as *casserode* and *genauche*, were more common. pp. 22–23.

15 Monter seems to use the term ‘sex-linked’ only when the majority of witches are women. Witchcraft is not sex-linked, it appears, when the majority are men. This is another obvious instance of historians’
conceptual bias against the existence of male witches. There is no logical reason to view witchcraft as sex-linked in one instance and not in the other – unless, that is, one is employing asymmetrical standards of sex-relatedness.


18 Ibid., 31.
19 Ibid., 4–6.
20 Ibid., 54.
21 Ibid., 55.
22 Ibid., 57.
23 Ibid., 62–63.
25 Graf, Magic in the Ancient World, 185.
26 Bodin, Preface, Demonomanie, unpaginated.
27 Ibid., 1.1.3.
28 Molitor, De laniis, unpaginated.
31 Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae; Rabanus Maurus, De magiciis artibus; Burchard of Worms, Decretum Bk. X (De incantatoribus et auguribus), PL 140, 831–854 (ed. J.-P. Migne).
33 Peters, The Magician, the Witch, and the Law, 54.
Jan R. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France: Text and Context of Laurens Pignon’s Contre les devineurs* (1411) (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 68. The first man involved was Arnaud Guillaume, who attended the king in 1393.

Ibid., 72–73.


de Lancre, 1.3, 89.


Ibid., 189.

William Monter found in his study of the Jura region that many men accused of witchcraft were also accused of ‘grave sexual crimes’, including sodomy, but this does not necessarily mean that male witches in general were thought to engage in homosexual activity – on the contrary, it could suggest that sodomites also engaged in witchcraft. *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, 135–136.

See e.g. Bodin, *Demonomanie*, 2.7, 107. Bodin refers to Giovanni Francesco Pico, Prince of Mirandola, on the subject of two sorcerer-priests whose demon lovers were female: ‘Ian François Pic Prince de la Mirande escript auoir veu vn Pretre Sorcier nommé Benoist Berne aagé de lxxx. ans, qui disoit auoir eu copulation plus de XL. ans auec vn Démon desguisé en femme … Et si escript auoir veu encorees vn autre Prestre aagé de LXX. ans, qui confessa aussi auoir eu semblable copulation plus de cinquante and auec vn Demon en guise de femme, qui fut aussi bruslé’ See Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002). This book appeared too late for us to consult it.

Constance Classen, ‘The scented womb and the seminal eye: Embodying gender codes through the senses’, *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 63–85. Classen’s discussion covers a very wide range of sources from the ancient, medieval and early modern periods, and the views she describes were not necessarily constant or consistent. Nevertheless, her work on the gendering of the senses offers an intriguing way of opening up the discussion of the gendering of witchcraft. Classen herself argues that ‘the
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Witch-hunters of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries took the traditional negative stereotypes of women’s sensory traits and practices and made of them a diabolic female sensorium in which each of the senses was dedicated to evil, 78–79. This interesting interpretation is, unfortunately, marred by Classen’s conclusion that ‘the witch-hunts were, at least in part, designed to put the fear of God and of the executioner into women, and to clamp down on attempts by women either to aspire to male forms of power, or to empower themselves through traditional women’s work’, 82.


Ibid., The Color of Angels, 66.

Ibid., 70.

Ibid., 71.

Bodin, Demonomanie, 2.1, 52. The date given on this page is 1574 (see note 52), but this is surely an error for 1571.

Ibid., 3.3, 134. ‘Et me souvient que Trois-eschelles Manseau estant en la presence d’un Roy, fist un truict de son mestier, qui estonna le Roy à vray dire … le Roy le fist sortir, & ne le voulut on ques voir, tellement que au lieu d’estre fauory, on luy fist son procès, & fut condamné comme Sorcier …’ (I recall that Trois-eschelles, while in the presence of the king, performed a trick of his craft, which amazed the king, truth to tell … the king sent him out and desired never to see him again, so much so that instead of being favoured, he was tried and condemned as a witch … )

Ibid., 2.4, 80. ‘Et n’y a pas long temps, c’est à dire lan M.D. LXXI. entre ceux qui furent deferez Sorciers par l’aueugle, qui fut pendu à Paris …’ (Not long ago, that is, in the year 1571, among those who had been denounced as witches by the blind one, who was hanged at Paris … )

Ibid., 2.1, 52. ‘Et mesme l’aueugle Sorcier, qui fut pendu à Paris l’an M.D. LXXXIII, & qui en accusa cent cinquante, & plus …’ (Even the blind witch
who was hanged at Paris in 1574, and who denounced one hundred and fifty others, or even more …

53 Nyder, 5.4, 202.

54 Bodin does state that witches are foul-smelling, but he explains that this is because they copulate with demons, who may take on the bodies of the dead. Women have sweeter breath than men, but their intimacy with Satan causes them to become unnaturally hideous and foul. 3.3, 133: ‘les anciens ont appelé les Sorcieres foetentes … pour la puanteur d’icelles, qui vient comme ie croy de la copulation des Diables, lesquels peut estre prennent des corps des pendus, ou autres semblables pour les actions charnelles et corporelles’.


56 See e.g. Roper, ‘Exorcism and the theology of the body’, and ‘Witchcraft and fantasy; Purkiss, The Witch in History; Barstow, Witchcraze; Classen, The Color of Angels.


58 For example, Johann Weyer, who published his attack on witch-hunting, De praestigiis daemonum, in 1563, wrote that ‘most often … the Devil thus influences the female sex, that sex which by reason of temperament is inconstant, credulous, wicked, uncontrolled in spirit, and (because of its feelings and affections, which it governs only with difficulty) melancholic; he especially seduces stupid, worn out, unstable old women.’ De praestigiis daemonum, trans. John Shea, Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991), 180–181. One of Weyer’s arguments against witch-hunting was that using women as his servants would be counter-productive to the Devil’s evil purposes: ‘because of their age and sex and as a result of the cold, moist, dense, sluggish constitution which renders their bodies unsuitable, they hinder the work of the demon’s fine and subtle substance, so that if he seeks the cooperation of these women, he is disturbed and hindered in the performance of his task.’ Ibid., 85–86.

59 Clark, Thinking With Demons, 114.

60 Ibid., 115.

61 See also Eliane Camerlynck, ‘Fémininité et sorcellerie’; Sophie Houdard, Les Sciences du diable; Gerhild Scholz Williams, Defining Dominion.

62 Many of the arguments are borrowed almost verbatim from Nider.
Schnyder, I.6, p. 41: ‘quia prone sunt ad credendum. et quia principaliter demon querit corrumpere fidem. ideo potius eas aggreditur’. This passage is supported by a reference to Ecclesiastes 19: ‘Quia cito credit leuis esse corde et minorabitur.’

Ibid., ‘a natura propter fluxibilitatem complexionis facilioris sunt impressionis’.

Ibid., p. 42. ‘Mul[i]eres ferme vt pueri leui sententia sunt’ – a paraphrase of a line by Terence.

Ibid. ‘Mala ergo mulier ex natura cum citius in fide dubitat etiam citius fidem abnegat’.

Ibid., p. 43: ‘ex inordinatis affectionibus et passionibus varias vindictas querunt excogitant et infligunt siue per maleficia siue alii quibuscumque mediis’.

Ibid., ‘Quantus insuper defectus in memoratiua potentia cum hoc sit in eis ex natura vitium nolle regi sed suos sequi impetus sine quacunque pietate ad hoc studet et cuncta memorata disponit.’

Summers, 47. Schnyder, I.6, 45. ‘Omnia per carnalem concupiscientiam, que quia in eis est insatiabilis’.

Ibid., I.6, 42.

Ibid.


Graf, Magic in the Ancient World, 1.


Kieckhefer, Magic in the Middle Ages, 38.

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77 Schnyder, I.2, 18. ‘Concludamus quod ad maleficiales effectus de quibus ad presens loquimur malefici cum demonibus semper concurrere et vnum sine altero nihil possesse efficiere.’ (We conclude that so far as the evil deeds of which we are now speaking are concerned, witches [male] always work with demons and one cannot make anything happen without the other.)

78 2.8, 116: ‘sans la paction auec Sathan, quand vn homme auroit toutes les poudres, caracteres, & parolles des Sorcieres, il ne sçauoit faire mourir ny homme ny beste.’

79 E.g. Bodin, 1.3, 20: ‘Agrippa … a esté toute sa vie le plus grand Sorcier qui fut de son temps’. (Agrippa … was for his whole life the greatest witch who existed in his time.) de Lancre, 1.2, 69: ‘Ce grand Sorcier Agrippa était de cet avis’. (The great witch Agrippa was of this opinion.)


81 Bodin, 1.3, 15: ‘les malins esprits anciennement trompoient, comme ils font encore à present, en deux sortes l’vne ouuertement, auec pactions expresses, où il n’y auoit quasi que les plus lourdaux, & les femmes qui y fussent prises: l’autre sorte estoit pour abuser les hommes vertueux, & bien nais, par idolatrie, & soubs voile de religion’.

82 Ibid., Preface, unpaginated: ‘pour la plupart sont gens du tout ignorans ou vieilles femmes’.

83 Bodin’s comments are not isolated, but similarly explicit statements are rare. However, in our view, the logic of demonology, combined with the explicit rhetoric one does find, supports the reading of demonological texts as implicitly feminising male witches.

84 Our argument here is influenced by the metaphor of the ‘Hesse-net’, described by H.M. Collins as a network, or spider’s web, of concepts that is ‘mutually supporting since everything is linked to everything else’ but is also susceptible to change: ‘by virtue of the way that everything is connected, a change in one link might reverberate through the whole of the network.’ ‘The scientist in the network: A sociological resolution of the problem of inductive inference’, Changing Order: Replication and

Bodin, 3.3, 135: ‘Mais pourquoi Satan ne depart de ses tresors cachez en terre à ses esclaues?’ (Why does Satan not give his treasures, hidden in the earth, to his slaves?) Ibid., 137–138: ‘quel malheur peut estre plus grand que le rendre esclaue de Satan pour si peu de recompence en ce monde, & la damnation eternelle en laurte?’ (what misfortune can be greater than to become Satan’s slave for so little recompense in this world, and eternal damnation in the other?).

See, for example, Cornwall and Lindisfarne, ‘Dislocating masculinity’; T rexler, Sex and Conquest. For a classic discussion of the social and cultural meaning of slavery, see Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982). Brian Levack has hinted at an association between servility and feminisation, but in the context of distinguishing between male magicians and female witches: The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, 38. Levack’s citation of James I and VI’s Daemonologie to support his view that male magicians commanded the Devil while female witches served him is somewhat misleading. Levack quotes the statement that ‘Witches ar servantes onelie, and slaues to the Devil; but the Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders’ out of context. The statement is a characterisation of vulgar opinion, which, as the text explains, is only ‘in a manner true’. Men may command the Devil, ‘not by anie power that they can haue over him, but ex pacto allanerlie: whereby he oblices himself in some tri- fles to them, that he may on the other part obteine the fruition of their body & soule’. King James the First, Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue [1597], ed. G. B. Harrison (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 9.

As according to the confession of an early modern witch reported by E. William Monter, European Witchcraft (New York: Wiley, 1969), 80–81: ‘She had used the said little bones to manufacture hail; this she was wont to do once or twice a year … At last the hail was sent over the marsh towards Weissingen, doing great damage.’

Briggs, Witches and Neighbors, 88: ‘Cows, pigs, goats and sheep were all potential targets for witches; these were the animals which were kept for meat, milk, hides and wool and can be assimilated to crops in general.’


See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Jasmin’s Witch: An Investigation into Witchcraft and Magic in South-west France during the Seventeenth
Especially by ‘cunning-folk’ – as in the Veneto, where witchcraft was almost entirely associated with cunning-folk, whose main pursuits were love magic and seeking buried treasure – activities that almost certainly pre-dated the ascendancy of the ‘elaborated concept’ of diabolical witchcraft. See Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650*.

92 Francisco Bethencourt, ‘Portugal: A scrupulous Inquisition’, *Centres and Peripheries*, 403–422: 414: ‘Curses are, among witches’ crafts, the most feared by the common people.’


96 Robert Muchembled, ‘Satanic myths and cultural reality’, 153.

97 E.g., Pierre de Lancre, Jean Bodin: the former set the ratio of those accused of witchcraft at 10:1 (female: male); the latter, at 50:1!


99 Heikkinen and Kervinen, ‘Finland: The male domination’, 322; and see chapter 1. Much the same is true for Estonia, where of the 193 defendants whose gender is known, 60 per cent were men. Madar, ‘Estonia I: Werewolves and poisoners’, 266.


101 As Christina Larner has put it, witches were accused not because they were women ‘but because they were witches’: *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 56 and 87.