THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WITCHCRAFT AND FEMININITY:

WITCHCRAFT AS A SEX-SPECIFIC CRIME

WITCHCRAFT IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA

A Master's Thesis

by

TURKAN YILMAZ

Lingue e Letterature Europee, Americane e Postcoloniali

European Joint Masters' Degree in English and American Studies

CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY

VENICE

February, 2015

To the lost womanhood…

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Universita Ca Foscari, Venezia

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis is an attempt to understand the close relationship between femininity and witchcraft in early modern English society, and to analyze the religious, socio-historical, and cultural reasons for that association. Then, I aim to present how witchcraft material is approached by the contemporary English dramatists. With this aim, the first chapter consists of four subchapters each of which includes the explanation of four different reasons for the strong association of witchcraft with femininity. The second chapter includes comparative analysis of three plays; namely *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton, *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford, and *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. Accordingly, how witchcraft theme is interpreted and incorporated in the corpora of those plays and the function of witch scenes constitute the main concern of the second chapter.

Through analyzing the possible reasons for the clear link between femininity and witchcraft, and discussing the interpretation of witchcraft theme in the plays from early modern English drama, this research highlights how witchcraft and witch-beliefs serve as a material for playwrights to criticize idealization of femininity.

Keywords: witchcraft, witch-beliefs, religion, female sexuality, female chastity

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Everything (all witchcraft) is governed by carnal lusting, which is insatiable in them (women) […] and for this reason they even cavort with demons to satisfy their lust…for intelligent men it appears to be reasonably unsurprising that more women than men are found to be tainted with the Heresy of sorceresses. Hence, and consequently, it should be called the Heresy not of Sorcerers but of Sorceresses, to name it after the predominant element. Blessed be the Highest One, Who has, down to the present day, preserved the male kind from such disgraceful behavior, and clearly made man privileged […]

Heinrich Kramer, Jacob Sprenger 45A, 170.

Witchcraft has been present in cultural and intellectual history of so many societies since time immemorial. It has been a subject approached by so many scholars from varying disciplines, ranging from anthropology to sociology. Thanks to the studies of these disciplines on witchcraft, today we have an educated understanding of witchcraft. However, one area that has remained particularly controversial is the question of gender in the witch hunts. Although the role of gender in witchcraft was acknowledged by most of the earlier historians, it was not at the centre of their discussion. It was either ignored or dismissed as a product of late

medieval clerical misogyny.[1] In the modern discourse of witchcraft, gender relations and the question of sex-specificity in witch hunts constitutes one of the main research areas. Scholars offer different hypotheses about the question of why women were most often targeted in witch hunts. According to Mary Daly, an American author of *Gyn-ecelogy*, the witchcraft vogue was totally a "Western and Christian manifestation of the androtic state of atrocity",[2] and she analyses the male obsession with purity by referring to some extremely misogynistic parts in the *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinric Kramer and Jacob Sprenger (1486)[3], which will be discussed extensively in this thesis. In her book, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, Anne Llewellyn Barstow maintains that the witch craze was gendered and it was an attack on femininity.[4] Furthermore, in a pamphlet on woman healers, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English evaluate witchcraft as 'a calculated ruling class campaign of terrorization' against female peasant population.[5] They point specifically to midwives and women healers as the main targets of persecutions. They also, like Daly, criticise the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and emphasize female sexuality as a reason for witch accusations. Steven Katz, who focuses on the close relation between the growing panic in witchcraft and the stigmatization of women, remarks that causing the witch-hunts "genderized mass murder" is not totally a fallacy.[6] In the words of Stuart Clark, one of the leading witchcraft scholars, "witch hunting was in reality women hunting."[7] Moreover, Christina Larner argues that witch-hunts were "sex-related" if not "sex-specific".[8] On the other hand, Keith Thomas, one

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[1] Sigrid Brauner. *Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews: The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany*. Ed. Robert H. Brown. U.S.A.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, pp. 14.
[2] Mary Daly. *Gyn/ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978, pp. 179.
[3] Jacob Sprenger & Heinrich Kramer. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Edt. Christopher S. Mackay. *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
[4] Anne Llewellyn Barstow. *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*. U.S.A.: Pandora,1994.
[5] Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. New York: Feminist Press, 2010 (first published in 1973), pp. 39.
[6] Steven T. Katz. *The Holocaust in Historical Context: Volume 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. pp. 433; 503.
[7] Stuart Clark. *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 427.
[8] Christina Larner. *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunting in Scotland*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981. pp.3.

of the most appreciated witchcraft historians of our time, asserts that gender played a small role in the witch hunts, for it was more related to the socio-economic shift and changes in religious ideologies during this time, and these were the two main reasons for the outbreak.[9] In the same way, James Sharpe expresses that seeing the witch craze merely as an organized attack on women would make the matter straightforward, and he warns of how influential the *Malleus Maleficarum* really was.[10] The existence of accusations directed to males proves that not all of the accused witches were female, and the crime was not exactly specific to women. On this point, in a special article on male witches in Old and New England, E. J. Kent rejects the notion of male witches as the secondary targets of accusations. He sees the feminization theory[11] as unconvincing, because it characterizes male witches as 'weak-minded', 'passive' and 'powerless'. Arguably, the contrasting explanations for the question of whether witch-hunts were an attempt at gendercide[12], a systematic gender-selective mass killing, or not are not enough to explain the fact that neither before nor since have adult European and English women been selectively targeted for such an atrocity. For this reason, the present thesis is an attempt to understand witchcraft in England in terms of gender that had a crucial role in the witch-hunts in early modern England. Carol Karlsen states that "between 1645 and 1647, several hundred people had been hanged in the wake of England's most serious witchcraft outbreak. More than ninety per cent of these English witches were women."[13] Especially when the socio-historical and religious background for witchcraft is analysed in depth, it

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[9] See chapters: "The Impact of the Reformation", "Witchcraft in England: the Crime and its History" and "Witchcraft and Religion".

[10] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. pp. 170.

[11] A theory, in some studies on gender and male witchcraft, which suggests that male witches were feminized who 'represent a failure of masculinity' so that they had female traits and were labelled witches. See E. J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680". *History Workshop Journal*, No. 60 (Autumn, 2005).

[12] For further information, see Marry Anne Warren, *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985). In her book, Warren first coined the term.

[13] Carol Karlsen. *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998 (first published in 1987), pp.2.

becomes clear that, to a much greater extent, witchcraft was a crime directly against women in England, as in Europe.

It is evident that the topic is so vast and many-sided, raising so many distinct yet interconnected questions, that no single book, yet alone M.A. thesis, could treat it with full appreciation. This is neither the aim nor the claim of this study. The aim of this study is not to offer an explanation for the question of gender in the witch hunts; but rather to seek to understand and examine the nature and the role of gender in witch hunts during the early modern period. Then, in accordance with the socio-cultural and religious context, analysing how English dramatists represented witchcraft in the works of early modern English drama is the aim of the present thesis.

The first chapter of the current thesis focuses on some social and religious dynamics behind the close relationship between womanhood and witchcraft in England. Because of the fact that English witchcraft was certainly 'a variation on a European theme'[14], I am going to discuss extensively also European witchcraft in terms of gender relations. Accordingly, the first chapter consists of four sub-chapters each of which includes the discussion of possible reasons for the witch figure being incessantly represented as a woman. The Judeo-Christian tradition of misogyny and its impact on the English Reformation with regard to gender discourse, perceptions of female nature and women's participation in folk healing constitute three main concerns in the first chapter.

Within this framework, the second chapter takes as its focus the witch figure in Elizabethan drama. This chapter will discuss how the close link between witchcraft and femininity was represented in the outstanding witchcraft plays of the period. With this aim, three plays are examined in depth, namely *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton, *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford, and *Macbeth* by William

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[14] Sharpe, 32.

Shakespeare. Here I have adopted a critical approach against the notion of seeing these plays as witch-centered, for witchcraft in these plays functions as a cloak under which we could find the plays' struggle for presenting and criticizing perceptions of female identity. Accordingly, the analysis of social obsession with female chastity and the function of Hecate in *The Witch,* of Mother Sawyer's symbiotic position between Winnifride and Susan in *The Witch of Edmonton*, and of the 'weird' sisters as a new witch figure in *Macbeth* form the content of the second chapter. It is my contention in this chapter that the representations of the witches are used only as dramatic elements to point at major concerns surrounding femininity in these plays. Through the comparison of three contemporary plays in accordance with the issues surrounding female gender and its relation with witchcraft, examining how witchcraft and witch women were interpreted and represented by the contemporary English dramatists is what I have tried to do in this chapter. Thus, the representations of Hecate and her cohorts in *The Witch*, of Mother Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton*, and of the weird sisters in *Macbeth* are analyzed as well as the constructions of female characters in those plays.

Consequently, this dissertation considers the role of gender in witch hunts and how witchcraft was represented in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in terms of gender. Therefore, I am going to examine possible reasons for the strong association of femininity and witchcraft in socio-cultural and religious contexts, and how this relation between femininity and witchcraft was staged in early modern English drama.

CHAPTER I

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WITCHCRAFT AND FEMININITY:

WITCHCRAFT A AS A SEX-SPECIFIC CRIME

I.0 Introduction

The *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinric Kramer and Jacob Sprenger (1486), which is referred also as the "Witch hunters' Bible", is one of the most famous and discussed medieval treaties on female witches. Although proving the existence of witchcraft and supplying the European witch hunters with information on how to identify, interrogate and convict witches seem to have been the basic concerns of the work, the claims on and explanations for the defects of women are also outstanding. The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* belonged to the fifteenth century Dominican reform movement, which propagated celibacy, venerated the Virgin Mary, equated sexuality in women with sin and death, and in their work, they claimed that women rather than men become witches because they are weaker, less intelligent, and so lascivious that they fall easy prey to temptation.[15] It is possible to present a distinctive sample statement for a misogynistic approach in the explanation offered by the authors in their work for the question of gender in witchcraft:[16]

> Indeed, just as the result of first defect, that of intelligence, is that they commit the renunciation of the Faith more easily than do men, so too the result of the second, namely irregular desires and passions, is that they seek, think up and inflict various acts of vengeance, whether through acts of sorcery or by any other means. Hence, it is no wonder that such a large number of sorcerers are women. In addition, how great is their defect in the power of memory.

The English gentlemen Reginald Scot was the first to respond to the claims in the *Malleus Maleficarum* on witchcraft. In his work, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584)[17], Scot rejected the existence of magic and witchcraft by applying to reason and religion. However, Scot's

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[15] Sigrid Brauner. *Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews: The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany*. Ed. Robert H. Brown. U.S.A.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, pp. 14.
[16] Jacob Sprenger & Heinrich Kramer. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Ed. Christopher S. Mackay. The Hammer of Witches: *A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 167.
[17] Reginald Scot. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Rev. Montague Summers. New York: Dover Publications, 2013.

point was not related to the issue of femininity; he was merely against the idea of superstition which was caused by women and could have been a threat to divine power. In her book, Diane Purkiss refers to Scot's work as sceptical on witchcraft but misogynistic in response to the idea that women might act as agents of supernatural causation.[18] The copies of Scot's empirical study were burned on the accession of James I, the author of *Daemonologie* and the sponsor of the translation of the Bible. In the introduction of his *Daemonologie*, the king states that his aim is to convince those who are sceptical about the existence of witchcraft. Besides, in Book Two of the work, Philomathes asks why there are twenty female witches for every male witch and Epistemon's response to the question is the stock answer of the demonologists which is going to be discussed in the following pages:[19]

> The reason is easy, for as that the sex is frailer than man is, so is it easier to be entrapped in these gross snares of the Devil, as was overwell proved to be true by the Serpent's deceiving of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the friendlier with that sex since then.

These historical works written either to prove or to reject the existence of witchcraft share an aspect; the constant representation of women as being inherently weaker than men. According to the claim of Kramer and Sprenger, women rather than men become witches because they are weaker, less intelligent, and so lascivious that they are prone to being tempted by the devil easily. In the same way, Epistemon's words in *Daemonologie* by King James I reveal the common belief that ever since the serpent deceived Eve, he has tricked more women than men. In Scot's rejection of existence of witchcraft, we again examine the same attitude towards femininity. Thus, this chapter aims to interrogate the possible socio-cultural and religious dynamics behind this treatment of women and to analyse how these

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[18] Diane Purkiss. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 64.

[19] King James I. *Demonologie*. Ed. Donald Tyson. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011, pp. 128.

reasons have functioned in regard to the strong association of femininity and witchcraft. To do

so, the issue is going to be approached from four separate but interconnected perspectives.

I.1 Religious Dynamics of Witchcraft as a Sex-Specific Crime

The position of woman and attitudes held about her are predominantly determined by the Judeo-Christian tradition and thus the first and oldest approach to explaining the sex-specificity of witch hunts needs to be referred to the Judeo-Christian tradition of misogyny (hatred towards women). To understand the nature of such misogyny, and the way Judaism and Christianity were supplementary and complementary to each other in terms of depiction of God and of the devil, the attributed gender images to these religious figures and the biblical account of creation which is posited on a premise about women's nature as inferior are the matter to be discussed.

In the introduction of his well-organized dictionary of witchcraft, Michael Bailey explains the interaction between Judaism and Christianity in terms of magic and witchcraft:[20]

> As Judaism developed into a fully monotheistic religion, that is, a system of belief maintaining not just that Israel had only one god, while other peoples might have many, but that the one god of Israel was in fact the single supreme deity of the entire universe, the idea of magic as deviation from proper religious practise became further developed. This process culminated, however, only in the early Christian era. Although Judaism was monotheistic, it never had a clearly defined concept of the devil, that is, the principal opponent of the one god responsible for all evil in the universe, as developed in Christianity. For early Christian authorities the power of Satan and the legions of lesser devils he commanded were set very directly against the power of God and the church in the world, and much magical practise became fully demonized.

If we consider the quotation, two crucial points are made with Christianization: the emergence of the principal opponent of the one god and the notion of relating magical practise with that opponent, namely Satan. In other words, the anti-social and religiously deviant aspects of

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[20] Michael B. Bailey. *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*. U.S.A: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2003. pp. 27.

magical practise were fully merged in Christian cosmology. It was the great church father Augustine of Hippo, as Bailey refers to, who gave this new Christian concept of magic its full form.[21] In his most important work, *The City of God*, Augustine described the struggle between divine and demonic power. Accordingly, all evil arose from demons, and all evil sorcery derived from demonic power. Moreover, Augustine fully articulated the concept of the pact made between the demon and the human magician. However, although the articulation of the reality of demonic sorcery and of the existence of witches started in the early Middle Ages, clerical authorities were either unable or unwilling to respond to such beliefs and practices.[22] For instance, there was also a belief in the existence of a group of women coming together to ride through the night sky with the pagan goddess Diana in that period; but this belief would be conveyed centuries later to the idea of the night flight of witches to a Sabbath, where they would allegedly summon demons or Satan himself in order to worship, receive instruction, and engage in a variety of sexual and horrific activities.[23] That is to say, although medieval theologians developed a sophisticated demonology, it was in the sixteenth century that the devil's personification and the notion of the possibility of his coming into the world and of having connections with human beings was disseminated.[24] As Thomas illustrates:[25]

> Demons had no corporeal existence, but it was notorious that they could borrow of counterfeit human shape. Medieval preachers enlivened their sermons with terrifying stories of the Devil's repeated appearances *to tempt the weak* and to carry away desperate sinners [Emphasis added]. The horns, tail and brimstone of the medieval stage, and the grotesque creatures of church sculpture and wood-carving, helped to form the popular conception of Satan which has remained ichnographically familiar until present day […] But in the sixteenth century, when

[21] Bailey, 28.
[22] Bailey, 29.
[23] Bailey, 109.
[24] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, pp. 190.
[25] Keith Thomas. *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. (first published in 1971) pp. 560.

all forces of organized religion had been deployed for centuries in formulating the notion of a personal Satan, he had a reality and immediacy.

As stated in the quotation, in Christian doctrine, the devil who was thought to be the enemy of both God and the human race was depicted as trying to tempt the weak and carry away desperate sinners. On this point, it is important to examine the attributed gender images to God, to the devil and to the weak one to analyse the impact of religious dynamics on gender question in witchcraft.

Firstly, although there is speculation on God's transitivity between genders in Christianity, God is traditionally referred to with masculine terms. As Pagel observes:[26]

> Jewish, Christian and Islamic theologians are quick to point out that God is not to be considered in sexual terms at all. Yet the actual language they use daily in worship gives the distinct impression that God is thought of in exclusively masculine terms.

For instance, God is addressed as Father, which forms the predominantly masculine image of God, and this father figure is linked with decision and direction as well as support.[27] Hence, it is possible to say that the theological vocabulary of Christianity is male-centred, and God is referred to as male. Then, would the enemy of God associated with a male image have been described as a female or male in the religion of a patriarchal society? To answer this question, representations of the devil should be taken into consideration. In Christianity, the concept of the devil as the supreme force of evil developed as a combination of several figures from the Hebrew Bible. For instance, the serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, the rebellious angel Lucifer who was thrown out from heaven, and Satan who appears in the Book of Job are among several figures of the devil. Thus, there is no definite gender image

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[26] Elaine H. Pagels. "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity". *The University of Chicago Press*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter, 1976), pp. 293.

[27] A result of crosscultural research reported by Vanesse Vergote and Tamayo de Neuter (1981), and quoted by Hart M. Nelsen, Neil H. Cheek, Paul Au. "Gender Differences in Images of God." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec., 1985), pp. 396.

attributed to the devil; yet, as in the case of the gender of God, he is referred to with masculine terms. The answer of Epistemon in the *Demonologie* of King James, for instance, to Philomathes's question on what forms the devil appears, "Diverse forms, even as he used to do […] he appears"[28], shows that at least the pronoun for the devil is 'he'. Furthermore, in "the gendered and religious culture of Puritanism"[29], Satan and his imps were viewed as male. The idea of a gendered male Satan who has sexual intercourse with witches and the idea of suckling to provide familiars with nourishment strengthened the idea that witches were women. While, in ancient Judaism, those figures were not represented as the source of evil; in the Christian New Testament, the devil appears as the principal opponent of God.[30] On this point, the account of the Fall takes another direction, and this information is of the first importance to examine the gender of the weak one.

The emergence of the devil concept as the principal opponent of the one god and the notion of relating magical practise with that opponent were not the only ideas generated by Christian theology out of Jewish theology. By valuing the New Testament narratives over those of the Old Testament, Christian tradition framed a far more negative image of women than did postbiblical Jewish tradition.[31] For instance, while Jewish theology does not speak of a "fall" or of "original sin", the drastically negative evolution of the figure of Eve dominates the Christian image of a woman. As Berkovic remarks:[32]

In the chain of events which includes the offer of a fateful food-"and the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for eating" (Gen 3:6)- a critical place is occupied by the woman as a dramatis persona. This biblical account about the destruction of earthly paradise actually, albeit in an

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[28] King James I. *Demonologie*. Ed. Donald Tyson. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011, pp. 139.
[29] Elizabeth Reis. *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1999, pp. 56.
[30] Bailey, 37-38.
[31] Helen Schüngel-Straumann. "The Older Part of Primordial History (Genesis 2-11)". Ed. Luise Schottroff & Marie-Theres Wacker. *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012. pp. 4.
[32] Danijel Berkovic. "From Misogyny to Cult: An Etiological Reading of Genesis 3". *Evangelical Journal of Theology*. Vol.3 No.2, 2009. pp. 154.

indirect way, assigns a critical role to the woman and not to the man. This paves the path which the woman will tread in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Her role in society, family and in the religious community is cemented through this tradition. She is the one who has deceived, not the man (1 Tim 2:14): she becomes the "weaker sex" in cognition (1 Pet 3:7); the woman must receive instruction "in silence" (1 Tim 2:11) or ask her husband (1 Cor 14:35).

Furthermore, the Serpent in this traditional theology is identified with the devil, and it tempts Eve, a woman, into eating from the forbidden tree. As Caldwell points out:[33]

> It is endowed with the faculty of speech and inspired with occult wisdom, able to prophesy the effect of eating from the forbidden tree. The serpent appears as a medium of the power of temptation. Its function is to present the outward object with suggestions calculated to stir the sinful desire within the soul. It makes the appeal of apparently superior wisdom to the natural inclinations of innocence – an appeal to the senses.

Thus, the serpent is not depicted merely as an animal. Instead, it is depicted as the devil tempting a woman. Conceptualising the devil as the supreme source of evil and the female as the weaker sex who is prone to the temptation by the devil was the main reason for misogyny in early Christian authorities. Since then, the woman has been marked as "weak" because it was she who succumbed to the snake and thus robbed humanity of a blissful existence in the Garden of Eden. In this way, the woman opened the door to the enemy of human race as well as to the fall of humankind. This identification of woman and sin, most often in the context of sexuality and the body, poses some challenging questions such as the question of why the biblical author let the woman carry on a discussion with the serpent alone and where the man is. Helen Straumann deploys a very convincing argument over the stated question: "The association is frequently made between tree and woman, tree and goddess. And the act of

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[33] William Caldwell. "The Doctrine of Satan: I. In the Old Testament." *The Biblical World*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jan., 1913), pp.31.

offering food is a matter for women; they are the nurturers".[34] Although Straumann continues her argument by claiming that the biblical author demonstrates the existence of evil in the world without attributing guilt to the woman, I would argue that this biblical account is the main source for misogynist commentaries and the reasons for showing the affinity of woman with sin and witchcraft, and the church's attitude towards women best exemplifies how the biblical account of the fall could have been easily applicable to misogynistic commentaries. As Brauner states:[35]

> The church equated women and their bodies with sin, carnality, and spiritual death; and in feudal society, women were extremely repressed. These traditions fused […] in the concept of the modern witch.

As for England, the concept for the devil and misogyny in Christian cosmology was not challenged by the Reformation. In contrast, it is possible to add that the Reformation strengthened this devil concept by rendering temptation as the only agent of the devil. As Thomas explains:[36]

> In the long run it may be that the Protestant emphasis on the single sovereignty of God, as against the Catholic concept of a graded hierarchy of spiritual powers, helped to dissolve the world of spirits by referring all supernatural acts to a single source. But if so it was a slow development. For Englishmen of the Reformation period the Devil was a greater reality than ever.

Certainly temptation is one of the central aspects in Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, as Johnstone rightly states, temptation had been only one of the activities in which the devil could affect humankind in the Middle Ages, whereas Protestants elevated it into the single

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[34] Helen Schüngel-Straumann, pp. 5.
[35] Brauner, pp. 13-14.
[36] Thomas, pp. 561.

most important aspect of his agency.[37] After all, the main reason for the separation between Catholism and Protestantism was the Protestants' experience of a progressive realization that the faith they had once accepted was corrupted by the devil.[38] On this point, it is particularly important to emphasize the difference based on religion between Catholic and Protestant demonologies. As Thomas states:[39]

> The demonological treaties by continental writers were only an extension of ideas latent in early medieval Christian theology, and there was, in principle, no reason why England should have offered less fertile soil for their reception than anywhere else in the Christian world. Nevertheless, medieval England does seem to have been largely isolated from the intellectual and judicial trends which encouraged witch persecution on the Continent. For this the substantial independence of the English Church seems to have been largely responsible. England had no Inquisition and no Roman Law; and Papal authority in England was much reduced.

This radical difference would have effects on witchcraft in England. That is, the main difference between European and English witchcraft seems to have been caused by this religious friction between the Catholic Church and Protestant Reformation. While witchcraft was labelled as heresy in Catholicism, in Protestant demonology, it was not open apostasy of the sort depicted in the fantasies of witches' Sabbaths.[40]

Consequently, the attributed genders to God and to the devil as male and the notion of woman as a weaker sex mostly posited on the biblical account of the fall reveal that the Bible is a book that comes to us from a patriarchal culture. Thus, the majority of texts were written, extended, and interpreted by men from their predominantly androcentric perspective.

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[37] Nathan Johnstone. "The Protestant Devil: The Experience of Temptation in Early Modern England." *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April, 2004), pp. 176.
[38] Johnstone, 180.
[39] Thomas, 522-523.
[40] Johnstone, 181.

However, the masculinising attitude towards religious images, like God, or seeing the female as a weak sex is not specific to Catholicism or Protestantism, and is not merely related to the Christian authorities; it is the result of patriarchal societies which have patriarchal religious beliefs. Then, the issue goes beyond the differences in religious interpretation of witchcraft. Instead, it is connected with femininity in general. As Daly rightly claims:[41]

> All-from Buddhism and Hinduism to Islam, Judaism, Christianity, to secular derivatives such as Freudianism, Jungianism, Marxism, and Maoism- are infrastructures of the edifice of patriarchy. All are erected as parts of the male's shelter against anomie. And the symbolic message of all sects of the religion which is patriarch is this: [...] Women are the objects of male terror, the projected personifications of "the Enemy", the real objects under attack in all the wars of patriarchy.

When a line from the Quran, An-Nisa 4/34 or Al-Baqarah 228,[42] or Freud's Penis Envy theory[43] viewing women as simply men without penises is taken into account, the accuracy of Daly's claim stated above is proven. I will not go further on this issue; but it has been important to mention the common characteristics of religion from this perspective. Even by looking at Christian doctrine in terms of the religious authorities' attitude towards femininity, it could be concluded that religious values are the products of patriarchal systems. Hence, religion had an important role to cause women to become the target of witch-hunts.

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[41] Mary Daly. Gyn/ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978, pp. 30.
[42] The examples could be multplied. An-Nisa 34: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance- [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them..."
Al-Baqarah 228: "Divorced women remain in waiting for three [menstration] periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation [...] But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]..." Web. 26 March 2014. <http://quran.com/4 >
[43] Sigmund Freud. "The Psychical Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction Between the Sexes". Emily Zakin. "Psychoanalytic Feminism". The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 edition). Web. 15 March 2014. < http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis >

I.2 Female as a Weaker Sex

> I am Eve, the wife of noble Adam; it was I who
> violated Jesus in the past; it was I who robbed my
> children of heaven; it is I by right who should have been crucified.
> I had heaven at my command; evil the bad choice
> that shamed me; evil the punishment for my crime
> that has aged me; alas, my hand is not pure.
> It was I who plucked the apple; it went past the
> narrow of my gullet; as long as they live in daylight
> women will not cease from folly on account of that.
> There would be no ice in any place; there would be
> no bright windy winter; there would be no hell,
> there would be no grief, there would be no terror
> but for me.[44]
>
> Anonymous, Old Irish

The role of woman, particularly her second-class status and her subordination to man, and the fixation on the so-called Fall (Gen 3), in which woman has been positioned as a so-called seductress have to a great extent defined the so-called Christian image of woman, as discussed in the previous sub-chapter. Now, how this image of woman was approached and interpreted from anatomical, moral and sexual perspectives and what the result of these interpretations was during the time period in question are the matters to be discussed. My purpose is to explain how female anatomy, sexuality and intellect were perceived in the early modern period and how this perception affected the close relation between witchcraft and femininity.

Females were considered easier targets for the devil because they were viewed as weaker than men physically. One of the main reasons for that perception was the ignorance

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[44] David Greene & Frank O'Connor. Eds. And trans. *A Golden Treasury of Irish Poetry 600-1200*. London, 1967. pp. 158.

about human anatomy causing to entertain the traditional notion that inwardness, in spiritual and physical senses, was recognized as a female trait which became much more pronounced in Puritan beliefs. Although there was a growing interest in the human body and some research on human anatomy was conducted and published during the early modern period, such as *The Questyonary of Cyrurgyens* by Guy de Chauliac and Robert Copland Galen (1542), and *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* by Andreas Vesalius (1543), the perspective on human sexual nature, as the historian Thomas Laqueur informs, was going to change during the second half of the eighteenth century.[45] One of the significant changes was the reconceptualization of male and female genitals and anatomy. Before the late eighteenth century, as Susie Steinbach states:[46]

> 'One-sex model', in which female genitals were thought to be male genitals turned inside out, prevailed. The uterus and ovaries were analogous (though inferior) to the penis and testicles; indeed, there was no separate term for ovaries.

Hence, women's anatomy was perceived as identical to men's; but women's genitals were inward and thus women seemed lesser beings than men. In some medical texts of that era, it is possible to see how female sexuality was described with the terminology available for male sexuality. For instance, Martin Akakia, a physician of King Francis I of France, wrote that (1597):[47]

> […] a woman is like a man without seed, and has a certain impotence […] that a woman in copulation excretes a certain fluid yet it does not carry seed […] So in conception the female supplies matter only, namely the blood, the male provides the form, that is to say the semen.

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[45] Thomas W. Laqueur. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Harvard UP, Cambridge, MA, 1990.
[46] Susie Steinbach. *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*. London: Phoenix, 2005. pp. 112.
[47] Martin Akakia. "On Women's Illnesses". Ed: Kate Aughterson. *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 49.

This biological notion that the female was a defective or lacking form of the male was stated also in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, in which the female is referred as an "imperfect animal" due to her creation from a curved rib as stated in Genesis.[48] However, in the late eighteenth century, as a result of both a cultural need to redefine women as different from men and new scientific discoveries, the misconception about female anatomy was replaced by a 'two-sex' model in which female genitals were wholly unlike male genitals. This 'two-sex' model of sexual difference involved new patterns for the sexual organs and sexual activity, which was based on differences between men and women. The most striking point in the development of that model was the recognition of the vagina as a medical term to name the cavity in female anatomy. As Robert B. Shoemaker informs: "From the 1670s there is evidence of the use of the term 'vagina' to label a cavity which had previously been labelled the neck of the womb and characterised as an inverted penis." [49] However, before that time, the idea of female genitals as inward penises set the belief in inwardness as an indicator of femaleness. In accordance with this mentality, the soul was perceived as female; because it was inside of and protected by the body. This attitude towards the soul could be seen in Elizabeth Reis's explanation when she points out the double standard in gender roles:[50]

> Men were not required to adopt outwardly feminine traits and risk compromising their masculinity; but man's soul, his inner self, could safely display female virtues. Passivity and receptivity to Christ's advances resided in men's (female) souls, but their bodies and sense of themselves remained masculine.

Consequently, it was regarded that if the body had been psychically stronger, then it could have supplied the soul with much more protection against the devil. In this case, females were

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[48] *Malleus Maleficarum*, pp. 165.
[49] Robert B. Shoemaker. *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*. England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998, pp. 62.
[50] Elizabeth Reis. *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1999. pp. 101.

considered as easier targets for the devil because of their psychical weakness and of being viewed as a lacking version of the male anatomy.

During the early modern period, females were regarded as being much weaker than men also because of their supposed propensity for sexual immorality and this was a reason for a close relationship between witchcraft and femininity. That is to say, women were thought to be the more sexually voracious of the sexes. The perception of a woman as almost a nymphomaniac is represented in many archival writings of the Renaissance period. One striking example is Ludovic Mercatus writing on womb hysteria (1597):[51]

> Womb hysteria, whose nature belongs partly to the natural appetite of the womb which has been damaged by upsetting its equilibrium, and in part to the brain, which the womb draws also into partnership. Womb hysteria is therefore an immoderate and unbridled desire to copulate, so strong and unquenchable that the woman appears mad and delirious as a result of this excessive and insatiable appetite.

While the quotation illustrates the representation of female sexuality, it also draws attention to the relation between womb and hysteria. Today hysteria is regarded as a physical expression of mental conflict which is possible for both sexes. However, during the medical enlightenment in the ancient world, hysteria was thought to be an illness which was special only for women; because it was thought to be caused by the womb. Furthermore, Plato's animistic view on the uterus and of the hysterical symptoms, that the uterus was an independent animal which wilfully wandered the woman's body and caused diseases, shows the deep historical background of ideas on female sexuality.[52] As Carol Groneman reports in her article, Hippocrates described the melancholy madness that could consume young girls

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[51] Ludovic Mercatus. "On the Common Conditions of Women/ On the Irritation and Hysteria of the Womb". Ed: Kate Aughterson. *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 53.

[52] Mark. J. Adair. "Plato's View of the Wandering Uterus". *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Dec., 1995-Jan., 1996) pp. 153.

and recommended marriage as the cure, and the second-century Greek physician Galen believed that uterine fury occurred particularly among young widows whose loss of sexual fulfilment could drive them to madness.[53] Thus, the solution suggested by the early thinkers seems to be marriage so that the women's uncontrollable lust could be kept under male control. When the fact that many of the women who were accused of witchcraft were generally widowed[54], which meant they were no longer under the care of a man, is considered, the importance of being married and having a husband for a woman at that time is crystallized. Yet what was the reason for firmly defining the female sex as the voracious sex? To present a possible background for this belief, I would like to provide a famous quotation from the *Malleus Maleficarum*:[55]

> There is a natural explanation, namely that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear in connection with many filthy carnal acts. These defects can also be noticed in the original shaping of woman, since she was formed from a curved rib, that is, from the rib of the chest that is twisted and contrary, so to speak, to man. From this defect there also arises the fact that since she is an imperfect animal, she is always deceiving, and for this reason she is always deceptive […] It is also clear in connection with the first woman that they have less faith by nature, since (her) response to the serpent's question […] shows that she is doubtful and does not have faith in the words of God.

In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the reason for sexual prejudice against women is based on the biblical account and on Eve's "infidelity". By taking the quotation given above and the general outlook of the work on female sexuality into account, we see two categories under which the women were labelled: "the first sinner Eve and her imitators […] and the blessing

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[53] Carol Groneman. "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality.".*Signs*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter, 1994), pp. 343.

[54] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. pp. 172.

[55] *Malleus Maleficarum*, 165.

Mary".[56] However, Eve's depiction as an unfaithful sinner who is disobedient to God recalls her opposite depiction as Adam's obedient wife when she is compared to Lilith in Jewish mythology. Lilith, in Jewish mythology, is depicted as a disobedient woman who rejects the 'under' position during copulation with Adam, that means refusing the authority God gives to Adam over her, then leaves him and consorts with Samael, the chief of satans. After all, Hebrew demon Lilith is just another version of Ardat Lili or Lilitu, "a monstrous female demon with wings and talons who would fly through the night, seduce men, and drink their blood" in ancient Sumerian belief, or Greco-Roman creatures strix and lamia.[57] For that reason, she is traditionally represented as an insubordinate, demonic and nymphomaniac woman. In contrast with Lilith, Eve represents the submissive and faithful woman who is formed from a curved rib of man and whose sexuality is oppressed by man. Nevertheless, in the quotation from *Malleus Maleficarum* given above, Eve's representation turns into the opposite one, the Lilith one, which reflects the Christian interpretation of Eve. The main reason for the transformation of Eve in Christian theology is the Christian association of sex and sin and death which entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned.[58] In Christian symbolism, the soul dies in lust as the body rots in death. The root of this belief was the Fathers of the Church's definition of evil. As Warner explains:[59]

> In the City of God, written 413-26, Augustine noted that Adam and Eve, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, covered their genitals, not their hands or mouths, which had done the deed. From this he reasoned that the knowledge they had acquired was of an inner force, which he called *epithymia* (concupiscence). It affects all areas of life, he wrote, but particularly the sexual act, which cannot be performed without passion […] Augustine suggested that either the hereditary taint was transmitted through the male genitals themselves during the

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[56] *Malleus Maleficarum*, 164.
[57] Michael B. Bailey. *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*. U.S.A: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2003. pp. 68.
[58] Marina Warner. *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983. pp. 50-51.
[59] Warner, 54.

intercourse, and that the body itself, not the soul, was genetically flawed by the Fall, or that because a child cannot be conceived outside the sexual embrace, which necessarily involves the sin of passion, the child is stained from that moment. The premise for this literal connection of intercourse and original sin was the virgin birth of Christ.

To support her point, Warner quotes from Augustine who wrote: "Let us love chastity above all things, for it was to show that this was pleasing to Him that Christ chose the modesty of a virgin womb."[60] In other words, the son of God chose to be born from a virgin mother because this was the only way a child could enter the world without sin. It could be deduced that Augustine bound up three ideas: the sinfulness of sex, the virgin birth, and the good of virginity. Augustine, who developed the theory more fully, was not the only man of his day to hold such ideas. Jerome, as Warner quotes, highlighted the categorization between women figures by saying:[61]

> Now that a virgin has conceived in the womb and borne to us a child […] now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman.

Hence, it is possible to say that while sexuality represented to the Fathers, such as Saint Jerome and Augustine, the gravest danger and the fatal flaw; they viewed virginity as its opposite and its conqueror.[62]

As a consequence, Christian theologians' interpretation of concupiscence as the tendency to sin causing spiritual corruption embodied the very essence of seeing woman's virginity as a sign of virtue and purity, and was the reason for the cult of the Virgin Mary. Like the transformation of the creation account, that the disobedience of Adam and Eve was a

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[60] Warner, 54.
[61] Warner, 54,55.
[62] Warner, 50.

catastrophe and paradise was lost, but through Christ's coming, his death and Resurrection, paradise was regained, the virgin birthing of Mary conquered the post-Eden natural law that man and woman couple in lust to produce children.[63] Hence, the Virgin Mary is set apart from the human race because she is not stained by the Fall. The overwhelming endorsement of virginity for its special holiness had an impact on placing the female sex on the side of the flesh in the battle between flesh and soul. Warner explains this impact by stating:[64]

> For as childbirth was woman's special function, and its pangs the special penalty decreed by God after the Fall, and as the child she bore in her womb was stained by sin from the moment of its conception, the evils of sex were particularly identified with the female. Woman was womb and womb was evil: this cluster of ideas endemic to Christianity is but the extension of Augustine's argument about original sin.

Therefore, it becomes clear that the main urge under the changeable representations of women has no concern with femininity at all. The main reason is to create a constant dual categorization among women; so that female sexuality could be under male control. This urge becomes clear also in the observation of Shomaker who says:[65]

> Fear about unleashing women's uncontrollable lust is one of the reasons, in addition to men's desire to control their wives and legal concerns about establishing the legitimacy of children, that there was a 'double standard' of sexual morality at the time, in which men's sexual peccadilloes were often tolerated and the sexual misbehaviour of women was widely condemned.

Apart from the intolerance of sexual misbehaviour of women, it is important to define which kind of behaviours or attitudes were seen as 'misbehaviour'. One way to do so is to examine extracts of significant accounts of women and femininity in early modern England. For

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[63] Warner, 52-53.
[64] Warner, 57.
[65] Shomaker, 62.

instance, Thomas Becon was one of the licensed preachers at Canterbury cathedral under Edward VI and Elizabeth I, and his description of an idealized woman is worthy to be reported:[66]

> As the woman's duty is to be in subjection to her husband: so likewise is she bound by the commandment of God to be chaste, pure and honest in deed, in word, in gesture, in apparel and in all her behaviour, no point of lightness appear in her, but all her modesty, sobriety, gravity, chastity, honesty, womanliness, that whosoever beholdeth her, may justly seem to look upon a perfect pearl of precious purity […] Let her refrain herself from all wicked company. Let her not accustom herself to strange flesh, but content herself only with the love of her husband. For if shipwreck of a woman's honesty be once made, there remaineth nothing in her praiseworthy (112).

In the quotation, there is only one attribute which is emphasized behind others: woman's chastity. While the honesty in the last sentence of the quotation refers to virginity, the shipwreck is a metaphor for the situation of the loss of virginity due to the premarital sex. Hence, we see a clear equation between virginity and virtue. All the properties of a woman to be thought as virtuous depend on one condition: she has to be a virgin before a lawful copulation, namely marriage. Another outstanding point in the quotation given above is the absence of education among the components of an idealized virtuous woman, for the female was regarded also as the intellectually weaker sex. A distinctive sample statement for that kind of approach to the female intellect is possible to find, again, in the *Malleus Maleficarum*:

> Indeed, just as the result of first defect, that of intelligence, is that they commit the renunciation of the Faith more easily than do men, so too the result of the second, namely irregular desires and passions, is that they seek, think up and inflict various acts of vengeance, whether through acts of sorcery or by any other means. Hence, it is no wonder that such a

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[66] Thomas Becon. *The Book of Matrimony*. Ed: Kate Aughterson. *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 110.

large number of sorcerers are women. In addition, how great is their defect in the power of memory (167).

The supporting statement to the quotation above comes from William Heale's *An Apology for Women* (1609), "Man the great creator's greatest creature, endued with remembrance, a register to recount former events; with wisdom […]".[67] As the quotations elaborate, women were seen as defected in terms of intelligence and memory. In contrast, man was seen as the source of wisdom and intelligence. With this attitude, education and being educated were not among the components of an idealized virtuous woman. Instead, her sexuality formed a focal point and her virginity loss was enough to automatically label her as a woman of easy virtue with low standards of sexual morality. On this point, it is important to add that illegitimacy rates, in contrast, reached their peak in England around 1600 when they constituted 4.5 per cent of all births.[68] Hence, it was also the period when extra-marital sexual activity prevailed and there was little premium among the people at large on pre-marital chastity.[69] Nevertheless, at the same time, the education of a woman was surrounded by the issues related to womanhood and motherhood in England. As Kate Aughterson points out:[70]

> Protestant writing on education for girls focused on two specific aims: the cultivation of virtue and the development of the skills of housewifery. The former was principally defined as the avoidance of the sign of pride and cultivation of the virtue of chastity, which are also specifically angled towards the girls' one function in life: to become a wife and mother.

As highlighted in the quotation, woman education was based on curriculum which was part of the gendered hierarchy of explicit political patriarchal practise and theory. Because of that

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[67] William Heale. "An Apology for Women". Ed: Kate Aughterson. *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995. pp.

[68] J. A. Sharpe. *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1987. pp. 44.

[69] Sharpe, 43.

[70] Kate Aughterson. *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 167.

fact, education was the key term even in the works of early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) who, as Steinbach refers, claimed that only an educated woman could be virtuous.[71]

However, while female sexuality was limited and demoted to the interest of procreation and motherhood, male sexuality was governed by sexual desires. Thus, as Steinbach claims, the fundamental discrimination between men and women was in sexual desire.[72] Steinbach continues to explain her claim by saying:[73]

> Motherhood and desire came to be seen as incompatible. Women- especially respectable middle-class women- were politically and rhetorically reduced to, and defined, by their bodies as reproductive, not desiring. The effect was to render women passive vessels who satisfied men's desire and bore children because it was their destiny. Connected to this was a new emphasis on women's virginity and on the loss of virginity as the key sexual moment in a woman's life.

In the beginning of twentieth century, this urge would be termed and theorized by Sigmund Freud as the Madonna-Whore complex. As the founder of psychoanalysis, Freud was highly interested in gender and sexual relationships between the sexes and his Madonna-Whore Complex theory was originated during his clinical work with his patients. Freud, as Lyman quotes, defines the term as: "Where such men love they have no desire and where they desire they cannot love".[74] According to this complexity, men and even women tend towards creating two extremely opposite categories for the social and sexual statue of the women: 'Madonna' as an innocent, sexless woman protecting social virtue and 'Whore' as an immoral promiscuous woman driven by sexual desire. Accordingly, the man who has traits of the

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[71] Susie Steinbach. *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*. London: Phoenix, 2005. pp. 172.
[72] Steinbach, 114.
[73] Steinbach, 114.
[74] Stanford M. Lyman. *The Seven Deadly Sins: Society and Evil*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers,1989. pp.91.

Madonna-Whore Complex is a man who desires a sexual and beautiful woman; but he would never respect her as a wife or have children from her.[75] This dichotomy between the idealization of woman as a virgin, wife, mother versus the eroticization of woman as a hussy, whore, tease is a highly significant point to understand also the association of witchcraft and female sexuality. Both the Lilith and Eve figures, which contributed to the stereotype of European witchcraft, suggested an alleged evil, demonic and dark side of womanhood and this suggestion works also for the description of witches. In this sense, sexuality was both a reason for the strong association of witchcraft and womanhood, and a parameter defined by patriarchal values to set the limits on being a witch woman and a virtuous woman.

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[75] For further information, see Estella V. Welldon. *Mother, Madonna, Whore: The Idealization and Denigration of Motherhood.* U.K.: H. Karnac (Books), 2004 (first published in 1988).

I.2.1 Sexuality in Witchcraft

One of the main enigmas in witchcraft discourse has been the sexual crimes of witchcraft such as orgies in witches' sabbaths or the demons' ability for engaging in sexual activity with humans. It is an almost undeniable fact that, as Mary Daly claims, the witches were accused also for sexual impurity.[76] Similarly, Ehrenreich and English point out that the witch were quite simply accused of having a female sexuality.[77] Orgiastic sabbaths and their typical components, namely copulation with the devil, transvection (nocturnal flight), violation of the dead, cannibalism and ritual infanticide, were all materials related to so-called sexual impurity of witches, as they were illustrated in the frontispiece of German bishop Peter Binsfeld's 1591 treatise, *De Confessionibus Maleficorum et Sagarum* (the Confessions of Evildoers and Witches):[78]

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[76] Mary Daly. *Gyn/ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978, pp. 180.

[77] Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. New York: Feminist Press, 2010 (first published in 1973) pp. 39.

[78] Web. 24 May 2014. <http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/uhle/001/witches'sabbath.htm> For further information about Peter Binsfeld, see William E. Burns. *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: An Encyclopedia*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003. pp. 33-34, 114.

Figure 1. Peter Binsfeld, the frontispiece of *De Confessionibus Maleficorum et Sagarum*

In the illustration above, we see witches flying on brooms and goats, another witch kneeling to the devil, and another witch crudely putting a baby into a cauldron. In other words, we observe a perversion of the early modern period's idealized female figures and roles. Apparently, widespread speculations on what went on at the witches' sabbaths shaped and stimulated the development of sexual knowledge within witchcraft. Descriptions of the witches' sabbath could vary, but Bailey's description includes certain general characteristics:[79]

> Witches would gather in secret at night. They would most typically fly to a sabbath on brooms, staves, or other common items [...] At these gatherings, witches would invoke their demonic master, often summoning the devil himself, who would typically appear in the form of a black cat, goat or other animal. Witches would then formally renounce their Christian faith and offer him their worship, usually symbolized by the obscene kiss on the devil's buttocks or anus. They would also engage in feasts, dancing and oher revels, culminating in indiscriminate sexual orgies with each other and with the attendant demons [...] The murder of babies and children also typically played an important part in the sabbaths. Witches either killed and ate these children as part of their feasts, boiled down the bodies to make magical powders, potions and ointments, or they did both.

The sabbath obviously functions as an umbrella term covering every aspect of supposed sexual witch crimes resulting in the inversion of religious, sexual and social rituals. One of those crimes was copulation with the devil, which seemingly provided a starting point for a witch's "career". After this point, female witches were generally thought to submit sexually to

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[79] Michael B. Bailey. *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*. U.S.A: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2003. pp. 110-111.

the devil himself. The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* asserted that a witch was always able to see her devilish sexual partner:[80]

> […] although the incubus demon always works visibly from the point of view of the sorceress (it is not necessary for him to approach her invisibly because of the ratified and explicit agreement), in terms of the bystanders it is frequently the case that the sorceresses were seen lying on their backs in fields of woods, naked above the navel and gesticulating with their forearms and thighs. They keep their limbs in an arrangement suitable for that filthy act, while the incubus demons work with them invisibly in terms of bystanders, although at the end of the act a very black vapour would (very rarely) rise up from the sorceress into the air up to the height of a human.

In this detailed and pornographic description, we find another term repeated twice; 'the *incubus* demons'. In medieval and early modern Europe, it was believed that demons could take substantial form to engage in sexual activity with humans, and demons who took male form were called *incubi* while those who took female form were called *succubi*.[81] It was Thomas Aquinas, one of the most famous medieval theologians, who developed a full argument to explain how demons operated as *incubi*. He maintained that demons collected semen from human men, which they preserved so that they could impregnate women with it.[82] This claim is mentioned in *Demonologie* by James I when Epistemon explains that the incubus devils operate either by stealing the sperm of dead men and injecting it into women, by which impregnation is not possible, or by stealing the seed of a living man which would be again infertile in transit.[83] Thus, in contrast with Aquinas's claim of a possible insemination in that way, in *Demonologie*, it is stressed that in either way, sperm would be icy cold, and so

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[80] The *Malleus Malificarum*, 313.
[81] Bailey, 68.
[82] Bailey, 69.
[83] King James I. *Demonologie*. Ed. Donald Tyson. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011, pp. 163-168. see "Book III, Chapter III, Argument: The description of a particular sort of that kind of following spirit, called incubi and succubi. And what is the reason wherefore these kinds of spirits haunt most the northern and barbarous parts of the world."

fertilization would not be possible. Another striking aspect of the description in the quotation given above from the *Malleus* is its intense concentration on the matter of female delectation. On this matter, it is important to note that women's erotic pleasure was a topic legitimized in medical discourses owing to its supposed role in fertility and conception.[84] Hence, in fact, both the enjoyment of the devil might derive from such couplings and male sexuality generally received much less attention. This interest in women's pleasure becomes crystal clear in the discussion about the quality of pleasure provided by incubus devils. According to the *Malleus Maleficarum*:[85]

> Regarding the question of whether the sexual pleasure is greater or lesser with incubus devils in an assumed body than with men in a real body, if all things are equal, it seems that it must be said that although the natural order gives less excuse for this since it is greater when like plays with like, nonetheless when the infamous Contriver of a Thousand Deceits (the devil) joins appropriate active elements with appropriate passive ones (appropriate in qualities like heat or some temperament, though not in nature), he clearly rouses no lesser feeling of lust.

In this respect, Garret promotes debate among demonologists on intensity of women's delectation:[86]

> Some European demonologists, such as Nicholas Rémy, insist that because of the unusual size and coldness of the devil's sexual organs, such intercourse is invariably painful for the witch. Others claim, and more vigorously than the *Malleus*, that such sexual activity must be the source of truly uncommon pleasure in order to account for the prevalence of demonic sex and the fact that some individuals have carried on with demon lovers for decades.

Although the demonologists occupy different places on the spectrum of ideas on intensity and quality of such a supposed copulation, it is blatantly obvious that female sexuality and

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[84] Julia. M. Garrett. "Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England." *Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 2013). pp. 39. See also Steinbach, 127.
[85] The *Malleus Malificarum*, 314.
[86] Garrett, 42.

delectation served as a focal point. It is possible to find these issues in early modern English witchcraft drama. For instance, Thomas Heywood and Richard Broome's 1634 comedy *The Late Lancashire Witches* offers a short interrogation of a suspected witch who asserts the coldness of the devil's genitals. Moreover, Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*, which is one of the plays discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, produces a representation of a witch whose sexuality is not hidden and who would have intercourse with her own son or even with her familiar cat instead of going without sex.[87] However, in this respect, it is important to note that English witchcraft is a special case regarding sexuality. As Garrett informs:[88]

> […] the content of witch trials in England is far less lurid and detailed than that of Continental trials. In the latter, the use of torture and formulaic questions tended to produce more outlandish confessions, ones that emphasized diabolism and all the pornographic details of the witches' sabbath . Since the English judicial system was not rooted in Roman law, it generally eschewed the more physically coercive techniques for eliciting confessions. Trial accounts in England are thus less sensationalist, its learned literature steeped less intensively in debates about the sabbath and demonic intercourse.

Despite this fact highlighted in the quotation above, the dissemination of European witchcraft's sexual concerns in England was inevitable thanks to English intellectuals who translated major Continental tracts into English, and to English playwrights who addressed such matters in their works as exemplified above.

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[87] Elizabeth Schafer. Introduction. *The Witch*. By Thomas Middleton London: A&C Black Limited, 1994. p.20.
[88] Garrett, 36.

On the other hand, searching for a distinguishing mark on the body of the accused woman was as common in England as in Europe, for the discovery of such a mark served as evidence for a conviction. As Sharpe offers:[89]

> The presence of the mark, evidence of contact with the devil, was seen as confirmation of guilt in some fifteenth-century Continental trials, although the then current custom of shaving body hair from suspects does not seem to have been followed in England. The first pamphlet account of a witchcraft trial, published in 1566, stressed the importance of the mark in proving a person to be a witch, and as English trials progressed its importance remained central. It also gradually became accepted that the mark, with women, most commonly took the form of a teat-like growth in the pudenda, from which it was thought that the witch's familiar sucked blood.

By considering the quotation, two complex subjects appear to be investigated; the function and the placement of such a mark. In the first place, although there was a confusion among prosecuting authorities, we find two kinds of mark; a witch's mark which was believed to be an extra teat by which the witch suckled her demonic familiars (various typically lesser demons who were thought to attend witches in some assumed animal form) and a devil's mark, almost any blemish, scar or bodily mark, which was thought to be a sign of the demonic pact between the witch and the devil.[90] In either case, they both stand for a contractual relation between a witch and the devil. Another distinctive aspect of this subject is the placement of the mark which is important to examine sexuality in witchcraft. As Sharpe states in the quotation above, a witch's mark, similar to a nipple, through which her demonic familiar was thought to be able to suck her blood, was considered to be in the 'pudenda'

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[89] Sharpe, 178.
[90] Bailey, 38. Garrett, 37.

(female external genital). Thus, searching for that remark required investigation of women's bodies, particularly their sexual organs. Garrett describes this operation by remarking:[91]

> In many surviving pamphlet accounts the incriminating mark turns out to be a small protrusion near the woman's "fundament" or "privy place," suggesting that in many of these cases, the exposure of a woman's genitalia may have served as evidence sufficient to send her to her death. Standard judicial procedures thus provided a permissive, even urgent context for intimately investigating women's bodies, interrogating them about their erotic experiences, and speculating about their deviant sexual activities.

In conclusion, legitimization of such an inquest with legal authority demonstrates how ostensibly witch sexuality but ultimately female sexuality was made open to access. As clear, all versions of fantasies in sexual discourse in witchcraft are described as being precisely opposite ones to gender norms imposed mostly by patriarchal religious agents. There is a question that remains to be asked: in such a social environment, what was the involvement of women in witchcraft accusations? James Sharp's declaration that women took an active part in searching and giving evidence against other women accused of being witches, presumably in the hope of not losing a chance to take part in the patriarchal system and reduce the risk of being prosecuted, shows how it would be a superficial analysis to see women merely as the passive victims of patriarchy.[92] On the other hand, Robin Briggs emphasizes how this claim could be tested by taking the inadequate surviving evidence into consideration.[93] Thus, as also Sharpe agrees, we must not forget the fact that the creators of the female sphere's limitations were patriarchal norms provided by patriarchal religious values and the societies organized into patriarchal hierarchies.

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[91] Garrett, 37.
[92] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. pp. 182-183.
[93] Robin Briggs. *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996. pp. 267.

I.3 Work Fields Available For Women

The continental reformers and their English followers, as Valerie Lucas informs, advocated a patriarchal model for marriage, based on biblical authority, which emphasized the necessity of wives' voluntary submission to their husbands' authority.[94] This kind of model for marriage providing theological justification for notions of female inferiority was chiefly responsible for the law which considered a married woman to be a *femme couverte* meaning under the guardianship of her husband. The author of *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights* (1632), as Lucas quotes, says:[95]

> A woman as soon as she is married is called *covert*; in Latin *nupta*, that is 'veiled'; as it were clouded and over-shadowed [...] I may more truly, farre away, say to a married woman, Her new self is her superior; her companion, her master […]

The legal status of the *femme couverte* suggested that all woman's property came under her husband's control during the couple's marriage and so that the majority of women were deprived of their economic independence and most of their rights under law. As Lucas continues to say and quote from *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights*:[96]

> Since married women had no existence *de jure* (concerning law), they also had no right to enter the public world: "women have no voice in Parliament, they make no laws, they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to be married, and their desires or (are?) subject to their husbands. I know no remedy, though some women can shift it well enough".

Thus, as Susie Steinbach points out: "[…] we find women concentrated in occupations that were considered female, many associated with domestic labour."[97] Since public sphere was closed for women, women tended to pursue a few traditionally female employments such as

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[94] R. Valerie Lucas. "Puritan Preaching and the Politics of the Family." Ed. Anne M. Haselkorn & Betty S. Travitsky. *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990. pp. 224.
[95] Lucas, 225.
[96] Lucas, 225.
[97] Susie Steinbach. *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*. London: Phoenix, 2005. pp. 9-10.

domestic service, charring and laundering, making and mending clothes, nursing and midwifery, and tending animals. Some of these jobs begot a great affinity between witchcraft and femininity.

In a pamphlet on women healers, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English point particularly to midwives and nurses as the main targets of persecution. At first the writers mention the fact that one of the central and repeated accusations against witches was their so-called magical powers seriously affecting health, either by harming or by healing, so that they were often charged with having medical and obstetrical skills.[98] For instance, as the authors demonstrate, the existence of some herbal remedies which were developed by the female peasant healers exemplifies these women's good deeds:[99]

> They had pain-killers, digestive aids, and anti-inflammatory agents. They used ergot for the pain for the pain of labor at a time when the Church held that pain in labor was the Lord's just punishments for Eve's original sin. Ergot derivatives are the principal drugs used today to hasten labor and aid in the recovery from childbirth. Belladonna-still used today as an anti-spasmodic- was used by the witch-healers to inhibit uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened. Digitalis, still an important drug in treating heart ailments, is said to have been discovered by an English witch.

Unfortunately, today we know about witches only through the recorded history by the educated elite, namely her persecutors. Hence, the existence of these herbal remedies which have their place in modern pharmacology offers us another way of thinking on witches. Moreover, the authors' claim that the majority of the witches were healers serving the peasant population explains how the witches' persecutors formed medical reasoning for witch hunts.

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[98]Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. New York: Feminist Press, 2010 (first published in 1973) pp. 39.
[99] Ehrenreich & English, 47-48.

To support their point, they quote from Thomas Szasz's work, *The Manufacture of Madness*:[100]

> Because the Medieval Church, with the support of kings, princes and secular authorities, controlled medical education and practise, the Inquisition (witch hunts) constitutes, among other things, an early instance of the "professional" repudiating the skills and interfering with the rights of the "nonprofessional" to minister to the poor.

Thus, according to the writers, the establishment of medicine as a profession, requiring university training which was closed to women, made it easy to prevent women legally from practising. Ehrenreich and English offer an explanation for this attitude towards women:[101]

> The witch-healer's methods were as great a threat (to the Catholic Church, if not the Protestant) as her results, for the witch was an empiricist: she relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine, she believed in trial and error, cause and effect. Her attitude was not religiously passive, but actively inquiring. She trusted her ability to find ways to deal with disease, pregnancy, and childbirth- whether through medications or charms. In short, her magic was the science of her time. […] In the persecution of the witch, the anti-empiricist and the misogynist, anti-sexual obsessions of the Church coincide: empiricism and sexuality both represent a surrender to the senses, a betrayal of faith.

When we consider the quotation, the authors' vivid description of a witch as a healer whose practise based on empiricism possibly could have been a reason for a friction between women healers and the face of the repressive fatalism of Christianity. Nevertheless, historian James Sharpe's criticism about the perspective of these and other feminist critics in witchcraft should be kept in mind:[102]

> Yet most historians would find their explanations over-simplistic, and would be appalled by their lack of acquaintance with a broad body of evidence, their limited grasp of historical context and their frequent factual errors: powerful historical myths usually make bad history.

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[100] Ehrenreich & English pp. 31-32.
[101] Ehrenreich & English, 48-49.
[102] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. pp. 170.

Since, as stated before, we have limited data regarding the age of witches, we could not be absolutely sure about Ehrenreich and English's apt description of a witch; whether they were factually an empiricist rebellious group against the religious doctrines or not, yet the authors' interpretation of the witches' deeds could broaden our horizon.

Another significant subject of debate is the connections between witchcraft and midwifery. Before discussing that connection, I intend to present the meaning and importance of childbirth in the female sphere. First of all, just as most women got married, most became pregnant and gave birth more than once during their lifetimes.[103] In addition to gender-based reasons discussed in this chapter, Sharpe offers historical-medical reasoning for seeing pregnancy as female deed to be done:[104]

> Early modern England furnishes surprisingly little evidence of contraception of any type. Contraception, it will be remembered, was considered sinful by contemporary moralists, while medical thinking on the subject was not very advanced.

Lena Orlin discusses a court decision taken by the London Court of Aldermen on abortionist Peter Stone's punishment on 2 April 1572.[105] He was charged of being "common minister of wicked medicines to maidens that chance to be with child" and of killing children and maidens.[106] The specific accusation was aborting Alice Tyler's child. His punishment was being set on a horseback with his face to the horse tail, being whipped in that position, and then being led from Bridewell round. It is necessary to add Orlin's brief note on the issue:[107]

> Some of the women faced with terrible social consequences of bearing illegitimate children abandoned their newborn infants; others, like Alice Tyler, sought remedies to terminate unwanted pregnancies. The city officers who publicly disciplined this abortionist also punished the father named by Tyler.

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[103] Steinbach, 127.
[104] J. A. Sharpe. *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1987. pp. 43.
[105] Lena Cowen Orlin. *The Renaissance*. England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. pp. 87.
[106] Orlin, 87.
[107] Orlin, 87.

What we observe in the words of Orlin is her claim that some social pressures might lead women to accusing someone falsely by cynically exploiting the witchcraft theme. Further support of this contention is provided by the fact that, as Steinbach adds, particularly condoms were associated with prostitutes and disease prevention and were never used to prevent births within marriage, and so women had few and unreliable forms of contraception, such as breast-feeding as foolproof method:[108]

> The connection between breast-feeding and lowered fertility had been noted. Some women made use of this information; for instance, aristocratic women who wished to conceive frequently might send their babies to wet-nurses […] Others might not able to put their knowledge to good use: a woman who wanted to delay subsequent pregnancies, but needed to keep her factory job, had to wean her babies early […] For most sexually active women, pregnancy might be hoped for or dreaded but could rarely be planned or avoided.

As a consequence, whether married or not, women, as Steinbach depicts, bore the brunt of intercourse.[109] In an age when the medical profession was not practised on conception, women got pregnant, faced the dangers of childbirth, and underwent physical damage from subsequent and mostly multiple pregnancies.

On the other hand, childbirth had another crucial dimension, as Linda Pollock describes:[110]

> Childbirth is usually portrayed in early modern Europe as being managed and controlled by women. As one of the leading scholars on childbirth, Adrian Wilson, vigorously asserts: "Before childbirth belonged to medicine, it belonged to women […] Woman had constructed a coherent system for the management of childbirth, a system based on their own collective culture and satisfying their own material needs." The birth itself is saluted as the tribute to female support networks. The conventional portrayal is of a darkened room, with fire and

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[108] Sreinbach, 127.
[109] Steinbach, 126.
[110] Linda A. Pollock. "Childbearing and Female Bonding in Early Modern England." *Social History*. Vol. 22, No. 3 (Oct., 1997), pp. 288.

candles flickering; a woman, in pain, physically supported by one or two women, others sitting in the background, watching, chattering, offering caudle, advice or sympathy; the midwife in attendance; a background hubbub of noise. Draughts and bright light were excluded; men and the world were shut out until the child was born.

By this description, it seems quite obvious that childbirth was within the female sphere which was more or less peculiar to women. Robert Shoemaker adopts the same perspective:[111]

> Childbirth was a primarily female domain, as midwives and nurses were joined by female kin and neighbours. No men were present, with the possible exception of the father and, in the second half of our period (fifteenth century) among better-off families, a male midwife. The lying-in extended this period in which women resided in a largely female domain, which arguably gave them a degree of power; there followed the religious ceremony of 'churching'. Although originally a possibly humiliating ritual which 'purified' new mothers from the sinful taint of sex and childbirth, by our period churching was popular among women because it 'legitimated the wider ceremony of childbirth' which they controlled.

In contrast, Ehrenreich and English state that the beginning and the ending of childbirth were the two sides of a constant circulation between two men; a father and a priest:[112]

> The misogyny of the Church, if not proved by the witch craze itself, is demonstrated by its teaching that in intercourse the male deposits in the female a homunculus, or "little person," complete with soul, which is simply housed in the womb for nine months, without acquiring any attributes of the mother. The homunculus is not really safe, however, until it reaches male hands again, when a priest baptises it, ensuring the salvation of its immortal soul.

On the basis of these arguments, it is possible to observe that childbirth was mostly in the female sphere, yet there was still male control, and midwives were significant persons in that sphere. Hence, as Carol Karlsen remarks: "She was commonly accused of obstructing reproductive processes, either by preventing conceptions or by causing miscarriages,

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[111] Robert B. Shoemaker. *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*. England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998, pp. 123.
[112] Ehrenreich & English, 40.

childbirth fatalities or "monstrous" (deformed) births."[113] The charges were not only limited to destruction given to others' babies; but also they included destroying her own baby either while pregnant or after the birth of her child.[114] Ann Oakley illustrates this point by presenting a quotation from Henry Boguet's 1590 manual of witches:[115]

> Those midwives and wise women who are witches are in habit of offering to Satan the little children which they deliver, and then killing them, before they have been baptised, by thrusting a large pin into their brains. There have been those who have confessed to having killed more than forty children in this way. They do even worse; for they kill them while they are in their mothers' wombs.

Furthermore, Kramer and Sprenger's most referred declaration, "No one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives"[116], and their claim that witch-midwife either caused to have a miscarriage or offered a baby to a demon had an impact on the association of witchcraft and midwifery. Another highly relevant issue to be discussed on this point is a bewitchment of a child. As Diane Purkiss states: "The roles of the herbalist-midwife-witch are traditional feminine roles: nursing, healing, caring for women and children."[117] Thus, it seems that her duties led to the issue of a child as victim of witchcraft and helped define the herbalist-midwife-witch's target group as spouses, infants and young children.[118] Besides, like other mythological creatures, such as the lamia and strix, Lilith, as an archetype of female evil trying to kill babies and small children, contributed to the image of witch as a murderer of young children.[119] In the same way, Medea, one of the great female sorceresses of classical mythology who killed her own children by Jason and fled in a dragon-drawn chariot, became

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[113] Carol Karlsen. *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998 (first published in 1987), pp. 7.
[114] Karlsen, 7.
[115] Ann Oakley. *Subject Women*. Oxford: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982. pp. 327.
[116] Malleus Maleficarum, 212. See also Oakley, 327. Ehrenreich & English pp. 45,
[117] Diane Purkiss. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations*. Taylor & Francis, 2004. pp. 22.
[118] Karlsen, 6.
[119] Michael B. Bailey. *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*. U.S.A: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2003. pp. 84.

a literary archetype of the witch as a baby killer.[120] Bailey suggests another reason for the longstanding connection of witchcraft with infanticide: the extremely high mortality rate of infants and young children in the pre-modern world.[121] As a result, cannibalism became one of the elements characterizing the image of a witch. Cutting young children up, cooking babies in a cauldron, and eating human flesh were described as part of the witches' Sabbath, as was illustrated in the frontispiece of the German bishop Peter Binsfeld's *De Confessionibus Maleficorum et Sagarum*.[122] In an article on cannibalism and witchcraft, Charles Zika interprets some visual images and explains the matter:[123]

> Cannibalism was one of the European metaphors for otherness, for the non-civilized; but since the sacrifice and eating of one's God was a belief and act of liturgical practice at the centre of Christianity, and especially so in the later middle ages, cannibalism was also a metaphor located threateningly at the centre of the European psyche. And it was in the early modern period, through the instruments of theological and legal treaties, judicial trials, pastoral and moralizing literature, romance and folkloric tales, and also through visual images, that cannibalism was grafted on to the image of the malefic witch. As the witch was feminized and demonized, she was also represented as a savage figure, an evil mother, who killed and ate young children.

One of the eventual outcomes of Zika's analysis, which is extremely relevant to the general concern of this dissertation, is that in the early sixteenth century allusions to the cannibalism of witches seem closely linked to fears of moral disorder based on a female sexuality which is perceived as essentially aggressive.   In addition to the cannibalistic aspect of witch representation as a baby killer, such representation was also the reason for children's

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[120] Bailey, 91-92.
[121] Bailey, 69.
[122] See Chapter 1.2.1 Sexuality in Witchcraft, 29.
[123] Charles Zika. "Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images." *History Workshop Journal*, No. 44 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 78.

appearance as accusers, witnesses, suspects and even as witch-finders.[124] Robin Briggs provides one of the typical examples of children involvement in witchcraft. Accordingly, Mongeotte Pivert, an eight or nine year old girl, was manipulated by her uncle, who was trying to take a revenge since he had been fined for assaulting one of his relatives by marriage, into accusing her whole family of attending the sabbath, sending five of them to the stake.[125] By telling this story, Briggs points out the fact that it was too easy to extract false statements from young people during the period when witch stories and their powers prevailed.

Going back to the discussion on midwives, feminist scholars used to think that midwives were frequently accused of witchcraft for the reasons discussed above; but this theory is largely refuted by scholars who believe that very few midwives were accused of witchcraft. Thus, modern historians of witchcraft and feminist critics stand at opposite ends of the spectrum. The clear separation between historical and feminist criticism regarding witchcraft discourse continues with Sharpe's implicit claim that there was not a strong association between healing and witchcraft: [126]

> A less familiar theme, located also in an allegedly female domain, which has been adduced to help explain the prosecution of women as witches is the repression of women healers as the male medical profession sought to establish a monopoly over medical care […] There does seem to be some evidence from our Yorkshire sample that women accused as witches had been involved in healing, although unfortunately for the usual arguments they seem to have been most frequently involved in curing animals (we await with interest attempts to link the witch craze with the rise of a male-dominated veterinary profession).

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[124] Robin Briggs. *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996. pp. 233-237.
[125] Briggs, 234.
[126] Sharpe, 174-175.

Purkiss goes further and suggests that midwives were more likely to be found helping witch-hunters than being victimized by them.[127] Furthermore, in an article, "Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-witch", David Harley emphasizes that although the midwife-witch could be found in the writings of some demonologists, in few of the vast numbers of trials midwives were accused.[128] He continues to explain that being a midwife, in fact, decreased a woman's chance of being prosecuted, because "midwives were trusted to give reliable evidence in cases of rape, bastardy and infanticide, and even in cases of witchcraft itself."[129] Thus, midwives had to be respectable and reliable in order to practise their profession, rather than being vulnerable and marginal individuals. Moreover, both Bailey and Harley points out[130] that feminist scholars' midwife-witch theory is based on the now-discredited work of Margaret Murray who states that "in the sixteenth and seventieth centuries, the better midwife the better the witch."[131] As a result, because of the fact that midwifery was one of a few occupations open to women, much feminist scholars focused on the midwife-witch theory. However, this argument has been decisively disproved by the scholars of historical criticism who have established the opposite: very few midwives were, in fact, accused of witchcraft, and, in contrast, being a midwife decreased the possibility of being charged with witchcraft.

While criticising the attitude of feminist scholarship, Sharpe also mentions another significant female occupation which established a relation between witchcraft and femininity: tending animals. For the reason that the agriculture and farming were the most important factors in the early modern English economy, raising and fattening animals was quite

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[127] Purkiss, 244.
[128] David Harley. "Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-witch." Ed. Philip K. Wilson. *Childbirth: Midwifery Theory and Practise*. Taylor & Francis, 1996. pp. 99.
[129] Harley, 102.
[130] Bailey, 93. Harley, 118.
[131] Margaret Murray. *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. Oxford, 1921. p. 170.

common as a local economic source.[132] Thus, as Mitchison reports, women worked with their farmer husbands and took part in the agricultural tasks.[133] When it is considered that, as Bailey points out, one stereotype of a witch as having familiars[134] is unique to England, found in Irish and Scottish sources rather than in continental ones[135], it is possible to say that agricultural English society and pastoral life of a peasant population were effective in creating a link between the witch and a woman tending animals. Furthermore, in an age when agriculture was the main source of livelihood, the loss of agricultural products, which are grouped as grains, livestock and wool, would have been a great problem. On this matter, it is necessary to recall Keith Thomas's discussing witches as the scapegoats for all the ills of society:[136]

> In a society technologically more backward than ours the immediate attraction of the belief in witchcraft is not difficult to understand. It served as a means of accounting for the otherwise inexplicable misfortunes of daily life. Unexpected disasters -the sudden death of a child, the loss of a cow, the failure of some routine house-hold task- all could, in default of any more obvious explanation, be attributed to the influence of some malevolent neighbour.

Thus, killing or injuring farm animals, or interfering with nature by preventing cows from giving milk, or frustrating such domestic operations as making butter, cheese or beer became one of the various forms of *maleficium*, the damage a witch might do.[137] Karlsen adds another version of that allegation; she might "overlook horses, cows, and other livestock, causing them to sicken and die, or simply bewitch them into wandering off."[138] Additionally, Briggs

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[132] J. A. Sharpe. *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760.* London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1987. pp. 129-136.

[133] Rosalind Mitchison. *Lordship to Patronage: Scotland 1603-1745.* Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 1990 (first published in 1983). pp. 86-88.

[134] See Chapter I.2.3 "Sexuality in Witchcraft."

[135] Bailey, 48.

[136] Thomas, 638.

[137] Keith Thomas. *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. (first published in 1971) pp. 519.

[138] Karlsen, 6.

informs that, in England, it was a productive technique to interrogate young children about the animal familiars supposedly used by their mothers.[139]

What we deduce from this discussion is that women were often targeted also because of the tasks surrounding a few working areas available for them; notwithstanding, it is hard to see how this claim could be completely proven. The main reason for such inability is the insufficient evidence. Besides, as in the case of midwifery, the close reading of contemporary archive materials could cause the inversion of what an ill-informed reading   of the demonological treatises has suggested. Hence, it is possible to say that the only blatantly obvious fact in witchcraft discourse is that it is not a closed subject and it is going to be investigated and debated in the light of further information.

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[139] Briggs, 235.

CHAPTER II

WITCHCRAFT DISCOURSE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA

Comparison of Three Contemporary Plays in terms of the Issues Surrounding a Close

Association of Female Sexuality and Witchcraft

II.0 Introduction

Because of the fact that witchcraft in England was certainly 'a variation on a European theme'[140] and it took time to be transformed in accordance with English style made up of religious, judicial and social components, the late appearance of witchcraft as an important dramatic motive is not surprising. As Stuart Gillespie remarks on the link between England and Renaissance Europe:[141]

> Shakespeare and his contemporaries were in many ways likelier to connect writers through generic links than nationality, and in some respects these links supersede chronological considerations too- the concept of separate literary periods, so prevalent in literary study today, was of less account for Renaissance readers.

Besides, witchcraft served as a subject of universal interest which was abundantly represented in literature, so it would have been strange not to find the witchcraft theme in early modern English drama. However, the interesting point is that English drama, specifically Elizabethan drama, was ready to cover and embody the witchcraft theme, for it had already been crowded with magic and magicians who were an actual figure not only in contemporary drama but also in contemporary life.[142] For instance, fairy mythology in England is ancient, and John Lyly, the first significant English dramatist to employ the fairies, demonstrably uses them as a theatrical device in his *Gallathea* (1584 or earlier).[143] Hence, the fairy as a stage figure had already been available and well known. As was developed in the court masque, the fairy theme started to be an essential part in the plays' construction, as in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609). Moreover, the typical practicing magician figure, for which magic is a science, an art to be practised like other learned professions, forms another main aspect of

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[140] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. pp. 32.

[141] Stuart Gillespie. "Shakespeare's Reading of Modern European Literature." Ed. Andrew Hadfield & Paul Hammond. *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005. pp. 99-100.

[142] H. W. Herrington. "Witchcraft and Magic in the Elizebethan Drama." *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 32, No. 126 (Oct. – Dec., 1919). pp. 453.

[143] Herrington, 448.

Elizabethan drama, and Christopher Marlow's *Faustus* (1588 or 1589)[144] is celebrated as the most conspicuous work about a practicing magician. With Doctor Johann Faustus, the rich dramatic representation of all the old tales told of magicians who gained their powers by selling their souls to the devil and who had to pay as price for their bargain in a violent way entered English drama. On the other hand, as for what concerns female magicians, there are no full representations in spite of several trivial sketches. This fact can be exemplified with Dispas in John Lyly's *Endymion* (1585) or Medea in Robert Greene's *Alphonsus* (1591). Herrington explains the position of female magicians in early English drama:[145]

> Most of these female wielders of magic are, as their names imply, an inheritance from classical literature. Since, according to Elizabethan experience, the only women engaged in magic were of a very vulgar sort indeed, the dignified enchantress was hardly possible except in a conception derived from, and closely modelled on, the classics. She is usually a minor character; and her occasional appearance seems accidental, depending solely on her occurrence in the subject-matter taken up by the dramatists for independent reasons.

As a result, it could be deduced that there was already an extended vogue for the magic, magicians, fairies and so on. Thus, the Elizabethan theatrical interest in witchcraft would not have seemed unusual; but there would have been a 'slight' difference: in contrast to female magicians' trivial occupation, female witches were the very essence of the plays listed below.

The prominent witchcraft plays of the period have attracted attention from scholars. *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford, *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton, *The Masque of Queens* by Ben Jonson, *The Lancashire Witches* by Thomas Shadwell, *The Late Lancashire Witches* by Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome are featured as the most famous specimens. Although the dramatists of these plays pursue different aims by representing a witch figure in their

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[144] Herrington, 462.
[145] Herrington, 465.

plays, it is blatantly obvious that witchcraft functions as a leading motive. Herrington remarks

on the dramatists' interest in witchcraft:[146]

> For the playwrights and the public, witchcraft in general, and known cases thereof, must have
> been a topic of unceasing conversation. Everybody knew some old hag who was reputed to be
> a witch; there were persecutions for witchcraft, particularly in Middlesex and the neighboring
> counties, almost every year; and that the facts of witchcraft might not become stale and dull,
> sensational cases periodically excited the imagination of the public,- cases that were typically
> reported in the greedily devoured tracts which in that day served instead of the lucubrations of
> the modern yellow press.

Accordingly, some contemporary witch plays dramatize a report on recent, notorious witch

trials.[147] For instance, the execution of Elizabeth Sawyer as reported in a pamphlet written by

Henry Goodcole about this event was the inspiration for Dekker, Ford and Rowley's *The

Witch of Edmonton*. Nevertheless, some plays develop critical approach and question the

existence of witches or their gender image which is widely attributed to female. In this

respect, while Middleton's *The Witch* adopts traditional gender roles for the witches, it

interrogates the reasons for the beliefs in witchcraft by presenting the human characters in the

play as being, particularly in terms of sexuality, much more abhorrent than Hecate and her

cohorts. On the other hand, in *Macbeth*, we see how Lady Macbeth, who initially appears as

femme fatale figure, and the witches do not function like this in the course of the play.

Consequently, this chapter aims to analyze and discuss how the close link between witchcraft

and femininity was represented in the outstanding witchcraft plays of the period.

Here I have adopted a critical approach which goes against the notion of seeing these

plays as witch-centered, for witchcraft in these plays functions as a cloak under which we

could find the plays' struggle for presenting and criticizing perceptions of female body and

sexuality.

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[146] Herrington, 469.

[147] Elizabeth Schafer. Introduction. *The Witch*. Thomas Middleton London: A&C Black Limited, 1994. p.19.

II.1 Mother Sawyer: A Scapegoat Phenomenon

> Elizabeth Sawyer: And why on me? Why should the envious world
>
> Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
>
> (II.1.1-2)[148]

Although the late introduction of the witchcraft material into the play and its largely irrelevant structure to the Frank Thorney plot have been criticized by scholars,[149] Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) is unique in highlighting the scapegoat phenomenon in witchcraft. The close reading of the play paves the way for the analysis of how the dramatists interpreted witchcraft and a witch figure in drama. According to this, the construction and presentation of the play's witch, Mother Sawyer, reveal the fact that this is a play in which there is a heightened tension between society and the individual, a tension between the accuser and the accused one. Furthermore, when the structure and nature of early modern English society is examined, it becomes clear that the society of Edmonton in the play serves as the dramatists' sharp criticism of their own society. Therefore, an overview of the nature of early modern English society is essential while examining the scapegoat phenomenon in witchcraft and how this theme was interpreted in the character of Mother Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton*.

Let us start by considering the term "scapegoat" which requires careful definition in order to analyse the play. René Girard provides the background for the term:[150]

> The biblical and Christian power of understanding phenomena of victimization comes to light
>
> in the modern meaning of certain expressions such as "scapegoat." A "scapegoat" is initially

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[148]William Rowley, Thomas Dekker & John Ford. *The Witch of Edmonton*. Ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. All further references to the text will be taken from this edition.

[149] In an article, David Atkinson, who claims that the play's unity is given to the double action of the play by the theme of moral knowledge or the knowledge of good and evil, examines differing viewpoints of other scholars on the play. David Atkinson. "Moral Knowledge and the Double Action in *The Witch of Edmonton*." *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (Spring, 1985), pp. 419-437.

[150] René Girard. *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. New York: Gracewing Publishing, 2001. pp. 154-155.

the victim in the Israelite ritual that was celebrated during a great ceremony of atonement (Lev. 16:21) […] The ritual consisted of driving into the wilderness a goat on which all the sins of Israel had been laid. The high priest placed his hands on the head of the goat, and this act was supposed to transfer onto the animal everything likely to poison relations between members of the community. The effectiveness of the ritual was the idea that the sins were expelled with the goat and then the community was rid of them. This ritual of expulsion is similar to that of the *pharmakos* in Greece, but it is much less sinister because the victim is never a human being […] In a distant period when the ritual was effective as ritual, the transfer of the community's transgressions onto the goat must have been facilitated by the bad reputation of this animal, by its nauseating odour and its *aggressive sexual drive* [emphasize added].

The rituals of expulsion were common in the primitive and archaic world, and the case of the scapegoat is one of them, which is, as Girard points out, "a spontaneous interpretation of the relationship between the ancient Jewish ritual and transferences of hostility in our world today."[151] Moreover, the quotation reminds us of the ancient interaction between Jewish and Christian cosmology in witchcraft discourse,[152] which seems to be the same in the issue of the scapegoat. On the other hand, a goat's sexual aggressive drive, stated by Girard in the quotation above as a reason for the animal's bad reputation, recalls the sexuality theme in witchcraft and the fact that witches were accused of 'active female sexuality'.[153] As a result, it is possible to observe that even the etymological definition of "scapegoat" carries connotations of witchcraft, and it was going to be referred to as one of the widespread theories of witchcraft. In this respect, as Thomas Szasz reports:[154]

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[151] Girard, 155.
[152] See chapter I.1 "Religious Dynamics of Witchcraft as a Sex-Specific Crime" withnin the current dissertation.
[153] See chapter I.2.3 1 "Sexuality in Witchcraft" within the current dissertation.
[154] Thomas Szasz. *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisiton and the Mental Health Movement*. Syracuse University Press, 1997. pp. 95.

Historians are strong supporters of the scapegoat theory of witchcraft: they hold that witches were the sacrificial offerings of a society animated by the symbolism and values of Christian theology […] According to the scapegoat theory of witchcraft, the belief in witches and their organized persecution represent an expression of man's search for an explanation and mastery of various human problems, especially bodily diseases and social conflicts.

Szasz supports his claim by quoting the words of an English anthropologist, Geoffrey Parrinder, who writes:[155]

If men had wanted an explanation of the ills of nature, they found it in the diabolical activities of witches. They provided a scapegoat for the troubles of society, as the Jews had done at certain periods, and as they were to become again to the German Nazis in the twentieth century. Reginald Scot, who lived in the midst of the witch-fear and wrote so bravely against the whole superstition, gives the same picture. "For if any adversity, grief, sickness, loss of children, corn, cattle, or liberty happen to them, by and by they exclaim on witches […] Insomuch as a clap of thunder or a gale of wind is no sooner heard, but either they run to bells, or cry out to burn the witches."

The society described in the quotation and criticised by Reginald Scot is early modern English society, in which reputation was of crucial importance in defining the society's behaviour pattern towards individuals. As Sharpe describes:[156]

[…] the early modern English community, whether rural or urban, was a place where gossip thrived, where reputations were evaluated, where discussable news was a welcome entity. In such an environment there is little doubt that witchcraft suspicions were among the more avidly discussed of topics.

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[155] Szasz, 95-96.
[156] James Sharpe. *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England.* Philadelphia: University of PennsylvaniaPress, 1997. pp. 163.

When the fact that the ill-reputation of the suspected witches served as a starting point in accusations is considered, the importance of reputation in village life is clearly exposed. Anne Reiber Dewindt offers a story that shows how easy it was to be labelled as a witch and be executed for this reason in England during the period in question:[157]

> In the fall of 1589, ten-year-old Jane Throckmorton pointed to the old woman who had settled into a seat in her family's cavernous stone hearth and cried out, "Looke where the old witch sitteth … did you ever see … one more like a witch then she is?" With those words the child set in motion a four-year-long drama that culminated in the hanging of three of her neighbours from their fenland village of Warboys in north Huntingdonshire.

To Jane Throckmorton and many inhabitants of early modern England, a witch figure was frequently a frightening individual who could do harm with terrible speed and terrible effectiveness.[158] Although it is difficult to define the exact age and economic distribution among those tried for witchcraft, a familiar depiction of a witch bears similarities to Reginald Scot's description; a "woman" who is "commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles, poore."[159] As will be discussed in the following pages, the situation given above and Scot's depiction apply to Mother Sawyer in the play. Edward Bever points out the interpersonal violence as a fact of village life:[160]

> Indeed nearly every human relationship which went wrong might lead to a charge of witchcraft […] Early modern village life certainly included warm friendships and peaceful coexistence, but any attempt to understand early modern witchcraft must start by recognizing that the "internal viciousness of village interactions […] and the brutality of interpersonal conflict"

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[157] Anne Reiber Dewindt. Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions of the Ideal Village Community." *Journal of British Studies*. Vol.34, No.4, (Oct., 1995), pp. 427.
[158] Sharpe, 149.
[159] Reginald Scot. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Rev. Montague Summers. New York: Dover Publications, 2013. Book I, Chapter III, pp. 4.
[160] Edward Bever. "Witchcraft, Female Agression, and Power in the Early Modern Community." *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer, 2002). pp. 958.

drove some members "to pursue personal quarrels with a degree of persistence and ruthlessness" that might "harass an enemy even unto death."

In such a community, as Lawrence Stone indicates, "hatred, fear and violence were endemic" and "an atmosphere of contention, of chronic and sometimes bitter enmity" prevailed.[161] Thus, the scapegoat phenomenon was inevitable "in these gossip-ridden, mean-spirited, endlessly litigious and generally rather nasty villages."[162] The main reason for this situation seems to be the communal sense of fear caused by any kind of interruption of domestic routine, such as the "unnatural" death of individuals or animals, and by an increasing demand for explanation of the illnesses or misfortunes. The belief in a witch's power and the paranoia about a witch using her power against her community caused, as Brian Levack expresses:[163]

> popular view of the witch as a powerful woman [that] reminds us that although the witch was often a scapegoat for the ills of society and a victim, many of her neighbours viewed her as powerful and threatening.

In an article on the association of witchcraft and feminine power, Stephanie Irene Spoto agrees with Levack and claims that some women would voluntarily choose to be identified with the fearful witch figure, for witch trials were the only way that women's issues could be given a stage and a public outlet.[164] Joanna Levin reports the general opinion among feminist historians and some literary critics who argue that witchcraft beliefs elaborated a mythos of female power, and thus the unruly female witch figure who threatened hegemonic sex and

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[161] Lawrence Stone. "Interpersonal Violence in English Society 1300-1980." *Past and Present* 101, 1983. pp. 22.
[162] Stone, 28.
[163] Brian P. Levack. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. London & New York: Longman, 1987. pp. 141.
[164] Stephanie Irene Spoto. "Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power." *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 45 (2010), pp. 54.

gender systems is celebrated.[165] Keith Thomas investigates the perspective of the accused one:[166]

> For even the innocent person, under the pressure of interrogation, might come to believe that she was guilty. The supreme paradox was that some of the suspects confessed that they had taken up witchcraft in order to avenge themselves upon neighbours who had falsely called them witches. Society thus forced the role of witch upon its victims.

To exemplify his claim, Thomas quotes a part of Elizabeth Sawyer's speech from *The Witch of Edmonton*:[167]

Elizabeth Sawyer: Some call me witch,

    And, being ignorant of myself, they go

    About to teach me how to be one, urging

    That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,

    Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,

    Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse.

    This they enforce upon me, and in part

    Make me to credit it.

                                                                                      (2.I.8-15)

In light of Mother Sawyer stating what could have been the facts of early modern English village, it is possible to observe that the society of Edmonton in *The Witch of Edmonton* offers criticism of early modern English society regarding its strong tendency towards scapegoat

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[165] Joanna Levin. "Lady Macbeth and the Daemonoligie of Hysteria." *ELH*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Spring, 2002). pp. 23.

[166] Keith Thomas. *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. (first published in 1971) pp. 628.

[167] Thomas, 628.

phenomenon. Arthur Kinney's thesis, as quoted by Susan Penberthy who criticizes Kinney's interpretation who sees the play merely as a social document, agrees with this idea:[168]

> The playwrights, throughout *The Witch of Edmonton*, expose the limitations of a rural early modern English village which is organised by class and privilege and whose activity, therefore, fosters intrigue and deception.

The description of the town in the play is provided by Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge:[169]

> It is a coherent but self-absorbed community in which social divisions and financial standing are clearly demarcated […] Concern at a horse's sickness or fears for the health of the cattle (4.I.1-18) reveal a society living on the margin between prosperity and disaster and thus vulnerable and open to the conclusion that witchcraft is the cause of each misfortune- a set of conditions which drives them to witch-mania.

Mother Sawyer occupies the marginalized position within this society. She is the scapegoat of Edmonton and the reason for her status as a witch is her verbal aggression and communal anxiety in the face of the "unruly" woman.

To illustrate this point, it would be useful to present the character of Mother Sawyer in a broad perspective. First of all, it is important to establish that the characterization of the witch of Edmonton, Mother Sawyer, draws much of its inspiration from Henry Goodcole's published account of Elizabeth Sawyer's notorious witch trial, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch, late of Edmonton* (1621). Thus, the dramatization of the real witch trial of Elizabeth Sawyer supplies the play with a sociohistorical context and modern pseudo-

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[168] Susan Penberthy. "*The Witch of Edmonton*: Review." *Parergon*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (July,1999). pp. 288. For more information, see Arthur Kinney. Introduction. *The Witch of Edmonton*. William Rowley, Thomas Dekker & John Ford. Methuen Drama, 1998.
[169] Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. Introduction. *The Witch of Edmonton*. William Rowley, Thomas Dekker & John Ford. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. pp. 8.

documentary approach.[170] However, the play challenges its direct source for some dramatic purposes. For instance, Elizabeth Sawyer in Goodcole's pamphlet is married and has a family, whereas, the play's Elizabeth Sawyer is not provided with a family or any skill that might enable her to pursue an occupation. She is completely isolated. By doing so, the dramatists stress her social vulnerability to deepen the sympathy of the reader or audience for her. In fact, her social isolation is the key point in the play, which provides her with a reason for explaining her will to be in relation with the devil-dog. Up to the moment of her contract with the devil, she does not have anything to offer to the social, economic and political system around her. As Helen Vella Bonavita explains:[171]

> As her conversation with the dog-devil continues, it becomes increasingly clear that she views her connection with the devil as her passport into a different, alternative economy, one in which she herself is an active, bargaining participant, with a commodity of her own to sell: her curses. In the event, the Devil endows Sawyer with more than the power to call spirits to her bidding; he gives her the power to impose her own meaning on the world around her, to bend speech to her own purposes.

She does not even fit into the structure of society as an object of charity; she is abject from the beginning, utterly cast out. Therefore, the first thing she gains with her contract is a title that is absolutely vital for struggling to survive into a society where the social hierarchy has a great importance. Frank has to employ himself as a servant to Sir Arthur Clarington because his father's estate is burdened with debt. In the same way, Old Carter hopes to improve his social status by marrying his daughter to a gentleman. Similarly, Old Thorney pushes his son into marrying the elder daughter of a wealthy farmer. Surely, the two fathers look after similar interests to wed Susan to Frank. While these examples could be multiplied by presenting other

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[170] Peter Corbin & Douglas Sedge. Introduction. *The Witch of Edmonton*. Thomas Dekker, John Ford & William Rowley. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. pp. 7. All references to *The Witch of Edmonton* are from this edition.
[171] Helen Vella Bonavita. "Maids, Wives and Widows: Multiple Meaning and Marriage in *The Witch of Edmonton*." *Parergon*, Vol.23, No. 2 (2006), pp. 82.

social interactions based on money and title among Edmonton society, in the case of Sawyer, how her diabolic contract allows her to participate in society and gain a title is highlighted in the words of Cuddy Banks who renders her a part of society through his language. He addresses her first as "Mother Sawyer" (2.I.195), then as a "motherly woman" (2.I.208), and finally merely as "mother" (2.I. 239). However, when all other members of the society of Edmonton swear at and blame Sawyer for every trouble in the society, Cuddy Bank refers to Sawyer as a "bitch" (4.I. 249). Thus, we observe how even Cuddy Banks, who ostensibly behaves kindly to Sawyer and to the dog and might be considered as an emblem of comic innocence,[172] changes his language in accordance with the changing situations. In fact, he only guards his selfish interest in winning Kate Carter's affections and is solely a corrupt member of a corrupt society. In this respect, it is useful to add that the comic subplot of Cuddy Banks, as it is stated in Kate McLuskie's words, reported by Laura Denker and Laurie Maguire, "gives the commonplace metaphor of love as witchery a striking resonance."[173] As Denker and Maguire continue to explain:[174]

> Cuddy's May Morris activity, which occupies four scenes in the subplot, illustrates the socially sanctioned male side of pagan tradition- dancers heralding spring by "waking up the earth" with their heels- and contrasts with socially suspicious female side of paganism, witchcraft. Thus, the social ritual in the subplot and the social threat in the main plot are linked in a kind of chiastic parallelism.

In this harsh system which functions with the coercive power of rural poverty, Sawyer's social structure is not strong enough to prevent her from being a scapegoat and a witch by her neighbours who label her as "witch" long before she decides to become one (II.1.17).

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[172] David Nicol. "Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton.*" *Comparative Drama*, Vol 38, No. 4 (Winter, 2004-05), pp. 438.
[173] Laura Denker & Laurie Maguire. "The "Morris Witch" in *The Witch of Edmonton.*" *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Naomi Conn Liebler. New York: Palgrave, 2002. pp. 186.
[174] Denker & Mguire, 186.

On the other hand, what Goodcole and Rowley, Dekker, Ford share in Elizabeth Sawyer is her cursing tongue. In an article on the association of unruly female speech and transgressive female bodies, Sarah Johnson points out Goodcole's insistence on seeing what first caused Elizabeth Sawyer's downfall as her cursing, swearing and blaspheming tongue, and explains how this attitude is used as a source of sentimentality in the play:[175]

> […] Goodcole is fairly straightforward: Sawyer's transgressing tongue opens the way for bodily transgression in the form of physical intimacy with the devil, who in turn visits physical harm on others. In short, Elizabeth Sawyer's unruly speech has very tangible consequences. Dekker, Rowley, and Ford clearly draw on Goodcole as source material when they dramatize Elizabeth Sawyer's fate in *The Witch of Edmonton*, but they significantly challenge and revise Goodcole's primary warning about the dangers of unruly speech- and with specific attention to women's speech. Like Goodcole, the playwrights foreground the physical nature of Mother Sawyer's relationship with the sinister Dog, though to drastically different effect. On stage, Sawyer's interactions with Dog move beyond the sensational to become haunting and sad- especially if, as in Simon Cox's production of the play, Sawyer is portrayed as 'touchingly besotted' with Dog and 'it was implied that this was the first and only loving relationship the old woman had ever had.'

This sensitive portrayal of Sawyer enhances the play's sympathetic treatment of Sawyer. However, when the quotation above and the play's related parts with the quotation are considered, it becomes clear that the playwrights are in agreement with Goodcole on central moral message about "the tongue". For Goodcole, the lesson to be drawn from what happened to Sawyer is, as Nicol quotes, that one must avoid "cursing, swearing, and blaspheming."[176] He repeatedly insists that the verbal aggression is "a playne way to bring you to the Divell;

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[175] Sarah Johnson. "Female Bodies, Speech, and Silence in *The Witch of Edmonton*". *Early Theatre* Vol. 12 No. 1 (2009). pp. 69-70.
[176] Nicol, 435.

nay that it brings the Divell to you."[177] The dramatists of the play must clearly have been influenced by this viewpoint. For instance, while Dog's remarks, "Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own." (2.I.127) best exemplifies that agreement between the play and its source. In addition, the conversation between Mother Sawyer and the Justice reveals how her tongue, rather than any deed she performed or not, affects her situation:

All: Hang her, beat her, kill her!

Justice: How now? Forbear this violence!

Elizabeth Sawyer: A crew of villains, a knot of bloody hangmen

        set to torment me, I know not why.

Justice: Alas, Neighbour Banks, are you a ringleader in mischief?

    Fie! To abuse an aged woman!

<div align="right">(4.I. 36-40)</div>

Justice: You must not threaten her; 'tis against law.

<div align="right">(4.I. 60)</div>

Elizabeth Sawyer: I am none. None but base curs so bark at

      me. I am none. Or would I were! If every poor old woman

      be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten, as I am

      daily, she, to be revenged, have sold your soul to th'

      devil.

<div align="right">(4.I. 86-91)</div>

Justice: You are too saucy and too bitter.

<div align="right">(4.I. 93)</div>

In this conversation between Mother Sawyer and the Justice, we see how the Justice's first image as a protector gradually turns to be the incriminating attitude due to Mother Sawyer's arrogant and swearing tongue. Thus, the characterization of Mother Sawyer as an image of the quarrelsome woman with a mischievous tongue, which is a conspicuous aspect of many of

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[177] Nicol, 435.

witch accusations, establishes the association of women with loquacity generally, and in particular the association of transgressive speech with witches.[178] In an article discussing the social pressure and demonic causation in *The Witch of Edmonton*, David Nicol holds the strong opinion that Sawyer's meeting with the devil is the result of her cursing tongue and he justifies his point by quoting the devil's speech in the play and commenting on that part:[179]

Dog: I'll thus much tell thee. Thou art never so distant
   From an evil spirit but that thy oaths,
   Curses and blasphemies pull him to thine elbow.
   Thou never tellst a lie but that a devil
    Is within hearing it; thy evil purposes
    Are ever haunted. But when they come to act,
    As thy tongue slandering, bearing false witness,
    Thy hand stabbing, stealing, cozening, cheating,
    He's then within thee.

(5.I.137-45)

   The Dog's speech describes a logical sequence of cause and effect, in which the Devil is attracted by wicked thoughts or speech and then provokes his victim into committing worse sins [...] For Goodcole and the dramatists, then, the boundary between social and demonic forces is located in the individual will with which the subject may be able to resist the pressures of society.

Certainly, it is possible to interpret the play in the way that the characters' responsibility regarding morality at individual level and the issue of self-will provide focal point for the dramatists. However, I would claim that the play presents social criticism of contemporary English society and so the issues or the concerns in both the case of Mother Sawyer and Frank Thorney are approached at community level. It is an undeniable fact that Sawyer is an old and impolite woman who speaks a lot during the play. However, when her words are examined, what disturbs her society is revealed in her speeches. During her conversation with the Justice

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[178] Bonavita, 76.
[179] Nicol, 436-37.

(4.1. 36-163), we observe that she articulates a range of social criticism and the dramatists express fierce criticism of contemporary English justice system in her situation:

Elizabeth Sawyer: These by enchantments can whole lordships change
      To trunks of rich attire, turn ploughs and teams
      To Flanders mares and coaches, and huge trains
      Of servitors to a French butterfly.
      Have you not city-witches who can turn
      'Their husbands' wares, whole standing shops of wares,
      To sumptuous tables, gardens of stol'n sin;
      In one year wasting what scarce twenty win?
      Are not these witches?
Justice: Yes, yes; but the law
    Casts not an eye on these.
Elizabeth Sawyer: Why then on me
    Or any lean old beldam? Now an old woman
    Ill-favoured grown with years, if she be poor
    Must be called bawd or witch. Such so abused
    Are the coarse witches, t'other are the fine,

                   (4.1.124-138)

She utters a diatribe on the sinners of London by asking whether they are worse than she. Moreover, in her speech, "bawd", an archaic noun meaning a woman in charge of a brothel,[180] serves as substitute for "witch". In this respect, it is important to note that Mother Sawyer is usually called by the peasants as a whore, and this reminds us of the fact that witches were accused of active female sexuality, as discussed in the framework of the first chapter:

  Old Banks: You hot whore, must we fetch you with fire in
    your tail?

                   (4.I.30)

As the editors of the play, Corbin and Sedge, note, Old Banks' accusations of Sawyer's sexual insatiability articulate the stereotypical view of women propagated by many witchcraft

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[180] Web. 06 July, 2014. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bawd?q=bawd>

persecutors.[181] In fact, as Anthony Dawson draws attention, the society of Edmonton perceives Mother Sawyer as a threat to the sexual order more than anything else.[182] Certainly, sexuality is not the only sphere in which Mother Sawyer is blamed for a possible sexual disorder in society; however, in the remarks of the peasants, we find how they see a witch as a significant threat to male sexuality:

> First Countryman: I took my wife and a servingman in our
> town of Edmonton thrashing in my barn together such
> corn as country wenches carry to market. And examining
> *my polecat* why she did so, she swore in her conscience
> she was bewitched, and what witch have we about us but
> Mother Sawyer? (emphasis added)

(4.I.6-11)

Here, the sexual implications are clear in the countryman's complaint that he found his wife "trashing in my barn" with "a servingman", and he blames Sawyer for the occurrence. Another striking point in the countryman's words is that he mentions his wife as "my polecat", which means "whore", and other women in the town as "wenches", which again means prostitute, as Winnifride is referred to by both her husband Frank Thorney and by her employer/lover Sir Arthur Clarington who gets her pregnant (1.I.1-1.I.157).[183] To continue with the complaints of the peasants:

> Second Countryman: Rid the town of her, else all our wives
> will do nothing else but *dance* about other country
> *maypoles*.
> Third Countryman: Our cattle *fall*, our wives *fall*, our daughters
> *fall* and maidservants *fall*; and we ourselves shall not
> be able to *stand* if this beast be suffered to graze amongst
> us.

(4.I.12-18)

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[181] Corbin & Sedge, 96.
[182] Anthony Dawson. "Witchcraft/ Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in The Witch of Edmonton". *Renaissance Drama*, 20 (1989). pp. 85.
[183] Web. 17 June 2014. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/wench?q=wench>

All emphasized words carrying sexual overtones and connotations clearly expose the sexual concerns of the play's society and its endeavour to blame Sawyer for the sexual disorder within society. On the other hand, Sawyer's terms to refer to Nan Ratcliffe, "that jade, that foul-tongued whore", "quean" (4.I.183-186), shows how female sexuality is abused either by the accused or by the accuser.

In conclusion, it is clear that the dramatists portray Mother Sawyer as a scapegoat, and this depiction of the witch as a scapegoat is congruent with the explanations of modern social historians who have shown that witchcraft accusations often arose from the collective guilt of communities who had failed to see and accept their misfortunes and be charitable to their poor neighbours.[184] No one in the play is a perfect symbol of innocence; however, everyone except Mother Sawyer is in a position that he or she could avoid being a social leper. Although initially, she occupies the same marginalized position as Mother Sawyer, Winnifride manages to move from single woman to wife and finally to financially and socially secure widow and avoids association with the outcast. Frank, whose bigamous marriage and murder of his second wife bring him to the gallows, is forgiven by the society who is ready to see him as innocent despite the fact that his crime is clear. In contrast, there is no sentimentality in Sawyer's execution, although she does not have any legally proved guilt. Mother Sawyer is a woman who is sacrificed for the sins of villagers in Edmonton.

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[184] Keith Thomas see chapter witchcraft and its social environment (638-680)

II.2 Social Obsession with Female Chastity and the Function of the Witches in *The Witch*

> In a maiden-time professed,
>
> Then we say that life is best.
>
> Tasting once the married life,
>
> Then we only praise the wife.
>
> There's but one state more to try
>
> Which makes women laugh or cry-
>
> Widow, widow. Of these three,
>
> The middle's best and that give me.
>
> (II.1.127-134)[185]

As it is stated in Isabella's song above, whose lyrics allude to the plights of Isabella, Amoretta, Francisca, Florida and the Duchess in *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton (1615-16),[186] a widow, typical known marital status of witches, is "one state more to try" (II.1.131) . While the play's other female characters suffer from being sexually possessed and oppressed at the hands of male authority, the witches, Hecate, Stadlin, Hoppo, Hellwayn and Prickle, are free from any kind of patriarchal norms. By applying to a witch figure that is depicted as not being confined by any patriarchal values, Middleton examines and criticizes social norms for female sexuality and the cult of female chastity.

As a playwright who acknowledged the mutual implication of sex and power, Middleton had destroyed the Jacobean opposition of lust and power thanks to his suspicion of dogma, his subversive use of irony, and his trick of reversing perspectives and withholding judgement.[187] His plays are full of women, as the names of the three of them suggest; *Women Beware Women*; *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*; *More Dissemblers Besides Women*. In this respect, Gamaliel Bradford states:[188]

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[185] Thomas Middleton. *The Witch*. Ed. Elizabeth Schafer. London: A&C Black Limited, 1994. All further references to the text will be taken from this edition.

[186] Elizabeth Schafer. Introduction. *The Witch*. Thomas Middleton. London: A&C Black Limited, 1994. pp. 6.

[187] Swapan Chakravorty. *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton.* Oxfrod: Clarendon Press, 1996. pp. 3- 6.

[188] Gamaliel Bradford. "The Women of Middleton and Webster." *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 29, No.1 (Jan., 1921), pp. 15.

> Middleton was a keen, occasionally a profound, observer, and his scenes are full of comments
>
> on feminine life which are highly illustrative of the manners of the age […]

However, Bradford criticizes *The Witch* as unattractive due to the fact that the women in it offer nothing to redeem the rest.[189] Samuel Schoenbaum quotes Middleton to point out the fact that even the playwright himself speaks of *The Witch* as "this (ignorantly-ill-fated) Labour of mine," which has lain "so-long, in an imprisond-Obscuritie."[190] The reason for this situation might be that *The Witch* is Middleton's first exploration of tragicomedy in which he, for the first time, uses women characters as the essential figures to investigate the nature of virtue itself.[191] Thus, although the title of the play provides a reader or the audience with a strong impression that this is a play about a witch, it explores and offers various possible roles available for women such as a wife, an unmarried mother or a prostitute. In fact, when the play is analyzed in depth, it appears that this play is not related to witchcraft at all, and the existence of the witches merely supplies the dramatist with the necessary material to mirror the obsession of his own society with female chastity. Middleton's play is a topical satire of the scandal involving Frances Howard, her husband Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, to whom she was married when she was thirteen and he was fourteen. According to the event, Frances Howard had an affair with Robert Carr and then married him. By the way, Robert Carr's close associate and probably lover, Sir Thomas Overbury, opposed Carr's marriage to Frances. As Schafer informs: [192]

The grounds for the divorce were that Essex was subject to witchcraft and could not have sex with his wife, although he was not rendered incapable in relation to other women. The claim that Essex had been bewitched occasioned much gossip, particularly because the 'proof' included a test for Frances's

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[189] Gamaliel Bradford. "The Women of Middleton and Webster." *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 29, No.1 (Jan., 1921), pp. 15.

[190] Samuel Schoenbaum. "Middleton's Tragicomedies." *Modern Philology*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Aug., 1956), pp. 8.

[191] Schoenbaum, 8.

[192] For more details on the event see Schafer, 25-29.

virginity; she was physically examined by several women, but the fact that she knew she could not pass the test and persuaded another woman to take her place.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that all machinations and the nature of both male and female characters in relation to female virginity and sexuality in *The Witch*, as will be discussed in the following pages, expose Middleton's criticism of his own society.

To illustrate Middleton's key aim in witchcraft material, it would be useful to start analyzing the play by looking at Middleton's sources for his play. Like many other playwrights of that time who dabbed in the tragicomedy, Middleton was influenced by John Fletcher whose famous definition of tragicomedy is quoted by Eugene Waith: "[…] it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie."[193] However, Middleton enhances the genre by applying to a new kind of ironic drama which is neither comic nor tragic. In this respect, as Schoenbaum observes:

> In the pattern of tragicomedy Middleton found an innovation that he could adapt to his own
> uses: the "middle-mood" which Ellis-Fermor and Waith regard as the outstanding contribution
> of Beaumont and Fletcher […] He moves toward a new kind of ironic drama […] It is a
> realistic drama that rejects sensationalism which characterizes the tragedy of the age […] But
> Middleton did not quite complete the transformation, and, as a result, the plays are
> disturbingly uneven and contradictory.[194]

On the other hand, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* from which Middleton drew invocations, potion ingredients and demons' names,[195] serves as the main source for much of the witchcraft material in *The Witch*. As Elizabeth Schafer points out:[196]

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[193] Eugene M. Waith. "Characterization in John Fletcher's Tragicomedies." *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 74 (Apr., 1943), pp. 142.
[194] Schoenbaum, 7-8.
[195] See David Holmes. *The Art of Thomas Middleton: A Critical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970. pp. 146. Thomas Middleton. *The Witch*. Ed. Marion O'Connor. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Ed. Gary Taylor & John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. 1128.
[196] Schafer, 13.

Although no audience would recognize Scot as Middleton's source, the fact that when Middleton wanted detail on witch practices he went to a sceptical source is suggestive of his general strategy in this play, which I believe to be satiric.

Although this is the only play of the period which represents almost all the sensationalist elements in Continental witchcraft, such as infanticide, sexual deviance and transvection, which were not common in English trials, yet it occupied a place in the broader public imagination.[197] The hyperbolic and rumbustious characterization of the witches, and their ineffectiveness on the main action in the play, as will be discussed in the following pages, reveal Middleton's incredulity toward the existence of witches. Thus, the play is not a deep exploration of witchcraft. Instead, it examines social norms for female sexuality and the cult of female chastity by applying to a witch figure that is depicted as not being confined by any social norms or values especially regarding sexuality. For this reason, the witches in the play are not represented as being capable of or interested in committing any crime associated with witches such as shaping any one's destiny or causing harm to someone. Instead, they are much more interested in satisfying their own lusts by openly sleeping with visitors or succubi or their own offspring, while, on the contrary, the play's human characters try to use the witches to make their sexual dreams real and make great efforts to hide their practice of sexual pleasures.

What combines and dominates the three plot lines in the play is the question of female chastity, and the witches are included in two of three plots, yet their existence or their poisons do not affect the events of the plots. The presence and absence of virginity was one of the

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[197] Julia M. Garrett. "Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 2013), pp. 46.

main concerns of the first chapter within this framework.[198] William Carroll summarizes the issues that I tried to discuss in the first chapter:[199]

> The religious and psychological value of virginity was, of course, under interrogation in early modern England. On the one hand, the cult of Virgin Mary taught, as Marina Warner has noted, 'that the virginal life reduced the special penalties of the Fall in women and was therefore holy. Second, the image of the virgin body was the supreme image of wholeness, and wholeness was equated with holiness.' The virgin body was believed to be perfectly sealed up, 'seamless, unbroken'. This belief was based in part on inaccurate medical knowledge- 'the hymen was thought to seal off the womb completely […] caulking the body like tar on a ship's timbers'. […] The hymen thus became the most important fetishized commodity possessed by a woman, a barrier both physical and spiritual, […] a threshold, a barrier to men, marking the fall into sexuality, the transition from maiden to woman, the making of the virgin not. The hymen's liminal status gives it an enormous symbolic importance as a construct of patriarchal discourse.

However, as Carroll agrees, the cult of female virginity was under attack in Reformation England despite the presence of the Virgin Queen figure.[200] Carroll offers also the etymological definition and implications of hymen as a term:[201]

> The name 'hymen' signifies both the god of marriage, and marriage generally, as well as the physical membrane; the same word thus figures the object which defines the virgin, and the ritual which demands the loss of that object. […] In perhaps the most common metaphoric name, virginity is an unplucked flower, usually a rose; to penetrate the hymen is to deflower. […] In *Anatomie of the Bodie of Man* (1548), for example, Thomas Vicary uses the metaphor of 'deflouring', but reserves the term 'flowers' as a specific name for the menses, a term which had become common usage among Renaissance anatomists, midwives and physicians.

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[198] See Chapter I.1 Religious Dynamics of Witchcraft as a Sex-Specific Crime, I.2 Female As a Weaker Sex, I.2.1 Sexuality in Witchcraft.

[199] William C. Carroll. "The Virgin Not: Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare." *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*. Ed. Deborah E. Barker & Ivo Kamps. London & New York: Verso, 1995. pp. 287.

[200] Carroll, 287.

[201] Carroll, 289-290.

Thus, it is not surprising to find hymen as a concept in early modern English drama.

In the plot of Francisca and Aberzanes, in which the witches are not included, Francisca is one of the "poor venturing gentlewomen" (II.1.43) who is under seventeen-year-old, and in her soliloquy (II.1.35-62) she reveals the fact that Aberzanes, "a gentleman neither honest, wise nor valiant",[202] secretly comes to her at night and now she is pregnant by him. She expresses her great fear of being killed by her brother, Antonio, if her secret sexual relationship with Aberzanes and her pregnancy are discovered. Aberzanes's solution to their predicament is getting Isabella out of the house so that she could give birth in secret. When Francisca has her baby, this time he pays an old woman to raise the child secretly. As is clear, he has no intention of accepting full responsibility for the baby. He makes his attitude clear when he speaks to Francisca and says: "Not I, pardon me; That let a husband do when he has married you;" (II.2. 38). On the other hand, Francisca has the same attitude with Aberzanes; what makes her hate herself after giving birth is "how monstrous thin I look!" (II.3.33), and before her childbearing, she does not seem to hesitate about spreading lies about Isabella to protect herself against exposure of her secret. Here, it is important to note that Isabella is the first person who discovers Francisca's secret and her first reaction is well worth examining:

Isabella: I'll call her stranger ever in my heart.

　　　She's killed the name of sister through base lust,

(III.2.50-51)

However, when Francisca enters, Isabella continues calling her "sister" (III.2.74). Her hypocritical attitude and her accusations against Francisca than Aberzane as if, as a woman, she was the only responsible person for the situation reveal how collaboration is impossible among women in this atmosphere of hatred. Moreover, Isabella is not alone to blame Francisca for her extramarital affair:

Antonio　(to Aberzanes): thou'st made my sister *a whore*. (V.1.25)

Aberzanes (to Francisca): thou *fruitful wickedness*, thou seed of shame and murder! (V.1.29)

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[202] See the description for Aberzanes provided by the playwright in the list of Dramatis Personae.

Antonio (to Aberzanes): This woman I bestow on thee; what dost thou say? (V.1.37)

On the contrary, when Hecate says "Come, my sweet sisters;" she really means "sister", because the witches are in collaboration with each other. For instance, Hecate asks Stadlin for advice on the quantity of ingredients she adds to the cauldron (I.2. 10-11) or they prepare for a night-time flight together (III.3). They do not harshly judge each other on their individual sexual activities as females. In this respect, it is possible to say that a witch community in the play reflects Middleton's ideal society in which individual liberty is considered important, for, as Holmes points out:[203]

> Middleton was a great lover of individual liberty, and this humanistic predilection no doubt played a large part in producing the balanced and objective outlook which his dramatic microcosms increasingly reveal […] Middleton's liberalism was considerably 'advanced' […] Middleton was not an enemy of the aristocracy, or of any other class; nor was he opposed to the class system of social organization itself, for that matter. Yet […] he was intolerant of the humbug in the social structure.

On the other hand, Isabella is a key female figure whose name directly involves in the female virginity discourse of the play's Isabella-Sebastian-Antonio-Florida plot. The first act of the play begins with Sebastian's claim that "She is my wife by contract before heaven, and all the angels" (I.1.3), and only one line after, he informs that "she's gone; another has possession." Towards the end of the first scene of the first act, we discover that this is, in fact, the day of the marriage of Isabella and Antonio. From now on, we witness the effort put by Sebastian and Antonio into defining who will "conquer" Isabella's hymen. On one hand, Sebastian resorts to the witches to make Antonio impotent by a charm on his wedding night, so that he can preserve Isabella's virginity for his own purposes. However, although the spell which Hecate puts on Antonio is successful, later, his plan to lure Isabella into bed brings him on the verge of violating her virginity with rape. That he subsequently gets what he wants has

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[203] Holmes, 46-47.

nothing to do with the witch but rather with "a fearful, unexpected accident" (V.3.25). Beside the ineffectiveness of witchery, this scene also highlights the hypocrisy of men in relation to female chastity: Sebastian, who speaks about a heavenly union with Isabella, comes close to raping her by claiming that it is his right to do so. In addition, Sebastian makes so many misogynistic comments during the whole play.[204] For instance, he complains that "honesty's a rare wealth in a woman" (II.2.209) while he is disguising himself as Celio, Isabella's servant, to reach his aim. He does not hesitate about labeling Florida as "whore", following her affair with Antonio, yet he considers Fernando, who is the owner of the brothel in which Florida has a room too, his best friend. On the other hand, the play's ostensible tragic hero is Antonio, who dies in the end; but his excessive reaction against Isabella's so-called infidelity and his exaggerated speeches on his honor as a man who has had a mistress for nearly seven years prevent us from sympathizing with him. Instead, the realistic aspect of Middleton's play represents male hypocrisy regarding female chastity and the distorted morality with respect to gender in sexuality. Moreover, both Francisca and Florida's attempts to discredit Isabella's claim to chastity and destroy Isabella's status in society demonstrates, again, the absence of collaboration among women characters.

In the duchess- Amoretta- Almachildes plot, The Duchess is a woman whose father is killed by her husband who "came to" her " bedside at the full of midnight, and in his hand that fatal, fearful cup, waked" her and "forced" her "pledge him" and her "father's scorn" (II.2.58-62). Thus, the Duchess who is driven by revenge wants to get Almachildes who desires her servant, Amoretta, "a maid, a perfect one" (II.2.74), to help her killing the Duke. Thus, the Duchess tricks Almachildes by blindfolding. This scene of the play is important because as Schafer points out:[205]

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[204] See also IV.2.54-55, III.2.15-28, III.3.222, IV.2.102-103,
[205] Schafer, 22.

> […] there is so much hullabaloo over which woman precisely Almachildes has penetrated: first it seems that it may be Amoretta, then that it may be the duchess and finally it turns out that it was a common prostitute. A bitter comedy emerges, focused around the grotesque comic device of the bed trick, where one woman is substituted for another without the man concerned noticing difference […] In a play where the focus on female chastity and sex is so strong, the bed trick points uncomfortably to the utter reification of women in the act of sex, as each woman becomes an anonymous body to be penetrated, not an individual with distinguishing marks.

Almachildes is, like Antonio and Sebastian, a hypocrite who complains that the woman he thought he was deflowering did not have an intact hymen, so she deceived him (III.1.1-14). However, he visits Hecate's cave and asks for a love charm to be used on Amoretta.

> Almachildes: I will to the witches; they say they have charms and tricks to make a wench fall backwards and lead a man herself to a country house some mile out of the town, like a fire-drake. There be such whoreson kind girls and such bawdy witches, and I'll try conclusions.

In his speech, while we observe that he wants to use the witches to make his sexual dreams real, he also voices a kind of public opinion on "bawdy" witches. Interestingly, O'Connor adds information on the title character of the play, Hecate:[206]

> The pronunciation of the name 'Hecate' in *The Witch* is disyllabic and its mere utterance carries a sexual innuendo, 'cat' being early modern slang for 'whore'.

However, although the love charm at first appears so powerful, it works only as a dupe misleading him about the woman he is having sex with. Therefore, again, the witchery charm does not work in the play's action. On the other side, the Duchess, who refers to Hecate as a "mother" (V.2.33) and reveals once more the witches' acceptance by society, is the last person visiting the witches. She asks for a potion to kill Almachildes who helped her kill the Duke. When, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, the two female groups, one group including the plays' women characters and the other group formed by the female witch

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[206] O'Connor, 1127.

characters, are considered, the Duchess is the only woman who establishes a direct contact between these two groups, for she is the only woman resorting to witchery. In addition, at the same time, she is the only person who has an extremely cynical attitude during the whole play and constantly has a plan in her mind. The Lord Governor's accusation of adultery and murder against her and her defense remind us of Sawyer's execution scene. Thus, it is possible to say that the Duchess is described in witchlike terms in the play. Nevertheless, the poisons she gets from Hecate to make Almachildes meet "a sudden and a subtle" death (V.2.2) turn out in the next and last scene either not to have worked or even been remembered. Furthermore, the Duchess's acceptance to be executed as a murderer and her hard fight to clear her name of adultery shows, as we observe in the case of Isabella and Francisca, that the obsession for chastity is not specific to the play's male characters; it has a vital importance also for the female characters.

In conclusion, although ostensibly the witches are there to supply the play with an action by their charms and poisons, as we observe, Hecate and her cohorts are represented as being incapable of determining the outcome or affecting the actions of the human figures. Their consulters are neither her victims nor her converts but rather simply her clients. As Marion O'Connor explains:[207]

> It is not that the witch brings the plots together in some formal unity of the sort that twentieth-century criticism so often, and inappropriately, foisted upon Renaissance dramaturgy. The witch has no direct involvement in one plot, the second, for neither Francisca nor Aberzanes has any resort to her. In the other two plots Hecate is active but finally otiose. […] Conspicuously ineffectual in their plot relations to the courtiers, the witch and her colleagues appear almost innocent alongside them. For all her talk of incest and infanticide, the coven is not shown to be performing anything more noxious than their aerial song and dance routine.

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[207]Thomas Middleton. *The Witch*. Ed. Marion O'Connor. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Ed. Gary Taylor & John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. 1126.

Within the fiction of *The Witch*, it is in the court that vices are enacted, and it is by the courtiers that crimes are committed, with ultimate impunity.

Schafer agrees with O'Connor and expresses that:[208]

> The witch scenes in the play are challenging because they present the witches as less obnoxious than the human characters. The comparison is clearly invited by the parallelism of the two opening scenes (see pp. xxvii-xxviii). Sometimes the witch scenes seem irrelevant to the main action except for the fact that the witches provide almost a local shop, casually used by the court whenever a poison or potion is required. However, Middleton's witches also provide a compelling focus for a subject that Middleton often explored in his plays: his society's neurosis about female chastity. […] The play condemns a corrupt society rather than focusing on one or two individuals.

This parallelism between the human characters, I would say especially the female ones, and the witches, define their functions in the play. Francisca, Isabella and the Duchess form a configuration: a maid, a wife, a widow. However, as O'Connor observes:[209]

> None of these ladies actually meets the terms of sexual conduct defining the social category to which she is assigned. Francisca the sixteen-year-old mother is no maiden. Isabella, promised in marriage to one man and bound in an unconsummated marriage with another, is no wife. The Duchess, having (as only the final moments of the play make clear) failed to kill her husband, is no widow. […] In *The Witch*, the maid, the wife and the widow exist merely by sleights of language. Indeed, among the female characters in the play, only Hecate and Florida are entitled to the names by which they are known- witch and whore. The fact that the other female characters do not meet the job descriptions for their respective titles points to the play's preoccupation with the problem of determining a woman's moral worth and her social status solely with respect to her sexual relations with men.

O'Connor's interpretation of discontinuity in female roles in the play and her conclusion that the play hints at the problem of complete absence of female individualization is seminal.

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[208] Schafer, 20-27.
[209] O'Connor, 1127-1128.

Moreover, in O'Connor's analysis of the play, it is possible to understand how *The Witch* displays the fact that a woman's social status totally depends on her sexual relations with men. However, I would suggest that Hecate and Florida are no exceptions, for they do not meet their "job descriptions" too. As explained before, in spite of being presented as performing all the traditional witch deeds such as night flying, Hecate and the other witches are not "real witches". They are expected to be effective by their strong power to change the outcome of the events in the play; yet, every time, they fail as their charms are ineffective and inessential. As Julia Garret states:[210]

> Middleton seems rather detached from debates about the reality of witchcraft, and instead views this lore as appealing raw material for his dramatic craft. His witch figures are consequently not socially realistic but fantastical characters who embody a carnivalesque energy- provocative but ultimately not threatening. […] These comically repugnant characters exist at the periphery of the dramatic action, setting off the more central plots of disguise, romantic betrayal, and revenge. And, as in Macbeth, the witch scenes provide interludes of invigorating theatrical display- perhaps employing some ingenious stage machinery- between the scenes of the primary drama.

In the case of Florida, it is true that the play's folio and its whole characters title her as a whore, but we observe that there is a problem in her description. She is a whore, "the poor sinner that hath this seven year kept herself sound for" (V.1.74-75) the powerful aristocrat Antonio, and she does not have any relation to any other man during the whole play. She gets upset about Antonio's marriage, yet accepts having an adulterous affair after his marriage. That is to say, she is totally possessed by Antonio who, in the end, stabs her while trying to stab his wife, due to Isabella's so-called infidelity. Thus, it is possible to say that Florida is presented as being Antonio's mistress, rather than being a female prostitute. In her situation,

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[210] Julia M. Garrett. "Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 2013), pp. 46.

while we observe that she does not fit her job description offered by the play, the complexity of moral and sexual ambiguity about references to females' social situations is articulated.

In result, Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* functions in the same way with the previous play. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, we examined the scapegoat phenomenon in witchcraft discourse through the characterization of Mother Sawyer, an old, poor, deformed and isolated woman who is first accused of being a witch, then treated as a social outcast, and finally executed. The function of social coercion and causation in the process of "making a witch", communal fear and cruelty, how and why Mother Sawyer is rejected and persecuted by her society were among the matters discussed in the analysis of *The Witch of Edmonton*. From this perspective, the play, as I hope to show, offers social criticism of early modern English society which is not so different from Edmonton's society in the play. From this perspective, Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* functions in the same way. We are again offered a bitter social criticism and the witch scenes serve for that aim, as discussed above; however, Middleton's usage of witchcraft material differs markedly from that of Rowley, Dekker and Ford. In *The Witch*, Hecate and her cohorts are clearly incorporated into the play's society. Thus, they are not in any danger of being brought to trial and executed. However, although Hecate and her cohorts are represented as "real witches" who perform all of the deeds attributed to witches, they are not "real" characters at all. They are in the play merely as a material for the playwright's social satire on unhealthy obsession with female virginity and male hypocrisy in relation to female chastity. Furthermore, the reason for the witches' total acceptance in the society of *The Witch* is that the individuals in society of *The Witch* are in aware of their misfortunes. There is no attempt in the play to resolve social problems, yet there is no search for any scapegoat as in Edmonton's society.

II.3 Lady Macbeth and the Weird Sisters: The *Femme Fatale* Archetype

> Double, double, toil and trouble,
>
> Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
>
> (IV.1.10-11)[211]

The existence of witch scenes in *Macbeth* constitutes one of the most debated topics in the field of Shakespeare studies. Due to the fact that the interpretation of the play changes drastically in accordance with how the play's witch material is interpreted, Shakespeare provides us with a wide range of options, and it seems impossible to claim one and only description for the weird sisters in *Macbeth*. One of the main reasons for the fact that the issues in Shakespeare's plays including *Macbeth* and its witchcraft material seen from more than one perspective is the playwright's not propagandist but relativist view. As Amos Oz expresses:[212]

> Every extremism, every uncompromising crusade, every form of fanaticism in Shakespeare
> ends up either in a tragedy or in a comedy.

Thus, even only by analysing his plays, we conclude that Shakespeare does not intend to supply an audience or a reader with one aspect of an issue in question. According to Robin Headlam Wells:[213]

> In play after play Shakespeare deals with the past and the lessons it has for the modern world;
> with the problem of tyranny; with the responsibilities of rulers and subjects; with war and the
> question of whether and under what circumstances it can be justified. […] Shakespeare was
> plainly interested in politics; but he was above all an artist writing both for the stage and for
> publication, and one of the characteristics of great literature has always been a sense of the
> irreducible complexity of the moral and political issues it deals with. Despite his royal

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[211] William Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. Ed. Nicholas Brooke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. All further references to the text will be taken from this edition.
[212] Amos Oz. *How to Cure a Fanatic*. London: Vintage Books, 2012. pp. 71.
[213] Robin Headlam Wells. *Shakespeare's Humanism*. Cambridge: Cmabridge Universty Press, 2005. pp. 27-28.

patronage, Shakespeare seems to have been less interested in acting as a spokesman for, or critic of, the government, or even attacking or defending particular constitutional models, than in analyzing the human causes of failure in different types of polity.

Macbeth and its witch material are not excluded from Wells's examination. Regarding the witchcraft theme in *Macbeth*, at the one extreme, there are scholars like Thomas A. Spalding and Walter C. Curry who deal with the play in accordance with the historical context and concepts of witchcraft;[214] at the other extreme, there are critics like Terry Eagleton who interpret the play's witchcraft material mostly as psychological symbolism. Even the play itself offers a plurality of references to the sisters, which leads us to considerable variation in interpretations. For instance, they are called "witches" by Folio direction, yet only the sailor's wife refers to one of them as a "witch" in the play (I.3.6). Instead, they call each other as "sister" (I.3.1-3), while Macbeth terms them as "imperfect speakers" (I.3.70) and "the Weird Sisters" (III.4.133), and Banquo mentions them as "the devil" (I.3.107) and "the instruments of darkness" (I.3.124). However, since the current thesis is an attempt to examine the close association of witchcraft and female sexuality, my analysis of the play focuses on the question of the Sisters' power and the archetype that lies behind them: the female figure who, by the power of her position or magic, leads men to destruction, namely the *femme fatale* archetype. Thus, in this sense, the question of the possible combination of the Sisters and Lady Macbeth in relation to female power is the matter to be discussed.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, some archetypal female figures, such as Lilith and Eve, contributing to the beliefs in witchcraft were discussed. These ancient mythical seductive wicked female figures could be added to Aphrodite, Medea, Circe, or with historical figures such as Cleopatra and Messalina. As the phrase itself suggests, the *femme fatale* figure portrays a woman who has power over man by using her feminine wiles. We find the

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[214] Thomas Alfred Spalding. *Elizabethan Demonolgy*. BiblioBazaar, 2008 (first published in 1880); Walter Clyde Curry. *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns*. P. Smith, 1968 (first published in 1937).

definition of the phrase in Elisabeth Bronfen's analysis of *Double Indemnity*, by Billy Wilder:[215]

> […] she is not only sexually inhibited, but also unabashedly independent and ruthlessly ambitious, using her seductive charms and her intelligence to liberate herself from the imprisonment of an unfulfilling marriage. Furthermore, though she gains power over the noir hero by nourishing his sexual fantasies, her own interest is only superficially erotic. She entertains a narcissistic pleasure at the deployment of her own ability to dupe the men who fall for her, even as she is merciless in manipulating them for her own ends. […] One can speak of tragic sensibility in conjunction with the femme fatale in part because she inevitably comes to recognize that her radical insistence on independence is a delusion, which was meant to stave off recognition of her own fallibility. […] On the one hand, one could speak of her as a figure of male fantasy, articulating both a fascination for the sexually aggressive woman, as well as anxieties about feminine domination.

In the light of this definition, is it possible to consider the Sisters and Lady Macbeth as *femme fatale*? Do they really function as the coercive female power leading Macbeth to his final destruction? In an article on the relation between Macbeth and the witches, Peter Stallybrass argues that:[216]

> Witchcraft, prophecy and magic function in Macbeth as ways of developing a particular conceptualization of social and political order. Witchcraft is associated with female rule and the overthrowing of patriarchal authority which in turn leads to the 'womanish' (both cowardly and instigated by women) killing of Duncan, the 'holy' father who establishes both family and state.

What we deduce from Stallybrass's words is the triumph of feminine authority in the play. Accordingly, the Sisters and Lady Macbeth, as combined female power, indirectly destroy patriarchal authority around them by leading Macbeth to kill the king. Furthermore, in *The*

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[215] Elisabeth Bronfen. "Femme Fatale: Negotiations of Tragic Desire." *New Literary History*, Vol. 35. No. 1 (Winter,2004). pp. 106.
[216] Peter Stallybrass. "*Macbeth* and Witchcraft." *Macbeth*: Contemporary Critical Essays. Ed. Alan Sinfield. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1992. pp. 34.

Masks of Macbeth, Marvin Rosenberg considers the issue from every possible angle, and he analyses the Sisters as women, witches, satanic agents, fates, projections of the mind, and as symbols.[217] In a part of his analysis, he explains that:[218]

> In Freudian terms, the witches could be projections of inner images of the powerful female-mother-figure who suborns the male, driving or luring him to his own destruction. […] the Sisters themselves, whose femaleness dominates the male side of them, can be seen as immediate visual symbols of mysterious, primeval, but ambiguous feminine influence.

However, on the other hand, Janet Adelman, who combines feminist and psychoanalytic approaches in her analysis of *Macbeth*, points out that although they are initially constructed as powerful, the play's women virtually disappear at the end:[219]

> By the end, she (Lady Macbeth) is so diminished a character that we scarcely trouble to ask ourselves whether the report of her suicide is accurate or not. At the same time, the witches who are her avatars disappear from the stage and become so diminished in importance that Macbeth never alludes to them, blaming his defeat only on the equivocation of their male masters, the fiends. Even Lady Macduff exists only to disappear.

My reading of the play agrees with Adelman, and I argue that both Lady Macbeth and the Sisters superficially symbolize *femme fatale*; yet they do not function as *femme fatale* in the play. To clarify this point, I would like to present a quotation from Robin Wells who says:[220]

> What seems to be unique to Shakespeare is the emergence for the first time in English drama of psychologically plausible characters who give the illusion of having interior lives, but who are at the same time representative figures in the drama of humanism's great symbolic battle between *humanitas* and *feritas*.

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[217] Marvin Rosenberg. *The Masks of Macbeth*. University of Delaware Press, 1993 (first published in 1978). See chapter "The Weyward Sisters." pp. 1-32.

[218] Rosenberg, 23.

[219] Janet Adelman. "Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, *Hamlet* to *The Tempest*." *William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Alexander Leggatt. Oxon: Routledge, 2006. pp. 82.

[220] Wells, 27.

By so many scholars, the Sisters have been viewed as the evil female power or influence, and Lady Macbeth has been conceived as one of the great "alive" and "active" female characters ever. We witness the moment when she invokes the "spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts" to unsex her, fill her with cruelty, make thick her blood, and exchange her milk with gall (I.5.39-47). Lady Macbeth's soliloquy portraying her as a witch-like woman gives us a chance to examine the psychological state of her mind, while it also implies a kind of combination or continuity between the Sisters and the Lady. However, I would claim that *Macbeth* is the story of Macbeth and, as Wells agrees, it deals with the paradox of violent action in defence of civilised values by reflecting the realities of the patriarchal system in the play's society.[221] Macbeth seems to have built a close relationship with his wife and with the Sisters, yet in both cases, we observe that his relations are superficial. Therefore, Lady Macbeth and the Sisters' influence on Macbeth is not factual.

To begin with, Lady Macbeth does not have a profound influence on Macbeth in killing the king and in his other murders, and the question of the closeness of the Macbeths' marriage is the main reason for analyzing the Lady not as an effective, powerful, seductive *femme fatale*, but as a passive female victim of patriarchy who first loses her mind then dies. For instance, Macbeth thinks about murdering Duncan before he meets Lady Macbeth:

Macbeth: Present fears
        Are less than horrible imaginings:
        My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
        Shakes so my single state of man,

                                                                (I.3.138-141)

Moreover, Macbeth's own reasons he sets out for not killing the king are different from the ones he explains to Lady Macbeth. While Macbeth thinks that he should not kill the king because Duncan is both his kinsman and host, and the king is a virtuous man (I.7.13-18), he says to his wife that he has just gained a new title that he cannot quickly cast aside (I.7.32-35).

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[221] Wells, 28.

Thus, although they seem to work as a team at the beginning, after a short while, we observe that he does not share his real inner thoughts with his wife; instead he keeps his ideas and plans for himself. In this regard, Barbara Everett observes:[222]

> Their love is so corrupted by the struggle to survive as to pull each other down. Macbeth, to put it simply, loves Lady Macbeth; they love each other; at the painful III..2, where they first show a marked drift away from each other, each minds. Macbeth addresses his wife with troubled extra care, as "Love", "deare Wife", and "dearest Chuck". The tragic mutual destructiveness of the marriage is summed up by a simple fact. Married couples invariably, if it is a true marriage, grow like each other. The Macbeths slowly exchange qualities in the course of the play.

Lisa Hopkins agrees with Everett:[223]

> […] and Macbeth in particular presents perhaps the Shakespearean canon's most sustained and probing portrait of an individual marriage- and one which, for all the brevity of the play, is particularly attentive to changes in the relationship over time. The institution of marriage radically fashions not only the individual life of Macbeth, but also the whole mindset of the society in which he lives. Violent and unsettled as it may be, it nevertheless adheres strictly to the rituals which surround kinship and the home.

In result, ostensibly *femme fatale* Lady Macbeth does not function as a woman who uses all her feminine wiles on Macbeth in order to lead him to his destruction. Their marriage relationship is in question. Furthermore, especially after killing the king, Macbeth seems desperately nervous about not having an heir. From now on, his bloody actions start with murdering Banquo:

Macbeth: They hailed him father to a line of kings.
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,

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[222] Barbara Everett. *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. pp. 104.
[223] Lisa Hopkins. *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy Husbands.* Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998. pp. 145.

>   No son of mine succeeding; if't be so,
>
>   For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind
>
>   For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered,

<div align="right">(III.1. 59-65)</div>

Macbeth does not share his plans with his wife anymore. Cleanth Brooks explains:[224]

> The babe signifies not only the future; it symbolizes all those enlarging purposes which make life meaningful, and it symbolizes, furthermore, all those emotional and- to Lady Macbeth-irrational ties which make man more than a machine- which render him human. It signifies preeminently the pity which Macbeth, under Lady Macbeth's tutelage, would wean himself of as something "unmanly."

As a result, although the play itself does not offer precise information about why the Macbeths do not have a child, it is clear that the issue is a considerable worry for King Macbeth, and it might be a reason why Macbeth totally excludes Lady Macbeth from his plans and actions. On this subject, her hysteria has a great importance. Firstly, the association of womb and hysteria constituted one of the issues discussed in Chapter I.2 "Female as a Weaker Sex" within this thesis. Accordingly, hysteria was discussed as a way to male control over the female body and sexuality. Secondly, the argument of many feminist historians who claim that witchcraft beliefs elaborated a myth of female power, and celebrate the unruly female witch figure who threatened hegemonic sex and gender systems were mentioned in the analysis of *The Witch of Edmonton*.[225] Joanna Levin explains how hysteria is interpreted by scholars as a deliberate attempt to destroy that powerful female figure created and celebrated by a witch figure:[226]

> Several critics parallel the shift from violent persecution to hegemonic cooptation with the transformation of the witch into the hysteric. […] Marianne Hester elaborates this theory,

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[224] Cleanth Brooks. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry. William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Alexander Leggatt. London & New York: Routledge, 2006. pp. 64.

[225] Joanna Levin. "Lady Macbeth and the Daemonoligie of Hysteria." *ELH*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Spring, 2002). pp. 23.

[226] Levin, 23-24.

arguing that a new gender ideology expedited the end of the witchhunts by providing "a new, and more effective, means of controlling women by men," and she characterizes this "new ideology" as the changing "perception of women from that of 'powerful and threatening witch' to that of 'hysterical woman.'" Sexually passive and domesticated, […] patronized rather than feared, consigned to an involuted private sphere of sentiment, morality, and nurture; […].

Thus, it is possible to say that the "hysterical woman" theory explained above applies to Lady Macbeth's discontinuity in her initial strong determination and her final 'suicide', as Carol Thomas Neely interprets.[227] However, I would say that the powerful witch figure theory is partially suitable for *Macbeth*'s witches.

The Sisters do not function as *femme fatale* either, for they are not in close cooperation with Macbeth. As in the case of Macbeth's contemplation of murdering the king before Lady Macbeth voices his wish, Macbeth's first sentence in the play, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I.3.38), echoes the witches and the play's motto: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair". This fact shows that Macbeth is not "wicked" because of the witches. If we mean becoming evil by using the term "wicked", then Macbeth was already basically evil at the beginning. He has a remarkable capacity for evil, and seeks for "spur to prick the sides of my intent" (I.7. 26-27), so he deludes himself into believing in the words of the sisters and of his wife. Even if Lady Macbeth's influence on him to kill the king is open to discussion, the fact that he is alone murdering the others and that he only visits Hecate at the end of his 'fantastic' career emphasize his free will to decide on events.

On the other hand, the witches in *Macbeth* are, like Edmonton's Mother Sawyer, treated as social outcasts by human figures in the play's society. For instance, the first witch wants some chestnuts from a mortal female; but she is rejected and accused of being a witch, which is for the first and the only time in the play that "witch" is used to refer to the Sisters:

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[227] Carol Thomas Neely. "'Documents in Madness": Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture.' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No.3 (Autumn, 1991). pp. 327.

> First Witch: A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
>
> And munched, and munched, and munched. 'Give me', quoth I;
>
> 'Aroynt thee, witch', the rump-fed ronyon cries.
>
> Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th Tiger;
>
> But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
>
> And like a rat without tail,
>
> I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

<div align="right">(I.3.4-10)</div>

Now, she plans to take her revenge by destroying her husband's ship, namely she plans to return with a venganance. On this subject, Terry Eagleton, a prominent British literary theorist and critic, refers to the witches as the 'unconscious' of the drama, "which must be exiled and repressed as dangerous but which is always likely to return with a venganance."[228] In fact, the act of the first witch physically exemplifies what Eagleton means in his description of the witches as the unconscious of the play. Moreover, what happens between the witch and the sailor's wife exposes the fact that the witches in *Macbeth* are marginalized by the play's society. We find the same attitude in Hecate's complaining about mortals:

> Hecate: And which is worse, all you have done
>
> Hath been but for a wayward son,
>
> Spiteful and wrathful who, as others do,
>
> Loves for his own ends, not for you.

<div align="right">(III.5.10-13)</div>

Here, Hecate is angry with her cohorts, for they appeared to "a wayward son", Macbeth. Thus, it is possible to say that although the Sisters seem to be close to Macbeth, which might lead us to the idea that they are incorporated into Macbeth's society, they are, in fact, totally excluded from the social environment. However, at the same time, in contrast with Mother Sawyer who, at the beginning of the play, tries to be accepted by her neighbours, the Sisters do not attempt or seek to be a part of society. This situation blurs the lines between their existence and inexistence in the play. In this sense, one of the most striking and thought-

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[228] Terry Eagleton. " 'The witches are the heroines of the piece…' " *Macbeth: Contemporary Critical Essays.* Ed. Alan Sinfield. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1992. pp. 47.

provoking interpretations of the witch material in *Macbeth* belongs to Stephen Greenblatt who argues that the witches in the play account for nothing:[229]

> They are given many of the conventional attributes of both Continental and English witch lore […] they are associated with tempests, and particularly with thunder and lightning; they are shown calling to their familiars and conjuring spirits; they recount killing livestock, raising winds, sailing in a sieve; their hideous broth links them to birth-strangled babes and blaspheming Jews; above all, they traffic in prognostication and prophecy. And yet though the witches are given a vital theatrical *enargeia*, though their malevolent energy is apparently put in act, it is in fact extremely difficult to specify what, if anything they do or even what, if anything, they are.

Greenblatt supports his claim by quoting Banquo's question, "What are these," when he and Macbeth first encounter them, and by showing how Macbeth echoes the same question, "Speak, if you can. What are you?" to which he receives in reply his own name: "All hail, Macbeth!".[230] Thus, from these questions, Greenblatt concludes that it is extremely difficult to specify what the witches are and what they do. Even their gender is blurred (I.3.45-46). Relevantly, it is difficult to term what they tell Macbeth as prognostication or prophecy. For instance, Macbeth's ignorance of the latest news that he is made thane of Cawdor does not make the witches' words prophecy. Similarly, again Macbeth's ignorance of the fact that Macduff was born by caesarean section (V.7.46-47) is not enough to interpret the witches' words as prophecy. Above all, throughout the whole framework, we never see them urge Macbeth to any specifically immoral act. Instead, in contrast with Macbeth's description of the weird sisters as "imperfect speakers" (I.3.70), their unreliable and unstable riddling language running through the play shows how they are outstandingly successful at equivocation. As Alexander Leggatt expresses: "Reversing the meanings of the words, they

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[229] Stephen Greenblatt. "Shakespeare Bewitched." *William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Alexander Leggatt. London & New York: Routledge, 2006. pp. 83-84.
[230] Greenblatt, 84.

(the witches) reverse the poles of the moral universe."[231] Moreover, in Macbeth's society, the witches do not have to put in a great deal of effort to do so, since "words slide easily into their opposites."[232] For instance, at the very beginning of the play, the second witch's line, "When the battle's lost, and won" (I.1.4), summarizes the dual and relativist construction of the play. In fact, amphibology[233] in riddles, treason, and representation constituted a substantial part in life and literature of Renaissance England,[234] and *Macbeth* is perhaps the fullest literary representation of amphibology in the witches' riddles. However, even though the witches are experts of applying to it, amphibology is the power of a language. That is to say, the amphibology in the witches' riddles does not make them powerful demonic creatures that are very much effective on the tragic hero's action. In this regard, Mullaney says:[235]

> Amphibology marks an aspect of language that neither treason nor authority can control. It is a power that cannot be trammelled up, mastered, or unequivocally defined, but it is a power: it compels and moves the speaker or auditor. […] It is not when Macbeth lies but when the language he would use instead masters him that the power of amphibology strikes us, and its effects are not confined to the witches' riddles.

On the other hand, Rosenberg analyses the language used by the witches:[236]

> The First Witch's two speeches, that open and close the scene (III.5), have rhythms quite "boldly" and roughly" different from Hecate's; in fact both are very close to prose. Hecate's rhythms are by contrast usually -not always- as formally rhythmical as the Sisters' own ritualistic chant. Nor are Hecate's lines all dull, mechanical, regular. The rhythms have breaks

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[231] Alexander Leggatt. Ed. *William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Sourcebook*. Key Passages. Oxon: Routledge, 2006. pp. 127.
[232] Leggatt, 127.
[233] Amphibology in language is when a sentence is so constructed as to be susceptible of two different interpretations. M. De Levizac. *A Theoretical and Practical Grammar of the French Tongue*. New York: W. E. Dean, 1839. pp. 421.
[234] Steven Mullaney. "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation, and Treason in Renaissance England." *Macbeth: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Ed. Alan Sinfield. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1992. pp. 108-120.
[235] Mullaney, 115.
[236] Rosenberg, 491.

and changes; the words and ideas have echoes of the play's action, as well as of recurrent motifs in the language; and some of the lines speak with authentic Shakespearean eloquence.

Regardingly, without entering into the discussion of how much *Macbeth* owes to Thomas Middleton in terms of the witch material, it is necessary to touch on the subject. By many scholars Middleton has been suggested as the writer of III.5 and the Hecate passages of IV.1. in *Macbeth*.[237] There is no certain information on the subject, yet what stands beyond speculations is the fact that Hecate and her song are common in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Middleton's *The Witch*. What Hecate's name and her appearance suggest in *The Witch* was discussed in the relevant chapter. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare seems to have deliberately used Hecate to provide many implications beyond ancient mythology or diabolical. Rosenberg interprets her as a spokeswoman:[238]

> Hecate suggests, as the play does, that a man may be lured by his Dionysian visions to destruction. […] Her method here is the essence of equivocation: leading man by what seems the safest way to the worst.

Rosenberg continues by examining different approaches which discuss the broader implications of Hecate:[239]

> Aronson, with his Jungian orientation, sees Hecate as an archetypal matriarchal figure who plays, as the "mother" does, paradoxical roles: preserver and destroyer. Hecate makes her appearance at midnight, Aronson observes, the dark time of the unconscious, associated with the female image; certainly she prepares Macbeth for a descent into his underground, the pit from which he will try to rise "bloody, bold and resolute."

Consequently, in the analysis of *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton, what is underlined was the unrealistic presentation of the witches and the discussion was based on how Middleton applies to the witch material to offer criticism of social obsession with female chastity. In the same

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[237] Nicholas Brooke. Ed. *Macbeth*. Introduction. : "Middleton and the Revision of *Macbeth*." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 57. Marvin Rosenberg. *The Masks of Macbeth*. University of Delaware Press, 1993 (first published in 1978). pp. 490-91.
[238] Rosenberg, 491-92.
[239] Rosenberg, 492.

way, as Anthony Burgess clearly states, to Shakespeare, "witchcraft was good dramatic material, apt for incorporation in a serious tragedy."[240] The witches in *Macbeth* are not effective in the play. Instead, the *femme fatale* figure, portrayed as a combination of Lady Macbeth character and the witch material, is in the play, yet this figure does not function as an actual and active *femme fatale* figure. A. R. Braunmuller refers to William Wetmore Story's observation:[241]

> Lady Macbeth, 'having committed one crime, dies of remorse'; Macbeth 'is a through hypocrite' and 'a victim of superstitious fears, and a mere coward'; 'The witches are a projection of his (Macbeth's) own desires and superstitions. They […] prophes(y) in response to his own desires' and are therefore neither instigators nor determinants of his behaviour.

Macbeth, as a Scottish general and the thane of Glamis and later Cawdor, is a powerful man and a brave soldier who fulfills the ambitions of the feudal system around him. The only way he knows to solve the problems or get what he wants is violence and murder. Although he has some problems with the psychological results of his atrocities, in contrast with his wife's psychological and physical discontinuity in this system, he fights until the last moment and is killed as a king. In this social background, it is difficult to say that Lady Macbeth and the witches, the so-called frightening female side of the play, manipulate him with remarkable effectiveness.

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[240] Anthony Burgess. *Shakespeare*. Chicago: Elephant Paperback, 1994. pp. 202.
[241] A. R. Braunmuller. Ed. *Macbeth*. Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. pp. 71.

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