

TOIL AND TROUBLE: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT DURING THE EUROPEAN WITCH CRAZE

Amy Walp

Introduction

Beginning in the fifteenth century, the height of the European witch craze was a time of fear and accusation. With the Reformation heightening the ideas of evil within the culture, all evidence seemed to prove that the Devil was walking among them, and witches, as his human agents were wreaking havoc in his name. Belief in witches had existed since antiquity; however the idea that a witch was the agent of Satan was relatively new in the fifteenth century. Pope John XXII allowed the inquisition to punish witchcraft as a type of heresy beginning in 1320, and The Council of Basel (1431-37) helped to strengthen the idea of diabolical witchcraft. Epidemics, famine and political fragmentation helped to perpetuate the idea that evil forces were at work on Earth. Leading up to the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church was seen as corrupt and was criticized for practices such as the sale of indulgences. During the Reformation, and the resulting Catholic Counter-Reformation, there were debates about theology and the dogma of the Church, and this caused a heightened awareness of the sin and evil in the world. The Catholic Church, as well as the new Protestant sects all had a similar focus on Satan. In fact, "Luther, it was said, was so obsessed with the devil that he mentioned the devil more often than Jesus Christ in his Small Catechism."¹ With Satan supposedly controlling their actions, witches were accused of raising storms, killing livestock, and most importantly, impeding the ability of married couples to produce children. In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or The Hammer of Witches, a witchcraft treatise written in 1486 by Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, Part II, Question One, Chapter Five, the authors comment on how witches may impede fertility:

And as such to men, first, how they can

cast an obstructive spell on the procreant forces, and even on the venereal act, so that a woman cannot conceive or a man cannot perform the act. Secondly how that act is obstructed sometimes with regards to one woman and not another. Thirdly, how they take away the virile member as though it was all together torn away from the body. Fourthly, if it is possible to distinguish whether any for the above injuries have been caused by a devil on his own account, or it has been done through the agency of a witch. Fifthly how witches change men into beasts by some prestige or glamour. Sixthly, how witch midwives in various ways kill that witch have been conceived in the mother's womb; and when they do not do this, offer the children to devils.²

In an age and society where the successful production of offspring was vital, the possibility that one might be bewitched into being infertile was a crippling thought. This issue was of utmost importance to theologians, witchcraft theorists and the lay population of the time, albeit for different reasons. Theologians were concerned with the way infertility impacted the sacrament of marriage, while witchcraft theorists explained the methods by which witches could impede the production of children. Married couples dealing with reproductive difficulties looked to the clergy and authorities for help in warding off the witches who were hindering their efforts. For the suspected witches, some of which were only considered guilty for their positions as midwives, this issue was literally a matter of life and death. The witchcraft theory set forth in the popular treatises of the times explained how witches may impede fertility, but the question

remains; where did the notion of infertility based on witchcraft originate? With further examination, it is possible to determine that these accusations of witchcraft based on reproductive failure were a product of both sacramental theology and popular folklore.

Historiography: Midwives (Literally) Under Fire

When considering the problems with conception, pregnancy, and childbirth between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, one cannot overlook the role of the midwife. These particular wise women were in essence the “gynecologists” for approximately ninety percent of European women of the time.³ The physical work of delivering children was done by midwives, as male physicians believed this to be “women’s work” or a skill that was “beneath them,” like surgery. As a result, these women had a practical working knowledge that the university educated physicians did not. Therefore midwives were privy to information that was unknown to men, and they dealt with an aspect of the world that was strictly feminine in nature. While their much needed skills earned them a respected place among the communities they served, the witchcraft treatises and literary evidence of the time indicates that midwives were more likely to be witches than the average woman. What characteristics could be associated with midwifery or its practitioners that made these women more likely to be suspected of witchcraft? There are differing opinions among historians about whether or not midwives were accused of witchcraft with more frequency than average women, and why this may have occurred, and this historiography must be addressed when considering reproductive health during the European witch craze.

Montague Summers, a notable scholar of witchcraft, who was also responsible for the first English translation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1928, addressed the issue of midwives and their likelihood of being witches. He theorized that since the sacrifice of children was a common part of the witches’ Sabbath, midwives, because of their access to infants, would have been the most likely people to procure them. In his 1926 book, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, Summers states “since a witch not unseldom was the midwife or wise woman of the village she had exceptional opportunities of stifling a child at birth as a non-Sabbatical victim to Satan. ‘There are no persons who can do more cunning harm to the Catholic faith than

midwives’ says the *Malleus Maleficarum*.⁴ Summers used the actual text of the *Malleus Maleficarum* as the basis for his position, as well as other sources by theologians such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. This is fitting when one considers that he was a scholar of Latin and studied theology himself. However, there is an issue of bias when considering the opinions of Montague Summers. Firstly he was writing before the onset of the feminist movement, and his work is sometimes seen as quite sexist today. Also, he was a member of the clergy, and he unashamedly defends the actions of the Catholic Church during this time. Perhaps the source for most of his bias was the fact that he actually believed in the existence of witches. He scathingly gives his view of these women:

In the following pages I have endeavored to show the witch as what she really was – an evil liver; a social pest and parasite; the devotee of a loathly and obscene creed; and adept at poisoning, blackmail, and other creeping crimes; a member of a powerful secret organization inimical to Church and State; a blasphemer in word and deed; swaying the villagers by terror and superstition; a charlatan and a quack sometimes; a bawd; an abortionist; the dark counselor of lewd court ladies and adulterous gallants; a minister to the vice and inconceivable corruption; battenning upon the filth and foulest passions of the age.⁵

The official position of the Church was explained in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which was sanctioned by Pope Innocent VIII and written by Kramer and Sprenger, both members of the Dominican order. Summers accepts the theories in the work along with the rest of the official Church position of the time.

With the rise of social history, or “history from below,” historians of the witch craze began to take a closer look at the people and ideas of the time. Examining the societies affected by the witch crazes responded to the more traditional literary and theological studies. For example, Jeffrey B. Russell, a respected professor of medieval European history and the history of theology holds that midwives were targeted as suspected witches because of their standing in society. In his 1980 book, *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans*, Russell states that midwives were accused of witchcraft

simply because they had attained a bad reputation from documents like the *Malleus Maleficarum*. A bad reputation then singled them out from the rest of the population. Russell holds that:

The two groups most susceptible to accusation were people of unusually bad reputation and people of unusually good reputation. Thieves, sex offenders, brawlers, midwives (unfortunately but inevitably these had a bad reputation), and quarrelers were likely to be accused. On the other hand magistrates, merchants, and teachers were also likely to be accused, though the nobility, physicians (oddly), lawyers, and students were not.⁶

This bad reputation was also exacerbated by anger directed at the midwife when things went awry during childbirth. Russell explains that “husbands felt guilt or anger at the death of a wife or a child and readily projected these feelings upon the midwife, who was charged with negligence or, if no physical reason for disaster could be found, with sorcery.”⁷ Because he is a scholar of medieval Europe, Russell is able to examine European society in the proper historical context. He has an understanding of the period, and he is familiar with primary sources, and able to properly examine them. This is important because the ideals and opinions of this society offer insight as to why these midwives might have been targeted.

In their 1987 article, “On the Trail of the ‘Witches’: Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts,” Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley look at cultural reasons and superstition as the causes for these accusations. Horsley and Horsley explain:

Besides the general aura of mystery and awe which surrounded birth, there were superstitions connected with particular parts of child birth such as the placentas, the umbilical cord, and the caul (the piece of amniotic membrane which may still cover the infant’s head at birth). Thus numerous regulations were published which forbade midwives to carry off or bury the placenta or to keep the caul—lest they be used for sorcery.⁸

It was also common knowledge that “midwives used

charms, spells, and incantations to assist women in labor.”⁹ Perhaps these superstitions led to the numerous mentions of midwives and midwifery in the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Horsley and Horsley comment that “certainly in the documents that reflect the official views of the Church and learned opinion, the midwife is an obsessive concern.”¹⁰ The authors definitely study this topic as a cultural history looking at the superstitions and folklore of the society and the ways that they effect the population. This fits with their backgrounds as Ritta Jo Horsley teaches courses about women in German and European culture, as well as Women’s Studies, and Richard A. Horsley studies Religion and social history. By examining the folklore and superstitions in society during the witch craze they are able to offer a logical explanation as to why these particular opinions of midwives may have formed in the first place, and why the populace would have been apt to listen to the official Church stance regarding these women.

Not all historians argue that midwives were specifically targeted during the witch craze. Robin Briggs, in his 1996 work *Witches and Neighbors*, holds that this common belief is an illusion, and that in reality midwives were not targeted any more than other women. To the contrary, he states “no statistical evidence of any significance has been produced to support it; where figures have been established they show that midwives were rather under represented among the accused.”¹¹ Briggs also has a simple explanation for the numerous mentions of midwives in later witchcraft treatises. He states that the reason was because the *Malleus Maleficarum* mentioned midwives in several places, and the authors of the later writings took their statements from this work. In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, midwives were considered to be good candidates for accusations of witchcraft because they had access to the infants who were supposedly needed for spells or consumption. However, Briggs explains this is an example of an ideal that is not actual reality. He makes a strong counter-argument by stating that “it is easy to understand why midwives were rarely accused: they were selected precisely because they were regarded as trustworthy persons by the community, so that it must have taken a catastrophic drop in their standing for them to become suspects.”¹² Briggs writes a social history as well, because he claims that it was the midwives’ very position in society that protected them from accusations of witchcraft. He supports the fact that

midwives were not targeted by statistical data and public records. However, the fact that consistent record of the accused and executed 'witches' were not always maintained could affect his argument. With literary sources it is often difficult to determine whether or not they influenced society or just reflected the society when they were written.

Some historians have a view that falls between the two previous theories. Brian Levack, in his book, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, written in 1993, argues that midwives were suspected of witchcraft, but probably not as many that were at once believed. For example, he uses records from Lucerne to demonstrate that only one woman out of forty five that were tried for witchcraft was a midwife. However, he elaborates that "midwives remain virtually the only female occupational group that receives any mention at all in the records."¹³ Levack holds that "the main reason for their susceptibility to charges of this nature was that they could easily be blamed for the death of infants."¹⁴ Due to the high infant mortality rate of the time, where as many as twenty percent of children died at birth or within the first few months of life, Levack argues that "the charge that a midwife had killed a child by sorcery was both functional and plausible, and it offered the bereaved parents a means of revenge."¹⁵ Furthermore, a midwife accused of witchcraft was of greater importance to the judges than the common people, because demonological theory could be affirmed. Levack points out that in witchcraft theory, "witches, it will be recalled, were eager to obtain unbaptized babies so that they could sacrifice them to the devil, feast upon their flesh at a sabbath meal, and use their remains in the production of magical ointments."¹⁶ Levack studies witchcraft prosecution in early modern Scotland and demonic possession in Reformation Europe. He uses several primary sources in his work and as a historian; he has the ability to analyze the credibility of these sources.

An aspect of social history that plays an important role in the study of witchcraft is feminist theory. As a response to more traditional witchcraft histories that were written before the rise of feminism, feminist historians make a point to examine the roles of misogyny and control that permeated the witch craze. Anne Llewellyn Barstow, in her book, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* written in 1994, uses a feminist perspective on why midwives were targeted as witches. Barstow chalks this up to

male fear and professional jealousy. Because men were excluded from the birthing room, there was a mystery surrounding what was happening inside. Barstow states: "a deep male jealousy pervades this story, fed by the exclusion of all men (including fathers) from the birthing room left to imagining what went on inside, they sometimes responded with wild imaginings, as the authors of the *Malleus* did."¹⁷ Barstow also comments on some of these "wild imaginings" telling of the popular belief that witches who acted as midwives would dedicate the unbaptized newborns to Satan. This was a problem because the midwife-witch who offered a newborn infant to the devil was usurping the role of the parish priest. She states: "because of her favored position as female healer, she was able to seize the child first and 'baptize' it in the name of the devil, while the priest ran from the rectory, arriving too late."¹⁸ Barstow is a historian and a feminist, so bias can be an issue in her work. She has written many works centered on the notion that the witch hunts were a way to control women, and this interpretation many skew her perception of the evidence. However, as the use of primary sources and research demonstrates, her work cannot be over looked.

With the rise of social history, many sociologists began to examine the witch craze, and they are able to offer a perspective of this period that is different than those of the traditional historian. For example, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English offer another theory as to why midwives were targeted during the European Witch Craze in their 1973 essay "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers." They argue that the midwives were beset with accusations of witchcraft so that the professional, university-educated male doctors could surpass and replace the traditional female folk healers and midwives. Ehrenreich and English state that healers of that day, and especially midwives were more skilled than they were made out to be. For example:

They used ergot for the pain of labor at a time when the Church held that pain in labor was the Lord's just punishment for Eve's original sin. Ergot derivatives are the principle drugs used today to hasten labor and aid in the recovery from childbirth. Belladonna – still used today as an anti-spasmodic – was used by witch-healers to inhibit

uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened.¹⁹

The same could not be said about the university trained male physicians of the time. Ehrenreich and English detail the medical training of these physicians by saying that “medical students, like other scholarly young gentlemen, spent years studying Plato, Aristotle, and Christian theology. Their medical theory was largely restricted to the works of Galen, the ancient Roman physician who stressed the theory of ‘complexions’ or ‘temperaments’ of men.”²⁰ Male physicians also did not examine female patients, and they especially did not perform manual gynecological or obstetrical exams on women. Midwifery, like surgery, was considered a menial craft by these physicians. However, this was hardly the case. Midwives practiced a more sophisticated type of medicine. They received hands on training from other midwives, who passed on tested, effective methods. They also experimented, and developed fairly advanced treatments on their own, some of which are the basis of practices used today.

Furthermore Ehrenreich and English make the argument that not only were the male physicians attempting to take over medicine in Europe, they were taking part in some of the trials and helping to convict some of these midwives for witchcraft. For example “the doctor was held up [as] the medical ‘expert,’” giving an aura of science to the whole proceeding. He was asked to make judgments about whether certain women were witches and whether certain afflictions had been caused by witchcraft.”²¹ Ehrenreich and English used a gendered history to look at a larger social history. This is not surprising considering that they are both feminists, and Ehrenreich is a sociologist. The feminist bias at times can overshadow the underlying sociological analysis, and without actually being historians, one has to question their sense of historical context. With that being said, Ehrenreich and English make an impassioned argument that not only were midwives persecuted because of their profession, but they were persecuted for their gender as well. However, one must question their sources, and their analysis of them. Neither one is a trained historian; they are both more known for their feminist writings.

In his 2006 book *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen*, Gunnar Heinsohn takes quite a different position on the targeting of Midwives during the European witch hunts.

Heinsohn holds that the midwives were specifically targeted after the devastating outbreaks of the Plague because of their knowledge of contraception. After this ruin, there was a need to build the population back up to pre-plague numbers. Heinsohn holds that this repopulation was achieved partially by the execution of midwives that had knowledge about birth control. The authorities that controlled the witch hunts could then essentially control the ability of women to learn about contraception by removing their source of information. Heinsohn furthers his argument by stating “Clerical and secular authorities, and the Catholic and non-Catholic churches of Europe took the killing of wise women in the same direction, the reason being that the witch hunt was the most effective, and at the same time the most formidable means of repopulation. Only the conjugal act of intercourse for procreation was allowed as the solitary unpunished sexual desire.”²² Without the knowledge of birth control made readily available to them, women gave birth with more frequency, and Heinsohn holds that “by banning all contraception, people were unable to exercise fine-control over their family planning. There were many more births than Europe needed.”²³ Heinsohn’s main focus seems to be a political history because he theorizes there was an agenda by the powers that be to control population expansion, or lack thereof. However, there is an aspect of social history as well because he deals with the family planning of the society at large, and the effect that this society’s loss of birth control had on the population. Gunnar Heinsohn is a German sociologist, and he has done research into genocide and sub-replacement fertility, or a total fertility rate that is not high enough to replace an area’s population. With his areas of study he is in a position to examine some aspects of the witch craze from a new perspective; however, Heinsohn is a sociologist, so obviously he looks at the witch craze as a social issue. When this article is looked at as a historical work, it must be noted that he uses mainly secondary sources. While this may be an interesting sociological perspective, with a lack of primary sources one has to question the validity of Heinsohn’s history.

The common thread of all of these histories is the fact that they are all social histories in some way, shape or form. That is to say, they all study the relationships of groups in a society. Whether these relationships are between the Church and women in general, midwives and male physicians, the group of midwives and its place within society as a whole,

or even the relationship between men and women, with the exception of Summers, who relied on literary and theological evidence, these historians used aspects of social history to examine midwives in relation to their place in society. This makes sense, because the Witch Craze was very much a social phenomenon. The various ecclesiastical and secular authorities may have played a large part in these witch hunts, but in the end it was the population of Europe as a whole that drove the Witch Craze. They did the accusing for the majority of the cases, for a plethora of reasons.

The Sacrament of Marriage: God's Guarantee of Fertility

In order to understand the weight that was put on the problem of impotence and infertility during the witch craze, it is important to understand the role that consummation and the production of children played in the holy sacrament of marriage according to the Church, especially in an age when the Church reigned supreme. Using the Bible as a reference, the Church Canon held that matrimony was a holy sacrament, blessed by God. Genesis 2:24 reads that "a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh."²⁴ To further this, Ephesians 5:25-33 states;

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body – 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.²⁵

Catholic belief holds that a sacrament causes divine

grace, therefore God's commands regarding marriage would automatically be fulfilled when a couple was joined in holy matrimony.

Married couples therefore needed to become "one in flesh" and consummate their marriage with the physical act of intercourse. Walter Stephens, in his book *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief*, elaborates that "Catholic matrimonial theory already reflects as literalizing interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis, the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, and the fifth chapter of Ephesians. And the scriptural passages themselves describe matrimony as a kind of external sex act that literally conjoins husband and wife, making them 'two in one flesh.'²⁶ The reason why successful intercourse was vital was because the purpose of marriage was to produce children. The Book of Genesis also states "so God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'²⁷ In the eyes of the Church, it was a command from God that man and wife were to produce children, and theologians wrote on the matter extensively. St. Augustine wrote in his *On Marriage and Concupiscence* (419-20 CE) that "the union, then, of male and female for the purpose of procreation is the natural good of marriage."²⁸ Furthermore, St. Augustine states "with respect, however, to what I ascribed to the nature of marriage, that the male and the female are united together as associates for procreation."²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas states that sexual relations between married people for the production of children are necessary. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he states that "now just as the preservation of the bodily nature of one individual is a true good, so, too, is the preservation of the nature of the human species a very great good."³⁰ The thoughts of these two theologians were especially influential due to their status in the Church.

Augustine was a Church father and he was considered one of the most important figures in the development of Christianity, so much so that he is the patron saint of theologians. Augustine influenced many theologians that came after him, including St. Thomas Aquinas, who was important in his own right. St. Thomas was such an influential theologian that the Catholic Church holds him to be the model for those studying for the priesthood. He is often considered the Church's most important theologian. This tradition influenced the way that witchcraft

theorists, church officials, and authorities thought during the witch craze. The existence of witches and the severity of their sins, as well as evidence that they were in league with devils were all logically laid out in these earlier works with the authority of the Bible behind them. Matrimony is mentioned as a sacrament as early as 1208 by Pope Innocent IV, so “it is, therefore, historically certain that from the beginning of the thirteenth century the sacramental character of marriage was universally known and recognized as a dogma.”³¹ Canon law, along with the original Biblical references and the writings of these important theologians helped to concrete these notions into the collective mind of the fifteenth century. Moira Smith furthers, “to many fifteenth-century Christians (among whom we must count Dominicans and inquisitors), Biblical accounts were not myths or fictions, but historical fact. Further the fact that they and other literary texts were fixed in written form enhanced trustworthiness.”³²

Infertility and impotence added a whole new dimension to the idea of the sacrament of marriage. If a man was impotent he would be unable to consummate a marriage ordained and blessed by God. Likewise if a married couple had fertility issues, they could not produce offspring as God commanded all married people. This presented a problem to the Catholic Church. How could a sacrament fail? This was especially troubling, because the sacrament of marriage was firmly based in scripture. If this sacrament could fail, than surely the other six could fail as well. Walter Stephens furthers: “infertility and impotence menaces the entire sacramental construct, because the biblical notion of incorporation that subtends Catholic marriage was the basis for theorizing about all the Church’s sacraments. Marriage is the only Catholic sacrament that has any scriptural authority at all.”³³

In order to protect the validity of the sacrament of marriage, the Catholic Church had to explain why, when marriage and procreation was ordained by God, infertility and impotence occurred to married couples. There had to be a reason why the will of God was being usurped. This reason had to be evil, and evil was of course, the work of the Devil. The reasoning of theologians then turned to how the Devil was acting against this sacrament. Since the Devil was a spirit and not flesh and blood, it was believed that he needed human agents to work for him if he were to effectively have contact and cause harm to a human body. So it stood that “only by enlisting human cooperation can demons

subvert the sacramental privilege.”³⁴ Enter the witch, who willingly makes a pact with the Devil and agrees to do his bidding.

Essential to protect the sacrament of marriage, witches became necessary to explain impotence and infertility when no physical reason, as allowed by medical knowledge of the time, could be determined to explain it away. St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Quaestiones quodlibetales* (1256-9), addressed the question of whether impotence is the result of sorcery in *Quodlibet* XI. He states: “I respond that the Devil himself, as well as matrimony, is the work



Figure 1. Brauysegen im Bett. Woodcut from *The Fair Melusina* (15th C.)³⁹

of God. And among the works of God some are stronger than others. One of them may be impeded by another which is stronger. Whence, since the Devil is stronger than matrimony, nothing prevents that through his agency matrimony may be impeded.”³⁵ This explained how one of God’s sacraments could be undermined by the Devil, even if God was all powerful. This was essential for the Catholic Church. The failure of a sacrament could not be overlooked, and neither could the power of God be questioned, for “unless devils and witches are actively preventing the consummation of sacramental matrimony and the procreation of children according to God’s command to be fruitful and multiply, then the sacrament is imaginary.”³⁶

Therefore, theologians concluded that witches, in league with the Devil and his demons, were able to produce evil deeds, or maleficium to work against the sacrament. However these *maleficia* could also be countered by the power of the sacrament at times. Stephens explains the balance by saying “*Maleficium* is a countersacrament, just as the sacrament and sacramentals are counterdemonism.”³⁷ This means that a battle against the *malificum*, and witches who impeded fertility in general, could be waged. Witches had to be identified and brought to justice. After all, in Leviticus 20:27, God orders that “A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.”³⁸ If they renounced their ways and repented before their executions, then there was a chance that fertility and sexual potency could be restored to their victims. That is, if the victims confessed their sins and God found favor with them.

Prevention of the Power of Procreation: Impotence and Infertility in Men

For men, the ability to produce children was more than just a matter of pride. During this time, not only was the ability to consummate a marriage vital, but the production of children was essential. Important family ties were made by marriage, and Stephens furthers that “marriage was an economic arrangement far more than a romantic ideal. Childless marriages could have profound effects on inheritance and alliances among families or even countries.”⁴⁰ With this pressure to father children, a man suffering from infertility or impotence could find himself in a dire situation. Not only did his impotence cause him distress, but infertility on a husband’s part could cause the wife distress as well. More often than not, infertility was blamed on the wife herself, and even her husband’s impotence could be a source of shame for her. When there was no known physical ailment that caused these problems, witchcraft offered afflicted men and their wives a way to cast the blame on others. Stephens furthers that “witchcraft could be a convenient explanation for both spouses; it preserved the male self-esteem by identifying an external cause for his inability to fulfill his personal and economic duty. For the wife, as well, self-esteem was at stake: even if an impotent husband did not blame his wife, she could feel that the impotence impugned her sexual desirability.”⁴¹

Furthering the idea that witches could cast spells to rob a man of his ability to produce children,

the *Malleus Maleficarum* also asserts that men were more easily bewitched in this way than women. In Part I, Question 8, it is stated that “more men than women are bewitched in respect of that action.”⁴² This notion led to the fear that the sexual potency of men was something that was specifically targeted by these female witches. Part II, Question I, Chapter 6 of the *Malleus Maleficarum* explains the involvement of witches in male infertility:

First when they directly prevent the erection of the member which is accommodated to fructification. And this need not seem so impossible, when it is considered that they are able to vitiate the natural use of any member. Secondly when they prevent the flow of vital essences to the member in which resides the motive force, closing up the seminal ducts so that it does not reach the generative vessels, or so that it cannot be ejaculated, or it is fruitlessly spilled.⁴³

The *Malleus*, through use of the scholastic method and evidence provided by earlier Church fathers is then able to explain that witches, with the aid of demons, are able to overcome the sacrament of marriage.

While the *Malleus Maleficarum* discusses the matter of impotence at great length, it is hardly the first instance where impotence was blamed on sorcery. In her article, “The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*,” Moira Smith states that “Kramer did not invent the notion of magically induced impotence, for this fear is widespread in folk belief from antiquity to the present day.”⁴⁴ Throughout time, there have been spells and hexes that were purported to interfere with a man’s sexual potency. Smith elaborates that “the technical name for the practice in English is *ligature* (French, *nouer l’aiguette*, German, *Nestelknüpfen*), because the most common method for casting this spell involved tying knots in a cord or a string, sometimes accompanied by the pronunciation of various spells.”⁴⁵ These spells were all a part of so-called “love-magic,” a common occurrence in many societies. Love spells were sought after to win the affection of an elusive suitor, or in some instances the relationship of a sought-after love was sabotaged by the spurned. This sabotage often times was meant to prevent the desired party from having any physical relations with their partner. In his book, *European Witch Trials*:

Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500, Richard Kieckhefer furthers that “incitement of love was not the only sort of manipulation of affection sought by sorceresses. In a few cases the goal was to arouse hatred, or bring about impotence.”⁴⁶ Sometimes these seemingly harmful practices could lead to the very real danger of an accusation of witchcraft.

Because of the widespread belief of spells, such as ligature, various counter spells and remedies existed to cure impotence brought about by witchcraft. In *De praetigiis daemonum*, written in 1583 by Johann Weyer, a German physician and demonologist, gave advice as to the cure for impotence in the chapter “What must be done when Coition is Prevented by Malificum”:

The man (legally called the maleficium, or victim of an evil-doer, or frigid, impotent) should first be examined by doctors to see whether he was harboring some other, natural, cause of impotence. Secondly the wife should continue to live with her husband for three years while he makes trial of his potency. They should give alms with more than usual generosity, and practice fasting, so that God, the author of matrimony, might design to take away this misfortune.⁴⁷

In 1671, Jane Sharp, a midwife, told of a cure for impotence in her 418 page book *The Midwives Book of the Whole Art of Midwifery Discovered, Directing Childbearing Women How to Behave Themselves in Their Conception, Breeding, Bearing, and Nursing of Children*. By Mrs. Jane Sharp, Practitioner in the Art of Midwifery above Thirty Years. Printed for Simon Miller, at the Star of the West End of St. Pauls, 1671. She states “the French in such case advise a man to thread the needle, as much as to say, to piss through his wife’s wedding ring and not spill a drop and then he shall be perfectly cured. Let him try it that pleaseth.”⁴⁸ Similar cures recommend the afflicted man urinate through “the keyhole in the door of the church.”⁴⁹ Folk remedies like these, that were meant to counter the work of witches casting “love magic,” would have undoubtedly been known to Kramer while he was writing the *Malleus Maleficarum*. This would have further proven his assertion that impotence was caused by the evil acts of witches. Robin Briggs, author of *Witches and Neighbors* further states, “The early Church fathers, inquisitors, and later witch hunters were all well aware of folk

belief in ligature, both its practice and the various countermeasures taken (especially by newlyweds) to prevent it.”⁵⁰ Previous Canonical writings also offer cures for impotence, and this goes even further to prove the authenticity of witch-induced impotence. Of course, a more preferred cure for impotence, at least in the eyes of Kramer, and other witchcraft theorists would have been the successful capture and confession of the guilty witch. Impotence, along



Figure 2. Francesco Mazzola, called Parmigianino, *Witch Riding a Phallus*, c. 1530 (engraving) British Museum, London.⁵¹

with other ills caused by charms, was believed to be cured with the execution of the witch who perpetrated the evils.

Missing Members: Witches and Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*

Witchcraft-induced impotence in itself was a terrifying thought to men during the witch craze, but Heinrich Kramer told of an even more disturbing way that witches could impede men from fathering children in the *Malleus Maleficarum*. In Part I, Question IX, Kramer states that “there is no doubt that certain witches can do marvelous things with regard to male organs. For this agrees with what has been seen and heard by many, and with the general account of what has been known concerning that member through the senses of sight and touch.”⁵²

The “marvelous thing” that witches could do to the male organs was to steal them, or cause them to appear to be missing. The subject of penis theft by witches is given considerable examination in the *Malleus*, including three specific examples of cases where this occurrence supposedly happened. Perhaps the most well known account is told in an anecdote in Part II, Question I, Chapter 7:

And what, then, is to be thought of those witches who in this way sometimes collect male organs in great numbers, as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in a birds nest or shut them up in a box, where they move themselves like living members, and eat oats and corn, as has been seen like many and is a matter of common report? It is said to have all been done by the devil's work and illusion, for the sense of those who see them are deluded in the way we have said. For a certain man tells that, when he had lost his member, he approached a known witch to ask her to restore it to him. She told the afflicted man to climb a certain tree, and that he might take which he liked out of a nest in which there were several members. And when he tried to take a big one, the witch said: You must not take that one; adding, because it belonged to a parish priest.⁵³

Kramer reported that these instances really occurred, and said they were reported or “narrated by a certain venerable Father from the Dominican House of Spires, well known in the Order for the honesty of his life and for his learning.”⁵⁴ Perhaps the idea of a stolen penis seemed a bit unbelievable to Kramer himself, because throughout the sections where he discusses the issue in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, he makes a point of saying that the organ itself most often is not physically removed, but only bewitched to seem as if it were gone. The inclusion of penis theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum* has been a topic of debate among witchcraft historians for years. It is often credited as being the first mention of phallus thievery recorded in writing, and this fact often leads to speculations about the mental faculties of Kramer. Perhaps the most logical explanation of them all is that while there are no actual written records of penis theft before the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the notion of penis theft would have existed in popular



Figure 3. *Castration Sorcery; A Spell Against an Earwig; The Use of Axe Magic to Steal Wine*. In Hans Vintler, *Buch der Tugend*, Augsburg: Johann Blaubirer, 1486.⁵⁵

culture of the time.

The ideas of penis theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum* may have been influenced by ideas related to the popular folklore of “love magic.” It was often believed that body parts, fluids, and clothing removed from a hanged criminal possessed magical power. Everything from semen, hair, and menstrual blood was used in various potions. The idea of a witch having a collection of penises in a container may have come from practitioners of love magic that offered love charms and various instruments for self pleasure when these charms failed. Smith states that “a common tradition that plays upon the ribald implications of the traditional witch as a purveyor of love philters and charms.”⁵⁶ Dildos have existed since antiquity, and no doubt were in use at the time of the writing of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Even Montague Summers, one of the pioneers of modern witchcraft history makes a mention of these devices in his 1926 work, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*:

It is demonstrable, then, that artificial methods of coition, common in pagan antiquity, have been unblushingly practiced throughout the ages, as indeed they are at the present day, and that they have been repeatedly banned and reprobated by the voice of the Church.⁵⁷

Certainly, the sight of a container of phallic shaped objects in the possession of a practitioner of “love magic,” who may have practiced midwifery as well, could lend itself to the story of the witch in possession of a nest full of disembodied phalli.

In her article “The Flying Phallus and the



Figure 4. *Taking Body Parts from a Hanged Thief*, woodcut, in Hans Vintler, *Buch der Tugend*, Ausburg: Johann Blaubirer, 1486.⁵⁸

Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*,” Moira Smith contends that the nest imagery in the penis theft story told in the *Malleus Maleficarum* can be explained by folklore. Smith holds that associations between male genitalia and birdlife have been made since antiquity. Artistic examples of this association can be found in Roman art. Smith states that “The winged phallus was very common in ancient Rome; the image was incorporated into rings, pendants, and finger-rings that were commonly worn by boys as good luck charms. Like other phallic objects, these were probably designed to counter the evil eye.”⁵⁹ Not only are these images present in various forms of visual art, but the parallel between male organs and birds also exists in the vernacular, even to this day. There are numerous slang terms for the penis that are drawn directly from bird imagery, for example, in English *cock* (which has been in use since the early seventeenth century), and *pecker*. Also, “the same association continues in slang terms for male masturbation, such as *choking the chicken*.”⁶⁰ Smith also points out that “verbal associations between the human male genitalia and birdlife are not restricted to English, as witnessed by the Spanish *paloma* (pigeon or dove), Italian *uccello* (“bird”), and the German verb *vögelin* (meaning literally “to bird,” or to fuck).”⁶¹

Penis theft is one of the most popular topics of discussion from the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and many theories exist when it comes to the interpretation of these aspects of the work. While the accounts seem to have a bit of ribald humor to them, the truth remains that the inclusion of penis theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum* as a crime committed by

witches sealed the fate of those women accused of these actions. To these suspected witches this was anything but a laughing matter. In the context of the *Malleus*, penis theft was an illusion created by the Devil, carried out by his witchy human agents, all for the purpose of attacking God’s sacrament of marriage.

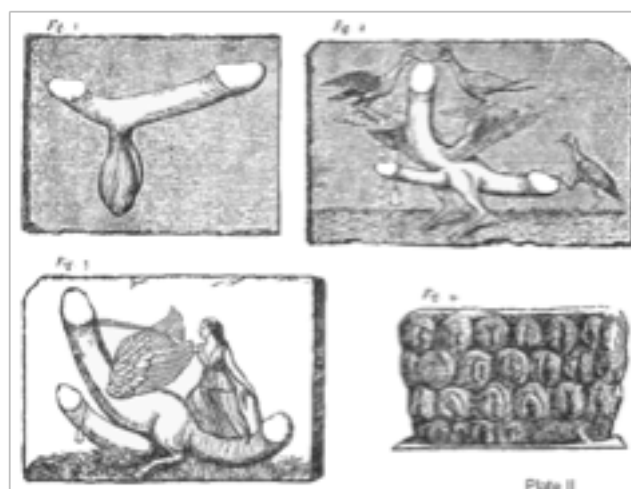


Figure 5. Plate of the Phallus sculptures on the Roman Amphitheatre at Nimes, in the south of France⁶²

Midwives: A Portrait of the Accused

In Part I, Question 12 of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer states that “no one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives. For when they do not kill children, then, as if for some other purpose, they take them out of the room and, raising them up in the air offer them to devils.”⁶³ These words cast a shadow of doubt over countless midwives of the time. Their expertise in matters pertaining to reproductive health, along with their access to unbaptized newborns made them prime suspects for witchcraft. Unfortunately, these stereotypes were furthered by the aura of mystery that surrounded their profession.

Often times there was speculation about the abilities of the midwives. Physicians viewed midwifery as a menial craft and the women who practiced this skill were more valuable for their reassurance to a laboring mother. For example, Johann Christoph Ettner, a male physician, wrote *Trusty Eckharth’s Carless Midwife* around 1715. He states that a good midwife must offer comfort to her patients:

since women, especially laboring women often are of little courage when they are afraid, it is necessary that a midwife

address them with beautiful sayings or other cheerful appropriate comfort and funny speeches or stories with well wrought examples, urge them on with joyful courage and good hope to a quick and successful birth... which often helps more than all toil and trouble.⁶⁴

Regardless of the views of physicians, the vast majority of women turned to midwives for their gynecological and obstetrical care.

Without formal education, midwives developed many skills that were relatively sophisticated. They were able to examine women and diagnose various ailments. Midwives were also able to educate women about contraceptives that were available at the time. For example, chewing the seeds of Queen Anne's Lace had worked as birth control, as well as using "fenugreek, mallow, pennyroyal, rue, birthwort, cyperus, arum root, cassia, reed, valerian, calamint root, and myrrh."⁶⁵ These methods were tested over time and passed from one midwife to another. However with all their professional experience, midwives also employed a great deal of superstition when practicing their trade. Barstow elaborates that "In addition to empirical methods, these women depended also on rituals based on magic. Incantations, the wearing of amulets, and the repeating of charms were universal practices. In order for herbs to be efficacious, as one gathered them, one must say five Lord's Prayers, five Hail Marys, and the Creed."⁶⁶ The use of superstitious charms helped to concrete the idea of the witch-midwife in the eyes of the Church and inquisitors.

Perhaps the aspect of midwifery that led to the most accusations of witchcraft was the participation in childbirth. Childbirth was risky for both mother and child at this time, and "while it could be seen as the ultimate emotional and social fulfillment of a woman's life, it also made her exceptionally vulnerable."⁶⁸ The high mortality rate during childbirth, coupled with the fact that the birthing room was strictly the domain of women, led to much speculation about the activities of midwives, and the possible evil that they might be perpetrating behind closed doors. Even male physicians were not present during childbirth. In her article "Speculum Feminarum: Gendered Perspectives on Obstetrics and Gynecology in Early Modern Europe," Lynne Tatlock states that "male medical practitioners did not usually touch or even view the private parts of



Figure 6. Jacob Rueff. *De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis* (Frankfurt: 1580).⁶⁷

their female patients and were therefore as a rule barred from the birthing room."⁶⁹ In most instances, the only time that a doctor was summoned was when either the mother or the child died, and surgical intervention was needed to save the life of the other.

Midwives employed many superstitious rituals while assisting in childbirth. For example, a midwife might recommend "opening doors or chests to open the womb in prolonged labor."⁷⁰ Some practices that had a legitimate medical basis led themselves to ideas of witchcraft when combined with superstition. Instead of waiting for God to bring on labor, midwives could induce contractions through breaking the amniotic sac or employing herbs. For instance, "pepper was the common drug used to induce labor."⁷¹ Midwives could alleviate some of the pain of labor by employing plant-derived narcotics and wine. Also, the benefit of superstitious charms to quell labor pains and speed delivery cannot be overlooked. No doubt these practices could comfort a laboring mother; employing a type of a placebo effect.

Unfortunately for the midwives, it was commonly believed that these superstitious charms could be used for darker purposes. For example “as late as 1772, Scottish midwives were believed to have the power of transferring labour pains from women to animals, or from the ‘good wife’ to her husband.”⁷² This was particularly troubling in a time when the Bible was considered not only historical fact, but also the literal word of God. Genesis 3:16 outlines the punishment that Eve received for her sins. God said: “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”⁷³ Relieving the pains of childbirth went directly against the punishment for the original sin of Eve. This punishment is a consequence of this first sin, “the hereditary stain with which we are born on account of our origin.”⁷⁴ This, along with the use of superstitious charms, and the matter of contraception did not please religious authorities, and helped to perpetuate the stereotype of the midwife-witch.

Loss and the Myth of Sacrificial Infants: Miscarriage, Abortion, Infanticide and Infant Mortality

The high mortality rate during childbirth, coupled with fact that the birthing room was strictly the domain of women, led to much speculation about the activities of midwives, and the possible evil that they might be perpetrating behind closed doors. It was commonly believed that the bodies of unbaptized infants were needed for Witches’ Sabbats, either for sacrifice, cannibalism, or the production of magical ointments. It was said that “with the ointment, they changed themselves into animals, rendered themselves invisible or rubbed their bodies in order to obtain the power of flying through the air.”⁷⁵ Along with the children that the witches themselves gave birth to, midwife-witches were thought to be the source for these unbaptized infants. This belief often times led to accusations of witchcraft for those unfortunate midwives who lost patients. Grieving parents or a husband who lost his wife in childbirth could seek revenge by casting suspicion on the midwife. Furthermore, with the pressure on to produce children, “women who had difficulties bearing children, with frequent miscarriages or stillbirths, were liable to blame these on witchcraft, perhaps displacing their worries about their own failure to meet expectations.”⁷⁶ With the belief that witches acting as midwives were seeking unbaptized infants for diabolical purposes, the

possibility of something going awry in the birthing room, or even afterwards in some cases, was a cause for concern. Accusations of witchcraft following one of these unfortunate events was a distinct possibility. A 1587 demonological work by Sebastian Michealis, titled *Pneumanologie*, included a passage containing the sentence passed at a 1582 witch trial in Avignon:

(Fie, for very shame) with the greatest reverence you did kiss with sacrilegious mouth his most foul and beastly posterior; and did call upon him in the name of the true God and invoke his help; and did beg him to avenge you upon all who had offended or denied your requests; and taught by him, you did wreak your spite in spells and charms against both men and beasts; and did murder any newborn children, and with the help of that old serpent Satan, you did affect mankind with your curses, loss of milk, the wasting sickness, and other most grave diseases. And your own children, many of them with your own knowledge and consent, you did with those magic spells suffocate, pierce, and kill, and finally you dug them up secretly by night from the cemetery where they were buried, and so carried them to the aforementioned synagogue and college of witches. There you did offer them to the Prince of Devils sitting upon his throne, and did draw off their fat to be kept for your own use, and cut off their heads, hands and feet, and did cook and stew their trunks, and sometimes roast them and at the bidding of your aforesaid evil father did eat and damnably devour them.⁷⁷

This account shows the ideas of witchcraft contained in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, as well as popular folklore, in the form of a guilty verdict for an unfortunate woman.

Despite their usefulness, the superstitious practices used by midwives could be perceived as evil when there was a death in the birthing room. One must remember that “miscarriages, hemorrhaging, and stillbirths were frightfully common, so expectant mothers anxiously called on midwives for charms or superstitious ceremonies.”⁷⁸ However any misunderstood chant or herb could have been taken as an act of sorcery when things

went wrong. Robin Briggs explains:

High infant mortality rates were general across Europe, with many babies languishing then dying for no obvious reason. These deaths inevitably formed one cause for suspicion; difficulties with breastfeeding, another very common problem, were often blamed on witchcraft too. Older women, who usually provided the normal source of advice in such cases, could easily find themselves in ambiguous positions.⁷⁹

Not only could an accusation of witchcraft arise from problems related to the birth itself, but it could also arise from the death of the child over a period of time.

The authorities tried to combat the evil activities of witches by regulating the practices of midwives, as well as passing statutes that held women accountable for infanticide and abortion. For instance “an English midwives’ oath of 1567 has midwives pledge that they ‘will not use any kind of sorcery or incantation in the time of the travail of any woman; and that they will not destroy the children born of any woman...’”⁸⁰ In sixteenth century Germany, midwives were not allowed to “administer medications, perform diagnostic analyses of blood or urine or use instruments such as forceps; they were required to report abortions, infanticide, and childbirth outside of marriage to the authorities, and to submit themselves to the authority of doctors.”⁸¹ Strict laws against infanticide and abortion were also instituted; although these were implemented against all women, not just midwives. Anne Llewellyn Barstow relates that “so concerned were the French about abortion and

infanticide that in 1556 the Parlement passed an extraordinary edict: every expectant mother must register her pregnancy and have a witness to the birth. If she did not, and the infant died, she was liable for the death sentence on a murder charge.”⁸² Charges were similar in Luxembourg; however, there was a distinct gender bias. Women were dealt a more severe punishment than men, because “women condemned for doing away with their newborn children, for example, were buried alive, whereas fathers, if known were either fined or let go free.”⁸³ These regulations demonstrated the severity of the accusations that could be leveled against a midwife accused of witchcraft. The laws, paired with the superstition about the use of unbaptized infants in Witches’ Sabbats led to the persecution of midwives when things went awry during birth and the postpartum period.

Conclusion

Witchcraft theory was a combination of sacramental theology and superstition that existed in the folk culture of the time. Ideas about sorcery, fertility, and the miracle of birth had existed since antiquity. However, ideas about who a witch was, or what magical arts they practiced underwent a change during the witch craze in Europe. Wise women and healers had existed in various forms in cultures throughout time, but sacramental theology added demonic aspects to these notions. Witch-midwives were now thought to be on a quest for unbaptized infants to make magical ointments. They were believed to attack God by sabotaging His holy sacrament of marriage. No longer were they performing beneficial rites. Witches were now the

Bibliography

human agents of the devil on Earth, freely doing his bidding. With this frightening twist on established ideas in popular folklore, and the stress of infertility, reproductive dysfunction could easily lead to accusations of witchcraft.

Primary Sources:

St. Augustine. “*On Marriage and Concupiscence*” (419-20). Internet Medieval Sourcebook. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-marr.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

Aquinas, St. Thomas. Excerpt from Quodlibet XI (1256-9). In *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*. Edited by Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 103-4. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Aquinas, St. Thomas. Excerpt from the “*Summa Theologiae*” (1265-1274). Internet Medieval Sourcebook. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas-sex.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

- Kohl, Benjamin G. and H.C. Erik Midelfort, eds. *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's De praetigiis daemonum*. Translated by Benjamin G. Kohl. Ashville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 1998.
- Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger. *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486). Translated by Montague Summers. New York: Dover Publications, 1971.
- Michealis, Sebastian. Excerpt from *Pneumanologie* (1587). In *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, edited by Brian P. Levack, 101-102. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Rueff, Jacob. "De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis: de matrice et eius partibus nec non de conditione infantis in utero, et gravidarum cura et officio..." (Frankfurt: 1580). Medical Rare Books Collection, University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections. <http://spotlight.nottingham.ac.uk/story003/viewImage.asp?page=1&image=1> (accessed December 12, 2010).
- Secondary Sources:**
- "Ailments and Cures of Medieval Women." <http://www.richeast.org/htwm/MMed/MMedicine.html> (accessed December 6, 2010).
- Barstow, Anne Llewellyn. *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*. San Francisco: Pandora, 1994.
- Briggs, Robin. "The Experience of Bewitchment." In *The Witchcraft Reader*, edited by Darren Oldridge, 57-68. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Briggs, Robin. *Witches and Neighbors*. New York: Viking, 1996.
- The Catholic Encyclopedia. "The Sacrament of Marriage." *New Advent*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm> (accessed December 13, 2010).
- The Catholic Encyclopedia. "Original Sin." *New Advent*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm> (accessed December 13, 2010).
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Deirdre English. "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers." From the archives of the Memory Hole. <http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/witches.html>. (accessed September 2, 2010).
- Heinsohn, Gunnar. *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen*. Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag AG, 2006.
- Horsley, Ritta Jo and Richard A. Horsley. "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts." *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 1-28.
- Kieckhefer, Richard. *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Levack, Brian. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Longman, 1993.
- Russell, Jeffrey B. *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans*. New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1980.
- Russell, Jeffery Burton. *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Smith, Moira. "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*." *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (January-April 2002):85-117.
- Stephens, Walter. "Witches Who Steal Penises: Impotence and Illusion in the *Malleus Maleficarum*." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no.3 (Fall 1998): 495-530.
- Stephens, Walter. *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Summers, Montague. *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*. 2nd ed. New York: University Books, 1956.
- Tatlock, Lynne. "Speculum Feminarum: Gendered Perspectives on Obstetrics and Gynecology in Early Modern Europe." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no.4 (Summer 1992):725-760.
- Trethowan, W.H., "The Demonopathy of Impotence," In *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology: Witchcraft, Women and Society*. Edited by Brian P. Levack, 265-71. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992.
- Wikimedia Commons. *Brauysegen im Bett*. Woodcut from *The Fair Melusina* (15th C.). http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brauysegen_im_Bett.gif (accessed December 6, 2010).
- Williams, Selma R. and Pamela Williams Adelman. *Riding the Nightmare: Women & Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1978.

Wright, Thomas. "The Worship of the Generative Powers," http://www.askwhy.co.uk/christianity/0793_thomas_wright_phallus_worship.php (accessed December 6, 2010).

Zika, Charles. *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Endnotes

¹ H.C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwest Germany 1562-1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 67.

² Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 115.

³ Gunnar Heinsohn, *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag AG, 2006), 82. Die Hebammen sind im Mittelalter die Gynäkologinnen für über 90 Prozent der Frauen Europas. Translated by author.

⁴ Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 2nd ed. (New York: University Books, 1956), 160.

⁵ Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 2nd ed. (New York: University Books, 1956), xxii.

⁶ Jeffrey B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1980):111-112.

⁷ Jeffrey B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1980):115.

⁸ Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts," *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 9-10.

⁹ Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts," *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 10.

¹⁰ Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts," *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 9.

¹¹ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (New York: Viking, 1996): 77-78.

¹² Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (New York: Viking, 1996), 78.

¹³ Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1993), 139, n.33.

¹⁴ Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1993), 139.

¹⁵ Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1993), 139-40.

¹⁶ Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1993), 140.

¹⁷ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 113.

¹⁸ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 113.

¹⁹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers," from the archives of the Memory Hole, <http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/witches.html> (accessed September 2, 2010): 13.

²⁰ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers," from the archives of the Memory Hole, <http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/witches.html> (accessed September 2, 2010): 15.

²¹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers," from the archives of the Memory Hole, <http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/witches.html> (accessed September 2, 2010): 18.

²² Gunnar Heinsohn, *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag AG, 2006), 83. Klerikal und weltliche Obrigkeiten, katholische und nichtkatholische Kirchen Europas ziehen beim Töten der wiesen Frauen an einem Strang, weil ihnen die Hexenverfolgung ein entscheidendes und zugleich das furchtbarste Mittel zur Wiederbevölkerung wird. Als einzig unbestrafte Lust wird nur noch der eheliche Zeugungsakt zugelassen. Translated by author.

²³ Gunnar Heinsohn, *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag AG, 2006), 83.

Durch das Verbot aller Verhütungsmittel werden die Menschen zur Feinsteuerung unfähig. Es gibt viel mehr Geborene, als Europa selber benötigt. Aber die Furcht obsiegt, daß bei Wiedenzulassung der Mittle nicht genügend Kinder da sein werden. Translated by author.

²⁴ Gen 2:24 (New Revised Standard Version).

²⁵ Eph. 5:25-33 (New Revised Standard Version).

²⁶ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 317.

²⁷ Gen. 1:27-28 (New Revised Standard Version).

²⁸ St. Augustine, "On Marriage and Concupiscence" (419-20), Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-marr.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

²⁹ St. Augustine, "On Marriage and Concupiscence" (419-20), Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-marr.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae" (1265-1274), Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas-sex.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

³¹ The Catholic Encyclopedia, "The Sacrament of Marriage," New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm> (accessed December 13, 2010).

³² Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 109.

³³ Walter Stephens, "Witches Who Steal Penises: Impotence and Illusion in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no.3 (Fall 1998), 500.

³⁴ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 316.

³⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, Excerpt from *Quodlibet XI* (1256-9), in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*, eds. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 104.

³⁶ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 317.

³⁷ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 198.

³⁸ Lev. 20:27 (New Revised Standard Version).

³⁹ Wikimedia Commons. Brauysegen im Bett. Woodcut from *The Fair Melusina* (15th C.). http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brauysegen_im_Bett.gif (accessed December 6, 2010).

⁴⁰ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 313.

⁴¹ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 313.

⁴² Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 55.

⁴³ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 117-8.

⁴⁴ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 92.

⁴⁵ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 92-3.

⁴⁶ Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1976), 60.

⁴⁷ Benjamin G Kohl and H.C. Erik Midelfort, eds. *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's De praetigiis daemonum*, trans. Benjamin G. Kohl (Ashville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 1998), 246.

⁴⁸ Selma R. Williams and Pamela Williams Adelman, *Riding the Nightmare: Women & Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1978), 123.

⁴⁹ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (New York: Viking, 1996), 83.

- ⁵⁰ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 93.
- ⁵¹ Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 124.
- ⁵² Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 58.
- ⁵³ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 121.
- ⁵⁴ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 119.
- ⁵⁵ Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 41.
- ⁵⁶ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 99.
- ⁵⁷ Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 2nd ed. (New York: University Books, 1956), 100-1.
- ⁵⁸ Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42.
- ⁵⁹ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 99.
- ⁶⁰ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 98.
- ⁶¹ Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2 (2002), 98.
- ⁶² Thomas Wright, "The Worship of the Generative Powers," http://www.askwhy.co.uk/christianity/0793_thomas_wright_phallus_worship.php (accessed December 6, 2010).
- ⁶³ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 66.
- ⁶⁴ Lynne Tatlock, "Speculum Feminarum: Gendered Perspectives on Obstetrics and Gynecology in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no.4 (Summer 1992), 743.
- ⁶⁵ "Ailments and Cures of Medieval Women", <http://www.richeast.org/htwm/MMed/MMedicine.html> (accessed December 6, 2010).
- ⁶⁶ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 114.
- ⁶⁷ Jacob Rueff. "De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis: de matrice et eius partibus nec non de conditione infantis in utero, et gravidarum cura et officio..." (Frankfurt: 1580). Medical Rare Books Collection, University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections. <http://spotlight.nottingham.ac.uk/story003/viewImage.asp?page=1&image=1> (accessed December 12, 2010).
- ⁶⁸ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (New York: Viking, 1996), 243.
- ⁶⁹ Lynne Tatlock, "Speculum Feminarum: Gendered Perspectives on Obstetrics and Gynecology in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no.4 (Summer 1992), 733.
- ⁷⁰ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 114.
- ⁷¹ "Ailments and Cures of Medieval Women", <http://www.richeast.org/htwm/MMed/MMedicine.html> (accessed December 6, 2010).
- ⁷² W.H. Trethowan, "The Demonopathy of Impotence," in *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology: Witchcraft, Women and Society*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 265-71.
- ⁷³ Gen. 3:16 (New Revised Standard Version).
- ⁷⁴ The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Original Sin," New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm> (accessed December 13, 2010).
- ⁷⁵ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 216.
- ⁷⁶ Robin Briggs, "The Experience of Bewitchment," In *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (New York: Routledge, 2002), 57.

⁷⁷ Sebastian Michealis, Excerpt from *Pneumanologie* (1587), in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2004), 102.

⁷⁸ Selma R. Williams and Pamela Williams Adelman, *Riding the Nightmare: Women & Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1978), 18.

⁷⁹ Robin Briggs, "The Experience of Bewitchment," In *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (New York: Routledge, 2002), 57.

⁸⁰ Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the European Witch Hunts," *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 10.

⁸¹ Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives, and the

European Witch Hunts," *Women in German Yearbook* 3 (1987): 10.

⁸² Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 135.

⁸³ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994), 67.