

**Title 'Vermin and Devil-Worshippers': Exploring Witch Identities in Popular Print in Early Modern Germany and England**

**Author(s):** Natalie Grace

**Source:** *Midlands Historical Review*, Vol. 5 (2021)

**Published:** 04/02/2021

**URL:**

<http://www.midlandshistoricalreview.com/vermin-and-devil-worshippers-exploring-witch-identities-in-popular-print-in-early-modern-germany-and-england/>

# Vermin and Devil-Worshippers': Exploring Witch Identities in Popular Print in Early Modern Germany and England

Natalie Grace

## Abstract

This paper compares the creation of witch identities in news reports about witchcraft printed in Germany and England (1560 – 1650). The scale of witch-hunts and witchcraft reports differed dramatically in Germany and England. This difference, however, masks similarities in the created identities of witches in both countries. Both sometimes overlooked male witches, a decision shaped by reporters' need to engage readers with sensational stories. Witch identities in both countries were always fluid, although this fluidity was especially evident during periods of intense witch-hunting. Ultimately, a diabolic connection and evil nature were the defining characteristics of witches in both Germany and England. In portraying the witch as a diabolic other – as 'vermin and devil-worshippers' – the pamphleteers in Germany and England created an enemy against whom Christian readers could unite.

**Keywords:** *witchcraft, Germany, England, early modern, identity, sex, gender, crime, news, popular print, diabolism*

**Biography:** Natalie Grace is a History PhD student at the University of Nottingham researching witchcraft in print in Germany and England. She is funded by the Midlands4Cities DTP and supervised by Dr David Gehring and Dr Simone Laqua-O'Donnell.

Twitter: @Witchy\_Nat

Midlands4Cities VPP:

[https://www.midlands4cities.ac.uk/student\\_profile/natalie-grace/](https://www.midlands4cities.ac.uk/student_profile/natalie-grace/)

## Introduction

Who, or what, is a witch? Belief in witches and witchcraft can be found, in some form, throughout history across the globe.<sup>1</sup> Yet a scholarly consensus on what exactly defines a witch remains elusive. Even contemporaries during the early modern European witch-hunts – which claimed the lives of roughly 45,000 people between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries – struggled to find a coherent definition of a witch.<sup>2</sup> The difference of opinion was not a simple separation between so-called ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ thinking. Rather, ideas about witches and witchcraft varied significantly at every level of society. Historians have long been interested in untangling the complex web of meanings surrounding witchcraft, but extant sources pose a problem when trying to explore the identity of the witches themselves. Even witches’ confessions, recorded in trial documents and news reports in the first person, are not unmediated windows on their thoughts and feelings.<sup>3</sup> Trial records are full of silences. Since questions were not often recorded, identifying leading questions and when the questioner has shaped the answers is challenging. Records of trials, whether they be court documents or news reports, often underwent significant editing, translation, and shaping to present a coherent narrative.<sup>4</sup> Some scholars argue that, by seeking signs of resistance in the records, it is possible to identify some semblance of the witch’s own ideas and agency.<sup>5</sup> This article, however, explores how the identity of the witch was constructed and created by others – namely, the writers and printers of witchcraft news reports.

This article examines such reports about witchcraft, from Germany and England, between 1560 and 1650. The witch-hunts in Germany and England could both be considered exceptional for different reasons. Germany – or, more properly, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation – has been dubbed ‘the heartland of the witch craze’ and ‘the mother of witches’: approximately 25,000 people were

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, From the Ancient Times to the Present* (London, 2017), pp. 41 – 3.

<sup>2</sup> B. P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (4<sup>th</sup> edn., London, 2016), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> L. Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 2018), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> M. Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London, 1999), pp. 14 and 36 – 7.

<sup>5</sup> G. Warburton, ‘Gender, Supernatural Power, Agency and the Metamorphoses of the Familiar in Early Modern Pamphlet Accounts of English Witchcraft’, *Parergon*, 20/2 (2003), p. 118.; Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, p. 14.

executed for the crime of witchcraft there.<sup>6</sup> The picture in England was different: around 1000 people were tried, and approximately 500 executed by hanging.<sup>7</sup> For some scholars, the comparatively mild approach to witch-hunting, and what they view as a lack of popular acceptance of the diabolic nature of witchcraft – that is, the notion that witches’ power was derived from making a pact with the Devil and Devil-worship marked England out as distinct from mainland Europe.<sup>8</sup> Of course, the suggestion that either was exceptional implies that there were norms of witch-hunting in other parts of Europe, but decades of detailed witchcraft research demonstrate that every country and region had its own idiosyncrasies in its approaches to witch-hunting. While the scale of witch-hunting differed considerably in Germany and England, the two countries also shared several characteristics. Both experienced significant religious upheaval, because of the Reformation. They also experienced significant political upheaval in the form of civil strife and warfare, including the Thirty Years’ War in central Europe (1618 – 1648) and the British Civil Wars (1642 – 1651).<sup>9</sup> As will become clear in this paper, these periods of conflict coincided with significant witch-hunts in the respective countries. Both also had vibrant print industries. In England, this industry was concentrated primarily (although not solely) in London, while in Germany several print centres emerged including Augsburg, Nuremberg, Erfurt, Leipzig, and Cologne. These print centres, coupled with developments in communication networks, and cheaper production of paper, led to a growing popular print industry by the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The news reports on witchcraft discussed here were part of this wider growth in print. More specifically, they belong to the genre of crime reporting, alongside

---

<sup>6</sup> H. C. Erik Midelfort, ‘Heartland of the Witchcraze: Central and Northern Europe’, *History Today*, 31/2 (1981), p. 27.; J. Dillinger, ‘Germany – “The Mother of the Witches”’, in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> J. Sharpe, ‘Witch Hunts in Britain’, in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> B. Rosen, *Witchcraft* (London, 1969), p. 19.; Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 8 and 243.

<sup>9</sup> A. A. O Lynn, ‘Ghosts of War and Spirits of Place: Spectral Belief in Early Modern England and Protestant Germany’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bristol, 2018), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> A. Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London, 2014), p. 2.; H. Droste, ‘How Public Was the News in Early Modern Times?’, in H. Droste & K. Salmi-Niklander (eds.), *Handwritten Newspapers: An Alternative Medium during the Early Modern and Modern Periods* (Helsinki, 2019), p. 29.

reports of other lurid and serious crimes such as murder. They were printed in the form of short pamphlets (approximately eight pages), chapbooks, single-sheet broadsheets, and ballads. Such documents often claimed to be 'truthful' (*wahrhaftig*) and 'authentic' (*glaubwürdig*), but they were not objective factual reports.<sup>11</sup> Rather, they were literary constructions, moulded by their authors (who were, in most cases, anonymous) to appeal to their readers and to present certain perspectives. Such representation was only indirectly related to actual events; pamphlets and ballads tended to report only the most sensational and atypical cases because they were likely to attract buyers.<sup>12</sup> It should not be assumed, therefore, that these accounts are simply *reflections* of existing ideas. The value of these sources for studying witchcraft in Germany has been demonstrated by Wolfgang Behringer, Harald Sipek, Ursula-Maria Krah, Robert Walinski-Kiehl, and Abaigéal Warfield.<sup>13</sup> Similar arguments have been made by Barbara Rosen, Marion Gibson, Carla Suhr, James Sharpe, and Charlotte-Rose Millar regarding witchcraft in England.<sup>14</sup> Witch news reports were accessible to a wider audience than the learned treatises that have often been the focus of witchcraft research; they were cheaper, shorter, and often illustrated or written with a tune to be sung aloud, ensuring that their message could be disseminated beyond the literate elite. They

---

<sup>11</sup> See, for example: W. W., *A True and Just Recorde, of the Information, Examination and Confession of all the Witches, taken at S. Ofes in the countie of Essex* (London, 1582); *A Most Certain, Strange, and True Discovery of a Witch* (London, 1643); *Warhafftige vnnd Erschreckliche Thatten vnd Handlungen der Lxiiij. Hexen vnnd Unholden, so zu Wisenstaig, mit dem Brandt gericht worden seindt* (Launigen, 1563); *Warhafftige und Glaubwürdige Zeytung. Wie man in diesem 1582. Jahr wol in die 200. und fuenff und zweyntzig Weiber verbrant hat* (Strasbourg, 1582).

<sup>12</sup> S. Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (London, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> W. Behringer, 'Witchcraft and the Media', in M. E. Plummer & R. B. Barnes (eds.), *Ideas and Cultural Margins in Early Modern Germany: Essays in Honor of H. C. Erik Midelfort* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 217–36.; H. Sipek, 'Neue Zeitung. Marginalen zur Flugblatt – und Flugschriftenpublizistik sowie zur Druckgraphik im Kontext der Hexenverfolgung', in S. Lorenz (ed.), *Hexen und Hexenverfolgung im Deutschen Südwesten. Aufsatzband* (Ostfildern, 1994), pp. 85–92.; U. Krah, 'Fiktionalität und Faktizität in frühneuzeitlichen Kleinschriften (Einblattdrucke und Flugschriften)', in K. Moeller & B. Schmidt (eds.), *Realität und Mythos: Hexenverfolgung und Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 77–87.; R. Walinski-Kiehl, 'Pamphlets, Propaganda and Witch-Hunting in Germany, 1560–1630', *Reformation*, 6/1 (2002), pp. 49–74.; A. Warfield, 'The Media Representation of the Crime of Witchcraft in Early Modern Germany: An Investigation of Non-Periodical Newsheets and Pamphlets, 1533-1669' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Rosen, *Witchcraft.*; Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft.*; C. Suhr, 'Portrayal of Attitude in Early Modern English Witchcraft Pamphlets', *Studia Neophilologica*, 84/1 (2012), pp. 130–42.; J. Sharpe, 'English Witchcraft Pamphlets and the Popular Demonic', in J. Goodare, R. Voltmer and L. Helene Willumsen (eds.), *Demonology and Witch-Hunting in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2020), pp. 127–47.; C. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London, 2017).

offer, therefore, the opportunity to explore what the wider populace learned about witchcraft. Millar has recently demonstrated the importance of these sources for exploring witch identities, offering an insight into male witches in English witchcraft pamphlets and highlighting the need for diabolism to be integrated into our understanding of English witchcraft.<sup>15</sup>

While this essay echoes Millar's conclusions, it goes further by closely comparing German and English witch identities. Such comparison has not been undertaken previously. Comparative research remains rare in witchcraft scholarship, despite notable studies including the works of Johannes Dillinger, Laura Stokes, and Louise Nyholm Kallestrup demonstrating the merits of the approach.<sup>16</sup> Historiographical reviews of both English and German witchcraft note the potential for comparative work to yield new insights.<sup>17</sup> This study provides convincing evidence for commonalities between German and English witch identities, while acknowledging and explaining differences. In doing so, it deepens our understanding of witchcraft in both countries, provides a framework to consider overarching trends in a way that is not possible with regional case studies, and highlights the potential of comparative research in the field of witchcraft. It asks what characteristics pamphleteers in both countries considered to be quintessential to the witch. It also considers how the genre of crime reporting and the intentions and priorities of pamphleteers shaped their approach to witch identities.

The essay is divided into four parts. Part one investigates pamphleteers' approach to sex and gender, aspects of witch identity central in the historiography; part two considers how the need for sensational and shocking stories influenced the choices made by pamphleteers, and compares a sensational case that was reported in both countries; part three looks at the wider witch identity and considers

---

<sup>15</sup> C. Millar, 'Diabolic Men: Reintegrating Male Witches into English Witchcraft', *The Seventeenth Century* (2020), pp. 1 – 21.

<sup>16</sup> J. Dillinger, 'Evil People': *A Comparative Study of Witch Hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, trans. L. Stokes (Charlottesville, VA, 2009).; L. Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430–1530* (Basingstoke, 2011).; L. N. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark* (Basingstoke, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> M. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft Trials in England', in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), p. 289.; T. Robisheaux, 'The German Witch Trials' in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), p. 196.

the extent to which the identity broke down during times of intense witch-hunting; finally, part four shows the centrality of diabolism and evil nature in the witch identity, and argues that the moralistic and religious tone of the pamphlets explains their emphasis on these characteristics. Ultimately, the essay demonstrates that, while they are not identical, there are clear overlaps in the witch identities created by German and English pamphleteers.

### ***‘What the Devil cannot do himself he does through an old woman’: Sex and Gender in Witchcraft Reports***

In Germany and England, the female criminal was an anomaly, although the percentage of men and women prosecuted varied in different localities. According to Jeanette Kamp, some major European cities such as London, Leiden, and Glasgow had relatively high proportions of female criminals (30 to 50 percent), but others, such as Frankfurt am Main, had a much lower rate of female prosecution (22 percent).<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of those who were officially prosecuted were men.<sup>19</sup> Men and women were also traditionally accused of different crimes. Men were the chief offenders in major crimes including treason, heresy, and murder. Women tended to be involved in crimes which undermined public order, such as slander, scolding, sexual impropriety, or property offences.<sup>20</sup> Two serious crimes, however, were closely associated with women: infanticide and witchcraft. In England, 90 percent of those executed for witchcraft were women.<sup>21</sup> In Germany, the figure was closer to 80 percent, although this masks significant regional variations across the Empire.<sup>22</sup>

The connection between witches and women has prompted much debate. In the 1960s and ‘70s, second-wave feminists viewed the witch as evidence of the longstanding oppression of women by patriarchal structures. Andrea Dworkin and

---

<sup>18</sup> J. Kamp, *Crime, Gender and Social Control in Early Modern Frankfurt am Main* (Leiden 2019), p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> G. Walker & J. Kermode, ‘Introduction’ in J. Kermode & G. Walker (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, *Women and Crime*, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Sharpe, ‘Witch Hunts in Britain’, p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> Dillinger, ‘Germany – “The Mother of the Witches”’, p. 97.

Mary Daly argued that the witch-hunts were ‘gynocide’, claimed erroneously that the hunts cost the lives of nine million women, and suggested that the high proportion of widows and spinsters among the accused is evidence that witch-hunts targeted women ‘whose crime [was] independence’.<sup>23</sup> These claims have been criticised for their ahistorical use of terms such as misogyny and patriarchy, neglect of archival evidence, and their refusal to treat male witches as a worthy subject of investigation.<sup>24</sup> They did, however, highlight the need to investigate relationships across sex, gender, and witchcraft properly. Subsequent explorations have added depth and nuance to our understanding of the connections.<sup>25</sup> Significant work has been done to integrate male witches and masculinities into discussions.<sup>26</sup> Considerations of gender and witchcraft also increasingly emphasise the need to move away from simple binaries, and to explore ‘how and to what extent gender was intrinsic to the identity of the witch’.<sup>27</sup>

Julian Goodare suggests that different ideas about witches and women existed at learned and popular levels.<sup>28</sup> Because witchcraft news reports appealed to both learned and popular audiences, it is worth considering how they navigated the relationship between witchcraft and women. The majority of German and English news reports published between 1560 and 1650 solely discuss female witches. Woodcut illustrations – important because they communicated ideas to illiterate or semi-literate audiences – feature primarily women. *The Examination and Confession of Certaine Witches* (1566), for example, which warned its readers about ‘feminine dames [...] whom sathan hath infect’, included depictions of each of the three women who feature in the text.<sup>29</sup> Another, *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True* (1579), contains two depictions of women feeding animals or alongside demon-like

---

<sup>23</sup> A. Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York, NY, 1974), pp. 125 – 50. M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, with a New Introduction by the author* (London, 1991), pp. 179 – 85.

<sup>24</sup> A. Rowlands, ‘Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe’, in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 451 -3. L. Apps and A. C. Gow, *Gender at the Stake: Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2003), p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> For a historiographical overview, see: Rowlands, ‘Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe’.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example: Apps and Gow, *Gender at the Stake*. and R. Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, trans. L. Froome-Döring (Basingstoke, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> J. Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt* (London, 2016), p. 310.

<sup>29</sup> *The Examination and Confession of Certaine Wytches at Chensforde in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1566), sigs. Aiii<sup>v</sup>, [Avi<sup>r</sup>] and Biii<sup>r</sup>.

creatures.<sup>30</sup> In Germany, the title page of *A Truthful Report from the Town of Osnabrück* (1588) shows a woman, whose crooked stance and supporting stick gives her an aged appearance, reaching out to a scaly, horned creature, presumably the Devil.<sup>31</sup> The image bears a resemblance to the woodcut showing a woman and the Devil embracing in Ulrich Molitor's *Of Witches and Diviner Women* (first published 1489), indicating perhaps that printers took inspiration in their depictions of witches from learned treatises.<sup>32</sup> Another German woodcut, on the title page of *A Truthful Report Concerning Wicked Witches* (1571) shows four women, naked or barely dressed, with long flowing hair, gathered around a cooking pot with bones strewn on the ground around them.<sup>33</sup> The nakedness, loose hair, and the cooking pot are all symbols which Charles Zika suggests represented the connection between witchcraft and women in art during the late fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> These features once again indicate that ideas about witches and women from other learned sources were adopted and disseminated in these pamphlets. The connection between witches and women is not restricted to visual imagery. It is sometimes explicitly stated in the text. Several German reports from the late 1570s and early 1580s, for example, include the phrase 'as the old saying goes, what the devil cannot do himself, he does through an old woman'.<sup>35</sup> This statement, presented as received wisdom, implies that writers were simply reflecting a popular notion that old women were in league with the Devil and were, therefore, archetypal witches.

---

<sup>30</sup> *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True, of Hainous and Horrible Actes Committed by Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham, Mother Dutton, Mother Devell, Mother Margaret, Fower Notorious Witches apprehended at Winsore in the Countie of Berks.* (London, 1579), sigs. A<sup>r</sup> and Av<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> *Warhafftige Neue Zeittung auß dem Land Westvahlen von der Stat Ossenbruck wie man da hat auff einen Tag 133. Unholden verbrenndt* (s.l., 1588), (unpaginated – p. 1.).

<sup>32</sup> U. Molitor, *Von den Uholden oder Hexen* (Augsburg, 1508), sig. [Bv<sup>v</sup>].

<sup>33</sup> R. Lutz, *Warhafftige Zeittung Von Gottlosen Hexen Auch Ketzerischen und Teuffels Weibern die zu Schettstadt deß H. Römischen Reichstadt in Elsaß auf den XXII. Herbstmonat deß 1570 Jahrs von wegen ihrer schändtlichen Teuffelsverpflichtung sind verbrennt* (s.l., 1571), sig. A<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> C. Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London, 2007), pp. 12 – 26.

<sup>35</sup> 'nach dem alten Sprichwort/ Was der Teuffel nicht kan zu wege bringen/ das bringt er durch ein alt Weib zu wege': H. Kuntz, *Neue Zeitung von einer Erschrecklicher That, welche zu Dillingen, von einem Jhesuwider, vnd einer Hexen geschehen ist* (Basel, 1579), sig. Aiii<sup>r</sup>. H. Kuntz, *Neue Zeitung von einer Erschrecklicher That, welche zu Dillingen, von einem Jhesuwider, vnd einer Hexen geschehen ist* (Urssel, 1580), sig. Aiii<sup>r</sup>. *Neue Zeitung aus Berneburgk Schrecklich und abschewlich zu hoeren und zu lesen von dreyen alten Teuffels Bulerin Hexin oder Zauberinnen* (s.l., 1580), sig. B<sup>r</sup>.

Yet it is important not to take such statements at face value. Some pamphleteers appear to have actively curated an image of the witch as exclusively female, disregarding the facts of the events that they were reporting. Of the 72 reports surveyed for this paper, 24 (thirteen English and eleven German) include references to men accused of or executed for the crime of witchcraft. In some cases, however, male witches are relatively downplayed or overlooked. The clearest example is two English pamphlets from 1579 discussing a trial in Windsor. The first is *A Rehearsall Straung and True*. This pamphlet names ‘fower notorious witches’ on its title page: Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham, Mother Dutten, Mother Devell, and Mother Margaret.<sup>36</sup> The text provides the testimony of Elizabeth Stile, who begins by naming other witches. The first name she gives is Father Rosimond.<sup>37</sup> Father Rosimond reappears later in Elizabeth’s confession, as she describes meeting with the other witches to perform ‘heinous and vilanous practices’: he is, once again, the first person she names.<sup>38</sup> *A Brief Treatise Containing the Most Strange and Horrible Cruelty of Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham and her Confederates* (1579) discusses the same events. It is written by Richard Galis, an apparent first-hand victim of the witches. Galis also refers to Father Rosimond. He describes seeking Father Rosimond’s advice about suspected sorcery and witchcraft, indicating that Father Rosimond acted as a cunning man.<sup>39</sup> Galis reports that Elizabeth named ‘diverse men as well as women, that used to do much harm by sorcery, witchcraft, and enchantments.’<sup>40</sup> In both pamphlets, however, Elizabeth’s naming of Father Rosimond as a witch is downplayed in the overall narrative. The pamphlets inform readers that Elizabeth and three other women that she named were executed, but Father Rosimond’s fate remains unclear. Galis’s choice of language makes his position clear. He talks of how the ‘sisters’ gathered to perform their sorcery – a gathering at which Elizabeth states Father Rosimond

---

<sup>36</sup> *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True*, sig. A<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True*, sig. Av<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True*, sig. [Avi<sup>v</sup>].

<sup>39</sup> R. Galis, *A Brief Treatise Containing the Most Strange and Horrible Cruelty of Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham and her Confederates* (London, 1579), sig. [Ciii<sup>v</sup>].

<sup>40</sup> Galis, *A Brief Treatise*, sig. D<sup>v</sup>.

was present – and, in his conclusion, warns his readers about the ‘daughters of the devil’.<sup>41</sup> The reader is left with the distinct impression that witches are women.

A similar technique can be observed in a German pamphlet – *A True and Authentic Report: How 225 Women were Burned in the Year 1582* – which reported numerous witch trials in the south of the Empire. The word choice in the title is significant. The writer used the German *Weiber* which translates as ‘women’ or, alternatively, ‘hags’.<sup>42</sup> Different terms which include both men and women, such as *Unholden* (fiends), appear in other German pamphlet titles.<sup>43</sup> The choice of *Weiber* here suggests that the author of this pamphlet wanted to place emphasis on the fact that the witches were female despite the fact that within the text there are scattered references to male witches. Indeed, the report states that ‘44 women and three men’ were captured and burned in the county of Montbéliard.<sup>44</sup> It also mentions a male sorcerer (*Hexenmeister*) in Colmar.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the report, however, the author warns of Satan’s power over ‘his weak instruments of the female sex’.<sup>46</sup> Evidently, this pamphlet’s author felt that sex was a defining component of witch identity. In both English and German sources, then, there is a clear emphasis on female witches and male witches’ roles are downplayed. Why exactly did pamphleteers in both countries choose to emphasise female witches in this way?

---

<sup>41</sup> Galis, *A Brief Treatise*, sigs. Cii<sup>v</sup> and [Diiii<sup>r</sup>].

<sup>42</sup> *Warhaffte und Glaubwürdige Zeytung. Wie man in diesem 1582. Jahr wol in die 200. und fuenff und zweyntzig Weiber verbrant hat* (Strasbourg, 1582).

<sup>43</sup> See, for example: *Ein New kläglich Lied von dem grossen Schaden der Unholden So sie in Westphalen zu Aschenbruegk und andern Orten begangen haben in dem jetztwerenden 1583. Jar* (Wesel, 1583) and *Ein Warhafftige Zeitung Von etlichen Hexen oder Unholden welche man kürztlich im Stiff Mäntz zu Ascheburg, Dipperck, Ostum, Rönßhoffen auch andern Orten verbrenndt was Ubels sie gestift und bekandt haben* (Frankfurt am Main, 1603).

<sup>44</sup> ‘man hat auch vier und viertzig Weiber und drey Man gefangen/ und den 24. Oct: zu Mimpelgart verbant’: *Warhaffte und Glaubwürdige Zeytung*, sig. [Aiii<sup>r</sup>].

<sup>45</sup> *Warhaffte und Glaubwürdige Zeytung*, sig. [Aiiii<sup>r</sup>].

<sup>46</sup> ‘dem leydigen Sathan solche gewalt/uber den schwachen Werckzeug weibliches Geschlecht’: *Warhaffte und Glaubwürdige Zeytung*, sig. [Aiiii<sup>r</sup>].

## **'The most monstrous act that ever man heard of': Sensationalism and shock in the shaping of witch identities**

The attention given to female witches can be explained, at least partially, by the conventions of the crime reporting genre to which these sources belong. Alongside claims to be 'truthful', reports emphasise the shocking nature of their stories using terms like 'wonderful', 'strange', and 'terrifying'.<sup>47</sup> The juxtaposition of truth and shock leads Warfield to characterise such sources as 'a forerunner for our own modern-day fascination with "true crime" series and documentaries'.<sup>48</sup>

Attention-grabbing headlines ensured the purchase of the pamphlet in an increasingly competitive market; put another way, they were the early modern equivalent of 'clickbait'. Andrew Pettegree suggests that there was 'a particular fascination with the crimes of women [...] because they were so rare'.<sup>49</sup> Several scholars have noted that the audience for such cheap print was 'socially variegated' and 'assumed a broad social consensus of shared values'.<sup>50</sup> Yet the people most likely to purchase these documents, especially in the earlier years of the period examined here – and the audience, therefore, that printers were particularly seeking to entice – were 'the literate upper levels of early modern society'.<sup>51</sup> For members of this stratum of society who had achieved some level of security and comfort, news pamphlets like these witchcraft reports 'spoke to [their] deepest fears of attacks on established social and gender hierarchies'.<sup>52</sup> Reporting on witchcraft offered an ideal opportunity for pamphleteers and printers to tap into the market for dramatic tales of women who had contravened societal norms, which may go some way to explaining why writers chose to only mention female witches in the titles of their

---

<sup>47</sup> See, for example: T. Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster With the arraignment and triall of nineteene notorious witches* (London, 1613).; *Witchcrafts, Strange and Wonderfull: Discovering the Damnable Practices of Seven Witches, against the lives of certaine noble personages, and others of this kingdome, as shall appeare in this lamentable history* (London, 1635).; *Zwo erschreckliche und unerhörte Geschicht, welches in diesem XCCI Jar geschehen ist auff dem Brockersberg, dar sich ahn die hundert tausend Unholden oder Hexen versamlet* (Cologne, 1596).

<sup>48</sup> Warfield, 'The Media Representation of the Crime of Witchcraft', p. 265.

<sup>49</sup> A. Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, p. 92.

<sup>50</sup> T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550 – 1640* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 3.; J. Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (London, 1992), p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, p. 93. J. Wiltenburg, 'True Crime: The Origins of Modern Sensationalism', *American Historical Review*, 109/5 (2004), p. 1382.

<sup>52</sup> Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, p. 94.

pamphlets in the examples above. Criminal women were more sensational than criminal men, and the reports on such women nurtured the anxieties of upper-class men who sought to maintain their positions within the social order.

The role of sensationalism in moulding the witch identities in these reports is illustrated by the fact that, where male witches do feature prominently, the stories were especially sensational and shocking. Both German and English reports discussing male witches accuse them of a litany of dreadful crimes. The English pamphlet discussing Lewis Gaufredy, a French priest who was convicted for witchcraft, emphasises his duplicitousness and how he used his diabolic powers to seduce and rape women.<sup>53</sup> A German pamphlet reporting the prosecution of a family of witches, but primarily focusing on the men in the family, accused them not only of witchcraft, but also multiple counts of murder, theft, and arson.<sup>54</sup> The case of Peter Stumpf, who was executed in Bedburg near Cologne in 1589, is particularly sensational. Alongside sorcery, Stumpf was accused of child-murder, incestuous rape, and cannibalism. His crimes obviously captured the European imagination. Alongside four surviving German reports, his story was translated and printed in Dutch, Danish, and English.<sup>55</sup> The English version, printed in London in 1590, claims to be a translation from a German copy, but does not match any of the extant versions.<sup>56</sup> The survival rate for such ephemeral literature is extremely low, so it is possible that the source text for the translation has simply not survived. It is,

---

<sup>53</sup> *The Life and Death of Lewis Gaufredy* (London, 1612), sigs. A2<sup>r</sup> – A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> *Zwo Warhafftige neue Zeitungen [...] Die andere Zeitung: Eine abschewliche vnd zuuor nie erhoerte erschreckliche Zaubereyen Moerdt vnnnd Diebereyen von Vater Mutter zweyen Soehnen vnd zweyen Tochtermaennern geschehen Welche in ... Muenchen im Beyerland sind gefaenglich eingezogen worden.* (Basel, 1600), sigs. Aii<sup>v</sup> – Aiiii<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> *ANNO MDLXXXVI. Ist bey Bedbur ein Zauberer geweßen STVMP PETER genant, welcher sich in einen WOLF verwandelt* (s.l., 1589).; *Warhafftige und wunderbarliche Neue Zeitung von einem Bawren der sich durch Zauberey deß Tags siben stund zu einem Wolff verwandelt hat* (Augsburg, 1589).; *Warhafftige und Wunderbarlich Neue Zeitung von einem Pauren der sich durch Zauberey des tags siben stund zu ainen Wolff verwandelt hat* (Nuremberg, 1589).; *Warhafftige und erschreckliche Beschreibung, von einem Zauberer (Stupe Peter genandt) der sich zu einem Wehrwolff hat können machen* (Cologne, 1589).; J. van Gehlen, *Warachtighe ende verschrickelijcke beschryvinge van vele toovenaers, hoe ende waerom men die verbrandt heeft in 1589* (Antwerp, 1589); *En forskreckelig oc sand bescriffuelse om mange troldfolck som ere forbrends for deris misgierninger skyld fra det aar 1589* (Copenhagen, 1591).; *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter, a Most Wicked Sorcerer* (London, 1590).

<sup>56</sup> A. Warfield, 'Witchcraft and the Early Modern Media', in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), p. 215.

however, also plausible that the author simply claimed it was a translation to lend legitimacy to the account, a common tactic when reporting foreign news.<sup>57</sup>

The survival of German and English examples of this case offers a rare opportunity to directly compare witch reporting and the creation of witch identities in the two countries. The extant German copies are three broadsheets (all written in verse) and one pamphlet; the English version is a pamphlet.<sup>58</sup> There are some similarities across the five sources. All report Stumpf's crimes, including the murder of thirteen children, eating his son's brain, and sleeping with his daughter. All proclaim the incredible nature of the tale: one German broadsheet talks of Stumpf's 'unspeakable shame and vice', while another claims his story is 'too terrifying to hear'; the English pamphlet reports that Stumpf 'did more mischeefe and cruelty then would be credible, although high Germany hath been forced to talke the truth thereof.'<sup>59</sup> Both the German and the English texts give the impression that Stumpf was, in a twisted way, a celebrity. One of the broadsheets is written from Stumpf's own perspective, offering a vicarious insight into the imagined mindset of a serial killer.<sup>60</sup> The English version describes him as a 'most wicked sorcerer'.<sup>61</sup> According to Sara Barker, focusing the story on a central character was a common technique in news reporting, allowing the reader to create a personal connection.<sup>62</sup>

There are, however, some differences. As Warfield has observed, the English version is far more detailed than any of the German accounts.<sup>63</sup> Comparing the German pamphlet with the English one, the German account spends just two of eight pages discussing Stumpf, before moving on to discuss witch trials happening elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> The English pamphlet devotes nineteen pages solely to discussing

---

<sup>57</sup> S. K. Barker, 'International News Pamphlets', in A Kesson and E. Smith (eds.), *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2016), pp. 152 – 4.

<sup>58</sup> ANNO MDLXXXVI. *Ist bey Bedbur ein Zauberer geweßen STVMP PETER genant.; Warhafftige und wunderbarliche Neue Zeitung von einem Bawren.; Warhafftige und Wunderbarlich Neue Zeitung von einem Pauren .; Warhafftige und erschreckliche Beschreibung, von einem Zauberer .; A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter.*

<sup>59</sup> 'unsäglich schandt unndt Laster': ANNO MDLXXXVI. *Ist bey Bedbur ein Zauberer geweßen STVMP PETER genant.; 'schröcklich ist es zu hören an': Warhafftige vnd wunderbarliche Neue Zeitung von einem Bawren.; A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter*, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> ANNO MDLXXXVI. *Ist bey Bedbur ein Zauberer geweßen STVMP PETER genant.*

<sup>61</sup> *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter*, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Barker, 'International News Pamphlets', p. 150.

<sup>63</sup> Warfield, 'Witchcraft and the Early Modern Media', p. 215.

<sup>64</sup> *Warhafftige und erschreckliche Beschreibung, von einem Zauberer*, sigs. Ai<sup>v</sup> – Aii<sup>r</sup>.

Stumpf, providing far more detail about his life, his deeds, failed attempts to capture him, and his final demise. The English pamphlet is particularly hyperbolic in its descriptions of Stumpf: he is 'a most wicked sorcerer', he lusted after his daughter 'most unnaturally, and cruelly committed most wicked incest with her', and the murder and cannibalisation of his son was 'the most monstrous act that ever man heard of.'<sup>65</sup>

The extra detail provided in the English report may partially be to aid the reliability of the report, given the foreign origins of the tale. Yet this level of detail and hyperbole is also found in other English witch reports examined for this paper. Similar exaggerations are found in the news ballad from 1628 reporting the murder of Doctor Lambe, an associate of the Duke of Buckingham who was widely believed to be a sorcerer: the ballad describes him as 'the Devill of our nation' and states that 'such a wicked wretch/in England hath liv'd seldom'.<sup>66</sup> These hyperbolic descriptions are not reserved for male witches. In Thomas Potts's report on the witches of Lancaster, published in 1613, he describes the witchcraft performed there by both male and female witches as 'the most barbarous and damnable practices', and labels one of the accused witches, Elizabeth Demdike, as 'the most dangerous and malicious witch'.<sup>67</sup> Another early English report from 1592 is titled *A Most Wicked Worke of a Wretched Witch (the like whereof none can record these manie yeeres in England.)*.<sup>68</sup> The length of English witch reports is also notable. While the vast majority of the German reports examined for this paper were between eight and sixteen pages long, the length of the English reports varies considerably. It is not uncommon for English witch reports to devote several pages to the description of each individual witch's character and misdeeds.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter*, pp. 1, 7, and 10.

<sup>66</sup> M. Parker, *The Tragedy of Doctor Lambe, / The great suposed Coniurer, who was wounded to death by Saylers / and other Lads, on Fryday the 14. of Iune, 1628. And dyed in the / Poultry Counter, neere Cheapside, on the Saturday morning following* (London, 1628).

<sup>67</sup> Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*, sig. B<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> G. B., *A most wicked worke of a wretched witch (the like whereof none can record these manie yeeres in England.)* (London, 1592).

<sup>69</sup> See, for example: W. W., *A True and Just Recorde. and The Examination, Confession, Triall, and Execution, of Joane Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott: who were executed at Feversham in Kent, for being witches, on Munday the 29 of September, 1645* (London, 1645).

The differences between the German and English pamphlets discussing the Stumpf case are, therefore, indicative of a wider difference between German and English witch reports, and one which has a significant impact on the way they treat witch identities and construct sensational stories: scale. In the German version, Stumpf is a case that, while admittedly notable because of his sex and the severity of his crimes, is one of multiple cases of witchcraft across the Empire. The discussion is, therefore, fairly brief. Most German pamphlets report the trials and executions of multiple witches in different regions; they do not tend to focus heavily on individuals' motivations and lives, but instead emphasise the widespread devastation and threat posed by the witches collectively. The sensationalism which printers needed to sell their stories comes, in these instances, from the extensive and growing nature of the problem. English witch reports, by contrast, tend to report on only one trial in a particular locality and, consequently, they spend more time discussing the individuals involved in the trials. The sensationalism in these reports is more tied to individuals' failures to conform to societal norms. As a result, the individual witch identity appears more important and more stable in the English pamphlets than it does in the German reports. Yet what characteristics formed part of this identity, and how far were these identities truly fixed in either country?

### ***'Men and women, young and old, poor and rich': Breakdown of the Witch Identity***

Thus far this article has explored gendering and sensationalism in print. Sex and the gendering of witch identity have dominated historical discussions. In examining the pamphlets, it is clear that they are also the individual characteristics that both English and German witch pamphlets most commonly make reference to: even if German sources discuss large groups of witches, the gendering of the language chosen gives some indication as to the sex of the witches. Historians have, however, highlighted that witch identities were multifaceted.<sup>70</sup> Historians of both German and English witchcraft have, for example, noted a high proportion of old

---

<sup>70</sup> Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe', p. 466. J. Dillinger, *Hexen und Magie* (2nd edn., Frankfurt am Main, 2018), p. 126.

women among the accused.<sup>71</sup> In many cases, the specific age of the witch is not mentioned in the pamphlets examined for this paper. Yet often when age is mentioned the accused is notably old. *A New Report from Bernburg* (1580), for example, discusses ‘three old women’, one of whom was 90 years old.<sup>72</sup> Another German account discussing a witch and a Jesuit claims that the witch was 73 years old.<sup>73</sup> In England, Elizabeth Stile – discussed above – was 65 years old.<sup>74</sup> In *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches* (1589), the only person whose age is recorded is Joan Cunney (80 years old).<sup>75</sup> According to Raisa Maria Toivo, descriptions of witches as old, poor, or lame ‘may have been made to fit the popular notion of how a witch should be rather than a genuinely accurate portrayal.’<sup>76</sup> The way that pamphleteers provide information about the age of the accused when they are particularly old, and are silent on the ages of other witches, supports Toivo’s suggestion that such sources created an idea of what witches ought to have been (in the eyes of the intended audience) rather than simply reflecting reality.

Poverty is another characteristic mentioned by Toivo. This characteristic is also not mentioned by pamphleteers as frequently as sex or gender, but some English pamphlets do draw a clear connection between poverty, lack of education, and witchcraft, as *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612) demonstrates. The author states that those tempted into witchcraft are ‘of the meanest, and the basest sort both in birth and breeding, so are they the most incapable of any instruction to the contrary’.<sup>77</sup> One witch, Agnes Brown, is described as ‘of poore parentage and poorer education’; another, Arthur Bill, is labelled ‘a wretched, poor man, both in

---

<sup>71</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), p. 671.; L. Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (London, 2004), p. 161.

<sup>72</sup> *Newe Zeitung aus Berneburgk*, sig. Aii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> Kuntz, *Newe Zeitung von einer Erschrecklicher That*, sig. A<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> *A Rehearsall Both Straung and True*, sig. Aiiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches. Arreigned and by Justice condemned and executed at Chelmes-forde, in the Countye of Essex, the 5. day of Iulye, last past. 1589* (London, 1589), sig. Aiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> R. M. Toivo, ‘Witchcraft and Gender’, in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), p. 225.

<sup>77</sup> *The Witches of Northamptonshire Agnes Browne. Ioane Vaughan. Arthur Bill. Hellen Ienkenson. Mary Barber*. (London, 1612), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

state and mind.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps because of the differences in scale of the events they are describing, the German pamphlets do not emphasise poverty in the same way. More often, German reports state that witches were 'poor and rich'.<sup>79</sup> References to rich, handsome, and stately witches can also be found in several German pamphlets in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>80</sup> These examples indicate that the German witch identity was broader and more malleable than its English counterpart.

While the witch identity in Germany seems to have been comparatively flexible, some German witchcraft historians have suggested that the stereotype broke down entirely during so-called witch panics.<sup>81</sup> This argument was first made by Hans Christian Erik Midelfort, who focused on the increased number of men among the accused during the large-scale witch-hunts in the southern parts of the Empire in the 1610s and 1620s.<sup>82</sup> The reports published in these decades evoke paranoia and fear in their characterisation of witches. One from 1616 states that 'men and women, young and old, poor and rich, have been executed and burned because of their witchcraft and sorcery'.<sup>83</sup> Similar sentiments are found in the *Certain Account of Witch Burnings in the Territory of Bamberg* (1628), which describes how 'gentlemen as well as women' were burned, and claims that 'many are arrested daily [...] rich, poor, beautiful, men, and women'.<sup>84</sup> A year earlier, *A True and Thorough Report from the Bishoprics of Würzburg and Bamberg* (1627), warned

---

<sup>78</sup> *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, sig. B2<sup>r</sup> and C<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example: *Warhafftige Neue Zeitung auß dem Land Westvahlen von der Stat Ossenbruck*.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example: *Warhafftige und erschreckliche Beschreibung, von einem Zauberer (Stupe Peter genandt)*, sig. Aiiir<sup>r</sup>.; *Erweyerte Unholden-Zeitung: Kurze Erzehlung wie viel der Unholden hin vnd wider/ sonderlich inn dem Oberrn Teutschland/ gefängklich eingezogen* (Ulm, 1590), sig. [Aiiir<sup>r</sup>].; *Zwo schröckliche Neue Zeitung, die erste ist von dem grewlichen Elendt, so sich in Aschenburck am Maynstrom von Hexen unnd Unholden geschehen* (Giessen, 1612). Sig. Aii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Robisheaux, 'The German Witch Trials', p. 187.

<sup>82</sup> H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562 – 1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford, CA, 1972), pp. 178 – 85.

<sup>83</sup> 'Manns und Weibspersonen/ jung und alt/ arm und reich/ so der Hexenkunst und Zauberey erfahren/ hinrichten und verbrennen': *Zwo Hexenzeitung: Die Erste Auß dem Bisthumb Würzburg, das ist Gründliche Erzehlung wie der Bishoff zu Würzburg das Hexenbrennen im Franckenlande angefangen [...] die Ander Auß dem Hertzogthumb Würtenburg wie der Hertzog zu Würtenberg in unterschiedlichen Stätten das Hexenbrennen auch angefangen* (Tübingen, 1616), (unpaginated – p.1).

<sup>84</sup> 'Teglich mehr eingefangen viel/ kein ansehen der Person gilt/ Reich/ Arm/ Schön/ Herr und Frawen': *Gewisser Bericht des Truten und Hexenbrennens Bambergischen Gebiets wie lang es gewehrt: Was für ubels ihrer Außsag nach sie viel Jahr hero an Menschen, Vihe, Früchten und andern verübet was allbereit verbrennet* (Schmalkalden, 1628), sigs. Aiii<sup>v</sup> and [Aiiir<sup>r</sup>].

that anyone could be a witch. The pamphlet opens by lamenting the discovery of ‘many witch men and women’ (*vil Hexen Mann und Weib*) and explains that family members could not be certain about whether their relatives were witches.<sup>85</sup> It lists the professions of several witches, including a grocer (*ein Kramer*), a butcher (*ein Metzger*), a tanner (*ein Gerber*), and a schoolmaster (*ein Schulmeister*).<sup>86</sup> Taken together, these pamphlets appear to reflect a change in the witch stereotype because pamphleteers specifically emphasised the diverse characteristics of those accused of witchcraft, rather than isolating particular traits.

England never experienced witch-hunts on the same scale as those in Germany. There was, nevertheless, a peak in witch-hunting during the 1640s due to a breakdown of law linked to the British Civil Wars and the zealous witch-hunting of Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne.<sup>87</sup> 100 people were executed in the East Anglia trials, carried out by Hopkins and Stearne in Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk between 1645 and 1647; this figure amounts to a fifth of the total witchcraft executions in England across the early modern period.<sup>88</sup> During these trials, witch reports also reflect a shift in witch identities away from the old, poor, ill-educated woman. More male witches feature in pamphlets published during this decade than any other time.<sup>89</sup> One 1643 report begins by stating that ‘many are in a belief, that this silly sex of women can by no means attaine to that so vile and damned a practise of sorcery, and Witch-craft, in regard of their illiteratenesse and want of learning, which many men have by great learning done.’<sup>90</sup> That the author deemed it necessary to justify the existence of *female* witches suggests there has been a significant change in thought about what witchcraft is and who can perform it. Another pamphlet, printed in 1645, lists the trials of several groups of witches in various parts of England including Norfolk and Suffolk. This pamphlet, commenting on numerous trials, is more in keeping with the German style of witch reporting than the English, an

---

<sup>85</sup> *Ein Warhafftige und gründliche Beschreibung Auß dem Bistumb Würtz und Bamberg Deßgleichen von dem ganzen Fränkischen Kraiß wie man alda so vil hexen Mann vnd Weibspersohnen verbrennen laßt* (S.l., 1627), sig. A<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> *Ein Warhafftige und gründliche Beschreibung Auß dem Bistumb Würtz und Bamberg*, sig. A<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> M. Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft and Evidence in early modern England’, *Past and Present*, 198 (2008), pp. 46 – 54.

<sup>88</sup> J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550 – 1750* (London, 1996), pp. 128 – 9.

<sup>89</sup> Millar, ‘Diabolic Men’, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> *A Most Certain, Strange, and true Discovery of a Witch*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

indication of the shift in scale of witch-hunting in England.<sup>91</sup> In one of the cases reported in this pamphlet, the witch is not an impoverished old woman but is instead described as ‘a gentlewoman or a great lady’.<sup>92</sup>

How far do these examples truly represent a breakdown of the witch stereotype? As Alison Rowlands notes, male witches exist outside major witch-panics; similarly, many other characteristics highlighted in the examples from the 1610s and 20s are present in earlier reports.<sup>93</sup> It may be unusual to see so many varied characteristics side-by-side as they are in the German reports from the 1610s and 20s, but the potential for the broader witch identity is arguably present throughout the reports, as illustrated above. When the wider corpus of German witch reports is considered, the witch stereotype – that is, the idea that the witch identity was largely fixed and narrowly defined as an old, poor, socially-isolated woman – seems to be an illusion. This period represents, rather than a breakdown of the stereotype, an intensification of the enduring flexibility of the German witch identity. Scholars of English witchcraft have expressed similar misgivings about the extent to which the trials of the 1640s can be truly considered atypical. Sharpe argues that, in fact, ‘the alleged witches [...] were firmly in the English mainstream’, and Millar agrees that while the period was unusual it did not include anything that had not previously appeared in witchcraft print.<sup>94</sup> The broader witch identities shown in the 1640s English pamphlets are arguably an amalgamation of the possible identities that appear in earlier pamphlets. One of the earliest English pamphlets, published in 1566, features a man accused of witchcraft and argues that ‘not onely simple people have been falsely seduced and superstitiously led’, foreshadowing the emphasis on learned and elite individuals seen in the 1640s pamphlets.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> *Signes and Wonders from Heaven* (London, 1645), pp. 2 – 5.

<sup>92</sup> *Signes and Wonders from Heaven*, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> A. Rowlands, ‘Not the Usual Suspects? Male, Witchcraft, and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe’, in A. Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> J. Sharpe, ‘The Devil in East Anglia: the Matthew Hopkins Trials Reconsidered’, in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 249. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh [...] upon certayn interrogatories touchyng wytychcrafte and sorcerye* (London, 1566), sig. Aii<sup>r</sup>.

Close analysis of the witch reports from both countries indicates, therefore that the periods of crisis in each respective country unlocked the potential, which had always been present, for flexible witch identities. While some individual characteristics were more closely associated with witchcraft at certain points or in certain reports, the association was not consistent over time. The lack of consensus on which individual characteristics were synonymous with witchcraft that emerges in these pamphlets is actually logical. The ambiguity of the witch is a significant factor in its power to inspire fear. By failing to tie the witch to any one group of society, the news reports contribute to the sense that witchcraft was ever-present and posed a significant threat to all. The role of fear in shaping witch identities explains why they were at their most flexible at times of heightened anxiety about witchcraft. The adaptability of the witch identity is perhaps more obvious in the German reports because of their tendency to focus on several trials at once, meaning individual pamphlets can reflect a diverse range of individuals accused of witchcraft. Individual English pamphlets may create the illusion of a fixed witch identity, but by considering the corpus as a whole, it becomes clear that the situation was more complex.

### ***'A witch is one that worketh by the Devil': Diabolic Identities***

Although German and English witch reports did not link witches to one social group, comparison shows that there was a characteristic which pamphleteers in both countries considered quintessential to the witch identity: the witch's connection with the Devil and their fundamentally evil nature. The connection between witchcraft, diabolism, and heresy is well-established in German scholarship. Imperial law, codified in the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* or *Carolina Code* (1532), distinguished between harmful and non-harmful magic and only punished the former with death.<sup>96</sup> In practice, however, territorial rulers across the Empire introduced their own legal codes concerning witchcraft. Laws introduced in the

---

<sup>96</sup> *Des allerdurchleuchtigsten, groszmechtigsten vnüberwindlichsten Keyser Karls des Fünfften, vnd des Heyligen Römischen Reichs peinlich Gerichts ordnung: auff den Reichßtügen zu Augspurg vnd Regenspurg, in jaren dreissig vnd zwey vnd dreissig gehalten, auffgericht vnd beschlossen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1562), sig. D<sup>r</sup>.

Electorate of Saxony in 1572, for example, stated that sorcery was forbidden in the Bible and that ‘those who make a pact with the devil – even if they harm no one with their sorcery – must be executed by fire’.<sup>97</sup> In England, the exact connection between diabolism, witchcraft, and heresy is disputed. Like the *Carolina Code*, the *Elizabethan Witchcraft Act* (1563) distinguished between those who performed harmful and non-harmful magic, punishing the former with death on their second offence.<sup>98</sup> The act refers to the existence of ‘many fantasticall and devilishe persons’ but does not specifically link witchcraft with devil-worship.<sup>99</sup> The *Jacobean Witchcraft Act* (1604) called for ‘more severe punishing’ and removed the distinction between harmful and non-harmful magic.<sup>100</sup> This act mentions consulting with evil and wicked spirits but stops short of placing diabolism at the centre of witchcraft.<sup>101</sup> Clive Holmes suggests that the courts were primarily concerned with ‘harm rather than heresy’, a distinction which seems to suggest significant difference between German and English conceptions of witchcraft.<sup>102</sup>

Recently, however, scholars including Millar and Sharpe have used witchcraft pamphlets to argue that the centrality of diabolism to popular English witch beliefs needs to be re-examined. Sharpe suggests that Christina Larner’s notion of a ‘popular demonic’, the development of well-rooted popular demonology in Scotland, can also be found in England.<sup>103</sup> Millar argues that understanding the role played by diabolism in English witchcraft is key to incorporating male witches into the broader paradigm, because both male and female witches were ultimately defined by their relationship with demonic familiars (a spirit – often in the form of a

---

<sup>97</sup> *Augusten Hertzogen zu Sachsen ... Verordnungen und Constitutionen des rechtlichen Process* (Dresden, 1572), sig. ff. 71<sup>v</sup> – 72<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> ‘An Act agaynst conjuracons inchantmentes and Witchcraftes (5 Eliz I, c. 16)’, in *Statutes of the Realm, vol. 4 part I* (London, 1819), p. 446.

<sup>99</sup> ‘An Act agaynst conjuracons inchantmentes and Witchcraftes (5 Eliz I, c. 16)’, in *Statutes of the Realm, vol. 4 part I* (London, 1819), p. 446.

<sup>100</sup> ‘An Act against Conjuracion Witchcrafte and dealing with evill and wicked Spirits (1 Jac. I, c. 12)’, in *Statutes of the Realm, vol. 4 part II* (London, 1819), p. 1028.

<sup>101</sup> ‘An Act against Conjuracion Witchcrafte and dealing with evill and wicked Spirits (1 Jac. I, c. 12)’, in *Statutes of the Realm, vol. 4 part II* (London, 1819), p. 1028.

<sup>102</sup> C. Holmes, ‘Popular Culture? Witches, Magistrates, and Divines in Early Modern England’, in S. L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY, 1984), p. 87.

<sup>103</sup> Sharpe, ‘English witchcraft pamphlets and the popular demonic’, pp. 127 – 8.

domestic animal – that made a bond with the witch and did their bidding).<sup>104</sup> The pamphlets certainly draw a clearer connection between the Devil and witchcraft than the statutes. *A True and Just Recorde* (1582) offers a particularly stark example: the author is openly critical of the leniency of English law, describing witches as ‘that hellish liverie’ and labelling witchcraft ‘a devilish and damnable practice.’<sup>105</sup> They praise ‘magistrates of forren lands’ for treating witchcraft with the severity it deserves.<sup>106</sup> Gibson has noted that this pamphlet is unusual because it specifically draws on ideas from mainland Europe.<sup>107</sup> Yet it is far from the only English pamphlet to consider witchcraft tantamount to heresy and devil-worship. *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612), for instance, offers this definition of witchcraft:

A witch is one that worketh by the Devill, or by some Devillish or Curious act, either hurting or healing, revealing things secret, or foretelling things to come, which the Devill hath devised to entangle, and to snare men’s souls withal unto damnation.<sup>108</sup>

These ideas are remarkably similar to German reports which frequently label witches as ‘devil-worshippers’, the ‘devil’s servants’, or ‘instruments of the Devil’. The connection to the Devil is more explicit in the German reports, often featuring descriptions of meetings between the Devil and groups of witches. Such meetings with the Devil in human form are rare in English pamphlets outside of 1645-50, although the familiar arguably performs a similar role. Additionally, a similar providential explanation for witches’ power exists in German and English reports. In Germany, Lutz’s *Concerning Wicked Witches* outlines the hierarchy within which witches operate. The hierarchy is as follows: the primary cause of misfortune in God, who permits; the secondary cause is Satan, who brings the misfortune about; the third is the witches, who consent and cooperate with Satan.<sup>109</sup> An analogous

---

<sup>104</sup> Millar, ‘Diabolic Men’, p. 14. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, p. 48.

<sup>105</sup> W. W., *A True and Just Recorde*, sigs. A3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> W. W., *A True and Just Recorde*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>107</sup> M. Gibson, ‘French demonology in an English village: the St Osyth experiment of 1582’, in J. Goodare, R. Voltmer & L. Helene Willumsen (eds.), *Demonology and witch-hunting in early modern Europe* (London, 2020), p. 108.

<sup>108</sup> *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> Lutz, *Von Gottlosen Hexen*, sig. A<sup>v</sup>.

explanation of witches' power is found in the English *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (1619), which states that 'divers impious and facinorous [i.e. extremely wicked] mischiefs have been effectuated through the instruments of the Diuell, by the permission of God.'<sup>110</sup>

Clearly, then, not only are Millar and Sharpe correct in their identification of diabolism in English witchcraft pamphlets, but this comparative study demonstrates that there are evident parallels in the characterisation of witches and their connection with the Devil in England and Germany. These resemblances can also be seen in the German and English witch reports' emphasis on the evil and disruptive nature of the witch. Many English witches are portrayed as outsiders, disliked by their community and driven by revenge. An early English report, for example, describes the examination and confession of three women accused of witchcraft: Elizabeth Francis, Agnes Waterhouse, and Joan Waterhouse.<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth and Agnes are both described as living 'unquietly' with their respective spouses, and confess to disposing of their husbands with Satan's aid; Agnes and Joan both confess to using their witchcraft to take revenge on neighbours who had refused them charity.<sup>112</sup> These descriptions are typical of the deviant quality associated with witches in the English sources. Although the German pamphlets focus more on groups of witches rather than individuals, their wickedness and evil nature is unmistakable. Several pamphlets discuss the witches' plots to harm and kill people. The idea that witches particularly target babies, new mothers, and older people – presented in many pamphlets including the *Expanded Witch Report* (1590) – serves to emphasise their implicit wickedness because of their decision to target the weak, innocent, and most vulnerable members of society.<sup>113</sup> Johannes Dillinger suggests that, rather than seeking commonalities in the social characteristics of those accused of witchcraft, scholars should consider that the individual's reputation for conflict or disruption was the key to their identification as a witch: he terms this the

---

<sup>110</sup> *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower, daughters of Ioan Flower neere Bever Castle* (London, 1619), sig. B<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> *The Examination and Confession of Certaine Wytches at Chensforde*.

<sup>112</sup> *The Examination and Confession of Certaine Wytches at Chensforde*, sigs. [Aviiv] – [Biiir].

<sup>113</sup> *Erweyterte Unholden-Zeitung*, sig. A2<sup>r-v</sup>.

‘Evil People Paradigm’.<sup>114</sup> A similar argument has been put forward by Rowlands, who argues that the idea of the witch as a ‘bad neighbour’ is ‘a more useful conceptual category than that of the masculine or feminine “other”’.<sup>115</sup> Comparison of English and German witch reports supports the validity of these arguments, suggesting that a person’s moral background and bad nature were central to the witch identity in both countries.

The notion of a diabolic, wholly evil sect was undoubtedly shocking, and as sensationalism has been emphasised throughout the printed works examined here, it is probable that this factor played some role in the ways that witches were characterised. Yet, while sensationalism was important to engage readers, the role of these pamphlets was not merely to entertain. It is unlikely that anyone could have to survived solely on profits made from writing these news pamphlets; it is also unlikely, therefore, that such pamphlets were written purely for commercial gain.<sup>116</sup> Why, then, were these pamphlets written, and how does this influence their construction of witch identities? Several scholars have noted that crime pamphlets, including witchcraft reports, were moralistic and didactic, bearing a close resemblance to sermons in the way that the stories they reported had a clear moral message for their readers.<sup>117</sup> This moral purpose is crucial to understanding the focus of the pamphleteers. These pamphlets did not simply seek to report events, but also to instruct their readers on sinful behaviour, to remind them of the cosmic struggle between God and his foes, and to exhort them to good Christian living.<sup>118</sup> The German and English witch pamphlets often contain laments about sin, other crimes, and the state of the world, and commonly conclude with calls to God to protect them against the ‘tricks and wiles of the Devil and his followers’.<sup>119</sup> The witches are portrayed as a threatening infestation; such ideas are neatly encapsulated in the *Expanded Witch Report*, which claims that ‘nearly every city, market, and town in all of Germany [...] is full of these vermin and

---

<sup>114</sup> Dillinger, ‘Germany – “the Mother of the Witches”’, p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> Rowlands, ‘Not the Usual Suspects’, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> Wiltenburg, ‘True Crime: the Origins of Modern Sensationalism’, p. 1383.

<sup>117</sup> Wiltenburg, ‘True Crime’, p. 1385.; J. E., Slotkin, *Sinister Aesthetics: The Appeal of Evil in Early Modern English Literature* (Cham, 2017), p. 132.; Krah, ‘Fiktionalität und Faktizität’, p. 77.

<sup>118</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p. 69.; Wiltenburg, ‘True Crime’, pp. 1384 -5 .

<sup>119</sup> *Ein Warhafftige vnd gründtliche Beschreibung Auß dem Bistum Würtz und Bamberg*, sig. Aii<sup>v</sup>.

devil-worshippers'.<sup>120</sup> Similar rhetoric can be found in an English pamphlet which describes how God 'weeds [the witches] out in every cell they lurke'.<sup>121</sup> Witch pamphlets in both Germany and England ultimately construct witch identities in a very similar way, with the diabolic connections and evil nature of the witch at the centre of their identity. In doing so, the pamphleteers construct the witch as a wholly evil, diabolic other, acting as a foil for the good Christian readers to whom they appealed and sought to influence.

## Conclusion

This article has explored the creation and shaping of witch identities in German and English witch reports from 1560 to 1650. The topic is challenging and complex, making it impossible to cover every aspect of the witch identity sufficiently here. Many other areas would benefit from further exploration. It would be interesting, for example, to examine how the pamphlets in the two countries explained the act of becoming a witch; is it innate, inherited, or learned? Linking to the notion that witchcraft could be inherited, there is also significant scope to explore the notion of the 'witch family', a concept discussed elsewhere and a recurring theme in the reports in both countries. Additionally, the role of reputation, briefly mentioned in this piece as it relates to an individual's bad nature, could be considered in greater depth.

Nevertheless, this article offers the first comprehensive comparison of these German and English witch reports. This comparative approach offers new insights into commonalities and contrasts in English and German constructions of witch identities that had not previously been fully explored. To allow for sufficient and detailed comparison, it has limited its focus to the aspects of witch identity that have drawn the interest of witchcraft historians and emerge most clearly in the pamphlets from both countries. Undoubtedly, one of the most frequently discussed

---

<sup>120</sup> 'das schier alle Stödt/ Märckt/ und Dörffer/im gantzen Teutschland [...] desselbigen unzifers und Teuffelsdienern voll seindt': *Erweyerte Unholden-Zeitung*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> G. B, *A most wicked worke of a wretched witch*, sig. A<sup>v</sup>.

characteristics of the witch is their sex and gender. In this case, clear similarities emerge in both German and English witch reports. Although most witches prosecuted were women in both countries, part one above demonstrates that, even if male witches were present in the trials, pamphleteers in both countries chose to downplay their role and emphasise instead the feminine connection with witchcraft. This tendency to highlight female witches might have been influenced by the need for the pamphlets to catch the eye of their audience. As part two, and particularly the example of Peter Stumpf, illustrates, pamphleteers would put male witches front and centre in their narratives if the story was especially shocking or sensational. Once again, the idea that sensationalism was a driving force in the writing of witch reports applies to both German and English reports, although the Stumpf case and other English examples indicate that the English reports drew their sensationalism from individual actors more than the German sources did.

This observation draws attention to the differences in scope and scale of the German and English witch reports. These differences, on the surface, had a significant influence on the way that witch identities were presented in the two countries. German sources often discussed larger groups of witches or several different trials in one report; the broader scope of these reports meant that the witch identity emerging from individual reports was often fairly diverse, and not limited to a single social group. This diversity was especially evident during the peak of the trials in the south of the Empire during the 1610s and 20s, but this does not represent a total breakdown of the witch stereotype in German reports. Rather, the fear and anxiety that this period generated brought the diverse witch identities to the forefront of the pamphlets to a greater extent than previously, as pamphleteers sought to remind readers that anyone in their community could be a witch. The English witch reports, tending to focus on a small group of witches or on one isolated trial, give the initial impression of a stronger, fixed witch identity centred on impoverished old women. The reports published in the 1640s at first glance seem to represent a departure from this fixed stereotype. As in Germany, however, this period merely realised the potential for more diverse witch identities that had always been present in the English witch reports. The notion that anyone could be a witch

was more threatening than was a more limited notion restricting the witch to a small section of society.

Ultimately, both German and English witch reports considered the same characteristics – a connection to the Devil and a wicked nature – to be definitive components of the witch identity. The diabolic connection is more explicit in the German reports which often feature the Devil as a character and include descriptions of the Devil meeting with witches. Nevertheless, scholars such as Millar and Sharpe are correct to highlight the diabolism present in English witchcraft reports. While diabolism may be more implicit than the German accounts, English witch reports frequently describe the witches and their actions as ‘devilish’. Both German and English reports offer similar explanations for the witches’ power, with God giving permission to the Devil to perform harm, who then employs his witches to wreak havoc. The witches in both countries are also presented as wicked or evil, although the way in which the pamphlets convey this idea differs in England and Germany. The reason for emphasising these wicked and devilish characteristics of the witches is clear in light of the purpose of these pamphlets. In portraying the witch as a diabolic other, as ‘vermin and devil-worshippers’, the pamphleteers in both Germany and England created an enemy against whom good Christian readers could unite.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### *Printed primary sources*

**Note:** Where available, bibliographical references have been provided to the *English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC) in England and the *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* (VD16) and the *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts* (VD17) in Germany.

Anon., *A Most Certain, Strange, and true Discovery of a Witch* (London, 1643). [ESTC R4848]

Anon., *A Rehearsall Straung and True, of Hainous and Horrible Actes Committed by Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham, Mother Dutten, Mother Devell, Mother Margaret, Fower Notorious Witches apprehended at Winsore in the Countie of Berks.* (London, 1579). [ESTC S101967]

Anon., *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of one Stubbe Peeter, a Most Wicked Sorcerer* (London, 1590). [ESTC S101735]

Anon., *ANNO MDLXXXVI. Ist bey Bedbur ein Zauberer geweßen STUMP PETER genant, welcher sich in einen WOLF verwandelt* (s.l., 1589). [No VD16 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Augusten Hertzogen zu Sachsen ... Verordnungen und Constitutionen des rechtlichen Process* (Dresden, 1572). [VD16 S 895]

Anon., *Des allerdurchleuchtigsten, groszmechtigsten vnüberwindlichsten Keyser Karls des Fünfften, vnd des Heyligen Römischen Reichs peinlich Gerichts ordnung:auff den Reichßtügen zu Augspurg vnd Regenspurg, in jaren dreissig vnd zwey vnd dreissig gehalten, auffgericht vnd beschlossen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1562) [VD16 D 1081]

Anon., *Ein New kläglich Lied von dem grossen Schaden der Unholden So sie in Westphalen zu Aschenbruegk und andern Orten begangen haben in dem jetztwerenden 1583. Jar* (Wesel, 1583). [VD16 ZV 11599]

Anon., *Ein Warhafftige und gründliche Beschreibung Auß dem Bistumb Würtz und Bamberg Deßgleichen von dem ganzen Fränkischen Kraiß wie man alda so vil hexen Mann vnd Weibspersohnen verbrennen laßt* (S.l., 1627). [No VD17 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Ein Warhafftige Zeitung Von etlichen Hexen oder Unholden welche man kürztlich im Stifft Mäntz zu Ascheburg, Dipperck, Ostum, Rönßhoffen auch andern Orten verbrenndt was Ubels sie gestifft und bekindt haben* (Frankfurt am Main, 1603). [VD17 1:691858R]

Anon., *En forskreckelig oc sand bescriffuelse om mange troldfolck som ere forbrends for deris misgierninger skyld fra det aar 1589* (Copenhagen, 1591).

Anon., *Erweyterte Unholden-Zeitung: Kurze Erzelung wie viel der Unholden hin vnd wider/ sonderlich inn dem Obern Teutschland/ gefängklich eingezogen* (Ulm, 1590). [VD16 E 3889]

Anon., *Gewisser Bericht des Truten und Hexenbrennens Bambergischen Gebiets wie lang es gewehrt: Was für ubels ihrer Außsag nach sie viel Jahr hero an Menschen, Vihe, Früchten und andern verübet was allbereit verbrennet* (Schmalkalden, 1628). [VD17 23:293541Q]

Anon., *Newe Zeitung aus Berneburgk Schrecklich und abschewlich zu hoeren und zu lesen von dreyen alten Teuffels Bulerin Hexin oder Zauberinnen* (s.l., 1580). [VD16 N 624]

Anon., *Signes and Wonders from Heaven* (London, 1645). [ESTC R232297]

Anon., *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches. Arreigned and by Justice condemned and executed at Chelmes-forde, in the Countye of Essex, the 5. day of Iulye, last past. 1589* (London, 1589). [ESTC S119280]

Anon., *The Examination and Confession of Certaine Wytches at Chensforde in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1566). [ESTC S2279]

Anon., *The Examination, Confession, Triall, and Execution, of Joane Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott: who were executed at Feversham in Kent, for being witches, on Munday the 29 of September, 1645* (London, 1645). [ESTC R200303]

Anon., *The Examination of John Walsh [...] upon certayn interrogatories touchyng wytchcrafte and sorcerye* (London, 1566) [ESTC S102100]

Anon., *The Life and Death of Lewis Gaufredy* (London, 1612). [ESTC S102950]

Anon., *The Witches of Northamptonshire Agnes Browne. Ioane Vaughan. Arthur Bill. Hellen Ienkenson. Mary Barber.* (London, 1612). [ESTC S115086]

Anon., *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower, daughters of Ioan Flower neere Bever Castle* (London, 1619). [ESTC S102363]

Anon., *Warhaffte und glaubwirdige Zeytung. Wie man in diesem 1582. Jahr wol in die 200. und fuenff und zweyentzig Weiber verbrant hat* (Strasbourg, 1582). [VD16 ZV 29564]

Anon., *Warhafftige Neue Zeittung auß dem Land Westvahlen von der Stat Ossenbruck wie man da hat auff einen Tag 133. Unholden verbrenndt* (s.l., 1588). [VD16 W 337]

Anon., *Warhafftige und erschreckliche Beschreibung, von einem Zauberer (Stupe Peter genandt) der sich zu einem Wehrwolff hat können machen* (Cologne, 1589). [VD16 W 516]

Anon., *Warhafftige unnd Erschreckliche Thatten und Handlungen der Lxij. Hexen unnd Unholden, so zu Wisenstaig, mit dem Brandt gericht worden seindt* (Launigen, 1563). [VD16 W 535]

Anon., *Warhafftige und Wunderbarlich Neue Zeitung von einem Pauren der sich durch Zauberey des tags siben stund zu ainen Wolff verwandelt hat* (Nuremberg, 1589). [No VD16 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Warhafftige und wunderbarliche Neue Zeitung von einem Bawren der sich durch Zauberey deß Tags siben stunnd zu einem Wolff verwandelt hat* (Augsburg, 1589). [No VD16 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Witchcrafts, Strange and Wonderfull: Discovering the Damnable Practices of Seven Witches, against the lives of certaine noble personages, and others of this kingdome, as shall appeare in this lamentable history* (London, 1635). [ESTC S92558]

*Zwo erschreckliche und unerhörte Geschicht, welches in diesem XCCI Jar geschehen ist auff dem Brockersberg, dar sich ahn die hundert tausend Unholden oder Hexen versamlet* (Cologne, 1596). [No VD16 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Zwo Hexenzeitung: Die Erste Auß dem Bisthumb Würtzburg, das ist Gründliche Erzehlung wie der Bishoff zu Würtzburg das Hexenbrennen im Franckenlande angefangen [...] die Ander Auß dem Hertzogthumb Würtenburg wie der Hertzog zu Würtenberg in unterschiedlichen Stätten das Hexenbrennen auch angefangen* (Tübingen, 1616). [VD17 23:626143G]

Anon., *Zwo schröckliche Neue Zeitung, die erste ist von dem grewlichen Elendt, so sich in Aschenburck am Maynstrom von Hexen unnd Unholten geschehen* (Giessen, 1612). [No VD17 Catalogue Number]

Anon., *Zwo Warhafftige neue Zeitungen [...] Die andere Zeitung: Eine abschewliche vnd zuuor nie erhoerte erschreckliche Zaubereyen Moerdt vnnd Diebereyen von Vater Mutter zweyen Soehnen vnd zweyen Toechtermaennern geschehen Welche in ... Muenchen im Beyerland sind gefaenglich eingezogen worden* (Basel, 1600). [VD16 ZV 21490]

G. B., *A most wicked worke of a wretched witch (the like whereof none can record these manie yeeres in England.)* (London, 1592). [ESTC S119200]

Galis, R., *A Brief Treatise Containing the Most Strange and Horrible Cruelty of Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham and her Confederates* (London, 1579). [ESTC S124945]

Kuntz, H., *Neue Zeitung von einer Erschrecklicher That, welche zu Dillingen, von einem Jhesuwider, vnd einer Hexen geschehen ist* (Basel, 1579). [VD16 ZV 21532]

Kuntz, H., *Neue Zeitung von einer Erschrecklicher That, welche zu Dillingen, von einem Jhesuwider, vnd einer Hexen geschehen ist* (Urssel, 1580). [VD16 ZV 28968]

Lutz, R., *Warhafftige Zeittung Von Gottlosen Hexen Auch Ketzerischen und Teuffels Weibern die zu Schettstadt deß H. Römischen Reichstadt in Elsaß auf den XXII. Herbstmonat deß 1570 Jahrs von wegen ihrer schändtlichen Teuffelsverpflichtung sind verbrennt* (s.l., 1571). [VD16 L 7693]

Molitor, U., *Von den Unholden oder Hexen* (Augsburg, 1508). [VD16 M 5976]

Parker, M., *The Tragedy of Doctor Lambe, / The great supposed Coniurer, who was wounded to death by Saylers / and other Lads, on Fryday the 14. of Iune, 1628. And dyed in the / Poultry Counter, neere Cheapside, on the Saturday morning following* (London, 1628). [ESTC S126177]

Potts, T., *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster With the arraignment and triall of nineteene notorious witches* (London, 16139). [ESTC S114979]

van Gehlenahlen III, J., *Warachtighe ende verschrickelijcke beschryvinge van vele toovenaers, hoe ende waerom men die verbrandt heeft in 1589* (Antwerp, 1589).

W. W., *A True and Just Recorde, of the Information, Examination and Confession of all the Witches, Taken at St. Ofes in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1582). [ESTC S101821]

### **Primary sources in edited collections**

*Statutes of the Realm. Volume 4, Part I* (London, 1819).

‘An Act agaynst conjuracons inchantmentes and Withecrafteres (5 Eliz I, c. 16)’, pp. 446 – 7.

*Statutes of the Realm. Volume 4, Part II* (London, 1819).

'An Act against Conjuracion Witchcrafte and dealing with evill and wicked Spirits (1 Jac. I, c. 12)', pp. 1028 – 9.

### **Secondary Sources**

Apps L., and A. C. Gow, *Gender at the Stake: Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2003).

Barker, S. K., 'International News Pamphlets', in A Kesson and E. Smith (eds.), *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2016), pp. 145 – 155.

Behringer, W., 'Witchcraft and the Media', in M. E. Plummer & R. B. Barnes (eds.), *Ideas and Cultural Margins in Early Modern Germany: Essays in Honor of H. C. Erik Midelfort* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 217 – 36.

Clark, S., *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (London, 2003).

Daly, M., *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, with a New Introduction by the author* (London, 1991).

Dillinger, J., 'Germany – "The Mother of the Witches"', in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), pp. 94 – 118.

Dillinger, J., *Hexen und Magie* (2nd edn., Frankfurt am Main, 2018).

Dillinger, J., *'Evil People': A Comparative Study of Witch Hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, trans. L. Stokes (Charlottesville, VA, 2009).

Droste, H., 'How Public Was the News in Early Modern Times?', in H. Droste & K. Salmi-Niklander (eds.), *Handwritten Newspapers: An Alternative Medium during the Early Modern and Modern Periods* (Helsinki, 2019), pp. 29 – 44.

Dworkin, A., *Woman Hating* (New York, NY, 1974).

- Gaskill, M., 'Witchcraft Trials in England', in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 283 – 99.
- Gaskill, M., 'Witchcraft and Evidence in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 198 (2008), pp. 33 – 70.
- Gibson, M., 'French demonology in an English village: the St Osyth experiment of 1582', in J. Goodare, R. Voltmer & L. Helene Willumsen (eds.), *Demonology and witch-hunting in early modern Europe* (London, 2020), pp. 107 – 26.
- Gibson, M., *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London, 1999).
- Goodare, J., *The European Witch-Hunt* (London, 2016).
- Holmes, C., 'Popular Culture? Witches, Magistrates, and Divines in Early Modern England', in S. L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY, 1984), pp. 85 – 112.
- Hutton, R., *The Witch: A History of Fear, From the Ancient Times to the Present* (London, 2017).
- Kallestrup, L. N., *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark* (Basingstoke, 2015).
- Kamp, J., *Crime, Gender and Social Control in Early Modern Frankfurt am Main* (Leiden 2019).
- Kounine, L., *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 2018).
- Krah, U., 'Fiktionalität und Faktizität in frühneuzeitlichen Kleinschriften (Einblattdrucke und Flugschriften)', in K. Moeller & B. Schmidt (eds.), *Realität und Mythos: Hexenverfolgung und Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 77 – 87.
- Levack, B. P., *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (4th edn., London, 2016).

Midelfort, H. C. Erik, 'Heartland of the Witchcraze: Central and Northern Europe', *History Today*, 31/2 (1981), p. 27.

Midelfort, H. C. Erik, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562 – 1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford, CA, 1972).

Millar, C., 'Diabolic Men: Reintegrating Male Witches into English Witchcraft', *The Seventeenth Century* (2020), pp. 1 – 21.

Millar, C., *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London, 2017).

O Lynn, A. A., 'Ghosts of War and Spirits of Place: Spectral Belief in Early Modern England and Protestant Germany' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bristol, 2018).

Pettegree, A., *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London, 2014).

Robisheaux, T., 'The German Witch Trials' in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 179–98.

Roper, L., *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (London, 2004).

Rosen, B., *Witchcraft* (London, 1969).

Rowlands, A., 'Not the Usual Suspects? Male, Witchcraft, and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe', in A. Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 1 – 30.

Rowlands, A., 'Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe', in B. P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 449 – 67.

Schulte, R., *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, trans. L. Froome-Döring (Basingstoke, 2009).

Sharpe, J., 'English Witchcraft Pamphlets and the Popular Demonic', in J. Goodare, R. Voltmer and L. Helene Willumsen (eds.), *Demonology and Witch-Hunting in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2020), pp. 127 – 47.

Sharpe, J., 'The Devil in East Anglia: the Matthew Hopkins Trials Reconsidered', in J. Barry, M. Hester, and G. Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 237 – 54.

Sharpe, J., 'Witch Hunts in Britain', in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), pp. 145 – 59.

Sipek, H., 'Neue Zeitung. Marginalen zur Flugblatt – und Flugschriftenpublizistik sowie zur Druckgraphik im Kontext der Hexenverfolgung', in S. Lorenz (ed.), *Hexen und Hexenverfolgung im Deutschen Südwesten. Aufsatzband* (Ostfildern, 1994), pp. 85 – 92.

Slotkin, J. E., *Sinister Aesthetics: The Appeal of Evil in Early Modern English Literature* (Cham, 2017).

Stokes, L., *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430–1530* (Basingstoke, 2011). Suhr, C., 'Portrayal of Attitude in Early Modern English Witchcraft Pamphlets', *Studia Neophilologica*, 84/1 (2012), pp. 130 – 42.

Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971).

Toivo, R. M., 'Witchcraft and Gender', in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), pp. 219 – 32.

Walinski-Kiehl, R., 'Pamphlets, Propaganda and Witch-Hunting in Germany, 1560 – 1630', *Reformation*, 6/1 (2002), pp. 49 – 74.

Walker G., & J. Kermode, 'Introduction' in J. Kermode & G. Walker (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 1 – 24.

Warburton, G., 'Gender, Supernatural Power, Agency and the Metamorphoses of the Familiar in Early Modern Pamphlet Accounts of English Witchcraft', *Parergon*, 20/2 (2003), pp. 95 – 118.

Warfield, A., 'The Media Representation of the Crime of Witchcraft in Early Modern Germany: An Investigation of Non-Periodical Newsheets and Pamphlets, 1533-1669' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2013).

Warfield, A., 'Witchcraft and the Early Modern Media', in J. Dillinger (ed.), *The Routledge History of Witchcraft* (London, 2020), pp. 208 – 18.

Watt, T., *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550 – 1640* (Cambridge, 1991).

Wiltenburg, J., 'True Crime: The Origins of Modern Sensationalism', *American Historical Review*, 109/5 (2004), pp. 1377 – 1404.

Wiltenburg, J., *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (London, 1992).

Zika, C., *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London, 2007).