THE TRICK OF THE TALE: DECONSTRUCTING JOHANN WEYER'S

DE PRAESTIGIIS DAEMONUM

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an intellectual history of early modern European beliefs in witchcraft. Most research and scholarship on this period has focused on understanding the "witch hunts" and the collective phenomenon known as the witchcraze. Historians have focused more the social and political conditions that contributed to witch-hunting. These studies have tended to focus on the institutions that existed to facilitate witchcraft prosecutions. Comparatively, the writings of "demonologists" or intellectuals during the early modern period have been studied to a lesser extent.[1] Early modern authors like Johann Weyer are often interpreted as either a skeptic or believer in witchcraft. Most studies of Weyer have interpreted him as an early skeptic of witchcraft and an advocate against the witch trials.

One of the reasons for this interpretation is that it fits within the historical narrative of the rise of the scientific method in the early modern period. However, by looking at a demonological text through the lens of its own language, historians gain a much sharper understanding of how intellectuals shaped early modern ideas: we understand what they believed and why. Moreover, the work that has been conducted on demonological texts that has produced the most promising results has been an examination of the language and these texts. By understanding what early modern intellectuals believed and why allows for a more

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[1] See Jonathan Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1560-1620* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1999), 7-9.

nuanced perspective on the phenomenon of early modern witchcraft. The significance of this thesis is that it is a window into the beliefs of Johann Weyer; we experience the intellectual process that Weyer engaged in to formulate his treatise and opinion of witches. Accordingly, Weyer's text is a snapshot of a process in flux and undergoing transformation from an older medieval period and towards early modern thought. In short, by engaging with Weyer in his text on his terms, we understand not only what conclusions he reached about witchcraft, but more importantly the logic by which he arrived at those conclusions. We see more clearly the complexity of historical change and the complexity which forged the transition into the period known as the age of reason. This study reveals the cross-section of religion, science and magic and how these beliefs functioned in sixteenth-century European thought.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthromorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are metaphors
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> Friedrich Nietzche, "On Truth and Lies"

> Knowledge in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even to learning. Learning is the set of statements which to the exclusion of others denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false.
>
> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*

In the 1972 horror film, *The Exorcist*[1], the audience is shocked with the nightmarish and gruesome depiction of a young girl undergoing a physical and psychological assault from apparent demonic forces. In a particularly memorable scene, "Reagan" vomits a substance that is the result of demonic possession. To the uninitiated audience, this occurrence may have seemed random, or part of a "shock effect" created by the filmmakers. Within the logic of demonology, despite the appearance of illogic, the depiction in *The Exorcist* makes sense. Moreover, it bears a striking similarity to descriptions by demonologists in the sixteenth century. If Johann Weyer, a sixteenth-century Danish physician, or Reginald Scot, a noted Renaissance demonologist, could watch *The Exorcist,* it probably would not only make sense, but confirms many assumptions of early modern intellectual beliefs.[2]

In his treatise *De praestigiis daemonum*, Johann Weyer gave his account of demonic possession, which could have been in the script from *The Exorcist*:

A sixteen-year-old woman's hands became so contorted when pain arose in the lower part of her abdomen. As she broke out into a terrible scream, her whole stomach immediately swelled so greatly that one would have thought her eight months pregnant. When her voice gave out, she hurled herself hither and thither all around the bedroom, sometime touching the soles of her feet to her neck,and then leaping back on her feet, and once again falling forward and jumping back up. She kept doing this over and over until she gradually came to her senses and recovered to an extent. Upon being asked what she had done, she was totally unaware of her behavior. Seeking the cause of the disease, we thought the illness stemmed from a stifling or suffocation of the womb and from evil vapors carried upwards and repeatedly striking

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[1] *The Exorcist*. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1972. Dir. William Friedkin.

[2] Reginald Scot wrote *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* in 1608 largely influenced by Weyer.

the heart and brain. But when no progress was achieved by our medications, she became even more fierce; staring about with wild eyes she finally broke into vomiting and cast forth rather long curved nails and brass needles together with wax and tangles of hair. . . and since she had often repeated this action right before my eyes, I thought that she was in the power of an evil spirit, who blinded the eyes of the spectators while carrying out these activities. She was therefore turned over to Ecclesiastical "physicians," and she confirmed the truth of the matter by even clearer signs of proof.[3]

What does this narrative reveal about early modern demonology? Unfortunately, some historians have neglected the historical significance of demonology, and perhaps have used films like *The Exorcist* as the basis for both dismissing and ignoring demonology in early modern Europe, considering those beliefs equivalent to today's fictional horror movies. Johann Weyer's treatise of demonology was not a movie script; it was a scholarly work, written by an erudite, learned intellectual replete with references to Greek and Roman literature that far exceed many modern standards. It also includes accounts not only of demonic possession, but also of demonic trickery, love potions, poison, magic, witchcraft, werewolves, night owls and Satanic pacts.

Yet while these topics today are the subject of entertainment for modern horror films, early modern audiences interpreted the literature of demonology in a different way; these tales not only made sense but described possibilities lurking on the horizon. Not only was witchcraft part of everyday experience among the populace, but it was also carefully studied by intellectuals in early modern Europe. For Europeans, witchcraft was a reality that they believed in and upon which they based very real decisions. The occult sciences formed part of the intellectual makeup of the sixteenth century. Belief in astrology, witchcraft, divination and alchemy was universal, and nearly all culturally significant figures of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shared an interest in the occult. Members of the elite such as clergymen, theologians, lawyers, philosophers, scientists and physicians wrote numerous treatises on the nature of demonology and witchcraft.

However, historians have been relatively reluctant to examine these rich documents with much seriousness despite the wealth of material produced by demonologists during the early modern period. Some historians consider the analysis of demonological texts in their own right, i.e., as part of a discourse,

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[3] Antonio Benivieni, *De abditis nonnullis ac mirandis morborum et sanationum causis* (Florence, 1507) trans. Ch. Singer, *The Hidden Causes of Diseases* (Springfield,Illinois: Thomas, 1954) in Johann Weyer *Witches, Devils and Doctors in the Renaissance: De praestigiis daemonum* trans. George Mora (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts, 1991), 297.

as irrelevant to history. They consider demonology a subject for rhetoricians or for functional anthropologists.[4] However, the general problem with witchcraft is its strangeness; it does not fit neatly into historical plot structures or narratives. Witchcraft disturbs the plot of historical narrative of European history because it upsets the inevitable triumph of science over magic. Analytically, witchcraft is a slippery concept; it stretches and breaks pre-defined categories such as "early modern Europe" or "age of enlightenment." Dianne Purkiss in *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations,* argues that it is easier for historians to forget about witchcraft than attempt to understand or interpret witch beliefs. According to Purkiss, "rather than trying to understand how witch-beliefs were structured for and by the believer, historians have often bent their energies towards explaining beliefs *away.*" Witchcraft is a topic which "puts the traditional conceptual framework of historiography under pressure."[5] Witchcraft can occupy an uncomfortable position in history for it simultaneously occupies, defies, and transcends classification. As a result, the majority of historical studies have examined the nature of witch trials and prosecutions. With some exceptions, the bulk of writings by demonologists have ignored by most historians in favor of more objective studies regarding patterns of witchcraft prosecutions and circumstances that may have produced them.[6] Much less historical work, comparatively, has been done in tracing the ideas of intellectuals (clergymen, theologians, lawyers and physicians) that constructed demonological ideas of witchcraft.[7]

Without asserting a teleological claim, the principles contained within the text are the seeds of destruction for demonology as a belief system. Weyer's text can be read as an intellectual transition of thought; like the thawing of ice on a pond, Weyer's text reveals the cracks and gradual melting of demonology as it departs from its medieval origins and moves towards a modern epistemology. Weyer creates a syllogistic style of book in which each part builds upon the arguments in the preceding part until

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[4] For a discussion of the epistemological issues raised by witchcraft for historians see: Malcolm Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft," *The Historical Journal*, 51, no.4 (2008): 1069-1088.

[5] Dianne Purkiss, *The Witch in History Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London:Routledge, 1996), 61.

[6] Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997; reprint, Oxford University, 2005), vii (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[7] Ibid.

the final book, in which Weyer draws his most profound conclusion that witches should not be executed. This was a novel proposal in early modern thought. However, I do not wish to focus on how Weyer's arguments contributed to the decline in witchcraft prosecutions. My intent is to show how Weyer's text represents the slow transition from medieval thought into early modern thought, and to demonstrate how many of Weyer's beliefs on demonology simultaneously reflect a continuity with medieval philosophy and a bridge into the early modern period of the Enlightenment. Weyer and his work represent two important points in intellectual history: first, through Renaissance humanism Weyer signals the beginning of the end to the field of knowledge attributed to magical thinking with words; second, his work marks the beginning of a new scientific discourse that would eventually be realized in the Enlightenment. More importantly, the implications in this shift in mental taxonomy is that the new linguistic paradigm of science will ultimately reveal the artificiality not only in witchcraft but also in linguistic structures as a whole. Witchcraft beliefs survive insofar as the theological-philosophical realm remains cohesive. Once the space of theology and philosophy begin to fracture, witchcraft as a belief system begins to break down. In short, Weyer represents the beginning of the fracturing of demonology as part of the natural "order of things" and the movement into a new system or representation of reality.[8] In this regard, Weyer's work belies the reality of an existing demonology and points towards a new "natural order" which is equally artificial. It is not just an epistemological break from Foucault's classical form of resemblance and towards the "medical gaze," but it is the unmasking (in the mode of Derrida's "Pharmakon") of the aleatoric nature of language. In its place, the "mask of the enlightenment" is beginning to reveal itself.

In my thesis, I argue that Weyer's unstable treatise exposes hidden contradictions within witchcraft; my central argument is that Weyer's text represents the inherent instability in witchcraft because it ultimately is a system of representation. It is a self-referential closed system that cannot escape its own circular logic. As will be seen, Weyer has no consistent definition of witchcraft. I am not making the positivist claim that the advancement of medical truth leads to the inevitable triumph of science over magic. Rather my study will refract his demonological beliefs as beliefs, per se, through the lens of what Weyer believed and why. Weyer's text is a catalog of demonology, a compendium of cases he uses to deny

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[8] See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 42-43.

the efficacy of witchcraft. I propose to analyze his text to consider how it represents a method of discernment based upon empirical observation rather than the authority of language.

Rather than placing Weyer's text within the historical framework of the early modern hunts, my thesis is a journey through the process and discourse of Weyer's internal logic. By not considering the traditional historical question of how Weyer functions as a key factor in the witch hunt era, I can arrive at a better understanding of Weyer's ideas—what he believed and why. My aim is to trace the logical and rhetorical choices that Weyer makes in his text to arrive at a clearer understanding of how his logic. In this survey of Weyer's belief we will see *how* Weyer came his conclusion that witchcraft is counter-intuitive to his positivist experience as a physician. Thus, instead of skipping over his text, as some historians have done, I will examine his text to see not only how it contributed to the minimization of witchcraft beliefs but also the rise of the empirical method.

Weyer's text is in short a "common sense" approach to analyzing witchcraft: a precursor for a new form of analysis, one that is based on the science of empiricism rather than the "magic" of the language of the Renaissance. We see the beginnings of a new form of analysis: an early modern search for "truth," not based upon an "unstable" or an ad hoc belief system that lacks internal consistency, but an epistemology that recognizes the need to verify and correct beliefs to reflect observation.[9] Weyer's central argument is that language does not provide immediate access to reality, but that observation is a "hermeneutic" of the truth.[10]

Furthermore, I am not as concerned with the content of Weyer's demonology as much as with what his logic implies in an epistemological sense; for by merely chronicling his demonological beliefs, I would relegate his thoughts to a closed narrative. The goal is not to find a meaning to the text but to examine the open-endedness and the choices Weyer makes in the text. In doing so, I will argue that Weyer does not invent new arguments, but instead that he shifts the meaning of witchcraft into a new paradigm so that demonology is rearranged into a new field of knowledge.

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[9] Rebecca M. Wilkin, *Women Imagination and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France* (Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008), 5.

[10] Ibid.

Chapter 2 of my thesis is an analysis of Weyer's theological principles. This analysis will set forth the logic for the remainder of the text. He argues that a central goal of his treatise is to establish the illusory nature of witchcraft. Thus each one of Weyer's books continues scholastically to the conclusion that witches have no powers, per se. Additionally, I will examine Weyer's construction of the word "devil" and its symbolic and iconic references. Chapter 3 is a combination of Book 2 and 3 in *De praestigiis*. This chapter is a discussion of demonic powers v. natural magic and the epistemological implications that Weyer's argument has in demonology.

Thus, my fourth chapter analyzes Weyer's Book Three and Four in which he examines *lamia*e or witches and the "afflictions" suffered by witchcraft. Weyer claims that these women are confused, melancholic and under diabolical deception. Moreover, since Weyer believes the very nature of witchcraft is false, he concludes that witchcraft is a "non-sequitur," a conclusion based on a false premise. Thus the final chapter of this thesis will be an examination of Weyer's conclusion that "witches" are not witches. I shall argue that Weyer examines witches through the lens of misogyny to create his legal argument that women should not be punished as witches. We will see that Weyer has engaged in a type of language-game that employs a rhetorical device, in which he will shift from a magical belief system into a medico-legal sphere. This shift will be based upon reading women as a "text" or a set of presumptions based upon gender and pseudo-science. While Weyer is often credited as a skeptic and even as a hero for advocating the non-punishment of witches, he does so by utilizing a misogynistic view that considers women "deluded" because of their lower sense of discernment or "common sense."[11]

1.1 Historiography of Johann Weyer

Historians have generally made two assumptions about European witchcraft: First that the witch "craze" or era of mass prosecutions was the result of superstition and "post-medieval" science. Second, the demise of these beliefs was the result of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century.[12] Consequently, most interpretations of Weyer until the 1960s considered him an archetypical forerunner of

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[11] Rebecca M. Wilkin, *Women Imagination and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France* (Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008), 10-25.

[12] Peter Elmer, "Science, Medicine and Witchcraft," *Witchcraft Historiography* Eds. Nathan Barry and Owen Davies (UK:Palgraves, 2008), 33.

modern science and medicine. My thesis, in part, rejects this interpretation. The idea of Weyer as a founder

of modern psychiatry is a myth designed by medical historians to rationalize "the birth of the clinic" in a

narrative of how medicine liberated man from superstition.

In Weyer's lifetime, there were nine unauthorized translations of his work. Weyer's own

abridged translation appeared in three editions.[13] Weyer's work sparked a vigorous counterattack by

religious officials and intellectuals, known as the Weyer-Bodin controversy.[14] Jean Bodin, a French

lawyer and philosopher, responded to Weyer in 1580. Instead of challenging Weyer's assertion of

diabolical delusion directly, he argued that even if melancholy could produce delusions, women are not

prone to melancholy. Bodin based his argument on Galenic beliefs of melancholic humors.[15] The Roman

Catholic Church placed Weyer on "the index as an *auctor primae classic*, one whose opinions are so

dangerous that none of his works may be read by the faithful without special permission."[16] Moreover,

Protestants also burned copies of the book. Weyer only escaped punishment from the efforts of Duke

William of Berg, whom Weyer served as court physician.[17]

Even though the work of Weyer sparked a debate among his contemporaries, his work drifted into

obscurity until centuries after his death.[18] Until the twentieth century, most interpretations of Weyer were

placed within the "rationalist" school of historical interpretation. Most scholars from the eighteenth to the

twentieth century interpreted Weyer as the first "serious opponent of witch mania" or as an example of the

triumph of science over magic.[19] Although witchcraft historiography is complex, it is necessary to trace its

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[13] Sam Migliore, "The Doctor, Lawyer and the Melancholy Witch," *Anthropologica,* New Series 25, no. 2 (1983): 175; Midelfort, Introduction to *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Edition,* xv.

[14] Milgiore, 175.

[15] Ibid., 177.

[16] Withington, 220.

[17] Milgliore, 174.

[18] Mora, lxxvii. Also see Sydney Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft: The Debate between Wier, Bodin and Scott" in *Articles on Witchcraft and Demonology: The Literature of Witchcraft* (New York:Garland, 1992), 137.

[19] Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality," 1073.

development to understand, not only where Weyer fits into this literature, but also the theoretical components of my thesis.

The historiography of modern witchcraft studies is multifaceted, varied and thoroughly well-researched. At the risk of oversimplification, the historiography of European witchcraft essentially follows three models: a Romantic view, in which witches were believed to be real and performed what they claimed, a "rationalist" model that reached maturation in the late nineteenth century, and a social science model that appeared in the twentieth century. However, variants have been incorporated into several historical models.[20] The earliest studies of witchcraft date to the eighteenth century, in which Enlightened philosophers saw the witch hunts as a remnant of a medieval belief system.[21] Voltaire propagated the idea that witches were part of antiquated superstitions.[22] This interpretation was inherited by historians in the nineteenth century, who generally looked at witchcraft through the lens of positivism. The rationalist interpretation views the history of witchcraft as the triumph of science over magic, an interpretation that dismisses as "irrational any belief not warranted by observation."[23] The underlying premise is the principle that belief is contingent upon an objective set of facts. [24]

The method of Leopold Von Ranke at the University of Berlin shaped the belief that historical research should be predicated on a strict study of archival sources. This limited the study of folklore and mythology, such as witchcraft, in historical research. The first history of witchcraft dates to 1701, written by a law professor, Christian Thomasius, who concluded that witchcraft was a product of the imagination

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[20] For a discussion of the most current historiographical models see: Malcolm Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research Into The History of Witchcraft, " *The Historical Journal* 51, no.4 (2008): 1069-1088; David D. Hall, "Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation," *The New England Quarterly* 58, no.2 (June 1985): 253-281; Robin Briggs, " 'Many Reasons Why': Witchcraft and the Problem of multiple explanation," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe,* eds., Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49-51;E. William Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no.4 (1972) : 435-51.

[21] William Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," 435; Peter Maxwell-Stuart, "The Contemporary Historical Debate," in *Witchcraft Historiography* (United Kingdom: Palgraves, 2007), 14.

[22] Maxwell-Stuart, 15.

[23] Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons,* 5.

[24] Ibid, 5.; See John Tosh, "The Limits of Historical Knowledge," in *The Pursuit of History*, 3d ed. (London: Pearson Longman, 2000) 122-133.

of inquisitors and monks.[25] From the mid-1840s, the consensus among historians, until the First World War, followed Voltaire's reasoning that witchcraft was a remnant of Middle Age superstitions.[26] This was the fundamental premise from which other interpretations were based through the nineteenth century. The German historian Carl Binz, in 1885, credited Weyer as the first systematic opponent of witchcraft.[27] The English historian William Lecky depicted the "witch craze" as a "struggle between reason and superstition."[28] This approach was taken by the German historian Wilhelm Soldan in 1843. Soldan argued "witchcraft was a nonexistent crime invented by monks and inquisitors.[29] Soldan's work has been described as the standard rationalist account, in which the end of the witch hunts "mark a vital stage in human progress."[30] This interpretation was expanded by the German scholar Joseph Hansen, who also considered witchcraft to be an imaginary crime. Hansen provided the most comprehensive interpretation of European witchcraft from a rich collection of sources, and is considered to be "the most influential protagonist of the rationalist interpretation."[31]Hansen's central argument was that the Inquisition created the witchcraft persecutions as a reaction against perceived heresy which assimilated magical fantasies from medieval folklore. [32]

Liberalism, rationalism and anti-clerical interpretations combined to associate opposition to witchcraft with scientific progress. The idea was that the liberated, rational mind—when removed from authoritarian ideology—could make "progress" towards reason. American and French historians were the primary writers of positivist witchcraft history in the nineteenth century.[33] In America, witchcraft was

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[25] Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality," 1069.

[26] Elmer, 34.

[27] Carl Binz. *Doctor Johann Weye*r. (Bonn, 1885) cited in Midelfort, *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Edition.*

[28] Elmer, 34.

[29] Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality," 1069.

[30] Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," 436.

[31] Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch Hunts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 5.

[32] Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* Rev. Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 181-182; Gaskill, 1069.

[33] Elmer, 34.

seen a remnant of religious fundamentalism. Witchcraft research centered on the tension between religious

dogma and science. James Russell Lowell, at Harvard, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* an essay entitled,

"Witchcraft," that heralded the victory of rationalism over irrational theology.[34] At Cornell, Andrew White

in *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, argued the disappearance of

witchcraft was the result of the Scientific Revolution and "the newer scientific modes of thought."[35]

However, the tradition of the liberal-rational historian is most evident in the works of George Lincoln

Burr. Burr was a librarian at Cornell and is responsible for the collection of vast witchcraft archives held

there.[36] Burr's interpretation in *Narratives of Witchcraft Cases* was that witchcraft and science were at

opposite ideological spectrums.[37] This created the idea of two "camps" or schools of interpretation, one of

skepticism and the other of belief.

<p style="text-align:center">1.2 The Medical Man and Enlightenment Myth</p>

Rationalism influenced interpretations of Johann Weyer in France, who was seen as a "hero" for

scientific history. Eventually, in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, Weyer was considered to be

the founder of modern psychiatry. Unlike in America, Weyer's interpretation in France did not stem from a

reaction by academics to perceived religious dogma. Weyer was rediscovered in 1865 probably due to

lectures given to the Paris Faculty of Medicine by Alexandre Axenfeld.[38] Interest in historical witchcraft

was based around an asylum for women in Paris led by the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Charcot and

his colleagues examined witchcraft narratives, not from the "rational" perspective, but instead as case

studies for comparison with contemporary accounts of hysteria. In 1885, as part of a collection called

*Bibliotheque diaboliqu*e on possessed nuns, Desire Bournevill published a French translation of Weyer's

work. Before the French translation, however, Weyer was an obscure figure among historians and

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[34] Ibid., 35.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 47.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 36.

physicians.[39] Weyer was now seen by Charcot as an "enlightened" physician battling the superstitions of witchcraft. Many students of Charcot declared that Weyer was the first to recognize that early modern women were not possessed but suffering from hysteria.[40]

Additionally, Weyer is sometimes credited as the precursor to the theories of Sigmund Freud's studies on hysteria and women.[41] Freud, a student of Charcot, cited Weyer's work as "one of the ten most influential books."[42] According to George Mora, Weyer laid the foundation for modern patient evaluation by reporting his personal observations of witchcraft cases.[43] Mora stated that the greatness of Weyer lay in his "having seen through centuries-old prejudice and in having formulated a fresh unbiased approach to the study of the personality"[44] Freud borrowed from Weyer the idea of repressed sexual fantasies and seduction. Weyer believed that the confessions by women of seduction and sexual abuse by the Devil were forms of sexual fantasies. Freud's examination in his *Interpretation of Dreams* of women and hysteria, which parallels Weyer's study of exorcism, is also based upon sexual anxiety.[45] Repeated experiences (such as the witches' sabbath), according to Freud, represented repressed memories from a traumatic experience or memory.[46] Although Freud did give some credit to Weyer for providing the basis for psychoanalysis, Freud never acknowledged Weyer completely as the basis for his theories beyond a reference in a 1906 letter.[47]

Despite the work of Charcot, Weyer remained largely unknown as a skeptic until the publication of *The Medical Man and the Witch during the Renaissance*, by the psychoanalyst and medical historian

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Wilkin, 8.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Mora, lxxviii

[43] Ibid.

[44] Mora, lxxviii, lxxix.

[45] Richard Appignanesi and Oscar Zarate, *Freud for Beginners* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 40-52.

[46] Ibid., 39.

[47] Elmer, 38.

Greogory Zilboorg. This study of Weyer influenced generations of historians of medicine.[48] According to Zilboorg, Weyer was the founder of modern psychiatry and a forerunner of the clinical method.[49] Through Weyer, "one gains the impressions that a new man, a new type of individual has entered upon the scene of medicine."[50] However, Zilboorg was aware of the uncertain status of psychiatry as a legitimate field, so Weyer was crucial to create the image of a psychiatrist. Using Weyer as a template, other historical writers sought to uncover other "Weyers" and trace their skepticism through the Enlightenment to the present.[51] The "foundation myth" was repeated in the field of psychiatry and manuals of abnormal psychiatry.[52]

This interpretation of Weyer as founder of modern psychiatry fit neatly into positivist histories of the great "medical man" against Renaissance magic. E.T. Withington further elaborated on the discovery of modern psychiatry. According to Withington, Weyer stood alone as the first serious opponent of witch mania.[53] Zilboorg's picture of Weyer served the need for the "birth of the clinic" to grasp mental illness objectively.[54] However, as will be seen, Zilboorg's rational interpretation of Weyer was indistinct from a Romantic interpretation of history, for it fit into the trope of the triumph of science over magic, and it served the need for historians to objectively record the dawning of medical truth in a Hegelian form of self-realization.

1.3 Romanticism and the Margaret Murray Thesis

Although by the late eighteenth century witchcraft was no longer a crime, the interest in witchcraft did not wane. There remained a fascination with witchcraft among scholars in the nineteenth century. Because historians in the rational tradition had not examined witchcraft beliefs, per se, an

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Mora, lxxvii; Zilboorg cited in Elmer, 37.

[50] Zilbooorg cited in Elmer, 37.

[51] In England two historians, Richard Hunter and Ida MacAlpine, discovered an English Weyer, Edward Jorden, who they claimed represented "the first book by an English physician which reclaimed the demonically possessed for medicine." See Elmer, 37-38.

[52] Ibid.

[53] E.T. Withington, "Dr John Weyer and the Witch Mania," in *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology: The Literature of Witchcraft*. Volume 4. ed. Brian Levack (New York: Garland, 1992), 33.

[54] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. (London: Tavistock, 1963; New York: Vintage, 1970); Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 180.

intellectual vacuum existed into which fantastic explanations were projected. From the Romantic historical viewpoint of the nineteenth century, the purpose of historians was to "make the silences of history speak, those terrible organ notes which will never sound again, and which are exactly its most tragic notes."[55] The notion that witchcraft was part of a lost medieval world fascinated nineteenth-century writers.[56] Romantics such as Sir Walter Scott in Scotland and Jules Michelet in France rediscovered witchcraft beliefs after witchcraft was decriminalized in the eighteenth century[57] Scott, in *Ivanhoe,* represented witches as exotic figures of a lost medieval world.[58] Michelet espoused the idea that witches were victims of religious persecution. In Michelet's *La sorciere,* he constructed an archetypical witch based upon mythology and then tried to explain how these witches were prosecuted for witchcraft as victims of feudal suppression.[59] The German mythologist Jacob Grimm believed that witches were heroines who were attacked by a religious elite.[60] In the Romantic tradition, witches were interpreted as wise women, bearers of ancient wisdom unjustly punished by the Church to control European cultures.[61]

By 1900, in an age of growing interest in the occult, theosophists and spiritualists saw witches nostalgically as the progenitors of an occult counterculture.[62] After the First World War, in an era of growing disillusion with positivism, interest in witchcraft continued. The "rational" assumption that atrocities such as the witch hunts could never happen again was destroyed. A post-Rational or Romantic interpretation of witchcraft reemerged. In the 1920s, James Frazer and Margaret Murray reexamined witchcraft. Building on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Murray's thesis was that witchcraft was really the survival

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[55] Michelet cited in Hayden White, "The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe," 159.

[56] Christina Tuczay, "The Nineteenth Century: Medievalism and Witchcraft," in *Witchcraft Historiography*, 52.

[57] Tuczay, 53.

[58] Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scot's Fiction* (Edinburgh, 1964), 134-151.

[59] Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," 435.

[60] Gaskill, 1070.

[61] Behringer, 5.

[62] Ibid.; Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 12.

of a Dianic cult that dated back to pre-Christian times.[63] Murray found close connections among the details of witch confessions which could not be explained. Even if witchcraft confessions were made under torture, Murray asks: how could the confessions contain strikingly similar details, all independent of one another? For example, the persistence of the number thirteen in Covens, the limited number of personal names among witches, and the survival of the names of some of the early gods were all similarities that must point to a network or witchcraft cult.[64]

Michelet's Romantic paradigm was further expanded by Montague Summers. Rather than writing monographs, Summers wrote general texts that were the opposite of the Soldan paradigm.[65] For Summers, witchcraft was very real and practiced extensively throughout history. Summers argued that the evidence for witchcraft must be taken at face value because the burden of proof rested with the skeptics who claimed witchcraft did not exist. Summers pointed to common links in all witchcraft confessions that point to an independent conclusion that witches were real and part of an extensive "coven" or network.[66] Although Summer's thesis remains to be proven, it did provide ample material for many of the horror films in the 1970s.[67]

According to the Romantic interpretation, Weyer is not a skeptic but instead an advocate of witchcraft. Some interpretations suggest a "conspiracy" theory in which Weyer was covertly an advocate

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[63] See Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft"; Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (London, 1926), 32.

[64] Murray, 16-17 in Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," 438; Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, 40. Summers notes that Murray claims, "the fixed number among the witches seems to have been thirteen." In English trials, the coven appears to have consisted of thirteen members. See Summers, "The Witch: Heretic and Anarchist," *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology.*

[65] Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," 437.

[66] Summers, 5-10. Summers argues as does Murray for the existence of "covens" that have masqueraded under the guise of Christianity; Rose, 16-17. Murray claims witch-cult rites are performed secretly during Christian era. Joan of Arc was claimed by Murray to be a member of a witch coven.

[67] Rose, 12-13.; Carlos Ginzberg mentions "conspiracy" in terms of witches, Jews and French Revolution. He notes that "conspiracy" is a "caricature of a more complex phenomenon" and that historians have to look "rethink the manner in which political action intervenes in deep social structure." See Carlo Ginzberg in *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991; Penguin Books, 1992), 3,12; Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion* on influence of pop culture and witchcraft, 82-83.

of witchcraft.[68] Montague Summers believed that Weyer's text contained encoded messages of witchcraft for those who understood its language.[69] Summers, in his interpretation of Weyer, mentioned Weyer's discussion of Agrippa, the noted Renaissance occultist and alchemist.

Despite the historical understanding that witchcraft beliefs could provide, historians who have examined witchcraft beliefs haves sometimes been discredited or not seen as legitimate. As a consequence, Weyer was largely regarded by rationalist historians as a light in the "dark ages" of the witch "craze." Even the term "craze" connotes a pejorative position from which historians portray witchcraft beliefs. Therefore, from the 1920s until the 1960s most research in European witchcraft was still within the "liberal-rational" or positivist framework. Margaret Murray's thesis from the 1920s is largely responsible for the view that witchcraft beliefs are inconclusive for "positive" results. The refutation of Murray sought not only to rebut her argument for the existence of "witch cults" but, more significantly, to advance the "powerful myth of the Enlightenment."[70] This has posed a challenge to historians who wish to examine demonological texts. In the study of witchcraft, the question of how to approach sources is particularly important given that much of what is known about witchcraft defies the traditional notion of historical sources. As a result, the reliance on positivistic explanations had a chilling effect on the study of witchcraft beliefs.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, historians questioned many rationalist assumptions. Events such as the Holocaust, raised doubt by historians that the witch hunts would never happen again.[71] It was in this crisis of rationalism that new interpretations of Weyer emerged. After witchcraft studies had experienced a long hiatus following the work of Soldan Hansen, Henry Lea and George Burr, two British historians emerged that set forth a new interpretation. Frances Yates, in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* argued that the "occult sciences" were not deleterious to the advancement of science but rather

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[68] Jean Bodin, *Demonamanie des Sorciers* in *European Witchcraft,* 53.

[69] See Summers, *The History of Witchcraft.* As a student of Agrippa, Weyer defended him against accusations of black magic. Some contemporaries thought Agrippa owned a black dog that was "possessed" or under diabolical control. Agrippa published two works which both defend and opposed the occult sciences. It remains unclear what Agrippa's position was with magic; Mora, xxxi.

[70] See Diane Purkiss, 61-63. She argues that dismissals of Murray are part of "Enlightenment discourse" by historians to "stake out the authority" of empiricism over "irrational beliefs."

[71] Behringer, 7.

served as the foundation for more science.[72] Renaissance Neoplatonists such as Agrippa revealed hidden or "occult" knowledge that laid the foundation for Newton and Boyle.[73] Yates coined the term "the occult tradition" regarding the occult influence at English universities.[74]

Subsequently, Stuart Clark challenged the idea posited by Burr and Lea that demonology could be divided into either "true or false." Clark argued that demonologists were proto-scientists who did not "simply pile up evidence for the guilt of demonic witchcraft. They tried to separate phenomena correctly attributed to demonic agency from phenomena incorrectly so attributed, and to both they applied a second set of criteria for dealing with truth and illusion."[75] Historians such as Yates and Clark have attempted to debunk the narrative of the Age of the Enlightenment and rescue "intellectuals from this particular condescension." Witchcraft beliefs were no longer oddities of a particular age salvaged by reason but were part of "natural science." According to Clark, "the dismissive judgements that used to be leveled at surviving modes of natural philosophical thought (above all Aristotelianism) and teaching (above all at the universities) have been completely revised."[76] Jonathan Israel in two books, *Enlightenment Contested* and *Radical Enlightenment* has further challenged the notion of a "Scientific Revolution."[77] Israel argues that the idea of a "revolution" is a historical trope, a misnomer. He explains that ideas such as "revolution," "republic," "liberty" or "enlightenment" often are used unconsciously by the historian which allow a "superimposition of prior intellectual preferences, or ideas that are selected as key to a particular era."[78] Israel challenges the conception of the Enlightenment as a singular movement of ideas but rather views it

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[72] Yates cited in Elmer, 40.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*; Mordechai Feingold, "Occult Tradition at English Universities," *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance,* ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University 1984), 73.

[75] Clark, "The Scientific Status of Demonology," 359.

[76] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 157.

[77] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006); *The Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001).

[78] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 15.

as a fragmentation of ideas with no coherent profile.[79] Unfortunately, this idea of compartmentalization dominated witchcraft studies until the 1960s.

H.R. Trevor-Roper posited the strongest claim for historians to examine witchcraft beliefs, in his 1967 essay "The European Witch Craze." Trevor-Roper's essay is a reworking of rationalist interpretations of European witchcraft, and considered by historians to be a significant contribution to witchcraft historiography.[80] As part of series of essays on the general crisis of the seventeenth century, Trevor-Roper argued that the middle of the seventeenth century was a period of revolutions, from the price revolution to the Scientific Revolution.[81] He questioned the "Whig" historians that characterized European history as one of progress.[82] Trevor-Roper believed there was not only a political and economic crisis in the seventeenth century, but also a religious and intellectual crisis manifested in the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and witch hunts.[83] According to Trevor-Roper, "ever since the eighteenth century we have tended to see European history, from the Renaissance onwards, as the history of progress."[84] He maintained, however, that each phase in "progress" is "Janus-faced"—composed of both light and darkness."[85]

Trevor-Roper explains although that the witchcraze did appear irrational, it could be explained by time and context. Trevor-Roper's overall thesis was that witchcraft beliefs eventually out grew their historical time and place, not by a more "rational" belief system, but by the dialectic of historical change. From Weyer's perspective, belief in witchcraft is not irrational, for the "irrationality of one age is the

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[79] Israel, "Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67.3 (July 2006), 523.

[80] William Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft," in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no.4 (1972), 440.

[81] Trevor-Roper, "The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," in *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row 1967), 46.

[82] Elmer, 40.

[83] Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *European Witchcraft*, 90-91.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

rationality of another."[86] Weyer was simply a product of historical contingency and was eventually

replaced by a different cosmology. However, Trevor-Roper remained attached to the idea that the demise

of the witch hunts was not the result of general skepticism, but rather "a philosophical revolution which

changed the whole concept of Nature"[87] According, "rationalism could not attack it [witchcraft] for

rationalism as always moved only within the intellectual context of the time."[88] The end of the witch hunts

was the not the effect of a growing "mechanical philosophy" or science, but rather part of historical

dialectic: the synthesis of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Trevor-Ropers's essay sparked a

renewed interest in the problem of science in relation to the demise of the witch trials and a reexamination

of the "irrationality" of witchcraft and how it functioned.

<u>1.4 Social Science and Interdisciplinary Models of Witchcraft Research</u>

A major turning point in witchcraft research occurred when historians incorporated

methodologies from psychology and anthropology. Historians, in seeking answers to "why" the European

witch craze took place from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, borrowed techniques from other

disciplines. The assumption of European rationalism that witchcraft was a consequence of a primitive

society was proven false in the fields of anthropology and psychology. Anthropological research revealed

that witchcraft is no longer a marker of the past, but also of complex societies at the beginning of the

twentieth century.[89] Anthropologists identified a "universal" desire for the image of a witch. Freud argued

in 1900 that witches were projections of the subconscious, i.e. witches are objects of hidden desires, such

as omnipotence and aggression. Freud's theory of displacement is a variant of a general theory of magic

advanced by Bronislaw Malinowski.[90] Maslinowski argued that magic was part of "the laws of nature in a

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[86] Ibid., 91.

[87] Elmer, 40

[88] Ibid., 191

[89] Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 6.

[90] Ibid; Bronislaw Malinowsk*i, Magic, Science and Religion and other essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1954).

primitive society."[91] The witch is a "totem" that is connected to primitive taboos.[92] Taboos are never

meaningless however "strange" they may appear to the outside observer. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud traced

the evolution of "taboos" from their primitive origins. The theory according to Freud was that taboos such

as incest and murder are unconsciously driven by totemism or a symbol that represents the primitive act of

ritual murder.[93] Freud argued that a witch was part of a "metapsychology" that was essential to

psychoanalysis. He based his theory of infantile sexual fantasy on Weyer's "theory of traumatic seduction"

and the idea that alleged seductions were imagined. [94]

One important study that prompted a new direction in witchcraft historiography was Keith

Thomas' *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Emile Durkheim argued that society defines norms by

deviance and, therefore, the witch is a means of reinforcing social norms.[95] Following his lead, Thomas

also argued that witchcraft functions to reinforce social norms by creating a system of rules for deviants.[96]

The examination of witchcraft by other historians has incorporated techniques from anthropology, but that

methodology has remained within the functional theories of E.E. Pritchard. Alan MacFarlane applied

anthropology to the study of English witchcraft to find that witchcraft prosecutions were not occasional

eruptions, or abnormal reactions to a particular crisis, but rather witchcraft was a normal part of village

life. Just as anthropologists discovered, English witchcraft revealed hidden tensions under social order. By

applying to England research from the study of witchcraft in Africa, Macfarlane and Thomas argued that

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[91] Behringer, 7

[92] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Prometheus Books, 1999), 42-43.

[93] Freud, 264.

[94] Peter J. Swales, "Freud, Wier, and the Status of Seduction," Private Publication 1982, 3.

[95] Behringer, 7.

[96] Jonathan Barry, "Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. Edited by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), 4.

witchcraft was endemic and at the root of all societies. Moreover, witchcraft was an outgrowth of conflict and was a psychic consequence of conflict, including guilt.[97]

In the 1970s, the new wave of intellectual and social historians began to reexamine witchcraft literature and trial records. This socio-historical approach was utilized by Erik Midelfort and William Monter.[98] Midelfort argued in *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany* that witch hunting had no social function in the manner prescribed by the MacFarlane-Thomas thesis. Monter combined Thomas' approach with Midelfort's analysis to argue, as did Midelfort, that the Jura region was a crossroads of different styles of witch hunts. [99] A key theory that Monter articulated is the distinction between popular beliefs and elite theories of demonology.[100] Monter argued that Johann Weyer was the only important sixteenth-century critic to deny the reality of the witches presumed pact with the Devil.[101] The conclusion that Monter and Midelfort reached in both studies is that witchcraft beliefs varied depending upon shifting religious and political alliances.[102] Historians began to see the problem of present-centered methodologies in this field. From Midelfort's view, the religio-centric nature of witchcraft defies modern categorization. [103] Instead of being seen as a skeptic, Weyer should be viewed as someone influenced by *devotio moderna* or the Erasmian "middle way."[104] The focus of this socio-historical approach, found in Monter, Kieckhefer, Midelfort, Cohn, and Russell, views Weyer more as "skeptical" believer or author of

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[97] Jonathan Barry, "Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft," 4; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 535-546; See also Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 29-35; Arnold van Geenep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 7-12 for rites and taboos; Sigmund Freud, " Animism, Magic and Omnipotence of Thought," *Totem and Taboo* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000).

[98] Gaskill, 1071.

[99] William Monter, "Preface," *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 10.

[100] Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, 8.

[101] Ibid., 33

[102] Elmer, 41.

[103] Gaskill, 1071.

[104] Mora, xxix, xlii

witchcraft and, to a lesser extent, a "founder" of modern psychiatry.[105] Weyer, from the relativist position, began to take on a new interpretation.

However, the revision of scholarship in Weyer came not only from history, but also from psychiatric history. In *Madness and Civilization,* Michel Foucault argued that mental illness was a product of historical discourse rather than clinical "conditions."[106] Scholars began to change their view of the Enlightenment and accordingly historians examined Weyer from a new perspective. Inspired by Foucault's work, an "anti-psychiatry" movement emerged in the 1960s[107] Thomas Szasz also encouraged members of psychiatry to reexamine the history of psychiatry.[108] Szasz attributes to Zilboorg the belief that Weyer was a founder of modern psychiatry and that witches were mentally ill. Rather than examining the victims, the focus of the revisionist psychiatric approach was to understand the accusers and their need to create scapegoats.[109] According to this interpretation, witches were no different from victims of the Holocaust. These victims appear and reappear throughout history depending upon social conditions.

Following this analysis, Johann Weyer was reexamined not as a skeptic of irrational belief system, but rather as a reflection of an underlying belief system or structure. Under this new perspective, Weyer was a medical conservative and no different from his predecessors.[110] Sydney Anglo argued that Weyer's vaunted position as the lone opponent of witchcraft was a misnomer.[111] Anglo pointed out that Weyer's views of delusion, for example, are indistinct from his predecessors. Apologists for Zilboorg

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[105] See William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1976). Eric Midelfort *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1972); Richard Kiekhefer *European Witch Trials* (Berkeley: University of California, 1976); Jeffrey Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University 1972); Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

[106] See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961).

[107] Mora, lxxvii; Elmer, 42.

[108] Elmer, 42; Thomas Szasz *The Manufacture of Madness* New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

[109] Nechman Ben-Yehuda "Problems Inherent in Socio-Historical Approaches to the European Witch Craze," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20.4 (Dec. 1981), 329.

[110] Elmer, 42; Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality in Witchcraft," 1076.

[111] Elmer, 42; Sydney Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft," in *The Literature of Witchcraft*, 210.

retort that when "Wier talks about devils and demons he is being figurative not literal."[112] Anglo argued that this may be true of Reginald Scot but not of Weyer, whose "demons and devils are real."[113] Weyer's interpretation of witchcraft was essentially a circular argument; he argued against witchcraft on its own terms. Christopher Baxter argued that Weyer exacerbated the tensions of the European witchcraze, for his mistake was to "discuss magic and religion in the context of religious polemic."[114] Stuart Clark concluded that Weyer was both a skeptic and believer. He may have "exculpated old women accused of witchcraft by offering naturalistic" explanations but he did so within the framework of demonology.[115]

By the 1980s a number of general textbooks appeared on the subject of the European witch hunts. Most of these textbooks continued to perpetuate the idea of the Scientific Revolution triumphing over witchcraft. The most notable of these surveys, written by Brian Levack, addressed the difficulty in classifying Weyer as a skeptic and the nature of the relationship between science and witchcraft.[116] He further adds that a skeptical tradition existed before Weyer and that most of Weyer's demonological arguments were not original.[117] Levack also explained that Weyer's most important contribution is that he began to shift the witchcraft debate from the religious sphere into the legal sphere. According to Levack, "without a philosophically and theologically sound refutation of the belief in demonic power, Weyer's treatise was subject to the assaults there were made to it" by demonologists such as Erastus and Jean Bodin.[118] Levack concluded that Weyer's treatise was a net loss for arguments against witchcraft, and that he represented the limits of skepticism when tied to demonology.[119]

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[112] Anglo, 213.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Christopher Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," in *The Damned Art,* ed. Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge, 1977), 71.

[115] Elmer, 42; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 198-199.

[116] Brian Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe* 3rd ed.*,* (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2006), 63.

[117] Ibid., 53.

[118] Ibid., 64.

[119] Ibid.

Historians such as Leland Estes have argued that physicians contributed to the witch prosecutions because they deferred cases of witchcraft to witch-hunting clerics.[120] Estes argued that advances in medical science facilitated the hunts by realizing that witchcraft cases were not medical in nature. This thesis rejects the idea of "skepticism" of physicians during the early modern period. As early modern medicine extended its field of knowledge and revised its theories, 'irregular diseases" such as witchcraft were considered beyond the realm of the physician.[121] However, Brian Levack disputed the "medical hypothesis" of Estes. Levack pointed out that physicians such as Weyer—rather than deferring to non-medical sources for the examination of witchcraft—shifted the method of examination of witchcraft from religion into the medical profession. Weyer himself considered the physician more qualified to discern "occult" diseases based on the ability of the physician to examine hidden causes.[122]

The net effect of this sea change in witchcraft historiography is that Weyer is seen either as a medical conservative, who offered nothing new about the topic, or as a "skeptic." Most of the commentary on Weyer using this approach again sees him as a critic, in varying degrees, of witchcraft prosecution against women. Although more recent scholarship has revised views of Weyer, largely Weyer's role as "the father of modern psychiatry" remains intact.

<u>1.5 Legal Interpretations of Johann Weyer</u>

Generally, historians consider Weyer's Book 6 to be the most innovative in its early modern thought. The most common interpretation of Weyer is through the lens of the "insanity defense." Book 6 argues for the non-punishment of witches based on the inability of women to formulate criminal intent. Weyer, although not a legal expert, displayed a broad knowledge of Roman law, and cited passages from Justinian's *Digest* to argue "one should treat the crazy, old and weak with special mildness."[123] Midelfort in "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense" contends that Weyer insisted that witches were not legally

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[120] See Leland S. Estes, "The Medical Origins of the European Witch Craze: A Hypothesis," J*ournal of Social History* 17.2 (Winter 1983), 271-284.

[121] Estes, 273.

[122] Levack, *Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 63; Elmer, 50; Wilkin, 20.

[123] Erik Midelfort, "Introduction" to *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Translation of De praestigiis daemonum*, xxix.

culpable for their actions, arguing not that the devil was non-existent, but that the devil was capable of deceiving "melancholic" women into hallucinations of witchcraft.[124] However, Levack explained that the import of Weyer's argument—since it was couched within demonology—failed to "free melancholic women from moral responsibility." Even though women could not be legally responsible, Weyer's argument did not apply to ecclesiastical courts. Weyer only opposed prosecution by secular courts, but reserved the right for prosecution in ecclesiastical court for "spiritual crimes."[125] In addition, scholars such as Levack and Joseph Klaits poined to Weyer's argument against the use of torture in witchcraft prosecution.[126] In this view, Weyer served as a "restrictor" of the hunts or a guardian of due process because he argued that confessions gained through torture were unreliable as a standard of evidence.[127] Weyer contributed to the decline in witchcraft prosecutions, not as a skeptic of witchcraft, but as a skeptic of the legal process used to prosecute witchcraft cases.[128]

<u>1.6 Witchcraft and Women</u>

Historians of both witchcraft studies and women's history have struggled to understand why the majority of persons prosecuted for the crime of witchcraft were women. There are few conclusive explanations for why women were especially targeted as witches. Midelfort examined population pressure and demographic change, and concluded that the large presence of unmarried women may have contributed to witchcraft cases.[129] Monter's study of the Jura found that social and economic status was a factor but that gender was the crucial factor witch cases. Other historians such as Christina Larner argued that women were targeted not because they were women but because some women were at odds with the

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[124]Erik Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," in *The German People and the Reformation*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 243.

[125] Brian Levack. *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 64.

[126] Levack, "Crime and the Law," in *Witchcraft Historiography* (London:Palgrave, 2008), 150; Joseph Kalits, *The Servants of Satan,* 128.

[127] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 261.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany,* 183; Elspeth Whitney, "Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch Hunts," in *Gender and Witchcraft*, ed. Brian Levack (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 94.

existing social order.[130] The stereotypical witch was an independent woman who did not conform to the male idea of proper behaviour.[131] However, Larner concluded "witch hunting is not woman hunting."[132] In other words, women were targeted as witches not because they were women but because they were witches.[133] Older women were accused of witchcraft, whereas younger women were accused of prostitution.[134] Klaits' explanation for women as targets for witch hunts was explained by "sexual politics"[135] Woman-hating is tied to sexual exploitation and familial attitudes. The basis for women as witches is the misogyny of theology, medicine, law, art and poverty. Changes in sexual attitudes can explain the "metamorphosing" of witchcraft into a crime.[136] The bias against women was telescoped into the witch hunts following the Reformation. The ancient traditions of misogyny reinforced by a renewed preoccupation with religious elites with sexual sinning were transmitted to the general populace through missionary efforts of godly reformers.[137] Klaits believed that the difference that allowed a critic like Weyer to emerge was a change in the intellectual climate that allowed for more "naturalistic" explanations of events. For example, Weyer rejected torture because it was no longer part of a "divine" ordeal. The universe was redefined as an impersonal mechanism.[138]

Weyer's defense of women rests on the idea that they were melancholic or incapable of making "rational" decisions. Weyer in his defense of women argues that women, as witches, should not be punished in the same way as male magicians. Historians have interpreted his views as in line with the

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[130] Christina Larner, *Enemies of God* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983; Edinburgh: Redwood Books, 2000).

[131] Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion* (U.K.Basil Publishing, 1984. Reprint, New York: Basil Publishing, 1987), 84.

[132] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 8.

[133] Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 87.

[134] Ibid., 86.

[135] Joseph Klaits, *Servants of Satan* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985), 167.

[136] Ibid., 49.

[137] Ibid., 72.

[138] Ibid., 167.

misogynistic nature of early modern Europe. Levack explained that misogyny was "conventional thinking in the fifteenth century.[139] Clark pointed out that Weyer's portrayal of women is evidence of the negative image of women found in the *Malleus*.[140] The *Malleus,* according to Rebecca Wilkin was "the repository of tropes medieval misogyny."[141] The Dominican monk Kramer invented Latin roots for *femina*: "*Femina* comes from *fe* and *minus*, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith."[142] Weyer adopted the position posited by Plato in which the status of women was undefined as rational or irrational.[143] He borrowed from the same sources as Kramer to conclude that women are not responsible for their actions.[144] Weyer reiterated the narrative of Eve's seduction and temptation: "it was not Adam but Eve that he approached, as being an instrument more suitable for persuasion; it was she that he overcame in argument with light skirmish."[145] Weyer, etymologically, associates the "soft female body and her persuadable mind."[146] Weyer's discussion of women differs only from Kramer according to responsibility.

While Weyer defends women, he did so by using many medieval tropes of misogyny. In a study of the gender distinctions of early modern intellectuals, Rebecca Wilkin argues that Weyer's defense of women rests upon his diagnosis of melancholy is "symptomatic of gender strategies through which enterprising intellectuals like Weyer sought to capitalize on such instability."[147] Wilkin explains "the words and bodies of women who Weyer claims are falsely accused of witchcraft serve as 'texts' through whose 'reading' the physician demonstrates the pertinence of the literalist."[148] In other words, Weyer examines witchcraft through the "literal" lens of the physician who can see that witches cannot perform acts that are

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[139] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 55.

[140] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 118.

[141] Wilkin, 13.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Wilkin, 13-14.

[145] Weyer, 181-182.

[146] Wilkin,14.

[147] Wilkin, 9.

[148] Ibid.

physically impossible, but he does so through the filter of misogyny: even if witches could perform acts of magic, they do not understand the difference between right and wrong because, as women, they are "the more fragile sex."[149] Any attempt to defend women from torture and death must use the rhetoric of misogyny because "gender was a crucial component of the intellectual preoccupations mediated by demonological inquiry."[150]

However, historians do not agree on the interpretation of Weyer as misogynistic. As Clark states, "early modern people put witches to death because they feared witches not because they hated women."[151] Clark's theory is that because witchcraft was defined according to binary opposition "polarity was the natural order of things." Once men began to think of women as "Woman" they could easily be signified as witches.[152] Although Clark pointed to Weyer's attitude towards women as "evidence of the unremarkable character of the misogynistic sentiment that pervades the *Malleus*"[153] He interpreted Weyer as par for the course in the sixteenth century. Gender cannot be the exclusive variable identifying witches because not all women were classified as witches. Witchcraft was a "cultural artefact" that signified certain things about those accused. Clark argued that these "dismal misogynisms" were cliches and as old as Aristotelian notions regarding women as "deformed males."[154] For example, these notions about women were commonplace in French literature in the sixteenth century and found everywhere from "'theology to the little books of *bibliotheque bleue*'"[155] Renaissance writers such as Jean Bodin ignore questions regarding why women were witches. This general omission from demonological writings is evidence that these beliefs were so deep-rooted that there was no need to indulge in further proof. The notion of women as

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[149] Erastus cited in Wilkin, 13.

[150] Wilkin, 14.

[151] Stuart Clark cited in Wilkin, 14.

[152] Clark, *Thinking*, 131.

[153] Wilkin, 14.

[154] Clark, "The 'Gendering' of Witchcraft in French Demonology," 57.

[155] P. Darmon, *Mythologie de la femme dans l'ancienne France xvi-xix siecle* cited in Clark, "Gendering,"57.

witches was seen as a self-evident truth, a gender neutral category based upon the need to classify as polar opposites.[156]

In this system of dual classification, a polar opposite category signifies analogous items or terms on the other side of classification.[157] Weyer, in his text, drew conclusions based upon his assumption that women were weaker and more prone to temptation. Christina Larner argued that witchcraft was "sex-related" and not "sex-specific."[158] Witch hunting was not woman hunting but related to female deviance to reinforce cultural norms in the rise of the early modern state.[159] According to Larner, the purpose of the witch hunt was not to find women, but instead it was to find "enemies of God" or of the state. Witch hunting could be seen as a "rearguard action against the emergence of women as independent adults" because women on the margins of society were more prone to witchcraft accusations.[160] Weyer's skepticism was based upon an assumption women about their mental capacity; however, his opinion is that women were more prone to be witches, but—based upon a legal technicality—they should not be held accountable.[161]

From another perspective the definition of "misogyny" is construed too narrowly. If misogyny is merely the targeting of women because they are women then, according to that interpretation, Weyer and other writers are not strictly speaking "misogynists." Some scholars in the field of women's studies and feminist scholarship take a different view. According to Elspeth Whitney, historians construct a notion of a "monolithic, timeless force which they have rightly dismissed as a cause for witch hunting."[162]

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[156] Clark, "Gendering," 64.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion* cited in Gibson, "Thinking Witchcraft:Language, Literature and Intellectual History," 169.

[159] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 5.

[160] Ibid., 102.

[161] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 190.

[162] Elspeth Whitney, "Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch Hunts," in *Gender and Witchcraft* Brian Levack Ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 78.

Anne Barstow points out that Larner failed to use gender as an analytical category.[163] Barstow calls for the study of women and witchcraft as a "tradition of misogyny that historians should embrace."[164] The common thread that runs throughout witchcraft prosecution is gender. She maintains that questions of women's history are too narrowly defined, and they ignore women has an analytical category for gender has a specific historical function.[165] Women were accused primarily by men, burned to death by male executioners, and prayed over by male pastors.[166] Barstow's interpretation of Weyer is that although he was a critic of witchcraft, he "did little to deflect the hostility toward women as witches." Barstow notes that as women were denied "the ancient role of clergy or the newly emerging doctor women drew on their own networks of information" and served as counselors and practitioners or healers.[167] Ultimately, Barstow argues that witchcraft prosecution was about control over the female body for witchcraft, itself, is sexual by nature. She believes that there is a hidden subtext of sexuality behind witchcraft prosecutions. For example, the sexual content of the witchcraft prosecutions in the sixteenth century parallels laws that restrain sexual conduct.[168] The objective of witchcraft trials was more than just the conviction of witches, the goal was sexual power over women.[169] Barstow explains "women's thoughts even the most intimate were made public" during trials and priests took a prurient interest in possessed women's bodies and during exorcisms.[170]

Walter Stephens explains that the female body was conceptualized as lure or bait for demons. These were depicted in nude drawings such as those of Hans Baldung.[171] In *De praestigiis daemonum*,

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[163] Barstow, "On Studying Witchcraft as Women's History," 16-17.

[164] Ibid., 18.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Anne Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 109.

[168] Ibid., 133.

[169] Ibid., 132.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, 122-123.

Weyer often describes witchcraft examinations by clergy with references to sexual conduct or abuse.[172] Most of the basic lore about witchcraft is derived from the female anatomy.[173] The early modern idea of the body was defined according to humors and substances that could become contaminated.[174] The witch was a representation of an image of the female body that was considered secret by nature. The witch's memory was a repository of secrets concerning the body. In psychoanalysis, the body is in a sense a fantasy; it is a product more of social and cultural forces rather than a physical construction[175] According to Freud, no female is "purely feminine" for social customs determine the definition of "feminine" or "masculine."[176] This is reflected in the early modern construction of the body. Women's bodies were considered weaker and more prone to becoming "unbalanced."[177] For Lyndal Roper, maternity is tied to cultural hostility toward the aging female body.[178] According to Roper, "the cruelty shown to older women is one of the more disturbing aspects of early modern German culture."[179] One could argue that Weyer, a physician in an all male profession, only reinforced the "fantasy" of the female witch. However, Rebecca Wilkin argued that Weyer refuted the idea of the female as a "repository of secrets in his critique of torture." Weyer proclaimed the physician to have a keener insight into the interior of the body. The witch, under Weyer's lens, begins to look more like a patient, a body to be constructed and re-constructed based upon "sense perception."[180] However, for some historians "gendering" of witchcraft misses the point. For Clark, the gendering of witchcraft is the phenomena.

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[172] Weyer, Book 4 Chp. 10.

[173] Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 141.

[174] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History,* 121; Wilkin, 10-11.

[175] Katharine Hodgkin, "Gender, Mind and Body: Feminism and Psychoanalysis," *Witchcraft Historiography* 2008, 192.

[176] Swales, "Freud, Johann Weier and the Status of Seduction"; Richard Appignanesi and Oscar Zarate. *Freud for Beginners* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979) 90.

[177] Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 121.

[178] Lyndal Roper, "Crones" in *Witch Craze Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[179] Ibid., 160.

[180] Wilkin, 10.

The problem is that the historical interpretation of women and witchcraft tends to adopt a teleological approach to explaining the witch hunts. In my view, Clark's interpretation of gender and witchcraft as he applies it to Weyer is a "straw man" argument. It is irrelevant whether we "label" Weyer or the witch hunts as "misogyny." The process of "power" is not important, but rather the instruments of power are reflected in language. Although Weyer may not have used this rhetoric out of a misogynistic belief per se, he did do using, in his own words, a form of rhetorical misogyny. Wilkin argues that expressions of misogyny were more than just mental *outillage* of the time; these motifs could be avoided and condemned. Two authors from whom Weyer borrowed heavily, Agrippa and Desiderius Erasmus, avoided misogynistic motifs.

1.7 The Linguistic Turn

However, for some historians, the gendering of witchcraft misses the point. For Clark, the genderning of witchcraft is the phenomena. The real issue is what were the reasons women were thought to be witches. Long before deconstruction or post-modernism, witchcraft historiography was interested in constructed realities.[181] According to Stuart Clark, the gendering of witchcraft turns out to be reliant on binary thinking.[182] As a result, witchcraft is particularly amenable to structural analysis because it is a system based entirely upon language.[183]Witchcraft is unique in this aspect of language; it is based upon "dual symbolic classification" or a system of paired binary opposites.[184] Dianne Purkiss points out that the history of witchcraft is fragmentary; it consists of texts written down by someone other than the "author."[185] As she states, "lacking a shared body of interpretative popular knowledge or knowledge that is perhaps lost in the very moment when some or all of the texts were being inscribed, the texts do not make sense; they cannot be read except as unreliability itself"[186] Marion Gibson noted that "witchcraft was a crime that consisted entirely of the use of words; its 'conviction' or 'convincing' of the witch was also the

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[181] Behringer, 6.

[182] Clark, *Thinking*, 119.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Clark, "Dual Classification" *Thinking With Demons*, 36-37.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Ibid., 61.

convincing of the community."[187] In this view, language determines the structure of witchcraft.

Because the logic of witchcraft is molded through a linguistic structure, structuralism and linguistic analysis will form the basis for my thesis. I shall consider the theoretical background of "structuralism" and "post-structuralism," and examine different historical methodologies to demonstrate why literary analysis is most appropriate for an examination of Weyer. In general, seven twentieth-century thinkers contributed to what is known as structuralism and post-structuralism: these writers include,Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.[188]

According to Joseph Culler,"structuralism" is fundamentally a way of thinking about the world as a web of unconscious structures.[189] Rather than a phenomenological explanation, structuralism identifies structures that operate unconsciously (structures of language, of the psyche, of society).[190] At its simplest level, structuralism claims that the nature of any phenomenon in a given situation has no significance. Instead, its meaning is determined by its relationship to all the other elements. Thus, the full significance of any event or entity cannot be understood unless it is integrated into a contextual whole, or a "structure."[191]

Saussure is credited with the development of semiology, which is the study of "signs" or linguistic phenomenon in social institutions.[192] Saussure's theory of linguistics (structuralism) has valuable applications when applied to the study of witchcraft. Saussure's focus on the linguistic sign composed of "signified" and "signifier" is of particular use for historians of witchcraft, even though they have been

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[187] Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America* (Itacha, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 9-11.

[188] Ibid; Tosh, "The Limits of Historical Knowledge," *The Pursuit of History*, 122-133; Kearney, 251.

[189] Joseph Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 123; Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) 17.

[190] Culler, 123; Hawkes, 24.

[191] Hawkes, 17.

[192] Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 20-27; Richard T. and Fernande M. De George Eds. *The Structuralists: from Marx to Levi-Strauss* (New York: Doubleday, 1972); Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 123; Terry Eagelton, "Structuralism and Semiotics," in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 96-97; Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* ed. Charles Bally trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Mc Graw Hill, 1966).

hesitant to use semiology in examining witchcraft beliefs. Saussure made the distinction between "langue" (language) and "parole" (speech): language is the abstract system of rules which govern speech or parole. Saussure's analogy was like a game of chess, in which the rules of the game govern each move, but they only acquire meaning in relation to other pieces on the chessboard. The nature of language lies beyond the *function* of speech; language is constituted by the *nature* of speech. Language (or the system of rules that governs speech) has no concrete existence of its own except in the manifestation that speech permits.[193] However, and most importantly for my thesis, post-structuralists such as Barthes and Derrida developed "semiotics" or "deconstruction" based on Saussure's notion of arbitrary signification into multiple signification or the "performative aspect of language as the production of meaning."[194] What this means is that rather than language being the product of an extralinguistic phenomena, language exists as available "codes" or signs.[195] Because these signs, as Saussure noted, are negatively established or based upon "difference," meaning is not immediately discernible or present in a sign.[196] Barthes and Derrida argued that signifiers are not "bonded" in a structure, as Saussure posited, but rather point to other signifiers.[197] Since language is a system of signs which signifies other signs, meaning is necessarily deferred onto other signs. As Derrida explains: "Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer"[198] For Derrida, behind language is more text, and more text, in infinite regress.[199] We are trapped in a "prison house of language."[200]

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[193]Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 20.; Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) 248-249.

[194] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65 (1990) 61.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Eagelton, 128.

[197] David Harlan, "Intellectual History and the Return of Literature," *American Historical Review* 94 (1989), 582.

[198] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammotology*, (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University, 1976), 157.

[199] Harlan, 63.

[200] Ibid.

For Barthes, language or a text is not an "autonomous expression of a centered speaking subject but coded texts" which are fitted into discontinuous and contradictory codes.[201] According to Barthes, "To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other reassemble and their groupings calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename: so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor."[202] In classic demonstration of semiotic analysis, *S/Z*, Barthes deconstructed a Balzac novella into an operation of codes or signs[203]. These codes are selected from an "infinite number of possibilities."[204] Codes acts as "agencies which modify, determine and generate meaning."[205] It is the cultural code that is the most powerful and significant. According to Barthes, the cultural code is "the code of knowledge, or rather of human knowledges, of public opinion, of culture as it is transmitted by the book, by teaching and more generally, by the whole of society; this code has for its reference knowledge as the body of rules established by society"[206]

Additionally, an important concept related to the "fragmented text" that Barthes discusses is the idea of inter-texuality.[207] "Inter-texuality" is the "basic premise that any text is essentially a mosaic of references from other texts; a text is not a closed system and does not exist in isolation."[208] As Barthes states, "the text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning, it is reversible, we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the

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[201] Ibid.; From Barthes' point of view, all words or signifiers identified five types of "codes" or messages and images contained in the text, which have multiple meanings: a hermeneutic coded (connotative) or iconic message and a non-coded (denotative) message., symbolic, "semic" or connotations, "proairetic" or narrative, and cultural. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Howard Miller (New York:Hill and Wang, 1974).

[202] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Howard Miller (New York:Hill and Wang, 1974) ,11.

[203] Spiegel, 62.

[204] Eagelton, 138.

[205] Hawkes, 110.

[206] Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang: New York, 1988), 288.

[207] Intertexuality was a term coined by Julia Kristeva. David Macey, "Intertexuality," *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Penguin Books:London, 2003); Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, 261-262.

[208]Macey, "Intertexuality,"203.

codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach."[209] Finally, and most significantly, as Barthes states, " textual analysis does not to attempt to *describe* the structure of a work; it is not a matter of recording a structure, but rather a mobile structuration of the text (a structuration which shifts from reader to reader down through History)."[210]

This is key to my understanding of Weyer's text. Most significantly, Weyer's "intertexually" reifies or creates demonology out of preexisting texts. Furthermore, the fundamental premises contained in these texts are never questioned or challenged from "outside of the text of demonology." This creates the illusion that these signifiers are cultural "codes" or referents that are interpreted as "natural." These codes are "already seen, already read and already done."[211] Weyer's text, baldly stated, is an "allegorical re-codification" of primarily Greek, Roman and Christian texts. Behind and beyond Weyer's text, only lies more text.

The importance of language in analysis is that, at a fundamental level, witchcraft is a structure of signs. Like all linguistic systems, witchcraft is not based on any inherent meaning, but its meaning is derived from relationships within the structure.[212] Witchcraft is a belief system constructed entirely upon words. As such, witchcraft does not exist beyond the reach of language; it is "always already" constructed in language.[213] Therefore, "Witchcraft" refers not to an exterior world but only to other signifiers within language; "witchcraft" as a word (or signifier) is meaningless outside of language because it is encoded in language. In other words, witchcraft has no intrinsic meaning, but rather its meaning is constructed from a system of *differance* or "differences" that ultimately display a "surplus" over exact meaning.[214] In effect, Weyer's text—rather than a single work—is a series of coded texts or themes that (re)present "witchcraft." Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, Weyer's text contains the cultural and iconic

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[209] Barthes, *S/Z*, 5-6.

[210] Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, 262.

[211] Ibid., 288.

[212] See Clark "Witchcraft and Language" in *Thinking With Demons*.

[213] Spiegel, 61.

[214] Derrida used the neologism "differance" to note the dual function of the text as both differing and deferring (or postponing signification); Gayatri Spivak, preface to *On Grammatology*, xxix. See Kearns, 119; Eagelton, 134.

language of early modern witchcraft. For example, Weyer engages in a textual analysis of many names and symbols contained in witchcraft. Although this language is known at a literal level, it is the connotative level that Weyer uses to associate witchcraft symbols with new meanings. This is because witchcraft epistemology is a function of language; it is the *language* of witchcraft which determines its content. Like Barthes' *S/Z*, however, Weyer shows that witchcraft has no final rendering; any attempt to glean a "true" meaning from demonology is fraught with circularity.

Moreover, most historians (even those using a positivist methodology) would agree that history is a text, in the sense that it is constructed by historians. The question is whether a text can provide a comprehensive understanding of history. This idea is based upon the premise that a narrative somehow, mysteriously, arrives at "the truth" in a straight-forward way. For some historians, literary theory is one of the worst labyrinths, especially the post-structuralist version. As David Harlan states, "it is perceived as a foreign invasion (mainly French), a passing fashion, a too-easily domesticated bag of tricks."[215] Literary theory seems, at face value, to undermine the "pursuit of history" and render it meaningless, to reduce history to a matrix of language. However, witchcraft poses theoretical problems for history. Roper writes, "as a profession used to addressing documents for their reliability, it is hard to interpret documents which we do not believe to be factual."[216] Thus, it is not surprising that linguistic or post-structural analyses of witchcraft texts have less popularity than historically oriented-studies. However, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, a "linguistic turn" in witchcraft studies began to emerge. Just as previous historians borrowed from functional anthropology, historians now borrowed from cultural anthropologists, linguists and literary critics.[217] Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* provided a strong basis for semiotics and the use of culture forms to be treated as "texts."[218] Geertz made an argument for application of "text analogy" to the study of culture. Moreover, Geertz's use of symbolic anthropology was compatible with

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[215] David Harlan, 583.

[216] Lyndal Roper, "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany," *History Workshop Journal* 32 (1991), 19-33 ;Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 60.

[217] Marion Gibson, "Thinking Witchcraft: Language,Literature and Intellectual History" in *Witchcraft Historiography,* eds. Johnathan Berry and Owen Davies, (Basingstoke,2007), 164-81.

[218] Spiegel,64-65.

the structural anthropology of Claude Levi Strauss.[219] Stephen Greenblatt applied Geertz's textual analysis

in a kind of literary criticism known as "New Historicism." New Historicism was built on the foundations

of post-structural analysis.[220] Accordingly, like cultural history, "new historicism" is concerned with the

semiotic view of cultural production."[221] Just as cultural history treats social history as text, New

Historicism treats political and social practices as "scripts."[222] Greenblatt argues that literary criticism

should be applied to "venture out to unfamiliar cultural texts, and these texts—often marginal, odd,

fragmentary, unexpected and crude—in turn begin to interact in interesting ways. . .."[223] Thus, other

scholars such as Roper, Willis, Purkiss and Gibson have examined witchcraft from the perspective of

"unfamiliar cultural texts."[224]

Furthermore, Purkiss offered one of the strongest criticisms against "empirical" methodologies of

history. As Purkiss notes, "most historians are still a long way from taking note of the way in which things

are said rather than seeing this merely as a vehicle for what is said."[225] She argues that a "witch" is in

effect a template or symbol of "everything that is dark about the past."[226] She states that the story of

witchcraft is "retold in full or in part not because of historical truth but because of its mythic

significance."[227] According to Purkiss, "it is a story with clear oppositions. Everyone can tell who is

innocent and who is guilty, who is good and bad." [228] This further supports the idea that witchcraft is a

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Gibson, "Thinking Witchcraft," 168; Spiegel, 70.

[221] Spiegel, 70; Stephen Greenblatt, "The Touch of the Real," *Representations* 59 (Summer 1997), 14-29.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Greenblatt, 20.

[224] Gaskill, 1072.

[225] Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations*, 71.

[226] Ibid., 4.

[227] Ibid., 61-62.

[228] Ibid.

"coded" language which is accepted as "natural" or part of the cultural landscape. Purkiss calls this a "maddening distance" of the historians who repeat the "rites of distantiation."[229]

Gibson's work on early English witch pamphlets is of particular importance in my analysis of Weyer's text. Gibson examines witchcraft stories as a genre which can change in content and form based upon authorship. Gibson notes that rather than regarding witchcraft pamphlets as documentary evidence, the scholar should view them as "representations of events."[230] The "truth" of witchcraft stories, therefore, is "no more than a version of reality which satisfies an audience."[231] Gibson suggests that witchcraft pamphlets need to be studied structurally with traditional literary inquiries."[232] The important point to note in Gibson's analysis is how authorship can alter the representation of witchcraft. According to Gibson, "histories are made up of stories: myths, opinions and anecdotes that may tell a coherent tale or that may disintegrate into contradictions, qualifications and general subtlety"[233]

Finally, among the scholars I am referencing, the "linguistic turn" in witchcraft studies is found in Clark's *Thinking With Demons,* which is a "tour de force" in witchcraft studies. Clark built on the idea of witchcraft as a contradictory system, and argues that witchcraft is in particular need of linguistic analysis; witchcraft, he argues, is the classic example of the Saussurean sign.[234] According to Clark, "rationalism in the history of witchcraft has only been a pure version of the dismissal as irrational of any belief not warranted by objective fact."[235] This type of analysis is particularly important for witchcraft for it is based on a system entirely of binary opposition, inversion and dual classification.[236] Clark wrote "demonology is a topic that wears it formation on its sleeve" in that demonology is ultimately determined by demonology

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[229] Ibid.

[230] Marion Gibson. *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 5-7.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, 1550-1750 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,2003), 5.

[234] Clark, 9.

[235] Ibid., 5.

[236] Ibid.,8-10.

itself. [237] Thus, the meaning of demonology is built into the language itself; ultimately, the meaning of "witch" is not an existential question but a linguistic condition.

If Clark, Gibson and Purkiss are correct, then language occupies a central position in witchcraft. In a similar fashion, I propose that Weyer's text alters in a striking way the representation of witches in his demonology. Demonology (like any part of a language system) is capable of transformation within its own system of logic. How can these transformations take place? Since witchcraft is in effect a system of signs, or a naming system based upon a non-written structure, it must necessarily borrow forms of analysis from other disciplines. One suggestion comes from anthropologists, who have argued that a fundamental construct of the human mind is to think in binary opposites or relationships of difference. This is critical for understanding why demonology makes sense according to its own internal logic.

<u>1.8 Mythology and Ginzburg's Micro-History</u>

Consequently, another key aspect of my analysis is to examine, not only the structure of witchcraft, but to explore how the *mythology* of witchcraft functions. Myths are not just "fanciful fairytales recounted for leisurely distraction."[238] Myths possess their own kind of reason which operates according to an "unconscious logic."[239] Levi-Strauss explains that totemism helps us to understand how the human mind works. Totemism creates relationships between nature and culture, such as between man and animal or good and evil.[240] Levi-Strauss believes that the human mind seeks to "mediate" or understand differences in these relationship; myths are fundamentally ways of explaining contradictions in relationships between mankind and nature. For example, myths are the ways in which humans can control nature and the ways in which they cannot explain contradictions.[241] In turn, these contradictions are explained by a mythological narrative that encodes or hides contradictions of fundamental archetypes.

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[237] Ibid.

[238] See Claude Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Basic Books, 1963), 208-209.

[239] Ibid.; Eagelton, 104.

[240] Claude Levi Strauss, "The Totemic Illusion," *Totemism* (Boston:Beacon Press,1962), 16-20.; Hawkes, 50-51.

[241] Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 208-230. Also See Claude Levi-Strauss, "Structure and Dialectics," *Structural Anthropology* trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Basic Books, 1963).

Myths are ways of explaining fundamental relationships such as binary opposition, but they always seek to resolve contradictions, i.e.good and evil.[242]

From Freud, Levi-Strauss borrowed the idea that myths contain an unconscious wish.[243] For Levi-Strauss, myths enact an almost universal concern with human origins. Myths signify a universal structure as "bundles of relationships."[244] Like language, a myth is made of constituent units that is constructed on a system of internal logic.[245] According to Levi-Strauss, "whether the myth is recreated by the individual or borrowed from tradition it derives from its sources (individual or collective) only the stock representations with which it operates." [246] Levi-Strauss is referring to two different processes: on the one hand there is the creation (and re-creation) of the myth; on the other, the myth's narrative is both consciously and unconsciously restricted by "stock representations."[247] Although it would seem that the creation of the myth is arbitrary (as in the case of demonology), myths follow an internal logic based upon "mythemes."[248]

These "mythemes" are bundles of relations that follow a narrative sequence. However, the narrative of the myth is agreed upon by the audience; it is the audience that re-tells stories which alter the "tale" or narrative. Levi-Strauss disregards the sequence of events in the myth for this disguises the relations that are encoded within the mytheme. For example, in jazz improvisation, a soloist plays patterns or "licks" based upon a sequence of chords that is derived from the melody (or sequence of notes). The solo implies certain modes or scales based upon the arrangement of notes over a chord progression. However, each phrase is based on a collection of stock "licks" or idiomatic phrases upon which the soloist, both consciously and sub-consciously, uses to create the solo over the chord progression. The soloist can

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[242] Claude Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 210-211; See Hawkes, 42-49.

[243] See Freud, *Totem and Taboo*. Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology,* 202-203.

[244] Claude Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology,* 211 ; Hawkes, 48-49.

[245] Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropolog*y, 210: "Myth is part of the language where the formula tradittore reaches it lowest truth value."; Hawkes, 53.

[246] Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 203.

[247] Levi-Strauss., 217.

[248] Ibid.,211; Carlo Ginzberg *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991; Penguin Books, 1992), 20-22.

re-tell familiar licks from the "language of jazz" in almost any fashion, as long as the musical passage does not entirely displace the melodic or tonal structure of the chord progression.[249] This is analogous to Levi-Strauss' theory of mythology. "Mythemes" are like collections the "chords" or bundles of notes. The narrative of the myth is like a sequence of notes that can be re-arranged diachronically but reference and allude to underlying (and often ambiguous) chords. For the creation of myth, Levi-Strauss is referring to two different processes: the creation (and re-creation) of the myth diachronically (horizontally) and the synchronic (vertically) using stock representation of the myth's narrative. A myth, therefore, consists of "all its versions" which have a collective meaning; it is a self-contained system that needs no referent outside the structure of the myth.[250] However, the degree to which the narrative of the myth corresponds to the conscious content of the myth is not a "mirror-image" but a *transformation*.[251] Thus, the concept of a witch is a stock representation of a series of relations, a connection of signifiers that encode the logic of witchcraft.

While some historians have been slow or reticent to incorporate methodologies that utilize structural analysis, historians who have adopted this approach have yielded some very interesting results. Carlo Ginzburg addresses the witches' sabbath from a mythological perspective that uses structural analysis to examine the myth of the witches' sabbath.[252] Ginzburg uses both a synchronic and diachronic methodology to "decipher" the witches' sabbath to deconstruct this mytheme of witchcraft. Although Ginzburg notes that a purely synchronic method can lead to a distorted view out of context, a diachronic perspective moves beyond micro-history to explore temporal causality. This is of particular significance when examining witchcraft beliefs for their intellectual chemistry rather than as epiphenomena. Ginzburg

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[249] Levi-Strauss in *Structural Anthropology,* 213-214. He uses analogy of an orchestra score to mythology, but I am making comparison to jazz improvisation to illustrate or suggest more fluidity in the narrative of myth.

[250] See Levi Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Structural Anthropology*, 212-215.; Hawkes, 45.

[251] Hawkes, 43.

[252] See Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal(New York: Pantheon Books, 1991; Penguin Books, 1992).

incorporated a methodological approach from Levi-Strauss and Roman Jackobson.[253] Ginzburg, in his analysis of the witches' sabbath, poses the question: "what does this sabbath conceal?" The emphasis for my study of Weyer's text must be on the word "conceal" for this is key to understanding Ginzburg's methodology and my approach to examining Weyer's text. For, I must ask, what does Weyer's account of demonic possession "conceal"? Ginzburg sought to "resurrect" or reveal what, he called "crystallized," within the witches' sabbath. The focus of Ginzburg was not on explaining how the witches' sabbath functioned according to its social context; instead, he was concerned with the meaning of the witches' sabbath and how it evolved as a mythological artifact.

What Ginzburg intertwined in his analysis both in *Ecstasies* and a previous study, *Night Battles*, was the "core of truth" explanation that was contained within Murray's thesis on fertility cults.[254] This "core of truth" in effect traced the signification of the witch cult through it various iconic manifestations as it was reinterpreted and acquired different meaning.[255] This approach permits an explanation for the discursive nature of witchcraft, and in turn, is key to analyzing Weyer's text. For Weyer is re-telling an old story in a new way, taking elements of witchcraft, like the host desecration, and adding a new layer of myth to existing archetypes of witchcraft. Weyer is transforming the witch from merely a "servant of Satan" into a woman, albeit delusional and in need of medical assistance.

Providing further insight is Miri Rubin's, study of the "Jewish host desecration myth," in *Gentile Tales*. She argues that history is an act of forgetting; in writing or remembering the past, we are forgetting by re-creating the meaning of the past.[256] The Jewish host desecration myth shifted meaning over time and assumed no final meaning; it took on a variety of meanings based on different iconography and Jewish depictions. Most importantly, Rubin questioned the cohesive meaning of the tale and explained that the

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[253] Roman Jakobson combined synchronic and diachronic analysis to mythology. Levi-Strauss derived a method of analyzing myth based on Jakobson.See Carlo Ginzberg, "Introduction" in *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Penguin, 1992), 20.

[254] Ibid.,9; Carlo Ginzberg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*,trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, 1992).

[255] Ginzburg, Ecstasies, 9.

[256] Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 132-133.

myth was "historically situated." Moreover, Rubin challenged the cohesion of the Jewish host desecration myth. Her central thesis is that the myth was not a centralized tale that was pre-figured; rather, the myth was a narrative. The host desecration was part of the cultural "code" or landscape that appeared natural. The audience understood the cultural codes of host desecration as this myth appeared in art and literature. However, the narrative of this tale was told and re-told, through writing and visual images, and as such the tale took on differential meaning. The tales of host desecration were "chameleon like" and took on different shadings "based on the conditions of their reception" and the "exchange implicit in their transfer." Rubin points out that myths have an aspect that is tied to both past and present. [257]

In *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany,* R. Po-Chia Hsia also explores the myth of Jewish ritual murder and blood libel. The author traces the evolution of the myth by examining how it combined and recombined in new ways but retained the larger themes of sacrifice, vengeance and divine benefaction. All the while, these tales focused on themes that repeated themselves in different forms or cultural artifacts but always retained the same bundled relation of Jewish murder and Christian vengeance. Although the relation of witchcraft to Jewish blood libel mythology is beyond the subject of this thesis, witchcraft, like the Jewish host desecration myth, is iconic—it can have only one meaning. However, this meaning is arbitrary and can shift over time. Most importantly, for my examination of Weyer, Hsia cautions that when analyzing blood libel myth, there is a temptation to "begin a dialogue with the past."[258] Hsia was referring to how historians have a tendency to refute "historical accusations against victims of a past age." [259] The challenge for historians is how to reconstruct an "elusive reality" of blood libel. [260] Similarly, in applying this idea to the study of witchcraft, the goal is not to verify beliefs but how to explain the power and signification of the symbols of witchcraft.

This methodology is particularly important in my analysis of Weyer's text for I propose that Weyer was innovative in that he altered witchcraft mythology by re-telling the tale in an early modern

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[257] Rubin, 4-5.

[258] R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 12.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid., 5.

way. Weyer's text is part of a process of transition from medieval philosophy towards modern philosophy. An examination of each chapter will show, at various points, the ripples of change emanating throughout Weyer's arguments. Weyer's wording, while long and convoluted, shows the transition in his thinking and fluctuations in his arguments, which are often contradictory. The main problem Weyer faces is how to reconcile theological beliefs, which are at times contrary to his observed experience and medical training.

CHAPTER 2

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE DEVIL

> One fatal Tree there stands of Knowledge called Forbidden for them to taste. Knowledge forbidden? Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord envy them that? Can it be sin to know? Can it be death? And do they only stand by ignorance? Is that their happy state? The proof of their obedience and their faith? O fair foundation laid upon where to build their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds with more desire to know and reject envious commands invented with design to keep them low with knowledge might exalt equal with gods.

> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* in 1667, almost 100 years after Johann Weyer composed his treatise on demonology. In Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the Devil is portrayed as a trickster, a deceiver that uses superior intelligence to lure man into evil. By the time Johann Weyer composed his chapter on "the Devil, his origins, aims and powers," the Devil had assumed a more significant role in the lives of humanity. For Weyer, the Devil was not an abstract concept, or a symbol for evil, but a literal being that played an active role in human life. By analyzing Weyer's epistemology, one gains a sharper understanding of the logic that Weyer used to compose his treatise. Weyer's construction of the Devil is a product of inter-texuality, meaning that his image of the Devil is the product of biblical, classical, and patristic demonological texts.[1] As will be seen in this chapter, Weyer redefines the epistemology of the Devil. Throughout Weyer's Book I, entitled "The Devil, his origin, aims and powers" Weyer's inter-textual use of sources reveals that witchcraft, like the image of the Devil, has never had a stable meaning; the meaning is a composite of numerous sources. This fluctuation in meaning is also reflected in the historiography of witchcraft.[2] Most scholars have interpreted Book I of Weyer as a standard account of early modern demonology, which offers typical epistemological assumptions about the Devil. [3] Some

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[1] Mora, lviii.

[2] William Monter, "The Origins of Organized Witchcraft" in *European Witchcraft*, 1.; Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality in Witchcraft."

[3] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe* 63; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 202; Sydney Anglo,"Melancholia and Witchcraft," *Articles on Demonology and Witchcraft: The Literature of Witchcraft* vol.4 ed. Brian Levack New York Garland: 1992, 211.

scholars maintain that if Weyer does not contribute in a positivist way to early modern demonology, his work does serve as an example of the cumulative nature of witchcraft theory.[4] This chapter argues that rather than accumulating more knowledge of witchcraft or crystalizing this knowledge into a "structure," Book I is an example of variability in the structure of demonology.

Although Weyer's writing style is frequently digressive and rambling, the chapters of Book One can be grouped together by three categories: the origins, aims, and powers of the Devil.[5] These categories constitute the epistemological and ontological status of the Devil that Weyer uses to construct an image of the Devil and, in turn, the possibilities of reality within his demonological belief system. Despite Weyer's digressions, each chapter builds upon the next to arrive at his final argument in his Book VI. Furthermore, this chapter will be sub-divided into three sections to illustrate three "motifs" or tropes in demonological narratives. The first theme is the Devil itself, the central antagonist in tales of demonology. The second theme is the "aims of the Devil" or purpose. This is a familiar trope throughout demonological literature. The third theme, and perhaps most subject to modification or "re-telling," is the idea of the "powers of the Devil." The status of the Devil constitutes the efficacy of the "magic" of witchcraft. Weyer will ultimately deny the existence of witchcraft because it is counter to Biblical interpretation. God, as the ultimate authority and creator of the universe, does not allow for "magic.

2.1 Source Material

Weyer was drawing from three different types of sources. First, the authority of the Bible, which was frequently cited by Renaissance demonologists.[6] In addition to Biblical sources, Weyer drew his image of the Devil from Greco-Roman and Renaissance occult texts.[7] As such, Book I adheres to a conventional model for demonological literature.[8] Weyer relies heavily on Renaissance humanism to

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[4] Levack, 42-50.

[5] Monter, "Johann Weyer," *European Witchcraft (*Knopf: New York 1969,), 37.Sydney Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft" in, *Articles on Demonology and Witchcraft: The Literature of Witchcraft* vol.4, ed, Brian Levack, 140-141, 152.

[6] Benjamin G. Kohl, and Erik Midelfort, "Introduction," *On Witchcraft:Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's De praestigiis daemonum,* Ashville, N.C. : Pegasus Press., 1998, xxvii.

[7].Mora, 590.

[8] See Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 200.

deploy his arguments, and was also influenced by the Canon *Episcopi*, which argued that witches were deceived by the Devil.[9]

Weyer states from the outset that he rejects "the maxims of Aristotle and the Peripatetics and the Sadduccees, all of whom contend that demons do not exist."[10] By the time Weyer wrote this, Aristotle had been interpreted as a skeptic of demons.[11] Pietro Pomponazzi in *De naturalium effectuum causis* or *On the Causes of Effects in Nature*, was a scholar of Aristotle, and in 1516, published a treatise which demonstrated that Aristotle argued against the immortality of the soul.[12] Pomponazzi used passages from Aristotle that did not argue for the existence of demons.[13] Pomponazzi's view of demons was influential on Weyer's work, for he found the workings of demons and natural phenomena not mutually exclusive. Weyer's demonology, when combined with Augustine and Aquinas, allowed for demonic activity within an Aristotelian universe.[14]

Weyer's seeks a medical explanation for physical ailments.[15] Most physicians of the sixteenth century were trained in principles based upon Galenic medicine.[16] Galenic medicine was premised on a "scholastic humorology" in which equal balance of four humors was necessary for health.[17] All diseases were seen as disorders of corporeal humors.[18] Most physicians in the sixteenth century, however, did not agree on how much force to attribute to the supernatural.[19] This combination of magic and science was

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[9] Mora, xxviii; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 63.

[10] Weyer, 3.

[11] Mora, 741;Clark, 243.

[12] Mora,741-742.

[13] Clark, 243,263, Mora,741.

[14] Ibid., Mora, 741.

[15] Kohl and Midelfort ,xxii

[16] Clark, 46; Kohl and Midelfort ,xxii

[17] Kohl and Midelfort, xxii.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Midelfort and Kohl, xxii.

uneasy proposition for those influenced primarily by Galen, since it created many logical contradictions in attempting to explain phenomena.

Another influence on medicine in Weyer's time was Paracelsus, an ancient authority whose medical influence was waxing somewhat as Galen's was waning. Paracelsus' theory was that instead of viewing humans as forces that are out of balance, they should serve as opposite or inverse operations that were symbiotically related.[20] From this perspective, the humors were not in opposition but were correlated into a relationship that was mutually dependent. Instead of canceling each other, these inverse operations were inextricably linked.[21] The physician, therefore, should strive for a Manichean type of unity of opposites rather than attempt to sublimate opposing forces.[22] Paracelsus' intellectual foundation was Neo-Platonic; he was a physician who blended alchemy and medicine.[23] However, the problem in making this distinction between "magic" and "medicine" is that it is very artificial, and based on a conceptualization of binary opposition. The Renaissance physician who trained according to Paracelsus made no distinction between magic and medicine and would consider them the same. Weyer was trained in Paracelsian medicine, but was openly critical of Paracelsus, who rejected the classical theory of the four humors, in favor of an alchemical search for the search for the basic essence of things. Weyer rejected Paracelsus' emphasis on chemistry and his dislike for classical Galenic medicine.[24]

At the heart of Paracelsus' theory of medicine was the Renaissance notion of binary opposition, a philosophical principle that undergirded virtually all of early modern thought. Neo-Platonism was based on the principle of "as above, so below"[25], or that all things are ranked in a hierarchy of being, ranging from the lowest order of life to the highest angels. Between humans and angels there were intermediate

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Mora, xxxiv.

[23] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 220; Brian Vickers, "Introduction," in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, 16.

[24] Mora, 731-732.

[25] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1972), 143.Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 200; Mora, 721-722; Westman, Robert, "Nature, Art and Psyche: Jung, Pauli and the Kepler-Fludd Polemic," in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance,* ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 177-221.

spirits or demons who could adapt human understanding.[26] Marsilio Ficino, a Renaissance magus in the

fifteenth century perhaps best represents the tradition of Renaissance magic.[27] Ficino believed in the

maxim, "nature is everywhere a magician. The role of man in the Neo-Platonic universe was that both of

servant and master.[28] Although most people were unaware of the hidden or "occult" forces that surrounded

them, the learned magician through rigorous study could harness these occult forces and manipulate them.

If the Devil was capable of deception based on superior ability, then how is it possible to

distinguish true magic from false magic? This is largely Weyer's point in Book I, where he is breaking

from the early modern tradition of binary opposition. Although much of Book I is familiar scholastic

theological arguments about the limitations of the powers of the Devil, Weyer is reassessing this argument

within a new framework. Weyer expressed not so much new arguments about the ontology of the Devil,

but rather the limitations of a co-existence between natural magic and demonic magic, particularly within

the proto-scientific Renaissance framework of Weyer in his time.

In Book I, there is no single text or source (other than existing demonological accounts) which

explains the origins, aims and powers of the Devil. Weyer discusses demonological topics by weaving

narrative with demonological literature to create a new text. Even if Weyer's Book I did not fit within

standard demonology, it would only "signify" other texts; Weyer's argument is a closed-loop, or self-

referential tautology.

Moreover, the interplay between demonological literature and trials illustrates the inter-textual

nature of witchcraft. Most beliefs of witchcraft were the result of the combination of witchcraft trials and

literature. Trials served as anecdotal evidence that were used to write and re-write witchcraft beliefs. As

the body of witchcraft literature grew, the trials themselves served as self-validating function, only to reify

witchcraft beliefs further.[29] Often, however, Brian Levack points out, it is difficult to determine whether

demonological literature or trials played a greater in the construction of witchcraft because of the

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[26] Mora, 721.

[27] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 1989), 46.

[28] Russell,120; Levack, "The Intellectual Foundations," in *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe.*

[29] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe,* 54.

reciprocal relationship between the two.[30] The judge in a trial often would make up demonological rules based on an arbitrary system of beliefs. The prosecutor could draw upon whatever literature, iconography or other sources he or she desired in rendering a verdict.

One major piece of witchcraft literature that assumed a major role in witchcraft prosecutions was the *Malleus Maleficarum.* In the later part of the fifteenth century, scholars composed many demonological treatises.[31] The *Malleus* is accepted by scholars as the "greatest summa of printed demonological literature."[32] The *Malleus Maleficarum* or "Witch's Hammer," was composed by two Dominican authors, Heinrich Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger in 1486 as a scholastic argument similar to those of Thomas Aquinas. The *Malleus* is an example of the effect that literature had in creating the "cumulative concept of witchcraft" that Weyer uses as a reference throughout Book I is the *Malleus Maleficarum*.

Although the *Malleus Maleficarum* and demonological texts, skepticism about witchcraft existed.[33] Shortly after the *Malleus* appeared a doctor of canon law, Ulrich Molitor published a dialogue entitled *De Lamiis et Pythonicis Mulieribus* which questioned many central components of witchcraft.[34] By the time Weyer wrote his summa, in other words, witchcraft had already been under attack. By the fifteenth century, a skeptical tradition emerged to challenge witchcraft beliefs.[35] For all of Weyer's skepticism about the veracity of demonic power, his central tenet was that demons exist, and that they have superior skills (Chapter 10, 28).

Weyer was faced with two alternatives to explain witchcraft: either in terms of a Devil and by implication God or deny God entirely. However, as will be seen, the later alternative was not really an

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Sydney Anglo, "Evident Authority and Authoritative Evidence," in *Articles of Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology: The Literature of Witchcraft*, vol.4, ed.Brian Levack (New York: Garland,1992),14.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 62

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

intellectual possibility in 1577.[36] This form of heresy was far too radical for Weyer, both intellectually and practically[37] Consequently, Weyer had to develop a demonological explanation within scholastic framework. Weyer begins his examination of witchcraft within a traditional scholastic ontology of the Devil, one of a master impersonator that could mimic natural phenomena.[38] Weyer's entire thesis rests upon making a semantic distinction between "natural" and "supernatural" phenomena. However, once natural phenomena is introduced as an explanatory device, demonology becomes a slippery slope. The problem with arguing against witchcraft in religious terms is that it leads to internal inconsistencies which ultimately undermine it as a belief system entirely. In setting up a distinction between natural and demonic activity, Weyer has in effect walked though a trap door. As will be seen, the same logic that Weyer uses to disprove demonic activity could be used to question the very existence of demons. Asserting that demons exist and can engage in *any* activity presupposes the "supernatural." Furthermore, since Weyer has no "natural" basis for the existence of demons (other than demonological activity) Weyer's reasoning is tautological, for he is forced to prove or disprove demonological assumptions with other demonological assumptions. The result is that Book I creates a self-contained system of logic that is used to set the course for Weyer's main arguments about witchcraft. Weyer's system of rules becomes self-contradictory the more than his demonology attempts to seek explanations outside its own logic. By the end of Book I, the image of the Devil is internally inconsistent—one that is part natural and part demonological. In the end, these two categories will break down, when followed to their logical conclusion. More importantly, however, Weyer is showing the slippery division between belief and skepticism in early modern demonology; the belief in demons was really the flip-side to skepticism.

2.2 The Origins of the Devil

Given that the epistemology of witchcraft is based on the Devil, Weyer must start with an explanation for the Devil. Therefore, since the Devil is the centerpiece as a literary character in

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[36] According to the English jurist, William Blackstone, "To deny the possibility,nay,actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God." cited in Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 121.

[37] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 211; E.T. Withington, "Dr. John Weyer and The Witch Mania," in *Articles on Witchcraft,Magic and Demonology,* vol 4, 35.

[38] Clark, *Thinking With Demons,* 81.

demonology, it is imperative for Weyer to explore the history of the Devil as a linguistic construct. By the time Johann Weyer composed his chapter on "the Devil, his origins, aims and powers," the Devil had assumed more a significant role in the lives of mankind.

In the early modern mind, and for Weyer, the Devil was not an abstract concept or a symbol for evil, but instead, a literal being that played an active role in human life. It is clear from the historical record that the Devil of the sixteenth century was not the same as the one from the Middle Ages. Like other parts of the intellectual foundations of witchcraft in Western history, the Devil has assumed various names and purposes.[39] In the first century before Christ, there were multiple entities or "Satans." Before the Reformation, Satan was viewed as assuming a relatively minor role [40] Even before the Middle Ages, the Devil was seen differently than during the early modern period. Early Christianity was unclear about the function of evil—evil was both the result of God and the Devil. [41] "Satan" appeared in early Hebrew scripture, which is literally translated as "adversary."[42] He was depicted as a tempter of mankind, but usually a counter-part to God. Judaism attributed all causality to Yahweh, the creator of all things both good and evil. [43] Late Jewish texts point to the idea that Satan was responsible for all that is evil, an idea that possibly was due to the influence of Zoroastrianism, which had spread throughout the Hellenistic world.[44] In the Old Testament, according to Christians, the image of Satan that emerged was the "enemy of God."[45] In the New Testament, the image of Satan as an enemy was further crystallized into a deceiver. It was not until the New Testament that the serpent from the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament and Satan were the same creature.[46] Satan was brought explicitly into relation with the serpent in the Garden of

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[39] Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* 117; Cohn, 21.

[40] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 32.

[41] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, 32.; Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* 120-123.

[42] Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, 32.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: Demonization of Medieval Heretics*, 17; Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 102-110.

[46] Levack, *The Witch Hunt,* 36.

Eden and was seen as either the serpent or as acting through the serpent.[47] Moreover, Satan was transformed from a mere adversary into a clever deceiver, one who used his gifts to tempt mankind into his legions to overthrow God's kingdom. [48] This was clearly projected in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. In that text, Satan emerged as an "anti-Christ" in which he lured humans into a false religion in opposition to God. [49] This image of the Devil as a trickster gained the most credibility in Europe as an explanation for evil; from this theory of the Devil medieval theologians constructed "demonology."[50]

Before the thirteenth century, there was no universal ontology of witchcraft.Thomas Aquinas and other scholastic philosophers did not assign the Devil a consistent place in theology. Aquinas, when he wrote on the history of demons, drew upon Augustine in emphasizing the Devil's power.[51] By the time of Augustine, the problem of evil was discussed according to a Manichaean dualism.[52] Augustine, whom Weyer cites extensively in refuting the beliefs of the Manichaeans, emphasized that Satan had great power as a deceiver.[53] The net effect of these writings created a dialogue over the Devil's powers. In Chapter 1 of Book I, Weyer unequivocally states that demons exist. Yet from the outset of his treatise, Weyer introduces the idea of illusion. An important theme that runs throughout Weyer's entire book is that of deception and illusion. The trope of deception and irony is a rhetorical device that Weyer uses to explain the Devil according to cosmology and to create an analytical category, since the Devil based upon the premise of deception. Weyer uses this intellectual framework to examine the nature of witchcraft in subsequent chapters.

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[47] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: Demonization of Medieval Heretics*, 21.

[48] Ibid., 20.

[49] Ibid., 19.

[50] Demonology is defined as the attempt to classify phenomena and the epistemological and ontological possibilities given a certain set of conditions. See Clark, "Natural Magic" and "Demonic Magic," in *Thinking With Demons*; Clark, "Scientific Status of Demonology" in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, 352; See Russell, 102.

[51] Russell, 142-143; Clark, *Thinking With Demons,* 87.

[52] Russell, 56-57.

[53] Augustine affirmed the reality of magic, which could only be achieved with demonic assistance. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* 56.

Furthermore, Weyer uses the story of Eve as an example of Satan's deception in the Garden of Eden. The image of a woman as a witch is historically and intellectually tied to the Biblical account of Eve's deception by the serpent.[54] As such, Weyer explains that due to Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, "man became an enemy of God and fell subject to the punishments divinely established for sin, namely, damnation, the tyranny of the Devil and death"[55] Weyer's account of Eve confirms the belief that a woman was responsible for the fall of man. Many scholars have tied this belief to the cumulative belief that women were prone to witchcraft.[56] Klaits, in *Servants of Satan,* tied misogyny to witchcraft. The belief that a woman was responsible for Adam's temptation is psychologically connected to a need to control women's sexuality [57] Although it is not clear from the historical record that the idea of women and witchcraft was connected directly to misogyny, the image of a witch as a woman is firmly rooted in historical precedent. However, the opposite premise is not necessarily true: that all women were witches. In other words, demonological texts do not identify women as witches, but they do assume that the witch was a woman. Weyer's chapter on Eve extends the representation or trope of women as inherently weaker and more prone to temptation.

2.3 The Aims of the Devil

By the time Weyer wrote his treatise, the extent of the powers of demons was considered almost undisputed. For example, according to Weyer: "the ancient theologians have written so fully and so well on the subject of the fall of demons and its cause and the nature of those spirits that I would seem to be acting *superfluously [added for emphasis]* if I were to compile all the material in this book."[58] Weyer states his purpose: "intending to explain the illusions and spells of demons, I shall begin with the principal cause—the Devil—and his wiles, aims and power"[59] Furthermore, Weyer establishes his authority by

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[54] The concept of women and witchcraft has a long and extensive historical record beyond the scope of this study. See Klaits, Monter, Larner and Barstow. For journal articles see Mora's bibliography lxxxii. Footnote 38.

[55] Weyer, 9-10.

[56] See Levack, Klaits and Barstow.

[57] Klaits, "Sexuality and Witch Stereotype" in *Servants of Satan*, 48-85.

[58] Weyer, 3.

[59] Ibid.

explaining the "origin, aims and powers" of the Devil.[60] Weyer begins by explaining that the Devil is a deceiver, an illusionist--a "magician par excellence." [61] For Weyer in Book I, it is clear that he believes the Devil to be "God's ape," a being that wished to be like God. As such, the Devil exists to make a mockery of God; if the Devil cannot be God then he can imitate God.[62]

Weyer explains that only by understanding the *nature* of the Devil is it be possible to discern his actions: "with the clear eye of the mind and henceforth distinguish them more readily and surely."[63] After seducing Eve, the Devil's objective was to be worshiped like God. If the Devil wished to be like God, then logically he would create a mirror image world of God. Because the Devil is the consummate parodist he is left with nothing but imitation, a backwards mirror-image of God's reality. The Devil has created a world "through the looking glass," a type of Alice-in-Wonderland reality in which logic, order and time are suspended.[64]

If Weyer's text is based on the notion of deception, then the corollary of misrule is a topic worthy of some discussion. Clark, in *Thinking With Demons,* argues that witchcraft is a form of "misrule," or a parody of existing order. Witchcraft is in effect a reflection of the taxonomy of early modern belief. This notion of misrule underlies all of witchcraft belief for it is based on inversion, or for each classification there is an opposite category.[65] In the early modern world, the idea of contrariety is built into to all fields of inquiry such as physics, medicine, and magic.

According to Rodney Needham, "symbolic classification calls not only for ritual expression but even for a degree of histrionic exaggeration of its main categories" [66] A ritual can be a form of misrule, a

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[60] Ibid.; Weyer, Chapter 1.

[61] Mora, lxxi.

[62] Clark, "The Devil, God's Ape" in *Thinking With Demons; Weyer,* 3-4.

[63] Weyer, 3.

[64] Edward Muir, *Ritual In Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[65] Clark, *Thinking,* 71.

[66] Rodney Needham cited in Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 80.

parody of existing order. Rituals serve a function of legitimizing belief systems.[67] According to Edward Muir, a ritual can be a mirror of reality; it depict reality as it is understood. Muir in *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* makes a distinction between mirrors and models in ritual. Accordingly, a ritual is a model of behaviour in that it prescribes a set of conditions which must be present for an event to occur.[68]

Consequently, for witchcraft theory, rituals are the very fabric of their ontology, for they serve two purposes: first, they reinforce a classification and order of witchcraft beliefs. For without a prescribed set of behaviour, believers in witchcraft would have no heuristic device with which to measure witchcraft. Yet rituals are inherently ambiguous and lack concrete meaning.[69] Rituals are circular, for the logic of the ritual is self-contained so that there is an explanation for why they work and do not work. In other words, witchcraft writers would frequently use the ritual to confirm what would be interpreted as "natural activity"[70] However, if rituals have no efficacy, then this in turn calls into question the legitimacy of subsequent aspects of witchcraft. In other words, skepticism of almost any aspect of witchcraft creates a domino effect that could potentially undermine the belief system. Witchcraft beliefs have a built–in logic which precipitates skepticism. Rituals are a good example of the reinforcement of belief because they were believed to provide efficacy to witchcraft, to stabilize its meaning. Accordingly, Weyer is doing more than questioning the theological premise of rituals; he is arguing that sacrifice, *in toto* is a massive fraud, an attempt by the Devil to make a mockery of God. This, ultimately, is the source of the power of the rituals, for the causality of the ritual is contained within itself. From this perspective, an assault on the logic of the ritual is unassailable for the ritual.

In an example of the application of misrule and ritual, Weyer spends two chapters (5,6) explaining how demons were given authority over regions and assigned "names that they bore in this capacity"[71] As Weyer narrates, "emboldened by such happy and promising beginning these exiles, the evil

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[67] Clark, 186; Edward Muir, *Ritual In Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 4.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Clark, 247.

[71] Weyer, 12.

spirits, proceeded more violently and arrogantly against the principality of this world, and they contrived

many forms of worship and various oracles, in opposition to divine."[72] Weyer then provides a list of

names of "provincial" (people, mountains, islands, cities, villages and households) gods which are evil

spirits in disguise. For example, Beelzebus, is "lord of the fly" or "one who spreads his net and catches at

least the fly or weak individual." Baal is the name of the idol which was transferred from the Sidonians,

Jews and the Greeks, who equated Baal with Mars.[73] Furthermore, Weyer claims that this demonic

influence was not limited to "heathen people" but spread to "the people of Israel" in their worship of a calf

idol.[74] Historians who have discussed these sections of Weyer largely gloss over this section as part of

"orthodox demonology"[75] However, Book II reflects a larger historical perspective. Although these

chapters are part of a canon of demonology that had synthesized into what Weyer understood to be

witchcraft theory, the important point that should not be overlooked is that these sections are an extension

of what scholars termed "demonization of medieval heretics."[76]

This process of demonization of heretics occurred as Christianity rose in prominence during the

Middle Ages; the early patristic authors often would explain Judaism or a pagan belief system as the

diametrical opposite of Christianity. [77] One way of accomplishing this task was to demonize pagan gods or

Judaic rituals as part of the Devil's campaign against man. Often the Devil in medieval art is depicted

using pagan iconography or symbolism; for example, the goatee, horns and cloven feet resemble the Greek

god, Pan. One of the most enduring images from Roman mythology is Diana (equivalent to Greek goddess

Artemis).[78] In the *Canon Episcopi,* it was believed that women known as witches met at night either flying

astride broomsticks or on the backs of animals, or transforming themselves into an animal at a witches'

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Weyer,12-17.

[74] Ibid., 14.

[75] Clark, 202.

[76] Cohn, 35; Russell, 46-53.

[77] Levack, 33.

[78] Ibid.; Cohn, 146.

sabbath to honour a female deity, Diana.[79] Norman Cohen's theory is that ancient negative stereotypes of heretics, which consisted of sexual orgies, cannibalism and the worship of a divinity in animal form, was applied from heretics, to Jews, and finally to male and female "witches." [80] However, as Carlo Ginzburg wrote in *Ecstasies*, this tale of flying witches on broomsticks has many variants. Depending on the geographic location, "Diana" could be Perchta, Holda, etc. [81] Weyer, in discussing the spread of "demonic" idolatry, lists Diana along with other gods from different regions.[82]Thus, according to Cohn the image of witches' sabbath goes back to a negative stereotype of pagan religions in an attempt to demonize a particular god. Tales of the witches' sabbath date back to at least to 1428 and possibly earlier if Ginzburg's thesis is accepted as true.[83]

By the time Weyer had composed his treatise, the image of the demon-worshiping witch was well crystallized in the early modern mind. Weyer's chapters on the provincial gods and idolatry of Greeks and Romans is very revealing from a historical perspective because it is a snapshot of Cohen's demonization of "pagan idolatry" Weyer includes a rather exhaustive section on pagan gods that he believes are a cover for demonic worship. This list includes the pantheon of Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman gods. From this list, Weyer believes that each province has a demonic power assigned for worship. For example, the Egyptians have different gods for land, water and air. Moreover, in other regions different animals are worshipped in different regions. Weyer maintains that the particular animal worshiped in a region has no substantive correlation with a specific geographic locale; although there may be an anthropological or social explanation why in Persia, for example, a lion-headed figure is worshiped, Weyer's claim is that the animals are, in effect, arbitrarily assigned. The important point is that it makes no difference whether it is an ox, cat, bear, lion or owl.[84] These assignments are an arbitrary function of

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[79] Cohn,167.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ginzburg *Ecstacies,* 6.

[82] Weyer, 15.

[83] Russell, 47.

[84] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. George Weiderfeld, (Chicago:University of Chicago, 1966), ; Brian Vickers, "Analogy and Identity" in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance,* ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984), 97; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 289.

language. The association of a particular animal as a deity is randomly determined by a particular society, but the relationship between the animal and deity reflects only a relationship or structure rather than a concrete meaning. Weyer is attempting to show that the distinctions among these gods is largely semantic. Weyer states, "I have indeed been long in reciting the catalog of pagan gods so that those who make free use of barbaric terms and unfamiliar terms during exorcisms may recall the demons cloaked under such words" [85] This reveals a shift away from the magical thinking of the occult and towards the idea that language has an independent existence outside of words: language is only a signifier rather than "analogous" to reality.[86] In terms of Weyer's thesis, language can be used to further the Devil's deception. Weyer's point is that since the Devil is a deceiver, he will use whatever tricks available to further seduce mankind and be worshiped like God. Weyer's assertion is that the Devil is a master illusionist, a "shape shifter" that can alter his name but his essence is the same goal: the destruction of mankind. The effect of Weyer's catalog of pagan gods is to reduce his arguments into a black and white image of binary opposites. Not only is Weyer engaged in a Wittgensteinian language game; Weyer is simplifying demonology to better explain his arguments in Book 3 and 6; all of witchcraft, like pagan idolatry, is a demonic illusion.

Accordingly, Weyer devotes two chapters to discuss various names given for the Devil throughout history. Again, as with his discussion of pagan gods, Weyer argues that the various names for the Devil are a clever ruse to describe the same being. Unlike the pagan gods, whose names were a cover used to facilitate worship (which does not preclude the Devil from worship) the names for the Devil are signifiers that are functional. Whereas, the names ascribed to the pagan gods are nominally distinct and functionally the same, signifiers for the Devil each describe certain aspects of the Devil's purpose. For example, in Chapter 21 and 22 Weyer goes through an exhaustive list of names, which upon examination all reflect the cumulative ontology of the Devil. Of the seventy names Weyer recounts for the Devil, the most common meaning is "deceiver" or "impostor." The other meaning that is closely related is "knowing." *Daemon* and

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[85] Weyer, 17.

[86] Brian Vickers, "Analogy and Identity" in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance, ed. Brian Vickers* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1984), 95-157.

Doaemonium both refer to the Greek word "to know.[87] According to Weyer, "virtually the same characteristics are predicated, in different terms, of *Leviathan* and the force of the demonic nature is expressed, powerful and cunning beyond nature"[88] Weyer goes through the exhaustive list to illustrate that even though their are many names for the Devil, all the names correspond to a specific set of characteristics. It is worth noting Weyer's comparison of the Devil and Leviathan. In the book of Job, Weyer notes in Chapters 40 and 41, Leviathan means "devoted to himself." Weyer's point is that the Devil, through superior intelligence and skills, cannot "be held in check" but for the "divine will" of God.[89] This is a critical point about the nature of the Devil, for it forms the basis for Weyer's skeptical view of witchcraft. Furthermore, Weyer explains in Chapter 21 that "heathens frequently alter their [demons] names for the demon in various ways, in accordance with the variety of activities."[90]

Weyer's arguments illustrate two key points about demonology in his time. First, Weyer's statements provide a clear example of the process of demonization of medieval heretics. When Weyer wrote this chapter, he had two centuries worth of narratives about heretical sects, infanticide and sacrifice to draw from.[91] As a part of cumulative knowledge, Weyer's Book I is an example of the crystallization of this knowledge. The second point is that throughout Weyer's text, he, both consciously and unconsciously, is mimetically reconfiguring this narrative. As with all myths, the exact origins of these tales are not known. Historically these narratives have tended to be re-told and acquire new meanings with each version told. Rubin in *Gentile Tales* states that "narrative as a mimetic function; narrative prefigures and refigures action"[92] Thus, the importance of Chapter 6 is not its effect upon orthodox demonology (which is what most historians have looked at) but its serving as one example of the mimetic function of witchcraft theory.

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Weyer, 67.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Weyer, 71.

[91] Cohn, 35 ; Russell, 46-50.

[92] Miri Rubin,*Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 2.

This brings us to another important aspect of Weyer--the concept of blood and sacrifice. The idea of blood sacrifice and infanticide is a major component of the intellectual foundation of witchcraft; it is an old myth that dates back to at least 1479 in an account from Nider in *Formicarius*. [93] Moreover, the Germanic fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel contains a woman (who could be inferred as a witch) who cooks children. Blood signifies life; it symbolizes the living spirit.[94] Blood was also used to keep away witches and demons; moreover, it was used in cures in folk medicine.[95] Therefore, blood and magic are interconnected. In Judaic, Christian and Germanic folklore, power is often associated with blood.[96] However, as in all myths, the narrative has a cumulative effect. Over time, the discourse of the myth is consolidated by a synthesis between "past memory and present experience" that acquires an aura of truth.[97] Most scholastic theologians believed that learned magic required some form of payment. [98] This was based on the sacrificial rituals employed during magical ceremonies. In the sixteenth century, an old Saxon belief was transmuted into the Faust legend; Faust the magician signed over his own soul with his blood.[99] If a Renaissance magi summoned a demon for assistance an implicit contract was created.[100] The idea of blood payment is connected to an older tale of Jewish blood libel, and further illustrates how "retelling" of tales transform themselves into a belief system. One prevailing myth was Jewish blood libel, which reached its heights in the Middle Ages. Jewish rituals were often not comprehended by Christians and believed to require Christian blood for "magic" to work.[101] However, by the thirteenth century ritual murder accusations had transformed into host desecration rumors. Jews were no longer only the targets of

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[93] Stephens, 241.

[94] R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 8-9.

[95] Hsia, *The Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* 8-9; Russell,11.

[96]Hsia, 8-9.

[97] Russell, 11.

[98] Levack, 39; Russell, 144.

[99] Hsia, 9; Russell, 89, 144; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 39.

[100] Russell, 140.

[101] Hsia, *The Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany,* 8-9.

blood libel accusations; this was merely replaced or combined into a new narrative. [102] These narratives

operated in "separate geographical spheres" but began converge into one "narrative" in the second half of

the fifteenth century.[103]

However, Weyer is disengaging from the traditional narratives and drawing a conclusion as to the

veracity of these legends. Weyer makes the charge that all forms of ritual magic are a hoax. Weyer's claim

is that demons have created a deceptive cover by which humans throughout time have been fooled into

practicing human sacrifice. Weyer describes how the Devil induced "the Israelites, Greeks, Romans and

Germanic tribes into performing human sacrifices. Weyer cites a report from Tertullian from Africa in

which it was claimed "infants were publicly sacrificed to Saturn."[104] Weyer's contention is that blood

sacrifice itself has no efficacy; it is nothing other than a diabolical trick to destroy humanity. Again, this

echoes the central theme of Weyer's book, which is deception. Weyer is considering the ritual of human

sacrifice pertaining to its meaning, not of its *power*. In other words, Weyer is not questioning if human

sacrifice existed. Rather he admits that even if it did exist these rituals have no efficacy. According to

Weyer, "surely such things did not proceed from the eternal mind [God] just, pure and merciful— creator

of all, preserver of all; doubtless they were brought about by the demons who from the begining of the

universe in hatred of the true God, raged monstrously against the minds and body of men at every

opportunity and took their greatest delight in killing numbers of human beings."[105] Thus, these rituals are a

clever trick played by demons upon man and human sacrifice is the gullibility of man to follow the Devil's

scheme (which is to destroy mankind). The importance of Weyer's chapter on blood sacrifice is that it

reveals a shading of his skepticism in later chapters. Weyer believes that ritual sacrifice is a mockery of

God; it is Satan's attempt to create a false religion on earth in an attempt to overthrow God. Weyer in a

chapter on exorcism writes that the Catholic church to be a "front organization" for Satan's deception. [106]

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[102] Miri Rubin,*Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews*, 12.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Weyer, 20.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

For example, Weyer states "mocking tricks" are used by the Devil to harass "even our own people."[107] Weyer refers to the Catholic practice of purification of tower bells with baptism and exorcisms.

<center>2.4 Power of the Devil</center>

The final major topic that Weyer addresses in Book I is the power of the Devil. In Chapter 24 of Book I, he provides an overview of the power of demons. This area of epistemology was the most contested among demonologists, for it determined the possibilities within witchcraft theory. However, this section is crucial for Weyer's explanation of witchcraft because it contains the groundwork for his ultimate rejection of witchcraft; it was Weyer's position on demonology that made possible his rejection of witchcraft. In early modern demonology, demons and Devils were given an enormous amount of physical and intellectual powers.[108] The key point that Weyer and other demonologists emphasize is that because demons were once angelic spirits, they possess most of the superior characteristics of angels. According to Weyer, the angelic essence of demons is still retained: "all are agreed that he possesses great energy, incredible cunning, superhuman wisdom and discernment"[109] Among early modern demonologists, however, it was generally agreed that the Devil and his agents were constrained by the laws of the universe.[110] In Weyer's view, demons have no "supernatural power"; instead, they a more like superhuman beings that have accumulated knowledge and experience since the beginning of time.[111] Weyer believed as did many other philosophers and theologians that the very name *daemon* meant "knowing."[112] The essence of a demon was still that of angel; however, his angelic traits were not destroyed by the rebellion against God, but instead only impaired.[113] Weyer states that "being of a fine substance, they can, with God's permission, understand and do many things (some truly, some through trickery) by means of their fineness, subtlety, their incredible speed, keenness of their senses and the

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[107] Ibid.,23.

[108] Clark, *Thinking*, 160.

[109] Weyer, 26.

[110] Clark, *Thinking,* 247-248.

[111] Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," in *The Damned Art*, 55.

[112] Clark, 162.

[113] Ibid.

brighter light of their nature (in all of which qualities they far surpass the awkwardness of earthly bodies and the sluggishness of earthly senses)."[114] Weyer already presented examples of the Devil's attributes through the various names given to the Devil in Chapter 21 such as Behemoth, a Leviathan that, due to its enormous strength and skill, cannot be controlled by man, but through God's will.[115]

Thus, according to Weyer, demons can accomplish many things that are beyond human ability, but they are constrained by the boundaries of natural causality. Demons can do nothing which cannot be accomplished in nature, since only God, the creator of nature, can break the rules of nature.[116] Supernatural acts are beyond the limits of nature and can only be accomplished by God. Weyer attempts to make a distinction between what would be natural acts (whether from demons or God) and supernatural acts (God). The difficulty Weyer faces in creating this heuristic model is that it is ultimately a blurry and artificial distinction between acts from demons and those from God, and even more ambiguous to separate the supernatural from natural. Weyer's demonology creates four categories of causality: real demonic effects, illusory demonic effects, real non-demonic effects (natural), and illusory non-demonic effects (e.g. fool's fire).[117] Early modern demonologists generally thought that demonic power could not produce real effects, which meant there was no demonic power other than the ability to create illusions. However, the real area of debate was between what was an illusory effect of the Devil and what was real, but non-demonic.

In Book I, Weyer makes these distinctions based, however, not on his knowledge of demons, but rather his clinical observations. This is an issue that Weyer would face throughout his text: how to reconcile his medical experience with existing demonological beliefs. For example, in Chapter 24-26, Weyer establishes the limitations on the Devil's powers. Thus, after establishing what is possible (which is virtually nothing except trickery), Weyer sets forth a negative rule which is a limitation of the Devil's powers. In other words, there is no prescribed set of procedures, rituals or conditions under which the Devil operates; the Devil exercises no power or authority. According to Weyer, "God has established the

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[114] Weyer, 26

[115] Ibid.

[116] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 162.

[117] Clark, "Scientific Status of Demonology," 321.

limits into which He is tolerant of the Devil's activities" and "God never grants him even the slightest power over men-- except to test them." [118] Weyer states, "many things come before our eyes from time to time which are thought to be beyond the law of nature, and deemed to be the mocking activities of demons, even though Nature has produced them from definite causes not difficult to understand"[119] When Weyer provides a scientific explanation for "fool's fire," which was an optical illusion produced by water and air vapor, for example, his argument turns on whether or not natural and demonic magic are defined on the same terms. If demonic magic is supernatural then this presents a problem for religious orthodoxy, but if demonic magic is relegated to natural phenomena then it is much easier to discount orthodox demonology. A challenge that Weyer faced in the first book was how to reconcile medical knowledge under the rubric of natural phenomena with demonic activity. Weyer's problem in distinguishing natural from demonic activity is the ability given to the Devil as a deceiver. It is in the grey area where the powers of the Devil and natural phenomena begin that the area of skepticism over witchcraft theory exists. In this ambiguous realm, Weyer begins to discredit witchcraft theory. The conclusion that Weyer comes to in Book I is that the Devil is a master trickster. Weyer goes through a series of examples that point to this conclusion. He cites the example of a mountebank, who by superior dexterity and training can through "mere sleight of hand" perform "incredible feats which were thought to be done by the artifice of demons"[120] The crucial distinction Weyer was attemps to make was not between science and magic but between natural and demonic magic, which is an impossible task.

The importance of Book I is that it represents the impossibility of placing demonology on the same ground as natural science, which will ultimately serve to undermine Weyer's own argument. The more substance that is given to the Devil's power of illusion, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish true phenomena from deception: If it is impossible to distinguish truth from falsehood, then this distinction becomes semantic. In Book I Weyer begins to dislodge witchcraft theory. Weyer, in his efforts to explain demonic power, rendered the Devil superfluous, for it was impossible to distinguish what was a natural occurrence from demonic illusion.

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[118] Weyer, 86.

[119] Ibid., 56.

[120] Ibid., 59.

The challenge for Weyer throughout the remainder of his treatise was how to reconcile the Devil's power of deception from real "magic" or natural phenomena. Book I, rather than being a rehashing of orthodox demonology, contains the seeds for the demise of witchcraft theory. Once Weyer introduces even the possibility that magic is a hoax, then the reality of witchcraft begins to vanish. For Weyer, the more discrete the construction of witchcraft categories, the more they begin to break down. By the end of his treatise, Weyer comes very close to acknowledging the artificiality of the concept of witchcraft. Once witchcraft is over represented by theory and under represented by reality its artificiality becomes more exposed. The Devil as an analytical category made Weyer's assessment of witches much more difficult for it was not useful as an epistemological tool when truth and falsity were indistinguishable. By accepting the premise of a Devil and demons that are capable of engaging in deception it becomes impossible to distinguish between what is the product of an illusion and what is truly demonic activity. Demonology could not be sustained as a natural phenomena without endangering itself. Weyer's skeptical view of witchcraft itself allowed him to construct a demonology that was internally flawed and would contribute, in a teleological sense, to the more radical skepticism of Reginald Scot.

CHAPTER 3

ZAUBERERS AND LAMAIE

Merlin, they say, an English Prophet borne,
When he was yong and gouern'd by his Mother,
Took great delight to laugh such fooles to scorne,
As thought, by Nature we might know a Brother.
His Mother chid him oft, till on a day,
They stood, and saw a Coarse to buriall carried,
The Father teares his beard, doth weepe and pray;
The Mother was the woman he had married.

Merlin, They Say
Sir Fulke Greville, Earl of Warwick

The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court:
She hated all the knights, and heard in thought
...And Vivien ever sought to work the charm
Upon the great Enchanter of Time
As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she quench'd

Idyllis of the King
Alfred Lord Tennyson

Modern scholars have interpreted Books II and III of *De praestigiis daemonum* as a standard account of early modern demonological beliefs.[1] Stuart Clark, for example, states that Weyer "committed himself to a demonology as traditional as anything found in the literature promoting witch trials."[2] Weyer's arguments in Book II and III were not entirely original; for example, mental illnesses were known to cause delusions, and that the intention to seek demonic assistance was a delusion either brought by natural causes (pathology) or deception.[3] The central theme of Book II and III represent is that Weyer was both a skeptic and a believer; but more importantly it shows that demonology was not vulnerable to criticism from within its own belief system. In the end, only by "redeploying" old arguments into a legal field of inquiry allowed

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[1] Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 202; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe,* 62-64

[2] Clark, *Thinking With Demons,* 202.

[3] Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft," 213.

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Weyer to make much ground in an attack on witchcraft. In Book II, "Magicians of Ill Repute," Weyer begins his analysis of magic. His purpose in Book II is to draw a bright line between "magicians" and "witches." Weyer fits within a line of sixteenth-century skeptics who distrust Neo-Platonism.[4] These group of writers include Gran-Francesco Pico, Weyer and Erastus.[5] The general argument among these writers is that all magic is diabolical or illusory.[6] In the sixteenth century, skepticism regarding witchcraft and magic expanded with the influence of Renaissance humanism.[7] However, most Renaissance thinkers accepted varying degrees of Neo-Platonic theory.[8] To distinguish themselves from medieval scholasticism, Renaissance magi attempted to make a distinction between "natural" magic and "demonic magic." Weyer's Book II and III reflect his influence from his teacher Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa.[9] Agrippa attempted to make a clear distinction between "natural" magic and "demonic" magic; he believed that there was an organization to nature that could be manipulated by the magi. However, these theories of magic could just as easily led to accusations of demonic intervention, which Agrippa was accused of practicing.[10] Interestingly, Weyer never identified Agrippa as a "magician" and defended him accusations of sorcery.[11] However, the problem sixteenth-century skeptics faced was how to dismiss magic entirely without dismissing religion. Skepticism of magic was designed to establish the authority of God but it still relied on a belief in the deception of the Devil.[12]

The task that Weyer is fundamentally faced with is in making an epistemological distinction between two forms of "magic." Weyer's entire thesis turns on the "religious alliances" of magicians and

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[4] D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: University of London, 1958),145.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Levack, *The Witch Hunt,* 62.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 62; Mora, lviii; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 232.

[10] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 232.

[11] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 238.

[12] Clark, 208-209; Walker, 152; Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 62.

witches. The purpose of Book II and Book III is to distinguish between persons who practice magic with "ill-intent" and those who are merely misguided by the Devil.[13] Although the only clear distinction between witches and magicians is gender, one way Weyer makes this distinction is in the behavior of the magicians and witches. He maintains that magicians or "evil-doers" are in a different analytical category from witches because witches are deceived by the Devil, and they are not legally culpable for their crimes. Weyer, however, has created a distinction without a difference. Once the "imaginary" is introduced as a factor in making a distinction between natural and demonic magic, it becomes impossible to separate real from imaginary phenomena. For if magic is an illusion, with no efficacy, then both magicians and witches are "deluded" on the same basis. The more power Weyer attributes to natural science the less stable demonology becomes as a belief system. The result is that natural and supernatural is a semantic distinction rather than an empirical one.

3.1 Magicians of Ill-Repute

In "Magicians of Ill Repute," Weyer begins with a history of magic. As in the cumulative concept of the Devil, Weyer's study of magic is based upon centuries of sources which have evolved in Europe over centuries. A typical pattern that Weyer uses throughout his treatise is to combine vivid tales with demonological literature to serve as an example of his analysis. As such, Weyer takes on the familiar example of the learned magician or "magician of ill-repute" to argue that magicians are guilty of practicing black magic.

Therefore, to understand Weyer's argument more clearly, we will briefly examine some of the central aspects of magic in the Middle Ages. Magic has no precise definition, but in a general sense, intellectuals in medieval Europe recognized two forms of magic: natural and demonic.[14] Natural magic was not separate from science, but instead a branch of science that dealt with the "occult" or hidden forces in nature.[15] Demonic magic was a form of contrariety or a perversion of religion; it was the religion "turned away from God and towards demons for assistance."[16] Even though magic was a science, in the sense that

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[13] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 146.

[14] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 9.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

it was natural, there was a fine distinction upon which the definition of magic hinged: the critical

distinction between white and black magic was on the moral spectrum.[17] White magic was the techniques

of the village wizards, the cunning men who healed diseases, recovered stolen goods and gave advice.

These medicine men were equivalent to doctors, lawyers or psychologists. [18] Black magic was the

employment of demonic means in the use of white magic; in other words black magic was the use of

demonic forces to manipulate natural forces. Thus, the definition of magic turned not on the result of the

magic, but instead the use of demonic forces. However from the viewpoint of medieval theologians and

philosophers, this distinction was not so clear. Natural magic had to be defended against accusations that it

was demonic.[19]

The position of medieval Christianity was that all magic was evil. [20] Although magic had been

challenged on a moral and theological basis by medieval Christian authors, the argument was generally

predicated on the idea that magic, since it invoked demonic assistance, was considered morally wrong.[21]

The Church deduced that all magic was evil because God and the angels are not subject to compulsion.[22]

Black magic in the Middle Ages was considered low magic or intended to obtain immediate effects.[23] The

high magic or system of the learned Renaissance magi was speculative and intended to ultimately

understand the universe.[24]   By the time of the Neo-Platonic influence, the distinction between white and

black magic became blurred as Renaissance magicians began to incorporate ancient rituals from Greek,

Persian, and Arabian schools of magic.[25] Renaissance magicians began "summoning demons" to acquire

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[17] Clark, *Thinking*, 233-234.

[18] Klaits, 14.

[19] Clark, *Thinking*, 233.

[20] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 10.

[21] Ibid., 2.

[22] Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* 13.

[23] Ibid., 6.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 9; Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 37-39.

knowledge.[26] Thus, the more learned magicians explored the boundaries or magic and science, the more it began to appear that demonology was an illusion. This was the result of both the belief that all magic was essentially diabolical and growing empirical evidence which contradicted the effects of magic.The image of Merlin, a popular example in film and literature from Arthurian legends, is a person cloistered in a dusty room with spell books, crystal balls, potions and a magic wand.[27] This is the archetypal Doctor Faustus, the classical Renaissance magi, who through enchantment, divination, soothsaying, and charm has gained superior knowledge and understanding of the "occult" forces of nature, which are only available through a higher wisdom and knowledge; the Devil and his demons offer, through a Faustian bargain, him access to this "forbidden knowledge" just as was present in the Garden of Eden.[28] Yet this image is in stark contrast to the witch who, rather than pursuing knowledge, was merely a "servant of Satan."[29]

The image of magician in the Renaissance is virtually indistinct from the modern day "scientist"; magicians were the "scientists" of the sixteenth century. Like a modern day scientist, a magician was an alchemist or "occultist"[30] who pursued knowledge of the laws and principles of nature. However, Weyer objects to the idea of a learned magician who attempts to manipulate nature through "demonic" assistance. Unlike the Church of the Middle Ages, he does not base his argument entirely upon the distinction between demonic and natural magic. Rather simply arguing that all magic is "demonic," Weyer is claiming that all magic, while perhaps demonic in nature, is ineffectual. The difference between Weyer's position and the Church is that even if magic, in toto, is demonic it has no basis or effect in reality. From this position, Weyer concludes that witchcraft does not exist. In other words, if witchcraft is ineffectual there is no *maleficium* and therefore, there can be no crime.

Weyer begins by providing an etymological history of the trope he wishes to examine. Weyer examines the word "magician" in its Hebrew and Greek translations and lists seven Hebrew words used for magician. He compares these words in their Hebrew and Greek translations to find a common meaning.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Goodrich, Norma Lorre, *Merlin*. Harper: New York, 1989.

[28] Mora, 702; Christopher Marlow, *Doctor Faustus*, (Cambridge: Harvard University,1962). Scene 1.

[29] Klaits, *The Servants of Satan*, 24.

[30] Russell, 12; Clark, *Thinking,* 217.

Generally, there are three categories of meaning that Weyer's usage can be divided into: evil-doer, enchanter, and fortune teller or practitioners of divination. Weyer cites as an example the Hebrew *Chasaph*, which he translated as evil-doer. Weyer mentions misdeeds of evil doers that do harm, through the evil arts, to cattle, crops or even human beings.[31] The next word Weyer cites is *Kasam* from the Greek which means "prophesy," which is used in the Latin bible as to "observe dreams" or "divination." According to the ancient Hebrews, this word refers to a person that can observe sub-divisions in time, and can make distinctions as to the outcome of time.[32] In the Greek Bible, the meaning is "to take omens from birds." The fourth word that Weyer uses is *Nahas*, which translated in Latin is "to observe the omens from birds." Thus, two words *Onen* and *Nahas* both refer to the ability to predict the future.

The next two words refer to forms of "enchantment" or "charmer." For example, *Habar* in both Latin and Greek is translated as "to enchant." According to Weyer, "Jews use it when certain secret words, thought to be wondrously effective are murmured by Magicians." Weyer then quotes Virgil: "The chill serpent in the meadow is burst asunder by incantation." [33] Weyer is referring to the ability of a magician to charm an animal such as a serpent with an incantation. Interestingly, Weyer even claims to have witnessed persons who by their words can bring animals to a halt. This concept of charming, particularly snakes, is related to the sixth word Weyer uses, "Ob" which means python in Latin. Weyer notes that this is sometimes translated as "magician" and in Greek as "ventriloquist." The meaning is that a spirit can occupy a specific place and mimic or imitate behaviour, like a puppet controlled by a puppeteer. In Hebrew *Ob* is a bag or bottle i.e. a magic bottle, genie lamp,etc. that contains a demon. The meaning is that a spirit can occupy or enchant a person or place (bodily part) and then take upon the attributes of that subject.[34]

The last word for magician, which is the broadest and most sweeping in scope is *Iidoni*, or "to know." We have already seen this usage in the word "daemon" in Book I, for superior knowledge of demons. Weyer, however, adds to "knowing" the additional meaning of "understanding." As Weyer states,

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[31] Weyer, 95.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Levack, 39.

"this word *Iidoni* represents that they are called so because of their professed understanding of all things."[35] The image of the learned magician, such as Faustus, who is offering himself in exchange for access to unlimited knowledge. This is the concept that Weyer finds most heretical because it is beyond the scope of knowledge; the magician seeks with the Devil's help to unlock the secret mysteries of nature and in turn to encroach upon God's authority. Weyer objects to the learned magician that intentionally employs demonic assistance to perform acts of *maleficia*.

Moreover, Weyer notes that the German word *zauberer* is used for both the learned professional magician and the "wise woman" or witch, as well as the poisoner who makes use of potions and drugs.[36] He dislikes the term because it groups together three ideas without making a distinction: "I am especially ready to express my view because I see that they assign too much power to witches."[37] Weyer does not believe magicians" and "witches are in the same category. His reasoning, which will be expressed more throughly in Book Three, is that the witch lacks judgment, in comparison to the magician, who purposely avails himself of the usage of demons. This distinction is central to Weyer's argument that women are delusional or misguided and should, therefore, not be punished; whereas the "learned" magician knows fully well from whom the powers (even if there is no power) he invokes are derived. However, the problem for Weyer lies in making the distinction between those who have bad intentions and those are merely misguided and intend no harm. This is why Weyer struggles with finding the appropriate definition for "magician." Weyer settles for the term "infamous magician" as a general term that incorporates the belief in someone who takes instruction from demons. This definition incorporates previous definitions such as evil-doer, prophesier, enchanter or poisoner. The magician is someone who "strives to perform some works which surpass the laws of nature."[38] As we have seen from Book I, real magic or demonic activity, which seems to have efficacy, is an illusion.

Furthermore, Weyer traces the origins of magic. Weyer cites the pseudo-Clementine writings in *Recognitions* that the origin of magic is demonic: "Peter traces the origin of this art[magic] from the fallen

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[35] Weyer, 96-97.

[36] Weyer, 98.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Weyer, 98-99.

angels, reporting that they taught men that demons could be compelled to obey mortals by certain arts, that is to say, by magical invocations."[39] According to the narrative, after the flood in the Bible, the son of Noah, Cham was instructed in the demonic arts. The Persians and Babylonians learned magic from Zoroaster, who was believed to be Cham.[40] Weyer then proceeds to trace how from Persia, magic was transmitted across the world from the Persians to Egypt and then to the Greeks. In Egypt, magic was taught by Hermes, where the same magic was taught to Plato.[41] Weyer claims that Pythagoras, Democritus and Plato all studied magic. Furthermore, Weyer discusses how spurious books of magic "bearing splendid titles which these magicians put on the covers and circulate under the falsely assumed names of Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Daniel and Solomon.[42] As an example of this is the Cabala and sources of Jewish magic, which Weyer believes to be demonic in origin. [43]

Weyer provides a list of names of magicians from the Middle Ages who "followed the folly of the earlier magicians."[44] Weyer's conclusion is that these magicians are temporarily used by the Devil primarily to deceive others with false doctrines and then met with a perilous death. Again, this is a reference back to Book I in which Weyer's stated purpose of the Devil is to deceive and ultimately kill mankind. Weyer cites numerous examples in which one of these "renowned magicians" won a reputation for magic, led astray "simple folk" and was either killed by the people who detected that he was a fraud, met a perilous death, or became insane.[45] By the sixteenth century, "magic" and "intellectual magic" of the learned magi were essentially different activities that had overlapped. [46] Weyer's point is that although these learned magicians purport to teach magic they teach falsehoods: "although they promised to teach

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[39] Weyer, 100.; pseudo-Clementine bk 3 of *Recognitions*. This is from "pseudo-Clementine" writings purported to be of Clementine I.

[40] Ibid., 100.

[41] Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," in *The Damned Art,* 58; Weyer, 100-101.

[42] Weyer,104.

[43] Ibid. 104-107.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 106-110.

[46] Russell, 17

magic they merely made compilations of raving nonsense based upon no reasoning or of superstitions unworthy of all pious men."[47] The Renaissance was period of studying long established folk magic traditions in an attempt to rationalize a system of magic. [48] Weyer chronicles some of these attempts to expose the "follies" of these magicians. One noteworthy example involved the use of arsenic as an ointment. Another example involved a magician who practiced medicine in a village near the town of Jena. A carpenter sought a remedy from the magician for a serious disease, and a local magician instructed the carpenter to drink a potion of poisonous herbs, upon which the carpenter died.[49]

Weyer labours through an argument that magicians are evil-doers who must be punished. The reasons are two-fold: first, Weyer wants to separate a person who causes harm or injury from those who do not. Second, Weyer believes that someone who intentionally and knowingly seeks demonic assistance in magic is in a different analytical category than someone who claims to practice magic, albeit nominally different from demonic magic. While this difference between magicians and witches may seem artificial, this difference in criminal intent will form the basis later in the book for Weyer's assertion that witches should not be punished. Of all the significance of Book Two for Weyer's argument, these chapters both help Weyer's thesis and contradict it at the same time.

The key point in Weyer's argument is the theme of deception or "the trick of demons." The activities of both magicians and witches is predicated on a falsehood projected by the demons onto humans. There is no magic beyond the boundaries constrained by natural law, which has been created by God. According to Weyer, demons are capable of superhuman activity, but not supernatural. Demons can manipulate through magic tricks or sleight of hand to appear to have or bestow supernatural ability to witches, but this is a merely a deception.

Next, Weyer begins a discussion that will ultimately lead to his conclusion that witches are deceived. Weyer analyzes the type of person most susceptible to demonic illusion. According to Weyer, the impious or those without faith in God or "wrongly trained in the Christian religion" are prone to deception

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[47] Weyer, 106.

[48] Russell, 115.

[49] Weyer, 109.

because part of the mental faculties is impaired. [50] Since there is a false component to the mental faculties in some aspect (whether it is the result of faulty reasoning or impairment), the Devil is able to use this disability and substitute lies for truth. As Weyer states, "they think that everything he suggests is true and they are devoutly confident that all the forms imposed by him upon their powers of imagination and fantasy exist truly"[51] The importance of this chapter is that it represents a shift in epistemology. Weyer has introduced the kernel of a medical explanation into his demonological theory. The beginnings of this thread will eventually expand into an explanation that, incrementally, does not permit a combined demonological and medical explanation for witchcraft

3.2 Magical Books and Objects

Part of this deception is the belief that the Devil has complied magical occult books throughout history. Weyer engages in a discussion of books of magic from infamous magicians, and contends that these books are "nonsense"; they contain "utterly false presuppositions."[52] Interestingly, Weyer says that they "have all come teeming forth in our day from the slough of a single conspiracy."[53] In other words, these books purport to be a continuous body of collective knowledge. As we have seen magic, like all mythology, is a cumulative process of an inter-textual narrative that of fragments from many sources. Most of the information on magic from learned magicians was fused with information obtained from other magicians or witches at trials. [54] Weyer seems to recognize the inter-textual process of witchcraft. As he states, these books "they have all come teething forth in our own day from the slough of a single conspiracy, and they bear no trace of the language and the antiquity of the Chaldaeans and Hebrews, nor familiarity with the two systems of writing of the Egyptians—one for the sacred, one for the profane."[55] Weyer adds that in these books are false and designed to intentionally confuse and deceive the "profane": "they also insert many unknown names and signs to amaze and terrify the less educated, the simple and

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[50] Weyer, 181.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Weyer, 111.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 53.

[55] Weyer,

improvident."[56] The point that Weyer is making is that these books cannot be true at face value since the sources for these books are incorrect. The content of these books reflects the long historical process of knowledge acquisition and the diverse number of sources from which knowledge of magic is obtained. There is no single book of magic one can point to like a reference book that contains true and accurate information about magic; those books that claim to have the answers to hidden knowledge are spurious. Weyer believes these books are designed to confuse and manipulate magicians to keep them trapped in a system of deceptive magic.

Not only is the veracity of the books implausible, but the authorship of many of these books is dubious. Weyer mentions his teacher Agrippa, who was accused of sorcery in Weyer's time.[57] Yet Agrippa (who influenced Weyer) was skeptical of witchcraft. The conclusion to draw is that because Agrippa was a notorious occultist, certain magical books were attributed to his name. However, Weyer denies that Agrippa is the author of Book Four on Occult Philosophy based not on content of the book. Weyer argues that because the book contains "pure nonsense" that Agrippa could not be the author. The book describes astrological symbols, shapes and occult signs that can be used to trap evil spirits. Weyer attacks the truth of these ceremonies not for their authenticity but for their causality.

Moreover, in Chapter 6, Weyer discusses Johannes Trithemus and *Steganographia*. Johannes Trithemus like Agrippa was a notorious magician, scientist and occultist who composed *Steganographia* or "secret writing" a work on demonology in 1500. By the time Weyer composed his treatise in 1583, the *Steganographia*, was a book well known in the occult sciences of the Renaissance.[58] The book is divided into three parts the first part of which consists of an elaborate system of signs and symbols. However, unlike other books which Weyer considers to be entirely false, he seems to believe the *Steganagraphia* to be a book which claims to be pious but is deceptively evil. Its claims are part of a spectrum of ideas which can be projected as truths, in varying degrees, but have no basis in reality. This is also an example of the fracturing of demonology, for while Weyer acknowledges that magical effects are an illusion, it is clear from his quotation on Johannes Trithemus that he believes demons to be real and to have causality. From

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[56] Ibid., 111.

[57] Mora, xxxi.

[58] Mora, 753.

Weyer's perspective, the danger lies not in "amusing" books of magic but in the belief by magicians that they can manipulate evil spirits. For Weyer, the question becomes who is controlling whom? The answer is magicians are being misled into a false hope of "necromancy" and divination with spirits.[59]

Weyer goes forward with his argument by examining various methods of enchantment in Chapter 7. It is a false hope that leads these "masters" and "commanders" to believe that they command demons, for according to Weyer, it is the opposite; the demons are in effect "laughing and mocking" these magicians with false images of specters and ghosts.[60] He describes various objects such as "rings, seals, statues, mirrors and other objects used in magical arts."[61] Weyer asserts that all of these objects the magician believes in are deceptions. Again, the emphasis should be placed not in Weyer's denial of the efficacy of magic, but in his claims of demonic deception. Weyer is not denying the magic (in the sense they are demonic) of these objects, but he questions the belief of the magician that he can manipulate skills with the assistance of these objects. This example demonstrates how Weyer is both simultaneously a believer and a skeptic and how the ideas of witchcraft and demonology were in transition from a state of accepted dogma to a growing skepticism.

In Chapter 8, Weyer returns to the example of the illusions performed by pharaoh's magicians. Arguably, in this chapter and later in his book, he begins to separate science from magic; when magic is no longer believed to possess empirical efficacy, it is ceases to be believed.This is perhaps the sharpest distinction that Weyer makes between "natural" magic and demonic magic. According to Weyer, "in order that those fabled magicians may be more clearly revealed, or rather their illusions, may be more clearly revealed to the sight of all and more thoroughly understood, come now, and with undeceived eyes let us contemplate and carefully investigate the aims, accomplishments, and the powers of Pharaoh's magicians."[62] Weyer goes through the entire list of tricks performed by Pharaoh's magicians and compares them to the real magic of Moses. For example, the staff in the hand of Moses was truly transformed into a serpent, whereas the serpents created by the magicians were "an illusory form of serpent that was portrayed

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[59] Weyer, 114.

[60] Weyer, 118.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Weyer, 122.

before the eyes of the King."[63] Furthermore, the magicians could not have turned the Nile turn into blood or caused a plague of frogs; these are only illusions since God alone is capable of creation. Weyer is pointing out the ontological difference between natural magic and demonic magic; the Devil can do can nothing beyond the scope of his power. However, this raises the question of the authenticity of any form of magic. If all magic is an illusion, then logically the magicians have committed no crime other than deception. Therefore, how can Weyer distinguish between the culpability of magicians and witches when both perform illusory acts of magic? For example, in Chapter 20, Weyer discusses how Nero discovered the false art of magic. Weyer notes that Nero studied and attempted to harness the art of magic, but he discovered the "magical arts" to be false.[64] Weyer cites as evidence Nero's subsequent abandonment and prohibition of the study of magic. The overall point is related to the general decline of magic. Weyer states that even the pagan religions lost interest in magic once it was determined the practice of magic had no veracity.[65] However, as in the case of the ability to distinguish natural from demonic magic, if one accepts the presupposition that a phantom or ghost did truly appear, even if the nature of the ghost is challenged, then it could be just as easily be asserted that nothing was seen; all ghosts are illusions. In other words, it is only a short leap in logic to conclude that phantoms and ghosts are *de facto* illusory. Weyer is faced with the impossible task of reconciling a belief system that contains many internal contradictions.

After establishing that communication with dead spirits is an illusion, Weyer analyzes the subject of "magical divination" by using specific objects or body parts. Weyer in Chapters 12 and 13 begins a discussion of divination and how this is another form of diabolical deception. Weyer examines the various modes by which divination or communication with spirits is sought. For example, Weyer mentions mirror-divining as a means of seeing into the future, crystal-diving through the magical crystal ball, and palm reading or finger-divining. Water divining was practiced in which a ladel of water is used for fortune telling. He describes types of fortune-telling such as lot-divining, tossing dice, or the study numbers by observing birds or importing prophecy from the content of the random page in a book.[66] The point of

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Weyer,138.

Weyer's discussion is to reveal the incongruity in believing that divination can have any efficacy, if divination is from false information. Since the Devil is the source of this information, divination is "without natural cause." [67] The idea that a spirit "most noble by nature but most base because of his malice (because of rebellion) listens, obeys and is commanded by human beings" is specious.[68] Herein is the main point of Book Three: magicians who believe they are in control of magic and command of demons are being deceived. Therefore, the magic created by magicians is delusional since the source of the magic is false. It follows as a result that all the various modes, rituals and objects used for prediction, divination, or fortune telling are false. This is an illustration of the line of Weyer's reasoning from Book I, in which the entire basis of the Devil's power is false, therefore, magicians have no "power" or effectual magic. Weyer questions the wisdom of these learned magicians who trust in the Devil, the master of deceit: "Consider also that this deceiver the father of falsehood and deceit turns all truths to falsity, all good to evil. Who of sound mind would trust this spirit and question him about some future truth?"[69] Furthermore, Weyer points out that either magicians do not know the truth of magic, or the truth is made into a falsehood. This line of reasoning was used in *Doctor Faustus*, when Faustus believes that Hell is a fable: Mephistopheles tries to warn Faustus, "Ay, think so still, till experience change thy mind."[70]

This is the "big lie" that Weyer believes the learned magician has succumbed, namely, that the magician can use the demons to acquire skills and knowledge without consequence. Thus, the basis for the magician's power is based upon a lie, and in turn, the objects and devices of magic are false. Weyer then continues to compare learned magicians to uneducated physicians who are deceived into practicing false medicine. This is a crucial distinction made by Weyer, whose argument turns on the distinction between a learned magician and the witch or physician, who is merely deceived. In his view, the learned magician or "wizard" or "sorcerer" is in an entirely different category than the "inept" or "uneducated" physician who practices false medicine. The physician who attributes causality to magic is merely deceived by false doctrine, whereas a magician intentionally and knowingly uses demonic assistance, even if the magic

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[67] Ibid.,139.

[68] Ibid., 147.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1962), Act V.

employed is ultimately false. Weyer explains that uneducated physicians are blinded by deception. These untrained physicians claim "witchcraft" when they are "forced to make decisions like blind men judging colors"[71] Like the priests that use religion as a cloak for a lack of understanding of disease, physicians use medicine as a cloak to mask their lack of medical knowledge. Again, as in the case of the false priests, Weyer believes that the real crime is not the witches, against whom accusations are levied by these physicians, but rather guilt lies with the physicians who denigrate the "hallowed art of medicine" with false claims of witchcraft.

Moreover, Weyer engages in an argument against the medical view of Paracelsus. This serves as an example of Weyer's break with Neo-Platonic beliefs and the beginnings of an enlightenment belief system. Weyer condemns the Paracelsian approach to medicine for its emphasis on alchemy. [72] He cites an example from Julich, an "absurd" method of treatment in which powders, salts and metals were used that made the condition worse rather than curative.[73] Although Weyer is substantively opposed to the form of medicine Paracelsus advocates, Weyer is more concerned with the method of Paracelsus rather than the specific cures.

For example, Weyer states that students of Paracelsus are "slaves of Paracelsus" who mimic their "master."[74] Weyer spends several pages discussing the erroneous limitations of Parcelsian medicine, not only in its substance, but in its form. The fault that Weyer finds with Paracelsian medicine is that it blinds the mind into slavish obedience, without using the methods of medicine. In Weyer's view, the true power of medicine lies, not in its mystical remedies, but in the power of the human mind to analyze an illness. Weyer finds it very presumptuous to conclude that any system has all the solutions; in part, this is the same fault he finds with witchcraft. Weyer discusses how witchcraft is "the cloak of ignorance, the charms, the enchantment, the evil-doing of witchcraft"[75] Furthermore, Weyer states that the medications of Paracelsus

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[71] Weyer, 153.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 153.

[75] Ibid., 156.

are impaired by the "maleficent fire of chemistry and ignorance of facts."[76] In Chapter 27, Weyer introduces a third level of deception: by priests and "untrained physicians." The illusion is that witchcraft acts as a cover for false medicine; Paracelsian medicine and its reliance on alchemy is a guise for a system of medicine, not based upon empiricism, but reliance on "ignorance of facts." In place of facts, Paracelsus has substituted an ineffectual system of magic. Weyer's argument is not with the substance Paracelsian medicine but its false attribution to witchcraft. According to Weyer, "my quarrel is only with those who, under the pretext of this art and because of their ignorance, lyingly allege witchcraft and falsely impress a belief therein upon the ill."[77]

Weyer's Book Two represents two significant historical observations about witchcraft. First, we see that Weyer considers the basis for witchcraft as false; he believes that the entire idea of magic to be, in effect, a misnomer, an erroneous category. Moreover, if the causes of witchcraft are false then the practitioners and their actions are equally false. Even if magic had effectiveness, it could only be with God's permission. By extension, Weyer reasons that claims by magicians are equivalent to the conclusions of uneducated physicians. Second, Weyer faced an epistemological dilemma: how to distinguish what was "natural" from what was false. However, by accepting the presupposition that a Devil existed and could exercise inordinate deceptive powers over the mind, Weyer's answer lay partly in science and empirical observation and partly in demonology. Thus, Weyer is both a believer in witchcraft and a sceptic. Only by understanding this incongruity can it be ascertained why Weyer would claim that learned magicians, on the one hand were "guilty" of demonic magic, yet fully deluded at the same time. However, it is unclear how Weyer makes a distinction between the guilt of magicians, who practice magic and, in Book III, the *lamaie*, who practice magic with the Devil's assistance. This contradiction ultimately breaks down the logic of Weyer's book. However, Weyer was not attempting to simply pile up evidence in an attempt to refute witchcraft; Weyer was attempting to understand phenomena that fit within demonology. He was trying to distinguish true demonological experience from false doctrine (as professed by learned magic, false priests and physicians). This was a slippery slope for Weyer because the more he used medicine as an explanation, the less viable demonology is as set of beliefs.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 157.

Weyer begins Book III as he does in previous books, with an etymology of a specific concept in witchcraft. By the time Weyer composed his treatise, the idea of a flying witch had been well formed in the popular European mind. Many accounts of "night ravens" existed in German, Greek and Roman literature. Like most myths, the exact origins of this belief are not entirely known, but the belief in these "ladies of the night" that could transform themselves into birds has its basis in many cultures, including many African cultures in modern times.[78] However, the Canon *Episcopi* is the oldest source for the myth that witches fly to attend nocturnal meetings.[79] Weyer, for his section on the *strix,* drew readily upon these tales. These creatures fly at night in search of babies unprotected by nurses. In Roman literature, Ovid gave an account of night flying screech owls which flew and sought the bodies of young children.[80] In Fasti, Ovid describes the *strix*, Latin for "screech owl," derived from an Ancient Greek word, s*trigae*.[81] These owl-like creatures could be natural birds or they may be women who have been transformed into birds.[82] It was believed that these creatures were a threat to children at night. Some scholars have speculated that this myth arose as an explanation for infant mortality or "sudden infant death syndrome" in medieval Europe. [83] Weyer etymologically exams the Latin usage for witch, *strix* ,which is roughly equivalent to "night raven."[84] The Hebrews derived *lilith* from *lail* for "night" to signify the "ill-omened strix which is especially hostile to child birth" [85] Added to the meaning of *strix* is the idea of saga or "wise woman." Weyer discusses many variants of the saga; he notes that in some cultures, as in Germany, a witch is referred to as *hexe* and

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[78] Carlo Ginzberg, *Night Flight* and *Ecstasies*; Stephens, 126-130; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 45-51.

[79] Stephens, 127.

[80] Weyer, 165; Cohen, 162.

[81] *Strix* is a Roman word derived from *strigae* an older Greek word. Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 46.

[82] Russell, 15.

[83] Stephens, 277.

[84] Russell, 15; Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 47.

[85] Weyer, 165.

zauderin, which means a "demented woman."[86] Thus, like the magician, the second component to the definition of witch pertains to the state of mind or mental capacity, whether it is "wisdom" or "delusion."

The term for witch that Weyer finds most fitting is the term *lamia*, which is a woman who because of a deceptive pact, allegedly is capable of *maleficia*. Weyer cites many examples of witches from Greek and Roman literature, as his aim is to dismiss the plausibility of these accounts of witchcraft. Weyer sarcastically provides a range of skills and tricks that the witch can perform—everything from creating lightning bolts, to traveling at light-speed to holding banquets and engaging in intercourse with demons. He considers all of these "feats" implausible, *primae facie* evidence of a massive delusion. Weyer acknowledges how "far removed these spectacles are from the illicit magicians."[87] Weyer is almost embarrassed even to discuss these feats of witchcraft because he believes them to be utterly preposterous. Accordingly, Weyer states "I am ashamed to have taken so long in relating these stories." [88] However, he does not just believe these are only "tall-tales"; he thinks something much more is happening with witchcraft ideology.

Weyer raises the question: "which persons are more vulnerable to the arts and illusions?" First, Weyer states that the person who is likely to be attacked is of a vulnerable temperament, such as a "melancholic."[89] The impious, those without faith, are according to Weyer most prone to delusion for the Devil knows the "feelings of every heart" from "indications."[90] However, the Devil only knows through observation the feelings of humans but cannot know the inner most thoughts because he is not omniscient. The Devil may assume an attractive form or disguise to corrupt the imagination to "give way to his persuasion." The "distorted imagination" of the melancholics are often under attack because melancholic humor seizes control of the mind and alters the brain. Weyer asserts an orthodox early modern belief that women were more vulnerable to "credulity" due to "the frailty of the female sex"[91] Clearly, Weyer's beliefs

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Weyer, 165.

[88] Weyer 171.

[89] Ibid., 180-181.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Weyer, 181; Stephens, 34.

reflect a history of misogyny throughout history, and the principles of witchcraft reflect this belief. According to Klaits, "traditions of woman hatred antedate the era of witch craze culture. Many cultures of the ancient world regarded women as second-class members of humanity, and the male fear of female domination is reflected in myths of diverse cultures."[92] Weyer is drawing not only from a historical tradition of misogyny, but also from the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Kramer and Sprenger wrote "their imperfections cause women extraordinary difficulty in warding off temptation" [93] Like Kramer and Sprenger, Weyer cited historical half-truths using Biblical, Greek and Roman sources.[94] Weyer cites Homer who uses the term "soft" or "delicate" to describe women. Weyer cites the law as evidence "women are weak, frail and easy to deceive." Weyer claims that because the law contains special provisions for women this is evidence that women are more vulnerable to deception. Despite the inherent circularity in this argument, this also ignores the truth that the law is a reflection of social conditions rather than a set of truisms. Weyer's begins to combine existing demonological beliefs about women with a medical perspective. Rather than relying entirely upon a doctrine of dogma about witches, Weyer introduces the idea that there is a medical explanation for their "distorted imagination" rather than inherent characteristics for certain individuals. In other words, even though Weyer uses the early modern rhetoric of misogyny, the text of his language suggests another explanation for witchcraft. However, Weyer's interpretation of "delicate" is, in the sense of malleability or weakness, evidence that women are "weak, frail, infirm and easy to deceive."[95] This type of "disfigured etymology" is often used to justify power, and Weyer frequently uses it throughout the book.

Unlike witches who are like pawns in a diabolical chess game, learned magicians are actively seeking and studying magic. Weyer believes witches are unwittingly part of diabolic eschatology, whereas magicians are consciously aware of the diabolical forces that they employ to achieve magical powers. Weyer's argument is that, in the end, the belief in magical forces beyond natural law is another illusion, a masquerade of the Devil to deceive mankind with false beliefs. After a discussion of the spurious

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[92] Klaits, 67.

[93] Klaits, 67; Kramer and Sprenger cited in Mora, 725.

[94] Ibid.; Mora, 725.

[95] Ibid.

characteristics of the *lamiae*, Weyer makes a distinction between the *lamaie* and learned magicians. Weyer points out that the *lamiae* do not "seek out their doctrine in company of infamous magicians by long toil or study."[96] Since the *lamiae* have only their "imagination" to use in the spells and tricks they employ, Weyer believes this is proof that the Devil is deceiving these women into the belief that they have magical power. Because *lamiae* have no permission other than their own mind for the ability to conduct *maleficia,* this provides the Devil with the opportunity to insert illusory doctrine into their imagination. As Weyer states, "relying too willingly upon this 'teacher' in many instances they are wretchedly deceived and wholly ruined."[97]

<div align="center">3.4 Cumulative Concepts of Witchcraft</div>

3.4.1 *The Witches' Sabbath and Flight*

As part of this deception, Weyer deconstructs three familiar tropes of early modern witchcraft beliefs: flight, the witches' sabbath, and metamorphosis. Weyer explains that each one of these aspects of witchcraft are implausible. Perhaps the image of the night witch was the most persistent of all popular beliefs in early modern Europe. The ideas of "night flight,"along with the witches' sabbath, are the two central aspects of the intellectual foundations of witchcraft. The mythical nucleus of night flying and animal metamorphoses became infused with the image of the hostile sect of heretics, Jews, and eventually was transformed into witches.[98] These ancient myths combined into a composite profile of the stereotypical witch. This image, along with the witches' sabbath, formed the basis of the belief that an army of night flying witches existed, and their existence posed a threat to European civilization. Weyer struggles to explain the mythology of the night flying witch, but he is skeptical about the notion of a night- flying witch that seeks out infants. Weyer's argument is that witches are deluded into believing that they are capable of flying. Weyer is deciphering witchcraft mythology from the perspective of delusion and reexamining witchcraft theories, such as night flight, as product of the imagination.

Moreover, a key part of witchcraft theory was the "witches' sabbath." According to Brian Levack, "every culture has been known to generate myths about persons, sometimes possessing peculiar powers

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[96] Ibid, 263.

[97] Weyer, 263.

[98] Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 23.

who invert the moral and religious norms of society and who therefore present a threat to the very fabric of society."[99] The belief was that witches surreptitiously attended a secret meeting at night. For early modern Europeans, the witches' sabbath represented this threat. At these meetings, witches made a pact with the Devil and engaged in blasphemous and obscene rites, in the tradition of parody or misrule.[100] However, it is unclear from the historical record as to the reality of a "witches' sabbath." Another cumulative aspect of belief was the "pact" or contract with the Devil. In exchange for the ability to practice *maleficia*, the witch made a contract with the Devil. Weyer does not challenge the *belief* in this pact; he disputes the legality of the Devil's pact rather than its authenticity. Weyer argues that this "pact" is an invalid contract; even if this pact could take place, because of the disparate nature of the contracting parties and the circumstances in the formation, the contract is both void and voidable.[101] There is no "offer" or consideration to create a contract. Weyer invokes from contract law the principle of an "illusory offer."[102] In addition, Weyer characterizes this "pact" as "vanity." He states "we can clearly recognize that the pact is illusory and that it is fabricated and confirmed by the deceptive appearance of a phantasm, or a fancy of the mind or the phantastical body of a blinding spirit."[103]

Second, the debate over the witches' sabbath was not about the reality of its existence; instead; the debate was over whether witches attended these meetings in the "imagination" as a dream, or if these meetings were a physical reality that the witches attended in "body" or "spirit."[104] In order for witches to attend such meetings, "flight" was necessary for it explained how witches arrived at these meetings unnoticed. Therefore, the concept that witches could transported through the air, or "transvection" was another central component of witchcraft theory.[105] This idea is very old and is a universal witchcraft theme reflected in Western and Eastern culture. According to Carlo Ginzberg from *Ecstasies*, "Male and female

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[99] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 41.

[100] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 40; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 13-15.

[101] Allan Farnsworth, *Contracts*, 3rd ed. (New York: Aspen Publishing, 1999), 53-54.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Weyer, 173.

[104] Ibid, 127

[105] Stephens, 126.

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witches met at night, generally in solitary places, in fields or on mountains. Sometimes, having anointed their bodies, they flew, arriving astride poles or broom sticks; sometimes they arrived on the backs of animals, or transformed into animals themselves."[106] The descriptions of these "night flights" were numerous and varied, sometimes reportedly with the assistance of the goddess Diana, or other times with the aid of broomsticks or pitchforks.[107] In these "tales of ecstasies," it is purported that these "old women" lie as though dead and are seemingly carried out of themselves to awake and relate tales of a "witches' sabbath." The broom, according to Levack, was a "symbol of female sex and its use in fantasy of witches, sabbath might reflect nothing more than a preponderance of females."[108]

According to Walter Stephens in *Demon Lovers*, "contrary to modern cliche, witches could not fly because they were defined as powerless in themselves."[109] A witch needed demonic assistance in order to fly.[110]   Weyer and other skeptics disagreed over the idea of a "flying" witch. In the early modern period truth was not necessarily equated with reality or waking and falsehood with dreaming. This is similar to the "mind-body problem" that Descartes discusses in his *Discourse on Method and Meditations*.[111] The question was fundamentally epistemological, concerning how to distinguish truth from falsehood. Weyer believed that the imagination was "naturally joined to all powers of the soul, and it shapes and fashions likenesses and apparitions of all external forms."[112] According to Aristotle from *On Dreams*, "images which may appear in dreams are carried to the head and the sense-organs just as clouds-images are raised on high and the faces of various animals are represented in the vapor that comes from the water or the earth, which is then carried to mid-air by the heat of the sun."[113] Weyer's point is that demons "having obtained from

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[106] Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, 1.

[107] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 49.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Stephens, 126.

[110] Ibid.; Levack, *The Witch Hunt*,47-49.

[111] Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations, First Meditation*. New York: Penguin 1968, 97-100. Descartes discusses the epistemological question of dreaming in which he states that there is no certain way to distinguish sleep from reality. At the time Weyer composed his treatise, the idea that

[112] Iamblichus, *De mysteriis from the anthology of Platonists,* ed and trans. Marsilio Ficino in Weyer, 186.

[113] Aristotle, *On Dreams* in Weyer, 188.

God the power of forming such apparitions and impressing them upon physical spirits of the soul" to create false images in the mind.[114] Weyer believes these are images are not real, but exist *only* in the imagination. Weyer cites Ficino from the Platonic Theology, "Four effects follow upon the imagination: appetite, pleasure,fear,sorrow. All of these, at their strongest, affect totally and suddenly the body in which they arise, but never another body . . . Many persons when they see a bitter potion offered to someone, at once experience a bitter taste in their own mouths, and we have no choice but to believe that this sensation in bitterness is caused by a powerful imagination."[115] Accordingly, humans deceived by demonic influence sometimes think "he seems to be carries from place to place with Diana and her nymphs or in some other company of silly women, and to join in dances, and travel to far abroad."[116] Weyer states "a demon can do these things by means of his natural power, when even a man awake and of sound mind can readily propose and produce whatever forms he wishes in his sense-organs and linger over them in the imagination."[117]

Like Weyer, other skeptics challenged the veracity of witch flight dating from the Canon *Episcopi*, which is an early document that challenged witchcraft theory. The Canon *Episcopi* states "some wicked women perverted by the devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons believe and profess themselves..to ride upon certain beasts of Diana" [118] In the *Malleus Maleificarum*, contains a long discussion of the ability of witches to fly.[119] According to Kramer, " where it is said that witches are only transported in imagination [*tantum fantastice et imaginarie*]; but who is foolish to conclude that from this they cannot also be bodily transported?"[120] Kramer's concern is that if witches only "imagine" themselves to fly, then it is also be possible that rituals such as the witches' sabbath are imaginary.[121] Weyer's position is that a person must have a physical body to occupy space; only angels or demons, which are spirits do not

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[114] Weyer, 188.

[115] Ibid., 187.

[116] Ibid., 189.

[117] Ibid.

[118] *Canon Episcopi* cited in Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 47.

[119] Levack, *The Witch Hunt,* 48; Stephens, 140-43.

[120] Kramer and Sprenger, *Malleus maleficarum*, cited in Stephens, 140.

[121] Ibid., 141.

occupy a physical body.[122] Therefore, it is impossible for witches to "battle" or travel in spirit to engage in "ecstasies" at a witches' sabbath. Moreover, the only possibility that Weyer recognizes of "flight" would be the transportation of the body with demonic assistance as he noted in the Biblical accounts. Weyer cites the Devil tempting Jesus and being transported to the pinnacle of a temple. According to Weyer, if Jesus could be transported by the Devil to the top of the pinnacle in bodily form, then it could be possible for a man or woman. However, this is not done through human agency. Weyer does not allow for non-demonic flight or magic because this is outside the realm of phenomenology. In Chapter 12, Weyer believes that angels and demons can both falsely make men believe they have been transported through air and "truly snatch up the bodies and carry them through air." [123] However, the problem is determining the exact parameters and conditions of "flight" once it is stipulated that it is even possible. Nonetheless, whatever symbolism is used in descriptions of "night flight,"Weyer's argument against the flight to a witches' sabbath was novel concerning his assertion that the witches were suffering from hallucinations due to the use of certain ointments. [124] In Chapter 16, Weyer states that the ointment used by the *lamiae* falsely leads them to believe that they can fly "up the chimney and roam far and wide through the air to dances, sexual encounters and delightful spectacles."[125] For Weyer, since the physical body cannot occupy two places at the same time, it is impossible for a demon or person not to be constrained by a specific space and time.[126] Weyer explains that "God does allow demons to practice violent mockeries upon our Lamiae, whose decrepit age, corrupt imagination, and impaired mind serve as punishment enough; God does not act in collusion with demons."[127] This serves as an example, not only of Weyer's skepticism, but also as an example of the epistemological difficulty of distinguishing demonology from natural phenomena. For it was just as possible, based on Weyer's reasoning, that the Devil could produce imaginary effects to mimic flight.

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[122] Weyer, 197.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 225.

[126] Ibid., 202.

[127] Ibid., 200.

3.4.2. *Metamorphosis*

Since it was believed that a witch was a *strix* or night owl, another key part of witchcraft that Weyer discusses is the concept of metamorphosis, which was a concept that was very closely related to flight.[128] In Chapter 10, Weyer uses the same type of demonic and non–demonic logic he did in analyzing flight. Not only were witches believed to transform themselves into owls, but another popular belief in Germany was in the transformation of werewolves. In Livonia and other regions, it was believed that the *lamiae* or "werewolves" in German were raving "wolf-men."[129] However, Weyer is quick to point out that this, if possible, is a demonic illusion.[130] Even if these werewolves did exist, they would have to be demons who had assumed the shape of wolves, or the imagination someone suffering from the disease lycanthropy, which "the Devil sets in motion the humors and spirits suitable for the illusion" of lycanthropy. [131] Just like night flight, persons that believe they are werewolves are deluded and suffer from lycanthropy.

In Chapter19, Weyer begins a discussion of another witchcraft myth, the incubus or the perceived sexual encounter of witches and demons. Of all the myths, Weyer arguably presents the strongest medical case for the impossibility of this idea.[132] The incubus was the belief in witchcraft lore that a being would interrupt the sleep of individuals by "lying upon" to create the effect "that a weight is lying upon us and is on top of us as we sleep, stopping our breathing and therefore impeding our voice so that if we wish to cry out we may not do so."[133] Weyer attributes this type of sleep disorder to a condition similar to epilepsy that he describes as "sleep nightmares." He explains this condition occurs when the person is in a supine position, which he believes causes a disturbance of the bodily humours that affects phlegm and breathing. Weyer says that some persons are "phlegmatic" because of their sex and age and others melancholic

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[128] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe* 46; Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 15; Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, 301.

[129] Weyer, 193.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Incubus was another part of the cumulative concept of witchcraft; Mora,716; Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 31; Stephens, 14.

[133] Weyer, 231.

because of their state of mind; these two variables combine to produce the sleep nightmares which have, in popular folklore, been attributed to demons.[134]

The second part of the incubi and succubi relates to the notion that witches had sexual intercourse with demons (or middling beings such as sylvan and pans). [135] The Devil in his male form was called an "incubus" and in the female form a "succubus"; it was believed that a union with a "mortal" woman would produce children.[136] Weyer again points out that "deluded old women" are maddened by evil trickery into believing they are being "pressed" into sexual intercourse with demons. First, Weyer demonstrates that intercourse does not truly occur, and that medicine has documented a disease known as incubus. Weyer is quick to dismiss this as a medical possibility due to the lack of physical evidence from the hymen.[137]

Moreover, Weyer dismisses the notion that intercourse with demons, even if it were possible, would produce offspring. Genesis 6:4 states "the sons of God went in unto the daughters of men and these women brought forth powerful and famous men"[138] First, Weyer states that demons are spirits, bodiless entities that have no sexual organs and can neither have sex, nor have human sexual desires: "where there was no need for succession and propagation, nature brought no need for generation."[139] In addition, Weyer disputes the scriptural interpretation of the "sons of God" as "angels or pure gods begotten by the gods"[140] Furthermore, some authors have interpreted the "sons of God" to be demons. However, Weyer explains that the "sons of God" refers to a literal translation taken from the Bible itself, rather than medieval sources. The "sons of God" discussed by Moses were not divinities, but the men that God loved before the flood. [141] Weyer cites opinions of various theologians on the subject, such as Lactantius, who argued that gods are

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[134] Ibid., 232.

[135] Levack, 35.

[136] Klaits, 24.

[137] Weyer, 235.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid, 238.

[140] Weyer, 237.

[141] Weyer, 237.

immortal and have no need to propagate.[142] Furthermore, in Chapter 22, Weyer states that despite popular myths, there is a precise system by which intercourse takes place. He debunks Roman myths such as Hercules, "a demi-god" who was half-way between divinity and humanity.[143] Again, Weyer explains "humanity forbids us to think that a god is born from a human being, whether from man and woman together or from a maiden alone."[144] This would contradict the laws of the universe which have specific conditions for the "succession of generations."[145]

Weyer refutes the false belief held by many "theologians [who] concoct and absurdly maintain the bizarre fiction that demons have sexual relations with women" [146] In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the authors report that demons could have sexual intercourse with men and women. [147] The claim is during the act of intercourse the same demon acts as succubus of a man and then becomes incubus of a woman impregnating her with "the seed previously taken from the man and that in this way an offspring is conceived and brought to birth."[148] Weyer's interpretation is that procreation is constrained by natural order to forms of life.[149] If births from incubus were possible then, human semen would have to originate in demons, which Weyer has shown to be patently false because of the demons' lack of a physical body. Weyer relegates these tales as folklore, wives tales that are absurd due to the lack of medical understanding of insemination.

The next area of witchcraft mythology that Weyer examines is the rumor of the magician, Merlin. Merlin of the Arthurian tales serves as an example of both the incubus and medieval magic. [150] In the Arthurian legends, Merlin was the offspring of a demon who raped his human mother. [151] Merlin was also

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Weyer, 240. In the *Aeneid*, Weyer explains that Hercules was born of Jupiter (or Zeus in Greek mythology) and the mortal Alcemena.

[144] Ibid., 241.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid, 249.

[147] Mideflfort, 128.

[148] Weyer, 250.

[149] Clark, *Thinking*, 190.

[150] Cohn, 31.

[151] Kieckhefer, 111.

believed to have been the Antichrist, but his mother had him baptized at birth to prevent him from

becoming a malignant magician. The result was that Merlin had special skills, such as divination, and was a

tutor to King Arthur. This myth of an Antichrist like other aspects of witchcraft is based on the idea of the

incubus.[152]Allegedly, Merlin was the son of a woman and incubus. The medieval legend of Merlin was

known in Weyer's time. According to Boece, a Scottish historian, it was rumored that Merlin had been

"begotten from the union of an incubus and a British noblewoman."[153] One source of this tale is from

Vincent of Beauvais and the Swiss Physician Jacob Ryff. In Weyer's version of the Merlin legend, Merlin is

an advisor to King Vortigern, a Saxon king. Merlin advised the king as to the construction of a tower, which

contained a lake and dragon beneath it. Merlin revealed many things such as predictions of future battles

with the Britons. Furthermore, Weyer cites other examples of offspring from demons. Boece relates

another tale in which a monk was "invited to obscene sexual embraces by a demon in the form of a lovely

woman."[154] The principle that Weyer states, which points to this impossibility, is the medical fact that

"every seeds begets its like"[155]

Weyer addresses the idea that witches could cause harm through an object or "without touching

the victim."[156] For example, Weyer takes various examples from the *Malleus Maleficarium* to illustrate

diabolical illusion.[157] The idea that "some scholars think certain worthless objects or noxious drugs harm

when they are hidden" is a logical fallacy. If the noxious properties of these objects are inherent within the

object, then how could the object be selectively used? In other words, it would be impossible to selectively

use hidden magical poison because it is impossible to know the range of its effectiveness. For Weyer, there

can be no limitation if the object is in its nature magical, since anyone who "passed by the object" would

fall victim. According to Weyer, "if such virulence inheres in the poison's native powers, then it must strike

all who step upon it or pass it by." Weyer states that "experience and plain facts" demonstrate that this does

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[152] Cohn, 31.

[153] Weyer, 256.

[154] Ibid, 258.

[155] Weyer, 258.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Kramer and Sprenger, cited in Weyer, 264.

not happen.[158] These diabolical illusions exist only in the mind; they have no existential import. If there is an efficacy to the magical object it is not the result of witchcraft but from the inhalation of noxious fumes. The *Malleus* states that a serpent placed beneath doorstep could take away fertility.[159] Weyer logically points out that why are women not sterile in those regions in which serpents roam through the house? He summarizes this section by stating it is only through illusion that belief in magic is possible.

The last topic that Weyer addresses in Book III is "poisoners" (*pharmakoi* in Greek) or "poison magic."[160] An example of this myth is the Germanic fairy tale *Schneewittchen und die sieben Zwerge* or *Snow White* involving a witch, magic mirror and a "poison apple."[161] Poisoners are persons who, according to Weyer, "bring on dangerous diseases accompanied by hideous symptoms by means of drugs or poisons."[162] Weyer explains that there are many examples of persons suffering from ailments as a result of a "potion or ointment." Weyer's theory is that poisons have an effect due to their toxic nature, whereas witchcraft has no effect. Poisoning is the only physically harmful form of witchcraft, unlike "spells." Weyer's point is that "poison-magic" is not magic at all; it is merely the real effects of poison. As an example, Weyer cites the account of John Echt, a physician a physician at Cologne. In this account, a poison mixture is combined (often mercury or arsenic) into food or drink, the afflicted person suffers either death or extreme pain. Although it may seem obvious to the modern reader that poison causes harm, in the early modern period witchcraft was believed to act through the poisonous concoction. Weyer, in his discussion of poison, notes that "witchcraft" has nothing to do with magic potions or spells; the physical effects caused by this magic is the result of poison and nothing else. Finally, Weyer mentions in Chp. 38, "love potions" or charms; these potions "avail little or not to cause love at all but rather stir up frenzy."[163]

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[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid., 267.

[161] N. J. Girardot "Initiation and Meaning in the Tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs",*The Journal of American Folklore* 90, no. 357 (1977): 291-293.

[162] Weyer, 267.

[163] Weyer, 275.

Weyer has tried to disprove witchcraft by using medicine, but he remains trapped within the maze of witchcraft. In the beginning of the book, Weyer acknowledges that the Devil had limited powers, but among those powers is the ability to deceive. Weyer, in Book III, has exposed the inconsistencies in witchcraft; the critical points of internal logic that do not comport with external reality come to the surface in Weyer's text. The more Weyer attempts to make distinctions between natural magic and demonic magic, between delusion and sanity, the more his arguments begin to break down. Weyer's aim is to affirm that witches, unlike learned magicians are guilty of a crime but no "harm" has taken place. For Weyer, witchcraft was both a medical and legal impossibility. It is this impossibility that began to render witchcraft a less useful explanation. Weyer's attempt to distinguish lamiae from learned magicians is ambiguous at best. Even if, as Weyer contends, witches are deluded into believing they are engaging in magic, they are still guilty of intent to engage in demonic practices, in the same manner as the learned magicians that Weyer condemned. Other than a gender difference, witches and magicians are qualitatively the same. Moreover, if "magic" is ultimately ineffectual, then *both* the learned magician and witch is incapable of maleficium. Yet Weyer insists that learned magicians and witches are qualitatively different. Weyer, as will be seen, uses this distinction as the basis for his objection to the prosecution of witches, but maintains that learned magicians are guilty.

CHAPTER 4

THE MEDICAL GAZE OF WITCHCRAFT

> Settle thy studies Faustus and begin
> To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess
> Having commenced, be a divine in show—
> Yet level at the end of every art
> And live and die in Aristotle's works
> Sweet Analytics 'tis thou hast ravished me
> *Bene dissere est finis logices*
> Is to dispute well logic's chiefest end?
> Affords this art no greater miracle?
> Then read no more, thou hast attained that end.
> A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:
> ...Bid on kai me one, Galen come,
> *See ubi desinit philosophus ibi incipit medius*
> Be a physician Faustus, heap up gold,
> And be eterniz'd for some wonderous cure.
> *Summa binum medicinae sanitas*
> The end of physic is our body's heath
> Why Faustus hast thou not attain'd that end?
> Is not thy common talk sound aphorisms?
> Yet art thou still but Faustus and a man
> Could thou make men live eternally?
> Or being dead raise them to life again?
> Physic farewell! Where is Justinian!
>
> *Dr. Faustus* Scene 1,
> Chrsitopher Marlowe

Dr. Faustus has been described as a Renaissance man who had to pay the medieval price for being one.[1] The above quotation illustrates not only a depiction of a Renaissance alchemist, but encapsulates the problem that Weyer faced when composing his treatise. Although some scholars consider Book VI of *De praestigiis damonum* to be Weyer's most influential book[2], Book IV is perhaps the most significant for Weyer's analysis of witchcraft. Weyer draws together the two competing theories of witchcraft: an older belief system based in myth and a more "enlightened" view based upon empirical observation and

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[1] Sylvan Barnet, Introduction. *Doctor Faustus*. Christopher Marlowe. Sylvan Barnet Ed. (New York: Signet, 1969), xviii.

[2] Christopher Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," *The Damned Art* ed. Sydney Anglo. (Routledge: New York 1977), 53.

induction. From Weyer's text, we can conclude that he believes witchcraft to be both true and false, real and imagined. Stuart Clark points out that witchcraft becomes "unstable" when it fails to accurately represent "real events in the real world."[3] However, as will be seen, the distinction between the real and imagined is a semantic distinction, a language game. The success of witchcraft as a belief system hinges on its ability to explain, to have existential import. Witchcraft always had a differential account of meaning that is "overdetermined by theory and underrepresented by reality."[4] The more witchcraft appears incongruous the more it becomes discarded in favor of an explanation which comports with medical observation.

At a causal level of explanation, Weyer explains how "science" and "demonology" can co-exist; however, this is a very slippery slope. For the more Weyer attempts to explain extraordinary activities, the more his statements contradict previous explanations. Anomalies and counter examples serve to undermine Weyer's position, and at minimum make his explanations less believable. However, these were not contradictions in the early modern mind. According to Clark, contraries of language are built into "fields of inquiry" in the early modern period.[5] This idea is reflected in the field of medicine and scholastic humorology or opposed Galenic forces. According to Paracelsus, contrary forces were believed to act on the body in unison rather than cancel each other out.[6] Francis Bacon spoke of there being "armies of contraries in the world as dense and rare, hot and cold, light and darkness, animate and inanimate and many others which oppose, deprive and destroy one another in turn."[7] Weyer's text reveals that the difference between these two categories lies, not so much in the causation of the perceived effects of witchcraft, but in how the effects are interpreted. Book IV reveals Weyer's struggle to maintain

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[3] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 146-147.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 46.

[6] Ibid., 47.

[7] Ibid.

witchcraft's existential integrity in spite of his medical knowledge, which often is counter to demonological explanations.

<div align="center">4.1 The Paracelsian Chemical Philosophy</div>

Renaissance doctors had two theories to chose from for medical explanations: the effects of "humoral disorder" or the supernatural.[8] As such, physicians of the sixteenth century did not agree on how much power to attribute to demons or on the parameters of demonic possession.[9] Physicians of the sixteenth century generally accepted the ancient teachings of Galen, who Weyer called "the Phoenix of all physicians."[10] Galen, a Greek physician and philosopher from Perganum, affected medical thinking throughout Europe.[11] After the separation of the Roman Empire into the Latin West and Greek East, the West was isolated from Greek classical ideas for centuries. Galenism was established as a medical philosophy in the East and translated into Islamic texts around 642 A.D. Texts of Islamic scholars were eventually translated into Latin by Constantine of Africa, and others reintroduced Greek medical and philosophical ideas to the West during the late Middle Ages. These Greek and Islamic texts provided the basis for medical schools throughout Europe.[12] The net result created a scholastic approach to medicine rather than a clinical method based upon induction. Galen's ideas were based upon Hippocratic writings from the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.[13] Of most importance in his medical writings was the idea that four humours were attributed to health: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. These humors "travel as a mixture within the body, nourishing parts and organs of similar constitution and perform essential functions for survival."[14] An imbalance of these humors disrupted equilibrium resulting in illness.

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[8] Kohl and Midelfort, xxiii.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Midelfort, Introduction to *On Witchcraft*, xxii.

[11] Milgliore, "The Doctor, Lawyer and Melancholy Witch," 168.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 168.

[14] Ibid., 169.

Throughout Renaissance Europe, the belief was that vision provided the most direct knowledge of things. The eye was considered a lens into the truth of nature. The eye, wrote the English oculist, Richard Banister, "is the sunne of this little world and is for the certainty of apprehension."[15] However, the Late Renaissance, through exposition from Weyer in psychology, realized the limitations of visual phenomena. The power of the imagination to influence perception challenged the "vanities of the eye" that prevailed in the sixteenth century.[16] In the occult tradition, no distinction exists between words and things; however, with the emergence of the scientific method, a clear distinction appears between the signifier and signified or words and things. With the emergence of Neoplatonism and the challenge of new diseases from the "New World," Galenic medicine grew more untenable as a reliable explanation.[17] The Swiss physician and alchemist Paracelsus criticized Galenic theory in his book, *Archidoxes of Magic.* Whereas the medieval doctor based diagnosis on a limited number of symptoms, the early modern physician began to make finer distinctions in medical diagnosis.[18] Physicians began to pay closer attention to the pathological condition of the patient and less to medieval nosological categories, such as the color of urine or the position of the stars.[19] Most physicians during the Renaissance combined theories of Paracelsus with Galenic medicine to regroup symptoms to create a new disease category based on different occasions or observations.[20] The Paracelsians called for new observations that today seem to be based upon the scientific method.[21]

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[15] Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

[16] Ibid., 39.

[17] Estes, Leland L., "The Medical Origins of the European Witch Craze: A Hypothesis," J*ournal of Social History* no. 2 17 (Winter 1983), 271-272.

[18] Ibid., 272.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Alan Debus. *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1977), 212-213.

For Paracelsian theory, Galenic medicine was no longer adequate. The explanation of disease, as a result of humoral imbalance, was rejected by Paracelsus.[22] However, distrust of ancient authority was widespread and coupled with a conscious search for some new key to nature. The "chemical" theory provided an epistemological framework for the universe that called for a new observational approach.[23] Paracelsus provided a "chemical interpretation" of Genesis that focused on the first elements of Creation.[24] Chemistry was the key to understanding nature because it revealed the divine construction of the universe and its constituent elements. Man was a microcosm of the universe, and within him are all parts of the universe.[25] The role of the physician was similar to an alchemist; a priest-physician which investigated the ultimate nature of reality as reflected in a macrocosm and microcosm analogy. The true physician should first turn to "the book of divine revelation—the Holy Scripture—and then to the book of divine Creation, nature."[26] The Paracelsians called for fresh observations based on experiments or a form of Biblical exegesis to arrive at knowledge of things and their properties.[27] Indicative of this change was a new concept of disease, which looked less at "internal imbalances of fluids than in external factors which entered the body and became localized in specific organs."[28] The Paracelsian chemical philosophy was a call for a new observational approach for all of nature, but especially applied to physicians. For Paracelsus, the physician was comparable to a natural magician, and it was considered necessary to discover hidden or occult relationships between the macrocosmic universe and the microcosmic.[29]

Medical theory was changing in the early modern period to suggest new types of demonic illnesses. These were "gaps" in medical epistemology that were either replaced with new theories of

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[22] Alan Debus. *Man and Nature in the Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Repint. Cambridge, 1980), 27.

[23] Ibid., 96.

[24] Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, 78.

[25] Ibid., 99.

[26] Paracelsus, *Labyrunthus medicorum errantium* cited in Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, 69.

[27] Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, 70.

[28] Ibid., 99-100.

[29] Ibid., 96-103.

medicine or attributed to demonic activity. Weyer's text illustrates this process of medical transformation; as the medical profession paid closer attention to individual cases rather than pre-established categories of diseases, the physician would encounter cases which did fit within demonology. In medieval medicine, failure of a remedy was not failure of the theory, but instead a weakness of the individual physician, or it was part of God's plan. A new category of illness emerged that could be both demonic and natural. The two poles of medicine and magic were not always mutually exclusive and could at times overlap. It was never clear when an illness or effect of witchcraft was real or imagined, or whether it was demonic or non-demonic. Weyer's approach is to examine what could be possible based upon his experience as a physician and then to consider what is possible within demonology. Weyer's attempt to explain the effects of witchcraft is an impossible task; he must recast witchcraft into a medical perspective, but by acknowledging the existence of witchcraft, he is faced with the dilemma of how to explain the unexplainable.

4.2 The Weyer-Bodin-Scot Debate

The debate between Weyer, Jean Bodin and Reginald Scot is an example of the epistemological question that Weyer's text addressed: the conflict between the "authority of evidence" versus "evident authority."[30] The debate over witchcraft is centered on how to reconcile empirical data with accepted authority. Given the weight of authority and mass of evidence it would appear that the reality of witchcraft was undeniable. Medieval theological authority on the nature of witchcraft seemed unassailable, as Kramer and Spencer presented an "airtight" or a hermetically sealed argument for the "witches' hammer" that was accepted for nearly one hundred years until Weyer's treatise. As Bodin stated: "the truth had been laid bare by thousand upon thousand of convictions, confessions and accusations of witchcraft."[31] Like Margaret Murray, Bodin pointed to the uniformity of witchcraft confessions as a basis for belief.[32] Bodin states: "The most difficult thing to believe, and the most wonderful, is the changing of the human figure

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[30] Anglo, "Evident Authority and Authoritative Evidence," in *The Literature of Witchcraft*, 1-31.

[31] Anglo, 149 "Melancholia and Witchcraft,"; Bodin, 196-202.

[32] Bodin, 181-189; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 53.

into a beast and even one body into another. Nonetheless, the trials conducted of witches and the divine histories of all peoples, are undeniable proof."[33]

Bodin, in an addendum to, *De la demonomanire des sorciers* refuted Weyer's argument that women were more prone to melancholy. Bodin relativized the influence of the humors to craft an argument that appeared to counter Weyer's argument. Sydney Anglo points out that Bodin selected aspects of Galenic theory to produce a "one-sided" argument.[34]In response to Weyer's claim that women suffered from melancholy, Bodin utilized Galenic beliefs to claim that women are naturally "more cold and moist; therefore, their constitution is contrary to that of melancholy."[35] Bodin's argument is that witches exist in the northern climates of Germany and the Alps. This climate produces physical effects, blond hair and green-eyes and a constitution that is inconsistent with melancholy. Therefore, women accused of witchcraft in Germany should not be classified as melancholics, but were truly witches.[36] In addition, women were healthier than men because menstrual flow prevents excess humors and black bile, and therefore, cannot suffer from melancholy. However, Bodin ignored Weyer's application of melancholy to elderly women, who "since the menstrual flow ceases after a woman's change in life it can longer help to purify her system."[37] The use of women's bodies in the search for the truth was merely a tool to reaffirm the position of Galenic authority. The significance of this debate is illustrative of the malleability of demonological theory and its lack of adherence to an epistemology. This incoherence further shows that language, rather than empiricism, is the "touchstone of truth" in understanding Weyer's text.

Furthermore, Bodin argued that Weyer had delved into matters beyond his competence. According to Bodin, Weyer is a physician and cannot apply medical knowledge to "sacred" matters.[38] Whereas Weyer declared the truth to open to anyone, Bodin argued that the search for truth is an arduous

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[33] Bodin, 122.

[34] Milgiore, 183; Anglo, 142.

[35] Bodin, *Demonomanie des Sorciers* in European Witchcraft, 50.

[36] Milgliore, 175-176.

[37] Milgliore, 176.

[38] Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft," 144.

quest that confers an "uncommon aura" on the truth seeker.[39] It is the role of the law to determine the

meaning of witchcraft, based upon a given set of facts and circumstances. For Bodin, Weyer's

interpretation exemplifies the physician's blindness to the supernatural[40] Not only did Bodin argue that

women could not suffer from melancholy, but even if they were, it would not apply to witches. Since

Weyer asserts that the Devil exists, this necessarily implies that witches exist: there are "good and evil

spirits who have dealings and compacts with men."[41] Bodin states that because the Devil needs assistants

that witches must exist: "partnership and alliance can exist only between similar things, or things which

have some similarity or harmony between them."[42] The Devil and the witch form part of nature, just as a

honey bees group together because of their similarity and to profit from mutual association, so do ants and

social animals.[43] Therefore, the witch and the Devil are "partners in crime" and form part of nature.

Bodin's point is that witches are part of a natural order that "we see that this great God of nature has linked

all things which are in accord with the extremities and has composed the harmony of the intelligible."[44] He

continues to explain that just as "in the sky the opposing signs are joined by a sign which agrees both with

the one and the other. Between rock and earth we find chalk and clay. Between earth and metals,

marcasites and other minerals." Thus, Bodin equates the witch to a subordinate part of the order of the

universe because, like the entire host of natural connections, the Devil and witches are like poisonous

snakes and plants that God has created.[45] This argument is directly counter to Weyer's argument that the

Devil does not need witches for assistance. Again, Weyer argues that even if the Devil does use witches

any results from this alliance is the result of demonic illusion. The difference in perspectives between

Weyer and Bodin is an epistemological argument over the nature of "facts."

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[39] Wilkin, 80; Bodin, 64.

[40] Wilkin, 84.

[41] Bodin in *Demonomanie des Sorciers in European Witchcraft* ,49.

[42] Bodin, 55.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid, 52-55.

A clearer example of Bodin's methodology is reflected in his standard of evidence. Rather than a scientific method, he applies a legal hermeneutic to the examination of witches. The legal standard of evidence is quite different from a scientific standard; the law is not a search for an objective truth, but an interpretation of a set of facts or totality of the circumstances to establish the truth. Bodin's interpretation of legal procedure is to assume guilt against that accused and then mold the facts against the defendant. There are three standards of evidence used in a legal proceeding: concrete facts, voluntary confessions, and eye witnesses. For Bodin, a fact is determined by a judge: "one must, therefore, insist on the truth of the concrete fact which the judge sees, or knows, touches, or apprehends by one of the five senses. This proof is never dismissed either by decrees, or judgement or by customs."[46] He gives the example of someone in possession of poison as a "fact" or proof of witchcraft; in another example Bodin states: "if one sees a witch threaten her enemy who is hale and hearty, or she touches him, and instantly he falls dead, or he becomes a leper, or suddenly he becomes deformed or crippled or struck by sudden illness, as we have shown by many examples—it is a clear and concrete fact, if as well it is rumored that she is a witch."[47]

Upon examination *De la demonomanire des sorciers* is a blue print for how to conduct the classic "witch hunt" or sham legal proceeding that functions as a "kangaroo court." Bodin is finding purpose from result; he claims not only circumstantial evidence to be dispositive, but he categorizes examples, in an *a priori* fashion, as "witchcraft." He presumes, based on rumor and suspicion, that a witch is guilty and facts and evidence pertaining against the witch are established after a determination of witchcraft. In Chapter 4 of *De la demonomanire des sorciers,* "On Presumption Against Witches," Bodin interprets evidence against witches as a "probable" or "strong" presumption of guilt. Bodin states: "presumptions which are legitimate and set forth in the law, are based on a natural reason."[48] This line of reasoning substitutes mere tautology for a legal analysis of the "facts." In the case of occult of hidden crimes of witchcraft, a much lower standard of evidence is used, one based entirely upon suspicion and the opinion of witnesses, which is often based on denunciations. He believes that eye witness accounts of witchcraft are to be construed as

[46] Bodin, 181.

[47] Ibid., 182.

[48] Ibid., 196.

facts; this is the opposite interpretation of Weyer who believes that eye witnesses can be wrong, when the testimony to medical or empirical data. Bodin believes, for example, that rumors can be used as evidence in court: "for it a most powerful presumption that when a woman is reputed to be a witch she is one." and "as for evidence such as public reputation, forced confession, presumptions of law or other such things, one can say they are 'presumptions,' some of which are greater than others, but not indisputable proofs."[49] According to Bodin, in criminal cases evidence is never excluded. Facts are to be construed against the accused when the person has a reputation for being a witch, but if individual has no reputation for being a witchcraft then:

Bodin believed that lawyers, as agents of the King, establish political absolutism based on authority. Rather than relying on Weyer's direct clinical experience, Bodin restates the opinion of *authorities* over observation.[50] However, the flaw in Weyer's argument, which Bodin exposes, was that he accepted the reality of witchcraft while denying certain components of witchcraft. Bodin simply pinpointed these inconsistencies to refute Weyer. Bodin claimed that since on the death of the witch the effects of *maleficia* (such as bad weather or storms) cease that *maleficia* was the cause. This is clearly a case of confusion of cause and effect or finding purpose from result. Bodin even states: "I will show in due course the harmony and constant agreement of similar stories of different peoples, and in different centuries connected with the actions of witches and their confessions. One must not persist against the truth when one sees the effects but does not know the cause. . .."[51]

Reginald Scot, in attacking witchcraft, responded that because the effects of witchcraft *do not cease* proves their are no effects of witchcraft, i.e. storms still occur even when a witch dies. For Scot, what secrets lie in nature are not the work of magic but God: " narurall magicke is nothing else but the worke of nature."[52] Scot's response to Bodin is to categorically deny the involvement of demons in human activity. Scot was neither a theologian, physician or lawyer. He was an independent "country gentleman"

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[49] Bodin, 181.

[50] Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft," 145.

[51] Bodin, 42.

[52] Scot, 165.

that made his own decisions and evaluated what he had read against what he observed.[53] In a sense, Scot is a more radical form of Weyer. Scot in removing demonological activity entirely from nature gives a much more coherent argument than Weyer.

However, the debate between Weyer, Bodin and Scot illustrates the nature of the epistemological debate over Renaissance demonology. Weyer offered an experimental approach and a new view of inductive reasoning. Weyer's methodology takes into account the weight of accumulated evidence balanced with authoritative evidence. Bodin represents the archetypical sixteenth century thinker who relies on the weight of authority. Whereas, Bodin rejects empirical observation in favor of statements from the past, Scot rejects "manifest absurdities promulgated by erudite professionals."[54]

<u>4.3 Possession and Witchcraft Affliction</u>

Demonic possession and witchcraft are two closely related topics and are intellectually connected in Weyer's attempt to explain the "afflictions of witchcraft." The possession of humans by demonic spirits is reported to have taken place in many different societies throughout history.[55] Since early modern writers did not agree about the definition of possession, one of the problems in examining Weyer's text is his usage of the term "possession" Cases of possession were considered important to document because they confirmed the existence of *maleficium*. Possession was "proof positive" of the existence of witchcraft, for otherwise the crime of witchcraft was imaginary.[56] In many ways, possession was an umbrella term which covered all types of witchcraft or *maleficium;* however, Weyer argues that the victims of possession are "deluded" and not suffering from witchcraft affliction.[57]

Possession is a sliding scale of possibilities that illustrates the "unstable" meanings within witchcraft, for it is impossible to make a distinction between acts of witchcraft by *lamiae* and acts that are exclusively demonic activity. Possession was interpreted as an "eschatological sign and exorcism (in

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[53] Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft,"149-150.

[54] Ibid., 150.

[55] Brian Levack ed., *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology : vol. 9 Possession and Exorcism* (New York: Garland, 1992), xii.

[56] Stephens, 326.

[57] Ibid.

Catholic rites); it was an enactment of the promises of Revelations."[58] Brian Levack notes that there is only a "terminological distinction between witchcraft and possession."[59] Generally, there are two skeptical interpretations to demonic possession in early modern Europe. First, the possessed were guilty of fraud. The "victims" stage an incident in to draw attention to themselves as a pretext to engage in illicit behaviour.[60] The second possibility is that the victims are suffering from a physical, neurological or psychological disorder.[61] We see Weyer struggle to reconcile and explain his medical knowledge with his ideas about witchcraft. Weyer attempts to distinguish between "afflictions of witchcraft" and possession by a very narrow margin.

Weyer uses possession in three senses: deception, disease and real possession. In understanding Weyer's chapters on possession, it is necessary to examine his text, not for the cause of possession, but for its meanings.[62] For in each case of possession, Weyer is creating and re-creating the epistemological categories of demonology. In Book IV, we are unclear as how to maintain clearly defined categories of possession. The problem is, again, that Weyer has raised the issue of deception as a possibility, which undermines the viability of possession as an explanation. Weyer makes a terminological distinction between possession and witchcraft, which was to early modern writers.[63] Afflictions of witchcraft are illusory and non-effectual; witchcraft or any purported effects have medical explanations. Epistemologically, this is an important distinction, for Weyer believes that magic is ineffectual or an illusion of the Devil. Weyer discusses the process by which demonic possession can be treated. It is important to note that when Weyer diagnoses the effects of witchcraft, which he believes to be "real," he uses the Bible as a source of information. Throughout Book V, Weyer demonstrates the ineffectiveness and deceptiveness of exorcism, which he believes to be another trick of the Devil. The idea is that the Devil

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[58] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 392.

[59] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe* 11.

[60] Brian Levack, "Introduction," in *Demonic Possession and Exorcism: Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology,* ed. Brian Levack (New York: Garland, 1992), xi.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Clark, 403.

[63] Levack, 12.

has corrupted theology into the use of exorcism. In Matthew 8:28-34, Jesus has power over demons; He delivered two men from demonic possession by ordering demons to leave.[64] Weyer believes that this is the only true form of "exorcism" or the power of God over demons

In Chapter 27, Weyer uses an example of priests who feigned possession. According to the description, a priest traveled with a man who claimed to be possessed and an exorcism was conducted. However, Weyer describes that following the exorcism, the same man was seen in another exorcism the next day. Although it is not clear why the priest and the man were in engaged in this ruse, Weyer explains that both men were punished for the crime. The important point to note is that in Weyer's account it is impossible to make a distinction between Weyer's spurious account of possession and other "real" cases of possession. Weyer's real, imagined, and fake possession cases are only semantically distinguishable and are effectively only nominally similar. Whether the effects of possession are real or not, Weyer does not believe people apparently afflicted by witchcraft are suffering symptoms that are the result of witchcraft. Any real consequences to witchcraft is the result of demonic activity (in conjunction with God's will) and not human agency.

The connection with witchcraft is that *lamaie* were believed to have caused the demons to assault the body. Many of the witchcraft prosecutions in the early modern period were the result of people believing that a witch had caused *maleficium* or demonic possession.[65] The difficulty, as Weyer's text reveals, is in maintaining the distinction between witchcraft and demonic activity. As will be seen, Weyer is insistent that witches cannot cause possession. At the same time, he believes possession does exist. Clark argues that even if certain examples of possession were proven false, this leaves untouched the principle of authentic possession.[66] Weyer has set up another trap door for himself by ruling out possession, while at the same time claiming that it does exist. If the Devil is believed to have superlative deceptive powers, it is difficult to distinguish between real and imaginary effects of demonic possession.

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[64] Matthew 8:28-24 RSV.

[65] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 12.

[66] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 392-394.

<u>4.4 Those Afflicted by Witchcraft</u>

Weyer begins Book IV with an explanation of how the Devil "assails the body in various ways."[67] Weyer debunks many afflictions that were thought to have existed in early modern Europe. Demons were believed to cause a variety of symptoms such as seizures, illness, changes in voice or speaking in foreign tongues.[68] Weyer's theory is that the Devil can manipulate humours of the body and cause particular diseases. However, this is qualified with the stipulation that the Devil can only assail the body with "God's permission." The over-arching theory within Weyer's demonology is that God is the ultimate arbiter of the universe and that Devil, as "God's ape," can only mimic natural phenomena.

Weyer had to separate "natural phenomena" from "demonic phenomena," otherwise the Devil's power would have been contrary to the theological explanation that God is the divine creator. This is important to remember when deconstructing Weyer's logic because it is central to his argument. Acknowledging that the Devil's power is constrained, allows for an explanation of witchcraft that fits within both medical science and demonology. Weyer states "men's substance and possessions do not remain free or immune from the witchcraft of this subtle and cunning enemy"[69] The Devil needs only God's permission to assault the physical body; the assistance of witches is not necessary. Weyer states that nowhere in the Old or New Testament does the Devil seek the assistance of witches; rather, the Devil deceives his followers into a false belief. [70] Witches, or those who profess to be witches, are suffering from melancholia, which is the result of the Devil's use of bodily humors, optic nerves and the brain. The *lamiae* who believe they are performing witchcraft are deluded. According to Weyer, "these women are so beleaguered by the demon and their minds so seriously impaired by witchcraft . . . that they know of nothing else."[71] Weyer is unclear whether the actual illness is real or imagined. On the one hand, Weyer claims that there are actual illnesses which are created through the Devil's "ability to manipulate natural

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[67] Weyer, 283.

[68] Levack, 11.

[69] Weyer, 283.

[70] Ibid., 283-285.

[71] Ibid, 285.

phenomena," but Weyer, in the same paragraph states, "ensnared by rare and deceptive phantasms" [72]

Weyer steadfastly maintains in Book IV that the *lamiae* cannot cause any physical harm because this is

impossible according to the logic contained in Book I. In Weyer's view, there is no such thing as

"affliction from witchcraft," but he concedes that demonic activity exists. The flaw in Weyer's argument

is that he is uncertain when an occurrence is true or a "phantasm of the imagination."[73] The only clear rule

that Weyer employs is that when he is certain that an event is physically impossible, he either dismisses it

entirely or explains how demons used "natural medical laws" to fool the observers.[74] According to Stuart

Clark, "the principle themes of sixteenth and seventeenth century demonology were the qualities and

powers of demonic agents and the effects produced by their activity"[75] The challenge was how to

distinguish between what were the real effects of demonic activity and the imaginary. By engaging in this

analysis, early modern demonologists, such as Weyer, were forced to make epistemological choices about

the nature of reality; these choices created an epistemological framework which ultimately could not

incorporate demonological theories. As the status of demonology was rationalized, it changed from an

explanatory theory based upon unknown factors to known causes, which eventually converted

"demonology" into science. Rather than being discarded, in toto, demonology was divested of its

superstitious and mythological status.

Weyer gives an account of his treatment of a girl who was allegedly "tormented by *lamiae*." This

case serves as an example of folk belief systems without medical knowledge. Weyer explains that a young

girl he treated for vomiting was believed by her father to have objects in her stomach. Weyer does not

deny the presence of demonological activity; he points out that the cloth which was believed to have been

vomited by the girl was not moist three hours after she had her noon meal.[76] Therefore, Weyer concludes

that this object was not vomited by the girl, but allows for the possibility that the Devil left an impression

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 283.

[75] Clark, "Scientific Status of Demonology,"14.

[76] Weyer, 291.

that the material may have been cast from the stomach.[77] Weyer explains that the Devil could have created the appearance that the object was contained in the stomach; Weyer contends that the Devil, in his ability to control and assail the physical body *according to natural law,* caused the girl's mouth to close to prevent her from speaking. The net effect of this is to form in the mind of the observer a causal connection between the observed physical effects and the cloth. Weyer believes that this "would create the impression" that the Devil had caused the object to be contained in the stomach. One of Weyer's central tenets is that the Devil seeks to mimic the power of God through deception, and one deception is to create the impression that there are powers which are not possible (those that violate natural law). This illustrates the intersection of three aspects of Weyer's treatise: first, that the Devil, as God's ape, can only mimic natural law, the Devil as an angelic being has superior knowledge, but is constrained by natural law and because of superior knowledge the Devil can use those skills to deceive humans, who have more limited knowledge.

Through Weyer's observations and experience the Devil's deception, or demonology, becomes less useful as an explanation. As Weyer states "reason and experience and the canons of our profession teach us that medicine is the art of administering contraries against contraries."[78] In describing the curing of demonic possession, Weyer denies the "sign of the cross" or blessing from a priest as a cure for witchcraft. It is not true that the Devil has any power over the *lamaie* or can act unilaterally without God's consent. As Weyer states, "if any power be granted to the reciting of these words, they will rather achieve their effect (according to God's wishes) when pronounced by faithful ministers of the Church."[79] Weyer points out that the cessation of the effects of possession confuses causality; the remedy applied by the church is not the cause for the ending of the effects of "possession." Weyer continues with an example of a person who was believed to be possessed by demons. In Chapters 6-8, Weyer examines numerous examples of false accounts of possession. According to Weyer, these persons are not possessed in the sense that they are suffering from the effects of witchcraft, but instead are mislead by the quickness of the

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 294.

[79] Ibid.

Devil's hand that deceives the eye.[80] Because of the Devil's skill, he is able to manipulate natural laws to create optical illusions.

However, Weyer does not dismiss cases of "real" possession. The distinction that Weyer makes between the cases of real and apparent possession are ambiguous, but the main difference is that, in his previous examples, the cases were the result of human action in conjunction with demonic activity. Weyer explains the impossibility of "vomiting" strange objects as has been reported in cases of *maleficia*. For example, Weyer is unclear as to the reality of the events he is describing. He does not deny that these objects (nails, coarse woolen cloth, needles, pins, etc.) are found in the patient's body, but Weyer attributes the placement of these objects within the body to demonic activity. Weyer knows as a physician that it impossible for "ridiculous oddities of the sort which very often surpass in size the natural width of the esophagus."[81] Thus, how does he reconcile these two opposed concepts? Weyer creates an explanation that can account for both theories, an explanation that fits within both medicine and demonology. Weyer accounts for these objects by explaining that demons place these objects in the mouths of victims through "imperceptible subtlety and speed of a demon."[82] He does not deny the reality of the presence of these foreign objects, instead Weyer provides a medical explanation that can co-exist with demonology. Weyer mentions that sometimes foreign objects, such as pins and needles are inadvertently swallowed, but he calls cases of vomiting larger objects "illusory."[83] In this way, Weyer attempts to preserve parts of demonological explanations that are counter to his medical experience. Demonology ceases to be relevant as empirical evidence weighs more heavily against a theory of demons.

Weyer believes that the Devil needs no assistants or "servants of Satan"; therefore, in cases of possession that do not involve witchcraft, Weyer contends that these are actual demonic activity. For example, Weyer relates an account of some nuns who were thought to be bewitched by *lamiae* but were really possessed. Weyer make a distinction between this account and his "spurious accounts" of demonic possession in Chapters 3-6. Weyer's logic seems to turn on the ability of the Devil to manipulate the body

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[80] Ibid., 285.

[81] Ibid.,286.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Weyer, 288.

and mind to create optical illusions. Weyer believes that whether the demonic possession is real or imaginary, it cannot be the result of *maleficium*.[84] Weyer's view the Devil does not need any assistance, nor was it possible for humans to use the Devil's power. If there are any physical effects, these are the consequences of real demonic activity; witchcraft is merely a guise used by the Devil to lure humans into a trap. Furthermore, Weyer excludes from witchcraft those activities which he knows to be medically impossible. For example, nails, knifes and other objects cannot be "inserted" into the body as has been reported in specific cases. Weyer relates a case in which a "knife was surgically removed from the side of a girl."[85]

In Chapter 14, Weyer offers a rather bizarre explanation for this event, which reveals the type of tortured logic that Weyer engages in to reconcile his medical experience within demonology. Weyer theorizes that the Devil appeared as an old woman who inquired about the health of a young girl suffering from fever and "to inculcate a false belief that runs contrary to true worship of God."[86] According to Weyer, the Devil is responsible for the false belief that the "old woman" or *lamiae* had implanted the knife. He points out the physical impossibility of a knife remaining embedded within the body without causing pain or discomfort. Rather than dismissing the account of demonic activity, he modifies the story to comport with a medical explanation. This type of mixed narrative is prevalent throughout Book IV and comes to the fore in Book V.

In Chapter 16, Weyer gives an explanation of how naturally occurring objects are sometimes attributed to witchcraft. For example, some objects which resemble foreign objects such as stones, hair or thread are by-products of natural conditions, such as gall stones or kidney stones. Weyer cites Benedetti's *Anatomy,* in which certain objects, such as scalpels, hairpins are contained in the body but eventually are able to leave through some opening.[87] According to Benedetti, "the blade of a scalpel (which had been

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[84] *Maleficia* is defined as an "act" of witchcraft or practiced witchcraft; *Maleficium* however has a much broader meaning which can be the result of the witch's general harm or it can be the performance of witchcraft, or it could refer only to the witches' sabbath. See Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4-12. Weyer generally uses the term *Maleficium.*

[85] Weyer, 312.

[86] Ibid., 315.

[87] Weyer, 325-326.

broken when an irresponsible surgeon has been careless in the cutting of a vein) penetrated various passageways and came to rest behind a a [patient's ear], where it made itself felt by an almost continuous pricking."[88] Chapter 16 contains similar examples, but the significance is that these serve as counter-examples to the notion that witchcraft could have caused these objects to be found in the body. In cases in which Weyer is certain objects, such as kidney stones to mimic foreign objects, Weyer provides a medical explanation; in other cases in which actual foreign objects do exist (such as a knife or scalpel). Weyer cites known evidence of surgeons inadvertently leaving those objects within the body. Finally, in Chapter 13, when it is unknown how a foreign object was found inside the body, Weyer dismisses the notion of witchcraft because it is counter to his *observed experience and medical knowledge*. This appears to be Weyer's criterion for separating true phenomena from illusory phenomena: when Weyer knowns that an occurrence is physically impossible, he will use a medical explanation as the cause. If he cannot prove how an object arrived in the body (but he knows how it did not), he will default to a demonological explanation. As seen, these explanations are turgid at best. For example, he invents a narrative about how the Devil disguised himself as an old woman who, using superior speed and skill, was able to "secretly" implant the knife within the girl. Weyer deduces that, if a knife had been in the girl for an extended time, there would have been physical symptoms. Therefore, since there is no other explanation, Weyer concludes that this is truly demonic activity.

Yet, Weyer does not believe that any of these afflictions, or insertion of objects, could be the work of *maleficium.* The key argument in Book IV is that the conditions and examples he gives cannot be the work of *lamiae.* Weyer points out that even the most skilled physicians can be deceived into believing that witchcraft is the cause in certain afflictions of "possessed individuals." Weyer believes in some cases that demons can "mock physicians and delude them" to false beliefs in witchcraft which are merely the result of natural conditions.[89] However, in cases of demonic possession the demon can confuse the physician into treating a naturally occurring condition, such as epilepsy, even though it is induced by demonic possession. Weyer is not able to make a clear distinction between when a natural occurrence and demonic activity, or how it is even possible to maintain a distinction. For example, Weyer relates the story of a

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[88] Benedetti as quoted by Weyer, 325.

[89] Weyer, 327.

woman, who was treated for an ulcer, but the demon had merely exhibited the appearance of an ulcer. Weyer believed that the demon "charmed and deluded the physician into believing an ulcer existed" and that the demon had mimicked the effects of an ulcer. Weyer explains that "ichor had seeped out of the ulcer," which was in reality only honey.[90] In these *prima facie* cases, Weyer uses a post hoc explanation and concludes that demonic possession exists because it is demonic possession. The circularity of this is patently obvious, and this is type of circular logic that Weyer uses throughout the book. In these cases, Weyer believes there is real demonic activity, which can create illusory effects, but it is impossible to make a distinction between "real" demonic activity and natural phenomena. Weyer has created two categories: real demonic activity which has real effects, and demonic activity which produces "simulated effects" of natural occurrences. However, the difference between these two is unclear and largely semantical. This also illustrates the only way to dislodge witchcraft as a belief system was to not use witchcraft as an explanation. As long as witchcraft remained as an explanatory tool, particularly the idea of demonic illusion, there was no explanation that could not fully exist outside the theory of witchcraft.

4.5 Natural Magic

This brings us to the subject of "natural magic." In early modern Europe, magic was inseparable from science. Magic was a catch-all word for hard to explain phenomena.[91] Natural magic was a proto-scientific method that used a form of inductive reasoning.[92] In contrast "illicit" or black magic was hidden and attributed to demonic activity. However, the possibility of natural phenomena that mimics demonic phenomena challenged the ability to make a distinction. One of the problems in understanding Weyer's examples is that demonic and natural magic were two sides of the same coin in early modern thought. Whereas in the modern world magic was separate from science, in the early modern period, there was no rational system of science; demonology *was* science. Many early modern scientists did not consider rational inquiry and magic incongruous.[93] Therefore, it is important when looking at Book IV not to apply a rational framework and conclude that Weyer's text is irrational. Nonetheless, we can upon examination

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Mora, lxii.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Clark, "Scientific Status of Demonology," 314.

look at Weyer's text and see the inherent contradictions contained within his explanations. The examples from Book IV reveal, not so much the flaws contained in Weyer's argument, but the unraveling of witchcraft theory as a solution to natural phenomena. Witchcraft has viability as an explanation as long as it is considered an empirical tool to measure observed experience.

Weyer believes that demons can create illusions both externally and internally.[94] Demons can either change the imagination or "fantasia," to create false external images, or they can create hallucinations within the mind. [95] Like the Devil, in early modern thought, demons have the power to manipulate various substances, images and humors.[96] They can create imaginary images, in the mind, but cannot create life or change the substance of things, for the universe was created by God.[97] However, it is this power of imagination that threatened the believability of demonology, for if demonic activity were imaginary, then it would not be difficult to conclude that demons themselves were a creation of the same imaginary agent, the human mind. For example, in Chapter 13, Weyer tries to explain how a physician could be fooled by demonic possession into believing that it could be a natural malady. Yet, Weyer does not make a distinction between cases in which a physician is fooled and previous cases in which supernatural activity was suspected but was in reality, natural phenomena. The difficulty lies in establishing what is "natural." Once demonic activity is presumed to be "natural," then it is impossible to make a distinction between natural and unnatural because demons, by Weyer's account, exist outside of phenomenology that is known to be natural.

Weyer must constantly define and redefine his demonology with natural phenomena. In Chapter 18, Weyer explains the limits of demonic possession; the Devil is not capable of being "cast into the body by some individual."[98] Weyer's claim is that again a demon is constrained by the will of God. The reason for this is that the power of an "evil man" would surpass the Devil's power if of his own freewill he could

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[94] Weyer, 231, 288, 302-303; Stephens, 311; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe,* 35.

[95] Weyer,186; Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 35; Stephens, 133.

[96] Stephens, 307.

[97] Weyer, 240-243; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 183.

[98] Weyer, 329.

do what is denied to a demon.[99] However, this statement seems to contradict Weyer's account in Chapter 10 in which Weyer believes young girls were "possessed." The difference between these two examples is not "possession" in the sense that an evil spirit can occupy a body, but rather it is how the possession occurred. First, Weyer believes that the Devil can only exercise power with God's discretion because God is the ultimate "power" or source of natural law. Therefore, if "possession" does occur it is not through the work of the Devil, but with God's permission (which is Weyer's point in Chapter 18). This is based on the biblical principle that God is the ultimate authority and demons have no power other that what God permits. Moreover, according to Weyer, God sometimes permits "spectacles out of the ordinary to frighten humans against imprecations involving demons."[100] The point to note is that Weyer is placing limitations upon demonology and that the Devil is constrained by natural law. The Devil cannot overturn the natural order of things nor destroy any of its essential features.[101] This is further illustrated in Chapter 20, in which Weyer discusses the impossibility of removal of testicles by demons. As Weyer states, "I think that a demon dulls the senses and blinds the eyes of those persons who think that their testicles and sexual organs have been removed by a charm"[102] Weyer points out that it would be impossible for this to take place "unfelt" and without "bloodshed"[103] Weyer states that demons do not have this type of power or "magic"; in other words, there is no magic capable of transcending natural law, and if it is believed to have taken place, then this is only a sleight of hand.

In Chapters 23 and 24, Weyer revisits metamorphosis. Weyer restates that persons who suffer from the lycanthrophy are afflicted with melancholia. This condition makes a person more vulnerable to diabolical illusion. Weyer cites evidence from the Greeks who termed lycanthropy "lupine melancholia" and Arab sources which describe a condition known as "chatrab."[104] Weyer is quick to point out that this condition is cured by "natural" methods such as bloodletting or the application of an ointment. Skepticism

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[99] Ibid., 330.

[100] Ibid., 331.

[101] Clark, 165.

[102] Ibid., 332.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 342-343.

over metamorphosis, however, dates back to the Canon *Episcopi*. [105] Unlike the belief in night flight, the majority of early modern demonologists did not accept belief in metamorphosis. [106] As with the effects of witchcraft in general, it is not clear whether the objection was based on the belief that metamorphosis was impossible or if it was only an illusion. For example, Henri Boguet cited the Bible as evidence that a "metamorphosis from a man into beast" is possible but he believed the change was 'illusory'" [107] Since it is impossible for the Devil to reverse or undo natural law, it is impossible for metamorphosis to occur.

In Chapter 24, Weyer discusses the transformation between sexes. However, unlike metamorphosis, Weyer believes that transformation between sexes is a "miracle" of nature a phenomena that is empirically possible. Weyer cites Pliny who states " it is no fable that females are changed into males."[108] Weyer states that sex change is based upon the forces of nature. However, it is not possible to change from male to female, but rather from female to male. The reason for this is based on the idea of perpetual motion; the "formative force" of a living creature is not inactive but active.[109] The problem is deciding where the ultimate boundaries of nature lie and the ability of the Devil to camouflage his actions begins. [110] Weyer believes the Devil could create "optical illusions" using the imagination and "bodily humours." He provides a natural medical explanation that exists outside the field of demonology. When observed experience contradicts demonology, Weyer will modify theory to fit within medical knowledge and observation. Medicine is used to both confirm and deny specific aspects of witchcraft.

Weyer notes that sometimes possessed persons are mistakingly called melancholics and sometimes melancholics are mistaken for the possessed. According to Weyer, a possessed person must be a melancholic because the Devil has "disturbed the senses," but a melancholic is not necessarily possessed. In Weyer's view, the Devil can deceive or mimic the symptoms of melancholy. However, if the effect of

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Weyer, 337.

[109] Michel Jeannere, *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from Da Vinci to Montaigne* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001), 1-18.

[110] Clark, 166.

both is the same, then one must question the plausibility of making this distinction. This is even more true if the treatment in both cases is the same (which Weyer discusses in Book V). Nonetheless, Weyer must account for possession and melancholia or dismiss possession entirely. The difference between the two is a question of degree not in type; in *effect,* they are the same, for possession is in its function the same as melancholia. In Weyer's discussion of poison, the effects, including pains, hiccups, chills, spasms and dizziness, are all associated with demonic possession. Weyer introduces the idea that many of the perceived effects of demonic possession are the result of poison. This further adds to the difficulty in asserting a claim of demonic possession for it mimics cases of real possession. Weyer maintains that only physicians can distinguish among poisons and be able to make a determination about the nature of poisoning.[111] In this chapter, Weyer lists various ailments which can be the result poison that should be treated by a physician.

Book IV is a snapshot of the development of the scientific method and the relationship between inductive and deductive reasoning. Looking at Weyer's Book IV from this perspective allows us to see how he imagined cases of both real and fraudulent possession; cases of fraud did not vitiate possession but confirmed possession because principles of skepticism were contained within demonology. Clark argues that to make sense of possession, we must take a "relativist position" as to what is real.[112] From Weyer's perspective, there was no contradiction between asserting, in cases with the same symptoms, that these cases could simultaneously be both true and false, the result of diabolical illusion and natural causes. Furthermore, we see from Weyer's text that the meaning of possession, and therefore, witchcraft was deferred from each case to the next. There is no consistent meaning in individual cases, but there is a relationship among Weyer's examples. The central connection among Book IV is that those who seemed to be afflicted by witchcraft are not afflicted by witchcraft. The main connection between witchcraft and possession is that witches are incapable of causing demonic possession.[113] Moreover, in cases of confirmed possession, authenticity exists in the belief of demonic activity. The effects of possession are impossible to separate given the inordinate ability of the Devil to create mirages and optical illusions. The

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[111] Weyer, 354.

[112] Clark, *Thinking,* 396.

[113] Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, 12.

best way to approach Book IV is to examine it, not for what Weyer considered to be the cause of

possession, but according to how his cases of possession altered the symbols of witchcraft. In the most

ambiguous cases, Weyer combines medieval and early modern beliefs Book IV is representative of the

emerging doubt over witchcraft in the early modern period, but more importantly it shows cross-section of

medicine and demonology. Each case is a snapshot of various perspectives of demonology; whereas, some

are firmly couched within a medieval tradition of magic, others are completed removed from the medieval

perspective and are contained in Renaissance science.

4.6 Treatment of Persons Possessed

In Book V, Weyer begins an analysis of the "treatment of persons possessed." In this book, we see

an example of the intersection between demonology and medicine. He begins by a discussion of Paul,

from the New Testament. Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18 writes "put on the whole armor of God that you may

be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood but

against the rulers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in

the heavenly places."[114] The significance of this text is that it shows an application of Weyer's logic from

Book 1. Since he attributes the actual effects of witchcraft to spiritual warfare, "in the heavenly places" as

Paul writes, then the word of God is the only defense.[115] Accordingly, Weyer believes that the best defense

against the Devil is the strength and authority of God over the Devil. Weyer points out that if "the

shepherds of the church were building a straight and true structure upon this foundation [the church]

closing up all the windows of false doctrines and impiety, they would be providing for consulting the

interests of those under their care, with salutary precautions against the devil's wiles, tricks and

mockeries."[116] Weyer's belief is that false doctrines of demonic possession and exorcism have corrupted

the church, which are reflections of the Devil's deception. This arguably is an example of Weyer's

Lutheran influence, along with his Renaissance Neo-Platonic influences.[117]

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[114] Ephesians 6:10-18 RSV.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Weyer, 367.

[117] Levack, "Possession and Exorcism" in *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology,* x.

In addition, in Chapter 3 of Book V, Weyer adds that priests make a "mockery" of medicine by proclaiming false cures and healing.[118] According to Weyer, "these stupid, ignorant unschooled men wickedly and falsely lay claim to a knowledge of the hallowed art of medicine."[119] This is another epistemological example of Weyer's combination of magic and science. One the one hand, Weyer cites examples of demonic possession and exorcism by priests, but on the other hand he decries priests who employ "wicked and false" claims of medicine. Weyer equates priests who claim cures to magicians who work "diabolical cures."[120]

Weyer continues this pattern in Book V, when he addresses the misuse of sacred scripture for the cure of medical ailments. In Chapter 4, Weyer argues that magicians twist scripture or mix passages for purposes beyond God's words. For example, for stopping the flow of blood, a remedy is to use "cold water and add three drops of flowing blood saying the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary before each drop."[121] Weyer then cites examples of other uses of scripture such as a remedy for medical problems. Clearly, Weyer believes this is a sacrilegious use of scripture. These are examples, for Weyer, of the Devil's purpose which is to manipulate man into serving evil. However, for Weyer's text, these examples further illustrate how Weyer blends rational claims (those of medicine) with superstition.

Next, Weyer addresses magical cures for witchcraft, and he dismisses various forms of magic such as charms and magic words. He discusses a Mass in which the Gospel is written down and consecrated as an "amulet" against witchcraft. Weyer points out the arbitrary distinction made in maintaining such a belief in magical objects. Weyer acknowledges that language does not manipulate reality.[122] Unlike the Renaissance view, in the modern view, words do not alter reality. As he states, "But unless that Scripture take root in our hearts, where it is brought to reality by the heat of life, as it were, it remains a dead letter even if it is hung about our necks a thousand times, or attached to our persons, or carried about, or rubbed on, or muttered beneath the breath, or inscribed or imprinted upon seals or rings,

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[118] Weyer, 370.

[119] Ibid., 367.

[120] Ibid., 370.

[121] Ibid., 374.

[122] Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity," 95.

or drunk, or eaten, or even swallowed hole."[123] This as well is an illustration of the recognition that language does not correspond to reality, but only *signifies* reality.

Furthermore, in Chapter 12, Weyer discusses "words which supposedly induce a state of silence."[124] Weyer explains that prisoners during witchcraft interrogation remain silent, not because of spells, but because of either a medical explanation or demonic possession. Weyer weaves together medical explanations with witchcraft theory. He cites the cases of Paolo Grillando and silent prisoners in Pisa, Rome and Milan. Weyer compares these to his contemporary accounts in Antwerp.[125] Weyer confirms these are cases of demonic possession, but notes that in Antwerp, the College of Physicians was consulted and concluded that "such a stupor could have been caused by certain soporific drugs."[126] Weyer concludes that when such "insensibility is either caused by drugs or the Devil."[127] However, Weyer maintains that when such possession or ailments occurs, it is not supernatural; any such phenomena is the manipulation of "humors of the brain, promotes deep sleep, blocks nerve endings, banishes sensation, and induces stupor."[128] We see another example of the fracturing of the magical belief that language is analogous to reality.

Throughout Book V are examples of "grave abuses" committed by doctors and clergy under the guise of magic. In Chapter 15, Weyer explains that some physicians use "witchcraft" as a blank check to charge higher fees or engage in unethical practices. Weyer, again, says that any pretense of magical power by doctors or witches is either a deception of a learned magician, a nefarious doctor, or it is an illusion conceived by the Devil. Weyer provides the example of a physician who uses "witchcraft" as a pretext for sexual advances with a young girl. Weyer illustrates that the physician used witchcraft as a ploy by making the parents of the daughter pledge that the daughter "obey the doctor in all particulars and be attentive to

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[123] Weyer, 391.

[124] Ibid., 397.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 400.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.,409.

what he [the doctor] would say."[129] Weyer expresses disdain for this physician by stating "here is your witchcraft! Here is a scandalous crime, to be atoned only by a death most cruel."[130] He is critical of physicians who use medicine under the pretext of witchcraft for ill-purposes and cites numerous examples whereby a physician has claimed that someone was suffering from possession of witchcraft only to use this as a ploy to engage in unethical practices. However, this reveals not only that witchcraft is a type of "blank check" or template for any affliction, it shows that medical impostors use witchcraft for ill gains.

In Chapter 17, Weyer is critical, for example, of many physicians that employ pseudo-science and superstition in healing. He cites the example of "merely praying to saints" to restore health or "similar vows made to statues were thought far more effective than medical remedies."[131] Weyer then begins a discussion of "false" healing by physicians through magic. [132] Weyer, as a physician, is skeptical of this practice and believes these methods are superstitions.More importantly, this illustrates his claim that magical healings are counterfeit. Weyer believes that it is by blind faith in superstition by that allows such "healing" gains any credibility.

Weyer states that "demonic healings" do not occur. The only way in which these healings take place is by demons ceasing their "injurious activities."[133] According to Taatianus Assyrius, "no condition is removed by the occult opposition of some second object."[134] Weyer cites Augustine who writes, "let the faithful priests admonish their people to recognize that magical arts and incantations can bring no remedy for man's various infirmities."[135] According to Augustine in *City of God*, "demons are able to afflict all those whom God has subjected to their tyranny on account of sinfulness."[136] Weyer cites Hesychius from *Commentaries* bk. 6, "even if to mislead us they seem for the moment to bring some trivial improvement

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[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 414.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., 412.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 413

in bodily health (even as untrained physicians can do), nevertheless, they do this not from their goodness and their kindly concern for men, but from a desire to reduce men to servitude and separate them from God."[137]

Weyer's point is that the Devil, as God's ape, seeks not only to mimic God, but ultimately to destroy mankind. By creating false healings the Devil made a mockery of God. According to Weyer, "His [the Devil] one chief aim is that those whom he has deceived should deem him worthy of divine honor and worship."[138] Weyer's intersection of science with magic is again revealed; he denies spurious medical claims, in the form magical healing, but at the same time permits the possibility of "supernatural" intervention. Weyer argues that if demonic healings" do take place, it is not the result of demonic influence, but rather is done so with God's permission. According to Weyer, "God often permits things because of man's stubborn unbelief so that seeing they might not see, hearing they might not hear or understand."[139]

Weyer recognizes the patient's confidence and belief in the healer or doctor to construct illness. For example, Weyer states, "we observe the power of medication sometimes grows stronger as a result of the patient's confidence in the doctor."[140] According to Weyer, "superstition requires gullibility, just as true religion requires faith."[141] Weyer believes that each person "uplifts his spirit by reason of this very credulity until it becomes like unto those spirits who are the princes and leaders."[142] The only cures that "magic" brings are those that the believers ascribe to the outcome. In other words, if the believers think magical healings have taken place this has a "placebo effect" or the result of the patient's perception of the illness. As Weyer states, "And thus I have discovered that the success of these cures does not derive from the characters or the charm; but the power of our mind is so great that if the mind convinces itself of some honorable object and firmly perseveres in the conviction, it carries out and powerfully brings to

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Weyer, 414

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid., 415.

[142] Ibid.

completion the very object that it was conceived. . ..[143] In Chapter 28, a theologian prescribed a cure for a woman who had been suffering from inflamed eyes. He made her wear a "piece of paper upon her neck and strictly cautioned her not to remove it."[144] The woman believed that she was cured and the eye condition gradually improved. However, Weyer notes that "after regaining her health she became carless about the piece of paper and it fell from her neck."[145] When she became aware of the loss, her condition returned. Weyer cites other similar tales in which "cures" of physical ailments (attributed to demonic activity) were remedied with parchment paper or other magical objects, such as a wooden cross or incantation. Weyer argues that "no one can fail to see that healing of this sort is captious, fallacious and filled with peril."[146] The conclusion to draw from Weyer's statements is that when his medical knowledge directly contradicts magical explanations, Weyer will defer to his medical experience. However, this does not preclude Weyer from superimposing witchcraft theory with medicine. This is confirmed when he states that "no one can fail to see that healing of this sort is captious, fallacious and filled with peril. Under the appearance of these ludicrous objects [magical items] the Devil often works his mocking illusions; thus it happens that all power proceeds from such artificial objects."[147] Augustine states that "whatever is invented by man to make and worship idols is superstitious . . . To this category belong the ligatures and remedies which the medical profession condemns."[148] Weyer attempts to make distinctions within demonology, e.g., illusory demonic effects from real non-demonic effects. As we have seen this is a slippery slope for once illusions are used as an explanation, it becomes impossible to maintain a distinction from illusion and reality.

In Chapter 19, Weyer discusses the subject of "eminent physicians that have employed ligations, characters or charms." He seems reluctant to discuss this topic for he states " I am not unaware that the

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[143] Weyer, 420

[144] Ibid.,416

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., 417

[147] Ibid., 417-418

[148] Ibid.

most eminent physicians have stumbled badly in this area, putting faith in such trifles"[149] Weyer notes that the "most learned Alexander Trallianus" claims to use a statue of Hercules as a form of medicine.[150] Weyer admits that the most respected physicians are given to superstition. His contemporaries such as Jean Fernel all believed that the Devil could have an effect on the physical body.[151] Weyer disagreed in the ability of human agency to use or control magic. The point is the use of magical or herbs have no "magical" efficacy.

In Chapter 20, Weyer makes a distinction between the use of "natural ligatures," which are imbued by God, which contain an "innate" power and ligatures that are falsely used by physicians.[152] Weyer argues that if these "natural ligatures and amulets" have any healing power it is *not* from magic, but rather the effect of a medical reason. For example, Weyer discusses a "red-flowering pimpernel about the neck to counter epilepsy."[153] This is not the result of a hidden or occult cause but for a reason that physicians understand: "Galen who had gained practical knowledge of these remedies advised that one should rely upon periapts in the belief in that their substance would prove helpful and not the words of magical incantation."[154] Weyer points out that demons as spirits cannot be "attracted by a plant or other substance nor can they be repelled."[155] However, Weyer again hedges this statement by acknowledging that "certain bodies such as the melancholic or choleric . . . can be changed to a degree and relieved of their affliction by the use of certain objects or harmonies, just as we read that Saul was mollified by the music that soothed his ears[1 Kings 16]."[156]

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[149] Weyer, 419.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Kohl, xxv; Weyer noted in Chapter 4 that "the most learned physicians are often deceived by possessed individuals.", 327.

[152] Weyer, 422.

[153] Weyer, 423.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

<u>4.7 Exorcism</u>

The topic of exorcism and the ability physicians to heal afflictions of witchcraft juxtaposed with priests that use magical incantations is another topic that reveals the intersection of science and magic. The word exorcism has at least two general meanings. The first is the general definition used in Mark from the New Testament in which Jesus performed an "exorcism" by ordering demons to cease activity.[157] The Bible explains that faith is an essential part of exorcism.[158] Christ states in Mark 6 that He was unwilling to heal or cure a person who lacked faith.[159] The second form of exorcism, and the type that Weyer finds objectionable, is the use of ceremonial or liturgical rites performed by clergy.[160] A liturgical or clerical exorcism such as that done in the Catholic Church is a ritual performed by an ordained priest or appointed by a bishop.[161]

Exorcism was a practice under criticism in the Middle Ages.[162] Skeptics of exorcism argued that the possessed were guilty of fraud or that the victims were suffering from physcial illness.[163] By the Middle Ages, the main purpose of exorcism was not so much to "cure" a victim but instead it was to reaffirm the sanctity of the exorcist.[164] Increasingly, the failure of exorcism was seen a threat to the sacramental order to the Church.[165] The historical record shows that the more exorcisms were performed during the fourth, sixth, seventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the failure rate of exorcisms increased.[166] This presented a problem for the Church, which depended on the efficacy of exorcism as

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[157] Mark 3:7-12 RSV.

[158] Andre Goddu, "The Failure of Exorcism in the Middle Ages," in *Articles in Witchcraft, Demonology and Magic vol. 4*, 543; Mark 9, 17-29 RSV.

[159] Mark 6 RSV.

[160] Goddu, 543.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Levack, "Introduction," in *Articles on Witchcraft:Possession and Exorcism*, x.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.; Goddu, 551.

[165] Ibid., 541.

[166] Ibid., 548

proof of its authority.[167] The solution to this problem was to change the definition of possession: the

exercise of demonic influence was both internal and external.[168] By the Middle Ages, the main purpose of

exorcism was to prove the sanctity of the exorcist. D.P. Walker explains that exorcism was often a form of

propaganda. In many cases exorcism was used to bolster arguments in the Catholic-Protestant debate, or

for, in rare cases, anti-semitic purposes.[169] When exorcism failed to cure the physical effects of possession,

the Church modified the definition of exorcism to fit the results.[170]

In the fifteenth century, it became clear that failures of exorcism and medical evidence of

symptoms warranted new explanations of demonic possession.[171] Sigmund Freud, for example, in 1923

pointed out that demonological theory corresponded to neuroses. According to Freud, " we merely

eliminate the projection of these mental entities into the external world which the middle ages carried out;

instead, we regard them as having arisen in the patient's life, where they have their abode."[172] Freud

equated the Devil as a symbol for a father substitute based on hidden neurosis or a copy of "inherited

memory traces of the primal father to form the individual's idea of God." [173] Some scholars have noted the

close relationship between possession, exorcism and psychopathology. Many of the therapies to treat

mental illness, such a hypnosis, used mesmerism. Mesmer in the late seventeenth century believed

convulsions, a symptom of demonic possession, were therapeutic. He believed that convulsions could be

controlled by the wave of a mesmerist's hand, or even by inanimate objects the patient believed were

magnetized.[174] Weyer questioned the role of the exorcist and this shows the influence of the exorcist or

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[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid., 551.

[169] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 130; D.P. Walker, "Demonic Possession Used As Propaganda in the Later Sixteenth Century," *Articles in Witchcraft, Demonology and Magic: Possession and Exorcism vol. 9*, 283.

[170] Ibid.,Levack, ; Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 395.

[171] Goddu, 551-55.

[172] Sigmund Freud, "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis," in *Possession and Exorcism*, 28.

[173] Ibid., 39-41.

[174] Nicholas P Spanos and Jack Gottlied, "Demonic Possession, Mesmerism and Hysteria: A Social Psychological Perspective on Their Historical Interrelations," in *Possession and Exorcism*, 263.

hypnotist to create and manipulate conditions of demonic possession. In addition, exorcism formed part of a controversy regarding baptism in the Later Reformation. The use of exorcism as a rite was a major point of contention between Lutherans and Calvinists. Martin Luther included exorcism in his *Taufbuchlein* of 1523. However, while most Lutherans viewed exorcis as largely ceremonial.[175]

The controversy over exorcism revolved around how it functioned as a symbol. According to Victor Turner in *Forest of Symbols*, ceremonial acts must "be examined in as a component of a total system of religious beliefs and practices. Its symbols and episodes. . . Must be related to those found in other parts of the total religious system."[176] In the same way that a witch was the lowest common denominator of witchcraft beliefs, the rite of exorcism symbolized the most basic question in Lutheran theology: is salvation dependent upon the acts of God or in human action? Lutherans stress that exorcism has no biblical foundation. Exorcism suggests that man has ability to intervene in supernatural activity in the same way a magician can manipulate forces of nature. Weyer argues again that priests have no "power" to manipulate demons, and an exorcism is another form of magic. Weyer states that " they have their prescribed exorcisms and their fixed ceremonies that they observe in order to remove the malady and drive away the demon."[177] According to Weyer, exorcism only works if the demon yields willingly to their curses and acts; in other words, he acts in collusion with them to strengthen their impiety.[178]As has been discussed, Weyer is skeptical of the belief that humans can manipulate or control anything beyond what is beyond "natural" parameters. Weyer objects to exorcists who use "rituals" rather than prayer for it is in clear violation of Christ's teachings: "I am the truth the way and the life."[179]

Weyer describes in Chapter 23 "grave abuses committed by priest-exorcists."[180] Weyer believes that these exorcists are in the same class as enchanters. Furthermore, he attacks the *Malleus* and its use of

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[175] Bodo Nischan, "The Exorcism Controversy and Baptism in the Late Reformation," in *Possession and Exorcism* ed. Brian Levack, 161-163.

[176] Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols,* 179 cited in Nischan, 177.

[177] Weyer, 431.

[178] Ibid.

[179] John 14:16 RSV.

[180] Weyer, 431.

exorcism. Again, Weyer does not believe in any human causality with the supernatural. Considering the logic from Book I under the aims of the Devil, the purpose of demons is to "mirror" God in a desire to deceive man into serving the demons just as they serve God. Weyer cites Augustine: "evil spirits manufacture shadowy honors for themselves, thus to deceive those who follow Christ."[181] Weyer's assertion is exorcism —like witchcraft itself—is a deception; either the priest performing the exorcism is disingenuous, or he is being deceived by the Devil.

    In Chapter 24, Weyer notes some "memorable stories" about certain "exorcists."[182] However, the term "exorcist" is used to describe persons who perform exorcisms rather than "priest-exorcists" or priests. Weyer does not state why he has changed terminology, but this illustrates my argument of how its meaning depends upon usage. Weyer's contention is that priests cannot be both exorcists and clergy. Priests who use rituals from the Malleus are in violation of Christ's words: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" and "I am the way, the truth and the light."[183] Weyer as a Lutheran held that any "proofs of the efficacy of exorcism" were diabolical deceptions.[184] Throughout the remainder of Book V, Weyer no longer refers to persons who perform exorcism as priests but as "exorcists" because they employ "magic" in exorcisms rather than Christ's example.

    Accordingly, Weyer notes a form of exorcism known as *Condemmatio ad Gehnnam* or "Condemnation to Hell."[185] Weyer explains that this special exorcism is employed if "normal Masses and exorcisms" are ineffectual.[186] Weyer considers this another form of trickery. Weyer gives an example that he knew about first hand. He cites the example of a clergyman who charged a higher fee for "special" exorcisms when the usual measures did not work. Weyer considers these type of exorcists con-artists. In this account, the woman had to borrow money to pay for the exorcism.[187] The fee for this exorcism was

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[181] Augustine in Weyer, 433.

[182] Weyer, 435.

[183] Ibid.; Matthew 11:28; John 14:16 RSV.

[184] Kohl and Midelfort, 231.

[185] Weyer, 437.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Weyer, 438.

eighteen Gelders, which was borrowed from Father Superior of Franciscan order. Weyer states: "the priest made off with the price for the *Seinkmiss* laughing up his sleeve that the spirit from the underworld had rewarded his efforts so richly."[188] Weyer adds: "I recall later reproving the Lady [from Wiss] face-to-face for her gullibility in allowing herself to be tricked in this way."[189]

Weyer cites other accounts of spurious exorcisms. In one famous story of the spirit of Orleans, Weyer notes a first-hand account he had experienced in Orleans. In this account, Weyer describes a staged exorcism. According to Weyer, "In France, when a person passes away the custom is that funeral criers are hired for the purpose to go around . . . and sound their cymbals, calling together the multitude" to proclaim the titles of the deceased and urge them to prayer.[190] Monks are hired to perform these ceremonies, but in this case, the wife of the mayor of Orleans requested that this custom not be performed. Thus, the Franciscans were paid six gold pieces for the burial, but lost money by not performing the ceremony. According to Weyer, they were disappointed and "hoped for a greater spoil."[191] The Franciscans devised a scheme to stage an exorcism to collect more fees. In something akin to a "B" Horror movie, the monks use someone, "a novice," as a "fake" ghost to scare visitors into believing the church was haunted. According to Weyer:

> They executed the scheme as follows. They stationed a young novice up above the vault of the church. In the dead of night when they came in to murmur their usual prayers, he struck a great noise. Adjurations were employed, and exorcisms; but he spoke not a word. Ordered to give sign to show whether he was a mute spirit, he raised a tumult once again and made a loud noise; and this served as a sign.[192]

Weyer goes on to narrate how the Franciscans created the story of a "condemned spirit" that needed an exorcism, and when other "prominent citizens arrived at the church, the 'specter' would raise a tumult once again and made a loud noise."[193] Weyer explains that this fraud was eventually discovered and the monks were taken to court. They were found guilty, and having "been caught in the act, the monks still rejected

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid., 439.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid.

the judges and flaunted their special privileges."[194] Weyer's narrative of the "ghost of Orleans" illustrates not only the power of early modern belief in the supernatural, but also the ability of the monks to manipulate these fears based on their clerical status. Moreover, for my thesis, it reveals more clearly the common "tales" of witchcraft were known and understood by the public, and that these tales could be re-invented according to circumstances or conditions.

After giving several examples of false *maleficium,* Weyer discusses ways to cure "real" cases of *maleficium*. Interestingly, Weyer changes terms in his discussion from "possession" to "*maleficium,*" but again we are not quite sure how Weyer makes this distinction other than by a semantical change. He seemingly uses the terms almost interchangeably throughout his treatise and shifts from three topics in Book V: possession, exorcism and *maleficium*. These chapters again show the ever-changing nature of the early modern witchcraft belief system. Weyer asserts the "surest method for curing *maleficium*" is the teaching of Christ and his Apostles.[195] Weyer explains "when an ill surpassing the natural order manifests itself in an individual, recourse should be had, as ordained by God, to a man renowned with respect to his profession."[196] In curing *maleficium*, Weyer explains that a learned and experienced physician of "strong moral sensibilities" should examine the patient. This is because various cases of maleficium can appear as natural such as "convulsions, melancholia, epilepsy, suffocation of the uterus, decaying seed and the many varies effects of poison." [197] Only when the physician has determined that the malady exceeds "natural" limits, should the physician consult a "clergyman or blameless member of the church."[198]

We see further evidence in Chapter 28 of Weyer combining natural with demonological explanations. Weyer states that a physician can first administer "a mild purgative in cases where, either by nature or as a result of disease, or for any other reason, the patient seems to be oppressed with melancholic humor."[199] Weyer cites Pietro Pomponazzi, an Aristotelian physician from Italy who would "purge the

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[194] Ibid., 237.

[195] Weyer, 446.

[196] Ibid. 447

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid.

possessed victims' bodies of black bile."[200] In some cases, a person could be both suffering from melancholia and afflicted with disorders "of the spirit, such as madness, grief, fear, hatred of life and despair."[201] In these cases, Weyer classifies these victims as "possessed"; however, by the same logic Weyer has previously stated that the term *maleficium* could be applied. Most importantly, this combination of magic with science, perhaps "pseudo-science," serves as an example of the early modern intersection of "contrariety" or competing belief systems.

This is further illustrated later in the chapter where Weyer explicitly states then "when the exorcist could do nothing [referring to a specific case] the possessed person as though relieved of *natural* impediment, will more readily be lead through the remaining steps by the minister of the Church."[202] The minister will then inquire as to the "possessed or bewitched person's life and morals, his instruction in the Christian religion and the chief tenets of our faith and the past and present trust in God."[203] This quote is very revealing for it shows, not only the dual nature of "witchcraft affliction," but also the malleability of the nature of Weyer's medical and theological beliefs. Weyer has laboriously tried to separate "possession" from "bewitchment" for causation, but in the above passage, Weyer has used these terms in the same "connotation" to suggest that they are related by the same cause of action. If witches cannot cause "bewitchment" and it is, as Weyer has explained, an illusion or "natural ailment," then either *maleficium* has no true meaning or Weyer is very inconsistent. In the next passage, Weyer uses the word "medicine" figuratively. He states "when by vigilant inquiry and skillful conjecture the minister of the Church has come to understand, to a degree, the cause of the condition, he will apply the appropriate medication."[204] The medicine that Weyer is referring to is the "positive hope and trust in the ineffable mercy and goodness and mercy of God."[205] Weyer believes this to be the true "remedy" for *maleficium*. He recounts "many true

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[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Weyer, 448

[203] Ibid.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Weyer, 448.

and consoling stories to encourage such convictions."[206] According to Weyer's logic, when medical

remedies do not appear to cure the patient or sufferer from "*maleficium*, the condition warrants the

intervention of clergy. However, it is significant for the changing epistemology that Weyer does not use the

term "exorcist" to describe clergy who apply the medicine of God. Furthermore, this is an example of how

the language of witchcraft can arbitrarily shift depending upon a set of circumstances or conditions,

depending upon which condition the speaker wishes to apply. Weyer is shifting and combining a medical

frame of reference with demonology.

Moreover, Weyer makes a distinction between a minister and exorcist. As Weyer states, "The

faint-hearted person, cast down by lack of confidence, must be uplifted to a positive hope and trust in the

ineffable goodness and mercy of God."[207] Weyer believes that witchcraft is only permitted by God when

an individual has led an irresolute life or lacks faith in God. The objective of the minister, therefore, is to

ascertain the "bewitched person's life and morals, his instruction in the Christian religion and the chief

tenets of our faith."[208] The minister must not be satisfied with "the patient's simple knowledge of how to

say the Lord's prayer and the Apostle's Creed word for word — any wicked person might do that but

rather will the living God to be implanted in the heart in such a way that effectively grasped, it may be

perceived as God's powers."[209] Upon examination, this quotation is very revealing about Weyer's early

modern epistemological beliefs, as well as his Lutheran theology.

First, it again shows a shift away from belief in the power of language to manipulate reality

"magically" to a more modern view that language only represents or signifies an underlying epistemology.

Second, it reveals that Weyer discredits the magical efficacy of words and recognizes that the existential

import of language is derived not from an objective value but instead belief. In other words, meaning is

derived not from text but from signification.

In the next section of chapters, Weyer examines numerous examples that illustrate how to

"overcome the Devil's works." Weyer shifts back to his argument from Book I that the Devil can do

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[206] Ibid.

[207] Weyer, 448

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

nothing without God's permission.[210] He restates the argument from Book I that God holds authority over demons and "God sets limits for the devil which beyond he cannot go. Christ has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God with angels and powers and virtues subject to Him." [211] Weyer notes how those afflicted by *maleficium* should be cured, which by being reminded of God's power. As a result, Weyer believes "we must therefore bear with patience and equanimity whatever afflictions befall our flesh, whether naturally or supernaturally."[212] Weyer gives the example of Job, who "extolled God with praise . . . and though he was aware of no guilt that would make him vulnerable to the demon, he still did not accuse the demon or complain that his great tribulations were inflicted by that spirit or by any man."[213] Weyer is recalling from Book I that God has authority over the Devil and that the surest way to "cure" someone from demonic affliction is to "rouse" the victim "to an invincible patience." As Job's patience remained "inviolate, God restored all things to him abundantly and with much interest."[214] Furthermore, in Chapter 31,Weyer elaborates on the argument by stating "persons harmed by *maleficium* should be aided by communal prayers."[215] The purpose is to affirm the idea that prayer and faith are a cure for illness. Weyer notes "Christ's prayer of intersession it was brought about by Peter's faith."[216] Weyer reminds the reader that God's authority (and the faith of believers) is what determines authority over the Devil.

After arguing that faith in God is the surest cure against *maleficium*, Weyer explains "the power of alms" and "the power of fasting" to overcome witchcraft. Weyer blends magic and science, with the statement that "fasting heals disease, dries up rheum, routs demons, banishes evil thoughts and makes the mind clear."[217] In Chapter 34 and 35, Weyer returns to medical explanations for possession. He describes

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[210] Weyer, 449.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Weyer, 450.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Weyer, 451.

[215] Ibid., 453.

[216] Weyer, 453.

[217] Weyer cities Athanasius, 456.

"methods for persons dealing with multiple afflictions" and "certain cures for pretended possession."[218] In some situations, a fit all with the same shoe appropriate will not be appropriate. Weyer states "let the choice of rehabilitation be based on individual need."[219] The key idea is that rather than attempting a prescribed formulae for exorcism that the best cure is "God's hand be submitted with all [their]heart."[220] In many cases exorcisms are used that involve physical harm such as torture or beatings.[221]

In Chapter 35, Weyer discusses "feigned possession." In these cases, Weyer argues a person will mimic or imitate demonic possession because the subject falsely believes to be possessed, but in truth, could be suffering from a physical ailment or simply be deluded. For example, Weyer cites an example of a woman, who upon hearing a particular German hymn would " be thrown immediately into a state of distraction, as though seized by a demon."[222] A remedy was employed that pointed out the absurdity in this case. Weyer notes "Hippocrates says that in extreme disease the most extreme remedies are best."[223] Weyers that a "wise woman" from the village "flogged the woman with all proper zeal."[224] The "Lady of the village" (Lady Anna of Virmont who lived in a nearby castle) then attempted to convince this woman that she had been cured. According to Weyer, "she urged her to be more confident -- the power of the demon had certainly been broken by the medication -- and she bade her to sing along with her."[225] This "act of comedy," as Weyer describes it, "had been observed by all the servants."[226] Moreover, Weyer adds sarcastically, "one must be selective in using this antidote for in everyone's eyes cannot be soothed by one salve."[227]

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[218] Weyer, 458-463.

[219] Weyer, 458.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid., 461.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Weyer, 462.

[225] Weyer,

[226] Ibid

[227] Ibid.

In the above example, we see that Weyer has introduced the idea that some possessions may be fake. However, again, it is unclear how Weyer makes a distinction between "real" possession and "fake" possession if in both cases the victim and demon can "fake" a possession or the effects of possession. In Chapter 33, Weyer explains that although "sometimes there are causes for frenzy, or delirium or madness, it is nevertheless most certain that devils enter into the hearts of some men and cause frenzy in torment in them—whether accompanying natural causes or not."[228] Weyer believes that when possession is cured without physical remedies that this was a case of "possession." However, by Weyer's own reasoning, this could have been a cases of "fake" possession based on the examples from Chapter 35.

In Chapter 37, however, Weyer returns to the subject of exorcisms and states "now if the calamity does not yield to the aforementioned methods of treatment, and if Satan's work continues, one may rebuke him in accordance with Christ's teachings."[229] Jesus, in Mark 16, cast out demons in His name.[230] For example, John the Baptist used these words to drive out a demon that had lived in the temple of Diana for years: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I forbid you to dwell here any longer."[231] Belief in Christ allows "exorcism" to take place rather than the "magic" of exorcists.[232] As Weyer states, "such is the power that a pious man's fervent prayer to God has against the Devil's schemings."[233] Weyer provides a definition of exorcism: "this is conjuration; this is the strong and mighty exorcism; this is the certain way to banish the demon . . . whereby Omnipotence is called upon to do things beyond the common workings of life. This is the true doctrine—a solid foundation—the philosopher's stone far surpassing that for which the alchemists strive in vain."[234] Weyer herein rejects the Renaissance Neo-Platonic belief that a "philosopher's stone" exists, or perhaps metaphorically, that the stone could represent complete knowledge. Book V is a reflection of Weyer's confused logic that no matter how convoluted, he ultimately

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[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid., 465.

[230] Mark 16 RSV.

[231] Weyer, 465.

[232] Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology", 67.

[233] Weyer, 467.

[234] Ibid.

rejects key aspects of Renaissance magic to set the stage for his final Book VI, in which he makes a bold statement against the punishment of witches.

The conclusion to draw from Weyer's Books IV and V is that when *lamaie* are believed to have caused the "affliction of witchcraft," the claim is spurious. If there are any harmful effects, they are not the result of "witches" but a deception of the Devil. However, from this premise it is difficult to make distinctions of causation. Weyer places witchcraft along an explanatory grid which divides phenomena into clearly defined categories of witchcraft (possession v non-possession, demonic activity v illusion).[235] Through a series of cases, Weyer is engaging in an investigation of "possession" or those believed to be affected by witchcraft. As we have seen, the attempt to separate demonic possession, witchcraft, and natural phenomena is a task that is perilous for most of these categories are difficult if not impossible to distinguish.

Finally, in these two books, we see Weyer attempting to combine and make distinctions, arguably, without a difference. Weyer provides an interesting blend of medicine and demonology. The result is that he has created an impossible form of analysis to make clear distinctions between a whole range of possibilities: real possession with physical effects, imaginary possession caused by demons with imaginary effects, imaginary possession with imaginary effects, and finally natural ailments that appear as possession. Ultimately these categories break down demonology into a mixture of ideas which become impractical as an explanatory tool. This becomes even more evident in Book VI, when Weyer introduces a legal argument into witchcraft. The net result is that once the language of witchcraft modulates into a medico-legal sphere, it becomes more vulnerable to skepticism and disbelief.

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[235] Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons,*

CHAPTER 5

THE PUNISHMENT OF MAGICIANS AND WITCHES

And there is another strong argument in law, *Nihil quod est contra rationem est licitem*; for reason is the life of the law, nay the common law itself is nothing else but reason, gotten by long study, observation, and experience, and not of every man's natural reason; for, *Nemo nascitur artifex*. This legall reason *est summa ratio*.

Reports of Sir Edward Coke

Good sense is the most evenly shared thing in the world, for each of us thinks he is so well endowed with it that even those who are the hardest to please in all other respects are not in the habit of wanting more than they have. It is likely that everyone is mistaken in this. It indicates rather than the capacity to judge correctly and to distinguish the true from the false, which is properly what one calls common sense or reason .

Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*

5.1 Kingship, Witchcraft and The Law

In this final chapter, I will examine, not only how Weyer crafted his insanity defense based upon epistemological assumptions, but in addition, how his legal arguments are part of a change in the authority of language. Throughout *De praestigiis daemonum*, Weyer premises his arguments on the claims that witchcraft is contrary to his observed experience as a physician. He labors through long explanations and fanciful tales of the impossible actions of priests, exorcists, magicians and witches. He concludes that the claims of witches, wizards and the victims of witchcraft are deceptions of the Devil. Weyer's fundamental argument has been an inductive one: observation determines truth rather than a "text" or a set assumptions. Weyer argues that witchcraft, in effect, defies "common sense."[1] Weyer begins to deconstruct the concept of a witch by separating the language of witchcraft from empiricism. Weyer illustrates a loss of faith and epistemological doubt in visual perception or the "rejection of occult symbolism."[2] When empirical

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[1] Rebecca M. Wilkin, *Women, Imagination and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate 2008), 8.

[2] Brian Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity," 95.

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observation is counter to these beliefs, then the belief system is wrong or should be modified, a late Renaissance idea that foreshadowed Descartes' method of "Cartesian doubt."[3]

To better understand Weyer's legal arguments, it is necessary to place them within the context of early modern state building. In many ways, the idea of the divine right of kings and the absolutist state have a direction connection with the epistemology of witchcraft. The divine right of the king that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was an extension of the king's "natural body" into the artificial body of the state. The idea of the "royal touch" was transmuted to the office of the King and it was present the rite of crowning[4]. Thomas Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, constructed the analogy of the subjects, laws and magistrates as, being by extension, parts of the King's body. Hobbes asserted that the purpose of the sovereign "consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Sovereign Power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people, to which he is obliged by the Law of Nature, and to render an account thereof to God, the Author of that Law, and none but him."[5] The sovereignty of the state was intended to provide a higher level of stability than was possible in the medieval period.[6] In remarking on James I, Francis Bacon recognized: "that Kings rule by their laws as God did by the laws of nature, and ought as rarely to put in use their supreme prerogatives as God doth his power of working miracles."[7] The hallmark of this idea was the development of the king's government from a superior magistracy to supreme authority.[8] Jean Bodin in *Republique* argued for the idea of absolute sovereignty of the state, and at the same time, in *Demonamanie,* he demanded the prosecution of witches. For Bodin, the royal justice system was necessary to maintain order and hold the state together. He blamed the French Religious Wars, for example, on a failure of the King to enforce laws revealed by God.[9] The conceptual world of James I

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[3] Ibid., 7.

[4] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 655.

[5] Thomas Hobbes, ed. Richard Tuck, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 231.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Francis Bacon cited in Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 624.

[8] Leonard Krieger, *Kings and Philosophers 1689-1789*, (New York: Norton, 1970), 3.

[9] Nicholas Terpstra, ed., Introduction to *On the Demon-Mania of Witches,* Jean Bodin. trans. Randy A. Scott. *Renaissance and Reformation Texts in Translation*, vol 7. (Toronto: Center for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2001), 12.

and Jean Bodin was dominated by the principle of order, but the meaning of order could only be grasped by exploring its antithesis or contrary. James' *Daemonlogie* discussed how demonology was a spurious version of legitimate order.[10] Witches were seen as a threat to the political order of the crown, and laws pertaining to witchcraft reflected the "ordering" nature of the early modern state. The Devil's style of government was seen as tyranny, the antithesis of true kingship.[11] James' *Daemonolgie* is a statement about the true nature and kingship, and the centralization and reform of witchcraft laws mirrored the divine nature of kingship.

This progression towards kingship is highlighted by the legal history of Germany. In the late 1400s, German princes in an attempt to centralize early modern Europe, asserted firmer control over the legal system and proclaimed authority over private matters such as the vendetta or feud.[12] New statutes challenged feuds to establish the princes's authority over all regions within the domain. Local German courts that had been independent were standardized under the Criminal Constitution of Saxony. In the sixteenth century, Roman law was incorporated into German law. The *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* is the first major example of criminal code in the sixteenth century.[13] The legislative history of the *Carolina* is complex, as it spanned nearly four decades; a uniform criminal code did not mature until the sixteenth century in Germany.[14]

Before the Code, criminal law was largely considered a private matter.[15] In early German law, a private legal system was used in which all actions needed a private plaintiff or accuser.[16] Criminal procedure did not serve the "public good," but was designed as a tort system of compensation.[17] Some

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[10] Clark, "Witchcraft and Kingship" in *The Literature of Witchcraft*, 188.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Klaits, *Servants of Satan*, 131

[13] Langhein, 140.

[14] Ibid., 145.

[15] Ibid., 142.

[16] Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany,* 68.

[17] Langbein, 142.

crimes were considered to be a public threat, such as desertion on the battlefield.[18] However, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, an "inquisitorial" system was adopted.[19] Many crimes, such as witchcraft, were initiated using the inquisitorial system, but the key difference was procedural; the state prosecuted crimes instead of an individual.[20] Once the state was responsible for prosecuting crimes, an individual accuser was "safer" from the claim of a false accusation.[21] Furthermore, as the legal system in Germany was rationalized, a de facto "common law" system was created by the princes who authorized judicial review of witchcraft cases.[22] According to Klaits, "by combining the functions of judges and prosecutor, the Roman canonical system placed nearly irresistible temptation in the hands of eager officials." In Germany as Roman law was codified from the fifteenth century onward, insanity was a legal defense with no influence from medicine or theology.[23]

From Roman law forward, the legal principle was that if a defendant did not understand his actions, and was clearly not pretending to be mad, "his madness is punishment enough."[24] Weyer draws upon a very old legal principle, dating to the time of Henry I, that a party is not guilty of a crime unless the actions are performed with malicious intent or *mens rea*: *actus not facit reum nisi mens sit rea* (the English phrase: an act does not make one guilty unless his mind is guilty).[25] For when an actor lacks "criminal" intent or *mens rea*, based on the totality of evidence as decided by an interpreter of the law, then he or she does not posses the necessary culpability to be charged with a crime.[26] Weyer's legal argument is premised upon the degree to which an act of witchcraft is performed intentionally and knowingly.

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[18] Ibid., 142.

[19] John Langbein explains that in Germany a recognizable "criminal law" of prosecution for public purposes appears in the twelfth century, 143.

[20] Levack, 77.

[21] Klaits, 38.

[22] Klaits, 142.

[23] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 234.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Stephen J. Morse and Morris B. Hoffman, "The Uneasy Entente between Legal Insanity and Mens Rea: Beyond Clark v. Arizona," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology no.4* 97 (Summer 2008), 1071.

[26] Ibid.

Roman law did not punish anyone for merely contemplating a crime.[27] The second component of the criminal law is that an act must have occurred that results in a "harm." This act must be the result of intentional, knowing, willful, or purposeful actions. Moreover, even if an actor had intended to commit a crime, if the act was beyond human ability there could be no crime. According to Roman law, impossible feats cannot be crimes, such as stealing real property or a person's land (this would be fraud not theft under Roman law). Thus even if someone attempted to steal real property it was interpreted that this person might be insane.[28] In part, Weyer's defense of witches was not that there were only melancholy but there was no "act" or to have occurred; witches were making claims that were physically impossible such as flight or intercourse with the Devil. As interpreted by most jurisdictions in 1500, witchcraft was the crime of *maleficium* or harmful magic, understood as the production of physical harm.[29] The *Malleus* shifted focus away from the "harm" of the crime to "the spiritual state of infidelity" or the mental component, *men rea*.[30] In this sense, witchcraft was a "thought crime" or heresy punished not for actions but for illicit thoughts. This canonical perspective was supported; however, from a secular court and according to Roman law this was not an acceptable standard for criminal law—it was a crime with no "act" or *actus rea*.[31]

The problem Weyer faced in a legal defense for witches is that he and other intellectuals in the sixteenth century subscribed to a belief system in which demons could disrupt the cognitive process physically by entering the eye and moving images around. Weyer creates a form of "double-think" or a violation of the law of non-contradiction. In Weyer's logic, an assertion can be both true and false. Accordingly, Weyer can maintain a distinction between illusory acts of the Devil and real effects (either demonic in origin or natural). For witchcraft accusations, it was much easier to assume that all acts of witchcraft were not illusory but self-directed, rather than deceptions of the Devil.

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[27] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer," 246.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 235.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

For his best argument, historians regard Book 6 of *De praestigiis daemonum* as the most radical for breaking with previous demonological treatises. Brian Levack, Stuart Clark and William Monter, among other scholars, point out that Weyer's most successful argument was that witches should not be punished based upon mental incapacity.[32] In Weyer's view, witchcraft was an attempt by a mentally handicapped person to perform an act that was both legally and physically impossible.[33] Unlike Jean Bodin, Weyer claims that a physician is perhaps more qualified to examine hidden things: "this business of demons is so involved in such inextricable labyrinths that one can scarcely get himself out."[34] Only the skills of the physician or priest could aid the melancholic witch. He points out that, as a physician, he is not an expert in the law. Weyer's point is that he should be given the opportunity to examine legal arguments based on witchcraft because he seeks the objective truth: "anyone may investigate the truth that lies hidden in depths."[35] He explains, "if a legal expert or anyone else should wish to state his candid opinion about a medical point which was based upon platitudes or long usage than upon sound reasoning, we physicians would not only not regard him with envy, but would willingly accord him extra honor."[36] Weyer, epistemologically, assigns truth value to observation of experience or *a posteriori* knowledge rather than *a priori* knowledge. The questions becomes, therefore, whether this new epistemology will replace the old to account for changes in perception and belief.

Weyer is not clear what "harm" is caused through the actions of a learned magician. One could infer from Book IV, Chapter 1 that poisoners, rather than the learned magi, is an umbrella terms that could incorporate any form of magic. In Weyer's view, all magic, whether "white" or "black" in intent, involves demons and produces only illusory effects.[37] Weyer classifies magicians according to legal culpability; he

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[32] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 63-64; William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, 32-33; Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 199-200.

[33] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 63.

[34] Weyer, 479

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] D.P. Walker, 153.

measures criminality by the extent of loss and purpose.[38] For example, he states magicians are those who "seek these arts not in ignorance or duress, but studiously and with constant vigilance, expending great sums and sometimes making pilgrimages for the purpose."[39] This is the professional, learned magician, the archetypical Faustus, who purchases "wagonloads of blasphemy—I refer, of course to their abominable books—frequently at great cost"[40] The punishment for the learned magi according to Weyer is death; Moses punished magicians with death in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.[41] Weyer's position that magic is ineffectual, at best, since it is a diabolical illusion, and no result occurs from the magical "acts" of learned magicians. Weyer argues that if no harm results from ineffectual magic, then the punishment for learned magicians must be predicated on the degree to which they rigorously study and practice magic. In other words, if in the practice of magic no physical harm has occurred, e.g. poisoning, then the death penalty does not apply.

The first group of magicians that Weyer takes aim at in Book VI is the learned magicians. The evidence for this crime is the accumulation of "blasphemous books" or "pilgrimages for that [the study of magic] purpose."[42] In Book II, Weyer explains that these learned magicians defile Scripture with their claims to know the future, to enchant their enemies, raise the dead or surpass the powers of nature.[43] Weyer believes the most severe punishment should be imposed on "evil-doers, and *those who think that there is something to be gained* [italics added for emphasis] from these nefarious arts."[44] He states "the magician and poisoner is meant here and not the deluded old woman."[45] Erik Midelfort interprets Weyer as referring only to physical harm and not a "rigorous interpretation" of any harm.[46] Weyer cites Augustine

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[38] Ibid. 480-481.

[39] Weyer, 479-480.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Cited in Weyer Levit. 20:27; Deut. 18:10, 11

[42] Weyer, 480.

[43] Weyer, Book II, Chapter 2-4.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 249.

(based on Cicero): "in the Twelve Tables the most ancient Roman laws, it was said 'Let death be the penalty for him who practices these arts.'"[47] Weyer's assertion is that learned magicians should be subject to death because of their intentional, directed efforts to knowingly practice magic. Weyer's belief is that women (as witches) cannot be responsible for their actions since they cannot form the requisite *mens rea* or criminal intent.

Weyer's advocates a lower degree of scrutiny is applied to magicians who "conjure up spirits" but do not cause a "harm." This type of magician is in a different analytical category than the aforementioned learned magi. Weyer believes the appropriate punishment is either a warning or a fine. According to Weyer, "they have entered into a secret association with demons on the basis of their common aims and wishes . . . by reciting the formula of superstitious or impious conjurations, or by murmuring secretly some senseless words while blinding the eyes of spectators.They can produce nothing that is truly substantial and not fantastical or imaginary—just as all of Pharaoh's magicians."[48] However, logically Weyer has arguably failed to make a distinction with a difference; it is unclear how one could separate a learned magician, who by Weyer's stipulation performs ineffectual magic, from another magician who performs other magical feats, which Weyer calls "fantastical or imaginary." The only clear difference turns on the intent and malice aforethought of the act; whereas the learned magician is aware and actively pursues diabolical assistance, other magicians are either misled into believing they are performing acts of magic or are deceived into a false belief. Weyer's claim is that where there is no criminal intent, there is a lesser degree of criminal responsibility. He mentions "sleight of hand artists and jesting vagabonds who haunt the marketplace" as the type of "fake" magicians who "slyly and secretly lie in waiting for the wallets of the common folk."

Weyer addresses the majority of magicians, or the "so-called religious by profession, who do not hesitate to feign an occult art and to boast that they can discern and cure maleficium." These are persons that use "pseudo-science" to cure unfamiliar "afflictions" or illnesses for which the general or untrained populace seek advice. These are illnesses that have natural causes and would "puzzle the most learned

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[47] Ibid.; *The Twelve Tables* were a codification of the laws of the early Republic that addressed primarily private law (contract law) and with the law of the disposal of the dead. Alan Watson, *The Spirit of Roman Law* Athens: University of Georgia 1995, 1.

[48] Weyer, 480

physician." These "magicians" attribute illness to maleficium or enchantment and "point a finger at some woman—often an innocent woman." Weyer holds these individual in contempt and considers them "among the deadliest vultures of ill-gotten gains, forgers of counterfeit coin, because they lure others on under the pretext of piety." They are the source of civil discord, fomenting violence and creating havoc. In other words, these are the classic "accusers" of the Early Modern European witch hunts. According to Weyer they, "echo through the neighborhoods, villages, and cities, bringing sore distress. Yet these individuals have their defenders, perhaps because of their claim to religion." Although Weyer believes the enormity of the crime of these "accusers" to be severe, he is unclear about what punishment they deserve. It is clear, however, that they are not the same as the learned magi. Whereas the learned magi intentionally and knowingly practice magic for the expressed purpose of "Satanic science," these magicians are "deceivers" of others either to affirm their religious status or ill-gotten gains. By claiming to "cure" maleficum, they are perceived as healers of witchcraft. Weyer believes they deserve death, but leaves the "proper authorities the power of decreeing and adding or changing the penalty in proportion to the enormity of their crime." At minimum, they should be "banished" and prevented from this course of action and precluded from the enjoyment of material possession. Weyer adds to the list of magicians those who "violate the majesty and genuine use of the Divine Word, in an intolerable affront to medicine, the most sacred and useful of all arts." This includes exorcists that employ ineffectual and "confused and incongruous words, some sacred name or phrases of Holy Scripture cleverly used to hide their deceit." According to Weyer these "one must admit that these men have overleaped the limits of superstition; for this reason they should be bitterly censured and reined in . . .." Weyer makes a distinction in criminal culpability based on intent. Weyer considers those magicians that knowingly accuse others of witchcraft more liable than a magician that falsely practices magic.

Weyer delineates varying degrees of criminal culpability in each chapter of Book VI. For example, in Chapter 2, Weyer examines another class of magician. As with the previous class of magicians that claimed to be able to detect and cure witchcraft, many magicians claim divination. However, rather than locating witches, they claim to be able to locate missing or stolen objects. According to Weyer, "seduced by the fumes of self-esteem and seeking prestige, these people lay claim to an occult art and science of which they are totally ignorant." Weyer does not know if these magicians are aware or are

intentionally deceiving others with false magic, but he nonetheless states that they should not go unpunished because they rely upon lies and the Father of Lies." Since they falsely accuse others of thievery, or other crimes, they slander families for generations and in this manner: "Well-known neighborhoods that had previously been most peaceful," says Weyer, "are torn and distracted with bitter enmity and hatred." Weyer argues the punishment for these "traitorous individuals" should be silence and an arbitrary fine imposed by a magistrate. He also notes individuals who carry a "magic" ring or crystal which contains a "trapped" demon. According to Weyer, "like some bought or captured slave, the demon is bound so tightly and securely that he now labors alone, divining or uncovering hidden masters." This is an illustration of the belief in magical stones and gems in the Middle Ages. Gems or rings were often thought to possess magical powers of divination. Weyer believes that these rings should be destroyed and those that make and use them should be punished according to the magnitude of their crime. In addition, magical books should be burned following the practice of Romans, who banished astrologers and enchanters from Italy.

In Chapter 3, Weyer begins a discussion of laws pertaining to magicians and witchcraft. He starts with a discussion of Roman law as it applies to the punishment of sorcery. According to Weyer, Roman emperor Constantine II stated "many persons using magical arts do not hesitate to disturb the elements and ruin the life of innocent people." Weyer cites Pope Gregory IX from Decretales: "No one shall consult a diviner and all must cease from divining; anyone doing otherwise shall be punished . . . those who perform enchantments for the purpose of evil are to be punished; even if they do so for a good purpose they shall be punished according to Canon Law." However, Weyer points out that this law does not apply to "our witches or Lamiae,being ignorant raving old women, [who] know no arts and cannot in any way or harm the elements (even as no man can do) nor can they compel demons to do injury to others." The purpose of Weyer's examination of decrees and canonical law is to establish its inapplicability to witches, per se: "there is no mention, in these laws and decrees, of the lamiae that we have described, or the crimes attributed to them. Therefore they should not be subjected to the penalties of these laws and decrees." The significance of these section, in terms of Weyer's legal argument, is that it shows that magicians intentionally practice magic or "In each case, there is a withdrawal from God, whether one speaks of actual magicians or poisoners or figurative ones—the deceivers who prophesy falsehood in the name of

Christ, and the flatters who by their poisonous words corrupt the hearing of the multitude in order to turn their ears away from the truth and in the direction of fable and error."

Weyer's text reveals that even though a modern inquisitorial system had been adopted in the Holy Roman empire, many times these procedures were ignored and an accusatory system was still followed. In Weyer's view, this is a gross procedural error in the prosecution of witchcraft cases, but what is more important, he believes that these statutes do not apply to women. Weyer cites the *Constituio criminalis Carolina,* the criminal code for the Holy Roman Empire, as the basis for his objection to criminal procedure. Although Weyer recognizes that a form of criminal procedure should exist to function within the boundaries of a "law," the flaw in this statute is that it addresses an imaginary or concealed crime. Due to the decentralized legal structure of the Holy Roman Empire, the *Constitutio criminalis carolina* was not uniformly followed, particularly in smaller regions. According to Brian Levack, "It should not surprise us that the largest witch hunts took place within Germany; that the reports of the most barbarous tortures come from Germany; and that the total number of executions for witchcraft within the Empire was greater than all others combined." Weyer recognizes the flaws in the legal procedure system in early modern Germany. The *Carolina code* states:

> When someone confesses sorcery, he shall also be questioned about the causes and the circumstances (as above), and moreover, with what, how and when the sorcery occurred—with what words and deed. Further, when the person examined states that he hid or held on to something facilitated the said sorcery, then afterwards there shall be an attempt to find it; when, however, the said sorcery was committed with other things through word or deed, then they too shall be investigated to see whether they are infected with sorcery. The person shall also be asked from whom he learned such sorcery, and how it came about; whether he also employed such sorcery against more people, and against whom, and what damage thus occurred.[49]

According to Article 17 of Imperial German statutes[50], "no person shall be sent to jail or subjected to questioning as a result of evidence given by an infamous magician or practitioner of magic."[51] Furthermore, as Article 32 states, "if anyone wishes to teach the art of magic, of if he threatens someone with magic, or if he threatens someone with magic and some misfortune follows, or if he is on familiar

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[49] *Constituito Criminalis Carolina* Section 52, 1532 cited in Langheim, 281.

[50] The Reichstag adopted the *Carolina* code as an imperial edit; therefore Article numbers from the Reichstag are different than section numbers from the *Carolina* code; See Mora, lvii, Langheim, 267 discussed passage of the Code as Imperial law.

[51] Weyer, 489.

terms with enchanters or enchantresses . . . this evidence seems to provide reasonable and sufficient grounds for subjecting him to questioning."[52] In the above statute, the masculine "he" is used to identify the actor or person suspected of practicing magic rather than the feminine "she," but the statute uses the feminine form "enchantresses" to refer, not to the person charged in the statute, but instead as an agent used by the actor named in the statute. Weyer argues, in his legal reasoning, that this statute is misapplied to women because "merely on the basis of malicious accusation or the false and ignorant suspicions of a rude and witless populace, the authorities throw poor old women into the terrible den of thieves."[53] Weyer's argument is that the court violates criminal procedure, either by not questioning the women, or by relying upon insufficient evidence to arrest the women and then charging them with *maleficum*. However, it also shows the difficulty enforcing the rule of law in the sixteenth century. Weyer cites a first-hand account he had experienced in which a "count of his acquaintance had two poor women cruelly tortured and then burned on suspicion of *maleficium*."[54] The basis for this was the "torments of a nobleman" and the confession of one of the girls under torture. Weyer states that he "demonstrated the falsity of the whole proceeding by a single argument: the nobleman was found to be a victim of demonic possession."[55] This illustrates the dangers of applying informal procedure followed in "accusatory" crimes, common for criminal procedure during the witch hunts.[56] Moreover, this incident illustrates Weyer's combination of reason with magic; he uses logic to undercut one argument, yet maintains other aspects of magical explanations. He recognizes the falsehood of confession under torture, but provides an answer that still fits within his belief system of magic.

Weyer was not objecting to the procedural rules pertaining to magicians; he was referring to the misapplication of these statutes to women. In Weyer's judicial summation at the end of his book, he gives examples in Chapters 5-7 of magicians that have been reformed, and argues those who repent from the

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[52] Ibid., 490.

[53] Weyer, 490.

[54] Ibid., 491.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 75-78.

crime of magic should avoid punishment.[57] Weyer's position reveals his mixed feelings about magicians. While he vigorously denounces them in Chapters 1-3, he later argues for leniency for the repentant.[58]

<div align="center">5.2 Thinking With Women[59]</div>

In Chapter 8, Weyer begins an analysis of *lamiae* or witches. Weyer explains that like the magicians, these women are corrupted by Satan and in need of repentance.[60] Weyer applies the logic of Erasmus towards heretics: heresy is a mental crime and does not hurt anyone but the heretic.[61] His analysis will eventually lead to the conclusion that witches are not heretics and therefore should not be punished. Weyer claims that even if witches intentionally practice *maleficium,* because they are deceived, they do not have the mental capacity to understand the consequences of their actions, and therefore, they cannot be held responsible for their actions.

The major reason for the development of the *Carolina* Code was the widespread use of torture in criminal proceedings.[62] The Code sets forth a jurisprudence of torture designed to address the "complaints brought to court against princes, imperial cities and other authorities that have allowed innocent people to be condemned to death and executed unlawfully."[63] Although the old German legal system shifted from an antiquated medieval system towards a rational legal system, it depended upon torture for prosecuting crime. Related to torture was the old medieval idea of the ordeal or trial by fire or water. In the Middle Ages, the ordeal was often used as a test to establish the guilt or innocence of a person in medieval

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[57] Weyer gives the example of Pope Slyvester II who gained his pontificate by the "evil arts"but confessed his "sin of magic and urged all people to live a good and holy life, putting aside ambition and diabolical deceit," 493.

[58] Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," 68.

[59] Rebecca M. Wilkin, Women, Imagination and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France Hampshire, UK: Ashgate 2008. Wilkin argues that like Clark's Thinking With Demons, in order to understand Weyer's legal argument for the non-punishment of witches, we must first understand how women were interpreted in the sixteenth century.

[60] Weyer, 498.

[61] Wilkin, 15.

[62] Langheim, 167.

[63] Ibid., 155.

courts.[64] The accused would clear himself of criminal charges by invoking divine assistance.[65] The

substantive criminal law in the Middle Ages used ordeals as proof of divine judgement assayed through

battle, ordeal, oath and oath-helping.[66] Torture was considered an infallible method of determining the

truth.[67] Safeguards were placed into the codes to prevent abuse. The French code of Francis I called for

"all other investigatory means" before using torture.[68] The purpose of the *Carolina* was to limit the use of

torture:

> Torturing shall be conducted according to the circumstances of the suspicion regarding the person
> —much, often or seldom, hard or lenient—according to the discretion of a good, sensible judge; and what
> the tortured person says shall not be taken down transcribed while he is being tortured, rather he will make
> his statement when he is released from torture.[69]

Although some jurists recognized that the information gained from torture was not reliable, the

designers of the use of interrogatory torture were still convinced of its reliability in obtaining evidence.[70]

Weyer argues that a physician is more capable of discerning the veracity of witchcraft accusations for the

physician's training as an interpreter of signs.[71] A physician is trained in internal medicine and observes

outside of the body to determine the inside.[72] Torture, rather than revealing the truth, only occludes the

truth by creating more confusion analogous to the Devil's deception. Weyer concludes that "Christians

should not strip themselves of every human emotion . . . and hand these women over to the torture

chamber."[73]

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[64] Klaits, 153.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Langhein, 142.

[67] Klaits, 152.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Carolina* Code (58) cited in Langheim, 283.

[70] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 82.

[71] Wilkin, 28.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Weyer, 499

Weyer, however, is referring to the practice of judicial torture, not as punishment, but as a method of interrogation.[74] Torture, in this context, is judicial or interrogatory and part of the pre-trial or interrogation process.[75] Statements made by the accused while being tortured were used as self-incrimination. Weyer explains that although an arrest and imprisonment are distinct in legal procedure, in Germany during the witchcraft prosecutions, imprisonment and custody were the same. The *Carolina* Code section 52 states that custody is a preliminary inquiry into the nature of the crime, and it does allow for this of torture if probable cause exists.[76] However section 56 of the *Carolina* Code stipulates that a confession made by torture is subject to judicial review: "the prisoner shall also at minimum two or more days after the torture and his confession (as set by judge) be brought before the competent judge . . . and his confession read to him by the court scribe, after which he will be asked a second time whether is confession is true, and what he says to that shall also be transcribed."[77] The prisoner can retract the confession, but if the suspicion is nonetheless manifest . . . "then he shall be returned to the gaol and again examined under torture."[78] In this case, the judge, at his discretion, can torture the prisoner until a confession is extracted.

However, Weyer argues that custody has disappeared from criminal proceedings, and most often the accused is "frightened by long solitude, filthy cells, grim darkness and various demonic specters."[79] The condition is only made worse by imprisonment (rather than custody) and they often confess in exchange for ending "various torments."[80] Weyer explains that often potions are used to drug the women and coerce a confession. Weyer proclaims, "how then can one look for truth—so necessary to a criminal process—from these women whose minds have been impaired by the power of such potions?"[81]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 80.

[76] *Carolina* Code section 60-61 cited in Langhein, 282-283.

[77] *Carolina* Code 56 cited in Langhein, 283.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Weyer, 499.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

The next topic Weyer addresses is fraudulent experiments to identify *lamiae*. With the occult crime of *maleficium*, there is no "evidence" other than a witness or a confession.[82] However, since *maleficium* was "concealed" there were no eye witnesses or evidence. As Weyer states, "but alas in order to recognize *lamiae* beyond any doubt and to point a finger at them, so to speak, people have recourse to water as though it were a sacred anchor of dependability."[83] In the seventeenth century, the water ordeal was in use throughout England, New England and Germany.[84] The idea behind these ordeals is that after someone has been identified as a witch, an impossible "experiment" is conducted (which is merely another form of torture) that will always yield a "positive result." Weyer describes a water test whereby "the *lamiae's* hands are bound together and thrown into water." If the woman floats in the water she is deemed to be a witch. Weyer points out the absurdity of this belief: "what reason can you find herein that they should be less able to float than any other woman?" Weyer notes that the "causes of floatation (lightness, want of density, retention of sustaining air, the aptness of the living body for floating, and other such natural causes) are not more present in these bodies—even for the guilty."[85] Weyer states "I make bold to state that if any such case is seen to surpass the natural order, it is done so by the Devil, who supports the falsely suspected women so that they do not sink. God permits this because of the unbelief of the magistrate who allows this fallacious experiment."[86] Yet, while Weyer claims these experiments to be falsehoods, he allows for the possibility that there could be a supernatural element. This serves, again, as another example of Weyer's mixture of science with magic. When observable phenomena have a "natural" explanation, Weyer will search for the truth and a "common sense" answer, but will qualify his empirical knowledge with the belief that the Devil is capable of deception.

Accordingly, in Chapter 10, Weyer explains the "proper steps to be taken in an inquisition."[87] The first step in an inquiry should be to determine "whether the troubles and calamities which the *lamaie* claim

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[82] Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 85.

[83] Weyer., 500.

[84] Klaits, 153.

[85] Weyer, 500.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Weyer, 502.

to have brought upon others are really as such or whether they are caused naturally."[88] Weyer maintains

that professional medical experts should be consulted "for their renowned understanding of natural objects

and properties thereof"[89] He explains "one cannot rely on the confession of a melancholic person or a

mentally incompetent person."[90] Finally, Weyer reminds the reader that the Devil "scatters" about

indiscriminately reports of confirmed confessions and "anyone who lends a ready ear—believing the

accusation and the confession to be valid—will finally find himself so deluded that like a person trapped

in a labyrinth, he will never get out."[91] Witch confessions often played a self-validating role in that the

accused believed in the legitimacy of the "ordeal" or trial. In another example of Weyer's methodology,

his confidence in sense-experience as a lens revealing the truth serves as a barometer for evaluating

witchcraft confessions.

Until this point, we have been examining Weyer's epistemological and legal questions

concerning punishment for the crime of witchcraft. However, another way of looking at Weyer's tales of

witchcraft is to view them as "generic" narratives. Weyer's treatment of witchcraft confessions shows that

he examines them at the literal level. According to Rebecca Wilkin, Weyer makes obvious to everyone

what is "not in fact evident to many people.[92] He deconstructs each point in the three confessions and

explains that the facts in each case are physically impossible. When the Devil is in the narrative, there is

always a chance for deception, even of the most trained physician. Weyer examines the confessions of

these women and explains that they are medically impossible. For example, Weyer describes a confession

involving an apple and a miscarriage and explains that an apple cannot cause a miscarriage, unless poison

had been added. In another confession, the woman also poisoned beer to kill the daughter of a man and

used *maleficum* to injure the wife of another man.[93] He describes how the victim of *maleficia* of draught

beer required a "more alert investigation . . . including a consultation with doctors known for their

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 503.

[91] Ibid., 503.

[92] Wilkin, 42.

[93] Weyer, 505.

understanding of such matters."[94] Furthermore, as Weyer states, "that which happen's by God's will and by God's hidden plan or that which is often permitted to the Devil by God, is often suggested by the demon to a woman's defective brain—as though it has all been done by her."[95] He further explains that there should have been a more careful investigation into the cooking vessel used to prepare the beer which caused spoilage.[96] Weyer suggests that rather than witchcraft, the explanation may be ergot poisoning.[97] In a third confession, in Rotterdam and Schiedam, Weyer explains another impossibility i.e., the sinking of a fishing ship, attributed to *maleficum*. Instead he theorized that it was caused by a great quantity of stones in a fishing net. According to the tale, Weyer explains:

> this unexpected misfortune was once attributed to *maleficum*, and they laid hold of a woman who admitted without hesitation that the misfortune had come about by means of evil-arts. She said that while they were waiting in readiness to catch the fish, she flew through a window pane...and plunged into the sea in a muscle shell (it is called mosselscolp by our countrymen), passing through the water until she came to where the herring were; there she drove the herring away by enchantment and substituted the stones. Sentence was passed at once and she was consigned o flames to be consumed.[98]

Weyer's explanation defies logic; as Weyer elucidates, "even if such a creature could have resolved into blasts of wind, their force in bursting through must have shattered the glass."[99] However, as has been illustrated, Weyer pointed to logical errors in witchcraft confessions as a way of showing that since they could not be legitimate there could be no charge of *maleificum*. According to Weyer these charges are unfounded: "let these judges make up all the explanations that they wish; they will never convince me by any line of reasoning that so bloodthirsty a sentence can rightly be pronounced in a matter that is either not understood or else located in a sphere outside of reason and the nature of things."[100] Weyer goes on to describe these confessions as "nursery tales" that have no credence. He notes that an "infinite number of confessions might be recounted from the public documents of the magistrate, but if

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[94] Ibid., 506.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 507.

[97] Baxter, "Unsystematic Psychopathology," 69.

[98] Weyer, 508.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

one weighs them carefully, he will find a labyrinth of impossibility."[101] Klaits argues that witchcraft

confessions often only confirmed what the accused already believed. In the era of the witch hunts, the

accused were often convinced that God would perform a miracle rather than permit an "innocent person to

confess falsely under pain of torture."[102] As a result, the experience of torture only confirmed guilt in the

mind of the accused. According to Klaits, "many confessions stemmed from the honest belief of

suggestible suspects in their own guilt when they saw that God did not protect them from torture."[103] In

addition, relatively few prisoners had enough "confidence and psychological bearing" to not confess

during an interrogation.[104] Christina Larner notes that "witch confessions represent an agreed story

between the witch and inquisitor in which the witch drew, through hallucination or imagination on a

common store of myth, fantasy and nightmare to respond to the inquisitor's questions."[105]

  In Chapter 25, Weyer discusses examples of coerced confessions. In these cases, rather than

dismissing confessions as patently false based upon physical impossibility, Weyer argues that the victims

are forced to confess after denying their guilt. The difference from the previous cases is that these women

do not believe that they performed *maleficium*. Whereas in Chapters 10-14 the examples were positive

affirmations of *maleficium*, in Chapter 25, Weyer gives examples of cases that involve false accusations

and forced confessions. It is important to note, however, that these confessions formed the basis for a

conviction. In inquisitorial procedures, once the victim was arrested, in a sense the criminal proceeding

was already complete. Often the magistrate would act upon hearsay evidence and then interrogate the

prisoner using torture. The most important point to note is that there was little adherence to rules of

evidence or procedure from the *Carolina code*. Weyer, in Chapter 25, gives several examples of unjust

punishment based upon false evidence that was acted upon by a legal official. In one example, a

soothsayer promised to provide information against a woman accused of *maleficium*. The information later

was proven to be false, based upon the observation of the official. However, the woman had already been

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[101] Ibid., 509.

[102] Klaits, 153.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 155.

[105] Larner cited in Klaits, 155.

punished by death. Weyer cites an example of a woman falsely jailed who denied the crime and died in jail as a result of torture.[106]

In another case, seven judges interrogated a woman accused of *maleficium*, who was then personally examined by Weyer: "she was examined by me and pronounced innocent."[107] Later, she was released by a bishop. However, he explains "they ordered the arrest of another woman from the city who had been suspected of *maleficium* for many years."[108] She was suffering from a disease, which she died from upon being arrested. Weyer draws a distinction between "custody" and "imprisonment." In most cases, an arrest is merely a pretext for imprisonment to gain a confession. A general summary of Weyer's section of witchcraft confessions follows: confessions were not useful as a form of evidence in witchcraft accusations, either because the confession is substantively false, or the confession itself was acquired through torture, which renders the confession invalid. Moreover, the last examples are of false punishment. In these cases, punishment was imposed without a confession, e.g., the victim was effectively punished in the interrogation process. The processes of custody and interrogation are indistinguishable, so that an arrest itself constitutes conviction and punishment.

In the next section, Weyer argues for tolerance in dealing with witchcraft. Weyer, basing his position on the arguments of Erasmus, argues that heresy and witchcraft are not the same. In Chapter 26, Weyer gives the example of Duke Wilhelm of Cleve,Julich and Berg, whom Weyer served as personal physician.[109] Weyer considers Duke Wilhelm to be an example of the tolerance that should be shown by the law regarding witches:

To you Prince, I dedicate the fruit of my thought. For thirteen years your physician, I have heard expressed in your court the most varied opinions concerning witches; but none so agree with my own as do yours, that witches can harm no one through the most malicious will or the ugliest exorcism, that rather their imagination—inflamed by the demons in a way not understandable to us—and the torture of melancholy makes them only fancy that they have caused all sorts of evil. . . You do not like others, impose heavy penalty on perplexed, poor old women. You demand evidence. . . When a Prince of such

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[106] Weyer, 519.

[107] Ibid., 521

[108] Ibid.

[109] Mora, lviii.

virtues protects me, then I have faith that I can make short work of the snapping teeth of insolent quarters. . . . [110]

This dedication encapsulates not only Weyer's general argument for the non-punishment of witches, but reflects the "singular wisdom of certain princes."[111] Weyer notes that too often "mature deliberation, discretion and a complete understanding of nature are sometimes lacking in those who counsel princes or who hold magistrates or govern the state."[112] Weyer explains in Chapter 25, "the facts clearly show that wise and timely deliberations are employed against the schemes of demons, without the torturing of innocent victims. . .. "[113] Weyer gives a counter-example to Chapter 25, in which the magistrate acted upon false information without a thorough investigation. Weyer explains "the noble Duke Wilhem of Berg deserves credit here in his own right."[114]

He cites another example in support of a woman accused of witchcraft based on charges that "others insisted upon these points so keenly in the count's presence that if I had not earnestly opposed them by the stronger power of Reason, and by the very truth of the matter, the flames would have swallowed her up in a few days."[115] Witchcraft confessions are "generic" in the sense that they contain elements of a "familiar tale" or motif that the listeners want to believe. Weyer argues, however, that it is the power of observation and sense that must guide investigations into the truth of the confessions, not "nursery tales."[116] The tale, as Weyer explains, is that of a woman accused of practicing "enchantments." According to her accusers, her son gave her a "clod of earth" to break her free from arrest.[117] It was believed by her accusers that the woman might "free herself from chains" to avoid the death penalty. After the arrest, her actions only "confirm" guilt for the accusers. As Weyer states, "her accusers had put a

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[110] Ibid. Weyer dedicated his treatise to Prince Wilhelm, Duke of Cleves,Julich and Berg.

[111] Weyer, 522

[112] Weyer, 523.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Weyer, 509.

[117] Weyer, 523.

sinister interpretation upon this [the clod of earth]."[118] Weyer explains that she provided a logical

explanation for this "magical" clod of earth: "she effectively disposed of the first charge brought against

her by replying that her son had given not a clod of earth but some linens" to use as a bandage for her

injured legs.[119] Boiling oil had been poured onto her as an "interrogation" tactic so that a false confession

might be wrung from her.[120] Again, it is clear the arrest/interrogation is a mere sham, a facade of justice

where none exists. The accusers had pre-determined the prisoner was guilty before the arrest; her actions

and words spoken were used against her to complete a picture of guilt. In the case of Duke Wilhelm, the

outcome was different. According to Weyer, "when she was constantly being insulted by the people

because of her reputation for *maleficium*, she told her children that she would challenge the person

responsible for her death to appear before the most fair tribunal of Christ"[121] She further stated "God is

the sole protector of justice." Her pleas moved the Duke; therefore, based on the totality of the

circumstances, he released the woman. Weyer notes this example because "these princes [Duke Wilhelm]

and men of distinction give full weight to the ever pious and praiseworthy maxim that it is better to release

ten persons who are guilty than to punish one who is innocent."[122]

5.3 The Insanity Defense

In Chapters 27 and 28 Weyer begins an argument that will lead to his conclusion in the last

chapter that witches should not be punished. Weyer reiterates that persons being misled or acting by error

should not be given "corporeal punishment."[123] Augustine states "insofar as the fearsome judges and laws

are involved, we desire our enemies to be corrected, lest they incur the penalty of an everlasting

judgement."[124] Weyer also explains, as with some of the illicit magicians that repent, those that who have

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Weyer, 524.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Weyer, 524.

[122] Weyer, 524

[123] Ibid., 524-525.

[124] Ibid., 525.

been misled by Satan should not be put to death.[125]Augustine further explains, "Through His servants the Lord overturns the reign of error; but he commands that the human beings themselves, insofar as they are human beings, should be corrected rather than destroyed."[126] As further support, Weyer cites Chrysostom on chapter 2 of Genesis: "heretics are afflicted in a similar fashion as those who labor under a disease and who are physically blinded; the latter, because of the weakness of their eyes, resist the light of the sun and because of their poor health, they refuse even the best and most healthful foods. . .. "[127] Weyer's approach to heretics is that they suffer from a type of disease or ailment and should be given the opportunity for a cure. In the same way that a medical condition inhibits health, a witch suffers from a condition of the mind that obfuscates the truth.

Moreover, Weyer is opposed to the dogma of medieval scholastics "consign a man to the flames because of rubrics which the monks compose at will."[128] Weyer gives the example of Christ's parables. Christ planted, nurtured, advanced and supported His church for centuries. Erasmus wrote, "the servants who wish to gather up the weeds prematurely are those who think that false apostles should be put to death by the sword . . . although the father of the house does not wish them to be removed but to be tolerated on the chance that they may repent. . .. "[129] Weyer points out that heretics do not pose a threat to Christianity: "for more than four hundred years after the birth of Christ, we nowhere read that orthodox Christians sought the aid of Caesar against the heretics."[130] Weyer explains that laws against heretics were passed by invoking temporal power on an ecclesiastical matter.[131] The Bishops, then, sought the aid of the Roman emperor against a threat by the Donatists to orthodox Christians.[132] Weyer's point is that over time the idea of a heretic has been over-extended to include, not only not those that pose a real and imminent threat to

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 527.

[128] Ibid., 533.

[129] Cited in Weyer, 529.

[130] Weyer, 530.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid. Weyer is referring to a schism within the Catholic church.

the Church but instead those who are ideologically at odds with Church doctrine. According to Weyer, the reader should "now please compare the leading bishops of the Church with [these vindictive] monks, compare the murderous Donatists with persons who have perhaps said the monastic orders are not necessary to the Church, or that in public prayer it is more seemly to invoke the spirit of Christ than the Virgin Mary. . .."[133] Weyer asks: "How is it, moreover, that in times past when no schools of theology had been established, people fought successfully against heretics by using the Word of God alone?"[134] Weyer notes that for eight hundred years it was the will of Christ that no heretic be killed. Weyer explains that now monks misuse Matthew 13:42, which states: "The Son of Man will send forth his angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."[135] According to Weyer, the meaning of this passage is not that "Christ was speaking there about the sword of the princes. . . He was rather speaking about the Apostolic goal of gently bringing all men to salvation."[136]

After challenging the legitimacy of the term "heretic," Weyer questions the authority of monarchs to decree the death penalty no matter what the transgression. Weyer notes that often a prince will apply the penalty in cases that are in error.[137] Weyer explains "if there is definite error, there is no need for theologians since a knowledge of facts will suffice. If the error is doubtful it is not the prerogative of any chance theologian but specifically the Roman See to render judgement on articles of faith."[138] Weyer, like Erasmus, is criticizing the "unwarranted merger" or ecclesiastical and legal concerns.[139] In many cases, "the trial is conducted insincerely and illegally by informants, prosecutors and judges, who are all monks; sentence is pronounced in the prison by three priors."[140] Unlike our modern legal system which provides

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[133] Ibid., 532.

[134] Ibid., 532.

[135] Matthew 13: 41-42, RSV.

[136] Weyer, 533.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Midelfort, "Johann Weyer and the Insanity Defense," in *The German People and the Reformation*, 239.

[140] Weyer, 533.

for the option of a judge trial or jury trial, in many witchcraft cases, there was no trial. The confession itself formed the basis of conviction. Many princes are unaware and should be informed "the law is a pretext" for the personal hatred of some monks.[141] Weyer makes a distinction between heretics that deserve the death penalty and those persons accused of heresy as pretext to enforce church dogma. According to Weyer, "they authorize the inquisition to go as far as the death penalty, but they specify certain heresies."[142] The distinction is that true heretics "despoil the Son of God, and much more also the Holy Spirit as the reality of the divine nature. The Apollinarists denied that Christ was truly man and thus deprived Him of man's better part, his soul."[143] Weyer observes convicted heretics who "persist in error or fall back into heresy that they have foresworn are simply to be handed over to the secular courts."[144] His argument is that the standard for heresy is too low; the charge is made in circumstances in which "a person is dragged off to the fire if he has doubts as to whether the Roman pontiff has authority over purgatory."[145] Christ "did not quench the smoking wick nor break the bruised reed: 'from the beginning the wolf has pursued the lamb, but by patient endurance the lamb has always prevailed."[146] The overall argument for Weyer's thesis, is that heresy is not a religious "crime" in the sense that it represents civil disobedience.

In Chapter 20, Weyer notes the opinion of various legal experts that *lamaie* who repent should avoid 'corporeal punishment" and their confessions are not to be used as the basis for a conviction. The famous sixteenth-century Italian jurist, Andrea Alciati discusses an inquisitor of heretical women that the "ancients" called *Lamiae* and his contemporaries called *strigae*.[147] The inquisitor "incinerated more than one hundred of them."[148] In response to accusations of witchcraft, Aliciati responds: "as a result of these proceedings it was generally agreed that once some poor woman called upon the name of Jesus during the

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141 Ibid.

142 Weyer, 534.

143 Ibid.

144 Weyer,

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Midelfort, "Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 240; Weyer, 537.

148 Ibid.

exhibition, the whole spectacle disappeared along with the leaping dancers and their lovers."[149] Alciati therefore, concludes that even the physicians attribute extreme consequences to the corrupted mind and the tricks of the imagination.[150] This serves as an example of the medico-legal sphere of influence on the procedure of witches in the sixteenth century. Alciati, a legal expert, recognizes what Weyer, as a physician, asserts that witches are innocent of a crime because they suffer from delusions. Aliciati further states "hence arise the problems of those who suffer from nightmare . . . all of which are cured by medication."[151] We see the intersection of the medical field within the law; Aliciati recognizes the empirical validity of a medicine in asserting the reason for the law. Erik Midelfort notes that sixteenth-century arguments of "melancholy" or mental impairment were known as an explanation, but they were not considered as legal arguments until Weyer's publication.[152] Again, we see the nexus of the legal-medical sphere within *De praestigiis*. This idea of reason and law culminates into Weyer's argument that not all intentions should be punished. Based on the principle of Roman and English common law jurisprudence, an act must be committed with the "guilty mind" or *mens rea*.[153] With no criminal intent, there is no crime for certain offenses.

Weyer begins his "insanity defense" in Chapter 22 of Book VI. Weyer notes that in legal texts: "men should be punished more severely, inasmuch as it is more their part to surpass women in virtue and govern by example."[154] The implication is that because women are more subject to temptation they are, therefore, less culpable. Weyer explains that women are not to be punished because they cannot be held responsible. Weyer cites Aristotle, "why is it more wicked to kill a woman than a man, though the male is

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[149] Weyer, 537.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Midelfort, "Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 240.

[153] See Sir Edward Coke, Report on the Law; As an example, western jurisprudence adopted the idea of mens rea into the common law and most jurisdictions in the United States adopted common law procedures using the Model Penal Code. The 1962 American Model Penal Code states: "in order to be blameworthy for any activity, the suspect must have done the act willingly, with the knowledge of what the final result would be or in a reckless manner that has no consideration for the safety of others." Moreover, every crime that is tried in court has two factors: the *Actus Reus*, which is the actual carrying out of the crime itself, and Mens Rea, an intent to commit that act. See Le Fevre, on Criminal Law 3rd ed.

[154] Weyer, 540

by nature superior to the female? It is because struggling against a weaker opponent is nothing manly but foolish and wicked."[155] This quotation is integral to the logic of Weyer's legal argument because it is an inchoate insanity defense; women are subject to a lower standard of scrutiny than men because they do not possess the same mental faculties.[156] The crux of the argument is that women cannot formulate criminal intent. Weyer states, "let us continue the thread of narrative to show the method of punishment I think should be employed to chastise people of this sort."[157]

In Chapter 23, Weyer starts to weave together the elements of his legal argument. He restates the basic line of reasoning from Book IV that witchcraft causes no harm but for the imagination.[158] He establishes the basis for non-punishment in part on the idea that no "act" or harm as been inflicted. Moreover, the appropriate punishment, as Weyer explored in Chapters 17 and 18 for dissension, is not death, but rather "they should be informed with sounder doctrine . . . and pledge alliance once more to Christ, and so that like limbs disjointed from their bodily connections, they may by repenting be restored to place with suitable binding."[159] Weyer cites *Ecclesiasticus*, "to repent has given the way of justice."[160] Most importantly, Weyer recognizes that there are different states or degrees of criminal culpability: "if anyone should argue contentiously that the will or intent should be punished more severely, let him first distinguish between the fully-formed will of a sane person, which has truly begun to be directed toward action, and the feelings of an impaired mind or (if you prefer) the corrupt will of a mentally defective person."[161] He further stipulates "God, Who searches the heart and reins, does not allow them to be punished equally with those of sound mind."[162] Thus, we have the "insanity plea," or not guilty due to the

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[155] Aristotle, *Problemata* 2.9.11, cited in Weyer, 540.

[156] As Rebecca Wilkin states "making sense of misogyny" is thinking with women (borrowed from Stuart Clark's phrase "Thinking With Demons."); Wilkin, *Women, Imagination and Search for Truth in Early Modern France*, 10.

[157] Weyer, 540

[158] Weyer, 541.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid., 542.

[162] Ibid.

inability to formulate intent. Even if there was an "act," in the sense of a harm caused, there can be no crime because there is no *mens rea* or act which is performed both intentionally and knowingly. If no crime has taken place, then there can be no punishment. Weyer explains "I chose to pursue the matter there to a surer understanding, like a continuos thread, rather than snap the thread and leave the reader dangling"[163]

In Chapter 24, Weyer explores a counter-argument: "since some persons have been found who are not yet satisfied with this [argument for non-punishment of witches] explanation of the law and who strive mightily to constrain our Lamiae under its jurisdiction." [164] Weyer refutes his opponents based upon Moses' edict in Exodus 22. In this section, Weyer's argument hinges on his distinction between magicians and *lamaie* from Books 2 and 3. Weyer explains that in "the age of Moses" witches or *lamaie* were unknown and did not exist.[165] Weyer, in effect, admits that women as witches are a product of historical conditions: "the Lamiae (as they are popularly called) whom I have described had not appeared in the time of Christ, much less in that of Moses—as can be inferred from the fact that there is no mention of them or their victims in Sacred Scripture."[166] Interestingly, this supports the argument that women as witches is a social construct based upon a predetermined structure or template of presuppositions about witchcraft.

Furthermore, Weyer argues that the law of the Old Testament against magicians refers to "poisoners." The translation of magician in the Old Testament is one who uses poison. However, Weyer notes that the word "*lamiae*" does not refer to poisoners. The five books of Moses (translated into Greek) state that the intention of *pharmakous* pertains to a deadly poison used to harm others.[167] This term is widely found in classical Greek sources and denotes a drug. The practitioner or poisoner works with these drugs, which could be herbs or plants mixes potions of various kinds.[168] The term derives its "negative

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[163] Ibid.

[164] Weyer, 543.

[165] Ibid., 542.

[166] Ibid., 542

[167] Weyer, 545.

[168] Stephen L. Jeffers, "The Cultural Power of Words: Occult Terminology in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin and English Bible" (Ph.d. diss, Florida State University, 1989), 90.

connotation" from being used in acts of sorcery involving poison. *Pharmakous* is generally translated as

witch, sorcerer, magician or witch. Anthropologically, *pharmakous* is a sorcerer who uses medicine for

evil purposes, or a magician who uses certain medicines which are not harmful.[169] However, Weyer

explains that Galen made a distinction between "natural medications" from substances that have no

medical value.[170] Many of Weyer's opponents " twist the words of Galen" and attempt to prove that

witchcraft or "magic potions" are effective. *Pharmakous* produce an effect because they are poisonous

i.e., due to natural causes, not magic. When Galen uses the term *Pharmaca*, it denotes "natural" medicine,

which includes poison.[171] However, Weyer's contemporaries use *Pharmaca* to signify or connote "magic"

or medicine.[172] Weyer points out "dispassionate interpreters and physicians understand this word

pharmakon as the equivalent of medicine."[173] Accordingly, Weyer cites the example of Jezebel. Jezebel's

pharmaka was not "witchcraft." In a translation by St. Jerome of Kings 4:9, *pharmaka* refers to

poisonings."[174]

Weyer agrees that poisonings should be included in the laws of homicide: "I would like us to set

all emotion aside and look at the twenty-first chapter of Exodus. Moses issues a general statement about

putting to death one who has killed another."[175] Moreover, this includes someone who "has determined to

kill or who has otherwise attempted to cause injury or bring disease—by means of poison, whether

administered or simply prepared by means of evil-doing arts or in any other manner."[176] The emphasis of

Weyer in this section is on the "act," not the state of mind. Weyer analyzes the terms used for "homicide"

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[169] Ibid.

[170] Weyer, 544.

[171] "The Cultural Power of Words"; In Greek, *pharmakon* means both cure and poison, but could also mean "magic potion." See Derrida, *Plato's Pharmacy*. This duplicity in meaning reflects my arguments in Chapter 1 about the dual nature of language and witchcraft.

[172] This is an illustration of the deferment in meaning I discussed in Chapter 1.

[173] Weyer, 544; In this context, Weyer is using pharmakon to refute the idea that it connotes "magic potion". He stipulates, as does Galen, that pharmakon, whether a "drug or "poison" is natural and not magic.

[174] Weyer, 544.

[175] Ibid., 545.

[176] Ibid., 546

and *pharmakeia*. He explains that in some applications, *pharmakeia* has been extended to "magical arts." For example, in German *Zauberi* is translated as "sorcery," and likewise in Italian *avvelenamento* is translated as "poisoning."[177] Weyer's goal in this section is to distinguish *lamaie* from the aforementioned illicit magicians and Biblical poisoners. Weyer believes the activities of Jezebel, seers and augers, are deluded and not murders. Likewise, he believes witches are separate and distinct from "poisoners." However, Weyer does not account for the possibility of a misguided witch, whose actions (perhaps with poison), unwittingly cause a death. Weyer seems to dismiss, out of hand, that a witch could cause a death based on the theory of ineffectual magic. However, what if, in the course of practicing magic a "magic potion," is used which causes a death? Weyer does not directly address this question.

Weyer states that "I admit that if they [*Lamiae*] are convicted of murder that they should be put to death according to the Mosaic law and the common law." Yet, he creates the legal loophole of placing witches into a harmless category; he also adds that "since they cause no harm at all—*much less kill anyone [*italics added from emphasis]—they are not guilty."[178] Weyer explains that "it has been demonstrated *ad nauseam* that these women have a corrupted imagination."*[179]* In this context, Weyer's analysis is based upon the *actus reus* of the crime; since *lamiae* perform imaginary acts, there is no crime. Again, his defense is not an affirmative one, as in the classic "insanity defense." Rather, the merits of his argument are based on the idea that magic does not exist. Weyer has not in the modern sense connected the *actus reus* and the *mens rea* into a singular criminal act, as Sir Edward Coke referenced in his Reports on the Law.[180] Weyer's arguments, in his refutation of his critics, are centered on why witches are not murders. However, he does not explicitly address the possibility that a witch could, under the assumption of a lower degree of criminal scrutiny, commit an "act" such as the use of poison, which results in a death. Weyer is not clear to which the lack of criminal culpability holds true. Like Weyer's epistemological views of witchcraft and medicine, Weyer's legal arguments are an inchoate version of a modern common law system that eventually emerged in England.

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[177] Ibid.

[178] Weyer, 553.

[179] Ibid., 552.

[180] Sir Edward Coke Reports on the Law

In Chapter 26, Weyer weaves together all arguments in *De praestigiis* into a single argument, an argument that grapples with how to account for someone who performs an act without a sane mind. Most scholars consider Book VI Chapter 26 to be Weyer's finest hour; unlike other parts of his treatise, Chapter 26 is a more cogent argument.[181] Most of Weyer's contemporaries concurred in the view that women were "weak or credulous."[182] If a witch was considered to be irrational, then the case for them "practicing" witchcraft becomes unsustainable; no demonologist was willing to concede this point.

In a broad sense, Weyer's task in discounting the criminality of witches is not focused on the "act" of witchcraft. In his response to criticism, he explains that he *does* believe in punishment, only when the punishment is in congruity with the crime.[183] Weyer's response is that witches are not heretics because they do not understand or are incapable of understanding their actions. Hence, women cannot form a "guilty" mind to warrant a crime. Weyer explains that witches fail to formulate criminal intent based on three prongs of analysis: "a capability on the part of the doer, an aptitude on the part of the patient or subject, and a fitting connection between the two."[184] Herein lies an example of the common law principle that every crime must constitute an act performed intentionally and knowingly with "malice aforethought."[185] Similarly, an action performed with lack of intention is not punishable.[186] In order for a crime to occur the *actus reus* must be "intentional" and "knowing." Although this is an embryonic formulation of a modern legal principle, Weyer has not considered the various ramifications, exceptions and implications of this idea.

Weyer summarizes his argument that witches cannot perform actions which are beyond "their power and potential."[187] He addresses the belief that witches can perform acts such as "hailstorms" or

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[181] Kohl and Midelfort, xxix.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid., 553.

[184] Ibid., 561.

[185] Sir Edward Coke, *Reports on the Law*.

[186] Midelfort, "Weyer and the Insanity Defense," 246.

[187] Weyer, 562.

"dissolve clouds."[188] As Weyer explains, "For there can be no act, whether done by us or by another agent except upon an apt and well-disposed patient or subject."[189] Weyer reiterates the point that even if these acts were performed, they would be such that "the Devil does things voluntarily or invoked by them."[190] It is immaterial if this is factually true because we know, from common sense and experience, that these feats are impossible. The best foundation is the knowledge is through observation.[191] Furthermore, when "a cause is lacking, the effect is necessarily lacking."[192] Even if there is no "consensus as to the cause of calamities" attributed to witchcraft, it does not mean an effect can result from no cause. Where "there is agreement as to the proximate cause (which is the cause) we would be "doing an injustice to God if we failed to recognize His hand at work."[193]

Weyer cites a principle from Roman law: "when the reason for the law ceases to exist, then the law ceases to exist . . . every law is interpreted on the basis of reason."[194] This applies to laws pertaining to witchcraft: "it has been proven by reason that none of these things [*maleficum*] can be done by men. Therefore, since the reason behind the law has been corrected, the law has been corrected."[195] Weyer connects the idea of the failure to act with intent. He notes that the "will" is referred to as "the power to proximate the deed."[196] As the Roman law maxim states, "a naked action without intention is not punishable." For example, if a person attempted to steal "landed property" this would be fanciful and absurd.[197] Since *lamaie* are incapable of producing an "act of magic" there is no true will; Weyer explains that this is "a childish conviction or fallacious belief. . . A childish conviction." No one is punished for a

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid., 563.

[192] Ibid., 564

[193] Ibid., 565.

[194] Constantine cited in Weyer, Ibid.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid., 566.

[197] Ibid.

mere thought; again, an act must occur to constitute a crime. Weyer even explains that "pre-crimes" or contemplation of a crime is not punishable since "nothing is freer than thought." For criminal culpability, witches fail the first test of analysis for an offense a criminal act must have resulted from will or intention.

More importantly, witches fail on the second tier of analysis, the *mens rea*. According to Weyer, "a madman lacks both will and reason."[198] The next section of Chapter 27 explores the nature of the insanity defense. First, Weyer explains that intentions performed by a "sound mind is the willing of something that is possible."[199] However, in the case of an insane person, they lack judgement. Like an insane person, witches lack the judgment to distinguish right from wrong, or truth from falsehood. Even if they possessed the ability to perform the action, they should not be punished because the action was not performed knowingly and intentionally; again, where there is no "malice aforethought" there is no punishable offense. According to Weyer, "even if our *lamiae* could do what they are believed to do—even if they *should* do that which they are said to be able to do—they could be punished no more than others."[200] Just like a contract that is created without mutual agreement or is induced by fraud is not enforceable, these "poor women" are not responsible for their actions, even if an "act" were to take place. In cases of "fraud, force fear, error or ignorance there can be neither will nor agreement."[201] Weyer recapitulates that for the mental component of heresy, "there is no suspicion of heresy or any other sin depends upon the mind alone."[202] *Maleficium* has no "act" but is an entirely mental crime based upon will or intent to cause harm.

Weyer extends his legal argument into a medical sphere by stipulating that Lamaie suffer from a physical disease which hinders the ability to be of sound mind.[203] According to Weyer, "their mental error and blindness of their will depend first of all upon a natural disease."[204] Therefore, since "nothing acts

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[198] Ibid., 567.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid., 568.

[202] Weyer, 569.

[203] Weyer, 570.

[204] Ibid.

against itself" or in other words, because they commit acts only in their minds, *lamaie* should not be punished but "are deserving of commiseration."[205] He states, "they deserve every assistance that is either due by law or accorded in keeping with the dictates of reason for victims of trickery, force or fear."[206] Weyer believes that they are tormented enough by their frenzy."[207] They cannot "consent" because they lack the power of reason of a "well-formed will."[208] Weyer states the Roman principle that combines the *actus reus* and *mens rea*; "no offense can be committed without consent and without design, nor can any injury be done without the intent to injure."[209] They do not "commit injury bur rather suffer from it."[210] Weyer repeats he has demonstrated *ad nauseam* that that *Lamiae* lack the "rational spirit for form a conscience.[211] The *lex Aquilia*, a Roman doctrine of unlawful damage to property is cited by Weyer to explain that the harm inflicted to property is a separate issue. Under Roman law, crime was generally limited to theft or damage to property, which was actionable as a private matter.[212]

The last argument that Weyer advances in Chapter 27 is a repetition that he believes those who practice witchcraft do not deserve punishment, per se. He states, "I am not advocate for magicians or poisoners, but for the deluded Lamiae."[213] Weyer explains that as method of interrogation, sex and age are exceptions to the use of torture. According to Weyer, "Every crime such be examined as to the thinking of the transgressor, so that the question may be weighed of whether he transgresses because of some ignorance, inexperience, or naivete or because of cunning, malice and stubbornness."[214] The punishment is determined based of the degree of criminal of culpability.Weyer believes "old age is itself a disease . . .

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[205] Ibid., 571.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Ibid., 572.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Tellegen-Couperus, 50.

[213] Weyer, 575.

[214] Ibid., 574

and it is almost always followed by mental folly and failure of judgement."[215] Therefore, just as men grow

feeble minded our old women grow more feeble minded . . . in the second and final stage of old age they

become even more childish . . . and they can scarcely commit a crime in their mind."[216] Thus, even if the

failings of old age should not permit such a privilege Weyer believes that torture should not be permitted

in cases of sex or age because it relates to the cause of the crime; in the deluded stage of old age, women

are completely unable to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Furthermore, Weyer explains that because witchcraft is an imaginary crime, it is much easier to

become deluded. Weyer acknowledges that witchcraft is a serious matter "to offend the divine majesty."

However, given the ease with which "human beings fall into this offense" because it is hidden and

removed the senses, we have no way to ascertain he veracity of witchcraft.[217] According to Weyer, it is

easier for men to err in spiritual matters because of the nature of things divine."[218] Weyer closes the

chapter with a refutation of a pronouncement of the faculty of Theology from the University of Paris. He

refutes a series of "vile errors" that he explains illustrate that "quite often Catholic [universal] truth is most

evident in those that study Sacred Scripture, while it remains hidden from all others, no doubt because

every art has the special characteristic of being evident to those who practiced it."[219] Weyer closes his

treatise with an epilogue in which he states, " I have no doubt, honest reader, that I will come into the bad

graces of many who will slander me in return for all the efforts that I have expended. . . Many of the

peevish theologians will cry out that they are being wronged by a physician who examines certain

passages of the Sacred Scripture and goes beyond the limits of his calling."[220] Weyer qualifies this with "I

have still provided them with an excellent opportunity to weigh the matter more carefully and examine it

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[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Weyer, 577.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Weyer, 576.; The Faculty pronounced in twenty-seven articles the approval of forms of magical arts.

[220] Weyer, 581.

more deeply and describe it more learnedly and coherently, in clearer discourse, with more suitable terminology, and with stronger demonstrations of the truth."[221]

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[221] Ibid., 582.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

O sancta simplicitas! In what strange simplification and falsification man lives! One can never cease wondering once
one has acquired eyes for this marvel! How we have made everything around us clear and free and easy and simple!
How we have been able to give our senses a passport to everything superficial, our thoughts a divine desire for wanton
leaps and wrong inferences! How from the beginning we have contrived to retain our ignorance in order to enjoy an
almost inconceivable freedom, lack of scruple and caution, heartiness, and gaiety of life—in order to enjoy life! And
only on this now solid, granite foundation of ignorance could knowledge rise so far—the will to knowledge on the
foundation of a far more powerful will: the will to ignorance, to the uncertain, to the untrue! Not as its opposite, but as
its refinement

Frederich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part Two

Nietzsche's quotation illustrates Weyer's contention that no one group or authority has a

"monopoly" over the truth or direct access to knowledge. Nietzsche argued that truth is a mask which

functions as a metaphor for a much larger epistemological question. The "truth" is found in those who

seek to uncover it from the dogma of authoritative or scholastic knowledge that masks the complexity of

life. As Wilkins states, "Weyer defined the search for truth as a hermeneutics of surfaces, wherein

'common sense' is the arbiter of truth."[1] Descartes posed in his *Discourse on Methods and Meditations* the

question of how can one be sure of what is, indeed, outside of oneself?[2] The answer for Weyer is that truth

lies not in language or a "text" but should be based upon experience and observation. In a broad sense, this

thesis has been about the conflict between medieval and Renaissance thinking, one the one hand, and early

modern thought, on the other. I have argued that *De praestigiis daemonum* is representative of the

epistemological failure of Renaissance demonology to adequately approximate reality. Weyer believes

theologians, legal experts or even physicians do not have direct access of truth based upon a set of

presumptions. Although physicians or theologians may be more qualified to judge the evaluation of

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[1] Wilkin, 8.

[2] Ibid., 7.

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evidence, Weyer's argument is we should not rest upon a body of "truth,' or knowledge but that observation and empirical evidence should be balanced against scholastic dogma.

At the time when revealed religion and ecclesiastical authority were becoming became the target for the "radical" thinkers of the Enlightenment, Weyer represents the clash between individual inquiry and authoritative evidence that emerged during the early modern period through new discoveries in science and mathematics. Weyer was a physician and an experimental psychologist who had a new understanding of the human mind. In the Renaissance, received knowledge or information from authorities was still considered more believable than empirical evidence: the more authorities one could cite, the better the argument. When Weyer wrote his treatise, this body of evidence was unassailable and were taken as truisms. Weyer, however, strives for pseudo-scientific objectivity, and less reliance on authoritative evidence, and more on "the evidence of authority."[1] In other words, Weyer challenges the "authority" of evidence and intellectual convictions that accumulated over centuries. Weyer's text is a precursor for the "Age of Reason" of the seventeenth century and the rise of deductive rationalism[2]. From this perspective objective evidence carries weight over a given set of presuppositions. However, my argument is not that science ultimately replaced magic as a theory of knowledge because early modern thinkers were skeptics, but rather that as "sense-based" or empirical observation became more reliable, magic became less useful as an explanatory. Demonology was intertwined and meshed into religion, politics, and science in such a way that by engaging in a discussion of witchcraft it necessarily had implications in other fields of knowledge. Thus, the arrival science was not merely a question of accumulating more evidence about the irrationality of witchcraft, it was the ability of science as an analytical tool to distinguish truth from illusions. As we have seen, the more Weyer tries to separate demonic causality from non-demonic causality the more self-contradictory his explanations become. As Stuart Clark and Marion Gibson have shown, the understanding of language is key to examining witchcraft texts. My thesis has implications for other texts such as Jean Bodin's *De la demonamanie des sorciers* or Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft.*

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[1] Sydney Anglo, "Evident Authority and Authoritative Evidence" in *The Literature of Witchcraft,* 3.

[2] Alan Kors and Edward Peters. *Witchcraft in Europe: 400-170 A Documentary History*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 393.

In Chapter 2, I argued that Weyer creates an epistemological category of the Devil based upon a body of sources. Weyer sets up the condition that the Devil, as an impostor, attempts to create a mirror-image world based on misrule and inversion. The basis for this claim is that God is the ultimate arbiter of the universe, and the Devil is "God's ape," an imitation who seeks to destroy mankind. It is through the manipulation of reality that the Devil as the consummate magician is able to create the illusion of witchcraft. However, I have noted that Weyer, by permitting the Devil a wide range of deceptive ability, is not able or cannot possibly distinguish real phenomena from illusory phenomena. This condition is the central flaw in Weyer's argument which sets up many inconsistencies and incongruous arguments through out the text. Although Weyer's theological argument is not original, it is his extension of this argument into witchcraft that is the most novel for Renaissance thought.

 Chapter 3 examined the Renaissance perspective on magic and how this influenced Weyer's interpretation of witchcraft. Weyer expand the theme of diabolical deception into the realm of the learned magic and witches. While Weyer is a skeptic regarding certain aspects of learned magic, he believes that witches or *lamaie* are practicing magic under false pretenses. Weyer goes through many examples of impossible feats of magic that are physically impossible, such as metamorphosis, flight, or sexual activity with demons. However, Weyer does not entirely reject the possibility of demonic activity; he challenges the belief that humans (both the magi and the witch) could create effectual magic. Weyer's attempt to maintain separation between white magic and black magic or witches from magicians is a distinction without a difference, and is internally inconsistent. This distinction, albeit false, leads to the phenomenological failure of demonology.

Weyer's medical interpretation of witchcraft examined in Chapter 4 represents the beginning of the end of witchcraft; the more Weyer debunks clinical cases of demonic possession and witchcraft affliction the less useful witchcraft is as an explanation. Weyer presents a medico-religious argument that witches and magicians practice ineffectual magic, not necessarily because the magic is unreal but rather that humans cannot practice magic with any degree of efficacy. According to Weyer, the Devil does not need an assistant; if there are any "real" consequences from witchcraft it is not through human agency but diabolical deception. It is this process of clinical observation juxtaposed against the revealed truth of demonology that presents a challenge for Weyer. He must constantly revise this juxtaposition in order to

maintain a blurry distinction between demonic effects and non-demonic effects. In his text he creates a range of possibilities from real demonic possession to imaginary demonic possession but with medical explanations to imaginary demonic possession with imaginary results. The difficulty that Weyer is presented with is that as long as demonic manipulation is given agency as an explanation, then it is impossible to distinguish the real from the imaginary.

Accordingly, in Chapter 5, I maintained that once the discourse of witchcraft is removed from the context of religious polemics it collapses as system of empirical knowledge. This is evident in Book 6 of *De praestigiis daemonum* whereby Weyer argues for the punishment of magicians and the non-punishment of witches. Weyer extended his argument to the logical conclusion that if witches suffer from melancholia they are deluded and therefore are not responsible for their actions. Weyer in applying concepts from Roman law, re-emphasizes individual autonomy or authoritative evidence. The individual is responsible for actions that are intentionally and knowingly undertaken, such as the formation of a contract or criminal acts. However, Weyer premises his argument on the idea that women are more likely to become deluded bases upon of the "fragility of the female sex." This theory is part of misogynistic sentiment reflected in the *Malleus* and the rhetoric of the early modern period, but Weyer "redeploys" these ideas into a medico-legal sphere to create an insanity defense for the exculpation of witches. Moreover, Weyer's rejection of witchcraft confessions from torture is founded on the principle that even if witches could perform feats of magic the only evidence used against witches is self-incrimination from torture. Finally, I have argued that Weyer represents a trend towards the modernization of the state. As kings sought to gain tighter control over the state, legal reforms and consolidation or criminal procedure into state courts reflected the idea of kingship. Weyer's legal theories reflect the theory of early modern kingship.

The second tier of my thesis is about the relationship between language and power. If the hermeneutics of the Renaissance represents an epistemological transition towards empiricism and since language is used to interpret reality, then language must be at the center of experience. Language is the creator of social reality and sets parameters for acceptable thought. It is language that acts as a "chessboard" for rules of thought. In contrast, during the Middle Ages, words were equivalent to things and could be interchanged.[3] Language was "interwoven" into the world: "the names of things were lodged

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[3] Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity," 95.

in the things they designated, just as strength is written in the body of the lion, regality in the eye of the eagle. . . ."[4] The witch was not merely a word but a magical sign of "power," with no specific external referent.

Moreover, Foucault argued that in the seventeenth century words began to "mirror" reality rather than resemble it.[5] The relationship between signifier and signifier began to appear more arbitrary. It became possible to alter words based on resemblance to an "ever increasing faithfulness in sense perception."[6] However, even though language constructs reality, this does mean that language is verifiable in a empirical reality. With power in the hands of a small minority, the expression of language can control information. Language maintains the status quo by defining experiences and is the primary tool used to construct definitions of reality. The power of language has been used throughout history to maintain the status quo or control reality—even to wield the power of life and death. Ultimately, this thesis is about how witchcraft beliefs intersect with language and the power of institutions to maintain control over information.

George Orwell, in *1984*, stated that "power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution to safeguard the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power." Throughout history have existed examples of institutions or agents that— through the ability to control information (religion, science or political)— have the ability to maintain an existing social structure. From the priest class in ancient Egypt, Sumeria or Babylon to the medieval Church, institutions within society maintain control over information with language.[7] These institutions or guardians of discourse claimed indubitable insights derived from private illumination or knowledge; the occult is simply "hidden" or secret information.[8] To the uninitiated, the hidden language of the occult remains a mystery for the reason of maintaining power. On the other hand, the ability to construct language based in the imaginary or the

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[4]Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 36.

[5] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 285; Foucault *The Order of Things*, 36.

[6] Clark, *Thinking*, 286.

[7] William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 206-210.

[8] Brian Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity," 96

occult reifies this power over the "profane" or those who are not "illuminated" in the occult, alchemy or mystery religion.[9]

Weyer represents a shift towards seventeenth-century experimental science and the rejection of the symbolic order of the occult: the need to begin observation or classification directly from nature and not by correlation with a pre-existing category. Once the macrocosm-microcosm analogy is rejected, the whole occult system is irrelevant.[10] Through Weyer's observations, we see the beginnings of clinical diagnosis and the process of induction based upon first hand data rather than reliance upon scholasticism. Weyer illustrates the dialectical interchange between induction and deduction, and the conviction that when experience is counter to a set of beliefs then the beliefs become useless words. To apply the language of witchcraft to physical events was a fundamental error, since witchcraft belongs to the realm of metaphysical activity. We see Weyer labor throughout his text to establish a criteria for accepting and rejecting witchcraft based upon his clinical experience, but in the end his efforts fall short. He sets up contradictory explanations in an attempt to maintain the existential integrity to witchcraft while still establishing the authority of medical evidence.

Renaissance intellectual thought reflects the difficulty in maintaining a clear distinction between magic and science. Renaissance philosophers, including those connected with "new" sciences, derived a series of distinctions between language and reality. Bacon, Galileo and Kepler drew a distinction between "primary and secondary qualities."[11] We have seen throughout the course of examination of Weyer's text examples of how, when language fails to represent an objective reality and defies "common sense," it begins to break down. I have attempted to show through Weyer's digressive examples how the definition of witchcraft has no concrete meaning other than that assigned by the authors of witchcraft. Like language itself, the meaning of words is an individual experience but is influenced and conformed by a social and political framework. Since language constructs reality it has the power to create a social and political reality that seems irrefutable. Yet if words had an absolute and fixed meaning and directly corresponded to

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[9] See William H. McNeill for examples of mystery religion cults, 206; Russell, "The Transformation of Paganism," in *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*.

[10] Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity," 148-149.

[11] Ibid., 104-105.

their referents, communication would be perfect. However, as shown in Weyer's, text words are not the things to which they refer; Weyer reveals the breakdown from a magical form of words towards the separation between words and things. It is this gap or disjunction between words and reality that allows for the manipulation in language.

In closing, we have seen that the meaning of witchcraft, as a function of language, morphs throughout history. Some historians have pointed to the end of the European witch hunts by the end of the eighteenth century. However, witches may have disappeared only to be redefined in other forms. Since witchcraft, unlike other words, does not represent something specific in reality, it is a word that can be transformed into whatever the speakers or "guardians of discourse" deem as appropriate. The term "witch hunt" today is often interpreted not only as any form of unjust prosecution based on fear but also involving the exercise of power. As Christina Larner explained witch hunting was always a political process to exert power over the state. Like the Jewish blood libel myth or host desecration tales, the rhetoric of witchcraft is a skeleton key to unlock hidden and subconscious myths that are built into the social fabric. The iconography and representations of witchcraft, like the host desecration iconography, are examples of nonverbal invitations to reify the language of witchcraft. Language can both knowingly and unknowingly act as a primary tool to support the status quo and restrict alternative viewpoints. The danger we face is not recognizing that language itself carries an ideological and political purpose which can be co-opted by institutions that wish to "manufacture consent" by tapping into these subconscious fears. The narrative of witchcraft is not encoded in secret or hidden language; ultimately it is contained within the memory of culture in the most familiar symbols and images.

The language of witchcraft is the language of identity reflected back or projected on ourselves. Herman Melville, in *Moby Dick,* told us this in the metaphor of the white whale. Ahab's quest for the white whale was a futile attempt to pierce a blank slate, a projection that is self-induced. Witchcraft is, in the end, a totemic "mask" to create meaning and understanding in a contradictory reality. Ahab explained this:

> Hark ye yet again—the little lower layer. All visible objects, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near me...that inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent,or be the white whale principle, I will wreak havoc on him. (Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*), 156-57.

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