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**Witch as Woman:  
Crones, Maidens, and Mothers in The Witch of  
Edmonton and A Discovery of Witches**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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## Abstract

My research focuses on representations of the controversial and culturally loaded figure of the witch and the way in which she has been represented in fiction. Through an exploration of two very different representations of witches, the 1621 play *The Witch of Edmonton* and the twenty-first century fantasy *All Souls* trilogy, this thesis unpacks the longstanding negative associations of the witch. The historical witch stereotyped as evil, old, deviant, and socially marginalised, compared to the way in which contemporary depictions of the witch have refashioned the figure into an autonomous heroine capable of balancing her powers with work, romance, and social responsibility. Throughout, my focus is on the gendered nature of the witch.

The play *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford draws on the historical record and the pamphlet *Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* (1621) by Henry Goodcole. The historical Elizabeth Sawyer was tried and executed as a witch and Goodcole's pamphlet is representative of the attitudes of the day which vilified the witch as a figure of demonic power and social disruption. The play both endorses the stereotype of Sawyer as a crone who makes a pact with the devil to enact harm on her neighbours and challenges these tropes by insisting that she is a marginalised, poverty-stricken figure who only turns to witchcraft after society labels her as such. In contrast, the *All Souls* trilogy by Deborah Harkness (2012-2014) reframes the witch as a young, beautiful heroine whose powers are capable of bringing about salvation rather than destruction. By juxtaposing these very different literary witches, this thesis seeks to understand both the social and literary factors that led to the patriarchal vilification of the witch and the cultural shifts that have resulted in the recent reframing of the witch as a figure of feminist power.

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## Introduction: The Witch as Woman

Witches... share a rejection of the rationalist norms of the symbolic order and cannot be contained within the realm of patriarchal meanings. It is for this reason, it is argued, that they have been devalued, repressed, or marginalised by being defined as evil or insane.<sup>1</sup>

Witches populate the pages of stories. Many of them are associated with destruction and evil, such as the antagonist of 'Hansel and Gretel' or the Grand High Witch of Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. Some are ambiguous, such as the Weird Sisters in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Increasingly, they are benign and even heroic, such as Cassie Nightingale in *The Good Witch* or Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter series. What connects all the witches listed here is that they are women.

This thesis focuses on the association of the witch with the feminine, the witch as a woman. In so doing, it interrogates how depictions of the literary witch have shifted from demonising the witch as a malign, disruptive outsider who makes pacts with the devil to more recent framings of the witch as a model of empowered womanhood. By juxtaposing two very different literary representations of the witch, the crone Mother Sawyer in the Jacobean play *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) and the maiden/mother Diana Bishop in Deborah Harkness' *All Souls* trilogy (2011-2014), this thesis approaches the texts through a feminist lens. It seeks to understand both the cultural and generic contexts out of which these narratives were produced. What lies beneath our understanding within popular culture of the witch and from where does this stem? By gaining deeper insight, how is the witch as a woman still resonating within fantasy today?

I began on this path due to my awareness of how women continue to suffer from harmful stereotypes and the internal voice of critique that is shaped by the historical record

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 72.

and oppressive stereotypes within popular culture. In literature, witches repeatedly feature as grotesque crones, evil mothers, and stepmothers; powerful yet feared as the anti-hero or villain. Literature is thought-pressed, squeezed into ink, and stamped on a page steeped in the collective psyche on a subject. The bricolage of popular belief surrounding the figure of the witch has continually been warped and modelled by the patriarchal perspective of women being linked to misfortune and targeting the marginalised who did not fit into the norms of society.

This thesis also began with an encounter with a novel. Reading Deborah Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* (2011) a few years ago, I was troubled and captivated by the novel's exploration of the figure of the witch. Troubled, because her story was embedded in centuries of persecution and a contemporary suspicion of her power as a witch and a woman. Not only is the novel, and the two successive novels in the All Souls trilogy, an interrogation of the social dynamic and structures in which: '[w]itches are vulnerable to the shifting moods of [their] neighbours'<sup>2</sup>, Harkness also makes a feminist protest against how powerful men, including other witches, seek to control, tame, and disempower women. I was also captivated because I encountered a strong woman on the page whose journey was one of empowerment and self-discovery. Diana Bishop is a witch in a vastly different mode from the witch of fairy tales and legend. She breaks the stereotype of the witch as old, poverty-stricken, ostracised, and powerless, with Harkness reimagining the figure from popular culture as strong, successful, and independent. Nevertheless, how far does this representation take a modern audience and in empowering young women, does Diana as a modern witch figure, within the tundra of fantasy literature, truly break the mould of witch stereotypes and if so, in what capacity?

In the context of this thesis, the All Souls trilogy is the endpoint, a contemporary trilogy by a female writer (one of many), who shifts the discourse of the witch in literature from a

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<sup>2</sup> Deborah Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* (London: Viking, 2011), p. 213.

negative to a more well-rounded narrative. To arrive at this destination, it is necessary to first go back in time to two prior, yet connected, literary representations of the witch from the seventeenth century, to explore the evolution of the witch in literature. My first textual example, discussed in the first chapter, is the pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* (1621) by Henry Goodcole and the play *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, both based on the historical witch trial of Elizabeth Sawyer. Within this chapter, I will be exploring Sawyer's position as an old woman who is marginalised and ostracised by her neighbours because of her poverty and lack of social status. One of the conundrums about the play is whether the playwrights simply codify Elizabeth Sawyer as a clichéd witch figure or whether there is any sympathy and understanding for her socially conditioned circumstances. Her role as Mother Sawyer within the play is in many ways performative, as the role is forced upon her by a society that hates her and is embraced by her as her only access to power. This raises the question of whether the play positions her as a figure of sympathy or blame.

The figure of the witch is a palimpsest that contains unexplored truths and encapsulates the history of the relationships between peasantry and state, economic strife, and gender-encoded ideologies of religion. I investigate the dynamic between the witch as a woman and how this figure creates fear as a destabilising threat to the patriarchal system. This in turn results in a complex power dynamic in which society seeks to disempower and punish the witch and the witches attempt to gain autonomy. The echo of gender disparity and subconscious association with the witch as related to misfortune begins in the tales of childhood. Before turning to the theoretical underpinning of this thesis and a brief overview of witches in the historical record, this introduction first interrogates how the witch of fairy tales encodes the stereotype of the witch as a woman.

## Fairy Tales

Witches are replicated in our minds through all modes of communication, and we employ the concept of witch in various ways, often changing the witch's meaning, in information or stories, especially fairy tales... Witch is a word/concept/image that has undergone a process of "demonisation" that is still potent today.<sup>3</sup>

When a witch comes knocking on the doors of our collective imagination, when the door creaks open, who do we see? Do we see a hunched, elderly woman holding a basket of apples that may be poisoned or a tall figure with unbound hair and a malevolent expression cursing her enemies? If so, this image of the witch bears the imprint of how she is depicted in fairy tales. In these foundation tales the origin of what Jack Zipes terms the 'demonisation' of the witch is to be found.<sup>4</sup> The fairy tale witch is stereotypically portrayed through physical markers of wickedness, such as wrinkled skin and warts or deformities that echo the dissonance of the stereotype. Similarly, the witch is an entity that stalks the pages of children's fairy tales within popular culture. How does the fairy tale as a cultural signifier portray women within roles of evil or wickedness and how does this impact the stereotypes concerning gender?

A key aspect of women's roles within fairy tale collections is the transition between orally told tales compared to the structured and religious moral/manner motivated fairytale collections such as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Despite the understandable divide of time between the past of orally told tales and modern gender implications, this cultural shift has directed the transformation of women's roles as fairy tale participants. Jack Zipes confirms that fairy tales were 'originally stamped by matriarchal mythology, circulated in the Middle Ages'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 56-57, JSTOR Books <<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt7sknm>> [accessed 15 July 2023].

<sup>4</sup> Zipes, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Milton Park: Routledge, 2012), p. 7, Taylor & Francis eBooks

Common female-oriented figures within fairy tales were vegetation Goddesses, women within positions of authority, or healers, all-powerful archetypal representations of women within oral tales. This reflects the shift from matriarchal cultural norms to how women 'ha[v e] been transformed in different ways: the Goddess became a witch, an evil fairy, or a stepmother; the active, young princess was changed into an active hero.'<sup>6</sup> The dualistic nature of womanhood as beings of creation and destruction reflects how women are closely tied to the rhythms of nature within societies in addition to the conquering of these natural spaces. Marina Warner insists the 'process of loss has to be resisted: as individual women's voices have become absorbed into the corporate body of male-dominated decision makers.'<sup>7</sup> Fairy tales are moralistic stories that reflect the social dynamics of the society and period in which they are written and, as such, they provide a useful lens to consider gender roles. Zipes claims that:

the essence of the symbols, based on matriarchal rites, was depleted, and made benign; and the pattern of action that concerned maturation and integration was gradually recast to stress domination and wealth.<sup>8</sup>

Considering this shift, the witch is a core representative of wickedness, the outcast, and monstrous as the associations between female danger and social expectations have intensified. The witch is made up of 'hallowed inevitable symbols,' representing a palimpsest of associations that continues to echo and reflect the gender dynamics of the time.<sup>9</sup> Two examples that highlight the evil witch and wicked stepmother archetypes are 'Hansel and Gretel' within the *Grimm Fairy Tales* collection (1856) and 'Vasilisa the Beautiful', a mid-sixteenth-century Russian fairytale collected by Alexander Afanasyev within *Narodnye*

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<<https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9780203805251/fairy-tales-art-subversion-jack-zipes>> [accessed June 20<sup>th</sup> 2023].

<sup>6</sup> Zipes, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blond: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*, Kindle Edition (London: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996), p. 417.

<sup>8</sup> Zipes, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Warner, p. 417.

*Russkie Skazki* (1855-1865).<sup>1012</sup> Despite the cultural differences between the stories, the themes of the crone as a disruptor, representative of trials, and a destructive force are evident, in addition to the witch stepmother as a fake mother and as a figure initiating calamitous events. I will be focusing on how these fairytales represent each wicked female character and how this reinforces the popular understanding of female deviance.

The representation of the witch as an evil crone in ‘Hansel and Gretel’ foregrounds how fairy tales frame witches as old women who are deformed, wicked, and cannibalistic. The tale claims: ‘Witches have red eyes, and cannot see far, but they have a keen scent like the beasts and are aware when human beings draw near.’<sup>11</sup> The witch is described as more animal-like than human with her glowing eyes and heightened senses. This indicates her position as an obstacle that must be overcome by the “hero” as she is the monstrous feminine that must be slayed. Furthermore, this represents how fairy tales use the hero cycle of initiation, trials, and coming home in a quest for the greater “good.” Furthermore, how ‘Hansel and Gretel’ portrays feminine wickedness conforms to narrow gender representations and the demonisation of the crone as an embodiment of evil.

The stereotype of witches stealing youth or as a devourer of children is also expressed: ‘When a child fell into her power, she killed it, cooked and ate it, and that was a feast day for her.’<sup>12</sup> To the young Hansel and Gretel, this represents a serious threat. After their capture, the witch must be outsmarted for the children to overcome her trap. Gretel as the young heroine and the oldest, retaliates against the witch, resulting in the children being in a position of entrapment by the witch, a representative of old age. This results in a struggle to overcome everything that the witch represents:

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Basbanes Richter, ‘Roald Dahl And Danger In Children’s Literature,’ *Sewanee Review*, 123.2 (2015), 325–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/sew.2015.0062>>, (p. 4).

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, ‘*Grimms’ Fairy Tales*’, trans. by Edgar Taylor And Edwardes, *Gutenberg.org*, (2001) <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2591/2591-h/2591-h.htm>> [accessed 30 August 2022], para. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Grimm, Grimm, para. 11.

Gretel gave her a push that drove her far into it, shut the iron door, and fastened the bolt. Oh! Then she began to howl quite horribly, but Gretel ran away, and the godless witch was miserably burnt to death.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the ‘godless’ witch’s lack of moral and Christian values, she must be burned, and society purified of her evil.<sup>14</sup> This is historically reflected in the witch trials and burnings in the historical record, as explored in later sections. Specifically, this, presents the crone as a figure of defilement that spreads wickedness as a tainting source. If the tale is read from the perspective of the old witch as an aspect of Gretel, she rejects old age and the consumption of her youth which is then purified through the fire. The link between the old and wicked witch of fairy tales and the historical witch is evident. This reflects how Western societies’ rejection of old age is apparent in how old female characters are represented.

Another female witch who also embodies the crone stereotype on the page is Baba Yaga. She is described as ‘an old witch grandmother.’<sup>15</sup> As a figure within Russian fairy tales and older oral tales, she is connected to strength, power, and wickedness, as a feared and dangerous individual. Due to her witch or ogress/fairy association, her tales have been told in a ‘pre-Christian era in eastern Europe up through the eighteenth century.’<sup>16</sup> This shows that there are anomalies across cultural and religious divides within the crone representation, but Baba Yaga’s classification is still in the realm of the *maleficium* figure. Like the witch in ‘Hansel and Gretel,’ Baba Yaga lives deep in the woods with the ‘green lawn where the wretched little hut stood on its chicken legs. Surrounding the hut is a wall of human bones topped with skulls.’<sup>17</sup> Death imagery that surrounds Baba Yaga’s house represents her role as the crone. Her role in Russian fairytales is varied but dynamic as she helps heroes and

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<sup>13</sup> Grimm, Grimm, para. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Grimm, Grimm, para. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Wiginton, *Yaga Tales*, Kindle Edition (n.p.: CreateSpace Publishing, 2017), p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Zipes, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> Wiginton, p. 11.

heroines for a price; she is a figure of change and transformation, but also a wicked trickster.<sup>18</sup> She is also known for her flying contraption: ‘Out of the forest rode Baba Yaga, riding in her mortar, guiding it with her pestle, sweeping her traces away with a broom.’<sup>19</sup> The kitchen imagery associated with her connects to her grandmother's title and is juxtaposed with her evil manner. Lastly, she has an elusive nature as she hides her tracks symbolising her wisdom but also the darkness associated with Baba Yaga.

As well as the crone figure, the witch is also associated with a negative form of motherhood, the evil stepmother. This is a recurring theme in ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and ‘Vasilisa the Beautiful.’ In the fairy tale, the heroine or hero frequently begins their journey with their real mother’s death and the intrusion of the stepmother. This is evident in ‘Vasilisa the Beautiful’ which opens with the heroine’s mother falling ill. ‘As she was dying, the merchant's wife called her daughter to her, took a doll from under the blanket, gave it to her, and said: “to help you in your woe.”’<sup>20</sup> The mother hands the heroine a representation of Vasilisa’s youth or childhood, a doll that upon being fed will magically assist her. As in ‘Hansel and Gretel’ once the real mother passes, which is seen as ‘necessary’ for the story progression, due to the mother as a protector but also an obstacle, the main character can leave on their quest. Marilyn Francus states that ‘spectral motherhood responds to the many fears, hopes, and anxieties that mothers elicit.’<sup>21</sup> These fears are related to the power, sexual desire, and autonomy of the mother figure with her dark side or reflection of the stepmother. This displays that without the stepmother the mother could not be associated with all that is good despite Western imagination and its need for the mother to be absent. Barbara Z. Thaden states:

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<sup>18</sup> Zipes, p. 62-63.

<sup>19</sup> A. N. (aleksandr Nikolaevich) Afanas'ev, *The Complete Folktales of A. n. Afanas'ev: Volume I*, ed. By Jack V. Haney and Sibelan E. S. Forrester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), p. 173.

<sup>20</sup> Afanas'ev, p. 175.

<sup>21</sup> Marilyn Francus, ‘The Absent Mother in the Cultural Imagination: Missing, Presumed Dead,’ in *The Lady Vanishes: The Rise of the Spectral Mother*, ed. by Berit Astrom, 1st edn (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 25–42, (p. 30).

powerful feelings of hatred and resentment against the mother must be suppressed in order for the family to function, fairy tales often replace the mother with a stepmother who can be rebelled against and left behind.<sup>22</sup>

The stepmother is welcomed in by the father as a necessary replacement yet functions as a trigger for the heroine/hero's heroic cycle of self-discovery. The stepmother in fairy tales is classified as witch-like or dangerous and represents the dark destructor that is part of death, as an interruption of happy family dynamics. The topic of killing off mothers and what they represent would need another thesis to explore but is a subject and fascinating area of gender dynamics and psychoanalysis.<sup>23</sup>

A representation of the stepmother as wicked and evil is when in Vasilissa or Vasilisa the Beautiful is rewarded with a skull light. Due to fulfilling her tasks, Baba Yaga gives her the light but in other versions, she steals it as she escapes Baba Yaga's house. Baba Yaga also declares in a modern version of the tale that: "Your stepmother is a kinswoman of mine."<sup>24</sup> This implies that Vasilisa's stepmother is a witch and an underling of hers. Despite this association, the skull light defeats Vasilisa's evil stepmother and wicked stepsisters: 'They brought the skull into the parlour, but the eyes in the skull so looked at the stepmother and her daughters that they were burned! By morning they were all burned up into charcoal.'<sup>25</sup> A witch-like stepmother being burned with fire parallels Gretel's destruction of the witch by pushing her into the oven. Both tales purify female deviance with the cleansing of fire.

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<sup>22</sup> Barbara Thaden, *The Maternal Voice in Victorian Fiction: Rewriting the Patriarchal Family* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 25, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203726846>> [accessed 29 June 2023]

<sup>23</sup> Explored by multiple authors such as; Sylvia Henneberg 'Moms do badly, but grandmas do worse: The nexus of sexism and ageism in children's classics,' *Journal of Aging Studies*, 24. 2, (2010), 125–34, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2008.10.003>>; Katarina Labudova, 'The Absent Mother in the Cultural Imagination Missing, Presumed Dead,' in *Dead Mothers and Absent Stepmothers in Slovak and Romani Fairy Tales*, ed. by Berit Åström (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 73–89.

<sup>24</sup> Irina Zheleznova, 'Vasilisa The Beautiful', *Microsoft Word - vasilya.doc* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966 <<https://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/65r.pdf>> [accessed 11 July 2023], para. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Afanas'ev, p. 177.

To conclude, fairytales are rich with gender alignments and discourse that reflects the darker side of femininity in Western imagination. The focus on stereotypical aspects of female dangers within fairytales represents how the signifiers of stepmother and witch continue to be recycled in popular culture today. These stereotypes have their origin in the historical record.

### **The Historical Witch: Gender and Scapegoating**

[T]he history of witchcraft is the history of women.<sup>26</sup>

Designating the witch as a woman, something I do throughout this thesis, is somewhat controversial. In the popular imagination, as the previous section on fairy tales has highlighted, the witch is typically gendered, with ‘witch’ being synonymous with a woman with magical powers. This stands in contrast to historical scholarship where a debate rages about this terminology. For some historians, ‘witch’ is a gender-neutral term that refers to both men and women persecuted for witchcraft.<sup>27</sup> However, feminist historians such as Carol F. Karlsen, who is quoted above, insist that the ‘history of witchcraft is the history of women’.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Marianne Hester, whose research focuses on witch hunts as a mechanism of patriarchal control, urges historians to adopt a ‘revolutionary feminist approach’.<sup>29</sup> My research is informed by this feminist discourse and this section highlights how the historical witch was shaped and judged by a patriarchal environment that associated social disruption with unruly women.

The key historians researching witchcraft come from two distinct schools of thought. The first, seen in the work of Robin Briggs, Alan Macfarlane, and Keith Thomas, insists on

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<sup>26</sup> Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), p. 261.

<sup>28</sup> Karlsen, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 108, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203409275>> [accessed 9 July 2023].

regarding witchcraft as sex-specific not sex-biased.<sup>30</sup> It needs to be noted that this gender difference in accusation and execution is not consistent geographically; Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Russia, and areas of France executed more men as witches.<sup>31</sup> Here it appears that the association between demonic forces and female disruption was not as strong. In Germany, England, Scotland, Norway, and Salem, where there was a correlation between linking witchcraft with the devil and women to temptation, a definite link was made between women and witches.<sup>32</sup> This link forms the basis of the second school of historical thought which, as so eloquently articulated by Karlsen above, is informed by a feminist gaze that argues that the particular associations between witch and woman, particularly in the British and American historical record, cannot be ignored.

These scholars point to a troubling targeting of women by patriarchal frameworks and institutions.<sup>33</sup> Men were accused, tried, and executed for witchcraft, but the statistics underscore how gendered these witch trials were, with women making up 80 per cent of the accused and 85 per cent of those killed.<sup>34</sup> Numerous witch trials of the early modern era occurred throughout Europe, but in this thesis, I concentrate on the two historical moments and locations of direct relevance to my research: the early seventeenth-century Lancashire witch trials (which form the backdrop to *the Witch of Edmonton*) and the late seventeenth-century trials in Salem (which form the matriarchal origin story of Diana Bishop in Harkness’

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<sup>30</sup> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Wiesner, p. 282.

<sup>32</sup> Barstow, p. 111-112.

<sup>33</sup> Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (London: Routledge, 1992), Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203409275>>, Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*, (London: Routledge, 1996) <<https://doi.org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203359723>>, Stephanie Irene Spoto, ‘Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power,’ *Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association*, 45 (2010), 53–70 <[https://www-jstor.org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/pdf/41413521.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aa2ea8cc0a5261158d65025cbabd3cdde&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www-jstor.org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/pdf/41413521.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aa2ea8cc0a5261158d65025cbabd3cdde&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)> [accessed 4 February 2023]

<sup>34</sup> Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 23.

trilogy). Here the statistics are again striking, in the English trials 92 percent of the victims were female, while in Salem 78 percent were female and the male counterparts were seen as guilty by association.

The early modern witch trials, when approached as a discourse on gender, reveal that women were vilified both through theological discourse and wider social and cultural tendencies to view women as disruptors. Christina Larner's exploration of the Scottish witch trials in *Enemies of God* is a riveting study of how the witch was codified as female during the political turmoil of the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563.<sup>35</sup> Despite Larner's insistence that women were at the forefront of the created witch figure, her later conclusions disappointingly funnel down to the reductive statement 'the reason why witches were hunted are not directly related to being woman, but to their being thought evil'.<sup>36</sup> These two statements are not separate from each other and ironically her work is one of the most prominent academic works that proves the point of gender discrimination within the process of witch hunts. Larner states that 'on average, witchcraft, the ultimate human evil, was sex-related to women in much the same proportion as sanctity, the ultimate good, was sex-related to men'.<sup>37</sup>

The publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and other religious texts on the witch cemented the perception of the witch as a woman. The association between women as witches and the demonic was influenced by the writing of Heinrich Kramer and co-author Jacob Sprenger. Their work, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), outlines how to identify and prosecute a witch. Kramer and Sprenger's beliefs reflect the attitude of certain groups of male medieval authors and church authorities that considered women to be weaker and more easily tempted into being the devil's servants. Wiesner states that 'what was new in the *Malleus* was the authors' obsession with the sexual connection between witches and the devil'.<sup>38</sup> The evidence provided

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<sup>35</sup> Christina Larner, *Enemies of God* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Larner, p. 197.

<sup>37</sup> Christina Larner and Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft and Religion: Politics of Popular Belief* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 61.

<sup>38</sup> Wiesner, p. 289.

for this in the *Malleus* was drawn from a range of sources, Lyndal Roper argues ‘[p]ersonal experience, jurists, theologians, the Bible, and classical authors...all cited alongside one another as if they offered equivalent proof of the reality of witchcraft.’<sup>39</sup> Witchcraft was framed as a female-oriented religious offence and heretics were burnt at the stake. The *Malleus* influenced the link between the demonisation of women as witches as it is a text littered with anxieties over women and sex. The anxieties surrounding male impotence as an aspect of the gender discourse demonstrate the projection of fear onto women as witches. The *Malleus* states that ‘by the occult power of devils’ illusions witches by this means to procure such impotence, namely that they cause a man to be unable to copulate’.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, witches were believed to threaten male performance and undermine their role as the head of the house and as husbands. The witch represented the fears of men and the wider community and became an easy target for scapegoating.

The effects of the *Malleus* and the connection between the witch and the demonic extended to English folklore and the process of demonisation a hundred or so years later. Chrystyna Dail writes that by ‘the end of the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church...condemn[ed] the practices of all witches and the majority of cunning folk’.<sup>41</sup> Thus, witchcraft became associated with murder, malice, and misfortune. Within the later Reformation, as the focus shifted to implementing the Protestant faith within England, this demonisation was emphasised by the devil’s access to the community through familiars. As will be explored more in the first chapter, these were small demonic spirits that indicated someone had fallen prey to the temptations of the devil’s power and pleasures. Charlotte Rose-Millar defines the

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<sup>39</sup> Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), p. 31, ProQuest EBook Central <<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=3444068>> [accessed 5 February 2023].

<sup>40</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2nd, (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 69-70, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315715292>> [accessed 11 December 2022]

<sup>41</sup> Chrystyna Dail, ‘When for “Witches” We Read “Women”’: Advocacy and Ageism in Nineteenth-Century Salem Witchcraft Plays,’ *Theatre History Studies*, 39, (2020), 70–88 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ths.2020.0004>>, (p. 82).

familiar as a physical manifestation of mental temptation that functioned as the image of more complex psychological and religious tempters. The witch figure was feared and scapegoated as she was associated with demonic spirits and the devil through bodily defilement due to familiars suckling on her witch's mark.<sup>42</sup>

Feminist historian, Anne Llewellyn Barstow, provides an in-depth investigation into witch hunting as women hunting during the 'witchcraze' of 1560-1760. Barstow's analysis of European witch trials in *Witchcraze* begins with the lives of the women accused as she uncovers trial records and evidence alongside historical and personal stories. *Witchcraze* demonstrates the harsh reality of a societal shift that saw women losing their role as fundamental members of a community due to a demonisation that linked women and misfortune. Barstow points to how the harsh environment, politically, and religiously, connects to this turn of belief and explores the correlation between the female body and wickedness. This was most often associated with the perversion of both virginity and motherhood through fornication with the devil: 'the distinctively female external part of the body—breasts and labia—were the model for the devil's teat.'<sup>43</sup> The anxieties of familiars or imps that fed from a witch's teat reversed the image of the nursing mother into the wicked witch. The 'most basic and negative imagery of witch lore was thus taken from female anatomy.'<sup>44</sup> The female body as the area of witchcraft contention demonstrates the link between women and the demonised witch, with William Monter stating that 'witchcraft, as the demonologists had repeatedly insisted, was sex-linked'.<sup>45</sup>

The cultural framing of women as social disruptors was also informed by common folk beliefs surrounding what a witch looked like and did. Women's powers over life and

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<sup>42</sup> Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, (London: Routledge; 2017), p. 34, Taylor & Francis eBooks <<https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mon10.4324/9781315547015/witchcraft-devil-emotions-early-modern-england-charlotte-rose-millar>>,[accessed 17th August 2023].

<sup>43</sup> Barstow, p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> Barstow, p. 141

<sup>45</sup> E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France, and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 198.

death caused mistrust within a village, community, or household. Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* encapsulates this attitude towards the witch as old, ugly, malevolent, and uneducated:

One sort of such as are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious, and papists; or such as knowe no religion: in whose drousie minds the divell hath gotten a fine seat; so as, what mischeefe, mischance, calamitie, or slaughter is brought to passe'.<sup>46</sup>

Scot (1538-1599) did not believe in witchcraft and sought to demystify the concept.<sup>47</sup> Here he explores the widespread stereotype of the witch as a commonly known figure of ugly nature and contempt for the structures of society.

Significantly, the most suspicious acts of *maleficia* related to women were seen as being primarily situated in domestic spaces. Karlsen argues that domestic 'processes were also the target of a witch's vengeance'.<sup>48</sup> Examples of this include birthing, looking after cattle, food going rancid, and caring for children and the elderly. Life expectancies were also increasing during this period. Young women often also married older men.<sup>49</sup> The domestic spaces witch accusations were linked to, such as milk curdling, children falling ill (or misfortune after discord between neighbours), meant that communities were more likely to pin women for the crime. A combination of factors, including the greater value placed on men as workers in the increasingly wage-oriented economy and an even greater fear of women as inherently evil, loaded the scales against women.<sup>50</sup> Wiesner explores the concept of witches as unfavourable women: 'Witches were women who often used words as weapons and did not

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<sup>46</sup> Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (England: Centaur Press, 1964), p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> S. F. Davies, 'The Reception of Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 74.3 (2013), 381–401  
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhi.2013.0021>>, (p. 381).

<sup>48</sup> Karlsen, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Wiesner, p. 285.

<sup>50</sup> Wiesner, p. 285.

fulfil their expected societal roles as wives and mothers'.<sup>51</sup> This link between women and the demonic exaggerated witchcraft as a prosecutable offence and assisted in its demonisation in addition to the stereotypes surrounding women and witches. As stated by Wiesner above, witchcraft is about female disobedience and conceptualising the anxieties and fears surrounding women who did not fit the model of obedience within this historical period.

Within England, the link between the rise in female crimes and the higher rates of witchcraft persecution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests that the prominent social institutions, in particular the church and state, were fearful of losing control of female norms or behaviours. Social, moral, and religious anxieties about female behaviour were evident in the courts. Wiesner writes that women's crimes 'particularly involved sexual behaviour, such as charges of fornication and prostitution, or the products of sex, such as charges of having a child out of wedlock or infanticide'.<sup>52</sup> She contends that this 'broader criminalisation of women's behaviour, of which witch accusations were a part, may have worked to shape the way that women acted, particularly in public'.<sup>53</sup> Barstow reinforces this argument, highlighting that the 'effect on the image of sixteenth-century women was dramatic: although women committed far fewer crimes than men, the chief criminal stereotype of the period, that of the witch, was female'.<sup>54</sup> Female criminalisation correlated with the belief that women were assumed to have a strong link to magical uses of violence.<sup>55</sup> The anxieties surrounding the female sex drive and crimes such as infanticide fuelled fears that led to the demonisation of women in the early modern period. The feminist scholars writing about the historical witch draw attention to how she was a gendered social construct and a figure of blame who was scapegoated for social ills and misfortunes.

This connects with a key theory that, in conjunction with the feminist discourse outlined above, underpins my analysis, the theory of scapegoating (*bouc émissaire*) proposed by René Girard

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<sup>51</sup> Wiesner, p. 291.

<sup>52</sup> Wiesner, p. 299.

<sup>53</sup> Wiesner, p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> Barstow, p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Bever, 'Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community,' *Journal of Social History*, 35. 4, (2002), 955–88, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2002.0042>>, (p. 957).

(1923-2015), a theorist who explores scapegoating as a form of both social control and vengeance in *Violence and the Sacred*. Labelled as disruptive and evil, the witch frequently became the nexus point of blame for social ills and was scapegoated for the sins of the collective. Girard regards the scapegoat as a social mechanism through which ‘society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a “sacrificeable” victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members, the people it most desires to protect’.<sup>56</sup> This sacrifice ‘serves to protect the community from its *own* violence [...] The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric.’<sup>57</sup>

This provides a useful lens for thinking about the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Once the witch was othered and marginalised as demonic and unwomanly, she was then scapegoated, punished as the cause of social ills. Barbara G. Walker argues that according to this logic, women could ‘be called witches and destroyed, like domestic animals past their usefulness...The old woman was an ideal scapegoat: too expendable to be missed, too weak to fight back, too poor to matter.’<sup>58</sup> The poor within the turmoil of the early modern period posed a threat to an already struggling village or town. Caught on the bottom rung of the hierarchical social ladder, poverty was a contributing factor in the witch’s scapegoating. Barstow writes that ‘almost always, accusers were at least one notch higher in the social order than those accused... some of the poorest and most vulnerable people were made to serve as scapegoats for the mighty.’<sup>59</sup> Older women who were past childbearing age were viewed as uglier, sometimes disfigured, and in some cases defiant of the norms of village life causing them to receive the brunt of witchcraft accusations.

Brian Levack scrutinizes how women were condemned and scapegoated as witches

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<sup>56</sup> René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Girard, p. 8. [emphasis added].

<sup>58</sup> Barbara G. Walker, *The Crone: Women of Age, Wisdom, and Power* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> Barstow, p. 107.

due to their position within society, in addition to the role older women played when they had ‘lost value’.<sup>60</sup> Due to poverty and a lack of education many of the accused were illiterate. During the trial process power thus resided with the male scribe writing the accused’s statement, and sometimes distorting words to present and package the “witch” in a way that met society’s expectations. The lack of voice and acknowledgment is one of the reasons women donned the gendered performance of the witch to incite fear, gain back power, and be heard.<sup>61</sup>

### **Questions of Genre: Pamphlets, Plays and Fantasy Fiction**

Contemporary writing about witchcraft challenges generic boundaries... in its way another type of writing back.<sup>62</sup>

In investigating how historical perceptions of the witch have shaped literary representation, this thesis juxtaposes three different genres. The first chapter contrasts a theological pamphlet about the historical Elizabeth Sawyer, who was accused of witchcraft and executed during the seventeenth-century Lancashire witch trials, with the stage representation of her case in *The Witch of Edmonton*. Both works emerge from a social and cultural context in which the witch was widely believed to be real, and they reflect the religious and gender attitudes of the day. The play, however, provides insight into the factors that lead to Mother Sawyer forming a pact with the devil and thus gestures towards thinking about the witch as a socially constructed figure. These two texts stand in contrast to the trilogy that is the focus of the last chapter. Deborah Harkness’ novels are works of fantasy. In the intrusion fantasy world that she creates in the All Souls trilogy supernatural beings (witches, vampires, and daemons) walk the earth beside humans. Moreover, as a twenty-first-century fantasy author writing in

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<sup>60</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1987), p. 141.

<sup>61</sup> Stephanie Irene Spoto, ‘Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power,’ *Pacific Coast Philology*, 45 (2010), 53-70, <[https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/pdf/41413521.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5ba53728702ee2291b4e7cedce5ad114&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/pdf/41413521.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5ba53728702ee2291b4e7cedce5ad114&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)> [accessed 04 February 2023] (p. 56).

<sup>62</sup> Marion Gibson, *Rediscovering Renaissance Witchcraft* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 223, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315147802>> [accessed 15 July 2023].

a far more secular world, Harkness is writing for a readership who regards fantasy as the place for supernatural beings.

*The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch*, a didactic pamphlet written in 1621 by Henry Goodcole is distinct in its tone and presentation. Goodcole, as will be explored in more detail in the first chapter, uses the genre of the pamphlet to communicate a moral lesson and religious message of truth and justice. This form of publication was a way to make money and detail to the lower and middle class and other authors about moral injustices in addition to intrusions of the demonic. This included other crimes such as ‘reports of gruesome murders and executions, battles, monstrous births, and celestial apparitions.’<sup>63</sup> Witchcraft as a subject was captivating for audiences as a salacious depiction of female crimes. Significantly, as mentioned by Abaigéal Warfield, well-known pamphleteers of the early modern period did not write about witchcraft. The ones that did were listed as anonymous or tied to Church and moral endeavours, displaying how the political-social tensions because of James I affected this source of news and ‘truth.’<sup>64</sup> Goodcole’s pamphlet is thus distinctive in its direct attribution to the author.

Marion Gibson explores the line between ‘necessary’ and ‘triviall’ witchcraft pamphlets of the period.<sup>65</sup> The fusion of an articulated moral purpose with claims of truthful, authenticated depictions creates questions surrounding authenticity. Gibson argues ‘[s]erious pamphlets can be just as unreliable as trivial pamphlets because they sometimes have propaganda purposes which may distort their view of witchcraft.’<sup>66</sup> Henry Goodcole falls into this category of religious seriousness as he spreads the word of the soul’s redemption,

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<sup>63</sup> Abaigéal Warfield, ‘Witchcraft and the Early Modern Media,’ *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, 1, (2020), 208–218, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003010296-16>>, (p. 210).

<sup>64</sup> Warfield, p. 210.

<sup>65</sup> Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 114, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203992302>> [accessed 5 October 2022].

<sup>66</sup> Gibson, p. 114.

temptation, and the sexually explicit relationship between the devil and Sawyer. The careful line between factuality and truthful confessions and depictions ‘conceals its own creation, its fragmentary nature and the propagandist purposes which ride on the contested facts of witchcraft.’<sup>67</sup> This contention of witches as Satan’s bearers created a dialogue between the female body, as the site of political and religious tensions as explored above, and the agenda of pamphleteers, shocked their audience with sordid details. Garthine Walker explores how ‘women were an obvious symbol for both the definition of and the transgression of social, political and religious boundaries.’<sup>68</sup> The witch occupied a liminal space between women corrupted and yet the soul’s redemption despite the inability for the witch’s full pardon.

The contents of pamphlets at the time, while extreme versions of events for entertainment, serious fiction, or religious warnings, focused on gender-specific crimes. In England when female crime was written about:

it is significant that the woman is described as ‘the most devillish of all’. Assaults upon children by women are, along with witchcraft, far more likely than other crimes to be associated with women’s propensity to evil and malice in pamphlet literature.<sup>69</sup>

Women as the carriers of popular culture and tensions surrounding the rise in female criminalisation display how witchcraft was a female crime within England, but also how literacy devices such as pamphlets sought to re-educate and push religious agendas. Within the realm of pamphlets and announced discourse on the demonic it is evident that defining the boundary between good and evil was a clear intention: ‘the propensity to sin was manipulated by the devil; and in which providence and divine justice ultimately predominated.’<sup>70</sup> Pamphlets held heroic tones of justice, truth, and witnessing with the intent

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<sup>67</sup> Gibson, p. 122.

<sup>68</sup> Garthine Walker, ‘Demons in Female Form’: Representations of Women and Gender in Murder Pamphlets of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,’ in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. by William Zunder and Suzanne Trill (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 123–39, (p. 124).

<sup>69</sup> Walker, p. 127.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, p. 135.

to persuade their audiences into godly behaviour in addition to projecting witches as threats in the form of women. Philip C. Almond acknowledges this as: ‘an ambivalence at the heart of Christianity itself. For Satan was both divine emissary and divine enemy. This was an ambivalence often present in the literature of witchcraft and possession.’<sup>71</sup> The pamphlet acts as confessional and redemption of the soul for the witch but also places God’s promise and intent to the forefront as prefaces within pamphlets refer to Biblical references.<sup>72</sup> This demonstrates how the purpose of certain witchcraft pamphlets as a literary device of moralistic signposting was an essential form of communication but also demonisation within early modern England.

Witchcraft within the theatre was performative yet engaged in the dichotomy between mysticism and reality, as depicted in *Macbeth* (1606) by William Shakespeare.<sup>73</sup> The weird sisters begin the play with: ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air.’<sup>74</sup> Here witchcraft represents change and danger. Another example is how the witches are portrayed is when Banquo and Macbeth visit the witches:

By each at once her chappy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.<sup>75</sup>

Banquo distinguishes the witches as liminal and as being between something human and not, thus displaying Shakespeare’s complex intention in creating witches of fancy. After proclaiming glory on both men, the witches then vanish. Peter Stallybass explores this

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<sup>71</sup> Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and Their Cultural Contexts*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14, ProQuest Ebook, <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=266539>> [accessed 9 August 2023].

<sup>72</sup> Warfield, p. 213., Chaemsaithong, p. 169.

<sup>73</sup> This date is contested by scholars who debate whether it is 1605 or 1606.

<sup>74</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (South Bend: Infomotions, Inc., 2000), p. 2, ProQuest EBook Central <<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=3314833>> [accessed 10 August 2023].

<sup>75</sup> Shakespeare, p. 5.

ambiguity: 'At one level, no doubt, it enabled Shakespeare to draw upon the common belief in an 'evil' at work in the English countryside whilst never reducing the play's witches to village widows.'<sup>76</sup> This demonstrates how Elizabethan and Jacobean witchcraft plays were 'culled directly from popular treatises, pamphlets, and trial literature.'<sup>77</sup> However, plays also combined the current imaginative discourse and entertainment of the world of theatre. Andrew Softer contends that 'Elizabethan drama appears caught between the urge to demystify magic on the one hand...and to appropriate its vocabulary and spectacle for theatrical ends on the other'.<sup>78</sup> This hanging balance of mystical imagery as seen in *Macbeth* creates the ambience of witchcraft and perhaps plays on the fears of the time while also avoiding the debate on how it functions.

Furthermore, this balance of imagination and actual historical discourse is reflected in the Demonologies of the time and represents the 'boundaries between illusion and reality; and the very same issues were raised by the spectacle of the theatre.'<sup>79</sup> The key aspect here is the difference in belief; many common folks, church clergy, and elites believed in the dangers of witchcraft and the threat of witches. Regardless, theatre plays that draw on the fantasy of witchcraft attempt to indicate that is an illusion, to avoid political and religious tensions. As Deborah Lea insists the 'witches' tale thus becomes a parable: the hardships of temporal life prove too much for them and... their future will bring only more misery and a short, sharp drop off the gallows.'<sup>80</sup> Perhaps, Sawyer's fall to sin and evident construction as a witch signifies how she is a victim of the hardships in her life, but this representation shall be investigated in the next chapter.

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<sup>76</sup> Peter Stallybass, 'Macbeth' and Witchcraft,' in *Focus on Macbeth*, ed. by John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 189–209, (p. 195).

<sup>77</sup> Williams, p. 312.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Sofer, 'How to Do Things with Demons: Conjuring Performatives in 'Doctor Faustus,' *Theatre Journal*, 61.1, (2009), 1–21, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.0.0154>>.p. 20.>, p. 20.

<sup>79</sup> Roper, p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> Deborah Lea, 'The Supernatural on the Stage: An Analysis of Early Modern Literary and Theatrical Representations of Lancashire's Witches and Demons,' in *Staging the Superstitions of Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Verena Theile and Andrew McCarthy (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 109–30 (p. 98).

While the stage witch in early modern England is constructed as both a demonic entity and a socially constructed force, Deborah Harkness' trilogy removes the witch from the realm of the 'real' and locates her in the realm of fantasy. Farah Mendlesohn's *The Rhetorics of Fantasy* is particularly useful in understanding the mode of fantasy Harkness employs. Mendlesohn examines the parameters of intrusion fantasy and how it functions within contemporary fiction. The intrusion fantasy is one of four fantasy types. Mendlesohn identifies the others as portal quest, immersive, and liminal. This centres on the presence of fantasy elements within the 'real', human world: 'the world... ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled.'<sup>81</sup> Mendlesohn argues that in intrusion fantasy the 'trajectory moves from stability, through disruption, to a new mode of stability (one that rights the "wrongs" encapsulated in the old order).'<sup>82</sup> This is the template that Harkness' Diana Bishop follows.

Jackson extends this as: 'The fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday legality'.<sup>83</sup> Fantasy acts as a catalyst as an intrusion where the supernatural emerges from the cracks of the real world and creates tension. This forces the main character to respond and to be initiated into their quest that reflects wider world consequences. She insisted that the 'form appears to depend both on the naïveté of the protagonist and her awareness of the permeability of the world—a distrust of what is known in favour of what is sensed.'<sup>84</sup> The function of intrusion fantasy is, 'less toward negotiation with the intrusion of mysterious strangers and portents than toward their negation.'<sup>85</sup> As explored with Diana's inexperience in the second chapter, her willingness to

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<sup>81</sup> Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), p. 115, ProQuest eBooks < <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1110030&ppg=143> > [accessed 06 June 2023].

<sup>82</sup> Mendlesohn, p. 121.

<sup>83</sup> Jackson, p. 21.

In Rodger Caillois, *Au coeur du fantastique* (Paris, Lulu.com, 1965), p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Mendlesohn, p. 115.

<sup>85</sup> Mendlesohn, p. 127.

accept her situation is her initiation into the supernatural in the world around her and herself.

Charul Palmer-Patel writes that ‘literature and the ideas that it conveys are a product of a cultural moment, which, in turn, is part of the feedback loop that influences other literature and ideas in a continual open dialogue.’<sup>86</sup> This thesis is structured in such a way that both the embeddedness of the texts in their cultural moment and how Harkness ‘writes back’ to the historical narrative function as a backdrop. Harkness’ depiction of the witch draws on earlier narratives, yet also interrogates and critiques the stereotypes that frame the witch in a reductive way. The trilogy transforms the witch from the scapegoated figure of the historical record and the early modern stage into a sympathetic and empowered contemporary woman. This thesis explores how literature is an ‘open dialogue’ of continuous change and meaning.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it begins with how witches were represented in early modern England and how ageism—so apparent in fairy tale representations—is a core element of the witch as a woman.

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<sup>86</sup> Charul Palmer-Patel, *The Shape of Fantasy: Investigating the Structure of American Heroic Epic Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 6, ProQuest EBook Central <<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=1110030>> [accessed 28 June 2023].

<sup>87</sup> Gibson, p. 223.

## Chapter One: The (Re)Constructed Witch, Elizabeth Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton*

Some call me witch,

And being ignorant of myself, they go

About to teach me how to be one.<sup>1</sup>

*The Witch of Edmonton* is a play that gives an insight into the social and cultural conditions that produce the figure of the witch. As the quote which begins this chapter highlights, it is the labelling of Elizabeth Sawyer as a 'witch' that 'teaches' her how to behave as one. The Introduction to this thesis has built the foundation of the theological context, in addition to the English social-historical climate, which this chapter will continue. Both the historical witchcraft case of Elizabeth Sawyer, the pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* (1621) by the Reverend Henry Goodcole, and the play *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, depict how she performs to the community expectation of her wickedness but also defies them. Accused and rejected from the community as an entity constructed from fear and revenge, she then performs the role which is placed upon her and becomes the embodiment of the witch. The play depicts how her community has constructed her into this figure. The themes of rebellion within the pamphlet and the sympathetic voice the play gives her role are undermined by the end results of punishment, and yet create tension in her portrayal to the audience. How does Sawyer perform the role of the witch and what is the purpose of demonstrating her social construction as the witch?

The first section of this chapter will delve into Elizabeth Sawyer's life and her trial. This forms the basis of Henry Goodcole's pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch*. Goodcole's agenda is embedded in Protestant theology and his associated concerns over female behaviour. He takes an interest in Sawyer's moral and religious state

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<sup>1</sup> William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, 'The Witch of Edmonton', in *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, ed. by Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 2.1 5-10.

and documents Sawyer's repentance.

However, Goodcole's pamphlet has a split focus, which demonstrates a complexity to his primary theological objective. He wants to chart a narrative of repentance and return Sawyer to God's grace, but his horror towards the figure of the witch and her association with the devil means that he sees Sawyer as being removed from God's community through her associations and actions. By exploring how Goodcole codifies Sawyer as a witch through his stereotypical labelling of her as a crone figure, his text brings to light how some viewed witchcraft in the past. Sawyer is scapegoated by her community, due to her behaviour and how she appears to the public eye, thus depicting the witch visually as a defiant member of society and a pervasion of normality. In the pamphlet, Goodcole identifies her as a witch due to her association with the devil and the multiple familiars that she is assumed to have, her bodily disfiguration, and her social status.

The second section of this chapter will discuss the play, *The Witch of Edmonton* by Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, in which Elizabeth Sawyer is dramatised as the witch figure. David Nicol argues that her social construction and transformation into a witch is demonstrated by her story being an example of community and in how 'it highlights not only the power of devils, but also the power of social coercion to attract those devils.'<sup>2</sup> This is represented clearly by the two intertwining lines of the plot, Mother Sawyer's witch development but also the social pressure Frank Thorney faces due to inheritance and love issues. I explore how the playwrights have carefully placed Frank's radically different tale of murder beside Mother Sawyer's tale of deviance. Through this juxtaposition, the play investigates the boundaries of social pressure and demonic influence. The blend of embodiment within the play can be examined through Sawyer's portrayal as the witch and crone figure.

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<sup>2</sup> David Nicol, 'Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*,' *Comparative Drama*, 38.4, (2004-5), 425-445, <<http://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2004.0047>>, (p. 442).

Lastly, by understanding why Sawyer is cast from the community for her sins and why Frank is accepted back into the Christian community, questions of gender differences and what is truly deemed wicked can be answered. Why is Sawyer punished by the character Justice? Why do the playwrights (after dialogue and actions demonstrating the social and demonic pressures that shape Sawyer's actions) end back where they started in the communal blaming of Mother Sawyer for the sins of the village, instead of developing the glimpses of sympathy which represent the dynamics at work in the forming of wickedness?

### **Historical Context**

Many historical studies focus on the anomalies within Europe of mass torture, execution, and the practice of burning witches at the stake. This symbolically was a cleansing of the devil's presence within a community and evidence of how witch accusations stood as an act of heresy. Yet, the most fascinating cultivation of witchcraft trials, authorities, and social dynamics lies within the close-knit villages of England. As explored within the introduction, the unique arrangement of the historical period provides a backdrop to the environment that produced the witch as threat. The 92 percent of women persecuted within Essex County is particularly striking and demonstrates the link between women and witchcraft.<sup>3</sup> English cultural beliefs highlight the gendered nature of witch persecution in England during this time period. In examining the historical context of witch trials in England, it becomes evident that women were disproportionately targeted and persecuted.

Elizabeth Sawyer of Winchmore Hill was hanged on 19 April 1621 for the murder of Agnes Ratcliffe and for inflicting damage to livestock and children. She was labelled and found guilty of being a witch Sawyer's reputation for harsh oaths and blasphemies led to her being viewed as a typical witch: an old woman and deviant figure within a community who commits diabolical acts.<sup>4</sup> Sawyer's reputation, which was built over many years, made her

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<sup>3</sup> Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1998), 47.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Garratt, 'Dramatizing Deviance: Sociological Theory and 'The Witch of Edmonton,'' *Criticism*,

vulnerable to community expulsion due to her lack of family within the area, a fearful husband, and acts of neighbourly ‘vengeance’ which condemned her. Sawyer’s case was held at the Old Bailey, and soon after her death, Henry Goodcole’s pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* was released, and the *Witch of Edmonton* was performed. Witchcraft pamphlets were a common way of expressing community witch beliefs (as explored within the Introduction) and were popular before Sawyer’s persecution. Other examples include *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612) and *The Wonderfull Discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philip Flower* (1619).<sup>5</sup> Sawyer’s trial was dramatised into a series of sensationalised warning tales featuring the witch as a stereotypical crone figure and provides an insight into attitudes towards witches in English society at the time.

Witchcraft accusations and executions spiked within periods of change or turmoil where the systems set to restrain societal divisions were in flux. England experienced a moment of such turmoil in 1534 when, for a complex web of political and personal reasons, Henry VIII broke away from Roman Catholicism to form the Protestant Church of England.<sup>6</sup> Henry VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon, which Pope Clement VII refused to annul due to his views on marriage and its sanctity, caused conflict between the church and the state. This religious Reformation initiated the new state religion of Protestantism, thus beginning the Church of England. Yet, as Lockyer and Gaunt mention, while religious disruption and change was happening within this time period, it does not mean that the community practices and cosmology instantly changed with it.<sup>7</sup> The resulting Reformation not only created turmoil but also affected the fragile ecosystems of neighbourhood relations and economic pressures of the era. The blend of popular beliefs which constructed the general ideologies about

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49.3 (2007), 327–75 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.0.0037>> (p. 333).

<sup>5</sup> Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203976449>> [accessed 2 November 2023], p. 31-32.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Lockyer and Peter Gaunt, *Stuart Britain: 1485-1714*, 4 (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 68. Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780429459856>> [accessed 20 August 2023]

<sup>7</sup> Lockyer and Gaunt, p. 59.

“witchcraft” or folk magic were set outside of religious institutional thought within the early sixteenth century and, while regarded as suspicious, was not seen as a threat to the church within these early times. For instance, Karen Jones and Michael Zell argue that the Protestant church lacked what the Roman Catholic Church provided in terms of exorcisms and counter-magic to rebut attacks of *maleficia*.<sup>8</sup> The lacking presence of the Church in providing communities with solutions added to the tensions by accusations that were taken to court.

In addition to the fluctuation within religious circles, the political witchcraft laws within England reflected the views on witchcraft as a common crime yet they also highlighted the rise of demonisation. The third Act of 1601 brought witchcraft ideology from Europe, which altered English perceptions and is a factor of why women fell victim to demonologist assumptions about their nature.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the link between inflation and economic struggles such as a bad harvest, long summer, or few rains helped ignite the witch trials within England, in addition to the tensions from frequent plague outbreaks within the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Fundamentally, this time of uncertainty developed a new dynamic from community reconciliation within neighbourhoods dealing with witchcraft accusations versus the newly introduced reliance on the courts for ways to provide retribution from attacks of *maleficia*.

The first Witchcraft Act of 1542 and 1562 positioned witchcraft as a crime not a hearsay. In England, torture was against the law, unlike in Europe, where the framework of witchcraft was based on heretics committing hearsay against the Roman Catholic Church. Within this point of history, the Church held extensive powers of investigation and punishment.<sup>10</sup> The final Witchcraft Act of 1601 within the reign of Elizabeth I began the

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<sup>8</sup> Karen Jones and Michael Zell, “The Divels Speciall Instruments’: Women and Witchcraft before the ‘Great Witch-Hunt,’” *Social History*, 30.1 (2005), 45–63  
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/0307102042000337288>> (p. 59).

<sup>9</sup> Jones and Zell, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> James Sharpe, ‘Witch Hunts in Britain,’ in *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, ed. by Johannes Dillinger (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 145–59 (p. 146).

integration of European beliefs of Satan's presence within the act of witchcraft. This process of demonisation fuelled the flames of the unsteady religious, political, and economic landscapes between the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. Also argued by historian Merry E. Wieser, the witch figure within society was 'a symbol of hostility to the ruler and community'.<sup>11</sup> This is due to the witch personifying the internal threat of perverted society norms and her symbolic identification as the diabolical figure of *maleficium*. Witch hunters existed and came into villages to investigate witch rumours, but the main source of accusations came from neighbours, family, or extended communities. The main reason for these accusations were kinship stresses, family dynamics caused friction or stress on individuals such as stepchildren, property tensions or worries over public behaviour.<sup>12</sup> Witch investigations were hunting a type of woman, as other women gained social status and economic security from finding members of the community who fit the frames of the witch and vice versa.

The poor both made the most accusations and were the largest proportion of those accused of acts of witchcraft. This intrinsic connection demonstrates how witchcraft accusations were due to relationships between neighbours where survival could be based on begging for rancid milk or mouldy bread for the already marginalised within society who could face rejection due to economic tensions. This led to widespread fear and anxiety about the uncertainty and violent nature of community witch attacks. The suspicion targeted the marginalised within society and the accused usually were older women who were widows or relied on their neighbours for support. The misfortune which befell the individuals who avoided helping poorer or weaker members of their community, was assumed to be because of the rejected recipient's curses or mutterings, assumed to be an attack by magical means on crops, livestock, or household members.<sup>13</sup> This charity model of understanding witchcraft

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<sup>11</sup> Merry E. Wiesner, *New Approaches to European History: Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe Series* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 284.

<sup>12</sup> Sharpe, p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), p. 74-76.

accusations was first established by Alan Macfarlane and later applied to England by Keith Thomas. James Sharpe draws on this research in his recent chapter on ‘Witch Hunts in Britain’: ‘Among the poor... hard times and increased competition for resources encouraged the sort of neighbourly tensions which so often under pinned a witchcraft accusation.’<sup>14</sup> This angle of historical exploration provides further insight into why the witchcraft trials began and in what areas. Sharpe also insists that the ‘growth of women’s history and the establishment of gender as an important tool of historical analysis encouraged a feeling that they had paid insufficient attention to gender issues’.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Macfarlane and Thomas used outdated perspectives despite their fundamental place as leading historians on witchcraft studies.

Religious demonizing of the original concept of folk magic and healing helped discourage society to practice or seek herbal spells and charms, which were common in the late medieval period and potentially threatened the Church. Before the heightened religious tensions of the Reformation, wise women or cunning folk were consulted as oracles, healers, and professional spiritualists. Conversely, in the early modern period, midwives often worked for the courts to search witches’ bodies for the witch’s mark or teat, despite the popular belief that midwives were a highly persecuted group. However, their role as part of the judicial courts, despite also being persecuted, is another complex social-political aspect of witch accusations.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, another group that were greatly affected by witch trials were those who embodied the crone archetype. The crone, since pre-Christian times, was associated with wisdom learned over many years and the respect earned by being a powerful woman within the community that took care of the sick and injured, and provided them with protection.<sup>17</sup> This long historical shift from the respected and feared elder to a marginalised

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<sup>14</sup> Sharpe, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> Sharpe, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> Clive Holmes, ‘Women: Witnesses and Witches,’ *Past & Present*, 140.1 (1993), 45–78  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/past/140.1.45>>, (p. 72-75).

<sup>17</sup> Barbara G. Walker, *The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 12-13.

'hag' within a community represented the loss of village support and respect for older women. This was due to the economic crisis and the lack of work for women during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup> The widowed and spinsters were seen as local beggars as well as nuisances and yet were still feared for their wisdom and appearance. Older women were also described as aggressive, scolders, and lustful due to menopause.

Prominence must also be placed on the factor of economic pressures during the witchcraft craze within England. This establishes the foundation for the exploration of women's roles and how they were affected by marginalising reputations and the link between witch and women. The economic inflation of the sixteenth-century provided the lynchpins for the community tensions that arose from witchcraft suspicions, as Wiesner contends that 'large scale witch hunts often occurred after some type of climate disaster, such as an unusually cold and wet summer, and came in waves'.<sup>19</sup> The environment of economic struggles and agricultural hardships is what affected the poverty stricken the most, where the gravity of one's situation and charity was at stake.

The refusal of charity began a chain of fear where the guilt from turning away neighbours in hard times began shifting to looking for someone to blame, fuelling witchcraft suspicions. Anne Llewellyn Barstow examines a case of tensions between neighbours when John Wodle and his wife turned on their neighbour Goody Hall: 'In his guilt over having refused her, *he* accused *her* of sorcery. Accusations...provided the aggrieved party with redress and by identifying the evildoer, providing the possibility of defence by counter-magic'.<sup>20</sup> This aspect of counter-magic is fundamental in neighbour dynamics and the witch's place as scapegoat for unfavourable conditions or the lack of ability to give charity to others. These conditions form the foundations of why women were scapegoats and executed within this environment,

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<sup>18</sup> Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 100.

<sup>19</sup> Wiesner, p. 285.

<sup>20</sup> Barstow, p. 76.

especially the widowed, elderly, and promiscuous, were affected as marginalised members of society. Despite this, it also benefited in some regards as a way to rise in social status as long as they were not at the wrong end of the noose.

The two recurring themes—social pressure, and demonic influence within the late sixteenth to seventeenth century, are an essential factor in understanding how witches were constructed by a community through fear and suspicion. Elements of performing to the role of the witch as a method for power or gaining a voice breaks gender norms as a witch was considered a deviant figure who rejected societal norms and positive Christian values. The witch was dramatised by her defiance and in some cases rebellion against the set stereotype and yet performed to the role due to self-demonisation or how it provided power for acts of revenge, as seen within the case of Elizabeth Sawyer. Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the play, context must be given to understand how Elizabeth Sawyer's dramatised life story ended up within a Jacobean witchcraft play.

### **Blame or Sympathy?**

*The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* by the Reverend Henry Goodcole was published in 1621 after Sawyer's execution. An element of interest in Goodcole's witchcraft pamphlet is the aspect of rebellion within Sawyer's response to being condemned as a witch. Goodcole's pamphlet—which is untrustworthy in its narrative—provides a general overview of the accusations against Sawyer, from the murder of Ratcliffe, to the accusations of hurting children and cattle in the neighbourhood.

The responses I take particular interest in portraying are Sawyer's feelings about her situation through the perspective of Goodcole, which admittedly is dramatised and edited. Despite this, the themes which have already been discussed, such as social pressure and it is construction of the witch figure within a community, are prevalent. Goodcole begins with the question of Sawyer's intent: 'Why did you at your triall forswear all this, that you now doe

confesse?’<sup>21</sup> Her response is that she ‘did it thereby hoping to avoyd shame’.<sup>22</sup> This typical theme of shame and fear mongering within a community demonstrates the ability of social pressures to condition the marginalised into compliancy and how Sawyer is aware of what is required of repentance, which is confession and regret.

Goodcole then goes onto questioning her motives for the legitimacy of her words: ‘What moves you now to make this confession? did any urge you to it, or bid you doe it, is it for any hope of life you doe it?’<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Goodcole’s need for the interview’s scrutiny is also to show that witchcraft and female defiance would not result in redemption of any kind. Sawyer’s response here is fundamental to understanding her predicament, yet also contradicts Goodcole’s comment on her being ignorant. Her response demonstrates a complete understanding of her situation and the position she is in:

No: I doe it to cleere my conscience, and now having done it, I am the more quiet, and the better prepared, and willing thereby to suffer death, for I have no hope at all of my life, although I must confesse, I would live longer if I might.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of her living longer is unattainable due to the elaborate construction of her communal witch status; Sawyer is symbolically the sacrifice to end the darkness within the community. Therefore, the concept of Sawyer filling the role of scapegoat saves the community from having to go through multiple court cases of anti-Christian behaviour (otherwise the community would have to face themselves for the sins they committed), and the witch is conveniently placed as the vortex of all evil that moves through their community. Barbara G. Walker proclaims that ‘[i]gnored are the findings of modern psychology that fear is the basis of violence rather than its antagonist’.<sup>25</sup> An understanding of fear as the basis for witchcraft

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<sup>21</sup> Gibson, p. 313.

<sup>22</sup> Gibson, p. 313.

<sup>23</sup> Gibson, p. 313.

<sup>24</sup> Gibson, p. 313.

<sup>25</sup> Walker, p. 9.

accusations and community suspicion can help shape why pamphlets and dramatised forms of literature were deemed essential at the time to educate readers about moral and theological themes.

Here, it can be argued that Sawyer, her body as a readable text, performs the role of the crone witch figure because that is how society packages and understands her. Within the collective imagination of her community Sawyer behaved as a supposed witch was expected to behave. Goodcole's religious perspective and beliefs likewise shaped his attitude towards Sawyer, with his questions to her focusing on the way in which the devil fuelled her actions:

Question: What did you after such the Divells asking of you, to have your Soule and Body, and after this his threatning of you, did you for feare grant unto the Divell his desire?

Answer: I granted for feare unto the Divell his request of my Soule and body; and to seale this my promise made unto him, I then gave him leave to sucke of my bloud, the which hee asked of me.<sup>26</sup>

Sawyer's association with demonic familiars, her physical deformities that codified her as a witch, and the aspects of rebellion which cannot be edited from her narrative add a foundational understanding to her real life, and the trial she faced for 'unruly' feminine behaviour. The pamphlet details Sawyer as dealing with the devil.<sup>27</sup> As a minister at Newgate Prison, Goodcole put great emphasis on obtaining a confessional and what Anna Bayman terms a 'morally beneficial story'.<sup>28</sup> Unrepentant deaths were not seen as satisfactory, due to the lack of the soul's redemption. Theologically, Goodcole's Protestant narrative fulfils this purpose, yet also continuously seeks to make an example of and display Sawyer's evil deeds.

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<sup>26</sup> Gibson, p. 310.

<sup>27</sup> Anna Bayman, "'Large Hands, Wide Eares, and Piercing Sights': The 'Discoveries' of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Witch Pamphlets," *Literature and History*, 16.1 (2007), 26–45  
<<https://doi.org/10.7227/LH.16.1.2>> (p. 35).

<sup>28</sup> Bayman, p. 36.

This helps to dramatise the soul's redemption back into the church, yet there is also a kind of voyeuristic thrill in Goodcole's detailing of the devil's physical hold on her. This is evident in his interview with Sawyer:

Whether did you pull up your coates or no when the Divell came to sucke you?

Answer.

No, I did not, but the Divell would put his head under my coates, and I did willingly suffer him to doe what hee would.<sup>29</sup>

The theologically framed narrative, and the theme of a few of his pamphlets focusing on female "misdemeanour" make his writing riddled with bias. This is evident in what Gibson terms his 'leading questions' about as referred above the devil's hold on her.<sup>30</sup> Yet, despite the unreliability of Goodcole's pamphlet, his writing demonstrates how society viewed and constructed a witch, how an older women's body is codified and associated with maleficium, in addition to how a witch's social status and behaviour is perceived.

According to Purkiss, Goodcole 'is drawing on very powerful ideas of the saving power of truth'.<sup>31</sup> This is important as he is redeeming Sawyer within the eyes of God and her 'confessions' are of spiritual value, acting to return Sawyer to the Christian community. Goodcole uses 'truth as a means of salvation and reintegration... a recovery of the true self she had lost by diabolic pact'.<sup>32</sup> While most of the pamphlet is focused on depicting and condemning Sawyer as a witch, there are also moments where Sawyer's voice emerges within the text.

In comparison to the pamphlet, *The Witch of Edmonton* (based on Elizabeth Sawyer's historical case) interweaves Sawyer's real-life trial and local witch beliefs to dramatise

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<sup>29</sup> Gibson, p. 310.

<sup>30</sup> Gibson, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 236, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9780203359723>> [accessed 8 April 2023].

<sup>32</sup> Purkiss, p. 236.

Sawyer's interactions with the devil, in addition to exploring how the devil infiltrates a community and the women within it. The play was influenced by earlier writings, as mentioned in the Introduction—such as Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). Scot's work had a significant impact on literature due to its sceptical tone and intent to discredit witchcraft and witches. Yet, he also sparked an interest within the late sixteenth and seventeenth century in exploring the visual portrayal of witches in addition to giving evidence to discredit their existence. This was reflected in works such as William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* as the witch transformed into a fairy tale epithet for older women that were fierce and terrifying, a symbolic countenance from myth and folktales. Unfortunately, this was not true for villages living day to day in rural areas, where witchcraft was a very real threat.<sup>33</sup>

The playwrights' language in *The Witch of Edmonton* is similar to Henry Goodcole's demonisation of the witch, describing Sawyer as lustful, ugly, and stupid. This coincides with historical witchcraft beliefs and superstitions of how a witch looks and behaves. The playwrights use this language to situate the audience into normal village life, imitating the beliefs and social practices, but also twisting this for mockery. The process of Sawyer becoming labelled as a witch begins with her othering from the Christian community as an anti-social figure. Her age and social status are core concepts often mentioned, and this highlights how she became reconstructed into the stereotypical crone figure. The reasons for her categorisation as a witch fluctuate between her reliance on charity, being shunned by disgruntled neighbours, her 'age ridden' appearance, and how she reacts to being beaten down by her community, enacting revenge.

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<sup>33</sup> David Nicol, "I Knew Not How to Call Her Now": The Bigamist's Second Wife in 'The Witch Of Edmonton' and "All's Lost By Lust," in *Comparative Drama*, 50. 4, (2016), 317–39, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2016.0025>> (p. 323).

A doubling of the real Sawyer's expulsion from society and Mother Sawyer's labelling reflects how the 'plays based on real cases are the dark doubles or shadows of the more authentic discourses on which they draw'.<sup>34</sup> The surprising element within this play is the fact that the playwrights demonstrate the social conditioning which is required to develop a woman into the figure of the witch in addition to how she can be taught or reconstructed into the role. This links to the role of the scapegoat that is thrust upon her. Mother Sawyer is labelled by the villagers as a defiant figure whose sins have devoured her morality, thus making her the perfect subject to hold the sins of all the village. Similarly, through revealing the dramatisation of performance, the mechanics of the play that give Sawyer a voice is striking, demonstrating the production of the witch within rural English communities.

Secondly, Sawyer's connection to dark magic comes in the form of a familiar called Dog. An original and striking part of the play is how the authors reimagined how to animate Dog in a way suitable for human performance. Dog would have been played by a real person, most likely an adult male. Additionally, this was something that the playwrights invented. The role demonology plays in Dog's character divulges the beliefs and questions surrounding how the devil infiltrates a community and creates chaos through the female body. More importantly, fusing this with the elements of invention such as Dog embodied by a man in costume, added further gender dynamics to Dog's construction. The playwrights use Dog to explore the demonic that influences the witch and aids in othering her from her community. While also expressing how Sawyer's acts of revenge develop her into a figure of evil.

Lastly, Sawyer's final judgement by Justice displays the playwrights' genius at demonstrating the social conditioning and construction of a witch within a patriarchal system, while still displaying the same values as the audience. Her inability to be morally placed back in the Christian community, compared to Franks tale of inheritance and murder, is due to her

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<sup>34</sup> Purkiss, p. 235.

lack of repentance within the play. This also demonstrates the way she is regarded as a disposable scapegoat due to her place within society and ageism. The play swings back and forth between the two portrayals of Sawyer, a sympathetic description of a woman wronged by the system and her neighbours to that of a non-repentant woman who enacts terrible mischief and curses her community. This decision demonstrates that the witch must be eradicated for the community to move forward, creating an interesting puzzle of why Sawyer is given this role of tension, is it for sympathy or blame?

### **Labelled to Othered**

*The Witch of Edmonton* begins by representing the social construction of Mother Sawyer as a poor old woman with a central focus on the contaminating powers of female obstreperousness and the potential for women on the margins to disrupt social cohesion. Mother Sawyer is introduced through a soliloquy which revolves around how her situation has deteriorated from years of mistreatment from those she would have relied on for charity if they accepted her. At this point she has yet to take the final step of succumbing to the devil's clutches and reflects on her position within society:

MOTHER SAWYER. And why on me? why  
should the envious world Throw all their  
scandalous malice upon me? 'Cause I am  
poor, deformed, and ignorant, And like a  
bow buckled and bent together  
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,  
Must I for that be made a common sink  
For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues  
To fall and run into? Some call me witch,

And being ignorant of myself, they go  
About to teach me how to be one; urging  
That my bad tongue—by their bad usage made so—  
Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,  
Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.  
This they enforce upon me, and in part  
Make me to credit it.<sup>35</sup>

Here Sawyer castigates a society which can only see her as defiled, and ugly. This exposes the cause of her marginalisation, with her labelling and othering stemming from poverty, and the classism in addition to misogyny of the society. The description of her as, ‘a common sink’, for all ‘men’s tongues’ to fall into indicates how she is disregarded and oppressed by her environment.<sup>36</sup> The image of Sawyer as a drain into which both the filth and rubbish of what people say and the attitudes and beliefs that give rise to these words create sympathy for her situation. She is labelled a witch and scapegoated because of her tongue’s cursing and blaspheming in retaliation to their insults. The poignancy of the line, ‘by their bad usage made so’, places the blame for her behaviour squarely on the attitudes of a society complicit in producing the thing it fears.<sup>37</sup> Here, the play’s focus on her position and awareness of her own situation undercuts the image of her as evil that the other characters believe to be true, offering a glimpse into her mistreatment and frustration. As she insists in her soliloquy ‘why on me? why should the envious world/ Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?’<sup>38</sup> This is an excellent example of her recognising her separation from the community and how the witch figure is a physical concoction of deformities and age. The play gives her the space to express how she is being constructed: ‘Some call me witch,/ And being ignorant of myself, they go/

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<sup>35</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 5-10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 2. 1. 5-10.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 5-10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 5-10.

About to teach me how to be one'.<sup>39</sup> Sawyer knows the exact aspects which have condemned her and struggles as a result. The awareness she demonstrates works to portray an initially sympathetic character to the audience and to create tension from the terrible treatment her community enacts on her in tandem with her misguided behaviour as she evidentially attempts to get revenge.

This soliloquy positions the witch as a figure within society who has all the fears of the community thrust upon them. Dame Mary Douglas, a prominent anthropologist best known for her writings on human culture and structure within the field of social anthropology, contends that the witch is an anti-societal figure due to her liminal position.

It would be the anti-social psychic power with which persons in relatively unstructured areas of society are credited, the accusation being a means of exerting control where practical forms of control are difficult. Witchcraft, then, is found in the non-structure. Witches are social equivalents of beetles and spiders who live in the cracks of the walls and wainscoting. They attract the fears and dislikes which other ambiguities and contradictions attract in other thought structures, and the kind of powers attributed to them symbolise their ambiguous, inarticulate status.<sup>40</sup>

Considered dangerous, lewd, and unstable, the witch figure, like Sawyer and her experiences, can be twisted by court records and the play to suit the need to shock and titillate an audience. The ambiguous nature of the witches' role is twisted into a method of defiance towards repressive social gender expectations and stereotypes, yet this also conveniently places women into another categorical liminality; the witch label operates as a method of containment in society.

Sawyer's opening soliloquy demonstrates her knowledge of this and growing

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 5-10.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 103, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315015811>> [accessed 5 November 2022].

acceptance of her new liminal position as a dehumanised witch. This suits her need for power and revenge as the powers of the witch, while are mostly unwanted or unfairly placed, creates a figure that is uncontrollable by regular social expectations—inducing fear and suspicion. Sawyer craves this power as a means of fighting back, increasingly seeking strength in separation from societal rules and expectations.

A crucial moment in the play that exemplifies Sawyer's marginalisation and expulsion from the community is when she suffers abuse at the hand of Old Banks. This not only acts as a demonstration of her abuse, but it is also a moment of powerlessness that becomes one of the first triggers for her bargain with the devil. It begins when Old Banks finds her on his land:

*O. Banks.* Out, out upon thee, witch!

*M. Saw.* Dost call me witch?

*O. Banks.* I do, witch, I do; and worse I would, knew I a name more Hateful.

What makest thou upon my ground?<sup>41</sup>

A classic example of labelling, Old Banks calls Sawyer a witch and treats her as a non-human entity due to her poor status. A witch, as clearly represented from his words and actions, is treated like dirt and is lower on the hierarchy than animals. Sawyer, as a witch figure, crosses the border from the village onto his land for survival, gathering sticks for a fire. These are not even valuable sticks: Sawyer speaks of her plan to 'gather a few rotten sticks to warm me'.<sup>42</sup> Symbolically Old Banks' anger and disgust represent the wider community's reactions to Sawyer and demonstrates her rejection by society. Her reaction to being cast out and constructed in such a way is anger: 'You won't, churl, cut-throat, miser! —There they be/  
[*Throws them down*]: would they stuck cross thy throat, thy bowels, thy maw, thy midriff!'<sup>43</sup> Her reaction confirms his suspicions of her evil as the witch's image is clearly set as a defiant,

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<sup>41</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 20-25.

poor, and woman who blasphemes. As demonstrated before, this is due to the roots of causation being poverty, classism, and misogyny, further confirming how witchcraft is a manifestation of patriarchal systemic fears due to concerns over female behaviour.<sup>44</sup> The only thing that holds any power in deflecting his threats is her voice, and Sawyer attacks him with curses. Her defiance leads to bodily harm, illustrating the vicious cycle she is trapped in: one in which she is treated badly, seeks to defend herself, and is then brutalised. Cuddy Banks ridicules her and insists ‘Sayest thou me so? Hag, out of my ground! [*Beats her*]’.<sup>45</sup> After being beaten twice, Sawyer leaves his land and is nearing her lowest point.

The situation begins to tip her over the edge. If she cannot gather sticks to warm herself, how will she be able to beg for food or provide anything for her survival? The play uses this to its advantage as Sawyer rages over her mistreatment and begins to ponder the power witchcraft holds: ‘What is the name, where and by what art learned, / What spells, what charms, or invocations, / May the thing called Familiar be purchased?’<sup>46</sup> Due to being labelled and othered, Sawyer’s options begin to dwindle. Her progression towards embracing the role of witch is complete and, in this first part of the play, there is considerable textual sympathy for her.

Another scene that demonstrates how Sawyer is treated is when she encounters the Clowns and Cuddy Banks, the son of the man who in the previous scene beat her for asking for charity. The play cleverly touches on the notion of charity and refusal, as in the first instance when Sawyer is rejected and beaten. Furthermore, after her beating, Sawyer’s rage begins to pick up and within this next scene boils over as she has had enough abuse. Her position as the main character is labelled, othered, and then “tainted” by her connection to the devil. The play demonstrates the social construction of her witch title and the lowest point

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<sup>44</sup> Diane Purkness, ‘Women’s Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child,’ *Gender & History*, 7. 3, (1995), 408–32, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1995.tb00034.x>>, (p. 408).

<sup>45</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 2. 1. 35.

that pushes her from a grey moral character into the darkness. This example represents the communal expulsion from the community in contrast to the earlier individual rejection by Old Banks:

*3<sup>rd</sup> Cl.* Away—

*4<sup>th</sup> Cl.* With the witch!

*All.* Away with the Witch of Edmonton!

*[Exeunt in strange postures].*<sup>47</sup>

This becomes the catalyst for Mother Sawyer and her character progression within the plot. She begins turning to witchcraft for answers and conforms to the role that is thrust upon her. Her morally ambiguous position creates tension as her actions and associations draw her further towards the margins. She is cast from the community by the clowns and Cuddy Banks and retaliates by the means of witchcraft. By giving Sawyer a voice, the play displays her development and the experiences in her journey to witchcraft, portraying the environment of her construction instead of the stereotypical view that she was always evil.

## **Damnation**

Mother Sawyer's foray into the darker imaginings of casting spells, curses, and gaining a familiar begins as an exercise in gaining power. However, as she starts to perform to the role of the witch, she increasingly not only enacts but embodies this role. One of the remarkable things about the play is the way in which it remains ambiguous about both Mother Sawyer's status and whether she remains a sympathetic figure. It is possible to read her as a figure exploited by both her community and the devil, but the play also traces her transition from marginalised woman to dangerous witch. Sawyer's progression from beaten old woman to a witch filled with rage, demonstrates the community's construction of her as a demonic figure due to her mannerisms and eventual behaviour. As a result, Sawyer is forced to meet this role within her community. In addition, given that she is the title character of the play, there is also the matter of conforming to the audiences' expectations of what will happen within a

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 95.

witch drama. This brings forth the question stated by Andrew Softer in his exploration of *Doctor Faustus*: '[when] watching the play, we cannot tell whether the dialogue is *describing* a damned soul or forcibly *producing* one'.<sup>48</sup> Exploring the role of the witch figure and how she is constructed, if not forcibly produced for entertainment, to match the stereotypical expectations of society shines a light on how this character is developed within literature. Is Sawyer's character functioning as a critic of society and how her community has shaped her, or is her purpose to simply meet the formula of performance?

An example of this is when Sawyer is ridiculed by the clowns, as was briefly discussed above, which can evoke sympathy for her. However, her reaction to this event represents how far she is willing to go to accept the role of the witch if it helps her gain revenge. This soliloquy is her tipping point, pushing her character over the edge as she rages and calls forth the devil:

*M. Saw.* Still vexed! Still tortured! That  
curmudgeon Banks Is ground of all my  
scandal. I am shunned And hated like a  
sickness, made a scorn  
To all degrees and sexes. I have heard old beldams  
Talk of familiars in the shape of mice,  
Rats, ferrets, weasels, and I wot not what,  
That have appeared, and sucked, some say, their blood,  
But by what means they came acquainted with them  
I am now ignorant. Would some power, good or bad,  
Instruct me which way I might be revenged  
Upon this churl, I'd go out of myself

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<sup>48</sup> Andrew Sofer, 'How to Do Things with Demons: Conjuring Performatives in 'Doctor Faustus,'' in *Theatre Journal* (Washington, D.C.), 61. 1, (2009), 1–21, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.0.0154>>.p. 20.>, (p. 20).

And give this fury leave to dwell within  
This ruined cottage ready to fall with age.  
Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer,  
And study curses, imprecations,  
Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths,  
Or anything that's ill; so I might work  
Revenge upon this miser, this black cur,  
That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood  
Of me and of my credit. 'Tis all one  
To be a witch as to be counted one.  
Vengeance, shame, ruin light upon that canker!<sup>49</sup>

This section of the play establishes Sawyer as welcoming the darkness in to have the upper hand to punish those who have wronged her through revenge. As the developing witch figure, Sawyer is the contaminated source and the site of 'infection' by darker thoughts and her turn to witchcraft as an aid. Within her community she is 'shunned [a]nd hated like a sickness'.<sup>50</sup> Sawyer indirectly connects this 'illness' to 'familiar in the shape of mice/ rats, ferrets, weasels'.<sup>51</sup> These animals are symbolic due to their association with death and disease: infesting any environment, thus demonstrating the link between the witch and disease. Bronwyn Johnston argues that 'the play's model of contagion is exopathic, with the devil acting as the carrier of pathogens'.<sup>52</sup> This is also demonstrated by the imagery of carnage as they 'sucked, some say, their blood'.<sup>53</sup> The animals feed off the blood of witches, a common stereotype that Sawyer reflects on as she ponders the perimeters of "witch-ness". In addition

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<sup>49</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 95-120.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 100.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 100-105.

<sup>52</sup> Bronwyn Johnston, 'Go Touch His Life: Contagious Malice and the Power of Touch in The Witch of Edmonton,' in *Contagion and the Shakespearean Stage*, ed. by Darryl Chalk and Mary Floyd Wilson (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 63–81, (p. 68).

<sup>53</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 105.

to this, her dark thoughts and moral status become ambiguous as she begs for power from whatever will guide her: ‘would some power, good or bad, / Instruct me which way I might be revenged’.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, it is not God who answers her wish, hinting that her lowly status and liminal position of a marginalised witch figure is out of reach of whatever divine powers could have saved her.

Sawyer begins to find motivation to transform from an old woman to the witch figure to regain her place within society. Within her soliloquy she then states the periphery of what is needed to be a witch: ‘Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer’.<sup>55</sup> The witch functions as an anti-Christian source of dark knowledge and she resolves to ‘study curses, imprecations, Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths, Or anything that’s ill’.<sup>56</sup> Again, the key metaphor is of illness as spreading witchcraft that infects those who gives themselves to the devil. Sawyer’s attempt to become a witch is clumsy, yet her spoken word of witchcraft’s causations and her will to become powerful becomes more than just a spoken wish. Perhaps the most intriguing line within her soliloquy is ‘all one to be a witch as to be counted one’.<sup>57</sup> This again shows the playwright’s nuance in depicting the social pressures that are required to reconstruct a witch from a woman as Sawyer is right. It does not matter the exact details of her witch powers or if it is from divine or dark beginnings, all that matters is how she becomes the ‘face’ of the witch figure.

Sawyer’s summoning of these powers of good and bad results in the devil being beckoned. This coincides with common witchcraft beliefs of the time about calling the devil down through cursing and blaspheming.<sup>58</sup> Once invited, the performance of damnation begins, Dog a physical symbol of the devil is summoned: ‘Ho! have I found thee cursing? now thou

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 105- 110.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 110-115.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 110-115.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 115-120.

<sup>58</sup> Sarah F. Williams, ‘“A Swearing and Blaspheming Wretch”: Representations of Witchcraft and Excess in Early Modern English Broadside Balladry and Popular Song,’ *The Journal of Musicological Research*, 30. 4, (2011), 309–56, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411896.2011.614169>>, (p. 312).

art/Mine own'.<sup>59</sup> Through her opening mouth to curse and scold, Sawyer is then infiltrated by his claiming and through her body the community is penetrated by the devil. A ritualistic blood pact, that echoes the demonology beliefs of the time, accepts Dog into Sawyer's life force by his suckling of her blood.

Johnson insists that 'the devil functions as a disseminator of vice as well as infection'.<sup>60</sup> These functions as another metaphor for how the devil enters as a pathogen, the causative agent to the disease of witchcraft. Through this pact Sawyer then commands him to take revenge on Old Banks: 'Go, touch his life'.<sup>61</sup> When Mother Sawyer asks Dog to kill Old Banks, he declares that he 'cannot' because his power is 'circumscribed'<sup>62</sup> and has 'limits'<sup>63</sup>. In particular, he cannot act against Banks because 'he's loving to the world'.<sup>64</sup> Even although Banks' goodness may only be evident in the 'smallest measure', this preserves him from demonic harm.<sup>65</sup> There is an irony at work here as Dog describes Banks as being 'charitable to the poor', a quality he certainly does not exhibit towards Sawyer.<sup>66</sup> The implication is that even before she makes her pact with the devil, Sawyer is so liminal that she is considered to be beyond the reach of social ties and compassion. As Muriel Cunn argues, she 'embodies at least two of the great pre-modern stereotypes about unruly women... both a witch and a scold'.<sup>67</sup> Sawyer's position makes her vulnerable and susceptible to Dog's influence.

The only way Dog could take Banks' life would be if he were to make the same bargain Sawyer did. Dog has the 'power to touch' Sawyer because she foreswore her faith and aligned herself with the devil.<sup>68</sup> The implication is that she is now completely in the

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<sup>59</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2.1. 120.

<sup>60</sup> Johnston, p. 67.

<sup>61</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 150.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 155.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 2. 1. 155.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 2. 1. 160.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 160.

<sup>67</sup> Muriel Cunn, "'Within / This Ruined Cottage': Witchcraft, Domesticity and Inwardness in the Witch of Edmonton,' *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, 85.1 (2014), 41–55 <<https://doi.org/10.7227/ce.85.1.3>>, (p. 48).

<sup>68</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 2. 1. 165.

devil's power is evident from this soliloquy. Sawyer performs to the role of the witch by being destructive and wishing demise on people and possessions. Inevitably, she takes part in the sin that the community shuns her for, thus she accepts her role and becomes the witch of Edmonton.

Dog becomes Sawyer's weapon of revenge as she takes advantage of her new position by enacting 'dark' mischief on her neighbour's son Cuddy Banks. Sawyer mentions how he seems like 'a good young man, and —[Aside] I must/ Dissemble,/ The better to accomplish my revenge. —/But—for this silver, what wouldst have me do?/ Bewitch thee?'<sup>69</sup> He approaches her to ask for a favour in winning the love of Kate Carter as 'that same party has bewitched me'.<sup>70</sup> Bewitched by Kate and in love, he asks for her help to bewitch Kate so that she shares his infatuation. This incident highlights that Sawyer is now publicly acknowledged as the witch of the community, a figure who, while feared, is also sought after for help in community affairs. She relies on the performance of witchcraft to gain respect and fear as Cuddy Banks is requested to 'turn to the west, and whatsoe'er thou hear'st or seest, stand silent, and be not afraid'.<sup>71</sup> This imitates him as he stands towards the west. Sawyer then begins her performance of her role to 'scandal and disgrace pursue 'em, / *Et sanctibicetur nomen tuum*'.<sup>72</sup> Purposely, she lets him witness her commands to Dog and her speaking of Latin, suggesting her wanting others to know her powers as she publicly performs her role. As a poor woman with limited education, Sawyer received no training in Latin. Her ability to use Latin religious language comes directly from Dog. When she speaks Latin, this becomes "evidence" of her witch power and creates fear. This is evident in Banks' response to hearing her speak: 'Scare in a clean life, Mother Witch. —But did your goblin and/ You sprout Latin together?'<sup>73</sup> The performance of her speech and movement ties her closer to being categorised

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 205-210.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 210.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 235.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 240.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 245.

as a witch within her community as it brings her power and money. She is building up a reputation that is common within the witchcraft cases of the time, such as public sightings of witchcraft curses and spells in addition to how she uses fear to convince Cuddy of her fake intentions: 'A ball well bandied! now the set's half won; The Father wrong I'll wreck upon the son'.<sup>74</sup> Sawyer uses this interaction with him to further her revenge upon the community, demonstrating how Dog was drawn down by her cursing, but is ultimately the one being drawn deeper into sin, thus becoming the witch through performing her role.

As the witch figure, Sawyer's character now functions within the play as what Nicol regards as the tension between social pressure and demonic influence.<sup>75</sup> Despite her lowly and meek beginnings within the play, her decisions demonstrate the process which the playwrights are interested in portraying to the audience. How does social pressure influence one's will and how do these decisions fall on the individual? Sawyer is led to sin by her social environment and economic status yet rejects any opportunity to repent or cast out her sinful imaginings. She is forcibly produced by her environment yet throws herself into performing the role of witch for her own desires.

Nicol states that:

the boundary between social and demonic forces is located in the individual will with which the subject may be able to resist the pressures of society...simultaneously emphasize the extreme pressure that the characters are under to make the wrong decision.<sup>76</sup>

Linking this back to the question which began this section, is Sawyer being forcibly produced by the play? I believe her turn to witchcraft is indispensable to the play's progression and the playwright thus needed to place her in extreme situations in which social pressure turns her

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 2. 1. 270.

<sup>75</sup> David Nicol, 'Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*,' *Comparative Drama*, 38.4, (2004-5), 425-445, <<http://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2004.0047>>, (p. 431).

<sup>76</sup> Nicol, p. 437.

character from woman to witch.

## **Witch Eradication**

Sawyer is now the witch of the play and all other plot lines flow around her arc as they intersect through the common theme of social pressure and demonic influence. Frank Thorney is another essential character that is socially pressured by his need for an inheritance from his father and his own desires to be with Winnifrede, who in turn has duped him into believing he is the father to her unborn child. He must be married yet it must meet with his father's approval, creating a double tension of love and responsibility. One of the messages that the play seems to be espousing is that devils exist everywhere. Frank does not make a pact with the devil as Sawyer does, but he is also open to manipulation, with Sir Arthur Clarington and Winnifrede combining forces to lead Frank down a particular path. In this way, his actions, like Sawyer's, are shaped by the community he inhabits.

This juxtaposition of a witchcraft plot and an inheritance struggle represents the social pressures that drive humans to sin. Societal pressure creates Frank and Sawyer's temptation to sin, yet the play demonstrates how the will and social positioning of a character is what saves or eradicates them.

Within the play, Frank's decision to murder Susan is inherently more sinful than Mother Sawyer's dabbling with witchcraft, yet the play's trajectory takes Frank to a place of forgiveness by the community while Sawyer is eradicated. As Viviana Comensoli highlights: 'The marriage plot or Frank Thorney action locates the witch-craze in the social need to punish those who transgress social boundaries'.<sup>77</sup> This is demonstrated by Frank's repentance and how guilt brings him back into the community as Winnifrede mentions 'now this repentance makes thee/ As white as innocence; and my first sin with thee, / Since which I knew none like it, by

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<sup>77</sup> Viviana Comensoli, "*Household Business*": *Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 127, JSTOR Books <<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/10.3138/j.ctt130jvw3>> [accessed 3 May 2022].

my sorrow/ Is clearly cancelled'.<sup>78</sup> This brings forth the question of what Sawyer has done that is worse than the murder that Frank commits. The answer is tied to not only how Sawyer interacts with society, but how she freely speaks against its ironies and sins, which in many ways is regarded as worse than the witchcraft she practices. Sawyer's comments on society: 'A man; perhaps no man. Men in gay clothes, /Whose backs are laden with titles and with honours, /Are within far more crooked than I am, / And, if I be a witch, more witch-like'.<sup>79</sup> Sawyer declares these men as more witch-like than her, bringing note to the gendered image that witchcraft usually conjures. They are 'man yet no man' a clear indication of their lack of humanity as wolves in sheep's clothing.

Justice's response to her multiple comments on Edmonton's sinful men and witchy nature is defensive and angry. As a supposed neutral figure within the play, Justice acts emotionally to her comments suggesting: 'You are too saucy and too bitter'.<sup>80</sup> Sawyer becomes not just a witch but a criminal in Justice's eyes and the community's, a dual figure of liminal displacement that hovers on the edges, existing within the darkest cracks of society. Nicol shares this notion of Sawyer being condemned not for her witchcraft but for her comments on society:

Sawyer utters a diatribe on the sinners of London and asks whether they are worse than she. Thus, the Justice's subsequent denunciation of Sawyer seems to be inspired more by anger at her satirical jibes against Londoners than by objective proof of witchcraft. Once again, Sawyer is punished, not for being a witch, but for speaking her mind about the society that has oppressed her.<sup>81</sup>

Sawyer is scapegoated by her community as a sacrifice for all the sins, as her use of witchcraft centres the conflict on female-oriented spheres. The witch figure, the marginalised women, must be eradicated to restore social order and balance. Does this display the community's

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<sup>78</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 5. 3. 95.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 4. 1. 85.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 4. 1. 80.

<sup>81</sup> Nicol, p. 429.

need to get rid of a certain type of women or anything tainted by evil, and if so, why does that not include the wealthy dandies that Sawyer accused of greater sin than she?

Mother Sawyer as the witch figure operates as a present problem for the community but also as a reflective mirror of what happens when women speak out about the society that condemns them, the very society that also practices sins greater than any witchcraft. Comensoli emphasises that the 'figure of the witch is a sign of disorder – in the body, the family, and the body politic – the causes of which are rooted in female insubordination'.<sup>82</sup> The expectations of Christian values and theology pressure a woman as they become labelled as a witch and othered as an 'alien' entity within society. As Mother Sawyer argues 'if every poor old women/ Be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten, /As I am daily, she to be revenged/ Had need turn witch'.<sup>83</sup> Turning into a witch is seen as the only option for power within communities that shun women who stand out or questions the status quo.

This is also demonstrated by the community suspecting Sawyer's witchcraft in Frank's killing of Susan. Carter accuses her of being involved in magically pushing Frank to murder. 'Did you not bewitch Frank to kill his wife? he would never have/ done't without the devil'.<sup>84</sup> Carter connects the evil within the community to Sawyer's link to the devil, representing how she is scapegoated for all the sins within Edmonton. She replies: 'Who doubts it? but is every devil mine?'<sup>85</sup> Sawyer is cheated by Dog, signifying how he is the conduit that aids sin and yet does not care enough to save her as the devil is simply a mechanism for desire. As Nicol suggests: 'criminal behaviour that can result from hardship and social pressure is complicated by the an intervention of the Devil, who has the ability to pressure the characters into committing crimes, with or without their awareness'.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, Sawyer alludes to this: 'I would live longer if I might, yet since/ I cannot, pray torment me not; my conscience/ Is

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<sup>82</sup> Comensoli, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Rowley, Dekker, Ford, 4. 1. 75.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 5. 3. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 5. 3. 40.

<sup>86</sup> Nicol, p. 427.

settled as it shall be: all take heed/ How they believe the devil; at last he'll cheat you'.<sup>87</sup> Her comment on living longer is a direct quote from Henry Goodcole's pamphlet, just as the real Elizabeth Sawyer apparently stated. The play acknowledges her position within society, her age and how she was pressured into being the witch figure and yet society condemns her all the same. The witch is a figure of all darkness and sin within the community and like Sawyer must be eradicated for equilibrium to return to the village.

The way in which the play frames women as objects that have been murdered, become pregnant out of wedlock, and shamed for it, marginalised, and turned to witchcraft represents how women within later literature are side-lined to roles that are symbolic characters of deviance. A historical lens must be used to understand women's roles within theatre and society. This is apparent in understanding the dynamics at play, yet the *Witch of Edmonton* stands out as a play beyond its time. As Katherine remarks: 'I should fear to be married, husbands/ are so cruelly unkind. Excuse me that I am troubled'.<sup>88</sup> This acknowledges the vulnerabilities of women who have very little power within the seventeenth-century household dynamics. The play considers the voices it portrays and where the crux of power lies, yet adheres to social expectations, thus transforming Katherine's troubles as a form of rebellion.

The women symbolically hold social roles of deviance within the play and Sawyer's plot line is the most marginalising as it holds an entirely different purpose. The witch as a figure of darkness and evil perhaps is an imagined seed by society that is hidden within all women, seen as the potential for birth and death within feminine discourse. Yet, this conclusion has been reached by reading the play in the twenty-first century compared to the writing being for the intended purpose of those reacting to the play on the Jacobean stage. As Julia Garratt states:

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

In the early modern period it is imaginative discourse, it is a play that invites society to question what is happening in their courts of law and to consider alternatives to discipline and punishment.<sup>89</sup>

I conclude that the mechanics of deviance within the play have a range of portrayals of bad behaviour from all the characters, such as Frank Thorney and the rest of the cast. Mother Sawyer's role as a disruptive figure of transformation and change is clearly displayed as a performative yet fundamental aspect of demonstrating how theatre and society can forcibly produce a witch. Sawyer is depicted as the stereotypical crone who ends up mute and condemned by Justice and yet is also given a voice. The play is a complex narrative of historically influenced ideologies that shows an awareness of how society constructs and produces the witch. The audience's expectation of eradicating the witch is met, yet her lasting impression and social construction leave those to consider (as Garret mentions) how the witch is persecuted and why.

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<sup>89</sup> Garratt, p. 367.

## Chapter Two: The Contemporary Witch: From Malevolent Crone to Heroic Saviour in the All Souls Trilogy

It begins with absence and desire.

It begins with blood and fear.

It begins with a discovery of witches.<sup>1</sup>

Diana Bishop, the heroine of Deborah Harkness' All Souls trilogy, is a very different representation of a witch to Mother Sawyer. The choice of the word 'heroine' is deliberate, signifying a shift in the way the witch is conceived and presented. Despite the moments of compassion for Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the glimpses of how her behaviour and actions are shaped by the society she inhabits, she is perpetually othered as old, ugly, deviant, and evil. She is the villain whose malevolent actions wreak destruction and eventually bring about her downfall and punishment. As was highlighted in the Introduction, these negative perceptions of the witch as an evil force that needs to be controlled or expelled have a long history and are enduring, shaped as they are by a Christian belief system that saw the witch as a demonic force of disruption.

Despite the modern repositioning of the witch, the trilogy derives from the blueprint of the historical figure of the witch as a shadowy double that lingers on the margins, 'a dimension of radical (feminist) identity that inserts the history of her oppression into contemporary ideological and political spaces.'<sup>2</sup> The transfiguration of the witch's position within the literature as the feminist agent of change pushes the boundaries of the witch to its archetypal limits. The witch, already a figure of inversion, is then weaponised as a feminist figure of subversion, striking at the systems within the novel with the intent to replace the oppressive figures of power that dominate from a male position.

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, (New York: Viking, 2011), p. 526.

<sup>2</sup> Justyna Sempruch, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008), p. 172, JSTOR Books  
<<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt6wq72n.4>> [accessed 27 February 2023].

Four hundred years on from the first staging of *The Witch of Edmonton* both religious attitudes and literary representations have changed. Diana embodies a new form of witch as a young, heroic, beautiful, and intelligent woman whose powers are celebrated and whose desire to uplift others and improve society places her on the side of “good”. This shift is possible because Harkness is creating a fantasy series for readers who do not expect to encounter witches other than in fiction. Unlike the collaborators who created *The Witch of Edmonton*, who wrote for an audience who largely believed in witches as real entities and consequently feared their powers, Harkness’ twenty-first century creation is the product of a rise in religious scepticism and parallel demand for the gothic fantastic, supernatural beings that may instil fear on the page or screen but never manifest in reality.

The All Souls trilogy by Deborah Harkness portrays the contemporary witch as an extension of the negative witch stereotype as she is a figure of justice and change. The witch, ‘a central signifier of women's cultural un/belonging’, is no longer a liminal outcast, but a feminist hero and saviour.<sup>3</sup> The witch becomes a champion of feminist reclamation, ‘a form of feminist mythology constituted in relation to and as an alternative to the established male-centered master narrative.’<sup>4</sup> The genre of urban fantasy allows Harkness to redesign the power structures within her novel as she replaces the patriarchal structure within Diana’s town with a matriarchal reconfiguration that is then placed into tension with the overall patriarchal structure of her world.

Harkness’ trilogy is part of a growing trend of narratives that present witches in a positive and sympathetic light. This is not to say that the witch has become completely benign, plenty of contemporary representations continue to revel in long standing witch stereotypes, with Roald Dahl’s *Witches* a case in point, Anne-Marie Bird describing Dahl’s witches as ‘women behaving badly’.<sup>5</sup> Adriana Madej-Stang writes of the key features of this ‘evil witch’

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<sup>3</sup> Sempruch, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Sempruch, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> Anne-Marie Bird, ‘Women Behaving Badly: Dahl’s Witches Meet the Women of the

of literature: ‘She is evil, ferocious, malicious, treacherous, cowardly, and wild. In other words, she is a human who has never accepted, or has at some time rejected all moralistic impediments imposed by patriarchal society.’<sup>6</sup> However, the fictional possibilities have expanded, and the witch has become transformed in many contemporary imaginings. Justyna Sempruch characterises this shift as the ‘conversion of the “hag” into a “superwoman”’.<sup>7</sup>

*Beautiful Creatures* by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl (2009) encapsulates this shift of agency and power to a strong female and witch character. This trilogy follows Lena Duchannes and her quest to not be claimed by the dark. Garcia and Stohl blur the set stereotypes and definitions of what it means to be evil or good. This is demonstrated by Ethan Wate (the main love interest) learning what Lena’s choice between light and dark entails. ‘[Lena]... took a deep breath, her eyes glistening. “That’s what I could turn into—a monster—whether you believe it or not.”’<sup>8</sup> The stereotype of being torn between dark and light haunts Lena as she grows from naive to powerful, but she is ultimately able to make a choice for good. This is expressed by Ethan, as they had ‘underestimated Lena’s powers as a Natural. She had somehow managed to block out the moon and save herself from being Claimed after all.’<sup>9</sup> Garcia and Stohl use the historical perspective of a witch leaving the light to align with the dark and invert the imagery to emphasise how the female literary witch can redesign her fate. Lena shifts from a marginalised witch to a powerful superhero of her own destiny, mirroring the transformation that Diana also undergoes in the *All Souls* trilogy. This transformation of the witch from hag to the kind of independent heroine that Sempruch terms a “superwoman” is part of a wider trend in the way in which fantasy fiction frames and depicts women with magical

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Eighties,’ *Children’s Literature in Education*, 29.3, (1998), 119–29  
<<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022445204446>> [accessed 8 March 2023]

<sup>6</sup> Adriana Madej-Stang, *Which face of Witch: Self-Representations of Women as Witches in Works of Contemporary British Women Writers*, (England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p. 215, ProQuest eBook Central <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=20765>> [accessed 27 February 2023].

<sup>7</sup> Sempruch, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl, *Beautiful Creatures* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2009), p. 126-127.

<sup>9</sup> Garcia and Stohl, p. 293.

and supernatural powers or attributes. Harkness builds on the many who came before her. She was directly influenced by *The Witching Hour* (1990) by Anne Rice.<sup>10</sup> This influence reflects popular culture within the second half of the twentieth century with titles such as *Practical Magic* (1995) by Alice Hoffman, and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984) by John Updike, playing a role in shaping witches within popular culture.

The literary trend in fantasy of featuring strong, powerful, and magical heroines who are positive social disruptors is evident in Tamora Pierce's Song of the Lioness Series (1983-87). Pierce is a respected 'foremother of feminist fantasy' and her many literacy projects that empower female heroines accredit this claim.<sup>11</sup> Her series Song of the Lioness is based on a young girl being told she must learn magic and resort to quiet activities. Despite this, Alanna of Trebond yearns to become a knight and eventually finds hidden magic inside herself, on her own terms. The themes of female empowerment, a woman exploring male-oriented spaces, and the discovery of magic are echoed throughout the series. The complexity of female heroism that is represented within *Beautiful Creatures* and The All Souls trilogy is parallel to the situations Alanna faces in her own universe. Recent scholarship by both Jane Tolmie and Whitney S. May argues:

Alanna's reflection betrays her sombre recognition that although she has won her place as a knight of the realm through enormous amounts of hard work, her accomplishment has been attenuated in the eyes of the court by the advantages of her magic and divine interference...In this way, Alanna's heroic exceptionalism—her hand-selection by the Mother Goddess for divine favour—dramatises the struggles of women medieval fantasy writers identified by Jane Tolmie to “get around the

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<sup>10</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, 'Interview with Deborah Harkness', *Goodreads*, (2018) <[https://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/1386.Deborah\\_Harkness](https://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/1386.Deborah_Harkness)> [accessed June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023], para. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Whitney S. May, 'The Lioness and the Protector: The (Post)Feminist Dialogic of Tamora Pierce's Lady Knights,' *Children's Literature*, 48, (2020), 51–79, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/chl.2020.0003>> [accessed 06 June 2023], (p. 51).

problem” of portraying female heroism.<sup>12</sup>

Alanna’s story of coming into her own power and infiltrating the patriarchal structure of her society (to gain power and greatness) reflects a common theme of woman as disruptor that is also seen within Harkness’ trilogy. The magical women of these two universes both receive divine assistance from godly forces and yet have their own agency in addition to power to explore what it means to be a saviour, despite the repercussions from patriarchal powers within their respective literary worlds.

Within contemporary writing ‘fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law’.<sup>13</sup> For a woman to be the central protagonist of a novel that is action-packed and filled with adventure while holding a position of power and influence reflects an ever-growing feminist perspective within contemporary literature. This transformation of the deviant woman as a witch to a powerful woman as witch is a key factor in the evolution of popular culture and shifting perspectives on women’s rights. The positive and heroic qualities Harkness represents in Diana’s character reflect how literary representations of the witch have shifted and evolved from those who came before her.

This chapter begins by focusing on the patriarchal contexts in which Diana lives, with a group of powerful male witches and vampires seeking to perpetuate the kind of masculine domination that results in female oppression. Initially, this reflects the environment that impacts so negatively on Elizabeth Sawyer. Diana has direct experience of the kind of prejudice confronting Elizabeth in the accusations of witchcraft that her ancestor, Bridget Bishop, confronted. However, while Bridget is also executed in the Salem witch trials, this

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<sup>12</sup> Jane Tolmie, ‘Medievalism and the Fantasy Heroine,’ *Journal of Gender Studies*, 15.2, (2006), 145–58, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230600720042>>, p. 153. Quoted by May, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 4, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315015958>> [accessed 12 September 2023].

has led to the establishment of a matriarchal lineage of female power and the chapter turns to the many female influences and role models in Diana's life. In contrast to Elizabeth Sawyer, who, as was highlighted in the first chapter, personifies the crone archetype, Diana is representative of the maiden, associated with beauty, youth, and success. This is the starting point for the journey of change and growth that Diana undergoes, and this chapter will chart how she morphs into the heroic witch figure of contemporary literature. A witch who champions a utopian vision of a just and equal society for all creatures. Lastly, the discussion will shift to Diana as mother and lover, two roles denied both by the stereotypical witch of fairytales and the crone embodied by Elizabeth Sawyer. Throughout, this chapter seeks to answer the question: How does the witch as a formulation of patriarchal control and marginalisation break the mould of its beginnings and transform the witch as a figure of evil to good?

### **Patriarchal Structures**

The focus of this chapter is Harkness' reimagining of the witch as a heroic saviour, but this is set against a backdrop of patriarchal control, egotism, and oppression. To understand Diana's journey, it is therefore necessary to establish the patriarchal structures that dominate creature society. Tellingly, Diana's most significant opponents, and the main antagonists of the trilogy, are men of power and influence, both witch and vampire. As supernatural beings who have lived for centuries, the novel's main antagonists are representative of patriarchal structures that mirror real-world gender oppression. This section begins with the twenty-first century context in which Diana lives and then highlights how the patriarchal opposition she confronts replicates the experience of her ancestor Bridget Bishop, one of the witches executed at Salem.

Harkness' urban fantasy world profiles three supernatural groups as making up what is termed a 'creature' society such as witches, vampires, and daemons, who live alongside human society but keep their existence secret and hidden. The authority governing and

policing creature society is known as the Congregation, formed by three of each species acting as representatives to ensure creature safety.<sup>14</sup> These three members of each species act to enforce and control their factions' interactions. This law has created social tension amongst the creatures as science begins to see cross-species relationships in a different light. Chris, a scientist, and good friend of Diana's explores its implications:

'Think what you want, but forced segregation—or the covenant if you want to be fancy about it—is often about concerns for racial purity...Your covenant probably came into being because witches were having vampire babies. Making humans more “comfortable” was just a convenient excuse.'<sup>15</sup>

The novel twists towards conversations surrounding eugenics and how the creature society's political situation has controlled the narrative between the factions out of fear. This is represented by the main villainous figures, Peter Knox, and Gerbert of Aurillac, who despise the other factions and believe in racial purity. The issue of eugenics shows itself in the separation of the species when in reality all are one. As new knowledge emerges about the witches, vampires, and daemons being humans with only a slight difference in genetics, perspective begins to shift. Diana argues that this 'will shake the Congregation to its foundations'.<sup>16</sup> Matthew declares that the knowledge that they are 'not separate species' and that this will make 'the covenant completely irrelevant.'<sup>17</sup> In addition to the villains of the novel being associated with ideas of racial purity, they are also preoccupied with enforcing the patriarchal power structures that have given them authority over many centuries.

A significant villain that embodies the patriarchal structure and negative connotations of witchcraft is Peter Knox, a bestselling author on modern occultism and described as 'the wizard in brown tweed.'<sup>18</sup> He is introduced in the trilogy when he approaches Diana due to

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<sup>14</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *The Book of Life* (New York: Viking, 2014), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 186.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 616.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 616.

<sup>18</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* (New York: Viking, 2011), p. 120.

her display of power, the summoning of Ashmole 782. He seeks to obtain the book before the vampires and daemons, due to it containing ‘descriptions of the enchantments that bind the world together...The secret of immortality...the source of all our power, past, and present.’<sup>19</sup> As a figure of patriarchal control and species supremacy, Knox fits the stereotype of enforcer, seeker of forbidden knowledge, and male power and control. He is portrayed as a villain who actively works against Diana’s utopian vision of the three supernatural races living together in equality. Knox attempts to stop her and bring her under the control of the Congregation so that he can exploit her. He is also a scorned candidate for her mother, Rebecca Bishop’s, love.

Diana dislikes Knox immediately on the first encounter, she insists that the ‘closer I was to Knox, the more danger I felt. The skin under my fingernails started to prickle ominously.’<sup>20</sup> Represented as a dangerous male figure set on using Diana’s power as a nuclear weapon, Knox is relentless in his pursuit. He views Diana as a naïve young witch unable to understand the political complexities and importance of gaining the book’s secrets. This is evident as Diana mentions that every ‘time the wizard used my title, his formality sounded like a taunt, as if he were trying to make a point that he, not I, was the real expert.’<sup>21</sup> Knox is patronising Diana as he only respects her range of power not her as a powerful witch. His motives are based on control, greed, and exploitation. This ties into how he embodies the historical male authority figures who persecuted witches. Thus, alluding to the witch trials that Harkness took inspiration from. The importance of understanding the male villains Diana stands up against in her quest for utopia demonstrates the clear division between Diana’s micro-level matriarchal upbringing and the macro-level patriarchal structure of creature society.

The second clustered group of villains Diana opposes consists of vampires from her lover Matthew’s faction. This includes Gerbert of Aurillac, a previous vampire Pope based on

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 127.

the historical figure Pope Sylvester II, and Domenico Michele, a Venetian enforcer of Congregation rules, historically based on Domenico Michiel the 35th Doge of Venice. Both men represent the historical past of French and Italian political and religious spheres, in addition to patriarchal oppression. This is demonstrated when Domenico delivers the Congregation notice that Diana and Matthew have broken the covenant, ‘leave this house and no longer associate with Matthew de Clermont or any of his family...the Congregation will take whatever steps are necessary to preserve the covenant’.<sup>22</sup> The threat of the Congregation as a patriarchal institute is clear from its inability to de-escalate conflict and its attempt to exploit and control others for power. Domenico also expresses sexist views and contempt at Diana’s rich educational background, insisting that ‘modern women with your fine educations are so fascinating. But women are no good at theology... which is why we never thought it worth educating you in the first place’.<sup>23</sup> He is represented as a Congregation pawn and deliverer of punishment as he is unswerving in his persecution of women in power. Harkness again takes inspiration from religious persecutors of witches as Domenico is also a male motif of control and punishment for women who do not fit his religious image. This ties back to the historical moments of the Inquisition in Italy. The Congregation’s need for power and secret knowledge threatens Diana’s position throughout the trilogy and the consistent threats push her to fight or flight.

‘First the witches will bring you to heel. Then the Congregation will decide what to do with you.’ Gerbert’s eyes bored into mine, his finger moved down my cheek in a caress. ‘After that, you will be mine. For now,’ he said with a small bow in Satu’s direction, ‘she is yours.’<sup>24</sup>

The element of possession is made clear from his language and Satu’s attempt to torture Diana and reveal her secrets. This shows the lengths the Congregation will go to uncover unknown

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 278.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 278.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 375.

truths and to punish those who hold power that they do not own. Tellingly, the witches are the ones who attempt to punish and torture Diana, with Satu instructed by Knox to hurt Diana.

By embedding these antagonists in real-world historical contexts, Harkness leaves the reader in no doubt as to how they should be viewed. An extreme example of this is Benjamin Fuches, a vampire kidnapper, rapist, and murderer of female weavers. By associating Fuches with Nazi ideologies Harkness positions him as corrupt, evil, and irredeemable. Intent on destroying the de Clairmont Clan's family, he seeks out the most destructive ways in which to deal and trade in de Clairmont family secrets, seeking to exploit Diana's fertility to both destroy Matthew and further his own goal of breeding a more powerful "super creature". His attempt to kidnap Diana for his purpose's underscores how the novel's witch and vampire antagonists reduce women to the level of possessions to be used to further male political agendas.

As well as highlighting the continued patriarchal attitudes Diana has to confront and overcome, the trilogy is also explicit about the dark history of the treatment of those accused of being witches in past centuries, which is also part of a patriarchal system. Diana is linked to this history through her family lineage, with her ancestor Bridget Bishop one of the accused and executed in the Salem Witch Trials. The treatment of Bridget has many parallels with that meted out to Elizabeth Sawyer.

According to Matthew Dennis and Elizabeth Reis, the Salem witch trials, either indirectly or directly, 'set and police the boundaries of female normality and acceptability.'<sup>25</sup> As Isabelle Laskaris argues, women who did not fit the Puritan or cultural expectations within the community were considered ungodly and the source of violence within the community.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Dennis and Elizabeth Reis, 'Women as Witches, Witches as Women: Witchcraft and Patriarchy in Colonial North America,' in *Women in Early America*, ed. by Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2020), pp. 66–94, (p. 75.).

<sup>26</sup> Isabelle Laskaris, 'Agency and Emotion of Young Female Accusers in the Salem Witchcraft Trials,' *Cultural and Social History*, 16. 4, (2019), 413–29, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1585316>>, (p. 424).

To understand the implications of suspicion and the system of accusation it is important to examine who was accused and their circumstances in addition to their place within Salem.<sup>27</sup>

The Salem Witch trials in Massachusetts America, contributed to one hundred and fifty people being accused of witchcraft for *maleficia* against their community.<sup>28</sup> This reaction of terror from a collective emotional response by the girls who made the accusations embodied the cultural understanding and expectation as a product of Puritan and cultural superstition. Furthermore, the girls performed the act of possession, and this gave women the opportunity to be part of the driving force dictating the accusations.<sup>29</sup> These accusations led to a court being established to get to the bottom of Satan's influence within the community, resulting in thirty witches being detained and found guilty in addition to nineteen being hang. As Isaac Reed exclaims: 'Who knew murdering women was so useful?'<sup>30</sup> The women who were executed were Bridget Bishop, Sarah Good, Elizabeth Proctor, Martha Corey, and Abigail Hobbs to name a few. This demonstrates how the two factors that drove the town to a frenzy were Satan's presence and the confirmation of this by the young girl's medical seizures and blame. As they instilled 'challenges to the supremacy of God and challenges to prescribed gender arrangements.'<sup>31</sup>

A key historical figure that begins the lineage of witchcraft descent within Harkness'

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<sup>27</sup> The events of Salem have been exhaustively covered by historians such as Matthew Dennis and Elizabeth Reis 'Women as Witches, Witches as Women: Witchcraft and Patriarchy in Colonial North America,' in *Women in Early America*, ed. by Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2020), pp. 66–94; Isabelle Laskaris, 'Agency and Emotion of Young Female Accusers in the Salem Witchcraft Trials,' *Cultural and Social History*, 16.4, (2019), 413–29 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1585316>> Isaac Reed, 'Why Salem Made Sense: Culture, Gender, and the Puritan Persecution of Witchcraft,' *Cultural Sociology*, 1.2, (2007), 209–34, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507078188>.> Brian P. Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2015), Taylor&Francis eBooks, 59–71 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715292>> Bryan Le Beau, *The Story of the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Taylor&Francis eBooks, 100–123 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315509051-10>>, Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (New York: W. W Norton & Company, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Dennis and Reis, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> Laskaris, p. 418.

<sup>30</sup> Isaac Reed, 'Why Salem Made Sense: Culture, Gender, and the Puritan Persecution of Witchcraft,' *Cultural Sociology*, 1.2, (2007), 209–34, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975507078188>.>, (p. 217).

<sup>31</sup> Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (New York: W. W Norton & Company, 1998), p. 119.

All Souls trilogy is Bridget Bishop. Born in England, Bridget immigrated to Massachusetts after the death of her first husband Wasselbe (Wasselbee and Wasselby) in 1666. The same year, when she was in her forties, she married Thomas Oliver with whom she had one daughter named Christian or Chrestian.<sup>32</sup> In 1670, both Bridget and Oliver were sentenced to public whipping as they were found guilty of assaulting each other and disturbing the peace.<sup>33</sup> Their marriage was well known within the community to be a violent one and historically is a suspected domestic abuse case with multiple testimonies confirming that Bridget's face has been bloodied and that bruises were common to see on her face. Both were sentenced to public humiliation 'to stand gagged in the marketplace, a sign on their heads indicating their offences.'<sup>34</sup> Oliver passed away in 1679, leaving Bridget as the executor of his estate. She inherited land from his death but had to pay off his debts by selling a portion.<sup>35</sup> In 1680, Bridget was charged with witchcraft due to an accusation from a landowner's slave. He had accused her of the bewitchment of livestock in which her shape was seen as a vanishing apparition, in addition to spectral pinching and pain.<sup>36</sup> This was interesting timing for an accusation, Bridget's new fortune of land she had gained from Oliver's death caused her neighbours discomfort and made her a primary target for accusations.

In 1685 Bridget married Edward Bishop and was charged with witchcraft again the same year. The accusations ranged from theft to causing the spectral pain of the girls afflicted within Parris's household as Bishop functioned as a scapegoat for the community. Another accusation was from the tradesmen John and William Bly due to finding 'several poppets made up of rags and hog's bristles with headless pins in them with the points outward'.<sup>37</sup> These poppets had been found (in her cellar) seven years before this trial, indicating perhaps

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<sup>32</sup> Karlsen, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> Le Beau, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Le Beau, p. 95.

<sup>35</sup> Karlsen, p. 105.

<sup>36</sup> Le Beau, p. 95.

<sup>37</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2015), Taylor&Francis eBooks, 59–71 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715292>>, (p. 291).

that charms were used and not unheard of within Salem. During her trial in April, after being held in prison since December, she insists, 'I am innocent. I know nothing of it. I have done no witchcraft.'<sup>38</sup> The voices of the women accused in witch trials are fragmented, rewritten and manipulated by those conducting the trial, but in Bridget's case, her voice is clear and firm in her statement of innocence.

The myth of Bridget Bishop is a bricolage of myth and fact; she was often presented as being an owner of two thriving taverns and influencing debauchery amongst local youths, in addition to dressing in brightly coloured clothing. Bishop had been reconstructed into a rebel figure within Salem and was represented in an entirely different light than the life she led.<sup>39</sup> In a rare case of mistaken identity with a Sarah Bishop from Beverly, testimonies against her and details received by Reverend John Hale were mixed with Bridget's witch trial case. The fact that these two women had been merged to create a more dramatic tale indicates how Bridget Bishop became the face of witchcraft accusations and executions within Salem. Nicole Dittmer states that Bishop can be categorised as a 'haunting spectacle of carnivalesque performativity.'<sup>40</sup> Like Sawyer and other women who represented misfortune and marginalisation, Bridget is dehumanised by her representation within history as the deviant who began the Salem persecutions. This demonstrates how she was as an historical figure that has become irrelevant due to her categorisation as a disruptive force.

### **Matriarchal Lineage**

Bridget Bishop is the matriarchal source of power from which the Bishops have originated, and this inheritance generates both pride and an awareness that the original Bishop witch was a polarising figure. Harkness' representations of the past create a modern twist as she further extends Bridget's story, taking her case of mistaken identity and giving the Bishops a

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<sup>38</sup> Levack, p. 289.

<sup>39</sup> Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft: The Basics*, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 61, Taylor&Francis eBooks <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315726755>> [accessed 24 October 2022].

<sup>40</sup> Nicole Dittmer, 'Spectral Anomaly: The Disappearing Act of Bridget Bishop, Salem's "Absentee" Witch 1692-2018' (Illinois, USA: unpublished conference paper, *International Gothic Association*, Lewis University, 2018), pp. 1-10.

controversial background within the witchcommunity: ‘The rumours of her immortality haunted her for the rest of her life. After Bridget was executed, Rebecca legally changed her name to Bishop... It was an act of defiance.’<sup>41</sup> The feminist spin on not only Rebecca sailing from England to Salem but her rebellion against the Puritan society that oppressed her mother again sets the tone for Diana’s journey and her family’s reputation. The reversal of not taking her husband’s name is a key feature of witch families within the All Souls trilogy, as the author emphasises the witch being a figure of feminist defiance.

The novel uses Salem as a location of powerful witches, a centre of gravity and a power vortex that pulled the most influential matriarchal lines to this town. Most importantly, Diana’s father Stephen is a Proctor, a prominent family who was accused in the witch trials. The story of her mother Rebecca meeting Stephen expresses this: ‘She first went to Harvard, where she met a young wizard named Stephen Proctor. He also had a long magical lineage and a desire to experience life outside the scope of his family’s New England history.’<sup>42</sup> Harkness also alludes to their love being star-crossed due to many in the witch community suggesting the match was not a good idea considering both witches were so powerful. New England frames Stephen and Rebecca’s lineage as powerful due to their Salem involvement, marking them as witches born from conflict with humans. Diana’s immediate family in Madison, New York are led by a trio of capable women. Her aunt Sarah Bishop and Sarah’s partner Emily Mather are the family heads, who take on the mantle after Rebecca Bishop’s death. Each woman is represented by Harkness as being associated with certain types of witchcraft and powers. This is significant in her portrayal of ‘modern’ witches, introducing the reader to multiple stereotypes that are redesigned.

Sarah represents classical witchcraft powers such as folklore magic and spells, in addition to home and hearth rituals. Another element of her character is displayed during her

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<sup>41</sup> Harkness, p. 548.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

investigation into the magical book Ashmole 782. Sarah's role lies in magical discovery as a scientist:

In the stillroom...Sarah... crouched over a pot of something atop an old electric burner... bunches of dried herbs swung from the rafters... 'Eyebright is crucial,' Sarah was explaining like a schoolmarm. 'It clears the sight.'<sup>43</sup>

Her temper is another aspect that she inherited from her namesake (the late Sarah Bishop who fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775) in addition to red hair, and the elements of earth and fire.<sup>44</sup> She is an important figure in Diana's life due to Sarah raising her in place of Rebecca after her death in Africa. 'My mother's younger sister, my Aunt Sarah was a skilled witch, too, but her talents were more mainstream: a deft hand with potions and a perfect command of witchcraft's traditional lore of spells and charms.'<sup>45</sup> Diana sees Sarah as a strong witch in her own right and as fundamental to keeping the family together. Her Aunt is fierce, protective, and is constantly watching over her.

The second member of the trio is Sarah's partner Emily. Their lesbian relationship reinforces the series' feminist message, the narrative framing them as the pre-eminent exemplar of committed love. Emily represents magic through visions, scrying, and dreams. Her calm nature and clever thinking attributes to the elements of earth and water. Diana claims 'like my mother and my aunt, Em came from a long line of witches.'<sup>46</sup> As the pacifist of the family, she helps mediate Sarah's temper when she deals with Diana, who is often disappointed at her lack of magical interest. Emily also met Rebecca in high school and they 'became best friends, then devoted pen pals.'<sup>47</sup> Emily is a constant figure within the Bishop family's lives. She is the polar opposite to Sarah and they both represent a yin-yang pairing. Sarah is fiery and masculine, while Emily is coolheaded, a strategist, and feminine. Her magic

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 552.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 553.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

is not so often shown within the text other than her visions and scrying; the plot uses her interest in higher magic and her attempt to reach Rebecca in the afterlife as her main representation of power. Lost in her emotion for wanting to help Diana, she becomes addicted to higher magic later in the series due to wanting to find out more information from Rebecca.

Lastly, Rebecca was a witch who used higher magics, such as communicating with the dead and using old incantations, she is linked to the elements of earth and air: 'she could outmagic most of the senior witches in the local coven with her intuitive understanding of spells, startling foresight, and uncanny knack for seeing beneath the surface of people and events.'<sup>48</sup> Rebecca was a powerful figure within the Bishop family and the Madison Coven. Her power made her magic explosive and dangerous at times, as Diana mentions from her childhood memories:

my mother decided to clean the silver and became mesmerised by a bowl of water... it became covered with a fog that twisted itself into tiny, ghostly shapes... something half human and half animal crept near and pinched my arm... she exploded into a shower of angry red light.<sup>49</sup>

Rebecca was a witch who is represented as being between worlds and magic, a figure who was a great seer in addition to being knowledgeable in the mysteries of witchcraft. Symbolically, the figure of three that is used often within witchcraft such as the maiden (Sarah), mother (Rebecca), and crone (Emily) represent the three women as the leaders of the Bishops.

Harkness' emphasis on the matriarchal line is also evident in the second book of the trilogy when Diana and Matthew time-walk to Elizabethan England. As Diana struggles to fully realise her powers she discovers female mentors and teachers. The witch teachers Goody Alsop and Susanna Norman help support Diana's growing powers as she carves out a

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

matriarchal space within the patriarchal setting of Elizabethan England. Indeed, the presence of a woman on the throne is a reminder that even in this patriarchal space women can be effective leaders and exercise power. An example of female guidance is when Goody Alsop mentors Diana to weave the threads of life and death: “You need to focus your knots,” Goody Alsop said... [she] had taught me how to blow gently on the strands while focusing my intentions.’<sup>50</sup> The art of weaving and becoming a weaver is taught to Diana by Goody and the other women. This leads her to craft her first disguising spell and enables her to communicate with her familiar:

My final knot was not symmetrical as it should have been, but it held nonetheless.

‘You are indeed a weaver, child,’ Goody Alsop said, letting out her breath.<sup>51</sup>

Goody is her teacher in all things magical, but significantly she also provides a space for Diana to practice as a weaver at a time when women coming together was dangerous. The coven support Diana within the patriarchal constraints of England by helping her summon her fire drake in addition to teaching her how to use weaving abilities. In *Shadow of Night*, weavers are represented as a sub-group within the witch faction that are marginalised by their own people. As a marginalised community they have been largely stamped out due to their dangerous ability to create spells. Harkness creates a layering of the historical ostracising of women, as not only were witches accusing other witches but within witch communities’ sub-groups were being exterminated from the same fear that haunted all creatures. As a weaver, Diana is even more set apart from her magical faction than a normal witch, which will be explored later in this chapter.

## **Maiden**

Diana’s symbolic representation of the maiden archetype is connected to her by encounters with her namesake, Artemis/Diana the virgin Goddess of the hunt and protector of young

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<sup>50</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *Shadow of Night* (New York: Viking, 2012) p. 374.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 376.

women. In direct contrast to Mother Sawyer, who is constructed as the stereotyped old, vengeful, and marginalised crone, Diana Bishop is physically beautiful, desirable, and sexually autonomous. Old and disfigured, the historical witch is dismissed and demonised whilst the modern witch's youth and desirability remove her from a space of major othering. Yet, Sawyer and Diana share being inexperienced and naive when it comes to magic and how power can be triggered by magical encounters. Diana still deals with the repercussions of being different from her adversaries and yet is more accepted within society as a figure of change. In the contemporary context in which Harkness is writing, female rebellion against societal norms is linked not to deviance but to strength and heroism. Jean Shinoda Bolen, Valerie Andrews, in addition to Tatianna Tiaynen-Qadir and Ali Qadir write how Artemis is a model of women going 'beyond prescribed social roles...The Artemis archetype inspired the women's movement, shaped powerful female political figures, and "dominated prime-time television" of the recent decades'.<sup>52</sup> Diana is a witch of strength who subverts societal norms and leads her own destiny, thus embodying her as an Artemis figure. The double representation of Diana as a divinely guided witch associates her with purity and justice, thus removing her from embodying evil. In 'Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious' Carl Jung explores the Kore (maiden) archetype, an archetype of direct relevance to Diana:

The maiden is often described as not altogether human in the usual sense; she is either of unknown or peculiar origin, or she looks strange or undergoes strange experiences, from which one is forced to infer the maiden's extraordinary, myth-like nature.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Tatianna Tiaynen-Qadir, and Ali Qadir, *Symbols and Myth-Making in Modernity: Deep Culture in Modern Art and Action* (London: Anthem Press, 2022), p. 97, JSTOR Books <<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctvrnfr7n>> [accessed 8 July 2022].

Valerie Andrews, 'Artemis and the New Feminine Psychology,' *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*, 10. 2, (2016), 73–83.  
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2016.1157440>>

Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddess in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women's Lives*, Kindle Edition (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2009.) p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Gerhard Adler and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 186.

Despite the maiden archetype personifying virtue and the mystical, her feminine beauty is a multifaceted representation of female youth with the parallels of purity and desirability that enchant those around her. Diana is designed within the trilogy as a witch of mystical nativity contrasted with sexual autonomy. The rise in power and desirability she develops within the trilogy does not mean she has to sacrifice power for her humanity. This remains maintained through her sexual appetite and discovery of the witch within herself. She is also viewed as the “blessed harlot,” due to this great beauty and sexual freedom.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the youth and beauty that the typical maiden possesses, Diana is intelligent and driven as she is introduced within the text as a successful scholar. Her association with independence and focusing on her academic career demonstrates how the contemporary witch is portrayed as beautiful yet also successful:

The main character and the new type of witch... An intelligent, hard-working, down-to-earth, and enterprising woman she is well able to make her career in a male dominated world. She is introduced into the novel as a self-confident and independent... who transgresses the borders between the male and the female genders...<sup>55</sup>

Adrianna Madej-Stang explores how the contemporary witch within intrusion fantasy participates within patriarchal spaces, transcending the witch stereotypes and restrictions once placed within history. The trilogy reworks this stereotype by giving Diana power and autonomy while simultaneously reinforcing her femininity.

Within her career, Diana has independently built a space where she is respected and acknowledged as a specialist in her field. Her journey follows the traditional hero's arc of the progressive acquisition of knowledge and power. A common trope within novels similar to

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<sup>54</sup> Tiaynen-Qadir, and Qadir, p. 91-93.

<sup>55</sup> Madej-Stang, p. 227.

Harkness' is to have strong protagonists with well-established skills. María T. Ramos-García insists that the 'protagonists of urban fantasy are usually intellectuals or artists.'<sup>56</sup> Harkness utilises Diana's intelligence and forms her into a prodigy, providing her with a position of independence, money, and success: 'Aided by a prodigious, photographic memory... my schoolwork was soon established as a place where my family's magical legacy was irrelevant.'<sup>57</sup> As a witch who does not practice magic, or is unable to, Diana builds her own power through study and writing: 'I churned out two books, won a handful of prizes, and collected some research grants. Then I received tenure and proved everyone wrong.'<sup>58</sup> Diana's journey begins as one of repression and using academic success as a barrier between herself, her family, and her community to escape from their expectations: 'The lines I'd already drawn between what went on in my mind and what I carried in my blood grew more distant.'<sup>59</sup> This distancing provides Diana with a separate path from her magical family as she utilises her humanness. Consequently, her skills within the world of research make her vulnerable to magical attacks.

On the other hand, Diana's inexperience as a witch place her in dangerous situations. Despite her acceptance into society as a modern witch, she also faces direct conflict with other witches as she comes into her powers and identity. Diana's lack of experience and awakening to her own naivety comes from being tortured by another witch. 'Worse yet, my struggles against Satu's magic were inexperienced and futile. Ysabeau was right. My weakness—my ignorance of who I was and how to defend myself—had landed me in serious trouble.'<sup>60</sup> In the face of this attack, Diana's inexperience costs her, as her back is branded and is then thrown in an oubliette. This trial is the deciding moment for her join the world of

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<sup>56</sup> María T. Ramos-García, 'Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy,' in *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction*, ed. by Jayashree Kamblé, Eric Murphy Selinger, Hsu-Ming Teo (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 141–67, (p. 142).

<sup>57</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* (New York: Viking, 2011), p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.

magical creatures by reclaiming her power and breaking through her binding. Although there is a disparity in their ages and situation, there are some parallels between Diana and Sawyer in that they both obtain access to power suddenly, Sawyer through Dog and Diana through Ashmole 782.

Within fantasy as a genre, magical encounters with objects act as the trigger for magical initiation. Examples include the rings of power in *The Lord of the Rings* (1937-1955) by J. R. R. Tolkien, the wardrobe and Susan's horn in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) by C. S. Lewis, the Horcruxes in *The Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) by J. K. Rowling. These magical encounters act as a trigger for the hero beginning on their journey in the realm of magic. This is apparent in Diana's ability to transcend her limitations and experience empowerment by using magic: '*Magic is in the heart, Diana, my father said. Don't forget...* The ribbon unfurled and soared through the hole, taking my body with it.'<sup>61</sup> Harkness develops Diana's character to accept her witch powers through trauma and desire. She is helpless at first but develops her powers earlier, compared to Sawyer's constant struggle for control. This highlights how Diana's powers are unknown but innate and pushes her character further away from the restricted historical stereotypes of the witch. This is significant as it leads her to her arc of power and eventually finding a mentor. The discovery of the witch within herself pushes her further along the hero's path of self-discovery.

Lastly, Diana's desirability and beauty redefine the usual and constricting societal expectations in past and present popular portrayal of the witch. As a disruptor of the patriarchal order, she is hunted yet also presented as a good witch and a figure of justice. This further demonstrates her maiden archetypal figure and Artemis-like representation, as she is portrayed as both beautiful and strong. This contrasts with the over-sexualisation of women in media as the "good woman" (that is, virginal, passive, castrated, helpless, victim) is either young, blond, and attired in white... The "bad woman," on the other hand (that is, sexually

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 466.

active, predatory, castrating), is usually dark-haired and dressed entirely in black'.<sup>62</sup> Diana is an amalgam of the two. Her hair is the 'straw blond' of fairy tales but is also 'unruly', and she also has an 'athletic build.'<sup>63</sup> This physical representation shows her as a woman of business and strength. The athletic ability she has through her rowing and running builds her as a non-magical witch of capability within her academics and physical pursuits.

Alternatively, Diana also attempts to cloak her femininity to make her way into the patriarchal order of human and creature society. This demonstrates the age-old tale often associated with the maiden archetype, represented in multi-media renditions such as Joan of Arc's masculine appearance. Diana wishes to dampen her powers of enchantment and femininity to 'be taken seriously' within academia and yet the parts of her she cannot hide give her away as magical: 'I stopped wearing flowing skirts and layered tops in favour of the black turtlenecks, khaki trousers, and loafers that the solid, ambitious prelaw students were wearing.'<sup>64</sup> She performs and adapts to the expectations of her environment by dampening her presence to control her fate and to be taken seriously. Her inability to avoid her magical nature is illustrated by two conversations she has within the first novel that depict her beauty:

'What did you do, put him under a spell with those eyes of yours?'

Since Chris didn't know I was a witch his use of the word 'spell' was entirely accidental. 'He admires my work on Boyle.'

'Right,' Chris scoffed. 'You turned those crazy blue-and-gold starbursts on him, and he was thinking about Boyle's law? He's a scientist, Diana, not a monk.'<sup>65</sup>

The features that reveal Diana's desirability and beauty are her eyes and manner, demonstrating how she cannot be fully hidden as a magical creature, as her friend Chris indicates her otherness as obvious as well as her beauty. This highlights how the boundary

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<sup>62</sup> Bird, p. 121.

<sup>63</sup> Harkness, p. 35 and p. 62.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

between her genetic disposition as a bound witch and her wish to remain as human as possible is constantly being crossed. Matthew reminds Diana of her uniqueness: ‘You don’t fool anyone accept yourself. I’ve seen them watching you... Every time you look at Sean, you reduce him to speechlessness.’<sup>66</sup> The power of beauty that she has redefines her as a witch figure compared to the old and deformed Sawyer. As a witch who is inexperienced in magic, desirable, and intelligent Diana is the opposite of Sawyer despite their similarities in naivety. This demonstrates how contemporary authors such as Harkness reimagine the witch figure as a being of power and agency.

### **Journey to Power**

Diana may be initially presented as the quintessential maiden figure, but this is only the starting point for a character arc that takes her on a journey towards ever-increasing magical power. Diana’s trajectory follows the trend in contemporary fantasy outlined at the start of this chapter, that of the heroic witch whose disruptive energy is no longer viewed as a negative but rather as a positive force for change. This hero’s journey is captured in four key moments: Diana’s first interaction with Ashmole 782 within the Bodleian Library; her defence against Juliette Durand; her altered powers in Elizabethan England; and her absorption of the Book of Life. Her journey is a cycle beginning with Ashmole 782 and ending with her gaining its altering wisdom, enabling her to become the catalyst for change within creature society. Diana strives to reform the society and its politics to take it to a utopian state of equity.

The Bodleian Library of Oxford University is where Diana’s world becomes altered by her life-changing encounter with Ashmole 782. Significantly, the magic of her world intrudes on her everyday life as explored above in intrusion fantasy. The book is distinguished by its magical state and represents all magical mysticism within the novel. Ashmole 782 is the secret, unknown, and unobtainable “elixir of life” within creature societies paralleling the archetypal mythology of the Philosopher’s Stone.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 105.

Diana's first physical encounter with the tome thrusts her into the world of magic: 'I'd ignore my burning fingertips, the book's strange smell, and simply describe its contents...My fingers trembled when I loosened the small brass clasps never less. The manuscript let out a soft sigh.'<sup>67</sup> Harkness displays Diana's desperation to ignore how the magic is affecting her, as she pushes forward responding to this encounter like a human academic. The tension between her logical mind and genetic magical abilities is made apparent, with fear being a common element in her coming into power. Diana deals with the unknown by understanding how this encounter has changed her world by 'opening Ashmole 782, I'd breached the wall that divided my magic from my scholarship.'<sup>68</sup> The boundary between the mundane and magical is crossed by her metaphorically opening this hidden world of magic. Diana now begins the point of no return within her hero cycle as her world is changed and intruded on by the unknown. This initiates her into a new world of magic, Diana declares that 'the air around me constricted, as if the library were squeezing me tight. The air shimmered for a split second, just as the pages of the manuscript had shimmered on Sean's desk... something had just happened. Something magical.'<sup>69</sup> Ashmole 782's role in the novel is of magical intrusion into Diana's controlled and normalised world despite her growing up with magic. This moment exposes Diana to the world of creature society as an active participant. The book leaves an imprint on her, signifying that she is magically powerful and able to function within creature society. This draws attention to her parentage and unknown relationship to magic.

The second important event of Diana's evolution of power is her defence against Juliette Durand when she obliterates her with witch fire. Matthew and Diana are attacked because they are breaking the Covenant, an agreement by all creatures not to have a relationship outside of their creature factions. The governing authority, the Congregation,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

believes they need to be brought to justice due to Diana's relationship with Matthew. Their relationship instils jealousy and feelings of betrayal from their factions but also his ex-lover.

This is the first instance within the novel of Diana using combative magic, she enacts revenge against Juliette for attacking Matthew, 'hesitation gone, my right hand tightened and opened. A ball of fire arced from the extended tips of my left fingers.'<sup>70</sup> Diana is hesitant about maiming or killing another creature. Yet, her internal conflict is overridden by survival and rage causing her to push mercy to the side. She proceeds to use her magic, releasing raw elemental power to deal with her foe. This explosion of power is rooted in her emotions but also reveals her connection to higher forces displaying her unique relationship to magic: 'Juliette heard the explosion of flame and smelled the sulphur in the air... Disbelief shaped in her eyes before the spitting ball of black, gold, and red enveloped her.'<sup>71</sup> Her attack presents itself as atypical due to it being witch-fire, as it is a specialised type of fire that cannot be put out. Diana's attack harnesses elemental magic fused with the Goddess' power as she 'released another bolt. It hit her in the middle of the chest, went through her rib cage, and came out the other side, shattering the tough skin as it passed and turning her ribs and lungs to coal.'<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the destructive power of magic highlights Diana's potential to be a protector but also as a dangerous destructive force. Her magical ability can turn other creatures to ashes, as not only does she release witch-fire, but she also uses three bolts to destroy her enemy, a feat most witches would not be able to achieve.

This situation teaches Diana to not hesitate or feel guilty about using violence; within this process of kill or be killed, her powers are established as beyond the scope of a normal witch. Ramos-García argues that an aspect of fantasy is how the protagonists must 'act in unethical ways justified by the dire situations they are in; forced to choose between two evils,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 591.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 591.

<sup>72</sup> Harkness, p. 591.

they opt for the lesser one'.<sup>73</sup> This is evident in Diana's reaction to kill or be killed. Significantly, this instance heightens the tensions of the series as their world grows more menacing.

An encounter with divine forces becomes another minor turning point within Diana's journey. In the wake of Juliette being destroyed by Diana, it is shown that it is too late for Matthew to heal himself. Harkness reveals Diana's higher powers and connection with the triple Goddess. Tiaynen-Qadir, and Qadir state that the hero's 'journey cannot take place without the hero or the heroine being shattered by the uncanny and then helped and transformed by the meeting with goddesses.'<sup>74</sup> The female heroism she portrays is backed by the Goddess' involvement in her hero journey, as the triple Goddess also represents different states of feminine archetypes that Diana experiences throughout the novel.

The Goddess reveals two aspects to her: 'Two women were standing inside the barrier of flames. One was young and wore a loose tunic, with sandals on her feet and a quiver of arrows slung across her shoulders. The strap was tangled up in her hair, which was dark and thick.'<sup>75</sup> This Goddess is her namesake Artemis who guides her throughout the novel to protect others and bring justice. The wildness associated with this Goddess reflects Diana's youthful state of being and raw power. The second Goddess remains unnamed but instils shadow imagery and gentle movement, the 'other was the old lady from the keeping room, her full skirt swaying'<sup>76</sup> This Goddess is presumably a Goddess of death but also of the hearth. She aids Artemis in offering Diana a transfer of power in exchange for Diana's fate. This fuses her destiny with the Goddess's will and intertwines her journey of rising power with the fate of creature society: 'The power of the tree and the earth flowed through my veins.'<sup>77</sup> Diana is reborn as a witch in this instance within the novel as she leeches the life force from

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<sup>73</sup> Ramos-García, p. 152.

<sup>74</sup> Tiaynen-Qadir and Qadir, p. 79.

<sup>75</sup> Harkness, p. 513.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 594.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 595.

the tree into her blood for Matthew to drink. This pact of blood and rebirth is issued by two aspects of the triple Goddess heralding her fate as a protector and figure of justice.

The third example of Diana's growing power and the complications arising from possessing this power occur when she time-walks back to Elizabethan England. A side effect of her growth in power is that it becomes unstable and frightening to those around her and herself. This is witnessed when Diana unintentionally brings multiple beings to life, such as the creatures stitched on the Countess of Pembroke's shoes. A 'faint buzzing filled my ears as the silver-and-black bee detached itself from the Countess of Pembroke's shoe and took to the air.'<sup>78</sup> This demonstrates how her powers are unmanaged and that in her situation there is a need for guidance. 'My powers have been misbehaving,' I admitted, thinking of the shrivelled quinces and Mary's ruined shoes. 'I never know what is going to happen next.'<sup>79</sup> As discussed in the earlier section on matriarchal role models and family, it is the mentors Diana finds in Elizabethan England that are necessary in her development of control. Even in the context of this witch community Diana is portrayed as an irregularity and beyond the usual scope of witch power.

As a weaver Diana is part of a secretive association of witches that not only hide from other creatures but also from witches: 'Weavers hide because once we were sought and murdered... Not everyone approved of our power... It wasn't the *wearhs* or the daemons who hunted us down, but other witches,' Goody Alsop said calmly.'<sup>80</sup> The conflict of witches killing other witches due to fear and power echoes the historical past that Harkness touches on and Diana's place within the novel as the originator of change. Her faction is smaller than just being a witch, but as a marginalised weaver she must claim her place within the creature world by accessing her power. Subsequently, this connects to the wider theme of identity and reclaiming her autonomous state within her new world of magic.

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<sup>78</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *Shadow of Night* (New York: Viking, 2012), p. 254.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 328.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 323.

Diana's power arc is completed in the final scene where the Book of Life absorbs itself into her very being. This is significant as Diana is portrayed as a witch figure within contemporary literature who becomes a symbol of change, wisdom, and female authority, further implying the complete shift in popular culture surrounding the witch as a product of fantasy and flourishing as a figure for good.

Diana faces one of her final trials by capturing Ashmole 782 before her enemies. The magical tome occupied her mind and became an obsession during her time in Elizabethan England. She time-walks back to the present with Matthew to restore the book and keep Peter Knox from obtaining its secrets. This movement from the present to the past, and now the present again symbolises Diana's trials and progression in obtaining her power. She begins the process of defeating the evil characters within the novel by harnessing the book's power:

The chattering ceased, leaving the library silent. I felt power surge within me, rising to unprecedented levels... It was empty. Blank. Panic swept through me.

'Where did it all go?' I turned the pages....

'Oh, Christ.' Gallowglass was white as snow. 'Her eyes'...

Sarah swallowed hard. 'It's inside you.'

*I was the book of life.*<sup>81</sup>

As seen by her use of higher magic and developed powers Diana is now physically the Messiah. Her internal development of becoming a weaver changes her from within, but with the book's absorption finalising the process, she becomes physically otherworldly and is externally marked as different: 'No disguising spell could hide the way my eyes went milky white and displayed letters and symbols at even the hint of a query, more letters appearing on my forearms and the backs of my hands.'<sup>82</sup> This is where her ability to maintain autonomy over her body is compromised by Ashmole 782 using her as its vessel.

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<sup>81</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *The Book of Life* (New York: Viking, 2014), p. 532-533.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 540.

Despite the magical autonomy that is regained within the trilogy, Diana cannot pass as human anymore, an aspect she has always struggled with. The book's placement under her skin rips away her last physical normalities. This transformation is radical as she is firmly placed in the position of saving creature society and being its protector. Her body changes drastically: 'The answer was running up my arms in letters and symbols from languages long dead or never spoken except by witches performing spells.'<sup>83</sup> Diana's confidence and ability to contain the knowledge from the Book of Life leads her closer to her final trial against the disruption within creature society. Despite this change, her internal power manifests on the surface of her skin, an unveiling of her divine connection and uniqueness, the 'cords in my body were twisting and turning into brightly hued helices of yellow and white, red, and black, green, and silver.'<sup>84</sup> The book's absorption concludes Diana's last ascent to power as a protector fully embracing her magical infinities and its physical manifestation. She has become a witch figure of immense power and status; who without hesitation slays her enemies; is a voice of authority in the Congregation; and stays a loving wife and mother. Harkness portrays her as a witch within the lens of female empowerment and the ability of Diana to keep her humanity and to a certain degree her autonomy. This is achieved by the humanistic qualities of passion and violence that she portrays as a character.

Diana as a witch figure morphs from being lost in the unknown to an experienced figure of justice. Fighting for equality brings the three different subgroups together as she takes the position of a political leader. This signifies her final form and representation as a maternal figure of strength and change who works tirelessly 'on policy statements about equality and openness.'<sup>85</sup> The seemingly contradiction nature of becoming part of the very institution that oppressed and segregated those around her is resolved by Diana using the platform of the Congregation to work for a better future for all involved. This completes her

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 548.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 548.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 634.

heroic cycle of discovery of the witch within and cements her place at the heart of creature society. Her destiny is tied to being an authoritative figure that is uncorrupted:

My eyes locked on the ouroboros—the tenth knot—carved into the back of the de Clermont seat and the silver and gold threads in the room snapped with power... *This is your seat. Here is where you belong...* My left finger bore a thick ribbon of violet...—the colour of justice—remained.<sup>86</sup>

Her position is granted by her own magical ability and de Clermont name, symbolising her union with Matthew but also of her newfound political power due to the Book of Life. Significantly, Diana had the option of destroying the whole structure of the Congregation but decided to merge with its existing structure to birth a new world from within but also to acknowledge its faults. This stems from the responsibility she feels to those who fought for justice before her and to all those she lost: ‘High above I felt the spirits of those who had come before, their glances freezing and nudging and tingling. ‘*Give us justice,*’ they said with one voice,’ *and remember our names.*’<sup>87</sup> Diana refuses to hide the past mistakes of the Congregation by continuing it in a completely new structure. She becomes dedicated to rearranging the systems and beliefs; moving away from destruction and loss and instead raising the marginalised from the edges of society. Matthew also encourages this: ‘You must do this. For me, for us. For every member of our family who has been harmed by the covenant: Emily, Rebecca, Stephen, even Philippe. And for our children, so that they can grow up in love instead of fear.’<sup>88</sup> The breaking of the covenant symbolises the new era; how those who are marginalised and oppressed can become active members of society, contributing to a utopian vision for the future that focuses on inclusivity and equality.

It can be argued that Diana births a new world vision and political approach to creature society. As Tiaynen-Qadir and Qadir write: ‘The feminine establishes the stage on

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 620-621.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 621.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 613.

which future heroes play out their quests and dramas. The feminine births and contains the entire world within.’<sup>89</sup> As a contemporary witch figure, Diana represents the past historical connotations of the witch. Be that as it may, as a figure of justice, she rebirths this notion of a deviant woman occupying the liminal space of marginality and becoming a leader, saviour, and mother. The ability of contemporary fantasy to explore political and social themes that those historically and presently marginalised cannot access gives the author and reader the ability to dream and rebirth the future.

## **Mother**

In contrast to the stereotype of the witch as an ancient crone or evil stepmother, Harkness insists that Diana can be both a powerful witch and a woman capable and deserving of experiencing romantic love and motherhood. The final section of this chapter highlights first Diana as mother, and then as lover. This reversal of the novel’s chronology (where her passionate relationship with Matthew eventually results in her becoming a mother) is deliberate, as aspects of Diana’s motherhood are so intimately connected to her journey of power.

The mother archetype explored by Carl Jung within *Aspects of the Feminine* describes this archetype as having ‘three essential aspects of the mother: her cherishing and nourishing goodness, her orgiastic emotionality, and her Stygian depths.’<sup>90</sup> These correlate to Diana as a witch figure that has an intricate background, relationships, and future as she possesses qualities of this prototype. She embodies feminine qualities that are associated with the mother as a valued family member in addition to being a mother of the new age bringing together the utopian creature society as a tool of the Goddess. An example of this is when Sarah examines her hand:

‘The pentacle represents the elements.’ Sarah tapped my palm where the brown,

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<sup>89</sup> Tiaynen-Qadir, and Qadir, p. 85.

<sup>90</sup> Carl Jung, p. 110.

yellow, blue, and red streaks twined together...

‘And the green on your thumb is associated with the goddess—the goddess as mother in particular.’<sup>91</sup>

Diana is marked outwardly as well as inwardly by her role as a mother and representation of the mother archetype. The green symbolically represents her initiation into fertility and motherhood as it depicts the final stage of her feminine reclaiming.

The positive key components that Diana as a witch figure represents in the later book of Harkness’ trilogy forms a direct contrast to Mother Sawyer. Sawyer’s title of “Mother” indicates how she represents a darker reversal of the nurturing mother. Especially as the crone archetype; deviant and wicked. Both women as witch figures have a grey area of right and wrong choices throughout their narratives and yet their stark difference lies in how these aspects are represented. Jung highlights the positive mother’s key components as ‘maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility’.<sup>92</sup> The magical authority that Diana expresses through her growth in her power is apparent as she likewise begins her journey into motherhood and explores the secrets she holds within herself. She grows from a maiden of desire and inexperience to a mother who holds the position of authority, maternal growth, and as a fierce protector. In conclusion, this is significant in showing how the contemporary witch changes from the historical evil crone and is capable of transforming as witnessed through Diana’s representation. As she claims her place within the world of creatures and motherhood.

In comparison, the mother’s negative aspects which are represented in the historical record juxtaposes Diana’s positive image. Jung claims that ‘the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead,

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<sup>91</sup> Harkness, p. 144.

<sup>92</sup> Carl Jung, p. 110.

anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate.’<sup>93</sup> More importantly, Diana transforms the mother archetype from this assumption of maternal darkness and symbolically is represented as the bridge between life and death: ‘Marjorie gestured at the branch by my feet. ‘Life—and Death. You can be in both worlds. That is why the rowan chose you, not the alder or the birch.’<sup>94</sup> The mother archetype is one of liminality also associated with the same darkness as the historical witch. Jung develops this further, arguing that the mother’s shadow represents darker psychoanalytic symbolism ‘as is frequently the case in infantile phobias where the mother may appear as a wild beast, a witch, a spectre, an ogre, a hermaphrodite, and so on’.<sup>95</sup> Sawyer is typecast as a witch figure of evil magic and this stereotype lies in the shadows of this association of the negative mother. This is due to this archetype reflecting the core fears surrounding witchcraft as the mother signifies death and life as characteristic traits. Her age further pushes her into the realm of the crone figure of endings. In contrast to this, Diana weaves between being a witch figure with the mother archetype of growth and darkness in all its aspects as the novel moves beyond what a woman as a witch can be associated with and its limits.

An example of the positive mother archetype within the contemporary witch is how Diana adopts two children during her time-walk to Elizabethan England.

‘Where are your parents?’

‘Jack shrugged. ‘Haven’t any, my lady.’

‘Take the boy home, Annie, and have Françoise get him some food and clothes...’<sup>96</sup>

Diana houses and cares for Jack and Annie and becomes a mother figure to them during their time in England. This demonstrates her progression from the maiden to mother archetype but

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<sup>93</sup> Carl Jung, p. 110.

<sup>94</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *Shadow of Night* (New York: Viking, 2012) p. 368.

<sup>95</sup> Carl Jung, p. 111.

<sup>96</sup> Harkness, p. 336.

also how the witch is presented as part of a collective and as a cherished family member. Jack and Annie become her project of motherhood and providing for others, as her station allows her to and is expected. This is shown when Diana meets Annie for the first time with ‘her too-short skirts expos[ing] her skinny ankles to the cold. Andrew Hubbard outfitted his sons in warm, well-fitted clothes, but his daughters received no such consideration. I smothered my irritation. Françoise would have to get her needles out.’<sup>97</sup> She shows Annie and Jack motherly affection as they all become connected as a family unit. As a witch and woman, Diana experiences the historical shunning of Elizabethan England and divisions of male and female-oriented space, yet still embodies the mother archetype of maternal instinct; family; and authority: ‘‘A mother’s work is never done,’ I murmured with a smile.’<sup>98</sup> Nurturing Jack and Annie is significant to how Diana is portrayed as a witch as it places her in a position of a good mother despite the usual connotations of witches as the anti-mother or cannibal. The contemporary witch as seen in Harkness’ work then becomes a dualist figure who wields raw power within a fantasy setting but also embodies maternal roles with which a witch is not traditionally associated.

Diana experiences becoming a biological mother with Matthew after their initial arrival in England as she demonstrates the witch’s association with childbirth and family: ‘I was a weaver. Soon I would be a mother. *A child between, a witch apart*, whispered the ghostly voice of Bridget Bishop.’<sup>99</sup> Despite the positive association that she embodies as the mother, she also is bringing children into the world that are between two different factions.

In addition to not only bearing a child she also has twins which signifies her fertility and ability for growth and new life:

‘Twins run in my family,’ I said...

‘Mine, too,’ Ysabeau whispered.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 296.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 464.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 327.

‘Then is it true, what Sophie has seen in her dreams? You are with child—Matthew’s child?’

‘Children,’ I said, watching the blood tear’s slow progress.

‘It’s a new beginning, then,’ Sarah said, wiping a tear from her eye.<sup>100</sup>

This growth is significant as Diana has the biological means to further her bloodline as a witch who is family-oriented and valued by her peers. Not only does she get pregnant with a child but having twins demonstrates her capability to generate new life as a witch figure of power. Diana is far from the stereotype of barrenness or as the anti-mother that the historical witch, who is linked to the idea of a world turned upside down, is associated with. Through her ability to be part of a family, she can enter the realm of humanity and experience the joys of birth, life, and death. Demonstrating how the witch, who was separated from the image of a nurturing mother and was a marginalised figure viewed as sub-human; can subvert this association. Furthermore, she is a nurturing mother to two children instead of the stereotype in fairy tales of the witch as a predator, where the witch kidnaps children to eat their youth. As a mother she becomes a protector of the young, as a ‘fierce protective feeling took root where my child had been only moments before, filling me with purpose.’ Her role as protector and mother are in tandem with her purpose to better society. Diana’s witch aspects are also not hidden from her children either which pushes her further in breaking the boundaries of the mother. Matthew remarks on this: ‘Our children are going to know who their mother truly is...’ Their family dynamic of trust and awe is the complete reversal of the usual witch portrayal as Diana is not only a valued family member, but her family also pushes her to come out of her shell and thrive.

### **Monstrous Lover(s)**

Despite this transformation; however, and the way in which Diana epitomises this new powerful heroine, questions remain as to just how feminist fantasy fiction of this kind differentiates. How is the relationship between Diana and Matthew and Harkness’ emphasis

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 624.

on female desirability and sexuality complicated by the dynamic between the heroine and a vampire lover who struggles to overcome centuries of belief and training that make him the epitome of hegemonic masculinity?

The romance plot's love interest is situated within a shift in popular culture. Joseph Crawford argues that the 'once firm cultural divide between the desirable and the monstrous' has been replaced by love interests who frequently combine these two traits, or who are desirable precisely because they are 'other.'<sup>101</sup> In particular, the male romantic lead in this kind of fiction has transformed, with the once monstrous figure now the lover. This raises complex questions about both masculinity and the choices the heroine, typically framed as a feminist, makes. Is Diana's choice of partner more important than her ability to own her own life and decisions? Does the dominant male lover compromise or undercut the feminist heroine? Harkness' answer to these questions is no: 'I am a feminist... feminism influenced the All Souls trilogy. It was fascinating to write about a woman who believed that women and men were equal and about a man who was raised to think women were the weaker sex.'<sup>102</sup> However, these issues require careful consideration and analysis. Viewed as a limitation is it easy to categorise the romance plot as an aspect that diminishes Diana's potential and yet Harkness herself states that this is not the case.

Popular culture and Harkness' influences are seen in recent explorations of modern portrayals of vampire and heroine relationships, with Ramos-García arguing that the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) popularised the 'revisionist vampire' and 'kick-ass heroine'.<sup>103</sup> As a 'kickass heroine' within the popular culture trope of paranormal romance Diana fulfils the role of the naive witch playing a human with 'traits of

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<sup>101</sup> Joseph Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic: Vampire Fiction and the Rise of the Paranormal Romance*. (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 58, JSTOR Books, <<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt9qhjcp>> [accessed 20 March 2023].

<sup>102</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, 'Ask the Author: Deborah Harkness', *Goodreads*, (n.d) <[https://www.goodreads.com/author/3849415.Deborah\\_Harkness/questions](https://www.goodreads.com/author/3849415.Deborah_Harkness/questions)> [Accessed 23 April 2023], para. 25.

<sup>103</sup> Ramos-García, p. 150.

empathy and intuition', in addition to the ability to foster, 'special emotional connections with those whom all other relationships leave untouched.'<sup>104</sup> This gives her the ability to take on the special qualities needed as the main female heroine whose vulnerability essentially coaxes the vampire figure into a "revisionist" character. Multiple key influences also include *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice (1976-2018) which explored vampires as erotic figures within a gothic horror tradition in addition to the early 2000's vampire romance culture and the popularity of the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer (2005-2020). Harkness incorporated the vampire romance within her complex urban fantasy and reimagined it on a grand scale, involving ancient, medieval, and religious historical elements. Yet, the female characters within *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Twilight* display two very different models of how humans interact with vampires. Buffy is action-driven; eradicating evil compared to Bella's moon-eyed obsession over Edward's love. It is necessary to interrogate where Diana stands in relation to these distinctions between the trope of damsel in distress versus the powerful protagonist.

Vampires within the trilogy are represented as objects of desire but with the risk of death. Tiaynen-Qadir and Qadir write of the 'hyperbolized machismo' of vampire culture within urban fantasy which caters to a female audience and reflects the thirst for dangerous men that are not dangerous to one's fated mate.<sup>105</sup> The desirable monster, be he a vampire, a werewolf, a demon, or a supernatural being is strong, dominant, and frequently possessive, all traits synonymous with traditional hegemonic masculinity. The choice of a morally grey alpha male with the explicit capacity for violence and destruction as the romantic lead has become the new norm. Gone is the clearly defined line between good and evil, replaced by a character that keeps the novel's intended audience caught between fear and desire. Vampires act as shadowy figures caught between two extremes of intense sex appeal and risk factors. As Crawford writes, the 'greater the violence, the greater the attraction; and thus, logically,

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<sup>104</sup> Crawford, p. 149.

<sup>105</sup> Tiaynen-Qadir, and Qadir, p. 105.

the most desirable man possible will be the one whose love for the heroine is only just stronger than his desire to murder her.’<sup>106</sup> The aspects in need of inquiry in the romance plot demonstrate Diana’s continual navigation of her relationship with Matthew. Her lover simultaneously respects and acknowledges her power, but constantly positions her as a damsel in distress in need of rescue.

The tension between Diana as a modern witch with a matriarchal upbringing compared to Matthew’s patriarchal life as a being that is charming yet monstrous is evident throughout the trilogy. She must put up with being stalked, her rooms ransacked, and her blood drunk, while being manipulated and possessed by Matthew’s obsession. How does being courted by a vampire—a figure of great violence and seduction—affect her representation as a witch throughout the series? Diana introduces the vampires as ‘rockstars and serial killers... there are vampires, ancient and beautiful, who feed on blood and will charm you utterly if they don’t kill you first.’<sup>107</sup> The vampire is represented as dangerous and seen as a threat within Diana’s matriarchal household as witches feud with vampires. Balanced on the edge of death, the *All Souls* trilogy’s love story begins with Matthew’s desire for someone he cannot have, adding star-crossed lovers from different factions to their already complex dynamic: ‘If only he could taste it—taste Diana—he would be satisfied, and the painful longing would subside.’<sup>108</sup> Her scent and blood drive Matthew into a crazed state that exists within the extremes. The darkness represented within his character reflects Crawford’s analyses of how male leads are ‘encroaching upon the terrain once reserved for the monsters and villains of Gothic fiction’.<sup>109</sup> Matthew is a heightened portrayal of male desire, and his obsession mirrors how his monstrous behaviour yet deep love for Diana fights within him throughout the trilogy.

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<sup>106</sup> Crawford, p. 167.

<sup>107</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches* (New York: Viking, 2011), p. 19.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120.

<sup>109</sup> Crawford, p. 58.

This is demonstrated by Diana's introduction to Matthew and represents their significance as fated mates. Already on first meeting the attraction between them is intense but also indicates his obsessive desire: 'His eyes, which never left my face, were not actually dark at all, I discovered.'<sup>110</sup> His forthright hunt for her is intense but also is reciprocated: 'Their pull was insistent, and I found myself unable to look away.'<sup>111</sup> The dynamic of predator and prey between them adds to the sexual attraction of the relationship and also shows the liberties that vampires can get away with by being a morally grey character of desire. Yet, Diana is his mate, unable to be killed yet forced to endure his obsessive traits. Diana relies on his presence as she is marginalised from her witch faction due to her powerful nature. The biggest signifier in Matthew's place within her destiny is how his scent enhances the object of her fate: 'Clairmont's clove scent brought back the strange smell of Ashmole 782.'<sup>112</sup> His connection with the Book of Life displays his significant role in her growth to power and enactment of justice as fear and desire guide their journey through the treacherous terrain of understanding each other in addition to their place within the creature society.

In the genre of urban fantasy, Ramos-García argues that in terms of the contemporary heroine 'romantic relationships are part of what defines these characters, but are only one dimension among many, such as their friendships, family history, and abilities. While they affect the narrative, they do not drive it, and they constitute only one aspect of the characters' identity and evolution.<sup>113</sup> This forms a contrast with Diana's journey as the romance plot is central to her discovery of her power, Matthew acting as her lynchpin, friend, lover, and soulmate through the trilogy. He discovers her and her power, spinning destiny's threads and helping her realise her potential. This is clear from the fairy tale told to Diana while she is young. '*One day, long after, Diana met a handsome prince who lived in the shadows between sunset and moonrise... The prince loved Diana, despite the fact that she couldn't seem to fly.*

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<sup>110</sup> Harkness, p. 23.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>113</sup> Ramos-García, p. 143.

*He could see the ribbons binding her, though nobody else could.*<sup>114</sup> He is the one to see her binding and her potential, as indicated by Rebecca's tale. Witches as figures of power—in popular culture—are argued to be separate from these male influences. Alice Nuttall argues that 'despite the significance of the transition from maiden to mother for many witches, the identity of the man or men involved is irrelevant; it is not the individual man who changes the witch, and he remains secondary to her witching identity.'<sup>115</sup> Both of these quotes contrast to Diana and Matthew's portrayal as Diana could not have spread the wings of her power without Matthew's influence and direction. She learns her powers separate from him by teachers and mentors (as explored above), but it could be argued that while he supports her, he also clearly directs her.

Diana's performance of the trope of damsel in distress is extended by Harkness throughout the trilogy as she transforms into an independent witch. The trilogy begins with Matthew in charge. As the narrative progresses Diana takes charge and, in the end, becomes the most powerful creature of all who revolutionises the creature world. As a witch of strength, Diana saves herself from Christopher Marlow and Matthew's sister Louisa by using her own power and wits. Within Elizabethan England, Diana is surrounded by enemies from Matthew's circle of friends and family but also learns the true extent of her abilities. Within her altercation with Kit and Louisa, she is treated like a witch of the period, blamed for misdeeds out of her control and tortured: 'It is the witch who weakens me, just as she weakened your brother.' Kit's eyes turned glassy... 'The witch does not deserve a swift death,' Louisa said bitterly.'<sup>116</sup> Her enemies dehumanise her by addressing her as 'witch' instead of by her name, signifying her position as accused. This is reinforced by Diana's reflection that in their eyes she is 'bound to a thick log like a witch about to be set alight.'<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Harkness, p. 447.

<sup>115</sup> Alice Nuttall, 'Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett's Witches,' in *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods*, ed. by Marion Rana (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 23–36, (p. 31).

<sup>116</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *Shadow of Night* (New York: Viking, 2012), p. 543.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p. 549.

Amongst their torturous jousting and harming of Diana with their lances, she states: ‘I was utterly alone. Something fluttered in my chest. But it wasn’t alone. And I was a witch. I didn’t need my eyes to see the world around me.’<sup>118</sup> Within this dangerous situation, she realises her position as a witch as a person of strength with the aid of the elements and her powers. With the aid of her fire-drake familiar, Diana regains control over the situation and retaliates. This demonstrates how she overcomes her fear and uses her powers:

I rose twenty feet up into the air... ripped the blindfold from my eyes with my undamaged hand... Blood trickled from my wrists and feet. Whenever the red beads fell, a black shoot grew. Soon a palisade of slender black trunks surrounded the dazed daemon and vampire.<sup>119</sup>

Diana saves herself; she metaphorically and physically takes off the cover from her eyes to reveal her reality but also her inner strength to deal with their enemies. The black trunks aid her in defeating Louisa and Kit as shadowy allies, and this depicts how Diana’s powers have grown in strength and confidence as she uses whatever means necessary to save herself from a fatal end.

In her final act of violence and justice, Diana saves Matthew from Benjamin’s and Knox’s torture. This is the final moment of her destructive nature at full throttle as she obliterates Knox: ‘The keening rose into a shriek as all the chaos contained in the Book of Life and all the creative energy that bound the creatures together in one place burst from the web I’d made and engulfed Peter Knox.’<sup>120</sup> Throughout the series, as she grows more capable, Diana saves Matthew in many instances, such as the attack on Juliette as discussed above. Hence, this moment is meaningful as her growth in power truly develops her into a fierce leader and fighter: ‘Vengeance had been mine. Now it was time for the goddess’s justice...

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 547.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 550.

<sup>120</sup> Deborah E. Harkness, *The Book of Life* (New York: Viking, 2014), p. 593.

Benjamin was dead and could no longer torment anyone. And Matthew, though broken, was alive.<sup>121</sup> Matthew takes the role of victim as Harkness uses the horrific details of his torture as the final showdown. This demonstrates Diana's potential as a saviour of not only Matthew but of all creature society. She eradicates the final evil and corruption, purifying the space as she destroys the villains. This also signifies how she becomes an agent of ultimate change and places Matthew in a supporting role. Furthermore, this expands Harkness' desire to place a patriarchal figure of old with a brazier and modern woman as they explore their strengths and weaknesses. Diana claims that 'Matthew and I were an alchemical marriage of vampire and witch, death and life, sun, and moon. That combination of opposites created something finer and more precious than either of us could ever have been separately.'<sup>122</sup> Therefore, this pairing echo the undercurrent within the novel of a feminist perspective, with the initial construct of a hegemonic vampire and damsel in distress increasingly subverted into a model of equality and partnership.

Viewing the relationship through a post-feminist lens develops a more sufficient understanding of the complexities involved in this gender discourse. In *Postfeminism* Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon write that post-feminism is 'neither a simple rebirth of feminism nor a straightforward abortion...but a complex resignification that harbours within itself the threat of backlash as well as the potential for innovation'.<sup>123</sup> It is not that Diana needed a man; she needed any trigger to push her magic to the next level. Matthew is indeed represented as her other half, to orbit her and drive their story. Despite this, once Diana does come into her magical lineage with his aid, she surpasses him in power. This shift leads her to become a saviour figure to the creature society and Matthew. Another important link is to Ramos-García's contention that the 'reason many critics... dismiss largely all urban fantasy written by women is that their works often contain a romantic narrative, be it ever so small

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 593-94.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 637.

<sup>123</sup> Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, *Postfeminism*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 32.

part of the story.’<sup>124</sup> Genz and Brabon also reiterate that the societal pressure to ‘convince women of their need to scale back their professional and rekindle their interest in romance and marriage’.<sup>125</sup> This develops a societal expectation where ‘career women are pathologized and defined as abject and deficient, selfish and emotionally stunted’.<sup>126</sup> The contrast between Diana’s romance and her role as a figure of justice highlights the importance of balance in addition to having support. Diana being romantically involved with Matthew does not diminish her destiny or power arc, as a witch, with powerful allies and community, her agency and choice places her central to her own decisions. Perhaps viewing the trilogy and Diana’s story as driven by the romance plot with magical alpha men to drive female audiences crazy is a shallow perspective. Diana has every right to love, be a part of a family, and obtain her desire. ‘As with other romance subgenres, paranormal novels address the social tensions of the period in which they are written, and especially their effects on women.’<sup>127</sup>

Another aspect to keep in mind is that ‘[a]dvocating the “postfeminist” (or third - wave) position as “exclusive of the first two [first and second wave feminism] is to lose touch with the political reality of feminism,” but more importantly perhaps it is to realize that “labels,” such as “femininity,” “masculinity,” “feminism,” or “sexuality,” are categories operated for specific political reasons.’<sup>128</sup> Harkness writes the witch from a position of power and independence reminiscent of feminist movements and Diana claims feminist power and autonomy for herself. Advocating for female power within a character, Harkness represents Diana’s wilful nature and immense power as she begins to reconstruct society around her in an attempt for a better future. The trilogy’s quiet upheaval and vanquishing of all those who are corrupt within the system of the Congregation changes it from within as Diana promotes equality and remembrance. Due to the nature of her takeover, the future within the novel is

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<sup>124</sup> Ramos-García, p. 142.

<sup>125</sup> Genz and Brabon, p. 92.

<sup>126</sup> Genz and Brabon, p. 87.

<sup>127</sup> Ramos-García, p. 159.

<sup>128</sup> Sempruch, p. 6.

Toril Moi, ‘Feminist, Female, Feminine,’ in *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (New York:Blackwell, 1989), pp. 117-32, (p.132).

unclear and yet perhaps the space it leaves for the audience to hope for the world to move towards a better future is its hidden message. The key to take away from this representation of the witch as a woman, mother, political leader, and holder of all knowledge is that women, whether in urban fantasy or real life, can be commanders of their own future.

## Conclusion

This thesis has focused on representations of the controversial and culturally loaded figure of the witch and the way in which she has been represented in fiction. Through an exploration of two very different representations of witches, the 1621 play *The Witch of Edmonton* and the twenty-first-century fantasy *All Souls* trilogy, this thesis unpacks the longstanding negative associations of the witch. The historical witch was stereotyped as evil, old, deviant, and socially marginalised, compared to the way in which contemporary depictions of the witch have refashioned the figure into an autonomous heroine capable of balancing her powers with work, romance, and social responsibility. Throughout, my focus has been on the gendered nature of the witch.

Attitudes towards the witch in the historical record, particularly in seventeenth century Lancashire and Salem, were ‘sex-biased’.<sup>1</sup> The perception of the witch as demonic and as a social disruptor led to witch hunts and witch trials, with the overwhelming percentage of those accused and executed in England and New England being women. Theological discourse and patriarchal structures linked witchcraft to the feminine, with an insistence that women were unruly and more easily tempted. Women, especially those who were poor, old, or without family structures of support, were easy targets for blame, lacking the education, voice, and power to defend themselves. This stereotype of the witch as old, malevolent, and marginalised was reinforced in fairy tales and these culturally dominant narratives, recounted to children in their formative years, removed the witch from the complexities of historical prejudice and fashioned her into a villainous figure of evil.

It was the fairy tale witch that was the genesis of my research for this thesis. I was frustrated at how flat this figure was and concerned at the way in which children absorb narratives that perpetuate negative, one-dimensional images of older women who are coded as

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), p. 261.

disruptive and undesirable. In particular, I was outraged at the way in which women who wielded power in these fairy tales are depicted as monstrous and egotistical. This establishes a problematic link between female power and negative qualities such as amorality and destruction and raises wider questions about the continued marginalisation of women in Western culture. Of particular concern is the ageist attitudes evident in the construction of the old woman as witch and the distortion of female wisdom and knowledge into something malign and unnatural. In investigating the sexist underpinnings of the witch, I knew I would have to confront these negative and reductive stereotypes, but I also wanted to find textual examples of witches who were presented as more complex figures and who had a connection point with the historical witch. I was also determined to explore the way in which contemporary representations of the witch reimagined her as a source of feminist power and autonomy, the kind of witch who could highlight what Alice Nuttall describes as the ‘respect the witches command, the power they wield, and the value of their female-coded work and roles, are emphasised...encouraging readers to champion womanhood as a source of agency and power.’<sup>2</sup>

In exploring these important questions about gender and representation my thesis compares two very different literary depictions of the witch. My first grand plan for my thesis was to trace the evolution of the witch on the pages of fiction from the early modern period to the twenty-first century. I quickly realised that this was a task requiring more time and words than a Masters thesis could accommodate. My analytical chapters thus focus on two disparate historical moments and two very different modes of writing. The texts are carefully chosen to form a counterpoint and a dialogue.

The play *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford draws on both the historical record and the 1621 pamphlet *Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth*

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<sup>2</sup> Alice Nuttall, ‘Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett’s Witches,’ in *Terry Pratchett’s Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods*, ed. by Marion Rana (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 23–36, (p. 33).

*Sawyer, a Witch* by Henry Goodcole. The historical Elizabeth Sawyer was tried and executed as a witch and Goodcole's pamphlet is representative of the attitudes of the day which vilified the witch as a figure of demonic power and social disruption. The play both endorses the stereotype of Sawyer as a crone who makes a pact with the devil to enact harm on her neighbours and challenges these tropes by insisting that she is a marginalised, poverty-stricken figure who only turns to witchcraft after society labels her as such.

In contrast, the *All Souls* trilogy (2012-2014) by Deborah Harkness reframes the witch as a young, beautiful heroine whose powers are capable of bringing about salvation rather than destruction. Diana Bishop fits with the post-1970s feminist trend Justyna Sempruch identifies, one that still positions the witch as a source of "trouble", but a necessary and welcome trouble that 'reverses the phallic gaze, contesting the authority of the masculine position'.<sup>3</sup> In many respects Diana is the answer to my feminist quest. She is a witch, but she is also independent, intelligent, powerful, and unafraid of challenging the systems of male authority. She demonstrates that the witch is not just a crone, but also a maiden and a mother, and her characterisation is an important corrective to the longstanding stereotype of the witch as undesirable and unloved, a bad mother with no place in the family. While Diana wields tremendous power, Harkness also insists on her humanity and it is this humanity, as much as her magical ability, that leads her to use her powers for the good of creature society and wider human society. In some ways, the *All Souls* trilogy can thus be read as a radical feminist text of female empowerment, one that emphasises matriarchal lineage structures as a corrective to corrupt and outdated patriarchal institutions.

The trilogy also has limitations, raising questions about just how transformative Diana is when she retains the structures that have oppressed creatures, particularly women, for centuries, reforming from within rather than looking for new modes of community and shared

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<sup>3</sup> Justyna Sempruch, *Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008), p. 3, JSTOR Books <<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt6wq72n.4>> [accessed 3 May 2022].

power. At times the replication of the stereotype of the damsel in distress is also problematic, particularly in the context of a relationship dynamic with an alpha vampire who expects to be in control. My analysis contends that Harkness raises these issues only to find solutions, with the reformed Congregation working to heal itself from within in a way that gives all its members agency and Diana taking control of her own destiny as a post-feminist woman who can have it all.

While *The Witch of Edmonton* and the All Souls trilogy are very different texts that centre around very different witches, they are connected through what they reveal about social scapegoating. Due to the witch being an outsider Mother Sawyer is scapegoated by her village for the sins of the collective. Her death does not purify her village but provides temporary catharsis for her community. Scapegoating, while an ineffective method of control, demonstrates how the innocents within this process are not blameless. Sawyer enacts the performance of the witch for her own gain, yet her crimes are distorted by her community. She is viewed as an evil figure, but this is an illusion due to the wider corruption of the community; with her trial and justice the sins of all have not been eradicated. Likewise, in the All Souls trilogy, Diana is scapegoated simply because her outsider status threatens the status quo of creature society. She eventually transcends this, unlike Sawyer who pays the ultimate price, working to create a new society based on utopian values of inclusion, but her narrative reveals that even in the twenty-first century women remain easy targets of blame and shame. Both women are viewed as the embodiment of evil but are not the source. This proves how scapegoating serves as a tangible relief and physical ritual of eradication yet provides no long-term solution or benefit.

By juxtaposing these very different literary witches, this thesis seeks to understand both the social and literary factors that led to the patriarchal vilification of the witch and the cultural shifts that have resulted in the recent reframing of the witch as a figure of feminist power. There is much work yet to be done, particularly in the contemporary space. Is

Harkness' narrative typical of twenty-first-century reimagining's of the witch heroine? Do traces of the stereotypical crone remain? Does the witch heroine have to be young, beautiful, and heterosexual or are there other ways of framing the transformed witch, as queer, as old but desirable, as ordinary yet special? Answers to these questions may be found in a discussion of the television series *The Good Witch* which imagines the witch as middle-aged mother contending with small town problems, or *We Were Witches* by Ariel Gore, whose witch rises from poverty and provides for her daughter with words and witchcraft. Another potential investigation could explore Juno Dawson's engagement with queer representation in *Her Majesty's Royal Coven*, a novel that focuses on a group of thirty-something women battling the system and entrenched gender power dynamics. These are investigations for another day or another scholar. What this thesis has sought to do is to place the witch centre stage and in so doing 'confront our godlike, heroic, and monstrous selves'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Attebery, *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 4, ProQuest EBook Central <<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=1561208>> [accessed 4 March 2023].

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