In 1566 a pamphlet was published in London detailing the crimes of three women executed for witchcraft in Chelmsford, Essex. Elizabeth Francis, Mother Agnes Waterhouse, and Jone Waterhouse all confessed to possessing a familiar spirit whom they identified as ‘Sathan’. This creature, first identified as a ‘whyte, spotted Catte’, then a toad and, finally, ‘a thynge lyke a blacke dogge with a face like an ape, a short tail, and a peyre of hornes on his head’, was said to ‘require a drop of bloude’ which he sucked from the accused witches. In return for this blood Sathan brought his mistresses riches and revenge. He killed children and made several men impotent. After performing these acts, the familiar spirit betrayed his mistresses to the authorities. This pamphlet, the first of its kind to appear in England, has often been reproduced and cited by

1 John Phillips, The Examination and Confession of certaine Wyhtches at Chelmsforde in the countie of Essex: before the Quenes Majesties judges, the xxvi daye of July, anno 1566, at the assise holden there as then, and one of them put to death for the same offence, as their examination declareth more at large (London: Willyam Powell for Willyam Pickeringe, 1566). This pamphlet contains three distinct versions of the same case all of which have been constructed as one pamphlet. Footnotes will make clear which of the three is being discussed by a 1, 2 or 3 before each reference.

2 Ibid., sig. 1A6r.

3 Ibid., sigs. 1A6r and 2A4v.
Historians. But the main themes running through it, which continue to appear in other witchcraft pamphlets throughout Elizabeth I’s reign (1558-1603), have not been fully explored.

In recent scholarship, the concept of maleficium, the act of doing harm through witchcraft, has been pivotal to understandings of English witchcraft. Scholars emphasise that English witchcraft narratives are usually concerned with the malefic acts the witch performs, namely killing and laming animals and neighbours. Diabolic witchcraft is more concerned with the Devil’s involvement in the witch’s activities. This focus on maleficium has meant that the diabolic elements of English witchcraft have been almost completely overlooked. This article will examine the seven extant sixteenth-century witchcraft pamphlets and demonstrate that English witchcraft needs to be analysed not just through the concept of maleficium, but also through the idea of diabolic witchcraft. In fact, a close analysis of these pamphlets demonstrates that a key concern about witchcraft for both theologians and ordinary people stemmed from a fear of the witch’s relationship with the Devil and the power that she (or, in two documented cases, he) may have gained from diabolic allegiance.

Pamphlet accounts provide the clearest description of witchcraft trials in Elizabethan England. Whereas the well-studied trial records or indictments often ‘contain the barest essentials of a case’, pamphlet accounts are extremely rich...
resources which ‘allow us to see what lay behind the formal court records’. Historians such as James Sharpe, Alan Macfarlane, Marion Gibson, and Emma Wilby are unanimous in their belief that ‘the most important sources for early modern English witchcraft stories are Elizabethan…witchcraft pamphlets’. These pamphlets, although generally printed in London, were distributed throughout the countryside by chapmen, thus allowing witchcraft beliefs to spread to rural England. My focus on the Elizabethan period stems from the marked change in pamphlet prose (that both Barbara Rosen and Marion Gibson have observed) after approximately 1590. This article will therefore confine itself to sixteenth-century pamphlets, rather than comparing them to their seventeenth-century equivalents. This emphasis on the sixteenth century represents a shift in focus in English witchcraft scholarship and will allow historians to understand English witchcraft in new ways and create a deeper understanding of the sixteenth-century origins of many seventeenth-century concepts. It will also, perhaps more importantly, allow sixteenth-century English witchcraft to be analysed for its own sake and not simply as a precursor to later years. Both James Sharpe and Darren Oldridge have argued that the satanic nature of English witchcraft had emerged in pamphlet accounts by the seventeenth century. This study will show that these ideas, rather than emerging in the seventeenth century, were actually discernible from the earliest pamphlet in 1566. The circulation of these ideas, from the very first witchcraft pamphlet, demonstrates that English witchcraft must be viewed as inherently diabolical and not, as has so often been asserted, purely malefic.

8 Gibson, Reading Witchcraft, 6.
9 Chapmen were a type of pedlar or merchant who carried ballads, broadsheets and pamphlets into the countryside. Gibson, Early Modern Witches, 6.
10 Barbara Rosen, Witchcraft (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 213; and, Gibson, Reading Witchcraft, 187-188.
11 To my knowledge there are no major English witchcraft studies that confine themselves to the sixteenth century.
Sixteenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets show that the Devil was normally represented as a familiar spirit, otherwise known as a familiar, imp, or sprite. Historians such as James Sharpe, Robin Briggs, Marion Gibson, Clive Holmes, and Emma Wilby are unanimous in the belief that familiars were a defining element of English witchcraft. I agree with these historians, but I believe that it is necessary to redefine how familiars were perceived and, in turn, how English witchcraft should be understood. A full analysis of the diabolical elements of the English familiar shows the extent to which English witchcraft was actually diabolical in nature. In a recent work, James Sharpe states that although the familiar has long been recognised as important to English witchcraft, there has been very little done to analyse or explain this phenomenon. For this reason, Sharpe believes that a ‘detailed investigation into the phenomenon of familiars is currently one of the most urgent items on the agenda for future research into English witchcraft history’. My investigation will focus largely on the crucial issue of representation, significance, and possible origin of the familiar. I begin by arguing for an understanding of the familiar primarily as a demonic trickster and then conclude by assessing the familiar’s role in tempting women away from traditional gender roles. Ultimately, this article will argue that English witchcraft needs to be understood in diabolical terms and that the familiar is pivotal to this understanding.

the origin of the familiar

The origin of the familiar is still heavily debated among historians. The reasons
behind their prominence in English witchcraft, as well as their particular characteristics, remain elusive. In recent years there have been two theories developed to explain the appearance of the familiar. The first, shared by both Diane Purkiss and Emma Wilby, suggests that the familiar may be ‘a form of household fairy, or hob’. In English witchcraft pamphlets, the most convincing evidence for the link between familiars and fairies comes from John Walsh’s ecclesiastical trial of 1566. On being asked whether he had a familiar, John vehemently denied it, claiming that he ‘has none about hym, neyther in anye other place of this worlde, eyther above the ground, or under the ground, either in any place secrete or open’. He does, however, admit to talking to fairies. Throughout the examination John frequently confuses the terms ‘fairy’, ‘sprite’, ‘familiar sprite’ and ‘familiar’. On being asked how long he has possessed his familiar John told the court that:

his familiar would come to hym lyke a gray blacish Culver [a type of dove or pigeon], and sometimes like a blended Dog, and sometimes lyke a man in all propositions, saving that he had cloven feet.

Fairies were commonly believed to be humans who had died prematurely and returned to life. John’s description of his familiar identifies both bestial attributes, which are suggestive of a familiar, and also human qualities, which may have been inspired by contemporary fairy beliefs. From John’s contradictory answers it seems possible that fairies and familiars were not clearly differentiated within the minds of ordinary people. This may have been a short-lived confusion given that no other sixteenth-century pamphlets mention fairies. They do, however, refer to sprites and imps as synonymous with familiar spirits. This leads us to the second major explanation for the origin of the familiar.

Sharpe suggests that the familiar may be a ‘folklorised version of the demons and other denizens of the spiritual world, which the learned magicians of the Middle Ages were meant to be able to raise’. These demonic creatures were believed to help magicians and conjurers with their magical work. This theory is also supported by the John Walsh pamphlet, as

19 Anon., The examination of John Walsh, sig A5v.
20 Ibid., sig. A5v.
21 Ibid., sig. A5v.
24 Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, 71.
he ‘raises the familiar spirit’ through an elaborate ritual. Unlike the fairy theory, however, this second hypothesis appears in more than one pamphlet.

In a 1579 pamphlet an illustration depicts a witch holding one of these spirits (see Figure 1 below) and in 1589, eighty-year-old Joan Cunny was accused of raising similar kinds of demonic spirits through circle magic. Government-sanctioned examples also made reference to these beliefs. Both the Henrician Statute of 1541/2 and the Elizabethan Statute of 1563 referred to the crime of conjuring ‘evill and wicked Spirites’ when discussing witchcraft. No references to fairies are included. In 1604 James VI’s witchcraft statute made it illegal to not just conjure these spirits, but also keep them. As it is clear that keeping a spirit equated to keeping a familiar, it would seem that language initially used to refer to the demonic spirits of the Middle Ages evolved over Elizabeth’s reign to refer to familiars. These examples, coupled with the numerous uses in many witchcraft pamphlets of the word ‘spirit’ to mean ‘familiar’ would suggest that, despite one man’s confusion between fairies and familiars, the more mainstream view was that familiars were linked in some way to the devilish imps of the Middle Ages.

There is one fundamental problem with both of these interpretations: the form of the familiar. The familiar generally took the form of a household animal, such as a cat, a dog, a chicken, or a small rodent. This link between the witch and the animal helped to create an idea of the witch as nonhuman and bestial. Although these animals sometimes possessed demonic attributes (such as horns), in illustrations they were generally depicted as normal animals. Fairies were believed to be reincarnations of people, not animals. Also, whereas in the

25 Anon., The examination of John Walsh, sig. A5r.
26 Anon., A Rehearsall both straung and true, of heinous and horrible actes committed by Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham, Mother Dutten, Mother Devell, Mother Margaret, fower notorious witches, apprehended at Winsore in the countie of Barks. And at Abbington arraigned, condemned, and executed, on the 26 daye of Februarue laste Anno. 1579, (London: J. Kingston for Edward White, 1579), A1r.
27 Anon., An Act against Conjurations, Witchcrafts, Sorcery, and Enchantments 1541/42 33 Hen. VIII 8, Witchcraft and Society, ed. in Gibson, 2; and, Anon., An Act against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts 1563 5 Eliz I c. 16, Witchcraft and Society, ed. Gibson, 3.
28 Anon., An Act against Conjuraction, Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked Spirits 1604 1 Jas. 1 c. 12, Witchcraft and Society, ed. Gibson, 5.
Middle Ages, magicians were believed to conjure spirits for their own purposes, in sixteenth-century witchcraft pamphlets familiars often sought out witches without being invited. It seems possible to explain the animalistic form of the familiar by examining the unique circumstances of Elizabeth’s reign.

All sixteenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets begin with a note to the reader. This appears as a separate section before the main text. The content of these epistles often reads as a sermon warning the reader of the ‘divillish practices’ of witches and the importance of worshipping the ‘Almighty’. They also make frequent references to, or hint at, the idea that these are ‘desperate daies’. The message of these tracts is that Satan is more active than before, that he will appear to tempt unbelievers, and that people must be prepared to fight him. Stuart Clarke has suggested that witchcraft and possession were interpreted as ‘eschatalogical signs’ and that these dangers would increase to warn against the ‘apocalyptic events that were due to follow’. Indeed, in England it was widely believed that ‘occult phenomena [such as witches] would prefigure the overthrow of the present earthly order’ and lead to the Apocalypse. Early modern readers would have feared the Apocalypse and this fear may have been increased by the religious tension that characterised Elizabeth’s reign (in the form of numerous Catholic plots and religious instability). One

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31 All sixteenth-century witches claimed that the familiar appeared to them uninvited with the exception of John Walsh, Anon., The Examination of John Walsh, sig. A5 r.; Margaret Staunton, Anon., A detection of damnable driftes, sig. A8 v.; and, Joan Cunny, Anon., The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches. Arraigned and by justice condemned and executed at Chemes-forde, in the Countye of Essex, the 5. Day of Julye, last past, 1589 With the manner of their divelish practices and keeping of their spirits, whose fourmes are herein truelye proportioned (London: E. Allde, 1589), sig. A3 v. In cases where a witch may have been given a familiar, the origin of it is not made clear, but there is no evidence to suggest it was summoned. Sharpe has explained that the spirits of the Middle Ages were believed to be conjured, not to appear without invitation. Sharpe, “The Witch’s Familiar in Early Modern England,” 227.

32 Anon., The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches, sigs. A2r and A2v.

33 Anon., A Rehearsall both straung and true, sig. A2r.


36 The most significant of these dangers were the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569, the Ridolfi plot in 1571, the Throckmorton Plot in 1583, the Babington Plot in 1586, and a plot by the Essex Circle in 1599 to force Elizabeth I into naming James I as her successor. There was also a papal bull issued in 1570 delegitimizing Elizabeth’s right to the throne and authorising English Catholics to rise up against her. All of these schemes, with the exception of the one in 1599, were formulated by Catholics to try and restore a Catholic monarch (namely, Mary Queen of Scots) to the throne. Christopher Haigh, Elizabeth I (New York: Longman, 2001), 177. For more information on apocalyptical ideas in early modern England, see Walsham, Providence in Early Modern England, 116-224.
plausible possibility is that people might have begun to adapt pre-existing beliefs about magicians conjuring demonic spirits into the idea that these same spirits appeared on earth to tempt people into an allegiance with Satan. For these demonic spirits to be a tangible force, they had to have a tangible form, such as a cat, dog or rodent. In this way, ordinary people may have adapted theoretical ideas about the nature of spirits to apply to the circumstances of their time.

**deceived by the devil: the familiar as a demonic trickster**

Robin Briggs claims that ‘the animal familiars or imps which appear in almost every well documented case [of witchcraft] quite clearly performed the role of the Devil’. While this is an accurate description it is too simplistic. The familiar should not just be seen as the Devil’s minion but as an intermediary between the Devil and humanity. Through an analysis of sixteenth-century witchcraft pamphlets, it becomes clear that the familiar was believed to act as an agent of the Devil, sent to trick mankind into forsaking God and pledging alliance to Satan.

The familiar was initially represented as a devilish trickster in the first surviving witchcraft pamphlet (Chelmsford, 1566). In this pamphlet, two of the three witches reported were deceived by their familiars. Elizabeth Francis’ ‘whyte spotted Catte’ gave her eighteen sheep ‘whych continued with her for a tyme, but in the end dyd all weare awaye she knewe not howe’. This incident reminds the reader that the Devil’s gifts have no real substance and his promises of wealth are fleeting. Elizabeth Francis was so seduced by her familiar’s gifts and persuasions that she renounced God and entered into a blood pact with it.

Later in this same pamphlet Mother Waterhouse is tricked by this familiar who has morphed and assumed the shape of a ‘tode’ and then ‘a thynge lyke a blacke dogge with a face like an ape, a short tail, and a peyre of horns on his head’ (see Figure 2 below). If there was any doubt about the devilish nature of the cat, this horned dog leaves no question that he is demonic.

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40 The blood pact will be discussed later in this article.
41 Phillips, *The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytyches at Chelmsforde* 2A4v.
This dog, named ‘Sathan’, openly told maidservant Agnes Browne of Mother Waterhouse’s witchcraft. When Agnes saw the dog it carried the knife of its ‘sweete dame’. On being asked who his dame was the dog ‘nodded and wagged his head’ towards Mother Waterhouse’s house. The examining magistrate seemed satisfied to accept Agnes’s account of the dog’s information. Thus, Mother Waterhouse’s conviction was helped by the admissions of her familiar, who tricked and betrayed his mistress.

The idea of the familiar as a demonic trickster, as in the very first witchcraft pamphlet, appeared at a time when the idea of what constituted a familiar was still being formed. This places the role of the diabolically tempting familiar as central to ideas of English witchcraft in the sixteenth century. The notion of a demonic trickster was still circulating in Essex twenty years later. In a 1582 St Osyth pamphlet an awareness of the Devil’s tricks began to circulate. Although accused witch Ursley Kempe naively believes that her white lamb familiar Tyfin always tells the truth, another witch in the same pamphlet, Joan Pechey, tells her familiar ‘I perceive if I doe give you an inch, you will take an ell’. This admission would suggest that there is a growing awareness among ordinary people about the tricks and temptations of the Devil. However, this awareness is not widespread enough to prevent nine of the fourteen witches mentioned in this pamphlet from falling prey to Satan’s treachery. Some are simply abandoned by their familiars, while others are betrayed to other suspected witches or to the authorities. Most notable, however, are Suckin and Lyerd ‘two spirites, the one of them like a blakke Dogge, and the other redde like a Lyon,’ who hound Mother Elizabeth Bennet to renounce God and enter into a pact with them. After Mother Bennet has refused the spirits seven times, Suckin and Lyerd tell Ursley Kempe that Mother Bennet is a witch and then ‘seeing that [Mother Bennet] wilt not be ruled…thrust [her] into a burning oven.’ This example highlights that familiars not only deceived their mistresses, but were also vindictive towards those who refused to concede to their demands.

It is evident that contemporary readers saw an association between the familiar and the Devil’s tricks. A 1589 Chelmsford pamphlet starts by warning its readers

42 Ibid., sig 2A6v.
43 Ibid., sig 2A6v.
44 Ibid., sig 2A6v.
45 W.W., A true and just recorde, sig. A4v.
46 Ibid., sig. B3r.
47 Ibid., sig. B8r.
of the ‘illusions of Sathan’ and goes on to describe Joan Prentice’s betrayal by her familiar, ‘a dunnish culoured ferret having fiery eyes’.

Like the dog in the 1566 Chelmsford trial, this animal (named Bidd) is clearly demonic. The ferret even introduces himself by saying: ‘I am Sathan’.

Joan asks Bidd to nip a child a little, but not so much as to hurt her. Bidd nips the girl and then tells Joan that the child ‘should dye thereof’. Joan’s declaration of ‘thou villain what hast thou don?’ shows Joan’s shock over her familiar’s uncontrolled and deceitful behaviour.

These witches who were deceived by the Devil only seem to realise it after they have already been betrayed. Mother Upney, of this same pamphlet account, cried ‘the devill had deceived her, the devill had deceived her, and that she had twice given her soule to the Devill.’

This change in awareness between 1566 and 1589 suggests not just that ideas about the Devil as a trickster were in wide circulation, but that they were increasing in their intensity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the next witchcraft pamphlet of the sixteenth century (1592) the author declares that ‘Sathan stil doth hatch fresh Impes, wherby of al sorts he may catch’.

This pamphlet is very clear in identifying familiars (or ‘impes’) as agents of a Devil keen to deceive mankind. A popular belief about Satan’s deceptions has been incorporated into witchcraft lore.

English people were substantially concerned with the Devil’s involvement in witchcraft. Witchcraft pamphlets not only reflected, but also helped to shape, the way in which Elizabethans viewed the Devil. Over thirty years the familiar evolved from being viewed as an untrustworthy demonic creature to an agent deliberately sent by Satan to capture human souls. The unexpressed idea of the demonic trickster present in the first witchcraft pamphlet has evolved into a clearly articulated belief.

**witches, the devil, and sexuality**

The demonic familiar, as a trickster, tempter, and betrayer, was also intimately involved in attempting to lead women away from their traditional role as wives.

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49 Ibid., sig. B1v.
50 Ibid., sig. B2r.
51 Ibid., sig. B2r.
52 Ibid., sig. B2v.
and mothers and reinvent them as lustful witches in league with the Devil. In sixteenth-century England, women were never free from ‘moral and sexual surveillance of some kind’ and unmarried women were viewed as an ‘anomaly’. Unmarried, widowed or promiscuous women were viewed as ‘objects of suspicion’. The idea that witches threatened the traditional household sphere, through their attacks on pregnant women, children, and the sexual potency of men, as well as through their own extra-marital affairs, demonstrates the link between inappropriate sexual activity, witchcraft, and the Devil. My argument is that the pact made between a witch and her familiar formed the basis for accusations of indecent and inappropriate sexual behaviour and that this is demonstrated by the sexual transgressions present in nearly all surviving witchcraft pamphlets and focus on the familiar’s role within them.

Until recently the witches’ blood pact made between the witch and the Devil was thought to be primarily a Continental phenomenon, found especially in Germany, Switzerland, and France. This article will demonstrate that the witch’s pact was central to English witchcraft and was believed to have sexual implications. Although in Europe the pact was made between the witch and the Devil, in sixteenth-century English witchcraft the Devil did not make this deal in person. Rather, familiars acted as his intermediaries. In Continental Europe this pact was:

formalised by an act of sexual intercourse with the devil, by which the witch surrendered herself sexually and spiritually to the lordship of a new master in return for the promise of his power and protection.

Although stories of sexual intercourse with the Devil were not widely circulated

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56 Ibid., 175.

57 James Sharpe has helped to revise this view in his study Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), as has Walter Stephens in his recent book Demon Lovers, 102-106.

in England until well into the seventeenth century (though the idea did briefly appear in the 1590s), it is my contention that the bond between a witch and her familiar was still highly sexualised, as explored further below.\textsuperscript{59}

Often the pact was made at the time when a familiar would first appear to a witch, as a necessary prerequisite for the familiar to obey the witch's commands. The 1589 Chelmsford pamphlet specifically focuses on explaining the intricacies of the pact in terms its readers can understand. By the time this pamphlet was published, the vast majority of prior pamphlets had focused on the demonic pact as crucial to the practice of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{60} However, prior to this 1589 pamphlet, none had attempted to explain the significance or method of giving one's blood to Satan.

The 1589 pamphlet records that at about ten o'clock at night, Joan Prentice was visited by a 'dunnish culoured ferret having fiery eyes' called Bidd.\textsuperscript{61} Bidd tells Joan that he is Satan and that she must 'give [him her] soul'.\textsuperscript{62} Whereas in previous pamphlets this is normally the point at which the potential witch either gives up her soul or attempts to resist, Joan is confused.\textsuperscript{63} She asks how she can give Satan her soul when 'her soule is appertained onely unto Jesus Christ, by whose precious blood shedding it was bought'.\textsuperscript{64} Bidd explains that if Joan gives him some of her blood this will override Christ's claim to her soul. Joan willingly agrees and, after Bidd sucks blood from her finger, the contract is complete.

This explanation suggests that the Devil's interest in forming pacts with witches was focused on tempting Christ's followers away from their godly lives and into an illicit allegiance with Satan. As well as being the popular explanation, this reason was also accepted by theologians who, in the words of Emma Wilby, believed Satan was 'amassing an “army” of witches with which to wage war

\textsuperscript{60} The only pamphlet before this date to ignore the pact between Devil and witch was: Anon., \textit{A detection of damnable driftes}.
\textsuperscript{61} Anon., \textit{The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches}, sig. B1r.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., sig. B1v.
\textsuperscript{63} Previous pamphlets include: Phillips, \textit{The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chelmsforde}; and, Anon., \textit{A Rehearsall both straung and true}, and W.W., \textit{A true and just recorde}.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches}, sig. B1v.
on mankind’. There is, however, another, more sexual element present in this arrangement.

In the pamphlet’s illustration of Joan Prentice and Bidd (which is printed twice, for emphasis), this other, crucial element has been added (see Figure 3 below). While Bidd sucks Joan’s cheek, Joan cups her breast and rests her hand on her stomach, hinting at the sexual and maternal undertones of the arrangement. From this example, it is clear that the blood pact and sexuality were intimately linked. The presence of a familiar cemented this relationship.

Alan Macfarlane influentially once wrote that ‘English witchcraft…differed considerably from that on the Continent [because there] did not seem to be any marked sexual element’. Yet a close examination of both the 1563 Elizabethan statute, as well as a wealth of evidence available in sixteenth-century witchcraft pamphlets, disproves this statement. Walter Stephens and Joyce Gibson have both made use of some of this English evidence by pointing out that the witch had ‘intimate physical relations’ with her familiar(s). This physical contact generally took the form of the witch’s familiar suckling her and drinking her blood. The blood pact demonstrates that the sexual nature of English witchcraft was closely linked to familiars. As well as this demonic pact, a witch was often described as a ‘lewde’ woman, or as a ‘harlot’, ‘whore’, or ‘strumpet’, thus adding a second sexual dimension to English witchcraft.

The pamphlets also hint at the idea of the witch as an inverted maternal figure. The belief that the familiar could be fed milk if blood was unavailable and a familiar’s suckling of the witch both support this theory. This idea has been discussed in detail by Deborah Willis and, to a lesser degree, James Sharpe

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65 Wilby, Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits, 47.
66 Anon., The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches, sig. B1v.
68 Anon., An Act against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts 1563 5 Eliz, 1 c. 16, Witchcraft and Society, ed. Gibson, 3-5.
69 Stephens, Demon Lovers, 103; and, Joyce Gibson, Hanged for Witchcraft: Elizabeth Lowys and Her Successors (Canberra: Tudor Press, 1988), 244.
70 For example see Phillips, The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chelmsforde; and, Anon., A Rehearsall both straung and true, and W.W., A true and just recorde.
71 Anon., A Rehearsall both straung and true, sig. A4r; and, W.W., A true and just recorde, sigs. C1r, F2v, and F3r.
and Philip C. Almond. Willis, Sharpe, and Almond present a strong case for the relationship between a witch and familiar being similar to that of a mother and child. These three elements of the sexualised English witch (the pact, the loose sexuality, and the inverted maternity) are intimately tied with the relationship between a witch and her familiar. In this way, we can see the familiar, as an agent of the Devil, as a sexual animal that was complicit in tempting a woman, or witch, into abnormal sexual behaviour and, ultimately, eternal damnation. As the familiar was a key element of English witchcraft, its demonic nature strengthens the argument for an understanding of English witchcraft as diabolical. The additional link between the demonic familiar and sexual temptation allows us to view English witchcraft as not purely composed of malefic acts, but as a diabolical and sexual phenomenon.

The sexualised nature of witchcraft was elaborated within witchcraft pamphlets over the following thirty years. As well as displaying a preoccupation with the danger witchcraft presented to masculinity, pamphlets also stated that witches killed their husbands and children (as well as other people’s children), terrorised pregnant women and, in one instance, initiated and participated in incestuous relationships.

In the very first pamphlet in 1566, Elizabeth Francis asks her familiar to ‘waste [the] goodes of a man (Andrew Byles) who ‘would not mary her’ after engaging in premarital sex. This belief that witches could cause impotence in men appears to be supported by Clause Two of the 1563 Elizabethan Statute, which describes the ability of witches to harm a ‘Bodye or Member’. This reference to body parts often denoted male genitalia and demonstrates that English witchcraft, so long believed to be almost devoid of sexual undertones, may have been actively defined as having the potential to cause sexual disharmony and dysfunction. A short time after making Andrew Byles impotent, Elizabeth discovers that she is pregnant and ‘will[s] Sathan [her familiar] to destroye’ the

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75 For more information on witchcraft and impotence see, Catherine Rider,  *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
child.\textsuperscript{76} Elizabeth does eventually marry and has a child ‘borne within a quarter of a yere’.\textsuperscript{77} The pamphlet’s inclusion of this detail shows the writer’s and readers’ preoccupation with the supposed sexual promiscuity and loose morals of witches.\textsuperscript{78} After her child is born Elizabeth once again asks Satan to ‘kyll the childe’ and, later, to kill her husband.\textsuperscript{79} Already, in 1566, pamphlets describe a clear link between familiar spirits, the Devil, and unconventional sexual behaviour. The Devil is using his familiars to disrupt normal sexual harmony.

This theme continues in pamphlets across the next three decades. In 1579 accused witch Elizabeth Stile is described as a ‘lewde’ woman, but it is not until 1582 that the concept of the sexually deviant witch truly develops.\textsuperscript{80} The 1582 St Osyth pamphlet examines fourteen witches of whom eleven are accused of inappropriate sexual activity. This activity takes many forms. Ursley Kempe, Margaret Ewstace, and Cysley Selles are all accused of killing children. Ursley made one young ‘childe fall out of the Cradle; and brake her necke’, thus killing the child and destroying the traditional family unit.\textsuperscript{81} She was also accused of bewitching several other children and injuring a child and a pregnant woman in the ‘privie and hinder partes’.\textsuperscript{82} The pamphlet claims that Ursley committed these acts through her ‘three impes [whom] were like cats’ to cause a heavily pregnant woman to have a ‘strange sickness’, thus causing the death of her child.\textsuperscript{83} The actions of all of these women represent a departure from their traditional gender roles as caring wives and mothers.\textsuperscript{84} Instead of nurturing children and creating a stable household environment, these witches were believed to destroy the children of a household, thus rendering it barren and upsetting the natural order.

While both of these women sought demonic aid to injure and kill their neighbours’

\textsuperscript{76} Phillips, \textit{The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chelmsforde}, sig. A7v.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., sig. A7v.
\textsuperscript{78} Unmarried women in this period who fell pregnant could be jailed for a year or publically whipped. This happened to an Essex woman (Frances Baker) in 1599. Elizabeth Francis’ behaviour, although she does eventually marry, would have been seen as far outside the bounds of normal sexual behaviour. Mendelson and Crawford, \textit{Women in Early Modern England}, 148.
\textsuperscript{79} Phillips, \textit{The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chelmsforde}, sig. A8r.
\textsuperscript{80} Anon., \textit{A Rehearsall both straung and true}, sig. A4r.
\textsuperscript{81} W.W., \textit{A true and just recorde}, sig. A1v.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., sig. B1r.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., sig. A3v.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., sigs. D7v and C7v.
\textsuperscript{85} For more information on the role of women in sixteenth-century England, see Mendelson and Crawford, \textit{Women in Early Modern England}. 
children, Cysley Selles allowed her two familiars (Hercules and Mercurue) to attack and terrorise her own young children. Both of Cysley’s children, John and Henrie, testified that in the night ‘there came a spirit [which] took John by his left legge, and also by the little Toe’. On hearing his son call for help, John’s father shouted to his mother ‘why thou whore, cannot you keepe your impes from my childe’. John later told the magistrate that he would ‘sweat for fear’ whenever he saw his mother with her imps. In this narrative it is clear that Cysley’s imps are endangering her children and that her familiars now take priority over John and Henrie. This was highly deviant behaviour: as Mendelson and Crawford have argued, in the sixteenth century, any woman incapable of loving her child would have been diagnosed as mentally ill. Cysley’s husband associates her supposed witchcraft with deviant sexuality and loose morality, calling her a ‘whore’ as he yells at her to remove her ‘impes’. Cysley has been seduced by her devilish imps into abandoning her traditional role as a loving and attentive mother.

This idea of endangering the family unit is taken to the extreme by Joan Pechey who was charged with having ‘willed her Sonne Philip Barenger, being of the age of xxiii years, to lye in bed with her’. After Philip corroborates his mother’s story, claiming he was ‘willed and commandeered’, Justice Darcey immediately asks whether Joan ‘had any Cat in her house’. This question demonstrates three things: first, that the mere presence of a cat has come to be understood as demonic; second, that people understood that the Devil interfered with normal sexual activity; and third, that they also believed that the only way that Joan could have ‘commandeered’ her son to sleep with her was with the help of the Devil. Because of her initiation and control of this relationship, Joan is perceived to be taking on a more dominant, stereotypically male role in her sexual dealings. This phenomenon was also visible in Continental Europe where witches ‘were female, [but] were also masters of their own sexuality, appropriating masculine roles and agency to themselves.

86 W.W., A true and just recorde, sig. D1r.
87 Ibid., sig. D1r.
88 Ibid., sig. D1v.
89 Mendelson and Crawford, Women in Early Modern England, 159.
90 W.W., A true and just recorde, sig. D1v.
91 Ibid., sig. C6r.
92 Ibid., sig. C6r.
94 Zika, The Appearance of Witchcraft, 81.
way as its Continental counterpart, English witchcraft must (despite several decades of historical scholarship which argued for a view of English witchcraft as asexual) be viewed as inherently sexual and, given the demonic nature of this sexuality, inherently diabolical. By 1589, this belief is so ingrained in English witchcraft that no overt mention of it seems necessary. Rather, the author of the pamphlet has changed Joan's name from Cony to Cunny, a lewd sexual term, and the title page of the pamphlet simply depicts a toad and a ferret (supposedly familiar spirits) copulating. The different species of the animals furthers the concept of unnatural sexuality. In English witchcraft, therefore, witches were clearly understood to be sexually deviant creatures. These numerous examples of sexual undertones in English witchcraft, as well as overt references to the unorthodox sexual practices of witches, demonstrate that English witchcraft was inherently sexual. This sexuality was inescapably tied to a witch's relationship with her familiar.

This article has attempted to reassess the way historians might view the English familiar and, as such, English witchcraft itself. Instead of being purely malefic in nature (as has been the prevailing argument over several decades of research) English witchcraft was in fact deeply concerned with the Devil's influence on the world. Nathan Johnstone recently contended that witchcraft was atypical of early modern demonic belief and was therefore excluded from his work on the Devil in early modern England. On the contrary, English witchcraft pamphlets were a focus point of wider preoccupations with social conflict and concern. The form of the familiar stemmed from medieval beliefs; the representation of the demonic trickster arose from a fear of instability and the idea that the familiar seduced women was borne out of contemporary concerns over a woman's position in the home. While running counter to previous analyses that have focused on and prioritised the issue of maleficium, my study's close examination of these pamphlets, and of the familiar's role within them, leads to the conclusion that English witchcraft must be viewed as inescapably diabolical and that

95 Alan Macfarlane is one of the key authors who claim that English witchcraft was asexual. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. The book contains six extremely brief references to sexuality all of which discount the idea of sexualised English witchcraft. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England, 6, 160, 215, 275, 281, 307.
96 Joan Cunny's name was given in legal records as Joan Cony. Gibson, Early Modern Witches, 129; and, Anon., The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches, sig. B1r.
the familiar is pivotal to this understanding.

illustrations

Figure 1: A witch with her demonic spirit. Anon., *A Rehearsall both straung and true of heinous and horrible actes*, (London: J. Kingstone for Edward White, 1579), titlepage. C. The British Library Board, shelf mark: C.27.a.11.

Figure 2: A familiar in the shape of a demonic dog. John Phillips, *The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chelmsforde*, (London: Willyam Powell for Willyam Pickeringe, 1566), sigs. 2A1 r. and 2A4 r. Lambeth Palace Library, class mark: (zz) 1587.12.03.

Figure 3: Joan Prentice suckling her familiar Bidd. She cups her breast to hint at the sexual nature of their relationship. Anon., *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches* (London: E. Alde, 1589) titlepage and sig. B1v. Lambeth Palace library, class mark: (zz) 1597.15.03.