CHAPTER TWO

THE WITCHES

As I argued in the Introduction, the high proportion of women arrested and executed for witchcraft in Eichstätt between 1617 and 1631 was not the result of local social or political conflicts or panics about witches. The explanation for the predominance of women among the witch-defendants lies instead in the persecutors’ perceptions of what characteristics a witch-figure might possess, and the nature of the defendants’ responses to questions posed at particular points in the interrogation process. These same responses also led to two unexpected patterns of prosecution: the high proportion of witch-suspects drawn from the political craft elites of the town of Eichstätt; and the significant number of men denounced as witch-accomplices, but never arrested. In this chapter, I want to show how and why these patterns emerged. In doing so, I will also show in detail how interrogations were conducted, something which most historians of witchcraft episodes fail to do.

The authorities and the gender of the witch

The views of Westerstetten, the witch commissioners and the canons on the typical witch have to be reconstructed from a limited range of sources. If these authorities articulated their opinions on the characteristics they expected to find in the majority of witch-suspects who came before them, none survive. Gregory of Valencia’s opinion of 1590 provides the best general overview of the witch in the eyes of the Eichstätt authorities. The interrogatory drawn up by the witch commission and the commissioners’ handling of the denunciations of witch-accomplices reveal which individuals they found most plausible as witches.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Wilhelm V of Bavaria, to whom Gregory addressed his report, his sons Maximilian and Ferdinand, Westerstetten and other Catholic rulers, such as Ehrenberg, were linked to each other and the university in Ingolstadt by their patronage of the Society of Jesus, their Jesuit education and their witch-hunting activities. Among these advocates of witch persecution, the Malleus Maleficarum
and Binsfeld’s *Tractatus* assumed primary importance through the recommendation of Gregory and other jurists at the university. These demonologies were supplemented by later Jesuit texts such as Martín Del Río’s *Disquisitionum magicarum* (1599–1600).¹

Kramer argued in the *Malleus* that women were, by nature, more susceptible to attempts by the Devil to seduce them into the heresy of witchcraft. In his discussion of female witches, he drew on the authority of the Scriptures and the Apocrypha, citing such examples as Eve, Delilah and Jezebel, on patristic and classical authors, and on the stories of Cleopatra and Pelagia. Each citation served to impress upon the reader that women were weak, deceitful, unintelligent, jealous, vain and a general hindrance to man’s communion with God and his intellectual endeavours.² As Stuart Clark has observed, he was not stating anything original in his discussion of this disposition in women; it reflected the misogyny inherent in late medieval and early modern orthodox Catholic theology.³ Gender did, however, become the feature which distinguished the heresy of witchcraft from other heresies like Catharism or activities falsely attributed to other social groups such as lepers.⁴ Although male defendants formed a significant proportion, and in some cases the majority, of the ‘witches’ tried in the Friuli, Estonia and Finland, the authorities in each instance still subscribed to the fundamental demonological equation of woman with witch. In each case, the persecutors were able to impose their own stereotypes of the female witch-figure on a culture which had continued to adhere to a pre-Christian association of ‘low’ magic with men.⁵ It is not surprising therefore that in one of Binsfeld’s few comments on the gender of the witches, he claims (in Clark’s paraphrase) that women have ‘a greater despondency in tribulation and a more angry desire for revenge’ which

¹ In his attack on the Ingolstadt opinion of principle of 1601 which found ‘contra Binsfeldium’, the Bavarian Court Chancellor, Johann Sigismund Wagnereckh, quoted both Binsfeld and Del Río, Behringer, *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern*, pp. 270–1. Both Binsfeld and Del Río based their demonological tracts on the *Malleus*, ibid., p. 15.


³ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 112–33.

⁴ On the beliefs and activities ascribed to lepers, Jews, Muslims, witches and other heretics, and how they were linked imaginatively by politicians and theologians, see Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, Part One, pp. 33–86; cf. Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*.

⁵ See the following articles in Ankarloo and Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft*: Ginzburg, “Deciphering the Sabbath” (pp. 121–37), Maia Madar, “Estonia I: Werewolves and Poisoners” (pp. 257–72), and Heikkinen and Kervinen, “Finland: The Male Domination”.

makes them weak before the Devil’s persuasions. Against this background of demonological orthodoxy, women were always going to be among the first suspects to be identified by the authorities in Eichstätt once they had concluded that they had a problem with the insidious witch sect in the prince-bishopric.

The questions which constitute the Eichstätt interrogatory used from 1617 reflect the gender and spiritual emphases of standard demonological texts, rather than the putative superstitions or vengeful preoccupations of the local population. Of the eighty-four questions drawn up to aid the witch commissioners appointed by Westerstetten, only eleven dealt directly with the witch’s harmful relations with her neighbours, and these were positioned towards the end of the interrogatory. Of these few questions, question 63 asked whether the suspect had seduced anyone into the vice of witchcraft, and if so whom, and questions 69 and 74 concerned the witches’ entries into other people’s dwellings. Aggrieved neighbours rarely concerned themselves with these particular offences. They worried instead about the harm asked about in the remaining eight questions about the witch’s criminal activities and which was a feature of isolated witchcraft episodes across Europe: injury to particular individuals, their livestock or their crops, the death of kin or, less often, marital discord. Fifty-one questions of this document, however, were designed to elucidate the defendant’s spiritual state and provide information on the nocturnal gatherings of the witch sect and the accomplices who attended them with her. As I will argue below, the twenty-two questions about the witch’s personal history also concern to a large degree her moral probity. The emphasis of the interrogation was therefore placed primarily on establishing that the defendant was spiritually corrupted, that she had transferred her allegiance from God to the Devil, ignored or abused the sacraments of the Church and taken part in other heretical activities. The interrogators were then concerned to identify the other adherents of the witch sect among the local population. The questions about the witch-suspect’s crimes in the world were subordinated, both in quantity and in their position in the interrogatory, to those about her spiritual offences and her accomplices.

6 Clark, Thinking with Demons, p. 116.
7 StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Questions 63, 69 and 74. See also Appendix 1 “The Interrogatory of 1617”.
8 StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Questions 64–5, 67–8, 70, 72–3 and 76.
If one compares the content of the Eichstätt interrogatory with that of similar lists of questions and other pieces of legislation and demonological tracts, the emphasis on the heresy of witchcraft and the spiritual crimes of which it was constituted can be discerned more clearly. In the Kelheim interrogatory of 1590, the sequence of the questions about the defendant’s criminal acts shows a different set of priorities. The seduction of the witch by the Devil was naturally the point of initial concern because the interrogators in Kelheim, like their counterparts in Eichstätt, had first to establish that the suspect had contracted to join the witch sect. Once her status as a heretic had been confirmed by her own testimony, however, the Kelheim prosecutors turned immediately to the defendant’s acts of malevolence against her neighbours. Only then did they attempt to ascertain the quality of her spiritual state and force her to confess to performing sacrilegious acts and attending the nocturnal sabbaths. The remaining questions of this interrogatory addressed alternately other temporal and spiritual crimes: entry into cellars, bedchambers and stalls, the exhumation of children’s corpses, creating bad weather, adoration of and sex with the Devil, the incurable illnesses the suspect had caused, and creating discord between spouses.\(^9\) Throughout the list of questions much more emphasis is placed on actions which had tangible, harmful effects on human beings, their property and their communal lives. Over one-quarter of the questions posed in the Kelheim questionnaire dealt with such aggression within the community, compared with about one-tenth of those in the Eichstätt interrogatory.

The prominence accorded to the witch’s malevolence in the Kelheim document reflects the sole piece of substantial anti-magic legislation then current in Bavaria, under whose jurisdiction the town of Kelheim fell, Article 109 of the *Constitutio criminalis Carolina* of 1532.\(^10\) The authors of the *Carolina* prescribed punishment only for those who practised *harmful* sorcery. Although there is a greater awareness of the spiritual context and organized nature of the crime of witchcraft in the Kelheim interrogatory than the authors of the *Carolina* and its predecessors had recognized, these elements had not yet come to supersede the malign

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potential of sorcery as witchcraft’s central feature in legal and political discourse in the duchy of Bavaria.\footnote{Maximilian I of Bavaria was not to introduce his own legislation against witches until 1612. The Bavarian \textit{Hexenmandat} covered a range of supernatural beliefs from general superstitions and magic (both ‘black’ and ‘white’) to soothsaying, astrology and alchemy. Malevolent magic was not discussed with any more repugnance than the more ambiguous and beneficent preternatural practices. They were portrayed together in this document as the arsenal which was deployed by the Devil in his battle with God for the souls of people and rule over the world, “Das bayerische Hexenmandat von 1611 [sic]”, in Bernd Roeck (ed.), \textit{Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung}, vol. 4 \textit{Gegenreformation und Dreißigjähriger Krieg 1555–1648} (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1996), pp. 160–8.}

As Ruth Gänstaller has demonstrated, the Eichstätt witch commissioners were not scrupulous in the application of this article of the \textit{Carolina}, even though they used this legislation as the legal framework on which to construct their own juridical practices.\footnote{Gänstaller, “Zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns”, pp. 46–65. The interrogatory cites the \textit{Carolina} specifically, StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), f. 11v. Abraham Windteis’s correspondence about his wife’s prolonged imprisonment makes reference to the \textit{Carolina} as if it were the only valid law pertaining to witchcraft in the principality, StAN, Hexenakten 44 (M.M. Windteis), letters of 1 December 1617, f. 1r, and 9 July/29 June 1619, f. 1r. He also made reference to the tenth-century “Canon episcopi” concerning the illusory nature of witchcraft, ibid., letter of 1 December 1617, f. 3r. He presumably had access to an adviser who had knowledge of demonology and knew how to construct a valid defence against a charge of witchcraft in the same language spoken by the witch commissioners. How widespread this knowledge was and whether anybody else felt sufficiently confident to expose their doubts about the testimonies of the accused in this fashion are, however, difficult questions to answer.} This was because they treated witchcraft not as a felony but as a heresy. The Eichstätt interrogatory therefore mirrors more the emphasis of the \textit{Malleus} in which witchcraft was discussed primarily within its demonological context. Kramer did consider, in detail, particular malevolent acts—those which hindered generation, facilitated possession, caused infirmities, illness or death, injured cattle, and raised unseasonable weather—and set out the Church’s prescribed remedies against them.\footnote{Kramer, \textit{Malleus}, II/1,6–7 and 9–15, pp. 417–28 and 433–96 respectively.} Of these acts, impediments to procreation and cases of possession seem to have been raised much less frequently by witch-accusers and witch-suspects than the other acts which involved harm towards a person or his property. Even if one includes these types of witchcraft, malevolence accounts for only about a third of the text relating to the works attributed to witches by Kramer, that is part two of the \textit{Malleus}; in the remainder of
this section he discussed the seduction of the innocent, the pact, modes of travel to the nocturnal gatherings, copulation between witches and their incubi, and the performance of spells using the sacraments of the church—all before he turned his attention to the witches’ malevolence in the world—as well as shape-shifting and, at the end of this part of his discourse, male witches. The main focus of the rest and most substantial proportion of the Malleus was the theological possibility of witchcraft and the limits within which the Devil and his followers were permitted to work by God, and the legal basis and judicial procedures for instituting and carrying out prosecutions against adherents of the witch sect. Kramer’s preoccupation with the witches’ spiritual crimes and activities generally and the precedence over temporal crimes ascribed to them in the second part of the Malleus were reflected in the hierarchy of concerns presented by the Eichstätt authorities in the principality’s interrogation.

Among the Eichstätt witch commissioners therefore the stereotypical witch was not the malevolent old crone, the victim of her neighbours’ guilty consciences, whose image has pervaded much of the literature on witchcraft from early modern texts, such as the Kelheim interrogation or the sceptic Reginald Scot’s The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584), to the beginnings of modern witchcraft historiography; nor did she embody the more subtle, local conflicts which have been cited as the prevailing contexts within which witchcraft accusations and trials took place. The typical witch was rather the heretic against whom Kramer’s inquisitorial powers and the Malleus had been directed. Her primary crime was the renunciation of God as her master; her malevolent acts were of secondary importance, expressing her devotion to her new spiritual lord, the Devil, rather than being motivated by real social conflicts. The only characteristic common to all early modern stereotypes of the witch was that she was usually, but not always, female. The

15 Ibid., II/1,1–5, pp. 363–416.
16 Ibid., II/1,8 and 16, pp. 428–33 and 496–510 respectively.
17 Ibid., I, pp. 136–343.
18 Ibid., III, pp. 599–796.
19 Scot wrote, for example: ‘One sort of such are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles. . . . They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them.’ Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584; repr. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1972), p. 4.
particular configuration of stereotypical elements found in the Eichstätt interrogatory, however, also had a profound effect on the information which the interrogators were able to elicit from the witch-defendants who stood before them.

The interrogatory and the course of the witch interrogations

The extant trial transcripts from 1617 onwards show that the witch commissioners followed the priorities of the interrogatory as strictly as they could. The trial of Margretha Bittelmayr, for example, progressed through the following stages. She was arrested on the morning of 15 October 1626 and brought immediately before the witch commissioners. Few of the questions put to her were recorded in the trial transcript, but her answers show that the commissioners were using the standard questionnaire as a guide to their interrogation of her. The exact sequence of the questions was, however, contingent upon the course of the interrogation, in particular the defendant’s willingness to co-operate with her judges. Torture was frequently applied to obdurate witch-suspects in Eichstätt, and the more recalcitrant of them often retracted their testimonies which then had to be re-established by the witch commissioners. The transcript of each trial was therefore punctuated by episodes of recapitulation and the introduction of new or variant evidence which disrupted the flow of the interrogation.

The deposition recording the interrogation of Bittelmayr begins with a summary of personal details about herself, her parents, her marital status and her children which were derived from her answers to the first twenty-two questions prescribed in the interrogatory. The details recorded at this point in the interrogation transcript were not as innocuous as they might first appear. The commissioners were not merely seeking biographical information. What they were also looking for was evidence that Bittelmayr’s character did not conform to the patriarchal or spiritual norms of early modern Catholic society. Questions about her marital status, for example, focused on the validity of her marriage and her chastity prior to it. In question 9, Bittelmayr was asked ‘If she married of her own will or with the foreknowledge of her parents and friends’; and in answer to question 12 they hoped to find out ‘Whether

20 StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Question 9.
she had not previously, when single, had disorderly love with him [her husband], mixed with him in the flesh, or done such things willingly.'

Two questions later a defendant was to be asked directly about her attitude towards superstition: ‘If she had not before or near to her wedding used superstitious things, or let them be used by others.’

In her answers to this initial phase of questioning, Bittelmayr appeared to have been chaste and properly married, and there is an absence of any reference to superstitious practices. That the commissioners had been concerned with her lifestyle is, however, confirmed by the introductory paragraph of the afternoon session of the first day of interrogation. The record of each session before the witch commission was often preceded by a summary of the topics which were to be covered during that period of questioning. On the afternoon of 15 October 1626, Bittelmayr was asked ‘... how she lives, also what she thinks, and when she came to that vice, as well as how and in what form.’ Under these separate heads were grouped together the questions of different sections of the interrogatory. The twenty-two personal questions with which the prosecutors began their interrogations were therefore summarized as ‘how she lives’, a broad category which could include a spiritual appraisal of her conduct as well as the more conventional biographical requisites of the trial situation.

In this context, these questions about how Bittelmayr lived may not evince only a concern to elicit useful prosecution evidence. They were also an integral element of more than one tool adopted by Westerstetten’s government in the aggressive reform of his subjects. The questions reflect the concerns of Tridentine Catholicism and resemble those asked in the visitations which were designed to be a primary means by which moral and spiritual welfare was monitored and abuses were corrected. The answers given by the witch-suspects correspond to the

21 Ibid., Question 12. The preceding question asked whether the couple had plotted together alone at night; and question 13 pursued the theme of question 12 by asking where, when and how often the couple had made love, and who had paired them off together.

22 Ibid., Question 14.

23 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 15 October 1626 (p.m.).

24 I have not found a visitation questionnaire for Eichstätt. Peter Lang, however, has shown a shift in emphasis among visitors of southern German parishes in around 1600 from the correction of abuses among the clergy to the beliefs held by the community and the fabric of parish property, “Reform im Wandel. Die katholischen Visitationsinterrogatorien des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts”, in Peter Lang and E.W. Zeeden (eds.), Kirche und Visitations. Beiträge zur Erforschung der frühneuzeitlichen Visitationswesen in Europa.
‘correct’ answers which parishioners schooled in the catechism and the activities of the visiting clergy ought to have been able to give if they wanted to prevent intrusion into their affairs by the ecclesiastical and judicial machinery. The witch-suspects’ responses to these biographical questions also reflect the pattern of personal profiling identified by Ralf-Peter Fuchs as part of the strategy of those who appealed against their prosecutions for witchcraft or presented suits against those who had slandered them as ‘witches’ at the Imperial Court in Speyer. These personal profiles were designed to present the injured party as honourable and unlikely therefore to have been a witch. It is notable that none of the witch-suspects for whom this part of the transcript survives fails to present themselves as pious and honourable at this early stage of the interrogation process, even though many later admitted to fornication, adultery and bestiality. These suspects included Margretha Bittelmayr.

After Bittelmayr had answered the questions relating to her private life, the interrogators asked her a question which did not form part of the standard questionnaire: ‘What she then thought the cause to be that she had been called to this place?’ It was, however, put to all those who were brought before the Eichstätt witch commission whether or not they were witch-suspects. In the case of the witch-suspect Maria Mayr, for example, each member of the prison staff in the town hall was presented with the same question during the investigation by the witch commissioners into their unprofessional conduct. Whilst it had not been included in the original interrogatory, the question did fit the purposes of this section of the questionnaire. The questions with which the interrogatory began were to be discussed ‘before the evidence of

(Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), pp. 131–90. The visitation was one method adopted by the Würzburg and Eichstätt bishops in their unsuccessful attempt to recatholicize the village of Bergreinfeld, Weiss, “Reformation und Gegenreformation in Bergreinfeld”, pp. 283–341. For an account of how visitations were used by the Catholic Church in Germany, see, for example, Marc Forster, The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 77–83 and 97–8.

26 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 15 October 1626 (a.m.).
27 StAN, Hexenakten 48 (B. Halm), 26 November 1618, (J. Halm), 27 November 1618, (Bartle), [22 or 27] November 1618, (L. Fendt), 1 December 1618. The bedwatcher Hans’s interrogation began with an unusually direct question: ‘whom he had accompanied out of the town hall, who was that?’, ibid., (Hans), 23 November 1618.
the crime’ was revealed to the suspect.\textsuperscript{28} Up to this point in the interrogation therefore the commissioners had not told Bittelmayr of the crime with which she was charged, although the wife of a town scribe would doubtless have recognized that the men before whom she had been brought constituted the local witch commission. The question asking why she thought she had been brought before them served to introduce to the suspect the cause of her arrest and eased a problem inherent in the tone of the questions to be asked about the nature of her heresy. These questions followed two about the witch’s denouncers (questions 23 and 24) and a recommendation that all the indications of suspicion against the defendant be placed before the defendant at this juncture.\textsuperscript{29} They assumed on the basis of the accumulated evidence from other trials that the person who stood before them was guilty. Question 25, for example, simply asked ‘How long ago was it that she had come into this vice?’\textsuperscript{30} If the suspect persisted in protesting her innocence, however, the prosecutors could not ask these questions; the alleged witch had at least to place herself in a position of guilt for the interrogation to progress. In order to avoid accidentally implicating herself in the witch conspiracy at this early stage the suspect had to construct a careful answer to the question asking why she found herself in the town hall. Bittelmayr’s strategy, like most of the other witch-defendants in Eichstätt, was to claim that she did not know why she stood before the judges, but she added, in an unnecessary act of self-incrimination, that God knew that she had not seen anybody at the diabolical dances so she could not report anyone to the commission except those whom she had seen at wedding dances.\textsuperscript{31}

The commissioners in Bittelmayr’s case passed over her insufficient explanation of her presence before them and ‘confronted’ her with twenty of the twenty-one denunciations laid against her by previously convicted witches; the one with which she was not confronted was made by a suspect who was still in custody with her. In naming her denouncers, they had moved on to questions 23 and 24 of the interrogatory, and the damning evidence of Bittelmayr’s involvement in the activities of the witch sect: ‘23. Whether N. denounced person in particular was known to her, and in what way’; and ‘24. Whether she was aware, so as

\textsuperscript{28} StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), f. 1r.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., f. 3v.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., Question 25.
\textsuperscript{31} StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 15 October 1626 (a.m.).
not to doubt, that these persons had been executed for witchcraft.\(^{32}\) Bittelmayr’s responses to the first four of these denunciations were transcribed by the interrogators’ scribe; they were all negative. She had never seen the Lehenbauer from Landershofen; she did know the second, unnamed, denouncer, and was not aware of anything ‘vnrechts’ (‘wrong’ or ‘unjust’) about her, although she had only seen her at a wedding dance; the third convict she had seen, but did not know anything ‘unjust’ about her; and the Große Beckin of the Eastern Quarter of Eichstätt she did not know.\(^{33}\) Bittelmayr’s reactions to the remaining denunciations were summarized under a single article: ‘5. Of this and all other denunciations she knows herself innocent, but probably, she believes, that the persons said it, then she would confess it just as well, but that it was true, which God knew well’.\(^{34}\) The interrogators’ course of action at this point in other Eichstätt witch trials was usually to make a search for the witch’s mark and then to torture the suspect in order to extract a confession of guilt.\(^{35}\) In Bittelmayr’s case, they departed from this course because they had other significant evidence from the defendant herself which could be dealt with under the recommendation in the interrogatory that all further suspicions against the suspect be raised at this time.

Two years previously Bittelmayr had sought counsel in the confessional about some unrecorded matter no doubt related to witchcraft, magic or superstition. Bittelmayr remembered the episode, ‘but she had only done it for the sake of those whom she would not like to see in prison’.\(^{36}\) She claimed, however, that she was ‘now all pious: and wants to [show] herself innocent of the twenty denunciations [ ] read out loud above’.\(^{37}\) Again, this issue, like the insubstantial testimonies of the various witnesses brought into their presence, was not pursued by the interrogators. Instead they moved on to a physical inspection for diabolical marks. This experience too was not specified in the prescriptions

\(^{32}\) StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Questions 23 and 24.

\(^{33}\) StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 15 October 1626 (a.m.).

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (a.m.).

\(^{35}\) For example, immediately after being confronted with the denunciations laid against him, Peter Porzin was searched for the witch’s mark. Two suspect mark’s were found, one on his left hip and another on his backside, neither of which bled when they were pricked. As the discovery of these marks did not prompt Porzin to confess, he was tortured, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (P. Porzin), 10 September 1627.

\(^{36}\) StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 15 October 1626 (a.m.).

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (a.m.).
of the interrogatory, although it was probably intended by the advice that all other suspicions held about a defendant should be examined here. The torturer Mathes Hörman was not able to find a mark on Bittelmayr’s body, but the scribe recorded the conclusion (drawn by whom, one does not know) that such marks ‘had to be on another secret place’, i.e. Bittelmayr’s genitalia or anus.\(^\text{38}\) The commissioners then decided to defer torture and retire for lunch.

Throughout the afternoon session Bittelmayr obstinately maintained her innocence. An attempt to continue focusing on the morning’s issues, the evidence against her, was abandoned in favour of question 25, ‘how long ago was it that she had come into this vice?’. After light torture in which she ‘flinched only a little, but was not quite raised from the stocks’,\(^\text{39}\) she made a beginning: ‘She said she knows well that she sits there as a witch, but it happens as an injustice to her. She asks therefore that they should stop the torture; she wants to think about how long ago it was. It was likely to be about fifteen years’.\(^\text{40}\) With this the interrogators were able to claim that Bittelmayr had given ‘the right truth’\(^\text{41}\) and to ignore the statement of innocence which preceded this piece of information (‘it happens as an injustice to her’). The defendant was then led away to think about question 25 in further detail.

Friday 16 October began with Bittelmayr’s revocation of this beginning and she was again tortured lightly, enough for her to be ‘only frightened’.\(^\text{42}\) Bittelmayr begged to be let down so that she might talk about her entry into the witches’ sect, but she only proceeded to recall a wedding which she had attended at Weißenkirch with the Bonschabin, the Richelin, the Apothekerin and the Stricker Bastelin. They had ridden into the town drunk and merry and had caroused. It seems that this beginning was an answer to three questions about when, where and on what occasion she defected to the witch sect: question 25; question 26 ‘Whether this happened here or at other places, and where’; and question 27 ‘On what occasion and at what opportunity did she come to this vice?’.\(^\text{43}\) As she refused to elaborate further on this episode, even when strongly examined, she was again tortured. Two points, however, should

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (a.m.).  
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (p.m.).  
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (p.m.).  
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 15 October 1626 (p.m.).  
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 16 October 1626 (a.m.).  
\(^{43}\) StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Questions 26 and 27.
be noted about this fragmentary story. The first is that it was about a wedding and may have been inspired by the reference to marriage superstitions in question 14 of the interrogatory. Marriage certainly seems to have been on Bittelmayr’s mind because she had already referred to weddings twice: once when observing that she could only name those whom she had seen at wedding dances; and again when she said that she had seen the second of her denouncers at a wedding celebration. The wedding motif occurs frequently throughout the Eichstätt confession narratives, especially when the suspects told of the seduction into the sect and the atmosphere of the clandestine nocturnal gatherings. Walburga Knab, for example, also stated that everything at the witches’ sabbath was ‘as if at a wedding’. This was not an unusual suggestion. During the first decade of the sixteenth century, a witch-suspect from the Tyrol was allegedly elected a queen of ‘Engelland’ (‘land of angels’) and was married to the Devil with all the trappings of a royal wedding. The second point is that Bittelmayr’s relationships with the other women mentioned were not ones of conflict; and her chosen wedding guests had all been executed, as the scribe had noted later in the margin. They had got drunk, travelled and caroused together in order to celebrate someone else’s happiness. Bittelmayr was therefore drawing on positive relationships in her answers to the judges’ questions, a characteristic of her subsequent answers and the responses given by other defendants in other trials.

The second experience of torture on the Friday was stronger. Bittelmayr was stretched on the strappado. This was followed by a different tale of her seduction by the Devil based on the same three questions which had inspired her first abortive attempt to construct a narrative. Twenty-seven years previously she had been in the service of the old Krämbsin. There she had slept with an ‘old, cautious person’ named Anna who ‘handled her and rolled around with her like a male person’. If Bittelmayr felt any moral unease about this sexual experience, she did not express it in her narrative even though it contradicted the impression created on the previous day that she had been chaste before her marriage. It was followed immediately by: ‘after that she won the
love of her present husband’. 48 She concluded this version of events, however, with her actual seduction by the Devil—‘until finally the evil enemy appeared to her in his [her husband’s] form, with whom she committed improprieties’ 49—and a description of the transaction which then took place to bring her into the witch sect. The interrogators seem therefore to have appended questions 28 to 34 of their questionnaire to the three originally asked of her on this day of interrogation. These dealt with the suspect’s meetings with the Devil, what he desired of her and what she promised to him. 50 Three of these questions (30, 32 and 33) were repeated, slightly altered, in the text by the scribe: ‘What he then desired?’; ‘But whether the evil enemy otherwise desired nothing further?’; and ‘Whether she promised it to him?’ 51

These questions about the Devil’s desires of her were repeated in the afternoon session. Special emphasis seems to have been placed on the thirty-fourth question: ‘Whether she did not disown God and all the saints, and promise to harm people, livestock and fruit; with what words and in what form this happened?’. 52 Bittelmayr confirmed her earlier testimony that she had, unwillingly, rejected God and all the saints and added ‘Otherwise that she did everything to them which is detestable to the world, like harming people and livestock’. 53 In asking the defendant here whether she had promised to harm people, livestock and crops, the interrogators interrupted the sequence of the interrogatory. Strictly, the question had been correctly included among those dealing with the suspect’s seduction into the sect and her relations with the Devil because its subject was the promise to perform harmful acts rather than the specific instances of her malevolence. Unlike true heretics, however, the Eichstätt witches were a product of a circumstance which they did not always fully understand. Responses to questions about the nature of their heresy were invariably short, often a mere ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or an almost verbatim repetition of the question itself, and lacked detail. In answer to the question ‘What he [the Devil] then desired?’, the court scribe recorded that Bittelmayr said ‘nothing until he came to her again on the second day, and performed improprieties with her, she [promised]
him only to be his'.

This particular response to this question recurs often in the extant Eichstätt witch-trial transcripts and its frequency may be explained in one of two ways. The promise to give oneself over to the Devil only may reflect the language of lovers proceeding towards marriage, as well as the marriage vows themselves. The repetition of the whole response, including the reappearance of the Devil and the fornication, in diverse confessions suggests, however, that, even if the suspects were drawing on their experiences of courtship, it was the interrogators who encouraged the phraseology of the covenant. The lack of any imaginative expansion on the awesome event of the Devil’s second unarranged meeting with his new convert also suggests that the defendant could not comprehend such a situation.

It seems that the defendants felt more comfortable expanding on episodes of malevolence; they could, after all, be grounded in real events. In Bittelmayr’s case, as with many others in Eichstätt, the judges took the decision at the end of Friday’s interrogation to ask her to reflect on ‘whom, how, when, and in what circumstances she harmed people and livestock’, that is they passed on to questions 64 and 68. This is not because the witches’ supposed malevolence had assumed a greater significance for the witch commissioners since the interrogatory had originally been drawn up. They remained unconcerned by the high proportion of unsubstantiated acts of harmful witchcraft confessed by the defendants and were willing to overlook the consistent negative responses which they received from the witnesses they were able to subpoena for each act. I think, rather, that the sequential logic of the commissioners’ questionnaire was inappropriate for this part of the interrogation process. The defendant was able to make sense of personal tragedy, either her own or her neighbours, in supernatural terms.

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54 Ibid., 16 October 1626 (p.m.).
55 In 1617, Barbara Ruoser, for example, had given much the same response to this question. After the Devil had come to her a second time and fornicated with her, she promised, or rather desired, to be his, StAN, Hexenakten 48 (B. Ruoser), 14 December 1617 (p.m.).
57 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 16 October 1626 (p.m.).
58 StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory; fair copy), Questions 64 and 68. Both were variations on whether, why and how the defendant had harmed anyone, and who had helped her.
(providential as well as magical) and the interrogators found it expedient to exploit the suspect’s comprehension of this element of witchcraft in order to promote the flow of testimony. During the course of the next four days of her interrogation, therefore, from Saturday 17 to Wednesday 21 October, Bittelmayr was forced to confess to nine acts of harmful witchcraft.\(^{59}\)

On Friday 23 October, the interrogators had Bittelmayr ratify her confession and she affirmed that she was not able to relate any more about her malevolent acts.\(^{60}\) On 24 October the judges resumed the sequence of the interrogatory and began questioning her about her sacrilegious acts, the congregations of the witch sect and her spiritual state, the subjects of questions 35 to 62.\(^{61}\) These points were also covered during the following nine days of interrogation.\(^{62}\) Within this series of questions the witch commissioners concentrated on those about Bittelmayr’s fellow witches (questions 48–50).\(^{63}\) She spent seven days simply identifying twenty-nine people whom she had ‘seen’ at witch gatherings. Thereafter the witch commissioners briefly interrogated Bittelmayr on the remaining topics covered by their interrogatory, although they did so slightly out of sequence: the making of weather (9 November);\(^{64}\) the exhumation of children’s corpses (10 November);\(^{65}\) entry into other people’s cellars (12 November);\(^{66}\) and entry into stalls and bedchambers and disharmony between spouses (13 November).\(^{67}\) Finally, on 14 November, a Saturday, Bittelmayr was read a summary of her whole confession, questioned

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\(^{59}\) StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 17 and 19–21 October 1626.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 23 October 1626.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 24 October 1626.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 26–27 and 29–31 October, 2 and 5–7 November 1626.

\(^{63}\) StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), questions 48 to 50 asked about specific incidences which the witch commissioners believed would have occurred at each gathering of a witches’ convent. Question 48 concerned who served at the feast table; question 49 deals with accomplices generally; and question 50 asked about dancing partners. In a number of other questions a defendant was also asked who had helped or advised her.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., Question 73.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., Questions 67, 71 and 72.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., Question 74.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., Questions 69, 74 and 75, and 70 respectively. Stalls were not directly referred to in the questions of the interrogatory, although they were a consistent feature of the answers given by the suspects and the annotations made in the margins of the transcripts by the scribes. Entering into animal stalls was therefore probably implied in question 69.
on her new spiritual status\textsuperscript{68} and bound over to reflect on her crimes and punishment for the next three days (Monday 16 until Wednesday 18 November) as prescribed by the Carolina.\textsuperscript{69} On 20 November 1626, the sentence of death was executed on Margretha Bittelmayr.

\textit{Denunciations}

That the interrogators spent most of their time extracting the names of witch-accomplices in this and other interrogations confirms that they were more concerned with the spiritual aspect of the crime of witchcraft than with the malevolence which characterized the witches’ alleged treatment of their neighbours. Such lists were important to the witch commissioners’ crusade to eradicate the menace of the heresy of witchcraft from the prince-bishopric because they were the only means by which other witch-heretics could be brought to justice. The very secrecy and supernatural powers of the alleged sect members disguised the potential manifestations of false belief by which real heretics and followers of heathen cults gave themselves away: openly held beliefs, preaching and proselytising, and ascetic lifestyles.\textsuperscript{70} The paucity of accusations originating from within the community and the inability of witnesses to confirm acts of harmful witchcraft also served to obscure

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., Questions 77–79.  
\textsuperscript{69} Article 79 of the \textit{Constitutio criminalis Carolina}, Gänstaller, “Zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns”, p. 61. Gänstaller suggests that the Eichstätt interrogators consistently abused this provision, which also permitted visits from morally upstanding people and prohibited the consumption of too much strong drink by the condemned (so that they might not avoid the full experience of their punishment). It is difficult to assess the accuracy of her suggestion. The period given for reflection was not relevant to the interrogation process and consequently details of what happened to the suspect after she was sentenced were not recorded by the commissioners’ scribes. As most suspects had to wait to be executed with others whose interrogations were not concluded, most had more than three days in which to reflect on their lives.

\textsuperscript{70} To the Cathars and Waldensians in this respect, one might also add Lutherans who refused to accept the priests and liturgy imposed on them by non-resident Catholic overlords, as happened throughout the seventeenth century in Bergrheinfeld, Weiss, “Reformation und Gegenreformation in Bergrheinfeld”. There were also individuals like the miller Domenico Scandella who created their own unique cosmological world-views and cults like the \textit{benandanti} which subscribed to Christianized versions of pagan fertility rituals. In both cases they were unwilling to renounce their world-views despite the persistent attentions of the authorities, Carlo Ginzburg, \textit{The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller}, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (London: Penguin Books, 1992), and id., \textit{Ecstasies}.}
the alleged witches from the authorities in Eichstätt. Several sightings at the supposed nocturnal gatherings of the sect, the revelries in other people’s cellars or the exhumations of children’s corpses were therefore the only available indicia that an individual might be a witch.

The denunciation therefore lay at the heart of the witch persecutions in Eichstätt. Its importance to the witch commissioners is highlighted in their handling of the interrogation of Hans Stigeliz, master of the Spital. Whilst under interrogation in May 1628, Stigeliz became too ill to continue with the trial. His interrogators decided to dispense with normal judicial procedures and press Stigeliz to name further accomplices before executing him, by beheading, on the following day, 27 May, in the privacy of the town hall. During his final day of interrogation, Stigeliz denounced forty-one individuals as witches. In their haste to complete this section of Stigeliz’s confession before his death, the witch commissioners seem content to have extracted a mere list of names.

In contrast he had identified the first twenty-three accomplices over two days (23 and 25 May) giving the usual additional details: when and where he had seen them; what they were doing and wearing; and what form their demons had taken. When he was executed, Stigeliz had not finished confessing all the usual sins perpetrated since his conversion to the witch-heresy; entry into other people’s bedchambers, cellars and animal stalls, for example, and the making of destructive

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71 Capital punishment for witchcraft in Eichstätt was legally by burning, alive, in public. In practice, however, convicted witches tended to be executed by beheading, in public, to spare them the prolonged agony of execution by fire. It is not clear from Stigeliz’s file whether his body was burned in the usual place after he had received the less dramatic punishment in private.

72 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 26 May 1628.

73 He claimed, for example, to have seen Bürgermeister Rehel six times at the nocturnal gatherings of the witches. The first time, twenty years ago, he had arrived at the Linsenwiesen on a pitchfork. He wore black clothes with silver buttons in his waistcoat and a silver belt. His paramour wore a blue dress. The second time, eighteen years ago, he had seen Rehel at a dance on the Waschegger. He wore clothes decorated with open-work and his paramour appeared in the form of a handsome young woman. They went off to the side with one another. And so on for the remaining four sightings, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 23 May 1628. It should be noted that such detail only appears in the extant transcripts from 1621 when Walburga Knab stated that she had seen Barbara Ehrenfrid on Linsenwiesen the previous autumn. They had done everything together that everyone else had, they had eaten, drunk and enjoyed other luxuries and danced with the Devil, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (W. Knab), 9 August 1621 (p.m.). Before this date, accomplices were just listed by name, giving only cursory details (noting if they had already been executed, who their spouse or other close relative was, where they lived, etc.).
weather had not been covered during the course of the interrogation. Names were therefore of more importance to the interrogators than any other aspect of the witches’ confession narratives. To ensure that Stigeliz received the appropriate punishment for his heresy on earth, he had also been denied the three days for reflection and the confession of his other sins prescribed by the Carolina in preparation for his execution. His interrogators appear to have been certain, however, that he did not die in the sin of witchcraft, that he had been sufficiently reconciled to the Church and to God, and that he had received due punishment and absolution for his heresy on earth: they recorded that he died ‘Christlich’ (‘as a Christian’).  

The interrogators’ use of these extensive lists of accomplices contributed to the discrepancy between the gender ratios among those denounced during the trial process on the one hand and the proportions of men and women who were then arrested on the other. A suspect like Bittelmayr was brought to trial on the strength of an accumulation of denunciations, usually about a dozen or more, made by previously convicted or imprisoned witches. The interrogators did not, however, present individual witch-defendants with a predetermined list of possible accomplices drawn from previous sets of denunciations and then ask her to confirm or deny their presence at a sabbath; that is not how the final phase of witch persecution escalated in Eichstätt. If this had been the case one would expect to find a greater correspondence between the lists of accomplices produced by the witch-defendants with few additional, unprompted, denunciations in each case than has been possible in my research. Certainly one would expect in such circumstances that a higher proportion of the relatively small number of accomplices denounced by Bittelmayr (thirty) would have been identified by future, as well as previous, defendants leading to their arrests by the interrogators’ officers. Over 55% of her alleged accomplices, however, were never summoned before the commission. This statistic would seem to be about average for Eichstätt. Of the accomplices identified by Walburga Knab, of whom over 90% were female, about 58% were not arrested by the witch commission. The first of the surviving trial transcripts shows that about 45% of the eighty-two people named as accomplices by Barbara  

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74 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 27 May 1628. This is the only reference to a convicted witch’s spiritual state immediately before execution throughout the entire collection of Eichstätt Hexenakten. It suggests, I think, that the witch commissioners were perhaps uneasy at leaving an unfinished confession on record without comment.
Ruoser were not later arrested as witches, even though the persecution still had almost fourteen years to run. Rather than being guided by the witch commissioners to confirm existing denunciations, therefore, the suspect volunteered names, and that dynamic, once the persecutions became established in the principality, is the main reason why a higher number of women were arrested for the crime of witchcraft: the gender of the accused and the ties with which she was bound to various sections of the community.

**Denunciations—the role of the interrogators**

As Stigeliz’s case shows, however, the witch commissioners were able to manipulate the judicial processes to fit their own ends. They also ignored series of denunciations which had accumulated against certain individuals. A number of the local clergy were identified as accomplices by some of the witch-suspects, but they were not subsequently brought to trial. Among them, Christoff Otto von Muckenthal was accused of being an accomplice in five of the extant lists of denunciations, Herr Vogel in four, and Herrn Welcker and Albrecht Schintelbeck in three each. The names of another four clergymen each appear twice in the extant depositions. By themselves these figures do not seem to amount

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75 These are minimum percentages as not all of those denounced by Knab or Ruoser can be identified. It may be that among these unidentifiable persons, several others were not later arrested as witches. The slight increase in the proportion of named accomplices who were not indicted by the witch commission is to be expected as the suspect under interrogation had to cast her net wider in the search for accomplices among a declining pool of possibilities, and the interrogators could only process a few cases at any one time.

76 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 2 November 1626, (P. Porzin), 23 September 1627, and (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628; and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 10 October 1626, and (Part transcript—unidentified female), no date.

77 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (W. Knab), 11 August 1621, and (H. Stigeliz), 26 May 1628; and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 7 October 1626, and (V. Lanng), 18 August 1618.

78 Welcker was denounced as an accomplice in StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 2 November 1626, and (H. Stigeliz), 26 May 1628, and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 7 October 1626. Schintelbeck was denounced in StAN, Hexenakten 45 (P. Porzin), 24 September 1627, and (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628, and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 9 October 1626.

79 These were: the former parish dean Gerstner, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (W. Knab), 11 August 1621, and (H. Stigeliz), 26 May 1628; Barthlme Ging at the cathedral, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 31 October 1626, and (P. Porzin), 24 September 1627; Hans Vlaich Humpiß, the dean of the cathedral, StAN, Hexenakten 45
to much. One must remember, however, that for the majority of the witch interrogations in Eichstätt there remains no substantial record. The actual significance of these accumulated denunciations is best measured by seeing who else appears on the same lists, and how many times, and then looking at the transcript of their interrogation to find out how many denunciations were laid against them before their arrest. In the same set of denunciation lists which can be abstracted from the interrogation depositions, Margretha Bittelmayr’s name occurs just once; we know from the transcript of her interrogation, however, that twenty-one denunciations were laid against her. Peter Porzin was denounced by only two of the witch-suspects for whose trials substantial sources are extant, although he was actually named by fifteen previously convicted witches, and Christoph Lauterer who, like Bittelmayr, was arrested on the basis of twenty-one denunciations made by other defendants, was accused of being a witch in just three of the extant interrogations.

There is a strong possibility, therefore, that the clergymen whose names occur in the available material as witch-accomplices were denounced by many other witch-defendants in Eichstätt. The commissioners did not comment on why they ignored particular denunciations, but it is likely that it was the status of these clerics which protected them from prosecution as witches. Muckenthal’s name would suggest that he was a minor nobleman and therefore a member of the only social caste to remain untouched by the witch persecutions locally. Vogel was the vicar of the cathedral, and Hans Vlaich Humpiβ was its dean. Welcker would sometimes act as a ‘spy’ for the commissioners, reporting his conversations with the suspects in custody.

These clergymen were not the only potential suspects treated lightly by the witch commission. Several other individuals evaded arrest for
witchcraft despite being alive, residing under the prince-bishop’s jurisdiction and appearing twice or more on the extant lists of denunciations. Among them were three men, Hans Danner,\textsuperscript{84} Georg Schwarz,\textsuperscript{85} and Paul Gabler,\textsuperscript{86} and two women, Herr Barthlmé Ging’s cook Ursul\textsuperscript{87} and Frau Dr Baumgartner.\textsuperscript{88} It is not clear why Danner and Schwarz never came before the witch commissioners. They seem to have been residing in the town of Eichstätt when they were denounced, but they did not occupy positions of any ecclesiastical or political influence. Danner was a Lebzelter, a baker of the regional speciality gingerbread, and consequently a member of the craft group worst hit by the persecution from 1617 (see Appendix 2). Schwarz was a servant and a member of a profession barely touched by the witch commissioners. The two women, one of whom was also a servant, seem to have enjoyed the protection offered by men of authority. Ging was one of the clergymen denounced twice in the extant trial records but who escaped prosecution.\textsuperscript{89} Dr Baumgartner would sometimes sit in on sessions of the interrogations conducted by the witch commission; he may therefore have been able to establish himself in a social circle which included senior Eichstätt clergy and which perhaps protected his wife.\textsuperscript{90}

The case of Paul Gabler, however, offers the best demonstration of the witch commissioners’ selective approach to identifying and arresting the alleged accomplices. Gabler was the secretary to the Hofrat and therefore one of the most senior secular figures in Eichstätt. Whilst only two denunciations are to be found against him in the interrogation transcripts, three extant versions of a list of all the denunciations made against him show that Gabler was denounced by twenty-one suspects under interrogation, the same number as had denounced Margretha

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid., (P. Porzin), 23 September 1627, and (H. Stigeliz), 23 May 1628.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid., (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628, and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 9 October 1626.
\item \textsuperscript{86} StAN, Hexenakten 45 (P. Porzin), 24 September 1627, and (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid., (M. Bittelmayr), 31 October 1626, and (W. Knab), 11 August 1621.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid., (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628, and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (U. Funk), 17 October 1626.
\item \textsuperscript{89} This is not to suggest that being in the employ of someone less likely to be arrested for witchcraft was a guarantee of immunity for the employee. Maria, Herr von Biberbach’s cook, for example, was executed for witchcraft on 18 July 1623, BundesASt Frankfurt FSg.2/1-F 4 668 (Eichstätt A-K), frame 38.
\item \textsuperscript{90} See StAN, Hexenakten 45 (P. Porzin), 10 September 1627 (a.m.), for example, when he sat on the indictment of Porzin with the Landvogt, the chancellor, the Stadtrichter, Secretary Gabler, and Drs Kircher, Schwarzkonz and Kolb.
\end{footnotes}
Bittelmayr and Christoph Lauterer. Of these denunciations, one was made in 1622 and the remaining twenty between 1627 and 1630.\textsuperscript{91} It was precisely in these four years that men became more vulnerable to arrest as witches. Sixteen of the twenty-seven men executed for witchcraft after 1617 were prosecuted during this short period, and many of them came from politically-active families. Although the commissioners were taking an active interest in those men whose names kept coming up in the confessions, they decided to leave Gabler until later. Their decision was no doubt influenced by his status within the polity, and also perhaps because they knew him well—like Baumgartner he sat in on some sessions of the interrogations.\textsuperscript{92} Whilst there was still a pool of women and less influential men to draw defendants from, Gabler was safe from prosecution.

This is not to suggest that Westerstetten and his advisors were averse, theoretically, to prosecuting senior members of the secular hierarchy or the clergy. Whether or not the encounter actually happened, the point of the anecdote relating the alleged discussion between the prince and Joachim Meggelin about the number of denunciations required to secure a condemnation for witchcraft seems to have been that the ecclesiastical officials themselves were in danger of being caught up in the drive to eradicate the witch sect from the territory. At least one clergyman, Johann Reichard, the priest at the Spital in Eichstätt, was arrested on 6 September 1624 on a charge of witchcraft, although he refused to confess and died on 20 November 1644 whilst still under house arrest.\textsuperscript{93} Generally, however, the witch commissioners were reluctant to act against the households of men who wielded a significant amount of authority in the principality. Whilst status may well have afforded some protection to these men and their families, one might also conjecture that the interrogators were unable to conceive that the heresy of witchcraft might be widespread among themselves and their peers. It appears that the witch commissioners’ preconceived notions of what characteristics the stereotypical witch should possess enabled them to manipulate the interrogation process, perhaps unwittingly, to exclude

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\item[91] StAN, Hexenakten 43 (P. Gabler—denunciations), and StAN, Hexenakten 48 (P. Gabler—denunciations) and (P. Gabler—table of denunciations). The extant denunciations are to be found in StAN, Hexenakten 45 (P. Porzin), 24 September 1627, and (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628.
\item[92] Ibid., (P. Porzin), 10 September 1627 (a.m.).
\item[93] StAN, Hexenakten 47 (J. Reichard).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
certain, usually male, individuals from prosecution. An indirect consequence of the drive ‘from above’ to exterminate the heretical witch sect in the principality was an emphasis on the only physical attribute which dominated the ecclesiastical stereotype of the witch-figure, her embodiment as a woman. In part, therefore, both demonology and the processes of law determined that a greater proportion of women than men were to be found among the witch-suspects brought before the witch commissioners in Eichstätt.

Denunciations—the role of the witch-suspect

Whilst the processes of arrest and interrogation reveal that women were more frequently targeted by the witch commissioners in Eichstätt, and the gender of a potential witch-defendant played an important role in deciding his or her fate, they do not adequately explain why women, especially as the final wave of witch-hunting progressed, continued to name a much greater proportion of women than men among their alleged accomplices. Fear and reputation did not make particular women more likely accomplices in the minds of the suspects. With the exceptions of Magdalena Pößl and Anna Harding, whose case will be examined in chapters 5 and 6, there is no evidence that any of the women brought before the Eichstätt interrogators had a reputation for deploying witchcraft or associated skills in any context, whether to avenge themselves or aid their neighbours. Anna Widman of Berching and her maid Kunigunda Pronner were arrested on the basis of an accusation of malevolent witchcraft, but their cases were not part of the wider persecution and their names do not feature among the accomplices listed by the witches of the district of Eichstätt. Anna Ruhr is one of the few suspects who may have been denounced because she was feared as a witch. She claimed to stand before the commissioners on account of a false reputation for witchcraft;94 her interrogators did not, unfortunately, comment on this claim, and the denunciations laid against her, which may have included malicious gossip and rumour, no longer exist. As the wife of the court cobbler, Ruhr was, however, of the same social class as her denouncers which suggests that at least some of the denunciations were made against her because her witch-neighbours would have

94 StAN, Hexenakten 49 (A. Ruhr), 7 April 1620.
expected to have seen her at the communal gatherings on which they based their versions of the witches’ nocturnal sabbaths. In general, however, conflict, fear and reputation for cunning or witch powers were of minor or no importance in the dynamics of witch denunciation in Eichstätt.

Rather than assuming that witch-suspects might try to name accomplices with an existing reputation for witchcraft or magic or neighbours with whom they were not intimate, one should regard the lists of denunciations produced under interrogation as indicators of social cohesion. They reveal close and strong familial or professional relationships between the witch-suspects and the people whom they identified as fellow heretics. I do not want to equate the closeness and strength of relationships in early modern Eichstätt with a nostalgic image of rural or small-town harmony. One can find many examples of malicious gossip and enmity among neighbours throughout the trial transcripts, but they were not the primary causes of witch denunciation in Eichstätt. One cannot therefore argue, as Macfarlane has done, that these instances of discord characterized the society from which they were drawn; nor can one infer, in the manner of Walz, that localized tensions were played out as witchcraft episodes. Rather, the testimonies constructed by the witch-suspects reveal the complex relationships which each individual maintained with her neighbours on an unexceptional daily basis. They reveal a community bound by a series of personal, familial, household and professional interests and emotions. The variety of relationships which can be found in a witch’s confession, especially in the naming of her accomplices, contributed to the gender imbalance among the witch-defendants.

The section of the interrogation about the defendant’s heretical acts and accomplices presented an opportunity for her to construct plausible narratives which would appease the commissioners who tended to resort to torture when she appeared, through both the knowledge of her innocence and her incomprehension of her interrogators’ unfamiliar demonology, to be recalcitrant. The defendant was asked to discuss familiar rituals and events: baptism;95 sexual relations;96 worship and

95 Ibid., (Interrogatory, fair copy), Question 35.
96 Ibid., Questions 36 and 37 concerned further sexual relations with the Devil; and Question 52 asked about her infidelities with other witches.
blasphemy;\textsuperscript{97} communal meals;\textsuperscript{98} and dancing.\textsuperscript{99} The Eichstätt commissioners were, however, never able to elicit from the defendants who stood before them a description of the nocturnal gatherings which corresponded to contemporary pictorial and demonological representations of witches’ sabbaths, a frightful image of the world-turned-upside-down, of utter disorder, social, natural and spiritual, which took place at a location, often on the Blocksberg, far removed from the witch’s own home (Ill. 1). What they got instead were brief, mundane recollections and stories which had their origins in real experiences of Catholic rites, intimate encounters and public gatherings, and which were set on the hills and in the fields surrounding the town. In her prosaic account of the witches’ gatherings Bittelmayr claimed that they took place regularly, every three or six weeks on a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday, ‘at the Schießhütten, and on Schotenwiesen, Kugelberg and other places’.\textsuperscript{100} Of these locations, the Kugelberg still exists to the north of the town, just beyond the line of its former walls, and was farmed in the early modern period,\textsuperscript{101} and the Schießhütten is marked on contemporary images of the town (Ill. 2).\textsuperscript{102} Occasionally the gatherings took place much closer to home or had an obvious personal connection. Barbara Ruoser included the horse market in the town of Eichstätt among her gathering places;\textsuperscript{103} and Anna Widman of Berching went to the Geißbühl at Irlahüll (about half way between Berching and Eichstätt) where she had been born and brought up.\textsuperscript{104}

Once at the gathering there was all sorts of food to eat, and dancing, but the feasting and revelry were imagined by the witch-suspects as

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., Questions 42 and 43 addressed the issue of worship of the Devil; Questions 55 and 56 asked about blaspheming against God and the saints; and Questions 57 to 63 were designed to elucidate her attitude towards and abuses of the sacraments and practices of the Catholic church.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., Questions 45 to 48 asked about various aspects of feasting during the nocturnal sabbaths.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., Question 50.

\textsuperscript{100} StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 27 October 1626.

\textsuperscript{101} Jacob Rabel’s will shows that he intended to bequeath a field on the Kugelberg to his brother Georg, StAN, Hexenakten 48 (J. Rabel—will), f. 6r.

\textsuperscript{102} Other locations for the local witches’ gatherings included: the Linsenwiesen (which may have been an alternative name for the Schotenwiesen); Wascheggerten just to the south of the town of Eichstätt; Blumenberg to the west of the town on the opposite bank of the Altmühl to Willibaldsburg, the bishop’s principal residence; and Petersberg which is directly south of the Kugelberg.

\textsuperscript{103} StAN, Hexenakten 48 (B. Ruoser), 15 December 1617 (p.m.).

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., (A. Widman of Berching), 18 July 1618 (p.m.).
ordinary episodes of communal activity; they rarely inserted diabolical
details into their descriptions of them and then only when they were
asked direct questions about, for example, the presence of bread and
salt. Even with the help of these questions, the Eichstätt interrogators
were unable to diabolize the suspects’ testimonies by forcing them to
conjure up bacchanalic scenes. Margretha Bittelmayr could not remem-
ber, for example, whether bread and salt were present at the meals.¹⁰⁵
The commissioners also had to make do with a rather peripheral Devil
and insubstantial demons. The Devil appeared in Bittelmayr’s narra-
tive only to take her to and from the sabbath on a stick or a goat and,
once at the gathering, as the object of undescribed reverence.¹⁰⁶ The
demons appeared throughout her testimony merely as the companions
of her accomplices. Each description of a witch-accomplice would end
with the human form taken by that person’s paramour. For the first
accomplice named by Bittelmayr, for example, she stated only: ‘but
her [Penner’s] demon appeared in the form of a citizen’.¹⁰⁷ There is
nothing diabolical about this description. Egina Penner’s husband was
a councillor and Bittelmayr would therefore have often seen her in the
company of a male citizen.
Throughout Bittelmayr’s account of the sabbath rituals there are only
two suggestions of disorder. The first and most effective attempt to pro-
vide her interrogators with a glimpse of the supposed topsy-turvy world of
the nocturnal gatherings is to be found in her answer to the question,
recorded in the transcript, ‘Whether light was also available?’, an abstracted
part of question 48 of the interrogatory.¹⁰⁸ She replied: ‘Yes, torches.

¹⁰⁵ StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy), Question 46, includes the sub-
question: ‘. . . whether bread and salt were present . . .’. Bittelmayr’s answer reads:
‘Bread and salt she could not remember, . . .’, StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr),
27 October 1626.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., (M. Bittelmayr), 27 October 1626, ‘at any time reverence was shown to the
supreme Devil who always sat there’. Again this is a rather unimaginative response to
StAN, Hexenakten 49, (Interrogatory, fair copy), Question 44. An alternative answer
to this question was to state that one had to kiss the Devil on the backside, although
this was not at all common, Jonathan Durrant, “The Osculum Infame: Heresy, Secular
Culture and the Image of the Witches’ Sabbath”, in Karen Harvey (ed.), The Kiss in
¹⁰⁷ StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 29 October 1626. The demons of the
other people whom Bittelmayr identified as witches on this day had assumed the shapes
of a brewer, a fairly old woman, a young student, a squire and another citizen.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 27 October 1626; and StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Interrogatory, fair copy),
Question 48, ‘. . . whether and how they saw in the dark night; what kind of light was
present; and from where this, as everything else, was brought?’. 
Moreover, the Devil had stuck the lights in the backsides of the old wives...”.\(^{109}\) In the second example she claimed that ‘one danced before and after the meal, but no order was kept during it’.\(^{110}\) Compared with near-contemporary portrayals of peasant feasting in which the participants were depicted as drunkards, gluttons and fornicators, this statement of misrule seems unimaginative and innocuous (Ill. 3). It hints more at Bittelmayr’s tipsy journey to the wedding festivities at Weißenkirch than it evokes the lewd and lurid rites of the theologians’ fantasies. Bittelmayr’s conception of disorder seems to have differed somewhat from that of her interrogators. Where the latter meant an irrevocable breakdown of moral order and decorum, she imagined it as a temporary absence of social propriety which could easily be restored as soon as it was necessary. At this point one glimpses tensions between reforming clerics and ordinary folk about precisely what the bounds of moral behaviour might be.

Bittelmayr’s confused attempt on 27 October to make sense of the leading questions posed about the nocturnal congregations of the witch-heretics by her interrogators formed the narrative background to the thirty denunciations made by her on the seven subsequent days of interrogation. Having constructed her own ordinary mental image of a communal feast, Bittelmayr then populated it with the people whom she would have expected or wanted to see there. Her selection of accomplices was in no way arbitrary or malicious. She had performed the same imaginative process previously, both in her initial inconclusive tale of her entry into the sect and in the second accepted story of seduction by the Devil. In the first of these two narratives, the trip to the wedding in Weißenkirch, her travelling companions would appear to have been friends with whom she had often attended public events before they were tried and executed for witchcraft. All five women on the way to the wedding were of the same social milieu at the centre of political life in Eichstätt: Bittelmayr was the wife of the town scribe and a relative of the wife of Johann Christoph Abegg, the Bavarian chancellor,\(^{111}\) and the Bonschabin, the Richelin, the Apothekerin and the Stricker Bastelin were members of one or other of the senior political families in Eichstätt. It is not clear to which Bonschab the Bonschabin refers.

\(^{109}\) StAN, Hexenakten 45 (M. Bittelmayr), 27 October 1626.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 27 October 1626.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., title page and 15 October 1626, and Behringer, Hexenverfolgung in Bayern, p. 255. Abegg was the Bavarian chancellor from 1625 to 1644.
Anna, Kunigunda (by whom Bittelmayr was certainly denounced) and Barbara Bonschab had been executed before 1626; Ursula Bonschab was executed in 1627. The family was, however, prominent in Eichstätt society. Lorenz Bonschab, for example, had been a Bürgermeister (mayor) of Eichstätt on his arrest for witchcraft in 1627. The Richelin, Maria Richel (née Bonschab), was the wife of Bartholomäus Richel, the chancellor of the bishopric until 1623, when she was arrested for witchcraft in 1620. It is also not clear to which of three Apothekerins executed for witchcraft in Eichstätt Bittelmayr had made reference in her narrative. All had been executed before 1626. The most likely candidate would seem to have been the wife of the court butcher. The Stricker Bastelin, also known as the Fischerin, was Walburga Wölch, wife of the Fronfischer (fisheries’ supervisor), a council position. In the second tale of seduction Bittelmayr prefaced the deception by the Devil (committing fornication with her in the guise of her husband) with a brief history of her sexual encounters. Bittelmayr did not insinuate that the old woman Anna or her husband were culpable in her seduction into the vice of witchcraft. Her relations with them merely served as the narrative device through which she enabled herself to imagine and introduce the actual diabolical seduction. Both figures were, in effect, her equals: Anna was a fellow servant in the old Krämbsin’s household and also her bed-partner; Jacob was from the same professional-craft class as her family.

Bittelmayr was not the only suspect who named her closer associates as accomplices and grounded her narrative in real events which were not characterized by conflict. From the lists of accomplices which can be reconstructed for the period from 1617, it is clear that the gender of the witch-suspect under interrogation influenced the gender ratio among those whom they denounced as their fellow witches. The women in question invariably named significantly more women than men. The men also tended to denounce more women as their accomplices. With the exception of Georg Gutmann and an unknown male for whom

112 StAN, Hexenakten 48 (K. Bonschab) and BundesA ASt Frankfurt FSp.2/1-F 13 668 (Eichstätt A-K), frames 70–75.
113 Ibid., frame 73.
115 StAN, Hexenakten 48 (B. Apotheker).
116 BundesA ASt Frankfurt FSp.2/1-F 13 669 (Eichstätt L-Z), frames 173 and 188.
there are only substantial (rather than complete) data available, however, men identified a much greater proportion of their own sex than were indicted by the witch commissioners; in two cases, those of Peter Porzin and Hans Stigeliz, over 70% of those whom they denounced were male.

On Tuesday 23 May 1628, Hans Stigeliz named just one accomplice, Bürgermeister Rehel.\textsuperscript{118} The next day he added the brewer Georg Pitelmayr, the Lebzelter Hans Danner, Bürgermeister Moringer and the town scribe.\textsuperscript{119} This must have seemed a frustratingly slow rate of denunciation to the interrogators who had been used to witch-suspects like Georg Gutmann naming a dozen or more accomplices in one session from the early years of this last phase of persecution.\textsuperscript{120} The illness which led to the abrupt end of this trial may have been hindering Stigeliz’s progress at this point, although no reason for his lack of co-operation is given in the record. It is not possible to state the quality of Stigeliz’s relations with his alleged accomplices, but they were at least his social peers, members of politically-active families or skilled professions, and male. He did not look beyond the men of his social milieu for other possible witch-heretics. Only Rehel was later brought before the witch commission; he was executed on 4 December 1628.\textsuperscript{121} Pitelmayr, Moringer and the town scribe escaped arrest, but their wives were later suspected or condemned as witches.\textsuperscript{122} Hans Danner and his family seem to have remained untouched by the persecutions in Eichstätt.

On Thursday 25 May, the pace of Stigeliz’s denunciations quickened significantly and he named a further nineteen people as witches, but the social status of the alleged accomplices was not diminished.\textsuperscript{123} He began with Father Reichard, the Renteiverwalter (a bursar) and Paul Gabler. It was at this point, on the third day of questioning about his accomplices

\textsuperscript{118} StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 23 May 1628.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 24 May 1628.
\textsuperscript{120} StAN, Hexenakten 48 (G. Gutmann), 29 January 1618 (a.m.).
\textsuperscript{121} StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Selected relationes). Three copies of one group of relationes are to be found in this fascicle of documents. They include a relatio of information abstracted from the trial of Rehel.
\textsuperscript{122} There is a denunciatory compiled in respect of Frau Pitelmayr, StAN, Hexenakten 49 (Pitelmayr—denunciations). Documents relating to the interrogation of Eva Susanna Moringer (a maleficia, an inquisition, a will and the trial transcript) are scattered throughout StAN, Hexenakten 48. The wife of the town scribe was Margretha Bittelmayr. It is not currently possible to state whether Georg Pitelmayr and his wife were related to Jacob and Margretha Bittelmayr.
\textsuperscript{123} StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628.
and after identifying eight of them, that he finally named two women, Anna Schrad and the widow of Dr Baumgartner. Stigeliz only named one other female witch on this day, the Kammermeisterin, that is, the wife of the council treasurer or chamberlain. Of the remaining twelve men denounced on the Thursday by Stigeliz, three were clergymen (Muckenthal, Schintelbeck and Sebastian) and four held positions on the town council or were employed by it: Bürgermeister Lauterer, the Oberamtsknecht (senior council servant who was then Georg Spindler), a servant of the council named Georg and the town steward (Leonhard Pfälzer). The others were Balthasar Richter (possibly a smith), the judge of St. Walburga, the court saddler, Georg Silbereis and the master watchman at the court. Of these nineteen alleged accomplices, only Reichard and Lauterer attracted the direct attention of the authorities, and only because other denunciations were later laid against them. The important point here, however, is that Stigeliz, whose illness was now causing his interrogators grave concern, was continuing to name those who would have been close associates within his social circle. This observation is borne out further by the way in which some of these individuals were described by Stigeliz. He claimed that Balthasar Richter went to the nocturnal gatherings of the sect with Lauterer and that Leonhard Pfälzer attended them with the Renteiverwalter; he also claimed to have seen the court saddler there with Georg Silbereis. Stigeliz added a telling detail to his description of this last pair: they drank together at the Spital. Stigeliz had known them socially, offering them the hospitality of his place of work. One is reminded of Margretha Bittelmayr’s first attempt to construct a tale of diabolical seduction. In that tale, she too had been drinking with her heretical companions. Sharing drink, as well as food, also occurs in the testimony of Michael Hochenscholdt, which I will discuss in the next chapter, when he was describing the quality of his relations with his denouncers to the witch commissioners.

Even on the fourth day of interrogation about his alleged accomplices, the Friday, Stigeliz maintained the same frame of reference for his denunciations: men of or connected with the polity or the clergy in the town of Eichstätt. Twelve, or just over a quarter, of the forty-one

124 Cf. StAN, Hexenakten 47 (J. Reichard) and StAN, Hexenakten 49 (C. Lauterer).
125 StAN, Hexenakten 45 (H. Stigeliz), 25 May 1628.
126 Ibid., 25 May 1628.
127 Ibid., 26 May 1628.
denunciations made by Stigeliz on that day were laid against clergymen resident in the town. Most of the other eighteen men listed as witches on the Friday were members of respectable families, although only one, the *Oblaier* (administrator of church gifts), was identified by his position of authority.\(^{128}\) There were, however, two deviations from the patterns of denunciation found on the previous three days. First, Stigeliz included people from outside of Eichstätt: Dollinger and his wife, who were residents of Kipfenberg, and the innkeeper in Pfünz.\(^{129}\) Second, the proportion of women among his alleged accomplices increased marginally. The first of these two changes was slight and probably only arose because Stigeliz was casting around for names. The second is more interesting. The statistical data could be used to suggest that, under increased pressure to complete this section of the interrogation in time for the dying Stigeliz to receive due punishment, he was reverting to a popular stereotype of a witch. Such a reading is not, however, borne out by the other details given for the eleven women denounced during this session. Five women were identified only by the names of their husbands and Walburga Aunbockh’s spouse, the tanner Hans, was included as part of Stigeliz’s description of her. Traditionally, tanners, because of the materials and smell associated with their occupation, were considered less honourable than their peers (although the job itself was highly skilled) and the status of Dollinger’s wife is not known. The remaining four of these women had, however, married into households of the respectable ‘middling sort’. One was a widow and therefore the only woman of this group to possess another characteristic of the stereotypical witch in addition to her sex; none of the others were, for example, also described as ‘old’.

The five other women were described by their own or their husband’s occupations: the Bürgerknechtin (possibly the wife of Georg who had been denounced on the Thursday), the Kürschnerin (furrier’s wife), the Old Hofschneiderin (court tailor’s wife), the Griesbaderin (owner of or employee at the Griesbad in Eichstätt) and the ‘Löschen Böckhin’ (the wife of a baker). These names were derived from crafts or professions which were generally regarded as respectable, although bathhouse owners and employees sometimes found themselves vulnerable to legal

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\(^{128}\) Stigeliz also gave the *Oblaier’s* previous public position, that of *Hausmeister* (it is not clear what responsibilities the *Hausmeister* held in Eichstätt), ibid., 26 May 1628.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 26 May 1628.
and social censure in moral panics. Only one of these five alleged accomplices was described as ‘old’, although this might have been more to distinguish her from the wife of the present court tailor than a description of her age. It would seem therefore that Stigeliz denounced female witches on the same basis as he denounced male ones. For the most part, they were associated with men of his social milieu and were consequently individuals whom he was most likely to remember under extreme psychological and physical pressure, compounded in this particular case by the pain of a terminal illness. As this pressure increased, Stigeliz became less restrained in making his denunciations and as he did so a greater proportion of women were included among the alleged accomplices.

The patterns of denunciation discerned in Stigeliz’s case can be identified in much longer lists of accomplices, like that provided by Valtin Lanng who named over 200 members of the witch sect. When he first began naming accomplices on the afternoon of 9 May 1618, he focused on his neighbours in the centre of the town of Eichstätt where the more affluent inhabitants lived. Of the first twenty-three accomplices, three lived near ecclesiastical buildings in this part of the town, three resided in Pfalergasse and two lived in Schlaggsasse, streets close to the market-place. A further three lived in the Western Quarter, a short walk from the market square, and one woman lived in the area by the Spitalbrücke, again not far from the centre of the town. Only two of these first accomplices cannot be placed definitely in this area, the Eichbaderin and a woman whose name cannot be read. Two and a half months later Lanng was still naming accomplices and the patterns remain identifiable. Thus, when he was coming towards the end of the penultimate session of interrogation about his accomplices on the morning of 23 August 1618, one finds him citing three widows, followed by the daughter of the last of these, and then another widow. At the end of his last session denouncing his fellow witches, Lanng named the Old Schmidin by the Buchtautor, then her daughter and a daughter-in-


131 StAN, Hexenakten 48 (V. Lanng), 9 May 1618 (p.m.). The Eichbaderin had been ‘deported’ according to Lanng’s testimony, but the reason for this is not given.

132 Ibid., 23 August 1618 (a.m.).
law, followed by the *Schachtelmacher* (a maker of shafts for weapons) and his wife, then the carter Georg’s wife (who lived in Buchtal, the same quarter of the town as the Old Schmidin and her daughter), followed by another carter’s wife who lived by the Blatterhaus, as did the penultimate accomplice, the wife of the *Gemeindestadtforster* (communal town forester). In this part of his list familial, occupational and residential patterns of association were mixed.

As in the lists of accomplices provided by Stigeliz, the patterns of association which informed Lanng’s denunciations were a product of the suspect’s knowledge rather than of prompting by the interrogators. Lanng was not encouraged to name people street-by-street as the Bamberg interrogators were to force Johannes Junius. These personal associations did not reflect one’s negative relationships with individuals who possessed some or all of the characteristics of the stereotypical witch. Lanng did not, for example, name a succession of widows until two and a half months after he had begun listing his accomplices, nor did he begin with possible suspects from the poorer suburbs of Eichstätt, such as the Buchtal and the area around the Blatterhaus. Instead, these lists reveal a suspect’s positive friendly, political or professional ties with his or her neighbours and, less often, family. Only when these associations were nearly exhausted did the defendant search further afield, if they did not stop completely at this point. Even then, however, the names of the accomplices were linked by associations based on marital status, familial connection, neighbourhood and profession, rather than being either overtly malicious or entirely random.

I have deliberately chosen the cases of two male witches to illustrate the point that suspects did not denounce as their accomplices people who had a reputation as witches or cunning folk or who fitted a preconceived cultural stereotype, even archetype, of a witch. Historians are used to conceiving of the witch as a woman, believing that this connection was inherent in a Continental-wide popular view of the witch-figure, and have tended to regard the minority of male witches, at least when they appear in the central regions of Europe, as an aberration to be explained away by showing that they were related to known witches.

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133 Ibid., 29 August 1618 (p.m.).
134 When the Eichstätt interrogators did ask about accomplices from specific locations, the scribe seems to have included the additional question in his transcript, for example, when Barbara Haubner was asked about witches in the town of Eichstätt, StAN, Hexenakten 48 (B. Haubner), 30 January 1618 (p.m.).
or by suggesting that they were the victims of some local power struggle. Both Hans Stigeliz and Valtin Lanng were, however, caught up in the persecutions in Eichstätt in the same way as Margretha Bittelmayr and their female neighbours. They had not been formally accused of witchcraft by their alleged victims; denunciations had accumulated against them and the witch commissioners decided to act on this evidence. Lanng and Stigeliz were then forced to name names. If they had been drawing on historically pervasive popular images of the witch one would expect the gender element of the witch-figure to be prominent, alongside old age, penury, widowhood and ugliness, in the attributes of the accomplices whom they denounced. Stigeliz did not, however, pick on vulnerable marginal figures when listing his accomplices, and those in Lanng’s list come towards its end. They looked instead to their networks of relatives, colleagues and other close associates for potential suspects. They did so because the questions posed by the interrogators included references to weddings, feasting, dancing, baptism and regular church attendance. The diabolical elements aside, the witch-defendants were being asked to conceive of their crime in terms of activities which were communal and therefore comprehensible to them. No wonder many witch-suspects located the witches’ sabbaths at weddings or other places where people might gather such as the shooting grounds. No wonder too that they peopled that other-world with their neighbours in this.

**The social status of the witch**

The analysis of the denunciations made by the Eichstätt witches also highlights a secondary effect of the naming process. The prevalence of citizens and their household members among the alleged witches cast suspicion on a particular class of people in the capital. It has been possible to identify, for the period 1618–31, the occupations or council positions of 100 of the urban suspects or their close relatives (husbands, fathers or fathers-in-law). As Appendix 2 shows, the households of bakers were worst affected by the persecution. There were, however, 139 bakers named in the baptismal, marriage and death registers for the town of Eichstätt between 1589 and 1618. As a craft practised by a large number of men in a small town, one might expect their households to have produced an equally significant number of witches during a persecution. The same may be observed of the brewers, butchers, innkeepers, cloggers, smiths and tailors, all of which were among the
larger occupational groupings in the town. Together these craftsmen dominated local secular politics. Many of the smaller occupational groups affected by the persecution were also of relatively high status and had similar access to authority in the capital: traders, apothecaries, carters, fishermen, millers and so on.

The most interesting statistic in this appendix, however, is that for the clothworkers. Although this was the largest professional grouping in the town, to which one should also add weavers and dyers (at least another sixty-one men in addition to the 183 noted in the appendix), only one clothworking household was affected by the witch trials. These men were not prominent among the secular political elite of the town, nor were the bathhouse owners (of whom there were twenty-nine in the period up to 1618) or the day-labourers (twenty-eight described as such between 1589 and 1618), none of whose households seem to have provided a witch-suspect. Other less honourable professionals were also excluded, among them the executioners and the soldiers at the bishop’s residence. The dynamics of interrogation meant that many lower-class occupations were not represented among the witch-suspects.

There are also higher-status crafts missing from the data. Apart from the clergy (with the exception of Johann Reichard), no witches were members of households headed by, for example, builders, glassmakers, goldsmiths, potters, hunters, musicians, carpenters or stonemasons. This is not to say, however, that their relatives were not arrested as witches. Maria Mayr, for example, was the daughter of the glassmaker

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135 Buchner recorded fourteen dyers, sixteen flax-weavers, a finecloth-weaver, a silk-weaver, a knitter and twenty-nine weavers, Buchner, “Eichstätter Familienbuch”, pp. 11, 18, 23, 26, 28 and 30. One could also add a number of craftsmen, apart from the tailors, who made the resulting cloth into other products, for example, the Gollermacher (makers of collars and similar items).

136 Ibid., pp. 7 and 28.


138 Buchner recorded thirteen glassmakers, thirteen goldsmiths, twenty-two potters, seventeen hunters, thirty-two musicians, thirty-two carpenters and thirty-four stonemasons or related craftsmen, Buchner, “Eichstätter Familienbuch”, pp. 13–14, 16, 20–1, 25 and 27–8. None of these seems therefore to have been a minor profession in the town of Eichstätt.
Thoma Nagelmayr. It seems, however, that the relationships between these craft households and those of bakers, for example, were not sufficiently strengthened through marriage and godparentage to provide suitable candidates as witch-suspects. Given that there were very few accusations from self-identified victims of witchcraft and that the interrogations were carried out by ecclesiastics who had little or nothing to do with their secular peers in other contexts (which rules out faction as an explanation for the omission of certain crafts), the concentration on a few professions would seem to have resulted solely from the naming process imposed on the suspect during her interrogation.

Conclusion

The first witch-suspects to be arrested in the final phase of persecution from 1617 were women. It is not now possible to suggest how they came to be suspected of witchcraft, but these early suspects named close associates among their accomplices. It seems that because female witch-suspects maintained more intimate relationships with their female neighbours, they denounced more women than men as fellow heretics. It also seems to be the case that the persecution from 1617 affected mainly craft or professional households because of the same naming process. Those witch-defendants who did include a greater proportion of women than men among their accomplices may have instinctively equated witchcraft with women, but they still chose these individuals from their social circles. Of the 163 identifiable accomplices denounced by the cobbler Valtin Lanng (he named 237 in total), most of the 140 women were drawn from craft households.

If the trials during Westerstetten’s reign began among women and escalated because women tended to denounce women, the failure of his witch commissioners to follow the logic of their own procedures exaggerated the proportion of women among those arrested for the crime of witchcraft. Denunciations sufficient in number to lead to the arrest of a woman were laid against certain men, notably clergymen, but were not acted upon. It is likely that the interrogators could not easily imagine men as witches. They were also not abstract, faceless embodiments of faith. They created friendships based on personality which

139 StAN, Hexenakten 48 (M. Mayr—inquisition), Article 1.
140 Ibid., (V. Lanng).
transcended their vocational duties and they must therefore have been sufficiently intimate with their peers to know that they could not have been witches, and that a witch could be lying when she denounced them. Whilst these friendships cannot be reconstructed for the clergy in Eichstätt, their lay contemporaries left commentaries on their relationships, including friendships, with their neighbours in their answers to the interrogators’ questions. These commentaries are the subject of the following chapter.