Analyses of early modern narratives have often disregarded such works as diaries and court testimonies. My study fills this gap by analyzing the narrative structure of two women’s encounters with the Foreign in seventeenth-century Germany. The first text, a diary written by Clara Staiger, is a detailed account of her experiences with Swedish soldiers during the Thirty Years’ War. The second text is an official testimony of Maria Braun and her encounter with the devil. By using Labov and Waletzky’s model (1967), I demonstrate the structural similarities of these two narratives. Thus, analyzing these two texts not only provides insight into extraordinary experiences of women encountering the enemy, it also advances our general understanding of narrative structures.

Traditional analyses of early modern literature have frequently overlooked writings by underprivileged women authors as well as writings from such non-traditional sources as diaries and court testimonies. Two seventeenth-century women’s narratives, a nun’s diary and a girl’s testimony on witchcraft, provide the focal point here for investigating foreign encounters as well as analyzing the
general structure of narratives from these under-researched perspectives. The foreign elements in both narratives signify the two women’s enemies, both in the outward appearance of soldiers and witches and in a deeper, more underlying form that threatens their very existence. Even though each woman reacts differently to her encounter with the foreign enemy, both narratives exhibit similarities in structure. Using the framework for analyzing narratives first proposed by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, I demonstrate that these two early modern texts have the same basic underlying structure as modern literary and oral narratives. Application of this framework to the two texts shows that the basic narrative structure presented here effectively explains both texts in their entirety and specific episodes within each text.

In the early modern period, women fulfilled specific functions in society. According to Rublack, the social order allowed for women to be unmarried daughters, married women, or cloistered nuns. Society generally disapproved of independent women, i.e., those not associated with a husband or father. For example, widows were accused of witchcraft more often than married women, because they did not typify the normal role of women in early modern society. The primary function of women in the early modern period was to bear children and to manage the household. These activities excluded most women from obtaining a higher level of education at a university and from participating in many activities outside of the home. In this male-dominated society, women also did not have the same rights as men. For instance, their political activities were limited to petitions and demonstrations only. In many ways, male-

---


5 Wunder, see note 4, p. 221.

6 Wunder, see note 4, p. 12.

7 Wunder, see note 4, p. 221.

8 Wunder, see note 4, p. 223.