

Witches and Imagination in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Europe

Masatake Kurokawa

1. Introduction

It is safe to say that witches were typical of social deviants in the late Middle Ages and early modern Europe, because their depictions consisted of various actual types of deviants, such as the prostitute, the aged, the poor, and the heretic. The perception of witches, however, differed from that of other types of deviants. While the prostitute, the poor, and the heretic are the real beings who can be seen with naked eyes and felt by hands, witches were both the real *and* imaginary beings. From today's point of view, the witches' sabbath in which worship of the Devil, trampling of the cross, sexual orgies, and cannibalism occurred is entirely imaginary. In those days, however, many people considered it to be real, fewer considered it imaginary.

When we try to understand and interpret witches in the late Middle Ages and early modern Europe, the problem of reality/imagination is very important. It is clearly reflected in the criticism by R. Muchembled against C. Ginzburg. Ginzburg insists that *Benandanti* of Friuli in Northern Italy in the 16th century is the remnant of folk beliefs, and that the night battles of *Benandanti* were considered real by people at that time.¹ However, Muchembled says, "...like Carlo Ginzburg, they postulate the existence of a ritual based on a highly composite mythical structure inferred from various descriptions of the sabbath ...[its] procedure is the most subtle, but is methodologically flawed, depending as it does on arbitrary associations, with no reference to chronology or, above all, to the social structure of the groups who are supposed to preserve this ritual in the myths of which they inform the judges."²

It seems that his criticism originates from the view that he regards witches' various activities, such as the sabbath and flying into the air, as imaginary, but this view is not adequate because it does not take the real/imaginary conceptions of that era into consideration.

The real/imaginary problem played an important role in witch beliefs when witches were accused. If witches had really done various malevolent activities, their executions would be justified, but if not, their executions would be avoided. It should be noted that imagination in those days was not a modern concept of the Romantic imagination,³ but was related to black bile in the Hippocratic-Galenic humoral pathology. According to this pathology, imagination is melancholic, a condition caused by an excess of black bile.

Although the real/imaginary problem in witch beliefs is important for witchcraft studies, little

¹ C. Ginzburg, *I benandanti: stregoneria e culti agrari tra cinquecento e seicento*, Giulio Einaudi, 1966.

² R. Muchembled, "Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality", in B. Ankarloo & G. Henningsen, ed., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, Clarendon Press, 1990, p.141.

³ W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, Harrassowitz, 1991, p.181.

attention has been given to it, and few studies have been made so far on the relationship between witches and humor of melancholy.⁴

This study aims to investigate the relationship between witches as social deviants, imagination, and melancholy, comparing several representative demonological discourses of the late Middle Ages and the early modern eras, namely, Henry Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), Johann Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563), and Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580).

2. The problem of imagination in witch beliefs in the late Middle Ages: *Malleus Maleficarum*

The age of the “witch-craze”⁵ dated from the second half of the 16th century, but the witch-hunts themselves began already in the 15th century. Particularly, “the period from 1435-1500 . . . foreshadowed the mass hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”⁶ But the two eras of witch-hunts have different characteristics. The early modern witch-hunts are characterized by their large-scale nature, the overwhelming accusing of women, and the importance of the sabbath.⁷ N. Cohn says that mass witch-hunts “occurred only where and when the authorities had become convinced of the reality of the sabbat and of nocturnal flights to the sabbat.”⁸ The late Middle Ages witch-hunts were characterized by their small-scale nature and the accusing of many men closely linked to the heretics.⁹ Needless to say, the concept of the sabbath had existed and occupied an important position in witch-beliefs in the 15th century.¹⁰ However, the way of treating the problem of relationship between witches’ various activities, such as the sabbath and imagination is different in the two eras.

We will begin by considering the descriptions in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*) in order to understand the relationship between witches and imagination in the late Middle Ages. The *Malleus*, authored by the Dominicans, Henry Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, was published in 1486. As is generally known, it is an infamous manual that explains the reality, increase, and character of witches and their proceedings. According to recent research, Institoris played a more important role than Sprenger in completing the work, but Sprenger’s prestige of his

⁴ The following work is exceptional. See the articles about witches in C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003. However, they treat the relationship between the witch and the melancholy using visual images.

⁵ H. R. Trevor-Roper, “The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation & Social Change*, Second Edition, Macmillan, 1972, p.90.

⁶ B. P. Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, Longman, 1987, p.171.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.35-36; C. Zika, “The Devil’s Hoodwink: Seeing and Believing in the world of Sixteenth-Century Witchcraft”, in C. Zika, ed., *No Gods except for Me: Orthodoxy and religious Practice in Europe 1200-1600*, The University of Melbourne, 1991, p.192, n39.

⁸ N. Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons: the Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, Revised Edition, Pimlico, 1993, p.231.

⁹ Levack, *op.cit.*, pp.124-125.

¹⁰ M. D. Bailey, “The Medieval Concept of the Witches’ Sabbath”, *Exemplaria*, Vol.8, 1996, pp.419-439.

name as an outstanding scholar of theology and the “apostle of the Rosary” might have been needed to lend an authority to the *Malleus*. As H. P. Broedel says, “because the *Malleus* throughout reflects Institoris’ known preoccupations, it is likely that beyond lending the work the prestige of his name, Sprenger’s contribution was minimal.”¹¹ But a close analysis of the authorship is not necessary for the purpose of our study. Only the content treated by the *Malleus* is important.

The *Malleus* did not regard witches’ various activities as imaginary but considered them as real. For example, concerning the copulation of the witch and the demon, the *Malleus* says,

in the present day, the deeds and words of sorceresses who really and truly [verè & realiter] carry out such acts give testimony to the contrary. Therefore, we make the following three statements. First, such demons practice the most revolting sexual acts . . . Second, through such an act women can conceive perfectly . . . Third, in the begetting of such offspring, only the aspect of movement in location is ascribed to the demons . . .¹²

“Such acts” refer to the copulation of the witch and the demon. The *Malleus* considers it *verè & realiter*. There are other examples too, such as cannibalism.

Some sorceresses devour and consume babies, it is the Inquisitor of Como mentioned above who reported to us. It was for this very reason that he was summoned by the inhabitants of the county of Bermio to conduct an inquisition. For when a certain man had lost a child from its crib, he went in search of it, and when he saw a gathering of women at night time, he observed that the baby was being killed and eaten while liquor was being consumed.¹³

“The Inquisitor of Como” is a Dominican friar, Laurentius of St. Agata, who worked as the inquisitor in a broad area in northern Italy from 1483 to 1510.¹⁴ “A gathering of women at night time”, namely, the sabbath, and the killing and eating of babies are considered as real. The *Malleus* says that this report was confirmed by John Nider in his *Ant Hill* (1435-38), and it goes on to say, “the memory of him and his writings is certainly fresh, and because of them such occurrences are not unbelievable [non incredibilia], as they seem.”¹⁵

How is then the problem of imagination treated? This problem’s treatment is shown through the witches’ transportation through the air. While it seems that the *Malleus* basically considered such flights to be real, it considered them to be imaginary as well. But we must consider the era’s understanding of imagination. First, let us consider the flights as reality. The *Malleus* considered

¹¹ H. P. Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief*, Palgrave, 2003, pp.18-19.

¹² C. S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009, p.132 (73). Although Mackay uses “sorceress” and not “witch” as the word in the translation, in this paper the word “witch” is used. Concerning Mackay’s use, see, in particular, *ibid.*, p.58. The content in the square brackets in the quotation means original Latin. The Latin edition is cited from the 1580 edition in possession of the Cornell University. The page numbers in Latin are cited parenthetically after Mackay’s page numbers. We can read it on the website. See http://digital.library.cornell.edu/w/witch/browse_title_m.html. My access date is 2009/12/02.

¹³ Mackay, *op.cit.*, pp.211-212 (165-166).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.211, note 439.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.212 (166).

them as one of the witches' important activities, as it says "since being transported bodily from place to place is one of their principal actions (as is engaging in filthy carnal acts with incubus demons)."¹⁶ It also cites *Canon Episcopi* (ca. 906) which is famous in the history of witchcraft, and argues against the *Canon*. The *Canon* says that certain women "believe and proclaim that during the nighttime hours, they ride on certain wild animals with Diana . . . pass over great stretches of land during the silence of the dead of night, obeying her in all things as their mistress," and that these things are "altogether false [omninò falsa]," and "such fantastical images [talìa fantasmata] are inflicted on the minds of the faithful not by a divine but an evil spirit."¹⁷ The *Malleus* refutes this view as the "heretical," and says that because of such a view, "for many years now the sorceresses have remained unpunished . . . their numbers have grown so enormously that it is now impossible to root them out."¹⁸

Turning now to the problem of imagination, the *Malleus* gives an example, the testimony of a young woman who was a witch but was converted in the town of Breisach in the diocese of Basel. Her aunt was a witch too, and had been burned to ashes in the diocese of Strasburg. The young woman confessed that she had been transported frequently with her aunt at night from Strasburg to Cologne. The *Malleus* says,

It is this woman who gave rise to our promise in Question One to explain whether sorceresses really are moved in body from place to place by demons [verè & corporaliter à Dæmonibus transferantur] . . . When she was asked whether they went about like this only in the imagination and fantasy [imaginariè & fantasticè], being deluded by the demons, she answered that they did so both ways. This is in fact the case . . . in connection with the method of being transported in location.¹⁹

What the passages make clear is that the transportations of witches were thought to take place both in real [verè & corporaliter] and imaginarily [imaginariè & fantasticè]. But we must note here that the *Malleus* doesn't investigate the cause of this imagination in detail. Indeed, in the *Malleus*, the relationships between imagination (melancholy), demons, and humors are treated at several instances in the book, but the relationship between the witch and melancholy is not treated at all. This is very different from the views of the demonologists after the second half of 16th century.

The *Malleus* says that demons can move the internal spirits and humors [humores] of the human, "so that the images stored in the places of preservation are brought forth from the storehouses to the origins of perception, that is, to the virtues of imagination and fantasy [Imaginatium & Fantasticam], so that this person can imagine certain things."²⁰ This explanation

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.293 (256).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.293 (256).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.294 (257). On the understanding of the *Malleus* about the *Canon*, see furthermore, for example, *ibid.*, pp.93[27].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.284 (246). See also, *ibid.*, pp.300-301(265-266).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.178 (127).

about humors and imagination suggests that although melancholy and black bile are involved, they are not directly identified. Instead of melancholy, the *Malleus* attributes this phenomenon to the frenzy and mania. According to the *Malleus*, demons can bring forth images that are not in front of the eyes by working on the head (brain). Those who are thus infected by demons are “frenetic and other maniacs [freneticis, & alijs maniacis].”²¹ The claim that demons work on the brain and bring forth imagination was used to explain the imagination produced by melancholy in the second half of the 16th century. However, it seems that the *Malleus* didn’t connect witches, imagination, melancholy, and demons with one another.

The *Malleus* treats them separately. It recognizes that melancholy is related to demons and says that demons can strongly torment a human who is already suffering melancholy [παβιῶε Melancholica].²² In this case, however, “the human” is not a witch. The *Malleus* says that the person born from the copulation of the demon and the woman has “an excellent temperament [complexionem optimam] for effects proportionate to him,” and demons know this.²³ But melancholy is not mentioned. According to the *Malleus*, there are five ways in which demons can perpetrate an illusion on someone, and the fifth way concerns with imagination and humors. “The fifth way is to work on the faculty of imagination [imaginatiuam potentiam] and bring about a transformation of the perceptible pictures by stirring up the humors [per commotionem humorum].”²⁴ Undoubtedly, this explanation implies the existence of a relationship among the demon, imagination, and black bile (melancholy), but it does not specify which humor it means. We may extrapolate that the relationship’s reference to melancholy from the statement that “the black bile is the bath of the devil,” was a famous assertion by the theologian Origenes (ca.185-254),²⁵ also a prevalent concept in the Middle Ages. The *Malleus* seems uninterested in humoral pathology, but the judgment is not correct. The *Malleus* refers to melancholy frequently, as we have seen, and considers humoral pathology as follows:

It is clear that varying disposition of the body greatly contributes to the variation of the desires and character of the soul. For the most part, the soul very much imitates the temperaments [complexiones] of the body . . . and for this reason, the choleric [Cholerici] are prone to anger, the sanguine [Sanguinei] are generous, the melancholic [Melancholici] are envious and the phlegmatic [Flegmatici] are indolent.²⁶

The Latin words “complexion,” “sanguineus,” “cholericus,” “melancholicus,” and “f(ph)legmaticus” relate to humoral pathology, demonstrating its consideration by the *Malleus*. But we should note that the *Malleus* seems to have subdued it, as it continues, “This is not necessarily so, however. For

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.335-336 (305).

²² *Ibid.*, p.157 (104). Mackay translates *paβiῶe* into *treatment*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.309 (275).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.198-199 (151).

²⁵ J. Starobinsky, “L’Encre de la mélancholie”, *La Nouvelle revue française*, 11, 1963, p.412.

²⁶ Mackay, *op. cit.*, pp.143(86).

the soul is the master of its body, especially when it is helped by Grace.”²⁷ The *Malleus* also asserts that “many choleric people are mild and melancholic ones, generous [Melācholuos benignos].”²⁸ Here, we note that humoral pathology isn’t regarded as a serious problem, and melancholy is highly evaluated.

It follows from what has been said that the problems of witch, imagination, humoral pathology, and melancholy are not closely related in the *Malleus*. In other words, witches have no relationship with melancholy.

3. Witches and Imagination in the second half of the 16th century: Weyer and Bodin

Witch-hunts began violently in the second half of the 16th century, although they had stagnated in the first half. There are two causes of this stagnation. First, the Reformation focused the people’s attention on the reformation itself in the first half of the century, distracting them from their concern about witches. Second, the Neoplatonists such as Agrippa von Nettesheim criticized witch-hunts.²⁹ These criticisms were based on the Neoplatonic magical beliefs that man himself could perform magic by exploiting natural forces in the universe.³⁰ According to Neoplatonism, magicians were not exploited by demons, as were witches. But the influence of this criticism did not continue into the second half of the 16th century.

After a half-century of stagnation, Weyer’s *De praestigiis daemonum (On the Deceptions of Demons)*, published in 1563, rekindled the controversy about witches. Weyer opposed witch-hunts, and his criticism was based on the theory of the relationship between witches and melancholy. The argument against Weyer came from Bodin, who in addition to being famous for originating the concept of modern sovereignty enthusiastically supported witch-hunts. He criticized Weyer vehemently in *De la démonomanie des sorciers (On the Demonomania of Witches)* (1580), and proposed a unique theory about melancholy. Weyer and Bodin differ in their methods of treating the problem of witches and melancholy.

(1) The case of Weyer

Weyer was a physician and had studied in Paris and later in Orleans, where he completed his doctorate in 1537. He had worked as the court physician of Duke William V of Cleve, Jülich, and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.143(86).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.143(86).

²⁹ Levack, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55, 171-172. P. Burke, “Witchcraft and Magic in Renaissance Italy: Gianfrancesco Pico and His *Strix*”, in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, Routledge & L. Paul, 1977, p.40; F. Max, “Les premières controverses sur la réalité du sabbat dans l’Italie du XVI^e siècle: Samuel de Cassini et Vincente Dodo (1505-1507), Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio et Bartolomeo Spina (1520-1525)”, dans N. Jacques-Chaquin & M. Préaud, *Le Sabbat des sorcières XV^e-XVIII^e siècles*, Jérôme Millon, 1993, pp.40-41, 51, 55-56, 58, 61.

³⁰ Levack, *op.cit.*, p.54.

Berg since 1550.³¹ He expressed his view from the perspective of a physician. His self-confidence as a student of medicine at the university was evident. His assessment of melancholy was based on the orthodox medicine of the day, that is, the Hippocratic-Galenic humoral pathology.

According to Weyer, the witch, “by virtue of a deceptive or imaginary [abusive ou imaginaire] pact that she has entered into with the demon, supposedly perpetrates all kinds of evil-doing.”³² Although the pact between the witch and the demon was very important to the concept and supported the reality of witchcraft, Weyer regarded it as deception or imagination. He attached much more importance to imagination than to deception as he explained the problems of imagination in detail. The importance of imagination is indicated frequently in some chapters: “The distorted imagination of melancholics” (Bk.3, Ch.7), “Concerning the imagination and how it is impaired” (Bk.3, Ch.8), “How the Devil corrupts the imagination of men and seems to prophesy: the views of Augustine” (Bk.3, Ch.9), and “Concerning the imaginary transformation of men into beasts” (Bk.3, Ch.10). As indicated by the title of Bk.3, Ch.7, imagination closely relates to melancholy, and the understanding of the relationship between them is most important in Weyer’s opinion. Weyer wanted to show that witches’ various activities, including the sabbath, were not real but imaginary and were caused by melancholy. Demons used the witches’ melancholy to make them imagine unreal things. Weyer defined witches as follows:

Since the so-called *Lamiae* [sorcières] are indeed poor women—usually old women—melancholic [mélancholique] by nature, feeble-minded, easily given to despondency, and with little trust in God, the Devil all the more gladly attaches himself to them, as being suitable instruments for him, and he insinuates his way into their bodies all the more easily, in order to confound their minds with various images.³³

Generally, witches are old, melancholic women. Exhibiting despondency is the typical symptom of melancholy. The melancholic old women are easily controlled by demons. According to humoral pathology, black bile increases with aging. The idea that demons like black bile had been accepted since Origenes’s assertion that “the black bile is the bath of the devils.” We should note that Weyer was faithful to the contemporary orthodox humoral pathology. Though women’s susceptibility to demons is related to melancholy, this negative image of women originates in Christianity. We may say that phrases such as “feeble-minded” and “with little trust in God” expressed typical negative images of women in Western Christian culture. Weyer described witches by combining such

³¹ On Weyer’s background, see G. Mora, ed., Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer: De Praestigis Daemonum*, Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991, pp. XXXII-XXXVI, XLII-XLV.

³² *Ibid.*, p.166. This modern English translation belongs to the 1583 Latin edition. See also, Johann Weyer, *Histoires, Disputes et Discours, des Illusions et impostures des diables, des magiciens infames, sorcières & empoisonneurs*, Genève, MDLXXXIX, D. M. Bourneville, ed., Bibliothèque diabolique, 1885, Vol.I, p.276. Important words of French translation are included in square brackets in the text. The page references of French edition are given parenthetically in the note, for example, p.166(Vol.I, p.276).

³³ Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance*, p.498 (Vol.II, p.240).

negative views with humoral pathology.

Most often . . . crafty schemer of the Devil thus influences the female sex, that sex, which by reason of temperament is inconstant, credulous, wicked, uncontrolled in spirit, and (because of its feeling and affections, which it governs only with difficulty) melancholic [mélancholique]; he especially seduces stupid, worn out, unstable old women.³⁴

The statement that “most often the devil influences the female sex” is based upon the theme of original sin in Genesis referring to the belief that the Fall of Man began as Eve, the prototype of women, ate the forbidden fruit.

As another piece of evidence of Weyer’s faithfulness to orthodox humoral pathology, he proposed the following in order to deny the belief in the incubi that copulated with women lying in bed:

Now, since *sagae* or witches are for the most part “phlegmatic [phlegmatiques]” by virtue of their sex and age and “melancholic [mélancholique]” because of the state of their mind, why should they not be vulnerable to this malady [maladie] when lying supine?³⁵

Weyer regarded the belief in the incubi as malady, denying the fact that demons copulated with the sleeping witches in reality. This “malady” was caused by imagination related to melancholy.³⁶ What must be noted is that he refers to phlegm as well as black bile, implying that one person has two temperaments at the same time. It seems that such a condition is improbable, because one temperament is predominant in one person. But Weyer further describes women’s temperaments elsewhere asserting that even if they cooperate with demons a thousand times, witches cannot possibly do miraculous things. He continues,

because of their sex and age and as a result of the cold, moist, dense, sluggish constitution which renders their bodies unsuitable, they hinder the work of the demon’s fine and suitable substance, so that if he seeks out the co-operation of these women, he is disturbed and hindered in the performance of this task.³⁷

Because “their age” means old, their temperaments mean phlegmatic. In addition, according to humoral pathology, while “the cold and moist constitution” belongs to the phlegmatic, “the dense and sluggish constitution” belongs to the melancholic.³⁸ It is strange that a person is phlegmatic and melancholic at the same time.

However, the study of melancholy by Panofsky et al. demonstrated that the characteristics of the melancholic and phlegmatic had been fused gradually through ancient times and the Middle Ages, and finally the two humors could be interchanged.³⁹ In fact, black bile and phlegm coexisted as

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.181(Vol.I, p.300).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.232(Vol.I, p.389).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.231(Vol.I, p.387).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86(Vol.I, p.146).

³⁸ J.Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th–18th Centuries*, St. Martin’s Press, 1990 (tr., by E. Nicholson, *Le Péché et la peur*, 1983), p.170.

³⁹ R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky & F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy—Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy*,

almost same humor in the late Middle Ages and the early modern era. Considering this, Weyer was faithful to the contemporary humoral pathology.

“The witches as the melancholic old women”—Weyer opposed the witch-hunts following this witch-image. The old women who were called witches did not do evil things “in real,” but “imaginarily,” affected by their melancholy. Therefore he claimed,

if our old women had defected from the true faith, they should not have been murdered during the time of their defection; they should rather have been restored to the right path by sound admonitions.⁴⁰

First of all, according to Weyer, physicians should have examined such old women, rather than allowing their execution as witches. Bodin, however, vehemently opposed this view.

(2) The case of Bodin

Bodin, a famous intellectual of the second half of the 16th century in France, was well-educated in the classics, philosophy, law, economy, and religion. He was also a supporter of witch-hunts.

The *Démonomanie* was a controversial book that described the concern of Bodin, that is, the increase of witches.⁴¹ It presented the argument against Weyer’s and was well received with 12 French, two Latin, three German, and three Italian editions published by 1600.⁴² The *Démonomanie* has been evaluated as “the *Malleus* of the end of the 16th century,” and it is said that it was used as the manual for witch-hunts as much as the *Malleus*.⁴³

The circumstances of its publishing were related to Weyer’s publishing of his new work. Bodin delayed his publication, when informed by the publisher about the publication of Weyer’s new work, *de Lamiis*. Angry at Weyer, Bodin added a new chapter, “The Refutations of the Views of Weyer,” of about 80 pages⁴⁴ severely criticizing Weyer and his view on melancholy.

Bodin claimed that witches were women who intentionally tried to achieve certain things with the help of demons.⁴⁵ According to Bodin, witches’ various activities were not imaginary, but real. The abandonment of God, pacts with demons, and the worship of demons were real. Witches who performed such activities were the most despised people.⁴⁶ His thoughts about, and attitude toward,

Religion, and Art, Kraus Reprint, 1979 (First Published, 1964), pp.63-64.

⁴⁰ Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance*, p.550 (Vol.II, p.328).

⁴¹ W. Monter, “Inflation and Witchcraft: The Case of Jean Bodin,” in T. K. Rabb & J. E. Siegel, eds., *Actions and Convictions in Early Modern Europe*, Princeton, 1969, pp.90-91.

⁴² See, for example, *ibid.*, p.90; S. Anglo, “Melancholia and Witchcraft: the debate between Wier, Bodin, and Scot”, in A. Gerlo, ed., *Folie et déraison à la Renaissance*, Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1976, p.141 NB.21; B. Easlea, *Witch Hunting, Magic, and the New Philosophy: An Introduction to Debates of the Scientific Revolution 1450-1750*, The Harvester Press Limited, 1980, pp.14-15.

⁴³ C. Baxter, “Jean Bodin’s *De la démonomanie des sorciers*: The Logic of Persecution”, in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, London, 1977, p.78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.77; N. Jacques-Chaquin, “La *Démonomanie des sorciers*: Une lecture philosophique et politique de la sorcellerie”, sous la direction de Y. C. Zarka, *Jean Bodin: Nature, histoire, droit et politique*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1996, p.69.

⁴⁵ J. Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, Paris, 1580 (Georg Olms Verlag, 1988), folio.1r.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, folio.42v.

witches were supported by his experiences as a judge. For example, Bodin described his attendance at the judgment of Jeanne Harvillier in 1578.

The judgment passed on a witch, for which I was called at the last day of April in 1578, made me write this work in order to clarify the subject of witches, which seems to all foreigners marvelous and to some others unbelievable.⁴⁷

For Bodin, the evil doings of witches were real and clear, a view quite contrary to that given by Weyer. Considering Weyer's representation of witches as melancholic old women, Bodin's criticism inevitably turned to the validity of Weyer's view of melancholy.

Bodin criticized that Weyer

says . . . that they [the witches] mistake the saying for the doing and it is the malady of melancholy that afflicts them. It is the excuse that the ignorants or witches use to make their fellows escape and increase the reign of Satan.⁴⁸

Because the physician Weyer cannot be among the ignorants, Bodin here implies that the reason for Weyer's advocacy is that he himself is a witch. Regarding Weyer's experience as the disciple of Agrippa von Nettesheim in his youth, Bodin says clearly, "it is necessary to note that Weyer confessed that he had been the disciple of Agrippa, the greatest wizard."⁴⁹ Bodin argues that Agrippa von Nettesheim was a servant of Satan,⁵⁰ and therefore, it is likely that Weyer, his disciple, was also a wizard. For Bodin, who regarded witches' various activities as reality, Weyer's defense of witches using the humor of melancholy provided the very excuse that concealed his true intention to "increase the reign of Satan."

Bodin's view of melancholy differs greatly from that of Weyer. Clearly, Bodin tried to separate witches from melancholy. He says, "it is not necessary to attribute the transportations of witches, their maleficences, and their strange actions to melancholy."⁵¹ Moreover, he says,

if Weyer made mistakes seriously concerning the art of medicine, claiming the melancholy of women, he committed a grave error in terms of dialectic to form a definition by the imagination.⁵²

Weyer had said that women suffered from melancholy, but Bodin denied it and suspected Weyer's authenticity as a physician. This was a bold remark because Weyer was a specialist in medicine, trained from the university.

Bodin had a unique view of melancholy, and esteemed it highly. He said,

the humor of melancholy is temperate, and makes men sage, calm, and contemplative (as all ancient philosophers and physicians told), and it is not suitable for women very much as the fire

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Preface, pp.1-2. Because there are no page numbers in Preface, we attach them expediently.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, folio.225v. The square bracket is by the present author.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, folio.219v.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, folio.219v.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, folio.226r.

⁵² *Ibid.*, folio.228r.

opposed to the water.⁵³

Bodin considered that melancholy was related to men, sageness, and contemplation, while Weyer considered that it was related to women, depression, and delusion. Based on these understandings, Bodin asserted the reality of witches' various activities, while Weyer declared their imagination. The disputes started by Weyer and Bodin concerning the relationship between witches, melancholy, and reality/imagination were taken over by demonologists, such as R. Scot, W. Perkins, James I, and others. Humoral pathology occupied an important place in witch beliefs after the second half of the 16th century.

4. Conclusion: Change of the concept of melancholy in the first half of the 16th century

In the late Middle Ages, when the *Malleus* was published, it was a popular manual for witch-hunts and was reprinted many times. About 13 editions had been published by 1520, and 16 new editions were produced between 1576 and 1670.⁵⁴ Although the authors tried to present it so, the *Malleus*, however, represented neither the official Catholic pronouncement on witchcraft, nor the consensus of learned opinions on the topic in the late 15th and early 16th centuries.⁵⁵ To borrow Trevor-Roper's phrase, "the Witch Bull and the *Malleus* appeared in an age of enlightened criticism. It was the time of Renaissance humanism, when Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus and their disciples, under the protection of princes and free cities, were using human reason to dissolve ancient superstitions and established errors."⁵⁶ In fact, Institoris had been criticized in 1485 by Golser, who was the bishop of the diocese Brixen which included Innsbruck. Golser said that the trial conducted by Institoris was a "bad trial [malum processum]," and "he should not remain in this place."⁵⁷ Here we should note that the problem of melancholy wasn't presented in the criticism, and as we have seen, the *Malleus* didn't relate witches to melancholy. Thus, we may say that the problem of melancholy in witch beliefs had been neglected in the late 15th century, although a half-century later, this problem became very important as demonstrated by the controversy between Weyer and Bodin. What was the reason for this change?

The change in the consideration of the relationship between witches and humoral pathology is closely related to the change in the concept of melancholy. There had been positive as well as negative views on melancholy since ancient times. The negative view was based on the Hippocratic-Galenic humoral pathology in which melancholy was closely related to depression, mental derangement, and delusion. The positive view was based on the pseudo-Aristotelian theory,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, folio.227r.

⁵⁴ Broedel, *op.cit.*, pp.7-8.

⁵⁵ S. Brauner, "Martin Luther on Witchcraft: A True Reformer?" in J.R.Brink, A.P.Coudert and M.C.Horowitz, eds., *The Politics of gender in Early Modern Europe*, Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1989, p.32.

⁵⁶ Trevor-Roper, *op.cit.*, p.129.

⁵⁷ Broedel, *op.cit.*, pp.15-17, 36 note 32.

that is, the descriptions in the *Problemata* XXX, 1, which was influenced by humoral pathology. However, it claimed that the geniuses in the fields of philosophy, poetry, art, and others were all melancholics.⁵⁸ This positive view had been revived in the late 15th century by Marsilio Ficino, a famous Neoplatonist who studied under the patronage of the Medici in Florence, and his idea of melancholy influenced Agrippa von Nettesheim, Dürer, Michelangelo, and others.⁵⁹ This positive view of melancholy had been in fashion from the late 15th century to the first quarter of the 16th century. Ficino's *De Triplici Vita (Three Books on Life)*, which treated the relationship between melancholy and genius, was written about 1482-1489 and published in 1489.⁶⁰ Quoting Panofsky, Delumeau said, "Ficino and the Neoplatonists, guided by both Aristotle and Plotinus, pursued a vigorous rehabilitation of Saturn and melancholy."⁶¹ The *Malleus* appeared and was accepted in the period when the positive view of melancholy flourished. It is likely that it was out of question at that time to relate witches, who were considered the negative and deviant beings, to the positive nature of melancholy. In short, for the *Malleus*, witches had to be separated from melancholy.

The view of melancholy, however, changed dramatically through the first half of the 16th century. Because of the Reformation, it had gained a negative connotation. First, the Neoplatonists had been criticized, and their views of melancholy were abandoned, because they had wanted to unite Christendom on the basis of Christian cabalism, but their aims were frustrated amidst the struggle between the Catholics and the Protestants. Second, melancholy had been connected with the Anabaptists. The Anabaptists considered themselves to be the chosen people on the basis of the millenarianism. This elitism had been identified as a characteristic of the positive view of melancholy. For example, the famous Swiss religious reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, criticized the Anabaptists in 1525, attributing them "to put it medically, a saturnine, melancholic stubbornness, and madness," and charged that "every saturnine madman" among them will start his sect.⁶² The positive view of melancholy had declined gradually, while the negative (medical) view of melancholy had become mainstream in the second half of the 16th century.

The controversy between Weyer and Bodin can be understood clearly in this context. Weyer contended on the basis of the orthodox medical view of melancholy, while Bodin's view was based on the pseudo-Aristotelian melancholy that was out of fashion in the second half of the 16th century.

In the age of the "witch-craze," the problem of reality/imagination of witches' various activities was disputed, taking melancholy into consideration, and reality and imagination were treated from the humoral pathological point of view. In this context, witches were the ambivalent beings who wandered between two worlds (the real and the imaginary world) and were tried and executed.

⁵⁸ Schleiner, *op.cit.*, pp.19-29.

⁵⁹ Delumeau, *op.cit.*, pp.168-175.

⁶⁰ W. Schumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns*, University of California Press, 1972, p.120.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.173.

⁶² Schleiner, *op.cit.*, pp.109-110.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Bodin, Jean, *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, Paris, 1580 (Georg Olms Verlag, 1988).
- Institoris, Heinrich, *Malleus Maleficarum in Tres Divisvs Partes*, Frankfurt am Main, 1580 (http://digital.library.cornell.edu/w/witch/browse_title_m.html. My access date is 2009/12/02).
- Weyer, Johann, *Histoires, Disputes et Discours, des Illusions et impostures des diables, des magiciens infames, sorcières & empoisonneurs*, Genève, MDLXXXIX, D. M. Bourneville, ed., Bibliothèque diabolique, 1885.

(Translation)

- Mackay, Christopher S, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009.
- Mora, George, ed., Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer: De Praestigiis Daemonum*, Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991.

Secondary Sources

- Anglo, Sydney, "Melancholia and Witchcraft: the debate between Wier, Bodin, and Scot", in A. Gerlo, ed., *Folie et déraison à la Renaissance*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1976.
- Bailey, Michael D., "The Medieval Concept of the Witches' Sabbath", *Exemplaria*, Vol.8, 1996.
- Baxter, Christopher, "Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers*: The Logic of Persecution", in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, London, 1977.
- Brauner, Sigrid, "Martin Luther on Witchcraft: A True Reformer?" in J. R. Brink, A. P. Coudert & M. C. Horowitz, eds., *The Politics of gender in Early Modern Europe*, Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1989.
- Broedel, Hans P., *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief*, Palgrave, 2003.
- Burke, Peter, "Witchcraft and Magic in Renaissance Italy: Gianfrancesco Pico and His *Strix*", in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, Routledge & L. Paul, 1977.
- Cohn, Norman, *Europe's Inner Demons: the Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, Revised Edition, Pimlico, 1993.
- Delumeau, Jean, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th–18th Centuries*, St. Martin's Press, 1990 (tr., by Eric Nicholson, *Le Péché et la peur*, 1983).
- Easlea, Brian, *Witch Hunting, Magic, and the New Philosophy: An Introduction to Debates of the Scientific Revolution 1450-1750*, The Harvester Press Limited, 1980.
- Ginzburg, Carlo, *I benandanti: stregoneria e culti agrari tra cinquecento e seicento*, Giulio Einaudi, 1966.
- Jacques-Chaquin, Nicole, "La *Démonomanie des sorciers*: Une lecture philosophique et politique de la sorcellerie", sous la direction de Y.C. Zarka, *Jean Bodin: Nature, histoire, droit et politique*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1996.
- Klibansky, Raymond, Erwin Panofsky & Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy—Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, Kraus Reprint, 1979 (First Published, 1964).
- Levack, Brian P., *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, Longman, 1987.
- Max, Frédéric, "Les premières controverses sur la réalité du sabbat dans l'Italie du XVIe siècle: Samuel de Cassini et Vincente Dodo (1505-1507), Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio et Bartolomeo Spina (1520-1525)", dans N. Jacques-Chaquin & M. Préaud, *Le Sabbat des sorcières XV^e-XVIII^e siècles*, Jérôme Millon, 1993.
- Monter, William, "Inflation and Witchcraft: The Case of Jean Bodin," in T. K. Rabb & J. E. Siegel, eds., *Actions and Convictions in Early Modern Europe*, Princeton, 1969.
- Muchembled, Robert, "Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality", in B. Ankarloo & G. Henningsen, ed., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, Clarendon Press, 1990.

- Schleiner, Winfried, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, Harrassowitz, 1991.
- Schumaker, Wayne, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance: A Study in Intellectual Patterns*, University of California Press, 1972.
- Starobinsky, Jean, "L'Encre de la mélancholie", *La Nouvelle revue française*, 11, 1963.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh R., "The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation & Social Change*, Second Edition, Macmillan, 1972.
- Zika, Charles, "The Devil's Hoodwink: Seeing and Believing in the world of Sixteenth-Century Witchcraft", in C. Zika, ed., *No Gods except for Me: Orthodoxy and religious Practice in Europe 1200-1600*, The University of Melbourne, 1991.
- , *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003.