The Praxis of Church and State in the (Under)Development of Women's Religion from France to the New World

Barbara L. Bernier
THE PRAXIS OF CHURCH AND STATE IN THE 
(UNDER)DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN’S RELIGION FROM 
FRANCE TO THE NEW WORLD

BARBARA L. BERNIER*

"There is no penalty cruel enough to punish the evil of witches 
... since all their wickedness, blasphemies and all their designs 
rise up against the majesty of God to offend Him in a thousand 
ways."1

INTRODUCTION

I was surprised to learn of the insurrection of black, white and 
colored women in New Orleans in the late eighteenth and 
nineteenth centuries.2 My initial research indicated that witchcraft 
was alive and well in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth 
centuries, but it appeared to be lost as Europeans crossed the 
Atlantic. Upon further inquiry, I discovered that in certain parts of 
France women accused of witchcraft were often banished, rather 
than burned at the stake.3 These banished women often arrived in 
San Domingue, currently known as Haiti, as indentured servants.4

* Associate Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law; B.A. 1972, State 
University of New York (Plattsburgh); M.S.W., 1974, Adelphi University; J.D. 1978, Howard 
University; L.L.M. 1980, Temple University. I would like to thank Bethany Foose and 
Daphne Clarke for outstanding research assistance. I would also like to thank Kari Lou 
Frank, Sheryl Orr and Juli Horka-Ruiz of the William and Mary Journal of Women and the 
Law for their work on this Article. I dedicate this Article to the women who took a stand and 
continue to take a stand for justice and freedom.

1. JONATHAN L. PEARL, THE CRIME OF CRIMES: DEMONOLOGY AND POLITICS IN FRANCE, 
1560-1620, at 121 (1999) (quoting JEAN BODIN, ON THE DEMON-MANIA OF WITCHES 1580, at 
204 (Jonathan L. Pearl & Randy Scott eds. & trans., 1995)).

2. See William H. Seymour, A Voudou Story, TIMES PICAYUNE (New Orleans), Aug. 14, 
1806, at 14. This newspaper article discusses a meeting of white and black women engaged 
in a voodoo ritual with a woman named Celeste as the main character. Id. The incorporation 
of the French influence on witchcraft in New Orleans is evident from the story's conclusion: 
On the banks of the Seine, in France, on a bright summer day, might be seen, in company 
with a holy sister, a pale, wan woman; as she walks along she mutters incoherent words; at 
times a sad smile pervades her countenance, her actions strange, all betray a mind diseased, 
a body from whence all reason has forever flown. Within the cloistered walls wherein she has 
resided for years, only to the mother superior is known the melancholy fate of her who at 
times answers to the name of Celeste. Id.


(noting that "[i]n order to meet the pressing demands for labor, the company even imported 
impoverished whites, called engagés, who were treated like slaves for thirty-six months").
The connection between France and Haiti is reinforced by comparing the names given to witches in these areas. A common French term for witches in some regions was vaudois. This is very similar to the Haitian terms voodoo and voodooiennes. The Haitian revolution unleashed both slaves and indentured servants onto the shores of North America, specifically in Louisiana. New Orleans is particularly interesting because the slaves from San Domingue brought the concept of voodoo with them, which the New Orleans culture incorporated. Furthermore, the French Code Noir, which was enacted in Louisiana, prescribed a different approach to the legal rights and responsibilities of both slaves and slave owners than was typical in the colonies. The legal system in New Orleans provided the opportunity for interaction between whites and people of color. This in turn permitted women of all colors to unite to practice the woman-based religion known as witchcraft. This Article presents the historical roots of witchcraft in France, the emergence of voodoo and witchcraft in Louisiana and the interconnection of white women and women of color who practiced this religion, which conflicted with patriarchal norms grounded in law and religion.

This Article consists of three components. Part I looks to the historical significance of witchcraft in France. Part II discusses the interconnection of legal slavery, plaçage and witchcraft in the state of Louisiana and Part III discusses contemporary social and legal

6. See Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century 302 (1992) ("Fon and Yoruba [ancient African nations] religious practices deeply influenced the culture, accounting for the emergence and resilience of voodoo in Louisiana. Fon and Yoruba women were present in significant numbers, and they tended to be clustered on estates. Unlike Haitian voodoo, Louisiana voodoo was dominated by women.").
7. See infra Part II.B.1.

Id.
9. Id. ("The presence of these people of color in the earliest records of the city shows that not only were they free but they held professional positions, had access to the justice of the colonial court and owned property . . . ").
difficulties faced by practitioners of women-based religions in New Orleans.

I. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WITCHCRAFT IN FRANCE

Jean Bodin, the French author of the most famous and widely read demonology works of the sixteenth century, embodies the strong views held by many during the sixteenth century against women accused of witchcraft. In order to understand the extreme enmity of the French populace during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries toward witchcraft, it is necessary to explore both the development of the witch image in France and the nature of witch prosecution in France, including the contributions made by both the government and those who wished to maintain a patriarchal society.

A. Development of the Witch Image in France

Many factors contributed to the development of the witch image in France. Various religious sectors of France contributed by labeling a member of another religious group a witch in an attempt to gain power. The rural poor also labeled individuals from lower social classes as witches in an attempt to find someone to blame for all of their ills. Furthermore, society labeled outspoken women as witches in an attempt to maintain the patriarchal system. Aside from identifying witches, well-known demonologists, courts and others created a stereotypical image of the wicked witch and attempted to describe their evil rituals. Together, the identification, or labeling, of women as witches and the creation of a stereotypical witch and her rituals comprised the development of the witch image in France.

10. See PEARL, supra note 1, at 112-13. Robert Mandrou, in his influential study, Magistrats et sorciers, stated of [Jean Bodin's] Démonomanie, "this vehement appeal to pitiless repression was understood by the magistrates of higher justice who were charged with the repression of all crimes, of which witchcraft constituted a good part." For Mandrou, demonology books, and especially Bodin's, played the central role in the development of the widespread and violent persecutions for witchcraft that he presumed to have taken place.

Id. For a discussion of the impact Bodin and other French authors had on the perpetuation of witch-hunts, see infra Part I.C.3.

11. See infra notes 15-21 and accompanying text.
12. See infra notes 25-29 and accompanying text.
13. See infra notes 46-53 and accompanying text.
14. See infra notes 57, 85-93 and accompanying text.
Religion was a divisive issue in sixteenth-century France. An underground movement of Protestantism that roused ill will and resentment among Catholic zealots came with the Wars of Religion in 1561. France was generally intolerant of religions other than Catholicism, which resulted in religious rioting. John Calvin, a Protestant reformer, began his movement in the 1530s in France. Although quite small in number, Protestants held a great deal of power. Seeds of serious conflict brewed between Protestants and Catholics and led to strategic accusations of witchcraft in the ongoing struggle for power and converts between the two religions. Wherever there were rivals of either the Catholic or Protestant Church, witchcraft was the underlying foundation for a charge of heresy. Demonic possession, and witches' supposed preoccupation with it, was also at the root of charges of witchcraft by religious groups. Certain power attributes were often associated with witchcraft, which were also signs of demonic possession, including:

(1) the ability to speak and understand languages not known to the patient;

16. Id.
18. Id.
19. Id. (noting that fewer than "ten per cent of French men and women were Protestant"). "The close cohesion and cooperation of these Huguenot [label Catholics gave to Protestants] communities, their vigorous defence of the centres of their religion, and their determination to spread their faith gave them a military strength far beyond their numbers." Id.; see also Pearl, supra note 15, at 286-87 ("While the Protestants never attracted over one million adherents out of a population of around seventeen million, their power was disproportionate to their numbers because of the active involvement of some very powerful nobles and scholars, and because of the Protestants' deep personal commitment to their religion.").
21. Id.
23. Id. at 12.
(2) knowledge of other people's secrets, of things hidden or in any way unknowable by natural means—for short, we can call this mark clairvoyance;
(3) bodily strength exceeding the patient's normal capacity;
(4) horror and revulsion at sacred things, at hearing Scripture, . . . being touched by relics, the host, holy water, . . . or other blest objects.24

Death and disease also contributed to the witchcraft phenomenon. The plague, also known as the Black Death, intensified the horror and despair of the fourteenth century.25 Lack of medical knowledge resulted in growing paranoia surrounding the origins of the disease.26 In addition to the plague, which resurfaced in the seventeenth century, famine also commonly occurred in seventeenth-century France.27 No one knew the causes of plague and famine; consequently, people searched for explanations.28 People presumed that God would not have allowed such suffering unless He was angry.29 People believed witches were the malefactors, when in reality the causes of plague and famine were poor weather conditions, crop destruction by disease or insects and lack of transportation.30 The rise in food prices exacerbated the problems of finding resources to purchase food, staving off starvation and fighting disease.31

24. See id.
25. RAPLEY, supra note 17, at 69.
26. Id. at 70.
27. Id. at 97. Rapley stresses that:
   The period between the late Middle Ages and the early seventeenth century was a time of universal fear throughout Europe. The Black Death, the deep economic crises that followed, the shocks and upheavals of the Reformation, and the recurring wars and plagues all caused people to believe that the Devil was intervening in the world with ever-increasing fervour.
28. Id. at 71.
29. Id.
30. RAPLEY, supra note 17, at 97.
31. Id.
Witchcraft was blamed for all afflictions, both known and unknown. If an individual could rationalize that his/her affliction was somehow connected to the prior behavior of a woman accused of witchcraft, such as some incomprehensible murmur, then the listener interpreted that prior noise as a curse.\textsuperscript{32} For example, any ill fate that occurred to an individual who denied a beggar woman food would be automatically connected to that woman.\textsuperscript{33} Witches were also charged with other inexplicable events, such as death during childbirth, the death of children, death from infection, impotence and sterility.\textsuperscript{34}

The religious sector furthered these beliefs. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches took the position that women were cavorting with the devil, thereby causing the ills afflicting society.\textsuperscript{35} They felt that the eradication of evil and, thus, the eradication of any woman accused of witchcraft, was the ultimate solution.\textsuperscript{36} Church leaders viewed this as the only viable method of restoring society's equilibrium.\textsuperscript{37}

The search began for the responsible parties, focusing first on society's outcasts. Poor women were characterized as contemptible and, thus, deserving of outcast status in the community.\textsuperscript{38} Witches and heretics were natural targets, as they were alleged to be cohorts of the Devil.\textsuperscript{39} Evil was the explanation embedded in everyone's minds for such an epidemic.\textsuperscript{40} The pressure of illness, starvation or
simply bad luck led many to suspect that a spell had been cast on
them. As a result, many in France believed that witches had the
power to invoke hardship with only an evil glance—or even by
means of gifts or praise. One story, involving a woman who was
thought to be a witch, La Kerzeas, exemplifies the fact that many
believed that a gift or praise from a witch could invoke hardship.
In the market at Pont-Croix, La Kerzeas exclaimed to a woman, who
had just bought some piglets, “They’re fine little beasts for the
price.” When the piglets fell ill that night, the buyer believed “not
that they were a poor bargain but that the jealous witch had cast a
spell on them.”

People believed that women were responsible for all unexplained events; however, because it was assumed that women
could not act alone, their acts were attributed to conspiracy with the
Devil to secure power for their evil deeds. By conspiring with the
Devil, women attained powers that made them witches. By labeling
women as witches, there was an explanation for everything that had

rather than the particular nature of the illness which resulted in an accusation
of witchcraft. In other words, illness or death was explained by witchcraft only
if the individuals concerned had prior reason to fear the use of witchcraft against
them, such as being cursed by the suspect or having denied her certain items.

Id.
41. JUDITH DEVLIN, THE SUPERSTITION MIND: FRENCH PEASANTS AND THE SUPERNATURAL
42. Id. at 104.
One of the most widespread magical beliefs in rural France in the nineteenth
century was the persuasion that the witch or sorcerer could with a glance, ruin
his enemy by making him ill or by hindering his agricultural labours. . . . [T]he
peasants of the Morbihan thought that the evil eye caused dangerous illnesses
and that they thought of it in naturalistic rather than supernatural terms: ‘. . .
They seem to think it natural and to imagine that some people’s eyes give out
miasmas or pestilential fluids which are carried on the wind, by which means
the contagion is spread afar’. . . . It suggests that the spell was seen more as a
natural than a supernatural phenomenon, not necessarily involving the divine
and diabolical superstructure elaborated by Christian theologians. If Mahé is
to be believed, the spell, for some people, belonged to this world of dissension
and misery, rather than to an exotic domain controlled by occult mysterious
beings.
Id. at 103 (alteration in original) (second omission in original) (quoting ABBÉ J. MAHÉ, ESSAI
SUR LES ANTIQUITÉS DU MORBIHAN 480 (Vannes 1825)).
43. Id. at 104.
44. Id.
45. Id. at 113.
46. See BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 34-41 (discussing the fifteenth-century presumption
that women were by nature weak and prone to align with the Devil). “Whether as a bad wife
who dominates her husband, a concubine who seduces those in power, or a midwife who
sabotages childbirth and slaughters the newborn, the female witch turns the world upside
down.” Id. at 43.
previously had no explanation. Witchcraft explained the inexplicable.

In some regions, witches were regarded as being so dangerous that they could even bewitch themselves and their husbands. The connection of witch power to male impotence is a recurring theme in historical literature. It became a main justification for witch persecution, as well as the furtherance of male supremacy. Since it was a patriarchal society, women were subjected to whatever viewpoints men concocted. Although initially "no distinction was made between men and women in the early witch trials," by the late fifteenth century, women bore the brunt of witchcraft accusations. In fact, the profile of witches in rural France was usually "poor, middle-aged or elderly [women]." Cultural commentators also connected witchcraft with female sexuality. Judge Henri Boguet, the French witch-hunter active around the year 1600, emphasized that it was easier for the Devil to seduce women "because of their inordinate love of carnal pleasures," and "that Satan spoke through a female’s ‘shameful parts.’"

In a world that should have been careful when condemning women to death, French society showed no caution regarding the identity of the accuser. Children often condemned women to their doom by accusations of witchcraft. There have been "well-known cases . . . of prosecutions for witchcraft originating in the evidence of disturbed or attention seeking children." A French judge who prosecuted witches, Pierre de Lancre, was well known for his skill in "extirpating" witches: he tortured six hundred individuals and

47. Johansen, supra note 34, at 357.
48. See id. at 356 (discussing "aiguillete," a well-known witch's curse, which is said to produce impotence in males); BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 43 (discussing how witches challenged male power by challenging the symbol of male power, the penis).
49. BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 6. "In fact, in Inquisitorial trials that began as heresy proceedings, slightly more men than women were charged as witches." Id.
50. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 25; see also BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 6 ("The majority of those tried as witches in France . . . were [late fifteenth-century] women."); HESTER, supra note 35, at 198 (noting that "the accused were nearly all women").
51. HESTER, supra note 32, at 112. For more on the stereotype of witches that developed during this time, see discussion infra Part II.B.
52. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 66.
53. Id.
54. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 28. Although children were usually the accusers, at times they were the accused and put on trial themselves for witchcraft. Id. "Sometimes children . . . incriminated themselves perhaps unintentionally by claiming that certain adults had led them into witchcraft." BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 173.
55. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 28.
executed eighty during one four-month period, “relying mainly on the evidence of children.”

B. The Stereotypical Witch Image and Her Rituals

A stereotypical image of the wicked witch has developed that still exists today: that of an old, ugly woman riding a broom and living with a black cat. The witch was considered to be both of the human world and of the evil world. This stereotypical image of a witch had its beginnings in France during the height of the persecution of witches. In addition, the rituals typically associated with witches had its origins in the writings of famous French demonologists.

There are several aspects of witchcraft unique to France. The French found demonic possession and witchcraft inextricably related. For example, if a woman could blame her demonic possession on another person who had conspired with the Devil to cause the possession, then that would inevitably lead to accusations of witchcraft against the conspirator.

As witchcraft was increasingly linked to women, the image of the wicked witch became all too familiar in the media. She was portrayed physically in the following manner: “an old hag: long nose reaching to a pointed chin; hanks or wisps of grey hair hanging below a pointed hat; long black clothes; and a dog or cat as a companion.” The witch was typically poor; she would customarily “go from house to house” looking for handouts. Although her accusers were also poor, “[t]he witch in many cases was the poorest of the poor . . . .” Poverty was commonplace throughout the sixteenth century, aggravating the fate of witches. Peasants were “forced to beg or steal in order to survive.” This magnified the

---

56. BARSOW, supra note 34, at 173.
57. Robert Rowland, ‘Fantasticall and Devilishe Persons’: European Witch-Beliefs in Comparative Perspective, in EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN WITCHCRAFT: CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES 161, 167 (Bengt Ankerloo & Gustav Henningsen eds., 1990). “[The witch] is of this world in that she performs concrete actions against individuals, and she does so in the guise of a normal member of the community. But she is also of the anti-world.” Id.
58. PEARL, supra note 1, at 42.
59. Id.
60. See supra notes 49-50 and accompanying text.
61. RAPLEY, supra note 17, at 99.
62. BARSOW, supra note 34, at 26.
63. Id.
64. Id.
65. Id.
difficult conditions of poor, old, single women.66 "When they turned them down, people felt guilty, an uncomfortable state often exacerbated when the beggar cursed them for their refusal. Then when misfortune occurred, people turned on the beggars, a classic example of 'blaming the victim.'"

Witches were not only perceived as ugly and poor, but also old; those proclaimed as witches were typically over fifty.68 In the French-speaking region of Lorraine, fifty-eight percent of the suspects were widowed.69 No longer beholden to their husbands or fathers, they were free to express themselves and state their true thoughts.70 "They were usually old women, often widowed and outside patriarchal control. They were usually very well known to their neighbors, who had both feared and despised them for many years before they were finally arrested."

The wicked witch played several roles that French society molded for her: "[w]ether as a bad wife who dominates her husband, a concubine who seduces those in power, or a midwife who sabotages childbirth and slaughters the newborn, the female witch turns the world upside down."72 As "the concubines of the great," their power was hailed as immense.73 They held the "three special vices of lust, ambition, and infidelity" within their bosom, and utilized them to control men and conquer faith in God.74

As midwives, witches posed a considerable threat. By advocating abortions and birth control, midwives were viewed as anti-life and anti-God.75 If those tactics were not readily available,
“they induce[d] miscarriages and even [ate] the newborn or offer[ed] them to the devil.” These acts were so reviled that two authors concluded, “no one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives.”

Despite the low regard society held for midwives, women’s work as healers was one role that had some positive underpinnings. Just as witches were considered powerful enough to invoke evil, healers were considered powerful enough to invoke justice. Professional healers could easily be targeted during witchcraft accusations, though, due to their admitted knowledge of spells and witchcraft.

implements to speed the birth, or repeat superstitions. City councils often called upon midwives to give opinions in legal cases of infanticide and abortion ... in the hope of delaying their corporal punishment or execution.”). See generally FRITZ GRAF, MAGIC IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (G.W. Bowersock, ed., Franklin Philip trans., 1997) (describing the terminology, words, acts and history of magic); GERHILD SCHOLZ WILLIAMS, DEFINING DOMINION: THE DISCOURSES OF MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT IN EARLY MODERN FRANCE AND GERMANY (1995) (discussing the myth of transgression, different witchcraft tracts and religious diversity); MARTINE SEGALEN, LOVE AND POWER IN THE PEASANT FAMILY-RURAL FRANCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (Sarah Matthews trans., Univ. of Chi. Press 1983) (1980) (recounting a woman’s place in society, the home and her personal relationship).

76. BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 43.

77. Id. (footnote omitted); see also UTA RANKE-HEINEMANN, EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: WOMEN, SEXUALITY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 231-32 (Peter Heinegg trans., 1990) (referring to a well-known statement made by inquisitors of the time); THOMAS SZASZ, THE MANUFACTURE OF MADNESS 84 (1970) (noting that “midwives in particular were often suspected of being witches”).

“Because midwives so often were in bad repute, ... even an innocent practitioner might be accused of witchcraft if the delivery had an unhappy outcome or if the non-obstetrical patients whom some midwives attempted to treat did not recover ... . Even more serious were the charges that midwives destroyed infants before or just after birth ... . [T]he Malleus Maleficarum charged that witch-midwives destroyed the child in utero, causing an abortion, or found a moment of privacy in which to offer the newborn infant to Satan.”


78. See DEVLIN, supra note 41, at 105.

The view of nature here implied was coloured not so much by mysterious supernaturalism as by ignorant naturalism. Here, counter-magic worked both as a kind of justice—punishing the guilty sorcerer and setting the world to rights—and as a form of medicine, like the techniques of folk-medicine when no foul play was suspected.

Id.

79. MONTER, supra note 5, at 184-85.

This was of course the single most common source of anyone’s arrest in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jura witch trials, but professional healers were very well known and made especially obvious targets for such accusations because of the general belief that anyone who cured spells could also cause them if he wished.

Id.
The "bad wife" or "shrew" is another motif of the stereotypical depiction of the wicked witch. She was "a woman who insisted on having her own way. Her obstinacy was characterized by self-centered actions, resistance to her husband, and rebellion against marital codes." She was also depicted as vying with her husband for power within the relationship in order to control the family household. The bad wife's unsightly appearance only highlighted her evilness, "suggest[ing] that defiance and disobedience make women unattractive."

As the connotation of "witch" has evolved, characteristics such as healer and sorcerer have been replaced with more modern traits. "Four characteristics distinguish the modern witch: using magic to harm others, attending secret 'Sabbath' meetings, flying through the air at night, and sealing a pact with the devil by copulating with him." It is believed the witches live for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is defined as "a nocturnal, demoniac meeting of witches and warlocks." Some scholars suggest that the Sabbath was merely a strategic invention of theologians to combat meetings of witches. All people in society knew what a Sabbath was—or did they? The common populace believed that they knew "what was supposed to happen at Sabbat[h]s—dancing, strange food, ice-cold sexual intercourse with the Devil—" and they pictured women engaging in such activities.

The Sabbath was composed mainly of devil worshipping and any other acts that were viewed as contrary to social order and values. The substance of the Sabbath defied acceptable cultural

---

80. BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 72.
81. Id.
82. Id. at 73.
83. Id.
84. Id. at 7.
85. Id.
86. Id.
88. Monter, supra note 5, at 200.
89. Rowland, supra note 57, at 166.
customs, such as engaging in incest or cannibalism. Additional strange behavior that goes against the norm is that of consuming "food without salt," eating but "not satisfy[ing] the appetite" and "inverted dancing." At her regular visits to the sabbath she makes, or is given, the ointments, potions, and powders. These instruments of malefic are sometimes made from bones of infants the witch has made to die. Francesco Maria Guaccio of Milan offered the typical Sabbath structure:

When the faithful of the Devil are gathered together they light a great bonfire. The Devil presides over the meeting and is seated on a throne, clothed in fearful goat- or dog-skins. They approach him to worship him in a variety of ways, sometimes on bended knee, sometimes with their backs to him, sometimes with their legs in the air and with their heads bent backwards and their chins turned toward heaven. Then they offer him candles black as pitch or children's navels and in sign of homage they kiss his anus. They take their places at the tables which have been laid out and begin to eat the food which the Devil supplies or which each has brought. It is certain that these banquets are so disgusting that even a starving stomach would be revolted by seeing the display or smelling the odour. In a filthy cup the Devil pours out wine for his guests which is like black and rotten blood. There is a great abundance of all kinds of food except bread and salt. Human flesh is also served. And many of the guests say their hunger and thirst are not satisfied by these foods and beverages. The banquets are followed by dancing in circles, always by the left [i.e. the wrong way]. And whereas our dances have enjoyment as their aim, these dances produce only fatigue, boredom and dreadful torments. When they approach the demons to worship them they turn their backs and retreat backwards like crabs, and to supplicate them they turn their hands backwards. To speak they fix their gaze on the ground, a gesture somewhat different from the customs of men. Sometimes they dance before eating, sometimes afterwards. Usually several tables—three or four—are prepared, at which each takes his place according to his rank and wealth. Each meal is blessed by the Devil with blasphemous words, according to which Beezlebub is declared to be who creates, gives and conserves all things. And with the same formula they give

90. Id. "The sabbath can, in fact, be seen as an elaborate representation of an anti-world and, simulataneouslly, as an implicit assertion of all the rules which are broken there. This emerges clearly from the systematized descriptions which later demonologists constructed out of earlier confessions and accusations." Id. (footnotes omitted).

91. Id.

92. Id. at 167.
thanks after the meal. After the banquet each demon takes by the hand the disciple whom he has in charge—everything takes place according to a senseless ritual—they turn their backs to each other and holding hands in a circle they shake their heads like lunatics and often dance holding the candles which they had previously used to worship the Devil. They sing very obscene chants in honour of the Devil, and the demons and their charges have intercourse in a filthy manner.\textsuperscript{93}

C. The Nature of Witch Prosecution in France

France saw a wave of witchcraft prosecutions that took hold of the country through the better part of three centuries. As Robert Mandrou observed, “[t]he wave [of prosecutions] did not spare, it seems, any region of France.”\textsuperscript{94} Witch-hunts erupted in phases.\textsuperscript{95} The first period of scattered witch trials occurred from 1435 to 1500.\textsuperscript{96} After that, witch trials nearly ceased until 1560.\textsuperscript{97} Another wave of witch trials began in 1560 and lasted for 200 years.\textsuperscript{98}

In order to comprehend how witchcraft accusations led to convictions, one needs to understand the actors. Theologians, demonologists, judges and the patriarchal society all actively worked together to formulate a politically charged, often self-serving, belief in the existence of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{99} The theologians developed the methodology to apply this witchcraft belief. “The works of the demonologists are seen to have been taken seriously by the judges and were used as guides to the legal prosecution of witches. The work of judges . . . is cited as proof that the legal community was totally committed to the violent eradication of witchcraft.”\textsuperscript{100} In their efforts to maintain control over women, the patriarchal society ensured that witches (predominately women)

\textsuperscript{93} Id. at 166-67 (quoting FRANCESCO MARIA GUACCIO, COMPENDIO DELLE STREGONERIE 49-53 (1967) (1st ed. 1608)) (alterations in original). Francesco Maria Guaccio was a friar born in the last quarter of the 1500s and envoy in 1605 to Clèves, who was an advisor in matters of witchcraft.

\textsuperscript{94} PEARL, supra note 1, at 112 (alteration in original).

\textsuperscript{95} BRAUNER, supra note 34, at 5.

\textsuperscript{96} Id. “The first witch trials took place in the mid-fifteenth century in the French Alps and Switzerland.” Id. at 10. “Within the mountains, Papal Inquisitors found “peasants rooted in pre-Christian folk beliefs.” Id. at 5-6. Uncertain of such practices, the Inquisitors chose to interpret the folk practice as a form of devil worship and confirmed their interpretation through torture. Id.

\textsuperscript{97} Id. at 5.

\textsuperscript{98} Id.; see also PEARL, supra note 1, at 10 (noting that the most intense period of witchcraft prosecution in France occurred between 1560 and 1610).

\textsuperscript{99} PEARL, supra note 1, at 31-32.

\textsuperscript{100} Id. at 31.
were identified. This symbiotic relationship enabled them to “get the job done,” so to speak, in their conviction and persecution of witches.

1. The Government Contribution

Probably the highest rate of witchcraft execution in France was in Pays de Vaud, with a rate that reached as high as ninety percent.101 This point is underscored by a jurist from Pays de Vaud who said in 1756, “witches were burned in former times; today, there aren’t any.”102 Fortunately, however, the judiciary in the jurisdiction of the Court of Parlement of Paris, which comprised at least half of France, was more leery than local courts of the witchcraft accusations.103 The Parlement was among the more lenient jurisdictions in the prosecution of witches, at least after 1580.104 The reason, in part, is because “an enormous social and intellectual gap” existed between the judges sitting in Parlement and the local judges in rural France.105 Whereas Parlement judges enjoyed the social and political connections that came with lifelong wealth and a good education, the local judges were newly wealthy peasants, lacking even the most basic education or training.106 As judges, those in Parlement enjoyed considerable autonomy, whereas those serving locally were under more political pressure.107 Thus, local judges tended to hand down rulings that were “severe and even abusive to many of those accused of witchcraft.”108

101. LEVACK, supra note 3, at 19. Incessant witch-hunts also occurred outside of France, as the French extended their influence to French-speaking territories outside of the political boundaries of France. PEARL, supra note 1, at 10. During the era of the Holy Roman Empire, several areas became hot spots of intense witch prosecution. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 20 (identifying western regions such as Lorraine and Franche-Comté as the hot spots). The area of Lorraine, in particular, showed no mercy: “semi-literate judges” presided over most of the trials there resulting in incredibly high conviction rates. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 65. Between 1657 and 1659 within Franche-Comté alone, “an inquisitor . . . ordered every parish to hunt out its witches [and] sent ‘more than a hundred’ to their deaths.” Id.

102. MONTER, supra note 5, at 40 (footnote omitted).

103. PEARL, supra note 1, at 14-15 (noting that the jurisdiction of Parlement of Paris included over half the population of France).

104. Id. at 122; see also LEVACK, supra note 3, at 102 (“In the 1580s, for example, the Roman Inquisition, acting in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, turned its attention increasingly to cases of superstition, magic, and sorcery.”).

105. Id. at 15.

106. Id. at 14-15.

107. Id.

108. Id. at 15.
A case of witchcraft would come to the court by either an individual complaint or by "a complaint in the king's name." The significant difference is that in the former, the individual plaintiff would be responsible for court costs, whereas in the latter, the costs would be charged to the regional crown. Thus, for economic reasons, individual petty offenses were often dismissed. Once at trial, guilt was proven by confessions, the standard of proof required for "condemnation."

Unlike the modern American mantra of innocent until proven guilty, an accusation of witchcraft virtually ensured conviction, a proposition supported by Robert Mandrou, author of *Magistrats et Sorcières en France*. Once accused, "[h]ostile leading questioning, intimidation, false evidence like diabolical marks and especially torture were frequently used in order to squeeze confessions from the accused." These forced confessions were meant to ensure that witches would be the "keeper of the flames." One common method of identifying a witch, and thereby forcefully extracting a confession, was by way of a "Devil's mark." It was regarded as being "key proof of the reality of the witch's pact with the Devil." Jacques Fontaine, a professor of medicine at the University of Aix in Paris, examined a person with the Devil's mark and "published an account of [his] examination . . . [whereby h]e stated . . . that the Devil's mark was one of the best ways to discover a witch."

Torture is one of the oldest tactics used to elicit confessions. "In the revival of Roman law in medieval Europe the use of torture was broadened, and it became an integral part of the legal system, as a means to confessions." In some areas, like those within the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris, torture was less frequently used. This was in sharp contrast to many of the lower local

109. Id. at 32.
110. Id. at 32-33.
111. Id. at 33.
112. Id.
113. Id. at 10-11 ("When people were accused of witchcraft and associated crimes, they were handled in such a way that most of them were convicted and accused, according to Mandrou.").
114. Id. at 11.
115. See id. (referring to the practice of burning witches at the stake).
116. Pearl, supra note 15, at 300.
117. MONTER, supra note 5, at 159.
118. Pearl, supra note 15, at 300.
119. PEARL, supra note 1, at 33 (noting that torture was used in ancient Greece).
120. Id.
121. Id. at 34-35; infra note 122 and accompanying text.
jurisdictions, in which torture was both frequent and severe and “persisted throughout the seventeenth century.”122

As can be expected, as part of the torture practices, regions also developed methods of testing the accused. For example, beginning in the 1650s, the Vaud region used “witch-pricking procedures” to test for the Devil’s mark.123 As the name suggests, this involved testing the suspected witch with a needle.124 The accusers were incessant in their pursuit, claiming “that suspects must be tested for the Mark on three separate occasions both before and after confession.”125 Another testing procedure was the water test to see whether suspected witches sank or floated.126 Overall, because witchcraft was “an essentially secret crime as well as a very serious one, authorities felt justified in employing the strappado, the heated chair, vices for the arms and legs, thumbscrews, and other painful devices to uncover the truth.”127 For the accused, denial was a way out, but few utilized it. Although the denial of guilt could eventually clear the charge, “few were able to withstand [the] severe and prolonged torture”128 that led to the erasing of the charge.

With regard to punishment, witches in Europe were usually burned at the stake.129 Jean Bodin, arguably the most famous French demonologist, recommended that in accordance to the severity of their offenses, witches “should be slowly roasted alive over a fire of green wood;,”130 however, this was not regularly adhered to. Instead, “many of the condemned were granted the


123. MONTER, supra note 5, at 163 (“Vaud was less careful than Catholic Fribourg in testing, as in torturing, its suspected witches. Besides, the pastors of Vaud were persuaded of the critical importance of the Mark, as a logical consequence of their belief in the reality of the witch’s pact with the Devil.”).

124. Id.

125. Id.

126. PEARL, supra note 1, at 15; see also MONTER, supra note 5, at 164 (discussing how some physicians were as critical of the efficacy of pricking as they were of water torture).

127. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 27.

128. Id. at 28.

129. Id. at 29.

130. Id.
mercy of strangulation before the fire was well alight." For those who were not sentenced to death, punishments by "imprisonment, flogging, fines or exile" were common. Imprisonment was especially grueling considering the dreadful conditions and more akin to an extended death sentence than a prison term. The local authorities' acceptance of torture may have led to the perpetuation of, and even popular support for, witchcraft allegations and even vigilante justice. In one case, an old woman who had not received an invitation to a marriage-feast "swore vengeance and was burned to death by a number of people anxious to forestall her retribution." This old woman was burned "on the public square in the presence of the local authorities, who made no attempt to stop the proceedings."

The more lenient Parlement of Paris jurisdiction adhered to the following rules of evidence for guidance in reaching a decision with regard to interrogations:

[T]here were only three kinds of acceptable proof: a) tangible evidence, such as written pacts with the devil, or pots of unexplained grease or powders, especially if poisonous; b) free confessions, that is, not made under torture or the threat of torture; and c) the testimony of unimpeachable witnesses to an act of sorcery. Parlement considered any evidence not falling into one of these categories presumptive and not conclusory. Jean Bodin wrote extensively on the Parlement's strict burdens of proof and advocated a lower burden for witch trials.

131. Id.
132. Id.
133. Id.
134. DEVLIN, supra note 41, at 117-18.
135. Id. at 118.
136. Id.
137. Soman, supra note 122, at 37.
138. Id.
139. Id.

All other forms of evidence—denunciations by convicted witches at the foot of the scaffold, confessions made under torture and later retracted, deep-rooted suspicion on the part of the witch's neighbors, the devil's mark, failure to sink when subjected to trial by water—were only presumptions of guilt. Conviction upon presumptions could entail severe punishment, but without one of the three proofs there could be no death sentence.

138. Id.
The Parlement of Paris did not deal with witchcraft as the French demonologists advocated. Although it is true that up until the mid-1620s, "the Parlement routinely confirmed the vast majority of death sentences it reviewed upon appeal," after that date, the Parlement changed its perceptions of witchcraft forever. Although

evidence necessary to proceed to torture, etc.) in order to close some of the legal loopholes through which so many sorcerers seemed to be escaping execution.

Id. Bodin was also concerned that judicial skepticism of confessions would let too many witches go unpunished:

Bodin showed his concern with judicial skepticism and incredulity stating, "often judges are puzzled by the confessions of witches and are reluctant to base a sentence on them, given the strange things they confess, because some think that they are fables from what they say." This puzzlement could be a serious problem, if it led to witches going unpunished, letting their evil flourish and spread.

PEARL, supra note 1, at 119-20 (quoting JEAN BODIN, ON THE DEMON-MANIA OF WITCHES 1580, at 190 (Jonathon L. Pearl & Randy Scott eds. & trans., 1995)) (footnote omitted).

140. In fact, "only 5% to 10% of the accused managed to escape execution." Soman, supra note 122, at 32-33. The Parlement often acquitted appellants or commuted their sentences. PEARL, supra note 1, at 15-17.

141. Soman, supra note 122, at 33 ("It was not until a series of sensational scandals, involving demonic possession in urban convents of middle-class nuns, aroused a lively debate, that the magistrates began to re-examine their superstitions and adopt what may loosely be termed rationalistic standards . . . ."). A landmark decision in 1624 changed the fate of those accused of witchcraft by decreeing that all sentences that prescribed corporal or capital punishment were to be granted automatic appeal. Id. See MONTER, supra note 5, at 105 ("[T]here were no known deaths for witchcraft after 1614."). In fact, by 1640 Parlement had implemented procedures to enforce lower courts' adherence to its guidelines. See PEARL, supra note 1, at 15 ("They endeavoured to supervise the local courts more closely and end abusive illegalities in prosecutions. In some instances, this involved bringing criminal charges against local officials."). As a result, members of the French populace who became victims to witch spells devised ways to attack accused witches outside of the formal court system; their methods took on a sort of primitive justice. Kay S. Wilkins, Attitudes Toward Witchcraft and Demonic Possession in France During the Eighteenth Century, 3 J. EUR. STUD. 348, 352 (1973). The populace developed several antidotes to guard against witchcraft, reflecting the popular superstitions of the time. Id. These remedies included: "putting salt and onions in your pockets, spitting on your urine and washing your hands and feet in it, spitting on your right shoe, [spitting on] your hair ... thrice on your breast, etc." Id. (citation omitted). In addition, due to the need for an informal route to reverse the spells of witches, the counter-sorcerer was born. Id. The counter-sorcerer "introduced a degree of formality . . . and legitimacy" to those who were searching for guidance and support. Id. The role of the counter-sorcerer is exemplified by the following story:

[A] young woman's attack of hysteria was suspected as being due to a spell cast by an old neighbour. A counter-sorcerer was called in who administered a potion and held up a mirror to the girl, asking her if she recognized her enemy. She affirmed that the enemy was her neighbour and promptly recovered.

MONTER, supra note 5, at 110 ("The Vendeenne cited by Trebucq had identified her witch before the ceremony: the healer merely enabled her to confirm her suspicions. As her case makes clear, the counter-sorcerer provided a mise-en-scène, which enabled her worries to be expressed with dramatic formality and then resolved."). Counter-sorcere used various techniques to quench anxieties and expose the truth, such as showing the culprit in a mirror. Id. at 109-11; see also LEVACK, supra note 3, at 153 (noting that "[c]ounter-magic might have been used against the suspect in the past but this time, either because the misfortune was
Bodin's approach to the rules of evidence appears stricter than the ordinary approach, he in fact "does not really stray far from the 'half proof' criterion that was used in ordinary proceedings."\textsuperscript{142} That is, many local proceedings assigned torture if the prosecution had met only half of the elements of proof.\textsuperscript{143}

2. Patriarchal Society's Contribution

The patriarchal nature of French society also contributed to the prosecution of witches in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century France. Women were supposed to be submissive; when they were not, they were often ostracized and labeled witches. This was especially true given the fact that women were held in very low esteem. In addition, some women actively sought out folk religion in their religious pursuits. The folk religions were labeled as witchcraft because they did not conform to society's beliefs about women and religion.

A patriarchal system does not esteem a quarrelsome and aggressive woman. "Traditionally, peasant women in bad marriages [who voiced their dissent] . . . were branded as 'traitors' to their husbands . . . [O]utspoken wives were called shrews and suspected of witchcraft; when they spoke out against neighbors, . . . they were hauled into court for being a nuisance and a witch."\textsuperscript{144} Her accuser backed the archetypal witch into a corner because society disdained her unattractive appearance, eccentric behavior and refusal to submit to patriarchal control. Already socially ostracized, women accused of witchcraft were too poor to resist; their status in society sealed their fate.\textsuperscript{145}

In the French patriarchal society, women were historically blamed for inexplicable harms and tragedies.\textsuperscript{146} Women did not receive compassion in the trial process. This was mainly because those in position of authority were men\textsuperscript{147} and perpetuating the notion of women as the cause of evil required that no mercy be given

\textsuperscript{142} PEARL, supra note 1, at 119 (footnote omitted).
\textsuperscript{143} Id.
\textsuperscript{144} BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 28.
\textsuperscript{145} Id. at 29.
\textsuperscript{146} See supra notes 25-50 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{147} BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 142.
to them at trial. Men were the “accusers, the ministers, priests, constables, jailers, judges, doctors, prickers, torturers, jurors, and executioners, and the court of appeal as well.”

Women could play virtually no role in the prosecution process; except for initiating accusations. To illustrate women’s powerless status, females could testify only if there were a sufficient number of corroborating witnesses.

Under this male-dominated system, it is not surprising that “80 percent of those accused and 85 percent of those executed were female.”

Women were repressed in their religious pursuits as well. Because the church barred women from entering the priesthood, witchcraft was the only avenue open to women who wanted to preach. These women found an outlet in “medieval heretical groups” that gave them the leadership roles they were seeking.

What was commonly perceived as witchcraft was, in effect, the practice of folk religion, the only alternative of the day. What becomes evident concerning witchcraft is that it was part of an ongoing sex war.

---

148. Id. (footnote omitted).

149. PEARL, supra note 1, at 118 (“Disreputable characters or women [whose testimony was worth half that of men, because of 'the imbecility and fragility of the sex'] could testify[,] as long as there were several witnesses.”) (quoting JEAN BODIN, ON THE DEMON-MANIA OF WITCHES 1580, at 185-87 (Jonathon L. Pearl & Randy Scott eds. & trans., 1995)) (alterations in original).

150. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 142.

This all-male establishment paid off . . . . As for the appeal process, few women attempted it: in France, 50 percent of the appeals to Parlement were by men, although only 20 percent of the accused were male. The power of the courts trying witches, operating as they were under an extraordinary dispensation from normal legal procedure, gave these men exceptional power over women, and many of them used it to carry out sadistic sexual practices on the victims. Therefore when women asserted themselves, challenging this patriarchal system in any way, they were punished.

Id. (footnote omitted).

151. WALKER, supra note 22, at 77.

152. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 5.

153. See id. (reviewing the scholarly debate as to whether witchcraft should be considered a folk religion).

154. See, e.g., BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 113.

Unfazed by their own complicity in relying on magic, the churches still insisted on attacking folk healers. These latter were in fact the priests’ competition . . . . But the women had a special edge over the clergy; as the authorities on matters of sex, they asserted what control was possible over fertility, conception, successful pregnancy, and safe childbirth.

Id.
3. Authors' and Demonologists' Contributions

Authors in the Middle Ages and early modern period in France perpetuated the witchcraft phenomenon by introducing significant concepts in the areas of witchcraft and demonology. The work of the famed Lorraine magistrate Nicolas Remy discussed how "supreme worship that is only due to God is given to the Evil One, in a sacrilegious and abominable manner." He "boasted that he sent eight or nine hundred to their deaths." Remy also "sentenced children of convicted witches to be beaten with rods as they watched their parents being burned alive (and then wondered if he had been too lenient)."

Other French authors wrote equally horrific accounts of witchcraft and the treatment it warranted, including Henri Boguet in 1596, Franche-Comté's demonologist. In his treatise, Examen of Witches, he contended that:

the devil is interested only in those [individuals] past puberty. Still, he condemned young children, believing that once possessed, no one could struggle free of the devil's hold. Boguet is best known for his extreme cruelty, his insisting on burning some victims alive . . . and lashing and burning children. One frantic woman, Claude Janguillaume, tore herself free from the stake three times, only to be dragged back each time by the executioner.

Jean Bodin published "one of the most influential guides to witch-hunting, the Demonomanic des Sorciers." He expounded "extreme arguments" concerning witches and believed that "witches promised Satan babies still in the womb, ate human flesh, drank human blood, had intercourse with the devil, and sacrificed their own children to Satan." He advocated torture and the death

156. Id.
157. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 65.
158. Id.
159. MONTER, supra note 5, at 69.
160. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 66 (footnote omitted).
161. See supra note 10 and accompanying text (discussing Jean Bodin's work as an eminent French demonologist).
162. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 175.
163. Id.
penalty. He believed “it was better to kill innocent persons than to allow a witch to live.” His views also reflected his wariness of women. “Claiming that he had known a few wise men but never a wise woman, Bodin confirmed that the female sex was a potential threat to society.”

An author possessing contrasting views from most of the writers of his time was Michel de Montaigne. Pronounced as “the best known French writer of the sixteenth century,” he held views opposing writers like Bodin, and was heavily criticized for such. In his Essays concerning witches, he argued that “it is to put a very high value on your surmises to roast a man alive for them.” He was prepared to defend his unpopular beliefs on witch punishment, a posture difficult to maintain during this time period.

4. The Demise of Witch-Hunts

During the latter Middle Ages and early modern period in Europe, “[p]eople of all social classes, from peasants to the elites, shared views of the reality of spells and magical manipulations of the natural world.” These views, many of which were initiated by men of the cloth, were shared by a broad class of citizenry. It was not until the 1630s and 1640s that “intellectuals and judges began to question traditional approaches to witchcraft and the Parlement of Paris reduced and gradually ended prosecutions for that crime.” In the seventeenth century, witchcraft prosecutions in France ended forever, upon the order of Louis XIV.

Even though the elite’s focus on witchcraft diminished, the lower classes’ belief in such supernatural forces continued. Much of this is to be expected due to the fact that the peasants took out
their frustrations over crop failure, disease and starvation on the only society members in a more inferior position. The perpetuation of witch-hunts “cast light on people's feelings and how they coped with them.” Commoners held steadfast to their beliefs in an effort to calm and rationalize their fears.

With all the discourse on the phenomenon of witchcraft, it must be realized that witch-hunts were not “a unique event to be filed under the 'historical unrepeatable past.'” Rather, they were, and continue to be, a reflection on the diverse and ever evolving methods used to repress those groups in society which question the patriarchal norm: mainly the poor and women.

II. SLAVERY, PLAÇAGE AND WITCHCRAFT IN NEW ORLEANS

In New Orleans, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were times that earmarked the perpetual subordination of women by men whose control extended over natural resources, wealth and, last but not least, human beings. Most Europeans saw slaves as being sub-human, “exploitable cheap labor and nothing more.” The mirrored growth of the slave trade and the “violent misogyny of the witch-hunts” during the sixteenth century is all too clear.

From a social point of view, the peaks in the persecution of witchcraft coincided with an overcrowded rural world in which life was made very difficult indeed by higher prices—that is, they coincided with a “conjunctural” impoverishment of the peasant masses. This impoverishment was felt all the more keenly during these periods because it was an intensification of a centuries-long process of “real pauperization of the rural mass” and of “growing parcellization” of agricultural holdings.

Id.: see supra notes 25-29 and accompanying text.

176. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 265.

177. DEVLIN, supra note 41, at 102.

178. See supra notes 32-34 and accompanying text (discussing some of the ways peasants blamed their hardships on witchcraft).

179. HESTER, supra note 32, at 202.

180. Id.

181. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 159.

182. Id.

183. Id.; see also ORLANDO PATTERSON, RITUALS OF BLOOD: CONSEQUENCES OF SLAVERY IN
order to see the similarities between suppressed persons in the patriarchal New Orleans system, and the witches of early France, it is first necessary to understand the transcontinental origins of both slaves in New Orleans and the emergence of witchcraft in New Orleans.

A. The History of New Orleans: Economics and the Arrival of Slaves

New Orleans, Louisiana boasts a thriving economic history. This, coupled with the Code Noir, paved the way for the emergence of witchcraft in America in the form of voodoo. New Orleans became the hub of the slave trade. 184 “By the beginning of the territorial period, . . . lower Louisiana was entering an agricultural and commercial boom.” 185 Saint Domingue, the world’s leading producer of sugar, was feeling the aftershock of France’s war with Britain and Louisiana’s sugar industry began to profit. 186 By 1804, the region “above and below New Orleans boasted nearly eighty sugar plantations, which may have produced more than five million pounds of sugar.” 187 Cotton plantations were also booming, which, in conjunction with the sugar plantations, increased the demand for slave labor. 188 In terms of population, the colony saw unprecedented growth. 189 New Orleans also flourished because it was “Louisiana’s primary urban center and port.” 190 As an international port, various products traveled through New Orleans on their way to Europe and the Americas, including “furs, hides, timber, and agricultural products.” 191 New Orleans also served as the “entrepôt for slaves and various goods such as flour and cloth that colonials could not

---

185. Id. at 211.
186. Id. at 210-11.
187. Id. at 212.
188. Id.
190. See id. at 11 (noting that there was a “royal cédula (decree) of 1782 (that) admitted slaves disembarked from French West Indies ports duty-free”).
191. Id. at 10.
supply on their own." Therefore, New Orleans had a rich history, in part from all its exchanges with various regions.

The majority of free men in the Louisiana territory in the early 1700s were trappers, miners, soldiers and adventurers, although there was a small contingent of government officials from France. These French officials brought their wives to the colonies; the other white women in Louisiana "were not only few in number, but also were frequently former inmates of asylums and houses of correction in France who had been brought to the frontier territory by force." Many of the men described these women as "ugly, ignorant, irascible, and promiscuous." This description of white women in New Orleans during this period correlates with the description of women accused of witchcraft in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France.

The voyage of slaves to New Orleans was facilitated by the fact that Louisiana was "part of a mutually dependent system of colonies in the Caribbean." France ruled, and claimed ownership of, Louisiana, the colony named for the "Sun King," Louis XIV. Louisiana, as part of the colonial system, supplied the French islands with lumber for the sugar industry and naval stores. In return, Louisiana received sugar and slaves. Louisiana did not flourish, either economically or demographically, during this period of French rule.

French rule of Louisiana did not last long, however. "After ruling—or actually neglecting—Louisiana for almost seven decades, France ceded its territory west of the Mississippi River, plus the Isle of New Orleans, to Spain following the Seven Years' War."
Thereafter, although the population of Louisiana consisted of settlers of French origin and slaves of African descent, Spain ruled the territory. 203

Spain's objectives were "to attract settlers to the region in order to defend it, balance the somewhat hostile French population remaining in the colony and promote agricultural and commercial growth." 204 To achieve these goals, Spain created an attractive immigration policy, one more effective than the previous French policy. "With generous grants of land, tools, and foodstuffs the crown enticed Isleños, Malagueños, and refugees from Acadia and Saint-Domingue to Louisiana." 205 Spain governed Louisiana for approximately forty years, at which point the colony was again under French rule until the United States purchased Louisiana. 206

During the initial years of United States rule in Louisiana, the population soared. "[A] substantial portion of the rapid population growth in Orleans territory derived from legal and illegal immigration from Saint Domingue." 207 The influx of Saint Dominguans profoundly influenced the development and economic vitality of Louisiana. 208 In addition to the economic and cultural effects of the migration of Saint Dominguans to Louisiana, the French-owned slaves and free people of color brought their beliefs and practices concerning witchcraft to America as well.

transfer was made through "the secret Treaty of Fountainebleau, signed on 3 November 1762, and the public Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years' War in 1763." HANGER, supra note 189, at 7.

204. HANGER, supra note 189, at 8.
205. Id. Saint Domingue is now known as Haiti. Paquette, supra note 184, at 204. Saint Domingue was populated by free people of color, growing in numbers and power. Fick, supra note 199, at 56. Many Saint Dominguans were well-educated and employed in business and the trades. Id. "Moreover, the free people of color of Saint Domingue ... owned one-third of the colony's plantations, one-quarter (over 100,000) of the slaves, and one-quarter of the real estate property." Id.
206. HANGER, supra note 189, at 8.
207. Paquette, supra note 184, at 214.
208. See id. at 214-15.

Whites filled roles as legislators, jurists, artists, educators, physicians, and journalists as well as planters, and in the process reinforced besieged French culture; free people of color occupied a wide range of arts and skilled trades, from cabinetry to fencing instruction; slaves provided muscle, skills, and knowledge that contributed to the success of Louisiana's nascent sugar industry.

Id. at 214.
B. The Emergence of Witchcraft in New Orleans

Witchcraft has slowly emerged in New Orleans as a result of a variety of factors. Immigrants from Saint Domingue brought with them their belief in voodoo. The slaves of New Orleans contributed to the emergence of witchcraft with their own version of voodoo: Hoodoo. The practice of placage in New Orleans contributed greatly to the modern form of witchcraft. There are a great deal of similarities between witchcraft in France and voodoo in New Orleans. These similarities provide us with insight as to the modern practice of witchcraft in America.

1. Placage\textsuperscript{209} and the Emergence of American Voodoo

The origin of the voodoo cult—voodoo being a spiritual power—is often associated with witchcraft.\textsuperscript{210} The voodoo practice made its way to the United States through the slave trade, as well as through the migration of French colonists and free people of color from Saint Domingue.\textsuperscript{211} “Packed in narrow spaces, in leaky and unseaworthy ships,”\textsuperscript{212} they made their way to New Orleans with only the bare essentials, among them, their belief in voodoo. Hence, the beginning of voodoo in America.\textsuperscript{213} The practice of placage allowed the voodoo to evolve through integration.

Some writers maintain that “hoodoo,” the African-American form of voodoo, has its roots in the vaudois, French for witch, that emigrated into Saint Domingue.\textsuperscript{214} Modern witches are reluctant to link the vaudois with hoodoo; an alternate view is that the term has African, not French roots.\textsuperscript{215} The fact that French witches emigrated to Saint Domingue,\textsuperscript{216} and then to Louisiana during the Saint

\textsuperscript{209} See infra note 219 and accompanying text.


\textsuperscript{211} ROBERT TALLANT, VOODOO IN NEW ORLEANS 9 (1946); Paquette, supra note 184, at 214; see also supra notes 207-08 and accompanying text (discussing the population growth of Louisiana following its transfer to the United States).

\textsuperscript{212} HENRY C. CASTELLANOS, NEW ORLEANS AS IT WAS: EPISODES OF LOUISIANA LIFE 301 (Pelican Publ. Co. 1961) (1895).

\textsuperscript{213} NEWBELL NILES PUCKETT, FOLK BELIEFS OF THE SOUTHERN NEGRO 177 (1969).

\textsuperscript{214} Id.; see also MONTER, supra note 5, at 195 (connecting French and African witchcraft).

\textsuperscript{215} PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 177. “[The word voodoo is] derived from the vo (to inspire fear) of the Ewe-speaking peoples and signifying a god—one who inspires fear.” Id.

\textsuperscript{216} HURBON, supra note 4, at 168.
THE PRAXIS OF CHURCH AND STATE

Domingue revolution of the early 1800s, underscores the intermingling of the races on a social basis under the Code Noir. Placage was the outcome of racial intermingling in New Orleans society. Thus, it is not difficult to recognize the outcome of the intermingling between religions as well.

New Orleans was firm in its approach to interracial sexual unions. American colonial areas did not condone interracial unions publicly, but New Orleans permitted the openness. In New Orleans, factors that contributed to a free black population and mixed unions included "a flexible, diverse economy and a scarcity of white women, artisans, and soldiers." Because there were few white women, white males engaged in forced and consensual relations with Indians, Africans, and castas. Even more interesting for the time period is that these relations were not publicly condemned. In fact, slave women's offspring were often recognized after the death of the father.

The offspring of these [interracial] unions were sometimes recognized in a planter's will, perhaps by a white man making public admission of his alliance only after his death. In 1825, Philip Henshaw made a clear declaration of paternity and affection for a slave offspring:

"I give and bequeath to my daughter (for such I believe her to be) Floreal Floretta . . . her freedom. I also bequeath her one half my estate of every description whatsoever, to her and her

217. Id.
218. The Code Noir, or Black Code, was issued by Louis XIV in 1685 and lists in detail the "nonrights of black slaves and the rights of the white masters." Id. at 28. The Code classified black slaves as personal property, forbade African religious ceremonies and regulated every aspect of their work, rest, family and nourishment. Id. at 23, 28.
219. Martin, supra note 193, at 57-58. "Placage was the practice that existed in Louisiana (and other French and Spanish slaveholding territories) whereby women of color—the option of legal marriage denied to them—entered into long-standing, formalized relationships with white European men." Id.
220. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 178. Within Africa, "in the southeastern portions of the Ewe territory . . . the adoration of the snake god was carried to Hayti by slaves from Ardra and Whydah, where the faith still remains today." Id. African voodoo (or vodu) entered when the "Dahomies invaded Ardra and subjugated it" in 1724. Id. Whydah was conquered soon thereafter. Id. These two conquests led to the selling and shipping of great numbers of tribes people, along with their vodu religion, to America. Id.
221. Violet Harrington Bryan, Marcus Christian's Treatment of Les Gens de Couleur Libre, in CREOLE: THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF LOUISIANA'S FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR 42, 48 (Sybil Kein ed., 2000). But see HANGER, supra note 189, at 97 ("The free black women who engaged in sexual relationships with white men . . . were condemned as 'lewd,' 'lascivious,' and 'licitious' in New Orleans and throughout the Americas.") (citation omitted).
222. HANGER, supra note 189, at 11.
223. Id. "Castas" are individuals of mixed race. Id. at 2.
224. Id.
heirs forever. It is my desire that my sister Sallie Gatewood, out of the estate I have devised to Floreal Floretta, shall board her at some decent white woman's house and have her educated... in the event of my sister Sallie Gatewood complying with the foregoing request, I give her and her heirs forever one-half of my estate.\textsuperscript{225}

A unique characteristic of lower Louisiana was the "relatively equal proportion of whites and slaves and the size of the free colored class, which by 1810 amounted to almost 10 percent of the total population."\textsuperscript{226} Even so, "[s]ex ratios amongst slaves were much more balanced than among libres and almost evened out in the early 1790's."\textsuperscript{227} Uneven sex ratios "contributed to racial mixture in New Orleans, ... where white females were scarce and women of indigenous or African descent were plentiful. White conquerors... believed that one of the rewards of conquest consisted of sexual favors from subordinated peoples, and thus there emerged a casta population."\textsuperscript{228} Consent was not an issue in a societal structure where "slaveowners maintained despotic rule."\textsuperscript{229} Moreover, the slave female "could not really give herself 'freely,' for she did not have herself to give: she already belonged to the master."\textsuperscript{230} Falling in love was an impractical concept for the female slave in southern society.\textsuperscript{231}

In most urban centers like New Orleans, there were more slave females—mainly domestics—than males, in contrast to the countryside, where planters preferred men slaves to work the fields and perform skilled and managerial tasks. Among libres, however, the disparity was much greater: females outnumbered males about two to one...\textsuperscript{232}

The sheer multitude of black women can also be explained, in part, by the number of Saint Domingue immigrants who moved to

\textsuperscript{225} CATHERINE CLINTON, THE PLANTATION MISTRESS 213 (1982) (omissions in original).
\textsuperscript{226} Paquette, supra note 184, at 214. The 1721 Census of New Orleans revealed striking figures: "145 white men, 65 white women, 38 children, 29 white servants, 172 blacks, and 21 Indian slaves." HANGER, supra note 189, at 12. The 1777 New Orleans Census demonstrates this continuing trend of white males outnumbering white females; the ratio was one hundred seventy-five white males to every one hundred white females. \textit{Id.} at 23.
\textsuperscript{227} HANGER, supra note 189, at 23. Libres are free persons of African descent. \textit{Id.} at 1.
\textsuperscript{228} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{229} CLINTON, supra note 225, at 213.
\textsuperscript{230} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{231} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{232} HANGER, supra note 189, at 23; see also Bryan, supra note 221, at 55 (discussing the growing population of free blacks).
New Orleans during Napoleon's invasion of Spain. Of the 9,000 refugees who came to New Orleans, “about 70 percent were women and children; about the same proportion were persons of color, almost equally divided between slaves and [libres].”

Although uncommon, official marriage unions between whites and libres occurred frequently enough to rouse suspicion. However, interracial marriages violated the “Royal Pragmatic,” which was issued by the crown in 1776. Getting married was difficult for those who disregarded the law. Spain instituted the requirement that all persons under twenty-five years of age wishing to marry needed parental consent.

The [Royal] Pragmatic exempted castas and blacks, because it was assumed that they were illegitimate and did not know who or where their parents were. Nevertheless, after receiving special permission and the consent of their families, a white and free black couple could marry in the Catholic Church . . . in New Orleans. . . . One scholar of Saint Domingue notes that “even during the last few decades of the colony, marriage between . . . impecunious white Frenchmen and comfortably placed women of color were common enough to inspire bitter comment.” Interracial marriage, however, was primarily of concern to status-conscious white aristocrats; few poor Spanish and wealthy mixed-race families objected to unions between their members and darker-skinned castas.

Marriages between whites and free blacks were even infrequently recorded in white marriage registers; however, this appears to be the result of the free person of color “passing” as white.

For interracial couples to whom marriage was denied, plaqage was a socially acceptable alternative. In combination with posthumous recognition of mixed race children, plaqage enabled many free people of color in New Orleans to acquire wealth and

---

234. Id. (footnote omitted); see also H.E. Sterick, THE FREE NEGRO IN ANTE-BELLUM LOUISIANA 264-65 (1972) (providing a very interesting discussion regarding the life of the libres in Louisiana, specifically their ability to assemble for religious purposes).
235. Hanger, supra note 189, at 93.
236. Id. at 92.
237. Id.
238. Id. (citation omitted).
239. Id.
240. Bryan, supra note 221, at 57-58, 65. But see id. at 65 (noting that lawmakers attempted to end the practice of plaqage).
241. See supra note 225 and accompanying text.
Along with the accumulation of wealth, these free people of color “equal[led] in education, refinement, and culture the best of their white fellow-citizens.” It is important to note the significant difference between English slave law and the French Code Noir. Slavery as a social institution was accepted in the English colonies without legal authorization. The Code Noir differed from laws governing slavery in the rest of the South in that slaves could be manumitted, could sue in court and could own property. Thus, the English paradigm of slavery was based solely on race, whereas the French paradigm was non-racist.

It is true that families in New Orleans exhibited mixed patterns of living arrangements, with anywhere from “some members maintaining long-term common-law relationships with one partner,” to others “seeking legitimate marriages,” to “still others having relationships with many partners.” Instead of establishing a “harem,” the slave owner would coalesce with a habitual lover. The offspring of these unions, as discussed above, were sometimes recognized only after the man’s death. Thus, “some did acknowledge their partners and their natural children in wills, inter vivos donations, and sacramental records.” This showing of adoration after the planter passed, however, evoked tensions between remaining blood family members. One man, Philip Henshaw, who willed property to his daughter, a slave offspring, had to bribe his sister in order to ensure that his wishes would be carried out after his death. This proved to be a common thing for the deceased to worry about because records indicate that “manumissions and other bequests to mulatto or slave individuals owned by the deceased were often challenged if legal white heirs, especially widows or legitimate offspring, were living.” As a result, courts saw an increasing number of suits brought by white widows and sons. The family’s efforts were not in vain because the law was often on their side.

242. Bryan, supra note 221, at 65. “In New Orleans a class of rich families of color became known as the ‘cordon bleus.’” Id. at 65.
243. Id.
244. ALAN WATSON, SLAVE LAW IN THE AMERICAS 64 (1989).
245. Id. at 132.
246. HANGER, supra note 189, at 99.
247. CLINTON, supra note 225, at 213.
248. Id.; see supra note 225 and accompanying text.
249. HANGER, supra note 189, at 98.
250. CLINTON, supra note 225, at 213-14.
251. Id. at 213.
252. Id.
253. Id. at 214.
widow, "especially if she was in debt." Freedom was often taken away as well. "The wish of a testator to emancipate a slave was frequently dismissed as deathbed delirium and the slave disposed of by the executor of the will." The colored class in society was bound into a position of inferiority and immobility by a white culture that harbored fear of unrest and uprising. The proportion of slaves and free persons of color increasing relative to whites, and the migration of resistant peoples from Saint Domingue, fed the pool of anxiety "about governance and social control." "Territorial officials and planters repeatedly confronted real and imagined rumblings from below, influenced to greater or lesser degrees by Saint Domingue/Haiti."

The fear had a long history in Louisiana, stretching back from the days the French and Spanish ruled the territory. The belief that the free blacks would have a rebellious effect on orderly slave societies and disturb the "hierarchical order" increased the fear. Throughout history, all of the countries that governed New Orleans feared the worst and took preventive action.

During the years of the French and Haitian Revolutions the Spanish government increased enforcement of its system of checks and balances among several corporate groups in society in order to avert mayhem, especially in the unstable Caribbean. These entities were components of "a hierarchical order, to be manipulated and counterbalanced against one another." An absence of overt rebellion and the failure of insurrectionary plots in late eighteenth-century Louisiana indicate in part that Spanish officials triumphed in their handling of the various interest groups.

Indeed, that the French and Spanish took such action before the Saint-Domingue rebellion indicates their fear of libre-slave collusion. Officials under American rule espoused the same

254. Id.
255. Id.
256. Paquette, supra note 184, at 215.
257. Id.
258. HANGER, supra note 189, at 151-52.
259. Id. at 152.
260. Id. at 151 (quoting 2 CHRISTIAN SCHULTZ, TRAVELS ON AN ISLAND VOYAGE THROUGH THE STATES OF NEW YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA, OHIO, KENTUCKY, TENNESSEE, AND THROUGH THE TERRITORIES OF INDIANA, LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI, AND NEW ORLEANS, PERFORMED IN THE YEARS 1807 AND 1808; INCLUDING A TOUR OF NEARLY SIX THOUSAND MILES 197 (New York, Isaac Ripley 1810)).
261. Id. at 150.
sentiment. In 1804 William C. Clairborne, provisional governor of the Louisiana territory and the first governor of Orleans territory, warned that "at some future period, this quarter of the Union must (I fear) experience in some degree, the misfortunes of St. Domingo."262

Fear became a reality in January of 1811 when the largest slave revolt in United States history occurred in Louisiana.

Hundreds of slaves—perhaps as many as five hundred—revolted in the river parishes of Saint Charles and Saint John the Baptist ... They rose on the sugar plantation of Manuel Andry in Saint John the Baptist Parish, less than forty miles northwest of New Orleans. They wounded Andry and killed his second son, ... advancing "rapidly" toward New Orleans. Along the way they burned plantations and destroyed other property and gathered into their ranks slaves from neighboring plantations.263

Wade Hampton of South Carolina, commander-in-chief of the United States in the Southern Division, arrived on January 6, 1811, and moved with his troops.264 Major Homer Virgil Milton, with troops from Baton Rouge met the challenge as well.265

[They] surprised the rebels on the sugar plantation of Bernard Bernoudi. About seventy slaves ... were killed in battle or summarily executed immediately thereafter. Survivors fled to swamps ... Some of those captured stood trial; at least twenty-one were found guilty and put to death. Only two or three whites appear to have been killed.266

In an extreme example of what could happen when slaves revolted, authorities left a vivid example, in order to be sure that this would never happen again. They ordered those awaiting execution to be decapitated; "their heads were stuck on poles for display from Andry's plantation downriver along the east bank to New Orleans."267 The white population became paranoid not only because of the history of the Saint Domingue revolt, but because of "the loose and fluid" life that persisted in New Orleans.268 For instance, "[s]laves often lived away from their masters and hired

262. Paquette, supra note 184, at 218 (footnote omitted).
263. Id.
264. Id.
265. Id. at 218-19.
266. Id. at 219.
267. Id.
268. Id. at 215.
themselves out up and down the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{2}

Apprehension about an uprising was never far from anyone's minds. "Claiborne repeatedly warned his superiors of the bands of 'young adventurers' in New Orleans from France and the French West Indies, who are 'troublesome for this society,' 'desperate,' and possessed of 'revolutionary disposition.'"\textsuperscript{7} Whenever dissent was taken up by a suspicious group of people, the groups were labeled and ways were found to quench their power, much like what was done to witches and voodoo queens.

"White apprehension of subversive activity among large groups of African slaves and libres in the context of the Saint-Domingue rebellion forced the performance of African religious practices into the back rooms or outskirts of the city."\textsuperscript{7} One such practice to express their beliefs was by dancing. As an early nineteenth-century witness observed, the "sight of twenty different dancing groups of the wretched Africans, collected together [in the rear of the town] to perform their worship after the manner of their country," scared many people who didn't understand their practices.\textsuperscript{7}

"On one Sunday in 1799 another visitor remarked on the 'vast numbers of negro slaves, men, women, and children assembled together on the levee . . . dancing in large rings' at the edge of town."\textsuperscript{7} Expression through dance, and the resulting fear of it, is comparative to how the witches and voodoo queens worshipped and how greatly they were feared.

The Americanization of Louisiana brought the same dread of insurrection. On December 20, 1803, the former French and Spanish colony was transferred to the United States.\textsuperscript{7}

With the Americanization of Louisiana and the commercialization of sugar and cotton production, free blacks encountered increasing discrimination and legal restrictions that would draw them together and more clearly define their position in New Orleans society. They, like the "large mulatto populations of Saint-Domingue and Cuba, suffered persecution and exclusion during periods of rising expectations, sugar boom, and self-generated economic competition."\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{269} Id.
\textsuperscript{270} Id. (footnote omitted).
\textsuperscript{271} HANGER, supra note 189, at 139.
\textsuperscript{272} Id. (alteration in original) (footnote omitted).
\textsuperscript{273} Id. (alteration in original) (footnote omitted).
\textsuperscript{274} Id. at 163.
\textsuperscript{275} Id.
With the "harsh Black Codes," a further effort was made to subjugate slaves to an even further inferior status to prevent any uprising. Officials decreed:

that slaveholders could not free slaves under the age of thirty, that they had to post bond upon manumission, and that the newly freed had to leave the territory. Laws also required free black residents to carry proof of free status with them at all times and forbade marriage between whites and blacks and even between libres and slaves. In addition, free blacks from the West Indies or anywhere else could not enter Orleans Territory under threat of a twenty-dollar fine for every week they stayed.

Although at times there was unrest, during much of the New Orleans colonial period free blacks "generally accepted and identified with the colonial status structure." Free blacks in New Orleans . . . imitated white vecinos in manner and attitude in order to distance themselves from slave status, gain acceptance, and cultivate patronage. "America the free" was truly no better at keeping its promise than any other country to date.

2. Similarities Between Voodoo and Witchcraft

Upon a closer look at witchcraft in France and voodoo in New Orleans, it becomes apparent that there are a number of similarities between the two. First and foremost, both witchcraft and voodoo have a very strong spiritual component. Both have startling similarities between their structures and rituals. In addition, both have been feared by the patriarchal society because of their lack of conformance to patriarchal norms and societal expectations of women.

Voodoo is a misnomer; rather than inspiring fear, it is a form of spiritual empowerment for women. Despite its spiritual basis, its manifestations are suspect to the outsider. Those who follow the
voodoo faith believe that mediums have the power to communicate with spirits. Believers profess that "the spirits bring messages from beyond this world; spirits are invoked during special rituals and have the gift of prophecy." The similarities between voodoo and witchcraft are inextricably tied to the concept of spiritual expansion and prophecy.

The voodoos have African symbols of worship and terms that are similar to witchcraft. In Africa, Dañh-gbi, "the deity of the python, is esteemed as omniscient." The devil has a similar connotation in witchcraft. This Dañh-gbi python holds within his power an "order of priests and many wives, termed kosio, who devote their lives to licentious dancing and debauchery—a sort of religious prostitution." The spirit of Dañh-gbi is said to possess the body of a priest and speak through him. In New Orleans, "the two ministers of this serpent god—the king and the queen—. . . communicate the will of the sacred serpent." These ministers hold life tenure and disobeying them is considered horrifying, since it "[i]s an offense against the deity himself." Voodooism in New Orleans centered on "worship of the serpent."

Just as witchcraft was marked by secret Sabbaths, Louisiana voodoo held secret meetings as part of the rite. These secret meetings were generally held at night. More similarities to witchcraft are found throughout the voodoo ritual. "[Voodoo] blends the practices of three continents into one tradition. It contains

---

281. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 178.
282. Reis, supra note 280, at 157; see also Zora Neale Hurston, Hoodoo in America, 44 J. AM. FOLK-LORE 317, 319 (1931).

Spiritualism, as a technique for communication with the dead, has a ready appeal to the black, and is often closely combined with hoodoo practices. There are many advantages to a hoodoo doctor in embracing spiritualism. . . . A spiritualistic name protects the congregation, and is a useful devise [sic] of protective coloration. Not all spiritualistic congregations practice hoodoo. The original Spiritualist church in New Orleans is apparently free of hoodoo.

Id. "The practice of Voodooism, which emphasizes ritual and secrecy, had widespread appeal to Louisiana's free Negro population and even for some White devotees." STERKX, supra note 234, at 264-65.
283. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 178.
284. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 15.
285. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 178.
286. Id.
287. Id.
288. Id. at 179.
289. Id. (quoting THE PICAYUNE'S GUIDE TO NEW ORLEANS (1986)).
290. See supra notes 85-93 and accompanying text.
291. See TALLANT, supra note 211, at 7-8.
292. See id. at 12 (describing the nighttime ceremonies in New Orleans).
African ancestor reverence, Native American earth worship and European Christian occultism.”

There are striking similarities between the Haitian voodooienne and the European witch. Individuals paid their respect to the voodoo god and “implore[d] the voodoo god—to invoke blessings upon friends and curses upon enemies.” Likewise the curse was an all too familiar feature attributed to the witch. It is the voodooienne who made physical contact with the snake deity, whereby her body was “seized with convulsions as the oracle talked through her inspired lips.” Just as the witch was regarded as more sensitive to hypnotic influence, the invocation of the deity by the voodooienne implies that voodoo shared this belief too. Once all formalities are finished, such as offerings and oaths, the voodoo dance can begin.

The voodoo dance marks the initiation of new members to the cult:

The voodoo king traces a large circle in the center of the room with a piece of charcoal and places within it the sable neophyte. He now thrusts into his hand a package of herbs, horse hair, rancid tallow, waxen effigies, broken bits of horn, and other substances equally nauseating. Then lightly striking him on the head with a small wooden paddle, he launches forth into . . . [a] chant . . . [T]he candidate begins to squirm and dance—an action called “monter voudou.” If he steps out of the ring in his frenzy, the king and queen turn their backs to neutralize the bad omen. Again the candidate enters the ring, again he becomes convulsed; drinking some stimulant, he relapses into an hysterical fit. To stop this the king sometimes hits him with a wooden paddle or with a cowhide. Then the initiate is led to the altar to take the oath, and from that moment becomes a full-fledged member of the order.

The king then places his foot upon the box containing the snake. He seems to get a sort of shock which is transmitted to his queen, and through her to every one in the circle. Violent convulsions take place, the queen being the most violently affected. From time to time the serpent is again touched to get more magnetic power. The box is shaken, and tinkling bells on

294. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 178.
295. SCARRE, supra note 20, at 3-4.
296. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 181.
297. Id.
298. Id.
the side increase the general delirium already under way, aggravated by much drinking of spirituous liquors. "Then is pandemonium let loose. Fainting fits and choking spells succeed one another. A nervous tremor possesses everybody. No one escapes its power. They spin with incredible velocity, whilst some, in the midst of these bacchanalian orgies, tear their vestments and even lacerate their flesh with their gnashing teeth. Others, entirely deprived of reason, fall down to the ground from sheer lassitude and are carried, still panting and gyrating into the open air."

The voodoo initiation dance and the witches' Sabbath devil dance have similar ritualistic components. For instance, descriptions of both ceremonies include a ritual circle, frenzied dancing and bacchanalian revelry. The similar nature of the ceremonies supports the argument that it was the social heterogeneity of New Orleans that enabled French witches to mix with Caribbean émigrés to create the modern form of voodoo practiced in Louisiana, which was dominated by women, unlike its Haitian counterpart.

Voodoioiennes' association with evil is also important because of the similar characterizations of witches, as discussed in Part I of this Article. "[T]hey use philters, drugs and poisonous substances in their wicked operations" called "gris-gris."

[Voodoioiennes] use dirt taken from graveyards. They employ certain powders, which they scatter around such places as they suppose their victims are apt to touch with their hands or feet, and the effect of these powders is to produce inflammation, pain and fever. Even feather pillows are impregnated with deleterious substances...

C. The Patriarchal System Re-emerges in New Orleans

New Orleans was rife with rumors of voodoism and women's practice thereof. The Euro-Americans' accounts of voodoo

299. Id. at 182-83 (quoting H.C. CASTELLANOS, NEW ORLEANS AS IT WAS 92-95 (New Orleans, 1895)).
300. See supra note 93 and accompanying text.
301. See supra notes 93, 299 and accompanying text.
302. HALL, supra note 6, at 302.
303. CASTELLANOS, supra note 212, at 100.
304. Id.
305. Id.
ceremonies described them as orgies, not as worship rituals.\textsuperscript{306} The academic perception of the voodoo religion practiced by women concentrates on the physical manifestations and dismisses it as irrelevant.\textsuperscript{307} The physicality of this religion is adverse to notions of the Western, patriarchal construct. In the same way that men in a patriarchal society label women who try to attain any amount of identity and power, “[o]utside observers depict Voodoo women as erotic objects and overlook their dynamic spirituality.”\textsuperscript{308}

There are grave similarities between suppressed persons in a patriarchal system, as women generally and witches in particular were, and enslaved persons in an unemancipated system.\textsuperscript{309} Free women and slaves shared similar circumstances in early modern Europe and its colonies.\textsuperscript{310}

Neither had control over what they produced... and their labor could be coerced. Both were seen by the law as children, as fictive minors who could be represented in court only by their masters/husbands. Both could be legally beaten, debased, and humiliated. When mistreated, both were impotent to gain help from others within their group, nor usually could their families help them. Both were caught in a hereditary system. Both were needed as well as rejected. Both could be sold. Under... their masters/husbands, both could be put to death for being what they were—female, or black.\textsuperscript{311}

“Viewing women as property, husbands became more authoritarian, a role no less oppressive for being disguised as paternalism. Just as slavery produced the myth of the good master, so patriarchy created the myth of the benevolent ruler of the family.”\textsuperscript{312} Men also blamed women for inexplicable events and, thus, “judges and priests devised a satanic conspiracy theory to punish women who might step out of line... [A]ccusations of witchcraft were ‘a highly effective means of social control.’”\textsuperscript{313}

\begin{flushright}
306. Estes, supra note 210, at 160.
307. See Barbara Rosendale Duggal, Marie Laveau: The Voodoo Queen Repossessed, in CREOLE: THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF LOUISIANA’S FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR 157, 158 (Sybil Kein ed., 2000) (“T]he Western aversion to the physical side of religion, as well as the male bias toward the exclusion of women within religious traditions in general, has no doubt contributed to the limited documentation and slanted analysis of traditional material in folklore studies...”).
308. Estes, supra note 210, at 160.
309. BARSTOW, supra note 34, at 159.
310. Id.
311. Id. at 159-60 (footnote omitted).
312. Id. at 164-65.
313. Id. (quoting Richard Horsely, Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused
The patriarchal system derived its power from subjugating women and slaves. Men, in their continuing quest for identification, cast as evil certain groups of society in an effort to determine and maintain their place within society. "Without slavery there would have been no freedmen," and "without the female witch as the symbol of evil, other Europeans could not have believed themselves to be good or just . . . ." Just as judges and priests devised a satanic conspiracy to condemn witches, masters and the state produced a system to perpetuate submission through slavery. The underpinnings of these abuses—"racism, neocolonialism, and misogyny"—still exist today.

There are parallels between the cultural process that was operative during the French witch craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the cultural process that led to shunning voodoo. By creating a chasm between witches and respectable women, it was easy for society to persecute those who did not conform with society's view of acceptable behavior for women. The emphasis on the differences between witches and respectable women created a sense of us against them, which empowered people to take action against those who did not conform to societal norms. For example, widows who did not rely upon a man for their livelihood were often characterized as witches during this era. Similarly, poor women who begged for food were characterized as dissimilar from the people who refused them aid. By labeling these unfortunates as "them," society could categorize them as evil and blame them for societal misfortunes. In addition, because the patriarchal norm, as demonstrated by the attitude of the clergy, took the position that women were incapable of acting alone, women who did not conform to societal expectation were branded as witches who cavorted with the Devil to secure power for themselves.

Similarly, although revered by her followers, the voodoo queen is feared and shunned by outsiders. "The characterization of New Orleans Voodoo as a matriarchy did not stand as a positive example of the creative potential of womanhood. It framed yet another

\[\text{in the European Witchcraft Trials, 9 J. INTERDISC. HIST. 689, 719 (1979).}\]

314. Id. at 160 (quoting ORLANDO PATTERTON, SLAVERY AND SOCIAL DEATH (1982)).
315. Id.
316. Id. at 165.
317. Id.
318. See supra Part I (discussing the French witch craze).
319. See supra notes 69-71 and accompanying text.
320. See supra notes 62-67 and accompanying text.
321. See supra notes 25-34 and accompanying text.
322. See supra note 46 and accompanying text.
abomination to the eyes of God, further extending the gulf between Us [Euro-American observers] and Them [black participants].”

Early New Orleans society disapproved of the Voodoo queen because she went against the well-established patriarchy. In fact, the term voodoo queen is “the slang term most frequently used to sum up disapproval of Spiritual women.” White observers of early New Orleans voodoo fostered the term and used it as a derogatory description of women.

In addition, similar to French witches, Voodoo queens used power that was customarily reserved to men. Rival queens attracted followers by displaying their powers. Although a queen might have a male counterpart, no man could be queen. Thus, although the “king and queen were the oracles of the serpent deity, . . . the queen was by far the more important.” Above all, in a society in which attachment to a male was a necessity, she was “the solitary monarch who [found] completeness within herself and need[ed] no king,” something that to a large extent remains incomprehensible and unacceptable today.

The last voodoo queen in New Orleans was Marie Laveau. The dichotomy between doing good and evil is reflected throughout her life. Like all independent women of the era, however, she is remembered more for the horror she caused than for the respect she warranted. “Upon her death, one local paper eulogized her for tending cholera and yellow fever victims and for visiting inmates on death row in the parish prison.” There was skepticism of even her beneficial power though. One news story claimed she was “the prime mover and soul of the indecent orgies of the ignoble Voudous; and to her influence may be attributed the fall of many a virtuous woman.” Perhaps the reason people were so awe-struck with

324. Id. at 165.
325. Id.
326. Id. One woman of the time lamented, "All my relatives look like they went haywire and left me alone and thought I was a Voodoo queen or something like that. . . . They thought I had gone crazy." Id. (omission in original).
327. Id.
328. Id.
329. PUCKETT, supra note 213, at 179.
330. Estes, supra note 210, at 165.
331. Id. at 169. Laveau (1783-1881) was the legendary matriarch of “all spiritually powerful women of African heritage.” Id.
332. Duggal, supra note 307, at 160.
333. Estes, supra note 210, at 159.
334. Id. at 159-60 (quoting A Sainted Woman, NEW ORLEANS DEMOCRAT, June 18, 1881).
Laveau was because she reflected "the full range of possibilities inherent in the feminine principle the major Western religious traditions have reduced to simple oppositions." "Marie's reputation reflects these perceived contradictions, holding her not only to be an evil temptress and sorcerer, but a saintly nurse during yellow fever epidemics and a ministering angel bringing last solace to condemned prisoners."

On a more practical level, however, the community hated her and her voodoo cult for gathering a following among many classes of society. Voodoo was "a woman's religion whose membership and leaders were women, mainly free women of color, but enslaved African and Afro-Creole and some white women also joined their circles." Perhaps her image is also disturbing because she launched the prototype for modern ministers in New Orleans Spiritual Churches, a tradition that continues today.

Marie Leveau represents "what the established power structure feared most and understood least." She maintained and prospered during a time when both Church and State vilified and marginalized women of any color. She turned the western paradigm of appropriate religions and feminine behavior upside down. She managed to be inclusive of her intellectual and religious power and thrived despite the social impediments of the day. She is one of the most enduring religious females in recent history.

III. SPIRITUALISM AND POWER: THE CONCLUSION

The confluence of race, religion and gender in the mid-nineteenth century is evidenced by the following account: "The

---

335. Id. at 160.
336. Id.
337. See id. at 159-60.
338. Id. at 159 (footnote omitted); see also NAPIER BARTLETT, STORIES OF THE CRESCENT CITY 100 (New Orleans, Steel & Co. 1869) (observing that most Voudou worshippers "were women and quadroons, though mixed somewhat with foreign-born guests"). See generally BRYAN R. WILSON, MAGIC AND THE MILLENNIUM: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS OF PROTEST AMONG TRIBAL AND THIRD-WORLD PEOPLES (1973) (surveying spiritual practices of non-European peoples and analyzing such practices within the context of social change).
339. Estes, supra note 210, at 160; see also HANGER, supra note 189, at 138-39 (discussing how discomfort with the unknown forced "religious practices into the back rooms or outskirts of the city").
340. Duggal, supra note 307, at 177.
341. See id. at 163.
342. See id. at 168-72.
343. Estes, supra note 210, at 159.
antivoodoo campaign of 1850 drove many practitioners across the river to the town of Algiers. The old folks say that these fleeing members became the foremothers of the Court of the Seven Sisters, a secret grouping about which little is known.\textsuperscript{344} The \textit{Code Noir} of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced far-reaching effects on later generations of mixed race people in Louisiana. The advent of this third race through the practice of \textit{placage}, coupled with manumission and inheritance rights from French fathers, established a sizable population of \textit{gens de couleur libre}, or free people of color.\textsuperscript{345} This was particularly important because it produced a class of women who achieved power through property acquisition.\textsuperscript{346} The English system of slavery separated the races, making the thought of romantic liaisons socially unacceptable.\textsuperscript{347} In fact the denial of the concept of sexual relations between the races continues even today.\textsuperscript{348} The French system accepted and formalized romantic liaisons, providing legal protection for the progeny of these relationships.\textsuperscript{349} This system permitted power to come into the hands of those previously disenfranchised by the system of slavery.\textsuperscript{350} These emotional relationships provided the legal foundation for women of color to have an avenue to not only maintain power relationships with other members of the community but also to establish religious connections with other women of color, whites and slaves.\textsuperscript{351} When women of color raised

\textsuperscript{344} Teish, \textit{supra} note 293, at 177-78. Hoodooism was and remains a matriarchal religion: evidence indicates that the present day Spiritual church in New Orleans was founded by Leavy Anderson (1887-1927) and is headed by women. \textit{See} Estes, \textit{supra} note 210, at 159-61.

\textsuperscript{345} \textit{See} Martin, \textit{supra} note 193, at 57-58.

\textsuperscript{346} \textit{See id.} at 65.

\textsuperscript{347} \textit{See Clinton,} \textit{supra} note 225, at 209. \textit{But see id.} at 204-05 (discussing social acceptance of white male slave owners’ sexual exploitation of black female slaves).

\textsuperscript{348} \textit{See generally} Annette Gordon-Reed, \textit{Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy} (1997) (discussing the historical denial of the liaison between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings that produced several children).

\textsuperscript{349} \textit{See} Martin, \textit{supra} note 193, at 57-58.

\textsuperscript{350} \textit{See id.} at 70. “Like other women of history whose race was held in bondage, the Negro mother through miscegenation was able to obtain educational advantages and economic security for her colored sons and daughters in an oppressed, hostile environment where most of the members of her race were held in bondage.” \textit{Id.} (quoting Sister Audrey Marie Detiege, Henriette Delille, \textit{Free Woman of Color: Founderess of the Sisters of the Holy Family} 9-10 (New Orleans: Sisters of the Holy Family, n.d.)).

infringement of their religious freedoms in the courts, it was done though their alliances with women of other races:

On this occasion the police had arrested a large group of women—white, black and of mixed color—while they were gathered for a Voodoo dance and proceedings which those making the arrests described as indecent and orgiastic in character. These women, for one of the first times in Voodoo history, refused to admit the charges made against them. On the contrary the summoned eminent counsel, who argued in excellent form that such Voodoo practices were purely religious and that the law had no justification for its attitude toward them. In order to justify the arrests, the courts, apparently bewildered at this unexpected and unheard of situation, seem to have been compelled to fall back upon an ordinance forbidding the assembling of white women and slaves.  

The interconnectedness of white, black and women of color in religious ceremonies in New Orleans is significant because it shows the nexus between witchcraft, voodoo and the theme of strong-willed women attempting to exercise their collective power against the patriarchal structure. Had this system allowed all women to come together as women in a religious movement, perhaps this would have provided a model of cooperation among women that could have potentially flourished. However, it is when the “divide and conquer” power of law squashes the efforts of women to organize and exercise their fundamental freedom of worship that the full underlying power of misogyny can best be understood. Women and their religion were again secreted underground.

The modern connotation of voodoo is “black magic” or “paganism.” A common belief is that Spiritualist churches in the twentieth century employ practices similar to voodoo, provoking criticism that Spiritualism is just another name for voodoo. Spiritualist ministers have attempted to distinguish their faith from voodoo, due to its negative image. Although the Spiritualist

352. Teish, supra note 293, at 177-78.
353. Estes, supra note 210, at 159.
354. Id.
355. Id. at 157-59.

Spiritual power (sometimes derided as witchcraft) and female strength have been inextricably coupled throughout American history, at times enabling women, but in other instances rendering them suspect. In early twentieth-century African American Spiritual churches, prospective church members feared the label of “witch” and sought to distance themselves from any suggestions of occult practice. Spiritually powerful women of African descent
Church intersects with other religions including Catholic, Baptist and Pentecostal, it is a distinctive faith. Recognizing the similarities with mainstream religions confirms the longevity of the public performance of spirituality by women in New Orleans.

When the women of New Orleans attempted to come forward in the twentieth century, they were again seen as suspect. The Spiritualist Church, formed and founded by Mother Leafy Anderson, Catharine Seal and others in the early 1920s and 1930s, reflected the same kind of women-based religion. The syncretic blend of many religions marginalized this religion, as it had every time women attempted to come together to create a force outside the traditional norms of the patriarchy. In an effort to circumvent continued criticism, Spiritualist women have attempted acceptance by renouncing Voodoo and cloaking their religion in Christianity; however, the suspect characteristics are ever present. Thus, the subjugation of women continues into the twenty-first century and beyond each time they attempt to establish themselves as separate entities outside traditional religions.

As the witchcraze in France aided the religious right to carry on a full-scale war against women in the name of eliminating the Devil, is it any wonder today that women who would dare to be different should be fearful? This difference continues to inculcate fear because women who speak out are different—a difference that cannot be tolerated by the mainstream of current political and religious thought whether it is 1484 or 2001.

have been prominent in the city's religious life. As a result of prevailing ideologies of race and gender, these religious figures have been received in contradictory ways—revered by some while dismissed as irreligious, if not manifestly evil, by others, who might nonetheless still fear them. This pattern, apparent already in the Voodoo[,] . . . arose during the French and Spanish colonial period.

*Id.*

356. *Id.* at 162.
357. *Id.*
358. *Id.*
359. See *id.* at 162-63.
360. *Id.* at 165.