Interrogating the Magic-Gender Connection

This chapter surveys the history of scholarship on women and magic in antiquity to the early modern witch-hunts in order to situate the contributions of this volume in a broad theoretical conversation. This chapter divides theoretical explanations for the frequent gendering of magic into five categories, and explores the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Finally, evidence that men constituted the majority of accused witches or magicians in certain times and places serves to challenge universalizing theories and raises questions about scholarly presuppositions that bias the interpretive process in favor of a gender-based explanation. This chapter complicates the relationship between gender and magic, providing an appropriate theoretical introduction for the chapters that follow.

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Additional Files

- MacOdrum Library
  - 9780195342710.jpg

See Also

Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World

K. Stratton (Kimberly B.)
Interrogating gender bias. This resource is a primary (or) secondary educational video from ABC Splash. Texts from other times can offer us an insight into the values of that society and provide a mirror in which to see our own. In this clip from 1975, compare the world of police interrogations with an example from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel 'Crime and Punishment'. Consider the values regarding gender embedded in the excerpt. What assumptions about gender are revealed in the questions asked by the off-screen interviewer? What do you notice about his choice of interview subjects? What qualities does Kerry Milte identify as being desirable in an interrogator? Does the interrogator in the excerpt from Dostoyevsky's 'Crime and Punishment' exhibit any of these qualities?