



# Contesting Orthodoxy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

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Edited by  
Louise Nyholm Kallestrup  
& Raisa Maria Toivo



Palgrave Historical Studies in  
Witchcraft and Magic

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Louise Nyholm Kallestrup • Raisa Maria Toivo  
Editors

# Contesting Orthodoxy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft

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*Editors*

Louise Nyholm Kallestrup  
Department of History  
University of Southern Denmark  
Odense, Denmark

Raisa Maria Toivo  
University of Tampere  
Tampere, Finland

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Willem de Blécourt** is a historical anthropologist. He works as an independent researcher and is attached to the Amsterdam Meertens Institute as an honorary research fellow. His main interests are, apart from the history of European witchcraft, the history of fairy tales and legends, as well as of werewolves. Occasionally he dabbles in analyses of films and television series with the (superficially) same subjects. His latest books are: *Tales of Magic, Tales in Print* (2012) and *Werewolf Histories* (ed. 2015). At the moment he is working on another edited collection *Precursors of the Witches' Sabbat* and a major book, *The Cat and the Cauldron* about the history of witchcraft in the Low Countries.

**Nancy Mandeville Caciola** is Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego. She is the author of *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2016) and *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2003).

**Johannes Dillinger** Professor of Early Modern History, Oxford Brookes University/Johannes Gutenberg Universitaet Mainz, published a number of monographs and articles about witch trials, magical treasure hunting and early modern folk belief.

**Matteo Duni** teaches Renaissance History at both Syracuse University's and New York University's centers in Florence. He is the author, among other publications, of *Under the Devil's Spell: Witches, Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in Renaissance Italy* (Syracuse University in Florence, 2007).

**David Gentilcore** Professor of Early Modern History, University of Leicester. His most recent book is *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe* (Bloomsbury 2016).

**Rune Blix Hagen** (1951) is associate professor of Early Modern History at The Department of History and Religious Studies (IHS), UiT The Arctic University of Norway. His main fields of research are witch trials and witchcraft in Northern Norway, including topics like demonology and Sami Shamanism. He has also written books and articles on discovery, exploration, rivalry, and early modern images of the far North. For the moment, he is finishing a critical study of Jean Bodin's writings.

**Louise Nyholm Kallestrup** is Associate Professor, Department of History, SDU (University of Southern Denmark). She is the author of a number of publications in English and Danish, most recently *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark* (Palgrave 2015).

**Richard Kieckhefer** teaches at Northwestern University, in Religious Studies and in History. He works on the religious culture of late medieval Europe, including the history of witchcraft and magic. Among his books are European Witch Trials, Magic in the Middle Ages, and Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century.

**Stephen A. Mitchell** is Professor of Scandinavian and Folklore at Harvard University and the author of Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages. He is a working member of The Royal Gustav Adolf Academy and has been a Fellow of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, the Viking and Medieval Center of the University of Aarhus, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies.

**Leif Søndergaard** (emeritus), Department for the Study of Culture, SDU (University of Southern Denmark).

**Raisa Maria Toivo** is research fellow, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tampere. She is the author of a number of publications in Finnish and English, including *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society: Finland and the Wider European Experience*, published in 2008. And most recently Faith And Magic in Early Modern Finland (Palgrave 2016).

**Rita Voltmer** is a senior lecturer in Medieval and Early modern History, University of Trier. From 2013 until 2015 she was Visiting Professor in History and Religious Studies, Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø). Her publications include *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm. Ein Prediger und seine Stadt—Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg* (2005); *Hexen. Wissen was stimmt* (2008); and (together with Walter Rummel): *Hexen und Hexenverfolgung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 2012. She has edited several conference proceedings and has published more than 80 articles in journals and as chapters in edited collections, among them contributions to the Encyclopdia of Witchcraft and the volumes *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* and *Werewolf Histories*. Her current research interests include: European and transatlantic witch hunts; medieval and early modern urban

history; the history of criminality and poverty; medieval and early modern communication media, especially sermons and pamphlets; the Jesuit order; and the history of Northern Europe (British Isles, Scandinavia).

**Charles Zika** is a Professorial Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, and Chief Investigator in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. His interests lie in the intersection of religion, emotion, visual culture and print in early modern Europe. His most recent books include *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Routledge, 2007); *The Four Horsemen: Apocalypse, Death & Disaster* (edited with Cathy Leahy & Jenny Spinks; National Gallery of Victoria, 2012); *Celebrating Word and Image 1250–1600* (with Margaret Manion; Fremantle Press, 2013); *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400–1700* (edited with Jenny Spinks; Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

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# Approaches to Magic, Heresy and Witchcraft in Time, Space and Faith

*Louise Nyholm Kallestrup and Raisa Maria Toivo*

On 4 September 1650 the Roman inquisitor of Siena sentenced the woman Francesca Rosata with the following words:

... we [the Holy Office] reveal, pronounce, sentence and declare you, Francesca, for the things confessed by you and extracted in the trial above and for what you have committed ... , as vehemently suspected of Apostasy from the holy faith of Christ and the true cult of God, of heresy and of apostasy to the ungodly cult of the Devil ... , for having believed and held that the Devil can interfere with the human will and force it to do evil, and that other creatures are capable of [performing] the sacred sacrament of baptism ... in the name of the spiritual world, and for this making it licit to have either a tacit or explicit pact [with the Devil].<sup>1</sup>

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L.N. Kallestrup (✉)

Department of History, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark  
e-mail: [lnk@hist.sdu.dk](mailto:lnk@hist.sdu.dk)

R.M. Toivo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tampere, Tampere,  
Finland  
e-mail: [Raisa.Toivo@uta.fi](mailto:Raisa.Toivo@uta.fi)

The verdict was the culmination of a five-month trial, in which Francesca di Rosata had been accused of various kinds of love magic and witchcraft (*sortilegio*), including the baptism of a magnet. By vehemently pronouncing her guilty of heresy, the inquisitor deemed Francesca a grave offender against the faith. After abjuring her heretical beliefs, she was to spend four months in prison and to be handled with the caution with which one treated excommunicated persons.<sup>2</sup> As well as being an example of the many individuals in the early modern period to be sentenced for heresy, magic and witchcraft, the case also illustrates how these concepts could be interwoven. Francesca had contested orthodoxy. By making use of rituals of love magic, she had mocked the doctrine of free will and she had made herself a suspect of heresy and apostasy. By baptizing a magnet, a common feature in love magic, she had believed she was capable of providing objects with godly powers, although it was in fact the Devil working in these rituals. Whereas heresy, magic and witchcraft all represented ways of contesting orthodoxy, such contests were not reserved for legal trials; they could take place in many ways and on many levels, be they institutional, popular, ideological or social.

This volume is about some of these various ways and levels of contesting religious orthodoxy or orthodox religions in late medieval and early modern Europe. As such, it deals with religion as the major ideology in late medieval and early modern culture. Religion is a concept understood in many ways in current historiographical work, ranging from theological institutions and dogma to social processes and structures of worldviews.<sup>3</sup> It can be understood as communal and public or individual and private – the former forms have usually been considered dominant in premodern cultures, whereas the latter have been considered part of ‘modern’ religion and piety.<sup>4</sup> What is important to understand is that religion, and heresy, magic and witchcraft as linked with it, operated on many levels of society and culture and was not restricted to a separate theological sphere. In the medieval and early modern periods, religion, politics and economics were each part of the other. Moreover, in this collection, religion must not be understood as an institutional imposition. Rather religious beliefs were constantly shaped and negotiated by individuals and institutions just as were political, economic and social developments.

In the medieval and early modern period of confessionalization, religious orthodoxy represented the dominant form of religion among the authorities. Early modern religious orthodoxy meant strict adherence to established dogma, usually one that was presented as original and pure.

The newly formed definitions of each denomination dictated how the Bible and church tradition were to be ‘purely’ and correctly understood, and what parts should be emphasized. Despite the seeming fixedness of the concept of orthodoxy, the distinction between heterodoxy and orthodoxy concerned interpretation. What, when and by whom beliefs and practices were deemed heterodox was a crucial issue in the cultural formation of the period, which led from negotiation to religious wars and persecuting violence. Nevertheless, this volume also shows that even though some beliefs and practices were contesting orthodoxy, they were not *per se* condemned as heretical. Orthodoxy was defined institutionally, but contested on yet many more levels, not limited to institutional, but also ideological or popular, social and performative. In the process, heterodoxy added to and shaped orthodoxy. Religion and religiosity, orthodox or heterodox, were less about what theologians described and defined, and more about what people did and how they acted. Consequently, religious agency became diffused.

Whether one approaches religion as a subjective, a social or an authoritative phenomenon, it is also a medium of power. Studying late medieval and early modern orthodoxy and the contesting of it can shed light on central aspects of power, its use and construction in medieval and early modern society. The suppression of heterodox beliefs can be seen as expressing and displaying power, as a long tradition of research on confessionalization shows.<sup>5</sup> Those representing orthodoxy were also explicitly or at least implicitly representing those in power. After the Reformation challenges to orthodoxy and the effort to suppress them became particularly visible. The Catholic Church suddenly experienced a need to define its doctrines in opposition to the emerging denominations, and it did so by negation, branding ‘the other’ as anathema. The Protestant churches, on the other hand, could not in an equal manner reject everything Catholic – since the churches shared a 1500-year history, condemning everything would have meant condemning themselves. Still, they needed to distance themselves from the rejected faith by certain key differences of opinion that centred on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and baptism, the role of the Bible and the adoration of saints. In practice, much was invested in priesthood: Who had the right to administer certain religious rites and symbols?<sup>6</sup> This is also visible in many of the essays here: although not directly administering sacraments, the actors in the essays are adopting the right to decide what was magic, and witchcraft or prayer and work, what was sacred and what profane. By doing so, they were using a central power in defining religion and heresy.

Contemporary scholars are generally aware of a connection between heresy, magic and witchcraft.<sup>7</sup> In past decades, the historiography of magic and witchcraft has evolved in the direction of conceptual history, investigating the meanings of magic, witchcraft and heresy within given historical contexts.<sup>8</sup>

For this collection, these concepts have been chosen from a variety of related ideas, such as superstition, preternatural or supernatural. They are not chosen because they always serve all purposes best – the other terms have their uses – or even because they are the most important. They are chosen because their nature, as concepts that have had multiple meanings in history and therefore will evade precise definition today, allows them to create a cross-point where different approaches intersect. We hope that this cross-point will make this work appeal to a large number of scholars, not only of religious but also cultural, social and political history. This book also covers the period from late medieval to early modern, acknowledging that despite the Reformation, the modern ideas were built on medieval plinths. We acknowledge that the essays are unevenly distributed on this timeline, and that the essays on heresy tend to be medieval, the essays on witchcraft concentrate on the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the essays on magic cover the late medieval and early modern periods. This reflects not only the interests of scholars working in these fields but also the interests of the contemporaries of each period. The volume presents essays in three rough and overlapping parts; however, the essays cover more than one, and some all three concepts. The volume starts with essays drawn together by the most general concept, heresy. Thereafter the focus will move to magic and finally to witchcraft. In the next introductory section, however, we will progress in the opposite order.

## WITCHCRAFT

In medieval thought, the concept of witchcraft held a place in the moral cosmology as a necessary evil receptacle of the hierarchically contrasting good of the community of Christians, God, piety and virtue. Still, the contents of the concept of witchcraft were dependent on the contents of its superior counterparts – and vice versa. In medieval and early modern thought, there could be no Christianity without the Devil and without witchcraft. This gave witchcraft an inherently unstable place on the threshold between orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy.<sup>9</sup>

It had been a widely spread premise throughout the history of the medieval period that magic and *maleficia* could only work because of the power of the Devil. In his *Summae* Thomas Aquinas had put forward what would be the foundations for the early modern Catholic condemnation of witchcraft by outlining the relationship between magicians and the devil. Although focusing on ritual magic, Thomas Aquinas stated that while magicians may claim it was divine powers at work in magical rituals, in fact the powers were always diabolical. Magical rituals were practised with a selfish aim, so making it an arrangement only the Devil would participate in. To have the Devil provide a magical ritual with power required the magician to enter a diabolical pact.<sup>10</sup> In the fifteenth century this demonized idea of magic gained much more force.

During the later Middle Ages heresy became more demonized and gradually evolved into the idea of the fully fledged witch.<sup>11</sup> Since the work of Norman Cohn (1975), scholars generally agree that the first witch-hunts grew out of a demonization of magic, which took place roughly at the same time as the eradication of Cathars and Waldensians. More recent studies of these heretical roots have documented that the fifteenth-century witch prosecutions were explicitly linked to these persecutions.<sup>12</sup> Members of these sects were misleadingly accused of being devil worshippers (Luciferanists), and the constant presence and activities of the Inquisition spurred on the transferral of these ideas and accusations to witches.<sup>13</sup> The first fully articulated conception of witchcraft occurred in writings in 1428 and 1442 in the area around Lausanne in Western Switzerland. Soon thereafter, in 1448, a series of trials was conducted in the same area, in all of which the witches were described as ‘modern Waldensian heretics’.<sup>14</sup> Together these trials and writings represent what Richard Kieckhefer has named the ‘Lausanne paradigm’ – the formation of the fully articulated witch.<sup>15</sup> By the end of the fifteenth century, a witch was not just any performer of magic, but a heretical and diabolical figure, one who had explicitly given herself to the Devil. Witchcraft was thus placed on the platform of heresy, apostasy, idolatry and possibly even schismatism.

In this collection, Charles Zika explores how this process was reflected in late medieval visualizations of the Witch of Endor, pointing also to a rise in the personal agency of the depicted necromancer alongside the rise of the demonic elements in the images. The witch was no mere channel, but had herself made a pact and worked together with the Devil in disguise. Johannes Geiler, presented in Rita Voltmer’s essay, and Giovanfrancesco

Ponzinibio, whose works are discussed in Matteo Duni's essay, were figures right on the threshold of old and new ideas of witchcraft. The ambiguity of witchcraft ideas shows in both their works. The same personal agency of the witch, the rise of whom is shown in Zika's essay, was emphasized by Ponzinibio in order to make witchcraft a crime among those to be investigated and judged by lawyers, instead of an exceptional crime to be moved to the realm of priests and inquisitors. To Ponzinibio, the Devil had no material power in the world and witchcraft was merely a spiritual phenomenon: the real heresy was believing that witches in fact went to the Sabbath. While Geiler never presented witchcraft as the exceptional super crime that had to be prosecuted without mercy, he did present it as the archetype of blasphemous crime. In fact, in these three essays we can already see at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all the ingredients of both the persecution and the waning of it.

The essay by Zika demonstrates how by the late sixteenth century the woman of Endor was depicted as a fully fledged witch parallel to the rise of the post-Reformation witch-hunts. In the Latin regions, and where inquisitions continued to handle trials for witchcraft, the link between heresy and witchcraft persisted. In the reformed churches of northern Europe, the correlation tended to take a secondary position to *maleficia* in the courts. The essay by Kallestrup investigates the link between heresy and witchcraft in the post-reformation witch-hunt in Denmark, from authoritative theologians such as Niels Hemmingsen to the practical handling of the trials – and how this correlation gradually faded when secular authorities handled the offence. The condemnation of witchcraft as heresy then became part of a sharp rhetoric applied for consolidating the Evangelical faith.

In his contribution, Rune Hagen turns his attention to another part of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom, namely the most northern part, the Finmark. He demonstrates how the myths of the evil north were applied in the efforts to gain power over the new territory and how this implied persecuting the indigenous population. In this sense, the prosecution of witches in the Finmark becomes an example of early modern state-building, since it is about consolidating the power of the Danish king on the frontiers of the kingdom. Whether the transformation of witchcraft into a form of heresy was a result of the hunt for heretics, Waldensians and Anabaptists dying out and then moving on the witches, or a new creation of post-Reformation period polemics between different religio-political parties – of course, not straightforwardly accusing each other

for being witches, but creating an atmosphere where that was a viable possibility – witchcraft acquires the place of the most important and most horrifying heresy, the necessary ‘enemy within’ a Christian society.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, witchcraft and witch trials also fulfilled similar religious functions to those served previously by ghost stories and anti-Jewish stories: they were an arena where the transcendent could be explored. The trials with testimonies, sentences and executions also provided proof of the existence and reality of the other world, and with it, the supernatural that was the principal essence of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> Another way of exploring the metaphysics and epistemology or the virtual reality was the abundant fiction created around witchcraft, and explored in this volume by Willem de Blécourt in examining magic and witchcraft in the late medieval Dutch play ‘Die Hexe’ as a commentary on historical events. In making a mockery of witchcraft and presenting magic as a series of fraudulent and useless tricks, the play presented an early version of the scepticism that came to mark witch trials in the Netherlands.

## MAGIC

Richard Kieckhefer has described magic as a ‘kind of crossroads’ where religion and science, popular and learned, as well as reality and fiction intersected.<sup>18</sup> As such it also takes a prominent place in this volume. The Christian worldview was inherently magical from the start, and it still is. Nevertheless it would not approve of all kinds of magic or of supernatural help. The border between prayer and magic, therefore, became one of the most lasting intrigues of Christianity. Still, a fairly early line was drawn according to where the power lay. In prayer humans submitted to the supernatural power of God, Christ and the saints, and could only hope for divine aid. In magic humans invoked and commanded the supernatural powers. The reality was, however, much more blurred, even among theologians. Indeed, it could be said that the neo-Platonic view, which juxtaposed magic and (Christian) faith was a major ideological trend but yet never secured full supremacy: it was always contested. The section on magic in this volume is initiated with Richard Kieckhefer’s essay on angel magic. In the later medieval period angel magic became still more widespread and consequently it was heavily debated. Angels were ambiguous – they could be either good or evil, they often acted in groups and they owned the power of locomotion the same way as demons, and as opposed to saints’ fixed location. In his essay, Kieckhefer argues that the

problems concerning angel magic resembled the problems with lay people practising magical healing: the practitioners of angel magic did not adhere to any intellectual or institutional control.

Concepts of witchcraft, often including the witches' submission to the Devil, are a case in point. Even when the juxtaposition of magic and prayer was fully accepted and its rhetoric used, it was still debatable whether any individual act, invocation or application was on this or that side of the distinction. The essays by Søndergaard and Toivo deal with these intersections, made even more complicated, as Toivo points out, by the fact that religious definitions are never used in an arena that is only theological: politics, social peace and other intellectual values mattered in the interpretations given to deeds, words and objects as religious or otherwise. The question of *adiaphora* and tolerance despite disapproval thus enters the world of magic as well as heresy. As Søndergaard points out in his essay, the functional character of the Scandinavian spell-books and spells made it natural for them to fuse elements from pre-Christian, non-Christian and Christian backgrounds, and thereby blurred the borders between religion and magic as well as between natural science and magic.

Natural magic in the form of magnetism and planetary influences likewise blurred the boundaries of the forbidden and acceptable, as explored in Dillinger's essay. Natural sciences, growing during both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment or even the proto-industrial technological period, formed another area bordering on magic. In the blurred areas, the idea that new profitable knowledge existed gained usages which did not require the trouble of acquiring the actual knowledge, like the Italian charlatan Saccardini's semi-scientific or quasi-empirical view on medicine laid out by David Gentilcore located in the section on heresy, or the divining rod explored in Dillinger's essay.

It is commonly stated that Protestant worldviews were at least as detrimental to magical worldviews as the rise of science, resulting in a more rational northern and more superstitious or sacramentalist southern Europe despite the spread of rationalism and virtues of moderation to Catholic Reformation religious life, too. This bias can be a result of defining Protestantism from the nineteenth-century viewpoint – as rational and 'modern'. Such a starting point is, however, not a very stable one if applied to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This collection as a whole would challenge such a view from both north and south.

## HERESY

In short, complying with heresy means the intentional break with the dogma of the church and the rejection of church doctrines as false. According to Thomas Aquinas, heresy meant ‘a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas’.<sup>19</sup> In the medieval and early modern era, theologically various degrees of heresy existed, and it often involved related offences such as apostasy and idolatry.<sup>20</sup> Heretics who refused to abjure were often executed, especially by fire, and they were often executed collectively, thereby strengthening the position of orthodoxy in opposition to heterodoxy.

Not every dissenting religious view was heresy, neither before nor following the break with doctrinal unity in the sixteenth century. Heresy needed to have a real subversive potential, even will, and it needed to tackle a religiously important point, such as the Cathar ideas on resurrection. As there was a considerable number of German debates on Lutheran identity and corresponding debates on Calvinism and Catholicism, various views on adiaphora had to be allowed. Although not correct, these matters were considered indifferent to the essence of faith and salvation. Therefore adiaphora were not heretical – although considerations of what exactly were adiaphora could be. Alongside merely indifferent matters the late medieval and early modern religious were concerned with a number of things that were certainly unwanted and worse than quite indifferent, but yet not important enough to be prosecuted as heresy: things that were tolerated because of a greater cause, be that religious, social or political.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, heresy needed to be identifiable as a branch of the religions which considered it heresy: infidels, pagans and other outsiders could not be heretics.

The first part of this book deals with various expressions of heresy, and how they could contest orthodoxy. It introduces three cases from the twelfth to the seventeenth century and illustrates the fluidity of definition that has marked the discussion of heresy itself and the differentiations or conflations of heresy, magic, witchcraft and superstition in the late medieval and early modern period. Since heresy, magic and witchcraft have mostly been studied separately, the varying ways of narrowing down this fluidity, however much acknowledged in themselves, have caused some controversy. We acknowledge that fluidity of definition is a major characteristic of any discussion of heresy, magic and witchcraft, which will effect and vary research results in time, culture and space. We seek not to reduce this fluidity and variation to a single definition, but rather to explore its variety to suggest ways it can be used in comparisons and generalizations

as well as individual studies. Correct faith and heresy had to be negotiated. Among theologians, this could be done via tractates and treatises, learned writings – and since heresy required an obstinate persistence in subversive thought, this was a viable option to test things that were not yet classified on one side or the other. Among lay members of society, other means had to be sought, and they could lead to trouble.

During the middle ages the heartlands of Christendom faced the great heresies. In north-eastern parts of Europe, the church continued to expand its territories, and was faced with contests from pagan and newly Christianized people. Nancy Caciola writes of a way of transferring the competition between pagan and newly Christianized people's ideas about life after death into the safer realm of stories and fantasies of the dead. Real and unreal, existing and gone at the same time, the dead offered a stage where differences between pagans and Christians could be laid out and the newly Christianized people could try out identities and thought forms. In these north-eastern borderlands medieval epistemologies of the dead as either demons or ghosts were incorporated into the church's project of acculturation. Explanations for how and why a person, though dead, might nonetheless display agency or power varied widely amongst different social groups and their associated epistemologies. Beliefs about the dead were left as an open field of interpretation and debate in this period; this makes the subject an excellent point of entrée into the multidimensional complexity of medieval thought and culture.

Stephen Mitchell likewise explores the debates of heterodoxy and orthodoxy in the newly Christianized area in his essay on trials for heresy in medieval Scandinavia. Trials for heresy and the harsh penalties they generated demonstrated the power of the authorities and served as a means for social control, and in which the trials for heresy were often linked to magic and witchcraft. Despite the apparent similarity of the cultures presented in the essays of Caciola and Mitchell – newly established Christianity – they present very different ways of dealing with the problem of identifying orthodox and heretical behaviour. The German parishioners in Caciola's essay created a vivid culture of the dead to explore the differences in unofficial ways. In Mitchell's discussion, the Scandinavian church authorities appear as the defining powers in a series of heresy and witchcraft cases.

The Protestant reformations brought an end to doctrinal unity of the Christian church. Catholic confessional expansion was aimed at the new world and internally efforts were aimed at preventing future divisions of the church and to maintain territories already Catholic. The reformations brought about renewed attention by Catholic authorities to heresy. In his

essay on the case of Constantino Saccardini, a charlatan sentenced for heresy by the Roman Inquisition in Bologna, David Gentilcore directs the focus to the Mediterranean context again. The Roman Inquisition had been reorganised as a direct response to Protestant followers but gradually the Inquisition became a crucial weapon in the religious disciplining of the populace.<sup>22</sup> In early seventeenth-century Bologna, after the profanation of a series of sacred images, the authorities, lay and secular, proceeded in order to find and sentence the guilty parties. The essay explores the intersection between ideas about magic, God, the devil, science and faith, by revisiting the thoughts, words and deeds of an early seventeenth-century Italian charlatan. The view of charlatans was ambiguous, not only in Bologna. Charlatans offered medical/healing aid and were an accepted alternative to the church and trained physicians; still, they needed to be registered either with the medical tribunal or with the papal legate. Historians have been tempted to relate Saccardini's radical religious views to his presumed radical medical ones, drawing into this mix his dual negative roles as jester and charlatan. And yet there is little in either of these two occupations that could have foretold or led to Saccardini's fate. Far from being a 'dangerous' or even liminal occupation, his medical activities had official recognition and sanction via inspection and licensing. Saccardini's performances, medicines and treatment strategies, and printed chapbook give little clue to the fate that would befall him. From the beginning of the seventeenth century the persecution of witchcraft and popular superstition decreased among most tribunals, but clusters of trials continued to appear throughout the seventeenth century, in some tribunals until the eighteenth. The Roman Inquisition was organized in regional tribunals with the Congregation in Rome as the centre. Still, the collaboration of the tribunals with local secular and church authorities varied.

Throughout the medieval and early modern period, the Christian church represented an orthodoxy that was continuously contested. The challenge of heterodoxy, especially as expressed in various kinds of heresy, magic and witchcraft, was constantly present during the period 1200 to 1650. With this volume we aim to break down three common scholarly barriers – of periodization, discipline and geography – in the exploration of the related themes of heresy, magic and witchcraft. By setting aside constructed chronological boundaries, inherent in periodizations such as medieval, early modern, Reformation and Counter Reformation, we hope to achieve a clearer and more continuous picture of what 'went before' and what 'went after', thus demonstrating continuity as well as change in the concepts and understandings of magic, heresy and witchcraft. The

geographical pattern of similarities and diversities suggests a comparative approach, transcending confessional as well as national borders. Theology, magic and science provided the framework for human knowledge, which shaped the medieval and early modern understandings of the world.

## NOTES

1. The trial of Francesca di Rosata, Archivio per la Congregazione della Dottrina della Santa Fede (ACDF), Fondo Siena, processi, 50, fol. 445r–58v.
2. ACDF, Siena Processi, fol. 457r–v; the Roman Inquisition distinguished between three levels of abjuration: *de levi*, *de vehementi*, *de formali*, see John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy* (New York and Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), p. 104; Christopher Black, *The Italian Inquisition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 88.
3. Emil Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life: The Totemic System in Australia* (1912, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 44; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987 (Engl. orig., 1957)).
4. Durkheim *Elementary forms*, Eamon Duffy, *Voices of Morebath* (London: Yale University Press, 2001).
5. Heinz Schilling, ‘Confessionalization in the Empire. Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620’, in Heinz Schilling (ed.), *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (eds.), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung in Europa* (Gütersloh: Aschendorff, 1995); critique against the Confessionalization paradigm has been summarized by e.g. Ute Lotz-Heumann, ‘The Concept of “Confessionalization”: A Historiographical Paradigm in Dispute’, *Memoria y Civilizacion* 4, 2001, pp. 93–114; and the paradigm developed further in e.g. Thomas Kauffmann, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der Zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).
6. Steven Justice, ‘Did the Middle Ages Believe in Miracles?’ *Representations* 103, 2008, pp. 1–29; Caroline Walker Bynum (ed.), *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), p. 130.
7. For recent works, see Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Karin Utz-Tremp, *Von der Häresie zur Hexerei*. (Hannover: Hansche Buchh, 2008), p. 486f; Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2003); Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Routledge, 2006) and the essay on ‘Heresy’ by Utz-Tremp in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft. The Western Tradition*, ed. Golden, Richard (ABC-Clio, 2006), pp. 485–88. See also the pioneering works of Norman Cohn,

*Europe's Inner Demons* (1975, revised edition London: Plimlico, 1993) and Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

8. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, vol. 3. The Period of the Witch Trials* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. x; this can easily be broadened to include heresy and witchcraft. See also Michael Bailey, 'The Meanings of Magic', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 1, 2006, p. 5.
9. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 134ff.
10. On Thomas Aquinas and magic, see Cameron *Enchanted Europe*, pp. 94–102.
11. Key notions being the flight, attending the Sabbath, paying homage to the Devil and *malitia*.
12. Most recently Utz-Tremp *Von der Häresie zur Hexerei*, esp. chapters II:3, II:5.
13. Utz Tremp 'Heresy', pp. 486–87.
14. Utz Tremp 'Heresy', p. 487.
15. Richard Kieckhefer 'The First Wave of Trials for Diabolical Witchcraft', in *Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Levack, p. 160.
16. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 116, 191.
17. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, p. 232.
18. Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 1.
19. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 'Heresy', <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07256b.htm>, consulted 6/5/15.
20. Among others, see Otto Hageneder, 'Der Häresiebegriff bei den Juristen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts', in W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (eds.), *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th C.). Proceedings of the International Conference, Leuven, May 13–16, 1973* (Leuven University Press and The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) pp. 42–103; Tedeschi 'Inquisitorial Law', p. 101.
21. A heated discussion over matters of importance and adiaphoras was included in the definitions of Lutheranism in the Formula of Concord and in the debates of the position of the FC later on. See e.g. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation. Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 352–58; on political toleration e.g. Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Belknap Press, 2007).
22. Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, missionari, confessori* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996); Giovanni Romeo, *L'Inquisizione nell'Italia moderna* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2009); in English, see most recently Black *The Italian Inquisition*.

PART I

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## Heresy

# ‘Night is conceded to the dead’: Revenant Congregations in the Middle Ages

*Nancy Mandeville Caciola*

‘As day is to the living’, wrote Thietmar of Merseburg, ‘so night is conceded to the dead.’<sup>1</sup> With these words, the eleventh-century bishop concluded a peculiar tale of transgression. One night a priest, assigned to a newly repaired and reconsecrated church in a village called Deventer, noticed that a crowd of dead folk were using the building after dark. Each night, they conducted mass. Puzzled, the priest sought counsel of his bishop, who ordered him to prevent the dead congregation from gathering there. But as it transpired, when the priest attempted to defend the building it was he who was ejected. The dead mob unceremoniously picked up the living man and threw him out of the building, with his bedding after him. When the priest reported all this to the bishop, however, the latter insisted that he return to his vigil the next night. The terrified cleric fortified himself with holy water and took blessings from the relics of saints; dread kept him awake as darkness fell and the dead throng filed into the church at their customary hour. Noticing the priest, they picked him up as before – but this time, they carried him to the altar, placed him upon it, and there ‘burnt his body to a cinder’.

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N.M. Caciola (✉)  
University of California, San Diego, CA, USA  
e-mail: [ncaciola@gmail.com](mailto:ncaciola@gmail.com)

The story is strange but not singular. Indeed, preoccupation with the continuing vitality and power of the dead was a characteristic feature of medieval society. After the millennium, in all corners of Europe we find accounts of defunct people who seem far from fully extinct: corporeal revenants attacked their former neighbours; ghosts possessed their descendants; undead dancers skipped their feet in cemeteries and fields; Harlequin's dead army marched across the winter skies; royal courts of the dead were discovered inside mountains; and of course, everywhere relic cults proliferated for the powerful dead. The living, for their part, classified deaths as either 'good' or 'bad'; treated human remains in particular ways depending on whether they elicited reverence or fear; staged dances of death in graveyards; painted macabre motifs; and eagerly gathered around spirit mediums. Both medical specialists and regular folk struggled to precise the exact physiological differences between vitality and mortality, and to diagnose deaths when someone was unresponsive. Concern to assist the dead escalated steeply in monastic and clerical circles, as evidenced by the innovation of necrologies, the increasing formalization of Purgatory after 1170, and the multiplication of assistance techniques for the 'Church Suffering' there. In sum, the struggle to imagine death and afterlife is a recurrent theme in every region, social stratum and area of cultural endeavour. Like Thietmar's doomed priest, who turned to the remains of the holy dead for protection against the dangerous dead, medieval people encountered the deceased at every turn, in contexts of veneration, of supplication, and of fear.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the systemic importance of the dead has been either overlooked or under-emphasized by medievalist scholars. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that the majority of medieval people who believed that they had had direct experience of the supernatural realm did so in intimate confrontation with dead human beings, rather than through encounter with a transcendent deity. Medieval church doctrine permitted, even fostered, a great deal of latitude when it came to the imagination of death and afterlife. It is striking that stories of ghosts and revenants, for example, while not quite orthodox, never were declared heretical either. They occupied a capacious middle ground of toleration without endorsement, an unusually ambiguous emplacement for such a significant area of thought.

Indeed, it is the distinctively non-heretical character of my source material that is key to its usefulness as a point of entry into a discussion of medieval natural philosophy and the supernatural. I begin with some remarks about the medieval people's struggles to define mortality precisely; then

offer some reasons why I think tales of ambiguously powerful, this-worldly dead folk were allowed to persist without objection in the interstices of medieval culture. I move on to some close readings of tales about return from the dead; and finally close with some remarks about why the dead are 'good to think with'.

The state of knowledge about death and afterlife offered by medieval Christian intellectuals was as follows: death was born amid the lushness of Paradise, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's commandment not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, as the seventh-century Bishop Isidore of Seville wrote, in a famed etymology repeated for many centuries thereafter, death, *mors*, derives from our first ancestors' bite, *morsus*, of the forbidden fruit.<sup>3</sup> Ancient medicine and later, medieval natural philosophers suggested that, physiologically speaking, death occurs at the moment when the human spirit ceased to power the spiritual system, for it regulated the vital signs: heartbeat, pulse, respiration. The dissolution of the spirit was, in turn, linked to the exit of the soul from the body, for the spirit was the soul's instrument for interacting with the flesh. Afterwards the soul transitioned to a tripartite, otherworldly realm of punishment, purgation, or paradise, according to its merits, where it persisted in a purely spiritual state; the body, meanwhile, decayed to bone and then to dust. This separation of body and soul would persist until their joyous reunion at the General Resurrection at the end of time.

Yet, medieval people had many more things they wanted to know about death and afterlife. Their questions continually recur in medieval texts. What was the difference between death and sleep? Why did falls, drownings or other accidents sometimes result in death, even though the body was still intact? How did death feel? What did the soul look like and what were its capacities? And on and on: these are significant queries insofar as they indicate the scope of non-convergence between available systems of knowledge and human curiosity. Furthermore, death remained mysterious even at the most basic level of physical verification. Our sources tell us that when someone became unresponsive and unconscious, observers frequently were unsure how to proceed. We read of debates, of vigils held over unconscious bodies to watch for revivals, of checking for pulse, splashing cold water on victims' faces and sometimes even inserting needles under the toenails to see if there was a pain response. The medical branch of natural philosophy tried to precise the signs of death, some of which we would recognize (lack of pulse, breath and heartbeat); and some of which seem less useful (the nose becoming pointed or the forehead

hard). Lists of the signs of death even were translated into mnemonic vernacular rhymes or ‘jingles’, for reference in cases of unclear death.

Consensus about the forms and possibilities of afterlife was equally elusive. From the church fathers on down, there was significant diversity of thought on this topic. On the one hand was a tradition originating with Saint Augustine, which held that the souls of the dead were translated to another dimension, and could *not* return to this worldly plane. Augustine’s treatise *On the Care to Be Taken for the Dead*, composed around 422, erected a firm barrier between this and the other world.<sup>4</sup> This strand of thought persisted throughout the Middle Ages and was, indeed, the dominant school of thought among theologians, natural philosophers and other intellectuals. A good, clear statement of the Augustinian position may be found in the writings of William of Auvergne: ‘If [they] are in the society of the blessed and sublime spirits, why would they descend ... from the joys of blessedness? If, however, they are in the infernal prison or the purging fire, in either case they would seem to be confined and incapable of leaving.’<sup>5</sup>

According to Augustinian heuristics, the dead, once departed, cannot return: the veil between worlds is thick. Hence, apparitions of the dead could only be demons impersonating the deceased and wreaking havoc with the imaginations of the living. Yet another ancient tradition accepted the possibility that the dead might indeed linger on earth. The fourth book of Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*, which is filled with tales of ghosts and revenants in this world, is the locus classicus for this stance. Gregory’s specific tales, and the motif more generally, were commonly to be found in predatory texts, courtly entertainments and histories – all works aimed at largely lay audiences.

Why were these kinds of stories allowed to persist, despite the fact that the highest levels of the theological elite were following Augustine’s lead rather than Gregory’s? I would suggest it was because, quite simply, the main idea about death that the church wished to promote to the laity, one so important that it overwhelmed all other considerations, was that there *was* life after death. The suggestion that everything was extinguished at the death of the body likely was rare in its most radical form – but it certainly is attested. Thomas of Cantimpré, for instance, recounted a story of drinkers debating the afterlife. When the sceptic offers to sell his soul for another ale, a dark stranger promptly appears, buys the drink and flies off with the man right after it is done.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, pagan peoples who were still actively being evangelized in the high Middle Ages were said to

believe that 'everything finishes with temporal death'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, doubt about the afterlife was a highly threatening area of unbelief for those charged with missionizing journeys or pastoral duties. Annihilation: this was the unthinkable, the truly heretical, for immortality is the central promise of Christian faith. Thus ghost stories were simply too useful to reject, for they offered direct, first-hand evidence for the afterlife:

... [some] say that what we teach about the Other World is nonsense: they suggest we made it up! ... They won't believe it ... unless they hear it from someone who either resurrected from the dead, or who appears to the living after death. For how can anyone know about something they have neither seen nor experienced?<sup>8</sup>

In brief, representations of ghosts and revenants persisted, even flourished, in large part because they served the church's broader acculturative projects. They provided a form of epistemic proof about the persistence of the individual essence beyond the death of the body.

At the same time, tales of the restless dead were a particularly active conduit for the circulation of ideas among different sociocultural groups in the Middle Ages. They frequently were drawn from earlier cultural antecedents, yet were suffused with an ecclesiastical ideology: thus they were able to function within more than one field of meaning simultaneously. A group of tales from the *Chronicon* of Thietmar of Merseburg<sup>9</sup> can serve as excellent evidence for this point. This bishop served in a place (the far eastern frontier of Christendom, amid Slav communities that still were only partially converted); and a time (the 10-teens) in which the Christian church still was actively evangelizing a mixed population. Here, Christianity was relatively young. This was the second great wave of missioning activity eastward, attempting to extend the gains of a previous generation (which brought the new religion beyond the Rhine and to the North Sea) now across the Elbe and into the Baltic region. Christianity was embraced by some Slavic peoples, but actively rejected by others.<sup>10</sup> The indigenous Slavic group just east of the Elbe, known variously either as the Wends or Redarii, proved militantly resistant to the acculturation projects of the German princes, and pushed back with bloody uprisings from the late tenth through the eleventh centuries. The Ottonian rulers, in turn, pushed back.<sup>11</sup> The eastern frontier of Christendom collapsed entirely in both 986 and 1066, with the result that the eastern Marches were not truly Christianized until the mid-twelfth century.

Thietmar, though born of Saxon aristocracy and an advisor of the Ottonian ruler Henry II, also was a keen observer of his surrounding culture. In book six of his work, for instance, he provides a detailed description of a pagan cult site, one that is regarded as reasonably reliable by modern scholars. Nor was Thietmar unique among Christian clerics in the region: Merseburg also was home to an anonymous cleric who collected and preserved two pagan incantations sometime during the tenth century. The so-called ‘Merseburg Charms’ are short, rhythmic invocations of valkyries, Phol, Wodan, and Frija, composed in an archaic German and carefully transcribed onto a leaf of an otherwise Christian manuscript found in the library of the Cathedral of Merseburg.<sup>12</sup> The decision to commit the charms to writing suggests an active interest, on the part of clergy in the area, to understanding local beliefs and practices. Thietmar’s text provides our richest contemporary testimony to how the imported religion of Christianity interacted with older native traditions.

### A GATHERING OF THE DEAD, OR OF DEMONS?

The story of the priest incinerated by a congregation of dead folk, with which I began, is the last of a group of three such stories in Book I of Thietmar’s eight-book work. The first one is set in Walsleben, a town that, as Thietmar recalled, had been attacked and burned by Slavic forces some time earlier. The church had since been repaired and reconsecrated. The new priest rises at the first blush of dawn to sing matins, but finds the church and cemetery already occupied by corpses arisen from their graves. A deceased woman of his acquaintance assures him that they already have taken care of the morning’s liturgical duties, and tells him he has not long to live (her words prove true). The next tale is set in Magdeburg, where the night guards of the Merchants’ church notice activity in the attached cemetery. They recruit some prominent citizens to keep watch alongside them. These witnesses aver that they saw the dead holding lights in candelabra; near dawn, they heard voices sing the morning mass in full, with proper chanting and responses. The last tale is the one from Deventer, with which I began. Thietmar heard this one from his niece, an abbess, who claimed to know of many similar instances.

A number of details in these stories are worthy of close consideration. First, and as a precondition for everything else, the dead conduct their nightly activities on the same plane of existence as the living: in short, Thietmar adopted a Gregorian framework. The dead are portrayed as

remaining close to the spaces they occupied during life, and they behave much like a living congregation. There is a lay-clerical social division; the dead can sing mass and they sometimes carry candles; they can see and speak to the living. These are corporeal, revenant corpses with physical capabilities to sing, to speak, to grasp, and not least, to kill.

One reason why cultural fragments about the dead were so ubiquitous to medieval culture is that they held a surfeit of meanings. Thietmar's tales exemplify this: they are hybrid formations with several different sets of cultural meanings bundled together into a syncretic narrative form. In fact, I find in Thietmar's text intimations of three ways of understanding these tales. First, they may be taken at face value, as the Christian dead arisen before the end in order to offer a theological lesson; second, they may be interpreted as demons impersonating the dead for nefarious purposes; or third, they may be interpreted as embodying a fundamentally pagan sensibility about the afterlife, albeit one transposed to a Christianizing context. In the remainder of this essay I unpack each of these notions in turn. However, it is necessary to offer one caveat: the analysis to follow somewhat artificially dissects a narrative that functions as an organic, integrated whole. Thietmar's stories are plurivocal and sometimes inconsistent, and this in itself is interesting and important to observe.

I begin with a rationale that Thietmar himself offered for his stories as he recounted them in Book I of his eight-part work. The bishop introduced this series of anecdotes as transparent proofs so that 'no one faithful to Christ may doubt the future resurrection of the dead'. This is a theme to which he returned obsessively. Shortly thereafter, for example, he paused to exclaim, 'I have written these things down so that unbelieving people may learn that the words of the prophets are true: "Lord, your dead will live!" And another, "The dead shall rise up, those who lie in graves; they will hear the voice of God's son and rejoice!"' And he concluded the series: 'I speak to the uneducated and most especially to the Slavs, those who believe that everything finishes with temporal death, firmly indicating to the faithful the certainty of our future resurrection.'<sup>13</sup>

Thus Thietmar persistently argued that congregations of living cadavers demonstrate the truth of the General Resurrection at the End of Time. The latter doctrine apparently was one to which he had encountered resistance from pagan Slavic populations. As someone charged with pastoral responsibilities at the geographic limit of Christendom – Thietmar was the second occupant of the see of Merseburg – it is easy to see why he would have found these tales appealing: they provided compelling entertainment

mingled with a frisson of fear and pity; they foregrounded worship in a church; and they are premised upon the continuing life of the physical body at some point after death and burial. Thus on one level, it makes sense that he would point to them as a rejoinder to pagans, recent converts and other Resurrection sceptics.

Yet at the same time, one is struck by the fallacy of Thietmar's reasoning. Just how, exactly, do contemporary groups of revenant corpses, in the year 1013, establish the truth of the General Resurrection of all humanity at some future time? Thietmar undoubtedly meant to suggest that the moving, animate cadavers of these dead folk provide a pattern of possibility: proof that the mortal coil may transcend corruption, rise and live again. Yet the illogic of his proposition is manifest: the doctrine of Resurrection is more than the paradox of life returned to a defunct body. It plays a specific role within the unfolding of universal history, and the process of human salvation. It takes more than a few reanimated cadavers in a cemetery to do it justice. Finally, the gruesome murder of the priest in the last story obstructs any transparent understanding of these revenants as patent symbols for the most exalted mystery of the Christian faith.

Other medieval sources likewise reported congregations of the dead, though usually they were deployed as evidence for spiritual afterlife after bodily death, rather than as proofs of the bodily Resurrection. The Fournier register tells us that in Montaillou, groups of the dead continually moved between churches in the region, in a form of post-mortem penitence from which they would eventually be released.<sup>14</sup> The belief that the dead came out of their graves at night to worship also was known to medieval German Jews: in some regions the living customarily knocked on the synagogue doors before entering in the morning, in order to give fair warning.<sup>15</sup> Thietmar's contemporary Raoul Glaber told of a monk who witnessed a matins service in church early one Sunday, conducted by a dead bishop on behalf of some recently killed Crusaders on route to Paradise.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Peter the Venerable recounted how a novice was summoned into the cemetery one night by his deceased uncle, to attend a post-mortem chapter meeting of all the defunct brethren.<sup>17</sup> Yet though the structural substratum of these other stories is similar to Thietmar's narratives – religious communities of the dead, encountered on this plane of existence and with some indications of corporeity – the meanings attached to them differ. Thietmar is alone in arguing that his reports prove the doctrine of the General Resurrection.

It is perhaps all the more surprising, then, to encounter this sentiment in Book VII of Thietmar's history: 'I would truthfully proclaim ... that following the commendation of the soul and completion of the solemn office of burial, no corpse will rise from the dead before the resurrection of all flesh.'<sup>18</sup> Thietmar likely composed Book VII four or five years after he wrote Book I. By then, he had changed his mind about how best to explain movements of corpses and appearances of the dead. The cadavers of the deceased lie quiet in the ground after they receive the solemn rite of burial: they do not, on any account, wander forth from their graves. What, then, of reports of dead people coming back to life? Thietmar no longer regarded such events as salutary indicators of Resurrection, but rather as sinister evidence of demonic mischief: 'The cunning enemy of mortals appears in the image of dead people and tries to delude us. Fools accept his deceit as truth.' More fool he, then.

Of course, blaming evil spirits either for mimicking the dead, or possessing their cadavers, had long been the strategy of choice for sophisticated Christian sceptics called upon to explain reports of ghosts or revenants.<sup>19</sup> To frame the switch in terms of the heuristic patterns introduced above, in Book VII Thietmar switched to an Augustinian from his earlier, Gregorian understanding of animate corpses. To wit: they cannot be taken at face value, but are a form of demonic interference and deceit. In so doing, Thietmar was coming into line with the explanatory mechanism that traditionally was preferred by men of higher education and higher clerical orders like himself. Yet Thietmar failed to go back and edit Book I in line with his newly sceptical outlook, thus preserving two distinct interpretations of return from the dead.

### MARVELOUS, ANCIENT SACRIFICES

Thus far, I have concentrated on setting forth two explanations that Thietmar of Merseburg offered for appearances of the collective dead. In the early part of his chronicle, he suggested that night-time companies of the dead at worship provide potent evidence for the doctrine of the General Resurrection. In a later passage, he opined that the deceased cannot arise before the end of time; but are simply demons in disguise. In both these cases, however, the heuristic framework was rationalizing and ideologically Christian. Accounts that, in themselves, had no intrinsic theological content, were appropriated to a doxology in which the living, the dead, and demons all have precisely predetermined roles.

I return now to a key point that requires illumination: the peculiar fact that this apparently pious congregation of dead folk kill the hapless living priest in their midst. This facet of the story is rather puzzling: How ought we to understand these pious, yet murderous, revenants? What kind of cultural logic is expressed in a Christian congregation that kills a cleric?

The best point of entry lies in the details of *where* and *how* the dead folk killed the priest: these details are specific and they are revelatory. According to Thietmar, the dead men picked up the priest bodily and transported him to the altar before killing him. There, they offered him up, apparently as a sacrifice, in a specific way: they incinerated him, flesh and bones, down ‘to a cinder’. Thietmar’s undead congregation, in short, made of the living priest a burnt offering. And this, in turn, alerts us to the fact that these living cadavers were not fully or self-evidently the Christian dead of this contested region. There is a good case to be made that the underlying core of this urban legend concerned a group of pagan dead folk who managed to invade a once-wrecked, deconsecrated church; who resisted the return of Christian clergy to their reclaimed territory; who arose in a physically embodied form as the pagan dead traditionally were imagined to do; and who engaged in human burnt offering as a form of worship. This makes sense when we recall that burnt sacrifice was well known as a characteristic practice of Northern European paganism, one well attested in both ancient and contemporary sources.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Thietmar himself was fully familiar with the custom. Indeed, it is no coincidence that, just after concluding his stories about revenants, Thietmar was moved to offer an ethnographic sketch of exactly this tradition of human immolation among pagans of the region:

Since I have heard marvellous things about their ancient sacrifices, I do not wish to pass over these without mention. ... Every nine years ... they gather and offer to their gods a burnt offering of ninety-nine men ... They believed with certainty that these sacrifices would serve the dead below [*inferos*].<sup>21</sup>

It is telling that Thietmar should offer this description of burnt offerings of human victims only a few short paragraphs after describing how a congregation of revenants burned a living man upon an altar. Significantly, Thietmar’s description of sacrifice is neither formulaic nor repetitive of antecedent works.<sup>22</sup>

Yet at the same time, the dead in all these tales were celebrating a Christian mass. If the living priest, the vicar of Christ, was in some sense functioning as a pagan burnt sacrifice in this story, at the same time he was

offered upon the altar of a church, the place where the sacrifice of Christ would ritually have been re-enacted in the Eucharist. In fact, the story intermingles pagan and Christian symbolisms rather promiscuously and indifferently; Thietmar himself does not appear concerned to sort them out. It is a frankly syncretistic tale that combines several contrary motifs, a fact that perhaps attests to its survival through oral transmission for some time before being preserved in written form by Thietmar.

Other details of the story function in a similarly fluid manner, poised between traditional pagan cultural norms and newer Christian ideals. For instance, Thietmar reported in passing that the defunct congregations gave offerings to their priest. This small feature, which might quickly be glossed over, seems to me quite significant, for it suggests that the dead owned material possessions. In other words, these physically embodied dead folk retained social divisions, material wealth and an economy of exchange. Offerings at mass would normally, in Thietmar's time, have been coins or small trinkets of value: these informal gifts were used for miscellaneous parish expenses, including support for the mass and as supplementary sustenance for the lower clergy. Thus it is tempting to suggest that the alms of the dead are helping to support intercessions on their own behalf: masses, prayers and offerings were beginning to be part of the regular *memoria* for the dead in the eleventh century.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the detail also implies something else very intriguing: the dead must pursue other activities outside of the communal worship at which they most frequently were observed. The lay dead must have secular engagements that produce goods or wealth, which they then share with their local dead cleric – just as they did in life. In short, the detail of the offerings opens up a vista onto a fuller post-mortem existence.

And this, in turn, prompts new questions and observations. Life is characterized above all by change, by shifting temporal rhythms. Indeed, one significant difference between this life and the next is the continually changing nature of vitality: the successive occurrence, and then the passing away, of people and events. The afterlife of the Christian imagination, by contrast, is static in its eternity: since the world to come is perfect and under direct divine governance, there is no place for change. The realms of the Christian afterlife generally lacked the texture of continual events – only graduation from Purgatory and eventually Resurrection. Yet as we have seen, the distinction between vitality and mortality was not always very sharp in the imaginings of medieval people: the dead often were portrayed as an 'age class'<sup>24</sup> of those who had passed on, but who yet remained organized in a complex society. The materialist logic of this representation derives from

European paganism, in syncretic fusion with Thietmar's Christian afterlife ideals. When describing the pagan concept of afterlife around the Baltic, for instance, the chronicler Peter of Duisberg wrote,

The Prussians used to believe in the resurrection of the flesh, but not in the way they ought to have. They used to believe that if a person was noble or not, rich or poor, powerful or powerless in this life, he would be the same after resurrection in his future life. ... [And so] they burnt whatever was appropriate to their station: they believed that things when burnt would rise again with them and serve them as previously.<sup>25</sup>

Afterlife is a continuation of this life – including the transfer of worldly possessions (burnt sacrifices from the living). And there are versions of this materialist afterlife scattered throughout northern European sources: anecdotes about the dead glimpsed at tournaments, in courts, at the hunt. Usually, when followed home they are found to live inside mountains. Thus, Étienne de Bourbon tells us that, when a peasant followed a dead crowd of huntsmen, they entered Mont du Chat ('Cat Mountain') in Savoy. Inside, he found King Arthur and the rest of his long-dead court inhabiting a sumptuous palace: 'They were playing and dancing, drinking and eating gourmet foods. Finally, he was told to go to bed, and was led to a room with a bed made up with most precious things. On it lay a woman who appeared wondrously beautiful.'<sup>26</sup>

Gervase of Tilbury and Caesarius of Heisterbach likewise describe Arthur's glittering court of the dead as persisting inside a mountain, though they identify locations in Norman Italy: Mount Etna, Mount Gyber or Mount Stromboli. Indeed, Caesarius included several tales in his *Dialogue on Miracles* about different groups of the dead happily residing inside mountains, and welcoming new arrivals as they die. Thomas of Ecclestan updated these sorts of tales by reporting that it was the German Emperor Frederick II who ruled over the dead in Mount Etna, an idea he gathered from local gossip while sojourning in the region.<sup>27</sup> No doubt, there are strong literary elements in this group of courtly tales, yet the precise form this narrative takes – of the dead forming complex societies inside mountains – is significant. The motif also is found in Iceland: for example *Eyrbyggja Saga* describes how a shepherd witnessed the mountain of Helga Fell open up to receive a newly dead arrival; he hears the sounds of joyous feasting as the defunct man is welcomed to the community of his dead kinsmen.

Perhaps the richest portrayal of post-mortem society as complex and materialist may be found in the chronicle of Henry of Erfurt, however. A dead man named Reyneke was perceptible to the living as a single 'little human hand, soft and elegant'. The hand was 'touched and felt by perhaps a thousand people, though no other part of him could ever be touched or seen'. The phantom's voice, however, was clearly discerned by all. Accordingly, a crowd gathered at the hand's location, an inn, and began to question it intently about the forms and customs of the afterlife:

When asked what or who it was, it replied, 'Truly, I am a man and a Christian just like you, baptized in the town of Göttingen ...'

'Are you alone?' – 'No, there is a large community of us.'

'What do you do?' – 'We eat, we drink, we take wives, we have children; we arrange the weddings of our daughters and the marriages of our sons; we sow and we reap, and various other things just as you do.'<sup>28</sup>

This is quite a peculiar conversation. Reyneke assured his interlocutors that he was a faithful baptized Christian just like them, only dead. Yet, his form of afterlife was far from that imagined by the church: it included sowing and reaping in the fields, eating and drinking the fruits of these labours, and most astonishing, marriage and reproduction. The dead, in other words, are fertile: they were imagined as sexual beings whose numbers were not replenished simply by more deaths from among mortal men and women, but through their own self-sustaining fertility. They were assumed to be a fully parallel society that created new 'life' on their own; their progeny then grew up in turn, married, had sex and went on to create a new generation of, one supposes, living dead infants. The dead, in short, had an afterlife cycle just like a traditional life cycle. These dead folk led lives of change, rather than impassibility; of temporality, rather than static eternity; of production and reproduction, rather than of sterility and decay. In light of the above explorations, Thietmar's stories now appear ever more as an appropriation, into a Christian setting, of an originally pagan imaginative construct of an afterlife lived materially and socially.

### THINKING WITH THE DEAD

In conclusion, Why were the dead so 'good to think with' for medieval people, and what can we learn from this investigation? As for the first question, the dead were good to think with because they were fluid, rather

than fixed, signs. Private religious beliefs relating to the family and the ancestors often are those most resistant to change, for they speak to deep matters of identity, and of connections to the past and to place. For this reason, traditional ways of thinking about the dead were an area of culture that persisted even as Christianization slowly advanced.<sup>29</sup> Stories such as Thietmar's thus represent a kind of afterlife for paganism, both literally and metaphorically. For its part, the medieval Christian theological tradition was fully and definitively otherworldly, focusing intently upon life after death as the sum and goal of all action and experience. In Pierre Chaunu's phrase, this was 'the religion of the soul'.<sup>30</sup> The overwhelming importance of life after death was an intrinsic part of the pastoral agenda of missionizing clergy, who sought to implant an otherworldly consciousness in the new parishes of Europe. In such a context, rumours of first-hand encounters between the living and the dead held an obvious appeal. Moreover, such stories existed in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis Christian doctrine: though not quite orthodox, they never were declared heretical either. Hence they could conveniently be put to use as vivid proofs of the reality of life after death, thus sustaining the central doctrine of the faith.

For we modern scholars, investigating the ways in which medieval people imagined the dead casts light upon the multiplicity of overlapping religious epistemologies in the Middle Ages, and their conceptualizations of the human. Indeed, the dead are the ultimate test case for this: simultaneously real and unreal, the dead are people, yet they are not. As wholly imaginary persons, the dead were convenient depositories of social values, serving as a medium of exploration for ideas about how the individual, as a physical microcosm, existed within the macrocosms of society and the well-ordered universe. Yet at the same time, this imaginative aspect of the dead was built upon real memories, real personalities and real cadavers: thus any history of the dead necessarily is both idealist and materialist.

## NOTES

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4. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, in Migne, P. (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, 221 vols (Paris, 1841–66), 40, pp. 591–610 (henceforth PL).
5. Guillelmi Alverni, *De universo* in *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Frankfurt-am-Main: Minerva, 1963), 1, p. 1069.
6. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus* (Douai, 1627), II:56.
7. See below, n. 9.
8. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, Banks, S.E. and J. W. Binns (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 758–9.
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16. Rodulphus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, PL 142, pp. 640–2.
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# Heresy and Heterodoxy in Medieval Scandinavia

*Stephen Mitchell*

## INTRODUCTION

Heresy is hardly unique to Christianity, or, for that matter, to any particular religion, but the concept is naturally closely tied to the Catholic church in the medieval West.<sup>1</sup> After all, the church had a monopoly on deciding what was and was not an orthodox view, an authority it exercised with particular alacrity in the post-millennial period.<sup>2</sup> Yet already during the much earlier apostolic era of Christianity, it was acknowledged that there were, and would be, heresies; thus, for example, Simon Peter warns, in the Vulgate, that *in vobis erunt magistri mendacis qui introducent sectas perditionis* ('there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies').<sup>3</sup>

Among the many passages in the New Testament with references of this sort, one of especially great weight for the purposes of this essay, concerned as it is with heresy, magic and witchcraft in medieval Scandinavia, is Paul's letter to the Galatians (5:19–21) where, in enumerating the 'acts of the flesh', as a foil to the 'fruits of Holy Spirit' which will follow, he writes,

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S. Mitchell (✉)  
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA  
e-mail: [samitch@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:samitch@fas.harvard.edu)

*... manifesta autem sunt opera carnis quae sunt fornicatio inmunditia luxuria idolorum servitus veneficia inimicitiae contentiones aemulationes irae rixae dissensiones sectae invidiae homicidia ebrietates comesationes et his similia...*

(Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envynings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ...)

Representing as it did a sustained challenge to church teaching – and to church authority – heresy was the subject of voluminous treatments by church councils, scholars and canon lawyers in the Middle Ages, most clearly perhaps in Canon 3 of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.<sup>4</sup> Modern scholarship has tackled the issue no less capacious, and with an ardour that warns the non-specialist that these are closely guarded waters.<sup>5</sup> It is then only with timidity that a non-specialist dares to take up the problem of unacceptable religious behaviour, of heterodoxy and heresy, in the later Nordic Middle Ages, which I do mainly in order to re-examine the empirically knowable data on conduct of this sort in relation to beliefs about, and incidents of, witchcraft and magic in that period, and with an eye towards measuring our understanding of the religious contexts in which many of that world's best-known legal, historical and literary texts came into being.

What did medieval canonists, bishops and other church authorities mean when they referred to heresy?<sup>6</sup> The most influential canonist of the Middle Ages, the twelfth-century Bolognese scholar, Gratian, argued that, in the words of Anders Winroth, ‘a heretic is someone who follows false and novel opinions for the sake of worldly gain’.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas described it in his thirteenth-century *Summa Theologica* as a form of unbelief among those who profess Christianity, which corrupts its dogmas (*Hæresis est infidelitatis species ad eos partinens, qui fidem Christi professi sunt, et ejus dogmata corrumpunt*).<sup>8</sup> A key component of the concept was highlighted by the thirteenth-century Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, who, as quoted by Matthew Paris, defined it as ‘an opinion chosen by human perception contrary to holy Scripture, publicly avowed and obstinately defended’ (*Hæresis est sententia humano sensu electa, Scripturæ Sacré contraria, palam edocta, pertinaciter defensa*).<sup>9</sup> The heretic’s choice of a view contrary to church teaching and its studied resistance to correction, as in Bishop Robert’s characterization, was long held to be a critical component of the crime that helped distinguish it from mere error, but as McSheffrey notes, ‘recently a number of historians have challenged Grosseteste’s emphasis on intentionality in the make-up of the medieval heretic’.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to heretical views that challenge articles of faith and other established church doctrine, so-called heresy in the first degree, lesser degrees of heresy also exist. These heterodox views are nonconformist, unorthodox and unwelcome, but they are not understood to be as serious as heresy in the first degree.<sup>11</sup> A range of suspected errors, of heterodox views, thus exists, extending out from instances of clear and establishable heresy in the first degree. These include *sententia haeresi proxima*, an opinion approaching heresy but not specifically challenging established doctrine; *propositio theologicæ erronea*, a theologically erroneous opinion but not a heretical view; and *sententia de haeresi suspecta*, a probable but not demonstrable heretical view.<sup>12</sup>

What then does all this have to do with medieval Scandinavia, a region singularly unrenowned for, and insignificant, it would seem, as regards, heresy? After all, the medieval North experienced no large-scale inquisitions of the sort known from the Continent, a fact usually credited to its lack of extensive organized heretical movements, such as the Waldensians, Cathars, Lollards, Hussites and so on.<sup>13</sup> Thus, H.C. Lea, in *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (1888), argues concerning Niels Johansen in Odense (named by Pope Martin V in 1421 as Inquisitor for the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden), that 'there is no trace of his activity in those regions, and the Inquisition may be considered as non-existent there'.<sup>14</sup> Even if ecclesiastical institutions geared to suppressing heresy may not have existed on a large scale in the Nordic Middle Ages, we do know that at least some heresies, heretics and substantially heterodox views did, some of which plausibly involve issues connected with witchcraft and magic. How many? The answer, as it turns out, is more uncertain, and, to my eyes in any event, more interesting, than previously thought.

At one level, a discussion of this problem could easily turn solely on important if relatively narrow terminological and administrative issues, but my interest resides rather in the broader issue of those who walked outside of, or on, the lines of doctrinal and behavioural acceptability in medieval Scandinavia. How were these ideas of orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy understood and employed by bishops, canon lawyers and others in Catholic Scandinavia, and, especially, what sorts of light might such instances shine onto the murky image that emerges of superstition and so-called popular religion in the medieval North? By examining a number of cases where such charges are made or implied, as well as those where they are not, can we arrive at both a better tally of cases of heterodoxy and

heresy, and thus a better understanding of spiritual life more generally, in the Nordic Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup>

## TERMINOLOGY

The terms employed in medieval Scandinavia for heresy are well reflected in the late thirteenth-century discussions surrounding the division of responsibility between the church and the Norwegian crown. In documents from 1277 outlining the results of the negotiations between the bishop and the king, the parallel Latin and vernacular documents employ, respectively, Latin *heresis* and Old Norse-Icelandic *villa eða vantru*, ‘error or false belief’, in their enumeration of the cases belonging to the jurisdiction of the church.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the specific sense of ‘error’, that is, ‘heresy’, Old Norse-Icelandic *villa* can also gloss what in English we might term ‘disorientation’, and when related adverbial forms of it were used with verbs of motion, the phrase meant ‘to go astray’ in a religious sense.<sup>17</sup>

In Old Swedish, *villa* was similarly used to indicate heresy,<sup>18</sup> although *vanstro* is also known in eastern Scandinavia. In *Gutasaga*, for example, *wantro* clearly indicates ‘unfaith’ or ‘paganism’.<sup>19</sup> In a miracle connected with Gregory the Great, it more obviously means ‘heresy’.<sup>20</sup> Occasionally, the word appears in collocations with *villa* in a way where the phrase suggests a broad synoptic view of non-doctrinal positions and behaviours (e.g., *at blifua j toliko villa och vanstro*).<sup>21</sup>

Other native medieval Nordic terms (e.g., *aftrúa* ‘unbelief’, ‘heresy’, *falstrú* ‘false doctrine’, ‘heresy’, *rangtrúaðr* ‘heretical’ [lit., ‘wrong-faithed’]) more narrowly target doctrinal error. At the same time, the sort of careful distinctions that matter to decretists and lexicographers are often ignored in less technical and more quotidian usage: to take a fifteenth-century Swedish sermon as an example, sin, heresy and disbelief are bundled together when the homily warns against the devil, who secretly eggs the unwary ‘to sin or heresy and [the] irreligion of heretics’ (*til synd älla kättara oc otrona villara*) through such traps as false knowledge, healing herbs, witchcraft and diabolical magic.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, the homilist does not appear to be worrying much over the theological differences between the various terms he invokes. West Norse vernacular terms likewise occasionally suggest ambiguity and overlap, or perhaps differences unclear to modern eyes: in, for example, a list of malefactors that includes fornicators, those who bear false witness, notorious sorcerers and perjurors, the

so-called Third Statute of Archbishop Páll (1342) lists ‘heretics’ (*Jtem villumen*) and then immediately adds ‘those who do not hold to professed truth’ (*Jtem peir sem ey halda iattaða tru*).<sup>23</sup>

The vernacular loan word whose root eventually becomes the most common term in the non-insular Nordic dialects for heretics and heresy – *kätteri*, *kettere* and so on – derives from the name of the heretical sect known as the Cathars (borrowed into Danish, Norwegian and Swedish from Middle Low German *ketter* [modern German *Ketzer*], but apparently with no penetration into Icelandic). In medieval German, this term labelled not only heresy in its narrow sense, but eventually also covered a wide array of anti-social behaviours, including magic and sexual offences; this seems to have been the case in the North as well.<sup>24</sup> One of these associations was incest, a sense in which the term was used with some frequency in the later Middle Ages in non-insular Scandinavia. Evidence of the term used in reference to such misconduct is well documented in late medieval Denmark and Sweden, for example,<sup>25</sup> but such usage has generally disappeared in more modern times.<sup>26</sup> In any event, the word’s key connotation in the medieval period remained in relation to heretical views, that is, dissent from church doctrine.

An example of the terms, in something of a causal relationship, can be seen in an Old Swedish exegesis on the commandment concerning the worship of graven images (Exodus 20:4): the commentator notes that some people have gone astray (*foro ... wille*) and become heretics (*wordho kättara*) through the false understanding that this prohibition should also apply to church statuary.<sup>27</sup> Two sermons from the early fourteenth-century West Norse *Hauksbók*<sup>28</sup> provide further evidence of this relationship. The connection between these homilies and the works of Ælfric’s *Lives of the Saints*, especially his *De Falsis Diis*, and thus ultimately to Martin of Braga’s *De Correctione Rusticorum* as well, has been firmly established since the pioneering observations of Ingvald Reichborn-Kjennerud (1934) and Arnold Taylor (1969), even if the exact nature of this relationship remains obscure.<sup>29</sup> Both sermons are relevant to assessing ecclesiastical thinking relating to heresy, heterodoxy and so on in the Nordic thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially to the extent that they, the second one in particular, are strikingly reminiscent of the content and language of penitentials and the vernacular Nordic legal texts concerned with the church and religious affairs (called *kyrkobalker*, *Christenretter* and so on).

The first sermon addresses the veneration and worship of the old pre-Christian gods, particularly, the sacrifices and idols associated with this

worship by pagans,<sup>30</sup> people variously referred to as ‘heathen men’ (*hínir heiðnu menn*, 158–59), ‘those poor in faith and wayward men’ (alt., ‘heretics’) (*hína ormu menn oc. villu menn*, 159).<sup>31</sup> In its intellectual orientation, this text is both euhemeristic and antiquarian, and, given those frameworks, is not as interested in pursuing the heretical and heterodox aspects as is the other sermon (pp. 167–69), which looks rather to correct a wide array of problematic beliefs and traditions. Purportedly quoting Augustine, this second sermon presents itself in a particularly paternalistic and corrective fashion, saying, ‘I instruct you as a father should instruct his children’ (... *kenni ec yðr sua sem faðer skal kenna bornum sínum*, 167), and further, ‘We learned men are to instruct you in the proper [lit., ‘right’, ‘true’] faith’ (*Uer lerðir menn eigum at kenna yðr retta tru* ..., 167). Again and again the text admonishes against various magical practices (using such terms as *taufr* and *galdr*), against witches and sorcerers (referring to them as *galdramenn*, *gerningamenn*, *völur*, *skrattar*), against venerating land spirits (*signa land vettum*), against love potions, against divination and against such apotropaic practices as drawing a child through dirt at a crossroads.

Such behaviours are characterized in this sermon by phrases like *diofuls villu* (‘the devil’s delusion’, ‘diabolical heresy’), *syndir storar* (‘great sins’), *hindr vitni* (‘idolatry’, ‘superstition’, ‘nonsense’; lit., ‘hinder-knowledge’), *fianda villa oc diofuls þionasta* (‘fiendish heresy [or delusion] and diabolical service’), and *diofuls suícum* (‘diabolical deception’). These homiletic texts cast in bold relief the legal and ecclesiastical realities that emerge from the Nordic law codes and synodal statutes,<sup>32</sup> namely, that the entire range of magical activities, everything from such widespread traditions as the-riomancy to those connected specifically to Nordic pagan traditions (e.g., ‘sitting out’ in order to awaken trolls) were to be condemned, and were understood as, and to be understood as, *villa eða vantru*, ‘error or false belief’, a phrase which might even be translated as ‘heresy or heterodoxy’.

## HERESY IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA

Given this perspective on pagan practices and other forms of magic and witchcraft, and given the degree to which such activities are mentioned in the various medieval Scandinavian cultural documents, from Icelandic sagas to historical chronicles to the *diplomataria*, one might reasonably expect to find a number of heresy cases dotting the landscape of medieval Nordic history.<sup>33</sup> Yet when one turns to the entry on ‘heretics’ in

the authoritative *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* (KLNM), Jarl Gallén maintains that cases of heresy in medieval Scandinavia were (1) rare and (2) occurred exclusively in Sweden.<sup>34</sup>

This judgment seems curiously at odds with what those who peruse the historical record experience and offers a tantalizing opportunity to explore whether this tally of medieval Nordic cases of heresy indeed reflects the perceptions and interpretations of medieval authorities, or only those of modern scholarship – or neither. The following discussion thus reviews the cases Gallén cites, where actual legal or ecclesiastical procedures were recorded, as well as other instances which he, and others, have largely (or entirely) chosen to ignore.<sup>35</sup>

For the present exercise, I focus on those cases where such terms as ‘heresy’ are specifically deployed by church authorities, as well as those cases that clearly involve error about matters of doctrine, but exclude from this discussion various cases involving moral turpitude, such as incest and bestiality (although I do not discount the importance of these instances for understanding the full range of crimes in the Nordic Middle Ages envisioned here).<sup>36</sup> Briefly summarized, the cases cited in *KLNM* are the following:

1. The Upplander, Botulf of Östby in Gottröra parish, was declared a heretic in 1311 after a protracted, nearly decade-long wrangle with church leaders over the question of the transubstantiation of the consecrated sacraments of the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup>
2. Although Denmark’s Valdemar Atterdag had conquered Gotland several decades earlier (1362), Visby remained part of the Swedish diocese of Linköping and there at the close of the fourteenth century, the priest at St Olai Church, Heyno, argued, in writing and in his preaching, that it was a mortal sin to attend a mass officiated by a priest himself guilty of a mortal sin, nor could such a priest offer absolution. In this apparent case of neo-Donatism, Heyno was asked to account for himself to the bishop.<sup>38</sup>
3. The Birgittine mother house at Vadstena in Östergötland was visited in 1442 by a peasant who was subsequently charged with heresy. *Diarium Vadstenense* describes the case of a certain Hemming, ‘a simple and rustic man’ (*vir simplex et rusticus*) who presents to the clergy various articles, ‘some of which were contrary to the faith, some contrary to the doctrine of the saints, some contrary to the rule of [the Order of] Saint Saviour’ (*de quibus aliqui fuerunt contra fidem, aliqui contra*

*decreta sanctorum, aliqui contra regulam Salvatoris*), and declares himself to be a messenger from the Virgin Mary. These items were detailed for the bishop of Linköping (Nils König, bishop from 1441 to 1458) and were included in the examination of Hemming about the possibility of heresy (*de heresi*). The bishop summoned Hemming to Linköping, where he was found guilty of heresy (*convictus est de heresi*) and condemned to imprisonment. After a period of judicial fasting in prison, Hemming rejected his earlier error and was subjected to an elaborate, public mortification, during which Hemming bears a lighted taper in his hand and a bundle of firewood on his back, thus acknowledging that he would be destined for the flames if he were to recidivate in his error.<sup>39</sup>

4. In 1506, the Beguine community in Vadstena was driven from its accommodations, with numerous comments by the chroniclers of *Diarium Vadstenense* as to the heretical nature of the group.<sup>40</sup>
5. The events of 1520, in what has come to be known as *Stockholms blodbad* ‘Stockholm’s Bloodbath’, conclude Gallén’s discussion of the Nordic world’s long Middle Ages, where in a collusion between the Swedish bishops and the Danish authorities, more than 80 Swedish aristocrats, clergymen and others of the Sture party were executed. Archbishop Gustav Trolle’s charge of heresy had several grounds, including the destruction of church property. That the charge of heresy was used in this case has been widely interpreted as a means of neutralizing the amnesty earlier pledged by the secular authorities to the rebels.<sup>41</sup>

These five episodes are the only ones Gallén identifies as medieval Nordic heresies, all of them, it would seem, based on criteria involving the language of the charges, the authorities disposing of the cases and the theological basis for the charge. It does not seem, however, that these five events fully encompass all instances of convicted heresy, suspected heresy and accusations of heresy of various degrees in the medieval North: in addition to Gallén’s Swedish cases, a number of additional episodes, using the same standards (i.e., the language of the charges, the authorities disposing of the cases, the theological basis for the charge), might plausibly be part of the discussion as well.<sup>42</sup> Realizing that there may be other cases that should be included, I am for the present purpose simply using these episodes to expand the set of historical data-points from before c.1525, data-points which, I believe, help contextualize the degree

to which activities associated with magic and witchcraft formed part of the view of heresy and heterodoxy in the North.<sup>43</sup> Treated with comparable brevity, a sampling of these additional cases of heterodoxy, even heresy, in Scandinavian, whether connected to witchcraft and magic or not – incidents that challenge Gallén’s view that heresy in the Nordic Middle Ages was rare and occurred only in Sweden – would include the following:<sup>44</sup>

1. In 1264, the Archbishop of Lund, Jacob Erlandsson (Jakob Erlansen), received a letter from Pope Urban IV accusing him of a variety of both earthly and spiritual malefactions, including altering the *Pater noster* and the Creed, and, further, directing his priests to teach the texts according to his versions, behaviour which would inevitably cause his parishioners to fall into heresy (*quod in heresim populus laberetur*). Furthermore, and importantly, the charges themselves, the pope notes, do not lack for heretical wickedness (*non caret procul dubio scrupulo heretice pravitatis*).<sup>45</sup>
2. In 1301, a woman arrived at the Norwegian city of Bergen from Lübeck, claiming to be the daughter of King Eiríkr Magnússon and Queen Margaret (daughter of the Scottish king). The woman asserts that she was sold in the Orkneys on her matrimonial trip to Scotland by Ingibjörg Erlingsdóttir. Known to posterity as ‘the False Margaret’, she is executed by burning in 1301 at Nordnes, near Bergen, and her husband beheaded (*þa var brend þessi sama kona er vera quaz dottir Eireks kongs ok halshoggin bondi hennar*).

Many people apparently believe in her authenticity and – importantly – it must be inferred that she acquired a certain cult-like status and that unsanctioned worship practices grew around her memory. In 1319, Bishop Auðfinnr notes that worship of her is an error, and that he wants to guide people back to the faith (*retlede ethter til gudelig tro*). Addressing himself to those whom he calls ‘mad’ (*wanuitige*) and those who have ‘gone astray’ (*ij som wild farendjs ere*), the bishop issues an edict forbidding worship of ‘the false Margaret’ through offerings, pilgrimages to the site of her execution, fasting or prayer (*att dyrcke med offer och pilegrims ferdt faste, eller almenninge böne*).<sup>46</sup>

3. In 1324–25, events in Bergen lead a Ragnhildr tregagás to be found guilty by the same Bishop Auðfinnr of having employed charm magic in pursuit of an extramarital affair, a sexual liaison, moreover, that is found to be incestuous in the eyes of the church. The case, and the charges, involve enchantments and heretical wickedness (*horrende*

*incantationis et eciam heretice pravitati),* and the bishop repeatedly refers to the circumstances of the case with such terms as ‘error’, ‘heretical’ and ‘diabolical’. Although he offers her much leniency, Auðfinn notes that if she fails to follow his prescribed penance, Ragnhildr is to be regarded as ‘condemned of heresy’ (*condemnata de heresi*) and turned over to the secular authorities, presumably for execution.<sup>47</sup>

4. In 1343, Bishop Jón Sigurðarson had a nun of the Kirkjubær cloister in southern Iceland burned to death for her sins. Each of the three Icelandic annals treating the event gives a slightly different account of her transgressions: in one, she had made a written contract with the devil, fornicated with many laymen and thrown the consecrated host into the privy (*misfarit med guds likama ok kastad aftr um naadahus-tre*); according to a second, she had dedicated herself in writing to the devil (*er gefiz hafði pukanum með brefti*); and in a third, she had blasphemed the pope (*um paua blasphemiam*).<sup>48</sup>
5. In the Nordic colony on Greenland, a man named Kolgrímr was burned to death in 1407 after he has used ‘black arts’ (i.e., magic) to bend a married woman to his will – presumably romantically and sexually (*Fieck pessi*) *madur hennar vilia med. svarta kuon* (*stum oc siðjan br/er*) *endur eptir dom*.<sup>49</sup>
6. In 1435, in a statute issued by the Norwegian Archbishop Aslak Bolt, it is said that he has heard that some people, who ‘because of the weakness of their character, and some of the heresy and incitement of the devil’ (*af brøysleika sinna natura, en summer af villu pukans ok tileggian*) dare to challenge the church, the Lord, and divine sense by observing ‘the Saturday Sabbath, which Jews and heathens usually observe’ (*løgurdagx helg som Juda ok hædhninga plega at halda*), an observance which ‘remains highly forbidden in the laws of the holy church’ (*stander høgelika forbudit i helga kirkiulagnum*) and is forbidden by the church council under threat of severe punishment (*forbi-wda wy wnder hardri helagre kirkiu hirting*).<sup>50</sup>
7. In 1470, a man was executed by burning in Slagelse on Sjælland. Accused of church theft, he produced a hoarded consecrated host at his trial and consumed it in the apparent belief that this act would protect him.<sup>51</sup>
8. In 1478 in Stockholm, Jenis forköpare was reported to have said to an image of the crucifix, ‘Long have I served you, now I renounce you and enter the service of the devil’ (*jach haffuer länge tiänth tik, nw affsigx jak tik och tagher tienisth aff fänddanom*).<sup>52</sup>

9. Again in Stockholm, now in 1484, a Ragvald Odinskarl confessed to church theft, adding that he has served Odin for seven years (*Thermeth kendes han och, ath han hade tiänth Odhanom j vij aar ...*).<sup>53</sup>
10. In 1490 in Stockholm, Margit Halffstop admits that she learned, and applied, a kind of witchcraft which allowed her to make a man impotent (*ath hon hade thakit Hans Mille allen sin förlich bort pa sin mandoms wegna etcetera*);<sup>54</sup> moreover, she admits to having been unshriven for five years.
11. In 1492, yet again in Stockholm, Erick Clueson apparently renounced God and the saints and accepted ‘the devil Odin’ for the sake of money, going withershins about a cemetery on nine successive Thursday nights (*han hade Gudj widersacht ok allt hans helga selscap jx reser om jx torsdaga afftana om kirkiaagarden ansylis ok widerthagit dyeffuolen Oden fore peninga schull*). The court documents specify that he is to be burned for his sins against God and his own soul (*han wort dömpder til eldhen for then hogxta zachen, som han Gudj ok war schapere giord j moth och sina saliga siel*).<sup>55</sup>
12. In Stockholm in 1497, a woman was found guilty of fomenting treason through rumours and lies; she is reported to have implicated members of the council of also participating in the same ‘event’ or ‘action’ (*gärning*),<sup>56</sup> of which she says, ‘I have three trips gone withershins around the church-yard’ (*jach haffuer iij resar gangit ansylis om kirkiaogarden*).<sup>57</sup>
13. In 1517, the Icelandic lawman Jón Sigmundsson was convicted of heresy, in reality, mostly for disobeying the bishop, a case that would appear to have as much to do with the bishop’s renowned avarice as Jón’s own behaviour, despite the language used (cf., *ath hann hefdi talid Rangann átrunad fyrer monnum og framid og svo uppbyriad nyia villu moti Gudz laugum med sinni traktieringu og truarinnar afgongu*).<sup>58</sup> This episode is one Gallén notes, however, although curiously he does not include it in his enumeration of medieval Nordic heretics.

Although it is obvious that not all of these incidents involve witchcraft and magic, clearly the cases from 1324–25, 1343, 1407, 1470, 1484, 1490 and 1492 (that is, nos 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 above) suggest exactly that association, or at least, a commonly held witchcraft element of one sort or another, such as the *pactum cum diabolo*.<sup>59</sup> We do not know the outcome of the 1478 case (8) of Jenis forköpare, where apostasy ought to have been the charge<sup>60</sup> but it too has a bearing, one suspects.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

What are we to make of these cases? Should they in fact be understood to represent instances of heresy involving witchcraft and magic in the medieval North? Of course, these cases are highly eclectic even if from a popular perspective they might seem to be bound together by their shared divergence from church orthodoxy; still, important differences between them were likely perceived by the canon lawyers, bishops and others whose responsibilities included such determinations. Since as modern observers, we often have little more data than fragmentary notices consisting of the beginnings or ends of such episodes, it is difficult to reconstruct the opinions medieval authorities would have held about them. Difficult but not impossible, perhaps: for example, three Stockholm cases (1478, 1484 and 1492) hinge on serious religious crimes, and technically, the penalties meted out may, in fact, not have been for heresy *per se* but rather for apostasy *a fide*, that is, voluntary abandonment of Christianity.<sup>61</sup>

Canon law acknowledges the distinctions between heretics, apostates and schismatics, and addresses the differences by noting that heresy is characterized, as we have seen, by its obstinate denial of a truth central to Catholic faith, apostasy by its total repudiation of the Christian faith, and schism by the refusal to submit oneself to the church's supreme pontiff.<sup>62</sup> Apostasy *a fide* was regarded as a very serious offence but one that differed in nature from heresy. On the other hand, in the eyes of the public, this may have been a distinction without a difference: the theological segregation of heresy from apostasy was significantly blunted by the fact that they were usually classed together by the decretists, and subject to the same penalty – death by fire. Although the language of the court protocols in the case of Erick Claueson (... *han hade Gudj widersacht* ..., ...*widerthagit dyeffuolen Oden* ..., ...*for then høgxta zachen, som han Gudj ok war schapere giord j moth* ...) suggests apostasy (and the terrible gravity of the crime), it does not sharply distinguish this case from others.<sup>63</sup> The comments supposed to have been made by Jens in 1478 (... *nw affsigx jak tik* ...), on the other hand, much more clearly resemble apostasy. But again, although such distinctions were no doubt valued within episcopal circles, they presumably would have been largely unrecognizable to the crowds that witnessed the punishments: to them, death by fire was purely and clearly the ultimate exercise of social control.

One possibility to be considered as regards these dozen cases is whether they might represent levels of heresy so low, so insufficiently threatening to social order and to Christendom in the eyes of church leaders, that they were ignored or dismissed, and have been subsequently overshadowed by the more impressive cases that have captured history's notice. This view hardly seems credible to me: after all, such religious outrages, if true, as a written pact with the devil, blaspheming the pope, magically induced seduction, apostasy involving a pagan deity are all just the sort of crimes one would expect to have brought down on the accused the full attention, and judicial weight, of the ecclesiastical and secular authorities.<sup>64</sup>

At a minimum, it would seem that cases involving heresy and heterodoxy in the medieval North were neither limited to Sweden nor rare, but rather appear widely dispersed across both spatial and temporal frames of our admittedly limited textual records.<sup>65</sup> The weight of the data clearly suggests that we can no longer accept the view that heresy in medieval Scandinavia, even if we define it strictly, only took place in Sweden: focusing on instances where episcopal threats, charges and convictions took place, events like those in Bergen in 1319 and 1324–25, in Kirkjubær in 1343 and Greenland in 1407 (presumably at Garðr) demonstrate that such cannot have been the case.

Whether or not such instances were rare, on the other hand, is more difficult to assess, especially if we focus solely on the incidents involving witchcraft, paganism and magic. After all, as noted, history bequeaths to us an uneven record, so surely the record reflects only a portion of the incidents that actually took place, and, in fact, several other known cases might also be cited where superstition and charm magic have played their roles (for example, the case of Birgittha Andirssadotthir of Arboga in 1471).<sup>66</sup> There does not, however, seem to have been even a hint that these cases were treated as heresy or brought before ecclesiastical authorities as theological issues.

As suggested by the collocation quoted at the beginning of this essay (Galatians 5:19–21), witchcraft and heresy were historically viewed as belonging together, even if the exact nature of that relationship necessarily evolved and remains somewhat ambiguous in our materials. The cases enumerated above, together with the various ecclesiastical regulations that percolate out of synodal statutes and other church laws,<sup>67</sup> constitute the bulk of what we know about the relationship of heresy to the history of Nordic magic and witchcraft; yet despite this relatively slender body of evidence, it would appear that there is still much to be discovered.

## NOTES

1. An early version of this essay was originally presented at the 2010 Odense conference, and I take this opportunity to thank the conference organizer, Louise Nyholm Kallestrup for the invitation to participate, as well as for the stimulating insights she, Richard Kieckhefer and other attendees offered; I was subsequently able to vet a revised version of it with the Old Norse group at Harvard in 2014 and extend warm thanks as well to Joel Anderson, Agnieszka Backman, Maja Bäckvall, Jerold Frakes and Joseph Harris, and to Richard Cole in particular, for their thoughtful comments and helpful suggestions.
2. Scholarship on this topic is vast, of course, and theories about the increased concern over heresy after the millennium abound, from the view expounded in R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1987) concerning the rise of theological, legal and bureaucratic thinking about those who challenged doctrinal orthodoxy (as detailed in Canon 3 of the Fourth Lateran Council) to the relationship of scholasticism to heresy as argued in Heirich Fictenau, *Heretics and Scholars in the High Middle Ages, 1000–1200*, transl. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).
3. 2 Peter 2:1, here, as for English translation of the Bible throughout, in the King James Version. This passage is, of course, only one of a number of references to heresy in the early Christian era.
4. A large selection of medieval writings on this issue are conveniently anthologized and translated into English in Edward Peters (ed.), *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980).
5. I am thinking here in particular of the critical reception of the multivolume attempt by Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c.1250–c.1450* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967) as a synthesis of the problem in the later Middle Ages.
6. For an overview of the concept and its evolution, and the secondary literature on it, see, e.g., R.I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy. Documents of Medieval History*, 1 (London: Edward Arnold 1975), pp. 1–7; Othmar Hageneder, 'Der Häresiebegriff bei den Juristen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts', in W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (eds), *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th C.)* (Louvain: Louvain University Press 1976), pp. 42–103; Peters (ed.), *Heresy and Authority*, pp. 13–29; and Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 2nd edn (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 3–43.
7. Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2000), p. 73. Gratian addresses

heresy in canons 26, 27, 28, 29 and 39. Canon 28 reads, ‘Qui proprie dicantur heretici. Hereticus est, qui alicuius temporalis commodi et maxime gloriae principatusque sui gratia falsas ac nouas oppiniones uel gignit, uel sequitur. Ille autem, qui huiusmodi hominibus credit, est imaginatione quadam ueritatis illusus’, Emil Friedberg and Ämilie Ludwig Richter, (eds.) *Corpus iuris canonici. I. Decretum magistri Gratiani*. 2nd edn. (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1879), 998.

8. *Secunda secundae. Quest. 11*, Art. 1. Jean Nicolai, Franciscus Sylvius, Charles René Billuart and C.-J Drioux, eds. *S. Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologica*. Editio Duodecima (Paris: Bloud et Barral, 1880), IV:87, translation available in Thomas Aquinas 1920. This famous articulation, as lucid as it is succinct, did not simply pluck an unchanging truth from the air, however; on the evolution of the concept of heresy, see Hageneder, ‘Der Häresiebegriff’.
9. Henry Richards Luard (ed.), *Matthæi Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica majora*, Rerum britannicarum medii ævi scriptores, or, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, 57 (London: Longman & Co., 1872), V:401. The translation is cited after Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, p. 5.
10. Shannon McSheffrey, ‘Heresy, Orthodoxy and English Vernacular Religion 1480–1525.’ *Past & Present* 186 (2005), p. 47.
11. Although the term is relatively young in English, appearing first as recently as the seventeenth century (via Latin from Greek), its roots appear to be ancient within Christianity, dating back at least to the early second century CE, where ἑτεροδοξία ‘heterodoxy’ is used by St Ignatius of Antioch in the sense of ‘false opinion’. See Matti Myllykoski, ‘Wild Beasts and Rabid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius’, in Jostein Ådne (ed.), *The Formation of the Early Church*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 183 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 342–43.
12. See the entry on ‘Heresy’ in K. Knight (ed.) (2003), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, originally published in 1917. Available online as <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>, intended, according to the opening sentence of the preface, ‘to give its readers full and authoritative information on the entire cycle of Catholic interests, action and doctrine’.
13. Medieval episodes of heresy are often associated with large-scale movements, such as the Cathars and the Lollards (see Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*). That Scandinavia generally lacked such movements is, of course, true only to the extent that we ignore groups like the Beguines, who eventually come to be regarded as heretical (especially in their assumed relationship to the heresy of the Free Spirit).
14. Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888), p. 355. Two other inquisitors are known to have been named for Scandinavia: Clemens Ravaldsson of Viborg in

1403 and Knut Jönsson of Stockholm (previously Randers) in 1479. On these appointments, see the excellent discussion in Bjørn Bandlien, and Gunnar Knutsen, 'Kjetterinkvisitorer i Norge', *Historisk tidsskrift* 87/3, 2008, pp. 433–50.

15. I was inspired to undertake this review as my own curiosity about the issue has been both awakened and sharpened by a series of recent studies, e.g., Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Role of Secular Authorities in the Early Witch-trials', in Johannes Dillinger, Jürgen Michael Schmidt and Dieter R. Bauer (eds), *Hexenprozess und Staatsbildung / Witch-Trials and State-Building* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2008), pp. 25–39, and 'Witchcraft, Necromancy and Sorcery as Heresy', in Kathrin Utz-Tremp, Martine Ostorero and Georg Modestin (eds), *Chasses aux sorcières et démonologie: entre discours et pratiques (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Micrologus' library, 36 (Florence: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2010), pp. 133–53, and Kathrin Utz-Tremp, *Von der Häresie zur Hexerei: 'wirkliche' und imaginäre Sekten im Spätmittelalter*, Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 59 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2008), which suggest that a similar, if much more modest and as yet still only preliminary, review for the Nordic world would not be misplaced.

16. 'item cause possessionum ecclesiarum sacrilegij. periurij. usurarum. simonie. heresis. fornicationis. adulterij. et incestus ...', Jón Porkelsson and Jón Sigurðsson (eds) *Diplomatarium islandicum. Íslenzkt fornþræfasafn* (Copenhagen: S.L. Møller) 1857–1932, II:142; 'Sua hit sama mál kirkju eigna. banz werk. vm meinsæri. vm okr. oc þar sem sellder werða oc keýptir andliger luter. vm villu. eða. vantru. vm frillulifi oc hordoma oc frændsemis spell ...', Jón Porkelsson and Jón Sigurðsson *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, II:150.

17. In their treatment of the term, lexicographers have sometimes exhibited cautious differences. Cleasby-Vigfusson, for example, gives 'a going astray, losing the way: *metaph.* error, falsehood ... *eccl.* false doctrine, heresy', to which Zoëga adds '3) delusion' (Geir T. Zoëga (ed.), *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)) echoing Fritzner, who provides, 'Vildfarelse; om Vildfarelse fra Sandheden ... især om Vildfarelse fra den kristelige Sandhed i Tro og Levevis ... Ordet synes svare til lat. *secta* ... 2) Oplevelse, Tilstand hvorunder et Menneske ikke er sig selv mægtigt, har Syner der ikke stemme overens med Virkeligheden, bærer sig ad paa en Maade som ikke er det naturlig'; Johan Fritzner (ed.), *Ordbok over Det gamle norske Sprøg*, 4th rev. edn (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1973, originally published in 1886). In the context of the latter glosses, cf. Faroese *villa* 'bewilderment, confusion, aberration, error, delusion', and, especially, such related expressions as *villa veður á ein* 'call up a storm over someone by witchcraft' and *villing* 'optical illusion'. See also my remarks on related terms in Mitchell, 'The Supernatural and the *fornaldarsögur*'.

The Case of *Ketils saga hengs*, in Agneta Ney, Ármann Jakobsson and Annette Lassen (eds), *Fornaldarsagaerne. Myter og virkelighed. Studier i de oldislandske fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2009), pp. 281–83.

18. Old Swedish usage appears to be broader, especially regarding the term's explicitly magico-illusory sense: Söderwall and Ljunggren, for example, give: 1) *galenskap, raseri, sinnesförvirring*. 2) *galenskap, därskap?* 3) *vilsekommet, förvillelse*. 4) *förvirring, oro*. 5) *bländverk, gäckeri, trolldom*; Knut F. Söderwall and Karl Gustav Ljunggren (eds), *Ordbok öfver svenska medeltids-språket* (Ör *Supplement*), Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapets Samlingar, 27 (Lund: Berlingska boktryckeri- och stilgjuteri-aktiebolaget, 1884–1973).
19. Hugo Pipping (ed.), *Gutalag och Gutasaga jämte ordbok*, Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 33 (Copenhagen: Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1905–07), p. 63, ‘*Troþu menn a. hult. oc .a. hauga. wi. oc. stafgarþa. oc a haiþin guþ. blotáþu þair synnum oc dydrum sinum Oc filepi. miþ mati. oc mundgati. þet gierþu þair eptir wantro sinni.*’
20. George Stephens and F.A. Dahlgren (eds), *Ett Forn-Svenskt Legendarium, innehållande Medeltids Kloster-Sagor om Helgon, Påfvar och Kejsare ifrån det I:sta till det XIII: de Århundradet*, Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapets Samlingar, 7 (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt och Söner 1847–74), ‘*... hon thok annan delin mz wantro at thz war ey wars herra likame*’.
21. Gustaf E. Klemming (ed.) *Svenska Medeltidens Bibel-arbeten. Efter gamla handskrifter*. Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapets Samlingar, 6–7 (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1848), I:17–18.
22. ‘*... Oc thy tha han se komande til siälanna skadha vluin som är dyäfwlin. lönlika äggjande til synd älla kättara oc otrona villara villande mz falsom känedom. lifwom troldom oc dyäfwls galdrom ...*’, Gustaf E. Klemming, Geete, Robert and Ejder, Bertil (eds), *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapets Samlingar, 23 (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt 1879–), II:85.
23. Jón Porkelsson and Jón Sigurðsson (eds), *Diplomatarium islandicum*, II:753.
24. Cf. Matthias Lexer (ed.), *Matthias Lexers mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch*, 36. Aufl., mit neuarbeiten und erw. Nachträgen (Leipzig: S. Hirzel 1980), p. 107: ‘*ketzer; frevelhafter, verworfener mensch; Sodomit*’, ‘*ketzerei; zauberei; unnatürl. wollust*.’ Erik Noreen and Torsten Wennström, (eds), *Arboga stads tänkeböcker*. Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapets Samlingar, 53 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1935–), 21, argues for a similarly broad sense in Old Swedish: ‘*Ordet torde i äldre svenska även ha kunnat användas om person som gjort sig skyldig till andra sexuella brott, särskilt tidelag och pederasti.*’

25. The sense in which *kätteri* is employed in the Middle Ages to mean ‘incest’ does not appear to map perfectly onto modern English usage where honouring blood ties is the main principle (cf. *frændsemíspell*); medieval usage stresses rather the church’s perceptions about matrimonial eligibility. Thus, for example, in Stockholm in 1478, a woman named ‘Ragnilde graagaas’ is called a *kiäterska*, *ketterska* by another woman who says that Ragnilde and Ragnilde’s daughter have both slept with the same man (Almquist, Hildebrand et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid. II:a Serien. Tänkeböcker* (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande af handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 1917–30), II:111–112). Cf. the accusations in C.R. Unger, et al. (eds), *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (Christiania: P.T. Malling 1847–), III:2, 714, and Erik Noreen and Torsten Wennström (eds), *Arboga stads tänkeböcker*, II:116, as well as the sense later in the same case (II:116, and as a separate matter, on II:33) that the word was also used as a more general insult.
26. In addition to the loanword *incest*, modern terminology includes *blods-kam*, *blóðskömm* and *sifjaspell*. On older usage, cf., e.g., Erik Noreen, ‘Bidrag till fornsvensk lexikografi’, *Meijerbergs arkiv för svensk ordforskning* 3, 1941, pp. 21–23; Elof Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1922), p. 388; and Otto Kalkar, *Ordbog til det ældre danske sprog. 1300–1700* (Copenhagen: Thieles bogtrykkeri, 1881–1976), p. 703.
27. ...*foro some män wille/ oc wordho kättara ...*, Klemming *Svenska Medeltidens*, I:331.
28. Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson (eds), *Hauksbók udgiven efter De arnamagneanske Håndskrifter N. 371, 544 og 675, 4to samt forskellige Papirhåndskrifter* (Copenhagen: Det kongelige nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab, 1892–94), 156–64 and 167–69.
29. Cf. the assessment in Magnús Fjalldal, *Anglo-Saxon England in Icelandic Medieval Texts*. Toronto Old Norse-Icelandic Series, 2 (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 10–11. For detailed comparisons of the Old Norse-Icelandic sermons, Ælfric’s works and possible source texts, in addition to I. Reichborn-Kjennerud, ‘Et kapitel av *Hauksbók*’ *Maal og minne* (1934), 144–48; and Arnold R. Taylor, ‘*Hauksbók* and Ælfric’s *De Falsis Dii’s*’, *Leeds Studies in English* 3, 1969, pp. 101–9, see Audrey L. Meaney, ‘Ælfric’s Use of His Sources in His Homily on Auguries’, *English Studies* 66/6, 1985, pp. 477–95.
30. The text (pp. 156–64) bears the title, ‘Vm þat huaðan otru hofst.’
31. *Villumaðr* glosses both ‘heretic’ and ‘one who has gone astray or been misled’. Cf. Fritzner (1973), ‘vildfarende eller vildledende Menneske’, ‘hereticus’.

32. Cf. Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 147–74.
33. Naturally, I do not mean to suggest that mere mention of such activities in a literary text means that they necessarily took place; as I have argued elsewhere (Mitchell 2001, 102–4 *et passim*), witchcraft and magic were certainly useful narrative tools in the kitbags of medieval authors.
34. ‘Kända fall av kätteri äro sällsynta och förekomma endast i Sv[erige]’, Jarl Gallén, ‘Kättare’, in Johannes Brøndsted, et al. (eds), *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformasjonstid* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1982), X:cols 69–74. Originally published in 1956–78, p. 72. Cf. the recent study focusing on the Dominicans in the Nordic Middle Ages which seems to accept this view (Johnny Grandjean, Gøgsig Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle i middelalderens Danmark*, PhD dissertation (Syddansk Universitet, Odense, Kjøtterinkvisitører), pp. 260–2). Updating Gallén’s perspective, and very important for my thinking about this topic, has been Bandlien and Knutsen (2008), in which the authors detail the evidence for inquisitorial appointments for Scandinavia, and related issues, throughout the fifteenth century. Still of interest is Jöran Jacob Thomæus, (1835–38), *Skandinaviens kyrkohäfder, från de äldsta till närvarande tider* (Christianstad: F.F. Cedergrén, 1835–38), I:535–43, which takes a broad view of heresy cases, suggesting possibilities well beyond those I cite in this essay.
35. Intentionally left aside are various instances where accusations, slanders and rumours of heresy may have existed but no prosecution took place, e.g., St Birgitta’s accusations of heresy against King Magnus Eriksson for his taking communion while in a state of excommunication (although the circumstances surrounding this comment are complicated by the motivations and reputations of the players). Cf. Jonas Liliequist, ‘State Policy, Popular Discourse, and the Silence on Homosexual Acts in Early Modern Sweden’, *Journal of Homosexuality* 35/3/4, 1998, pp. 42–43, and Bernd Ulrich Hergemöller, *Magnus versus Birgitta. Der Kampf der heiligen Birgitta von Schweden gegen König Magnus Eriksson* (Hamburg: HHL-Verl, 2003), as well as Noreen (1941), pp. 21–23.
36. A key aspect of heresies frequently noted by scholars (e.g., Leff *Heresy*, p. 1) is the fact that they cannot happen in a vacuum: ‘It takes two to create a heresy: the heretic, with his dissident beliefs and practices; and the Church, to condemn his views and to define what is orthodox doctrine’ (Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 4–5).
37. This most famous of cases has been treated so thoroughly elsewhere (e.g., Hans Aili, Olle Ferm, and Helmer Gustavson, eds, *Röster från svensk medeltid: latinska texter i original och översättning* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1990), pp. 112–17) that a full review here seems entirely unnecessary.

38. See Johnny Grandjean, Gøgsig Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle*, pp. 260–61, and Gallén ‘Kättare’, p. 73.
39. Claes Gejrot (ed.), *Diarium Vadstenense: The Memorial Book of Vadstena Abbey*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmensis. Studia Latina Stockholmensia, 33. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988), p. 206.
40. The chronicle speaks, for example, of the Beguines as having been rejected by the church (*ab ecclesia Dei reprobatarum ...*), Gejrot, *Diarium Vadstenense*, p. 287.
41. Ericus Fant et al. (eds), *Scriptores rerum Specicarum medii aevi* (Uppsala: Palmlad, 1818–1871), III:68ff. The circumstances, and emotions, surrounding this event are complicated; reviews of particular value from the perspective of this essay include Kauko Pirinen, ‘Källorna till Stockholms blodbad i kanonistisk belysning’, *Historisk tidskrift* 75, 1955, pp. 241–63 and Niels Skyum Nielsen, ‘Blodbadet. Proces og kilder’, *Scandia* 35/2, 1969, pp. 284–352.
42. Jarl Gallén was a medieval historian of great repute, whose areas of specialization included the history of the Dominicans in Scandinavia. His narrow view of historical instances of Nordic heresy as expressed in *KLNM* I find puzzling but, of course, also a useful starting point for a consideration of the issue. In Gallén’s defence, he refers to his list as *kända fall* ‘known [or notorious] cases’ but that does not seem to me to explain adequately the circumspection, or the circumscription, of his inquiry.
43. I emphasize again that I cite here only cases that I find illustrative, but they are by no means exhaustive: Thomæus *Skandinaviens kyrko-häfder*, I:535–43, for example, suggests a number of additional avenues for exploration which I have not taken up here.
44. I am specifically focusing on events in the Nordic world itself, but recognize that doing so leaves aside important Scandinavian actors outside of the region, such as the thirteenth-century philosopher at the University of Paris, Boethius of Dacia (i.e., Boethius of Denmark), whose attraction to the writings of Averroes apparently led to a condemnation by the bishop of Paris in 1277. About Boethius, Sten Ebbesen notes, ‘The only reasonably certain facts about his life are (1) that he came from Denmark and (2) became a master of arts in Paris, where (3) he wrote a number of works that (4) by 1277 had attracted the unkind attention of the local bishop.’ [https://wikihost.uib.no/medieval/index.php/Boethius\\_de\\_Dacia](https://wikihost.uib.no/medieval/index.php/Boethius_de_Dacia) (last accessed on 19 April 2014).
45. Johan Gustaf Liljegren (ed.), *Svenskt diplomatarium: Diplomatarium Suecanum* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien and Riksarkivet, 1829), I:420 (no. 496). Cf. the pope’s instructions on this point to the prior in Halmstad and other ecclesiastics, Liljegren (1829), I:421–23 (no. 497).

46. E.g., from a sixteenth-century transcription, ‘ij som wild farendjs ere att hem sette ethers hoff och troer och hillighed till fandens patron, och harmelig blidist att the kaller aa then konne med storum heitom och dyrka[n]’. See especially the bishop’s letters in Unger, Huitfeldt et al. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, VI:104 (no. 100) and VIII:88 (no. 67). Cf. Gustav Storm (ed.), *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* (Christiania: Det norske historiske Kildeskriftfond, 1888), pp. 199, 266–67, 387, 395.
47. Huitfeldt Unger, et al. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, IX,1:112–15 (nos 92, 93). Cf. my remarks in *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 57–58 *et passim*, and the literature cited there.
48. Storm *Islandske Annaler*, pp. 210, 274, 402. On this case, see Mitchell, ‘*Pactum cum diabolo* og galdur á Norðurlöndum’, in *Galdramenn. Galdrar og samfélög á miðöldum*, ed. Torfi H. Tulinius (Reykjavík Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2008), pp. 121–45.
49. Storm *Islandske Annaler*, 288–89.
50. See Unger, Huitfeldt et al. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, VII:390. I thank Richard Cole for pointing this case out to me and for allowing me to use his translations.
51. Erik Pontoppidan (ed.), *Annales ecclesiae Danicae diplomatici...* (Copenhagen: Christoph Georg Glasing, 1741), II:653–54.
52. Johan Axel Almquist, Hans Hildebrand, et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker*, II:148.
53. Almquist, Hildebrand et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker*, II:66–67. On this and the other Stockholm cases, see Mitchell, ‘Odin, Magic and a Swedish Trial from 1484’, *Scandinavian Studies* 81/3, 2009, pp. 263–86.
54. Almquist, Hildebrand et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker*, II:418.
55. Almquist, Hildebrand et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker*, III:18.
56. It is difficult to know exactly how to read *gärning* in this context, since its semantic range is enormous, encompassing everything from ‘action’ or ‘event’ to ‘sorcery’. Söderwall and Ljunggren lists the following lexemes: 1) *gärning, handling*. 2) *handling, verkställighet, verklighet*. 3) *verkan*. 4) *arbete, verksamhet*. 5) *handtverk*. 6) *trolldom*. Cf. *misgärning* *gis man, qwina* ‘malefactor’. Here I have opted for the most neutral terms possible, but it is not difficult to imagine that it could be otherwise.
57. Almquist, Hildebrand et al. (eds), *Stockholms stadsböcker*, III:333.
58. Jón Porkelsson and Jón Sigurðsson (eds), *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, VIII:616–18.
59. Admittedly, beyond their connections to witchcraft and magic, I am also interested in these transgressive behaviours in their own right and for the purpose of challenging the seemingly overly narrow presentation in the *KLM* entry.

60. Cf. Bengt Ankarloo, *Trolldomsprocesserna i Sverige*. Skrifter utg. av Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning. Serien 1: Rättshistoriskt bibliotek, 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1971), 340.
61. In 'Odin, Magic and a Swedish Trial' I argue that these are cases in which Odin's connection with Nordic traditions of charm magic is paramount. Traditionally, scholarship has inclined to the view that the name 'Odin' is used in these cases as a simple local substitute for the Christian devil. As distinct from this kind of apostasy, relatively more minor forms of apostasy (*ab ordine, a religione* [or *monachatus*], indicating a cleric who has, for example, abandoned the clerical state or left his monastery) call for loss of privileges and the possibility of excommunication. These types of 'minor' apostasy, I note, seem to be fairly common causes for petitions for absolution. See, e.g., Sara Risberg and Kirsu Salonen (eds), *Auctoritate papae: The Church Province of Uppsala and the Apostolic Penitentiary, 1410–1526*, Diplomatarium Suecicum (Acta Pontificum, 2008), nos 36, 56, 109, 142, 437.
62. Thus, in the 1917 *Codex iuris canonici* c. 1325.2, 'Post receptum baptismum si quis, nomen retinens christianum, pertinaciter aliquam ex veritatisibus fidei divina et catholica credendis denegat aut de ea dubitat, haereticus; si a fide christiana totaliter recedit, apostata; si denique subesse renuit Summo Pontifici aut cum membris Ecclesiae ei subiectis communicare recusat, schismaticus est.'
63. The case of Ragvald Odinskarl in 1484 is complicated by the additional charge of church theft, which was regarded as an act of heresy.
64. The three apostasy cases were, I assume (but have no basis other than inference), adjudicated by church authorities before being handed over to the secular courts for final punishment.
65. One promising way scholars might in the future reflect on the relative diversity of the various heterodoxies enumerated above is to set them against Richard Kieckhefer's proposed schema (Witchcraft, Necromancy, 136) for parsing the errors behind various forms of medieval magical practice, i.e., necromancy, sorcery and conspiratorial witchcraft. The bases for the heresy charges against these acts of malfeasance, he suggests, are variously theological, cultural and political.
66. Erik Noreen and Torsten Wennström (eds), *Arboga stads tänkeböcker* I, 360. See also see Stephen A. Mitchell, 'Gender and Nordic Witchcraft in the Later Middle Ages.' *Arp* 56 (2000): 7–24 and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, pp. 58–59.
67. On which, see especially Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 158–68.

# Caught Between Unorthodox Medicine and Unorthodox Religion: Revisiting the Case of Costantino Saccardini, Charlatan-Heretic

*David Gentilcore*

Costantino Saccardini's case was first brought to our attention by Carlo Ginzburg and Marco Ferrari in a microhistory some forty years ago.<sup>1</sup> According to Edward Muir, the short study provided an 'extremely circumscribed and not generalizable' answer to questions about Saccardini's own culture and historical period.<sup>2</sup> I would like to revisit this 'partial narrative', for that is what this microhistory is, reconstructing some of the background and context, in light of my own research on medical charlatanism in early modern Italy.<sup>3</sup> In the process, I would like to recapture something of the worldview of Italian charlatans, especially concerning their conceptions of the natural world. But let us begin with our charlatan.

In 1622, following the profaning of a series of sacred images throughout Bologna, to which blasphemous notices and threats had been attached, the authorities proceeded to search for those responsible. According to the magistrate Ridolfo Campeggi, the search was accompanied by prayers, sermons and processions, as well as the offer of a papal amnesty from any crime and a financial payment to the accuser.<sup>4</sup> Suspicion fell on Costantino

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D. Gentilcore (✉)

School of History and Centre for Medical Humanities,  
University of Leicester, Leicester, UK  
e-mail: [dcg2@le.ac.uk](mailto:dcg2@le.ac.uk)

Saccardini, who had already been accused of heresy by the Holy Office in Venice a few years earlier, for proselytizing amongst other artisans.<sup>5</sup> A converted Jew, originally from Rome, Saccardini was a jester, a healer and distiller of chemical medicines, with his own shop in Bologna.

Since the Bolognese trial records have been lost, we have only Campeggi's account to go by. According to Campeggi, Saccardini was guilty of a range of heresies against church teaching. In public discourses he made in the streets and squares of Bologna and Ferrara, Saccardini was heard to ridicule holy scripture and indulgences, scorn the pope's power and call the Virgin Mary a whore. He denied the existence of hell, declaring that 'only baboons believe hell exists ... Princes want us to believe it so that can have things their own way; but now, at last, the whole dove-cote has opened its eyes.'<sup>6</sup> He also espoused the notion of spontaneous generation, that men were born like so many toads out of the earth.<sup>7</sup> Finally, one of Saccardini's fellow conspirators admitted to 'believing only that which he saw with his senses from day to day'.<sup>8</sup>

A certain friend of Saccardini's, Colombino Toscano, was persuaded to press charges against Saccardini. Swayed by the offer of a bounty, Colombino denounced not only Saccardini, but also Saccardini's son and two German brothers, Pellegrino and Girolamo (de' Tedeschi). The men were shortly arrested, a trial was quickly held and permission for the death sentence to be carried out on them obtained from Rome. The sentence was read out in the packed basilica of San Petronio, the four were then taken in procession before each of the images and altars they had been charged with profaning, in the main square they were hanged and their bodies burned, except for Pellegrino whose right hand was to be cut off prior to hanging.<sup>9</sup>

Campeggi was no objective bystander, but a Bolognese magistrate writing in praise of the action taken against the heretics in the name of the Catholic faith. Campeggi had been involved in an auto-da-fé (*atto pubblico di fede*) held in the city four years earlier, in his role as 'comforter' to the victim: Campeggi was confrère of the Confortatori di Santa Maria della Morte, whose official function was to accompany sentenced criminals to the scaffold and pray for their souls. On that occasion, in 1618, the victim had been Asuero Bispinch, a 27-year-old German Lutheran, hanged and then burned, before a large crowd.<sup>10</sup> If this gives the impression that the crime of heresy brought with it harsh punishments in early seventeenth-century Bologna, then it is an accurate one. And this severity could extend to other crimes: a register of criminals executed in Bologna during the period 1613–73 lists 316

executions, mostly hangings, 64 (or one-fifth) of which were accompanied by further corporal punishment, torture or mutilation, either before or after execution, expediencies used when the cardinal legates and their magistrates wished to appear more intransigent in the administering of justice.<sup>11</sup>

Historians, from Carlo Ginzburg to William Eamon, have been tempted to relate Saccardini's radical religious views to his presumed radical medical ones, drawing into this mix his dual negative roles as jester and distiller-charlatan. And yet there is little in either of these two occupations that could have foretold or led to Saccardini's fate. Far from being a 'dangerous' or even liminal occupation, Saccardini's livelihood as distiller and healer had official recognition and sanction via inspection and licensing. As a seller of medicinal goods, he would have been licensed by either Bologna's medical tribunal (the Protomedicato) or the office of the papal legate (which was responsible for licensing pedlars, traders and performers entering the city).

By this time the licensing of charlatans and other medical practitioners was routine, as paradoxical as the concept of the licensed charlatan may sound to twenty-first-century ears. From the mid-sixteenth century, Italy's Protomedicato tribunals, Colleges of Physicians or Health Offices (jurisdiction varied from state to state) required *ciarlatani* to submit their wares for inspection and, upon approval, pay a licence fee in order set up a stage from which to perform and sell them. In 1632, when a physician employed by the Protomedicato of the Papal States was asked to define the words 'charlatan and mountebank', he replied, 'they mean those people who appear in the square and sell a few things with entertainments and buffoonery'.<sup>12</sup> His definition is brief and to the point and not judgemental. As far as the medical magistracies were concerned, charlatans had a definable identity, constituting a specific trade or occupation. And it was a trade they were all too happy to license: and I am glad they did, for the 1500 licences in my *Italian Charlatans Database* provided much of the raw data for study of Italian charlatanism.<sup>13</sup> In this context, the term *ciarlatano* lost some of its bite, becoming less a term of abuse and more a generic, bureaucratic label, identifying a category of healer.

Medical charlatans were a peculiar type of pedlar and some of them, like Saccardini, also treated the sick; but their most defining characteristic was their use of performance of some sort. The licences issued by the office of the papal legate in Bologna sometimes give an idea of what the licensee intended to do. In a sample I did of the years 1648–51, a variety of pedlars were licensed 'to mount a bank in the public square' and sell their medicines,

but they each brought their own twist, as recorded in the licences. For example, the Neapolitan Francesco Sacchi was ‘to do hand and card tricks and sell certain dainties [*galanterie*] of sweet-smelling pastes and other secrets for teeth and burns’.<sup>14</sup>

Tricks might be classed as marvels and natural wonders; indeed, such practices had an air of menace about them, especially in the climate of Catholic reform, when any kind of trickery might be associated with the devil. When the future *comico* Nicolò Barbieri left his native Vercelli in 1596, he did so in the company of ‘the mountebank nicknamed “il Monferrino”’. Upon arrival in the Savoyard town of Aosta the pair were denied a licence to perform their magical tricks in the town square. The bishop angrily warned them that he would not allow ‘necromancies’ in his diocese. The bishop’s idea of their tricks was derived from what he had seen ‘in Italy’. The bishop told them that there, charlatans ‘take a small round ball in one hand and make it pass into the other, [they] hold a flame wrapped in hemp for a long time in their mouth and then send out in so many sparks, [they] cut themselves on the arm with a knife and immediately heal themselves with incantations, and other devilish things’.<sup>15</sup>

Numerous Italian charlatans also drew upon the occupation of the jester (*giullare*) or buffoon (*buffone*) long known to European courts. Jesters, like charlatans, tended to be of middling social origins, and, like charlatans, they often engaged in a variety of economic activities. The jesters who descended on Venice and other Italian towns made use of a wide range of different forms: dance, music, acrobatics, ballad-singing, improvisation, horse-riding feats, sleight-of-hand tricks, short sketches, impersonations and caricatures. They might put on different national costumes and make use of different Italian dialects and accents for their comic value, something later picked up by the *commedia dell’arte*.<sup>16</sup>

The *buffone*, Tomaso Garzoni ruefully remarked, was more honoured than the *virtuosi* present at court.<sup>17</sup> But Saccardini, comic and alchemist, would combine the roles of jester and *virtuoso*. From the diaries of Atanasio Atanagi in the middle of the sixteenth century, jester at the court of Guidobaldo II, duke of Urbino, we get a lively sense just what a peripatetic existence the court jester’s could be. Atanagi’s own experiences, as recorded by himself, suggest the many roles a jester might be called upon to perform. Some were more in keeping with his primary function: such as being asked to perform in a play, undertake (or be the butt of) practical jokes, sing and dance, converse wittily. Others were less so: from performing errands like going to the apothecary’s shop to settle a

bill, to acting as a go-between on behalf of certain courtiers, from waiting at table to functioning as a money-carrier. Atanigi was a supplier of simple medicines and treatments. On one occasion, he recalled, ‘wanting to make a medicine for eye ailments, I couldn’t find a fresh egg for my money, which caused me to fly into a rage’. Atanigi was always short of cash, paid irregularly, usually in the form of tips or payments for services, often in kind, and forced to pawn household goods or ask for a loan. His earnings were seasonal, increasing during major festivities.<sup>18</sup>

The role of court jester went into a slow decline in Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But jesters adapted. A jester might transform himself into a head actor, or *capocomico*. Sometime around 1548, Domenico Barlacchi, ‘Il Barlacchia’, jester at the Medici court, was given the responsibility of taking a theatrical company to France, to perform before Catherine de’ Medici and Henri II.<sup>19</sup> The difference is that actors (and charlatans) were playing a part on stage, often quite different from their projected off-stage identities; whereas buffoons were never really able to go outside of character, as it were.

To what extent this was true of Saccardini is impossible to say. All we know is that, as jester at the grand-ducal court in Florence and to the Bolognese *Anziani* (the eight counsellors chosen from the senate), Saccardini performed ‘singing with the guitar, prating, improvising’, once again according to Campeggi.<sup>20</sup> He also impersonated the *commedia dell’arte* role of Dottor Graziano. The role was a godsend as far as charlatan-performers were concerned. Dressed in a black habit that recalled the academic gown, his pedantic and macaronic verbosity was ideally suited to lengthy monologues. And, of course, it poked fun at the very figure responsible for licensing the charlatan. Satirizing the physicians’ Hippocratic aphorisms, Dottor Graziano spouted useful truths like ‘any man who’s walking can’t be dead’, and would mix up his words, so that *ordinar* (to arrange) became *orinar* (urinate), *Latino* became *latrina* and so on.<sup>21</sup>

Another feature of Italian charlatanry was that it generally attracted people who had at least a rudimentary education. All the charlatans who petitioned the various Italian medical authorities for licences and patents did so in their own hand. (Of course, this says nothing of those charlatans who were never licensed, thus potentially under-representing the lower end of the spectrum.) In their licence petitions there is none of the hesitancy and clumsiness, in separate letters, of those unaccustomed to writing; indeed, fluent merchant-italic script is quite common. Some charlatans referred to

university studies, conducted here and there; some flaunted their learning in their writings, their familiarity with the classics and more recent medical works, sometimes a working knowledge of Latin, and were quite confident in engaging in debate; and some compiled ‘books of secrets’ and short medical essays to boost their status and reputation, as well as to help sell their medicines.

Saccardini was indeed the author of two printed works. The first was a 1609 sonnet that Saccardini, already calling himself ‘Il Dottore’, wrote in praise of the recently deceased Tuscan grand-duke Ferdinand I.<sup>22</sup> The second was his short medical chapbook, promisingly entitled *The truth of various things, which treats in detail many health-giving spagyrical and chemical treatments*.<sup>23</sup> A work like this was a charlatan’s calling card, bringing him prestige. He could demonstrate his highly placed connections by means of the book’s dedication—in Saccardini’s case to the city’s *gonfaloniere* (head of the senate), Alberto Bolognetti. Saccardini’s printer may have been a minor one,<sup>24</sup> but it was published in quarto, and like any book printed in Bologna, it received the imprimatur of the city’s archbishop.

We might expect a charlatan like Saccardini to promise more than he delivers; but historians have led us astray too. They have classed his work as a ‘book of secrets’, a collection of how-to medical recipes, even though it does not contain a single recipe or scrap of medical advice.<sup>25</sup> Rather, Saccardini’s chapbook takes the form of a collection of brief essays on a range of medical topics—including that of knowledge and experience, chemical matter and the effects of the air and other elements. There is no direct tie-in with any of the remedies Saccardini might have either sold or used, although the booklet does come to an end with a three-page list of people he has successfully treated.<sup>26</sup> It is ironic that one of these is Giovanni di Colombini, the very person who would provide the damning accusation against Saccardini.<sup>27</sup>

Charlatans mixed entertainment with a display of erudition. From what I have been able to reconstruct of their public discourses, and from their printed works, charlatans sought to impress with their links to high learning. They participated in the natural philosophy and medical knowledge of the time. They wrote exclusively in Tuscan Italian, at a time when this was still very much a learned and courtly language, peppered with expressions in Latin and other classical elements. There are no explicit references to religion—with the exception of the occasional thanks to God for providing humanity with the remedy concerned—nor any reference

to magical traditions, whether learned or popular. This secular tendency certainly kept charlatans safe from the hands of Inquisitorial censorship.

If one were marking Saccardini's chapbook as a student essay, one might be tempted to describe it as poorly structured, repetitive and without a clear line of argument. The separate sections do not amount to a persuasive whole. The work tries hard to sound learned and philosophical, but ends up just being dense. In terms of content, there is little evidence of an alternative natural philosophy, although certain elements of the Swiss Paracelsus and the Bolognese Leonardo Fioravanti do make an appearance. Nothing in the book is even remotely heretical. If Saccardini would later affirm the notion of the spontaneous generation of man, here he limits himself to a reference to the spontaneous generation of certain lower animals from mud.<sup>28</sup> And far from rejecting Galenism, Saccardini uncritically summarizes how the Galenic system functions.<sup>29</sup>

That said, the book's title does boast of providing 'practical arguments revealing the many deceptions which for reasons of self-interest frequently occur in both medicine and medicinal ingredients'.<sup>30</sup> And Saccardini is certainly critical of Galenic physicians, like any charlatan worth his salt. He criticizes their 'idleness', discoursing so much on humours 'which they have never even seen or understood', and bickering amongst themselves over which herbal remedies to use, whilst the poor patient dies.<sup>31</sup> Saccardini's own views of the body and disease are simplified down to one organ and one process: the stomach and digestion.<sup>32</sup> And this is the only time Saccardini refers to what must be his own remedies, although without doing anything so vulgar as to name them. He refers to his 'health-giving spagyrical medicaments obtained from the distillation of herbs, plant simples and other ingredients', which 'will destroy and dissolve every corruption of crude and indigested humours', part of a 'universal medicine to treat and remedy any symptom whatsoever that a human body suffers'.<sup>33</sup> At the time, distillation was the alchemical art of purification, which held the promise of transforming ordinary ingredients into powerful 'quintessences' that would purify the body, cure disease and prolong life.

Sometime between 1609, when Saccardini signed himself 'Il Dottore', and 1621, when he signed himself 'spagirico romano', Saccardini discovered alchemy, or the 'spagyrical occupation, where true knowledge of almost every property operates'.<sup>34</sup> Although his language is not as strident or as self-confident as that of Paracelsus or Fioravanti before him, Saccardini was, like them, a 'spagyrical physician'.

And this was radical, at least in Italian medical circles. Chemical medicine constitutes one of the main developments in *materia medica*, beginning in the late sixteenth century. This was at a time when Italian charlatans' remedies, and what went into them, largely resembled those of the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition, as used by physicians and surgeons and prepared and dispensed by apothecaries. At the same time, in order to expand their markets, charlatans mixed imitation with innovation and invention, evident both in the medicines they petitioned to sell and the literature they wrote and dispensed.

And yet during Saccardini's time, Italian charlatans were generally wary of chemical medicine. Perhaps they were put off by the complexity of their preparation. Chemical medicine was limited to *virtuosi*, linked to princely courts and around cabinets of curiosities; few Italian apothecaries knew how to prepare chemical remedies and few had the necessary specialized apparatus. Or perhaps charlatans were put off by learned medicine's knee-jerk reaction against what it regarded as the threat of chemical medicine. Saccardini was active during a time of transition, when the first phase of prohibition (because of chemical medicine's associations with alchemy) gave way to that of toleration alongside Galenic medicines.<sup>35</sup> Twenty years after Saccardini, they would pose much less of a threat.<sup>36</sup>

Charlatans rarely regarded chemical medicine as anything more than a source of novel ingredients. It rarely became an underlying philosophy for them. If it was so for Saccardini, he does not explain how: with the exception of a reference to the elements sulphur, mercury and salt, Saccardini says very little about his alchemical philosophy, if indeed he had one. Charlatans like Saccardini streamlined some of the major medical fashions of the day, although the extent to which they offered an alternative therapeutic system or view of the diseased body is open to question.

Saccardini's chapbook is actually quite a tame document. There is little of the radicalism one would expect from someone accused of such strident heresy. And our brief look at the on-stage performances, medicines and treatment strategies, and printed chapbooks of Italian charlatans, gives little clue to the terrible fate that would befall him.

## NOTES

1. Ginzburg first mentions the case in 'High and Low: the Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Past and Present* 73, 1976, pp. 28–41, and then more fully in C. Ginzburg and M. Ferrari, 'La colombara ha aperto gli occhi', *Quaderni storici* 38, 1978, pp. 631–39, translated into English as 'The Dovecote Has Opened Its Eyes', in E. Muir and G. Ruggiero (eds), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 11–19. A slightly shorter version can be found in C. Ginzburg, 'The Dovecote Has Opened Its Eyes: Popular Conspiracy in Seventeenth-Century Italy', in G. Henningsen and J. Tedeschi (eds), *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe. Studies on Sources and Methods* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 190–8. The case is also discussed by W. Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 248–50. Some fifty years after Saccardino, Giuseppe Francesco Borri, who experienced some notoriety for his mixture of radical religion and medicine, met with a similar fate. G. Cosmacini, *Il medico ciarlatano: vita inimitabile di un europeo del Seicento* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1998).
2. Muir and Ruggiero *Microhistory*, editors' introduction, p. 11.
3. For a discussion of the strengths and limitations of microhistory as an approach and relevant bibliography, see D. Gentilcore, 'The Ethnography of Everyday Life', in J. Marino (ed.), *Early Modern Italy, 1550–1796. Short History of Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 188–205. My work on Italian charlatans is entitled *Medical Charlatanism in Early Modern Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
4. R. Cabpeggi, *Racconto de gli heretici iconomiasti giustiziati in Bologna a gloria di Dio e della B. Vergine et per honore della patria* (Bologna: Pelegrino Goffarini, 1623). The Bolognese trial records have been lost; all that remains is a barely legible copy of the sentence when Saccardini was released to secular justice: Archivio di Stato, Bologna, *Archivio del Torrone: Fondo Processi*, no. 5246, fols 101r.–104v. My thanks to Ottavia Niccoli for this reference.
5. The trial is related in Archivio di Stato, Venice, *S. Uffizio*, b. 72, 'Costantino Saccardino'.
6. 'Babioni quelli che lo credono [l'inferno']. ... Li principi vogliono farlo credere, per far a suo modo, ma ... hormai tutta la colombara ha aperto gli occhi.'
7. Campeggi, *Racconto* (1623), p. 88. For the historian Ginzburg, this belief in birth by putrefaction (spontaneous generation) was a popular notion, derived from peasant experience; but Paola Zambelli has noted how similar

ideas were being debated in learned circles, for example at the university of Padua. P. Zambelli, 'Topi o topoi?' in P. Rossi et al. (eds), *Cultura popolare e cultura dotta nel Seicento* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), pp. 137–43. Not that this mitigated against Saccardini in any way!

8. Campeggi, *Racconto* (1623), pp. 103–4.
9. M.G. [Michelangelo Gualandi], *Un auto da fè in Bologna il 5 Novembre 1618, documento originale pubblicato con commentario e note* (Bologna: n.p., 1860), pp. 18–20. It is unclear whether the promised bounty was paid to Colombino or Quilici, since most of Campeggi's praise goes to the latter.
10. Bispinch had sought treatment in Bologna's Spedale della Morte, but had refused to make the confession that was supposed to precede any medical treatment. This refusal led to his imprisonment and successive interrogations before the Holy Office, lasting three years, during which time Bispinch refused to convert or abjure, culminating in a death sentence. This was read out in the church of San Domenico and the execution advertised by means of broadsheets posted throughout the city. Gualandi (1860).
11. Casanova, C., 'L'amministrazione della giustizia a Bologna nell'età moderna. Alcune anticipazioni sul tribunale del Torrone', *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 16/2, 2004, pp. 267–92.
12. Archivio di Stato, Rome, *Fondo Università*, b. 67, fol. 113v.
13. The *Italian Charlatans Database, 1550–1800* (SN 5800) is freely available and can be downloaded, along with supporting documentation, at the UK Data Archive: <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=5800>.
14. Archivio di Stato, Bologna, *Legato: Expeditiones*, b. 172, fol. 155v.
15. N. Barbieri, *La supplica, discorso famigliare a quelli che trattano de' comici*, ed. F. Taviani (Milan: Polifilo, 1634/1971), pp. 126–27.
16. M. Pieri, *La nascita del teatro moderno in Italia tra XV e XVI secolo* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1989), p. 182.
17. T. Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, ed. P. Cerchi and B. Collina (Turin: Einaudi, 1585/1996), discourse cxix ('De' buffoni o mimi o istrioni'), vol. 2, p. 1305.
18. T. Saffiotti, ... *E il signor duca ne rise di buona maniera: vita privata di un buffone di corte nell'Urbino del cinquecento* (Milan: La vita felice, 1997), pp. 18–23, 81–93.
19. C.G. Leland, *Legends of Florence* (London: Ballantyne, Hanson and Co., 1895), pp. 44–45; Douglas, K., 'Commedia dell'arte', in Charney, M. (ed.), *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), p. 235.
20. Gualandi, *Auto da fè*, p. 18. The note about Saccardini is based on Campeggi's account.

21. Anon. [L. Bianchi], *Le cento e quindici conclusioni in ottava rima del plusquamperfetto Dottor Gratiano* (Venice 1587), and Anon., *Vocabulario Gratianesco* (Ms.), both in Pandolfi, V. (ed.), *La commedia dell'arte: storia e testo* (Florence: Sansoni, 1957), II:11–19 and 32, respectively.
22. Costantino Saccardini, detto il Dottore, *Sonetto (caudato) in morte del Ser. Ferdinando Medici Granduca di Toscana; al Ser. figlio Cosimo Medici Granduca di Toscana* (Florence: Volcmar Timan, 1609), cit. in D. Moreni, *Bibliografia storico-ragionata della Toscana* (Florence: Domenico Ciardetti, 1805), II:288.
23. C. Saccardini, *Libro nomato la verità di diverse cose, quale minutamente tratta di molte salutifere operationi spagiriche et chimiche* (Bologna: Gio. Paolo Moscatelli, 1621).
24. Active between 1616–24, Giovan Domenico and, later, Giovanni Paolo Moscatelli printed religious and literary works, including a few of Giulio Cesare Croce's satires (according to the results of an Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unito (ICCU) search). See also Natale, A., 'La tipografia popolare bolonese', at: <http://www.letteratura-meraviglioso.it/sommario.htm> (accessed 19/3/2104).
25. For example, W. Eamon “With the Rules of Life and an Enema”: Leonardo Fioravanti’s Medical Primitivism’, in Field, J.V. and James, F. (eds), *Renaissance and Revolution: Humanists, Scholars, Craftsmen and Natural Philosophers in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 43. See also Ginzburg and Ferrari ‘Dovecote’, pp. 13–15. For the kinds of remedies and recipes contained in these collections, see the *Italian Books of Secrets Database* compiled by Dr Tessa Storey and deposited at the Leicester Research Archive, <https://lra.le.ac.uk/handle/2381/4335> (accessed 18/7/2016).
26. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, where he provides a list, all duly notarized, ‘of the many sick people healed and liberated of various strange and desperate diseases by the above-mentioned spagiric author and other of his health-bestowing relief obtained by means of distillations’, pp. 31–3.
27. Colombini was ‘healed and liberated of a grave catarrhal and stomach infirmity, accompanied by terrible cough so they he could not breathe’, in Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 32. Another beneficiary was Pellegrino de’ Todeschi, whom Colombini would denounce as a co-conspirator of Saccardini’s. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
28. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 22.
29. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 28
30. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, frontispiece.
31. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 10.
32. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 16.
33. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 17.

34. Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 3. Saccardini does not specify when this ‘conversion’ to alchemy occurred, except to refer to his ‘having become some time ago a true follower and practitioner of alchemy’ (Saccardini, *Verità di diverse cose*, p. 29).
35. Admittance of chemical remedies into the pharmacopoeias occurred in significant numbers from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, some 200 years after the first phase.
36. Thus Fabritio Rosaccio, seller of ‘a spagyrical extract of his to be applied externally’, so impressed the English traveller Philip Skippon when he saw him in the square with his ‘collection of rarities’, that he accompanied him home, where he was able to admire his ‘flying serpent’ (or basilisk). ASS, *Studio*, 60, licence of 17 August 1640; P. Skippon, *An Account of a Journey Made thro’ part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy, and France* (London, 1752), pp. vi, 517, cit. in P. Findlen, ‘Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities’, in P. Smith and P. Findlen (eds), *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 305.

PART II

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Magic

# Angel Magic and the Cult of Angels in the Later Middle Ages

*Richard Kieckhefer*

Suppose you are a student living in a dormitory room or an apartment. In the middle of the night you wake up abruptly to discover that your roommate – dressed in a long hooded cloak, with incense burning, and mysterious symbols traced on the floor – is chanting in a low and tremulous voice a conjuration to summon a spirit named Zagam. You call out, ‘Oh, no! My roommate is conjuring demons right here in our room!’ The roommate interrupts the conjuration, turns to you, and says, ‘No, actually, Zagam isn’t a demon. He’s an angel.’ The question then is perhaps obvious: How reassured are you? Do you say to yourself, ‘Well, if Zagam is an angel then everything is fine’, and go back to sleep? Or do you remain wide awake and wary?

In the later medieval West this scenario was not entirely hypothetical. Christians in various settings were challenged by the discovery that contemporaries were in fact conjuring spirits they took to be angelic, not necessarily in shared bedrooms, yet near enough to arouse discomfort. Were the spirits truly angels? If so, what kinds of angels? Could their benevolence and beneficence be assumed? Under what circumstances, and by

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R. Kieckhefer (✉)  
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA  
e-mail: [kieckhefer@northwestern.edu](mailto:kieckhefer@northwestern.edu)

what means and for what purposes, was it appropriate to invoke them? These were crucial questions, but they admitted no easy answers. Fallen angels were famous for dissembling, and a magician meaning to conjure good angels might fall into the hands of a fallen one. Already 1 John 4:1 had cautioned against trusting spirits uncritically, and Paul had warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that ‘even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’, and so techniques for *discretio spirituum* were always needed.<sup>1</sup> But in the late medieval West they were more urgently needed than ever before, because the boundaries between the sacred and the taboo were more widely and strenuously tested.

### THE ISSUES AT STAKE

Magicians themselves acknowledged at times that distinguishing between angels and demons could be an issue. One late medieval manuscript describes a ritual for angel magic in which the practitioner is supposed to enter his magic circle with incense in a thurible. He is to cense the spirits, and if they are true angels they will in turn take the censer and offer to cense him, but if they are not true angels they will receive the censing but will not reciprocate it, ‘and by this you will know evil from good angels’.<sup>2</sup> The distinction between good and evil spirits is thus achieved through a ritual technology, but a technology whose employment most churchmen would have seen as *prima facie* evidence that all the spirits present were in fact fallen.

Johannes Hartlieb’s *Book of All Forbidden Arts* illustrates nicely the incompatibility of the magicians’ perspective and that of their critics. Certain magicians claim that the spirits who appear to them must be good angels, because in preparation for their magic rituals they confess their sins. How can the magic be a sin if it requires confession of sins? Hartlieb replies that these magicians confess some of their sins but fail to confess their greatest sin, that of idolatry, sorcery and superstition. They may confess and fast, pray and observe feast days, and do other works of piety, but they do all this in a way that is not ordained by the church, and thus it is all mortal sin. Indeed, the more they fast and pray, the more grievously they sin, because they do these things as part of a ritual that the church forbids. Hartlieb tells of priests who perform a kind of angel magic, conjuring angels to appear in the reflective surface of the paten that they use at mass. Because the consecrated host is placed on the paten, the priests believe only holy angels can appear on its surface. But they are wrong: their superstitious use of the sacred liturgical vessel is a perversion of the

purpose God has ordained for it, and the spirits who appear are demonic. Throughout his polemic, Hartlieb argues that the very factors the magicians take to guarantee the operation of good angels in fact demonstrate the involvement of evil spirits. For the magicians, participation in the sacramental system ensures the presence of angels. For Hartlieb, perversion of that system demonstrates the operation of demons. His distinction between participation and perversion is based not only on the superficial fact that the rituals are not specifically prescribed by the church, but on Hartlieb's own assumption that the magicians' rituals are demonic in inspiration and in essence. His conclusion is foregone.<sup>3</sup>

A conjuration contained in the fifteenth-century commonplace book of Robert Reynes further illustrates the issues. The procedure recommended there makes no overt reference to demons. One should take a child between seven and fourteen, and at sunset place him between one's legs, then wrap a red silk thread around his right thumb, scrape his thumbnail clean and, while the child is saying the Pater Noster, write on the nail with olive oil the letters O.N.E.L.I. Then one should pray to Christ three times in Latin, 'with good heart and devout', to send three angels to tell the truth about matters on which they are interrogated. Three angels will appear in the child's nail. The child should command them in Latin or in English – by God the Father, by the virginity of Mary and of John the Evangelist and of all virgins, and by the power of all saints – to tell the truth. Then the child may ask what he will, and the spirits will answer.<sup>4</sup> A perfectly innocent bit of angel magic? Perhaps, but four elements in it would surely give pause to an orthodox reader: the use of an impressionable young medium, psychologically and spiritually vulnerable; the mysterious letters inscribed on the child's thumbnail, which might turn out less benign than the rest of the procedure; the suggestion that angels can be commanded; and the close formal correspondence between this ritual and others, which, while meant explicitly to conjure malign spirits, might equally call on divine aid and invoke the power of the holy.<sup>5</sup> An inquisitor or other authority who read this formula with particular care might even note that the three angels are nowhere explicitly said to be un fallen, and might wonder why, if they were indeed un fallen, they had to be commanded to tell the truth rather than falsehood. Even if the conjurer did not intend to summon demons, a skeptical observer might fear that if spirits came they were likely to be fallen ones. All things considered, lack of suspicion here might even seem to betoken a certain naïveté: a seasoned observer could pounce upon so many different grounds for misgiving.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of these issues for the history of magic. Surely the most important development in the historiography of premodern magic in recent years has been the recognition that conjuration of angels played a central role in late medieval magic. Claire Fanger's collection of articles entitled *Conjuring Spirits*, published in 1998, was the first significant breakthrough in this area of research.<sup>6</sup> A workshop on angels and medieval magic was then held at Nanterre in 2000, and the proceedings were published in the *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* for 2002.<sup>7</sup> In 2012, a further collection edited by Fanger, under the title *Invoking Angels*, extended the research and gave more detailed examination of critical texts, many of which are now available in modern editions.<sup>8</sup> These texts examined in this literature are lengthier than that given by Reynes, and they provide fuller context for the practice of angel magic. It is clearly no exaggeration to say that we have entered a new era in the history of magic, in which the background and the impact of such texts is far better known. Our attention has been focused on the dissemination in the thirteenth and following centuries of elaborate rituals for private use, with angel invocations interwoven with ritual operations, designed for the sake of personal advantage.

The most obvious way this trend affects the history of magic is that it challenges the very definition of 'magic'.<sup>9</sup> The theological and judicial opponents of magic, who were in many contexts the ones who chiefly used the term, explicitly or implicitly used the source of power as the touchstone of whether something was magical. If an operation worked by divine power, with or without the intercession of saints, it was not magical. If it operated by knowable and definable powers in nature, powers that could be accounted for in the accepted categories of contemporary science, then again it was not magical. But if its efficacy could be traced to the hidden powers within nature it counted as natural magic, and if it worked through demonic aid it was demonic magic. Other factors, including the status of the practitioner, were incidental. A priest could work magic, and an old woman mumbling a prayer to some little known saint was doing something religious. The deciding factor was not who did the work, but how it worked, the source of its efficacy. But this schema, widely acknowledged in later medieval Europe, did not take fully into account the realities of contemporary practice. If angel magic was recognized as authentic magic – and as genuinely angelic, not in fact demonic – then a third form of magic had to be allowed that was not accommodated by these received categories. The emic vocabulary of magic does not correspond perfectly to

contemporary realities. The conceptual map was inadequate to the terrain, and the disparity was itself a source of confusion.

The widespread currency of angel magic is important also because it raises questions about why magic was reprobate. We would expect synods, theologians and inquisitors to condemn and prosecute magic that was overtly or at least quite clearly demonic, as well as magic that exploited any source of power for harmful purposes: to kill, to maim, to destroy property, to coerce another person's will and the like. But was harmful intent necessarily illicit if it did not call upon demonic aid? There was, after all, a tradition of monastic communities using liturgical curses to afflict their enemies.<sup>10</sup> And while angel magic might at times serve such maleficent ends, whether it did or not it was met with censure. Why? Was the problem that it undermined the privilege of clerical learning, making it accessible to all?<sup>11</sup> Did it seek to achieve by its own technology what should have been done only through the sacraments, through scriptural revelation, or through ecclesiastical authority? Did it offer a shortcut to salvation that circumvented the church's authority to forgive sins? Did it, in short, pose rivalry to the authority of the book, of the altar and the keys?<sup>12</sup> These explanations have been proffered in recent literature. No doubt all these factors were relevant, but none of them quite explains the aversion to angel magic, because (as we shall see) the practices it entailed could be found elsewhere in the piety of later medieval Christendom, where they were tolerated or even respected. The question thus remains: Why exactly was angel magic problematic? Simple and straightforward answers to this question have been proposed, but the answer cannot be simple or straightforward.

#### FOUR TEXTS OF ANGEL MAGIC FROM THE LATER MEDIEVAL WEST

Angel magic flourished in the medieval West from roughly the thirteenth century onward – far more, it seems, than previously. The consequences of this development may be sampled in a spectrum of four writings that had various degrees of currency in the thirteenth and following centuries: a *Liber de angelis* ascribed to one Bokenham, the *Liber iuratus* attributed to Honorius of Thebes, the *Holy Almandal*, and the *Ars notoria*. These four works proceed from the most obviously heterodox and transgressive form of angel magic to a kind that is relatively devotional and demands moral integrity. At least approximately, they extend from the most obscure

to the most widespread. We might readily add to the list. If we included John of Morigny's *Liber visionum*, we would find still further integration of angel magic with devotional practice, but the complexities of that work, on which Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson have done fundamentally important work, are perhaps too intricate to unravel here.<sup>13</sup> Also left out of account here are works of Jewish magic that gained currency in the Christian world and gave more direct access to angel magic derived from Jewish tradition, most importantly the *Liber Raziel*.<sup>14</sup>

The *Liber de angelis* (more fully the *Book of Angels, Rings, Characters, and Images of the Planets*) found in a Cambridge manuscript, has been studied recently by Juris Lidaka.<sup>15</sup> In one set of experiments the reader is instructed to sacrifice a bird or animal, and with its blood write a character and the name of an angel on parchment or on the ground. More complex experiments begin by making an image corresponding to one of the planets, of specified metal or wax, with the names of both angels and demons, after which the practitioner should then recite over the image a conjuration addressed usually to the angels. The angels include Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, but also Dandaci, Talanasiel, Harmanael, Sariel, Sariel, Samayel, Zagam and several others, occasionally the spirits of Saturn and of Jupiter. The experiments in this compilation are mostly self-serving: they seek hatred and discord, love of a woman, vengeance, power over demons, bodily harm, conquest in battle or use of a black horse, presumably meant to fly. This was the sort of work that no doubt gave angel magic a bad name. It is a composite work, conjoining simple astral magic with conjuration of largely undefined angels and demons, and it is unabashedly transgressive.

More sharply than the other three texts, the *Liber de angelis* highlights the association between angels and planets. That the celestial spheres were moved by intelligences was a teaching traceable to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and developed in Arabic science, and Maimonides identified these movers with the angels of the Bible. When Dominicus Gundissalinus translated the writings Avicenna and Avicebron, he introduced the term 'angel' for these celestial intelligences. Albertus Magnus demurred, arguing that the functions of angels are to contemplate God and serve humans, not to move planets, but his was a minority voice. The general equation of celestial intelligences with angels meant that otherwise natural magic, exploiting the occult virtues derived from astral radiation and captured or stored in sublunar objects, either became or was closely associated with a kind of angel magic.<sup>16</sup>

The second work, the *Liber iuratus* (or *Sworn Book*) ascribed to Honorius of Thebes, was also a composite text but with different proportions of material.<sup>17</sup> It was meant chiefly to invoke angels who could bring the practitioner to a vision of God *in vita*, somewhat as certain schools of Sufism provide techniques for a vision of God.<sup>18</sup> The angels invoked for this purpose in the *Liber iuratus* were undoubtedly pure and holy, but the text goes on to survey a variety of angelic spirits, not all equally wholesome. Some might be conjured with a formula that required them to appear in friendly, nonthreatening form, because their natural appearance was likely to strike terror into the heart.<sup>19</sup> Certain of the airy spirits, Honorius says, are ‘neither good nor evil’, while terrestrial spirits are overtly monstrous, *turpissimi et omni pravitate pleni*.<sup>20</sup> In other words, this was mainly a work of angel magic, but with elements clearly derived from the tradition of demonic conjuration. The text gives extended prayer formulas along with ritual operations. It invokes the angels at one point with the words, *angeli sancti, adestote, advertite et docete me et regite me ad visionem Dei sanctam perveniendam*.<sup>21</sup> But the more sinister the spirits invoked, the more the procedures for conjuring them resemble those of straightforwardly demonic magic.

Katelyn Mesler has confirmed indications that the magic of the *Liber iuratus* was inspired largely by Jewish precedent, although she suggests that certain features of the work could be indebted to Muslim traditions as well.<sup>22</sup> The *Liber iuratus* thus calls to mind a factor well worth exploring: the natural magic that had come to be fairly well accepted in the later medieval West was largely grounded in Muslim sources, while angel magic was more often indebted to Jewish tradition. Educated Christians may have been more often sympathetic toward the ordered intellectual world of Muslim scholarship, grounded in Greek philosophy and science, than they were toward beliefs and practices inspired by kabbalistic forms of Judaism that seemed deeply irrational. This is not to say, of course, that Muslim culture was inherently more rational and Jewish culture irrational, merely that the particular aspects of those cultures taken over into Christian angel magic could have seemed to differ in these ways.

The third compilation is called *The Holy Almandal*, a term referring to a kind of wax altar used to invoke and conjure angels. Jan Veenstra has written about the Latin and German versions of this text.<sup>23</sup> The author tells a great deal about the angels invoked: they reside in the twelve ‘heights of heaven’ that correspond to the Zodiac; they are drawn and induced to speak by incense that rises from beneath the altar; they have distinct forms,

one appearing as a young child with red countenance and hands signifying the fire of God's love, another as an armed knight, yet another bearing multicolored wings like a seraph; they have distinct functions, such as the regulation of sublunary motion, or the illumination of minds and instruction in the liberal arts; the most exalted of them constrain demons and serve as executors of God's command at the Last Judgment. When the magician has encountered one of these angels, he will be overwhelmed with lasting affection for the spirit that has come to him. One version of the text particularly emphasizes that the practitioner must manifest the utmost reverence, kneeling devoutly during the operation, and asking the angels to pray for him to God.

Probably the most important work of strictly angelic magic is the fourth, the famous *Ars notoria*, whose earliest known version dates to the thirteenth century, but whose interpretation is enriched by glosses added in a fourteenth-century manuscript that Julien Véronèse has studied in detail.<sup>24</sup> The art is meant to enhance the practitioner's memory, eloquence and understanding, and to give command of all the arts and sciences, in one manuscript even alchemy, within a period extending from a few months to some years. The text adapts the story of 1 Kings 3:5–15, in which God appears to Solomon in a dream, asking what favor he wishes, and Solomon requests the gift of understanding for the sake of judgment and discernment of good and evil. God gives him that gift, plus the riches and glory he has not requested. The foundation myth behind the *Ars notoria* is that God gave Solomon this art through the mediation of an angel while he was praying in the Temple; as he had given Moses tablets of stone containing the Law, now (Véronèse points out) he gave Solomon tablets of gold with the *Ars notoria*, which like the Law entailed strict precepts and required faithful compliance. The art involved repeated inspection of symbolic figures, and alas, the king once made use of these in a state of drunkenness, which brought God's disfavor and required repentance. One of the king's familiars incurred worse treatment when he came upon a book containing the prayers of the *Ars notoria* and read them without proper preparation, whereupon four angels seized him and deprived him of his sense and his senses for the remainder of his days.

Clearly, then, the art required absolute moral as well as ritual preparedness. Sacramental confession was followed by elaborate ritual to secure an angelic vision, which would tell whether or not one was fit to continue. If not, one should search out the unconfessed transgression clinging to one's yet unworthy soul. It is only at this initial stage that

the text speaks explicitly of an angelic vision; the imparting of arts and sciences is done by *virtus angelica* by action on the mind or soul of the practitioner, but (as Véronèse argues) it is not entirely clear that visions are involved at all stages.

The *Ars notoria* presupposes a scholastic context, in the sense that it is meant as an aid to scholars in the university system of the later Middle Ages. Yet this setting also gave it visibility to the scholastic moralists and left it vulnerable to their attack, more perhaps than other forms of angel magic. The *Ars notoria* is significant, among other reasons, because Thomas Aquinas expressly devoted an article to it in the *Secunda secundae* of his *Summa theologiae*.<sup>25</sup> Thomas was aware that the work involved fasting and prayer, indeed even prayer to God, as well as inspection of figures and pronunciation of *verba ignota*, and he recognized that it was meant to gain knowledge. But he insisted that the figures and the *verba ignota* functioned not as causes but as signs, and not as sacramental signs instituted by God but rather as vacuous signs that can have no effect. Knowledge is to be gained by means connatural to humans, by discovery and learning (*ad inveniendo vel addiscendo*). To be sure, God sometimes imparts wisdom and knowledge 'by infusion', as the story of Solomon and other biblical texts demonstrate, but this does not occur to just anyone, and is not achieved by techniques (*cum certa operatione*), but at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. The only possible source of knowledge gained by signs lacking inherent effect is demonic aid. Given what he knew of the techniques and the ends of the *Ars notoria*, Thomas must surely have known that its authors claimed to receive their learning not from demons but from angels, but this is a possibility he dismissed silently, as evidently unworthy of consideration. He could no doubt have given an explanation why operations of this sort could only be ascribed to fallen angels, but he passed over these steps in his proof, giving it a peremptory quality. Elsewhere, in his treatise *De potentia*, Thomas does argue that good angels cannot be the operative agents in magic because this would entail their associating with unsavory characters and fostering immoral ends.<sup>26</sup> Once again, however, the conclusion is a *petitio principii*, prejudged rather than grounded in assessment of the particular character of angel magic.

The theological faculty at Paris in 1398 condemned a series of twenty-seven propositions relating to the magical arts.<sup>27</sup> Most of these presuppose that the arts in question are accomplished through association with demons. Five of them, however, are of special relevance for our purposes: first, that God revealed the means of bewitchment (*maleficia*) to holy persons either

directly or through good angels (no. 14); second, that such arts are good and come from God (no. 16); third, that good angels can be enclosed in stones and made to consecrate images or clothing or otherwise contribute to these arts (no. 19); fourth, that some demons are good, some benign, some omniscient and some neither saved nor damned (no. 23); and fifth, that by certain magical arts we can come to a vision of the divine essence or of holy spirits (no. 27). These five propositions clearly reflect familiarity with works of angel magic, almost certainly including the *Liber iuratus* of Honorius. They are reproduced in the treatise *On Errors concerning the Magical Arts* which Jean Gerson produced four years later, and it is thus reasonable to surmise that Gerson knew directly or through the reading and report of close associates these works of angel magic.<sup>28</sup> And yet in his arguments he gives no real suggestion that he might be aware of angel magic. He argues first that the existence of demons is a probable conclusion of philosophy and a certain tenet of faith. From this he proceeds to his second argument, that effects which cannot reasonably be expected from God through a miracle or from natural causes must be held superstitious and suspect of involving an implicit or explicit pact with demons. But this is simply to ignore the possibility that certain forms of magic could be worked by angels, or by God through angelic mediation. Like other theologians, Gerson worked with received definitions of magic and did not admit the possibility of rituals of distinctively and specifically angelic magic. He took cognizance of angel magic, but assimilated it to one of the two familiar forms, demonic magic, rather than recognizing it as a *tertium quid*.

If we look at angel magic along a spectrum from the most manifestly sinister to the apparently pious, it is not entirely obvious why angel magic *per se* would be reprobate, or why it would have to count as a form of magic rather than devotion. Fundamental to the rise of angel magic is the emerging devotionalism of later medieval Europe, the wide range of paraliturgical devotions that might be grounded in what was done publicly in churches but got transported to domestic chapels, to bedchambers, sometimes to street corners: the rosary and other ‘technologies’ of prayer, the stations of the cross and sundry other devotional forms that burgeoned in the last medieval centuries.<sup>29</sup> Devotion to the angels was one facet of this complex phenomenon, and angel magic must be seen at least in part as an outgrowth of that devotion. If its ends were immoral, that was obviously a problem, but that could be the case with natural magic as well. It was secretive and unfamiliar to most Christians, but esoterism in itself does not turn devotion into magic. If there was a problem, why did angel magic

fall into the category of magic and become assimilated to demonic magic rather than being condemned under the more obvious category of superstition? Was it the use of unfamiliar angel names that was the key issue? Or the idea that there could be neutral spirits, distinct from both the fallen and the unfallen? Or that angels played a role in revelation and mystagogy? None of these need have been a stumbling block, as we shall see. What then was the problem with angel magic?

### EFFORTS TO REGULATE THE VENERATION OF ANGELS

The cult of angels had long been problematic. Their invocation and veneration might verge on idolatry or superstition, and its condemnation on those grounds goes back to the New Testament. The epistle to the Colossians already warned against worship (*threskeia*) of angels (Col 2:18). Toward the end of the Book of Revelation, the visionary author was himself on the verge of worshiping his angel guide, but the angel refused the gesture (Rev 22:8–9). And the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews hints at ideas about angels that had to be kept in check, possibly an anticipation of Gnostic devotion to angelic hierarchies that some interpreters have seen as lying behind suspicion of angelolatry.<sup>30</sup>

Not just angel magic, but the cult of angels *per se* was often seen as idolatry among early Christian theologians,<sup>31</sup> and we need to be careful about assuming that the issue was specifically angel magic.<sup>32</sup> Tertullian and Origen repudiated the veneration of angels. According to Origen and Augustus, the angels themselves did not wish for a cult like that of God. Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, and the council of Laodicea declared that the church knew neither of a cult of angels nor their invocation. Augustine added that the church does not construct temples to them, and they do not wish to be honored. Nonetheless, angels were in fact invoked. An early Byzantine inscription gives angels' names and corresponding monograms or symbols. Chapels were built in their honor, even in hegemonic communities. A basilica dedicated to Michael was built at Ravenna in the sixth century, a *basilica sanctorum angelorum* is attested near Perugia, and a church at Lyon was dedicated to the *angelici chori* in the early sixth century. As Johann Michl concludes, 'Probably under the impetus of Jewish-Gnostic influences, the cult of angels seems to have been practiced among the people until finally the official Church gave up its resistance and allowed it, once the distinction between the cult rendered to God and the veneration shown to the angels was clearly set forth.'<sup>33</sup>

Against this background it becomes clearer that texts challenging the veneration of angels actually were dealing with public and liturgical veneration more often than with private devotion, let alone magical invocation. The fourth-century canons of Laodicea forbade Christians from leaving the church, naming angels and forming congregations, which suggests concern about gnostic speculation regarding angels, and perhaps concern also about the mention of angels in liturgical formulas, but the relevance to angel magic is not clear.<sup>34</sup>

A sermon evidently written by the fifth-century Isaac of Antioch complains that priests and people alike revert to pagan practice, visit the houses of magicians instead of churches and have their children go about bearing the names of demons. They go into church and pray, ‘Deliver us, Lord, from evil’, but then they wear the Evil One around their necks. Degenerate priests invoke the names not of Gabriel and Michael, angels found in the Bible, but of demons: Ruphael and Raphuphael, ‘ministers of the Devil’, are contained in the their books. ‘Anathema be Ruphael and Raphuphael, along with their companions’, Isaac fulminates.<sup>35</sup> The names of ‘demons’ inscribed presumably on amulets may or may not have been apocryphal angels’ names. Isaac’s fury at the obvious variants on ‘Raphael’ seems perhaps exaggerated; Raphael is found in the book of Tobit (from the Old Testament apocrypha accepted as canonical in the Vulgate) and in various pseudepigrapha. That the variants were being used for magic is suggested by the context – passages before and after this speak explicitly of magic – but what Isaac actually says is that these names were written in ecclesiastical and presumably liturgical books.

In some instances it seems that angels were understood as the source of inspiration behind magic, which is not quite the same as their being invoked by magicians. A Roman synod of 494 in a long list of apocryphal writings included a prohibition of ‘phylacteries’ (presumably meaning here amulets) that are made not by the art of angels but by that of demons; that these amulets had names of spirits inscribed on them, or invoked the aid of spirits, whether fallen or unfallen, is not specified.<sup>36</sup> When Tertullian and Isidore of Seville insisted that all magic comes from the demons, this did not mean it necessarily invoked them *expressis verbis*. It meant, rather, that they were its source.<sup>37</sup> So too, the synod of 494 represents the phylacteries in question as the fruit of demonic rather than angelic art. The magicians in question perhaps thought angels were their sources of instruction, which leaves entirely open the question whether they were invoking them as sources of power.

The veneration of angels was complicated because of the company they kept: a named angel that appeared in a Christian litany might also appear in Jewish or Gnostic sources, and might be invoked in magical practice as well. Johann Michl, who wrote on angels for the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, included in his survey a catalogue of 269 angel names, 33 of which are variant forms of other names given on the list. Of the 236 that remain, approximately 44 per cent are primarily Jewish (very largely from 3 Enoch, or the Hebrew Book of Enoch),<sup>38</sup> 25 per cent Gnostic, 13 per cent Christian, 19 per cent from magical texts (mainly the Greek Magical Papyri and Coptic manuscripts),<sup>39</sup> and 11 per cent from astrological sources (particularly Pseudo-Apollonius). Obviously these are overlapping categories, and in many cases an argument could be made for further double and triple inclusion. Angels crossed cultural boundaries freely.<sup>40</sup> The crossover seems to have been especially frequent into Coptic apocalyptic literature: the angel Balsamos appears in the Greek magical papyri and in a Coptic apocalypse; Elel was a Jewish angel who presided over the month Elul, became a Gnostic aeon, and again made his way into a Coptic apocalypse; Suriel was the angel of the Jewish month Tishrei, became one of the four highest Gnostic angels, then appeared in a Coptic curse; Tartaruchos appeared in Christian apocalyptic apocrypha and then in a Coptic magical text as an underworld deity, somewhat like Temeluchos.<sup>41</sup> The transmission could, however, extend further: Peliel was the angel of the Jewish month Av, the teacher of Jacob, and the source of miracles of wisdom, but later appeared in Christian sources as an archangel; Phanuel appeared in Old Testament literature as a personal name, then became a Jewish archangel, and in Christian texts served as the archangel of conflagrations and presider over crops; Sedekiel was a Jewish angel linked with the planet Jupiter and with Thursday, appeared as one of seven archangels in a Coptic prayer, and later was integrated into German and Flemish sources; Tobiel was a personal name in Old Testament texts, became a Jewish angel of divine grace, and later appeared in Christian prayers, like Tubuas.<sup>42</sup> This fluidity does not necessarily imply that an angel had the same function in different contexts, or that an angel who entered into magical texts in one region had magical employment elsewhere.

The issue of invoking angels arose again in the Carolingian era. In 745, the missionary bishop Boniface secured condemnation of an errant preacher and healer named Aldebert, who had closed a prayer by addressing the angels Uriel, Raguel, Tubuel, Michael, Adinus, Tubuas, Sabaoc, and Simiel.<sup>43</sup> The accused had prayed in unconventional terms: *Precor vos,*

*et conjuro vos, et supplico me ad vos, angelus Raguel, angelus Tubuel*, and so forth, addressing the spirits somewhat as he addressed God himself, whom he called the ‘Father of the holy angels’: *te invoco et clamo, et invito te super me miserrimo...* Pope Zachary, who judged the case at a distance, determined that Aldebert had invoked demons under the pretense of invoking angels. But the purpose of the invocation, linked as it was explicitly to the invocation of God, is vague and unspecific, and in what sense it was magical remains at best unclear. Suspicion might well have been heightened by Aldebert’s other actions: his giving out his nail and hair clippings as reliques, his drawing people out of churches to hear his open-air preaching. As Jeffrey Russel points out, there is little suggestion of magic in the charges against him, and even the vague suggestion is unrelated to the invocation of angels.

Again in 789 the Carolingian *Admonitio generalis*, explicitly citing the canons of Laodicea, forbade the invention or invocation of unknown angel names, meaning those other than Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Here too the concern is probably more with litanies and other liturgical formulas than with angel magic in any clear sense.<sup>44</sup> The evidence here, as in most of the earlier cases, seems to have more to do with the regularization and standardization of liturgical texts than with condemnation of anything like later medieval angel magic.<sup>45</sup>

The Carolingian urge to regulate and standardize the liturgy according to Roman liturgical use was no doubt inspired not only by an impulse toward regimentation but also by encounter with texts of striking unconventionality. A litany from Soissons of around the eighth century included biblical and apocryphal names in an extended litany of the saints that was irregular both liturgically and grammatically: *Sancta Maria, ora pro nos. Sancte Michael, ora pro nos. Sancte Gabrihel, ora pro nos. Sancte Rafahel, ora pro nos. Sancte Orihel, ora pro nos. Sancte Raguhel, ora pro nos. Sancte Tobihel, ora pro nos. Sancte Cherubim, ora pro nos. Sancte Seraphim, ora pro nos.* As the litany proceeds, *ora pro nos* becomes transposed into *orate pro me*.<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey Russell points out that this text may have been the source for the list of angels propounded by Aldebert, who first appeared in the region of Soissons.<sup>47</sup>

In short, there was much concern about veneration of angels from early Christian centuries well into the medieval period, having to do mostly with public liturgical veneration of potentially ambiguous spirits. How this background relates to either the practice or the prohibition of angel magic remains to be seen.

## DEVOTION TO ANGELS AND CONCEPTIONS OF ANGELS: THE SCOPE OF TOLERATION

In the later medieval West – in the same culture that produced several writings on angel magic – there is a great deal of evidence for toleration and encouragement of private devotion to angels. The devotees might step beyond what their contemporaries deemed proper bounds, but veneration of angels remained important to mainstream piety.<sup>48</sup> The conception of angels found in later medieval sources was subject to considerable fluidity and even idiosyncrasy, not only in popular but at times in elite sources: we do not have to search far for notions such as neutral spirits (intermediate between the angels and demons), angels with apocryphal or invented names, or one guardian angel succeeded by another. Theologians might find themselves in uneasy accommodation with contemporary views of angels. Be that as it may, what remains striking is the variety of conceptions in sources not meant or received as transgressive.

The parameters of the cult of angels were defined by Saint Michael at one end and the guardian angels at the other; orders higher than the archangels, especially seraphim and cherubim, were mentioned in liturgy but were not themselves objects of liturgical cults in the West.<sup>49</sup> Liturgically the most important of the archangels, Michael, had unimpeachably orthodox character grounded in Revelation 12, where he is not only sharply distinct from the demons but their arch foe. His cult was public and liturgical, was universal and had the personal character made possible by his bearing a known name.<sup>50</sup> Liturgy in his honor is known from late antiquity, as in the Leonine Sacramentary.<sup>51</sup> Hymns in his honor ascribed to Rabanus Maurus, extolling him as *salutis signifer* and *angelus pacis*, were used liturgically for his feast. Assimilated to the category of saints, as *Saint Michael*, he was invoked in the litany of the saints, along with the other named archangels Gabriel and Raphael, but they did not enjoy anything like the same veneration. His shrines, at Monte Gargano and Mont Saint-Michel and elsewhere, often had significantly more than local or regional adherence. Linked with the Virgin Mary already in widespread interpretation of Revelation 12 (where he protects the Woman Clothed with the Sun, commonly identified with the Virgin), he shared something of her universal patronage. In his medieval cult he hovered somewhat like a sky god, touching down at particular but multiple mountains, rather as Mary became a universal patroness around the twelfth century and emerged in grottos like an earth goddess.<sup>52</sup> (The archangel Gabriel was also associated with the

Virgin and became popular in the later Middle Ages as the one sent to proclaim the Incarnation.<sup>53</sup>) In the last medieval centuries Michael would have been known in many capacities: as the receiver and judge of souls and thus the patron of many burial chapels, as the patron of a new chivalric order founded by Louis XI and as a fairly common baptismal patron.

The cult of the guardian angels is in many respects distinct from that of Michael.<sup>54</sup> It too had biblical foundation: passages from Tobit 3:25, Matthew 18:10 and Acts 12:15 gave early Christian writers the notion of angels appointed to protect individuals, and at least from the Carolingian era there were prayers to these guardian angels. The cult of Michael was a widely celebrated liturgical cult, centered on both his apparition at Monte Gargano and the dedications of his churches there and elsewhere; veneration of guardian angels was to a greater degree an affair of unofficial, devotional observance that became liturgical largely by association with the cult of Michael, when the feasts associated with him became attached also to them. While Michael was named, the guardian angels were mostly anonymous, following the tradition of Judges 13:18, where an angel refused to declare his name because it is *mirabile*. To be sure, Saint Patrick had a companion named Victoricus, construed by his hagiographer Muirchu as an angel, while Umiltà of Faenza had a pair of angels named Sapiel and Emmanuel; having a named guardian was not theological problem, but it was the exception.<sup>55</sup> Francesch Eiximenis in the late fourteenth century wrote a *Livre des sains anges* that dealt with guardian angels in a broader sense, including angels higher in the ranks of traditional orders, and serving as guardians for particular places.<sup>56</sup> While the mainstream conception was that each individual had a single guardian, there was room for alternative notions: Adelheit Langman had a succession of angels to whom she was entrusted, because as she advanced to higher spiritual levels she deserved to have more exalted angels. At one point Christ recommended a new angel to her, and she asked why she now had another angel. He answered that she had entered a higher life and deserved a higher angel, just as a king has a higher angel than a duke.<sup>57</sup>

While the cults of Saint Michael and of the guardian angels differed in certain respects, in others they converged and to some extent became fused. Michael not only defended Christendom but like a guardian angel protected the souls and bodies of individual Christians, and served as both guardian and guide. As Philippe Faure has said, the guardian angels participated in *fonctions michaeliques*.<sup>58</sup> Gervase of Tilbury went so far as to suggest that the name Michael applied not to a person but to an office, not to

a single angel but to a legion, to the guardian angels generally, who all call themselves Michael.<sup>59</sup> Fittingly, then, the liturgical feasts of Saint Michael and of the guardian angels generally coincided. The feast of Saint Michael on 29 September seems to have originated in the coalescence of dedication feasts for churches dedicated to him on Monte Gargano, in Rome, and perhaps also outside of Rome. In many places it soon became a feast in honor of St Michael and All Angels; one early martyrology comments that it seemed to the church fitting that on 29 September solemn memory should be observed of all the angels, ‘because each person is believed to have an angel delegated to him by God for guarding’.<sup>60</sup> In other regions of the Western Church, to be sure, alternative days were assigned for the feast of the guardian angels: 1 March, 1 August and other dates.

If Michael and the other archangels had individual names, it might be reasonable to assume that other angels did as well, and that on occasion those names could be known. The invocation of angels with apocryphal names, while sometimes suspect, was often tolerated, especially in private devotion. We have seen the cases of Saint Patrick and Umiltà of Faenza. A prayer pseudonymously ascribed to Bede called on the aid of biblical and apocryphal angels: *Gabriel esto mihi lorica; Michael, esto mihi baltheus; Raphael, esto mihi scutum; Uriel, esto mihi protector; Rumiell, esto mihi defensor; Paniel, esto mihi sanitas; et omnes sancti ac martyres, deprecor ut juvent me apud justum judicem ...*<sup>61</sup> A series of angels including *Michael victoriosus, Gabriel nuncius, Raphael medicus, Uriel fortis socius, Jehudiel remunerator, Barachiel adiutor and Sealtiel orator* was said to have been revealed by God to the fifteenth-century Portuguese Franciscan Amadeus Menez de Silva and appeared in the wall-painting of a church at Palermo.<sup>62</sup> A fifteenth-century English book of devotions invoked Barachiel, Raguel, Thobiel and Pantecessor in its intercessions.<sup>63</sup> More creative was the adaptation in a volume of chivalric and heraldic material put together in the fifteenth century for Sir John Astley, which included a prayer to a series of apocryphal angels disguised as obscure saints:

When you see your enemy, call on Saint Oriell. When you are going along the way, call on Saint Ragwell. When you are going somewhere to do an errand, call upon Saint Barachiell and you will have your desire. If someone is angry at you, call upon Saint Pantalion and his anger will soon depart from him. When you are coming before any lord or prince, have in your mind Saint Tubiell and Saint Rachyell and everything will come out well for you.<sup>64</sup>

Apocryphal angels continued to be invoked devotionally, and so long as the usage was otherwise not obviously problematic, the invocation was often tolerated. Opposition to apocryphal names was never absolute. Apocryphally named angels might turn out to be demonic, to be sure, but anonymous angels were surely no less hazardous. Indeed, there was no reason demons could not identify themselves falsely as scriptural archangels, and might even mimic Christ himself,<sup>65</sup> but this was no reason not to invoke Michael or Christ.

Nor was the notion of neutral or intermediate angels necessarily problematic. This was a key element in the *Liber iuratus* ascribed to Honorius of Thebes, but it was well known outside the context of magic.<sup>66</sup> This concept, grounded in Jewish apocalyptic literature and in early Christian writings, never quite went away, although it became largely a literary theme. These spirits might be neutral by virtue of their neutrality in the rebellion of Satan against God. Second, they could be the offspring of these fallen spirits and human women, an idea grounded in Genesis 6:2 and the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch), chapters 6–11.<sup>67</sup> Third, they might be akin to good spirits but turned to harm by their location: as the Platonist *Calcidius* says, they are ‘touched by an earthly passion as a result of the vicinity of the earth and they have an excessive partnership with matter’.<sup>68</sup> What all these categories have in common is that the spirits in question reside neither in heaven nor in hell but in the lower atmosphere, where they are able to assault humans on Earth. Augustine’s writings gave strong impetus to a tidier classification, in which these neutral or intermediate spirits were in fact assimilated to the fallen angels or demons,<sup>69</sup> but pre-Augustinian Christian writers had already given their sanction to various formulations of the concept, and it would not go away. The writing that probably did most to keep such ideas in play through the Middle Ages was *The Navigation of Saint Brendan*.<sup>70</sup> The reality of neutral spirits became a theme in later medieval literature, particularly in the later thirteenth century: in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, the *Chanson d’Esclarmonde*, Jansen Enikel’s *Weltchronik*, the *South English Legendary*, and then in Dante’s *Inferno*.<sup>71</sup> As a literary motif it was less subject to critique than it would have been in theological literature, but its literary safe haven did not ensure that it would always be read as fiction.

Revelation imparted by angels is a common theme of hagiography. The two lives of Lidwina of Schiedam by Johannes Brugman, particularly the *Vita prior*, refer repeatedly to the revelations given her by her angel; with his aid she was often brought to rapture, while he and other

angels revealed to her future events and the fates of souls after death.<sup>72</sup> The angels that appear in saints' lives are at times stunningly unconventional, yet the writers of these lives were interested in promoting their subjects' cult, and clearly they did not see the unconventionality as an impediment to either official or popular recognition of the subjects' sanctity. Elsewhere we hear of a guardian angel that took the form of a white bird and circled the head of a Franciscan tertiary as he lay dying, as if guarding him to the end and awaiting his soul when it was released from his body, rather like a spiritual bird of prey.<sup>73</sup> Hagiography is perhaps the richest source of such idiosyncratic notions, but they occur in other texts that cannot be dismissed as merely popular or peripheral to the cultural mainstream. Furthermore, many of the features characteristic of angel magic are found also in orthodox devotion to angels, where they were tolerated if not encouraged.

In the *vita* of Francesca Bussa of Rome by her confessor Giovanni Mattiotti, Book 2 consists of a series of ninety-seven visions, eleven of which deal with the revelations imparted by her angel guardians. She had angels assigned to her first from the choir of angels, then from the archangels and finally from the powers; they were given her not only for her protection and instruction but also to lead her toward a kind of mystical perfection, from the *via purgativa*, through the *via illuminativa*, and on to the *via unitiva*.<sup>74</sup> At one point she had as her guardian not an angel but rather an archangel, who tended her day and night in the form of a nine-year-old child.<sup>75</sup> Another *vita* of the same saint says she had two guardian angels, one who urged her to good deeds, while another punished her transgressions with blows that bystanders could hear, although they saw nothing.<sup>76</sup>

Hagiographic and mystical literature gives several instances of angels who guided and instructed their devotees, imparting revelations to them and enabling their mystical ascent. As in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, angels had often been the bearers of private revelation. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine had ascribed the divine manifestations of the Old Testament to the mediation of angels:

If ... I am asked how either the voices or the sensible forms and figures were produced before the Incarnation of the World of God, which they prefigured as something to come, I answer that God wrought them by means of His angels, and this is also sufficiently shown, insofar as I can judge, by the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures.<sup>77</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, the *doctor angelicus*, who devoted considerable attention to the theology of angels, also thought of both good and evil angels as capable of mediating visions to humans: angels can affect people's imaginations, as one did to Jacob in a dream; they are the mediators of divine enlightenment, revelation and prophecy; even the Annunciation to Mary was mediated by an angel who brought her vision of both the imagination and the intellect.<sup>78</sup>

Angels appeared regularly to Elizabeth of Schönau and served a vital role in the visions of Hadewijch of Brabant.<sup>79</sup> Angela of Foligno prayed to the angels, especially Michael, on the feast of the angels, asking them to obtain for her the presence of Christ, and they told her this wish was granted, as it was. She reflected that she had never experienced such great pleasure as she did from the angel's presence and discourse. She prayed to the seraphim, and everything the seraphim enjoyed was communicated to her.<sup>80</sup> John of Alverna had an angel companion who expounded for him the mysteries of the cross, the joys of heaven and passages from the Bible, passing in and out of his cell like a close friend over a period of three months, then opening for him the capacity to understand any passage of scripture, although he could explain this meaning to others only when it pleased God that he do so.<sup>81</sup> Hugh of Balma urged reverence for one's guardian angel, the 'perfected angelic spirit' who 'redirects to the human soul those things which he has perceived, irradiating her in many ways and letting his own exercises kindle hers'.<sup>82</sup> More daringly, angels could play a role in evoking rapture and even in mystical ascent toward union with God. At times, to be sure, their role was more symbolic than efficacious: Bonaventure, building on Richard of Saint-Victor and other sources, saw the angelic orders as exemplars of the stages in the heavenly ascent.<sup>83</sup> Jacopone da Todi went further, representing angels as guides on the mystical path as well as emblems of its stages.<sup>84</sup>

Hagiography and exempla provide examples of individuals who recognized a need for *discretio spirituum*, while at the same time suggesting that the problem was solvable. The *Legenda aurea* tells that a demon appeared to Saint Juliana in prison as an angel, but she was suspicious, prayed for guidance, and was told how to force him to confess that he was a demon.<sup>85</sup> Caesarius of Heisterbach has a story in which a demon appeared to an anchoress. Her confessor instructed her to have him produce a vision of the Virgin Mary, and when she cried 'Hail Mary' both the demon and the false vision evaporated.<sup>86</sup> Lidwina of Schiedam had visions of angels who always bore the sign of the cross on their foreheads

to distinguish themselves from evil spirits appearing as angels of light.<sup>87</sup> In the canonization process for Angela Merici, one witness testified that she was always distrustful of visions; she explained to him that when she was a child the Devil appeared to her in the form of an indescribably beautiful angel, but she was enlightened enough to cry out, 'Return to hell, you enemy of the cross, for I know I am not worthy to see an angel of God', whereupon the Devil immediately vanished.<sup>88</sup> The *vitae* of Lidwina and Francesca emphasize that these women also experienced the assaults of demonic spirits, alongside the guidance and illumination of angels, making in each case for a kind of *psychomachia* in which spirits on either side waged combat over the soul of the holy woman. One might suggest that this sense of combat makes for a context fundamentally different from that of angel magic, in which the magician thinks of himself as largely in control of a situation that is not so markedly fraught with conflict. Still, it remains true that the use of angelic aid to achieve mystical progress was not in itself necessarily suspect.

The fourteenth century seems to have witnessed a burgeoning of interest in the mystagogic function of angels. John Ruusbroeck in his *Spiritual Espousals* says some individuals receive revelations from guardian angels or other angels. Recognizing that the source may turn out to be demonic, Ruusbroeck urges that such revelations should be heeded only insofar as they agree with scripture and with truth.<sup>89</sup> But the word of caution did not dampen contemporaries' enthusiasm for angelic mystagogy and revelation. For Walter Hilton, it is by the ministry of angels that Christ both recalls and explains the mysteries of scripture to one who loves him.<sup>90</sup> It was an angel who told Birgitta of Sweden to establish her monastery and her order; when she was afflicted with doubt Christ sent her an angel to dictate the *Sermo Angelica*, which includes teachings about the role of angels in creation and salvation, as lessons to be read to her sisters, and her *Revelations* contain many accounts of angelic instruction.<sup>91</sup> They could also give instruction on scripture in ways one might expect to challenge ecclesiastical control of biblical interpretation. And the anonymous German *Book of the Poor in Spirit* saw angels as leading and educating the soul in its mystical ascent by presenting angelic images to the soul.<sup>92</sup>

Johannes Tauler preached a sermon for the feast of the Holy Angels, in which he asserted that each individual has a personal angel and devil, but he developed at greater length the theme that the orders of angels are divided into three hierarchies.<sup>93</sup> The first, which includes the angels (in a narrow sense), archangels and virtues, tends the outer and corporeal

person, leading to exercise of virtue and to grace. The second, comprising the powers, principalities and dominions, serves the spiritual person, the one who stands far above all corporeal creatures and is like the angels, being totally free and subject to none, in control over their own vices. The third, including the thrones, cherubim and seraphim, supports the ‘high, noble, divinely formed, utterly inner person, hidden within God’. The thrones work within the innermost ground of the soul, the throne where God rules and works. The cherubim enlighten this ground with divine light, while the seraphim kindle it with flaming love. The kindling of these qualities takes place within the innermost ground, yet it redounds to the outer person, and makes the individual well ordered and divine.

However much one might expect apocryphal angel names, neutral spirits between unfallen and fallen angels, or angels as sources of revelation and mystical ascent to arouse suspicion, there is a rich body of writing in which is it clear that these notions were not meant or perceived as necessarily transgressive. Yet the concept of angels found in this material was fluid, often unconventional, at times highly idiosyncratic, even when the intention was fully orthodox and devout.

### THE HAZARDS OF CONJURATION

How do these beliefs and practices relating to angels affect our understanding of angel magic? That question could be answered in four ways. First, with regard to the magicians, the widespread attention to angels in later medieval religious culture makes it more understandable that those interested in magical experiments might think of directing their invocations toward these unfallen spirits. Second, again with respect to the magicians, the wide acceptance of notions about the angels that might have struck a conventional theologian as highly unconventional puts the practice of angel magic in perspective: the lush growth of idiosyncratic angelolatry provided a ground in which angel magic too might flourish. Third, with regard to their opponents, one *could* say that the fluidity and unpredictability of the standard cult of angels might seem to make it harder to understand why angel magic was a problem. If so much was tolerated in devotion to angels, why should the magicians’ practices seem so much more deviant? But fourth, more plausibly, again with respect to the opponents, this very fluidity in the devotion helps to explain why angel magic was a problem: if even the devotion had such a strong tendency to veer toward the apocryphal and superstitious, this was all the more reason

to be on guard against practices that went yet further in their idiosyncrasy and potential deviance.

It is tempting to suppose that angel magic differed in some specific way from orthodox notions of angels, and that in principle if not in practice it should have been possible to formulate a clear criterion for the distinction: that everything was fine until apocryphal names were uttered, or those invoking angels sought revelations from them, or neutral angels were introduced onto the scene. In fact there was no such clear boundary between the licit and the illicit.

What then tipped the balance, provoking condemnation of certain observances as magic that could not be tolerated? Perhaps it was no one single factor that defined angel magic as reprobate, but the combination of factors, along with the use of ritual technologies that too closely resembled those of overtly demonic magic, and the flourishing of angel magic especially in the same sort of ‘clerical underworld’ that fostered conjuring of demons.<sup>94</sup> All this is no doubt true. It is also true, however, that the evidence can lead to a rather different conclusion: rather than providing reassurance that virtually everything in angel magic could be found also in orthodox devotion, it can be seen as suggesting that the mainstream cult of angels was itself complicated, fluid and unstable, outside of ecclesiastical supervision (no one ever canonized an angel), often tending toward conceptions that sooner or later would prove theologically problematic, and that grounding of angel magic in this tradition provided too little assurance of safety for the wary eyes of theologians and ecclesiastics. The doctrine of angels was fundamental to Christian orthodoxy, but their cult had always given rise to problems, from the first century onward. Comparing angel magic with devotion to angels might make the former less suspect, but was more likely to make the latter more so.

Ultimately the most important factor in deciding which way the scale tipped was the question of setting: if a potentially licit ritual appeared alongside a more doubtful one, or if a text that strained the limits of orthodoxy was accompanied by one that was more clearly transgressive, or if a belief or practice was ascribed to a figure known not for holiness but for misdeeds, all this would inevitably affect observers’ judgment. The three things that matter most in religious culture are context, context and context.<sup>95</sup> The meaning, the significance and the value of any practice or belief are always framed and often determined by setting: by the life in which it is cultivated, the actions and habits in which it is embedded, the text in which it is embedded, or the other texts that accompany that one.

The context is not altogether in the control of the believer, the author or the practitioner, because an observer can always recontextualize someone's act or statement, framing it in a way that was not at first intended, for better or for worse. An image, a ritual, a term or a name that might seem wondrous or at worst harmlessly eccentric in one context will take on different color in a context that makes it seem less innocent.

The cultural location of angel magic had to affect its reception. Some of the practices recommended in the *Liber iuratus* might have seemed acceptable in a different setting: contemplative prayer was always seen as a foretaste of the beatific vision, and prayers asking angels to aid the attainment of that vision need not have been problematic. But the preface to the *Liber iuratus* was largely a narrative of conflict between magicians and churchmen, and its table of contents offered procedures meant to people and destroy kingdoms and empires. This *captatio malevolentiae* placed all the rest in a context that ensured condemnation. More broadly, the angel magic of all the texts reviewed above was contextualized by public awareness of contemporary magicians who expressly conjured demons. The conception of angels in *The Holy Almandal* is not markedly different from that of contemporary writings in which angels of various sorts aided their devotees toward spiritual attainment. But eccentric veneration of angels might be tolerated more in a saint's *vita* than in a work that brought necromancy to the reader's mind, fairly or not.

More than the saints, more than God, far more than Christ, angels left almost everything to the imagination. They did not have the familiarity that comes with embodiment, but they also were not wrapped in unimaginable mystery as God was, nor did most of them have established and familiar stories to be told about them. Their iconography was purely symbolic; what they actually looked like nobody knew and everyone could imagine. They had individuality, indeed each of them was a distinct species,<sup>96</sup> yet if they had individual character and names these could be known only from imagination, revelation or some hybrid of the two. Left so much to imagination, angels could not be regulated as conveniently as other sacred personages. If someone made a claim about them, however weak the basis for the claim itself, there was equally little basis for refuting it.

Angels were subject to a triple ambiguity. Most obviously, they could be good or evil, and the distinction was not always manifest. Second, they had individuality but with few exceptions were usually thought of as collectivities, as choirs or as an amorphous band of angel guardians. Third,

they had the power of locomotion, which meant they could be present or absent, and precisely where they were was usually unknowable.

The third of these points requires further articulation. Conjurability implied locomotion. Angels could move around, invisibly and undetectably. In any location, and by the side of any individual, they could be absent one moment and present the next. Even if they did not occupy space, angels did have location, and they were present in ways that distinguished them both from God and from the saints.<sup>97</sup> God was by definition ubiquitous. Christ as God was universally present, becoming locally present in physical form in the Eucharist but without being previously absent, and without his sacramental presence in one location precluding simultaneous presence elsewhere. The proper location of the saints was in heaven, and intercessions addressed to them were transmitted to heaven, where they interceded before the throne of God on behalf of mortals on Earth; if they came to earth this was a miraculous exception, as when Nicholas intervened to protect a ship threatened with shipwreck. That angels routinely came down from heaven, and demons came up from hell, and occupied particular locations on earth, was a factor that made them distinct from other spirits but in this respect like each other. Because angels could move from one location to another, they served as bearers of prayer, transmitting it from individuals on earth to a transcendent God enthroned in heaven, as both *Tobit 12:15* and *Revelation 8:3* had suggested, and as Origen, Bernard and Bonaventure affirmed. The same point is made in the canon of the mass, after the consecration, when the priest prays that the sacrifice of the altar may be born *per manus sancti angeli tui* before the altar on high before God's divine majesty.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Bernard of Clairvaux pictured the angels (or 'angelic princes') as attending prayer of humans, mingling with them when they chant the Psalms, transmitting prayers to God and returning 'laden with graces for us'.<sup>99</sup>

The mysterious coming and going of angels, and their intimate presence to humans, invading their personal space, would be profoundly discomfiting if it were perceptible. An early artistic representation of guardian angels, in a thirteenth-century *Bible moralisé*, shows them perched on the shoulders of the individuals to whom they are assigned.<sup>100</sup> This intimate proximity is again a frequent theme in hagiography. A saintly figure might perceive the guardians of other individuals who themselves were oblivious to this presence. Denys the Carthusian wrote about angels in various of his works, especially a series of seven sermons for the feast of Saint Michael; his *vita*, written several years after his death, tells how after mat-

ins he would see his brother Carthusians returning to their cells, each accompanied by a white figure whom he took to be a guardian angel.<sup>101</sup> The point here is twofold: the saint was blessed with awareness of his own and of other monks' angels, but those other monks went about their business insensitive to the spirits hovering constantly about them.

Precisely because they were locally present in the same way that demons were locally present, angels might be conjured in the same way as demons. To conjure a spirit was first of all precisely to induce it to become present where it had been absent; one could not in this sense conjure God, or Christ, because they were already at least spiritually present, and one would not normally conjure a saint, because the saints' location was fixed, but it pertained properly to angels and demons that they could be sent on missions and they could be conjured to particular places. Even the angels who moved the celestial spheres could be conjured, and in some texts this results in the potentially incoherent notion that they can come down and mingle with humans – a notion that Albertus Magnus would surely have seen as reinforcing his sense that true angels belong properly in heavenly contemplation or earthly service, not in intermediate positions where they could be conjured about by mortals. We may speak, then, of an ambiguity of presence, a realization that one was surrounded closely by invisible beings, a perfectly understandable nervousness about the nature of those beings, and a horror at the thought of conjuring more of them into one's presence.

A student waking suddenly and finding a roommate conjuring an angel would understandably be disturbed, and not only by the sleep-disrupting commotion. For most people such rites would seem suspiciously unfamiliar, and in the context of powerfully realized ritual the unfamiliar can in itself be threatening. The instinctive reaction to draw back in astonishment and in fear will naturally lead to rationalization: the spirit conjured is (one might propose) likely to be a demon, the forms of conjuration imply inappropriate constraint, the trappings resemble those of condemned magic, the purposes seem suspect, and the practice is not properly controlled, has not been cleared by the spiritual equivalent of a Food and Drug Administration.

*Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.*<sup>102</sup> The potential for shock, in a sense the most basic problem with angel magic, was surely heightened by the radical instability of even the orthodox cult of angels. There was no effective control over this cult; angels could present themselves as spiritual instructors and even mystical guides in ways that might prove

salutary but could always arouse suspicion; there were techniques for *discretio spirituum* but these were not infallible and required a wise and discerning practitioner; there was no firm agreement on whether neutral or intermediate angels constituted a distinct class; and the capacity of both fallen and unfallen angels for local presence meant that spirits of all sorts might be hovering about unseen, with potential for causing good or ill, and the active solicitation of such spirits could only heighten the anxiety of those who feared spiritual foul play. In short, even without angel magic, angels could be nervous-making. They resisted both definition and control. Dionysius the Areopagite and others had ranked them in firmly fixed orders, but outside of theological circles they proved disorderly. Kept within bounds, they could be forces for goodness and holiness – but they could so easily slip through those bounds, and deliberately inviting them to do so could only have seemed rash.

In short, then, if theologians and ecclesiastical authorities had little tolerance for angel magic, this was not only because it seemed to distort orthodox angelolatry, but because angelolatry at its best and safest was somewhat elusive and never quite lent itself to either intellectual or institutional control. Angel magic was not the idiosyncratic and irregular side of the cult of angels; it was one element in a cult that often verged on idiosyncrasy and irregularity even on its safer side. If churchmen lay awake at night worrying about invokers of angels, their wariness is from this perspective understandable.

## NOTES

1. The line is quoted and the point is developed, e.g., by Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, 3.57, S.E. Banks and J.W. Binns (eds and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), pp. 664–65. Jean Gerson was a key figure in defining this traditional issue; see Paschal Boland, *The Concept of Discretio spirituum in John Gerson's 'De probatione spirituum' and 'De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis'* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), and, more recently, Cornelius Roth, *Discretio spirituum: Kriterien geistlicher Unterscheidung bei Johannes Gerson* (Würzburg: Echter 2001).
2. British Library, Sloane ms 38, fol. 24v. The key portion: *quod si veri angeli sunt accepto thuribulo te offerent thurificare ... et si non sunt veri angeli recipient thurificacionem a te et non thurificabunt te et in hoc cognoscet malos a bonis angelis.*

3. Johannes Hartlieb, *Das Buch aller verbotenen Künste, des Aberglaubens und der Zauberei / Das püch aller verpoten kunst*, Falk Eisermann and Eckhard Graf (eds and trans.) (Ahlerstedt: Param 1989), c. 86–87, 91, pp. 94–95, pp. 96–99, pp. 102–05.
4. Cameron Louis (ed.), *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acre: An Edition of Tanner MS 407* (New York and London: Garland 1980), pp. 169–70, no. 29, with notes on pp. 386–87.
5. Such conjurations are found throughout a necromancer's manual; see Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997; University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998).
6. Claire Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing; University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1998).
7. Henri Bresc and Benoît Grévin (eds), 'Les Anges et la magie au Moyen Âge: Actes da la table ronde, Nanterre, 8–9 décembre 2000', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge*, 114/2, 2002, pp. 589–890.
8. Claire Fanger (ed.), *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).
9. For fuller discussion of these issues see Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic', *American Historical Review*, 99, 1994, pp. 813–36. On the question of definition see also Alan F. Segal, 'Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition', in R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill 1981), pp. 349–75, reprinted in Alan F. Segal, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars 1987), pp. 80–108.
10. Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Renaissance France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
11. Véronèse, 'Les anges dans l'Ars notoria: révélation, processus visionnaire et engéologie', *Mélanges de l'École français de Rome, Moyen Age*, 114:1 (2002), p. 823.
12. Jan R. Veenstra, 'The Holy Almandal: Angels and the Intellectual Aims of Magic', in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters 2002a), pp. 197, 203.
13. John of Morigny, *Liber florum celestis doctrine*, Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson (eds) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 2015); Claire Fanger, *Rewriting Magic: An Exegesis of the Visionary Autobiography of a Fourteenth-Century French Monk* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

14. Bill Rebiger, Peter Schäfer, Evelyn Burkhardt, Gottfried Reeg, Henrik Wels and Dorothea M. Salzer (eds), *Sefer ha-Razim I und II: Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009), gives the Hebrew text with the Latin (*Liber Razielis*); see also Sophie Page, ‘Uplifting Souls: The *Liber de essentia spirituum* and the *Liber Razielis*’, in Fanger (2012), pp. 79–112, and Sophie Page, *Magic in the Cloister: Pious Motives, Illicit Interests, and Occult Approaches to the Medieval Universe* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), chap. 5 (which also discusses the *Liber de essentia spirituum*).
15. Juris G. Lidaka, ‘*The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets* attributed to Osbern Bokenham’, in Fanger (1998), pp. 32–75.
16. Joseph Bernard McAllister, *The Letter of Saint Thomas Aquinas De Occultis Operibus Naturae Ad Quemdam Militem Ultramontanum* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1939), pp. 170–78.
17. *Liber iuratus Honorii: A Critical Edition of the Latin Version of the Sworn Book of Honorius*, ed. Gösta Hedegård (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002). See also Robert Mathiesen, ‘A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book of Honorius of Thebes*’, in Fanger (1998), pp. 143–62; Jean-Patrice Boudet, ‘Magie théurgique, angéologie et vision béatifique dans le *Liber Sacratus sive Juratus* attribué à Honorius de Thèbes’, *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome, Moyen Age*, 114/1, 2002, pp. 851–90; Jan R. Veenstra, ‘Honorius and the Sigil of God: The *Liber iuratus* in Berengario Ganell’s *Summa sacre magice*’, in Fanger (2012), pp. 151–91; Claire Fanger, ‘Covenant and the Divine Name: Revisiting the *Liber iuratus* and John of Morigny’s *Liber florum*’, *ibid.*, pp. 192–216.
18. Rüdiger Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
19. *Liber iuratus*, sect. 4, p. 115.
20. *Liber iuratus*, sects. 118, 135; cf. sects. 3 and 115. On this point see Katelyn Mesler, ‘The *Liber iuratus Honorii* and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic’, in Fanger (2012), p. 136.
21. *Liber iuratus*, p. 81.
22. Mesler, ‘The *Liber iuratus Honorii* and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic’, pp. 113–50.
23. Julien Véronèse, *L’Almandal et introduction et édition critique* (Florence: SISMEL 2012); Jan R. Veenstra, ‘La communication avec les anges: les hiérarchies angéliques, la *lingua angelorum* et l’élévation de l’homme dans la théologie et la magie (Bonaventure, Thomas d’Aquin, Eiximenis et l’Almandal)’, *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome, Moyen Age*, 114/1, 2002b, pp. 773–812; Jan R. Veenstra, ‘Venerating and Conjuring Angels:

Eiximenis's *Book of the Holy Angels* and the *Holy Almandal*: Two Case Studies', in Charles Burnett and W.F. Ryan (eds), *Magic and the Classical Tradition* (London: Warburg Institute; Turin: Nino Aragno, 2006), pp. 119–34. Among the editions of Francesc Eiximenis, see *Libro de los santos angeles* (Burgos: Fadrique Biel de Basilea, 1490); *Llibre des angels: Le livre des saints anges* (Geneva: Adam Steinschaber, 1478); and *Àngels e demonis*, ed. Sadurní Martí (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2003).

24. Julien Véronèse, *L'Ars notoria au Moyen Age: Introduction et édition critique* (Florence: Sismel, 2007); Julien Véronèse, 'Les anges dans l'*Ars*, pp. 813–49; and Julien Véronèse, 'Magic, Theurgy, and Spirituality in the Medieval Ritual of the *Ars notoria*', trans. Claire Fanger, in Fanger, *Invoking Angels*, pp. 37–78. See also J. Dupèbe, 'L'*ars notoria* et la polémique sur la divination et la magie', in *Divination et controverse religieuse en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Cahiers V.L. Saulnier, 4) (Paris, 1987), pp. 123–34; Benedek Láng, 'The Art of Memory and Magic (the *ars memorativa* and the *ars notoria*)', in Rafel Wójcik (ed.), *Culture of Memory in East Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period* (Poznán: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, 2008), pp. 87–93.

25. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, pt. II/II, qu. 96, art. 1, in *Summa theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation* (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964–81), XL:70–75.

26. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei: On the Power of God*, trans. by the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1932, repr. 1952), qu. 6, art. 10 ('Are demons forced to work miracles by sensible and corporeal objects, deeds or words?'), <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdePotentia.htm#6:10>, accessed 24 March 2011.

27. Jean-Patrice Boudet, 'Les condamnations de la magie à Paris en 1398', *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 12 (vol. 73), 2001, pp. 121–57. See most recently Jean-Patrice Boudet, 'La postérité des condamnations de la magie à Paris en 1398', in Martine Ostorero, Georg Modestin and Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds), *Chasses aux sorcières et démonologie: entre discours et pratiques (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Florence: Sismel, 2010), pp. 331–47.

28. The relevant work of Jean Gerson is in his *Œuvres complètes*, Palemon Glorieux (ed.) (Paris: Desclée, 1961–73), vol. X, especially pp. 77–109 (*De erroribus circa artem magicam*), but also pp. 109–16 (*De respectu coelestium siderum*), pp. 116–21 (*Contra superstitionem dierum observantiam*), pp. 121–28 (*Super doctrinam Raymundi Lulle*), pp. 128–30 (*De observatione dierum quantum ad opera*), pp. 131–34 (*Contra superstitionem sculpturae leonis*), pp. 134–38 (*De orationibus privatis fidelium*), pp. 138–41 (*Contra Matthaeum de Fussa*), pp. 141–43 (*Adversus superstitionem in audiendo missam*). See also Françoise Bonney, 'Autour de Jean

Gerson: opinions de théologiens sur les superstitions et la sorcellerie au début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Le moyen âge*, 77, 1971, pp. 85–98.

29. Among the syntheses on this theme see Richard Kieckhefer, 'Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion', in Jill Raitt (ed.), *Christian Spirituality*, 2 (New York: Crossroad 1987), 75–108; R.N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004). Louis Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages*, trans. G.C. Bateman (London: Burns and Oates, 1927), is still useful as a source of information.
30. For this and related issues in Hebrews see Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
31. J. Michl, 'Engel IV (christlich)', in Theodor Klauser, ed., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 5 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1962a), pp. 109–200, and Michl (1962b), 'Engel V (Katalog der Engelnamen)', pp. 200–58.
32. See Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 157–72. This is perhaps the fullest compendium of information on supposed angel magic, but unfortunately many of the instances turn out on closer inspection to involve invocation of angels for purposes that have no clear relevance to magic, and in some cases (e.g., p. 169 n. 99) there is no reason to think angels were being invoked at all.
33. Michl (1962b), 'Engel', pp. 199–200.
34. Joannes Dominicus Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 2 (Venice: Antonius Zatta, 1759), cols 569–70, *Quod non oportet Christianos, relicta Dei ecclesia, abire, et angelos nominare, vel congregaciones facere; quod est prohibitum*.
35. Thomas Joseph Lamy, *Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 2 (Mechelen: Dessain, 1886), cols 393–426, especially 395–98; see Erik Peterson, 'Die geheimen Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs', in Erik Peterson, *Friihkirche, Judentum und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchungen* (Friburg: Herder, 1959), pp. 333–45.
36. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 8 (Venice: Antonius Zatta, 1762), col. 152, *Phylacteria omnia, quae non angelorum (ut illi configunt) sed daemonum magis arte conscripta sunt, apocrypha*. On the assimilation of amulets and phylacteries, see *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (Sects 1–46)*, trans. Frank Williams, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 41 (a reference for which I am indebted to Katelyn Mesler).
37. Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, *De cultu seminarum* 1.1.3–2.1, in *Opera* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 1) (Turnhout: Brepols,

1954), 344.45 (*Nam et illi, qui ea constituerunt, damnati in poenam mortis deputantur, illi scilicet angeli, qui ad filias hominum de caelo ruerunt, ut haec quoque ignominia feminae, accedat. Nam cum et materias quasdam bene occultas et artes plerasque non bene reuelatas saeculo multo magis imperito prodidissent, – siquidem et metallorum opera nudauerunt et herbarum ingenia traduxerant et incantationum uires prouulgauerant et omnem curiositatem usque ad stellarum interpretationem designauerant – proprie et quasi peculiariter feminis instrumentum istud muliebris gloriae contulerunt: lumina lapillorum quibus monilia uariantur, et circulos ex auro quibus brachia artantur, et medicamina ex fuso quibus lanae colorantur, et illum ipsum nigrum puluerem quo oculorum exodia producuntur*); Isidoro di Siviglia, *Etimologie o Origini*, 8.9.3, ed. Angelo Valastro Canale, vol. 1 (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2004), pp. 662–63 (*haec vanitas magicarum artium ex traditione angelorum malorum in toto terrarum orbe plurimis saeculis valuit*); *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 181 ('this foolery of the magic arts held sway over the entire world for many centuries through the instruction of the evil angels'); Francis C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), pp. 402–3.

38. Hugo Odeberg, ed., *3 Enoch, or The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; reissued New York: KTAV, 1973).

39. Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, 2nd edn, 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

40. See also Erik Peterson, 'Engel und Dämonennamen: nomina barbara', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 75, 1926, pp. 393–421.

41. In Michl's catalogue, nos 46, 71, 231, 236 and 239; see also Caspar Detlef Gustav Mueller, *Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959).

42. In Michl's catalogue, nos 164, 167, 214, 246 and 248.

43. Jeffrey B. Russell, 'Saint Boniface and the Eccentrics', *Church History*, 33, 1964, pp. 235–47; Charles Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, trans. H. Leclercq, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), pp. 873–74; Michael Tangl, ed., *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1916), pp. 102–05.

44. *Admonitio generalis*, c. 16, in Alfredus Boretius, ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1 (*Monumenta Germaniae historica, Leges*, sect. 2, vol. 1) (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), p. 55.

45. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd edn (New York: Seabury, 1983), pp. 575–89.

46. Jean Mabillon, *Vetera analecta* (Paris: Montalant, 1723), pp. 170–1.

47. Michl, 'Engel', p. 185; Russell, 'Saint Boniface and the Eccentrics', p. 237.
48. See especially David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), chs 8–9. Also David Albert Jones, *Angels: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
49. Erik Peterson, *The Angels and the Liturgy*, trans. Ronald Walls (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964); for a special case see Matthias M. Tischler, *Die Christus- und Engelweihe im Mittelalter: Texte, Bilder und Studien zu einem ekklesiologischen Erzählmotiv* (Berlin: Akademie, 2005).
50. The rich literature on the cult and legend of Michael is mostly specialized. For origins see Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), and Wilhelm Lueken, *Michael: Eine Darstellung und Vergleichung der jüdischen und der morgenländisch-christlichen Tradition vom Erzengel Michael* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898). On the cult and legend in early and high medieval sources: Philippe Faure, 'L'ange du haut Moyen Âge occidental (IV<sup>e</sup>–IX<sup>e</sup> siècles): création ou tradition', *Médiévaux: langue, textes, histoire*, 15, 1988, pp. 31–49; Glenn Peers, 'Apprehending the Archangel Michael: Hagiographic Methods', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 20, 1996, pp. 100–21; Richard F. Johnson, 'Archangel in the Margins: St. Michael in the Homilies of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41', *Traditio*, 53, 1998, pp. 63–91; Daniel F. Callahan, 'The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel and the "Terrors of the Year 1000"', in Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (eds), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 181–204; Richard F. Johnson, *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005); Roberto Franco, 'Excursus storico sulla pietà popolare', *Rassegna siciliana di storia e cultura*, 10, 2006, pp. 95–109; and Hana Pátková, 'The Cult of Saint Michael in Medieval Bohemia', *Quaestiones medii aevi novae*, 14, 2009, pp. 109–22; on later medieval material see J. Lemarié, 'Textes liturgiques concernant le culte de S. Michel', *Sacris Erudiri*, 14, 1963, pp. 277–85, and Edina Eszenyi, 'Angelology in the Peripheries: A Fresh Look at Otherworld Journey Accounts', *Bulletin of International Medieval Research*, 15–16, 2011, pp. 141–61, and more specifically on Michael's role for Joan of Arc see E. Delaruelle, 'L'Archange saint Michel dans la spiritualité de Jeanne d'Arc', in R. Foreville (ed.), *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint Michel*, vol. 2 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1967), pp. 363–74, and François Neveux, 'Les voix de Jeanne d'Arc, de l'histoire à la légende', *Annales de Normandie*, 62, 2012, pp. 253–76. On Michael in art, see now Meredith J. Gill, *Angels*

*and the Order of Heaven in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 78–83.

51. Charles Lett Feltoe, ed., *Sacramentarium Leonianum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), pp. 106–08. See *Acta sanctorum*, September, vol. 8 (Antwerp: Bernard Alb. vander Plassche, 1762), pp. 4–8 (*De S. Michaeli Archangelo, et de omnibus Angelis commentarius historicus*), for extended discussion of liturgical observances. To give merely illustrative data on the liturgical observance, the feast is given as a dedication feast in Usuard's ninth-century martyrology: *Le Martyrologe d'Usuard: texte et commentaire*, ed. Jacques Dubois (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), p. 311, for 29 September: *In monte Gargano, venerabilis memoria beati archangeli Michaelis, ubi ipsius consecrata nomine habetur ecclesia, vili facta scemate, sed caelesti praedita virtute*; the wording is reproduced in nearly identical form in Anselm Rosenthal, *Martyrologium und Festkalender der Bursfelder Kongregation, von den Anfängen der Kongregation (1446) bis zum nachtridentinischen Martyrologium romanum (1584)* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1984), p. 232, and in *Martyrologium romanum: editio princeps (1584)*, ed. Manlio Sodi and Roberto Fusco (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), p. 333 (p. 301 of the reproduction), under the same date. A second feast, the Apparitio Michaelis, on May 8th, commemorating the apparition at Monte Gargano on that date in 492, was observed in Italy and at St Michael in Hildesheim and in the 1481 printed missal of the Bursfeld Congregation; see Rosenthal, *Martyrologium*, pp. 47–48, 118 n. 798, 149, 269, 295. Elsewhere it was celebrated as the Memoria Angelorum (*ibid.*, 88).

52. William A. Christian, Jr, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), tells of cases in which an image of the Virgin is found in a grotto and miraculously returns to it.

53. The literature on Gabriel is comparatively sparse, but see Frits Scholten, 'De blijde boedschapper', *Kunstschrift*, 44/6, 2000, pp. 16–23.

54. There is abundant popular literature on guardian angels. For scholarly treatment see especially Philippe Faure, 'Les anges gardiens (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles): modes et finalités d'une protection rapprochée', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, 8, 2001, pp. 23–41. More specialized are the articles of Margaret Connolly, 'A Prayer to the Guardian Angel and Wynkyn de Worde's 1506 edition of *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*', *Manuscripta*, 45–46, 2003, pp. 1–17; Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, 'The Cult of Angels in Late Fifteenth-Century England: An Hours of the Guardian Angel Presented to Queen Elizabeth Woodville', in Jane H.M. Taylor and Lesley Smith (eds), *Women and the Book: Assessing*

*the Visual Evidence* (London: British Library, 1997), pp. 230–65; and Peter Matheson, ‘Angels, Depression, and “The Stone”: A Late Medieval Prayer Book’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 48, 1997, pp. 517–30.

55. On Patrick see the *Confession*, c. 23, in Newport J.D. White, *St. Patrick: His Writings and Life* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), p. 38, where Victoricus is a man seen in a vision, and Muirchu’s life of Patrick, i.7, i.11, 2.4–5, and 2.15, *ibid.*, pp. 76–77, 81, 104, 109, where he becomes construed as an angel; see also Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, pp. 164 and 192, and Theodora Van Wagenen Ward, *Men and Angels* (New York: Viking, 1969), pp. 97–104. Umiltà da Faenza, *Sermones: le lezioni di una monaca*, Sermo 4 (De angelis sanctis), ed. Lea Montuschi and Adele Simonetti, trans. Lea Montuschi and Luigi G.G. Ricci (Florence: Galluzzo, 2005), pp. 68–107, especially 68–73; Umiltà of Faenza, *Sermons*, trans. Richard J. Pioli, in Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff (ed.), *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 247–48. On saints in hagiography see especially Ferdinand Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen: Heilige, die besondere Beziehungen zu den Engeln hatten*, 2nd edn (Stein am Rhein: Christiana-Verlag, 1986), also Gail Ashton, ‘Bridging the Difference: Reconceptualising the Angel in Medieval Hagiography’, *Literature and Theology*, 16, 2002, pp. 235–47.

56. Jan R. Veenstra, ‘Venerating and Conjuring Angels: Eiximenis’s *Book of the Holy Angels* and the *Holy Almandal*: Two Case Studies’, pp. 123–29.

57. *Die Offenbarungen der Adelheid Langmann, Klosterfrau zu Engelthal*, ed. Philipp Strauch (Strassburg: Trübner, 1878), p. 9; ‘Offenbarungen der Adelheit Langmann’, in Josef Prestel (ed.), *Die Offenbarungen der Margaretha Ebner und der Adelheid Langmann* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1939), p. 119.

58. Faure, ‘Les anges gardiens’, p. 5.

59. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, III:103, 776–80, especially 778–79 (*interrogatus an unicrus esset angelus omnium animarum bonarum custos Michael, respondit quod hoc nomen est officii, non persone, nec unius, sed legionis: sunt enim huius nominis omnes angelii animarum custodes*); Faure, ‘Les anges gardiens’, p. 5.

60. *Acta sanctorum*, September, vol. 8, 7, citing a manuscript of Usuardus: *Hac etiam placuit die sanctae matri Ecclesiae, ut omnium sanctorum Angelorum memoria solemniter agatur, quia unusquisque hominum creditur unum Angelum habere sibi a Deo deputatum ad custodiam*.

61. Venerabilis Beda, *Opera omnia*, 5 (*Patrologia Latina*, 94) (Paris: Migne, 1862), p. 561; Francesco Cancellieri, *De secretariis veteris basilicae Vaticanae*, 2 (Rome: Officina salvioniana, 1786), pp. 1006–7, reproduces the quotation in the course of an extended discussion of Uriel.

62. Michl, 'Engel', 184.
63. Montague Rhodes James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), p. xxxi.
64. M.J. Swanton, 'A Fifteenth-Century Cabalistic Memorandum Formerly in Morgan MS 775', *Harvard Theological Review*, 76, 1983, pp. 259–61.
65. Dyan Elliott, 'True Presence / False Christ: The Antinomies of Embodiment in Medieval Spirituality', *Mediaeval Studies*, 64, 2002, pp. 241–65.
66. Marcel Dando, 'The Neutral Angels', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 217, 1980, pp. 259–76; Graeme Dunphy, 'On Neutral and Fallen Angels: A Text from the Codex Karlsruhe 408 and Its Source in Enikel's *Weltchronik*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 96, 1995, pp. 9–13; Gill, *Angels and the Order of Heaven*, pp. 85–86.
67. R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), pp. 191–95.
68. J. den Boeft, *Calcidius on Demons (Commentarius ch. 127–136)*, chap. 135b (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 39. Gervase of Tilbury was aware of the Platonic distinction between *calodemones* and *cacodemones*; see Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, 1.17, pp. 96–97.
69. Karl Pelz, *Die Engellehre des heiligen Augustinus: Ein Beitrag zur Dogmengeschichte* (Münster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1912).
70. Carl Selmer, ed., *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis, from Early Latin Manuscripts*, c. 11 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), pp. 24–25; J.F. Webb, trans., *The Age of Bede*, ed. D.H. Farmer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 220–21.
71. Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, Bk. 9, §471, lines 15–25, and §798, lines 21–22, ed. Karl Lachmann, 5th edn (Berlin: Reimer, 1891), pp. 226–27 and 375; rev. ed. Eberhard Nellmann, trans. Dieter Kühn (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 778–81, and vol. 2, 360–61; Max Schweigel, ed., *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive: Drei Fortsetzungen der Chanson von Huon de Bordeaux, nach der einzigen Turiner Handschrift zum erstenmal veröffentlicht* (Marburg: Elwert, 1889), p. 119, §93, lines 2710–38; Jansen Enikel, *Weltchronik*, lines 229–36 and 267–76, in Jansen Enikels Werke, ed. Philipp Strauch (Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores qui vernacula lingua usi sunt, vol. 3) (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1900), 5–6; Carl Horstmann, ed., *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of Saints: MS Laud 108* (Early English Text Society, o.s. 87) (London: Trübner, 1887; repr. Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1987), p. 305 (in the sequel, p. 307, lines 253–58, the fallen angels are identified as *Eluene* or elves); Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto 3, lines 37–42, in *The Divine Comedy: A Verse Translation*,

trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 22–23, on *li angeli che non furon ribelli/ né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro.*

72. In Joannes Brugman's *Prior vita*, based on an earlier vernacular life by a relative, in *Acta sanctorum*, Apr., vol. 2 (Paris: Palmé, 1866), pp. 270–302, relevant material is particularly in c. 6–8 (pp. 281–89), 10 (pp. 292–94, on the status of deceased persons), but references occur in other chapters as well; in the *Vita posterior*, ibid., pp. 302–62, see especially pt. 1, c. 8 (pp. 316–18, *De responsione sibi ab Angelo in mentis thalamo data, nec non de visitationibus realibus Angelorum sibi factis*), but again there is relevant material elsewhere (e.g., pt. 3, c. 11, p. 356, *socium Angelum et collegam habebat, cum quo velut amica cum amico familiariter loquebatur*). See also Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, p. 300.

73. *Acta sanctorum*, Jun., vol. 1 (Antwerp: Henricus Thieullier, 1695), p. 153.

74. *Acta sanctorum*, March, vol. 2 (Antwerp: Jacobus Meursius, 1668), pp. \*102–52, especially visions 1 (p. 103), 7 (p. 106), 9 (p. 107), 29 (p. 122), 36 (p. 126), 38 (p. 128), 42 (p. 131), 61 (p. 142), 66–67 (p. 145), and 69 (p. 146) deal with her angel guardians. The *vita* by Maria Magdalena Anguillaria in the same volume deals with them in c. 3 (pp. 179–80). For this interpretation of the text and its representation of the mystical path see Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, pp. 302–8, who cites the unpublished work of N. Reichsöllner, *Die Engel und die Askese: Die Beziehung zwischen den Engeln und der Askese des Menschen, gezeigt am Leben der hl. Franziska Romana* (Salzburg Diplomarbeit, 1982); see also Faure, 'Les anges gardiens', pp. 19–20.

75. Ibid., p. \*103.

76. Ibid., p. \*179. Veronica of Binasco, too, had a fierce guardian angel: she gazed idly at another sister one day during mass, and when she was later abstracted from bodily senses, her angel chastised her with fierce severity: 'Oh, how terrifying was the accusing angel! how harsh his words! how dreadful his visage!' *Acta sanctorum*, Jan., vol. 1 (Antwerp: Ioannes Meursius, 1643), pp. 903–4; Philine Helas, 'Bilder und Rituale der Caritas in Rom im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert: Orte, Institutionen, Akteure', in Susanne Ehrich and Jörg Oberste (eds), *Städtische Kulte im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2010), p. 297, shows an image of Francesca with a guardian angel.

77. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 4.31, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), p. 171.

78. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, pt. I, qu. 111, art. 3 (Blackfriars ed., vol. 15, 24–29); pt. II/II, qu. 172, art. 2 (vol. 45, 32–35); pt. III, qu. 30, art. 3 (vol. 51, 74–81). There is a useful compendium of the sources in

Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 23–24.

79. Elizabeth of Schönau, *The Complete Works*, trans. Anne L. Clark (New York: Paulist, 2000); Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, trans. Mother Columba Hart (New York: Paulist, 1980), pp. 263–72, 273, 276–78, 297–302.

80. Instruction 20, in Angela da Foligno, *Il libro della Beata Angela da Foligno*, ed. and trans. Ludger Thier and Abele Calufetti, 2nd edn (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1985), pp. 593–94; Angela of Foligno, *Selected Writings*, trans. Paul Lachance (New York: Paulist, 1993), pp. 275–76.

81. ‘Acta B. Joannis Firmani sive Alvernicolae’, c. 4.41–42, *Acta sanctorum*, Aug., vol. 2 (Antwerp: Bernard Albert vander Plassche, 1735), p. 467: *Quantum vero sanctis angelis, quibus continuo reverentiam singularissimam exhibebat, fuerit familiaris, apparebat ex multis visitationibus et consolationibus, quas recipiebat ab eis ... Interrogatus a quodam sibi familiari, quomodo a Deo donum sapientiae recepisset, cum omnino taceret, et nulli videretur velle revelare, dum riveret; tandem importuna prece, et supplici inquietatione violentatus, hoc, quod ab eo petebatur, sub sigillo secreti, dum riveret, revelavit dicens, quod quadam die, dum in cella reclusus arctam poenitentiam faciens ante crucem Crucifixum oraret attente, quidam juvenis admirandi decoris ad eum venit, dicens ad eum, quod erat missus, ut secum aliquo tempore moraretur: quem cum Vir sanctus agnosceret esse angelum Domini propter magnam, quam in suo conspectu ad praesentiam eius recepit securitatem... et simul sedens de cruce Christi et de gaudiis paradisi, atque de verbis Euangelii et Apostoli Pauli, aliorumque Sanctorum longum colloquium habuerunt: sicutque per tres menses continuos non fuit dies, in qua non suo luminoso aspectu et eloquio mellifluo frueretur. Erat autem vadens et rediens, sicut amicus ad dominum alterius amici, et socius ad dominum alterius socii ire et redire familiariter consuevit. Tandem, completo trium mensium spatio, sibi valefaciens aperuit ei sensum, ut intelligeret Scripturas, et extunc, ut retulit, non fuit Scriptura, quam in quocumque loco non intelligeret secundum aliquem intellectum, licet non fuerit sibi datum, quod, quidquid intelligeret, pro voluntate sua alteri panderet, et alteri aperire posset, nisi quantum placebat majestati divinae, quae sibi dederat spiritum intelligentiae; non autem dubitabit Vir sanctus, quin ille juvenis fuerit angelus suus, qui pro consolatione sui fuerat a Deo missus, et se ei frequentissime ostendebat. See Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, p. 283.*

82. *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte*, trans. Dennis D. Martin (New York: Paulist, 1997), p. 131.

83. Thomas J. Renna, 'Mystics and Angels in the Fourteenth Century', *Michigan Academician*, 17, 1985, pp. 367–74, esp. 370, citing Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, c. 4, trans. Philotheus Boehner (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1956), pp. 72–99 (especially 74–77); and Bonaventura, *Opera* (Quaracchi, 1882), IX:609–31. See also Steven Chase, ed., *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels* (New York: Paulist, 2002).
84. Renna, 'Mystics and Angels', pp. 370–71, citing Jacopone da Todi, *Laude*, ed. Franco Mancini (Bari: Laterza, 1974), pp. 224–31 (laud 77) and 251–61 (laud 84). God assured Gertrude of Helfta that 'all the angelic spirits must submit to your pious will'; see Jessica Barr (ed.), *Willing to Know God: Dreamers and Visionaries in the Later Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), p. 69.
85. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea, vulgo Historia lombardica dicta*, c. 43, ed. Th. Graesse, 3rd edn (Breslau: Koebner, 1890), pp. 177–78; Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, p. 194.
86. Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum: Dialog über die Wunder*, 7.26, trans. Nikolaus Nösges and Horst Schneider (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), III:1376–79; Keck, pp. 194–95.
87. From Joannes Brugman's *Vita posterior*, pt. 1, c. 8, in *Acta sanctorum*, Apr., vol. 2, 316: *Propter differentiam enim spirituum tenebrarum, qui se quandoque transferunt in Angelos lucis, Lydwina nostra spiritus lucis Crucis signatos in frontibus affirmabat*. See also Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, p. 300. On Marie de Maillé see *Acta sanctorum*, Mar., vol. 3 (Antwerp: Jacobus Meursius, 1668), p. 739.
88. Kaethe Seibel-Royer, *Die heilige Angela Merici, Gründerin des ersten weiblichen Säklarinstitutes* (Graz: Styria, 1966), pp. 169–70, from the manuscript of testimony assembled in 1568 by G.B. Nazari; see Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, pp. 326–27.
89. John Ruusbroec, *The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works*, trans. James A. Wiseman (New York: Paulist, 1985), p. 88.
90. Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, bk. 2, c. 43, trans. John P.H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward (New York: Paulist, 1991), p. 293.
91. Sancta Birgitta, *Sermo angelicus*, ed. Sten Eklund (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1972); Saint Birgitta of Sweden, *The World of the Angel: Sermo angelicus*, trans. John E. Halborg (Toronto: Peregrina, 1996); Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, pp. 287–89.
92. C.F. Kelley, trans., *The Book of the Poor in Spirit by a Friend of God (14th Century): A Guide to Rhineland Mysticism* (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 98–100; Renna, 'Mystics and angels', p. 372.
93. Sermon 67, in Johannes Tauler, *Predigten*, trans. Georg Hofmann, vol. 2 (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1979), pp. 516–22.

94. On the conception of a ‘clerical underworld’, which I have never represented as *exclusively* clerical, see my *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 153–56, and *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997; University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998), 12–13.
95. On the original saying see William Safire, ‘On language: location, location, location’, *New York Times Magazine*, 28 June 2009, p. MM14, published online 26 June 2009 at [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/28/magazine/28FOB-onlanguage-t.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/28/magazine/28FOB-onlanguage-t.html?_r=0) (accessed 16 October 2014).
96. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, pt. 1, qu. 50, art. 4 (Blackfriars ed., vol. 9, pp. 20–25).
97. *Ibid.*, pt. 1, qu. 53, art. 1 (Blackfriars ed., vol. 9, pp. 54–61).
98. *Supplices te rogamus, omnipotens Deus, jube haec perfirri per manus sancti angeli tui in sublime altare tuum, in conspectu divinae majestatis tuae ...* See Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, p. 176.
99. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, 7.3–4, trans. Kilian Walsh and Irene M. Edmonds, vol. 1 (Spencer, MA: Cistercian, 1971), pp. 40–41. Thiofridus Epternacensis [Theofrid of Echternach], *Flores egyptaphii sanc-torum*, bk. 3, chap. 1, ed. Michele Camillo Ferrari (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), p. 61, speaks of both saints and angels as existing in tension between heavenly contemplation and works of aid to those who call on them.
100. Faure, ‘Les anges gardiens’, p. 27.
101. Holböck, *Vereint mit den Engeln und Heiligen*, pp. 313–15.
102. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, with translation by C.F. MacIntyre (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), First Elegy, pp. 2–3: ‘Every angel is terrible.’ One might argue for the translation ‘dreadful’.

# Polyphony and Pragmatism in Scandinavian Spells *c.1300–1600*

*Leif Søndergaard*

Scandinavian magic spells, charms and rituals are integrated in an international context on which they draw heavily and to which they contribute significantly but there are also specific Nordic spells, charms and rituals, some of them with a connection to the Old Norse religion. The spells cover a wide range of uses and mentalities. They are often *polyphonic* and *heterogeneous*. Some are non-Christian. Some have mixed content of Christian and non-Christian content. Some have exclusively Christian content but are used outside the church. Others again have mixed content but are used within the church. Finally a group comprises spells that are ‘Christianized’, that is, where the Old Norse Gods are replaced by Christian protagonists concurrently with the progress and increasing dominance of Christianity.

This essay takes its starting point in the Norwegian *Vinje Book* from the 1480s which is the oldest extensive collection of spells in Scandinavia that has been preserved from the Late Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> This unique collection is here for the first time introduced in an international context. Together with the most important of the other Scandinavian spells they are quoted

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L. Søndergaard (✉)

Department for the Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

e-mail: [lso@sdu.dk](mailto:lso@sdu.dk)

*in extenso* in the essay in order to make them accessible for an English-reading audience. Most of the spells from the *Vinje* collection and other significant spells from Scandinavia are analysed and interpreted in their respective social contexts with an outlook to similar European spells.

The Norwegian *Vinjeboka* (book from Vinje) is exceptional in many ways. It is the first sorcery book, preserved in Scandinavia. But it is much more than that. It is a composite collection of different types of texts by various scribes, ranging from religious hymns via practical notes to medical advices and magic procedures concerning human beings and domestic animals.

The *Vinjeboka* is a handwritten book with 112 pages, wrapped into brown vellum. Oskar Garstein who published all the manuscripts in 1993 dates the book to c.1480 by means of the watermarks in the paper. He localizes twelve scribes who have participated in the manuscripts A-L with sixty-five contributions in total. Half of them (nos 18–49) are written by hand H. Eleven texts, all of them religious (nos 51–61), are entered by hand J while the other scribes contribute with 1 to 4 entrances.

The book was produced with blank pages and the various texts were added in the book itself in contrast to the typical *collectanea* where manuscripts from various contexts were written separately before they were brought together in the same collection. The *Vinjeboka* was from the very beginning determined to contain practical information for use in various everyday situations. As many very different texts were collected in the book it must have been meaningful for the owner or user of the book to compile so heterogeneous elements in the same book.

One of the sections in the book comprises twelve hymns to the Virgin Mary (nos 50–61). To this religious part may be added the fragment of a legend, likewise dedicated to the Virgin Mary (no. 65). Another part of the book brings short notices with advices on how to behave in various concrete situations: poetical texts to enter in visitors' books (nos 15 and 62), verse to thank someone (no. 16), verse to greet someone (no. 17), proposal for a desire to profess when leaving (no. 63), and dedication to a rural dean (no. 64).

Many of the texts focus on problems with horses: their toothaches, headaches, coughs and colds, twisted legs, boils in the neck or on the leg, eye problems, scabs or vermin, wounds and so on (nos 23–26, 28–36 and 38–39). Together with two advices concerning other domestic animals (nos 42 and 49) and three with the purpose to improve the soil (nos 27

and 37) or protect the grain (no. 44) these texts reflect the concern in rural areas to protect their animals and the fields on which they depend heavily. The protective advices range from natural medicine, often backed by experience, to magic procedures in various combinations.

The most interesting corpus of texts in this context is concerned with the health, welfare or wishes of human beings. Most general are a recipe for making ointments to protect or heal (no. 45), a recommendation to eat seven or nine mulberries in order to prevent diseases and secure one's health (no. 43) and instructions to utilize the head, the brain, the lungs, the heart and so on of a capercailzie for various purposes (no. 48).

Some of the texts focus on specific diseases and recommend either medical treatment by means of natural medicine or magic rituals or a combination of both to avoid diseases or to cure them. The recommendations cover a broad spectre of diseases and methods to deal with them: rheumatism (nos 11 and 19), whooping cough (no. 21), dropsy (no. 22), pulmonary tuberculosis (no. 46), jaundice (no. 21), cataract (no. 20), burns (no. 2), bleeding wounds (no. 1), headache (no. 47), toothache (nos 40 and 41), hoarseness (no. 3) and foul breath (no. 4).

A group of texts contains spells that aim at immaterial advantages: to gain power over a woman (no. 12) or to win a woman's love (no. 13), to identify or disguise a thief (no. 10 and 18), to catch a fugitive (no. 5), to deafen an enemy's sword (no. 7), to protect a woman while she gives birth (no. 14), to pacify a dog (no. 8) or simply to obtain exactly what you want (no. 9).

The *Vinjeboka* as a whole is a *heterogeneous* collection and in this way it is typical of the *pragmatic* way of thinking among ordinary people during the Middle Ages. They did not have a linear one-dimensional way of thinking but evaluated the opportunities in various ways to approach specific problems of health care and more general problems in social life. They adopted and adapted the methods that they could see worked in practice regardless of their content, their origin and their exact context. They were concerned about the *functionality* of the means they employed.

Theologians endeavoured to build an all-comprising, well-ordered, well-proportioned, coherent, harmonious cosmological system in order to express God's Creation in the best possible way. The mentalities of ordinary people differed fundamentally from that. Their way of thinking did not intend to comprise an overall worldview, a one-dimensional and logically coherent order or systematic way of confronting the problems they faced.

They focused on immediate solutions to diseases, accidents, hunger, enemies or whatever other problems they might encounter.

The *Vinjeboka* is not the only example of this. Carlo Ginzburg in his book *The Cheese and the Worms* from 1976 has convincingly argued how the miller Menocchio in Friuli in the second half of the sixteenth century construed his own religious and cosmological system with elements from many different contexts. The characteristic feature is the heterogeneity and the pragmatic inclusion of disparate elements in one person's mind.

The multiplicity of influences that run together in the same book may be conceived by means of Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of *polyphony*. In his book on *Rabelais and His World* (1965/1984) he deals with the many different voices in medieval texts, in Rabelais's novels *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* from the 1530s, and in Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605/1615). Different genres, styles, functions, beliefs, points of view and mentalities and so on confront and challenge each other in these books.

This is also the case in the *Vinjeboka* where influences from various different and disparate mentalities run together. As the *Vinjeboka* shows, ordinary people in the Middle Ages faced many dangers and evil forces that might cause damage, illness or even death. How could men and women protect themselves? How could they avoid serious illness or eventually cure it, if affected? How were they able to survive war without being wounded or imprisoned? How could they encounter evil and envious neighbours or enemies from abroad? How could they secure their domestic animals and crops? And on the other hand, How could they take advantage of metaphysical forces in order to try to obtain exactly what they wanted?

They might take refuge in *religion* and do what the church officials prescribed: prayers, good deeds, confessions, pilgrimage, alms and so on – in general living a chaste life. This 'solution' is reflected in the hymns to the Virgin Mary in the *Vinjeboka*. They might contact a person with knowledge of healing herbs and plants in *natural medicine*. Or they might use *magic* in order to gain control, as is the case in many of the texts recorded.

Valery Flint defined magic in this way: 'the exercise of preternatural control over nature by human beings, with the assistance of forces more powerful than they'.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to magic religion may be defined in this way, as Robert W. Scribner does: 'the recognition by human beings of a supernatural power to whom they show deference and are obliged'.<sup>3</sup>

Keith Thomas distinguishes magic from religion in a similar way. In religion people address God, relying on his will, and God might decide not to fulfil wishes, expressed for instance in a prayer, as God is infinitely superior and infinitely more powerful than men and women. Magic is different as the

man or woman who professes a spell or ritual expects it to work if she or he has used the right procedure. As Thomas puts it, ‘A prayer, in other words, was a form of supplication: a spell was a mechanical means of manipulation.’<sup>4</sup>

There are also significant differences between *magic* and *natural science*. In *natural science* we are able (more or less) to understand the relation between cause and effect. When we use this or that procedure (medical treatment and so on) in order to cure a disease we can explain what happens in terms of medicine, chemistry, biology and physiology.

In the *popular version* the exact explanation cannot be given but repeated experiences show (at least from the point of view of ordinary people) that a certain medical treatment with specific means, for instance various sorts of herbs, gives a certain result – without the invocation or interference of supernatural means. In *magic* supernatural forces are believed to be at stake and practitioners of magic rituals are unable to account for how the process works – as supernatural forces per definition are inaccessible to rational understanding even if some human beings, according to them, can exert influence on the supernatural.

In the *Vinjeboka* there are both examples of natural medicine and of magic rituals in order to cure diseases. The treatment of burns seems to be rational and medical (no. 3). The plaster which is recommended is very much like the porridge plaster that was used during the following centuries:

Likewise to heal burns: take garlic and stamp it together with milk from a woman that a suckling normally gets, and flour of barley and honey and the white of an egg, and make a soft dough and make from it a plaster with a linen cloth and put it over where the fire has burned.

Another text has a magic ritual and spell to protect against toothache (no. 40):

‘For toothache: write on a plate of lead as broad as a hand: Job Idrasson + Job Zarobatos + Job Thanobratos + In nomine Patris et Filii (and so on) And read .v. Pater Noster and Ave Maria. To praise God and Saint Aploonia.’

Job is invoked because of his immense sufferings. The Greek epithets such as Idrasson undoubtedly are of magic origin, even if the exact meaning is unknown. They are designed to have a magic impact together with the cross signs. The spell is written on a leaden plate as a specific magic power is ascribed to the extraordinarily heavy metal. It is not indicated how exactly to use the plate, to place it on the cheek where the affected tooth is or otherwise. Maybe the cross sign had to be made by the practitioner who

exerted the magic ritual while reading *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* and invoking God and Apollonia, who is the saint for toothache. She suffered martyrdom in the middle of the third century when her teeth were taken with tongs and she was burned at the stake. Various magic procedures are applied, primarily of Christian origin, but at the same time there is a floating border between magic and religion in so far as the prayers and the intention of praising God and the female saint tend to be religious and thus non-magical.

Beside the collection of spells in the *Vinjeboka*, singular spells are preserved in Scandinavia far back in history. A purely non-Christian Norwegian spell from 1325 is known because Ragnhild Tregagaas was brought before court in Bergen and the report of the inquiry has been preserved.<sup>5</sup> She confessed that she had committed the sin of making love to her nephew Baard four times even when she was married. Later the nephew had married Bergljot. Ragnhild admitted that on the wedding night she had taken refuge in magic in order to sow discord and revenge between the newly wedded and prevent the fulfilment of the marriage in bed, and apparently she had succeeded in making the genitals of Baard invalid. She had placed five loaves with peas together with a sword under the pillow in the bridal bed and sung the magic song:

I throw from me the demons of my magic stick  
might one bite you in your back,  
another bite you in the breast  
a third throw upon you hate and envy.

After having read the words one was meant to spit on the person concerned. Ragnhild admitted that she had renounced divine protection and surrendered to the devil, but during her stay in jail she had been penitent, and she had been mad (moon sick) and thus insane at the moment of her crime. She had furthermore abjured her sorcery so her punishment was relieved and she was sentenced to fast the rest of her life and go for a seven-year pilgrimage outside Norway.

This source is exceptional as it is one of the few early cases where it is documented that the sorcery was exerted and how it took place, that is, a descriptive source in contrast to the more frequent prescriptive sources where it is indicated that they *might* be used one way or another.

The *Vinjeboka* relates a non-Christian ritual with the purpose of gaining power over a naked woman (no. 12):

Item: if you want to have a naked woman's will and so on, on Friday in the morning, before sun rises, write these indicated characters with blood from your little finger in your right hand (three magic signs) show them to the one you would like to have, and do likewise to yourself and the power will work.

Friday apparently will be the best day to exert this type of magic, maybe because Friday derived its name from the Nordic goddess Freya, as the Latin *dies veneris* was the day of the analogous Roman goddess Venus. She was goddess of fertility and growth so her day was the natural choice for the exertion of erotic magic. Likewise night as the time for the moonlight was associated with the female aspects of life, preferable to daytime and sunshine. The three signs are purely pagan and may be conceived as contrasting the Christian cross signs. Once again the ritual ends up in a confirmation that the magic will work.

Another spell in the *Vinjeboka* mixes Christian and non-Christian elements in a polyphonic way in order to obtain maximum effect (no. 13):

To win young women's love that creates confusion in the clergy. Take the left shoulder-blade of a grey amphibian and this can only be found on a grey amphibian. The bone ends on one side in a fork and on the other side in a hook. Fasten this hook on the girl's dress and she will follow you immediately. This is an efficacious means and it is really true.

Apparently it is necessary to convince the practitioner that the ritual will work. But the magic ritual does not stand alone. While fastening the hook to the young woman's dress the following spell must be said in order to evoke the Christian magic powers:

I conjure you, oh shoulder-blade, by the Holy Trinity, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. I conjure you by the sufferings of Jesus Christ. I conjure you by Virgin Mary, by all the Holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors. I conjure you by all the Holy Virgins, widows and orphans, and by all God's male and female Saints. I conjure you by heaven and earth and all living there upon. I conjure you by these God's holy names: Ely, Eloy, El, Eleon, On, tetragrammaton, unitas, God. Further I conjure you by everything that can be sworn by: that this woman or maiden that you have touched shall not have peace, quiet or rest before she is coming to me, driven to it by Him who will come to judge living and dead and centuries with fire. Amen.

The procedure of invoking the Trinity and the total chain of Christian authorities in hierarchical order is often used in spells during the Middle Ages and later centuries. Names as well as pictorial representations of Christ, Mary and various saints and so on contain a strong power that might be brought into a magic context and taken advantage of. The word ‘El’ in various shapes means ‘power’ in Hebrew. ‘On’ is a form of Greek ‘to be’ and refers to ‘what exists’. ‘Tetragrammaton’ means ‘four letters’ and they refer to JHVH, the abbreviation for JeHoVaH. The spell enumerates everything that can be sworn by in order to reinforce the spell. The final ‘Amen’ has a double meaning: it finishes the *Pater Noster* but at the same time has the function to release the spell.

As Lisbeth Imer notes, the religious *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* can be found alongside magic refrains like the *Abracadabra*.<sup>6</sup> In her view faith and ‘superstition’ are linked insolubly together while I prefer to talk about religion versus magic, two sorts of metaphysics or eventually two different forms of faith. The *Abracadabra* may be a garbled form of the first four letters in the Greek alphabet: ‘a-ba-ga-da’.<sup>7</sup> A similar garbled formula is *Hokus Pokus* which is derived from ‘hoc est corpus meus’ that was used during the Eucharist ritual. Sometimes *Filiokus* might be added, signifying ‘filique’ meaning ‘and the son’.<sup>8</sup> The words that were used in the Eucharist were believed to contain very strong magic power as they were loaded with sacred meaning directly from God. In the early Middle Ages the use of that type of refrain was much more widespread but when the runes were repressed by the Latin alphabet most of these rhythmic phrases and sentences disappeared.<sup>9</sup>

A runic amulet on a leaden plate from Odense c.1300 likewise mixes Christian and non-Christian elements together:

+ (u)nguensine: pr(i)nsin(e) sal: kotolon  
 anakristi: anpisti kard(xx)r: nardiar  
 ipodiar Christ wins Christ rules:  
 Christ commands. Christ free me  
 Åse from all evil: Christ’s cross  
 be: over me Åse here and everywhere.  
 + khorda + inkhorda + khordai  
 + agla + Christ’s blood bless me.<sup>10</sup>

The leaden plate was originally folded and in unfolded shape it was 7.2 × 3.5 cm. It is an amulet designed to protect the person (*in casu* with the name Åse) against all evil, either in life or in death. The plate was found in

St Alban's churchyard in Odense but not in a tomb, so the exact context and function is not quite clear. The text in the spell is written in Latin, some of it garbled. The triple formula 'Kristus uincit Kristus regnat Kristus imperat' from the *Laudes* litany was common in many contemporary and later contexts. Also the use of 'agla' was widespread. It is a Hebrew acronym for *Attah Gibbor Leonam Adonai* that means 'You, Lord, are mighty for ever'. The phrases 'Christ free me from all evil' (*Kristus ab omni malo me liberet*) and 'Christ's cross be over me' (*kruix christi sit super me*) probably were derived from a common medieval prayer. A similar phrase was (and is) used in *Pater Noster: liberas nos a malo*. Some of the sentences seem to be pseudo-Latin formulas whose rhymed and onomatopoetic shape aims to have a strong magical impact. This is the case for 'anakristi anapisti' and 'kardiar nardiar ipodiar' at the beginning and 'khorda inkhorda khordai' at the end. Macleod and Mees in their book on *Runic Amulets and Magic Objects* propose that this last sentence refers to the chord, that is, the strings of a musical instrument.<sup>11</sup> The chorda-formula can be found in various earlier runic inscriptions with magic purpose.

The Odense plate is one out of many leaden amulets found in Scandinavia, with more than forty in Denmark, about twenty-five in Norway and about ten in Sweden. It is significant that only a very few lead plates have been found elsewhere in Europe, at least until now.<sup>12</sup> From Romdrup in Jutland a similar spell in Latin runs,

+ In the name of the Father + the Son + and the Holy Ghost. Amen. + I conjure you male elves and female elves and evil spirits by the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, that you do not harm this god's servant Niels, neither in the eyes, at the head or on any limb. They shall be harmed by Christ the most sublime power. Amen. Christ wins. Christ rules. Christ commands. May Christ bless these eyes together with the head and all of the other limbs. In the name of + the Father + the Son + and the Holy Ghost. Amen. + + + A + G + L + A.

This spell signifies that magic was used also within the clergy. The formulas were Christian but the idea of the elves which is rather rare in the spells was in no way part of Christian theology. It is remarkable that the eyes are mentioned separately but they were estimated to be the most important part of human anatomy and this was probably due to the common idea that the eyes were believed to be the mirror of the soul.

The spell on a wooden runic stick from Ribe (c.1300) contains so-called binding runes. The runes were originally thought to have a magic

impact in themselves and they were believed to be able to bind demons and trolls. The spell is designed to chain the demon which has caused the illness in the sick person to the black stone in the sea and thus render it harmless. Illness in the Middle Ages was often attributed to demons or evil spirits. This idea is very old and at the same time extremely modern. Affected persons are not said to *be* ill. Instead they *have* an illness or a disease. This means that the illness is not part of a person's identity but is exterior and temporary. As such it can be exorcised, for instance as is indicated on the Ribe runic stick:

Earth I ask to help  
 and the high heaven  
 sun and holy Mary  
 and the God-king himself  
 that he lend me healing hand  
 and curing tongue  
 to cure the shivering cold fever  
 when cure is demanded:  
 of back and of breast  
 of body and of limb  
 of eyes and of ears  
 of all where illness can enter.  
 Black is a stone called,  
 it stands in the sea;  
 on it the nine demons must lie  
 they neither shall sleep in peace  
 nor wake in heat  
 before you are cured  
 of this sickness-demon  
 whom I have carved runes over  
 words to recite  
 Amen let it happen.

Erik Moltke has transcribed the runes and analysed the structure and stylistic devices which have been used in the spell. The spell is conceived in the *fornyrthislag* metre, that is, short concise verse lines with extensive use of alliteration and assonance that gives the text a rhythmical character (that the translation cannot grant justice). Moltke distinguishes five separate sections in the spell: (1) the sorcerer fills himself with divine power; (2) the exorcism of the disease from back and breast; (3) warning to the demon of the disease; (4) the active threat; and (5) the execution.<sup>13</sup>

The runic stick from Ribe begins with an invocation of heaven or sky, earth and sun that may be interpreted in a Christian or non-Christian way,

either in an astrological context or as a part of God's creation. The following invocation of Mary and God is purely Christian. Moltke points to an old Anglo-Saxon spell with almost the same content where Mary's name has replaced the name of an older goddess.<sup>14</sup> This is interesting because the magic form seems to be constant whereas the protagonists in the spell itself are interchangeable, that is, 'Christianized'.

Instead of the initial heading where the purpose often may be indicated, here it is removed to the formula itself: 'to cure the shivering cold fever', the vernacular expression for malaria. After that the place of the illness is located. The black stone in the sea is a remote and powerful place where the demon of the illness is supposed to be bound. The operative words, that is, the spell, are here covered by the whole text and the indication of the procedure to use is incorporated implicitly into the text. The rhythm and the stylistic devices are used all the way through the spell and the carving of the runes and especially the indirect instructions may be conceived as a sort of preparation. Finally the spell is released with both the 'Amen' and 'let it happen'.

A spell to exorcise rheumatism in the *Vinjeboka* (no. 11) has some features which are similar to the Ribe runic stick, that is, the invocation of sun, moon and planets – instead of earth, sun and heaven on the rune stick. The Christian features are more prevalent in the spell for the *Vinjeboka* and it is later, so we may take this, together with similar features in other spells, as a movement from an equal balance between Christian and non-Christian features to a more dominating Christian content:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the holy .v. wounds. I conjure you by the holy .iij. nails that pierced hands and feet. I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the holy braided cross that Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered his death upon. I conjure you, Rheumatism, by sun and moon and all planets. I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the court of God. I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. + I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the powerful xij apostles. + I conjure you, Rheumatism, by all the worthy iij evangelists. + I conjure you, Rheumatism, by all the holy martyrs + and all confessors + and all virgins + and all holy widows. + I conjure you, Rheumatism, by the Last Judgment. + I conjure you, Rheumatism, that you fly from this, God's creature :N:, from her head and from her heart, from her ears and her arms and from her feet and hands + and from her back and from her legs + and from all her intestines and her limbs + and may thus happen to you, Rheumatism, and with the disease in this God's serving woman or man :N: in flesh like the Virgin Mary suffered by the death of God's blessed son. In this way Christ demonstrated his power. And he exorcised the invading disease. Say:

I conjure you, you disease that is now located, by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's name saves and cures. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The spell has a circular composition where the strongest magic powers from the Trinity are repeated as a sort of framework for the other Christian elements that are taken into use in the normal hierarchical way and in an analogical structure where 'I conjure you' is repeated several times as an anaphor. After having loaded the magic with maximum power the demon of Rheumatism is identified, located and confronted in all parts of the affected person. The "N" indicates that the name of the infected person should be inserted at this place in the uttering of the spell. The spell draws an analogy to Christ's exorcism of his 'invading disease'. This sort of analogism is commonplace in many spells where Christ's wounds that did not fester (according to popular belief) were invoked in order to give an injured person the same protection. At the end the mere enunciation of God's name has a saving and curing power. Finally the spell is released with the 'Amen'.

In Sweden a similar spell is known from the early sixteenth century but this spell is particularly interesting because it is indicated by whom, when and how the magic should be exerted. The exorcist should be a priest and this is not as unusual as one could expect. Sometimes a spell and eventually the ritual performance of it might be carried out by a lay person but often it was done by a professional sorcerer or an ecclesiastic person. The priest disposed of many means of magic: holy water, the host, relics of Saints and so on, so he was believed to have special magic skills. This is the case for the Swedish spell<sup>15</sup>:

*Item: this saying a priest shall do iij Sundays before mass, one after the other, and make a cross on the stomach ache with the point of a knife:*

Our Lord Jesus Christ stood on the earth

and completed all good words

and a blessed time

when Jesus Christ was born by Mary

With that blessed time

I conjure you, the evil stomach ache,

growing pains, stab of pain, lumbago, rheumatism, ache and suffering  
and all that can happen to the body

*(Hereafter follow ten verses where the Holy Cross, Christ's bloody feet, his thorny crown, the three nails, the lance, the Virgin Mary's holy tears, the Mary's, the 24 wise fathers, the 12 apostles are invoked, every verse ending with:)*

that you evil stomach ache, you must flee

to the mountain where nobody lives

and to that lake where nobody rows.

In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Amen. Finis.  
 Sanet te deus Ihesus Christus per meritum sue amarissime passionis!

The spell in the beginning focuses on stomach ache but the function is expanded to all sorts of aches and suffering. The empowering takes place in two steps. First the birth time of Christ was invoked, which is rather unusual, in order to identify and conjure the evil demon. Then the ordinary Christian hierarchy (with some variations) is invoked with the purpose repeatedly to scare the demon so that it must flee. The exact places where the demon is supposed to flee are mentioned explicitly, as was the case for the runic stick from Ribe. The description of the places is literary and metaphorical, especially ‘the lake where nobody rows’, that is, a place almost like ‘the silent sea’ in Coleridge’s ‘Ancient Mariner’ with connotations of deadly immobility and lifelessness without hope. Again the spell is released with an ‘Amen’ and here a ‘Finis’ in addition.

One of the most interesting spells in the *Vinjeboka* is *King Solomon’s Pentaculum* (no. 9). The person who performs the magic correctly will be able to obtain whatever he wishes. This all-comprising spell reads as follows:

This is King Solomon’s *Pentaculum*. For anyone to take advantage of, if he wants, and obtain whatever he might wish. First, get the blood of a hoopoe, and keep it in a bottle. When you decide to begin, go to a secret place in the forest with a bright sword. With it draw a circle. You shall take with you a blank piece of paper. When you approach the place where you will execute the magic – but before you enter – you must write these sorcery words with the blood of the hoopoe on the aforementioned paper: (magic sign) Barula! + you zealous and mysterious! Improve your multiplicity a thousand times! Remove the curtain that hides you from me.

When you have entered the circle you shall draw a quadrangle on the paper. In this outline the mare cross. Write at the edge of the quadrangle: on + ely + elöy + agla + Then write in the quadrangle on the paper what you want to obtain.

The person who performs the magic says it while standing in the circle. He does so thrice, and each time a spirit in the shape of an armed horseman appears. The third time the spirit promises to conjure up what the man wishes, and afterwards immediately disappears. The next morning the man will find what he has asked for at that place. The magic spell is illustrated with a drawing that shows the paper on which the magic words are written and Solomon’s sword drawn. The magic words, written in the corners, serve to improve the power. The ‘on’ and the variations of ‘el’ and the ‘agla’ are all powerful words with magic impact, as we already know from no 13.

Solomon's sword is well known from the Bible where Solomon exercises justice when two women both claimed motherhood of a little child.

The drawing and the spell has a certain similarity with a magic circle from the fifteenth century which was used by a necromancer in Britain in order to obtain contact with spirits.<sup>16</sup> Here a double *multi-purpose circle* is drawn with the tetragrammaton, 'agla', crosses and various magic signs. The occult elements are prevailing, compared to the Christian. In the circle a triangle is placed and in the middle of a triangle a sword is placed. This drawing is much more elaborate than the Norwegian illustration, but their functions are very much the same. These spells, like many others, contain what amounts to directions for practical use. Not only the spell in itself but also the way it was recited (often in a shrill voice), the gestures and the ritual that was connected to it were important elements of the performance.<sup>17</sup>

An example of the substitution of Old Norse gods with Christian protagonists can be found in a very common and widespread spell that aimed at the protection of horses while riding. The spell is known from c.800 onwards and it was 'Christened' during the Middle Ages. Here it is in a version from Ribe, 1618:

Phol and Wodan went into the forest then Balder's foal twisted his leg ... the Wodan sung magic as he could well as well over bone-twist as blood-twist as joint-twist bone to bone blood to blood joint to joint as were they glued <sup>19</sup>	Our Lord was riding the hill his foal twisted his leg then Christ said benediction blood to blood vein to vein through and through as it was before in the name of the Lord Amen <sup>18</sup>
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It was extremely important to protect one's horse in warfare where a stumbling horse might cause deadly danger for the horseman. During the early Viking Age it was natural in magic spells to invoke the Norse gods Odin (Wodan) and Balder in order to prevent or heal the horse's leg injuries. Even if the context changed in the feudal society of the countryside, it might be a disaster for a peasant to lose the work-power of his horse, so

an old spell could be transferred to a new context in an updated shape in order to serve a similar purpose.

The Scandinavian spells – like the European spells in general – give a fascinating insight into medieval mentalities among ordinary people. For them the spells were first of all *functional*. Some people who had recourse to spells and magic in order to cure diseases and illness, protect themselves against evil attacks and accidents or cause harm to their enemies, relied on previous *experience* over many years. The borders between science and magic were fluctuating, even if some procedures seemed to be well-founded. Why should people bother about any scientific explanation that could tell why this and that might work. They were not particularly interested in knowledge about cause and effect. The crucial question for these people who used the spells was: did they work? Or rather: were they believed to work? They were *pragmatic* in their approach and choice of means to protect themselves or perhaps cause harm to their enemies.

The medieval practitioners of magic fused pre-Christian, non-Christian and Christian elements together in various *heterogeneous* combinations, regardless of their origins. This means that the spells, as we have seen, contain disparate voices alongside each other in a sort of *polyphony*. During the centuries from the High middle Ages into the Renaissance and later periods the Christian elements prevailed more and more, but the non-Christian elements continued to exist. The Church mostly condemned what they called black maleficent magic, exerted outside the clerical context, whereas they themselves practiced what they labeled white beneficent magic. Often the borders between the two were blurred, especially among clergy who lived close to their parishioners. They had at their disposal powerful magic means in the church: holy water, the host, relics etc.

This differs fundamentally from the modern, rationalistic and linear way of thinking. Today most people go to the doctor in the event of illness, and mostly they want a reasonable explanation for the cure he prescribes. On the other hand: when it comes to life-threatening illness, like for instance cancer, the infected person will try whatever he can in order to fight the disease. First he will probably go to the doctor, and if he is unable to help, he will go on to various practitioners of alternative medicine, using alternative medicines or other means and procedures. He may even take refuge in cunning men or women who exercise magic by means of herbs, stones, magnetism or whatever they think might cure the fatal illness.

To this extent we still live in the wake of the Magic Middle Ages.

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# The Divining Rod: Origins, Explanations and Uses in the Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

*Johannes Dillinger*

The topic of this chapter is the use of the divining rod from the High Middle Ages to the onset of the Industrial Revolution. After a reconstruction of the earliest beginnings of dowsing, the study describes the many uses of the divining rod. It gives a short survey of the various arguments mostly early modern authors employed in order to explain the alleged effectiveness of the rod. In addition to that, the text tries to explain why this magical implement still enjoys a certain popularity.

Even though a lot of ink has been spilled over the problem, the origins of the divining rod are still rather unclear. Since the thirteenth century, various authors pointed to a biblical episode: Moses beat his staff on the rock to bring forth the water the Israelites in the desert needed desperately (Numbers 20:1–13). In seventeenth-century England, the divining rod was also known as the ‘Mosaical rod’. However, the biblical story was not at all about water-witching. The text stated quite clearly that God

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J. Dillinger (✉)  
Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England

Johannes Gutenberg Universitaet Mainz, Mainz, Germany  
e-mail: [dillinger@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:dillinger@brookes.ac.uk)

himself worked a miracle and created a well under the prophet's staff in the moment it touched the ground. The staff itself indicated or found nothing at all.<sup>1</sup> Konrad of Würzburg made a similar point when he compared the Virgin Mary to a divining rod 'dar mit zu einem steine wazzher wart geslagen' (which brings water from a stone) in the thirteenth century. The divining rod was clearly not about searching. Konrad certainly did not want to say that the Virgin had somehow found Jesus. She had given birth to him, that is, she had in a way brought him forth.<sup>2</sup>

It might be best to see the divining rod as a special form of the magic staff. Staffs as symbols of power – political and religious as well as magical – seem to belong to the bedrock at least of Western culture. The king's sceptre, the bishop's crosier, the judge's gavel, the maces used in parliamentary or academic ceremonies, and the magician's wand are some of the best-known forms the staff as a symbol of power took.<sup>3</sup> Cicero referred to stories about the *virgula divina* (literally, divine rod, not divining rod) which would help its owner to every good he might desire.<sup>4</sup> Cicero did not say that this *virgula divina* would help its owner to find things. He explained that people believed that this instrument would somehow provide its owner with everything he or she wanted. The *virgula divina* was clearly a magical staff but no divining rod in the modern sense of the word. Accordingly, Cicero did not mention the *virgula divina* in his work on divination. In the source materials from Greek and Roman antiquity, we encounter numerous magical staffs but there are not even allusions to diving rods which help to find hidden or lost objects.<sup>5</sup>

The same holds true for the medieval sources, at least until the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the medieval ecclesiastical polemics against the 'superstition' of the common folk did not mention the divining rod.<sup>7</sup> The Lay of the Nibelungen, written around 1200, mentioned a magical staff or rod. It belonged to the Nibelungen treasure. This rod, the author explained, would enable a knowledgeable person to rule the world. The Lay of the Nibelungen calls this rod 'wunsch' which might mean 'fate', 'good fortune' but also 'god'. However, we might also understand the rod ('rüetelin') that was called 'wunsch' as a 'wünschelrüetelin', that is, a diving rod. A divining rod which in the hands of an expert magician finds hidden treasures or ore might arguably make this magician very powerful.<sup>8</sup> Was the rod in the Lay of the Nibelungen the equivalent of Andvarinaut mentioned in the older Nordic traditions of the Völsungen? Andvarinaut was a magical ring which produced treasures. As Sigurd had never used Andvarinaut, so Siegfried ignored the golden rod completely. Both heroes

did not even seem to know what treasures they really owned.<sup>9</sup> However, it is problematic to assume that the medieval author simply identified wealth with power.<sup>10</sup> All speculations aside, the Lay of the Nibelungen simply did not say that the golden rod was supposed to find anything. It seems best to interpret the golden rod as just another symbol of power.<sup>11</sup>

When and where exactly did the rather unspecific magical staff turn into a divining rod used to locate lost or hidden items? Some authors referred to an elusive fourteenth-century manuscript that supposedly mentioned the use of the divining rod. This manuscript was almost certainly a fake of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> The earliest source appears to be Johannes von Tepl's 'Ackermann aus Böhmen' (The Ploughmen from Bohemia), a poem about a fight between a ploughman and the Grim Reaper written around 1400. Tepl mentioned in this text a 'warsagende Wunschelrute' (soothsaying divining rod). Even though Tepl used this expression as a metaphor for a person, it is quite clear that he thought a divining rod could be used to gain knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Swabian magical spells dating back to the second half of the fifteenth century provide the earliest examples of the actual use of divining rods by people who searched for something:

Ich beschwer uch vier haselrutten by den uier ewangelisten ... das jr vns wiset uff den rechtnen schatz, des wir hoffend sind. Jch beschwer uch by den hailgen dryen kungen ... das sie vns also recht wissen uff den rechten verborgen schatz, als sie gewiset warund von dem stern, der jn vor gieng zue der warhen kinthait ... Jhesu Christi.

I conjure thee, four hazel rods, in the name of the four evangelists ... so that you show us to the real treasure we hope to find. I conjure thee in the name of the three holy magi ... that they (=the rods) show us the real hidden treasure as they (= the magi) were shown to the true child Jesus Christ by the star which went ahead of them.<sup>14</sup>

It is not before the beginning of the sixteenth century that the sources speak more clearly about divining rods. At that time, however, German authors wrote at some length about people using rods in order to find ore and metal veins hidden in the earth. The divining rod clearly belonged to the nascent mining industry of Eastern Germany. Georg Agricola, one of the fathers of scientific mining, mentioned the rod in 1530 in his work 'Bermannus' and criticized its use rather sharply in 'De re metallica' in 1556.<sup>15</sup> In both texts, Agricola seemed to assume that his readers were familiar with the divining rod and its use by miners. Thus, we might safely

assume that dowsing for minerals had become a well-established practice in Eastern Germany by the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The early sixteenth century witnessed a major boom in mining in Germany. The territorial princes issued permits to private mining ventures on an unprecedented scale. The search for mineral ore became a very lucrative business. Pioneer mining entrepreneurs and investors like Franz von Sickingen or Hans Luder, Martin Luther's father, made their fortunes in the early years of the sixteenth century. The economic interest in mining confronted the most formidable technical problems. Among other difficulties it was notoriously hard to find profitable mineral veins. The inadequate prospecting techniques hampered economical development.<sup>16</sup> The divining rod was one of the means employed to overcome these difficulties. This does not mean that magic was just a substitute for technology. Rather, adapting an anthropological argument by Beattie, we might say that the magic of the diving rod was a symbolic and ritualistic expression of a pressing concern. A differentiation between expressivity and effectiveness remained largely alien to contemporaries.<sup>17</sup> Social, economical and technical change – in our concrete case, the rise of proto-industrial mining – created a crisis, a new urgent concern. Part and parcel of the reaction to this crisis was a new form of magic which was well-suited to express the new concern. In our case, this new form of magic was the divining rod: a new variety of the old magical staff that was supposed to be able to locate objects hidden in the ground. The miners used the rod not simply to find buried treasure anymore as the magicians of the fifteenth century had done, but to prospect ore. The divining rod was a magical innovation. The old magical staff of rather unspecified purpose turned into a new tool that catered mostly to the needs of the rising mining business.

Two problems bedevilled the use of the divining rod throughout the early modern period. Even today some people still consider them open questions. First, was the divining rod effective? Second, was the use of the divining rod allowed, that is, was the divining rod merely a technical tool or was it a magical instrument?

Agricola already knew that those who advocated the use of the rod attributed its effectiveness to some form of magnetism. This suggestion was of course hardly a valid explanation. An author who called himself Basilius Valentinus provided a more elaborate theory of the divining rod. Basilius Valentinus, supposedly a German alchemist monk of the fifteenth century, was a fictional person to whom magical writings produced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were attributed.<sup>18</sup> It seems

probable that Johann Thoelde, an expert in saltern technology from the late sixteenth century, really authored the book on dowsing. Basilius – as we will call the author for simplicity's sake – claimed that the divining rod had fallen into disuse. At the same time he repudiated those who ignored the natural laws of dowsing and tainted it with 'novelties'. Even though these statements contradicted each other indirectly, they suggest that Basilius wanted to present dowsing as a very old art.<sup>19</sup> Basilius based his teaching on the assumptions that metals breathe. Their breath can be detected even if the metal veins are deep down in the ground. Basilius thus formulated the basic idea that is at the bottom of dowsing till the present day. Some kind of emanation of minerals, metals, water – or treasure – rises out of the earth to the surface and somehow attracts the dowsing rod. The nature of that emanation – fumes, rays, electrical currents, magnetic forces – is a matter of taste and changes from author to author. In any case, the basic idea of an emanation – a 'breath' – of the minerals and ores has remained more or less the same. Basilius classified divining rods according to their reaction to the emanations of the minerals. On the 'glowing rod' the diviner had affixed a bit of heat-sensitive material that would smoulder when the supposedly hot breath of metal hit it. If a piece of marcasite was put on the rod it would violently move – the so-called 'leaping rod' – because the emanation of metal supposedly attracted the marcasite. What exactly Basilius meant with 'marcasite' is not quite clear. He had certainly not the iron sulphide mineral in mind that is today known as 'marcasite'. Bailius's marcasite was a substance which purified and attracted metals. The marcasite of gold, so Basilius explained, was lapis lazuli, the marcasite of iron was the loadstone. He insisted that this had been tested in practice in the mines.<sup>20</sup> The analogy with magnetism was a standard feature of the debate about the divining rod. However, most authors would claim that the rod itself was subject to a quasi-magnetic attraction of minerals, metals or water.

Basilius went on to explain the 'trembling rod' which consisted of various metals and glass. The instrument was supposed to be sensible to movement caused by hot air escaping from the earth. The rod was stuck into the ground and trembled when the 'breath' of the mineral vein struck the air above the surface. The 'falling rod' detected the movement of the metal 'fumes' caused by the sun. The sun was supposed to attract the metals' emanations when its rays penetrated the earth's surface and purified the metals. When the fumes became too heavy and fell back into the earth, they attracted the rod. No text on *magia naturalis* would be complete

without a reference to the occult qualities of the planets. According to Basilius the ‘breath’ of the metals followed the movement of the planets. A very delicate rod, the ‘superior rod’ with a small quantity of mercury ‘the weight of three barley corns’ in it, would react to the movement of this mineral ‘breath’. Indeed, Basilius claimed, the minerals themselves moved in the earth in accordance with the planets.<sup>21</sup>

The ‘furcilla’ or ‘striking rod’ in Basilius’s list resembled the divining rod of early modern popular culture most closely. It had to be cut from a tree in the name of God – which was, as Basilius briefly remarked ‘the usual way’. The ‘breath’ of metal would draw the rod down because it attracted the sap of the wood. The best trees to cut ‘striking rods’ from were the hazel and the almond because trees which bore fruit that had a hard shell and a kernel were ‘aeriell’ and ‘fiery’ in character and therefore apt to be attracted to the hot emanation of metal.<sup>22</sup> Natural magic had described such sympathetic influences in great complexity.

Basilius’s book seems to have enjoyed some success in the academic community. However, it had practically no influence on mining or the actual practice of dowsing. Nobody appears to have been interested in the complicated and rather costly rods Basilius described. Generally speaking, divining rods remained very simple and very cheap instruments that were readily available to virtually anybody. They were indeed mostly simple sticks or Y-shape twigs. The diviner held the rod in both hands or balanced it on the back of his hand or held it somewhat precariously between his forefingers or between the balls of his thumbs. Some dowsers used a T-shape variety in which one stick was attached to another stick with a bit of twine keeping equilibrium rather like a part of a children’s mobile. It hardly mattered what wood the rod was cut from. Some suggested rods made from metal.<sup>23</sup> In 1700, Johann Gottfried Zeidler published a book on dowsing that could boast a foreword written by his mentor Christian Thomasius, the great opponent of the witch-trials and early champion of the German Enlightenment. Zeidler examined the variety of divining rods in use. He concluded that neither the form nor the material of the rod mattered. Therefore there could be no connection between the divining rod and the object searched for. Rather, the somewhat awkward way the diviner was supposed to hold the rod caused the muscles in the arm to tremble involuntarily. Thus, the movement of the rod had a simple anatomical reason. You might as well use a sausage as a divining rod: ‘If you hold a Knackwurst [=Frankfurter] the right way it makes a perfect divining rod and moves so strongly in your hand that it might break.’<sup>24</sup> In

which case the diviner could celebrate his lucky find with a snack provided he had some bread and mustard with him.

Dowsing was not as unproblematic as Basilius and Zeidler suggested. Paracelsus had simply brushed the divining rod aside as unreliable and too sensitive. It found, he claimed, lost pennies.<sup>25</sup> Luther, however, rejected the use of the divining rod as magic.<sup>26</sup> Even though the advocates of dowsing like to point out that Agricola was familiar with that technique, they often chose not to quote what he actually had to say about it. Agricola certainly did not recommend the use of the divining rod. First, he explained, it was not reliable. Mines dug after a divining expedition proved invariably unprofitable. Second, Agricola said very clearly that divining did not belong to the ‘modis naturaliter venae possunt inveniri’ (natural ways in which you can find a mineral vein), that is, divining was magic. Agricola had even heard certain incantations used by diviners even though he could not – or would not – remember the exact words. Given the fact that the wizards of Pharaoh and the sorcerers of Ancient Greece and Rome had used magical rods, Agricola regarded the divining rod as coming ‘ex incantatorum impuris fontibus’ (out of the impure wells of conjurers). Thus, divining was simply below the dignity of an honest miner.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, demonology had little to say about dowsing. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) was not yet familiar with the use of the divining rod. Delrio dealt in his encyclopaedic overview over all kinds of magic briefly with rhabdomancy. He condemned it, as one might expect of a demonologist, as just another form of divination based on an implicit pact with the devil.<sup>28</sup> The demonologists who justified the witch trials were not really interested in dowsing as dowsers did not figure prominently under the victims of the witch hunts.<sup>29</sup> Other authors, however, were: they established a small but rather distinct demonological discourse on dowsing. Among these authors we find the respected oratorian theologian and philosopher Nicolas Malebranche as well as one of his correspondents, the Grenoble canon Lebrun, who conducted experiments designed to prove dowsing a demonic art.<sup>30</sup> The most outspoken adversaries of the divining rod seem to have been Protestants, for example Sperling and Albinus. This might simply be due to the fact that the German mining areas in which many people used the rod were Protestant.<sup>31</sup>

Far from condemning dowsing as witchcraft, some people just did not take it seriously. A German book on mining rhymed in 1570: ‘Der Ruthengänger geht durch Feld und betrügt die Leut um Geld’ (The dowser walks across the field and cheats the people with his fee).<sup>32</sup> In

1676, an anonymous English author even included the use of the divining rod in his collection of tricks and games ‘for the recreation of Youth, especially School-boys’. He presented his work under the quasi-enlightened motto, ‘There’s no Hobgoblin here for to affright ye, but innocence and mirth that will delight ye.’<sup>33</sup>

Whereas some authors condemned the divining rod and others ridiculed it, still others recommended its use under certain conditions. The fact that a number of miners used the divining rod was enough to convince some authors that divining was not only lawful but also that it actually worked.<sup>34</sup> Gabriel Platten, an English author on mining, suggested a combination of what we might call science and magic to find mineral veins. Platten explained that any prospector should at first check the springs for mineral residue, after that he should examine the vegetation for any anomalies that might hint at the composition of the soil and then he needed to check carefully the stones visible at the surface. Only when all of that suggested that there might be a mineral vein, Platten recommended the use of the divining rod to find the best place for a dig. Platten claimed to have practical experience with the rod:

About Midsomer, in a calme morning, I cut up a rod of Hasell, of the same springs growth, almost a yard long, then I tyed it to my staffe, in the middle, with a strong thred, so that it did hang even, like a Beame of a Balance [i.e. a pair of scales]. Thus I carried it up and downe the Mountaines where Lead growed, and before Noone it guided mee to the Orifice of a Lead mine. ... Within two houres we found a veine of Lead Oare within lesse than a foot of the Grasse. ... The signes that it shethe is to bow down the root end towards the earth as though it would grow there, neare unto the Orifice of a Mine, when you see it doe so, you must carry it round about the place, to see that it turneth in the string still to the place on which site Soever you stand.

Platten speculated that some form of magnetism caused the movement of the divining rod; he strongly rejected the idea that ‘any coniuration’ should be used. He recommended the use of the divining rod to find mines in the American colonies which could ‘yield more gaine in one yeare, than their [= the colonists’] Tobacco and such trifles would yield in their whole lives’. Maybe Platten was no objective observer: as he claimed that his expertise of the divining rod was based on ‘more experience of that kind than any man in England’, the use of the divining rod might have meant an attractive business opportunity for him.<sup>35</sup>

Whoever was (or is today) willing to advocate the use of the divining rod should be able to explain how exactly it is supposed to work. Aside from the demonological arguments and the emanation theory suggested by Basilius and others, there was a third explanation. The rod did not really do anything at all. It was simply a means the dowser used to focus his attention. Dowsing was about the sensibility of the dowser, not about the rod he might or might not use. The rod was not able to react to the emanations of hidden objects, but the dowser himself was. A skilful dowser was a person who was sensitive enough to feel these emanations. This explanation drew some strength from the widespread idea that not all people were able to work with the divining rod. Agricola was already familiar with the notion that a certain personal talent was needed in order to become a successful dowser.<sup>36</sup> A handbook for dowsers from 1668 made this point very clear: ‘Gott hat nicht die Krafft dem Holtzen sondern dem Menschen zu geeignet’ (God gave the power not to the wood but to the man).<sup>37</sup>

LeLorrain de Vallemont, a priest and doctor of divinity, made this explanation of dowsing the very centre of his book on Jacques Aymar, arguably the most renowned diviner of the early modern period. Aymar was a well-to-do peasant from the parish of S. Marcellin in the Dauphiné. He was supposedly not only able to find water, mineral veins and hidden treasures with his divining rod. Aymar was a premodern psychic detective. If he had the chance to visit the scene of the crime to get ‘son impression’, his rod would lead him to the criminals. On 5 July 1692, a wine merchant and his wife were found murdered in the cellar of their shop in Lyon. There were no witnesses. A neighbour suggested to call Aymar. The Lieutenant Criminel and Monsieur Le Procureur du Roy allowed Aymar to see the cellar at night. This might suggest that the authorities were less than convinced of Aymar’s abilities and did not want to attract too much attention to their somewhat desperate attempt to find the murderers. At any rate, Aymar’s rod reacted. It led him out of the town to the river Rhone. He concluded that the criminals had escaped with a boat. Together with the lieutenant’s guards Aymar followed them. Led by the divining rod the crime fighters left their ship in every river port and went to the taverns where the murderers had slept. Aymar was able to point out not only the bed they had slept in but even the bottles they had drunk from. The way down the Rhone must have been a triumph for the diviner. It is hard to imagine better publicity for him and his alleged abilities. It became apparent that there had been three murderers. In Beaucaire, deep in the Languedoc, 45 French miles from the scene of the crime, Aymar

finally found the first murderer. The rod led him to the prison and there it pointed out one man in a group of fourteen prisoners. The man, a certain Bossu, had only been arrested for petty theft an hour previously. At first, he denied everything and even questioned the reliability of Aymar's rod ('Sa baguette mentoit'). Aymar's triumph was even greater when witnesses recognized Bossu. He broke down and admitted to have helped his missing accomplices to commit the double murder. Aymar returned together with Bossu to Lyon. After that, he went back the same way – now of course with the great news of his success – to follow the two other murderers. They had – or so the movements of Aymar's divining rod suggested – gone to Toulon and embarked on a ship to Genoa. Even though Aymar still followed them for a while it became apparent that they had left the sphere of influence of the French authorities. However, Aymar later on failed the tests the Duke of Condé had devised for him. Canon LeBrun suspected him of witchcraft.<sup>38</sup>

Aymar owes much of his renown to Vallemont who published a lengthy treatise on dowsing in general and on Aymar in particular in 1693. Vallemont argued vehemently that certain particles rose from subterranean water as well as from hidden treasures which caused the movement of the divining rod. Vallemont explained that these particles were 'les atomes' which had been described by the ancient Greek philosophers and more recently by Boyle. The particles entered through the pores into human bodies. Contagious disease spread in the same way, Vallemont wrote. The atoms that emanated from certain persons left a kind of trail in the air. Thus, Aymar could follow the criminals from the scene of the crime. Sensitive persons – such as Aymar – could feel the particles' influence. The divining rod only helped these persons to concentrate. Aymar was therefore right when he said that it did not matter from what wood or at what time he cut his rod. Aymar's body was said to react quite violently to the influence of the particle emanation: when he used the divining rod he seemed to suffer from a fever and soon complained that his heart hurt. Of course, Vallemont stressed, it was easy to unbalance sensitive persons. Even the best diviners failed when they were under stress, in fear or in an emotional crisis. Thus, Vallemont could explain away some blunders Aymar had made. Needless to say, the theologian Vallemont took pains to stress that divining had nothing to do with demonism and thus contradicted Malebranche and Lebrun.<sup>39</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, the great naturalist and explorer, declared that the divining rod did not work in his hands. 'Maybe I belong to the kind of people who are by nature so

inferior that precious metals cannot excite them', he joked, poking fun at the notion that successful diviners needed special sensitivity.<sup>40</sup>

Zeidler was more serious when he criticized Vallemont. Even though Zeidler had ridiculed the divining rod, he still believed in dowsing. Zeidler rejected the Cartesianism that formed the base of Vallemont's argument. He accepted neither the mechanistic philosophy nor the nascent atom theory. Simplifying the ideas of Thomasius, Zeidler postulated the existence of an all-encompassing world spirit. This world spirit was the reason and the source of all physical movement. It connected all things with each other. According to Zeidler the real talent of the dowser was his ability to feel the workings of the world spirit. The dowser could thus enter into virtual contact with all beings and all objects. He could quasi-feel them by emerging his mind into the world spirit. Thus, he was able to find objects hidden in the ground.<sup>41</sup> However, the search for ore or treasure troves was, according to Zeidler, just a tiny fraction of all the possibilities dowsing offered – and arguably a relatively harmless one. Dowsing could be used to answer any questions. Therefore it was desperately easy to abuse. Some questions, Zeidler warned, should not be answered. A dowser could for example find out if spouses were faithful, or he could locate refugees hiding from a tyrant. Other questions, Zeidler continued, should not even be asked. Dowsers might be tempted to try to find out whether a dead person had gone to Heaven or even when Judgment Day would come.<sup>42</sup> The real danger of dowsing, Zeidler stressed, was blasphemy: it tempted humans to try to become omniscient like God. On Zeidler's Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil grew a divining rod. Thomasius deigned to write a foreword for Zeidler's book in which he politely but clearly stated that he thought Zeidler's arguments extravagant and rather obscure.<sup>43</sup>

Zeidler's account mirrored the development of dowsing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The divining rod was supposed to be able to find ore and hidden treasures. However, it was used for a variety of other purposes, too. Water-witching was one of these purposes. Dowsing for water is a comparatively young kind of magic. Besson, who wrote at some length about techniques employed to find hidden springs in 1569, did not yet mention the divining rod.<sup>44</sup> The demonologist Delrio mentioned Spanish diviners called 'Zahuri' – in modern Spanish 'zahori' means 'water-diviner' – who could see objects hidden in the earth, including treasures and water-channels. The Zahori did not use divining rods. That they were said to have red eyes suggests that simply their gaze was supposed to be able to penetrate the ground.<sup>45</sup> So far, the scant

scholarly literature on dowsing has suggested that the rod as the instrument of water-witches was first mentioned in a short French tract on mining published in 1632.<sup>46</sup> However, we could find a somewhat earlier text that alluded to persons who used the divining rod in order to find water. The Bavarian law against witchcraft and superstition of 1612 referred to superstitious practices associated with treasure hunting which were also commonly used by miners and by people who dug wells.<sup>47</sup> The law did not mention the divining rod explicitly but the rod would be the only magical implement used by treasure hunters, by miners and by people searching for hidden springs alike.

Dowsers dowsed not only for minerals, water and treasure troves. There were still more uses for the divining rod in early modern Europe. The rod was said to be able to find salt mines.<sup>48</sup> Dowsers claimed that with their rods they could find all lost goods. In the eighteenth century, they looked for forgotten boundary stones. They found suitable sites for building. They searched for game in the exploited hunting grounds of the nobility. They used the divining rod to find an unoccupied place in the churchyard. Dowsers could even find out if a woman was pregnant. When they themselves had gotten lost, they could find the right way with their rods. They could even find mistakes in history books.<sup>49</sup> From the seventeenth century onwards, dowsing was not necessarily about searching and finding anymore. The divining rod simply provided answers to all kinds of questions. Handbooks for dowsers suggested a simplified way of using the rod that resembled nineteenth-century experiments with the Ouija board or the planchette. All you had to do was to write 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe' on a piece of paper, ask a question that could be answered with these words and hold the dowsing rod over the paper. It would, the divining books affirmed, touch the appropriate answer.<sup>50</sup> In the early eighteenth century, an anonymous German author who claimed to be a mining expert glorified dowsing as a fireproof shortcut to successful prospecting. It was not necessary to go out into the field to search for mineral veins anymore: the diviner should simply hold the rod over a map and it would indicate the best spot to dig. Indeed, the divining rod would answer any questions concerning the depth and the direction of the mineral vein or its profitableness if one held it over the piece of paper with numbers and a compass with the words 'yes', 'moderate' or 'no' on it.<sup>51</sup>

At the end of the seventeenth century at the latest, the divining rod had become the universal detecting implement of the magical culture of Old Europe. It was used to find virtually anything.<sup>52</sup> The practically unlimited

use of the rod does not contradict our suggestion to see the miners' use of the divining rod as part and parcel of a process of innovation mining ventures underwent in the early sixteenth century. If the rod was used to find ore, treasure trove or water, that does not mean that it could not be used for other purposes, too. Proto-industrial mining demanded the use of the divining rod during a certain phase of its development but it did not absorb it. On the contrary, the mere fact that a 'modern' and 'progressive' element of the economy like mining used the rod drew attention to this magical implement. This might even have suggested using the rod for other purposes, too. The old magical staff turned into a divining rod used by treasure hunters and miners and quickly transformed into an all-purpose tool for divination.

This is how the divining rod survived until the present day, even though its heyday in the mining industry ended in the late eighteenth century. Improvements and technical innovations in mining engineering marginalized the dowsing rod. Experience and the increasing specialization of mining technology together with the rise of geology as an exact science transformed the whole industry. The divining rod was no longer acceptable as a symbolic and ritualistic expression of the problems miners and prospectors had to face.<sup>53</sup> Today, the rod is mostly used in a broadly medicinal context. It is supposed to be able to detect so-called E-Rays – the mere existence of which is not recognized by science – which are supposed to make people ill.<sup>54</sup>

The charms the divining rod had and still seems to have for some people are obvious. The divining rod was cheap and simple. It was available for virtually anyone at any time. Even though it was especially attractive for the nascent mining industry of the early modern period it could be used as a universal instrument of magical knowledge. The dowser needed neither the formal education of the scientist nor the complex magical knowledge of the alchemist. Dowsing seemed to fulfil the dilettante's dream: immediate success without schooling and research. The contrast between the simplicity of this tool and its universal use made the divining rod the very opposite of scientific instruments. The inconvenient question how exactly dowsing was supposed to work was at the same time answered in a number of different ways, ranging from demonological arguments to atom theory and the idea of an all-encompassing world spirit. The powers of the rod could always be explained as being really the powers of the dowser himself. The very lack of one dominant explanation for the supposed effectiveness of dowsing helped it to survive in one form or the other until the present day. The divining rod proved to be – in more than one sense – incredibly flexible.

## NOTES

1. Karl-Heinz Ludwig, 'Wünschelrute', in Robert Henri Bautier et al. (eds), *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980/1999), IX:col. 368–69; E.E. Trotman, 'Seventeenth-Century Treasure-Seeking at Bridgwater', *Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset*, 27, 1961, pp. 220–21 (221). The author would like to thank Benno Scholz for his assistance.
2. Margarethe Ruff, *Zauberpraktiken als Lebenshilfe: Magie im Alltag vom Mittelalter bis heute* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2003), p. 263.
3. Ferdinand Waele, *The Magic Staff or Rod in Graeco-Italien Antiquity* (Gent: Erasmus, 1927); Hubert Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger und Pendler: Erkundungen einer verborgenen Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1991), pp. 72–74.
4. 'Quodsi omnia nobis, quae ad victum cultumque pertinent, quasi virgula divina, ut aiunt, suppeditarentur, tum optimo quisque ingenio negotiis omnibus omissis totum se in cognitione et scientia collocaret'; Cicero, *De officiis* 1, p. 158.
5. Waele, *Magic Staff*, especially p. 205; Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, p. 285.
6. Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, pp. 73–74, 77.
7. Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, p. 74.
8. Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America. A History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 28–42; Claude Lecouteux, 'Der Nibelungenhort. Überlegungen zum mythischen Hintergrund', *Euphorion*, 87, 1993, pp. 172–86 (175–76).
9. Karl Bartsch and Helmut De Boor, (eds), *Das Nibelungenlied* (Mannheim: Brockhaus, 1988), p. 184.
10. Elizabeth Tyler (ed.), *Treasure in the Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000); Matthias Hardt, *Gold und Herrschaft. Die Schätze europäischer Könige und Fürsten im ersten Jahrtausend* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004); Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting*, pp. 42–52.
11. Lecouteux, 'Der Nibelungenhort', pp. 172–86.
12. Daniel Georg Morhof, *Polyhistor literarius, philosophicus et practicus*, 3 vols (Lübeck: Böckmann, 1747), II:403; uncritical: William Barrett and Theodore Besterman, *The Divining Rod* (London: Methuen 1926), p. 7.
13. Johann von Tepl, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen* (around 1400). <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/-4255/1>. Accessed 15.12.2015. For early sources on dowsing see also Ruff, *Zauberpraktiken*, 263; more sceptical Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, p. 74, p. 77. Knoblauch mentioned an even older image of a divining rod but was too vague about his source and did not actually reproduce the illustration; Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, p. 74. Knoblauch referred to divining rods

in the magical books of the Venetian sorcerers who supposedly roamed Eastern Germany but again did not give any reliable source. The only monograph which to my knowledge dealt with the Venetian magicians gave no hint to divining rods in early magical writings: Rudolf Schramm and Helmut Wilsdorf, 'Fundweisungen aus Walenbüchern', in Rudolf Schramm (ed.), *Venetianersagen von geheimnisvollen Schatzsuchern* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Grundstoffindustrie, 1985), pp. 257–81; cf. Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting*, pp. 79–84.

14. Gerhard Eis, *Altdutsche Zaubersprüche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1964), pp. 146–49.
15. Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger*, pp. 74–77; Barrett and Besterman (1926), pp. 6–9.
16. Otfried Wagenbreth, 'Zur Herausbildung der Montanwissenschaften in Sachsen im 16. Jahrhundert', *Sächsische Heimatblätter*, 32, 1986, pp. 63–65; Thomas Sokol, *Bergbau im Übergang zur Neuzeit* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag, 1994); Warren Dym, *Divining Science. Treasure Hunting and Earth Science in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 1–10; Christoph Bartel and Markus Denzel (eds), *Konjunkturen im europäischen Bergbau in vorindustrieller Zeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000).
17. Malinowski suggested that magic be seen as a substitute for technology: Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', in Joseph Needham (ed.), *Science, Religion and Reality* (London: Sheldon Press, 1925), pp. 19–84; cf. the symbolistic interpretation advocated by John Beattie, *Other Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1992).
18. Claus Priesner, 'Johann Thoelde und die Schriften des Basilius Valentinus', in Christoph Meckel (ed.), *Die Alchemie in der europäischen Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), pp. 107–18.
19. Basilius Valentinus, *His Last Will and Testament* (London: Davis, 1658), pp. 46–47.
20. Basilius, *His Last Will*, pp. 48–49.
21. Basilius, *His Last Will*, pp. 52–55.
22. Basilius, *His Last Will*, pp. 50–51.
23. Ruff, *Zauberpraktiken*, pp. 264–65; Arnold Bertram Walker, *The Art of Divining* (Whitby: Abbey Books, 1969), pp. 7–9; Gabriel Platten, *A Discovery of Subterraneall Treasure* (London: Emery, 1639), p. 12; Athanasius Kircher, *De arte magnetica* (Rome: Deuersin & Masottus 1654), pp. 500–2 with illustrations; Barrett and Besterman, *The Divining Rod*, p. 16, illustration pp. 7, 19, 259; Gasper Schott, *Magia universalis naturae et artis*, 4 vols (Würzburg: H. Pigrin, 1657–59), vol. 4, illustration facing p. 420; Pierre Le Brun, *Briefe oder Send-Schreiben vornehmer und gelehrter Leute, welche die Verspottung der Wünschel-Rute vorstellen*, trans. Johann Leonhard Martini (Frankfurt: Oehrling, 1700), p. 226,

illustrations facing pp. 122, 130; Johann Gottfried Zeidler, *Pantomysterium oder das Neue vom Jahre in der Wünschelruthe* (Halle: Renger, 1700), illustrations pp. 40–46; N.I., *La Verge de Jacob* (Lyon, 1693), frontispiece.

24. Zeidler, *Pantomysterium*, pp. 40–48. Of course, it was still possible that the diviner moved the rod voluntarily, pp. 354–56.
25. Theophrastus Paracelsus, ‘De occulta philosophia’, in Karl Sudhoff, (ed.), *Theophrast von Hohenheim genannt Paracelsus: Sämtliche Werke*, 14 vols (Munich: Oldenbourg 1933), XIV:513–42 (530).
26. WA 1, 520, 3–15, WA 10 I/1, 590, 7–591.13; cf. Jörg Haustein, *Martin Luthers Stellung zum Zauber- und Hexenwesen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), pp. 91–94, 98–100.
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28. Martin Delrio, *Investigations into Magic* (Louvain: Rivii, 1599), ed. Maxwell-Stuart, Peter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 162.
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47. Wolfgang Behringer, *Mit dem Feuer vom Leben zum Tod* (München: Hugendubel, 1988), pp. 178–79.
48. Dym, *Divining Science*, pp. 23–50.
49. Albinus, *Das enlarvte Idolum*, pp. 130–34, 494–99, 516–25.
50. Dym, *Divining Science*, pp. 57–58; Albinus (1704), pp. 531–62.
51. Anonymous, *Eines Bergverständigen ungenannten Autoris newer bisher ungedruckte Unterricht vom rechten Gebrauch der Wünschelrute in Bergwerken* (Leipzig/Frankfort: Renger, 1705).
52. Sökeland, ‘Die Wünschelrute’, pp. 202–12, here pp. 280–87, 205–7. The German poet Eichendorff understood this phenomenon and took it as the basis for his Romantic poem ‘Wünschelrute’ (Divining Rod): ‘Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen, / die da träumen fort und fort. / Und die Welt hebt an zu singen, / trifftst du nur das Zauberwort’ (Sleeps a song in things abounding / That keep dreaming to be heard / Earthe’s tunes will start resounding / If you find the magic word).
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# Ignorant Superstition? Popular Education on Magic in Early Seventeenth-Century Confessionalist Finland: The Case of Mary and the Rosaries

*Raisa Maria Toivo*

This article investigates popular education concerning magic and superstition in the Finnish part of early seventeenth-century confessionalist Lutheran Sweden.<sup>1</sup> It shows how what at first seems to have been considered popular religious superstition slowly came to be considered magic, and that the nonconformity of the practice appears to have been deliberately downplayed throughout the period. Special interest here focuses on the cult of Mary and the Rosary practices associated with it. The article uses popular education material of the church from the early seventeenth century and the model sermon collection of Bishop Ericus Erici Sorolainen to see what it teaches about Catholicism and the Rosaries and then contrasts it with (secular) court records in order to look at popular attitudes in practice. These are then put in the context of historiography on magic and superstition in Sweden and Finland. I will later revert to the relevant characteristics of the material as I attempt to interpret it.

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R.M. Toivo (✉)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tampere,  
Tampere, Finland

e-mail: [raisa.toivo@uta.fi](mailto:raisa.toivo@uta.fi)

## MAGIC, SUPERSTITION AND WITCHCRAFT IN EARLY MODERN FINLAND

Magic and superstition in early modern Finland and Sweden were concepts whose content eluded precise definition. In popular thought they were closely connected with each other along with concepts like witchcraft, maleficium and heresy on one hand and faith and piety on the other. The clergy and other theoretical thinkers tried to draw clear boundaries between these different definitions, but could not reach an agreement and were clearly unable to enforce their views even among the secular authorities, let alone different groups or individuals of the populace.

In the legal or judicial context of early modern Finland, trials against magic and superstition belong to the same group of trials as those against witchcraft. These trials used the same terminology and operated on the basis of the same legal codification. There were four different kinds of trials on magic and witchcraft in seventeenth-century Finland, of which two major kinds concerned either traditional maleficium or magic and superstition. Maleficium trials for supernatural harm, witchcraft or *trolldom* (Swedish for harmful magic and witchcraft) had been an endemic feature of court records since the Middle Ages. Benevolent or at least less harmful magic and superstition were usually grouped together under the same term of *vidskepelse*. These trials gain frequency in the middle of the seventeenth century. They formed a complicated set of cases, including healing practices or practices to increase the productivity of cattle or game by spells and prayers. They could include love magic, uncovering thieves or fortune telling. Court records also describe a variety of tangible actions such as hiding rowan tree branches or pieces of metal in secret places, presumably to ensure protection, but the purpose often remains unclear in court records.<sup>2</sup> The Swedish term of *vidskepelse* meant in Finnish court records both individual acts of magic, such as rituals or casting spells or reading prayers or using protective equipment, and the beliefs or indeed the worldview in which these practices made sense. It is therefore difficult to make a distinction between magic and superstition. In Finnish language there are and were different terms for the following words/concepts: *taikuus*, which fairly pragmatically means magic, and *taikausko*, which can mean either superstition or more pragmatically a belief in at least some acts of magic work. These differences were lost in early modern court records, however, which translated both of these terms – if they ever were used in court – into the Swedish *vidskepelse*. It seems indeed that a distinction

between magic as acts and deeds and superstition as beliefs and worldviews was not relevant for early modern Finns.

As Linda Oja states, the meaning of the term *vidskepelse* also changes so that during seventeenth-century trials it is considered close to witchcraft and at least in theory related to blasphemy and relationship with the Devil, but in the eighteenth century it takes on a meaning more like in modern dictionaries: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance. In both cases, however, it is relevant to notice that *vidskepelse* was a term imposed from above on practices and thoughts by outsiders who thought them incorrect. Likewise ‘superstition’ is obviously a label imposed by outsiders on the practices and beliefs of people who would, if they existed at all, themselves describe their ways and thoughts with terms varying from piety to common sense or experience and in any case with words implying much more respect: no one practices superstition.

Modern ideas of religion as a personal set or an institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices, or in the European case, a belief in the existence of spiritual beings or of a cosmic order/power and the cultural systems which arise from the need of humans to form relationships with these powers. Magic is then any type of attempt to influence these powers, and is broad enough to comprise practically all possible models of thought of early modern Finns and therefore it serves no purpose in trying to pick out the points of definition among early modern Finns. The traditional way, suggested by James Frazer and Bronislaw Malinowski, of separating magic and prayer – that prayer is when one humbly begs for a divine entity to intervene and this entity may or may not do it according to its own will, whereas magic is something coercive, something that in itself has the power to make the supernatural powers act – does not wholly serve this discussion. And neither does Marcel Mauss’s distinction serve, that magic seeks to satisfy instrumental needs whereas religion satisfies a moral code, although it would have been close to the ideas which early modern Finns, both the general populace and the elites, held. Early modern Finns shared a Christian starting point in the evaluation, and an understanding that religion, piety and prayer were something moral and righteous, but that magic was the opposite. That beliefs, deeds and even persons could (and sometimes should) be divided into these two categories was clear, although the division as such was never complete. For the clergy and the educated elites such a distinction was built in their systems of belief. A vast majority of Finnish members of the populace, when accused of either *vidskepelse*, as magic and superstition,

or of *trolldom* and *förgörning* as witchcraft, seem to have used prayers as part of their practices. They often used this fact as part of their defence, thinking that magic or witchcraft and religion were mutually exclusive: that using Christian formulas placed them on the side of the respectable folk and therefore they could not be considered witches. Sometimes this was openly stated – for example a woman asked of her opponents in the court, ‘Do not I mention God, too?’ – but more often the implication of citing prayers was left to be worked out by the court. The elites, however, though thinking prayer and magic equally exclusive, were not ready to accept these ritual words as prayers, but rather as blasphemy. The debate among early modern Finns arose around which individual acts and beliefs belonged to which side of the divide.<sup>3</sup> This produced a debate, in which the interesting point may not be the general impression that everyone usually held their own thoughts and deeds to be on the right side whereas the rest were less certain, but the ways in which people argued to support their beliefs against those of others. Superstition and magic were prosecuted as criminal offences, religious crimes although there was also a possibility (used more and more often as the eighteenth century wore on) to prosecute superstitious acts of magic as fraud, at least if they were performed for money. At some points, such as in this essay, silences and the decision to not prosecute were also seen as of key significance.

### IDOLATRY AND LIP SERVICE VS OBEDIENT MARY

Whereas the Swedish Reformation was at the legislative level abrupt, it was put into practice only slowly. The Diet of Västerås proclaimed in 1527 that all ministers in the country were to preach pure religion. However, only in 1593 did the clergy and the political powers of the country decide what pure religion was. At this point they also refused the so-called Red Liturgy or Liturgy of King John that had clear Catholic characteristics, and which, it seems, had not insignificant support among the clergy and parishioners in Finland. The Church Order had included a liturgy in Swedish, but it took some time to establish a Finnish one.<sup>4</sup> Despite a few catechisms, the practice and daily experience of religion changed slowly until the first really affordable catechism had been published in 1666. This event also coincided with a rise in the number of trials for magic and superstition. It is unsurprising to find a relationship between confessionalization and superstition trials, yet a simple correlation cannot be turned into causations. Despite or perhaps exactly because of that, the opposition between

Lutheranism and Catholicism did not rise to such political importance as it did in Sweden,<sup>5</sup> resulting in a long-lasting see-saw teetering between the various forms of cult, liturgy, ritual and dogma of the two denominations. Much early Finnish literature had polemic tendencies.

This applies even to the first major collection of model sermons in Finnish, *Postilla*, written by the Bishop of Turku, Ericus Erici Sorolainen, and published in 1621. One of the aims of *Postilla* may also have been to establish Sorolainen's dogmatic position, as he had been a supporter of King John's Liturgy before the Uppsala meeting. There are points in which Sorolainen refers to recent developments in his sermons. Some of them are directed more to the clergy and meant more as church politics than as instruction of the laity. For example, in the sermon on the first Sunday after Christmas, Sorolainen takes an example of the sin of Peter – denying his God – from 'what has happened in our time, when the Pope's Mass book or Liturgy was imposed on the clergy both in Sweden and Finland and they had to adopt it or lose their office and their livelihood. And then many hearts were revealed as it was received it but many spoke against it.'<sup>6</sup> At first Sorolainen puts on an apologetic air, but then goes on in a more condemning tone despite the fact that his readers surely knew that he had not spoken against the Red Liturgy. It is said that Sorolainen's polemic against other confessions – Catholicism and Calvinism – 'remained moderate', but his position was nevertheless clear. What is more uncertain is whether phrases like the above, or those cited below, reflect the genre expectations of the time for any religious text written at least partly for the laity or Sorolainen's real concern. Nevertheless, what Sorolainen says about Catholicism and superstition reflects the general educational polemics in early modern Finland.

The compilation of sermons in the *Postilla* begins rather ostentatiously with an admonition that it should not be used as an excuse for not going to church to hear a proper sermon given by a minister, but that it could be used for preparation before going to church or for meditation after the church proper – in short, *Postilla* claims to be meant for the use of laypeople. However, in reality not many laypeople could afford to buy it or invest the time in reading its 2500 pages. This must have been known by Ericus Erici himself, and he probably took it into account in his writing that most of his readers would, in reality, be clergymen trying to find inspiration and models for their own sermons. *Postilla* fluctuates between learned Latin quotations and tangible and emotional writing that relates to everyday life of at least elite women. When university students and parish ministers did

read the book, they also disseminated its ideas in their own sermons in the more remote rural areas of early seventeenth-century Finland.

Having previously defended a liturgy that had Catholic features, Sorolainen now refuted Catholic ceremonies already in the dedication of his work. He dismissed Catholicism as an outward cult of superficial actions and rituals only where people's thoughts could be far away from the numerous prayers that their lips may be citing. A number of 'papist delusions' are named, among them the elevation of the Host and the use of salt and candles and especially the use of rosaries, '[w]hen they can read hundred and fifty Ave Marias and fifteen Our Fathers – and they get indulgences and their sins forgiven no matter how far away their minds can be from their actions'.<sup>7</sup>

The Elevation of the Host, the use of candles and the use of the Hail Mary were in fact things that Ericus Erici had been supporting in the Liturgy of John III, which may be a reason why he now dwelled at length in the condemnation of outward forms of Catholicism. He says little of Catholic dogma in itself, however, considering the outward practices only. His superficial treatment of Catholicism is therefore in some contrast with the learnedness of the treatment of biblical material and Protestant teachings.

It is possible that the contrasting practicality of the treatment of the Rosary cult is due to its being meant to influence the populace directly. However, Sorolainen was not alone in attacking specifically the cult of Mary. There is, for example, a poem, spread around in manuscript form among the clergy of Finland, ridiculing the practices as meaningless outward deeds only, and paralleling Ave Marias and psalter-readings with fasting, wearing wool clothes and bare feet, flagellation and so on.<sup>8</sup> It seems indeed that the attack against Catholicism or Catholic practices in Finland was, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, at least in the early phase of confessionalization and the late phase of Reformation, largely embodied in an attack on the usage of Rosaries in particular and the cult of Mary in general.

However, at the same time, Mary had a strong place also in the Lutheran sermons. These were all medieval features of popular education – the imagery in churches, sermons speaking emotionally of Mary as the mother of Jesus and also yearly ceremonies to bless the growth of crops by venerating her.

The Reformation in Finland included no wide-ranging iconoclasm and most murals in Finnish churches were not painted or chalked over before the eighteenth century but were left to be seen and contemplated by the populace, although new meanings were attached to them.<sup>9</sup> Mary is perhaps the most important of the figures who acquired a new set of

meanings. In the murals painted during the seventeenth century, she is no longer the Queen of Heaven or even an intercessor between the sinner and God, but rather an exemplary mother and wife in the family of baby Jesus. In Lutheran sermons, she became an example of humility and obedience. Sorolainen used her as an example to all poor people – as did Luther and other preachers – by pointing out how she accepted the fate given to her and her son, accepted that she should give birth to the son of God and give him up to fulfil his mission. She submitted and was taken care of so that God's plan was fulfilled. A good example of Mary's still important role in Finnish Lutheran sermons is Sorolainen's sermon on the first Sunday after Christmas. It began with Simeon's greetings to Mary and Hanna's prophesy on Jesus. The theological point of the sermon is to demonstrate the simultaneously divine and human nature of Jesus. In this Mary was essential and the human nature of her motherhood is emphasized in the sermon. As the point was made by Ericus Erici, however, he began with Simeon's warnings of the suffering to follow: that a mother should not expect or even wish that everything should go well with her child. With Simeon's description of the swords that would pierce her soul, Ericus Erici grew especially emotive.<sup>10</sup> In the context of high child mortality and the dangers of war and childbirth, this would already have resonated with most women.

Instead of changing the image of Mary, this enforced the female experience of the Rosary practice. Mary was legitimately present in Protestant church life. Therefore people felt that she could be as legitimately present in their personal religious lives too.

### TRACES OF THE CULT OF MARY IN THE LUTHERAN COUNTY OF SATAKUNTA

There is a handful of court records from the beginning of the seventeenth century which mention the use of rosaries or the cult of Mary in Lower Satakunta in western Finland. The number of these records (I have found five, but for various reasons would estimate a few more to be waiting to be found, up to the total number of approximately ten)<sup>11</sup> is so small compared to the total number of cases connected to witchcraft, magic and superstition in one way or another (around 2000 according to Nenonen's estimate) that they appear at first totally insignificant. For any general explanation or characterization of what is important in Finnish witchcraft or magic, they would be close to useless.

However, to gain more insight into the relationship of confessionalization to the concepts of superstition or magic, they may shed some special light despite their small number. In fact, their small number is partly what makes them potentially interesting: there should be none at all. Religious irregularities were crimes usually punished by the church, although it was also legally possible for the secular courts to take these matters up, and at times they did, as can be seen in the existence of the cases noted here. Competition between the church and the crown had brought punishments by the church to the jurisdiction of secular courts already in the middle ages. During the sixteenth century this trend grew stronger so that secular courts came to have precedence also in sentencing church punishments. However, the initiative which the church legally had often meant that the local vicar would act as a prosecutor in a secular court. But at the beginning of the century the custom was that matters of minor religious deviation were dealt most often within church courts or during visitations. In secular courts rosary practices were not cases in themselves, but were only recorded by accident, because somebody took a special initiative or because something else took place in connection with rosary practices, something that was within the remit of a secular court.<sup>12</sup> That the rosaries in Ala-Satakunta made it to court records even if the court was not interested in them may actually mean that they were more important to the lives of the people who talked about them than the matter at hand.

The first thing that strikes the eye when reading these cases is that they did not start as trials against superstition. The first few of them were court cases on something else, and the records mention the use of rosaries almost in passing. Indeed, one of them is an inheritance inventory, in which one article was ‘a couple of strings of stones that old wives at the time used to read upon’.<sup>13</sup> The old wives’ practices merited no further attention and they seem to have been mentioned most pejoratively in order to denote the small monetary or practical value of the inheritance. The Rosary practice was not seen as important, but was merely something that old people used to do before, not something that would be a threat or a serious heresy. It seems apparent from the court records that no one was too interested in prosecuting or persecuting them: neither the neighbours and relatives nor the authorities. The courts at the beginning of the century, however, operated largely on an accusatorial basis and rarely took the initiative in prosecuting cases without an individual plaintiff or petitioner, although they did so in serious matters. Neither did the parish minister take up the matter of rosaries, although they followed

matters up in secular courts at the beginning of the century – a practice which was legally required of them and which grew, by the second half of the century, so common that the ministers pursued not only religious errors but also some of the more mundane matters of their flock such as the inheritance rights of old widows or the unpaid wages of servants.<sup>14</sup> The old wives' rosaries were not deemed important, it seems from the court records. Why then did the Rosary practices leave a mark in the court records which, in the early seventeenth century, usually limited their notes to important things?

The seeming lack of interest is in line with the policy of not normally punishing superstition and magic with a secular punishment before the 1660s. Sometimes a public confession was thought of as an appropriate remedy, and sometimes the secular courts turned the matter over to the church court institutions (either local church court, the cathedral chapter or parochial visitations by the vicar or the bishop). At this point in time, none of these had legal options to impose a secular punishment. The offenders were usually banned from communion until they mended their ways, confessed and were absolved – and sometimes, by the mid-century, were often also given a secular punishment in the form of a fine.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, at the turn of the century the country had behind it a recent cruel civil war, which usually in Finland is not interpreted as religious but related to economics and foreign policy, but which, however, could not fail to reflect in some measure the opposing religious parties in Swedish royalty. Therefore, a constant discussion among the parish clergy and the parishioners was slowly cooking under the lid of church jurisdiction. There was an interest in small-scale religious deviation, which brought them to court, but at the same time, there was a will to keep it quiet and not cause trouble.

Two of the records that mention rosaries also mention church punishments. In August 1624 in Huittinen district court, a woman accused her parish minister of denying her communion. The minister explained that she 'used Rosary [*läseband*] and Old Papist Fallacies. Her husband – admitted this was true and therefore he [the minister] had been given reason to send her away from Church until she would discard such practices.'<sup>16</sup> The secular court concluded that the minister's procedure was in accordance with Church Ordinances, and therefore acquitted the minister. It is clear from the context that the woman herself considered herself a good Christian and entitled to communion, and most likely did not think it was adverse to Lutheranism either – it may be possible that

such discussion was deliberately left out from the court records as the whole issue was understated.

The woman in Huittinen is an example of a person who still adhered to what in the neighbouring parish was called ‘old wives’ practices’. This woman did not make such a clear distinction between different forms of Christianity. Put into the context of not only rosary practices but of superstitious magic in the second half of the seventeenth century, she does not seem unique.<sup>17</sup> This is especially true as for a decade afterwards the vicar of Huittinen indicted several women for having held a Convent or a ‘Resolia’ at home. At these events they read a sequence of prayers, prepared and enjoyed a dinner with beer on the table and performed a rite during which they stepped ‘with iron on flint stone’. The nature of the meeting, however, is somewhat unclear, not only because of the spelling of the name of the meeting but also because the Ave Maria was not mentioned among the sequential prayers, but only the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, all of which were read nine times.<sup>18</sup>

At certain points a hint of deliberate nonconformism is discernible. Ten years after the case in Huittinen, a woman in the neighbouring parish of Ulvila was fined three marks for ‘practising mariolatria during church services and therefore staying away from church’.<sup>19</sup> This was a secular punishment, ordered by a secular court, although the fines were to be paid to the church. In addition, the spiritual side of the matter was recorded to be sent to the Cathedral Chapter for confession, absolution and guidance. The woman considered her practices alternative to those of the church, and although it is quite possible that she did not consider them mutually exclusive, she was treated as if she did.

However, a decade later in 1646 there was a case in which the former vicar of Punkalaidun was indicted of organizing rosary meetings ‘with old women’ and collecting alms for yearly meetings and processions possibly related to blessing the fields and the harvest. As the court record went on, an outdated old wives’ ritual was at the same time presented as a regular function of village farmers: while the vicar denied everything, one male farmer of the parish admitted to having spent two nights at such meetings with three other men and their families. One of these men denied his part, others were not present to admit or deny their participation and the matter was left open.<sup>20</sup>

It is obvious that practitioners of rosaries used them both religiously and magically, but they described and defended their practices as religious. The notion that practices like rosaries were not only mumbo jumbo

distracting the relationship between the believer and God, but should be regarded as magic and witchcraft, had certainly reached Sweden and Finland by this time if not long before. Paulinus Gothus wrote in 1630 on magic or *vidskepelse* that among the forbidden kinds of magic was the reading of word formulas, the names of the Trinity, Jehovah, quotations from the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria and the rosary saints as well as 'other, nonunderstandable words', and the use of the sign of the cross. Gothus grouped superstition and magic and witchcraft all together, in the way that was common in the learned theory of magic and witchcraft of the time.<sup>21</sup> On the level of theory Ericus Erici did not make this distinction either, but on the level of content he spoke of superstition as erroneous religious practice. It is clear that those who took the matter up in court and wrote it down in the records thought it at least useless superstition, and towards the end of the century clearly also reprehensible superstition. However, even in the case against the first vicar in Punkalaidun, the practice of the rosaries appears slight among the other complaints of the parishioners, and the most important feature of them in general seems to be the vicar's tendency to drink beer on all occasions, including church services and the rosary meetings. Even though the new vicar seems to have wished to get rid of his predecessor, the focus was kept on the way he carried out his Protestant duties, not on his possibly heretical practices.<sup>22</sup>

### A TRADITION OF CATHOLIC REFORMATION AND LUTHERAN SUPERSTITION?

The cult of Mary seems to have been spread in Lower Satakunta in the specific form of rosary practices partly because this was an area where the Catholic faith had gained a strong foothold before the Reformation. Also, it was remote enough from Turku for the old influences to survive the Reformation. Lower Satakunta was also actively placed in terms of communication, trade and outside influences, since both Rauma and the medieval Ulvila towns achieved a notable level of foreign trade in addition to domestic business. It has been suggested that the rosary piety, or the guild piety that it was connected with, came to Satakunta directly from northern Germany around 1500.<sup>23</sup>

There is little reason to assume that traces of the cult of Mary existed only in Satakunta. Folklore stories and poetry about Mary were collected in southern Finland and Häme later on, although they are difficult to date. The small geographical area of the court cases may be only a result of one eager judge or court scribe. It can generally be noted that

scribes performed their duties with varying zeal and both session and case descriptions in Satakunta and the province of Viipuri were generally longer than those in Häme throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> The narrow geographical scope of the court records noting a rosary cult suggests that these cases may not be representative of the cult of Mary in Finland as a whole. It seems plausible that in Satakunta the cult of Mary had either acquired or retained a more defined form than elsewhere in Finland, centring on the Rosary instead of merging with other religious festivities or mythology.

Lower Satakunta had been the main operative area of the Franciscan order in pre-Reformation Rauma. The Franciscans preached devotion to the Virgin Mary in the Lower Satakunta area during the late Middle Ages and only left their convent in 1538. Before the Reformation people from Lower Satakunta attended the church of the Brigittine cloister in Naantali, close to Turku, in the spirituality of which Mary had a strong mythological place. Even after the brethren left Rauma, their church – with the elaborate imagery of the Holy Virgin painted on its walls and ceilings – remained in the use of the local parishes in a town that was relatively frequently visited by the populace of the area. The importance of the Franciscans was not restricted to preaching: the convent owned land and had various other economic contacts in Ulvila. There is also evidence of long-term influence, for example, names like Frans and Clara which seem to have been remarkably common in the area still during the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Of the three parishes in which the Rosary cult was noted down, the parish of Kokemäki hosted a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. It was, however, a wooden church apparently with no paintings. Likewise, churches of Ulvila and Huittinen seem not to have had wall paintings inside, but both hosted a number of statues or at least an altar cabinet with several saint's figures. Although no statue of Mary alone has survived or has been recorded, both include an arrangement of St Anne.<sup>26</sup> Anne's role, it has been suggested, has been to strengthen the importance of Mary, both because they are often portrayed as a trio together with the baby Jesus, but also because they emphasize the femininity of the religious experience of women and make it both symbolically and pragmatically stronger by implying giving birth and caring for children as well as the kinship chain, and last, but not perhaps least, by including both a young and an old woman in the range of figures to identify with.<sup>27</sup> In both churches the altar cabinets seem to have been in use until the eighteenth century. In short, Lower Satakunta was one of the heartlands of Finland,

where material culture still reflected the deep rootedness of medieval Catholicism. It was a far cry from the backwoods of eastern and middle Finland, where Protestant historians have concluded that the Reformation had been very easy to achieve since Catholicism had never properly won people's hearts.

In pre-Reformation Europe, and also in the areas close to monasteries in Finland, one of the most important outlets of lay religion was through the cult of Mary. Women's religiosity found a way of experiencing and practising their devotion through the cult of Mary, not only with rosaries but also other material aids: dolls, embroidery and paintings or drawings were used to build a personal relationship with Mary and her son. It was a tangible form of devotion which was accessible even to the illiterate and unlearned – and yet one that would require a certain amount of wealth and leisure, which could be found in the richer parts of rural Finland like Lower Satakunta.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, it is unsurprising that the cult of Mary would be one of the longest surviving elements of medieval Catholicism, especially as she also held a place in Protestant teaching.

In church history these cases can be used as evidence for the slow progress of the Reformation from the more or less orthodox centres of Turku and Uppsala to the peripheries that had hitherto been almost heathen. Herein lays, however, a misconception. Lower Satakunta was no periphery at the time. On the contrary, it was a fairly densely populated area and these parishes had been established in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century the parishes were relatively wealthy. The livings of these parishes were sought after and valued, and new chapels were being established. It may be that the persistence of the cult of Mary in such a specific form as the rosaries was due to the centrality of these areas even before the Reformation. This was part of the area in Finland where Catholicism had been best established.

Nevertheless, the seventeenth-century cult of Mary should not be regarded as a remnant of the medieval Catholic tradition only, but rather a product of Reformation and Counter Reformation cultures in Finland, not least because medieval source material on such a cult is sporadic at best. These traditions begin to appear only after the Reformation, and many of them only after the reigns of King John III, Queen Catherine Jagiellonica and Sigismund I – the first with strong Catholic tendencies, and the two latter being openly Catholic. Jesuit Antonio Possevino who worked in Sweden during the reign of King John III indeed pronounced that he thought Finland especially suitable ground for Counter Reformation. The

contacts, who made him think this, lived in Lower Satakunta. This is also the area where the most famous of the twelve young students who left Sweden came to seek education in Jesuit colleges at the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Possevino met personally at least one of these men, Olaus Marci Sundergelt, originally a Lutheran clergyman from Pori, and ordered him to translate a Roman Catholic Catechism into Finnish. The job was concluded by another eager Jesuit student from a prominent Lower Satakunta family, Johannes Jussoila from Rauma. The catechism unsurprisingly never reached print, but as Jussoila's three brothers had also left for Jesuit schooling, it is plausible to think that the work was discussed in the family circles and that excerpts may even have been circulated and that the knowledge could not always be kept wholly secret from all (servant) members of the household. In any case, the number of men leaving for Catholic schooling from Lower Satakunta in the late sixteenth century shows both a receptivity towards Catholicism and a comparatively tight connection to Catholic Reformation. At the same time, it shows that the Lutheran teaching in Finland in general and in Lower Satakunta specifically was not of the nature that would have made Catholicism seem repellent or dangerous in this or the life hereafter. The cult of Mary was thus embedded in a post-Reformation culture which included both Lutheran and Tridentine ideas. It was at the same time accepted as piety, contested as superstition and condemned as papist fallacy. The name of heresy was, however, carefully avoided. Nothing of the sort of trials that went on in Sweden for the *Missio Suecia* adherents were wanted here.

### EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION AS IGNORANCE

As the seventeenth century wore on, a rise in religious popular education took place. It included very little practical teaching on magic or superstition, but rather concentrated on learning the commandments and the Pauline quotations on the Table of Duties in the catechism. Model sermons and like instructions had more details on matters like magic and superstition, including the influences of competing religions such as Catholicism and Calvinism for the most part of the mid-century. The rise of religious popular education seems to have coincided with the development where secular courts began more often to mete out secular punishment for superstitions and harmless magic. After the 1660s transferring superstition cases to church courts was rare. The development was such that by

the end of the century, one was more likely to be accused of or punished for superstition than for maleficent witchcraft, although these were by no means always distinguished between.<sup>30</sup> The reasons for this change were manifold. Changes in the court and judicial system obviously explain some of the change. Social and religious control did become tighter and the system more inquisitorial. It has been concluded that whereas injured neighbours were likely to prosecute for maleficium, both secular and clerical authorities were much more likely to prosecute for superstition.

At this point the courts started to act according to the theories circulating around Europe and also in Sweden: magic grew to be considered more and more harmful. Whereas the Finnish courts never were very interested in the witches' connections with the Devil, they still grouped witchcraft, magic and superstition in the same category of reprehensible and evil practices to be punished and repressed. During the eighteenth century, as Linda Oja has shown, Enlightenment rationality changed the emphasis and matters of magic were no longer considered harmful but only useless superstition, ignorance. In the context of the history of magic trials, one of the interesting points in this article has been that the Rosary practices show how similar were attitudes towards magic and superstition at the beginning of the seventeenth century to what they came to be after the witch-hunt phase. They were old wives' ignorant beliefs: useless, outdated but not threatening. The change in the attitudes during the hunt period was comparatively abrupt and short-lived.

For some reason Mary and the Rosary practices seem to have disappeared from the court records at the time when magic and superstition trials became common. It is hardly probable that Mary disappeared from the popular culture, however. Quite the contrary, evidence from the folkloristic materials suggest that she continued to enjoy an important place in the religious life or at least the semi-religious ritualistic festivities of rural villages. Mary only disappeared from the court records.

On the other hand, rosary practices in Lower Satakunta seem to have been deemed unimportant in the court records, but the downplaying of the practices as ignorant and outdated may also have been deliberate. Indeed, the fact that the practices reached a secular court at all when most small-scale religious misdemeanours were taken care of in church arenas, seems to point to the fact that they carried more significance than appears at first sight. The courts, consisting of the local people as well as local and Finnish elites, may have deliberately wished to avoid drawing more attention to matters that had already proven disruptive in other parts

of Sweden. It is also clear from the court records that the local secular district court had no wish to overstep the boundary of the jurisdiction of the church, and the church likewise had little interest in inviting the secular officials into their business. Most importantly, the treatment of the Rosary practices reflects the very advice given by the later bishop of Turku, Johannes Gezelius, to the parish clergy in Finland: although papist superstition was not to be tolerated, some old traditions, though false as such, were established, and trying to force people to abandon them could cause more disruption than such a diaphora was worth.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

1. This work had been done as a part of a research project, ‘The Orthodox Lutheran Confessionalism in Seventeenth-Century Sweden and Its European Context’, and the Center of Excellence ‘Rethinking Finland’ funded by the Academy of Finland.
2. See e.g. Linda Oja, *Varken Gud eller Natur. Synen på Magi i 1600– och 1700-talets Sverige*, (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings förlag Symposion, 1999) for a lengthy discussion on the characteristics of these groups, but also Marko Nenonen, *Noituus, Taikuus ja noitavainot Ala-Satakunnan, Pohjois-Pohjanmaan ja Viipurin Karjalan maaseudulla 1620–1700, Historiallisia tutkimuksia 165* (Helsinki: Societas Historica Finlandiae, 1992), pp. 39–72 and also Marko Nenonen, ‘Envious Are All the People, Witches Watch at Every Gate: Finnish Witches and Witch Trials in the Seventeenth Century’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 18/1, 1993.
3. Further, see Raisa Maria Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 36ff. and 120ff.; Raisa Maria Toivo, ‘Lived Lutheranism and Daily Magic in Seventeenth-Century Finland’, in Edwards, Kathryn (ed.), *Everyday Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2015).
4. Kauko Pirinen, *Suomen kirkon Historia I* (Helsinki, WSOY, 1991), p. 334; Jussi Hanska, ‘Revisionistista reformaatiohistoriaa maailmalla – milloin Suomessa?’ in *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 1, 2005; Jyrki Knuutila, ‘Liturgisen yhdenmukaistamisen toteutuminen Suomessa reformaatiokaudella 1537–1614’, *Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Vuosikirja* 77 (1987), pp. 28–29. See also Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 94.
5. Knuutila, ‘Liturgisen yhdenmukaistamisen toteutuminen’, pp. 28–29.
6. ‘[M]itä meidän aicanam on tapattunut/cosca se Pawin Messukirja eli Liturgia pappein päälle tungettia sekä Ruozisa että Suomessa, että heidän piti taicka sen wastanottama/taicka mistaman heidän wircans ja leipäns/’

silloin monen sydämen aiatoxet ilmoitettin/sillä monda otit sen vastan ia monicahdat sitä wastan sanoit.' Ericus Erici Sordainen, *Postilla I* (Stockholm: Christopher Reusner, 1621, faximile Helsinki, Gummerus, 1988), 1st Sunday after Christmas, p. 219 (187).

7. '[L]ucevat nimettäin/sata ja wijsikymmentä Engelin tervehdysta ja wijsit-oistakymmentä (sic) Isä Meidän Rucousta – ja sawat palio aneita ia syndins antexi waica cuinga caucana sydän ia aiatos siitä on', in *Postilla I*, pp. 7–8; *Postilla I*, p. 510.
8. *En lithen wnderwisning fwll medh Papisters wilfarelser, ther hvor och en Christen skall taga sigh vara före. Stelt på rijm till Antichristi rpäst Huru han schall stella si handell wthi wercket*, printed in Terhi Kiiskinen (ed.), *Fem källor från den Svenska Reformationstiden i Finland* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2010), pp. 287–97.
9. Markus Hiekkanen, *Suomen keskiajan kivikirkot* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2007), p. 50.
10. Sorolainen, *Postilla I*. Sunnuntai joulun jälkeen, pp. 207, 209–11 (pp. 175, 177–79). See also Toinen, joulupäivän saarna (2nd sermon on Christmas Day), *Postilla I*, p. 201 (p. 169).
11. References to these court records have been collected using local or church histories and the 'Tuokko' register of rural court records, local histories and scholarly works on church or religious history of witchcraft and superstition in Finland. Tuokko is a nineteenth-century catalogue of seventeenth-century rural district court records, which lists the cases by search words. It was originally written by hand on card files and has been housed in the National Archives of Finland, but is currently undergoing digitization and is accessible at [http://digi.narc.fi/digi/dosearch.ka?new=1&hak\\_u=tuomiokirjakortisto](http://digi.narc.fi/digi/dosearch.ka?new=1&hak_u=tuomiokirjakortisto). I have used search words relating to church, religion and superstition. In addition to the obvious search words 'traces of Catholic religion', cases like these should be expected to turn up for example under headings like 'communion' or 'church punishment' because the suspected parishioners would often be banned from communion. There are plenty of cases when someone was noted to be banned from communion, but the reasons are fornication and crimes of violence, and a couple of times 'ignorance of the rudiments of religion', which means that the person had failed his catechism hearing. Likewise one would expect that entries on 'visitation' included cases like these, but it seems not so. Nenonen (1992), pp. 405–10 includes an almost complete list of witchcraft and magic trials in Lower Satakunta, where some of the cases are also noted.
12. Bengt Ankarloo, *Trolldomsprocesserna i Sverige* (Lund: Nordiska bokhandeln, 1972), pp. 82–86; Nenonen, *Noituus, taikuus ja noitavainot*,

pp. 256ff. Unfortunately the church court and visitation records from early seventeenth-century Lower Satakunta do not survive.

13. [E]tt paar stene båndh som käringar i den tijdh hade läst opå. National Archives of Finland (NA), Ala-Satakunta I KO a 3, 304v. Kokemäki, 17.–20. November 1634.
14. Sven Wilskman, *Swea Rikes Ecclesiastique Werk I Alphabetisk Ordningh, Sammandragit Utur Lag ob Förordningar, privilegier och Resolutioner Samt Andra Handlingar, I* (Örebro, 1781).
15. Ankarloo, *Trolldomdprocesserna i Sverige*, pp. 82–86; Nenonen, *Noituus, taikuus ja noitavainot*, pp. 256ff.; Nenonen, Marko and Kervinen, Timo (1994), *Synnin palkka on kuolema*, Table on different types of witchcraft and magic in Finland 1620–1700, n.p. Otava, Helsinki.
16. NA Ala-Satakunta I KO a 2, 254v, Huittinen 30.–31. August 1624. ‘hon brukar Läsebandh och gammal Påwesk willfarelse. Hvilcket hennes Rychte man Hindrich Madzon bekiende för Rätten. Och förthenskuld haffwer hon nom giffues Orsak at sättia henne ifrån Kyrckian till dhez hon sådant afståår.’
17. Cf. e.g. cases in Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender*.
18. NA. Ala-Satakunta I KO a 6, 192v. Huittinen 16.–18. November 1646.
19. NA. Ala-Satakunta I KO a 3, 275v. Ulvila 31. March 1634, ‘hon I Kyrkotijden hade brukat Mariolatria och således warit ifrå Kyrckian’.
20. ‘med kärlingar’ NA. Ala-Satakunta I KO a 6, 148. Huittinen den 4.–5. June 1646.
21. Laurentius Paulinus Gothus, *Ethicae Christianae Pars Prima. Thet är cat-echismi förste deel. Om Gudzens Lag ...* (Strängnäs, 1633), pp. 188–94.
22. NA. Ala-Satakunta I KO a 6, 147v–149. Huittinen den 4.–5. June 1646.
23. Seppo Suvanto and Jari Niemelä, *Punkalaitumen historia I* (Vammala: Punkalaitumen kunta ja seurakunta, 1986), p. 158; Erkki Lehtinen, *Suur-Ulvilan historia I* (Pori: Porin maalaiskunta, Ulvila, Kullaa ja Nakkila, 1967), pp. 35–36.
24. An example of a folklore story mixing Marian mythology with Finnish ‘pagan’ religion might be a story from Hauho (again in Häme) depicting an offering tree (these were mainly thought to be offerings for ancestors or forest Gods, in this case possibly also to Ukko, the God of Heaven and Thunder or War, since the offerings were preferably of iron) and Mary revealing herself sitting up the tree every New Years Day. The story was passed on orally, and recorded at the beginning of the twentieth century; it claimed to speak about a tree that had been standing on a hill from the seventeenth century. W. Palmroth, *Kertomus Hauhon seurakunnan vai-heista. Muistojulkaisu 600 vuotisjublaa varten* (Hauho and Hämeenlinna: Hauhon seurakunta, 1929), p. 168. The Finnish Literature Society houses a collection of folk legends in the Finnish Literature Society Archives,

Manuscript card files, Perinnelajikortistot: Legendat. See also Pirkko-Liisa Rausmaa ja Kristiina Rokala (eds), *Catalogues of Finnish Anecdotes, and Historical, Local and Religious Legends* (Turku: Nordic Institute of Folklore, 1973).

25. Hiekkanen, *Suomen keskiajan kivikirkot*, pp. 246–251. On the Fransiscan connections and otherwise on the relative wealth of the area, see Tapio Salminen, ‘Suomen “pienet” kaupungit keskiajalla? – keskiajan kaupunkien tutkimuksesta Suomessa sekä Ulvilan ja Rauman keskiajan erityispiirteistä ja mahdolliksista’ [Medieval towns in Finland], in *Satakunta XXVIII: Kauppa ja Kaupungit Satakunnassa* (Helsinki: Satakunnan historiallinen Seura, 2011), pp. 8–63; Seppo Suvanto, *Satakunnan historia III. Keskiaika* (Pori: Satakunnan maakuntaliitto ry, 1973), p. 409; pp. 9–54; Päivi Salmesvuori, *Power and Authority: Birgitta of Sweden and Her Revelations*, dissertation (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2009).
26. Hiekkanen, *Suomen keskiajan kivikirkot*, pp. 219–74. On the church of Huittinen esp. pp. 220–23; Kokemäki, pp. 224–27; Ulvila pp. 266–69.
27. Elina Räsänen, *Ruumiillinen esine, materiaalinen suku. Tutkimus Pyhä Anna itse kolmantena – aiheista keskiajan puuveistoksista Suomessa* (Helsinki: Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistyksen aikakauskirja 116, 2009), pp. 130ff.
28. Miri Rubin, *Mother of God. A History of the Virgin Mary* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 261, 364–65; Bridget Heal, *The Cult of Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany. Protestant and Catholic Piety 1500–1648*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
29. Pirinen, Kauko, *Suomen kirkon historia I*, pp. 326–27, 339–41; Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia I* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 185.
30. However, even during the second half of the seventeenth century, more than half of those accused of either witchcraft or superstition were acquitted. Nenonen, *Noitunus, taikuus ja noitavainot*, pp. 129–35, 256–57.
31. Pentti Laasonen, *Johannes Gezelius vanhempi ja suomalainen täysortodoksi* (Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura, 1977), pp. 227–28.

PART III

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## Witchcraft

# The Witch of Endor Before the Witch Trials

*Charles Zika*

In the sixteenth century the biblical story of the Witch of Endor and her conjuration of the prophet Samuel on behalf of King Saul became one of the key texts in demonological and also political discourse, and would soon become critical in the scientific discourse concerning the nature of vision.<sup>1</sup> In demonological literature the story was used to demonstrate the existence of witches and condemn their practices of necromancy and fortune telling.<sup>2</sup> The first panel painting of the subject in 1526 by the Dutch artist Cornelis van Oostsanen (Fig. 1) demonstrates clearly how the subject was given new relevance by both recent discourse and the new iconography of witchcraft in the early sixteenth century. Although the painting depicts the story very carefully in the scenes on the periphery, the central image foregrounds the learned invocatory magic of this woman and also clearly identifies her as a witch, by inserting a group of women riding goats and grilling sausages from the iconography of Hans Baldung Grien and his copyists.<sup>3</sup>

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C. Zika (✉)

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, Australia  
e-mail: [c.zika@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:c.zika@unimelb.edu.au)

Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions,  
University of Melbourne



Fig. 1 Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostsanen, *The Witch of Endor*, 1526, oil on panel, 85.5 x 122.8 cm  
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

The story in 1 Samuel 28 relates how a woman skilled in the magical arts from the village of Endor in northern Galilee conjured up the prophet Samuel on behalf of King Saul. Saul was surrounded by Philistine armies and had no success in seeking counsel from God; and so despite his earlier ban on necromancy, he asked this woman to make contact with the dead prophet. The subsequent news was shattering. Samuel announced that God had abandoned Saul, and that on the following day he and his three sons would die in battle. Saul fainted at the news and the woman of Endor revived and comforted the traumatized king by preparing him a meal. On the next day, however, Saul's sons were killed in battle; and after being wounded, Saul himself committed suicide by falling on his sword.<sup>4</sup>

The frequent references to this story in demonological texts of the sixteenth century, as well as its repeated depiction in woodcuts from the 1560s and 1570s, led to the widespread dissemination over the coming centuries of this woman's role as a malefic witch engaged in

the conjuration of demonic spirits.<sup>5</sup> As a result the witch of Endor story had become firmly established by the second half of the seventeenth century as a subject appropriate for painting and graphic representation. Indeed, for some decades in the later seventeenth century, the figure of the witch of Endor seemed to achieve a new function as a model for the representation of witchcraft in general, combining in her person the common attributes of the female witch with those of the male ritual magician.<sup>6</sup> This appreciable new interest in the woman of Endor as the only named witch in the Bible was certainly dependent on the extent to which her story could be used to demonstrate the reality of witchcraft as diabolical in nature, and to support local and national campaigns to eliminate those practising all manner of magical arts. But what is not at all well known is that this woman was part of a long exegetical tradition going back to Origen in the mid-third century, and a visual history that began in the early twelfth century. Indeed there were more individual images produced of this woman in each of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than in the sixteenth, even if the circulation of the printed book created a much greater exposure for the witch of Endor than could ever have been possible through manuscript illuminations – through the reprinting and republication of multiple editions of individual works, the recycling of the same images in other printed works and the size of individual print runs.<sup>7</sup>

This examination, then, concerns the visual history of the woman of Endor prior to the period of increasing witch trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this later period the new technologies of printing and printmaking, the widespread anxiety about any practices hinting of sorcery and magic, and the increasing number of judicial trials for witchcraft throughout much of central and western Europe, clearly influenced the iconography and visual representation of this biblical figure and her role in the story of King Saul. Prior to the sixteenth century, by contrast, the woman is depicted as secondary or even incidental to the main story of Saul and Samuel. But some images, especially in the fifteenth century, do give some attention to the woman's autonomy and power in conjuring the dead prophet, and a few images even suggest that she may have worked her necromancy with the assistance of diabolical power. It is, however, remarkable that not one image attempts to depict the magical techniques or paraphernalia so prominent in Cornelis van Oostsanen's painting and in so many of the images produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

So how, first of all, was this woman of Endor named and described prior to the sixteenth century? In medieval Latin literature she is usually called a *phitonissa* or *pythonissa*, whereas in the Vulgate she is a ‘mulier habens pythonem’.<sup>8</sup> These terms refer to the woman’s claimed ability to divine the future with her *ars pythonica*, the prophetic powers of foretelling the future associated with the python of Apollo at Delphi. In Petrus Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica*, the Pythonic art is described as the power to raise the dead, that is, necromancy.<sup>9</sup> In the Latinized version of Pseudo-Philo, however, she is simply called a ‘filia divini’, ‘the daughter of a medium or mantic’, and there she is also given a name, Sedecla.<sup>10</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, she is a *ba’alat ov*, a woman who has mastery over necromancy or ghosts<sup>11</sup>; and in the Greek of the Septuagint, she is an *engastri-mythos*, a female ventriloquist, or as in a recent collection of patristic texts edited by Rowan Greer and Margaret Mitchell, a belly-myther or belly-talker, one divining through the belly.<sup>12</sup> Flavius Josephus, on the other hand, seems to combine the Septuagint and Hebrew terms, by referring to her as ‘a woman from among the ventriloquists and those who conjure up the souls of the dead’.<sup>13</sup> In medieval German translation, the woman is referred to in various World Chronicles as a *phitonisse*; a *Pythia*; ‘ein Frau die kunst kün’ (a woman who knows the [magical] arts); ‘eine Frau … der den wilichen rat von phitonis lehre hat’ (a woman who has a sure grasp of pythonic teaching); ‘ein zoubertig weip’ (a female sorcerer); ‘eine Frau die mit Hilf Pythons wahrsagen konnte’ (a woman who foretells the future with the help of the Python), and also simply a *Zauberin* (a sorceress or female magician).<sup>14</sup>

From the sixteenth century ‘sorcerer’ or ‘witch’ become more common terms to describe the necromancer of Endor, in line with a broader use of these terms for different magical practices. In the 1545 Luther Bible, she is ‘ein Weib die hat einen Warsager geist’ (a woman who has a divining spirit); but in his gloss Luther refers to her as ‘eine Zauberin’, and a *Zauberin* or sorceress explicitly collaborating with the Devil.<sup>15</sup> In the marginal notes and summaries at the beginning of the chapter in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Luther Bibles, she is often called a ‘Hexe oder Zauberin’ or simply ‘eine Hexe’.<sup>16</sup> A similar development occurs in English Bibles. In the King James Bible she is ‘a woman that hath a familiar spirit’, at a time when ‘familiar spirit’ clearly referred to witchcraft. And soon enough, the designation ‘witch’ begins to appear in chapter introductions.<sup>17</sup> But in the introduction to the story in the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible, she is already called a witch; as she also is in the

marginal notes to a 1602 translation of Josephus.<sup>18</sup> For the period prior to the sixteenth century, however, the textual evidence indicates that she was seldom regarded as a witch involved in some kind of diabolical association or pact, but more a woman who exercised the magical arts of divining, necromancy and conjuration.<sup>19</sup>

So where do we find visual images of this woman from the village of Endor in the period before she is explicitly identified as a witch? The forty-five images I have found prior to the sixteenth century occur in a range of sources. While illustrated Bibles from the twelfth through to the fifteenth century include a significant number of images, even more feature in the illustrative cycles of the so-called History Bibles (Historienbibeln, or Bibles historiales) – vernacular, prose versions of the biblical text produced primarily between the late fourteenth century and the 1470s.<sup>20</sup> These History Bibles incorporated explanatory glosses drawn from various medieval sources together with the biblical text. Illustrations of the woman of Endor also feature in a number of richly illustrated typological schemas of the Moralised Bibles, in which Saul is identified with the Jews as persecutors of Christ,<sup>21</sup> as well as in Psalters and commentaries on the psalms, as part of David cycles.<sup>22</sup>

As Jean-Claude Schmitt has shown, one of the most important medieval sources for an exegesis of the Endor story was the very popular *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor, written between 1169 and 1173 as a textbook in exegesis.<sup>23</sup> Through its various German, French and Dutch translations, the text of the *Historia Scholastica* was frequently incorporated into the different History Bibles, where its influence survived well into the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Virtually the whole text of Comestor was also included in the late thirteenth-century French translation of the Bible by Guyart Desmoulin, which was translated in turn into other European languages and called the *Bible historiale complétée*.<sup>25</sup> A number of these manuscripts feature illuminations of the Endor story.

But the most fruitful sources for illustrations of the Endor story, sources that have been totally ignored by the little scholarship on this subject, are the World Chronicles, the literary genre of the *Weltchronik* or *Chronique universelle* that relate the history of humanity from the days of creation and divide history into the customary six ages of the world. The most important of these chronicles is the *Weltchronik* of Rudolf of Ems from the mid-thirteenth century, a verse account commissioned by Rudolf's patron, Emperor Conrad IV.<sup>26</sup> The critical aspect of this work is that it combines biblical history with profane history. And these combined

histories were further complicated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with further additions and interpolations from chronicles such as the *Kaiserchronik*, the *Sächsischen Weltchronik*, the *Christherre-Chronik*, the *Jans Enikel Weltchronik*,<sup>27</sup> and most importantly for this study, with the World Chronicle of Heinrich of München, an Austrian verse chronicle frequently including some of the earlier chronicles and dating from the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

So what are the main characteristics of this representation of the Endor story from the first manuscript illuminations in the twelfth century through to the end of the fifteenth? And what developments and changes occur over this period? The first major feature that characterizes most images prior to the sixteenth century is that the woman of Endor rarely appears as the most important actor in the story and her necromantic techniques receive virtually no, or at least very minor, attention. The most common depiction of the biblical story is the announcement by Samuel of God's abandonment of Saul and Saul's imminent fate. This is graphically represented in an image by the so-called David Master, in Peter Lombard's *Commentary on the Psalms* in a Bamberg manuscript of c.1170 (Fig. 2).<sup>29</sup> Saul is seated on a couch in the house of the woman of Endor, while two



Fig. 2 The David Master, *Samuel Announces to King Saul in the Presence of the Necromancer of Endor that Tomorrow Saul and his Sons Will Be with Him*, illumination on parchment, in Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarius in psalmos*, Bamberg?, c. 1180

Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Msc.Bibl.59, fol. 3r (Photo: Gerald Raab)

of his men<sup>30</sup> wait outside on the left (and he is also shown leaving the house with them again on the right). He wears a crown and is even named king, contrary to the biblical text. The biblical account has Saul dressed in disguise in order to deceive the woman and ensure she meets his request, despite his own prohibition on necromancy in his kingdom. The focus here is on the message that the fully dressed Samuel presents, the text of the Vulgate written out very clearly on Samuel's scroll: 'Cras, hac hora diei mecum eris tu et filii tui' ('Tomorrow at this hour of day you will be with me, you and your sons'). The woman labelled a *phitonissa* is secondary to the central action. The focal point is the relationship between Samuel and Saul, while the woman stands to the side, behind the king. She is not totally divorced from the action, however, her hand gesture possibly referring to the conjuration by which she has called up the dead prophet.<sup>31</sup> But it is Saul on the couch, suffering the impact of Samuel's terrible words, who is the central figure, spatially and conceptually. The lack of any emotion in the facial expressions of the actors does not facilitate a reading of a traumatized Saul, who had to be persuaded to eat in order to recover his strength, the biblical narrative tells us, before he and his men could leave the woman's house. The textual interpolation above the image, however, makes such a reading quite clear: 'He is a foolish man, who when he learns his fate is afflicted with fear.'

The critical emphasis on the message communicated to Saul by Samuel means that the woman of Endor usually assumes an inferior and secondary status, positioned *behind* the king. In the World Chronicle manuscript in Colmar, a compilation of the World Chronicle by Rudolf von Ems and the *Christherre Chronicle*, which was produced by the well-known Heidelberg workshop of Dietrich Lauber in 1459, two illustrations accompany the story.<sup>32</sup> The second illustration depicts a post-necromancy scene (Fig. 3). The focal point here is the large figure of Samuel, only half his body visible as he rises up out of his tomb and confronts the much smaller figure of the king. His gestures suggest that he is announcing God's judgement, at which Saul seems to retreat. And even smaller and positioned behind King Saul is the woman of Endor, quite incidental to the action, a figure of little importance. The caption to the image simply underscores this focus on the prophet and his message: 'Samuel answers Saul by saying that tomorrow he and his three sons would be killed.'

The positioning of the woman behind King Saul, stressing the subordination of her role to the dialogue between the king and the prophet, is the default position in the composition of most medieval images. This is



Fig. 3 Dietrich Lauber Workshop, *Samuel Rises from his Tomb and Informs King Saul that Tomorrow He and his Three Sons Would Be Slain*, illumination on parchment, in Rudolf von Ems, *Weltchronik*, Hagenau, compiled by Hans Schilling, 1459

Bibliothèque municipale, Colmar, Ms. 305, fol. 274r

frequently presented in many of the World Chronicle images, as in two such chronicles by Heinrich of München: one in a Berlin manuscript of c.1400, which is again set in open space with Samuel emerging from his tomb, except that he is depicted here in a shroud (Fig. 4)<sup>33</sup>; and in a Munich manuscript of 1380, in which there is the barest suggestion of Samuel's grave (Fig. 5).<sup>34</sup> Though the woman is on the periphery of action in both these depictions, her slightly raised hand (just as in the Bamberg manuscript – and significantly perhaps her left hand), would seem to



**Fig. 4** *The Figure of Samuel Conjured by the Necromancer of Endor Rises from his Grave and is Addressed by King Saul*, illumination on parchment, in Heinrich von München, *Weltchronik*, Austria, before 1400

Bpk/Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. Germ. Fol. 1416, fol. 172r

represent the woman's conjuration of the dead prophet, and serves to remind the viewer that her presence is not totally insignificant. For the text clearly states that the woman performed her feats through the magical arts.<sup>35</sup>

A second major characteristic of the medieval illustrations of the Endor story is that they show little attempt by artists to problematize Samuel's message to Saul by reference to Samuel's true identity. The exegesis of this story is complex and only the main lines can be summarized here.<sup>36</sup> The strongest position among the church fathers was that the apparition represented the Devil in Samuel's form or a phantom created by the Devil. This was the view held by Eustathius and Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, and by Augustine in his early works.<sup>37</sup> Following Luther's unambiguous exegesis, it also became the view of almost all Protestant theologians.<sup>38</sup> Some of the fathers, such as Origen, supported by Flavius Josephus, and medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, maintained the view that the apparition actually represented the soul of Samuel. From the later sixteenth century another interpretation developed, found already in Jerome but



**Fig. 5** *The Figure of Samuel Conjured by the Necromancer of Endor Rises from his Grave*, illumination on parchment, in Heinrich von München, *Weltchronik*, Bavaria–Austria, c. 1380–1390  
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 7377, fol. 125r

articulated at length in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), that no figure had appeared, but was merely a product of the woman's deception and trickery, engineered by her and possibly an accomplice.

The depiction of the necromancy scene in the *Tickhill Psalter* is quite exceptional in medieval illustration. This lavish manuscript of c.1314 copied for the Augustinian Canons in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, by the former prior John Tickhill, and probably illustrated by artists from York, contains nine illuminations depicting the Endor story.<sup>39</sup> Folio 43 recto presents two scenes (Fig. 6). On the left, the woman watched by the king and his assistants gestures towards the figure of Samuel, who is depicted rising from his tomb. Her gesture would seem to signify conjuration rather than mere pointing; and in the scroll to her right she answers Saul's question as to what she sees: 'I see gods rising from the earth.' The scene on the right shows Saul kneeling before the 'Anima Samuel' (the soul of Samuel), a figure clothed in a white shroud, having realized (the scroll tells us) that this figure was Samuel. The *Tickhill Psalter*'s labelling



Fig. 6 *The Woman of Endor Conjures Up Samuel for King Saul; King Saul Kneels before the Soul of Samuel*, illumination on parchment, in *Psalter (Tickhill Psalter)*, Worksop Priory, Nottinghamshire, 1303–c.1314

The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Spencer Collection, Ms. 26, fol. 43r

of the figure as ‘the soul of Samuel’ suggests that the artist saw this as an act of (intended) necromancy, not of diabolical delusion. This was probably the result of the views of Flavius Josephus, which had been circulating in Peter Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica* since the late twelfth century. The wording in the scrolls of the Tickhill Psalter illuminations consistently quote the *Historia Scholastica*; and the text of the *Historia Scholastica* cites Josephus as the source for the view of Samuel.<sup>40</sup>

In the World Chronicles the nature of the apparition is left uncertain, even when, as in the 1459 Colmar manuscript, the caption describing the negotiations between the woman and the king states that the king demands a sorceress raise up Samuel’s body (Fig. 7).<sup>41</sup> Yet unlike the illustrations from the sixteenth and later centuries, there is little visual or even literary evidence to suggest that any particular image of Samuel represented the Devil or a diabolical illusion. Indeed, the apparition in a London manuscript of the *Bible historiale* of Guyart Desmoulin from the 1290s, which seems to follow the Desmoulin text and depicts Samuel as ‘glorious’ and ‘clad in a *priestly mantle*’, suggests the very opposite.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, the cross above the head of Samuel in a 1449 World Chronicle of Heinrich of Munich (Fig. 8) clearly rules out any identification with the Devil or a ghost created by the Devil.<sup>43</sup> It suggests rather a holy soul or body, whose appearance and message are divinely sanctioned. This clearly has implications for the role of the woman, a woman whose gesture



**Fig. 7** *Saul Demands that the Necromancer of Endor Raise Up Samuel's Body*, illumination on parchment, in Rudolf von Ems, *Weltchronik*, Hagenau, Dietrich Lauber Workshop, compiled by Hans Schilling, 1459  
Bibliothèque municipale, Colmar, Ms. 305, fol. 273v

indicates she believes she possesses the magical powers to raise the dead, but is hardly in league with the Devil or carrying out the Devil's work.

A third important aspect of the medieval illustrations of the Endor story is the manner in which artists in the fifteenth century tend to provide the woman with more agency and autonomy than previously. The seven pre-sixteenth-century images I have found that depict the woman of Endor negotiating with Saul (as in Fig. 7), and another three that show her providing the traumatized king with food and drink, might be construed as examples of the woman's independence of action and agency. Although the latter fit well the traditional role of women as carers and nurturers, and closely follow the biblical story, they are nevertheless very few in number.



**Fig. 8** *The Necromancer of Endor Conjures Up Samuel for King Saul*, illumination on paper, in Heinrich von München, *Weltchronik*, Styria, 1449  
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 7364, fol. 256v

Likewise, images which suggest not simply independence, but a more proactive role for the woman in her conjuration of Samuel are also very few prior to the fifteenth century. Yet they do require some acknowledgement. There are the illuminations from the Tickhill Psalter (Fig. 6), for instance, and from the 1449 Munich manuscript of the World Chronicle of Heinrich of Munich (Fig. 8), which we have already seen, and similar examples which depict the woman carrying out the conjuration in her own space, as in a northern French Picture Bible of c.1200, and in the *Toledo Bible of St Louis* of c.1230.<sup>44</sup> One quite unique example is a roundel in the so-called Gumbertus Bible, originating in Regensburg c.1180 (Fig. 9).<sup>45</sup> Here the woman of Endor adopts a position found in no other image: she seems to be assisting Samuel to rise out of the tomb, lifting up his dead body from behind in order to present him to the king, while in an Austrian Extended Christherre Chronicle of c.1370 held in Linz (Fig. 10), she is now in front of the king and gesturing excitedly with both hands toward the bearded and white-haired Samuel emerging from the earth.<sup>46</sup> The extended index figure of her right hand, prominent against the blue background, represents



**Fig. 9** *The Necromancer of Endor Conjures Up Samuel from his Tomb and Presents Him to Saul*, illumination on parchment, in *The Gumbertus Bible*, Regensburg, c. 1180–1185

University Library, Erlangen, Ms. 1, fol. 82v

the verbal conjuration she uses to raise up the prophet, and the manner in which her upper body leans forward emphasizes her active engagement. Saul's extended right index finger would also seem to refer to his participation, as he demands to know what the woman can see.

But during the fifteenth century the previously infrequent emphasis on the agency and autonomy of the woman in conjuring the prophet becomes more prominent, and is also expressed in novel and creative ways. In a richly illustrated Bible of c.1450 held in the New York Public Library, the woman (labelled a sorceress) raises her hand in the classic gesture of conjuration as the shrouded Samuel steps from his tomb and King Saul reels back, his arms raised in fright (Fig. 11). Again the woman is the protagonist, occupying a space in front of the king from which she controls the action, generating the apparition and also David's strong emotional reaction.<sup>47</sup> An illumination of c.1465 in a Bible held by the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Fig. 12) takes the woman's agency and autonomy a



Fig. 10 *The Necromancer of Endor Conjures Up Samuel for King Saul*, illumination on parchment, in *Extended Christherre Chronicle*, Austria, c. 1370  
Oberösterreichisches Landesbibliothek, Linz, cod. 472, fol. 276v

step further, by introducing a spatial relationship not previously found in medieval illustration. The necromancy scene is set within a building, an environment that is quite common in later representations of the story, but previously only found in the Bamberg manuscript of Peter Lombard's *Commentary on the Psalms* (Fig. 2). More importantly, the illustration locates the woman in the presence of Samuel, in a room into which Saul only comes later. Samuel has clearly appeared to the woman first, with Saul not even present. Her raised arms register her fright, and identify the moment described in the text immediately below: when the woman realizes she has conjured up Samuel, she cries out with a loud voice, and concludes that her client must be King Saul, to whom she now turns to remonstrate over his deception. The crucial relationship is spatial. The woman has a space and agency quite independent of Saul, an agency she rarely exercises in the manuscript tradition, but one that will become critical in the exegesis from Reginald Scot on.<sup>48</sup>



**Fig. 11** *The Sorceress of Endor Conjures Up Samuel from his Tomb for King Saul*, illumination on paper, in *History Bible*, Constance?, c. 1445  
The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Manuscript and Archives Division, MA 104, fol. 361v

An early fifteenth-century illumination produced by the Parisian Boucicaut workshop in a manuscript of Guyart Desmoulin's *Bible historiale*, captures the very same moment in the story: the woman realizes that she must have conjured up Samuel, that her client must be Saul, that she has transgressed Saul's prohibition against necromancy and, afraid of the consequences, she turns to remonstrate with Saul over his deception of her (Fig. 13). But in this case the artist links the woman's realization to the forces of evil by inserting a bat-like demon above the scene. Various medieval exegetes endeavoured to explain why the necromancer was able to draw such conclusions and were widely known from their summary in the *Historia Scholastica*. Some claimed that only kings could raise up prophets, others argued that those raised from the dead normally emerged from their tombs feet first, but when called up by a king, they emerged head first.<sup>49</sup> This particular narrative context makes me doubt Jean-Claude Schmitt's suggestion that this illumination constructs Samuel's apparition



Fig. 12 Furtmeyer Workshop, *The Necromancer of Endor Remonstrates with King Saul When She Realizes the Person She Has Conjured Is the Prophet Samuel*, illumination on parchment, in *German Bible, Old Testament*, Regensburg, c. 1465–1470

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 8010a, fol. 274v

as the product of diabolical power.<sup>50</sup> The bat seems to be positioned above the scene as a whole, rather than over the prophet or even over the woman. And although the woman is clearly depicted as intermediary, a medium between king and prophet, the condemnation is directed as much to the activity of the king as to that of the woman. Samuel's identity, moreover, is not really addressed visually. This is not to deny, however, that regardless of the artist's precise intentions, the presence of a demon-like bat could be readily interpreted as pertaining to a diabolical alliance between the woman and the prophet. This would be especially so in the theological environment of Paris in the early fifteenth century, in the wake of the University of Paris' *Conclusions* of 1398 that condemned the divining of the future by means of magical and superstitious rituals and objects as a form of demonic invocatory magic.<sup>51</sup>



**Fig. 13** Boucicaut Master Workshop, *The Necromancer of Endor Remonstrates with King Saul When She Realizes the Person She Has Conjured (with Diabolical Assistance?) Is the Prophet Samuel*, illumination on parchment, in Guyart Desmoulin, *Bible historiale*, Paris, c.1400–1424

The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms. M. 394, fol. 127v. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), 1910. (Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library)

Another fifteenth-century image does suggest this close relationship between the woman of Endor and Samuel through the use of spatial proximity and body language found in some post-medieval illustrations. The image is found in a south German or Austrian history Bible of c.1458, which depicts the three key figures facing the viewer as they stand before a large rock, possibly meant to represent Samuel's tomb (Fig. 14).<sup>52</sup> Saul is especially animated, gesturing excitedly, while the woman and the prophet



Fig. 14 *The Prophet Samuel, the Necromancer of Endor and King Saul*, illumination on paper, in *History Bible*, South Germany or Austria, 1458  
 Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg, Cod. 8 in scrinio, fol. 223v

stand close to each other, their relationship suggested by the tilting of the woman's head and the curve of her body, as she hitches up her skirt. More surprisingly still, the figure of Samuel holds on to her cloak as though to support himself. On clear display is the mutual relationship between these two figures; and as if to underline this, the text in the column immediately opposite, which draws directly on the *Historia Scholastica*, is included with a prominent heading: 'Some opinions of Samuel's conjuration'.<sup>53</sup> The first opinion is that it was an evil spirit that appeared in the form of the prophet – an opinion that the artist's depiction of the close relationship between the woman and Samuel would seem to represent.

This study shows, then, that although there was no dramatic change in the visual representation of the woman of Endor prior to the escalation

of the number of witch trials in the fifteenth century, we do begin to see a greater level of attention given to her at the end of this period. There are signs of a condemnation of necromancy as demonic, and of a close relationship between the conjuror and conjured. But the primary change relates to a stronger sense of the necromancer's agency and her personal role in conjuring the dead prophet. Such changes clearly reflect changes in exegesis, the broader religious culture's growing suspicion of all forms of magic, and possibly also an increasing association of women and magic. While alternative understandings of the diabolical nature of the Samuel apparition were circulating since the early church fathers, and were clearly incorporated in textual descriptions of the Endor story from the time of the *Historia Scholastica*, the notion of Samuel as the Devil in disguise was not represented in the pictorial account of those events. As a consequence, the woman of Endor was not clearly identified with the demonic and diabolical, as she was to be in later centuries.

Peter Comestor's openness to a range of interpretations concerning the true nature of Samuel, a range of interpretations transmitted through history Bibles in particular, constituted one reason why the woman of Endor was not subjected to any overt demonization in this period. But even more important, I believe, were the views transmitted through the editions and translations of the World Chronicle tradition. For at the end of the account of the biblical story, the World Chronicles included a paraphrase of Flavius Josephus' effusive eulogy of this necromancer as an exemplar of the virtues of generosity and compassion.<sup>54</sup> Yet, with a growing suspicion of all forms of magic from the mid-fifteenth century, a more intensive biblical exegesis in the sixteenth, a flourishing demonological literature that identified the practice of magic as dependent on a diabolical pact, as well as the disappearance of the World Chronicle genre, Josephus' viewpoint was largely lost to the exegetical and iconographical traditions. From the sixteenth century the female necromancer, diviner and sorcerer of Endor began to appear as a witch, complicit in a story of diabolical illusion and deceit.<sup>55</sup>

## NOTES

1. Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Le spectre de Samuel et la sorcière d'En Dor. Avatars historiques d'un récit biblique: I Rois 28', *Etudes Rurales* 105–6, 1987, pp. 37–54; Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye. Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 239–58.

2. Charles Zika, 'Reformation, Scriptural Precedent and Witchcraft: Johann Teufel's Woodcut of the Witch of Endor', in Breward, Ian (ed.), *Reforming the Reformation. Essays in Honour of Principal Peter Matheson* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004), pp. 148–66; Paolo Lombardi, 'La strega come necromante: Il caso della pittonessa di Endor', in Bosco, Giovanni and Castelli, Patrizia (eds), *Stregoneria e Streghe nell'Europa Moderna: convegno internazionale di studi* (Pisa: Biblioteca univesitaria di Pisa, 1996), pp. 181–206.
3. Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft. Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 156–60.
4. For the battle and suicide, see 1 Sam. 31.
5. For an overview, see Charles Zika, 'The Witch of Endor. Transformations of a Biblical Necromancer in Early Modern Europe', in Kent, F.W. and Zika, C. (eds), *Rituals, Images and Words. Varieties of Cultural Expression in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 235–59; Charles Zika, 'Images in Service of the Word: The Witch of Endor in the Bibles of Early Modern Europe', *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums*, 2009, pp. 151–65; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
6. I develop these arguments in a forthcoming article, 'Recasting Images of Witchcraft in the Later Seventeenth Century: The Witch of Endor as Ritual Magician', in Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, forthcoming).
7. Of the c.200 individual visual images I have found of this subject, approximately eight per cent occur in each of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, five per cent in the sixteenth, and thirty-eight per cent in each of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such figures are very inexact, however, since many works cannot be clearly dated and the categorization of images as copies or original is imprecise.
8. 1 Sam. 28:7.
9. 'Pythonem quidam tradunt esse artem suscitandi mortuos quam Pythius adinvenit'. Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, in *Patrologia Latina*, Jean-Paul Migne (ed.), vol. 198 (1855; repr., Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), p. 1320.
10. The woman is also given a name, Zephaniah, in the medieval aggadic compilation *Yalkut Shimoni*. See Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's 'Liber antiquitatum bibliarum'* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:192–93, 2:1201–15.
11. For some consideration of the Hebrew text, and the meaning of this term, see David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI:

Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 615–52; Brian Schmidt, ‘The “Witch” of Endor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy’, in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 111–29; Simon Uriel, ‘Saul at Endor. The Narrative Balance between the Pitiless Prophet and the Compassionate Witch’, in *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 73–92; Josef Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), pp. 206–27, 292–97.

12. Rowan A. Greer and Margaret M. Mitchell, *The ‘Belly-Myther’ of Endor: Interpretations of 1 Kingdoms 28 in the Early Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. xi–xv.
13. Flavius Josephus, *Judean Antiquities* 5–7, ed. and trans. Begg, Christopher, vol. 4, *Flavius Josephus. Translation and Commentary*, ed. Mason, Steve (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 190, n. 1196.
14. See below for the mss in Colmar and St Gall. A modern edition of Rudolf of Ems’ Weltchronik is in Rudolf von Ems, *Rudolf von Ems Weltchronik*, Gustav Ehrismann (ed.) (Dublin: Weidman, 1967).
15. Luther’s marginal note reads, ‘und solchs der böse geist mit der Zeuberinnen und Saul redet und that inn Samuels person und namen’.
16. For example, in the following editions of the Luther Bible: Lüneberg: Stern, 1684; Lüneburg: Stern, 1732; Tübingen: Cotta, 1729.
17. For example, the introduction to 1 Sam. 28 in the 1683 Cambridge edition of the King James Bible reads in part, ‘Saul having destroyed the witches, and now in his fear forsaken of God, seeketh to a witch. The witch encouraged by Saul, raiseth up Samuel.’
18. Geneva Bible, 1560: ‘Saul consulteth with a witche, and she causeth him to speak with Samuel’; *The Famous and Memorable Workes of Josephus ... translated out of the Latin, and French, by Thomas Lodge ...* ([London]: [Peter Short], 1602), p. 155: ‘Saul commandeth the witch to raise Samuels ghost’.
19. In the most frequently cited modern English Bibles she is called a medium (RSV) or a necromancer (Jerusalem Bible).
20. A fundamental guide is still Hans Vollmer, *Materialien zur Bibelgeschichte und religiösen Volkskunde des Mittelalters*, 4 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1912–29). For a short introduction, see Heimo Reinitzer, (ed.), *Historienbibel: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Cod. 7 in scriptio* (Munich: Helga Lengenfelder, 1988), pp. 27–35.
21. *Biblia de San Luis. Catedral Primada de Toledo*, Ramón Conzález Ruiz, (ed.), vol. 1 (Barcelona: M. Moleiro, 2002), p. 56; also see Oxford, Bodl. 270b, fol. 144, reproduced in Alexandre de Laborde (ed.), *La Bible moralisée, illustrée, conservée à Oxford, Paris et Londres; reproduction intégrale*

*du manuscrit du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris: Pour les membres de la Société, 1912).

22. See below for Peter Lombard's *Commentary on the Psalms* and the Tickhill Psalter.
23. Schmitt, 'Le spectre de Samuel', pp. 47–48; Maria C. Sherwood-Smith, *Studies in the Reception of the Historia Scholastica of Peter Comestor: The Schwarzwälder Predigten, the Weltchronik of Rudolf von Ems, the Scholastica of Jacob van Maerlant and the Historiebijbel von 1360* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2000), p. 2; Hans Vollmer (ed.), *Eine deutsche Schulbibel des 15. Jahrhunderts. Historia Scholastica des Petrus Comestor in deutschen Auszug mit lateinischem Paralleltext. Teil 2. I Regum bis II Machabäer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1927).
24. Sandra Hindman, 'Fifteenth-Century Dutch Bible Illustration and the *Historia Scholastica*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37, 1974, p. 132.
25. Rosemarie Potz McGerr, 'Guyart Desmoulins, the Vernacular Master of Histories, and his *Bible Historiale*', *Viator* 14, 1983, pp. 211–44.
26. Elisabeth Klemm (ed.), *Deutsche Weltchroniken des Mittelalters*, exh. cat. (Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 1996); Jörn-Uwe Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften in Versen: Katalog der Handschriften und Einordnung der Illustrationen in die Bildüberlieferung* (Munich: Tuduv, 1993).
27. The *Kaiserchronik* is an earlier twelfth-century verse chronicle from Regensburg; the *Saxon World Chronicle* is a late thirteenth-century chronicle from Lower Saxony that came in prose and verse versions; the *Christherre-Chronik* is a mid-thirteenth century verse chronicle from Thuringia; the *Jans Enikel Weltchronik* is a late thirteenth-century verse chronicle from Vienna.
28. Gisela Kornrumpf, 'Die Weltchronik Heinrichs von München. Zu Überlieferung und Wirkung', in Peter K. Stein, Andreas Weiss and Gerold Hayer (eds), *Festschrift Ingo Reiffenstein* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1988), pp. 493–509.
29. For this Bamberg manuscript, see *Der Buchschmuck zum Psalmenkommentar des Petrus Lombardus in Bamberg: Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Msc. Bibl. 59*, Gude Suckale-Redlefsen (ed.) (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1986); also Schmitt, 'Le spectre de Samuel', p. 49; figs 1, 51, 59.
30. Schmitt, 'Le spectre de Samuel', p. 59 n. 58, incorrectly refers to them as the sons of Saul.
31. Given that the woman's hand gesture closely matches Saul's, another possible reading is that the artist has conflated the woman's fear when she first discerned she had conjured the prophet (verses 12–13) and Saul's fear

once he heard Samuel's message (verses 19–20). The gestures more likely represent speech rather than emotion.

32. Colmar, Bibliothèque municipale, cod. 305, fols 273v, 274r. Also see Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften*, pp. 112–24; Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Spätformen mittelalterlicher Buchherstellung* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001), 2:17–24.

33. Also see Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften*, pp. 104–11.

34. Also see Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften*, pp. 258–66.

35. 'Da wip gie do nah ... ihr zoubirlist.' Rudolf von Ems (1967), p. 361, lines 25,794–97.

36. For an overview, see Schmitt, 'Le spectre de Samuel'; Lombardi (1996); Smelik, K.A.D., 'The Witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 A.D.', *Vigiliae Christianae* 33, 1977, pp. 160–79.

37. Augustine changed his views quite dramatically and therefore could be drawn on for support by different writers.

38. For Luther, see Zika, 'Reformation, Scriptural Precedent and Witchcraft', pp. 149–51.

39. Donald Egbert, *The Tickhill Psalter and Related Manuscripts: A School of Manuscript Illumination in England during the Early Fourteenth Century* (New York: New York Public Library and the Department of Art and Archeology of Princeton University, 1940); Jonathan Alexander, James Morrow and Lucy Freeman Sandler (eds), *The Splendour of the Word: Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts at the New York Public Library* (New York: The New York Public Library and Harvey Miller Publishers, 2005), pp. 201–7.

40. In Josephus, Saul asks the woman 'to bring up the soul of Samuel for him' (Josephus, *Judean Antiquities*, p. 191); whereas the biblical text makes no mention of Samuel's soul. The first reference to Samuel in the *Historia Scholastica* reads, 'Et ait anima Samuelis, ut dicit Josephus' (Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, p. 1320). Aquinas also uses the term 'anima Samuelis'; see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Vol. 45 (2a2a. 171–178). Prophecy and Other Charisms*, Potter, Roland (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 87.

41. 'Das sic erquickete Samuels lip' (fig. 7).

42. For this illumination, see Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, fig. 3. The description of Samuel derives from the *Historia Scholastica*, and ultimately from Josephus; see Josephus, *Judean Antiquities*, p. 192.

43. Also see Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften*, pp. 250–57.

44. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 76 F 5, fol. 43r; *Biblia de San Luis*, p. 56.
45. The Bible is named after the Collegiate church of St Gumbertus in Ansbach, which acquired the manuscript soon after its completion, and held it until 1733. See Veronika Pirker-Aurenhammer, *Die Gumbertusbibel. Codex 1 der Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen: Ein Regensburger Bildprogramm des späten 12. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Universitätsverlag Regensburg, 1998), pp. 11–22, 44–56, Tafel 5; Schmitt (1998), fig. 2.
46. See Günther, *Die illustrierten mittelhochdeutschen Weltchronikhandschriften*, pp. 183–93.
47. A similar scene is found in a far more sophisticated illumination by the north Netherlandish illuminator, Master of Otto van Moerdrecht, located in a richly decorated Utrecht history Bible. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 38, vol. 1, fol. 175v.
48. Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584; New York: Dover, 1972), pp. 79–86, book VII, chs 8–14.
49. Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, p. 1321.
50. Schmitt suggests this, even if he is tentative, when he writes, ‘dans cette image, le débat paraît tranché en faveur de la thèse diabolique’ (‘Le spectre de Samuel’, p. 53); and when he captions the illumination, ‘The ghost of Samuel: a diabolical interpretation’ (*Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, fig. 1). Although I have previously accepted Schmitt’s view (Zika, ‘The Witch of Endor’, 239), I now believe it needs a little more nuance.
51. For the *Conclusio*, Alan Kors and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 127–32.
52. See also *Historienbibel: Farbmikrofiche-Edition der Handschrift, Hamburg, Staats- und Univ.-Bibliothek, Cod. 8 in scrinio*, Hahn, Anna Katharina (ed.) (Munich: Lengenfelder, 1997).
53. ‘Etlich wänung von des Samuels erkükung.’
54. Josephus, *Judean Antiquities*, pp. 193–94.
55. The first version of this essay was written while I was a Visiting Fellow at the Lichtenberg-Kolleg, University of Goettingen, and I thank them for their support. Funding was also provided by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (CE110001011). For suggestions and assistance with the final version, I thank Laura Kounine, Charlotte Millar and Michael Pickering.

# Preaching on Witchcraft? The Sermons of Johannes Geiler of Kaysersberg (1445–1510)

*Rita Voltmer*

## JOHANNES GEILER OF KAYSERSBERG (1445–1510): SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Johannes Geiler of Kaysersberg is considered one of the most famous European preachers of the late Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> The first secular, university-trained man to take the public preaching office at the Strasbourg Cathedral, Geiler fulfilled his responsibilities with the greatest possible fervour and enthusiasm.<sup>2</sup> The foundation charter of the Cathedral from 1478 listed a multitude of duties for the learned preacher, including the obligations of *instructio* and *correctio*, *reformatio* and *purgatio*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, he was to instruct in the vernacular the simple folk as well as the authorities of the City, preaching *inter alia* from the Gospels and the Ten Commandments. Moreover, he was supposed to initiate a true Christian conversion of the people, correcting their sinful lives that were (allegedly) rampant with debauchery and blasphemy. His ultimate aim was to inspire the reform and purification of the entire urban society. The charter specified the preacher's duties in a rather idealized and rhetorical manner, but young Geiler

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R. Voltmer (✉)

Department of History, University of Trier, Trier, Germany  
e-mail: [voltmer@uni-trier.de](mailto:voltmer@uni-trier.de)

embraced the requirements of his new office with enthusiasm. He saw himself as the warden of the city, standing atop the Strasbourg cathedral tower and watching closely for outbreaks of sin, which should be eradicated. From the outset, he designed an extensive programme, which aimed to bring about reform and true purification.<sup>4</sup> He thus stood in the reform tradition of the councils of Constance (1414–18) and Basle (1431–49). His utopian plan was to model Strasbourg into a New Jerusalem, a City of God ruled only by the Ten Commandments. As a result he intervened in daily urban politics, using the pulpits in the cathedral as well as the monasteries as agitation platforms. Through fiery sermons, Johannes exhorted both the city magistrates and the clerical authorities to fulfil their duties in bringing to life his great plan of Christian *renovatio*.<sup>5</sup>

During the thirty-two years of his office, he preached more than 4500 sermons, all of which are lost in their verbal form, although about 1300 are recorded in a variety of written forms. Between 1495 and 1509, his preaching was studiously recorded in the written notes taken by the friar Johannes Pauli during or after Geiler's sermons. Beyond that, there are notes, letters, written advice and *gravamina* left by Johannes's own hand.<sup>6</sup> The works of Johannes Geiler provide us with a broad insight into late medieval society, seen through the perspective of a learned cleric, who had a very critical and observant eye on the daily life and politics of Strasbourg.

Johannes Geiler's life and sermons have been the topic of several German and French researchers, but most of them have avoided the daunting task of delving into his complete impressive oeuvre. Consequently, the preacher's life and work has been caught in a war of arguments. The inseparable body of his personality and his self-commitment, of his vita and his appointment have been divided up into segments and labelled in different, often paradoxical ways, by historians, who have named him variously a witty teacher of the folk, a pre-reformer, a failed reformer of the church, a legal reformer, an early humanist and a grumbling moralizer.<sup>7</sup>

German historians of witchcraft have taken up this rather selective way of dealing with the Strasbourgian preacher. Their primary focus has been a series of Lenten sermons, called the *Emeis*.<sup>8</sup> In 1901, the German archivist Joseph Hansen published a large and still valuable sample of sources concerning the medieval roots of witchcraft, including parts from Geiler's *Emeis* sermons. Hansen, following misleading information, dated the Lent series to 1508.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the first misunderstanding of Geiler's approach towards witchcraft was born. In the following years, some scholars pointed out that principally Geiler had condemned superstition and

all superstitious practices. Others thought Geiler to be an enlightened opponent of witchcraft trials. Some believed that his audience forced Geiler to deal with witchcraft and magic in the pulpit, but that he had flinched from the topic himself. Some were rather puzzled that Geiler could talk about the witches' flight being both an illusion and an actual event. Some quarrelled about related questions, such as whether or not Geiler should be labelled a demonologist. Had he been a representative of the contemporary witch craze? Had he used the *Malleus Maleficarum* or had he not? What other demonological works or tracts did he consult? Had he believed in a new sect of witches, who rode in the air and met at sabbats? Or was he still a follower of the older concept of the *Canon Episcopi*? Due to their defective approach, the results of these debates remained unsatisfactory, first because Geiler's entire oeuvre has only been analysed partly and out of context. Second, neither Geiler's self-perception nor the demands of his post nor his ultimate reform programme were taken into account. However, it has to be admitted that a close reading of Geiler's sermons remains rather difficult, since a complete edition of his works is missing. Without any translations of the original texts, written in Latin or in the Alemannic German vernacular, German, French and English historians who have worked on Geiler have to use the original manuscripts and early print publications, stemming from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Anglo-American researchers became concerned with Geiler's approach to witchcraft. Before the First World War, the intellectual exchange among German, English and American historians was still strong. Henry Charles Lea, who was well acquainted with German historians like Joseph Hansen and Johannes Janssen, included a summary of one of the *Emeis* sermons, which Hansen had published, in his materials towards the history of witchcraft.<sup>10</sup> George Lincoln Burr and Arthur C. Howland prepared the annotated collection of their friend Lea's publication in 1939. Thus the connection linking Geiler's works with the topic of witchcraft reached a wider audience. As Hansen had done, Lea and Burr emphasized Geiler's impact on teaching the populace learned concepts of witchcraft. All three agreed that the well-respected Strasbourgian preacher must have used the *Malleus Maleficarum* even if he did not quote it. George Lincoln Burr acquired a copy of the *Emeis* to place it in the *Witchcraft collection* at Cornell University (Ithaca/New York),<sup>11</sup> where probably Rossell Hope Robbins used it in writing his *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*

(first printed 1959). Although using the incorrect date of 1508, his short article concerning Johannes Geiler stated very clearly several important points,<sup>12</sup> including the idea that Geiler had rejected the belief in shape-shifting and the transformation of humans into werewolves. The Devil could only act with the *permissio dei*. Not the witches, but only the Devil could work *maleficia*. *Beneficia* had to be punished like the *maleficia*, as both were acts of forbidden magic with the help of the Devil's pact. Furthermore, Robbins underlined the importance of the woodcuts which illustrated Geiler's sermons and which probably can be attributed to Hans Baldung Grien.

Robbins declared the *Emeis* to be 'the first book on witchcraft in German (1517)'. Here, the outstanding expert on Cornell's witchcraft collection was wrong, since in 1489 the treatise of Ulrich Molitor had already been published in the vernacular, whereas the *Emeis* did not appear until 1516 and was re-edited in 1517. In 1972, Alan Charles Kors (Henry Charles Lea Professor of History)<sup>13</sup> and Edward Peters (Henry Charles Lea Professor of History)<sup>14</sup> – both at the University of Pennsylvania – included a translation of passages from Geiler's witches' sermons in their sourcebook *Witchcraft in Europe* (revised reprint in 2001). They pointed out that Geiler had been 'one of the most prolific theologians and public preachers in pre-reformation Germany'. Again relying on Hansen and Lea's material and on Robbins's encyclopaedia, they dated the *Emeis* falsely to 1508. They were also mistaken in thinking that the sermons were 'the first discussions of witchcraft in the German language since Johannes Hartlieb's work in 1456'. Kors and Peters emphasized that Geiler had not believed all charges against witches, yet that he had demanded the death penalty for witchcraft.<sup>15</sup>

Robbins's 1959 encyclopaedia was the first to deal with the witchcraft topic in an outstanding scientific approach. Since then, the number of dictionaries covering demonology, magic and witchcraft has increased. In 2003, both Michael D. Bailey and William E. Burns released such a publication. Each dedicated a short article to the *Emeis* sermons, both with the wrong date of publication. Burns emphasized that Geiler's approach to witchcraft was not always internally consistent, especially when it came to the description of the witches' flight as being a delusion as well as real. According to Burns, Geiler had seen witchcraft as a mainly female crime, demanding the death penalty for it.<sup>16</sup> Bailey corrected Robbins, instead calling Geiler's *Emeis* 'one of the first major works on witchcraft'.<sup>17</sup> In 2006, Charles Zika – drawing on my own research – in his contribution

to the *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft* dated the *Emeis* correctly to 1509. Being more interested in the iconography of witches, Zika summarized the witches' sermons briefly, but correctly identified Nider's *Formicarius* as one of Geiler's sources.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to these encyclopaedia entries, English-speaking surveys of European witchcraft sometimes mentioned the Strasbourgian preacher's transmission of the witchcraft topic to a broader audience. In 2002, Edward Peters erroneously stated that the 'popular sermons of the theologian Johann Geiler von Kaisersberg, preached in Strasburg in 1508, condemned not magic (*Zauberei*), but witches (*Von den Unholden, oder von den Hexen*)'.<sup>19</sup> In 2007, Robert Thurston declared that Geiler had been 'deeply anti-Semitic and regularly mentioned Jews and witches in the same denunciations'. Thurston referred to the *Beichtgedicht* of Hans Folz, which Geiler had edited in 1497.<sup>20</sup> Since the sermons, which the Strasbourgian preacher had released in Lent 1497 on Folz's *Mirror of Repentance* are lost, we do not know how he had treated the topics of witchcraft and the Jews that were discussed therein.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Thurston believed Geiler to be a major spokesman for the *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinrich Kramer, whose views he was supposed to have endorsed. This sounds rather exaggerated, since we have no proof at all that Geiler openly referred to the *Malleus*. Likewise misleading, Katherine Crawford suggested in 2007 that the *Emeis* provided a 'sexual script' for the witches' confessions, since it was the reputed 'first German-language witchcraft treatise which described the interrogation of suspected witches'.<sup>22</sup> Whereas Brian P. Levack in his survey on European witch-hunts did not mention the Strasbourgian preacher at all, Brian A. Pavlac granted him some lines, but brought more confusion to the chronology. According to Pavlac, allegedly Geiler had written the *Emeis* in 1507 and published it in 1508. However, I agree with Pavlac that it 'helped to broaden the discussion to nonscholars', but the 'result, however, was exchanges of ideas, rather than creation of hunts'.<sup>23</sup> Finally in 2013, Michael D. Bailey presented a thoughtful study in which he mentioned Geiler's sermons on witchcraft only briefly, but with the correct publication date and an emphasis on the fact that Geiler relied heavily on Nider's tract.<sup>24</sup> However, in 2013 Gerhild Scholz-Williams counts the *Emeis* as a demonology, published (wrongly) in 1508.<sup>25</sup>

Since Robbins, the important impact of the woodcuts, which illustrated the *Emeis*, on witchcraft iconography has been emphasized. In particular, Sigrid Schade, Jane Davidson, Linda Hults, Charles Zika and, at least, Yvonne Owens, have concentrated on interpreting the woodcut, which

shows three witches at their nocturnal gathering with a male observer, sitting in a tree.<sup>26</sup> After my close reading of the image and Geiler's text and in the wider context of its later transformation and reuse, it seems clear to me now that above all the image is not a pictorial narrative, commenting on the written narrative. The image does not depict the pagan planet god Saturn and the influence of melancholy on witches (as Charles Zika proposed), nor does it imply the motif of the 'battle for the trousers' (as Sigrid Schade has argued). Most of all, the publisher added the image to attract the attention of potential purchasers. Acting like a 'peeping Tom', obviously, the male observer takes the voyeuristic perspective of the reader, watching both, partly naked female bodies and the occult secrets of the witches' crime. In the first line, the image served commercial interests as an 'eye catcher'. The further use of the picture underlines my reading, since as visual illustration, it served in tracts, which either discussed the topic of witchcraft in a sceptical tone or which agreed with witch-hunts or which dealt with witchcraft only marginally. But due to limited space, we have to leave aside this important question concerning the tension between the lost voice of Geiler's sermons, their textual manifestation and their illustrations.<sup>27</sup>

Generally, Anglo-American scholars have treated Geiler's sermons in a very selective and superficial way. Likewise, the French and German researchers dealt with the topic without great accuracy. Herein, we find the anachronistic tendency to declare that Geiler was a representative of humanist enlightenment, whose antagonism against witch trials and witch belief had a posthumous impact on the electoral Palatinate with its total absence of witch trials in the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Even today, the debate continues over whether Johannes Geiler was an opponent of the witch craze and an ardent follower of the old-fashioned *Canon Episcopi* or if his witches' sermons instead gave both authority and diffusion to the new belief in a devilish sect of witches. A thoroughly close reading of Geiler's whole oeuvre offers a deeper perspective on these discussions.

### NO PLACE FOR WITCHES: JOHANNES GEILER OF KAYSERSBERG AND HIS CONCEPT OF URBAN REFORM

To reach a deeper understanding of the preacher's attitude towards superstition, magic, sorcery and witchcraft, one has to take his universal design of urban reform into consideration.<sup>29</sup> Johannes Geiler did not restrict his efforts of spiritual instruction to lay people and nuns, nor was he alone in

his ambition to reform the church. In a broader context, he aimed at a fundamental reform of the entire urban society, with the optimization of power and welfare, based upon the strict rule of godly order.<sup>30</sup> Thus, he followed the fundamental rules of preaching, demanding of the secular and spiritual authorities that all sins and depravity be abolished, so that a truly Christian *reformatio* might dawn. Geiler's attempts were designed for the whole society of Strasbourg: rich and poor, clerics and lay people, men and women, old and young, high and low, citizens and inhabitants, as well as the members of the ruling elite. His programme was thus both political and religious, since the magistrates received from him the strict order to change the policy and statutes of the city according to the divine law. Standing alongside the reform programmes of the Councils of Constance and Basle, Geiler's plan for regulation was strongly reminiscent of Savonarola and his godly state in Florence. Like most attempts in the fifteenth century which aimed at a groundbreaking reform of the whole Christian society, Geiler wanted to abolish heresy, blasphemy, superstition, fornication, sodomy, debauchery, luxury and all kinds of moral and religious corruption. Consistently, his invocations for establishing a new order of the city were justified with the urgent requirement to ward off God's wrath. War, privation, famine, pestilence and increasing witchcraft were seen as the horrible tokens of divine punishment.

Around 1500, the signs of God's wrath seemed to accumulate. Geiler explained the advancing Turks, the outbreak of syphilis, blood rain, comets, monstrosities and other odd phenomena to be clear manifestations of divine rage over human sins and disbelief. In 1499, Geiler made the prophecy that the Anti-Christ was on his way and that the final end of creation was drawing near. He diagnosed Strasbourg as a community of sick sufferers, besmirched with the blood of sin. According to his programme, only a truly Christian conversion of repentance and penitence could help the city to regain spiritual health, a blessed death and eternal salvation. Hence, Geiler proclaimed himself to be the necessary physician. He urged the secular authorities and the clergy to eradicate such heathen superstitions as the misuse of sacraments and sacramentals and the profanation and corruption of holy rites. Heretics, homosexuals and reputed sodomites were judged by Geiler to be sickened members of the city body. Only a sharp segregation from them could prevent the spread of the infection of the rest of the population with the sins of blasphemy, lust and heresy. For that reason, he demanded from the city council a severe persecution. Geiler considered witchcraft to be a perilous assault against

both the welfare of the urban community and the eternal salvation of each inhabitant. In the context of his reform programme, heretics and witches had deliberately left the Christian community to follow the great fiend. In Geiler's New Jerusalem, in a godly city, witches would not be endured.

### SUPERSTITION, SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT IN THE SERMONS OF JOHANNES GEILER (UNTIL 1509)

Geiler's sermons have survived as written texts in a great variety of forms, as full-length sermons as well as summaries and fragments, in Latin or in the vernacular, from his own hand and as *reportationes*, made by Johannes Pauli during Geiler's preaching.<sup>31</sup> The close reading of Geiler's oeuvre has shown an absence of ambiguity in his discussions of witchcraft. In the vernacular, Geiler applied the terms *Aberglaube* (superstition), *Zauberei* (sorcery) and *Hexerei* (witchcraft) synonymously, especially when he defamed the divinatory arts. The Latin terms *incantatrices*, *sagae* or *phitonicae* were commonly translated into the vernacular *Hexen* (witches). Harmful sorcery (or magic), soothsaying and the invocation of demons were called in Latin *maleficum / divinationem facere* or *daemonem incantare*. Following strictly the scholastic doctrine, Geiler categorized all kinds of so-called pagan and superstitious practices, as well as learned and popular magic, as apostate and diabolic acts of heresy. He made no distinction between sorcery (*Zauberei*) and witchcraft (*Hexerei*), or between good and bad magic (*beneficia / maleficia*).

Even today, we do not know exactly when and where Geiler initially took up the topic of superstition, magic and witchcraft. We also do not know which learned treatises he used as his earliest inspirational sources in dealing with these issues. Like his preaching colleagues, he was well acquainted with homiletic reference books, samples of exempla, which, mostly under the heading of the first commandment, provided the speaker with a variety of narratives about superstition, blasphemy, sorcery and witchcraft. Furthermore, Geiler admired the works of the Franciscan preacher of repentance, Bernardino of Siena,<sup>32</sup> as well as the tracts of the famous Parisian theologian Jean Gerson<sup>33</sup> and of the Dominican Johannes Nider.<sup>34</sup> Within various spheres of activity and influence, all three of them battled for a new moral order and against fornication, negligence of belief, superstition, heresy and blasphemy. Thus, we can assume that Geiler was familiar with their statements about superstition, sorcery and witchcraft. After all, he had edited and translated the works of Jean Gerson, who

named heretics, sorcerers, witches, soothsayers and conjurers of demons to be the greatest sinners against the Christian faith. Johannes Nider believed in the real presence of a new sect of witches. In his three treatises he provided alleged case studies of, and narratives about, the witches' activities and various forms of *maleficia* (*Formicarius*, *Praeceptorium divinae legis*, *De lepra morali*).

Gerson and Nider dealt with the 'magical' topics on a theoretical level. But the wandering preacher Bernardino of Siena seemed to have made encounters with magical arts all over his voyages in Italy. He exhorted his audiences to denounce suspected witches, sorcerers and soothsayers. Under the influence of his preaching, Siena, Perugia and Todi sharpened their laws against witchcraft. The execution of witches often followed in the wake of the fiery sermons of Bernardino. Johannes Geiler was strongly influenced by the Gerson, Nider and Bernardino programmes of reform, and used their tracts as references for his own sermons.

Undoubtedly, by reading the works of Gerson, Nider and Bernardino, Johannes Geiler would have been well acquainted with the topic of witchcraft. Moreover, close scrutiny of his sermons has shown that Geiler took references from the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486/1487) and from Martin Plantsch's *Opusculum de sagis maleficis* (printed in 1507). Being a bibliophile and book collector, he must also have known Molitor's work (*De Lamiis et Phitonicis Mulieribus*, printed in Strasbourg 1489) as well as Hans Vintler's *Pluemen der Tugend* (printed in Augsburg 1486). Even a manuscript of Michel Beheim's song against heresy and sorcery (written in around 1459) apparently caught the attention of Johannes Geiler.<sup>35</sup> From the fourteenth century onwards an increasing amount of instruction and guidance for preachers and confessors was produced and, at least after 1450, was printed. There can be no doubt that Geiler made use of these 'Mirrors of Confession' or 'Annotations to the Decalogue', as they were known. Across a wide range, these tracts argued against both learned and popular practices of so-called superstition and magic. Mostly, they copied their arguments from older texts. Even their theoretical lists of popular beliefs and practices can be tracked back to Gratian's *Decretum*. Significantly, from the beginning of the fifteenth century scholars and theologians had begun to associate these 'pagan arts' with blasphemous, devilish witchcraft.<sup>36</sup>

We have strong evidence that Geiler treated the topic of forbidden magic and superstitious arts in sermons dealing with the first commandment, which he gave in Augsburg in 1488.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, he often

discussed the witchcraft issue, especially when he required the extirpation of superstitious non-Christian practices. All in all, he classified the Devil's pact, *maleficia*, weather magic and sexual intercourse with demons as real material manifestations, which had to be punished severely. He also believed that children could be born by human women who had been fathered by demons with stolen human semen.

Following the tradition of the *Canon Episcopi*, he categorized the night ride in pursuit of the goddess Diane to be a diabolic illusion. All manner of deviations from the path of Christian orthodoxy were branded as demonically inspired superstition. In accordance with Thomas of Aquinas, Geiler judged that in every case of superstitious, pagan 'magical' practices, an explicit or implicit pact with the Devil must be assumed. Hence, Geiler made no distinction between *maleficia* and *beneficia*, or between sorcery (*Zauberei*) and witchcraft (*Hexerei*). In 1499 and 1508 he addressed the Strasbourgian city council and vigorously demanded the city's purification from all kinds of superstitious, blasphemous activities. In particular, he called for soothsayers to be banned from Strasbourg. Geiler made it clear that authorities who neglected the eradication of superstition were doomed to eternal hellfire themselves. Seen in this context, Geiler was not breaking new ground when during Lent 1509 he preached about Nider's *Formicarius* and delivered his famous witches' sermons.

### JOHANNES GEILER AND HIS CONCEPTS OF WITCHCRAFT (1509)

Johannes Geiler planned and organized every single sermon as well as every Lent cycle very carefully. In 1509 he picked as his source text Nider's *Formicarius* with its sixty qualities of the anthill as exemplifying examples for the sixty qualities of the true Christian. It was Geiler's habit to stretch the homiletic interpretation of a chosen reference over more than one Lenten cycle. He had done so with the 'death-cycle' in 1495–97<sup>38</sup> and with his famous sermons on Brant's *Ship of Fools* in 1498–99.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, he dealt with fifteen qualities of the anthill in 1509 and kept the rest of Nider's tract for the coming Lents in 1510 and probably in 1511. But sickness forced Geiler to give up the pulpit after his last sermon that year on 30 December. He would never serve again in his office, since he died on 10 March 1510. The sermons on Nider's anthill were left unfinished. For that reason, the twenty-six sermons which dealt with the fifteenth quality

of the ants ('their miraculous eyes'), the renowned *Emeis* sermons, gained an importance which they never would have reached in a finished series of several annual Lenten sermons. Auspiciously, Hans Baldung Grien stayed in Strasbourg seeking citizenship during the season of Lent 1509 and thus had the opportunity to hear Geiler's performances and also come face-to-face with the celebrated preacher.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that Geiler chose the topic of witchcraft deliberately. Perhaps he felt animated by news of witch-hunts in the neighbouring regions.<sup>41</sup> Being a trained eclectic, he used Nider's *Praeceptorium*, Plantsch's *Opusculum* and the *Malleus maleficarum* as additional sources. We can assume that he also read Molitor's tract for further information. All in all, Geiler consulted authors with differing attitudes concerning witchcraft. The Dominican Nider and the secular preacher Plantsch based their arguments on the *Canon Episcopi* tradition. Both, but in particular Nider, included the witches' crime in their sample of general complaints about moral and religious corruption. Alongside heresy and blasphemy, witchcraft was interpreted as an ominous sign, which foretold the onset of the Day of Judgment. Institoris, the author of the *Malleus*, had even more apocalyptic visions. However, he focused his tract on the witches' crime being a women's crime, the worst 'super crime' against creation and God. In contrast to Nider, the witches' flight was real to him.

But despite the varying sources used by Geiler, his concepts of superstition, magic, witchcraft and sorcery show a significant consistency. These concepts fitted perfectly into his universal programme of urban reform. In analysing the *Emeis*' sermons about witchcraft, twelve short statements regarding Geiler's approach can be made<sup>42</sup>:

1. An explicit as well as an implicit pact with the Devil could be negotiated. Geiler's argument followed Thomas of Aquinas and scholastic doctrine. Through making this pact, sinners joined Satan in order to gain his support, which was necessary to perform *beneficia*, *maleficia* and superstitious deeds.<sup>43</sup>
2. Sexual intercourse between demons and humans was possible in a material way. The Devil could appear both in the shape of a man or of a woman (*incubus* and *succubus*).<sup>44</sup> Within the context of natural law, God had given Satan limited powers, which the fiend used for the witches associated with him. However, the Devil could only move a human shape, which itself stayed cold, without soul and sentiment.

With the help of stolen semen, the demon could father children, who in fact were truly humans with a soul and not devilish changelings.<sup>45</sup>

3. Geiler's arguments concerning the witches' flight stayed ambivalent. On the one hand, it happened as a mere illusion. The witch anointed herself with a certain ointment, spoke several incantations, fell deeply asleep and dreamed of flying to far away meetings with other women to dance, play and feast. Even men could go through a similar delusion by dreaming of a flight to the mountain of Dame Venus. On the other hand, it seemed possible that the Devil could manage the witches' flight. In general, demons were able to transport humans – even against their will – from one place to another. Consequently the fiend could carry the witches according to their symbolic gestures (e.g. words, anointing of sticks) through the air.<sup>46</sup> But Geiler insisted that without the help of a demon, no human being had any magical power of their own to fly or to perform magic. On the ground of the *Canon Episcopi*, Geiler defamed the pagan lore of night-riding women in pursuit of Diane. But like Nider, he agreed with the Bible that the Devil could transport humans through the air.<sup>47</sup> Yet, Geiler showed already the great impact of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Herein, the witches' flight claimed a material manifestation, even if Satan could only act in the limited boundaries of natural law and godly permission. Geiler's rather vague approach to the witches' flight can be seen as being representative of many theologians at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. They were still standing on the ground of the ancient *Canon Episcopi* theory, but their scholastic training allowed gradual acceptance of the new ideology of diabolic witchcraft. In the future, even hardliners like Martin Delrio would argue that the flight could be performed both in dream and *in corpore*.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in representing both possibilities, Geiler showed no hesitation to accept equally the two concepts of the witches' flight.
4. Closely combined with the belief in night-riding women in the company of pagan goddesses or fairy queens, there remained the idea of a nocturnal banquet of the good dames, meeting secretly in human houses. Theological debate called this event banqueting, which was defined in the legend of Saint Germanus as a diabolic delusion. Geiler agreed with this concept. He spoke of demons, who showed themselves in the shape of sleeping women.<sup>49</sup> The feasting and banqueting he judged to be mere fantasy. A material sabbath with hundreds of members remained completely unknown to Geiler. This is

quite similar to the *Malleus Maleficarum* with its sparse allusions to the witches' assembly.<sup>50</sup>

- Using an onslaught of assorted ordeals, the Devil tried to harm the human spirit and body, especially with sickness worked through *maleficia* or storms. To accomplish this, witches performed certain signs in words, gestures and rituals to call upon the demons for help. According to Plantsch, Geiler called these signs the *execramentum* of Satan.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, he believed that *maleficia* could only be done by the Devil with the *permisso dei*. Geiler gave a variety of examples of witches' evil doing. With only one glance, menstruating women were able to darken a mirror. Likewise, through her evil eye a witch (*Hexin*) could corrupt children. The evil emanation of the witch stemmed both from her sinful life of debauchery and from her abhorrent fantasies. Corresponding to the witches' signs, the Devil could evoke the magical theft of milk or cause impotence. Geiler believed that superstitious acts took place both on sacred days like Christmas and on the *Fronfasten* (special days of fasting). And by misuse of sacred objects, these rituals were intended to strengthen the sacrilegious character of the witches' deeds.<sup>52</sup>
- Sickness, plague and other harm that resulted from witchcraft could not be remedied with the help of sorcery, divination or spellbinding. Geiler argued that these questionable antidotes to witchcraft were likewise sinful actions against God. However, he permitted other solutions, such as the dislodging or destruction of the magical object, which was causing the evil, without the help of sorcery. Essentially, only the orthodox protection of the church was allowed against witchcraft and magical spells: to pray, to cross oneself, to confess sins, and to use the sacramentals like holy water, consecrated salt, blessed candles, holy palm branches, Easter fire or holy relics. Geiler described their power against evil extensively.<sup>53</sup> But in contrast to the five sacraments, the power of the sacramentals remained limited. Even exorcism could fail in battling demons and their evil doing, if the performer lacked purity, chastity and piety.<sup>54</sup>
- Against storms raised by witches with the help of Satan, the church could use its blessed weapons, for example the peal of bells to expel the demons and to call people to prayer. Additionally, the minister and his parish could perform a procession while elevating the consecrated host and praying the first words of the Gospel according to Saint John. Such a procession, led around the land, was intended to

help against bad weather.<sup>55</sup> In general, Geiler praised John's Gospel as a mighty weapon against tempests, thunderbolts and storm damage. The mere presence of a man baptized John could protect a household from lightning strikes.<sup>56</sup> Even firestorms could be banned with the consecrated host and the invocation of God.<sup>57</sup>

8. Starting with a long narrative about 'wild men'<sup>58</sup> Geiler stated that the transformation from humans into animals, especially into were-wolves, was in general impossible. On the contrary, people who believed in such metamorphosis were mortal sinners because of blasphemy. The preacher explained that wolves had different reasons to attack humans: old age, hunger, fury or a taste for human flesh. However, the Devil was capable of performing the delusion of transformation.<sup>59</sup> He himself could adopt the shape of a wolf. Human transformation into other animals, like pigs, birds, horses or donkeys, performed by a witch like Circe, remained impossible. Even humans who thought themselves to be transformed into animal shape had fallen prey to diabolic delusion. On the other hand, with the help of Satan, sorcerers were able to conjure 'incomplete' animals like snails or frogs. But for all time Satan remained bound to the natural law, created by God. Thus, the Devil could only perform deeds in the context of nature.<sup>60</sup>
9. In general, Geiler explained so-called magical phenomena as either the result of fraud performed by humans or as diabolic delusion. This included spiritual visions and rapture, changelings, horses ridden by witches, love magic and poltergeists. Concerning other apparitions, Geiler remained undecided. Different causes were responsible for the appearances of ghosts or the furious horde, for souls of the doomed or souls suffering in purgatory.<sup>61</sup>
10. To answer the rhetorical question of why the Devil seduced more women than men, Geiler considered several reasons. Women possessed a more frivolous, weak nature, and were more susceptible to external influence than men. Therefore, women could be either the most evil or the most pious of human beings. Once seduced and trained by the Devil, their talkativeness would lead them to transfer their knowledge rapidly to other women. Thus, the followers of Satan might increase incredibly quickly. He thought women in childbed to be the most vulnerable and endangered females. First, their weakness caused bad vapours to enter their heads, creating illusionary fantasies. Second, the elder nursemaids were mere hags, who furnished the

child-bearing women with superstitious benedictions. Third, women in childbed celebrated the birth by feasting during the lying-in period with other women. Geiler was certain that the Devil played a part in these meetings, where only women were allowed.<sup>62</sup>

11. Explicitly, Geiler praised the judicial punishment of witches and sorcerers.<sup>63</sup> He did not criticize the use of torture or the death penalty by fire. Rather he mentioned each without comment.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, he insisted upon more severe persecution. In referring to the Old Testament and the book of Deuteronomy, which demands the banishment of soothsayers, necromancers and sorcerers, Geiler criticized Imperial Law (*Decretum Gratiani, De maleficis*). Herein, only *maleficia* causing human sickness or death were threatened with a death sentence, whereas *beneficia* bringing health was praised. Geiler declared the last passage to be against godly order. Instead the Imperial Law should diligently prosecute all magic, sorcery and witchcraft with legal punishment.<sup>65</sup> Blasphemous soothsaying had to be eradicated at once.<sup>66</sup>

12. Geiler explained why God had given so much power to the Devil and his followers and why Satan, witches and sorcerers were allowed to bring so much sorrow to humankind. First, the wicked were driven even deeper in the Devil's snare. Second, the steadfastness of the devoted and godly was tested. Third, sinners were either punished or brought to repentance. And fourth, the devoted, embittered by the futility of worldly joys, focused their attention only on eternal salvation. Therefore, Geiler's advice remained simple and direct. On the one hand, the pious should endure sorrow, misery, and affliction, all caused by Satan and the witches, with the greatest patience and godliness. On the other hand, the authorities were obliged to punish and eradicate heresy, witchcraft, superstition and blasphemy.<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Using the pulpit as an agitation platform, Johannes Geiler had summoned both the religious authorities and the Strasburgian city council to fulfil their duties in bringing to life his great plan of Christian *renovatio* and of urban reform. Whilst the ecclesiastical branch of Geiler's reform programme failed completely, its urban counterpart had some success, for example in 1501 a so-called 'Moral reformation' was printed in Strasbourg, wherein concubinage was forbidden and prostitution was

banished in certain quarters. Furthermore, the statutes against blasphemers, luxury, gambling and drinking were intensified, the poor relief system was reformed and an infirmary for syphilis sufferers was founded. Thus, we can clearly see how Geiler's sermons interacted with the intentions of the magistrate. Although the preacher criticized the urban regiment, he assigned the city council to be the legitimate authority, which had the privilege to discipline its subjects. The preacher transferred more responsibilities to the magistrate, especially in affairs which formerly had been ecclesiastical concerns, namely the poor relief and the morals. In doing so, the dominance of the Strasbourgian magistrate increased and widened its area of competence. Both the preacher and the magistrates legitimated their intentions with the threatening of God's wrath. Intensely, Geiler had battled against sodomy and pederasty. Perhaps his constant campaigns showed some consequences, since in 1508 two homosexuals were burnt in Strasbourg.<sup>68</sup> However, his sermons about magic, superstition and witchcraft never fuelled any actions against alleged witches in the city of Strasbourg. Whilst in Lucerne, the city council combined urban reform with the prosecution of witchcraft<sup>69</sup>; the Imperial city of Strasbourg did not use the politico-religious instrument of witch-hunting.<sup>70</sup> So why did Geiler choose to preach on the topic of witchcraft in 1509? Possibly, his expositions concerning both theodicy and the powers of Satan and his worshippers provide us with an answer. Geiler judged the era to be characterized by crisis, conflicts and catastrophes. His Strasbourgian audience was looking for explanations to assuage their increasing fear of witches. The preacher offered an ambivalent clarification. On the one hand, witches deliberately had separated themselves from the Christian body. They deserved uncompromising punishment. On the other hand, witches served as scourges in the hands of God to punish the wickedness of the immoral world. With these fundamental explanations, Geiler showed neither enlightenment nor liberal or humanistic attitudes, as some German historians have recently claimed. However, he used his pulpit to be a public platform for volatile debates on witchcraft topics. Moreover, he declared all kinds of popular and learned 'magic' to be witchcraft because of an implicit diabolic pact. Geiler referred openly to the treatises of Jean Gerson and Johannes Nider. Certainly, he stood in the line of succession with famous preachers of repentance, like Bernardino, Vincenz Ferrer and Savonarola. There can be no further doubt that Geiler and his programme of urban reform have to be compared with similar attempts elsewhere in Europe, which increased from the late fourteenth century onwards. The demand for the

universal reform of Christendom in head, body and members combined with demands for severe discipline both in religion and morals. The new pattern of diabolic witchcraft with its ingredients of apostasy, idolatry, heresy, superstition, fornication and harmful magic was blended easily with the ideas of reform. In the process witchcraft was labelled as the quintessence of all blasphemous crimes.

In preaching about witchcraft Johannes Geiler provided his audience with a broad catalogue of evidence with which to identify the diabolic behaviour of witches. He criminalized the commonly used deeds of ritual protection and healing, which lay in the twilight zone between orthodoxy and self-styled magic (*beneficia*). Geiler thus played his part in mixing up old and new concepts of witchcraft and sorcery. Notably, the media of preaching disseminated these concepts to a greater audience. The many Strasbourgian printing offices published treatises, sermons, broadsheets and images dealing with witchcraft, taken from Geiler's *Emeis* and other sermons.<sup>71</sup> Public awareness of the subject was thus raised, both for the new phenomena and for the demonization of daily so-called superstition and *beneficia*. However, Geiler should not be seen as an ardent demagogue. He never painted witchcraft as a super crime, which had to be prosecuted without mercy. Furthermore, he never proposed that witchcraft was the only explanation for malevolent mischief and catastrophes, but rather gave alternatives like natural causes and fraud. Significantly, he did not declare witchcraft to be an exclusively female crime. Womanly weakness in general, but not their flawed sexuality, seemed to be the cause of their vulnerability. Even if Geiler's sermons were filled with clerical misogyny, they lack entirely the polemics of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Emphatically, Geiler stated in the *Emeis*, 'Herewith I am far from abusing the pious, decent, old women.'<sup>72</sup>

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank my friends Alison Rowlands and LeNoir Kali Hayward for their advice in translating. The references in this article are reduced to the inevitable minimum. My doctoral thesis provides further references: Rita Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm. Ein Prediger und seine Stadt. Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg und Straßburg* (Trier: Porta Alba Verlag, 2005).
2. Ibid., pp. 27–41, 132–56.
3. Ibid., pp. 197–228.

4. Rita Voltmer, 'Political Preaching and a Design of Urban Reform: Johannes Geiler of Kaysersberg and Strasbourg', *Franciscan Studies* 71, 2013, pp. 71–88.
5. Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 433–61.
6. Ibid., pp. 66–125.
7. Ibid., pp. 50–65.
8. See with detailed references Rita Voltmer, 'Du discours à l'allégorie. Représentations de la superstition, de la magie et de la sorcellerie dans les sermons de Johannes Geiler de Kaysersberg', in Antoine Follain and Maryse Simon (eds), *Sorcellerie savante et mentalités populaires* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2013), pp. 44–51.
9. Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 945–47; Joseph Hansen (ed.), *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgungen im Mittelalter* (Bonn: C. Georgi, 1901), pp. 284–91; Wolfgang Behringer, 'Hansen, Joseph (1862–1943)', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft. The Western Tradition* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2006), pp. 474–75.
10. Henry Charles Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 4 vols, 1939), I:368–369; Edward Peters, 'Lea, Henry Charles (1825–1909)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 648–49.
11. Rita Voltmer, 'Ein Amerikaner in Trier. George Lincoln Burr (1857–1938) und sein Beitrag zu den Sammelschwerpunkten "Hexerei und Hexenverfolgungen" an der Cornell University (Ithaca/New York) sowie an der Stadtbibliothek Trier. Mit einem Inventar', *Kurtrierisches Jahrbuch* 47, 2007, pp. 447–89; 'Edward Peters & George Burr Lincoln (1857–1938)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 153–54.
12. Rossel Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Peter Nevill, 1959), pp. 213–14.
13. <http://www.history.upenn.edu/people/faculty/alan-charles-kors>.
14. <http://www.history.upenn.edu/people/emeritus/edward-peters>.
15. Alan Kors and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe – 1100–1700: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); second and revised edition by Peters, Edward (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 236–39.
16. William E. Burns, *Witch Hunts in Europe and America: An Encyclopedia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 107.
17. Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), p. 53.
18. Charles Zika, 'Geiler of Kaysersberg, Johann (1455 [!–]1510)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 405–7.
19. Edward Peters, 'The Medieval Church and State on Superstition, Magic and Witchcraft: From Augustine to the Sixteenth Century', in Karen Jolly

et al. (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. The Middle Ages* (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), pp. 173–245, p. 244.

20. Robert W. Thurston, *The Witch Hunts. A History of the Witch Persecutions in Europe and North America. A Revised Edition of Witch, Wicce, Mother Goose* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 171–72 (with annotation 14), 238.
21. Geiler shared the anti-Jewish arguments of his Christian contemporaries, but treated the matter very rarely in his sermons; Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 220–22.
22. Catherine Crawford, *European Sexualities, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 181–82; as mentioned above, the *Emeis* should neither be labelled as a witchcraft treatise nor as the first one in German language. To my knowledge, it never served in witchcraft trials as a matrix of questioning.
23. Brian A. Pavlac, *Witch Hunts in the Western World. Persecution from the Inquisition through the Salem Trials* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2009), pp. XIV and 57.
24. Michael D. Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies. The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 191.
25. Gerhild Scholz-Williams, ‘Demonologies’, in Levack, Brian P. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 69–83, 75.
26. Sigrid Schade, *Schadenzauber und Magie des Körpers* (Worms: Werner’sche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983), pp. 107–108; Jane P. Davidson, *The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470–1750* (Freren: Luca Verlag, 1987), pp. 22–23; Linda C. Hults, ‘Baldung and the Witches of Freiburg: The Evidence of Images’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:2, 1987, pp. 249–76, esp. 264–65; Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse. Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2007), pp. 84–85. Geiler was neither a member of the Dominican order nor a humanist and the *Emeis* was not published in 1511, as Hults states. In several articles, Charles Zika deals with the *Emeis* woodcuts. For a summary of his ideas, see Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft. Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 70–74, 118, 217–18. See without any reference to Charles Zika, but relying on Linda C. Hults, Yvonne Owens, ‘The Saturnine History of Jews and Witches’, *Preternature* 3/1, 2014, pp. 56–84, esp. 67–68. Owens seems not to know Idel, Moshe, *Saturn’s Jews. On the Witches’ Sabbath and Sabbateanism* (London: Continuum International, 2011).

27. All these questions are treated in detail, with full references and the respective images in Voltmer, *Discours*, pp. 70–82. Concerning images of Saturn and his so-called ‘children’ (e.g. vagrants, beggars, witches, Jews) see Voltmer, Rita, ‘Von den Kindern des Saturn und dem Kampf mit dem Schicksal – Lebenswege und Überlebensstrategien kleiner Leute im Spiegel von Strafgerichtsakten’, in Sebastian Schmidt (ed.), *Arme und ihre Lebensperspektiven in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 237–93.

28. See both with the wrong date of publication and with a most dubious appraisal of Geiler’s *Emeis*. Gerhard Bauer, ‘Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445–1510) und seine Hexenpredigten in der Ameise, Strassburg 1516’, in Giovanna Bosco and Patricia Castelli (eds), *Stregoneria e streghe nell’Europa moderna* (Pisa: Biblioteca Universitaria, 1996), pp. 133–67, and Bodo Brinkmann, ‘Hexenlust und Sündenfall’, in Bodo Brinkmann (ed.), *Hexenlust und Sündenfall. Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans Baldung Grien – Witches’ Lust and the Fall of Man. The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien*, Städelsches Kunstinstitut (Frankfurt am Main: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), p. 31.

29. See in detail Voltmer, *Preaching*.

30. See Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 396–734.

31. For the following chapter, see with full references Voltmer, *Discours*, pp. 52–62.

32. Franco Mormando, *The Preacher’s Demons. Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

33. *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, Brian Patrick McGuire (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

34. Werner Tschacher, *Der Formicarius des Johannes Nider von 1437/38. Studien zu den Anfängen der europäischen Hexenverfolgungen im Spätmittelalter* (Aachen: Shaker, 2000); Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons. Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

35. Ernst-Dietrich Gütting, ‘Michel Beheims Gedicht gegen den Aberglauben und seine lateinische Vorlage. Zur Tradierung des Volksglaubens im Spätmittelalter’, in Dietz-Rüdiger Moser (ed.), *Glaube im Abseits. Beiträge zur Erforschung des Aberglaubens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), pp. 310–67.

36. See Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1979); Michael D. Bailey, ‘From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 76/4, 2001, pp. 960–90; Krzysztof Bracha, ‘Der Einfluß der

neuen Frömmigkeit auf die spätmittelalterliche Kritik am Aberglauben im Reformschrifttum Mitteleuropas', in Marek Derwisch and Martial Staub (eds), *Die neue 'Frömmigkeit' in Europa im Spätmittels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 225–48; Fabrizio Conti, 'Preachers and Confessors against "Superstitions". Bruno Busti and Sermon 16 of His Rosarium Sermonum', in *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 6/1, 2011, pp. 62–91; Krzysztof Bracha, *Des Teufels Lug und Trug- Nikolaus Magni von Jauer: Ein Reformtheologe des Spätmittelalters gegen Aberglaube und Götzendienst* (Dettelbach: Verlag J.H. Röll GMBH, 2013); Fabrizio Conti, *Witchcraft, Superstition and Observant Franciscan Preachers. Pastoral Approach and Intellectual Debate in Renaissance Milan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

37. On Geiler's preaching between 1482 to 1509 on the topics of magic, sorcery and witchcraft, see Voltmer, *Discours*, pp. 59–64; the recorded Augsburgian sermons (without the non-recorded sermons on sorcery) are published recently: Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Die Augsburger Predigten*, Kristina Freienhagen-Bauumgardt and Werner William Krapp (eds) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

38. Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 759–81.

39. Ibid., pp. 782–803.

40. Ibid., pp. 845–47, 945–47.

41. See Georg Modestin, 'Lausanne Diocese of (Fifteenth century)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 630–32, William Monter, 'Alsace', in *ibid.*, pp. 31–32; Laura Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform. Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430–1530* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

42. See Voltmer, *Discours*, pp. 64–68.

43. Die Emeis. Dis ist das buch von der Omeissen ... Straßburg 1517, fol. 37 verso, cols 1–2.

44. See Christa Tuczay, 'Incubus and Succubus', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 546–48.

45. *Emeis*, fol. 55 verso, col. 1 – folio 56, col. 1.

46. Ibid., fol. 39 verso [!], col. 2 – 39 verso, col. 2, fol. 43 verso, col. 1–2.

47. See Bailey (2002), pp. 47–48.

48. See Christa Tuczay, 'Flight of Witches', in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 379–82.

49. *Emeis*, fol. 38, col. 1. – With further information to the legend of Saint Germannus see Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers. Witchcraft, sex, and the crisis of belief* (Chicago: University Press, 2002), pp. 132–34 and Tschacher (2002), p. 264.

50. See Wolfgang Behringer, 'Malleus maleficarum', in Golden (2006), pp. 717–23.

51. See Heiko A. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation* (Paul Siebeck: Tübingen, 1977), pp. 217–18; *Emeis*, fol. 45, cols 1–2.
52. Ibid., fol. 44, col. 2 – 45, col. 2; fol. 47, col. 1 – 48, col. 1; fol. 48, cols 1–2; fol. 54 verso, col. 1 – 55, col. 1.
53. Ibid., fol. 45, col. 2 – 46 verso, col. 2; fol. 48 verso, col. 1 – fol. 54, col. 2; fol. 55, col. 2.
54. Ibid., fol. 53 verso, col. 2.
55. Ibid., fol. 55, cols 1–2.
56. Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, 962.
57. *Emeis*, fol. 53, col. 1.
58. Ibid., fol. 39 verso [!], col. 2 – 41 verso, col. 2. – Geiler listed as so-called ‘wild men’: Hermits, Satyrs, the inhabitants of newly found Hispaniola, Pygmies (according to Saint Augustine) and demons.
59. Ibid., fol. 41 verso, col. 1 – fol. 43, col. 1. – see Rita Voltmer, ‘The Judge’s Lore. The Politico-Religious Concept of Metamorphose in the Peripheries of Western Europe’, in Willem de Blécourt (ed.), *Werewolf Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 159–84.
60. *Emeis*, fol. 41 verso, col. 1–2.
61. Ibid., fol. 43, col. 1 – fol. 44, col. 2.
62. Ibid., fol. 46 verso, col. 2.
63. Ibid., fol. 55 verso, col. 1.
64. Ibid., fol. 38, col. 1, fol. 56, col. 2. – Geiler demanded death penalties for adultery, fornication, sodomy and blasphemy, but torture should be handled with care not to force confessions from innocent people; Voltmer (2005), pp. 527–33. The preacher successfully achieved from the city council that repentant criminals were granted the possibility to confess their sins, to gain absolution and to receive the holy sacrament before their execution; *ibid.*, pp. 483–89.
65. Ibid., fol. 59, col. 1. – probably, Geiler referred to a decree, made by emperor Diocletian, in which *maleficum* was punished with death (by burning), whereas the *beneficia* were not punished; see Wolfgang Behringer, ‘Laws on Witchcraft’, in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 634–40.
66. *Emeis*, fol. 39 [!], col. 2, *passim*.
67. Ibid., fol. 57 verso, col. 1 – 61 verso, col. 2.
68. See Voltmer, *Wie der Wächter auf dem Turm*, pp. 614–734; Rita Voltmer, ‘Facing the Apocalypse in Strasbourg – Johannes Geiler’s of Kaysersberg (1445–1510) Design of Moral Reformation in Context’, in *Preaching and Reform in the Middle Ages* (14th International Symposium of the IMSSS in Cracow, forthcoming).
69. Stokes *Demons of Urban Reform*, pp. 129–73.

70. See in general Rita Voltmer, 'Witchcraft in the City. Patterns of Persecution in the Holy Roman Empire', in Follain, Antoine and Simon, Maryse (eds), *La sorcellerie et la ville* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2016, forthcoming).
71. We still lack a survey assessing the role of medieval and early modern preaching in distributing concepts and ideas of witchcraft; see Brian P. Levack, 'The Decline and End of the Witchcraft Prosecutions', in Levack, *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, pp. 429–46, 445. Currently, I am working on a broader survey on preaching media and their impact on demonology and witchcraft.
72. *Emeis*, fol. 50, col. 1.

# Law, Nature, Theology and Witchcraft in Ponzinibio's *De lamiis* (1511)

*Matteo Duni*

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, a wave of witch-hunting swept across northern Italy.<sup>1</sup> In remote Alpine villages and in thriving towns in the heart of the Po valley, Dominican inquisitors were busy trying hundreds of men, and especially women. These hunts were accompanied by a steady output of treatises written to explain and celebrate the repression of this horrendous crime. Around 1520, the Dominican friar Bartolomeo Spina, inquisitor of Modena and noted demonologist, was pleased to write that his colleague in Como was sending every year to the stake about one hundred witches from the Valtellina area.<sup>2</sup> In 1523 the inquisitor of nearby Reggio, Girolamo Armellini, consigned to the flames at least ten witches in the tiny principality of Mirandola, whose Lord, Gianfrancesco Pico, produced a very learned defence of the repression of witchcraft.<sup>3</sup> From Varese to Monza, from Parma to Milan, the pyres were burning – and the printing presses were running. If the Renaissance was anything in these parts of Italy, it was the age of witch-hunting.

In the past twenty years, knowledge of the European witch-hunt has grown enormously. A considerable output of research has brought to light

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M. Duni (✉)  
Syracuse University in Florence, Florence, Italy  
e-mail: [mduni@syr.edu](mailto:mduni@syr.edu)

the remarkable dimensions reached by the persecution of witches in the Italian peninsula. We can confidently affirm now that the witch-hunts reported by the authors quoted above marked an-all time peak in the Italian states.<sup>4</sup> Recent studies, however, have also shown that virtually no episode of witch-hunting failed to stir at least some protest, if not outright resistance. Most notably, for example, mass trials and executions in the Valcamonica provoked increasing opposition from the government of the republic of Venice, until church authorities were forced to dismiss the inquisitor and stop the witch-hunt altogether in 1521.<sup>5</sup>

While many cases of resistance to the witch-hunt are now well known, researchers have yet to analyse such phenomena in the context of the rich intellectual discourse on witchcraft between the second half of the fifteen century and the first half of the sixteenth century. Based on a then rather new and controversial theory, the very definition of witchcraft was problematic, since it intersected multiple fields: demonologists and inquisitors, philosophers, lawyers, physicians could all claim the right to have a say on the matter. Witch-hunts came thus to be a catalyst for the publication of books by inquisitors as well as of treatises by their opponents. Such copious production fostered a sustained debate on the reality and nature of the witches' crime, which can be read as a significant cross-section of Renaissance culture.<sup>6</sup> The controversy between believers and sceptics highlighted a number of contentious issues, as for example the question of which courts, secular or ecclesiastical, should have priority over witchcraft, a crime defined as of 'mixed jurisdiction'. More generally, if not always openly, the conflict was between those who argued that the final say on the witches belonged to the church and its theologians, and those who affirmed that both the theories and deeds of the witch-hunters should not be above the scrutiny of lay experts and their secular learning.

Probably the best-known literary and philosophical treatise deriving from this debate is Gianfrancesco Pico's book, *Strix, sive de ludificatione daemonum*, published in 1523 as a response to the strong criticism provoked by the witch-hunt at Mirandola.<sup>7</sup> While recent scholarship has delved in depth into Pico's sophisticated philosophical arguments and subtle rhetorical strategies, no serious attempt has been made so far to reconstruct the profile of the influential 'party' of witchcraft sceptics that composed the intended audience of *Strix*. Such a task would require, first of all, a systematic and comparative exploration of the copious literature produced by the doubters, many of them lawyers and jurists, whose

works stemmed most often from direct or indirect polemics against the witch-hunters.<sup>8</sup> I would therefore like to take this opportunity to concentrate on one of the least-studied books in this production, *De lamiis et excellentia utriusque iuris* (*On Witches and on the Excellence of Both Laws*, 1511), written by an otherwise almost unknown lawyer from Piacenza, Giovanfrancesco Ponzinibio.<sup>9</sup>

Ponzinibio, born presumably in the 1460s, was a member of the college of law doctors and judges in his hometown, and probably served as *podestà* in Parma as well as in Piacenza in the 1510s. Around this time he also authored the book that would give him some renown, *De lamiis*.<sup>10</sup> Although such pioneers of witch-hunt studies as Joseph Hansen and Henry Charles Lea already noted *De lamiis* at the turn of the last century, pointing out its significance for the study of this phenomenon, no one has ever studied it in depth, to the point that its first edition had remained unknown until I identified it in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

Ponzinibio's work stands out for a number of reasons, some of them evident: with the possible exception of Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulieribus* (1489), it was the first book devoted to disproving the reality of witchcraft, and was certainly the first book on witchcraft published by an Italian author who was not an ecclesiastic, predating by over a decade the second title in this category – Pico's *Strix*.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, our text is remarkable for the level of criticism it elicited from witch-hunters, since it was attacked violently (if belatedly) by the inquisitor of Modena, Bartolomeo Spina, with not just one, but two treatises: a clear sign that it was seen as a major threat by witchcraft theorists.<sup>13</sup>

In his dedication of *De lamiis* to Gioffredo Carolo,<sup>14</sup> president of the Senate of Milan and fellow jurist, Ponzinibio explains why he had decided to deal with such apparently disparate topics as witches and the pre-eminence of law:

In the past few days I was pondering on the issue of the witches, whose persecutions have become very frequent in this city of Piacenza. I was thinking about the contrary reasons, and I deemed them true and useful enough to be written down especially on a problem such as this one, which has aroused so many controversies. As I was writing about it, I found myself arguing that our jurisprudence can be rightly called science in a completely different way from that of the *logici*. As I kept working on it, I thus discussed its excellence, so that I ended up weaving together in the same booklet the witches and the praise of civil law ...<sup>15</sup>

The first, immediate motive for writing *De lamiis*, therefore, had been Ponzinibio's intention to publish his reflections against the growing witch-hunt, which he refers to significantly with the word *persecutiones*, meaning at the same time prosecution and persecution.<sup>16</sup> Exactly what persecutions he was talking about we cannot say, since the archives of the Inquisition of Piacenza are lost. I suspect, however, that a witch trial in nearby Parma the previous year was crucial for the genesis of the book. The trial had pitted the *podestà* (criminal judge), Antonio Malvicini – a lawyer from Piacenza – against the inquisitor. Malvicini had refused to carry out the death sentence issued by the Inquisition because he had not been able to examine the proceedings of the trial of Lucia Cacciarda, as the supposed witch was called. At that point the inquisitor had the *podestà* excommunicated, and then engaged in a legal arm wrestling which ended with the burning of Lucia, as we learn from the chilling account given by Leone Smagliati in his *Cronaca parmense*:

[8 Sept. 1510] A witch was burned in Ghiara by order of the inquisitor. She had been jailed for a long time, and it was because of her that the *podestà* had been excommunicated. Now, as provided by law, after a long litigation in Milan, he [the inquisitor] condemned her to the fire, and she was burned alive, something nobody remembers having ever seen. Near the end she said 'Jesus' and called out to the Virgin Mary. Her name was Lucia Cacciarda.<sup>17</sup>

The connection with the Parma trial, with the ensuing conflict between the *podestà* – a colleague and fellow citizen of Ponzinibio – and the inquisitor, provides the key to understand the second component of the book, the praise of law.<sup>18</sup> While in the dedication to Carolo Ponzinibio had kept the argument to a very abstract level – that of the scientific status of jurisprudence in comparison with another academic discipline, logic (or dialectic) – in the opening lines of the book he spells out clearly why he cannot discuss witchcraft without first talking about law:

As the noisy lawsuits have finally calmed down during these Christmas holidays, I will discuss the issue of the witches [*lamiae*], whom the populace calls *strigae*. I assume what is written in chap. 40 of Matthew [*sic: Mt.* 4:5, 8]: 'The devil took him [i.e. Christ] to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple', and further: 'The devil took him to a very high mountain.' Based on this, many argue and maintain that these women can be carried to the devil's game [i.e. the Sabbath] by the same devil, since if this principle seems to apply – and it really does – to a bigger thing, then it

must apply to a smaller one. More precisely, they affirm that this possibility is to be admitted, and therefore that one must believe as absolutely true that these [women] are carried to the devil's game, because what is possible is to be admitted. However, since it seems to be a matter for theologians, as it deals with faith ... I decided to discuss first the following question, that is, whether legal canons and laws can be adduced and drawn upon for the interpretation of the holy scriptures as well as for the discussion of, and decisions about, theological problems.<sup>19</sup>

In declaring his intent to examine the question of the aerial transportation of the witches to the sabbath, Ponzinibio is stressing both that this is the essential element of witchcraft theory, and that it rests mainly on the evangelical episode of the temptations of Christ, that is, on a theological foundation. Before he can bring his opinion to bear on the matter, therefore, he must prove that a lawyer like himself has the right to tread on the ground of theologians and to discuss issues relating to Scripture and faith.

To this goal Ponzinibio devotes the first, most ambitious – and so far neglected – part of the book.<sup>20</sup> In it, he strives to highlight the excellence of both civil and canon law over all other disciplines ('de excellentia utriusque iuris'), and to argue that, given this premise, jurists can apply their knowledge to, and formulate authoritative conclusions on, problems which lie apparently outside the confines of their field. His arguments can be divided into three types: those that highlight the divine origin of law and the lofty status of its practitioners; those that seek to prove that jurisprudence is indeed a 'scientia', which follows universally valid rules and provides definite knowledge of things; and finally, those stressing that law combines a theoretical with a practical side and is thus supreme among disciplines.

Following the lead of the champions of the fourteenth-century Italian legal school, Bartolo da Sassoferato and Baldo degli Ubaldi, who had argued that law was not only a science but actually 'vera philosophia', Ponzinibio builds up an impressive picture of the glory of jurisprudence.<sup>21</sup> He emphasizes that laws do not pertain merely to custom or behaviour, but also to faith and the soul, since they help to direct men's lives toward God. According to the Digest, law is 'the overall notion of divine and human things, knowledge of the right and the wrong' ('divinarum atque humanarum rerum notitia, iusti atque iniusti scientia').<sup>22</sup> Jurists, then, do not have to study theology, since everything they need is included in the *Corpus iuris*. They investigate the spirit ('ratio') of the law through their specific logical reasoning ('modus arguendi'), which obviously does not

coincide with that of the experts of other disciplines: ‘Laws should not be limited by the rules of Donatus [i.e. those of grammar], nor by those of the lazy schools of philosophers.’<sup>23</sup> Indeed, ‘men of law talk about, and pay attention to, real things, not mere words, since laws regulate real things, not words’ (*legistae sunt reales locutores et rebus, et non verbis, intendentes, quia non verbis sed rebus leges imponuntur*)<sup>24</sup> Not bound by linguistic or philosophical norms, jurists deal with real-life situations, interpreting the law in order to respond to ever-changing circumstances. The greatness of law (and the nobility of its practitioners) derives precisely from its ability to regulate the infinite variety of human affairs on the basis of clearly established principles of fairness: it is therefore fundamental for preserving the virtue of the human souls as well as the health of bodies.<sup>25</sup>

Extreme as it may appear to us, Ponzinibio’s panegyric of law was not isolated. Significant points of contact can indeed be found in an oration by Andrea Alciato dating from 1520. Then at the outset of his rise to celebrity, the Milanese jurist opened his course at the university of Avignon with an inaugural lecture *In laudem iuris civilis* (‘In Praise of Civil Law’), comparing jurisprudence with philosophy and theology.<sup>26</sup> His conclusion was that while the two latter disciplines broke down to just an endless series of inane ‘altercationes’, or disputes, ‘the only true philosophy is that which makes man honest, sincere and incorrupt’: that is, law.<sup>27</sup> Jurists and theologians, argued Alciato, have in common several key matters, from penance and absolution to the papal ‘power of the keys’. However, whereas those parts of theology which truly deal with the knowledge of divine things were derived from law – and jurists have thus full competence over them – those which pertain exclusively to theologians are only ‘infinite empty questions, which have to do with the worship of God as much as a dog in a bath’, the final expression being a Greek joke made famous by Erasmus’ *Adagia*.<sup>28</sup> While Alciato’s elegant and erudite prose, nourished by his sophisticated humanistic background, sets him obviously apart from Ponzinibio’s more traditional style and references, the two men appear to be on the same wavelength as far as the key thesis of *De lamiis* goes: law is not only the supreme guarantor of the civil order, but also the highest expression of human knowledge.

Around 1516, a few years before the beginning of his teaching career, Alciato had been confronted with the judicial consequences of theology in the form of a massive witch-hunt in the Valtellina. There an inquisitor, not content with having already burned one hundred women at the stake, was ‘daily offering many of them as an unheard-of type of sacrifice [*nova*

*holocausta*] to the god Vulcanus', wrote Alciato with grim but cultivated irony, when an uprise of the peasants forced the local bishop to stop the proceedings and call the young lawyer to give advice.<sup>29</sup> Some women were apparently accused of having gone at night to dance under a tree in the valley and of having participated in the sabbath; and while they denied both charges, the inquisitor wanted to burn them only on the basis of the testimony of their accomplices – that is, of their fellow witches. Alciato's considerations are worth quoting at length:

I answered that this would apply only to those things, which they had seen while fully awake, not to those seen while sleeping and dreaming. Indeed, the key question was whether they had participated personally in this sabbath, or they had been deceived by a false persuasion into mistaking for real those things which they had seen only in their dreams. It seems that recent theologians are absolutely convinced that witches go there personally and by the help of the devil, who carries them; in fact we read in the Gospel that the devil is so powerful, that he carried Christ on the pinnacle of the Temple. And although their husbands, absolutely trustworthy men, protested that their wives had been in bed with them at the precise time they were accused of having attended the sabbath, the inquisitor responded that they had been tricked by evil demons who had taken the shape of their wives. But I objected: why not rather presume that the demon had been with his demons, and that she was with her husband? Why are you inventing a real body that goes to a fictitious sabbath all while supposing a fictitious body that stays in a real bed? What is the use of imagining such incredible things, and of acting not as a theologian [*theologum*], but rather as a narrator of wonders [*teratologon*]? I found in the trials' proceedings as once at the sabbath a woman had called out the name of Jesus, and then the whole apparatus, all the dancers with their lovers, had suddenly disappeared: how could it have happened, if these had been real bodies and not phantasms? ... I would certainly trust more papal law and the common interpretation of our Italian jurists than those theologians, especially on a matter decided over by the council of Ancyra ... which states that such phantasms are imposed unto our minds by the evil spirit ...<sup>30</sup>

The reference to the *Canon Episcopi* (then wrongly attributed to the council of Ancyra), a part of canon law which stated that the tales of women who thought to ride long distances at night following the goddess Diana were just diabolically induced visions, was a standard argument brought forth by witchcraft disbelievers to prove that the sabbath was likewise a delusion worked by the Devil.<sup>31</sup> Alciato, however, was not only endorsing *Episcopi*'s

scepticism, but presenting it as the mainstream opinion of authoritative jurists and contrasting it with the demonologists' opinions, which he dismissed as nothing more than tall tales. The sabbath, he went on to argue, was just a mental vision caused by a 'deranged mind' ('corrupta mens'), a condition described by ancient naturalists such as Pliny the Elder, and treatable with appropriate medicines. Alciato's pathological interpretation of witchcraft, therefore, reinforced *Episcopi*'s stance and provided a strong foundation to a new legal principle: that judges cannot proceed against anyone the witches claim to have seen at the sabbath, since the whole matter is the product of either sickness or demonic deception.

It is probable that Alciato had Ponzinibio in mind when he referred to those 'Italian doctors of law' ('nostrates doctores') who supported the tradition of *Episcopi*, since at the time *De lamiis* was the only book in print written by an Italian lawyer that discussed witchcraft.<sup>32</sup> What is certain is that *Episcopi* provided Ponzinibio with the starting point for his demolition of the witch-hunters' theories, to which he devotes the second part of *De lamiis*. If indeed the witches' experiences are just dreams or hallucinations, as asserted in the canon, argues Ponzinibio, then to claim that witchcraft is a fact, as inquisitors do, is extremely far-fetched, because there is really no evidence of it. All testimonies relating of how the witches are able to reach very far-away places by flying at amazing speed are suspect of falsehood, as they refer to events which are 'far from likely' ('longe a verisimili').<sup>33</sup> Hence, those confessing to participation in the sabbath are deceived, especially since they happen to be mostly women or anyway uncouth country folk: both categories are an easy prey of the Devil's tricks, and certainly unreliable witnesses in court.<sup>34</sup> However, the witches' confessions cannot be trusted, not only because they are the fruit of diabolical delusion, but also because they contain things which evidently cannot be true by the standards of either law or nature ('ista respuant ius et natura'): in other words, they can only shed light on the witches' *beliefs*, but are invalid as far as any *fact* happening outside of their minds is concerned.<sup>35</sup> By separating fact from mental construct, Ponzinibio was thus suggesting that the problem of witchcraft should be examined in the light of criteria different from those of the theologians, and in particular that the standards of proof normally applied by lawyers should actually have precedence over those of the demonologists.

Confuting the witch-hunters' theses, however, was not easy, especially when these were based on passages from the Scriptures such as the Gospel's account of the temptations of Christ, whose literal truth could

not be doubted: if Satan had been capable of carrying the Son of God on the pinnacle of the Temple, why should he not be capable of carrying the witches to the sabbath? Ponzinibio answers that the instance of Christ's flight cannot be taken as a valid precedent because of its absolutely exceptional circumstances: Christ was God, and thus was able to give the Devil direct permission to transport him bodily through the air. Now, jurisprudence teaches that no rule can be derived from so rare an event ('ex his quae raro accidunt, non fit lex nec regula'), otherwise we would need a 'law on those raised from the dead' just because of the resurrection of Lazarus.<sup>36</sup> This consideration enables Ponzinibio to turn the witch-hunters' theory on its head: if there is a lesson to be drawn from that passage of the Gospel, it is paradoxically that the reality of the witches' flight could be proved only if divine permission for it were apparent, just like in the narrative of the temptations, which obviously amounts to rejecting it as unreal and impossible.<sup>37</sup> The line of reasoning is clear: by stressing that the events narrated in the Gospels have been wholly extraordinary due to the dual nature and role of Christ, the author of *De lamiis* is implying that they belong in a meta-historical dimension radically different from the plane of ordinary experience – to which legal principles apply – and thus cannot be drawn on to demonstrate that witchcraft is *ordinarily* possible and verifiable.

Having thus disproved the equation 'real transvection of Christ = real transvection of the witches' through the recourse to law, Ponzinibio shifts to a purely theological argument: the death of Christ, he writes, has caused the Devil to be chained in Hell, and has deprived him of any physical power in the world – including evidently the ability to interact bodily with the witches.<sup>38</sup> This is confirmed by simple logic combined with the mere observation of the number and personal quality of those accused of witchcraft. If Satan, the 'tempter of the whole world', really had such unfettered power as the inquisitors claim, he would certainly take full advantage of it, and by resorting to any means he would gain a virtually unlimited following among all kinds of people. Why, then, asks our lawyer, does he restrict himself to carrying to the sabbath what, all considered, amounts to a very small number of people, all of lowly status and thus hardly believable, as we see in the trials?<sup>39</sup> The truth is that Satan does not have any need of transporting his minions to a physical meeting, since what he really aims for is the full control of their minds so that they may worship him inwardly.<sup>40</sup>

Such meticulous rebuttal of the inquisitors' arguments enables Ponzinibio to propose strikingly radical conclusions. The first is a wholesale rejection of the 'cumulative concept' of witchcraft with all its features, from the

defilement of things sacred to the witches' nocturnal raids to suck the blood of babies.<sup>41</sup> Second, and most notable, a de facto reduction of the effects of sorcery to the product of either deceit or of natural phenomena such as the evil eye ('children are bewitched naturally ... by those who have an infected glance because of their infected soul').<sup>42</sup> Third, an important qualification of a fundamental legal provision, which admitted the testimony of accomplices against suspects of heresy: this does not apply to witchcraft, argues Ponzinibio, because the supposed witches are deluded by the Devil. Their testimony is not only unreliable, but misleading, since the Devil may influence it in order to incriminate the innocent. Although in the current practice this caution is often disregarded, the author remarks disapprovingly, nobody should be condemned for witchcraft just on the basis of the accusation of a witch.<sup>43</sup> The two final conclusions give the impression of having been written with the intent of making the witch-hunters' blood boil. The real heresy is believing that witches truly go to the sabbath, and inquisitors should always have people abjure it: 'This is a principle worth stressing, although it is unheard-of and not complied with', writes Ponzinibio, aware that his position was a highly controversial one.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, since the lawyers' knowledge is fully relevant to theological matters, they should assist inquisitors throughout all the phases of a heresy trial, as opposed to being called only at the end of it.<sup>45</sup> In other words, Ponzinibio is suggesting that, given the highly complicated, tricky nature of witchcraft cases, the learning of men of law is the best guarantee against the risk of serious mistakes.

Some of these conclusions were not new. As early as the mid-fifteenth century the jurist Ambrogio Vignati had stressed that the witches' confessions could not be admitted as evidence against accomplices (but his tract was not published until 1581). In his 1489 *De lamiis et pythonicis mulieribus*, Ulrich Molitor had been as firm as the Italian lawyer in rejecting the reality of many aspects of witchcraft – though not its overall existence. Just a few years before the publication of Ponzinibio's book, the Franciscan friar Samuele de' Cassini, in his *Questione de le strie* (*The Question of Witches*, also published at Pavia in 1505), had stated that inquisitors believing in the accusations of the witches against other people allegedly seen at the sabbath were 'guilty of a most serious sin', and actually outright heretics if they believed that the sabbath could take place in reality.<sup>46</sup>

The *De lamiis et excellentia utriusque iuris*, however, was not simply a compilation of pre-existing objections, but an unprecedented attempt at working out the full implications of such critiques, and at inserting them in a general framework deliberately alternative to that of the inquisitors.

This is evident in the discussion of a crucial issue: the testimony of a witch. Ponzinibio calls into question this most important – and almost only – proof of the reality of witchcraft by stressing that its credibility has to be assessed on the basis of the standards of law and nature, not of the theories of the witch-hunters. He was thus going beyond Vignati's position, mostly based on *Episcopi*'s well-known stance, and paved the way for Alciato's opposition to the theologians' fancies in the name of the solid arguments of the 'Italian doctors of law' and of the naturalistic principles found in ancient literature.

Ponzinibio's bold originality is also apparent in the way he draws on specifically religious themes to formulate far-reaching conclusions. Whereas witch-hunters were using the Scriptures to argue for the *physical* reality of witchcraft, he finds in the Gospel the foundations of a metaphysics in which the Devil is stripped of any material power in the world, and witchcraft is hence reduced to a *spiritual* phenomenon. Satan's role as the Tempter can only play out within a man's (and especially a woman's) soul, but it cannot produce any corporeal effects.

Such a revisionist demonology leads Ponzinibio to suggest, in a tantalizingly brief passage, that all 'maleficia' (bewitchments) have purely natural causes, like the evil eye. Although only hinted at, the author's sceptical view on magic is clearly discernible in his striking word choices: the term 'maleficium' (in the sense of bewitchment) recurs only once in the whole book, while 'maleficus' and 'malefica' (sorcerer, sorceress) are totally absent. Furthermore, while 'lamia' is used three times, 'strix' (witch) is used just once, and both terms appear only in the first two pages of the book. Indeed, witches are referred to either with the generic 'illae personae' (those persons), or with 'istae mulieres' – those women: while sharing in the traditionally misogynous view of the question, Ponzinibio was also consciously and systematically avoiding any recognition, even a linguistic one, of the reality of magical practices, let alone of witchcraft.

In sum, I believe that *De lamis'* contribution to the witchcraft debate was important and new mainly for two reasons: first, it was proposing a *de facto* expulsion of the Devil from the natural world, and a consequent reduction of witchcraft to the exclusively internal decision of those who choose to follow him in their souls; second, it asserted the right of jurists and lawyers to have the last word on witches and their alleged crimes. Both points implied, and required, the vindication of the hegemony of law over all other disciplines, thus challenging the assumption that assigned to theology and churchmen the key role in directing human life and sciences.<sup>47</sup>

It comes as no surprise, then, that the inquisitor Bartolomeo Spina would attempt a refutation of the first part of *De lamiis* in a book tellingly entitled *Tractatus de preeminentia sacre theologie super alias omnes scientias et precipue humanarum legum* ('A treatise on the supremacy of holy theology over all other sciences and especially over human laws', 1525).<sup>48</sup> Together with the *Tractatus*, Spina published a second tract dedicated to assailing Ponzinibio, *Quadruplex Apologia De lamiis contra Ponzinibium* ('Fourfold Defense on Witches against Ponzinibio'), in which he urged fellow inquisitors to send both the nefarious book and his author to the stake. One has to wait for Erastus' and Bodin's tirades against Johann Wier's *De praestigiis daemonum* to find another witchcraft sceptic attacked with the same violence: a clear sign that early sixteenth-century witch-hunters considered Ponzinibio's book to be the most dangerous refutation of their ideas to have appeared to date.

## NOTES

1. A substantially different version of this essay has been published in Italian as Duni (2011). In the time passed since then, an important book has appeared on the role of jurists (including Ponzinibio) in the witchcraft debate in the early sixteenth century: Martino (2011). To take fully into account Martino's contribution would have meant to rewrite completely the present essay; I hope to be able to benefit from his insights in a more comprehensive study of the Renaissance debate on witchcraft, which I am working on at present.
2. Spina (1669) vol. 1, section 2, part 1, p. 96. Spina's book, written between 1519 and 1520, had first been published in 1525 as *De strigibus* (see below note 13). On Spina see Zarri (2006a); Duni (2010a).
3. Tavuzzi (2007), pp. 68–72; see also below n. 7.
4. Behringer (2004), pp. 72–79; Del Col (2006), pp. 195–210; Tavuzzi (2007), pp. 188–92, 193–95; Lavenia (2010); Herzig (2013).
5. Del Col (2006).
6. Matteo Duni (2012), Duni; Bever (2009).
7. See a recent critical edition of the Latin version (with French translation), Pic de La Mirandole (2007). The Italian version has been published as Pico della Mirandola (1989). Scholarship on the book and its author is abundant; in English see Burke (1977); Zarri (2006b).
8. A non-comprehensive list includes Vignati (1581) ('A treatise on heresy', written c.1460); Molitor (1489); Alciato (1558), ff. 406–8: *De lamiis seu strigibus scito non indigna* ('Things worth knowing on witches').
9. The complete title of Ponzinibio's book is *Tractatus subtilis et elegans de lamiis et excellentia utriusque iuris, cum nonnullis conclusionibus ad*

*materiam heresis in practica utilibus* ('A subtle and elegant treatise on witches and on the excellence of both laws, with some conclusions on the subject of heresy which may be useful in the legal practice') (Pavia: Jacopo Pocatela da Borgofranco, 1511). Both this edition and the second, identical one published by the same Pocatela in 1513 are extremely rare. Except where otherwise noted, I will be thus quoting from the most widely available edition: Ponzinibio (1592). All translations from Ponzinibio are mine.

10. Duni. In the Italian online bibliographic system (SBN) Ponzinibio's last name is given in its alternate form, Ponginibbi.
11. Ibid. The German polymath Burckhard Gotthelf von Struve (1671–1738) was the earliest scholar to call attention to Ponzinibio's opinions on witchcraft, writing in 1703 that the Italian jurist had been 'the first to put in doubt the existence of the diabolical pact' ('primus, qui existentiam foederis diabolici in dubium vocavit [...]'], in Struve 1725), p. 400. Struve situates Ponzinibio at the start of a line of witchcraft sceptics which ends with Christian Thomasius, and includes the likes of Pietro Pomponazzi, Johann Wier and Friedrich von Spee. Lea (1957), pp. 377–82, provides a summary of the part of *De lamiis* devoted to witchcraft. A short selection of *De lamiis* was published in Hansen (1901), pp. 313–17. Following Hansen and Lea, who had not been aware of the first two editions of *De lamiis* (1511, 1513), all successive scholarship has tentatively dated the book to 1520 mainly due to the fact that it was first mentioned in Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio's 1521 *De strigimagarum daemonumque mirandis* (Mazzolini (1575), p. 222) (to the best of my knowledge, the only exception is Cameron (2010), p. 133, who dates the book correctly to 1511 but does not discuss it in any depth).
12. Molitor's book questions the possibility of some of the witches' deeds (for example their supposed flight to the Sabbath and sexual relations with demons), but does not really reject the reality of the pact with the Devil and the witches' ability to cast spells. Duni (2010c).
13. See below p. 228. Significantly, Spina had been a pupil of Mazzolini, who was the first to comment negatively on Ponzinibio's book.
14. Carolo, a native of Saluzzo, was also known under the French version of his name as Geoffroy Carles, because his career was entirely spent in the service of the French crown. King Louis XII gave him important positions such as President of the Senate of Milan, then under French rule. He was a noted patron of artists and intellectuals, and the owner of a remarkable library. See Meschini (2004), pp. 132ff.
15. Ponzinibio (1511), f. 1v (partially in *Quellen*, p. 313): 'Versabatur superioribus diebus animus meus in materiam lamiarum, quarum persecutio-nes in hac urbe Placentina valde frequentari cepere, et cogitabam que occurrebant et vera ac utilia mihi videbantur in ipsa eadem materia, in qua plurimae quaestiones exortae sunt, scriptis demandare. Et cum id

faciens, inciderit ut arguendo dicerem ius nostrum scientiam nequaquam logicorum more dici posse; et ad id longius progrediens, excellentiam eius explicaverim ut libellum de lamiis ac iuris civilis laudibus contextim confecerim ...'

16. Interestingly, in the most authoritative edition of *De lamiis*, included in a multi-volume collection of law treatises published in Venice between 1583 and 1586, the word 'persecutiones' is replaced by 'operationes'. This change completely distorts the meaning of the sentence: while Ponzinibio had originally written to have been struck by the increase of the trials ('lamiarum persecutiones'), the new version makes him sound worried by the increase of the witcheries ('lamiarum operationes'). Since Hansen read *De lamiis* in this edition, his selection from the book – on which most scholars have relied ever since – does not provide the original wording. See Ponzinibio (1583–86), f. 350ra.
17. Smagliati (1970), p. 151 (my translation); the name of the podestà is on p. 122. Ghира is a village some 12 km east of Parma.
18. On the first page of the book Ponzinibio suggests he has put pen to paper during the current Christmas vacations (see quote below). Since *De lamiis* was printed in June 1511 (the colophon reads, 'Papieque, impressus per magistrum Jacob de Burgo Franco. Anno Domini M.ccccxi. die. xii. mensis Junii'), it is highly probable that it had been written between the end of 1510 and early 1511, thus only a few months after the witch-burning in Parma (September 1510). Martino (2011), pp. 149–50, hypothesizes that Ponzinibio may have been spurred to publish *De lamiis* in June 1511 by the favourable political conditions created by the calling of the council of Pisa against Pope Julius II at the end of May of the same year. Martino's point is well founded, given the dedication of the book to Carolo, a high-ranking official of King Louis XII of France, who had been instrumental in the convocation of the anti-papal council.
19. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 234 (partially in Hansen (1901), pp. 313–4).
20. Ponzinibio (1592), pp. 234–60. But see now Martino (2010), pp. 147ff.
21. On the theme of jurisprudence as 'vera philosophia', and that of the 'spirit' of laws, see Kelley (1979); Kelley (1988); Quaglioni (1990).
22. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 249 (quote from D.1.1.10); see Quaglioni (1990), pp. 130–2.
23. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 252.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 250.
26. Alciato (1537). For details on Alciato's biography see Abbondanza (1960).
27. Alciato (1537), p. 227v (my translation).

28. Ibidem, 228r: 'innumeraeque ineptae quaestiones, quae id in divino cultu possunt, quod canis in balneo'. It is a reference to *Quid cani et balneo?* (*Adagia*, I.iv.39), in Erasmus (1969–2009), ord. II, vol. 1, pp. 438–42.
29. Hansen (1901), p. 310 (my translation). On Alciato's position on witchcraft see Matteo Duni (2006b).
30. Hansen (1901), p. 311.
31. On *Episcopi* see Peters (2006b).
32. While Alciato does not make reference to any specific jurist or book, he could very well have read *De lamiis* while in Pavia, where he studied law between 1508 and the end of 1511, the year in which Ponzinibio's work was printed in the same city by a publisher that specialized in legal books. Based on references to other published works, Alciato's text cannot have been written prior to the early 1520s, although it mentions the events in the Valtellina as having taken place immediately after the author had received his doctorate, thus in 1516 (Abbondanza (1960)).
33. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 266 (partially in Hansen (1901), pp. 314–5).
34. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 267.
35. Ibid., p. 271: 'since such persons are deluded, as it is said [in the canon], we must thus conclude that their confession, too, is erroneous and should not be accepted ... as a matter of fact, a confession should include true and possible things ... whereas both law and nature reject those things [confessed by the witches]. Hence it cannot be argued, that since those women confessed such things, then it must be true; indeed such a confession is far removed from the facts, and whatever is against nature is lacking in its own principles, and therefore is impossible by nature.'
36. Ibid., p. 274.
37. Ibid., pp. 275–76: 'since he [Christ] was transported or carried by the devil by his own permission, we can infer and affirm that in no way such transvection can nor must be admitted. ... Indeed, the argument based on Christ can be reversed, and therefore it is ineffective.'
38. Ibid., p. 274.
39. Ibid., p. 275: 'If the devil were able to do that [carrying the witches], why would he do it only with a few persons, and of lowly status, as he is impartial, being the tempter of the whole world? And again, if he really does it, why does not he do it only with those, who would be trustworthy witnesses?'
40. Ibid., p. 276: 'it is enough for him to be worshipped even if only mentally. Even the Almighty God looks at the heart of men. In fact, it suffices him, that is, the devil, to hold the mind of man captive, so as to be able to deceive men.'
41. Hansen (1901), p. 316.

42. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 276 (partially in Hansen (1901), *loc. cit.*): ‘parvuli stricantur ... naturaliter, oculo utenti ac infecto propter animam infectam’.
43. Ponzinibio (1592), p. 281 (partially in Hansen (1901), p. 316): ‘Et prop- terea contra alios non facient fidem nec indicium, etiam ad inquirendum, licet aliter videatur observatum et, ut arbitror, male, cum dicta talium per- sonarum procedant ab his, qui per deceptos homines alios decipere quoti- die gestiunt’.
44. Ibid. (partially in Hansen (1901), p. 316): ‘Quod puto notandum, licet novum, et non observetur’.
45. Ibid. (partially in Hansen (1901), pp. 316–17): ‘doctores [jurists] sunt vocandi ut assistant processibus inquisitorum ac examinibus et quaestioni- bus; ipsi enim sunt tractatores criminalium, et non post perfectum proces- sum differatur eorum vocatio’.
46. Cassini (1901), p. 271.
47. On this point see both Duni (2011) and Bertolotti (2010).
48. Both the *Tractatus* and the *Quadruplex apologia* were first published in 1525 as an appendix to Spina (1525).

# The Infected and the Guilty: On Heresy and Witchcraft in Post-Reformation Denmark

*Louise Nyholm Kallestrup*

Since the days of the early church, Christians have debated the connection between magic and the Devil, heresy, apostasy and idolatry. In the Acts of the Apostles, there is the story of the sorcerer Simon of Samaria, who saw how Peter and John gave the Holy Ghost to people by the laying on of hands. Simon of Samaria attempted to gain divine power by offering them money, but Peter answered, ‘Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money’ (Acts 8:9–29). Simon believed he could enhance his own magical powers in this way, but Peter dismissed him as a heretic. The story was interpreted by the early church as being the origin of the connection between heresy and magic. Simon was the ‘Father of all heresies’.<sup>1</sup> In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas argued that magical rituals were working through the power of the Devil. Practitioners of magic had engaged in dealings with the Devil and entered into a diabolical pact, for only in this way would the Devil empower the rituals. This link became essential for the early modern inquisitors’ understanding of the connection between heresy and magic. For them, magical rituals were proclaimed heresy.<sup>2</sup> In Scandinavia, the

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L.N. Kallestrup (✉)

Department of History, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark  
e-mail: [lnk@hist.sdu.dk](mailto:lnk@hist.sdu.dk)

Kingdom of Denmark-Norway broke with the Catholic Church in 1536. After this, secular courts assumed the jurisdiction which had belonged to the church over a number of offences, including witchcraft. Consequently witchcraft was now legally defined as causing harm to others.<sup>3</sup> Still, witchcraft implied heresy, idolatry and apostasy from God to the Devil, and consequently it remained a grave sin. It is the aim of this essay to explore further the correlation between heresy and witchcraft in a secular legal setting in the century following the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark.

### THE CONCEPT OF HERESY

The concept of heresy has many aspects, and its importance in relation to witchcraft and magic is not unequivocal – neither in the past nor in research. Various categories and definitions have been applied, from John Tedeschi's simple definition of heresy as an intentional break with the doctrines of the church to Othmar Hageneder's account of the seven canonical definitions of heresy, including the heretic as one who mocks the sacraments, or as one who has been excommunicated.<sup>4</sup> The American historian Richard Kieckhefer has analysed the connection between various forms of magical offences and heresy in the late medieval period. Kieckhefer has argued that the importance of the concept of heresy depended on the nature of the magical offence which had been committed.<sup>5</sup> Kieckhefer's investigation includes the categories of necromancy, witchcraft and sorcery, and he has demonstrated that in those instances where heresy was recorded as part of the crime, the meaning of the heresy varied. For necromancy the guilty were proclaimed heretics by referring to theology. Their crime consisted in invoking demons and being willing to surrender themselves to them. Kieckhefer defined witchcraft as a pact with the Devil and the collective conspiracy against the Christian community. In such cases, the accusation of heresy had a political basis. Witches were intent on overthrowing the Christian community. In cases of sorcery, which Kieckhefer viewed as being those that have to do with causing others harm, the accusation of heresy was made on the basis of a cultural significance where the heretic – in this case the sorceress – was a threat to the local community. The harm caused by the sorceress threatened the stability of the local community.<sup>6</sup>

For the post-Tridentine inquisitors in Italy, the connection between witchcraft, magic and heresy came to play a key role in the condemnation of practitioners of magical rituals.<sup>7</sup> Anyone sentenced for the practising of such rituals was sentenced for heresy and apostasy. Abjuration

of the heresy, often accompanied by physical punishment, was crucial and mandatory for being readmitted to the Catholic Church. A religious agenda basically governed how Roman inquisitors dealt with persons suspected of performing various magical rituals, most often referred to by the inquisitors as *sortilegio*, sorcery, but by historians often translated as witchcraft. To the post-Tridentine inquisitors, diabolical witchcraft, *stregoneria*, rarely occurred. A similar linguistic notion can be made when studying the case of Lutheran Denmark. In post-Reformation Denmark, people were prosecuted for *trolddom*, which directly translates sorcery. *Hekseri*, in German *Hexerei* and in English ‘witchcraft’, was not a part of the vocabulary applied in the trials before the late seventeenth century. In this sense, in post-Reformation Denmark the term *trolddom* implied a person who in some way had dealings with evil powers and made use of these powers to cause harm to others. This more or less corresponds to how most scholars understand the term *witchcraft*. A way of separating the two terms is to distinguish between ‘witchcraft’ and ‘diabolical witchcraft’, the latter implying that the witch had engaged in activities associated with the Devil such as travelling through air, or attending sabbats and worship of the Devil. In this essay, when I use the term ‘witch’ in a Danish context, it refers to the Danish term *troldkone* (fem.) or *troldkarl* (masc.). The suspects in Denmark only rarely fitted the category of ‘diabolical witchcraft’.

It is therefore relevant to ask if it makes sense to retain a linking of witchcraft and heresy in a Danish post-Reformation context. In Denmark, those accused of witchcraft were prosecuted in secular courts, where judges placed much emphasis on the damage caused by such people. Although the church had no legal authority in matters of witchcraft, theologians, bishops, deans and clergymen were all in various ways in contact with the phenomenon. The religious aspect of the crime of witchcraft was of fundamental importance in helping to legitimize the persecution of such offenders by the secular authorities.<sup>8</sup> Theologically speaking the crucial offence was the correlation with the Devil. This was simple and easy to understand, even for the illiterate common people. The Lutheran condemnation became more complicated to the parishioners when the authorities referred to beneficial magic as idolatry and witchcraft.

In Denmark, most witchcraft cases were conducted by the common people against the common people. The political argument was pushed into the background in favour of what Kieckhefer would call a cultural aberration, since practitioners were a threat to the stability of local communities. For those witnesses, prosecutors and suspects who appeared in

the trials, the crime consisted in consulting evil powers and using them to harm co-villagers and livestock. It was the illness or death inflicted that was the core of the offence – not the conspiracy with the Devil. In that, the conception of the populace regarding the crime of witchcraft corresponds more or less with Kieckhefer's concept of sorcery.

The intention of this article is to examine the term *heresy* when employed in connection to witchcraft in post-Reformation Denmark. In a medieval and early modern theological perspective, magic correlates with heresy, but in post-Reformation Denmark theologians had no legal say in witch trials and their role must mainly be considered advisory.<sup>9</sup> Church, king and the populace could agree on condemning witchcraft, albeit from different conceptions as to the nature of the crime. This article argues that the persecution of witchcraft as a form of heresy must have enjoyed limited popular backing in Danish trials. The first part of the article concentrates on the most central Danish treatise on demonology, namely Niels Hemmingsen's *En Undervisning aff den hellige scrifft, huad mand døme skal om den store og gruelige Guds bespottelse som skeer met Troldom, Sinelse, Manelse oc anden saadan Guds hellige Naffns oc Ords vanbrug* ['An instruction in Holy Scripture. What one is to think about the great and terrible blasphemy that takes place through the practising and use of witchcraft [*trolddom*], making the sign of the cross, conjuring and other kinds of abuse of God's word and holy name'], c.1570–74.<sup>10</sup> Although the treatise has a theological origin, it is addressed to the secular authorities, and the idea is to examine how especially Hemmingsen but also his predecessors drew the authorities' attention to the sinful aspect of witchcraft and magic and what meaning the concept of heresy acquired in these efforts. Following this, the article concentrates on texts with a completely or partially secular imprint, for example legislation and trials, in order to pursue the correlation between heresy and witchcraft, and to trace the connotation 'top-down', by starting with the learned level and moving down to the practical handling of the trials.

### FIRST-GENERATION REFORMERS, WITCHCRAFT AND HERESY

For Luther, witchcraft was a form of heresy, but also apostasy and idolatry. Everyone, including the devout, was in danger of being bewitched by practitioners of these arts. Luther discussed witchcraft, sorcery and evil

acts in several of his writings, often using them as a political instrument and as part of an attack on his opponents.<sup>11</sup> His perception of witchcraft and magic was a reflection of Luther's consistent insistence on the presence of the Devil and his constant attacks on humanity.

According to Luther witchcraft consisted of diabolical temptations by means of which God tested people's faith. If people turned to such arts, their soul was doomed. First and foremost Luther found witches guilty of idolatry. Motives for practising witchcraft varied according to what stage the offender had reached in life. For young people – and here Luther deals most obviously with male-related aims – witchcraft was practised in order to become invulnerable, to strengthen one's weapons (in war), to rouse the love of a woman and to have children – or to avoid having children. At the next stage, adult life, witchcraft was often practised in order to heal sick children, protect domestic animals or to interpret signs and omens. What these two ages shared was that witchcraft was practised in order to achieve something. For old age, witchcraft had a different angle. In Luther's sermon on the First Commandment, one can see some of the elements also found in demonologists' accounts of diabolical witches from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Here Luther is refuting the popular conception – and a topic debated among demonologists – that witches themselves were capable of causing the misfortunes and hailstorms of which they were accused. There was no doubt in Luther's mind: It was not the witches themselves who caused such harm; no humans controlled such powers. Instead, it was demons, acting on God's permission. This should not, however, prompt people to believe that it was God who caused these misfortunes. The Devil admittedly acted with God's permission, but not on God's orders. God through himself does good, but when he causes evil, he does so through demons and the Devil.

Luther was no exception in viewing witchcraft as a breach of the First Commandment. Indeed, this view was dominant among Protestant theologians, including Johan Bugenhagen (d. 1558), a key figure in the early implementation of Lutheranism in Denmark, and Jesper Brochmand (d. 1638), professor of theology and bishop of Zealand. According to British historian Stuart Clark, the many small passages of demonology in the texts of the reformers reveal that the belief in witchcraft corresponded well with their conceptual world. The many treatises and sermons that debated the topic confirm how the phenomena of witchcraft and heresy were actively used in the campaign to spread the Evangelical doctrine as the true faith.<sup>13</sup>

One of the best-known admonitions against witchcraft in Denmark from the years immediately after the Reformation is *A Visitation Book*, written c.1540 by the Zealand bishop Peder Palladius. The book was issued after his first tour of the diocese, and it is composed as a guide for vicars and bishops on how one was to visit the parishes of the diocese.<sup>14</sup> These tours of inspection were the instrument the new bishops could make use of to keep deacons, vicars and parishioners in order, and they were an effective method in general for teaching and educating parishioners in the new faith.<sup>15</sup> The *Visitation Book* is divided into five sections, dealing with all aspects of the parishioners' contact with the church, including how to furnish an Evangelical church and how the individual groups were to be treated by and in the church. It also contained warnings against women in confinement, midwives, witches (*troldfolk*) and so on. Throughout the book Palladius scattered more or less explicit warnings against the papist religion.<sup>16</sup>

As far as Peder Palladius was concerned, it was important to draw attention to the sinful aspect of practising healing magic, making the sign of the cross and conjuring. This he did by naming such practices witchcraft (*trolddom*). Like Luther, Palladius stressed that everyone could be subject to such evil arts, but Palladius commanded each person to be strong in the faith, for the more the head of the household ensured that his children were instructed in the faith and avoided keeping dishonest and loose-living people, the less was the risk of being a victim of evil people, and this was an argument that ought to encourage every parishioner to want to conform to the new confession. Here then is one of a number of examples of how Peder Palladius used witchcraft in his instruction of the populace regarding their religious belief and practice. The populace were to refrain from seeking help from cunning people, which were consequently referred to by Palladius as witches and completely in accordance with contemporary discourse. Palladius did not deny that making the sign of the cross and conjuring could have an effect, but here we can see how Palladius lumps Catholicism and the Devil together, for there was no mistaking the argument for every good Christian to refrain from visiting a witch: She had learnt her rituals from the monks and the Devil himself: 'It may well be that you think your cow will do better, but your soul will be condemned to the abyss of hell through making the sign of the cross.'<sup>17</sup>

In the warning against idolatry lays a condemnation of the ritualized, papist faith, as was explicated in the passage which follows, where Palladius warns against believing in the witch's incantations and words.

They possessed no power in themselves, but if one put one's faith in them, one would be eternally condemned. In its conclusion, the chapter on witchcraft contained yet another indication that Palladius was bent on eradicating false belief rather than on initiating a witch-hunt. By referring to folklore with the story of Shoe-Ella, a woman in Nordic folklore, who was so evil even the Devil feared her, he makes clear the hierarchy between a witch, the Devil and God: 'it is utter lies when they say the devil is afraid of [a witch]. He fears God only.'<sup>18</sup>

### THE ADMONITIONS OF NIELS HEMMINGSEN ON HERESY AND WITCHCRAFT

When Peder Palladius died in 1560, Niels Hemmingsen had already been installed as Professor of Theology at the university. Like Palladius, Hemmingsen had studied in Wittenberg, and he belonged to the Melanchthonic branch of Protestantism, Phillipism, which came to be associated with Calvinist doctrine, particularly as regards the Eucharist. This alignment proved fatal for Hemmingsen's career at the university and that resulted in his being deprived of his professorship in 1579.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, Hemmingsen enjoyed high status right up to his death in 1600.

In 1570–74 – the exact date is not indicated – the clergyman Rasmus Reravius published a compiled Danish edition of three of Hemmingsen's Latin treatises.<sup>20</sup> Precisely the fact that the treatise was published in Danish makes it interesting in this context. By means of the Danish edition, Reravius was sure of reaching the secular authorities, and the translation – like Peder Palladius' *Visitatsbog* – can be seen as a step in the church's campaign of illumination as to what sin witchcraft and the papist religion were. Hemmingsen shared the eschatological ideas of his European colleagues, and he emphasized that precisely because the Devil's attempts to eclipse Christianity had once again become so frequent, it was necessary to get people to understand the seriousness of resorting to witchcraft.<sup>21</sup> Like Peder Palladius, Hemmingsen's text contains the primary message that the practitioners of witchcraft (*trolddom*) were only half the issue. It also applied to those who knew about them and made use of their rituals. They too were sinful.

The number of signs of the cross made and of incantations used, especially in the villages, when cattle fall ill, is quite countless. And they are not only used by heathens who know nothing of God, or by the impious, who set

themselves up against God, for then it would not merit so great a complaint, but such blessings, spoken and written, are now used for illnesses suffered by man and beast, time and again, and are defended most of all by those who ought to be Christians and members of the church.<sup>22</sup>

In *En Undervisning*, Hemmingsen basically followed the path laid down by Luther, for he stated that witches renounced God and obeyed the Devil – they were offending against the First Commandment.<sup>23</sup> As his motive for publishing the treatise, Hemmingsen advances the need to clarify if witches have any place whatsoever in the Christian community. He puts forward five reasons why such people should be condemned.<sup>24</sup>

These five reasons for condemning underline just how, for the second generation of reformers, witchcraft constituted a religious crime, one where the transgressor was guilty of several kinds of sin. Completely left out of the discussion was the possible harm they might cause people or cattle. The acts and belief of witches confirmed, first and foremost, that they mocked God. This brings out two key concepts for Hemmingsen: heresy and idolatry. Such people were to be condemned, because they ‘in their wickedness more greatly revere this false belief and idolatry than God’s commandments and precepts’,<sup>25</sup> a disdain that had serious consequences for their relation to God, since they were condemned to everlasting perdition, but also caused damage to others by ‘their evil example’.<sup>26</sup> It was not only their own souls that were infected with heresy; they would also inspire others to commit sin and the evil result would spread, with yet more souls being lost. Hemmingsen makes use here of the same rhetoric which the Catholic Church used in condemning the great heresies of the Middle Ages, but which were also used in the pre-Reformation condemnation of witchcraft and magic – of comparing practitioners of such arts to an infectious disease.<sup>27</sup>

Although resembling a traditional Christian condemnation of witchcraft and magic, there was a difference of emphasis since the Catholic theologians mainly stressed that such practices were heresy and apostasy.<sup>28</sup> The essential thing for Luther had been the heresy and idolatry committed by witches and magicians. The following two arguments, however, reflect further on Hemmingsen’s position. He condemns witchcraft, but places this in a clear religiously educative context.

Witches used letters and words in their rituals, and by assigning ‘the holy’ to them, which for Hemmingsen means that the words are assigned supernatural powers, due honour was stolen from God.<sup>29</sup> Once a person had dared to venture out into the sinful life such practitioners led, their evil ways had a cumulative effect:

'Wherefore, anyone using this wickedness and false belief has forsaken and denied the faith, has fallen from God's grace, and shown himself to be the servant of the Devil, and not of Christ.'<sup>30</sup>

These assertions are, for Hemmingsen, indisputable and form the basis for why such people are to be condemned. This leads him to pose five questions that the treatise seeks to answer:

1. From whom does witchcraft come?
2. Do magical rituals hold inherent powers?
3. Why does God permit anyone to practise devilish arts?
4. What passages in Holy Scripture forbid witchcraft?
5. How great a sin are such practices?

In answering the first question, Hemmingsen is in line with both his Protestant and Catholic colleagues. Witchcraft always originates from the Devil. That Hemmingsen found it necessary to state what by this time was so fundamental in the theological understanding of magic and witchcraft, must be because of the lack of understanding displayed by the secular authorities in relation to beneficial magic who, as in other parts of Europe, found it hard to comprehend how the Devil could be the one at work in beneficial magic. Hemmingsen argued that God used divine acts and miracles to get people to understand the true faith, and the only tools He used were his Holy Word, the sacraments and the spirit.<sup>31</sup> But, Hemmingsen warned, the Devil would always try to tempt people to commit wicked acts. The Devil has his own sacraments that he would tempt people to receive.<sup>32</sup> Diabolical sacraments were many and involved objects that remind one of Catholic practices – images, signs, figures, combined with traditional witchcraft remedies such as salt, earth, water, paper, thread and so on. The religion of the Devil was a false religion, and for Hemmingsen, witchcraft was an abuse of God's word. It was false belief and heresy.<sup>33</sup>

In answering question two, Hemmingsen deals again with the problem of the ritual use of words and letters as in Catholic practice. He concentrates on objects of witchcraft and magic to which a special force or power were assigned and that many people continued to believe that signs, figures, images and readings possessed a force in themselves and that they were mistaken.<sup>34</sup> Only the Devil imbued the objects with power. Despite the fact that Hemmingsen himself does not draw attention to it, he is here expressing Thomist notions on the Devil and the magician. Only when the

magician had entered into a pact with the Devil would magical words and letters be imbued with this force.<sup>35</sup> Similar warnings were to be found in Catholic inquisitional manuals, where the unauthorized use by lay people of church rituals was defined as misuse of the sacraments, just as the guide was supplemented by warnings against finds of mirrors, rings, needles and other traditional witchcraft remedies.<sup>36</sup> Hemmingsen's focus on images, signs, figures and readings is interesting, because, similar to that of the Catholic inquisitors, it dealt with those Catholic rituals practised by the populace. The Catholic Church struggled to eradicate rituals without reference to them being illicit and an unauthorized use of religion. Such rituals and practices were referred to as 'abuse of the sacraments and sacramental objects [*cose sacramentale*]'.<sup>37</sup> Hemmingsen had a different agenda. For him, the use of Catholic rituals was unequivocally linked to witchcraft and magic. The argument is underpinned by Hemmingsen's distinction between such arts as practised by pagans, exemplified by Chaldeans and Arcadians, and as practised by Christians.<sup>38</sup> Pagans could be excused, since they did not know Christ and therefore did not know any better. But Christians who practised such arts had made a deliberate choice, since they had renounced Christ. Christian witches and magicians were to be viewed as 'twice as bad and wicked', because they had intentionally committed a sin. For Hemmingsen, then, witchcraft was a deliberate act. If their rituals were effective, the force at work came from the Devil. But, as everyone knows, nothing is obtained free from the Devil, and the abuse of God's word by such people led to their own perdition. If, however, such people realized the sin they had committed and did penance, there was hope for them.<sup>39</sup> If not, 'the one who does otherwise tries God, whom he will find a strict judge on the Day of Judgment, unless he in time does penance and reforms'.<sup>40</sup> In accordance with Evangelical views, God was not a mild, forgiving father, but zealous and punitive: 'As Elias said to Aschab: God is zealous, therefore he does not allow [even] the tiniest part of his honour to go to the Devil.'<sup>41</sup> That God even so permitted witchcraft was because it was a way of testing people's faith. Hemmingsen asked rhetorically why God allowed this mockery of his name. The answer was simple and a common one from Evangelical theologians: The Devil had been sent to tempt people to sin, and only those who managed to resist could entertain any hope of salvation. Here responsibility for committing sin is placed with the individual. For God allowed the Devil to insinuate himself into all the wicked crevices, there where man had sinned. So if man is afflicted by witchcraft or other misfortunes, man himself is solely responsible.<sup>42</sup>

The educative message is once more transparent in this section, where Hemmingsen confronts healing rituals. He does so by anticipating the question of the injustice some people must feel when their neighbour escapes illness. Here Hemmingsen warns against being tempted to use (Catholic) healing rituals. Good health was a gift from God, but if one does not have it, one must not resort to witchcraft or magic. Instead, parishioners are to believe and practice their faith correctly.

Basically, then, Hemmingsen saw witchcraft and magic as being a breach of the First and Second Commandments, that is, they were idolatry and sacrilege. With reference to certain biblical passages, Hemmingsen argued that idolatry consisted in such people having chosen the ‘false religion’ of Devil and the sacrilege through their witchery acts.<sup>43</sup> As mentioned, Hemmingsen also used the labels idolatry, heresy, apostasy, Catholicism and sacrilege for witchcraft. His condemnation of those who committed them is in line with Bugenhagen, Luther and Palladius, and it confirms Stuart Clark’s argument that the condemnation of witches was actively incorporated into the struggle to reform the populace.<sup>44</sup> The many references to Catholic practice must be seen in the light of Hemmingsen’s efforts to stamp out Catholicism. This should not cause one to think Hemmingsen only used the condemnation of witchcraft and magic to conceal a true agenda of condemning Catholicism. Instead the concepts of Catholicism, heresy and witchcraft are difficult to separate in Hemmingsen’s treatise. They are intertwined, which must be due to the fact that reformers, as Clark argues, see them as two sides of the same coin. The reformers wanted to return the church to its original, pure status, where God’s Word was the core. The multiple rituals that the Catholics regarded as necessary for practising their faith were equated by the reformers with witchcraft. When Luther proclaimed the pope to be Antichrist, he was merely underlining the close connection between Catholicism and diabolic magic. Antichrist was the greatest wizard of all, and witchcraft was thereby explicitly woven into an anti-Catholic campaign.<sup>45</sup> Hemmingsen’s use of the conceptual pair heresy–witchcraft assumed a political significance, where the key efforts became the eradication of the diabolical, papist belief. Danish scholars have argued that the Lutheran Reformation and the abolition of Catholicism led to a spiritual vacuum for illiterate people. They had been familiar with a religious system, which offered a large variety of healing rituals, and with the introduction of Protestantism all of these were rejected. Instead, villagers had attempted to fill this spiritual vacuum on their own by practising Catholic rituals, which resulted in

a counter-reaction from the church. The Catholic Church had certainly provided people with various kinds of healing rituals, but it is difficult to imagine that their illegitimacy did not exist prior to the Reformation. The difference is more likely to be found in the agenda of the authorities and their approach to the illicit practices and rituals. The Lutheran Church in post-Reformation Denmark was more inclined to exclude, compared to the medieval church, which had been more indulgent towards popular practice of beneficial magic, a tendency which can be supported by study of other confessionalized states and is not reserved for Northern Europe. In Italy a similar development took place during and after the Catholic Reformation. There was no spiritual vacuum at the end of the sixteenth century, but a church that continued to practise healing and protective rituals. Even so, the inquisition trials here bear witness to an increased vigilance as regards the copying by lay people of rituals described as witchcraft, magic and superstition.<sup>46</sup>

### LEGISLATION ON WITCHCRAFT AND HERESY

As far as Hemmingsen was concerned, eradicating witchcraft and magic was a duty of secular authorities, but judges on these trials had to be skilled and learned.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after the Lutheran Reformation in 1536, the Church Ordinance of 1537–39 was issued, which defined the organization, obligations and rights of the new Evangelical Church.<sup>48</sup> According to the Church Ordinance, secular authorities, referred to as The Sword, were obliged to defend the church and the faith.<sup>49</sup> A number of regulations in the Church Ordinance were aimed at eradicating Catholicism, but nothing about witchcraft and magic. During the sixteenth century, Danish legislation on witchcraft had been expanded by procedural regulations only, and until 1617 witchcraft was legally defined as maleficent magic (*maleficium*) only.<sup>50</sup> In addition, regulations designed to eradicate Catholic beliefs and practices that could lead to idolatry were issued on an ongoing basis. The Synodalia of Antvortskov in 1546 contained such regulations, and at intervals injunctions to eradicate idolatry in churches and chapels were issued. They were to be enforced by the king's vassals and sometimes entailed demolishing specified churches and chapels.<sup>51</sup> As a part of the Lutheran Jubilee in 1617, three regulations (*forordninger*) were issued on 12 October. The theme of the regulations was a clear statement from the Danish Lutheran Church: all three regulations considered the disciplining of the life and behaviour of the individual. One concerned witches (*trold-*

*folk*), and those privy to them, one was on excessive lavishness at funerals and weddings, and one commanded persons of loose living to make public confession.<sup>52</sup>

‘Regulation concerning witches [*troldfolk*], and those privy to them’ (referred to in the following as ‘the 1617 Regulation’ or ‘the Regulation’) is the first in a Danish context to describe the religious aspect of the crime of witchcraft. The theological fingerprint on the Regulation was made by the Zealand bishop Hans Poulsen Resen, but at several points the regulations reflect the discourse on the subject represented by Niels Hemmingsen decades earlier. The instructions in the Regulation on witches can be divided into three topics. Belonging to the first is a legal definition of the crime of witchcraft; to the second, instructions regarding the fixing of the punishment; and to the third a principle that all men in the service of the crown were obliged to initiate trials.<sup>53</sup>

As regards heretics and witches, the Regulation’s definition of such persons commands attention. First of all, it should be noted that it does not limit its focus to the practitioners themselves; it also includes their clients, those privy to them. The part of witchcraft to which most attention is given is, not surprisingly, the beneficial part, referred to in the Regulation as ‘secret arts’. Beneficial magic was the point of dispute between the theologians and lay people. The term ‘secret arts’ we also find in Hemmingsen,<sup>54</sup> and it covered such rituals as making the sign of the cross, conjuring and diagnosing bewitchment – rituals that were closely related to Catholic belief and practice and widespread in popular healing traditions. In line with the admonitions of Palladius and Hemmingsen the Regulation ordered lay authorities to eradicate the popular tradition for turning to cunning people in particular. In fact an earlier title of the Regulation was ‘Regulation concerning Signing’.<sup>55</sup> The ‘secret arts’ in the Regulation covered the same offences as those condemned by Palladius and Hemmingsen, and it laid down that these rituals, no matter if they were practised with the aim of curing human beings and animals, and no matter if God’s word was often included, were an abuse of God’s words and logically forbidden. While Hemmingsen and Palladius both regarded making the sign of the cross, conjuring and diagnosing bewitchment as forms of witchcraft, the rhetoric is milder in the Regulation. The difference in degree between *proper witches* (*de rette troldfolk*) and those indulging in secret arts (*hemmelige kunster*) was not discussed by Hemmingsen or Palladius, but it was defined in the Regulation. People practising these secret arts were to be banished and to leave behind their *boeslod* (property);

their clients were to make public confession and be punished according to their assets. For a second offence, they were to be punished as the practitioners themselves. No mercy was shown the proper witches. They had entered into a pact with the Devil and were to be sentenced to death. The Regulation contained then an explicitly religious argument in its condemnation of witches, but compared to Hemmingsen's exhortations in *En Undervisning*, the law was conspicuously low on religious rhetoric. It mentioned nothing about idolatry or heresy, clothing the religious argument instead in secular wording. In the same way as Peder Palladius in *Visitatsbogen*, the Regulation warned that rituals, which on the surface seemed to 'benefit and cure man and beast', actually belonged to the Devil.<sup>56</sup> This can probably be justified by a sender-receiver relationship, where both parties belonged to the secular world. Danish witchcraft trials were carried out through secular prosecution, and with marginal intervention only by the church. The other form of offence covered by the law is 'proper witches' (*rette troldfolk*). They were the ones who had entered into a pact with the Devil and harmed their neighbours. It was clearly not necessary to describe their sin – of that there was hardly any doubt, and they were to be burned at the stake.<sup>57</sup> The justification for the harsh punishment of these offenders was that they had forsaken their Christian faith and given themselves to the Devil, the same way as Hemmingsen in *En Undervisning* concluded that witches committed idolatry and apostasy.<sup>58</sup>

## IN COURT

Even though the Regulation of 1617 clearly stated that practitioners of secret arts were guilty of wicked acts and that proper witches had forsaken their baptism and converted to the Devil, it was still an accusation of material damage that initiated the trials for witchcraft. In this closing section, a more detailed look is taken at whether it makes sense to speak of heresy in relation to the practical handling of their trial.

The initial phase of a Danish trial took place at the manor court of the accused (*værneting*), where procedures were accusatorial but with inquisitorial features.<sup>59</sup> A trial resembled a kind of negotiation, and the role of the judge was to assess who had the best case. In practice, normal procedure was for the accuser to present his allegations and to formally charge the suspect. In addition a number of witnesses would testify as to the actual event that had led to the accusation. Most often the suspect had been disliked in her local community, so several people turned up to give

accounts of suspicious episodes and illnesses or threats of evil. In cases where sentence was passed, it was commonly noted in the trial records that the suspect, even before the case had been brought to court, had a reputation for being a witch. The suspect seldom spoke during the proceedings, except to admit or deny her guilt. Female suspects needed a male legal guardian, usually a husband or a son-in-law, to lead a defence, and if no one took on this task, the accusers had an easy prey. When defending a suspect, witnesses would try and refute the accusations through alternative stories, and/or they would swear on the good and honest reputation of the suspect. Generally, judges emphasized three things when passing sentence. First, a ‘principle of causality’, meaning that the supposed witch had uttered a threat of misfortune followed by a given person suffering an unforeseen illness or accident. The second thing being that the person carried a reputation for being a witch; and third, one or more sentenced witches had denounced the person. The trial negotiations were between lay parties, however, and as the example below illustrates, representatives of the church came to play a role during the later stages of a trial.

The case of Ane Nielsdatter Gammelmoder ('Old Mother') includes most of the judicial elements outlined above. Ane Gammelmoder was brought before Viborg Landsting in the autumn of 1617. Prior to this, she had been pronounced guilty by the manor court of Visborg (*birketing*), initiating the appellate court in Viborg.<sup>60</sup> Ane Gammelmoder was charged with the bewitchment of the noble man Eske Bille, master of Mariager Kloster. The bailiff (*ridefoged*) acted on his master's behalf by raising the trial.<sup>61</sup> During the trial, other episodes of suspected witchcraft surfaced, among others, taking the ‘good fortune’ of a local parishioner, Christen Sørensen. The two had been quarrelling for several years and, according to Christen, Ane had caused misfortunes with his health and livestock. Another parishioner testified to the following experience of his servant boy: one day when driving the carriage, Ane Gammelmoder had been standing on the road and this had made the horses go wild. Afterwards one of them had fallen ill and barely survived. During the trial it emerged that this was not the first time Ane had been in the public eye for witchcraft. Several witnesses had testified how her reputation had travelled ahead of her, when she came to the parish. Parishioners were familiar with her reputation for being a witch and they had feared meeting her. Many witnesses came forward and referred to episodes of Ane threatening them and misfortune befalling them, their family or livestock subsequently. In court, no legal guardian appeared to defend Ane Gammelmoder, and her

only hope was the testimonial (*skudsmål*) offered by the clergyman Niels Pedersen of her former parish. The clergyman stated that Ane had ‘occasionally sought the body and blood of the glorious Christ’, and he carried on and nourished suspicions against Ane by stating that ‘he did not know of her intentions and whether she was ever sincere’. Finally, the clergyman revealed how, clearly, Ane must have been a menace to the villagers. When in church, he stated, he often had to move her ‘from the Altar, otherwise she would be here and there and all over … and she would be intrusive and harassing people [*overtryggle*]’.<sup>62</sup>

The following year the same clergyman, Niels Pedersen, was summoned to testify in a case against Bodil Kleiens, one of the women who was denounced by Ane Gammelmoder. In this case Niels Pedersen confirmed that the suspect had carried a reputation for being a witch for the past twelve years and Bodil Kleiens was later burned at the stake. In the majority of Danish witch trials clergymen were asked to evaluate the character of the suspect, and they would often confirm the poor reputation of the suspect. The clergyman was regarded the most credible person, and his statements were commonly referred to in the final sentence.

Although the judges remained secular, the church became an important part by assuming importance regarding the question of a person’s honour and reputation. Despite the involvement of the church in this part of the trial, it does not have much to do with the clergyman as a representative for theological ideas. Only after the accused had been pronounced guilty is it possible to trace theological ideas about witchcraft in Danish witch trials. After a guilty sentence torture was implemented, and particularly in the first part of the cross-examination the idea of the apostasy and idolatry of the witch became evident.<sup>63</sup> The purpose of the torture was to get the witch to confess everything so as thereby to demonstrate her wish for reconciliation with God. At the same time, the aim was to have the witch reveal other witches.<sup>64</sup> The idea of witchcraft as a conspiracy of evil persons gathering to perform evil deeds against their devout neighbours was also prevalent in the Danish discourse of witchcraft, and in the initial part of the painful interrogation the judges sought to clarify where in and in the company of whom the witch had renounced God and her Christian baptism.<sup>65</sup> The theological ideas of the witch’s renunciation of her Christian baptism and the subsequent adherence to the Devil are in stark contrast to the first, distinctly secular part of the trial. When the witch had renounced her Christian baptism, she belonged to the cult of the Devil and had now entered into a diabolical pact. As a reward, she was

allotted her boy (*dreng*), a kind of servant devil. The meeting with this devil is often described as the entering into of a betrothal, sometimes even a marriage.<sup>66</sup> Following these descriptions the rest of the confession usually included accounts of various incidents and conflicts, which had led the witch to threaten with evil.

## CONCLUSION

In the court cases investigated by Richard Kieckhefer, heresy was or quickly became part of the accusation against the suspect, whereas in Danish court cases the heretical aspect of witchcraft was neglected, and the core of the offense remained the harm inflicted by the witch. To explain this, one must turn to the nature of the Danish trials. As in other parts of Europe, trials were initiated from below, and villagers rarely took an interest in heresy (*vrangtro*) unless this had material consequences. It has not been possible to locate witch trials that involved allegations of heresy in post-Reformation Denmark, and such trials were not likely to find their way into a secular courtroom. When, after all, it does make sense to analyse the various meanings of the concept of heresy in a Danish context, it is due to the frame for understanding some of the motives for the condemnation of witchcraft in Denmark provided by such analysis. Furthermore, this helps to explain the conceptual change of heresy taking place as part of the shift from theology to practice.

When reading Niels Hemmingsen, it is difficult to distinguish between witchcraft, heresy and Catholicism, because to Hemmingsen these concepts were inseparable and all grave sins. In his treatise on witchcraft, the concepts appear tantamount in the text, and must be understood as part of the anti-Catholic campaign condemning a ritualized faith. Hemmingsen's condemnation of witchcraft was based on a theological argument of witchcraft being heresy, idolatry and apostasy. But there was also a political argument – such persons were exponents of the Catholic faith, in which the pope was acting on behalf of Christ and hierarchically above the prince. This was a different social order, which was rooted in the ideas of the Lutheran princely state.

The Regulation of 1617 was issued at a time when Danish authorities, ecclesiastical as well as worldly, were characterized by a Lutheran orthodoxy. In the law, part of the theological argument was peeled away, and heresy was consigned to the background in favour of the witches' association with the Devil. Witches collaborated with the Devil with the shared

aim of bringing down Christian society. It was inherent in the Lutheran princely state that the prince was obliged to punish those who broke the laws of the kingdom; otherwise God would vent his anger on all of society. The last part of this trichotomy was the people, who were the main characters in the witch trials. Despite legislation after 1617 stating that everyone was ordered to raise cases against witches, cases remained more or less the same. When the church was directly confronted with witchcraft and superstition, it remained remarkably passive. A case included several religious elements after the verdict had been pronounced, but before then, the church was represented by the clergyman, when he was called upon to testify to the reputation of the accused. Here, the church was part of what must still be characterized as a secular arrangement. During torture, after sentences had been passed, there was more room for theological conceptions concerning the sin committed by the witch. Then, it was apostasy and, to a lesser extent, idolatry that were centre stage, as the first part of the confession always contained the time and place of the witch's forswearing of her Christian baptism. For the common person, the motive for raising cases of witchcraft had to do with a cultural threat. By conducting a case against her, stability could be maintained in the economic and social microcosm that a village community constituted. The theological ideas about the sin committed by such people and their crime against God had, at the level of the villagers, been peeled away, and the fact that the merciful mother figure had been exchanged at the Reformation for a zealous, punitive God did not make all that much difference to the popular view of witchcraft and secret arts.

## NOTES

1. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13797b.htm> (accessed 17.06.2015).
2. John Tedeschi, 'Inquisitorial Law and the Witch', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds.) *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 100–1; Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp. 33–64.
3. According to the Law Code of Jutland, which was the sole law to define witchcraft from 1536–1617; Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 33–35.
4. Tedeschi, 'Inquisitorial Law', p. 101; Hageneder lists the remaining categories of heretic as: one who cuts himself off from the church; one who puts a wrong interpretation on the Scriptures; one who founds or joins new sects;

one who deviates from Roman Catholic doctrines; and finally one who has evil intentions with the sacraments; Othmar Hageneder, 'Der Häresiebegriff bei den Juristen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts', in W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (eds.), *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th C.)* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1976), pp. 42–103.

5. Richard Kieckhefer, 'Witchcraft, Necromancy and Sorcery as Heresy', in Martine Ostorero, Georg Moderstin and Kathrin Utz-Tremp (eds.), *Chasses aux sorcières et démonologie. Entre discours et pratiques (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Florence: Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008), pp. 133–153.
6. Kieckhefer, 'Witchcraft, Necromancy and Sorcery', p. 136.
7. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 53–64.
8. Kallestrup, Louise Nyholm, 'Knowing Satan from God. Demonic Possession, Witchcraft and the Lutheran Orthodox Church in Early Modern Denmark', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 6/2, 2011, pp. 165ff.
9. Kallestrup, 'Knowing Satan', pp. 181–82.
10. The manuscript is undated, but is normally considered to have been published between 1570 and 1574. Hereafter referred to as *En Undervisning*. Niels Hemmingsen's work has yet to be examined in detail in connection with his activities as a theologian, both prior to and after his dismissal in 1579.
11. Alan Kors and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe 400–1700. A Documentary History*, 2, edn., Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 261–62.
12. Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, pp. 264–65.
13. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons. The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 489ff.
14. Danish translation by Lis Jacobsen, *Peder Palladius Danske Skrifter*, vols. I–V (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1926); the book is in V:1–240; most recently translated by Martin Schwarz Lausten, *En Visitatsbog*. Published in contemporary Danish and with notes by Martin Schwarz Lausten (Copenhagen: Anis, 2003) (in the following: *En Visitatsbog*). The edition by Schwarz Lausten will be referred to, unless otherwise mentioned.
15. Schwarz Lausten, *En Visitatsbog*, p. 16.
16. *En Visitatsbog*, pp. 29–38.
17. *En Visitatsbog*, p. 118.
18. *En Visitatsbog*, p. 119. The story of Shoe-Ella, also known from church murals, was an old popular myth about the woman who was so evil that even the Devil was afraid of her, referred to in Stephen Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 185; Ebbe Nyborg, *Fanden på væggen* (Herning: Wormianum, 1978), pp. 38–45.

19. Bjørn Kornerup, *Den Danske Kirkes Historie*, vol. IV (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1959), pp. 140ff.
20. Morten Fink-Jensen, 'En skrivende præst og hans publikum', in Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen (eds.), *Når det regner på præsten. En kulturhistorie om sognepræster og sognefolk 1550–1750* (Copenhagen: Hovedland, 2009), p. 53.
21. Eschatological ideas were characteristic of the theologians of the period, see Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe. Superstition, Reason and Religion, 1250–1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 174–95; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 401ff. This can be seen at several points in the introductory section of Hemmingsen's work, e.g. on p. 16 unpagged, my paging, where it is emphasized that this is a 'greater sin than people realize'.
22. Preface to *En Undervisning*, unpagged, my numbering, pp. 6–7. This is also noted in Rasmus Reravius' preface, and further: 'When someone opposes such impiety, and says that it is a sin and a wrong, one [does indeed] know so much that this can be argued against. It is, they say, God's word: One does no man evil thereby, but helps people and cattle to regain their health'; but Hemmingsen also draws attention to this, e.g. p. 39.
23. *En Undervisning*, pp. 23, 42 etc.
24. *En Undervisning*, pp. 18–19.
25. *En Undervisning*, pp. 15–16.
26. *En Undervisning*, pp. 15–16.
27. Kallestrup, *I pagt med Djævelen*, pp. 41–42; Alan Kors and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe 400–1700. A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), pp. 29ff.
28. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 153–54.
29. *En Undervisning*, pp. 16–17.
30. *En Undervisning*, p. 18.
31. *En Undervisning*, p. 24.
32. *En Undervisning*, p. 27.
33. *En Undervisning*, p. 28.
34. *En Undervisning*, p. 29.
35. Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, pp. 87–103. Apart from to passages of Scripture, Hemmingsen mainly refers to St Augustine.
36. Tedeschi, 'Inquisitorial Law', pp. 92–93.
37. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, p. 21.
38. *En Undervisning*, pp. 31–32.
39. *En Undervisning*, pp. 33–34, 35.
40. *En Undervisning*, p. 35.
41. *En Undervisning*, p. 42.

42. Hemmingsen has now already begun to answer his third question; *En Undervisning*, pp. 36ff.
43. *En Undervisning*, pp. 42ff.
44. In accordance with the ideas of the age concerning witches and sorcerers, Hemmingsen stresses that women are particularly disposed to resort to such practices. That Exodus emphasized a witch was, according to Hemmingsen, because women in all countries had always been more inclined to sin, and this also applied to Denmark; *En Undervisning*, p. 47.
45. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 387, 526–46, esp. pp. 534–35; on Antichrist, pp. 360ff.
46. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 20–226; Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), pp. 368–99; Mary O’Neil, ‘Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in Late 16th Century Modena’, in Stephen Haliczer (ed.), *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Totowa, NJ: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 89–90.
47. *En Undervisning*, pp. 45, 50.
48. The Church Ordinance was issued in Latin in 1537 and in Danish two years later. Published by Martin Schwarz Lausten as *Kirkeordinansen 1537/39. Tekststudgave med indledning og noter* (Odense: Akademisk Forlag, 1989).
49. Schwarz Lausten, *Kirkeordinansen 1537-39*, pp. 9–37.
50. Copenhagen Articles, 1547, §§8, §17, printed in Jens Chr. V. Johansen, *Da Djævelen var ude ... Trolddom i det 17. århundredes Danmark* (Viborg: Odense University Press, 1991), pp. 21–22; Kalundborg Articles 1576, art. 8, published in Rørdam, H.F., *Danmarks Kirkelove samt udvalg af andre bestemmelser vedrørende kirken, skolen og de fattiges forsorgelse fra Reformationen indtil Christian V's Danske Lov. 1536–1683*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen, 1886), pp. 269–70; Jutland Law paragraph on witchcraft and sorcery in Stig Juul and Erik Kroman, *Danmarks gamle Love på Nutidsdansk* (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog og Litteraturselskab, 1945–48), II:224.
51. Rørdam, *Danmarks Kirkelove*, pp. 247–60, in particular p. 251; for regulations relating to churches and chapels, *ibid.*, pp. 356, 496–97, 510 etc.
52. Rørdam, *Danmarks Kirkelove*, pp. 59–63; Per Ingesman, ‘Fromhed styrker rigerne’, in Bach-Nielsen, Carsten et al. (eds.), *Danmark og renæssancen 1500–1650* (Gylling: Gads Forlag, 2006), pp. 140ff.
53. Kallestrup, ‘Knowing Satan’, pp. 163ff.
54. *En Undervisning*, p. 36.
55. *Sjællandske Tegnelser*, vol. 21, fol. 258v–259v, Rigsarkivet, via Henningsen, Gustav ‘Da djævelen var ude ... Trolddom i det 17. århundredes Danmark’, review article, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 92/1, 1992, p. 138.

56. *En Visitatsbog*, p. 118; The Regulation via Rørdam, *Danmarks Kirkelove*, p. 59
57. Noble folk were to be beheaded instead of burned.
58. Hemmingsen's precise definition was that 'All the testimonies in Holy Scripture that condemn idolatry also condemn witchcraft and sorcery'; *En Undervisning*, p. 47.
59. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 53–69.
60. The Kalundborg Articles of 1576 had made a trial of appeal at the appellate court mandatory in guilty verdicts. In Jutland the appellate court was located in Viborg; see Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft*, pp. 65–66.
61. The case against Ane Nielsdatter Gammelmoder, National Archives of Denmark, Viborg, Appellate court in Viborg, 22 November 1617, fol. 388v–394v.
62. Appellate court in Viborg, 22 November 1617, fol. 393r.
63. Summaries of the cross-examinations are not always included in the trial records, but from the preserved ones from Ribe (17) and others from around Jutland, we get a clear view of the standardized questions. The trials from Ribe are published by David Grønlund, *Historisk Efterretning om de i Ribe Bye for Hexerie forfulgte og brændte Mennesker* (1780).
64. It can be seen how denunciations time after time initiated trials; in some of these the denunciations ended with the accused being declared non-valid.
65. The confessions have also been preserved for the trials against Mette Kongens et al., see Merete Birkelund, *Troldkvinden og hendes anklagere. Danske hekseprocesser i det 16. og 17. århundrede* (Viborg: Arusia, Historiske Skrifter, 1983), Johansen, *Da Djævelen van ude*, pp. 71ff., pp. 86–87; the trials against Aalborg mod Christenze Kruckow et al., see J.C. Jacobsen, *Christenze Kruckow. En adelig Troldkvinde fra Chr. IV's Tid* (Copenhagen: GEC Gads Forlag, 1973).
66. See also Kallestrup, 'Women, Witches, and the Town Courts of Ribe: Ideas of the Gendered Witch in Early Modern Denmark', in Marianna Muravyeva and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds.), *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 121–36.

# The Laughing Witch: Notes on the Relationship Between Literature and History in the Early Fifteenth Century

*Willem de Blécourt*

The centrepiece of this chapter is an early fifteenth-century play in the Dutch language, now known by the anachronistic name *Die Hexe* (The Witch), a name I will keep here for convenience sake. The main question I will pose here is how this play should be understood, that is to say, how it should be situated in history and especially the history of witchcraft and witch trials. As a play, it is clearly fictional. Nevertheless, its female witchcraft does not appear as fantastic as, for instance, the exploits of the magical women in the Arthurian romances.<sup>1</sup> The witchcraft of *Die Hexe* may be fiction, but it is grounded in contemporary concepts. Rather than seeking to balance the weight of ‘truth’ in the one with the fancy of fiction in the other scale, I present late medieval literary Dutch magic as a commentary on historical events, a comical form of entertainment which shows the fraudulent bag of tricks underneath the sheen of the supernatural. To this end I will substantiate the witchcraft in the play and discuss several historical stances on fifteenth-century magic, especially by the early twentieth-century Dutch historian Johann Huizinga (1872–1945), as his work is still in print

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W. de Blécourt (✉)  
Meertens Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands  
e-mail: [wjcdeb@historicalanthropologist.eu](mailto:wjcdeb@historicalanthropologist.eu)

and popular.<sup>2</sup> My main approach to fifteenth-century magic and witchcraft, however, is inspired by the publications of the American specialist of historical magic, Richard Kieckhefer. His grasp of Dutch witchcraft is not without fault but he does provide the tools to analyse the processes in which interpretations of witchcraft were dispersed in the Low Countries. I will also contextualize the play by paying attention to the very popular literary figure of the wizard Madelgijs. Together these different strands weave a more complete picture of fifteenth-century Dutch witchcraft, if not as bleak as Huizinga would have it, but nevertheless foreshadowing some of the later developments which characterize the Dutch *Sonderweg*.<sup>3</sup>

In this contribution I will be using the term ‘witchcraft’ as a translation of the Dutch ‘toverij’, which in the fifteenth century indicated both malicious and benevolent witchcraft. I have forgone the term ‘sorcery’ as applied by a number of medievalists (Kieckhefer included), because it implies wrongly a dichotomy between witchcraft and sorcery, either in an anthropological or a historical sense. The anthropological differentiation between innate witchcraft and practised sorcery is not borne out by the sources. This is not to say that the dichotomy itself is invalid – at least practised ‘witchcraft’ (whether for good or for evil purposes) seems a historically viable category – but it can easily obscure the important issue of *ascribed* witchcraft, seen as evil. It is also not possible to describe historical developments by using of witchcraft as a ‘cumulative concept’,<sup>4</sup> which encompasses both maleficium and diabolism and most distinctively the notion of a sect of witches, appropriate for describing historical developments. When necessary I shall refer to an ‘intellectual’ or ‘demonological’ interpretation of witchcraft.

## A FARCE

The play *Die Hexe* dates from c.1410, a time when the diabolization of witchcraft developed, but several decades before the Council of Basel, which can be considered as the epicentre of the European witch trials. The text certainly qualifies as a document of witchcraft ‘before’ the trials. To complicate matters somewhat, the word ‘hexe’ only entered Dutch vocabulary in the middle of the seventeenth century. The title was only added in the nineteenth century, in 1838 to be precise.<sup>5</sup>

*Die Hexe* is a ‘sotternie’, that is a farce, or a whimsical play staged to entertain the public after a serious play had been performed. In the manuscript it is paired with the ‘abel spel’ *Lanseloet* of Denmark.<sup>6</sup> *Die Hexe*

is a very short piece of only 111 lines. The first 73 lines consist of a dialogue between two women: Machtelt and Luutgaert. After that a third woman, Juliane, appears and mostly takes over from Machtelt. At the start Machtelt complains about her misfortune; she has trouble with her spinning; her yarn is not as good as the wool from which she spun it, for which she blames the Devil. Luutgaert responds that she just chased a fox away which was after her chickens and Machtelt explains that every day and night she ponders the profit she lost because of 'toverie', witchcraft. Luutgaert counsels caution:

Met toverie benic bedroghen;  
 Alsoe, Machtelt, maecht u staen.  
 Mine coe es haer melc ontgaen,  
 Hen es anders niet dan water.

Luutgaert, in other words, says that she had been betrayed by witchcraft; she once had a cow that was bewitched and only produced water. She suspected an old woman whom she had seen only yesterday at a crossroads with butter placed in front of her which the Devil must have given her. Machtelt then exclaims that the butter was surely stolen from her own cow and asks where to find the woman (whom she calls a *stronthoere*, a shit whore). According to Luutgaert, the woman was born in Kortrijk and had been banished from the city of Ghent because of theft. Don't you know who it is? It is Juliane who lives at the nearby farm. She has a magic book (*toveren boec*) which she uses for her enchantments and it is a pity that she does not lie in a pit underneath the gallows. She now sells 'eastern' beer. The two women then decide to visit Juliane to discover the truth. They drink a beer with her and ask her whether she can help them. She tells them that if they were given a thief's hand over which nine masses had been read, they would always fare well.

Want u welvaren ware mi lief  
 Haddi die hant van enen dief  
 Daer neghen messen op waren ghedaen  
 Het soude u altoes voerwaert gaen  
 Soe waer ghi die hant ane sloecht.

Luutgaert then accuses Juliane of having harmed them and they start a fight. The story ends with the three women (who of course at the time were played by male actors) rolling all over the stage.

The Dutch scholar Herman Pleij held that this play did not take witchcraft seriously but ridiculed it.<sup>7</sup> One cannot but agree with him. However, he and other commentators have failed to notice that the play concerned several diametrically opposed forms of witchcraft. Part of the reason why the witchcraft appeared ridiculous may have been due to an inappropriate combination. It concerned not only urban versus rural witchcraft, but also different sorts of witchcraft, such as ascribed versus performed, and ultimately different concepts of ‘magical’ bodies. Because the play is a ‘literary’ rather than a judicial text, modern scholars may well consider it a fantasy. That would, however, be ahistorical and it would also deny the possible ‘reality’ quotient of magical elements in medieval texts. But it will need to be established exactly what can be considered ethnographic and what the personal input of the playwright.

### THE WANING OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The legacy of Johan Huizinga is not particularly visible among witchcraft historians, and his name is not mentioned in major works like Brian Levack’s *Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* or Wolfgang Behringer’s *Witches and Witch-Hunts*.<sup>8</sup> Yet there are several references to Huizinga in the document collection by Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters. As they put it in their introduction, ‘The highly original and wide-ranging study by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, first published 1919, also drew sorcery and witchcraft into the cultural history of France and the Burgundian Low Countries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.’<sup>9</sup> This rather factual looking statement is slightly misleading, as Huizinga only considered a part of the Burgundian Empire: he only consulted French source material which, as I will explain below, is far from sufficient for witchcraft research. The next Huizinga reference by Kors and Peters is even more misleading. In a note they comment on Huizinga’s display of the ‘verbal imagery’ of the Dominican monk Alanus de Rupe (Alain de la Roche), one of Jacob Sprenger’s teachers. For Huizinga this contributed to the fifteenth-century contrasts he was so keen to expose: Alanus and, in his wake, Sprenger represented the late medieval light and dark side, since Sprenger was also one of the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>10</sup> Only Sprenger never contributed to the book, a detail which was known by the early twenty-first century, although this is not yet accepted by every scholar. Sprenger was only minimally

interested in witches and he seems to have been the opposite of Institorus, the genuine author of the *Malleus* who had hijacked Sprenger's name.<sup>11</sup>

Peters's pupil Michael Bailey was more cautious than his teacher when it came to Huizinga. In his *Battling Demons* he quotes the Dutch historian as describing the fifteenth century as being 'more than any other the century of the persecution of witches'. According to Huizinga, witchcraft and its persecution contributed to the overall notion of waning and decay. Yet, according to Bailey, Huizinga's views obscured certain aspects of the fifteenth century, certainly the production of 'witchcraft' in the sense of diabolical 'sorcery'. And, of course, the fifteenth-century trials were merely a preamble of those in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> Some years later Bailey would sharpen this stance and conclude that 'From the perspective of the history of magic' any characterization of the late medieval period as one of 'crisis and decline' 'makes no sense'. On the contrary, it was 'a moment of climatic transition' in which the full stereotype of demonic witchcraft was developed.<sup>13</sup> Although Bailey quoted Huizinga correctly and rightly doubted the concept of 'waning', he missed the chance of a major critique. But this was probably not his intention.

The picture that Johan Huizinga in 1919 painted in broad contrasting brush strokes of the 'Autumn tide' of the Middle Ages included witches and witch trials.<sup>14</sup> The witches were subsumed under the 'fear of devils and witches' which, together with war, pestilence and unreliable justice, was part of 'the general feeling of insecurity, capable of painting black life's background',<sup>15</sup> an observation Huizinga had also made in an earlier article on the Flemish painters' family Van Eyck, when he wrote about the 'perpetuous oppression of combats and hunger, injustice and violence, fire and pestilence, hell and witches'.<sup>16</sup> In *Waning*, he contrasted the 'horrendous fantasies of fear of the devil and witch craze' with the cult of saints.

The attitude of the late medieval mind against superstition, in particular against witches and witchcraft is of a great variety and of little solidity. The period is not as helplessly subjected to all phantasm and delusion as is to be expected from the general gullibility and the lack of criticism. There are many expressions of doubt or of rational opinion. Time and time again there are centres of demonomania, from which the evil erupts and sometimes remains for a long time. There were special lands of magic and witches, mostly mountainous areas: Savoy, Switzerland, Lorraine, Scotland. But also outside these areas epidemics occur. Around 1400 the French royal court itself was such a centre of witchcraft.<sup>17</sup>

A few paragraphs later, Huizinga called the trials in Atrecht (Arras), ‘one of the biggest epidemics of the witch craze’; his main focus here is on the reputation of the city and the eventual celebration when decades later, the verdicts were withdrawn.

The American approach to Huizinga is mostly one of caution, as if he is not to be tackled head-on.<sup>18</sup> As his book is still in print, a proper debate is long overdue, at least where witchcraft and the witch trials are concerned. The fifteenth century was hardly the principal century of the witch prosecutions<sup>19</sup>; that the period experienced the invention and start of the trials in which the ‘cumulative concept’ of witchcraft was applied is something quite different. The claim that it mostly occurred in mountainous areas is questionable, too, especially when these regions stand as a shorthand for backwardness. As Richard Kieckhefer remarked, ‘The great majority of Swiss trials occurred not in the Alps but in the urbanized region of the Swiss midlands, which had a cultural, social, and economic complexion quite distinct from that of the mountains.’<sup>20</sup> Witch trials with a full demonological repertoire certainly originated in the western Alpine region,<sup>21</sup> but how ‘mountainous’ are Atrecht, or Gorze or Metz?<sup>22</sup> The inclusion of Scotland in Huizinga’s list is very debatable, certainly in the view of the state of research of the early twentieth century. There is no indication that Huizinga consulted Hansen’s source publication *Quellen und Untersuchungen* of 1901. Pointing at countries instead of towns is too rough a method to yield insights into the distribution of a particular sort of trial, although this reproach applies to many researchers after Huizinga, too. One of the main criticisms, however, should be that the fifteenth-century Dutch-speaking provinces, and certainly the County of Flanders, the area of Huizinga’s main focus, the Van Eycks, were relatively free of witch trials. The very occasional execution of a mostly single witch hinged more on the kind of damage that he or she was perceived to have caused than on any pact with an evil entity.<sup>23</sup> The stark difference between the events at the two sides of the language boundary between speakers of French and Dutch, running straight through the Burgundian lands, was already documented in the nineteenth century, but somehow this escaped Huizinga. The term ‘language boundary’, *taalgrens*, never once appears in his book.<sup>24</sup>

He also did not differentiate between witch prosecution and cases of magic, moving effortlessly from the ‘hearts of demonomancy’ to ‘such epidemics’ at the French court. The first referred to the new witch trials, characterized by what Hansen more than a decade before Huizinga

had called the ‘collective concept’ of witchcraft. This combined demonic elements such as a devil’s pact and sabbat attendance with the practice of malitious magic. Huizinga touched on this when he discussed the term *vauderie* and remarked that witchcraft was combined with heresy, although he did not pursue this further by analysing, for instance, the different components of the accusations levelled at the Atrecht *vandois*. The ‘epidemics’, as I will elaborate below, have to be discerned from (ascribed) witchcraft; it concerned practised magic, ‘envoûtement’ surrounded by ‘devilish arts’.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Huizinga presented a balanced view beside his overgeneralized claim that the witch was associated with all that was bleak and dark about the fifteenth century. But he formulated this in a detached way; the wording ‘expressions of doubt or rational opinion’ can hardly be read otherwise. This was based on his reading of the reactions to the trials in Atrecht, among them those of the (theological) faculty in Louvain whose members declared, in Huizinga’s words, ‘that the *vauderie* was not real, that it was only illusions’.<sup>26</sup> But the theologians were far from modern in the early twentieth-century sense and in the fifteenth century they supported the traditional view of witchcraft that the new approach sought to undermine.<sup>27</sup> Understanding the contrasting images displayed by Huizinga may very well not have to proceed beyond the period in which he lived. Filing witchcraft under ‘superstition’ was certainly a nineteenth-century approach. As was once said, he fell back on Protestant tradition in his description of fifteenth-century devotion and he himself ‘descended from a long line of Protestant ministers’.<sup>28</sup> Although his father had broken with the Mennonite tradition (rather than merely Protestantism), Huizinga remained deeply attached to it; he had found in it the ‘ethic and moral principles which would guide him for the rest of his life’.<sup>29</sup> His general sense of witchcraft, however, may also have been influenced by his reading of Joris-Karl Huysmans’s *Là-bas* of 1891 in which the black magic materialized in rituals and recipes of murderous intent, such as the blood of mice mixed with human sperm.<sup>30</sup> Huizinga’s is not a neutral view but very much that of a Mennonite who is fascinated by the darker sides of Catholic culture. At least where witchcraft was concerned Huizinga hardly seemed capable of including historical developments in his analysis. Yet he did notice elements of ridicule, the mixing of the ‘hellish stench of sulphur with the farts of the farce’.<sup>31</sup>

## ASCRIBED WITCHCRAFT

Huizinga favoured the history of the ‘irrational’ over economic history. In the words of another Dutch historian, Wessel Krul, ‘he thought, it was the mental outlook of an age that determined the structure of the economy, and not the other way around’.<sup>32</sup> Theories about the interplay between witchcraft accusations and economic events demand at least another essay;<sup>33</sup> here I will only stress that the cultural context of witchcraft has so far not been studied sufficiently and that considering a cultural product like a witchcraft play, especially one that probably originated in an urban environment, is only a very small step towards this goal. A critical approach to Huizinga’s *Waning* helps to think about such a context and to make the present-day reader aware of the pitfalls of fifteenth-century texts. In the case of witchcraft and witch trials one can also turn to the more recent work of Richard Kieckhefer which offers some initial methods to disentangle the various traits.<sup>34</sup> Kieckhefer reconstructed and re-examined the list of trials in Joseph Hansen’s *Quellen* with the aim of distinguishing between popular and intellectual notions. He only quoted Huizinga twice, not about witchcraft or witch trials but about the influence of sermons, plays and wood-cuts on popular notions, and when he discussed ‘a general framework that encouraged belief in superstition’.<sup>35</sup>

If the fifteenth century witnessed the emergence of the ‘cumulative’ witch concept, this necessitates a distinction from earlier notions as expressed in *Die Hexe*. Huizinga’s work has also been criticized for paying scant attention to popular attitudes, to the ‘view from below’; it was far from his purpose to do this and to scorn an author for writing the ‘wrong’ book is hardly helpful for a constructive debate. Nevertheless, introducing the contrast between everyday witchcraft (or ‘sorcery’ as Kieckhefer called it) and intellectual diabolism is surely relevant. According to Kieckhefer’s findings, ‘diabolism played little or no role in popular belief’ and, ‘Though in a few cases the accused suggested that bewitchment was accomplished through invocation of the devil, there is no indication of popular belief in veneration of the devil’.<sup>36</sup> Although Kieckhefer’s incentive to differentiate between popular traditions and ‘the imposition of learned notions’ remains of utmost relevance, the regional variety of witchcraft on a popular level may occasionally have escaped him. The bewitching of milk, or in his terminology the ‘stealing of milk from cows through magic’, rarely featured in his records.<sup>37</sup> In later publications, he did recognize

the importance of regional variations, although mainly in relation to ‘witchcraft mythologies’, that is to say, the intellectual constructions of what he had previously called ‘diabolism’.<sup>38</sup> The intricate communication and reception of these constructions is, according to Kieckhefer, ‘a more complex process of coalescence, diffusion, fusion, and attenuation’, and is only starting to be unravelled.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the popular side of witchcraft, or what I would call witchcraft proper, tends to be marginalized.

Kieckhefer’s choice for the term sorcery was both inspired by ‘the most problematic word’ witchcraft, and by the anthropological division between witchcraft as innate power and sorcery as a practised art. As this did not fit the late medieval sources, he retained witchcraft as a general designation. In-between the two terms many a necessary specification was lost. In theory Kieckhefer differentiated between ‘magic’ and ‘sorcery’ (in his terminology), and he recognized that the latter was either practised or alleged.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, there is an overall tendency in his book *European Witch Trials* to emphasize the practised aspects: when he explained ‘sorcery’ his first inclination was to point to concrete examples, ‘such as rendering a person lame by making an image of the victim and braking the leg of the image, or inducing love or hatred through administration of magical potions’.<sup>41</sup> When he discussed ‘subtler methods for inflicting harm’, he included ‘image magic, placement of magical substances in proximity to the person afflicted, and recitation of incantations’, as well as ‘administration of magical (or “poisonous”) food’. Like Huizinga, Kieckhefer considered image magic, or *envoûtement*, one of the common forms of bewitching. Some pages later, his readers are treated to a variety of ‘means of sorcery’.<sup>42</sup> The virtual absence of incantations seems more problematic than the historical absence of any practical witchcraft in a number of cases.

The position of the Devil within witchcraft in everyday life is due for a more precise investigation. The concept of ‘diabolism’ may not have found many adherents, although elements of the sabbat were taken from narratives which were already in circulation, and a genuine devil’s cult may have been pure fantasy; yet the ritual binding of demons for magical purposes was indeed practised. Whether that implied that the Devil was always behind bewitchments, as the theologians would have it, is doubtful.

<sup>38</sup>The populace adhered to the simpler belief in the power inherent in a witch or her actions, whereas the learned élite insisted repeatedly that the witch herself has no magical power, and that all she does, she does through the mediation of demons.<sup>43</sup>

This is of consequence for the interpretation of *Die Hexe*. If a witch was able to operate without the Devil's help, his mention in the farce may well have been added by the playwright. In that case he would have been a teacher rather than an ethnographer.

In the Netherlands it was always extremely difficult to prove the crime of witchcraft; in slander trials the opponents never succeeded and thus had to retract their insults. Wax puppets or other magical artefacts surely would have been discovered occasionally, had they been used. To cite an example from the end of the fifteenth century, in 1491 three women who had been imprisoned in Lochem (Guelders) on suspicion of having bewitched animals, milk and corn, were tortured and treated with Catholic paraphernalia, but no confession was extracted. As in the case with the bewitching of milk (see below), material means are not only not mentioned, they are poignantly absent from the case, as a confession was needed when all other evidence failed. As in other documents, there is the crucial additional reference to the rumour about the women that they had *dat ganse gemeyn gerucht*.<sup>44</sup> In a number of circumstances a witchcraft accusation was just that, something that was only talked about.

A new, more sophisticated model is needed and Kieckhefer's approach should be widened to embrace especially 'popular', that is everyday witchcraft. The history of witchcraft remains truncated without the inclusion of witchcraft as merely a label, something that was ascribed by others to 'witches' instead of acts by witches themselves. This is not merely to accommodate the interpretation of an early fifteenth-century farce, but to account for the different elements contained in it: simultaneously practised magic and witchcraft, the latter in the form of ascribed bewitching. After all, it was these local concepts that were reinterpreted demonologically. In the early fifteenth century this process had hardly started and the most one could expect was that demons were projected onto a local witchcraft discourse, sometimes with some success. The 'cumulative concept' of witchcraft was not yet relevant, if it ever was.

### CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS

The extensive edition of witchcraft sources from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century by the Cologne archivist Joseph Hansen is sadly contaminated by the inclusion of the falsifications of the Frenchman Lamothe-Langon.<sup>45</sup> His *Quellen* nevertheless still provides a useful starting point for Western European witchcraft cases around the year 1400.

What appears striking is the difference between cases, although this may be due to the scarcity of the material. In 1391 two women were burned in Paris because they had raised the Devil among other things: 'Ennemi, je te conjure, ou nom du Pere, du Fils et du Saint Esperit, que tu vienges à moy ycy.' A devil had indeed appeared, looking like the character in the Passion play only without horns. This case evolved around a cunning woman and the wife of an inn-keeper who had kneaded wax into the shape of a human figure, cut three crosses in it and boiled it in water. Love charms had also been attempted and evidence collected included a toad, pierced with a spike.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, the only thing transmitted about two women who were burned in Berlin in about 1399 and 1423 was that they had dabbled with poisons and witchcraft (*tovarighe* or *toferryge*).<sup>47</sup> At the other end of the scale stands a midwife in Utrecht in 1417, of whom it was reported that she had practised witchcraft (*tovarie*) and other 'unbecoming things'; she was banned a mile from the city for fifty years.<sup>48</sup>

The kind of witchcraft Huizinga encountered by concentrating on the French culture of the upper echelons of early fifteenth-century society consisted for a major part of the perceived attacks on the life of the French king, Charles VI. These Parisian affairs will have been well known in Flanders, perhaps even more than the Berlin cases, although the latter proceeded in a familiar way. Huizinga did not provide many details.<sup>49</sup> The king was apparently mad and from time to time visited by experts who declared that his affliction was the result of magical practice. In 1398 one of his physicians was burnt on the pyre in Paris after he had confessed to 'the invocation of demons, devil-worship, various forms of ritual magic involving mass and eucharist, consecrating steel mirrors, swords and rings to compel demons and a number of superstitious observances'. The king's brother Louis d'Orléans, who together with his wife Valentina Visconti became implicated in these accusations, reportedly used to carry a small pouch under his clothes which contained pulverized bone and pubic hair from a corpse. He was also known to grant favours to magicians.<sup>50</sup>

Body parts of executed criminals could be obtained by anyone who had a purpose for them. In Nuremberg they were taken from the gallows.<sup>51</sup> Something similar was reported from Paris in 1404. Some of the examples of the witchcraft contained in *Die Hexe* may occasionally have been found elsewhere, or were possibly common in Western Europe; they were also decidedly early fifteenth-century Dutch as the playwright obtained his material from his own doorstep. Thus also in Flanders the thief's hand had to be taken from the gallows. A whole range of fifteenth-century trials

shows the trade of dead body parts to be a common practice among urban prostitutes. The magic recipes themselves were probably much older. In 1408 one prostitute in Leuven buried the hand of a hanged thief (and not just ‘certaines malefieces’) under her threshold to lure potential clients to her. She was sentenced to undertake a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella.<sup>52</sup> In 1412 a woman in Brussels was suspected to have procured a thief’s finger from a girl of low morals. Part of the finger was found in the woman’s house and she explained that if she put it underneath the bed in which she entertained men, more would come her way rather than go elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Another case from Leuven, ascribed by a Belgian historian to 1412, is actually misdated; it took place half a century later, but even then it still demonstrates a similar principle. A prostitute who ran a bath house paid the executioner for a bag of hand bones from a hanged thief. When suspended above the washing water, it was thought to secure a steady flow of customers.<sup>54</sup> This was probably a specific urban phenomenon and not found in the countryside. It was unlike the *main de gloire* (hand of glory) prescribed for the specific use of an undisturbed burglary, and one may speculate that fingers or a hand stood for another body part, the phallus. At least in the 1486 illustration of Hans Vintler’s early fifteenth-century *Buch der Tugend* a woman reaches for a hanged man’s testicles rather than his hand.<sup>55</sup>

The bewitchment of milk, on the other hand, was one of the traditional forms of witchcraft current in the countryside, though it may also have been familiar in towns. This notion is slightly confused in the play as it mentions ‘stealing’ both milk and butter.<sup>56</sup> Luutgaert’s cow produces only water and Machtelt is incapable of churning any butter: ‘Wat ic clutse of wat ic clotere, Het es al te male om niet’ (however much she stirs it, it is to no effect). It is debatable whether in the late Middle Ages the expression *molckentoverse* (milk witch) always denoted someone who had disrupted the production of milk or butter rather than someone who was accused of a bewitchment in general.<sup>57</sup> Contemporary examples can be found in the financial accounts of the sheriff of Turnhout where in 1414 and 1417 women were *slandered* of having witched away people’s milk; in the latter year another woman was on trial in Antwerp because she had claimed to be able to unwitch bewitched milk and butter.<sup>58</sup> In 1426 the same was said about a husband and wife.<sup>59</sup> Both cases resulted in ‘composition’, that is to say, instead of a fine a sum of money was paid to stay free of prosecution.

A bewitching of milk or butter churning could be countered by various means, such as prayers or charms, although the distinction between the

two was somewhat vague and depended on the reporter's perspective. In a fifteenth-century charm from Ghent, for instance, a cross made of wax was to be placed under the churn and the butter was then to be sprinkled with holy water. Next a little prayer was said (which in this case contained a critique of a verdict by the secular authorities). In another text from the same source the victim of a milk witch is advised to put a small rosary into the holes specially drilled for this purpose in the door and the threshold used by the cows.<sup>60</sup> One of the more interesting fifteenth-century charms in this category is kept at the London Wellcome library; it suggests that in case the production of beer or butter failed, one should take a new earthen pot and boil three steel needles in it. The perpetrator will then come and think she or he is burning.<sup>61</sup> While counter-charms clearly belong to practised activity, the bewitchments from which they were thought to offer protection were only ascribed.

The author of *Die Hexe* selected contemporary concepts of witchcraft which would have been familiar to his public and stirred them into the cauldron of his farce. For reasons that can only be speculated about, he omitted any references to wax puppets and other magical practices current in Paris at the time; the *grimoire* is only mentioned in passing and not elaborated. No serious counter-magic is adopted, apart from the necessity to identify the witch. The constructed character of the farce should be underlined, however, as there is no evidence that the various combinations also occurred in the witchcraft discourse of daily life. Another incongruity is that the Devil appears in the play but nowhere in official reports. This would suggest that the playwright was an outsider, a city-dweller and perhaps a member of one of the early Flemish rhetoricians.

### A POPULAR WIZARD

It is not known how many times the *sotternie* was performed; it has been transmitted only in a single manuscript. Within the literary dimension its witches are surrounded by the well-known wizard Madelgijs, who has so far not managed to secure his place in witchcraft history either.<sup>62</sup> Madelgijs first made his appearance in his French guise of Maugis in the early thirteenth-century *chanson de geste*, *Renaut de Montauban*, written in Northern France and later reworked in the romance of the four children of Aymon, the four *Heemskinderen*.<sup>63</sup> A counterpart of the English Arthurian cycle with its wizard Merlin,<sup>64</sup> Malegijs belonged to Carolingian literature, a group of poems and romances centred around the historical

figure of the emperor Charlemagne. But where Arthur is celebrated as a mythical king, Charlemagne is criticized for not following the rules of chivalry; especially Maugis succeeds in ridiculing him, which exposes him to lifelong hatred. From the *Renaut* soon a new narrative branched off with Maugis d'Aigremont as its main protagonist. The latter exists in three versions, dated from the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Prose versions stem from the late fifteenth century and were linked to the Burgundian court, although there is no sign of them in *Herfsttij*. In c.1300 the poem was reworked into a Middle Dutch version which has been transmitted in ten fragmentary manuscripts. A rather literal German translation was made in c.1480 at the Heidelberg court and another edited version, now in prose, was printed in 1556 in Antwerp.<sup>65</sup> The figure of Madelgijs, in print renamed as Malegijs, had a much stronger historical and international presence than the three women in *Die Hexe*. With over 20,000 lines, the *Malagis* was also much longer.

In this sequence of stories, the wizard's magic was constantly increased. In the French *Renaut* Maugis's magic is subdued. He excels in disguises and sleeping spells, but not much else. Only in one manuscript version is he said to have acquired his arts as a student in Toledo. Much more space is dedicated to relating the trouble he took to reconcile his art with his Christian creed.<sup>66</sup> Yet the wizard proved so popular that a prequel was written, which was solely devoted to his exploits. In the Dutch version the magic is much more pronounced than in the French but it is also more comical. Whereas in the *Renaut* Maugis tricks the emperor in paying homage to him, in the *Madelgijs* he humiliates the king (a demoted Charlemagne), his queen and their whole company by compelling them to dance in the nude. A summary of the wizard's arts includes practical abilities such as putting people to sleep, breaking his shackles when captured and opening locked doors. He is also adept at altering his appearance. He carries a little finger which guards him from hunger, thirst, fire and wild animals; he also possesses a ring that can render him invisible and he speaks various languages. Such feats are mostly accomplished by uttering incomprehensible spells.<sup>67</sup>

The passage in the beginning of the Dutch poem which explains how the wizard learned his magic is missing in both the French *Renaut* and the *Maugis*. It is worth looking at it in some detail. The young Madelgijs (Malagis) is taught by his foster mother and later lover, the fairy Oriande. He also has a natural gift for magic and when he goes to Paris (rather than

Toledo where in this version only his step-parents have studied) to acquire his mastership, he succeeds straight away. At night he studies the book of nigromancy, and reads as far as the section on the conjuration of the ‘geist’ (lit. spirits).

Alle die nacht gieng er studieren,  
 Als der gern wolte leren,  
 Und er hatt starcke synn.  
 Er det uff das büch und sach darinn  
 Von nygromancije das erst capitell.  
 So ferre laß er in dem ersten tyttel  
 Experment und conjuracie  
 Das die geist sonder gracie  
 Umb und umb en stonden.<sup>68</sup>

Madelgijs finds himself surrounded by the demons Yrocondus and his six brothers Superbia, Luxuria, Invidia, Pigrus, Avaritia and Julus, who are easily recognizable as the seven vices: anger, pride, lust, envy, sloth, greed and gluttony.<sup>69</sup> He also takes the devils Belial, Satyal and Belczeboük into his service. The poem offered a counterpoint to the increasing tendency at the time to condemn any contact with demons in whatever shape, as that would, according to the leading theologians, always corrupt the conjurer.<sup>70</sup> The Dutch version, as well as its close Würtemberg translation, also did not stress the wizard’s attempts at redemption as much as the French. Occasionally he even charms devils with the help of God and the Holy Virgin; in the poem, too, charm and prayer are used interchangeably. By portraying demons as vices which needed to be mastered, the poet succeeded in taking the sting out of demonology and turned it into a moral lesson while also emphasizing the burlesque.

The printed prose version of the *Malegijs* which appeared in Antwerp in 1556, was again somewhat different. For instance, the part in which the twelve-year-old boy learns his art is slightly altered and instead of seven vices there are many devils to conquer. After the boy has fallen asleep in his foster father’s office where he was reading books on nigromancy, he is taken to hell, but an angel intercedes and he is left in a wood. There he meets a hermit who happens to possess a book on nigromancy, too. *Malegijs* masters this art and conjures a devil who flies him back home.<sup>71</sup> *Malegijs* remained popular for the next 300 years but its variations and reception fall outside the scope of this chapter.

## FICTIONAL WITCHCRAFT

The relationship between history and fiction, and in the case of witchcraft between authored texts like a play or a poem and a widespread social phenomenon, is complex. A variety of different assessments of the relationship can be discerned, from fantastical to naturalistic. The question is whether authors attempted to render an account based on relatively common knowledge – in other words, acted as early ethnographers – or whether they followed their own mind and made everything up. There is no general method for the analysis of a ‘fictional’ text, such as a romance or a play and each case needs to be judged individually. A Dutch scholar has investigated the *Malegijs/Malagis* according to how ‘realistic’ magical elements were and concluded that they were ‘anchored in the actual and mental environment of the time’. She contended that the intended effects of charms used by nigromancers are similar to those in the poem and also asserted that different genres ‘interact’ which would have made the fictional wizard ‘believable’.<sup>72</sup> Similar conclusions could be drawn from the farcical play that came to be known as *Die Hexe*. It featured the thief’s hand, the theft of milk, the bewitching of butter (with the help of the Devil), a grimoire and even a ‘hellish cat’ that may have been the Devil or a cat with infernal characteristics.<sup>73</sup> But in both cases such an interpretation is problematic: the combination of elements together with those that are missing render the fictional texts less reliable witnesses of the past. Moreover, the potential value of these texts is undermined when the information they contain always needs to be verified with the help of other sources.

In the play the witch is identified as someone who has bewitched by the fact that she provides countermeasures, or at least some means to bring luck and happiness. This should not necessarily be taken as an expression of genuine everyday witchcraft, because being an expert may have made her a suspect in theory but not inevitably in practice. All depended on evidence; accusers and authorities alike usually struggled to prove cases of bewitchment, whereas, as the play shows, this was much easier in the case of practised magic. In the Low Countries, as a rule, a bewitching was not ascribed to cunning folk. *Die Hexe* stayed on the surface of the witchcraft discourse. In his turn, Malegijs may have been a ‘believable’ wizard, but only within the confines of the poem. He did not engage in detecting any witches, finding stolen goods or helping amorous people, let alone meddling in the darker aspects of his trade.

The dichotomy between fact and fiction can, of course, be bridged by considering the ‘fictional’ text as a part of history. Rather than approaching it as a possible representation of factual history it conveys opinions and perceptions of events. A text is more than just its elements. Seen in the context of the developments in intellectual thinking about witchcraft, the poem and subsequently the book use ‘magic’ as a way to ridicule authority. They have no problem with raising demons at a time when any perceived contact with them became increasingly decried as superstitious and thereby illegal. The popularity of the *Madelgijs* suggests that the comical or ‘burlesque’ characteristics of its magic was its overall function. The ‘sotternie’ was likewise meant to produce laughter, certainly by its fighting ‘women’. If the poem set the tone, then there is also an implicitly subversive message in the play, telling the authorities over the heads of the spectators not to take witchcraft too seriously. This interpretation is in blatant contrast to Huizinga’s impressionistic assessment of fifteenth-century witchcraft, but far more accurate given his neglect of the language boundary as well as witchcraft at a popular level. As a matter of fact, a literary tradition can be discerned that satirized witchcraft throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This did not so much refer to plays that featured a dominant devil, such as in the early sixteenth-century *Mariken van Nieuwegen* (*Nieumeghen*),<sup>74</sup> but rather the twenty-three rhetoricians’ plays which included some form of witchcraft, counter-witchcraft or supernatural phenomena in general. If the Devil does appear in these, there is always a way to counter him. Genuine bewitchments in the sense of an explanation of misfortune are mostly absent, yet the ‘cunning’ of pretend charmers and exorcists is emphasized.<sup>75</sup> The plays, of which *Die Hexe* may be a very early example, attacked the witchcraft problem by its roots and were more entertaining than the authorities who simply banned ‘cunning folk’.

In the concluding pages of his book about medieval theologians’ views on superstition, Michael Bailey again cites Huizinga to forecast future dire witchcraft prosecutions: ‘this dark system of delusion and cruelty grew slowly to completion’. Bailey, however, now questions the concept of ‘autumnal “lateness”’ and remarks that Huizinga’s assessment also reflected the time in which his book was conceived.<sup>76</sup> This is undoubtedly true, but the details which are left out in the abstraction can also be revealing. The Huizinga quotation is from the abbreviated 1924 English edition.<sup>77</sup> But even in this edition there is a reference to the *Malleus Maleficarum*. In the Netherlands the influence of the *Malleus* was negligible and although

the mid-fifteenth-century trial in Atrecht had some impact in Wallone, this remained on the French side of the language boundary. Especially in the prosperous Flemish towns witches were hardly prosecuted before the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>78</sup> Instead all the attention went to cunning folk, who were seen as the greater evil. Literary works like *Die Hexe* and the *Madelgijs* already expressed some of the sceptical tradition that would mark subsequent witchcraft history in the Netherlands.

## NOTES

1. Maren Clausen-Stoltenberg, *Märchen und mittelalterliche Literaturliteraturtradition* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1995), pp. 262–308; much less satisfactory: Heidi Breuer, *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England* (New York/London: Routledge, 2009).
2. According to Google Scholar the latest translation of Huizinga's *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) is cited over 200 times.
3. William Monter, 'Witch Trials in Continental Europe 1560–1660', in Bengt Ankarloo, Stuart Clark and William Monter, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, IV: The Period of the Witch Trials* (London: Athlone, 2002), p. 35. The term 'zonderweg' as applied by Monter is a Germanism, as in Dutch it would literally mean 'without road' rather than a special way.
4. The term is mostly used by Brian Levack, see e.g. his *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Routledge, 2006), pp. 32ff. It is similar to the 'collective concept' applied by other witchcraft historians, which is derived from the German 'Sammelbegriff' or 'Kollektivbegriff', coined by Joseph Hansen in his *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozeß im Mittelalter, und die Entstehung der großen Hexenverfolgung* (München/Leipzig, 1900), p. 35. See also Hans Peter Broedel, 'Fifteenth-Century Witch Beliefs', in Levack, Brian (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 33.
5. A.H. Hoffman von Fallersleben, *Altniederländische Schaubühne: Abele spelen ende sotternien* (Breslau, 1838), pp. 100–4, 224–28.
6. Abel spel is translated as 'fine play' in Willem M.H. Hummelen (ed.), 'Performers and Performance in Earliest Serious Secular Plays in the Netherlands', *Comparative Drama* 26, 1992, pp. 19–33. Van Dijk, however, states that there is a debate about the meaning of the word 'abele' (French: abile) and that its rendering as 'serious' cannot be substantiated; a more neutral translation would be 'beautiful' or 'excellent'; Hans van Dijk, 'The Drama Texts in the Van Hulthem Manuscript', in Erik Kooper

(ed.), *Medieval Dutch Literature in Its European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 283–96; see pp. 294–95, n. 1.

7. Herman Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511. Literatuur en stads cultuur tussen middeleeuwen en moderne tijd* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1988), p. 286.
8. As Wolfgang Behringer wrote, ‘he only used secondary sources and thus his findings found little support’. This was not completely accurate, but the impression would suffice; see Behringer, ‘Geschichte der Hexenforschung’, in Sönke Lorenz and Jürgen Michael Schmidt (eds), *Wider alle Hexerei und Teufelswerk. Die europäische Hexenverfolgung und ihre Auswirkungen auf Südwestdeutschland* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2004), pp. 485–668 (533).
9. Alan Kors and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe: 400–1700. A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 25. This is the revised edition.
10. Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, p. 30, n. 52.
11. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 77; see also: Behringer, ‘Malleus Maleficarum’, in Golden, Richard M. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft, the Western Tradition* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2006), pp. 717–23; cf. Michael Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies: The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 199–200.
12. Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons. Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003), pp. 9–10; see also p. 103. The blurb of this book states somewhat convolutedly that ‘Huizinga was correct in his observation’ about the fifteenth century being ‘more than any other the century of the persecution of witches’.
13. Michael Bailey, ‘The Age of Magicians. Periodization in the History of European Magic’, *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 3, 2008, pp. 1–28, cit. p. 17.
14. Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (ed. L. Brummel), *Verzamelde werken* III (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink en Zoon, 1949), online: [www.dbln.org/tekst/huiz003herf01\\_01/](http://www.dbln.org/tekst/huiz003herf01_01/); translations into English are my own.
15. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, pp. 32, 315.
16. Johan Huizinga, ‘De kunst der Van Eycks in het leven van hun tijd’, *De Gids* 80, 1916, reprinted in Willem Otterspeer (ed.), *De hand van Huizinga* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
17. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, p. 298.

18. Cf. the very thoughtful and erudite piece by Edward Peters and Walter P. Simons, 'The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages', *Speculum* 74 (1999), pp. 587–620. Against the notion of decay: Howard Kaminsky, 'From Lateness to Waning to Crisis: The Burden of the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, 2000, pp. 85–125.
19. I have translated the Dutch 'bij uitstek', lit. sticks out, as 'principal'.
20. Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials, Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), p. 94; against Hugh Trevor-Roper.
21. See the overview by Laura Stokes, 'Prelude: Early Witch-Hunting in Germany and Switzerland', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 4, 2009, pp. 54–61; Broedel, 'Fifteenth-Century Witch Beliefs', pp. 42–44.
22. Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Bonn: Carl Georgi Universität Bruchdrückerei und Verlag, 1901), pp. 552–53 (1448); for Metz, pp. 565–566 (1456), 569–70 (1457), 581–82 (1481), 586–87 (1488); cf. Alain Atten, 'Inquisition und Hexenprozesse in Raum Luxemburg – Lothringen im 15. Jahrhundert', in Gunther Frantz and Franz Irsigler (eds), *Hexenglaube und Hexenprozesse im Raum Rhein–Mosel–Saar* (Trier: Spee, 1996), pp. 405–15.
23. Jos Monballyu, 'Schadelijke toverij en hekserij te Brugge en te Ieper in de 15de eeuw', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 121 (1984), pp. 265–69.
24. Cf. Wessel Krul who writes that Huizinga 'excluded Dutch-speaking civilization', 'In the Mirror of Van Eyck: Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, 1997, pp. 353–84 (354). Further in his article Krul explains the reason why: after a long process of thought Huizinga concentrated on the French culture of the Burgundian court (369). This does not alter the problematic nature of Huizinga's views on witchcraft.
25. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, pp. 298–99.
26. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, pp. 300–1.
27. Marcel Gielis, 'The Netherlandic Theologians' Views of Witchcraft and the Devil's Pact', in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Rijswijk: Universitaire Pers, 1991), pp. 37–52.
28. Peter Burke, 'Historians, Anthropologists, and Symbols', in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (ed.), *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 268–83 (275). Cf. Krul, 'In the Mirror of Van Eyck' (1997), p. 375: 'Huizinga's opinions on religious matters are not entirely free from vestiges of his Protestant upbringing'.

29. Anton van der Lem, *Johan Huizinga. Leven en werk in beelden en documenten* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1993), p. 24.
30. Van der Lem, *Johan Huizinga*, p. 37. See on Huysmans: Robert Ziegler, *Satanism, Magic and Mysticism in Fin-de-siècle France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).
31. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, p. 297.
32. Krul, 'In the Mirror of Van Eyck', p. 373.
33. Cf. Oscar di Simplicio, 'On the Neuropsychological Origins of Witchcraft Cognition: The Geographic and Economic Variable', in Levack, *The Oxford Handbook*, pp. 507–27.
34. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*.
35. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, pp. 4 (155, n. 17), 47 (162, n. 1).
36. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, pp. 31, 36.
37. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, p. 63; the geography is slightly confused here: Zutphen is in the Dutch Duchy of Guelders.
38. Richard Kieckhefer, 'Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century', *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1, 2006, pp. 79–108.
39. See also Richard Kieckhefer, 'The First Wave of Trials for Diabolical Witchcraft', in Levack (2013), pp. 159–78 (160).
40. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, pp. 7, 8.
41. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, p. 5.
42. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, pp. 49, 50, 64.
43. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, p. 83.
44. Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 589–90; cf. Kieckhefer, 'The First Wave', p. 173.
45. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, pp. 16–18; Behringer, 'geschichte der Hexenforschung', p. 514.
46. Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 518–20. This would become a well-published case; cf. Kieckhefer, *The European Witch Trials*, p. 117; Jan R. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France: Text and Context of Laurens Pignon's Contre les devineurs (1411)* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 78–80. Extended depositions can be found in the *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris*, II (Paris, 1864), pp. 280–343. (*Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris*, du 6 septembre 1389 au 18 mai 1392. T. 1 / publ. pour la première fois par la Société des bibliophiles françois; observations préliminaires signées H.D.-A. [Henri Duplès-Agier] Éditeur: C. Lahure (Paris) Date d'édition: 1861–1864 Contributeur: Duplès-Agier, Henri (1825–91).)
47. Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 524, 529.
48. Hansen, *Quellen*, p. 528; J.J. Doodt (van Flensburg), 'Aanteekeningen uit de besluiten des raads, genomen gedurende de eerste helft der xv. eeuw', *Archief voor kerkelijke en wereldsche geschiedenissen, inzonderheid van Utrecht* 5, 1846, pp. 177–218, esp. p. 187.
49. See about one of his main sources, Jean Gerson, now: Bailey (2013), pp. 127–47.

50. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination*, cit. p. 68.
51. Kieckhefer, 'The First Wave', p. 173.
52. Fernand Vanhemelryck, *Het gevecht met de duivel. Heksen in Vlaanderen* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1999), pp. 31–32. Cf. Hansen, *Quellen*, p. 527.
53. Eric Aerts, Raymond Doms and Maurits Wynants, 'Diverse aspecten van het heksenverschijnsel', in Eric Aerts and Maurits Wynants (eds), *Heksen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (16de–17de eeuw)* (Brussel: Algemeen rijksarchief, 1989), pp. 95–108, esp. p. 96. Text in: *Ons Volksleven* 6, 1894, p. 17.
54. Vanhemelryck, *Het gevecht met de duivel*, pp. 30–31.
55. Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft. Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 42.
56. The use of axe magic or demonic beasts to steal milk is not reported in the Netherlands; cf. Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, pp. 45–49.
57. Willem de Blécourt, *Termen van toverij* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1990), p. 108.
58. E. van Autenboer, 'Toverij en aanverwante praktijken', *Oostvlaamse zanten* 50, 1975, pp. 142–47 (143).
59. E. van Autenboer, 'Uit de geschiedenis van Turnhout', *Taxandria* 40, 1968, pp. 31–32.
60. Willy L. Braekman, *Middeleeuwse witte en zwarte magie in het Nederlands taalgebied* (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1997), pp. 449, 451.
61. Braekman, *Middeleeuwse magie*, p. 453. I will elaborate on the symbolism involved here in my forthcoming book, *The Cat and the Cauldron: Witchcraft in the Low Countries, 14th–20th Centuries*.
62. Apart from a brief mention in Christa Tuczay, *Magie und Magier im Mittelalter* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), p. 321.
63. See in general W.P. Gerritsen and A.G. van Melle (eds), *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), pp. 177–78; Dutch: *Van Aiol tot de Zwaanridder* (Nijmegen, 1993).
64. See lately Anne Lawrence-Mathers, *The True History of Merlin the Magician* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012).
65. The work of Bob Duijvestijn is essential here, see B.W.Th. Duijvestijn, *Madelgijs. De Middelnederlandse fragmenten en de overeenkomstige Hoogduitse verzen* (Brussel: Paleis der Academien: Akademie Verlag, 1989). See also Annegret Haase et al., *Der Deutsche Malagis. Nach den Heidelberger Handschriften CPG 340 und CPG 315* (Berlin: Akademie, 2000).
66. Peter Noble, 'Maugis and the Role of Magic', in Hans van Dijk and Willem Noomen (eds), *Aspects de l'épopée romane. Mentalités, idéologiques, intertextualités* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995), pp. 71–75.

67. Bob Duijvestijn, ‘Er hett gelert und was eyn clerg gut/ von nygromancij. Die Zauberkunst im “Malagis”’, in Volker Honemann et al. (eds), *Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters in den Nideren Landen. Gedenkschrift für Hartmut Beckers* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 67–86.
68. *Der Deutsche Malagis*, 62: verses 2515–24.
69. This represented a moral system in which the emphasis still laid on the harm caused by witches rather than on their relation to the Devil; cf. John Bossy, ‘Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments’, in Edmund Leites (ed.), *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 214–34, esp. pp. 230ff.
70. See lately, Bailey, *Fearful Spirits*.
71. *Historie van Malegijs*, ed. Kuiper, E.T. (Leiden, 1903), pp. 11–18; on [www.dbln.org](http://www.dbln.org).
72. Orlanda S.H. Lie, “Alsoe leerde Madelghijs sine const”. Magie in de Middeleeuwen: fictie of werkelijkheid?” in Bart Besamusca and Jaap Tigelaar (eds), *Karolus Rex. Studies over de middeleeuwse verhaaltraditie rond Karel de Grote* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005), pp. 181–93.
73. The farce has been ‘corrected’ because of its assumed copying mistakes, see: A.M. Duinhoven, ‘Boterheks of melkdievegge? Toverij in “Die hexe”’, *Queeste. Journal of Medieval Literature in the Low Countries* 7, 2000, pp. 19–37, also to be consulted at [dbnl.org](http://www.dbln.org). These ‘corrections’ hardly bear on my analysis.
74. Gary K. Waite, ‘Dutch Drama’, in Golden, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 291–94.
75. Femke Kramer, *Mooi vies, knap lelijk. Grotesk realisme in rederijkerskluchten* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), pp. 241–59.
76. Bailey, *Fearful Spirits*, p. 224.
77. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, translated by Hopman, F. (London: Arnold, 1924), pp. 220–21. The Dutch edition I have used has seven more pages in this chapter; see above.
78. Willem De Blécourt and Hans de Waardt, ‘Das Vordringen der Zaubereiverfolgungen in die Niederlande. Rhein, Maas und Schelde entlang’, in Andreas Blaupert (ed.), *Ketzer, Zauberer, Hexen. Die Anfänge der europäischen Hexenverfolgungen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990), pp. 182–216.

# Images, Representations and the Self-Perception of Magic among the Sami Shamans of Arctic Norway, 1592–1692

*Rune Blix Hagen*

For centuries the farthest north was traditionally considered to be the realm of strong, evil magic and demonic forces. Peoples who lived up north were renowned magicians and sorcerers. These assumptions, among others, created images of a supernatural north which came to have a heavy influence on people who travelled up north and wrote about their experiences. To grapple with these kinds of perceptions and depictions from the exploration of what was strongly believed to be previously inaccessible northern regions can indeed result in exciting and sombre – if not appalling – reading. All kinds of things could have happened when adventurous Europeans set off for unknown lands beyond the Arctic Circle to experience strange creatures – both human and animal – and to observe odd natural phenomena. It is especially interesting to see how cultivated European travellers of the pre-eighteenth-century era typically depicted their northern experiences. The northern narratives and discourses are often unequalled in their drama and suspense, and must be studied in

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R.B. Hagen (✉)

Department of History and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway  
e-mail: [rune.hagen@uit.no](mailto:rune.hagen@uit.no)

the context of a lengthy tradition with enduring images and long-held assumptions about the extreme north with its midnight peoples.

Equipped with rarity, wonder and curiosity, courageous men set out on journeys penetrating into the wilderness of nearly uninhabitable regions. The way to the wild Nordic landscape seemed to follow what often was labelled as *terra incognita*, a more or less imaginative place where one odd event triggered another. As readers we sense a sinister atmosphere. It is questionable if they truly experienced all the strange things they wrote about; indeed, we can question whether some of the trips actually occurred. Nonetheless, their narratives are tales of northern adventures – kinds of cultural construction that have set standards for following perceptions of the north long after the medieval world faded. The travelogues are valuable as a cultural representation of the North, telling us about premodern perceptions, mentality and understanding. The cultural-shock encounters with the North also become part of the great tale about discovery, masculine conquest, cultivation and discipline.

The late medieval and early modern interpreters of the northern mist experienced, reflected on and wrote within a cultural context that was characterized by two traditions of conveyance. These traditions were strengthened shortly after seafaring European nations such as England, Scotland, Flanders and Holland had (re)discovered the northern trade route to Russia from the mid-sixteenth century. Among other things, it gradually became tempting to sail northwards to discover what kind of trade could be established with the native people, the Sami, of the far north. Stories had spread of the existence of valuable furs and exotic hand-crafted articles, the likes of which could be bartered for enormous amounts of tobacco and liquor.

### ‘NORDMYTHOS’

The Nordic peoples were regarded as barbarian, wild, unpolished and uncivilized by continental Europeans during the late medieval and early modern period until the mid-eighteenth century. Misery and demonic darkness were thought to cover a land populated by savages and terrible monsters. Learned Europeans, in the Renaissance humanist tradition, wrote about the innate cruelty of northern peoples and spoke of the dreadful and repulsive wildness with distaste. The peoples were of sanguine temperament, and their customs were similar in cruelty to those of the bears and wolves which hunted in the same territory.<sup>1</sup> In his famous

*Les six livres de la République* from 1576 the French lawyer Jean Bodin (1529/30–1596) considered the nature of northern peoples by writing about ‘a savage nature which cannot be easily tamed’. Bodin talked about ‘the barbarity and cruelty of northern races’ and believed that they ‘share the brutal nature of beasts’.<sup>2</sup> And since ancient times the Europeans had thought of the indigenous people of Northern Europe, the Sami, formerly known as Lapps, as a population with inferior ethnic elements sustained by extraordinary spiritual abilities. In general the authors characterized the native people as simple-minded, brutal and physically and emotionally crippled. They further wrote that their women ‘prostitute themselves to all Comers if they can do it unknown to their husbands’.<sup>3</sup> Because of this sexual weakness, ‘they are shut up when any Strangers come among them’.<sup>4</sup> Assertions of this kind are well known among demonologists of the early modern era, such as Jean Bodin. The notion of sexual weakness was used to explain why there were so many females among Europe’s witches. According to central viewpoints of demonology, the carnal appetites and general failings of women made them the Devil’s preferred target.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of the medieval period the people living up north were generally associated with negative images like barbarism, brutality and remoteness, and as such posed a serious threat to the true Christian faith. ‘The northern peoples would be defined through a counter-image of civilization, lacking control over their primitive instincts.’<sup>6</sup> Considered as the end of the world, civilized life was almost impossible in the far north – this was *Ultima Thule*, way beyond the frontier of European civilization. Ultima Thule was understood as a prevalent metaphor for terra incognita, in other words as the end of the world as they knew it. The crusade preacher Aeneas Sylvio Piccolomini shook his head in dismay and gave up his attempts to recruit the Scandinavian countries on a crusade mission against the Turks. ‘Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians live at the end of the world, and they are not capable of doing anything outside of their homes’, he told the Reichstag gathered in Regensburg in 1454. The king, Christian I, could not participate in any crusades because he had to fight against the barbarians who lived in his border regions and frequently raided his subjects. He spoke of hordes of pagan and heathen peoples numbering 150,000 warriors attacking his wide-stretching realm of Norway. These warriors came from the ferocious nations of ‘Tartars, Cumans, Erpions, Manbres, and Lapps’.<sup>7</sup>

Northern nature and climate, too, was looked upon as ugly, frightening and dangerous. Indeed, the legendary magical abilities of the midnight

peoples and all the strangeness of nature both shaped the prevailing representations of the utter north. The lands under the seven stars were wrapped in continuous darkness and buried under ice and snow. The bitter cold of winter – frequently combined with thick fog, severe snowstorms or storm-tossed seas – tried the strength of the most daring explorers. And so did the horror and terror of the dark polar nights. The vast, unknown seas represented the incarnation of deep chaos. The German canon, Adam of Bremen<sup>8</sup> working at the end of the eleventh century, wrote of ‘the immensely frightening ocean’, and claimed that the coastal inhabitants on the other side of ‘the barbaric sea’ were dubious individuals. Their magical conjuring was reputed to be strong enough to control the forces of chaos; in other words, they could control or raise the sea at will. Even the most skilled sailors had little to show for the northerners’ satanic tampering with nature. Adam of Bremen even implied that wild, ravenous women lived in the Nordic mountains, in a land of female inhabitants (*terra feminarum*).<sup>9</sup> Beautiful women turned out to be monstrous witches and the whole of nature appeared to be populated with female demonic beings with extraordinary abilities. Menacing natives, equipped with evil weather plagues, hid in the rocky cliffs and mountains. These terrible gluttons could, without any warning, conjure forth horrendous storms. The northerners were indeed readily blamed for inclement weather. Furthermore, in the *Historia Norwegiae*, one of the earliest written texts on Norwegian history, possibly from the twelfth century, the native Sami are described as ungodly sorcerers and as people working *diabolica superstition in magica arte*.<sup>10</sup>

Andreas Walsperger created a world map in 1448 which illustrated the satanic powers present in the northern regions. Published in Constance, this map portrays northern Scandinavia thus: ‘Here demons frequently appear in the guise of humans – whom they stalk.’ Drawn, too, within the same area of the map is a figure which devours human flesh. Here the image text states: ‘The antropofags [cannibals] devour human flesh.’ And just outside the coast, in a region that perhaps portrays the North Pole, the following may be read: ‘Hell, according to scholars, may be found in the heart or bowels of the Earth itself.’ According to Walsperger the regions of the north were populated by ‘many and various monsters who, however, use human reason’.<sup>11</sup> A poem called *The Owl and the Nightingale*, written between 1189 and 1216, illustrates this medieval Gog and Magog tradition:

The land is horrible and wretched,  
Its inhabitants wild and miserable.  
They have neither peace nor calm

And do not care how they live.  
 They eat fish and raw flesh  
 And tear at it like wolves.  
 They drink milk and whey –  
 They know no better.  
 They have neither wine nor beer  
 But live as do wild animals  
 And go about clad in rough skins  
 Just as if they came up out of hell.<sup>12</sup>

When it, after 1560, became of interest for the Dutch to sail and trade between the North Cape and Russia, the Dutch philosopher Guillaume Postel (1501–81) warned his fellow countrymen of the dangers involved in challenging Satan on his own home turf. The North was said to be the haunt of demons and devils with its heinous cold and wicked winds and among the most active were the demons of the air. Demons from the far-northern latitudes could conjure mighty whirlwinds, according to Postel, who claimed that Europe's northernmost inhabitants were the embodiment of evil and ugliness. Such people, wrote the philosopher, were placed there to raise the Antichrist. Indeed, Postel characterized Europe's northernmost outpost as the kingdom of Antichrist.<sup>13</sup> Storms, dangerous sea creatures and merciless pirates wreaked havoc at this threshold to hell. In the extreme north, wild, murky seas and monstrous cliffs rule, according to the article 'The Norwegian Pig' (Nor.: *Den norske Sø*) which was written by an unknown author in 1584. Nautical sorcery was a specialty of Norwegian witches. The French jurist and political scientist, Jean Bodin could tell his terrified readers how the North swarmed with sorcerers. In no other European country are there more witches than in Norway. They torment people all day long and all through the night, Bodin reported. And among the people of northern Scandinavia, many were tremendously skilled in sorcery.<sup>14</sup>

During the final decades of the sixteenth century, members of the Scottish, Danish and Swedish royal families came to feel the curses of Norwegian witches in their confrontations with poor weather, fog, thunder and lightning along the coast of Norway. A 1589 wedding between the Danish and Scottish royal houses had to be held in Oslo, and not in Edinburgh, because witches of the North Sea conspired against a Christian alliance between the Oldenburg and Stuart monarchies. But measure for measure, the Scottish Stuart king, James VI, reacted by proclaiming to be Satan's mortal archenemy. James wrote a textbook in 1597 on demonology and how to combat sorcery, based upon his painful

experiences fighting evil weather witches of the North Sea. And because of this book, the king became the era's foremost expert on the connection between sorcery and meteorology. He had lots to tell about the northern witch affliction. The Devil's worse havoc occurs in 'such wild parts of the world, as Lapland and Finland', wrote the monarch with great pathos, and pointed to the horrible roar of the oceans.<sup>15</sup> Witches of the far north could raise storms with the Devil's help. Magical winds could be bought from the native Sami for a mere slant. Portrayed as evil witches from the remote North, the Sami became famous all over Europe as *The Lapland Witches* – a favourite and powerful motif in travel narratives, literary fiction and demonology throughout the early modern centuries. Even William Shakespeare writing his *Comedy of Errors* in the early 1590s mentioned the Lapland Sorcerers.<sup>16</sup>

The English gave up attempts to find a northeastern sea route, the Northeast Passage, to Cathay (China) after their encounters with pack ice, severe cold and poor weather. Several Englishmen, however, were known to have told of the torment of witches in the North, as a result of these experiences travelling northbound. They related how the world's most notorious witches were found in the far north. Norway is a detestable nation where many are renowned for their sorcery, wrote one of them and asserted that Satan, the lord of the air, was the one who assisted the witches of Norway and Lapland.

### THE SEPTENTRIONALE REGION AND THE BIG DIPPER

During the late Medieval Ages and the beginning of the modern era, the northern peoples were renown throughout all of Europe for their handling of wind magic.<sup>17</sup> Numerous reports began to surface of foreign traders who had purchased wind from the natives.<sup>18</sup> Two people, in particular, have played a part in giving the Nordic people a reputation of sorcery related to wind magic. One was the Danish chronicler, Saxo Grammaticus (c.1150–c.1220), while the other was the Swedish Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), an exiled Catholic bishop. Their accounts, which dealt with the tenacious belief in sorcery among the Sami and Nordic peoples, became known when their writings were distributed during the sixteenth century. This happened simultaneously with the golden age of Europe's scholarly demonology. Saxo tells how some northern peoples, such as the Finns and the Biarmians, could control the elements of nature, and use magic instead of defending themselves with weapons. Saxo writes

about weather magic as primarily a Nordic specialty. As examples of Nordic sorcery, Olaus Magnus mentioned wind magic, spell casting, the ability to foresee the future, signing and the skill at brewing witches' stews that brought good fortune. The Nordic people were admirable fortune tellers, as well. They are in harmony with nature and can interpret the weather. He tells how the inhabitants of the far north can attach 'wind knots' to straps and use magical powers to protect against harm. The inhabitants of Finland and Lapland are experts at this art, writes the apostle of Nordic culture who brands the art of sorcery as mad and deranged.

The entire world is irresistibly fascinated by this devilish art. Sailors are forced to buy wind because of the wind conditions in the north, and for a slant of money they get three bewitched knots tied to a strap. Bad things will happen to those who doubt the power of the knots, but they are nonetheless forced into seeking advice from sorcerers.<sup>19</sup>

Olaus Magnus's account of the Septentrionale people was the first report in Latin that thoroughly described the Nordic countries to a geographically interested Renaissance Europe. Until the advent of this era, the northern regions were basically regarded as a 'terra incognita'. This work was based upon a journey that Olaus Magnus took to Norrland in 1518–19. He visited Nidaros (Trondheim), and travelled as far north as Pello, in Övertorneå. Torneå is described as a meeting place for the people of northern Scandinavia. The criteria of Olaus Magnus's scientific values and truthfulness were based upon visual observations and first-hand experience. The Swede has situated himself within the genre of first-person narrative of travel. He had been on the spot and made observations of all the strange things with his own eyes, at least according to himself.

Olaus Magnus's grand map of the north, 'Carta Marina' or 'Carta Gothica', which was published in Venice in 1539, has also played a part in spreading terror of the distant northern regions. In the first extensive map of the Nordic countries, the coastal waters of northern Norway were portrayed as a deep chaos filled with sea monsters preying upon sailing ships, and how they, as ship-destroying leviathans, tear human beings apart with their horrible teeth. A huge and long sea serpent can be seen demolishing a ship. And close to the islands of Lofoten, for instance, a devouring abyss was portrayed that sucked down all vessels in its vicinity. Norway's most famous natural phenomenon in ancient times – the whirlpool near Værøy (Moskstraumen) – was feared by sailors for centuries.<sup>20</sup> Demonic powers

of all sorts manifested themselves in the north. In his renown work on the northern peoples, published in Rome in 1555, Olaus Magnus commented upon this map where he wrote in great detail on the dangers that explorers and traders risked by travelling in regions under the Plough (or Big Dipper). In this book, which was translated into several European languages, the Swedish author wrote extensively on dangerous and malevolent demons who called on people in the wintertime during the dark periods and how these creatures, together with numerous witches, broke into houses and robbed people's beer cellars. Polar people, according to Olaus Magnus, use nature to their advantage in warfare. In a warning directed to foreign powers not to intervene in the affairs of the northerners, the author writes that ice, snow and the cold have produced a hardy people that are distinguished by their courage, strength and bravery. The rough, harsh and cold climate had created fearless warriors of a robust habitus. Exceptional depictions are common traits in this work. The North was depicted as both the Arctic Eden and the ancient home of evil.

The French jurist, Pierre de Lancre (1553–1631) explained in a 1612 publication that few sorcerers were to be found in Europe during ancient times, but those who did, existed in the northern countries:

It is necessary to note that since the witches were not formerly as numerous as they are today, and since they kept themselves separate in the mountains and the deserts and withdrew into Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Gotland, Ireland, Livonia, and other northern countries, their idolatries and curses were not as well known, and what was said about them was taken to be fables and old wives' tales.<sup>21</sup>

When witches encroached upon Europe around 1550, this invasion came from the north. De Lancre, who led an extensive hunt on witches in Bordeaux, in southern France, in 1609, gathered all his information on the northern witches from none other than Olaus Magnus.

### WIND KNOTS AND WEATHER MAGIC

Both Saxo Grammaticus and Olaus Magnus mention the art of Sami sorcery, but this art is always related to a greater tradition of Nordic sorcery. Both Sami and people within the Old Norse culture are able to course bad weather. In both cultures magic is used to cause harm and healing in much the same way.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the comments on Sami sorcery,

and its diabolical characteristics, were what caught the attention of early modern Europe. The notion of the northern regions as a hothouse for the forging of witchcraft and idolatry became increasingly a question of Sami sorcery. Like other peoples who lived at the farthest edge of the geographical and cultural periphery the Sami were considered to be the most potent sorcerers.

The magic of tying and untying knots is known throughout all of Europe, and it is not geographically isolated to the northern regions or to weather magic. Three knots were tied during French wedding ceremonies to make the husband impotent. The symbolic fear of castration was so widespread by the mid-sixteenth century that couples got secretly married outside of the local church to avoid affliction. Leading French intellectuals at the time, like Jean Bodin, feared population fall-offs as a consequence of this diabolical art.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, the magic of knots is best associated with wind forces and fishing communities. To raise destructive winds, or sometimes to prevent them by knot magic, are skills known ever since ancient times. From coastal areas in Europe, where sea transportation, fishing and trade were of importance, records show how witches could undo knots to conjure storms, frighten off the fish and sink fishing boats and larger trading ships. From Homer's *Odyssey*, for instance, we know of the story of Aeolus – the king of the winds – who gave a bag to Ulysses filled with wind. The knot on the bag was to be opened when there was a need for fair sailing winds. Jean Bodin told of the Sardinian captain who bought a rope with three 'wind knots', and, he added, there were fifty vile ways of using the knots.<sup>24</sup> Wind knots were widespread in Iceland and other coastal parts of Europe. As early as the fourteenth century, the English monk, Ranulph Higden wrote about a barren island, west of Denmark, in his world chronicle, *Polychronicon*. On this island the inhabitants sold wind in knotted ropes to sailors who arrived there.<sup>25</sup> Higden is supposed to be among the first to write of the northerners' meteorological knowledge. He likely copied an even earlier work entitled *Geographica Universalis*. This work is supposedly from the thirteenth century and written by an unknown author. Perhaps this is the source of the myth surrounding the selling of wind in the north. The story is well known:

The people are barbarously savage and ugly, and practise magical arts, therefore they offer for sale and sell wind to those along their coasts, or who are becalmed among them. They make balls of thread and tie various knots

on them, and tell them to untie three or more knots of the ball, according to the strength of wind that is desired. By making magic with these knots through their heathen practices, they set the demons in motion, and raise a greater or less wind, according to whether they loosen more or fewer knots in the thread, and sometimes they bring about such a wind that the unfortunate ones who place reliance on such things perish by a righteous judgment.<sup>26</sup>

A bit earlier, in a work printed in 1591, another version of wind magic can be found in the writings of Sir Giles Fletcher, the English ambassador to Russia. Taking up his position in Russia, Fletcher had sailed all the way from London, via northern Norway and to the White Sea where he then went by horse to Moscow. Describing the life of the ‘wild Sami’ of the Kola-Petsamo, he writes,

For practise of witchcraft and sorcerie they passe all nations in the worlde. Though for enchanting of ships that saile along their coast, (as I have heard it reported) and their giuing of winds good to their friends, and contrary too ther, whom they meane to hurt by tying of certaine knots upon a rope (some what like to the tale of Aeolus his windbag) is a very fable, devised (as may seeme) by themselves, to terrifie sailors for comming neare their coast.<sup>27</sup>

The central motifs in stories about purchasing wind are very similar to the basic plot structure which can be found in the maritime migratory legend of The Three Wind-Knots and the Ship-Sinking Witches. Versions of the tale can be found all over Western and Northern Europe, especially in Scotland, England, Ireland and in the Nordic countries. Some scholars have suggested that the legend itself may be derived from seafaring communities in Scandinavia and Lapland.<sup>28</sup>

### THE SAMI AND THE WITCH TRIALS

So how were the witch trials in the high north during the seventeenth century affected by these images and representations? Before we look at the numbers of convicted Sami women and men it is first necessary to have a brief outline of the regional framework. During the seventeenth century the northeastern part of Denmark-Norway had unresolved and disputed borders with Russia and Sweden/Finland. The Sami people lived in all three countries and travelled between them to trade with each other and with foreigners. Living and moving within three countries at

the same time represented a problem. This was especially the case for the conflicts between Sweden and Denmark-Norway at a time when state territories were being established. Therefore, the Sami were considered by the Nordic state authorities as subjects in need of proper integration into the individual realms.

While most of the witchcraft cases against Norwegian women were in the eastern part of the Finnmark region, the cases in the western part are of a quite different nature in terms of numbers, content, ethnicity and gender. The majority of the cases in the west involved Sami men, and they present another concept of sorcery than the demonological or diabolical one. The Sami men are considered dangerous magicians in their own right, but without being motivated by any connection to a diabolical network. They are individual practitioners of harmful magic, but do not travel through the air or attend the witches' gatherings. The impact of demons and devils is downplayed in the court cases against Sami sorcerers. The western region of Finnmark appears to be one of the very few regions in Europe with a greater proportion of men than women in the records of witch trials. Moreover the region is almost unique in a European context in having a distinct element of indigenous people involved in this kind of persecution.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the critical period from the end of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century, the authorities used the state power's taxation rights over the Sami to justify sovereignty claims on their land. Thus the central power's rights and control over certain subjects formed the basis for territorial sovereignty claims. The state power's colonization along fjords and land areas signified a stronger integration of Sami settlement areas into the Danish-Norwegian kingdom and a limitation on the indigenous people's use of previously common land. Colonization of Sami areas of utilization, with the main aim of incorporating the indigenous people into the Norwegian sphere, resulted in several painful and brutal outcomes during the course of the seventeenth century. The conflict between representatives of the Danish-Norwegian authorities, who maintained the King's rights in the Sami heartlands, and the Sami defence of unwritten and enshrined customary use, developed into direct confrontations with a much more serious outcome than later ethnic conflicts in the North. These violent collisions, especially around 1609–10 and during the 1620s, 1630s and 1640s in West Finnmark, have so far received little mention by historians.

Gradually the effort to control the native people of the contested territory raised the question of Sami skills in performing different kinds of

magic. Related to the process of penetrating unknown northern lands, the Sami were perceived by state authorities as unreliable and politically suspect. In this section we will try to show how their exotic forms of sorcery sustained these kinds of images, and were manifested through witchcraft persecutions of Sami men.

At the time of the Finnmark witchcraft trials, the Sami population was not integrated with the ethnic Norwegian population, which had mainly settled along the coast. The majority of the Sami lived in the interior of Finnmark and alongside the large fjords of the county. During the early modern period the Sami were known as Lapps or, more commonly, as Finns, and these are the designations that are used in the court books, statutory provisions and other sources at the time.

### SORCERY PERSECUTIONS OF THE SAMI

Those of Sami origin made up about 20 per cent of the total number of witch trials in the northern part of Norway (see Table 1). Altogether in the three counties – Nordland, Troms and Finnmark – which make up Arctic Norway, the civil courts persecuted 37 Sami individuals between 1593 and 1695. Of these, 20 men and 8 women were burned at the stake for practising witchcraft.<sup>30</sup>

Table 1 shows the total number of witch trials in the three northern Norwegian counties (Arctic Norway) from 1593–1695, distributed by gender and ethnic background, and compared with the western region of Finnmark. The figures in parentheses show the number of death sentences. The table pertains to indicted individuals in actual witch trials and does not include cases of slander, even though these might have contained elements of witchcraft. Notice in particular the strong overall predominance

**Table 1** The number of witch trials in the western region of Finnmark compared to Arctic Norway as a whole, 1593–1695

<i>Gender and ethnicity</i>	<i>Western part of Finnmark</i>	<i>Arctic Norway (northern Norway)</i>
Sami women	4 (2)	11 (8)
Sami men	15 (12)	26 (20)
Norwegian women	6 (3)	120 (87)
Norwegian men	2 (0)	14 (5)
Unknown	–	6 (6)
Total witch trials	27 (17)	177 (126)

of Norwegian women, while there is a small predominance of Sami men among those convicted of witchcraft in the western part of Finnmark.

Of course, the witch trials stand out as not the only, but the most brutal, measure used to integrate and convert allegedly dangerous people into the dominant culture. In other words, the persecution of the Sami as witches seems to have been closely related to the effort to establish a new political and cultural hegemony in the contested border areas in the north.

An observer could easily believe that the indigenous people of the North, who were afflicted by witchcraft, contributed to the large numbers of witchcraft cases in the Arctic North. In general, those who lived furthest away on the social and geographical periphery, such as the indigenous Sami and Indian people of the early modern era, were easily regarded as the worst sorcerers. In her analysis of witchery during the age of early colonialism in Mexico, Laura A. Lewis writes that 'Spaniards and others attributed the most powerful forms of witchcraft to Chichimecs, who were at the greatest geographical and cultural distance from Spanish colonization and thus from Spanish control.'<sup>31</sup> There was the same perception of the Sami as seen from Copenhagen. But, as in the New World, the indigenous people of the North were not those who were primarily afflicted when the witch trials began to spread. The native population was treated as a primitive people, who were basically left to themselves as long as there was no unrest.<sup>32</sup> The processes by which the Sami were subordinated to the changing structures of Danish-Norwegian state-building had been going on since the late Middle Ages, but a new and stricter policy of thorough integration of the ethnic minority into Danish-Norwegian society started in the post-Reformation period, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and lasted for the next two centuries. To make this indigenous people loyal, tax-paying subjects of the Danish crown, the elite had to use strong and sometimes brutal measures. It must be remembered, however, that serious conflicts between the Sami and the Danish-Norwegian authorities during this period of state penetration only emerged when their patterns of living clashed. As Anthony Giddens has pointed out, the general case in conquest states was that indigenous populations would be left to carry on their pre-existing patterns of conduct as long as they paid their taxes and did not try to hinder territorial expansion.<sup>33</sup> For the local power elite the real threat came not from the border people but primarily from the secret enemy within, or what Wolfgang Behringer has called *the internal outsider*.<sup>34</sup> Most of the manifestations of a secret enemy within were found

among the women living right in the middle of the Norwegian settlements and communities on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

The Sami shaman (*noaidie*) was usually a man and one who mastered a broad repertoire of ritual magic. The magic of the shaman is performed individually and is never a collective feature. As viewed by the Danish-Norwegian authorities, it was the spells cast – *diabolicus gandus* – by the Sami shaman that were most feared. It was this kind of sorcerer that was found in most of the witchcraft trials from the western part of Finnmark and partly in the neighbouring district of Troms. Several of the Sami men who were accused of *gand* had criminal records, in addition to having committed crimes of sorcery. Magic among men was generally connected to other crimes during the era of persecution and witchcraft. Sorcery was only one of many criminal charges. The fact that magic appeared simultaneously with other crimes seems to have been a common feature among European male sorcerers.<sup>35</sup>

Male practitioners who were accused of conducting evil magic essentially acted alone. All in all, the notions and imaginings of strong associations between humans and the kingdom of demons were non-existent in the coastal villages and fjords of the west. Those Sami convicted of sorcery did not consort with small demons or shed skin when casting wicked curses. They simply did not have any close affinity with Satan and his demons. Or to use the demonological interpretation, they had no open, explicit pact with Satan, only a silent or implicit pact.

The western sorcerers were individual practitioners of evil magic – they did not usually operate in the company of others. In 1621 and in the mid-1630s, the witch persecutions could be seen in connection with plans for insurrection among the Sami. However, the notions of large gatherings of witches who flew through the air, which were common among Norwegian women in the eastern part, hardly occurred at all in the west. And as we can observe from Table 1, the enormous regional differences were also evidenced by the total number of witchcraft trials.

Conflicts with the Sami of the inner fjord regions, related to territorial, demographic and economic expansion in an unsafe border area, seem to have arisen from natural factors – especially in the first cases. Territorial and demographic expansion into the fjords led to conflicts between the Sami on the one hand and visiting fishermen and the Danish-Norwegian authorities on the other. Because of these conflicts, it was important for the authorities to force the Sami under the yoke of Danish-Norwegian jurisdiction. Conflicts surrounding land and water rights apparently lie beneath the surface of several trials, and this is particularly true of the trials dating from the 1630s.

## THE SELF-PERCEPTION OF MAGIC AMONG THE SAMI SHAMANS

Men's magic is described and looked upon as a science in its own right by the Sami, and as acquisition of knowledge that demanded training and experience. This knowledge was passed from generation to generation. The Samis' magic, according to their own perception, was worlds apart from the evil magic allegedly practised by Norwegian women. Norwegian magic was based upon the spiritual power of evil, while Sami magic required insight, skill and training. This tradition of sorcery was primarily, but not only, ascribed to men by the Sami. It was looked upon with respect, dignity and admiration. Seen from a Norwegian historical perspective, sorcery had for centuries been regarded as an unmanly and extremely shameful activity. However, magic was also now and then referred to as a skill and knowledge by the Norwegians of the Old Norse period. One who was skilled in Old Norse magic could very well be regarded as a respected and knowledgeable individual. Such a person could be either male or female. From 1150 to 1300, in the Old Norse realm, there was no general denunciation of magic as a means to an end. Judgements were governed by intentions and consequences.<sup>36</sup> This is the ancient perception of magic that seems to have survived and perhaps influenced the Sami's self-perception in the early modern era.

Researchers from other Nordic countries such as Finland and Iceland, where numerous men were convicted of sorcery, have pointed out that traditional magic was associated with the concept of knowledge. This was almost always related to men. One assumption was that the total number of men involved in the witch trials would diminish as the Christian world-view gained a stronger foothold.<sup>37</sup> This view might in part explain why so few *Norwegian* males were accused of sorcery in Arctic Norway. The cases against the Norwegian coastal women are clearly dominated by their profusely Christian, diabolic character. The religious perception of the Sami world, however, seems to move more to the foreground in the cases where the Sami were involved.

Hans H. Lilienskiold (1650–1703) was the king's governor of Finnmark at the end of the seventeenth century. He, too, wrote about the practice of sorcery among the Norwegians and the Sami. Lilienskiold realized how the Sami perceived their magical skills as a science, in contrast to the harmful devilry of the Norwegian female witches. The Samis' 'Lapp skills' were less serious, apparently, than the open and direct pact with the Devil

as practised by the Norwegian female witches, wrote the district governor. The difference was only skin-deep, however. This Sami ‘science’, too, had a diabolic content and origin, he noted, and maintained that Satan was their master. They conducted evil deeds and ought to be punished for them. In principle, the Sami science of sorcery is just as black as the Devil and as wild as that of the Norwegians, concludes Lilienskiold.<sup>38</sup> As a representative of the Danish-Norwegian Lutheran dynasty, Lilienskiold wished to show that the Sami’s ‘science’ of healing, counter-magic and use of drums originated with the Devil incarnate. In this way the magic of the Sami belonged to a class of well-known categories and interpretations within a hegemonic understanding of culture. What Lilienskiold tries to imply in discussing Sami magic as opposed to magic among Christianized Norwegians is the well-known demonological distinction between an implicit and an open or expressed pact with the Devil.

### WITCHCRAFT CONSPIRACY AT THE FRONTIERS OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

As we have seen, the Danes knew of the strong rumours concerning Sami sorcery, as did many others throughout early modern Europe. Even though numerous witches had been put to death at the stake throughout Norway and Denmark, at the end of the sixteenth century no one had yet instigated a similar policy of persecution directed at the Sami for their particular skills. But not too many years would elapse before King Christian IV turned into a monarch agitated by demons and eager to pursue and hunt down all kinds of sorcery – including Sami sorcery. As a collective group, the Sami posed a threat to the territorial expansion of Denmark-Norway, its state-building and its endeavours to spread civilization and Christianity in the far North.

Since Christian IV turned the northern regions into his first major foreign adventure, he made sure that an efficient and energetic commanding officer was stationed at Vardøhus. The Dane Hans Olsen Koefoed was endowed with Vardøhus Fortress, and the county of Finnmark, in June 1597. The man travelled across great expanses of land in northern Norway in the winter of 1597/98 and the subsequent winter to investigate Swedish taxation of the Sami. Conscientiously, he presented his findings to the king. It is likely that Koefoed’s report on the Swedish drive towards the coast of north Norway was what convinced Christian IV himself to sail northwards

in 1599. Koefoed was known for actively taking care of the crown's northern policies in a highly satisfactory manner. He effectively disclosed Swedish territorial expansion in the north, and also impounded goods which were charged as a levy by Russian bailiffs. This stern and strong bachelor was the king's right-hand man. Things looked rather hopeful with such an energetic man at the outermost outpost of the far-stretched realm, but then Hans Olsen Koefoed suddenly died in Vardø in May 1601, barely 40 years old.

It was a hard blow for King Christian when, during the summer, he was informed about Koefoed's untimely death. Koefoed had not died of natural causes, however. Strong rumours at the time claimed that his death was due to a spell which had been cast upon him. A Norwegian and a Sami, both male, were said to have joined forces in order to bewitch the king's emissary. And because of this the stage was set for the largest peacetime persecution in Norwegian history. Vardø became the site of the first two bonfires used in the executions of the Sami: Morten Olsen, from the Sami siida community in Varanger, and the Norwegian, Christen Schreder living in Vardø, who were condemned to be burned at the stake for having cast an evil spell on the district governor. It is likely that their mutual conspiracy involved the Norwegian having paid the Sami to cast a lethal spell on Hans Olsen. Morten and Christen may have conspired with others in their plot against the king's civil servant, but only these two are mentioned in administrative reports since large sums of money were left behind in their estates.<sup>39</sup> The first couple of witch trials in the North are omens of escalating domestic dangers – in addition to the external perils posed by Swedes, Russians and foreign merchants. And after 1601, the rhetoric of sorcery accusation was one of the charges that arose nearly every time serious conflicts emerged between the Sami and Danish-Norwegian authorities.

### TERRITORIAL EXPANSION, STATE-BUILDING AND WITCHCRAFT

Thus the regime's state-building process in the North had its price as far as the indigenous population was concerned. One aspect of Sami politics is closely connected to the struggle against the dangerous and undermining practice of sorcery. The concept of devilish saboteurs in their midst among Sami men (and a few Sami women) resulted in a witch-hunt of internal enemies that is without parallel in Norwegian history.

Both Sami men and Norwegian women were regarded as instruments of disorder. Accusations of witchcraft were effective means by which to break down various forms of protest and solidarity among common citizens. Which border men and women had joined in the conspiracy against the power structure was made clearer while they were tortured in judicial and non-judicial settings. Prosecution of witches under the guise of moral severity worked hand in hand with the process of state-building and territorial expansion into sparsely settled border regions, opening new lands to settlements.

There seems to have been no lack of resistance and organized protest in seventeenth-century Finnmark. Central and local authorities, it should be pointed out, frequently demonized dissenters and dubious people. In fact, centrally placed persons in the local power system appear to have considered themselves in a way as moral entrepreneurs and crusading reformers at the very frontiers of European civilization.<sup>40</sup> This was first the case in Sami settlements in the border districts and then on a full scale with Norwegians as well, conceived as internal enemies. We thereby see what distinguishes the witchcraft persecutions of the north from most other regions within the Danish-Norwegian dynasty: namely, the characteristic of being conducted by the power system which is evident in the Finnmark trials – to secure control of culturally and politically unsecured frontiers.

The conflicting border issues with the threat from both sea and land and from a border people of suspicious dissenters supplemented the fight against the serious crimes of witchcraft among the Norwegian women. In the case of early modern Finnmark, the tension related to border and border-crossing reveals conflict patterns on three levels:

1. Conflicting border issues, including cross-border identities, in the context of state-building and territorial expansion on sea and land.
2. The magical threat from an external enemy in the context of ethnic patterns, that is, (primarily) Sami men.
3. The magical threat related to the internal outsiders in the context of rebellious coastal women – witches in the midst – the social construction of witches within the local communities.

Traces of motifs, as recorded in the legal sources of the witchcraft trials, are not difficult to find in the thoroughly organized and collective actions that were directed especially against merchants, but sometimes also against

county authorities and the power structure. In a demonological context, reports of witch gatherings could be interpreted as sublimated forms of social revolt and some sort of hidden society of women's groups organized in military-like units under the governorship of Satan himself. This threatened the male patriarchy and the fragile local power structure, who took its authority from God. In addition, ordinary women were frequently seen as scapegoats for accidents resulting from living conditions in the local societies and thereby involved in panics. Confessions abounded, too, of how the Devil offered the accused witches a better life. This could easily be seen as a way of obtaining power and freedom from economic marginalization, and the seventeenth-century authorities could see the Devil pact as a serious threat to their local governmental authority. Magic, as viewed by the authorities, was a portentous force capable of destabilizing the new political order in the north.

The difficult process of modernization and state-building in the northern borderlands of Europe stands out as a tragedy of cultural encounters. A judicial strategy of terrifying the Sami may have helped to lay the groundwork for a much larger witch-hunt. Without the Danish-Norwegian regime's assault on the border people, the local governors would have been less likely to have turned to annihilating an imagined sect of Norwegian witches with such determination as can be observed in the small fishing communities along the coast of Finnmark. In other words, the story of the brutal witch persecution in Arctic Europe is part of the well-known larger story of how conflicting border issues, in the wake of a clash of interests, constituted and constructed different kinds of enemy images. In the words of Gary K. Waite, 'Demonizing rhetoric against a threatening group ... might again penetrate the mindset of the populace and be readily redirected to other outsiders.'<sup>41</sup>

The witch trials of the far north are distinctive in a European context because of the simultaneous prosecutions of Norwegians, most of them married women, and of the native Sami, most of them being men. The notion of witchcraft, with some exceptions, was primarily a male phenomenon in Sami society. The legal sources emphasize that they were the cultural bearers of what has been labelled Sami shamanism. And in accordance with the tradition of lingering images and representations these men were demonized as learned and dangerous sorcerers, but not diabolized as evil witches.

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