Chapter 7: Witchcraft

For Further Reading

There is a huge literature on witchcraft, which continues to grow every year. The best place to start on any topic is the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, edited by Richard Golden (New York, ABC-Clio, 2006). The most up-to-date general survey, which specifically address the issue of why women were more likely to be accused, is Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (London, Longman, 2006). Another solid survey is Joseph Klaits, *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985). Bengt Ankarloo, Stuart Clark, and William Monter, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), is part of a six-volume series covering witchcraft and magic in Europe from biblical and pagan societies through the twentieth century.

Some studies promote ideas that have proved to have little basis in fact, such as the idea that witches were members of a pre-Christian cult of worshippers of the goddess Diana, or that witch-hunting was primarily an attempt to wipe out knowledge of birth control. The list of readings that follows includes only the most important basic studies, the conclusions of which have continued to shape our understanding of the witch hunts, and works that focus on the issue of the gendered nature of witchcraft.

For further suggestions, see the general studies noted earlier and also two recent review essays: Garthine Walker, “Witchcraft and History,” *Women’s History Review* 7, no. 3

(1998), 425–32, and Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "'Feminist Consciousness' and 'Wicked Witches': Recent Studies on Women in Early Modern Europe," *Signs* 20 (1994), 152–75. For references to older works, see H. C. Erik Midelfort, "Witchcraft, Magic and the Occult," in Steven Ozment (ed.), *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* (St. Louis, Center for Reformation Reserach, 1982), pp. 183–209. An excellent survey and critique of many schools of witchcraft research is Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London, Routledge, 1996). Elspeth Whitney, "The Witch 'She'/The Historian 'He': Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch Hunts," *Journal of Women's History* 7 (1995), 77–101, explicitly analyzes the role of gender in witchcraft studies.

Older general studies that continue to be useful include Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of the Witches* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964); H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969); Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, Routledge, 1970); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witchhunting in Southwestern Germany 1562–1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1972); Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (New York, Basic Books, 1975); E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1976).

Darren Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (New York, Routledge, 2001) includes secondary articles on a range of topics, as does my *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2007); both of these books are designed for students. Brian Levack has edited two multivolume collections of articles, *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, 12 vols. (New York, Garland, 1992; vol. 10 looks specifically at women), and *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology,* 6 vols. (New York, Routledge, 2001). Other wide-ranging collections of articles include Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centers and Peripheries* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989); Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996); Stuart Clark, ed., *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt (eds.), *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (New York, Manchester University Press, 2004), and *Witchcraft Continued: Popular Magic in Modern Europe* (New York, Manchester University, 2005), are collections that deal with witchcraft after the end of the witch trials; both emphasize the continued power of beliefs in witchcraft in many parts of Europe.

There are many good collections of original sources: Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft in England 1558–1618* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Early Modern Europe: A Documentary History* (New York, St. Martin's, 1999); Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe 400–1700: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press,

2001); Brian Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York, Routledge, 2003). Marion Gibson has edited two collections of sources: *Early Modern Witchcraft: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London, Routledge, 2001), includes scholarly editions of the surviving witchcraft pamphlets from Elizabethan and Jacobean England, sixteen in all, and *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550–1750* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2003), includes many types of texts. Elaine G. Breslaw, *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook* (New York, New York University Press, 2000), includes primary documents and scholarly interpretations of European, Native American, African, South American, and African American beliefs about witchcraft.

Hans Peter Broedel, *Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (New York, Manchester University Press, 2003), is the first book-length study in English of the most influential witchcraft treatise. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), is an enormous work that analyzes hundreds of witch treatises and related writings.

Recent work on witchcraft has stressed the fact that patterns of persecution differed widely in different areas of Europe, and many of the best studies are those that focus on a specific city, country, or region. See Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650* (London, Basil Blackwell, 1989); Gustav Henningsen, *The Witch's Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition* (Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1980); David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early*

Modern Terra d'Otranto (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992); Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt in Scotland* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Carlos Nogueria, "Sexuality and Desire: The Witches of Castille," *Revista Brasileira de Historia* 15 (1987–88), 169–84; Valerie Kivelson, "Through the Prism of Witchcraft: Gender and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy," in Barbara Evans Clements et al. (eds.), *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991), pp. 74–94, and "Patrolling the Boundaries: The Uses of Witchcraft Accusations and Household Strife in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995), 302–23. Sally Scully, "Marriage or a Career: Witchcraft as an Alternative in Seventeenth-Century Venice," *Journal of Social History* 28 (1995), 857–76; James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Edmund M. Kern, "Quotidian Distinctions: Women, Gender, and Witchcraft in Styria, 1550–1750," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (2000); Christine Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches: The Great Scottish Witch-Hunt* (London, Tempus, 2005); Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2005).

Single-case studies provide fascinating details that general surveys cannot. Michael Kunze, *Highroad to the Stake: A Tale of Witchcraft*, trans. Willian E. Yuill (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1987), provides a gripping narrative of a single case of otherwise obscure people charged with witchcraft in Bavaria; this is a book that is

impossible to put down, and, although slightly fictionalized in terms of details, is based on exhaustive archival research. Retha Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), which explores the case of one of the most prominent women ever accused of witchcraft. Gilbert Geis and Ivan Bunn, *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Persecution* (London, Routledge, 1997), traces an English case of two women hanged for witchcraft, with in-depth analysis of the court proceedings. Despite the sensational subtitle, James A. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Football, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (London, Routledge, 1999), provides careful reconstruction of a case involving a young woman who claimed to be bewitched but was later tried for false accusations. Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (New York, Norton, 1987), is only one of a score of books that look at the Salem case; it is important to recognize that Salem was the *only* mass trial in North America.

Works that focus specifically on the issue of women and witchcraft have become much more numerous over the last decade than they were earlier. These include several new books, which tend to emphasize misogyny and male control of female sexuality: Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (London, Routledge, 1992); Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York, Pandora, 1994); Sigrid Brauner, *Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews: The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Eric Durschmied, *Whores of the Devil: Witch-Hunts and Witch-Trials* (London, Sutton, 2007). Mary Daly's classic

critique of male dominance, *Gyn/Ecology* (London, The Women's Press, 1979), uses the witch craze as one of its prime examples.

Three studies that address the issue of motherhood and witchcraft are Lyndal Roper, "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany," in her *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion, and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (London, Routledge, 1994); Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995); and Louise Jackson, "Witches, Wives, and Mothers: Witchcraft Persecution and Women's Confessions in Seventeenth-Century England," *Women's History Review* 4 (1995), 63–83.

Many of the studies that focus on demonology and ideas about witchcraft do not address the issue of gender to a great extent, except to mention general cultural misogyny. Several that do include Brian Easlea, *Witchhunting, Magic and the New Philosophy: An Introduction to Debates of the Scientific Revolution, 1450–1750* (Sussex, Harvester, 1980); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, Harper & Row, 1980); J. K. Swales and Hugh McLachlan, "Witchcraft and Antifeminism," *Scottish Journal of Sociology* 4 (1980), 141–66. The works of Stuart Clark tend to deemphasize the role of misogyny in demonology: "Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft," *Past and Present* 97 (1980), 98–127, "The 'Gendering' of Witchcraft in French Demonology: Misogyny or Polarity?" *French History* 5 (1991), 426–37, and *Thinking with Demons,* noted earlier.

There are a number of recent case studies that directly address the issue of women's role as both accuser and accused: Russell Zguta, "Witchcraft Trials in Seventeenth-Century

Russia," *American Historical Review* 82 (1977), 1187–207; Phyllis Guskin, "The Context of Witchcraft: The Case of Jane Wenham, 1712," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 15 (1981), 48–71; Peter Rushton, "Women, Witchcraft and Slander in Early Modern England: Cases from the Church Courts of Durham," *Northern History* 18 (1982), 116–32; Susanna Burghartz, "The Equation of Women and Witches: A Case Study of Witchcraft Trials in Lucerne and Lausanne in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in Richard Evans (ed.), *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History* (London, Routledge, 1988), pp. 57–74; Richard Horsley, "Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in European Witch Trials," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (1979), 689–716; Robin Briggs, "Women as Victims? Witches, Judges and the Community," *French History* 5 (1991), 438–50; Clive Holmes, "Women: Witnesses and Witches," *Past and Present* 140 (1993), 45–78; Janet A. Thompson, *Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches: Women in 17th Century Devon* (New York, Peter Lang, 1993); Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London, Routledge, 1999); Edward Bever, "Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2002), 955–88.

Works that consider the issue across a broader geographic area include Clarke Garrett, "Women and Witches: Patterns of Analysis," *Signs* 3 (1977), 461–70, and comments by Claudia Honegger and Nelly Moia, same issue, pp. 792–804; Alan Anderson and Raymond Gordon, "Witchcraft and the Status of Women," *British Journal of Sociology* 29 (1978), 171–84, and the response, J. K. Swales and Hugh McLachlan, "Witchcraft and the Status of Women," *British Journal of Sociology* 30 (1979), 349–58; Ritta Jo Horsley and Richard A. Horsley, "On the Trail of the 'Witches': Wise Women, Midwives and the

European Witch Hunts," in Mariane Burkhard and Edith Waldstein (eds.), *Women in German Yearbook 3: Feminist Studies and German Culture* (Washington, DC: University of America Press, 1987), pp. 1–28; Allison P. Coudert, "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze," in Jean R. Brink et al. (eds)., *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 12 (Kirksville, MO, Sixteenth Century Journal, 1989), 61–89. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), provides a thoughtful discussion of the complexities of the link between gender and witchcraft and also discusses witchcraft within the context of sexual and family relationships. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witchhunts: A Global History* (London, Polity Press, 2002), puts the European witch hunts within the perspective of witch beliefs around the world and discusses issues of witchcraft that emerged in European colonies.

Thomas Rogers Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1966), and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (New York, Feminist Press, 1973), posit a connection between midwifery and witchcraft, whereas David Harley, "Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-Witch," *Social History of Medicine* 3 (1990), 1–26, is harshly critical of this idea. Leland Estes. "The Medical Origins of the European Witch Craze: A Hypothesis," *Journal of Social History* 17 (1983), 271–84, looks more broadly at medical issues. Edward Bever, "Old Age and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe," in Peter Stearns (ed.), *Old Age in Preindustrial Society* (New York, Holmes and

Meier, 1982), pp. 150–90, and Alison Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Old Women in early modern Germany," *Past and Present* 173 (November 2001), 50–89, focus on age.

Two studies that look at connections between witchcraft and ideas about sexuality are Walter Stevens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), and Tamar Herzig, "The Demons' Reaction to Sodomy: Witchcraft and Homosexuality in Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's *Strix*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 53–72.

Works that focus specifically on male witches include Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Manchester University Press, 2003), and E. J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593–1680," *History Workshop Journal* 60 (Autumn 2005), 69–92.

Studies that put witchcraft into a broader perspective of popular culture also often do not consider the question of gender, but those that do include Robert Muchembled, "The Witches of the Cambrésis: The Acculturation of the Rural World in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in James Obelkevich (ed.), *Religion and the People 800–1700* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 221–76; Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France 1450–1750* (Baton Rouge, University of Louisiana Press, 1985); and Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989). Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2004), explores the psychological as well as social dimensions of the witch hunts.

Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), David Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984); Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995); and Kirilka Stavreva, "Fighting Words: Witch-Speak in late Elizabethan Docu-Fiction," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2000), 309–38. All explore witchcraft within the context of language and meaning. Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), examines the ways in which visual images of witchcraft were crucial in linking the seductive or aged female form with the dangers of witchcraft and also helped further the career of the male artists who made them. Pompa Banerjee, *Burning Women: Widows, Witches and Early Modern European Travelers in India* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), is a fascinating analysis of why Europeans who first encountered Hindu widow-burning in India failed to connect this with witch-burning in Europe, although both were related to ideas about being a good woman. Studies that include witchcraft along with other types of crimes investigated by the Inquisition and that address the issue of women include E. William Monter, "Women and the Italian Inquisitions," in Mary Beth Rose (ed.), *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 73–87; Mary O'Neil, "Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in Late Sixteenth-Century Modena," in Stephen Haliczer (ed.), *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe* (London, Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 88–114; several of the essays in

Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (eds.), *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991).

Web Sites



Hanover Historical Texts Project. Hanover University's site with many historical texts, including documents from the witch hunts.

http://history.hanover.edu/project.html



The Damned Art. Online version of an exhibition at the University of Glasgow library of books relating to the history of witchcraft and demonology. Includes many visual sources.

http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/damnedart/index.html#introduction



Salem Witch Trials
Documentary Archive and
Transcription Project

Salem Witch Trials. Collection of manuscript and printed materials relating to the Salem witchtrials, maintained by the University of Virginia.

http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/

Original Sources

1. Malleus Maleficarum, 1484

The most influential witchcraft treatise, and a classic expression of learned demonology was the Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of [Female] Witches)*, written by the German Dominican Heinrich Krämer (c. 1430–1505). A long, rambling, and difficult work, the* Malleus *draws on the writings of many earlier authors as it lays out Krämer's theories about the nature and danger of witchcraft and provides advice about how to identify and prosecute witches. In this section, Krämer addresses the question of why most witches are women.*

http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson4/lesson4.php?s=1

The entire Malleus Maleficarum can be found online at http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/

2. Three fifteenth-century witchcraft documents

The three documents included here are the Papal Bull of 1484, in which the pope provided his blessing and encouragement to witch-hunting, an account of some beliefs about witches, and an extract from the Malleus Hammer of Witches *describing the process of examination and trial.*

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/witches1.html

3. King James I, *Demonology,* and a Scottish witchcraft pamphlet, 1590s

The first text presented here, written by James I of England and Scotland, is a wide-ranging discussion of witchcraft, necromancy, possession, demons, werewolves, fairies, and ghosts in the form of a Socratic dialogue. The second text is a sensational historical account of Scottish witch persecution.

http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/kjd/index.htm

4. A woman is accused of witchcraft, Italy, 1625

Although there were relatively few witch trials in southern Europe, there were a few. In this Inquisition trial record from seventeenth-century Venice, Christina Collari was accused of both witchcraft and having a sexual relationship with a Jewish merchant. Following is the testimony from one of the witnesses in her trial, a former lover named Nicholas who was fifty-five years old. Source: Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Sant'Uffizio, Processi, B. 80, no. 2, doc. #3, December 1625. Translated by Monica Chojnacka.

Inquisitor: Do you know a Christina who starches collars for a living?

Resp: Yes, I know her; for three years we had carnal relations because my wife is ill, and it's been one year since I haven't had anything more to do with her, since I have reconciled myself with God's majesty.

Inqu: Do you know that said Christina has practiced any kind of witchcraft?

Resp: That I ever saw, no. But I did hear talk from Mr. Antonio, the husband of Mrs. Cattarina . . . that about a year and a half ago he told me that I needed to free myself of said Christina, telling me that she was a witch because she had brought about the death of his nephew, a grown man. This was also told to me by Cattarina his wife, who is still alive, though the husband is now

dead. And some clients of mine also told me this, though I can't remember who was present when they told me. Nor did they tell me what particular sort of witchcraft said Christina practiced.

Inqu: Do you know that said Christina practiced witchcraft to pressure her lovers?

Resp: I don't know anything else, if not that once a year ago, about a month before I left her, I found a piece of cord in a little envelope for combs [probably a makeshift small bag for small things, made of a folded piece of paper] near the bed, whose color I don't remember. It wasn't made of silk, but of some thread, and it was wound around so that I don't know its length, and it had various knots with pins.. . . And when I asked her what she was doing with that cord, she answered that she tossed that to see what would be [i.e., to divine the future], and that she was doing no harm by using it. Then I threw it into the fire, and I left her, very angry, after reproaching her for engaging in such slothful, bad behavior. No one else was in the house when this happened, but outside of the room, in the entry way I saw a woman who rented one of the other rooms in the house, she was called the Fiorentina [the Florentine, i.e., from the city of Florence]; I don't remember her real name, who is the wife of Zanella the linen maker. And to this woman (she's about forty years old), I showed said cord [editor's note: how did Nicholas show Fiorentina the cord if he had just thrown it into the fire?], and I told her how I had found it in the envelope. And she, without saying a word to me, shrugged her shoulders.

Inqu: If you know that said Christina had domestic relations with any Jew.

Resp: Yes, my lords, a Jew from Ferrara named Bonforno, a man of 36 years. Actually I caught him, and I saw him in the house, and before, when he used to come by wearing a black hat, I thought he was a Christian. But once I discovered the deceit by finding his red hat [Jews had to

wear special red or yellow hat to distinguish themselves from the Christian population] in her storage chest, she confessed to me that this Jew had slept with her.

Inqu: If you know whether that Jew brought things to eat to that Christina, and whether she ate them, and what sorts of food it was?

Resp: Before I learned that he was a Jew, one Sunday we were eating together at Christina's house, who in those days lived in the parish of San Marcuola [near the Jewish Ghetto]. He brought two fowl, cooked in a pan and a pan of meat cooked with cloves, and he gave me to understand that he was staying in [the parish of] San Boldo in the home of a well-born friend of his. And other times, she told me that this Jew had brought her other cooked things, but at that point she had not yet told me that he was a Jew, because I learned of it from the hat, and when I found the hat, she and he confessed to me that he was a Jew, and after reproaching them I never returned, and that happened about a month after the said Sunday.

Inqu: if you know whether said Christina ate meat on Friday or Saturday that was brought to her by said Jew, and did you hear talk of this?

Resp: No, my lords.



Illustration from a German witchcraft pamphlet

5. The Witch Trial of Mayor Johannes Junius, Bamberg, Germany, 1628

The prince-bishoprics with the Holy Roman Empire, such as Bamberg, were the site of many of the deadliest witch hunts in Europe. The first people to be accused in most hunts were women who were somehow distinctive, but as the circle of accused widened, men who were politically and economically powerful were sometimes caught up in the process as well. This record of the minutes of the trial, and a letter by the accused, is just such a case.

http://history.hanover.edu/texts/bamberg.html

6. Fighting demonic possession with the assistance of the saints, Russia, 1659

Belief in the power of demons led people in early modern Europe not only to look for witches but also to engage in various religious practices deigned to ward off or fight that power. In Orthodox and Catholic Europe, men and women frequently invoked the saints for the treatment of physical and emotional illnesses. Recipients of healing through the ecclesiastical system sometimes made formal statements attesting to their "miraculous" cures. This statement by a woman named Solomonia, describes her healing of demon possession through the intercession of Saints Prokopii and Ioann of Ustiug. Ustiug was a major commercial center of Russia in the seventeenth century, and Sts. Prokopii and Ioann became the center of a popular cult. Solomonia's statement is found in cycle of miracle tales compiled by the clergy at the saints' shrine, appended to a longer and more detailed account of her sufferings. It was edited to suit the genre of the miracle-tale but retains Solomonia's first-person voice.

According to this account, she had been afflicted by demons since her wedding night over a decade earlier. The demons raped her, forced her to bear demonic children, made her attack her father, carried her off from home, and tried to hang her from the rafters and then to drown her. Or, as modern people might put it, Solomonia engaged in promiscuous sex, rejected her children, became violent with her father, ran away from home, and attempted suicide. Her despairing family sent her to the cathedral in Ustiug for treatment, and after two trips and months of residence, she received healing from the saints through their direct intercession. Source: Excerpted from the original version published in Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatur*, N. Kostomarov, ed., vyp 1 (St. Petersburg, 1860; reprint: The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 153–168. Translated by Eve Levin.*

In the past, in the year 167 [=1659], because of my sins, the Devil Satan, who from time immemorial hates humanity and fights it, settled a demonic force in me. This force ruled me for eleven years and five months, and during that time, I was tormented by all sorts of unspeakable tortures, as have been described already. I, a sinful one, did not see the natural world and the rays of the sun truly, but for me day was like night. I went to God's churches as though a prisoner tied up, sometimes into the holy church itself, sometimes to the entryway. [In early-modern Russia, sinners under penance were forbidden to enter the church building and take their places among the congregation but instead stood on the porches outside the doors of the sanctuary.] I did not listen to the voices singing or reading; my eyes were blind to holy things and by ears deafened by the terrifying demonic yearnings. From the first day when I sensed the hostile demonic blue flame, from then until now my ears were filled with a great noise during the chanting of God's words.

On the eve of July 8, the feast day of St. Prokopii, a desire entered me to go to the all-night vigil in the church in honor of St. Prokopii, the miracle-worker, to hear about his marvelous miracles. Before that, I had had no desire to do this. I went and stood outside the church, at the north doors. At that time, inside the church they were reading the vita of St. Prokopii. I stood there for a short time, and my brother started to send me into the church. Whether because of my brother's fear, or because of the gaze of all the people standing there, I entered the church with great difficulty, and the demonic force was forbidding me. . .

I began to cry out as much as I could, "Don't bring me into the church of St. Prokopii!" They dragged me by force, but I broke away from them, and I went into the church of St. Ioann the miracle-worker. I sat down, and I saw the grave of St. Ioann as though it was shaking. I greatly feared this terrifying vision, and I held onto the grave of St. Ioann with my sinful hands. I

dozed a little, and I saw an ineffable light, and in this light a maiden saintly and very wonderful; I cannot tell how beautiful. She came into the church of St. Ioann through the noon doors [Russian churches were always oriented on an east-west axis, with the altar on the east or "sunrise" wall. The "noon doors" were located on the south side of the sanctuary] past the icons standing there, and came to me. She took me by the right shoulder, and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy upon us!" I did not answer anything. She said to me, "Solomonia, say 'Amen'." I did not answer anything. She repeated the prayer a second time and a third, and this most holy maiden said to me, "Solomonia, say 'Amen'." I was barely able to answer "Amen!" She said, "Answer twice more, 'Amen"." I answered twice, "Amen! Amen!" She said to me, "Do you know who I am?" I said to her, "My lady, I do not know you at all. I am a sinful person in great distress from the demonic force living inside me." The most holy maiden adorned in light said to me, "How can you not know me? You have been coming to my house unceasingly for five years!" I, sinful person, said, "Where is your house, my lady?" She said to me, "My house is the cathedral church. I am called the most holy Mary, who gave birth in the flesh to Jesus Christ, my creator and God. Today I shall reveal a great miracle through you, thanks to Sts. Prokopii and Ioann of Ustiug, the miracle workers, my representatives and supplicants to me. Pray to them unceasingly for healing. In your womb now there are seven hundred demons, and another thousand and seven hundred demons will enter you. Do not fear these wicked ones, for the miracle-workers Prokopii and Ioann will stand by you, and rescue you from the demonic force of illness.... You should promise to observe all the instructions they tell you." Having heard this, I, a sinful person, could not answer her anything. Then the Most Holy Mother of God said, "Peace be upon you, Solomonia!" And she departed by the same path by which she had entered.

I awoke from that wondrous vision and terrifying apparition, and I wanted to run from the church. I saw my brother standing nearby, and I was afraid. Then I gathered my strength, and I sat down, and I dozed off. I saw a great light in the church, unlike anything I had seen before, and St. Prokopii came into the church by the western doors. When he was near the grave of St. Ioann, St. Ioann got up from his grave. They came to me, a sinner, and the saints stood before me and said, “Depart, accursed ones, from the servant of God Solomonia!” The saint said to me, “Solomonia, pray from the depths of your heart to the intercessor of Christians, the most pure Mother of God and to Sts. Prokopii and Ioann, and you will be healed on this day. And give us your promise that you will not return to your former husband, and will not attach yourself to another one. You will still suffer a evil torment for three hours this day, but then you will be healed.. . .”

This was St. Prokopii’s appearance: long red hair, a simple red beard, not too short, short clothing, boots on his feet, pokers in his hands. St. Ioann was the same sort, as he is depicted on the icon in the local fashion. Then they said to me, “Peace be upon you, Solomonia!” And they left her, and became invisible.

I, a sinful person, awoke from this wondrous vision, and came to; and I left the church. My brother and someone else took me, leading me then to the church of St. Prokopii. I cried out as much as I could, “Do not bring me to St. Prokopii!” They did not listen to me, but dragged me by force into the church.. . . My spiritual father and the priest Simion of the cathedral church began to read the Psalter over me. And I began to suffer the worst torment from the demons living inside me, and I, a sinful person, could not listen to the words they were saying. I began to cry out to them not to read the psalter over me. And so it was with me for three hours...

I went out of my mind and saw a wondrous and terrifying vision. On the right side, the ranks of priests and deacons came, and sang, with cross and Gospel and candles and incense. On the opposite side I saw a multitude of demons; and in appearance the wicked ones were black and blue and savage and terrifying. They were like a great cloud, and these wicked ones spit and sneezed in my face. I came to those terrifying and savage ones and did not suffer at all, thanks for the prayers of the most holy Mother of God and Sts. Prokopii and Ioann.. . .

Suddenly, an ineffable light shone on the place where I lay. I saw a youth coming into the room with a candle, and behind him came Sts. Prokopii and Ioann. They stood by my head, and the holy men spoke among themselves. I do not know what they said. Then St. Prokopii came up to me, and made the sign of the cross with his hand over my womb. St. Ioann held a little spade in his hand, and he came up to me and cut open my womb and took a demon out of me and gave it to St. Prokopii. The demon began to cry out in a loud voice and wriggle in his hand. St. Prokopii showed me the demon, and said, “Solomonia, do you see the demon, which was in your womb?” I looked at it, black in appearance and having a tail and a wide and terrifying mouth. He put the wicked one down on the floor and whacked it with his pokers.. . . St. Ioann said to St. Prokopii that while cutting me, a sinful person, not to bloody my shift, and not defile God’s church. St. Prokopii replied, “Solomonia will not allow herself to be bloodied, and my house will not be bloodied by the hostile force.” St. Ioann began to remove the demons from that same wound, as before. St. Prokopii took them, threw them to the floor of the church, and stomped them with his foot. St. Prokopii said to St. Ioann, “Is Solomonia’s womb clean of the demons living inside her?” St. Ioann replied, “She is clean, and there is no corruption in her!” Then St. Prokopii himself looked into my womb, to see that it was clean. St. Prokopii said, “Glory be to

God!" And St. Ioann also said, "Glory be to God!" Then the saints said to me, "Solomonia, you also should say 'Glory be to God!'" My tongue moved, and I said, "Glory be to God!"

Then St. Prokopii said to me, "Solomonia, from this day you will be healed of that great demonic torment of illness. You will still suffer from hostile imaginings, but you should not fear them." And then St. Prokopii said to me, "Be well, Solomonia, until God's day of judgment!" He blessed me with his hand and said, "May our blessing be upon you now and forever!" And he said, "Solomonia, go to the right side, and recite the Jesus prayer, and say, 'Glory be to God!'" And after this speech, the saints became invisible.

I returned to myself after this wondrous vision, and I saw the light of the sun in the church, and I looked around the whole church and icons. I asked my brother in the church, "Am I standing here, or am I seeing a vision?" My brother answered me, "You are standing in the church of St. Prokopii at the liturgy, and the holy Gospel is being read." Then I looked at the grave of St. Prokopii, and I rejoiced greatly, and bowed to St. Prokopii's grave. I fell down there and began to pray and call for help, "O saint of God Prokopii, you did not overlook me, a sinful person, but searched for me, like a lost sheep, and you rescued me from hostile oppression." I did not sense in my womb any hostile force, and I did not suffer even a little; and the sores from the evil devilish abrasions healed. From now on I am healthy, just as the saint told me.

7. Healing spells, Italy, seventeenth century

Saints and other holy figures might be approached through personal prayers, such as those in the previous source, and also through formulaic spells. These spells and chants would be used along with certain herbs and other substances, thus blending natural and supernatural cures. The Madonna of the High Seas (Madonna dell'Alto Mare) was often invoked as the source of

dream prophesies. In the prayers that follow, we see how closely linked were matters of health, the supernatural, food, and agriculture. Such practices were regarded as superstition by learned judges and clerics, and sometimes could result in an investigation, though rarely ended in punishment more serious than a scolding. Source: Cecilia Gatto Trocchi, Magia e medicina popolare in Italia *(Rome: Newton Compton, 1982), p. 234 (**a**) and p. 216 (**b**). Translated by Monica Chojnacka.*

Document a

O Madonna of the High Seas

Come to me in my dreams, for I must speak with you

Doors of gold and keys of silver

Bring me this dream for my salvation

O, of evil and of good

Beautiful Mother, you must warn me

If there is evil

Sharp needles, rushing water and burning fire

If there is good

A table is set

The church is lighted

And the vines are full [of grapes]

Document b. *Men who suffered from "hysteria" were considered victims of mal di matrone, or "illness of the strong woman." In the region of Abruzzo, such a condition was treated with a chest massage and the following chant:*

I will defeat you, Mother of the Strong Women

You have ninety-nine mouths

Cold like the snow

Sharp like needles

Your mouth like that of a serpent,

Your throat like that of a mare

Do not destroy this servant of God

I point you to the Virgin Mary

In the company of Saint Gregory