

81. Heinrich Krämer and Jacob Sprenger *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1486

During the Late Middle Ages, Christian philosophers and theologians developed a complex learned demonology, in which the most important aspect of witchcraft became a pact with the Devil. This demonology was described at great length by two German Dominican inquisitors, Heinrich Krämer (also called Institorius, the Latin form of his name) and Jacob Sprenger, in the *Malleus Maleficarum* ("The Hammer of [Female] Witches"), which also served as a guide for witch-hunters, advising them how to recognize and question witches. The *Malleus* was translated from Latin into the vernacular and reprinted many times; it taught judges and lawyers over large parts of northern Europe what to expect of witches and what questions to ask of them. Similarities in the answers they received helped convince people that witchcraft was an international conspiracy, and Europeans carried their demonology with them when they established colonies outside of Europe.

As for the first question, why a greater number of witches is found in the fragile feminine sex than among men; it is indeed a fact that it were idle to contradict, since it is accredited by actual experience, apart from the verbal testimony of credible witnesses. And without in any way detracting from a sex in which God has always taken great glory that His might should be spread abroad, let us say that various men have assigned various reasons for this fact, which nevertheless agree in principle. Wherefore it is good, for the admonition of women, to speak of this matter; and it has often been proved by experience that they are eager to hear of it, so long as it is set forth with discretion.

For some learned men propound this reason; that there are three things in nature, the Tongue, an Ecclesiastic, and a Woman, which know no moderation in goodness or vice. . . . Others again have propounded other reasons why there are more superstitious women found than men. And the first is, that they are more credulous; and since the chief aim of the devil is to corrupt faith, therefore he rather attacks them. See *Ecclesiasticus* xix: He that is quick to believe is light-minded, and shall be diminished. The second reason is, that women are naturally more impressionable, and more ready to receive the influence

of a disembodied spirit; and that when they use this quality well they are very good, but when they use it ill they are very evil.

The third reason is that they have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from their fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft. See *Ecclesiasticus* as quoted above: I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than to keep house with a wicked woman. All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman. And to this may be added that, as they are very impressionable, they act accordingly.

There are also others who bring forward yet other reasons, of which preachers should be very careful how they make use. For it is true that in the Old Testament the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators; yet afterwards in the New Testament we find a change of name, as from Eva to Ave¹ (as S. Jerome

¹Ave ("Hail") is the first word the angel bringing God's message to the Virgin Mary says in the Latin translation of the Bible. Because it is the reverse of Eve ("Eva" in Latin), many commentators used this as the beginning of their contrast between good women like Mary and evil women like Eve.

Malleus Maleficarum by Heinrich Krämer and Jacob Sprenger, 1486. Translated by Montague Summers (London: 1928).

says), and the whole sin of Eve taken away by the benediction of Mary. Therefore preachers should always say as much praise of them as possible.

But because in these times this perfidy is more often found in women than in men, as we learn by actual experience, if anyone is curious as to the reason, we may add to what has already been said the following: that since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft.

For as regards intellect, or the understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature from men; a fact which is vouched for by the logic of the authorities, backed by various examples from the Scriptures. Terence says: Women are intellectually like children. And Lactantius (*Institutiones*, III): No woman understood philosophy except Themistocles. And *Proverbs* xi, as it were describing a woman, says: As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. For Cato says: When a woman weeps she weaves snares. And again: When a woman weeps, she labours to deceive a man. And that is shown by Samson's wife, who coaxed him to tell her the riddle he had propounded to the Philistines, and told them the answer, and so deceived him. And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had little faith; for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise, she answered: Of every tree, etc.—lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted, and had little faith in the word of God. And all this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for *Femina* comes from *Fe* and *Minus*, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith.²

²This is a false derivation. *Femina* ("women") actually comes from the Greek word meaning "to produce," not from lacking (*minus*) faith (*fe*).

And this as regards faith is of her very nature; although both by grace and nature faith never failed in the Blessed Virgin, even at the time of Christ's Passion, when it failed in all men.

Therefore a wicked woman is by her nature quicker to waver in her faith, and consequently quicker to abjure the faith, which is the root of witchcraft.

And as to her other mental quality, that is, her natural will; when she hates someone whom she formerly loved, then she seethes with anger and impatience in her whole soul, just as the tides of the sea are always heaving and boiling. . . .

And indeed, just as through the first defect in their intelligence they are more prone to abjure the faith; so through their second defect of inordinate affections and passions they search for, brood over, and inflict various vengeance, either by witchcraft, or by some other means. Wherefore it is no wonder that so great a number of witches exist in this sex.

Women also have weak memories; and it is a natural vice in them not to be disciplined, but to follow their own impulses without any sense of what is due; this is her whole study. . . .

If we inquire, we find that nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women. Troy, which was a prosperous kingdom, was, for the rape of one woman, Helen, destroyed, and many thousands of Greeks slain. The kingdom of the Jews suffered much misfortune and destruction through the accursed Jezebel, and her daughter Athaliah, queen of Judah, who caused her son's sons to be killed, that on their death she might reign herself; yet each of them was slain. The kingdom of the Romans endured much evil through Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, that worst of women. And so with others. Therefore it is no wonder if the world now suffers through the malice of women.

And now let us examine the carnal desires of the body itself, whence has arisen unconscionable harm to human life. . . .

Let us consider another property of hers, the voice. For as she is a liar by nature, so in her speech she stings while she delights us. Wherefore her voice is like the song of the Sirens, who

with their sweet melody entice the passers-by and kill them. . . .

Let us consider also her gait, posture, and habit, in which is vanity of vanities. There is no man in the world who studies so hard to please the good God as even an ordinary woman studies by her vanities to please men.

To conclude. All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See *Proverbs* xxx: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils. More such reasons could be brought forward, but to the understanding it is sufficiently clear that it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft. And in consequence of this, it is better called the heresy of witches than of wizards, since the name is taken from the more powerful party. And blessed be the Highest Who has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime: for since He was willing to be born and to suffer for us, therefore He has granted to men this privilege. . . .

The method by which they profess their sacrifice through an open pact of fidelity to devils varies according to the several practices to which different witches are addicted. And to understand this it first must be noted that there are, as was shown in the First Part of this treatise, three kinds of witches; namely, those who injure but cannot cure; those who cure but, through some strange pact with the devil, cannot injure; and those who both injure and cure. And among those who injure, one class in particular stands out, which can perform every sort of witchcraft and spell, comprehending all that all the others individually can do. Wherefore, if we describe the method of profession in their case, it will suffice also for all the other kinds. And this class is made up of those who, against every instinct of human or animal nature, are in the habit of eating and devouring the children of their own species.

And this is the most powerful class of witches, who practise innumerable other harms also. For they raise hailstorms and hurtful tem-

pests and lightnings; cause sterility in men and animals; offer to devils, or otherwise kill, the children whom they do not devour. But these are only the children who have not been re-born by baptism at the font, for they cannot devour those who have been baptized, nor any without God's permission. They can also, before the eyes of their parents, and when no one is in sight, throw into the water children walking by the water side; they make horses go mad under their riders; they can transport themselves from place to place through the air, either in body or in imagination; they can affect Judges and Magistrates so that they cannot hurt them; they can cause themselves and others to keep silence under torture; they can bring about a great trembling in the hands and horror in the minds of those who would arrest them; they can show to others occult things and certain future events, by the information of devils, though this may sometimes have a natural cause; they can turn the minds of men to inordinate love or hatred; they can at times strike whom they will with lightning, and even kill some men and animals; they can make of no effect the generative desires, and even the power of copulation, cause abortion, kill infants in the mother's womb by a mere exterior touch; they can at times bewitch men and animals with a mere look, without touching them, and cause death; they dedicate their own children to devils; and in short, as has been said, they can cause all the plagues which other witches can only cause in part, that is, when the Justice of God permits such things to be. All these things this most powerful of all classes of witches can do, but they cannot undo them.

But it is common to all of them to practise carnal copulation with devils. . . .

A Succubus devil draws the semen from a wicked man; and if he is that man's own particular devil, and does not wish to make himself an Incubus to a witch, he passes that semen on to the devil deputed to a woman or witch; and this last, under some constellation that favours his purpose that the man or woman so born should be strong in the practice of witchcraft, becomes the Incubus to the witch. . . .

Now the method of profession is twofold. One is a solemn ceremony, like a solemn vow. the other is private, and can be made to the devil at any hour alone. The first method is when witches meet together in conclave on a set day, and the devil appears to them in the assumed body of a man, and urges them to keep faith with him, promising them worldly prosperity and length of life; and they recommend a novice to his acceptance. And the devil asks whether she will abjure the Faith, and forsake the holy Christian religion and the worship of the Anomalous Woman (for so they call the Most Blessed Virgin Mary), and never venerate the Sacraments; and if he finds the novice or

disciple willing, then the devil stretches out his hand, and so does the novice, and she swears with upraised hand to keep that covenant. And when this is done, the devil at once adds that this is not enough; and when the disciple asks what more must be done, the devil demands the following oath of homage to himself: that she give herself to him, body and soul, for ever, and do her utmost to bring others of both sexes into his power. He adds, finally, that she is to make certain unguents from the bones and limbs of children, especially those who have been baptized; by all which means she will be able to fulfil all her wishes with his help.

82. Witch Pamphlets: Strasbourg 1583 and Scotland 1591

Hysteria about witchcraft was fueled by the publication of pamphlets—often called “witch news” or “witch newspapers”—detailing the alleged actions of witches and their punishment. In these pamphlets, popular ideas of witches as those who cause harm mix with more learned ideas about witches making pacts with the Devil. Such pamphlets were usually printed cheaply, with paper covers and poor-quality paper, so they were affordable to most literate people; there was a steady market for them throughout Europe until the late seventeenth century.

A. Strasbourg, 1583

Truthful and Believable Report about 134 Fiends Who Were Burned to Death because of Witchcraft.

. . . On the 29th of August Duke William of Darmstadt had ten women burned, and also a 17-year old boy and a 13-year old girl. They confessed to over 331 points; these should be publicized and read to young Christian people. The Christian reader should pay attention to these short writings, since the injuries are even larger than are described here. Here is enumerated how the monsters [i.e., witches] have been

burned one after the other, and what useless things they have done.

Completely believable reports have come in from Mümpelgarten, that on a mountain a pile of all types of fruit and other strange things has been found, which the witches made themselves; 134 were near it, and, as is their custom, they held a dance on the 21st of August. Among them was a female cow-herd who was supposed to upset the pile, but she cried heartily. She was asked by her associates why she was crying, and answered, “I pity the poor children who will be killed and the innocent blood that will be spilled during the coming

“Witch Pamphlets: Strasbourg 1583 and 1591.”

storm." Nevertheless she knocked over the pile until it was only half as tall [as it had been before], and a horrible, terrible thunderstorm followed immediately, that, God be merciful, brought much irreparable harm, as one can see with one's own eyes. For this 44 women and three men were arrested, and burned on the 24th of October in Mümpelgarten.

Also, on the same hill, the apothecary's wife from Mümpelgarten held a wedding, and gave her own daughter to the devil as his wife. One also found more than 1500 gulden worth of silver objects, and three tables with all kinds of foods, but no bread or salt.¹ All of these things were brought into the city, and the silver pieces given to a goldsmith to look at. He knew the coats of arms and marks on them, and for that reason so many were taken in and burnt.

In the same way 42 monsters were assembled together on the 9th of September between Rottenburg and Tübingen and held a dance. They made such a wretched thunderstorm that the trees were ripped out of the ground along with their roots, doing hundreds of gulden worth of damage to the vineyards and grainfields and other crops. Basically everything was destroyed.

Further, at Reyte, a half mile from Waldkrich in Breisgau, on the 19th of October 38 women were burned to death; among these were four midwives who had done shocking things shortly before. The first, a farmer's wife from the Black Forest, killed 19 children and three expectant mothers. The second, a smith's wife, killed nine children and four expectant mothers. The third, a miller's wife, killed nine children and four mothers. The fourth was a tailor's wife and killed four children and eight mothers. The other twelve women were for the most part rich and well-off women, the wives of inn-keepers, farmers, and millers. They did such uncountable damage to people and animals that it cannot be described here.

¹Food at witches' sabbats was often described as lacking salt, or being in other ways without flavor.

There are three men in the hospital in Freiburg in Breisgau who have been robbed of their reason and sense [by the witches].

In the same way, at Duercken in Alsace on the 28th of October 36 women were burned to death. On the ninth of August near Adlaw in Alsace they held a dance on a mountain, and made such a thunderstorm that brought irreparable damage to houses, vineyards, and other fields, which is to be pitied. Again, on the 29th of October six women were imprisoned in Tuercke, along with a [male] hay-cutter from Colmar who was their witchmaster [*Hexenmeister*]; they will all soon be offered to the fire.

May God will that such terrible things come to an end, and that the accursed Satan no longer watch over and be the doom of the weaker vessels of the female sex! May God will that all people be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to withstand the arch-enemy of the human race and know to guard themselves from his thousand tricks, so that at the Resurrection they will receive a gracious judgment!

B. Scotland, 1591 Within the towne of Trent, in the kingdome of Scotland, there dwelleth one David Seaton, who, being deputie bailiffe in the said towne, had a maid called Geillis Duncane, who used secretlie to absent and lie forth of hir maister's house every other night: This Geillis Duncane rooke in hand to helpe all such as were troubled or grieved with anie kinde of sicknes or infirmitie, and in short space did perfourme many matters most miraculous; which things, for asmuche as she began to do them upon a sodaine, having never done the like before, made her maister and others to be in great admiration, and wondered thereat: by means whereof, the saide David Seaton had his maide in great suspicion that shee did not those things by naturall and lawfull waies, but rather supposed it to bee done by some extraordinarie and unlawfull meanes. Whereupon, her maister began to grow verie inquisitive, and examined hir which way and by what means shee was able to performe matters of so great impor-

tance; whereat shee gave him no aunswere: nevertheless, her maister, to the intent that hee might the better trie and finde out the truth of the same, did with the help of others torment her with the torture of the pilliwinkes¹ upon her fingers, which is a grievous torture; and binding or wrinching her head with a cord or roape, which is a most cruell torment also; yet would shee not confess anie thing; whereupon, they suspecting that shee had beene marked by the Devill (as commonly witches are), made diligent search about her, and found the enemies mark to be in her fore crag, or fore part of her throate; which being found, she confessed that al her doings was done by the wicked allurements and entisements of the Devil, and that shee did them by witchcraft. After this her confession, shee was committed to prison, where shee continued a season, where immediately shee accused these persons following to bee notorious witches, and caused them forthwith to be apprehended, one after another, viz. Agnes Sampson the eldest witch of them all, dwelling in Haddington; Agnes Tompson of Edenbrough; Doctor Fian alias John Cuningham, master of the schoole at Saltpans in Lowthian, of whose life and strange acts you

¹An instrument of torture similar to the thumbscrews later in use.

shal heare more largely in the end of this discourse. These were by the saide Geillis Duncane accused, as also George Motts wife, dwelling in Lowthian; Robert Grierson, skipper; and Jannet Blandilands; with the porter's wife of Seaton: the smith at the Brigg Hallis, with innumerable others in those parts, and dwelling in those bounds aforesaid; of whom some are already executed, the rest remaine in prison to receive the doome of judgment at the Kinges Majesties will and pleasure.

The saide Geillis Duncane also caused Ewphame Mecalrean to bee apprehended, who conspired and performed the death of her godfather, and who used her art upon a gentleman, being one of the Lordes and Justices of the Session, for bearing good will to her daughter. Shee also caused to be apprehended one Barbara Naper, for bewitching to death Archibalde lair Earle of Angus, who languished to death by witchcraft, and yet the same was not suspected; but that hee died of so straunge a disease as the Phisition knewe not how to cure or remedie the same. But of all other the said witches, these two last before recited, were reputed for as civill honest women as anie that dwelled within the citie of Edenbrough, before they were apprehended. Many other besides were taken dwelling in Lieth, who are detayned in prison untill his Majesties further will and pleasure be knowne. . . .

83. Trial of Suzanne Gaudry for Witchcraft, 1652

Some of the best-known witch trials involved dozens or even hundreds of people like the trials reported in the Strasbourg witch pamphlets and in Salem, Massachusetts. Most trials were much smaller and involved only one or two accused. In some of these, demonological ideas were not very important and the focus remained on the witch's supposed evil deeds (*maleficia* in Latin). In others, however, demonological ideas were there from the start, particularly as these became more widely known in the seventeenth century with the repeated publication and translation of witch-hunting guides like the *Malleus*. The following comes from the records of the local secular court at Rieux in France;

the accused, an illiterate older woman, is asked about others who participated in demonic rituals, but this trial apparently did not lead to a mass panic.

At Ronchain, 28 May, 1652. . . Interrogation of Suzanne Gaudry, prisoner at the court of Rieux. Questioned about her age, her place of origin, her mother and father.

—Said that she is named Suzanne Gaudry, daughter of Jean Gaudry and Marguerite Gerné, both natives of Rieux, but that she is from Esgavans, near Odenarde, where her family had taken refuge because of the wars, that she was born the day that they made bonfires for the Peace between France and Spain, without being able otherwise to say her age.

Asked why she had been taken here.

—Answers that it is for the salvation of her soul.

—Says that she was frightened of being taken prisoner for the crime of witchcraft.

Asked for how long she has been in the service of the devil.

—Says that about twenty-five or twenty-six years ago she was his lover, that he called himself Perit-Grignon, that he would wear black breeches, that he gave her the name Magin, that she gave him a pin with which he gave her his mark on the left shoulder, that he had a little flat hat; said also that he had his way with her two or three times only.

Asked how many times she has been at the nocturnal dance.

—Answers that she had been there about a dozen times, having first of all renounced God, Lent and baptism; that the site of the dance was at the little marsh of Rieux, understanding that there were diverse dances. The first time, she did not recognize any-one there, because she was half blind. The other times, she saw and recognized there Noelle and Pasquette Gerné, Noelle the wife of Nochin Quinchou and the other of Paul Doris, the widow Marie Nourette, not having recognized

others because the young people went with the young people and the old people with the old. And that when the dance was large, the table also was accordingly large.

Questioned what was on the table.

—Says that there was neither salt nor napkin, that she does not know what there was because she never ate there. That her lover took her there and back.

Asked if her lover had never given her some powder.

—Answers that he offered her some, but that she never wanted to take any, saying to her that it was to do with what she wanted, that this powder was gray, that her lover told her she would ruin someone but good, and that he would help her, especially that she would ruin Elisabeth Dehan, which she at no time wanted to do, although her lover was pressing her to do it, because this Elisabeth had battered his crops with a club.

Interrogated on how and in what way they danced.

—Says that they dance in an ordinary way, that there was a guitarist and some whistlers who appeared to be men she did not know; which lasted about an hour, and then everyone collapsed from exhaustion.

Inquired what happened after the dance.

—Says that they formed a circle, that there was a king with a long black beard dressed in black, with a red hat, who made everyone do his bidding, and that after the dance he made a . . . [the word is missing in the text], and then everyone disappeared. . . .

Interrogated on how long it has been since she has seen Grignon, her lover.

—Says that it has been three or four days.

Questioned if she has abused the Holy Communion.

—Says no, never, and that she has always swallowed it. Then says that her lover asked her for it several times, but that she did not want to give it to him.

After several admonitions were sent to her, she has signed this

Mark
X
Suzanne Gaudry¹

Second Interrogation, May 29, 1652, in the presence of the afore-mentioned.

This prisoner, being brought back into the chamber, was informed about the facts and the charges and asked if what she declared and confessed yesterday is true.

—Answers that if it is in order to put her in prison it is not true; then after having remained silent said that it is true.

Asked what is her lover's name and what name has he given himself.

—Said that his name is Grinniou and that he calls himself Magnin.

Asked where he found her the first time and what he did to her.

—Answers that it was in her lodgings, that he had a hide, little black breeches, and a little flat hat; that he asked her for a pin, which she gave to him, with which he made his mark on her left shoulder. Said also that at the time she took him oil in a bottle and that she had thoughts of love.

Asked how long she has been in subjugation to the devil.

—Says that it has been about twenty-five or twenty-six years, that her lover also then made her renounce God, Lent, and baptism, that he has known her carnally three or four times, and that he has given her satisfaction. And on the subject of his having asked her if she wasn't afraid of having a baby, says that she did not have that thought.

Asked how many times she found herself at the nocturnal dance and carol and who she recognized there.

—Answers that she was there eleven or twelve times, that she went there on foot with her lover, where the third time she saw and recognized Pasquette and Noelle Gerné, and Marie Homitte, to whom she never spoke, for the reason that they did not speak to each other. And that the sabbat took place at the little meadow. . . .

Interrogated on how long it is since she saw her lover, and if she also did not see Marie Hourie and her daughter Marie at the dance.

—Said that it has been a long time, to wit, just about two years, and that she saw neither Marie Hourie nor her daughter there; then later said, after having asked for some time to think about it, that it has been a good fifteen days or three weeks [since she saw him], having renounced all the devils of hell and the one who misled her.

Asked what occurred at the dance and afterwards.

—Says that right after the dance they put themselves in order and approached the chief figure, who had a long black beard, dressed also in black, with a red hat, at which point they were given some powder, to do with it what they wanted; but that she did not want to take any.

Charged with having taken some and with having used it evilly.

—Says, after having insisted that she did not want to take any, that she took some, and that her lover advised her to do evil with it; but that she did not want to do it.

Asked if, not obeying his orders, she was beaten or threatened by him, and what did she do with this powder.

—Answers that never was she beaten; she invoked the name of the Virgin [and answered] that she threw away the powder that she had, not having wanted to do any evil with it.

Pressed to say what she did with this powder. Did she not fear her lover too much to have thrown it away?

—Says, after having been pressed on this question, that she made the herbs in her garden die at the end of the summer, five to six years ago,

¹Trial of Suzanne Gaudry for Witchcraft," 1612.

¹Gaudry made an X because she did not know how to write.

by means of the powder, which she threw there because she did not know what to do with it.

Asked if the devil did not advise her to steal from Elisabeth Dehan and to do harm to her.

—Said that he advised her to steal from her and promised that he would help her; but urged her not to do harm to her; and that is because she [Elisabeth Dehan] had cut the wood in her [Suzanne Gaudry's] fence and stirred up the seeds of her garden, saying that her lover told her that she would avenge herself by beating her.

Charged once more with having performed some malefice with this powder, pressed to tell the truth.

—Answers that she never made any person or beast die; then later said that she made Philippe Cornié's red horse die, about two or three years ago, by means of the powder, which she placed where he had to pass, in the street close to her home.

Asked why she did that and if she had had any difficulty with him.

—Says that she had had some difficulty with his wife, because her cow had eaten the leeks.

Interrogated on how and in what way they dance in the carol.

—Says that they dance in a circle, holding each others' hands, and each one with her lover at her side, at which she says that they do not speak to each other, or if they speak that she did not hear it, because of her being hard-of-hearing. At which there was a guitarist and a piper, whom she did not know; then later says that it is the devils who play.

After having been admonished to think of her conscience, was returned to prison after having signed this

Mark
X
Suzanne Gaudry

Deliberation of the Court of Mons—June 3, 1652

The under-signed advocates of the Court of Mons have seen these interrogations and answers. They say that the aforementioned Suzanne Gaudry confesses that she is a witch, that she has

given herself to the devil, that she has renounced God, Lent, and baptism, that she has been marked on the shoulder, that she has cohabited with him and that she has been to the dances, confessing only to have cast a spell upon and caused to die a beast of Philippe Cornié, but there is no evidence for this, excepting a prior statement. For this reason, before going further, it will be necessary to become acquainted with, to examine and to probe the mark, and to hear Philippe Cornié, on the death of the horse and on when and in what way he died. . . .

Deliberation of the Court of Mons—June 13, 1652

[The Court] has reviewed the current criminal trial of Suzanne Gaudry, and with it the trial of Antoinette Lescouffre, also a prisoner of the same office.

It appeared [to the Court] that the office should have the places probed where the prisoners say that they have received the mark of the devil², and after that, they must be interrogated and examined seriously on their confessions and denials, this having to be done, in order to regulate all this definitively. . . .

Deliberation of the Court of Mons, June 22, 1652

The trials of Antoinette Lescouffre and Suzanne Gaudry having been described to the under-signed, advocates of the Court of Mons, and [the Court] having been told orally that the peasants taking them to prison had persuaded them to confess in order to avoid imprisonment, and that they would be let go, by virtue of which it could appear that the confessions were not so spontaneous:

They are of the opinion that the office, in its duty, would do well, following the two preced-

²"Devils' marks" were places that supposedly felt no pain and did not bleed. They were probed with pins or needles to see if this was indeed the case, a procedure also called "pricking a witch." Suspected witches were often completely shaved, head and body, in this search for marks.

ing resolutions, to have the places of the marks that they have taught us about probed, and if it is found that these are ordinary marks of the devil, one can proceed to their examination; then next to the first confessions, and if they deny [these], one can proceed to the torture, given that they issue from bewitched relatives, that at all times they have been suspect, that they fled to avoid the crime [that is to say, prosecution for the crime of witchcraft], and that by their confessions they have confirmed [their guilt], notwithstanding that they have wanted to revoke [their confessions] and vacillate. . . .

Third Interrogation, June 27, in the presence of the afore-mentioned.

This prisoner being led into the chamber, she was examined to know if things were not as she had said and confessed at the beginning of her imprisonment.

—Answers no, and that what she has said was done so by force.

Asked if she did not say to Jean Gradé that she would tell his uncle, the mayor, that he had better be careful. . . and that he was a Frank.

—Said that that is not true.

Pressed to say the truth, that otherwise she would be subjected to torture, having pointed out to her that her aunt was burned for this same subject.

—Answers that she is not a witch.

Interrogated as to how long she has been in subjection to the devil, and pressed that she was to renounce the devil and the one who misled her.

—Says that she is not a witch, that she has nothing to do with the devil, thus that she did not want to renounce the devil, saying that he has not misled her, and upon inquisition of having confessed to being present at the carol, she insisted that although she had said that, it is not true, and that she is not a witch.

Charged with having confessed to having made a horse die by means of a powder that the devil had given her.

—Answers that she said it, but because she found herself during the inquisition pressed to

say that she must have done some evil deed; and after several admonitions to tell the truth:

She was placed in the hands of the officer of the *hautes oeuvres* [the officer in charge of torture], throwing herself on her knees, struggling to cry, uttering several exclamations, without being able, nevertheless, to shed a tear. Saying at every moment that she is not a witch.

The Torture

On this same day, being at the place of torture.

This prisoner, before being strapped down, was admonished to maintain herself in her first confessions and to renounce her lover.

—Said that she denies everything she has said, and that she has no lover.

Feeling herself being strapped down, says that she is not a witch, while struggling to cry.

Asked why she fled outside the village of Rieux.

—Says that she cannot say it, that God and the Virgin Mary forbid her to; that she is not a witch. And upon being asked why she confessed to being one, said that she was forced to say it.

Told that she was not forced, that on the contrary she declared herself to be a witch without any threat.

—Says that she confessed it and that she is not a witch, and being a little stretched [on the rack] screams ceaselessly that she is not a witch, invoking the name of Jesus and of Our Lady of Grace, not wanting to say any other thing.

Asked if she did not confess that she had been a witch for twenty-six years.

—Says that she said it, that she retracts it, crying Jésus-Maria, that she is not a witch.

Asked if she did not make Philippe Cornié's horse die, as she confessed.

—Answers no, crying Jésus-Maria, that she is not a witch.

The mark having been probed by the officer, in the presence of Doctor Bouchain, it was adjudged by the aforesaid doctor and officer truly to be the mark of the devil.

Being more tightly stretched upon the torture-rack, urged to maintain her confessions.

—Said that it was true that she is a witch and that she would maintain what she had said. Asked how long she has been in subjugation to the devil.

—Answers that it was twenty years ago that the devil appeared to her, being in her lodgings in the form of a man dressed in a little cowhide and black breeches.

Interrogated as to what her lover was called.

—Says that she said Petit-Grignon, then, being taken down [from the rack] says upon interrogation that she is not a witch and that she can say nothing.

Asked if her lover has had carnal copulation with her, and how many times.

—To that she did not answer anything; then, making believe that she was ill, nor another word could be drawn from her.

As soon as she began to confess, she asked who was alongside of her, touching her, yet none of those present could see anyone there. And it was noticed that as soon as that was said, she no longer wanted to confess anything.

Which is why she was returned to prison.

Verdict

July 9, 1652

In the light of the interrogations, answers and investigations made into the charge against Suzanne Gaudry, coupled with her confessions,

from which it would appear that she has always been ill-reputed for being stained with the crime of witchcraft, and seeing that she took flight and sought refuge in this city of Valenciennes, out of fear of being apprehended by the law for this matter; seeing how her close family were also stained with the same crime, and the perpetrators executed; seeing by her own confessions that she is said to have made a pact with the devil, received the mark from him, which in the report of *sieur Michel de Roux* was judged by the medical doctor of Ronchain and the officer of *hautes oeuvres* by Cambrai, after having proved it, to be not a natural mark but a mark of the devil, to which they have sworn with an oath; and that following this, she had renounced God, Lent, and baptism and had let herself be known carnally by him, in which she received satisfaction. Also, seeing that she is said to have been a part of nocturnal carols and dances. Which are crimes of divine lèse-majesty:

For expiation of which the advice of the under-signed is that the office of Rieux can legitimately condemn the aforesaid Suzanne Gaudry to death, tying her to a gallows, and strangling her to death, then burning her body and burying it there in the environs of the woods.

At Valenciennes, the 9th of July, 1652. To each [member of the Court] 4 *livres*, 16 *sous*. . . . And for the trip of the aforementioned Roux, including an escort of one soldier, 30 *livres*.

84. Woodcuts of Witches' Activities, from F.-M. Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 1610

Books and pamphlets about witchcraft and witch-hunting were often illustrated with woodcuts and engravings depicting witches' evil deeds and demonic rituals. The artists frequently copied one another so that visual materials, like verbal descriptions, helped spread stereotypes. The following come from an Italian guide to witches; the dress of the female and male witches is quite elegant, very different from what women such as Suzanne Gaudry could have afforded.



A. Kissing the Devil's posterior. (By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.)



B. Causing illness. (By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.)

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, why are women more likely to be witches? How do gender and sexual issues figure in their discussions of acts done by witches?
2. How do popular ideas of witches as individuals who do harm blend with Christian notions of witches as devil worshippers in the witch newspapers, trial records, and illustrations? Are there issues on which they lend particular support to each other, or others on which they seem to conflict?
3. Suzanne Gaudry tells her story slightly differently at each interrogation, and she fully retracts her confession at one point. Why does this happen? Why do you think this fails to make her interrogators skeptical about the charges against her?
4. The number and names of accomplices are mentioned prominently in the witch newspapers and trial accounts, and several of the illustrations show witches in groups. Why might this have been viewed as important in reports about witchcraft? What patterns do you see in the type of individuals who are accused or mentioned together?



WOMEN'S RULE AND RIGHTS

As we saw in Chapter 5, the "debate about women" in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance largely focused on women's education and moral character. These concerns continued in the early modern period, but issues involving politics and power were added to the discussion as well. During the sixteenth century, the controversy centered on women's rule, a burning issue because of the number of women ruling in their own right or as advisors to child kings—Isabella in Castile, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor in England, Catherine de' Medici and Anne of Austria in France, Mary Stuart in Scotland, and many noblewomen in the smaller states of