THE WITCH

RONALD
HUTTON

THE WITCH

A HISTORY OF FEAR, FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE PRESENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been over a quarter of a century in the making, and many debts of gratitude have been accumulated in that time. The ideas behind it first began to germinate in the 1980s, as a result partly of my interest in British folklore, intensified by my researches into the history of the ritual year, and partly of my travels abroad, especially among the Polynesian islands and in the then USSR, which enhanced my interest in indigenous religion and magic and in shamanism. In the 1990s I began to test them in the form of guest lectures and seminar papers, at the universities of Oxford, Leicester, Edinburgh and (as it was then) Wales, a process continued in the new century at Edinburgh and Oxford again, Durham, Exeter, Åbo, Harvard, Ohio State, Jerusalem and Manchester. From 1999 onwards I also started to publish them, in a series of works which feature as building blocks in the construction of the arguments of this book, and are referenced as such. Accordingly I owe heartfelt thanks to my hosts at those academic institutions; to the editors of the journals, collected essays and publishing houses that accepted those early writings and the peer reviewers who commented on them; and to the many librarians and archivists who assisted my research with a greater than expected enthusiasm and kindness. To all these there is only space to express a generalized and generic, but still fervent, sense of enduring obligation.

It is otherwise with the final stage of the work, the sustained and concentrated task of completing the research and writing up this book, which was undertaken between 2013 and 2017. That was made possible by the Leverhulme Trust, which funded a three-year project on 'The Figure of the Witch', with Louise Wilson as my assistant and Debora Moretti as my student. We then attracted other students, supported from other sources, onto the team: Victoria Carr, Sheriden Morgan and Tabitha Stanmore, and

Beth Collier joined us as an artist. My experienced colleague from Classics and Ancient History, Genevieve Liveley, provided invaluable work in organizing symposia. The dynamism, harmony and camaraderie of the group were wonderful, and made for a perfect environment in which to work. Louise was an ideal assistant, and checked through the whole manuscript of this book. Individual chapters were read by Jan Bremmer, Mark Williams, Charlotte-Rose Millar and Victoria Carr, and their criticisms were very valuable. It was also read through by Ana Adnan, who has in addition demonstrated yet again her remarkable talent for the notoriously difficult task of providing companionship to a writer.

There are many other kindnesses on the part of professional colleagues which have contributed considerably towards the work and are recorded in the endnotes to it: indeed, a perusal of those is a testimony to the extent to which the writing of history is now a communal and collaborative process. Both personal feuds and struggles between ideological camps have declined notably among academic historians over the past few decades, and both have always been especially lacking in the now large and geographically far-flung field of the professional study of European beliefs in witchcraft and magic. I have certainly never witnessed any myself, let alone engaged in any, during my own participation, and while I cannot claim any of my colleagues in that field as opponents, I can claim very many of them as acquaintances and some as close friends; something which again the perceptive may detect among the endnotes. I would, however, like to end this section by expressing pleasure in my dealings with two particularly grand old men, and pay tribute to a third.

The first is Carlo Ginzburg, whom I had seen and heard speak repeatedly ever since I was a young don at Oxford in 1981, but with whom I eventually became friendly at a conference at Harvard in 2009. I remember with especial delight a walk together across Cambridge (Massachusetts) one hot summer evening, on which he told me how he had first discovered the records that revealed the existence of the *benandanti*. The second is Richard Kieckhefer, with whom – among other activities – I made another summer walk, this time across part of Jerusalem; but it was a much more fraught occasion as we had been dumped by a crooked taxi driver in the wrong district, when the time was coming for me to make an address to the gathering we were both attending. In an exemplary demonstration of mastery over new technology, he produced his phone and used satellite mapping to guide us both on foot, so saving my honour and the programme devised by our hosts. The third is Norman Cohn, with whom my dealings had been very different. We were in each other's company only once, at Cambridge in 1973 when I was an undergraduate there and he gave a guest paper.

In response, I tried to defend Charles Godfrey Leland's nineteenth-century text, *Aradia*, as a viable source for our knowledge of medieval and early modern witchcraft; and he annihilated my argument. He did so with perfect courtesy and geniality, and I subsequently of course came to realize that he had been right, but it was still a bruising experience. The fact that his work has subsequently fared so well in mine, including in the present book, is proof of how little personal encounters may affect scholarly judgements; and of how some of the best lessons may be sharp. With that in mind, I dedicate this volume to all three of these giants, in whose shadows I have grown up.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Definitions

What is a witch? The standard scholarly definition of one was summed up in 1978 by a leading expert in the anthropology of religion, Rodney Needham, as 'someone who causes harm to others by mystical means'. In stating this, he was self-consciously not providing a personal view of the matter, but summing up an established scholarly consensus, which dealt with the witch figure as one of those whom he termed 'primordial characters' of humanity. He added that no more rigorous definition was generally accepted.[1] In all this he was certainly correct, for English-speaking scholars have used the word 'witch' when dealing with such a reputed person in all parts of the world, before Needham's time, and ever since, as shall be seen. When the only historian of the European trials to set them systematically in a global context in recent years, Wolfgang Behringer, undertook his task, he termed witchcraft 'a generic term for all kinds of evil magic and sorcery, as perceived by contemporaries'.[2] Again, in doing so he was self-consciously perpetuating a scholarly norm. That usage has persisted till the present among anthropologists and historians of extra-European peoples: to take one recent example, in 2011 Katherine Luongo prefaced her study of the relationship between witchcraft and the law in early twentieth-century Kenya by defining witchcraft itself 'in the Euro-American sense of the word' as 'magical harm'.[3]

That is, however, only one current usage of the word. In fact, Anglo-American senses of it now take at least four different forms, although the one discussed above seems still to be the most widespread and frequent. The others define the witch figure as any person who uses magic (although those who employ it for beneficial purposes are often popularly distinguished as

'good' or 'white' witches); or as the practitioner of a particular kind of nature-based Pagan religion; or as a symbol of independent female authority and resistance to male domination.[4] All have validity in the present, and to call anybody wrong for using any one of them would be to reveal oneself as bereft of general knowledge and courtesy, as well as scholarship. Indeed, the circulation of all four definitions simultaneously is one of the factors that makes research into witchcraft so exciting and relevant to contemporary concerns, and sometimes so difficult. Although the latter two are distinctively modern senses of the word, rooted in the nineteenth century but flowering in the late twentieth, the others are both many centuries old. None the less, the use of 'witch' to mean a worker of harmful magic has not only been used more commonly and generally, but seems to have been employed by those with a genuine belief in magic and a resort to it, which signifies the great majority of pre-modern people. Its employment to mean any kind of folk magician, drawing on a longer medieval tradition among hostile churchmen of glossing the word 'witch' with Latin terms for a range of workers of apparently beneficial magic, seems to have been a polemical tool to smear all forms of magic-worker by association with the term used for the destructive and hated kind.[5] Hence in this book the mainstream scholarly convention will be followed, and the word used only for an alleged worker of such destructive magic. Such a usage may distress some people who nowadays habitually employ the word for workers of magic in general (and especially of benevolent kinds), but I hope that on reading this book they will understand that my choice has some value, given the book's particular preoccupations.

Already, however, the need for another definition has been begged, and that is of magic itself. Here the one employed in this book is that discussed and justified at length in an earlier work of mine,[6] and used in everything that I have published since that touches on the subject: 'any formalized practices by human beings designed to achieve particular ends by the control, manipulation and direction of supernatural power or of spiritual power concealed within the natural world'. This I distinguish from religion, defined in that earlier work as 'belief in the existence of spiritual beings or forces which are in some measure responsible for the cosmos, and in the need of human beings to retain relationships with them in which they are accorded respect'. When a group of people operates it in the same way, it becomes 'a religion'. It should be clear from these formulations that there can in practice be a considerable overlap between the two, so that, for example, a magical rite can be enacted in order to gain a vision of or interaction with a favourite deity. Magic can indeed constitute a category within religion; but it can also operate independently of it, when humans attempt

to manipulate spiritual powers which they perceive as having nothing directly to do with deities, and which they seek to operate for purely practical benefits.

If the term 'witch' will be reserved here for somebody believed to use magic for harmful purposes, what of the many individuals who have claimed to be able to work magic for the benefit of others, and have been believed by others to have this ability? Most if not all traditional human societies have contained such figures. Some have specialized in just one magical technique, and/or in just one service, such as healing, divining, removing the effects of witchcraft, tracing lost or stolen goods, or inducing one person to love another. Others have been versatile in both their methods and the range of tasks they have been credited with performing. In very simple societies, their services have been called upon by the whole community, and they have been given honours and privileges in proportion. In more complex social groups they have operated more as independent entrepreneurs, offering their skills for hire by clients like other kinds of craftspeople. In England they were commonly known as cunning folk or wise people, though when speaking of traditional societies outside Europe, English-speakers more commonly called them medicine men or women (especially in North America), or witch-doctors (especially in Africa). In English-speaking parts of Africa, a common recent expression for them has been 'traditional healer', but this is doubly misleading, because the practices used by such people are constantly innovative, to the extent of taking on ideas from foreign traditions, and healing is only part of their repertoire. For many, in fact, divination, especially of the causes of misfortune, is more important, and as they are united most obviously by the claim to special powers conferred by invisible beings, it is their alleged possession of magic that is their main distinguishing feature.[7] In this book the term 'service magician' will be used for such figures. 'Cunning' or 'medicine' woman or man, and 'witch-doctor' seem too culturally specific, and were only some of a range of popular names used for such people even in English. The more forensic term 'magical practitioner' has become increasingly popular of late among scholars, but has the drawback that it logically describes anybody who practises magic, for any purpose, including those who do so for private and selfish ends, and witches. The preferred expression of 'service magician' has the virtue of summing up the particular function of these people, which was, and is, to provide magical services for clients. Both witches and service magicians have been thought, among many people, to work with the aid of entities commonly known in English as spirits, and they too need some consideration here. I would define them as superhuman beings, not visible or audible to most people at most times, which are thought to intervene

constructively or destructively in the physical and apparent world. The greatest form of spirits, according to this usage, consists of those who are thought to command entire aspects of the cosmos and of activities within it, and who are generally termed deities, the goddesses and gods. There are, however, many lesser varieties conceived of among traditional peoples, from the servants and messengers of a deity down to the animating forces of particular trees or bodies of water, or of outwardly inanimate and human-made objects such as stoves. To call such beings 'spirits' is a tradition that has recently fallen out of favour with some anthropologists, and scholars influenced by them, as being too Eurocentric and carrying too much baggage. I retain it because it was coined historically by people who very much believed in the entities in question, and this book is mainly concerned with such 'insiders'. Furthermore, the meaning that they gave it, which I have stated above, still has common parlance and so aids rather than complicates understanding of it in a historical context. I also, however, use the word 'spirit' in a different sense, to describe that part of a human being's consciousness which is believed by many peoples to have a life independent of the physical body and to be capable of separating from it. The use of the same term for two different purposes is not necessarily confusing, because, as will be demonstrated, the two sorts of entity thus described can blend at times.

Finally, I retain three descriptive conventions from my last book, in which I explained my choice of them at length.[8] I employ the term 'paganism' to signify the pre-Christian religions of Europe and the Near East, and confine it to an active worship of the deities associated with them. I retain the old-fashioned expression 'the British Isles' to describe the whole complex archipelago of which Britain is the largest island (and Ireland the second largest), using 'British' simply in a geographical and not a political sense, to reflect the main physical component of the group. Finally, and with some persisting personal unease, I use the traditional abbreviations BC and to denote historical epochs, instead of the more religiously neutral, and recently appeared, BCE and CE. In doing so I am, as before, honouring the prevailing convention of my publisher but also attempting a gesture of gallantry suited to the ideal, which I profess, of tolerance and mutual respect between religions.

INTRODUCTION

This book is designed primarily as a contribution towards the understanding of the beliefs concerning witchcraft, and the resulting notorious trials of alleged witches, in early modern Europe. During the past forty-five years, this has become one of the most dynamic, exciting and thickly populated areas of scholarship, on a truly international scale. Among much else, it is a showpiece for the new cultural history, illustrating perfectly the role of the historian in interpreting, explaining and representing to the present world ideas and attitudes that are now officially, and in large measure actually, alien to the modern mind. In the process giant strides have been made in the understanding of the beliefs and legal processes concerned, but a gulf has opened between Anglophone and Continental European approaches to them.

Scholars based in English-speaking lands across the world have drawn upon insights furnished by criminology, psychology, literary criticism, cultural studies and the philosophy of science. They have been especially interested in structures of social and political power and in gender relations. In the process they have produced excellent work, in the British case that of James Sharpe, Stuart Clark, Diane Purkiss, Lyndal Roper, Malcolm Gaskill, Robin Briggs and Julian Goodare being outstanding. They have, however, been much less interested in insights gained from anthropology, folklore and ancient history, although these were especially popular among British historians of the subject in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. In many ways the different foci adopted by their successors have represented a reaction, initially self-conscious, against these earlier approaches, created by changes in academic fashion, which will be explored in the book. One result of the shift has been a relative loss of interest in the popular ideas and traditions that contributed to early modern stereotypes of witchcraft, as opposed

to those of intellectuals. Some Continental scholars, on the other hand, have retained a strong interest in the ancient roots of beliefs concerning witches and the relationship between these and the early modern trials. They have sought to connect the belief systems that underpinned those trials to pre-Christian traditions, especially as expressed in popular culture. These preoccupations have led them to take a much greater interest in classical studies, folklore and extra-European parallels than their English-speaking counterparts: notable exponents of this approach have been Carlo Ginzburg, Éva Pócs, Gustav Henningsen and Wolfgang Behringer. Their approaches have yielded a different set of valuable insights, but have in turn been susceptible to a different sort of criticism, of making use of modern folklore to fill gaps in knowledge of earlier societies, and of applying general models of archaic and worldwide belief systems without sufficient attention to local variation.

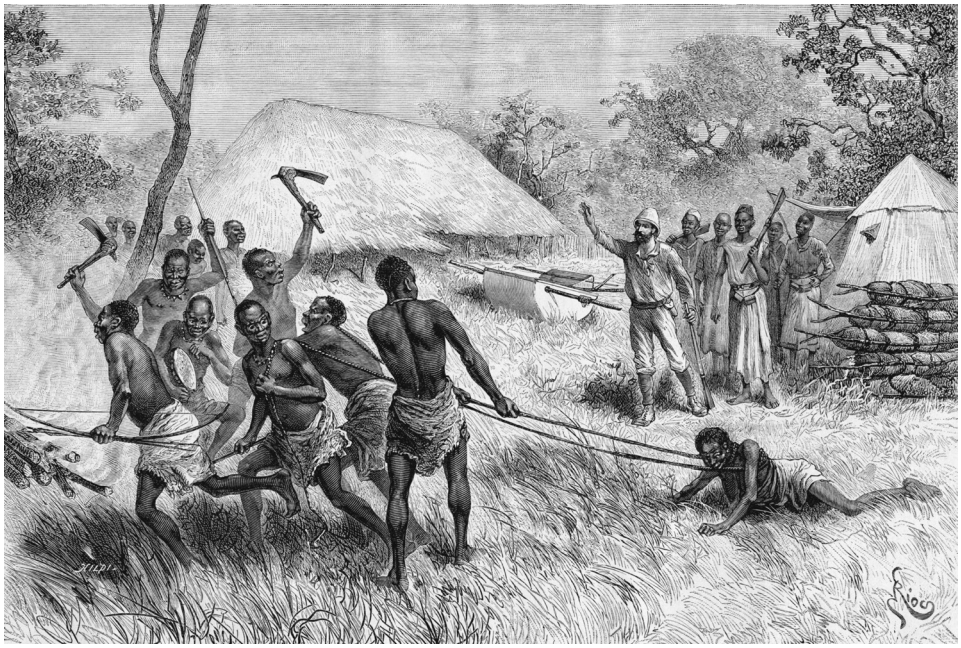
The purpose of this book is to combine both approaches with a view to enhancing the utility of each while taking account of its limitations. It is designed, in particular, to emphasize the importance of different regional belief systems concerning the supernatural and the way in which these support, qualify or negate universal models.

Its central question concerns the relevance of ethnographic comparisons and ancient and earlier medieval ideas, as expressed both in the transmission of written texts and in local popular traditions, to the formation of early modern beliefs in witchcraft and the patterning and nature of the trials that resulted. The book is constructed upon three narrowing circles of perspective, represented by its three different sections. The first of these is concerned with very broad contexts into which the early modern data can be, and have been, placed. It commences with a global comparison, based on ethnographic studies, of attitudes to witchcraft and the treatment of suspected witches in societies across the non-European world. It continues by considering the same phenomena in the societies of ancient Europe and the Near East for which we have records, and – as in the global survey – emphasizes in particular the great variation in them between cultures, and the relevance of most of these varieties of belief and practice to later European history. It concludes with a consideration of the question of whether pan-Eurasian shamanic traditions played a significant part in underpinning European beliefs concerning witchcraft and magic; which inevitably involves looking at different definitions of shamanism.

The second section shows how the insights of the first can be applied to a Continent-wide study of the medieval European background to the early modern witch trials, and the manner in which existing local traditions – and especially popular traditions – contributed to the patterning and nature

of those trials. It commences by looking at learned ceremonial magic, a branch of magical activity that was in its origins and nature quite different from witchcraft, and rarely in practice confused with it. It was, however, often to become officially associated with witchcraft by orthodox medieval Christians, and so to provoke a growing hostile reaction, which was to become one of the sources of the early modern witch-hunts. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a concise history of this kind of magic from its ancient roots, using the wide-angle perspective of the first section, but concentrating on Europe and the Near East and specifically on the development of the late antique tradition of this magic into a medieval form. The next chapter deals with medieval beliefs concerning night-roving spirits and their human allies, another complex of ideas that fed directly into witch trials. The third in this sequence traces the evolution of concepts of witchcraft through the Middle Ages, considering successively the impact of Christianity, the incidence of witch trials in the medieval period, and the origins of the early modern stereotype of the satanic witch. The fourth examines the patterning and nature of the early modern trials themselves with a view to determining how far either was affected by regional popular traditions.

The third section of the book is intended to demonstrate how methods and data drawn from both the first two sections can be applied to a study of them in one particular region of Europe, in this case the island of Britain. It focuses in particular on three specific aspects of British witch trials, which have recently been the subject of interest and discussion, and attempts to make a fresh contribution to an understanding of each. The first is the relationship between witches and fairies in the early modern imagination, and accordingly in British witch trials, which entails an examination of the development and nature of early modern British beliefs concerning fairies. The second considers the incidence of such trials in areas of the British Isles which had Celtic languages and cultures, and asks if this reveals any significant pattern for which an explanation can be suggested using medieval as well as early modern material, and later folklore. Finally, this section engages with the particular phenomenon of the English witch's animal familiar, and successively applies global, Continental European, ancient and medieval perspectives to it, with the intention of increasing an understanding of it.



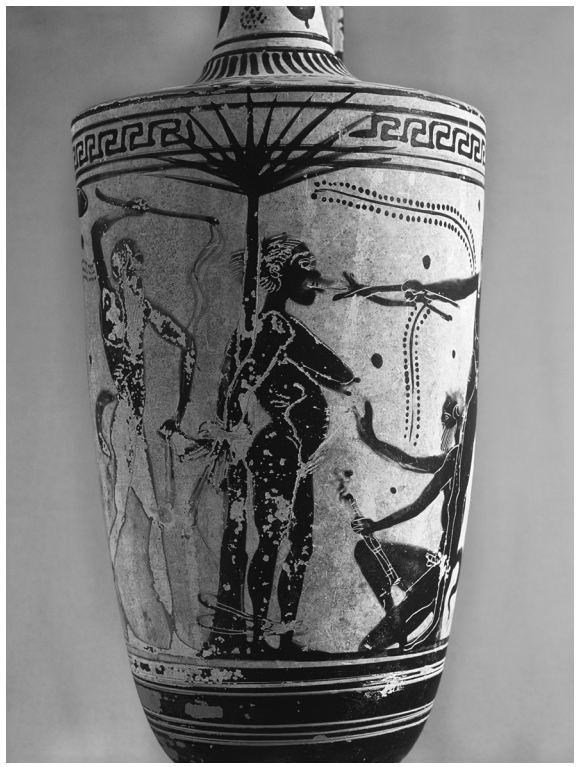
1. An (alleged) nineteenth-century witch-hunt in a native African society in Mozambique. The accused woman is being dragged to her execution, but is about to be saved by a strapping European gentleman bent on eradicating such practices.



2. An African service magician, known to the British as a 'witch-doctor', photographed in the 1920s. The headdress and jewellery would have had symbolic importance. Such figures were prominent both in removing the alleged spells of witches and in detecting the presumed perpetrators.



3. A Roman curse tablet, inscribed in the second or third century AD and buried at the amphitheatre of the northern frontier city of Trier.



4. A Greek vase, of the fifth century BC, painted with a representation of a (or the) child-killing demoness, *lamia*, being tormented by (presumably vengeful) satyrs.



5. A classic Siberian shaman, from the Tungus family of peoples, whose language gave the world the word 'shaman'. He is wearing his ritual costume, with decorations representing servitor spirits, and holding the drum that he used to induce a trance state. Both would have greatly enhanced the drama of the public performance, which was essential to Siberian shamanism.



6. An amulet (actually to ward off the child-killing demoness, Lilith), prescribed in one of the most famous medieval books of ceremonial magic, the Hebrew *Sepher Raziel*, the *Book of (the Angel) Raziel*.

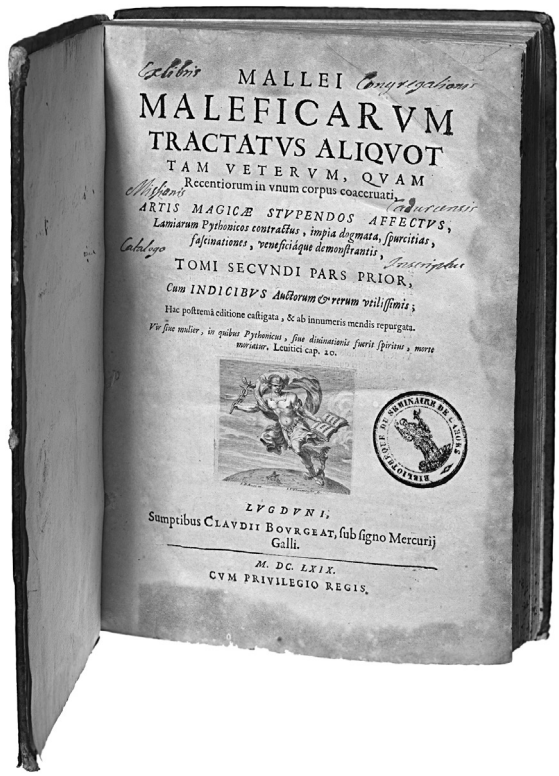


7. The first picture of a witch riding a broomstick, decorating a margin of a manuscript of one of the earlier texts to describe the witches' sabbath (*Le Champion des Dames*, Martin le Franc, published in the 1440s). The real significance of it is that both the witches portrayed ride sticks, presumably anointed with a magical unguent, which was the main means of locomotion to the sabbath in the first accounts of it.



8. A classic early modern representation of the witches' sabbath, produced by David Teniers the Younger.

9. The most famous of all witch-hunting manuals, the *Malleus maleficarum* (*Hammer of Evil-Doers*) by Heinrich Kramer, first published in 1487. Despite its modern fame, it is atypical both in some of its beliefs and in its intense fear of women.

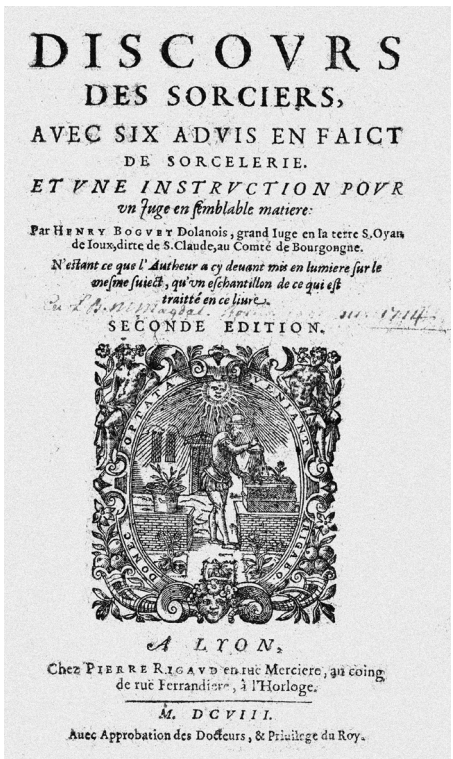


Exlibris MALLEI Congregationis

MALEFICARVM
TRACTATVS ALIQVOT
TAM VETERVM, QVAM
Recentiorum in vnum corpus coaceruati,
ARTIS MAGICÆ STVPENDOS AFFECTVS,
Lamiarum Pythonicos contractus, impia dogmata, spurcitias,
fascinationes, veneficiáque demonstrantis,
TOMI SECVNDI PARS PRIOR,
Cum INDICIBVS Auctorum & rerum vtilissimis;
Hac postremâ editione castigata, & ab innumeris mendis repurgata.
Vivat mulier, in quibus Pythonicus, sive divinationis fuerit spiritus, morte morietur. Leuitici cap. 20.

LVGDVNI,
Sumptibus CLAVDII BOVRGEAT, sub signo Mercurij Galli.

M. DC. LXIX.
CVM PRIVILEGIO REGIS.



DISCOVRS
DES SORCIERS,
AVEC SIX ADVIS EN FAICT
DE SORCELERIE.
ET VNE INSTRVCTION POVR
vn Iuge en semblable matiere:
Par HENRY BOGVET Dolanois, grand Iuge en la terre S. Oyan de Ioux, dicte de S. Claude, au Comté de Bourgongne.
N'estant ce que l'Autheur a cy deuant mis en lumiere sur le mesme suiect, qu'vn eschantillon de ce qui est traitté en ce liure.
SECONDE EDITION.

A LYON,
Chez PIERRE RIGAVD en rue Merciere, au coing de rue Ferrandiere, à l'Horloge.
M. DCVIII.
Auec Approbation des Docteurs, & Priuilege du Roy.

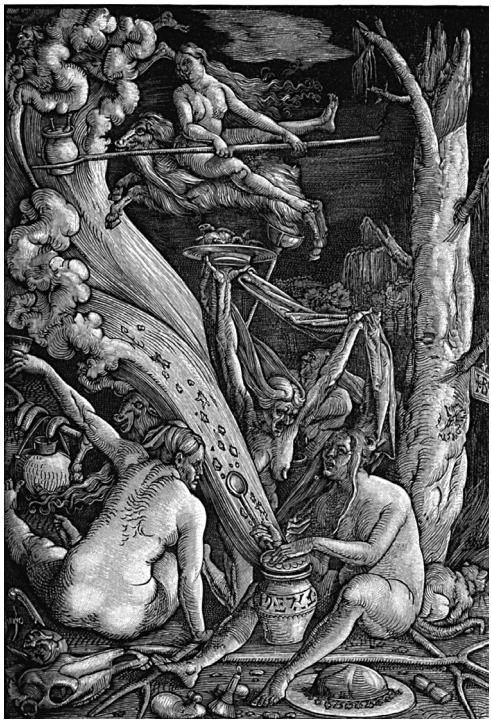
10. A later and more standard manual for witch trials, the *Discours des sorciers* by Henri Boguet, based partly on his own experience as a judge in Franche Comté, the part of Burgundy then ruled by Spain. The first edition is dated 1590.



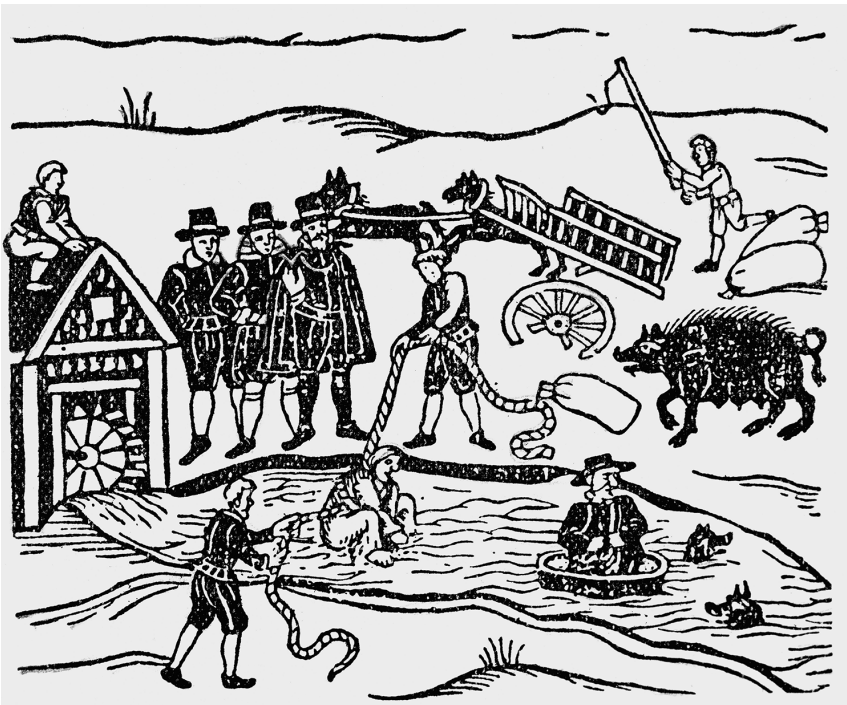
11. A later picture of a typical early modern witch-burning, in this case of Elsa Plainacher at Vienna in 1583.



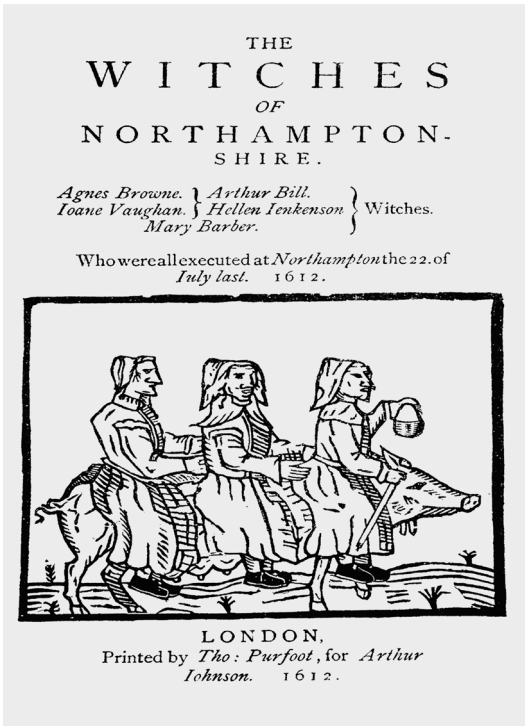
12. A woodcut of two witches brewing a potion, made to illustrate Ulrich Molitor's *Tractatus de lamiis et pythonicis mulieribus* (1487), a work that actually opposed the concept of the witches' sabbath.



13. This famous design by the German artist Hans Baldung Grien, from the early sixteenth century, shows a more animated and dramatic version of the same activity, with a fourth witch riding a demon transformed into a ram and carrying a finished potion.



14. The notorious, if never legally prescribed, test for a witch of 'swimming' her in water to see if it rejected her and she floated. The victim here is Mary Sutton, from the pamphlet describing her trial and published in 1613.


THE
WITCHES
OF
NORTHAMPTON-
SHIRE.

Agnes Browne. *Ioane Vaughan.* *Mary Barber.* } *Arthur Bill.* *Hellen Ienkenson* } Witches.

Who were all executed at *Northampton* the 22. of *July last.* 1612.

LONDON,
Printed by *Tho: Purfoot*, for *Arthur Iohnson.* 1612.

15. This woodcut decorating the pamphlet of 1612 describing the trial and execution of women for witchcraft at Northampton, shows the alleged witches riding a demon disguised as a gigantic pig.



16. Another woodcut from Ulrich Molitor's book shows witches riding the traditional stick to the sabbath, but also transforming into animals themselves.

PART I

DEEP PERSPECTIVES

1

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The significance of a quest for a worldwide context for the early modern European witch trials is that it can determine what, if anything, is specifically European about those trials, and about Europe's images of what a witch was supposed to be. It may answer the question of whether what happened in early modern Europe was something unusual, in a global setting, or simply the most dramatic regional expression of something which human beings have done in most places at most times. To embark on such a course, it is essential to establish from the beginning precisely what is being sought, and what the characteristics of the figure known in English as the witch are supposed to be. The basic usage chosen earlier, of an alleged worker of destructive magic, establishes the first and most important characteristic credited to the people who were prosecuted in the early modern European witch trials: that they represented a direct threat to their fellow humans. In very many cases it was believed that they employed non-physical, and uncanny, means to cause misfortune or injury to other humans, and very often they were accused, in addition or instead, of striking at the religious and moral underpinnings of their society. Four more distinguishing features were embodied in the figure of the witch as defined by those trials and the ideology on which they were based. The first of these four features was that such a person worked to harm neighbours or kin rather than strangers, and so was an internal threat to a community. The second was that the appearance of a witch was not an isolated and unique event. Witches were expected to work within a tradition, and to use techniques and resources handed down within that tradition, acquiring them by inheritance, initiation or the spontaneous manifestation of the particular powers to which they were connected. The third component of the European stereotype of the witch was that such a person was accorded

general social hostility, of a very strong kind. The magical techniques allegedly employed by witches were never officially regarded as a legitimate means of pursuing feuds or rivalries. They were always treated with public, and usually with spontaneous, anger and horror, and often associated with a general hatred of humanity and society and with an alliance made by the witch with malignant superhuman powers loose in the cosmos: in the European case, famously, by a pact with the Christian Devil. Finally, it was generally agreed that witches could and should be resisted, most commonly by forcing or persuading them to lift their curses; or by making a direct physical attack on them to kill or wound them; or by prosecuting them at law, with a view to breaking their power by a punishment which could extend to having them legally put to death.

Few, if any, experts in the early modern European witch trials will find those five definitive components of the witch figure unacceptable; indeed, if there is anything problematic about them it is likely to be their banality. None the less, they do provide a more precise checklist of characteristics than has been employed hitherto, suitable for a comparative study covering the planet. The result of such a study is in one sense a foregone conclusion, for scholars have spoken for centuries of finding very similar figures to that of the European witch in all parts of the world, and indeed they have employed the English word 'witch' for those figures. Again, however, it may be suggested that more care can be taken in making the necessary comparisons, and a larger sample of material can be employed for them. Moreover, it is by no means certain that most specialists in the study of the European trials would consider such an enterprise to have any value. The story of the relationship between experts in those trials, and those in what has been called witchcraft in other parts of the world is already a long and sometimes fraught one, with a large component of estrangement. That story must be considered before this latest contribution to it can be attempted.

Historians, Anthropologists and Witchcraft: A Friendship Gone Wrong?[1]

In the 1960s a global approach to the study of the witch figure was virtually the norm among British scholars, largely because most of the research published on witchcraft during the mid-twentieth century was by anthropologists working in extra-European societies, above all in sub-Saharan Africa. As British experts in European witch trials emerged at the end of the decade, they not only usually employed anthropological data to interpret European evidence, but acknowledged that their interest in the subject had been inspired partly by the reports coming from overseas.[2] Anthropologists

reciprocated with gestures of partnership, so that their conferences and collections of essays on witchcraft routinely included papers from experts in European history.[3] When Rodney Needham wrote his study of the witch as a human archetype in 1978, he used data from both African and European sources, declaring that a comparative approach was essential to the exercise.[4] By then, however, this view was already on the wane. It had not convinced American historians, who claimed that the 'primitive' social groups of Africa bore little resemblance to the more complex cultures and societies of early modern Europe.[5] Such views also affected some American anthropologists, who were already warning before the end of the 1960s that the term 'witchcraft' was being used as a label for phenomena that differed radically between societies.[6] Even in Britain, at the height of collaboration between history and anthropology in the field, prominent members of both disciplines urged that such exchanges should be carried on with caution.[7]

What really doomed them was a shift within anthropology itself, as the dissolution of the European colonial empires produced a reaction against the traditional framework of the discipline, now perceived as a handmaiden to imperialism. This reaction embodied hostility both to the imposition of European terms and concepts on studies of other societies and the offering of comparisons between those societies which the imposition of the terms concerned made easier. Fashion was turning to close analyses of particular communities, as unique entities, carried on as much within their own linguistic and mental models as possible (which of course also gave added value and power to the individual scholars who claimed a privileged knowledge of those communities). This self-consciously 'new anthropology' was reaching British universities by the early 1970s.[8] In 1975 an American exponent of it, Hildred Geertz, published stringent criticisms of the British historian who had emerged as the most distinguished practitioner of the application of anthropological concepts to his own nation's past, Keith Thomas. She accused him of having adopted categories constructed by the British from the eighteenth century onwards, as cultural weapons to be deployed against other peoples; and questioned in general whether cultural particulars could be formed into general concepts and compared across time periods and continents. She did not actually question the value of scholarly categories in themselves, only arguing for more care and criticism in the use of them; but Thomas made the debate an occasion to suggest that Western historians now needed to back off from comparisons with extra-European cultures and concentrate on their own societies, for which their terminology was native and so well suited.[9]

In doing so, he explicitly recognized the change in anthropology, acknowledging that its practitioners had become wary of using Western

concepts to understand non-Western cultures and preferred to employ those of the people whom they were studying. He accepted that they now desired to reconstruct different cultural systems in their entirety rather than employing terms unthinkingly used by historians, such as 'witchcraft', 'belief' and 'magic', to make comparisons between them. In case any of his compatriots missed the point, it was being hammered home between 1973 and 1976 by an anthropologist based in Thomas's university, Oxford, called Malcolm Crick, and with specific application to witchcraft. Crick called for the concept of the witch to be 'dissolved into a larger framework of reference', by relating the figures whom English-speakers called witches to others who embodied uncanny power of different kinds within a given society. He also asserted that conceptual categories varied so much between cultures that 'witchcraft' could not be treated as a general topic at all, and warned historians off ethnographic material, proclaiming (without actually demonstrating) that 'English witchcraft is *not* like the phenomena so labelled in other cultures'.[10] Historians of European witchcraft generally internalized this message, and the ever-increasing number of studies of early modern witch beliefs and trials which appeared from the late 1970s onwards limited themselves to cross-cultural studies within the European world, sometimes extended to European colonists overseas. When a very occasional scholar did try to compare European and African material, it was never somebody prominent in witchcraft studies or one who continued to publish on them.[11]

In 1989 a review article uncompromisingly entitled 'History without Anthropology' concluded that anthropologists had very effectively deterred historians from taking any further interest in their work with reference to the subject of witchcraft.[12] The irony of this was that during the same period the practitioners of anthropology themselves were starting to change their minds again. In an important sense they had never abandoned the comparative approach and the Western terminology that many of them had criticized in the 1970s, because even those who described the magical practices of non-European peoples using native terms still put English expressions such as 'witchcraft' and 'magic' into their titles. For the most part they continued to put them into their introductions as well, and some made such words the framework within which the local study was introduced: they retained their value as an international semantic currency for English-speakers. By the 1990s some of the most distinguished anthropologists were starting to become more actively interested in a new collaboration between their discipline and historians of Europe. One described the fixation of her discipline on holistic fieldwork in specific small-scale societies using participant observation as an 'academic narrowness', which had cut it off from the history of religion.[13] Another used both modern African and

early modern European data to compare attitudes to witchcraft and leprosy as strategies of rejection, and to consider the phenomenon of witch-hunting.[14] A third suggested that early modern images of witchcraft were closely related to African beliefs. In doing so she explicitly attacked the earlier assertions that the term 'witchcraft' lacked any validity in cross-cultural comparisons: indeed, she restated such comparisons as a duty of her discipline.[15] In 1995 a British sociologist, Andrew Sanders, made a parallel challenge to those assertions, and published a worldwide survey of occurrences of the witch figure, using both historic European and modern ethnographic records.[16] The most significant development in this regard was among Africanists, who called for a renewed emphasis on cross-cultural comparison in witchcraft studies. It was propelled by one of the most distressing and – to many – surprising characteristics of post-colonial states in the continent, an intensification of fear of witchcraft and attacks on suspected witches as one response to the process of modernization after independence: it will be discussed below. Anthropologists who studied this phenomenon found themselves needing to dissuade fellow Westerners from attributing the persistence of a belief in witchcraft in Africa to any inherent disposition to 'superstition' or 'backwardness' on the part of its peoples. Such a strategy called for a new emphasis on the prevalence of such beliefs across the globe, including in the relatively recent European past, and a return to a comparative method; and direct calls for that were being made by prominent Africanists by the mid-1990s.[17] Typical of them was an influential study of Cameroon by Peter Geschiere, who concluded that 'these notions, now translated throughout Africa as "witchcraft", reflect a struggle with problems common to all human societies'. He invited anthropologists to study research into the European trials, and termed their recent neglect of this 'even more disconcerting' than the loss of interest by historians of Europe in African parallels. Rounding upon experts in early modern Europe who had claimed that modern African societies were totally dissimilar to those which were their own focus of study, he argued that, especially with its ruling elites of colonial European administrators and settlers, early twentieth-century Africa had been as socially and culturally complex as sixteenth-century Europe.[18] By 2001 the editors of a major collection of essays on African witchcraft could introduce it by warning scholars not to restrict the study of witch beliefs to 'any one region of the world or to any one historical period'.[19] In urban centres of modern Africa, a multicultural perspective had become essential in any case: the image of witchcraft in the Soweto suburb of Johannesburg, for example, was by the 1990s a blend of ideas drawn from different native groups with some brought by Dutch and English settlers and based on the early modern

European stereotype.[20] A rapprochement between historians and anthropologists over the issue was, however, an extremely difficult enterprise.

Despite the call made by some for a return of the comparative method, few Africanists in practice paid attention to studies of the witch figure anywhere else in the world, or in time. Those who did attempt to cite early modern European material often seemed unaware of anything published on it after the early 1970s: the burgeoning of research that had occurred since, internationally, and taking ever more sophisticated forms, had passed them by completely. As for historians of witchcraft, almost all of them had stopped reading anthropology on the assumption that they had been discouraged from doing so by its practitioners. To resume an engagement with it after more than two decades would require a large amount of additional work of unproven value, when they were already achieving apparently impressive results as a consequence of relationships with a range of other disciplines. It was quite plain by the 1990s why Africanists concerned with witchcraft might profit from a fresh engagement with European comparisons, but not even the anthropologists themselves were making a clear argument for why historians of Europe would benefit from the transaction. A concealed irony in the situation was that the newly developed cultural history of the 1980s and 1990s, which had a profound influence upon the study of European witchcraft, was itself ultimately derived partly from anthropology; but reached most historians at one or two removes from it.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, historians have largely ignored the opportunity for a new dialogue, and anthropologists have largely ceased to offer it. In the early 2000s the present author published two essays that drew attention to it and suggested specific advantages to experts in early modern Europe from such a comparative exercise.[21] These have, however, been more cited than heeded. In 2004 one of the leading experts in German witch trials, Wolfgang Behringer, produced a heavyweight volume entitled *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*.[22] It was in practice a detailed and impressive history of the European witch-hunts bracketed between two swift surveys of beliefs and prosecutions concerning witchcraft across the rest of the world. The first of these made the point that what happened in Europe was part of a global pattern, and the second of them proved that a continuation of witch-hunting was not merely a problem in contemporary Africa but in many other parts of the planet. This was a precise and fruitful application of the comparative method; but the present book seems to be the first to follow up on its achievement. The only general effect of the growing awareness of a new potential for collaboration between anthropologists and historians of witchcraft has been an apparent disappearance on both sides of assertions that such collaboration

is itself inherently undesirable; which is some kind of progress. A few anthropologists have continued to make use of European material, but historians of Europe usually fail to repay the compliment.[23] A refinement of methodology is needed if any advance is indeed to be made on earlier attempts to collaborate.

Andrew Sanders was interested chiefly in the relationship between the witch figure and the pursuit of power through competitive social relationships in different parts of the world. As a sociologist, he was concerned more with the implications and consequences of a belief in witchcraft for human societies that held one than with the nature of that belief itself. Wolfgang Behringer's aim was to show that in most parts of the world human beings have been inclined to attribute seemingly uncanny misfortune to evil magic worked by their fellows, and to illustrate the lethal consequences which such an inclination has often produced (and continues to produce). My own essays attempted to establish a coherent global model for the witch figure, with sustained cross-cultural characteristics, and proposed one based on the five characteristics delineated above as fundamental for the European concept of that figure. What will be attempted now is a more systematic application of the cross-cultural method, across the planet, checking off those characteristics one by one. It utilizes studies of beliefs concerning witches in a total of three hundred extra-European societies made between 1890 and 2013: 170 in sub-Saharan Africa; six in North Africa and the Middle East; thirty-seven in South Asia from India to China and Indonesia; thirty-nine in Australia, Polynesia and Melanesia, including New Guinea; forty-one in North America (including Greenland and the Caribbean); and seven in South America.[24] The predominance of Africa in the sample reflects the amount of work that has been done there by anthropologists but also the resources available to a researcher based in the United Kingdom as so many of these anthropologists were British.[25] There is enough data from the rest of the world, however, to provide comparison with the African material, and that exercise may now be undertaken point by point with respect to the characteristics of a European witch listed above. The societies studied are those on which anthropology published in English has chosen or been able to concentrate, being generally relatively simple and small, and consisting of tribal units. There is a dearth of information available from larger, state-based, social and political structures such as those of China and Japan, which to some extent will be made up by a sustained examination of ancient states in Europe and the Near and Middle East in the next chapter. None the less, the sample from smaller ethnic units, across the world, is large enough for a comparative exercise to promise some general insights.

Characteristic One: A Witch Causes Harm by Uncanny Means

There is little doubt that in every inhabited continent of the world, the majority of recorded human societies have believed in, and feared, an ability by some individuals to cause misfortune and injury to others by non-physical and uncanny ('magical') means: this has been the single most striking lesson of anthropological fieldwork and the writing of extra-European history. One prominent historian of early modern Europe, Robin Briggs, has in fact proposed that a fear of witchcraft might be inherent in humanity: 'a psychic potential we cannot help carrying around within ourselves as part of our long-term inheritance'.[26] Speaking from anthropology, Peter Geschiere proposed that 'notions, now translated throughout Africa as "witchcraft", reflect a struggle with problems common to all human societies'.[27] What is valuable about these insights is that they testify to the general truth that human beings traditionally have great trouble in coping with the concept of random chance. People tend on the whole to want to assign occurrences of remarkable good or bad luck to agency, either human or superhuman. It is important to emphasize, however, that malevolent humans have been only one kind of agent to whom such causation has been attributed: the others include deities, non-human spirits that inhabit the terrestrial world, or the spirits of dead human ancestors. All of these, if offended by the actions of individual people, or if inherently hostile to the human race, could inflict death, sickness or other serious misfortunes. Wherever they appear, these alternative beliefs either limit or exclude a tendency to attribute suffering to witchcraft.

In addition, many societies have believed that certain humans have the power to blight others without intention to do so, and often without knowledge of having done so. This is achieved by unwittingly investing a form of words or a look with destructive power: in the case of malign sight, this trait has become generally known to English-speakers as 'the evil eye'. Belief in it tends to have a dampening effect on a fear of witches wherever it is found, which is mainly in most of the Middle East and North Africa, from Morocco to Iran, with outliers in parts of Europe and India. This is because it is thought to be part of the possessing person's organic constitution. As such, it is wholly compatible with witchcraft if the person concerned triggers it consciously and deliberately to do harm, as some are thought to do across its range. A majority of those who embody this malign power, however, are believed to do so wholly innately and involuntarily, so that they cannot in justice be held personally responsible for its effects. Protection and remedies for it mainly take the form of counter-magic, including the wearing of amulets, charms and talismans, the reciting of prayers and incantations, the

making of sacrifices and pilgrimages and carrying out of exorcisms, and the avoidance or placation of the person who is locally presumed to possess it. Across the range in which it is an important component of belief, it is used to explain precisely the sort of uncanny misfortunes that are blamed elsewhere on witchcraft.[28]

Alternative explanations for misfortune that rule out or marginalize witchcraft are found across most of the world. Before modern times, the largest witch-free area on the planet was probably Siberia, which spans a third of the northern hemisphere; a consideration of it will play a major part in Chapter Three of this book. Elsewhere in the world, societies that do not believe in witchcraft, or do not believe that it should be taken very seriously, are seldom found in compact concentrations but scattered between peoples who fear witches intensely. Although rarer than groups with a significant fear of witchcraft, they are present in most continents: the Andaman Islanders of the Indian Ocean, the Korongo of the Sudan, the Tallensi of northern Ghana, the Gurage of Ethiopia, the Mbuti of the Congo basin, the Fijians of the Pacific, the hill tribes of Uttar Pradesh, the Slave and Sekani Indians of north-west Canada, and the Ngaing, Mae Enga, Manus and Daribi of New Guinea are all examples.[29] The Ndembu, in Zambia, attributed misfortune to angry ancestral spirits, but the latter were seen as aroused by malevolent humans, in effect making the spirits the agents of witches. However, it was the spirits who were propitiated, by ritual, and so the witches rendered harmless and ignored.[30]

Among peoples who do have a concept of witchcraft, the intensity with which it is feared can vary greatly, even within the same region or state. Among the ethnic groups contained within the modern state of Cameroon are the Banyang, the Bamileke and the Bakweri. The first of those believed in witches but very rarely accused anybody of being one. Those afflicted by hostile magic were believed to have brought their misfortune on themselves.[31] The second took witchcraft seriously and made great efforts to detect its practitioners. The latter, however, were not held responsible for their actions, and were thought to lose their powers automatically on being publically exposed.[32] The third people feared witchcraft intensely, hunted down its presumed operators, and believed that they remained dangerous and malevolent even when identified, so that they needed to be punished directly in proportion to the harm they were thought to have caused.[33] In neighbouring Nigeria, a clutch of tribal societies shared very similar theoretical beliefs about the existence of witches, but in practice the Ekoi dreaded them, the Ibibio and Ijo feared them moderately, and the Ibo and Yakö took little notice of them.[34] Likewise, a survey made in 1985 of a sample of well-studied peoples in the Melanesian archipelago found that

two of them did not believe that humans used malevolent magic; five thought it a legitimate monopoly of hereditary leaders and used by them productively in order to keep order and conduct warfare; twenty-three believed that such leaders could use it but it was not respectable of them to do so; five conceived of it as a covert weapon of the oppressed, employed against unpopular leaders; eleven identified it as a means by which ordinary members of the community secretly harmed each other, but generally managed in practice to contain the tensions provoked by fears of it; and six had the same belief but were badly disrupted by the suspicions that resulted.[35] Among a single people, the intensity with which witchcraft was feared could vary according to the kind of settlement in which people lived. The Maya of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico all hated witches equally in theory during the early twentieth century, but those in villages were rarely inclined to suspect anybody of being one, while the tension was much greater in towns: in the district capital of Dzitas during the 1930s, 10 per cent of the adult population were thought to have been either perpetrators or victims of witchcraft.[36]

The identification of a belief in witchcraft among extra-European peoples, by a European scholar, may often involve the extraction of one element from a range of native concepts of magic and of kinds of magician. The Wimbum of north-west Cameroon used three terms for occult knowledge: *bfiu*, the harmless employment of arcane powers for self-protection; *brii*, occult power malevolently used, but sometimes merely as a prank; and *tfu*, an inborn magical force operated under cover of darkness which could be used for both good and evil ends. Witchcraft in the European sense could embrace some forms of both *brii* and *tfu*, but the Wimbum also believed in a special strain of the latter, *tfu yibi*, which consisted of killing other humans magically in order to eat their flesh, and those who deployed that would correspond precisely to the early modern European witch figure.[37] The Nalumin of the mountains of south-eastern New Guinea distinguished *biis* from *yakop*. The former were people, mostly female, who killed others in uncanny ways, using invisible weapons while roaming in spirit-body, in order to eat the flesh of their victims in communal feasts. The latter was a technique, used mainly by women, which consisted of killing by burying personal leavings of the intended victim – food scraps, nail clippings and hair – with spells. The two methods, however, were believed to be combined at times by the same individual, and anybody thought to use either would correspond to the European figure of the witch; which is, indeed, how the anthropologist making the study interpreted them.[38] A final example of such equivalence is supplied by the Tlaxcala province of central Mexico, where the rural natives have feared *tetlachiwike*,

people of both sexes who harmed by a touch or glance (the local equivalent to the evil eye or touch); *tlawelpochime*, people, mostly women, who sucked the blood of infants and so killed them, and caused harm to humans and their crops or livestock; *tetzitazcs*, men who could bring rain or hail; *tetlachihuics*, magicians who were believed to have powers which could be used for good or harm; and the *nahuatl*, a person of either sex who changed into animal shape to work harm or play tricks. The *tetlachihuics* were generally respected, and much employed for healing and other magical services, though sometimes murdered if they were thought to have used their abilities to kill: here as elsewhere in this book, the term 'murder' is used in its precise legal sense of unofficial and unsanctioned homicide. The shape-shifting *nahuatl* was believed to employ her or his powers of transformation to steal or rape as well as to inflict practical jokes, but did not inspire the fear and hatred that was accorded the child-murdering *tlawelpochime*. It was the latter to which Spanish-speaking natives gave the term *bruja* or *brujo*, meaning 'witch', and was regarded as inherently evil and associated with the Christian Devil.[39] Wim van Binsbergen, commenting on the complexities of belief in magic among Africans in 2001, could still conclude with regard to witchcraft that 'the amazing point is not so much variation across the African continent, but convergence'.[40] Adam Ashforth, considering attitudes to destructive magic and its alleged perpetrators in the modern Soweto township near Johannesburg, decided that he had to use the terms 'witchcraft' and 'witch' because 'there is no avoiding them'.[41]

Both conclusions are reproduced here, on the global scale. There are many cases of extra-European societies that have manifested, at least at the time of study, an endemic dread of witchcraft more intense than any recorded in Europe. The inhabitants of Dobu, an island group near the coast of New Guinea, had no concept of misfortune, blaming all mishaps on witches. Dobuans never went anywhere alone for fear of becoming more vulnerable to them.[42] In the 1980s, among a small New Guinea tribe, the Gebusi, about 60 per cent of middle-aged men had killed at least one person – mostly within their own community – in revenge for presumed bewitchment.[43] The most notable scholar of the Tlingit of Alaska has declared that witchcraft dominated their lives, making the simplest words or action vulnerable to misinterpretation as a manifestation of it.[44] It was calculated that among the Kwahu of Ghana, 92 per cent of the population became at one point in their lives an accuser, presumed victim or suspected of witchcraft.[45] 'Practically everyone' in the Cochiti tribe of New Mexico was under suspicion at some time or another, and the elders had to winnow the accusations and decide which affected the good of the community and should be followed up officially.[46] In Burma in the 1970s, every village was presumed

to harbour at least one woman who worked magic secretly to cause illness or death among her neighbours from personal spite.[47] Among some peoples found across Africa and Melanesia, and Australia's Northern Territory, all deaths save those caused by murder or suicide, and most illnesses, were attributed to bewitchment.[48] Having said all this, however, most peoples who have believed in the witch figure seem to have regarded the risk factor, for most of the time, in the manner in which a modern car-driver treats the danger of a road accident.

There seems to be no functional explanation to account for the tendency of some human groups to believe in the existence of witches and some not to do so; those in both categories generally share similar societies, economies and cosmologies, and live in close proximity.[49] Likewise, there is no apparent general explanation for the varying intensity of fear of witchcraft between different peoples. In the 1960s, P.T.W. Baxter, studying those of East Africa, noted that wandering pastoralists in that region rarely accused each other of using bewitchment, even when they possessed a well-developed belief that people could do so.[50] This pattern does seem to hold true for nomads across the globe, perhaps because their mobile lifestyle and relatively small social units tend to reduce the potential for the personal conflicts that generate suspicions of witchcraft. On the other hand, not all static and deeply rooted agrarian societies have believed in witches, and not all of those that have done have feared them deeply. Moreover, even those that have taken witchcraft seriously have not done so with the same intensity at all times. Instead, witch-hunting, all over the world, has tended since records began to burgeon dramatically at particular times and die away or fall to a low level at others.

This phenomenon was confronted head-on in 2013 by the Dutch anthropologist Niek Koning, who developed a general theory of witchcraft beliefs which covered every time and place, uniting history and anthropology in a way recommended by others in his discipline since the 1990s. He suggested that small foraging bands tend to cope well with the social consequences of deceit and envy, but the adoption of agriculture much exacerbates them, leading to the development of witch-hunts. State formation, civilization and economic development abate these, and replace them with more collectivist forms of social paranoia; though demographic and economic crises can still rekindle a fear of witchcraft, as in early modern Europe.[51]

This broad-sweep approach is courageous and commendable, and does incorporate the truth that economic and social stress often result in intensified fear of witchcraft in societies that already possess it, as was the case at times in early modern Europe. Its determinism, however, fails to take account of too many exceptions to its rules: that small foraging bands like those of native Australia can have a pronounced belief in witchcraft;

that some agrarian societies lack one; that highly developed urban civilizations such as those of ancient Rome and early modern Europe could hold big witch-hunts; and that the early modern European trials do not map simply and straightforwardly onto areas of most pronounced demographic and economic pressure, and indeed they commenced at a time of low population and relatively high incomes. All groups that do believe in witchcraft suspect certain kinds of person as being more likely to practise it than others, but the characteristics attributed to natural suspects differ greatly.

One major variable is age. In many societies, across the globe, accusations are directed mainly against the elderly, but in others they focus on the young and in many more, age is not a determining factor. It is normal for suspects to have passed puberty, because children are much more rarely involved in the social tensions between adults that generate accusations, and much less credited with power of any kind. None the less, among the Bangwa of Cameroon, children were frequently accused, and even babies could be thought culpable; and, as will be seen, there were and are other societies that associate witchcraft with the young.[52]

Gender is another worldwide variable, witches being, at different places within each continent, viewed as essentially female, or essentially male, or of both sexes in different proportions and according to different roles. It is fairly common, also, for societies to manifest a discrepancy between the gender of their stereotypical witch and that of the people whom they actually accuse. Those making the accusations are, likewise, normally female or male or both, according to the conventions of the culture to which they belong. The same variety attaches to the social status and wealth of accusers and accused, witchcraft being viewed as a weapon employed by poor against rich, rich against poor, or between equals or competitors, or by any member of a community, according to the society concerned. There has been a common tendency across the world for suspicions to map onto economic and social tensions, so that quarrelsome or boastful individuals, or parvenus, within societies in which affability and modesty are regarded as prime virtues and economic mobility is limited, have often been considered either as obvious targets for witchcraft or as obvious practitioners of it; but several other categories of behaviour or person fall into both roles.

While being so various in such details, local concepts of the witch figure are also strongly rooted, and often seemingly impervious to the fact that neighbouring peoples could have very different ideas. There are three island groups off the north-east coast of New Guinea, close to and in regular communication with each other: Dobu, Trobriand and Fergusson. Their inhabitants are similar enough in physical, social and cultural respects to make them virtually one people. All fear witchcraft, but to Dobuans witches

can be of either sex, though women are regarded as more dangerous; to Trobrianders they are mostly male; and to Fergussonians they are essentially female, and especially dangerous. An obvious question to be asked is whether the people in one of these societies find anything odd about the discrepancy between their beliefs and those of the other two. The answer seems to be completely negative, so that when Dobuans visit Trobriand, they are not afraid of the local women as witches but start to fear the men more, while the women of Fergusson frighten them even more than those at home.[53]

Characteristic Two: A Witch is an Internal Threat to a Community

As suggested above, early modern Europeans believed that witches attacked neighbours or kin, or, exceptionally, they attacked elite figures within their own political unit such as an aristocrat or a king. Witches were therefore not imagined to be interested in harming strangers. This distinguishes witchcraft from the use of harmful magic as a weapon in conflicts between communities. Much feuding between traditional human societies, whether organized as tribes, clans or villages, has been believed by members to include a magical element, and such societies are disposed to blame misfortunes on the activities of magicians among their collective enemies. This belief is found in many parts of the world, but especially in three: the Amazon basin, Siberia, and Australia and Melanesia. It is especially prevalent in the last of these regions, although even there it is found interspersed with societies in which the threat of destructive magic is perceived to be mostly or entirely internal, as mentioned above.[54]

Despite this broad dispersal of communities that expected magical danger from outside, they have been greatly outnumbered in the world by those who have feared it from within. Ralph Austen has commented that virtually all studies of rural African societies indicate that the efficacy of witchcraft is believed in them to increase in direct proportion to the intimacy between witch and victim.[55] Peter Geschiere has added that 'in many respects, witchcraft is the dark side of kinship', and Wim van Binsbergen that it is 'everything which challenges the kinship order'.[56] This certainly seems true for much of Africa, although even there the degrees of kinship within which it is supposed to operate vary greatly. In polygamous societies, accusations often arose from jealousies and animosities between different wives of the same man.[57] On the other hand, such consequences were by no means certain, and there was no more inevitable and predictable a relationship between polygamy and the targets of suspicion than there was between witchcraft beliefs and any other kind of social organization. Among the

Konkomba in northern Togo, who believed in witchcraft, much tension existed between co-wives, and yet accusations never arose from them.[58] The Wambugwe, living in Tanzania's Rift Valley, thought that witches could not attack their own lineage.[59] Further north, in Kenya, the Nandi believed that witchcraft operated between in-laws, while another Tanzanian tribe, the Safwa, held that it could only be used against members of the perpetrator's own patrilineage.[60] In Zambia the Ndembu thought that only close maternal kin were at risk, while in Sierra Leone the Kuranko viewed witchcraft as an attack on conjugal relationships, deployed only by married women against a husband or his kin.[61] The Ngoni of Malawi thought that witches only attacked relatives on their mother's side.[62]

Nor are kin necessarily suspected of witchcraft in Africa, or indeed other parts of the world, the spectrum of favoured targets for suspicion extending through friends and neighbours to outsiders who had been allowed to settle in a community. Among the Gusii of Kenya the obvious targets were simply people who had failed to give clear evidence of their loyalty to the social group as a whole; likewise, the Nyakyusa of Tanzania suspected the generally antisocial members of their society.[63] One New Guinea people, the Tangu, used their equivalent word for a witch to describe all socially marginal people who had ceased to reciprocate in the social relationships of the community, whether they had begun to use witchcraft or not.[64] The Lugbara of Uganda associated witchcraft with strangers, loners, people with red or squinting eyes, the greedy and the grumpy.[65] The Quiché of Guatemala saw it in the lazy as well as the antisocial.[66] The Western Apache, on the other hand, eclectically suspected the wealthy, the elderly and strangers who had moved unexpectedly into the community.[67] Sometimes the stereotype did not actually match up to the reality, so that the Mandari of the Sudan traditionally associated witchcraft with physical filth, stealing and generally antisocial nonconformist behaviour, but admitted that most suspects were people indistinguishable from the norm.[68] The Wambugwe thought that witches had no features at all that distinguished them from anybody else, while among another Tanzanian group, the Hehe, accusations bore no relationship to sex, age or kinship.[69] The Gisu of Uganda thought that witches only attacked people of their own sex, while in Papua the Kaluli believed that they normally made victims of those unrelated to them by blood or marriage.[70] To the Mohave, whose traditional territory spanned parts of California, Nevada and Arizona, witchcraft was especially insidious because those who possessed its powers only used them to kill people whom they liked, as a compulsive and appalling consequence of genuine affection.[71]

In general, the comment made by Philip Mayer on Africans half a century ago holds good for human societies in general, that suspected

witches and their accusers are people who ought to like one another but do not.[72] To put it another way, as Eytan Bercovitch did after working in New Guinea, 'The witch is everything that people truly *are* as communities and individuals but would rather not be.'[73] Suspicion of witchcraft has generally been one consequence of unmet social obligations. The circumstances under which that suspicion arises tend everywhere to be those of regular, close and informal relationships, especially those in confined and intense environments where it is difficult to express animosities in open quarrelling and fighting: which is why, for example, in southern India accusations were never made between different social castes, as they never had intimate enough relations with each other.[74] Although the consequences of allegations of witchcraft generally involved social groups, in essence they were generated by close personal relationships. In Godfrey Lienhardt's words, 'witchcraft is a concept in the assessment of relations between two people'.[75] A belief in it is an aspect of face-to-face human encounters.

Characteristic Three: The Witch Works within a Tradition

Around the world, it has commonly been believed that witches gain their malignant powers through training or inheritance; but there has been no general solution to the question of how this is done. Two very common responses are that the capacity to do harm is something innate in the person of the witch, or else that the witch works by the employment of magical materials. The two often overlap, in that a person who is empowered by an innate and internal force can utilize arcane forces in material objects in order to put their powers into action. Those societies that believe in witchcraft as an innate power often differ over whether it manifests because of the volition of the person concerned, or asserts control over the will and actions of that person, sometimes directly against their own inclination. It is quite common for the two kinds of witch figure, the one who operates because of innate power, and the one who needs to work by manipulation of the right tools and substances, to exist in the imagination of the same social group.

One such group was the Azande of southern Sudan, who became the subject of a very famous study during the 1930s by Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, which helped to inspire the subsequent interest in witchcraft shown by members of his discipline and created some of the methods and models for it. As one of the latter, he confined the term 'witchcraft' to describe the actions of people who worked harm through natural and internal abilities, and employed that of 'sorcery' for those who needed external means.[76] For a time his distinction was widely applied to the study of extra-European magic, and that in Africa in particular.[77] By the 1960s,

however, it was coming under criticism as inapplicable to many traditional peoples, in Africa as elsewhere.[78] It has now largely been abandoned, although some anthropologists still sometimes find it relevant to the particular societies with which they are concerned.[79] What emerges from a global analysis is that traditional peoples distinguish between forms of magic in different ways, some of which map onto the division made by Evans-Pritchard and some of which do not. A classification of harmful magic into witchcraft and sorcery, according to his criteria, will therefore not be used here. None the less, it must be recognized that societies across the world have divided workers of harmful magic into categories, in which some operate more from instinct and natural power and others more from design. In Dobu, for example, women were believed to work evil in their sleep, their spirits going forth to attack those of neighbours and so do them harm, while men worked it when awake, putting curses on the belongings of victims.[80]

Equally variable across the world are local answers provided to the question of whether witchcraft is voluntary or involuntary; and if it is involuntary, what implications this has for the treatment of the suspected witch. Some peoples in Africa and Melanesia have regarded it as the consequence of a literal physical malady. The Hewa of the New Guinea Highlands thought that witches had a being like a small human foetus living inside them, which craved human flesh and drove them to kill to get it.[81] The Tiv of Nigeria thought that witchcraft was a substance that grew on the hearts of certain people and gave them magical powers.[82] In southern Africa the Swazis considered it to be a virus, transmitted by mothers to children or acquired by infection later in life, which drove sufferers to join a secret witch society dedicated to murder.[83] In north-eastern Ghana the Mamprusi also thought it a substance in the body inherited from the mother, though virtuous people were believed to be capable of resisting and neutralizing it.[84] The Bamileke of Cameroon believed it to be an extra organ, which produced a literal blood lust, satisfied by magical attacks.[85] Elsewhere in the same country, the Bangwa thought that it was generated by a substance in the gullet, with which a person was born: parents with a baby who seemed to be manifesting strange behaviour would presume it to have this affliction, and would allow it to die.[86] Inhabitants of Seram in the Molucca archipelago of eastern Indonesia were of the opinion that the power to work evil magic was generated by a hard lump in the stomach or intestines.[87]

Other societies regarded involuntary witchcraft as more of a spiritual than a physical affliction, though the boundaries between the two were hazy. Among the Azande, those whom Evans-Pritchard termed witches were thought to inherit an evil spirit from a parent, fathers passing it to sons and mothers to daughters. This dwelt inside their intestines, possessed them,

and needed to prey vampire-like on the life forces of non-witches. Those afflicted by one were born with it, but like some genuine hereditary illnesses it grew stronger with age.[88] The Nyakyusa thought that witchcraft was endowed by an evil entity which took the form of a python lodged in the belly of the witch, while in New Guinea the Kaluli thought that such a being lodged in the witch's heart.[89] In parts of the Indian region of Mysore, witches were likewise believed to be women afflicted with an evil spirit that drove them to do harm.[90] Among the Gă people of southern Ghana, it was thought that the spirits that possessed witches could torment or kill their human hosts unless they placated them by murdering others; those who feared that they were in danger of becoming thus possessed would seek magical cures for the condition.[91] In the Philippines, the tariff demanded by the possessing spirit was at least one murder per year, in default of which it would kill the witch.[92] Most cultures to have credited the existence of witchcraft, however, have considered it to be as controllable, and culpable, as any other kind of human ill nature (though normally more frightening and dangerous). Even some that regarded witches as people completely possessed by evil spirits, and so no longer responsible for their actions, have often thought that to permit such a degree of possession, the individuals concerned must have been at least weak and perhaps malevolent. Nicola Tannenbaum, studying the Shan, a Buddhist tribe spanning the border between Thailand and China, noted that they treated suspected witches in much the same way as antisocial drunks: as a real danger to others, and responsible for their condition although not really responsible for particular actions.[93]

Another variation in global perceptions of the witch figure has been between those who have regarded witches as essentially solitary or operating in partnership with the occasional friend or ally, and those who believe that witches are members of organized secret societies. A belief in such associations has been recorded across much of sub-Saharan Africa, and in the south-western United States, India, Nepal and New Guinea. The participants were generally thought to feast together, encourage and strengthen each other in their vocation, plan in concert to work evil magic, and often actually do so. The methods imagined to be employed by witches in the working of such magic, whether collectively or alone, have inevitably taken different forms in different places, but certain patterns are found commonly across the world. One is a belief that witchcraft is worked with especial ease if the witch can obtain bodily waste from the person who is the target. Among the Maori of New Zealand witches were said to kill victims by destroying their clothes, hair, nails or excrement while uttering spells.[94] The Zuñi burned all hair clippings and their neighbours the Navaho concealed all human waste, lest it be used to work magic against the former owners.[95] In Alaska the

Tlingit thought that witches took food leavings or scraps of clothing from intended victims, and made them into dolls, which became the vehicles for curses.[96] Such fears, and reactions, are recorded across most of Polynesia, Melanesia, Africa, South Asia and North America. Another belief system, which is not mutually exclusive with the first, is an emphasis on the use made by witches of magical properties within objects taken from the natural world, such as special stones, plants and parts of animals. The Nyoro of Uganda thought that most bewitchment was achieved by use of vegetable matter, mixed with pieces of reptiles.[97] Another very widespread tradition, found in North America and Africa, is that witches strike by introducing magical objects into their victims' bodies, such as stones, bones, quills or ashes, the removal of which cures the effects. Yet another belief pattern, especially common in areas of West and Central Africa and Melanesia, is that witches work through their own innate powers of evil, having no need of physical aids. A further very widespread tradition is for the witch to be assisted or empowered by a personal spirit helper, or a set of them, often in animal form; such traditions will be examined in detail in the last chapter of this book. In the Solomon Islands of Melanesia, it was thought, unusually, that the evil spirits serving living witches were the ghosts of their dead predecessors.[98] Across the Americas, Africa and Melanesia, tradition also varied with regard to the question of whether witches were expected to go about their work as their normal, physical, selves, or to travel in some spiritual form to do it while their bodies remained asleep at home. In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Melanesia and North America, it was believed that they could fly, which greatly enabled their ability to cover distance in pursuit of their targets, although, again, opinion varied as to whether they did so in physical or spectral bodies.

Characteristic Four: The Witch is Evil

Across the world, witches have been regarded with loathing and horror, and associated with generally antisocial attitudes and with evil forces in the supernatural world. Such a trait rules out from the category of witchcraft the sanctioned or informally approved use of magic in neighbourhood feuds. That is sometimes found: for example in the Trobriand Islands service magicians would employ their skills to harm individuals who had incurred the jealousy of chiefs or neighbours by prospering above their station in life and disrupting the usual social order. Their activities were regarded as generally justifiable.[99] Among most peoples, however, the use of magic was never regarded as a legitimate means of pursuing feuds and quarrels within communities, but as an activity distinguished by secrecy,

malevolence and intrinsic wickedness. The element of secrecy was considered to deprive the intended victim of any warning of the coming attack or consciousness of what was happening, until the harm had been done. It was designed to prevent any opportunity for compromise, negotiation and reconciliation, and for defensive measures, and to shield the witch as far as possible from being called to account for the crime. Such a way of proceeding, linked to the witch figure, violates common human notions of courage, sociability and justice. In some aspects, witchcraft has been used to represent the evil inherent in the universe, manifesting through humans who are fitted by their natures to act as vessels or conduits for it. In others, it has embodied all that is selfish, vindictive and antisocial within human nature, epitomizing treachery and disharmony in societies that strive for unity and neighbourliness. Godfrey Lienhardt summed up a general rule when speaking of one African people, the Dinka: that the witch 'embodies those appetites and passions in every man which, ungoverned, would destroy any moral law'.[100] Accordingly, across most of the world, it has often been believed that witch societies reverse those norms in more dramatic ways, engaging during their meetings or their acts of evil-working in such activities as incest, nudity or cannibalism. Examples of this belief are abundant. The Zuñi of the American south-west thought that witch associations were dedicated to the destruction of the human race, and entry was allowed only to somebody who had already claimed a victim by magic.[101] Their neighbours the Hopi thought that their own local witches were the leaders of a worldwide network in which every nation was represented, the initiates of which had to keep sacrificing the lives of their relatives in order to prolong their own.[102] The Yoruba of Nigeria and Gonja of Ghana held that to join the secret witch society, people were even required to kill their own children as an initiation rite.[103] In New Guinea the Abelam believed that witch power was activated in a girl if she participated in a rite whereby a group of existing local witches dug up and ate a recently dead baby.[104] Across Polynesia there was no apparent belief in witch societies, training in witchcraft being conceived of as an individual business passed by an experienced practitioner to a novice, but those practitioners were still believed to have a general grudge against humanity and the test of proficiency was to slay a near relative.[105] The Iroquois thought that the price of joining the local witch organization was to use magic to murder one's nearest and dearest relation.[106] Across most of the world witches have been thought to gather at night, when normal humans are inactive, and also at their most vulnerable in sleep. The Tswana believed that they assembled in the hours of darkness to exhume corpses and use parts of them for their destructive magic.[107] More often, across most of Africa and Melanesia, including New

Guinea, witches were expected to dig up freshly buried bodies in order to feast on them together, this being the prime motivation for murdering the people concerned. The Bemba of Zambia thought that witchcraft was the work of people who committed incest as well as murdering babies.[108] Nudity was a common attribution of witches, not merely because it transgressed social norms but because it stripped away their everyday identities. In the Solomon Islands, witchcraft was attributed to women who met at night to take off their clothes and dance.[109] The Agariyars of Bengal thought that women became witches by going to the cremation ground at midnight, removing their clothing, sitting on the ground and speaking incantations over cremated ashes.[110] Children among the Lala of Zambia were told not to go out naked lest they be mistaken for witches, while in the Lowveld region of the Transvaal the same fate met, and still in places meets, any woman seen without clothing out of doors, even in her own yard.[111] On Flores in the southern Indonesian island chain, it was said that a person could attract a possessing spirit, which conferred the power of witchcraft, simply by running nude in the open air.[112] Witches among the Kaguru of Tanzania were not merely thought to operate naked, but to walk upon their hands and to smear their normally black bodies with ashes to turn them white, in further rites of reversal.[113] The Amba of western Uganda thought that they rested by hanging upside down in trees and ate salt when thirsty (as well as embracing the usual nudity and cannibalism).[114] In the Philippines, they were also supposed to hang upside down like bats, as well as having no sense of physical modesty.[115] Zulu witches were said to ride naked on baboons at night, facing backwards.[116] Those imagined by the Western Apache removed their clothing for all-night dances around bonfires, holding parts of exhumed corpses, as part of which rites men deliberately copulated with menstruating women.[117] In these senses, the witch figure has represented an attempt to imagine how human beings can continue to live within communities while secretly rejecting and attacking all of their moral constraints, striking at all the imperatives that bind their societies together and make them functional. In societies where the expression of aggression and resentment is customarily repressed in the name of communal solidarity and harmony – and these are very common among traditional peoples – the witch figure provided a kind of human being whom it was not only proper but necessary to hate actively and openly.

Characteristic Five: The Witch Can be Resisted

The belief that witches can be resisted by their fellow humans is also found worldwide, in the three main forms which it took in Europe. One of these

was to protect oneself or one's dependants and property by using benevolent magic, which could turn away spells and curses; if the latter seemed to take effect, then stronger magic could be employed to break and remove the effects of bewitchment; and perhaps to make the witch suffer in turn. The Dowayo of Cameroon put sharp thistles or porcupine quills on the roofs of their homes, and spines and spikes around their fields and threshing floors, to ward off evil spells.[118] The Navaho had a wide range of objects and techniques which were said to proof the owner against witchcraft, including songs, prayers, stories, consecrated artefacts, paintings and plants.[119] In northern India, the performance of blood sacrifices or the deployment of tamarind or castor oil plants was thought effective.[120] Across Polynesia, protective rituals were enacted to safeguard people against witchcraft, and if these apparently failed, others were used to counter-curse the witch.[121] The Vugusu and Logoli of western Kenya usually responded to the threat of witchcraft by avoiding presumed witches and carrying out counter-magic against them.[122] On the Melanesian island of Gawa, suspected witches were never publicly accused and no mechanism existed for trying them, the population depending instead on defensive magic.[123] The Gaya of northern Sumatra treated bewitchment with exorcism, designed to send back the evil spirit that caused the complaint to the witch who had originally sent it out.[124] Most societies that believed in witches have contained service magicians who were regarded as expert in such remedies and could provide them to others as a duty or for payment. Indeed, this activity is embodied in the common English term for such a magician (usually in a non-European and tribal context) of 'witch-doctor', which was first popularized by a best-selling book by the famous Victorian British explorer Mary Kingsley. It has sometimes been mistaken as meaning a witch who is a doctor, but it signified instead a doctor who specialized, at least some of the time, in curing the damage done by witches: Kingsley's own definition was a 'combatant of the evils worked by witches and devils on human souls and human property'.[125] Under whatever name, the breaking of bewitchment has been, worldwide, one of the most commonly found and important functions attributed to service magicians.

The second widespread remedy for bewitchment was to adjust the social relations that had created the suspicion of it. This could take the form of persuading or forcing the witch into removing the spell that she or he had placed, and so its destructive effects. Among the Azande, when a service magician or chief had decided that a malady was the result of bewitchment, then the next step would be to ask the alleged culprit to lift the spell. The same pattern was found in Botswana, with the Tswana.[126] Among the Gusii, the first reaction to a suspicion was to employ private magic to break the

hostile spell, and the second to sever all relations with the suspected witch, to deprive the latter of those contacts with their victim(s) that had made bewitchment possible.[127] In the Tonga Islands of Polynesia, it was believed that the only way to cure bewitchment was to persuade or force the witch to remove it.[128] The Yakö of eastern Nigeria thought that suspicions were best dealt with in private, by asking the suspect to desist from bewitchment.[129] In Ghana the Ashanti blamed the act of witchcraft rather than the person perpetrating it, so the presumed witch was forgiven after making a public confession (which was presumed to break the bewitchment) and paying a fine or enacting a penance.[130] The Tangu of New Guinea expected an unmasked witch to pay compensation to the victim, after which the matter was closed.[131] On Dobu, a service magician was hired to identify the source of bewitchment, usually by gazing into water or a crystal. A suspect would be accused as a result, and required to recall the curse placed upon the victim; and when this was apparently done, both diviner and alleged witch would be paid by the victim. Such faith was placed in this process that, if the victim still failed to recover, a new curse and witch were presumed to be the cause.[132] In Cameroon the Bamileke, who thought that witchcraft was the involuntary consequence of an extra organ in the body, likewise believed that public exposure as a witch automatically destroyed the power of the growth and so the accused was both disarmed and reintegrated into society.[133] The Lisu of the northern Thai highlands feared witchcraft acutely but relied on service magicians or private counter-magic to keep them at bay. If this failed, then a suspected witch would be accused and made to pay compensation and retract the spell; people very rarely killed those whom they blamed for bewitchment, for the good reason that people who murdered witches were thought to become witches themselves, by contagion.[134]

The third remedy was to break the power of the witch with a physical counter-attack, which could take the form of direct action, such as a severe beating or murder, or intimidation that ran the person concerned out of the neighbourhood. In most societies, however, a formal and legal remedy was preferred to this sort of private action, by which the suspect was prosecuted before or by the whole community, and if found guilty was subjected to such punishment as it appointed. In many cases the identification of the culprit was assisted or carried out by the same kind of magician as that which provided counter-magic against witchcraft. In Central and Southern Africa, the ability to detect witches was also believed in several places to be inherent in chiefs, as one of that concentration of semi-mystical qualities that gave them the right to lead. In central India the same power was attributed to holy men. Across much of the world, oracles and special rites were employed

to find the guilty party when witchcraft was suspected. The Dangs of western India would drop lentils named for each adult male villager into a vessel of water: the one that floated would be that of the husband of the witch.[135] Service magicians of the Lala of Zambia found witches by gazing into a bowl of consecrated water, throwing an axe handle into ashes or watching horns stuck into the ground.[136] The Nyoro of Uganda tossed cowrie shells into a mat and interpreted the pattern they made, while in the same country the Gisu asked questions of pebble patterns in a swung dish.[137]

Once under suspicion, people were commonly forced to undergo an ordeal to demonstrate innocence or guilt. The traditional witch-finding society among the Nupe of northern Nigeria forced suspects to dig the ground with bare hands: if they bled, they were deemed to be guilty.[138] The Dowayo would make them drink beer in which a poisonous sap had been mixed. A person who died or produced red vomit as a result was deemed guilty, while those who produced white vomit, and lived, were exonerated.[139] Different forms of this poison ordeal were found across Central Africa, from Nigeria to Zambia and Madagascar, and its consequences depended on how toxic a potion was made. The Lele herded suspects into pens for testing, and the drink administered killed many of them.[140] The same test was used in north-western New Guinea, where those who vomited the poison were declared guilty and put to death: as it was quite difficult to survive the poison without bringing it up, this was an ordeal heavily weighted against the person submitted to it.[141] In Africa from Ghana to the islands off the Tanzanian coast, a chicken had its throat cut or was given poison in front of a suspect, whose guilt or innocence was determined by the final posture of the dying bird. The danger in which the accused was placed could be manipulated by deciding how many such postures counted as proof of innocence: in much of Nigeria during the 1940s and 1950s, the odds were heavily weighted against acquittal by the ruling that only one position did.[142] A standard test for witchcraft on Flores, in the southern Indonesian island chain, was to have to pick a stone out of boiling water: the guilty would blister.[143]

Once a person was identified as a probable witch, torture was sometimes used to extract a confession: in India the Dangs commonly swung an accused person upside down over a fire.[144] Across much of the rest of India and in Burma suspects were flogged with wood from a sacred tree.[145] The Navaho of the south-western United States preferred to tie them up and starve them of food and shelter.[146] How severe a penalty was imposed on those convicted of witchcraft depended both on local attitudes to it and the perceived extent of the damage done by the presumed witch. To societies that prescribed the death penalty for murder or other serious crimes against the person, it was logical to apply it to people convicted of inflicting death

or ruinous damage by means of magic. Most peoples who have traditionally believed in witchcraft have killed at least some of those formally convicted of it. In communities that greatly feared witchcraft, the body counts achieved could be considerable. It was said that in pre-colonial days every village of the Bakweri of Cameroon had its witch-hanging tree.[147] Among the Pondo of South Africa, the rate of execution ran at one per day on the eve of the British conquest and this number did not include those who fled when accused, or were fined.[148] A British official serving in India during the early nineteenth century estimated that about a thousand women had been put to death for alleged witchcraft on the northern plains during the previous thirty years: a rate of mortality far more serious than that caused by the more notorious local practice of *sati*, or widow-burning.[149] The rupturing of British rule over India in the rebellion of 1857 permitted a great witch-hunt, with lethal effects, to occur among the tribes of northern India.[150] Before British colonialism arrived, the Nyoro allegedly burned many of their people alive as witches, while before the Germans conquered them, the Kaguru clubbed to death those convicted of witchcraft and left them to rot in the bush, and the Pogoro burned them alive.[151] The Greenland Inuit cut the bodies of those executed into small pieces to prevent their spirits from haunting the living.[152] Likewise, the Northern Paiute of what became Nevada and Oregon stoned convicted suspects to death and then burned the corpses.[153] A Jesuit missionary working among the Huron of Canada in 1635 noted that they often murdered each other or burned each other alive on the testimony of dying men who accused the victims of having caused their fatal illness by magic.[154] On Flores, the penalty for witchcraft before the Dutch conquest was to be buried alive, and this apparently occurred regularly. On another Indonesian island, Sulawesi, the Toraja people submitted accused witches to ordeals that allowed virtually no proof of innocence, and then beat them to death. Young boys were encouraged to participate in this to prove their courage.[155] Before being ruled by the British, the tribes of what is now Botswana avenged deaths by presumed witchcraft either by allowing the bereaved relatives to kill the family of the suspected witch or by having the local chief try the suspects and execute those convicted: there were twenty-six such trials among the BaNgwatetse alone between 1910 and 1916. The former execution places of witches were still pointed out to British visitors to the region in the 1940s.[156] The Kaska, who lived on the border between Canada and Alaska, had no concept of magical cures that could be used against witchcraft, and so the only known remedy was to deal with the witch, who in that society was usually thought of as a child. This belief led to persistent killings in the first two decades of the twentieth century, often by the families of the youngsters accused.[157]

Across the world, traditional peoples have often manifested the pattern of sudden upsurges in witch-hunting among populations hitherto or for a long time characterized by little of it. In general, people who have traditionally feared witchcraft tend to accuse neighbours of it much more frequently in times of economic pressure and/or of destabilizing economic, political and cultural change; but it is also true that such times do not automatically and necessarily produce an increase in accusations. When such an upsurge has occurred, it has tended to rebound on the social order in three different ways: to confirm the authority of the traditional leaders and society; to enhance the power of an individual member of the traditional elite; or to enable a new social group to seize authority. In Africa, Lobengula, king of the Matabele, Ranavalona, queen of the Malagasy, and Shaka, king of the Zulus are examples of nineteenth-century leaders who reinforced their hereditary authority by waging war on alleged witches. Shaka once summoned almost four hundred suspects to his court at once, and killed them all, while under Ranavalona about a tenth of her subjects were forced to endure the poison ordeal to test for witches, and a fifth of those died. Lobengula presided over an average of nine to ten executions per month, mainly of relatively powerful men. In nineteenth-century North America the Navaho chief Manuelito executed more than forty of his political opponents on charges of witchcraft, and a generation earlier the Seneca chief Handsome Lake established himself as a religious leader by directing a persecution of it.[158] Such figures sometimes used witch-hunting to defend traditional ways against innovation: in the eighteenth-century Ohio Valley the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa instigated it against Christian converts in his tribal confederacy.[159] Political use of the mechanism could be deployed collectively as well as by particular rulers and prophets: thus, in the seventeenth century the north-eastern Algonquian tribes of North America made witchcraft accusations their main means to establish new territorial boundaries to service the fur trade developing with European settlers.[160] On the other hand, some strongly based and long-established regimes chose to discourage witch-hunts as part of the demonstration of their authority. When a panic swept twelve provinces of China in 1768, that itinerant magicians were cursing people (especially male children) to death in order to enslave their souls, the imperial judges quashed the convictions imposed by local courts, although mobs had murdered some suspects before they could be arrested.[161]

In Africa witch-finding movements were common in the colonial period, affecting much of the western and central parts of the continent, and functioning partly as a response to the prohibition or extreme modification of traditional trials for witchcraft by the European administrations.

It is also possible that colonial rule, by shattering tribal institutions and moral codes, increased the instability in which a fear of bewitchment often flourishes.[162] The Lele were caught up in no less than five witch-hunts between 1910 and 1952.[163] Typically, they were conducted by young men who toured regions, crossing tribal boundaries and claiming the power both to detect witches and to render them permanently harmless. The latter process usually took the form of forcing suspects produced by communities to deliver up the materials with which they were supposed to work their magic, for destruction, and administering a drink or ointment to them, or a particular rite, which was supposed to remove their ability to bewitch. Likewise, in western India, the 'Devi' religious revival of the 1920s included the detection and banishment of witches from villages as part of its remit.[164] Such movements originated from outside traditional structures of authority and custom but generally worked within them. Even under colonial rule, however, witch-hunters sometimes emerged who provoked a rejection and punishment of the familiar native elites or religions. The Atinga witch-finding cult in West Africa was conveyed by devotees of a single shrine in northern Ghana, who destroyed other traditional cult centres as they travelled.[165] The Nyambua, their equivalent in Nigeria, denounced established chiefdoms as well as witches.[166] Sometimes, also, such movements blended with anti-colonial feeling, or even with outright rebellion: the Maji Maji uprising against German rule in Tanganyika in 1905–6 was led by a prophet who termed himself a 'killer and hater' of witches, and indeed ordered the death of anybody who refused the 'medicine water' that he administered to destroy evil magic.[167]

This pattern has become much more common since the removal of European rule, as Africa has undergone programmes of self-conscious modernization that have produced major social change.[168] Witch-hunting has often been prominent both in revolutionary movements which directly opposed and helped to end colonialism or white supremacy, and in the successor states, under native regimes, which emerged out of the former colonies. The groups of young men who attacked suspected witches in parts of the Transvaal during the 1980s were also those who led resistance to the system of apartheid, portraying the white government which both upheld apartheid and forbade witch-hunting, as the protector of witchcraft. After the establishment of black majority rule, they still found themselves marginalized by the new regime, and so continued their role as local defenders of their people, in the face of a largely alien central government, with persecution of witches still part of that role.[169] Closer to the main centres of population in the new South Africa, in the Soweto township, the daily fear of witchcraft was reported as 'tremendous' by the early 1990s, and it was

said that 'every older woman, especially if eccentric and unpopular, lives with the risk of being accused of witchcraft'.[170] Among the Mijikenda of the Kenya coast, independence was followed by an upsurge of accusations and of violence against suspects, with tribal and national administrative leaders uniting to promote a particular healer as a witch-finder.[171] From the 1970s direct and public accusations of witchcraft increased in Zambia, and with them the use of expert witch-finders, who were ubiquitous in rural areas by the 1980s.[172]

In the war of independence, which established native rule in Zimbabwe, the guerrillas assumed the traditional role of chiefs as witch-detectors, usually with the full support of local communities, and put those detected to death if those communities desired it. Unsurprisingly, the victims were often allies of the white government.[173] After independence had been achieved in the country, during the early 1990s, a local hunt was conducted by a spirit medium obtained from a government-sanctioned National Traditional Healers' Association, who detected witches by making suspects step over his walking stick.[174] Both sides in the Angolan civil war of the early 1990s, which followed the collapse of Portuguese rule, put alleged witches to death as an aspect of their attempts to enhance their popularity and claims to legitimacy; one tended to burn them alive and the other to kill them after making them dig their own graves. Refugees expressed outrage at the abuse of the activity, by targeting political opponents (and their children) as witches, but not at their execution.[175] In those parts of the world in which native people were ruled for a time by European powers, a feature of the persecution of alleged witches was the manner in which selected features of Christianity were borrowed from the colonial rulers and integrated with traditional concepts of the witch. This was a natural enough process in Latin America, where for more than two centuries the ruling Europeans themselves feared witchcraft and outlawed all kinds of magic. Two parallel systems of witch-hunting thereby met and blended, with the early modern European stereotype of witchcraft as a form of Devil-worship infiltrating indigenous ideas and taking up permanent residence among them.[176]

The process continued in Africa in the twentieth century under a very different colonial system, in which the official attitude to witchcraft was one of disbelief. Here the Bible, in early modern translations which affirmed a disapproval of witchcraft and ordered its suppression, often acted in its own right to confirm native beliefs: ironically, Christianity therefore had the effect of reducing the credibility of ancestor spirits and land spirits, against which the missionaries preached, and so of producing a tendency to blame witches alone for uncanny misfortunes. The easy relationship that could be made among traditional peoples between Christianity and witch-hunting is

replete with examples. When the Malagasy queen Ranavalona created an intolerant religion to bond together her nation in the 1830s, which persecuted alleged witches and Christians alike, she did so using early modern European Christian models.[177] A generation earlier, Handsome Lake's hybrid religion, which he introduced to his branch of the Seneca of upstate New York, added Christian angels and devils to native spirituality, reinforcing an existing fear of witchcraft.[178] In the 1920s native members of the Jehovah's Witness movement in Central Africa got the idea that baptism by total immersion in water could detect witches. One of the proponents of it, who came to call himself the 'Son of God', was executed by the British after he had been found responsible for the killings of over a score of people in their territory in what was then Northern Rhodesia, and for the indictment of almost two hundred more in the Belgian Congo.[179] He was followed in the next decade by a man who had been schooled by Seventh-Day Adventists and decided to found his own church in Northern Rhodesia, which included the exposure of witches in its remit.[180] The Bamucapi witch-hunters, who spread across Central Africa from Lake Nyasa to the Congo basin in the 1930s, wore European clothes and preached 'the word of God' like white missionaries.[181] Also between the world wars, a woman founded the Déima movement on the Ivory Coast after contact with Protestant Christianity had convinced her that she was an expression of the will and word of the Christian deity: she claimed to detect witches on sight. In the 1950s it was the missionary activities of the Salvation Army that triggered the Munkukusa or Mukunguna movement in the Congo basin, in which the Bible and cross were prominent symbols. Later in the decade a Protestant United mission in Northern Rhodesia baptized and instructed a woman who claimed a divine commission to preach against witchcraft. She set up her own church organization, which came to include 85 per cent of the population in her home district.[182] The establishment of Zionist churches in the Northern Province of South Africa enhanced fear of witches in that area, while among the Zulu some leaders of the same denomination became notable witch-hunters. Such churches also produced a hunt in Zambia during 1988–9, led by a prophet called Moses.[183] When some of the Tangu of New Guinea were converted to Christianity, they immediately identified witches with the Devil, and exactly the same thing happened among the Ewe of Ghana.[184] A notable witch-hunter in Malawi in the years around 1960 had learned his ideas in a Presbyterian church, while in Zambia by the 1960s prophets from Pentecostal churches were very prominent among the magicians who detected the sources of evil magic.[185] The leader of the Catholic Action movement in the Zambian capital of Lusaka in the 1970s was a woman who claimed to possess servitor spirits and to have the power to detect witches by

reacting physically to their presence.[186] When many of the Lele converted to Roman Catholicism in the late twentieth century, they promptly declared the native religion to be that of Satan and its priests witches. The young in particular proved amenable to conversion, as an opportunity to turn upon their elders, and some of the new Catholic priests among them became avid witch-hunters, employing torture to gain confessions.[187] By the opening of the twentieth century hundreds of community churches in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa were committed to a struggle against witchcraft, as a satanic force.[188] In 2005 it was estimated that Africa now had hundreds of thousands of 'prophets' attached to native denominations of Christianity who claimed the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and other spirits to detect the hidden causes of misfortune, especially witchcraft.[189] The movements to eradicate witchcraft under colonial rule were generally bloodless, because the use of serious violence would have encouraged a hostile response from the European administrators who officially disbelieved in the threat from witches. This is what happened to the Atinga cult in Ghana and Nigeria in the 1940s and 1950s, which tortured and sometimes killed suspects who refused to confess.[190] The ending of foreign rule, however, opened the way for the return of widespread physical attacks on suspects, often leading to death. When Belgian rule collapsed in the Congo during the 1960s, the Lele immediately reintroduced their traditional poison ordeal, and hundreds died.[191] In northern Uganda, the end of British rule was followed by a resumption of witch-hunting by chiefs, with considerable popular support. Suspects were tortured by being made to sit or walk naked on barbed wire, exposed to termite bites, beaten, made to drink their own urine, or having pepper put into their eyes.[192]

In the Northern Province (now the Limpopo Province) of South Africa, witchcraft seems to have been relatively little feared in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, and accusations ran at a proportionately low rate: the highest level was recorded among the Lobedu, of fifty in the course of the 1930s, punished by exile. The social, political and economic instability that accompanied the breakdown of the system of apartheid, however, led to an escalation of tensions among neighbours, which resulted in 389 known witch-related killings in the province between 1985 and 1989 alone.[193] In the 1990s recorded cases of such murders there totalled 587, but this was judged to be a serious underestimate due to a fear of reporting such incidents to the authorities: it was known that forty-three people had been burned alive in one action in just the Lebowa district.[194] At Soweto, witchcraft-related murders were rarer, but still took place at times in the 1990s, the victims being burned to death by a mob of young people who termed the process 'democratic'.[195]

Both Malawi and Cameroon have reintroduced laws that allow the trial and conviction of people for alleged witchcraft. In Cameroon service magicians are accepted as expert witnesses by judges, and their testimony valued above the protestations of innocence by the accused. The latter are commonly treated as having no human rights and are sometimes beaten to death by police attempting to extract confessions. Concrete proof or a confession is not required for conviction and the prison sentences imposed are heavy – up to ten years – but at least those found guilty are not put to death. Tanzania has refused to permit a revival of the legal prosecution of witches, and the result has been an epidemic of lethal vigilantism. At least 3,333 murders of suspected witches were recorded on the mainland of the country between 1970 and 1984, two-thirds among one people, the Sukuma.[196] By 1991 a ghetto had been created in the old capital of the Mamprusi of Ghana, in which 140 women had been permanently confined on suspicion of witchcraft, to live in poverty: the space operated both as a prison and as a sanctuary in which they were safe from their accusers.[197] In 2007 the president of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, sent a division of his personal bodyguard to join local police in rounding up over 1,300 suspected witches from one district of his country. They were taken to detention centres and dosed with a potion expected to remove their powers, which made many ill. Three years later a major hunt swept southern Nigeria, directed at children and driven by ministers from native Christian churches who offered to exorcize the accused and render them harmless. The young victims were often detained and tortured to induce them to confess, and then abandoned by their families after exorcism; and all this occurred despite the existence of a new national law forbidding accusations against children. By 2012 the panic regarding child witches had spread to Congo, and twenty thousand children were said to be living on the streets of the capital, Kinshasa, because they had been expelled from their homes.[198] By 2005 at least half a million people had emerged as self-proclaimed experts in dealing with the problems of bewitchment in South Africa alone. If Christianity had easily been assimilated into traditional beliefs regarding witches, and served to reinforce them, then so has modern technology. Indeed, as the anthropologist Adam Ashforth has emphasized, science has become the 'primary frame of reference' for interpreting witchcraft in some South African townships, as quantum physics, cell phones, digital imaging, cloning and artificial life are all more compatible with a magical view of the universe than that of the preceding machine age.[199]

In other areas of the world, informal and illegal violence against presumed witches has also reached, or been maintained at, serious levels in recent times. During the 1960s one small Mexican town inhabited by Maya

had a homicide rate fifty times that of the USA and eight times that of the Mexican average, and witchcraft was the motive in about half of all cases.[200] In north-eastern India, there were twelve witchcraft-related murders in the Maldo district in 1982 alone, and over sixty in the Singhbhum district during four years of the 1990s.[201] A Bolivian villager was tortured and exiled in 1978 by an informal communal tribunal for allegedly using magic to suck life out of neighbours while they slept; five years later, another such group burned a man to death for the same offence.[202] Among the Ambrym Islanders of Central Melanesia, fear of witchcraft, and the homicides that it generated, had reached what was described as 'critical levels' in the late 1990s.[203] By the 2010s other parts of Melanesia had become as severely affected, as a result of collapsing traditional social and cultural systems, declining health services, worsening poverty, and increasing lifestyle diseases and premature deaths. Violence against suspects was (as recently in southern Africa) mainly conducted by impoverished young men seeking to achieve value in the eyes of their communities, and was becoming more public as well as more extreme. In New Guinea a young woman was burned alive in 2013 in front of hundreds of onlookers, including police, and two other women publicly tortured and beheaded on Bougainville Island in the Northern Solomon archipelago. In 2014 two men were publicly hanged in a community hall in Vanuatu.[204] Nor is legal action against witchcraft missing from the world outside Africa, above all in Islamic states. During the period between 2008 and 2012, laws against magical practices of all kinds were more strictly enforced in Afghanistan, the Gaza Strip, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In that period Saudi Arabia executed several people for such offences, mostly foreigners and mostly by beheading. A woman was murdered as a suspected witch in Gaza in 2010. The Saudi government trains employees not only as witch-hunters but in rituals to destroy the effects of witchcraft, while one recent president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, sacrificed a black goat nearly every day to ward off its effects.[205] In Indonesia courts have become increasingly willing to try acts of magic as crimes, or at least as antisocial behaviour, judges often seeming to believe in it and their actions in doing so being popular.[206]

It is possible to make a theoretical case that witch-hunting may, at least at times, serve a positive social function. In some contexts it may reinforce cultural norms, and so communal solidarity, by discouraging aberrant or antisocial behaviour. The identification of witchcraft with jealousy, greed and malice can serve to strengthen attachment to the countervailing virtues, and discourage the expression of animosity. It can be used to enforce economic obligations and reduce competition in favour of co-operation. In other contexts, it can be a midwife to change, in that anti-witchcraft

movements have often legitimized or reinforced the power of new groups. Accusations have sometimes provided a means by which disempowered individuals, such as children or women, can attract attention and respect, and intimidate people normally in superior positions to them. They can articulate otherwise unspeakable fantasies, reveal and represent destructive impulses, and identify and express tensions within families and wider social groups, blasting away unsustainable relationships. Measures against presumed witchcraft have enabled humans to act purposefully in the face of adversity. It was for these reasons that an influential school of thought among anthropologists has held that witchcraft accusations functioned as instruments of social health rather than as symptoms of malfunction.[207]

Others, however, have held a different opinion,[208] and that is the one favoured here. It emphasizes that all these positive functions of belief in witchcraft have only acted to strengthen societies, or to enable them to adjust more effectively to changing circumstances, when the rate of accusation has been low and sporadic, and subjected to firm controls. In many cases this situation has not obtained, and suspicions and accusations have not resolved fears and hostilities, but aggravated them and represented obstacles to peaceful co-operation. At worst, they have torn communities apart and left lasting traumas and resentments, or greatly compounded the suffering consequent on adjustment to new economic and social developments. Most societies that have believed firmly in witchcraft have regarded it as a scourge and a curse, of which they have longed to be rid; but the only way in which they have been able to conceive of bringing about this happy result has been to destroy the witches. Such attempts have tended to reinforce vividly a consciousness of the threat from witchcraft, and so perpetuate fear of it, and make future witch-hunts likely, even if they have managed – often at a grim human cost – to reduce that which had existed at the moment.

Further Reflections

Anthropological research permits some other insights into the manner in which the stereotype of the witch can be constructed and maintained, which are not so readily available to a historian. One such insight – accessible to scholars working in relatively small, self-contained societies where they can themselves question inhabitants in detail – is that cosmologies do not have to be coherent mental constructions. Very frequently, traditional peoples have been shown to have believed in different kinds of supernatural entity, including deities, terrestrial spirits, animal spirits and ancestral spirits, without any clear idea of how they interrelated or could be distinguished,

or of the precise relationship between each of them and witches. What mattered to the humans concerned was the presumed effect that these kinds of entity had on the human world, and what could be done to encourage, deter or counteract that according to its degree of utility and benevolence. In subsistence societies it was the practical consequences of dealings with spirit worlds that were the real issue, often being literally a matter of life and death. The fact that the theoretical origin and operation of witchcraft, and the stereotypical nature of the witch, seemed in some places to be – in the perception of the European scholar – at odds with general preassumptions about the workings of deities and spirits, did not seem to trouble the individuals whose beliefs were being recorded.[209]

Another luxury permitted to anthropological research is to observe at first hand the manner in which beliefs in a given society can mutate in changing social and mental environments. The summary of extra-European beliefs concerning witchcraft made above may have given an impression of their being more or less static, the stereotypes of the witch held by particular peoples remaining broadly unchanged over time and little affected by contact with other cultures. In essence, that impression does seem to reflect reality, but there are a few qualifications to be made to it. On the whole, the image of the witch held by a particular human society alters in detail, with changing circumstances, while remaining the same in basics. It has already been noted that extra-European peoples in various different parts of the world have assimilated forms of Christian theology into their traditional beliefs about witches, and other and more specifically local additions of the same sort have been recorded by anthropologists. It is not uncommon for traditional peoples to accord new powers and modes of operation to witches, because of changing circumstances or contact with the ideas of other cultures. In the late twentieth century, the idea spread through parts of West and South Africa that witches were turning victims into zombies, to labour for them and increase their wealth; in Ghana this took the different form that they were changing humans into animals or plants and then selling them as such.[210] Much earlier, in some areas of East Africa, particular tribes acquired from Arab traders the idea that witches controlled evil spirits (sometimes by buying them from the Arabs themselves), while the mixed-race inhabitants of the Lebowa district of Transvaal adopted the idea that witchcraft employed spirits in animal form from the neighbouring Zulus.[211]

It was rarer for the stereotype of what a witch should be to change, but that sometimes occurred. As the Giriama of Kenya moved from fortified communities into dispersed homesteads in the late nineteenth century, greater discrepancies of wealth appeared among them, and it was the newly enriched who became particular targets for suspicion.[212] In the Gwembe

Valley of southern Zambia, witches were traditionally male relatives of their victims but not the latter's parents. From the 1980s, however, a declining economy produced a younger generation less wealthy than the older, who turned on their fathers with accusations of witchcraft as one product of the ensuing tensions.[213] In the lower Congo Valley, witches had stereotypically been elderly, but in the capital city of Kinshasa during the 2000s, as said, children and teenagers came to be blamed for all misfortunes instead.[214] Most rarely of all, it seems that some peoples who had no traditional fear of witchcraft could acquire one, or those who had feared it little could become severely afraid. Among the Kerebe of the Lake Victoria border of Tanzania, it seems that before the early nineteenth century uncanny misfortune was attributed to chiefs, who were credited with wielding a legitimate magical power over people to discipline them. Then a new trading economy disrupted the power of both chiefs and communities, producing a new competitive and individualist society in which fear of witchcraft became rife.[215] The Kaska, on what became the border between Alaska and Canada, seem to have acquired a belief in witches in the late nineteenth century, when their society underwent drastic change, endangering its very survival, because of European conquest. They therefore took on the belief from their western neighbours the Tlingits, among whom witch-hunting was traditional.[216]

Ethnographic fieldwork also allows some answers to the question of how far, and in what sense, witchcraft has ever been a 'real' phenomenon. Anthropologists all over the world have reported similar experiences, in finding that peoples who believed in witchcraft would, when their trust and confidence had been gained, talk avidly about who witches were, and what they were supposed to do. It was virtually impossible, on the other hand, to interview somebody who actually claimed to be a witch and to act out the role expected of one. It is equally true, however, that witch accusations among traditional peoples have regularly produced confessions, especially after the accused had been found guilty by their community. Fear and despair, and a hope to win mercy and forgiveness by a show of penitence, may well have produced many such responses. On the other hand, it is also credible, and perhaps logical, that some of the accused actually had tried to curse neighbours or relatives when moved by anger, jealousy or malice, using formulae and materials associated with witchcraft. This is, however, remarkably hard to prove.[217] Anthropologists have noted from first-hand observation that when a witch-finding movement passed through a district, the people whom it convicted and forced to surrender their materials of witchcraft certainly produced objects in response. These were, however, of a kind also associated with positive magic, such as that intended for protection and healing.[218] A scholar working in New Guinea commented on how

destructive magic was worked there by wrapping up physical waste products of the intended victim with bark, leaves and stones over which a spell was recited. She added that these bundles were sometimes genuinely made, but did not enlarge on the circumstances.[219] The Gusii of the south-west Kenya highlands believed that witches were usually women, and ran naked at night carrying a pot of burning vegetable matter. One man told the anthropologist Robert Levine that as a child he had seen a female neighbour hurrying home nude at dawn with a firepot, while Levine was also told that women had confessed to witchcraft and brought human remains out from their homes during a witch-finding movement. This testimony, however, remained unproven, as did that made to an anthropologist by informants among the Barotse in what is now Congo: that human bones were often found in the homes of suspects of witchcraft, which must have come from graves.[220] Some of the most convincing and disturbing evidence for the actual practice of magic with the intention of harming others comes from the recent escalation of fear of witchcraft in Africa. In Soweto in the 1990s, magical healers admitted that clients regularly asked them for spells with which to kill, and there seemed to be a black market in witchcraft equivalent to that in drugs in other parts of the world.[221] Proven cases have occurred elsewhere in South Africa of people being killed so that their body parts could be used in evil magic.[222] Among the Kamba of Kenya, magicians who normally market their powers for benevolent purposes are known often to sell the materials for curses, especially for the pursuit of neighbourhood feuds; though the main product concerned overlaps with literal poison, being a potion slipped into food.[223]

If it is certain, therefore, that some people do try to work destructive magic within their own communities at the present day, and that some are likely to have done so among tribal societies in the pre-colonial past, it is harder to find evidence that some of these actively attempted to live up to the broader image of what a witch was held to be. Certainly, the existence of any of the horrific cannibalistic and amoral witch societies in which many traditional peoples have believed remains entirely unproven, as do the serial murders with which their members were credited. Margaret Field, working among the Gă on the coast of Ghana, interviewed over four hundred women who had been accused of witchcraft, one of whom claimed to have killed fifty people, including her own brother and seven of her children, while another confessed to having caused the deaths of four of her children and one of her grandchildren. Field was left unable to decide whether they had committed any of these crimes in reality, or whether they had only dreamed of doing so, and of gathering with fellow witches.[224] One apparently unequivocal and credible first-hand testimony of active witchcraft in a traditional

society was provided to an American visitor by an old Tlingit woman, who described how she heard a Christian missionary preach, and decided that his Devil was stronger than his God. She accordingly became a Satanist, as part of which she stole the hair and pieces of clothing of certain people, including children, and put them to rot in the tomb of a shaman according to one reputed method of destructive magic. The people concerned died, and she felt herself responsible and subsequently confessed herself to be a witch.[225] This all sounds very real, and perhaps was, but it is hard to prove with absolute certainty that this was not also the result of dreams or fantasies. Between 1958 and 1962 a number of Shona women, who had confessed volubly to witchcraft appeared before magistrates in what was then the British colony of Rhodesia. In particular, they claimed to have met naked in the bush at night, called up evil spirits, and travelled through the air or ridden hyenas to the homes of neighbours to bewitch them to death and then eat their flesh. Under questioning, it was discovered that they had dreamed of doing this, and then compared their experiences with others, so that their individual stories were polished into a common and mutually corroborative form. As their cultural tradition was that it was the spirits of witches that left their bodies at night to work evil, there was no obvious discrepancy with the actual sensations of sleep and dream, and the confessions could be made with complete personal belief. In the short term, a reputation for being a witch could enhance the status of a woman in Shona society, in which females were usually repressed.[226]

Even witchcraft beliefs that rested on dream or fantasy, however, could still be lethal. In 1942 an American medical doctor called Walter Cannon took an interest in reports, drawn from South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia and the Caribbean, of tribal people falling sick, and often dying, simply because they thought themselves bewitched. He suggested that the individuals concerned responded to the belief with a sustained terror that made eating and sleeping difficult, weakening the body even while it was flooded constantly with adrenalin. This forced down blood pressure and put stress on all organs, damaging the heart in particular and making any normally sustainable weakness dangerous.[227] Subsequent medical studies served to confirm the reality of the phenomenon of 'death from suggestion', broadening it out to a realization that it can result from excessive stimulation of any system of the human body, and that a loss of hope can seriously reduce the capacity of that body to deal with any potentially pathogenic processes.[228] Claude Lévi-Strauss built on the earlier of these studies to construct a classic essay emphasizing the critical role played by absolute belief in the efficacy of magic.[229]

This perception can pose one part of a double dilemma for a modern Western liberal rationalist. If a belief in witchcraft means that witchcraft can,

in effect, kill, then are not societies with that belief justified in having criminal penalties for it? This challenge is compounded by the other aspect of the dilemma, the question of whether Western societies, in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic world, should show respect for the differing traditions of others, and accept that witch-hunting is intrinsic to their identity and world view, and so none of the business of outsiders. Indeed, it could be argued that they should recognize that it may in fact be appropriate to their needs. This dilemma was thrown sharply into relief in the late 1990s by a debate in South Africa kindled by the report of the Ralushai Commission, a panel appointed by the government of the Northern Province to consider solutions to the burgeoning amount of witchcraft-related violence in the province following the end of white rule.[230] The members, academics and magistrates, were almost wholly drawn from native peoples. Their report, issued in 1996, argued for a new approach that judged Africans according to African understandings of reality, embodying the ideas that witchcraft was objectively real and that a belief in it was a hallmark of traditional African identity. One member of the commission, Professor Gordon Chavunduka, spoke for the literal reality of most of the characteristics of witches as portrayed in native tradition, including membership of initiatory societies dedicated to evil; he only expressed a lack of certainty that witches rode hyenas.

The report called for cases to be tried henceforth in customary courts, by chiefs acting with the advice of service magicians, who could impose prison sentences or fines on those convicted, and lesser penalties for those who brought false or unreasonable accusations. Such suggestions, and those of the report itself, foundered on concerns about whether the courts would be regarded as bewitched if they failed to convict, how guilt could be empirically established, and whether such legal action would tone down or worsen fear of witchcraft. The greatest stumbling block was the problem of agreeing on a set of professional criteria that would regulate and evaluate traditional benevolent magic, and so make its practitioners appear competent as expert witnesses. Moreover, there seemed to be no easy way of extending such a law to cover white South Africans, who do not believe in witchcraft, or of exempting them from it without establishing a new kind of apartheid. In the end, the central government of South Africa decided to ignore the report, encouraging instead local reconciliation procedures to deal with suspicions of witchcraft, procedures reputed to have reduced violence since the 1990s.[231] The present book is openly and wholeheartedly in favour of this policy, and of the concomitant and longer-term one, however expensive and onerous it may be, of worldwide state-sponsored educational programmes to persuade people out of a belief that destructive magic is effective irrespective of the

credulity of the victim.[232] If it is true, as it seems to be, that people who are utterly convinced that they have been genuinely cursed or bewitched can suffer physically, and even die, as a result, then the only really sure way of rendering them safe is to remove that conviction and halt the effect. This same process of re-education would also provide a long-term absolute remedy to the desire itself to curse, and with it to the murders designed to acquire human body parts for use in destructive magic. It would not, on the other hand, necessarily call into question the use of magical operations intended for benevolent purposes, as the same effect, of belief in magic often rendering it potent, could still apply among those involved in the processes; but for good, and with the understanding that the voluntary complicity of the human subject of the operation would be needed for its success. By such a process, however difficult, laborious and protracted, the world may eventually be delivered from an ancient horror, which has caused much division and misery through the millennia for peoples who have conceived and nurtured it. That should be an ambition as important and meritorious as the eradication of smallpox and polio.

Conclusions

It should be plain enough by now that the five basic characteristics of the early modern European stereotype of a witch can all be found around the globe, although not among all of its inhabitants. It may therefore be worthwhile to emphasize the two respects in which Europe stands out as anomalous. The first is that it was the only continent in which natives developed the common equation between witchcraft and essential evil into the idea that it represented an organized heretical anti-religion, dedicated to the worship of an embodied principle of evil in the cosmos. This was because the dominant religion of medieval and early modern Europe was Christianity, which during this period placed an unusually heavy emphasis on a polarized opposition between utterly good and utterly bad powers in the universe, of which its own god represented the former, and ultimately the more potent. The European development of witchcraft beliefs thus represented a natural concomitant of this unusual theology, though not a necessary one. It was to have knock-on effects upon the rest of the globe, as the European Christian idea of the satanic witch was communicated to peoples who were conquered by Europeans or received them as missionaries, as described.

The other extraordinary feature of Europe was that it became the only area in the world to contain societies which had traditionally believed firmly in the reality of witchcraft and yet which came spontaneously to

reject that belief, at least in official ideology. This again had profound effects on the remainder of the globe, as European colonial administrators enforced that formal disbelief on traditional peoples to whom it came as a shocking, unwelcome and alien concept, with consequences that have been discussed. There are, it is true, qualifications and limitations inherent in this modern European scepticism. One of these is that a very long and arduous campaign of education and enforcement was needed, all over the Continent, to persuade most ordinary people of the truth and utility of the official change of attitude. It extended in most countries from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and is even now not wholly complete.[233] Another qualification is that an active fear of witchcraft has recently been reintroduced to the West among communities of immigrants from ethnic groups, especially African, who have traditionally harboured, and retained, it. In the first twelve years of the twenty-first century, this became a concern of the British police, who investigated eighty-three child abuse cases provoked by suspicion of witchcraft, including four murders, and still thought the problem significantly under-reported. The Metropolitan division set up a special task force, Project Violet, to tackle it.[234]

The early modern European image of the satanic witch lives on in its homeland, moreover, in a secularized form. The panic over satanic ritual abuse of children that erupted in North America during the 1980s and crossed the Atlantic to Britain at the end of the decade, was, as Jean La Fontaine has demonstrated in detail, based firmly on the early modern construct of an international, devil-worshipping sect concealed within Western societies. It was, however, repackaged in a form suitable for rationalists, such as many of the social workers (and in America, teachers and police as well) who became persuaded of its truth. This required no literal belief in the existence of Satan or of magic, merely a continued credence in that of well-organized groups of practising Satanists who were dedicated to the committal of antisocial and criminal acts, and so deserved to be exposed, supressed and punished. This credence was enough to produce some dreadful miscarriages of justice, on both sides of the Atlantic, before careful investigation revealed a complete lack of evidence for such a Satanist conspiracy.[235] However, some of those who propagated the panic over alleged satanic ritual abuse, and most of those who did so at its formative stage, were fervent evangelical Christians of a traditional kind, with a very literal belief in a Devil. The same belief is a hallmark of another relatively recent development, the Christian 'deliverance ministry' in Canada and the United States, which has depended on a straightforward credulity in demonic possession, sometimes accompanied by one in satanic witches.[236] The fact that members of this have not so far extended their activities into

calls for renewed witch-hunts may be attributed to their ability to draw a line between private conviction and public policy; but it may also depend to some extent on the lack of any willingness on the part of governments to pay them heed. Furthermore, these alterations in Western culture have, in turn, effects on other parts of the world. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European missionaries to extra-European peoples tended to discourage traditional beliefs in witchcraft, as an aspect of backwardness and barbarism; although, as said, this could be undermined by the fact that traditional translations of the book which they distributed as the word of their deity encouraged such beliefs. In recent years, some American missionaries visiting African peoples have, however, begun to encourage a literal acceptance of the existence of demons and of witches, and to reinforce the resurgence of witch-hunting.[237]

For the purposes of the present book, the most significant outcome of a survey of extra-European beliefs with regard to witchcraft is the value that it may have for an understanding of early modern mindsets and the witch trials that these generated. From the worldwide patterns that it has revealed, one would expect early modern Europe to manifest distinct fluctuations over time in the intensity of witch-hunting, linked to economic, social and political change. It would also be reasonable to expect distinctive regional variations in the nature of trials, both in their number and intensity and in the nature of the persons accused, with regard to status, age and gender. Another natural expectation would be for Europeans to distinguish between different kinds of magical practitioner, not merely with regard to the benevolence or malevolence of their operations but also the nature of those. It is hardly going to be news to anybody at all aware of the results of research into the subject to confirm immediately that all of those expectations are in fact correct. What may be novel, and is another outcome of a global perspective on the subject, is to enquire whether such differences in European belief and practice may be rooted in ancient ethnic and cultural differences, corresponding to those between particular tribes, polities and language-groups; and also what difference historical change made to those ancient traditions. That enterprise will be the purpose of the rest of this book.

2

THE ANCIENT CONTEXT

It was obvious to many early modern Europeans that their ideas and images of witchcraft were at least partly inherited from antiquity. The text that was most fundamental to their culture, the Bible, was itself ancient, and the authors of the demonological texts which supported witch prosecution quoted lavishly from it, and also from the Church Fathers. They also, however, included passages from pagan Greek and Roman authors: one of the most famous of such witch-hunters' guides, the *Malleus maleficarum*, cited five of those; Henri Boguet's *Discours des sorciers* also had references to five; and Martin del Rio's *Disquisitiones magicae* drew on a grand total of twenty-nine.[1] Creative writers were just as disposed to use such sources. Sometimes this process was implicit: the most famous witches in the whole of early modern literature, those who deal with Macbeth in William Shakespeare's play, were derived originally from the ancient mistresses of prediction, the Fates or Norns, and in parts the chant they use seems similar to one composed by the pagan Roman poet Horace.[2] At other times it is explicit, so that when Shakespeare's only slightly less famous contemporary, Ben Jonson, added an antimasque featuring witches to his *Masque of Queenes*, he stuffed the footnotes to his published text with references to Greek and Roman authors.[3] Recent historians of early modern attitudes to witchcraft have, understandably, been generally disinclined to follow up these links: after all, their concern is with the later period. Those who have done so have tended to be authors of general surveys of the subject and to devote a few pages to suggesting that the ancient Mediterranean world had either a similar fear of witches to the early modern European one or a different one from it.[4] Parallel to the tremendous expansion of research into early modern beliefs concerning witchcraft and magic in the past few decades, there has been an equivalent

development in the study of the same subject in ancient times; by 1995 one of the most distinguished of those involved in it, Fritz Graf, could already speak of a 'boom' in the field, and this has intensified further since.[5] These two developments have occurred almost without dialogue between them, and historians of ancient civilizations have tended to confine themselves to the particular one that is their individual specialism, without cross-comparison even between them. In recent years this pattern has begun to provoke some concern among them, with calls for a greater recognition of the differences between concepts of magic in ancient cultures, and an end to 'universalizing generalizations and reductionist approaches'.[6] This chapter is a response to these calls, and will attempt a broad comparative survey of attitudes to witchcraft and other forms of magic across the ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds, drawing on the mass of recent research and some of the primary sources upon which it has been based. It will build on the approach employed to anthropological data in the first chapter, by emphasizing the distinctive nature of the attitudes adopted by different cultures, and attempting to determine what is constant in them and what is not. One of the lessons provided by a worldwide survey of witchcraft beliefs has been the critical importance of local variation, and it is equally important now to see if these ancient peoples exhibited the same phenomenon.

Egypt

The ancient Egyptian attitude to the supernatural and the divine was centred on the concept of what was called *heka*, signifying the animating and controlling force of the universe.[7] It was employed by divine beings to maintain the natural order of things. They had no monopoly on it, however, because individual deities could teach it to humans, who could then deploy it not just against their own kind, but against other deities, to achieve their own desires and increase their might. This was part of a world picture in which the boundary between human and divine was porous, so that goddesses and gods often needed the aid of human beings and the greatest of the latter could become deified when they died and sometimes even before then. It was accordingly entirely permissible, and even admirable, for people to try to coerce deities, and texts in royal tombs which addressed the latter mingled praise with threats, and prayers with demands. *Heka* was especially expressed in words, spoken or written, but also by ritual, often linked to particular stones, plants and incenses. It could also be triggered by the making and treatment of statues and figurines, so that from the dawn of Egyptian history, at the opening of the third millennium BC, kings were

portrayed as striking bound effigies of enemy prisoners to favour their fortunes in war. By the middle of the second millennium, models of people were being placed in tombs to work for the deceased in the next life. This was a system of thought which completely collapsed into a single whole the categories of religion and magic, as defined at the opening of this book, and with them those of priest and magician, and prayer and spell. The same spell, indeed, could implore, cajole, flatter, threaten and lie, in its attempt to gain the compliance of a deity or spirit.

Ancient Egyptians had no concept of witchcraft, and therefore represented another of the examples of peoples scattered across the globe, as described earlier, who lacked one. One reason for this may have been that they were also one of the societies which believed in the 'evil eye' and feared foreigners as hostile magicians; traits associated worldwide with a reduced or absent fear of witches. Only once is the use of magic mentioned in a criminal trial, and that was of a group of conspirators at the royal court who had tried to kill King Rameses III in about 1200 BC. One of them had attempted to do so by using magic, making wax images and potions with allegedly deadly spells learned from a book in the royal library; but this was treated as the employment of just another weapon, and the culprit was convicted of treason and not of witchcraft.[8] *Heka* was itself entirely morally neutral and could be legitimately employed against both public and private foes, as long as the quarrel was generally considered to be a just one. Ordinary people who wished to exercise it often obtained the services of a special kind of temple priest, the 'lector', who was expert in its use and drew partly for such knowledge on the books in temple libraries. Lectors functioned as service magicians, most commonly by conferring protection against misfortune or attack, or treating medical problems. Tomb inscriptions, however, suggest that they could also use lethal curses, and state officials and private persons alike were expected formally to pronounce those upon the kingdom's foreign foes. Literature and art both support the idea that the laity, including commoners, also had specialized magical knowledge deployed for specific purposes. Some of this is summed up in references to specialists in certain kinds of spell, such as 'scorpion-charmer' and 'amulet-maker'; so well integrated was magic into the whole social and religious system that there was no general word for a magician in the Egyptian language.

Egyptians believed in frightening and dangerous spiritual entities, some inherent in the cosmos and others the ghosts of dead humans or the agents of angry deities.[9] They were especially associated with the realms beyond the normal haunts of humanity: night, the desert and the underworld. Magical protection was invoked against them, but they were not considered

to be intrinsically evil, but as having a mixture of positive and negative qualities, the former or latter predominating according to context. If they could be turned against enemies, then they became powerful helpers, and texts existed to do just that. Likewise, at least from the early first millennium BC onwards, it was considered possible, and even admirable, for a proficient magician to make a supernatural being into a personal servant. Especial significance was attached to knowing the true names of such beings, which could confer power over them upon those who possessed such knowledge. This belief system underwent no substantial alteration during the three thousand years between the appearance of the Egyptian kingdom and its conquest by the Romans, only an increase in associated objects and actions. Oddly enough, for a culture as enduring, formalized and apparently as static as the Egyptian, it quite early displayed a capacity for absorbing ideas from other cultures, especially those to the east: from the mid second millennium BC, spirits with Semitic names start to abound in Egyptian texts. Conversely, by the early part of the last millennium BC at the latest, Egyptians had acquired a reputation among neighbouring peoples for excellence in knowledge of most kinds, which included that of magic. In the oldest surviving European literature, the poetry of Homer (probably from the eighth century BC), Helen of Troy, restored to her native Greece, puts a herbal potion into the drinks of her husband and his guests which has the power to remove all painful memories and banish all grief for a day. It has been given to her by an Egyptian, and Homer comments that this race is the most skilled of all in the use of herbs, as in all kinds of medicine. Greeks such as Homer did not distinguish between the chemical and arcane properties of herbs (and indeed often could not), and the properties of this drug clearly surpass those of straightforward chemistry.[10] Eight hundred years later, the Jewish historian Josephus could declare that everybody regarded the Egyptians as representing the summit of all knowledge, including the arts of incantation and exorcism.[11] It is probable that this reputation was simply a natural consequence of the age, stability, wealth and sophistication of Egypt's civilization, but Sir Wallis Budge, writing in the nineteenth century at the start of the systematic study of Egyptian magic, commented that the ancient reputation of the latter also derived from its remarkable degree of acceptance by, and integration into, its native society. He may well have been right.[12]

Mesopotamia

The civilizations of Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria had much in common with that of Egypt. They were also based in a great valley, in their case that

of the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates which formed the plain that the Greeks called Mesopotamia and which is now in Iraq. They were likewise based on cities, with large temples staffed by a powerful priestly class, and centralized kingdoms, led by monarchs who were assumed to have a special relationship with the regional deities. They also showed a remarkable continuity over three millennia, despite cycles of stability and disorder in which particular dynasties rose and fell, sometimes precipitated or accompanied by foreign invaders. They had, too, a literate elite, who used texts composed in a standard script as a crucial component of government and religion. As part of this package of similarities, they also displayed a considerable interest in magic, partly as an aspect of official religion. This interest took forms that remained much the same throughout the whole historical period of ancient Mesopotamian culture, though evidence for it is most abundant in the first half of the final millennium BC. Attitudes to magic in Mesopotamia, however, also displayed striking differences from those in Egypt, so giving them their own strongly marked regional character.[13]

One of these differences was that Mesopotamians were more afraid of, and respectful to, their deities than Egyptians, and do not seem to have thought it possible to coerce or deceive them. Humans were not even believed to be capable of commanding spirits directly, being reliant on the help of deities to control lesser supernatural beings.[14] Another difference was that they displayed a much keener interest in the influence of heavenly bodies on human affairs, thus becoming the originators of the Western tradition of astrology. By the third millennium BC they already believed that the stars and planets were associated with major deities and should decide the best time for important actions. By the first millennium astrological omens were used to predict the fates of kings and court astrologers reported regularly to rulers.[15]

A third major difference was that the peoples of Mesopotamia attached great importance to demons, in the sense of spirits inherent in the cosmos that were hostile to humans and a permanent menace to them, and so essentially evil. These were thought constantly to attack people, especially in their homes, and to be immune to physical barriers. Virtually all human misfortune, and especially disease, was credited to them and ritual action, both regular and ad hoc, was regarded as necessary to repel and expel them. Dealing with demons was the job of a priestly functionary called the *āshipu*, who mostly worked for private clients, with a mixture of incantations and actions addressed to deities, natural forces and the demons themselves. The rites included, as in Egypt, the use of figurines of wood and clay, often buried below buildings to protect them and their inhabitants, or destroyed to represent the beings that were the causes of affliction, or used as repositories for

evil spirits exorcized from patients. Another similarity between the two was a willingness to import foreign ideas, in the Mesopotamian case by using spells in foreign languages. Like the Egyptians also, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia believed that to know the name of a supernatural entity was to acquire power over it; but unlike the Egyptians, they took pleasure in making long lists of demons with their characteristics. Virtually all the evidence that we possess for the practice of Mesopotamian magic consists of the records amassed by and for the *āshipu*: occasionally in those records mention is made of lower-grade kinds of magician, who operated among the common people – the 'owl-man', the 'snake-charmer' and 'the woman who works magic in the street' – but of these nothing else is known.[16]

The peoples of Sumeria, Babylonia and Assyria also believed in witches, in the classic sense of human beings, concealed inside their own society, who worked magic to harm others because they were inherently evil and associated with the demons which were the object of so much fear. The repertoire of the *āshipu* included many rites for undoing the harm that such people had wrought, while law codes prescribed death for those convicted of working such harm. The concern of the rites to avert witchcraft, however, was always to remove the affliction and not to detect the witch: indeed, the rituals themselves were supposed to bring about the death of the witch at whom they were aimed. In any case, most misfortune was blamed on angry deities, ghosts or (of course) demons. Mesopotamians also believed in the evil eye (and the evil mouth, tongue and sperm), and thought it to be destructive of both people and their livestock; it is not clear from the texts if this was thought to be voluntarily or involuntarily activated, but it was carefully distinguished from witchcraft. Actual witch trials seem to have been very rare, there are no recorded mass hunts, and the charge of witchcraft does not seem to have been a factor in political struggles. Witches were supposed to harm individual people, and not whole communities. The famous law code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi, from the early second millennium, allowed somebody accused of witchcraft to undergo the ordeal of jumping into a sacred river. If that person drowned, the charge was regarded as proven and the accuser inherited her or his estate; but if she or he survived then the accuser's estate was handed over instead.[17] It is possible, overall, that ancient Mesopotamian societies were among those in the world in which counter-magic used against presumed witchcraft was thought usually to be effective enough to remove the need to proceed against witches themselves.

The stereotypical witch mentioned in the sources is assumed to be female, which seems to match the generally low status of women in Mesopotamian society and make witchcraft an assumed weapon of the

weak and marginalized. This suggestion is borne out by the other kinds of people associated with the practice of it: foreigners, actors, pedlars and low-grade magicians. In the few cases of actual prosecutions for witchcraft, which span the whole period of the various Babylonian and Assyrian monarchies, the accused were all women.[18] Witchcraft was thought to be worked by the bewitchment of food or drink consumed by the victims, or of personal possessions or bodily waste taken from them (as across the world), or of images of them, or by the ritual making of real or symbolic knots. As in Egypt, destructive magic was regarded as a legitimate weapon if the cause were just, and kings formally cursed the enemies of the state. The secretive and malicious use of such magic was, none the less, clearly feared and hated in a way that was not apparent in Egypt. The texts used by the *āshipu* made the witch into a public enemy, capable of introducing chaos into the social order and even doing harm to deities. She was one of the menacing forces of the universe, along with foreign foes, wild animals, deities of other lands and wild lands, and (of course) demons. Fear of her seems to have increased gradually throughout ancient Mesopotamian history, so that by the mid-first millennium, she was ceasing at times to be regarded as a human being and becoming elided with a malevolent spirit of the night.[19] Like the Egyptians, the peoples of Mesopotamia seemed to make no distinction between religion and magic (as defined earlier in this book), though with the difference that the rituals they performed to obtain their wishes were allowed and empowered directly by the deities whose aid they solicited. They did, however, make a major distinction between good and bad rites, good and bad practitioners of rites and good and bad superhuman beings.

Mesopotamian attitudes to magic seem to have been typical of an area far larger than Mesopotamia itself, extending from Asia Minor and Palestine in the west to the Indus Valley in the east. Three peoples found on the borders of this region, while reproducing most of those attitudes, also developed variations that were to be significant in the history of European witchcraft. The first of these were the Persians or Iranians, who occupied the region between Mesopotamia and India, and between the sixth century BC and the seventh century AD often controlled huge empires, which included Mesopotamia itself, and sometimes the whole remainder of Asia westward to the Mediterranean. By the late first millennium BC they had adopted the religion of Zoroaster, which depended on the concept of a cosmos divided between two mighty warring entities representing, respectively, essential good and essential evil. Lesser deities had become servants of these great beings, according to their dispositions, turning into the equivalents of angels and demons. Virtuous humans were likewise expected to choose the good supreme being and wicked humans

the evil one. Among those who were regarded as automatic followers of evil were people who were believed to worship the demons who obeyed the Evil One and be rewarded by them with the ability to work destructive magic on others. Their rites were thought to be carried out at night, while naked. Putting a chronology on the development, or even the expression, of these ideas is very difficult, because the earliest records of them are in manuscripts dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries AD, but containing texts written in the sixth and seventh centuries and based on originals which, from their language, were composed at various points dating back to the thirteenth century BC. Moreover, they were the work of the priesthood of the official religion, and give little indication of how ordinary people regarded the same issues, and of the manner in which suspected witches were treated in reality. It can be safely concluded, however, that the belief system expressed in them was fully formed by the late antique period, equivalent to that of the Roman Empire. By then, if not long before, witches were regarded by the Persians as the most evil of humans, who had to be fought (by protective and retaliatory priestly rites of the Mesopotamian sort) and punished in order to keep the land healthy.[20]

At the opposite end of the Mesopotamian basin were the Hittites, who during the later second millennium BC developed a powerful and aggressive monarchy of their own, based on Asia Minor. Their culture also seems to have reproduced the attitudes to witches found in Mesopotamia, but with one significant difference: that the charge of being a witch was an important element in central politics at recurrent moments throughout Hittite history. This was one reflection of the Hittite tendency to try to concentrate magical power in the hands of the government, so that not only was witchcraft illegal but anybody thought to have knowledge of magic was to be brought to the royal palace for interrogation. The physical remains of purification rites carried out by priests or priestesses had to be burned at official places. Before 1500 BC, King Khattushili I banned his queen from keeping the company of certain priestesses who specialized in exorcism, and a couple of centuries later, a monarch accused Princess Ziplantawi of bewitching him and his family. In the late fourteenth century Khattushili III tried a governor for employing witches against him, and in the late thirteenth, Murshili II made the same charge against the current dowager queen.[21]

The final variation on the norm was found on the south-eastern fringe of the Mesopotamian world, among the Hebrews, who developed in the course of the first millennium BC an exceptional emphasis on one of their own gods, Yahweh, as the single deity whom they were henceforth permitted to honour. Spiritual power was therefore concentrated in the hands of priests and other holy men associated with Yahweh's cult, and this had an impact on attitudes to

magic. The Hebrew Bible applauds wonder-working prophets who serve Yahweh, above all Elijah and Elisha, even when they deploy their powers as expressions of personal vindictiveness. It invests the objects of Yahweh's cult, especially his altar and the Ark of the Covenant, with intrinsic power, sometimes lethal. Joshua's army stages an elaborate rite to draw on Yahweh's power to bring down the walls of Jericho, and the god himself tells Moses to make a bronze serpent to protect his people from snakebite. The Mosaic Law includes a ceremony to determine the guilt of a woman accused of adultery by making her drink water mixed with sacred texts and dust from the Tabernacle floor (Numbers 5:11–31). All these could be termed ceremonies of a kind usually associated with magic, co-opted into the service of the official cult.

Unsurprisingly, in view of this, the Hebrew Bible also forbids recourse to magic and magicians outside that cult. It lists practitioners of magical services among the pagan Canaanites, calls them abominable and bids Hebrews turn to a prophet of Yahweh instead (Deuteronomy 18:9–22; cf. Leviticus 19:31, 20:6). Moses puts a Hebrew to death for cursing in Yahweh's name (Leviticus 24:10–15), but the same curse is regarded as wholly acceptable when employed by a special instrument of the god such as Elisha (2 Kings 2:24). Saul is shown as behaving correctly when offering to pay a recognized Hebrew holy man to tell him the whereabouts of some lost donkeys (a classic service provided by magicians through the ages); and trying to learn Yahweh's will through dreams and the god's prophets (1 Samuel 9:1–10, and 28:15). However, when he hires a *ba'a lot'ov*, a female magician from outside the official cult (known in early modern English translation as the Witch of Endor), he does evil (1 Samuel 28:4–25). At one point the Mosaic Law ordered that a *mekhashepa* should not be permitted to survive, a passage officially translated in Jacobean England as 'thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' (Exodus 22:18). A proper understanding of this text would be possible if we knew exactly what a *mekhashepa* was, and was supposed to do: all we do know is that she was a specifically female practitioner of some kind of magic (and it is equally unclear from the language if she is expected to be killed or simply to cease living in the community, in other words, to be exiled). All in all, the Hebrew Bible does not spend much time on magic, as opposed to execrating the worship of other deities, and seems to make a classic incorporation of some forms of it into religion, by declaring that the same kinds of action were sanctioned for Hebrews if performed by accredited, and so divinely empowered, representatives of the one true god and execrated if offered by others.[22]

A similar relative lack of interest in magic seems to obtain in the Second Temple period, between the late sixth century BC and the late first century AD, when Hebrews returned from exile in Babylonia, eventually to establish a new monarchical state in their Palestinian homeland with a single

cult of Yahweh. Different strands of their literature continued to express a general animosity towards magic, as used by people not recognized as sanctified servants of the true god, but it was hardly debated. In the third and second centuries BC, the First Book of Enoch had fallen (and so corrupted) angels teach human women magic, especially by using plants (Book of the Watchers 1–36), but the Book of Jubilees (10:10–14) asserted that Yahweh sent angels to bind demons, which plagued humanity, and teach people the arts of healing, also especially by using plants. The Dead Sea Scrolls class apostasy from the true faith with magic, and order both to be punished. Exorcism, of demons from persons and places, by rites of the ancient Mesopotamian sort, remains the most commonly attested activity that may be categorized as magical.[23]

More material survives from the succeeding period, following the Roman destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Hebrew people, to complete their evolution into the Jews even as the cult of Yahweh completed its development into the religion of Judaism. The crucial collection of source material is the rabbinical literature composed between the second and seventh centuries, above all the Talmud, the collection of pronouncements and anecdotes to expound the faith, originally compiled in two separate documents in Babylonia and Palestine. The attitudes to magic expressed in it are not altogether coherent, but tend as before to credit outstanding holy men of the religion, now members of the official priesthood called rabbis, with the ability to work apparent miracles. These acts are always applauded, presumably as permitted and empowered by the true God, though this sanction for them is only sometimes made explicit. By contrast, anonymous women or heretics are treated as the natural practitioners of witchcraft, *keshaphim*, and are usually portrayed as being defeated by rabbis. Witches are not portrayed as having special looks or belonging to a special breed: they are just ordinary Jews, usually female, who have chosen to work harmful magic. At times they seem to operate in groups, with leaders. The Mishnah law code of *c*. AD 200 prescribed the death penalty for anybody who was judged to have bewitched somebody else with apparent genuine effect. How far it was actually enforced is hard to tell, as there are no references to witch trials in the same literature, or to rabbis having suspects put to death, save for the story of how rabbi Simeon ben Shetah and his followers killed eighty witches at Askelon in Palestine. That, however, has strong folkloric elements, which tell against it as a historical event: for example, it is described as having been necessary to lift all the women off the ground simultaneously to deprive them of their magical powers. The episode was supposed to have happened seven hundred years before the story is recorded. There are no accounts in the whole body of

literature of financial compensation for witchcraft or references to it in divorce cases, so it is hard to see whether Talmudic stories describing the defeat of female magicians reflect social reality. One possible insight into that reality is provided by the metal bowls found buried in houses and cemeteries in Mesopotamia and western Iran, apparently dating from the fifth to the eighth centuries AD and made mostly, but not exclusively, for Jews. They are inscribed with spells to protect the owner against witchcraft and demons, and women rather than men, especially working in groups, are identified as the witches. However, women are also found as commissioning or making the bowls, and 90 per cent of the spells are directed against evil spirits alone, and not evil humans. In general, the Jewish literature of late antiquity rarely used magic as a polemical label for the religious practices of opponents, and attributed misfortune far more to the anger of the deity or the malice of demons than to witchcraft. None the less, it retained the traditional Mesopotamian belief in the existence of witches, who were generally presumed to be women.[24]

Greece

The oldest European society from which evidence exists for attitudes to magic, including witchcraft, is the ancient Greek, which still has a far shorter recorded history than those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, extending back to the seventh or eighth centuries BC. By the fourth century at the latest the Greeks had developed their own distinctive set of beliefs, different again from any held in the great Near Eastern civilizations. One aspect of it was a distinction between religion and magic, often to the detriment of the latter, which was fundamentally that articulated at the opening of the present book, and indeed subsequently held by most Europeans until recent times.[25] It first appears in a medical tract concerned with epilepsy, *On the Sacred Disease*, which has been dated to the years around 400 BC and so may well push back the distinction concerned into the fifth century. This opposes the disreputable use of spells and medicines which seek to compel divine beings, 'as if the power of the divine is defeated and enslaved by human cleverness', to the legitimate actions of people who only supplicate for divine aid.[26] Shortly afterwards, the great Athenian philosopher Plato repeated it, attacking those who promised 'to persuade the deities by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers and incantations'.[27] It seems, therefore, that by the central part of the classical age of Greek civilization, intellectuals, at least, were confidently articulating a matched pair of definitions that would become an enduring part of European culture. The opposition between them made by the Greeks was different from that which was applied in

modern times – theirs was one between magic and normative religious practice, rather than between magic and religion as such – but it is still striking.[28] It was accompanied by hostility towards most categories of magician. The list of these remained more or less standard at Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries, in both stage plays and works of philosophy, and also in occasional other kinds of text: the *agurtēs*, a kind of wandering beggar-priest; the *goēs*, who is now generally assumed, from the linguistic relationships of the word, to have specialized in dealings with ghosts, either exorcizing them or setting them on people, and perhaps with other forms of spirit; the *epoidos*, or singer of incantations; the *mantis*, an expert in the revelation of hidden things, especially the future; and, most significant for future developments, the *magos*, who seems to have offered a range of services which incorporated most of those just described, and whose craft, *mageia*, became the root of the word 'magic'. In addition to these was a string of lesser practitioners, usually noted (and condemned) in the plural: 'oracle-mongers' or 'oracle-interpreters'; specialists who interpreted signs and portents; and those who 'performed wonders'. They also included *pharmakeis* (masculine) or *pharmakides* (feminine), who seem to have specialized above all in potions; and *rhizotomoi*, 'root-cutters', who appear from their name to have worked a magic, and in modern terms also a medicine, based primarily on herbs. Greek writers did not use these terms with consistency, and the categories must have been very porous, each practitioner offering a personal portfolio of services that would often have overlapped them. Not all of the references were pejorative, the *mantis*, in particular, sometimes being lauded in inscriptions for helpful predictions or advice, but diviners and portent interpreters who received official approval tended also to have an official status. The Greeks lacked the powerful temple system, with its specialist priesthood, of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and their sources provide instead an insight into a flourishing world of popular magic that is barely visible in the Near Eastern texts. The very disapproval expressed by the surviving sources of that world testifies to the hold it exercised over the imaginations of many Greeks. On the other hand, it would be unwise to dismiss those expressions of disapproval as the grumbling of elitist intellectuals, attempting to reform popular beliefs. The playwrights, who also condemned magicians, had, after all, to please crowds, as the theatre at Athens was an art form with mass audiences.[29]

It has become something approaching a consensus among experts that this hostility to magic appeared in Greece in the fifth century BC, as one response to a number of developments.[30] One of these was war with the Persians, which caused Greeks to define themselves more clearly against

foreigners, and eastern foreigners in particular. Certainly the term *magos*, which gave rise to 'magic', was in origin the name for one of the official Persian priesthood, serving the Zoroastrian religion. Greek city states were also engaged in a greater definition of their own identities, with a new concept of citizenship, and (for some) new enterprises in imperialism. It is certainly true, in addition, that during the period of the late sixth and the fifth centuries, the Greek imagination became more interested in underworld deities and in the spirits of the dead, as entities with whom living humans might work for their own profit. It is also likely that some of the forms of magical practitioner condemned in the sources only appeared at this time. The work of the *magos* or *goēs* in exorcizing unwanted spirits does make these figures look remarkably like the Mesopotamian exorcist-priests, transplanted to Greece and turned into wandering and freelance operators.[31] Furthermore, it is true that there is no securely dated and unequivocal condemnation of magic in Greek that can be placed before 450 BC.[32] A faint note of caution may be entered, however, against this apparent absence of evidence, as sources for the subject are much scarcer before the fifth century, and those most relevant in the earlier period, such as plays and works of philosophy, are missing. The argument for a new attitude from around 450 BC has sometimes drawn attention to the apparent absence of any condemnation of magic in Homer's poetry, and this may indeed be very significant. On the other hand, too much should not perhaps be inferred from one poet, and the kinds of magic apparently approved by him (scattered throughout the *Odyssey*) are those used by figures – a goddess or an official seer – or for purposes – healing or soothing – which later Greeks would also have been likely to find acceptable. It is possible that the classical Greek hostility to magic, when defined as an attempt to gain control over deities, has deeper roots than the fifth century.

What seems to be missing from this composite picture is witchcraft. There is no sense in any archaic or classical Greek text of hidden enemies within society who work destructive magic under the inspiration of evil. Plato called for the death penalty for any kind of magician who offered to harm people in exchange for financial reward, while those who tried to coerce deities, for any reason, should be gaoled. His targets, however, were service magicians offering morally and religiously dubious services in addition to the usual, theoretically benevolent, kind.[33] Furthermore, the fact that he needed to make this prescription perhaps indicates that no such laws already existed in his home city of Athens. There is no clear record of any trial of a person for working destructive magic in the whole of ancient Athenian history. There were a few in the fourth century of tragic women who gave men lethal poisons under the impression that those were love

philtres. The same century also produced the case of a foreign woman who had settled in Athens, Theoris of Lemnos, whom the texts call a *pharmakis, mantis*, or a *hiereia* (priestess) and who was put to death, with her whole family, for *asebeia*, impiety. Unfortunately, the same texts do not allow firm conclusions to be drawn regarding the nature of her offence. One said that it was to provide 'potions and incantations' and another that she was an impious *mantis*, which together would make her a convincing victim of the Greek animosity towards many forms of magic. Another, however, accuses her of teaching slaves to deceive their owners.[34]

The wider picture is equally enigmatic. Matthew Dickie has gathered hints that magicians were arrested and punished in Greek cities from the history of Herodotus, the drama of Euripides and a dialogue of Plato. He also points out, however, that such people were almost never practitioners of magic pure and simple, but doubled in other roles, such as priests, oracles or healers, so that their offences would be hard to match conclusively to magic.[35] One of the fables credited to Aesop tells approvingly how a female magician (*gune magos*) was sentenced to death for selling spells, which, she claimed, averted the anger of the deities, and so interfered with their wishes. This would be a perfect illustration of the Greeks' horror of trying to coerce divine beings; but we do not know if it ever matched reality.[36] The city state of Teos passed a law that decreed capital punishment for any persons who made destructive *pharmaka* against its citizens, collectively or individually. It may be presumed that this term covered magic as well as chemical poisons, but it is not clear if the measure was enforced, and if it was intended against fellow citizens as well as outsiders. Rules for a private cult at the Greek city of Philadelphia in Asia Minor made members swear not to commit a list of antisocial acts, which included a list of magical practices; but vengeance was left to the gods.[37]

Especially interesting and puzzling in this context are curse tablets, sheets of lead which are inscribed with spells or invocations to subject other humans to the author's will, usually by binding, punishing or obstructing them. Their targets span all ages, and social roles and levels. Many call on the power of underworld or nocturnal deities or spirits, or the human dead, and they are found in pits, graves or tombs. They appear from the fifth century onwards, especially around Athens, and the set formulae used in many of them suggest either a widespread convention that most people understood or the use of professional or semi-professional magicians to make them. The very need for literacy indicates that specialists were involved. No known law forbids them, though Plato railed against them (and explicitly attributed them to hired magicians),[38] and scholars are divided over whether they were regarded as socially acceptable or would have been covered by the penalties against murder, assault and impiety.

None of the authors seems concerned about the censure of society, though they do worry about the reactions of the spirit forms invoked. On the other hand, they certainly violated cultural norms, not merely by appealing to dark deities and ghosts but by using exotic names, retrograde writing and the reckoning of descent through female lines. It is hard to believe that they were ever a respectable means of mobilizing spiritual power, but how disreputable, illicit or illegal the resort to them was is completely unclear. In a different society, they would have been stereotypical acts of witchcraft, but they do not seem to have been classed as those in Greece.[39]

It is of a piece with these patterns that there seem to be no clear representations of witches in archaic or classical Greek literature. Two characters in mythology bear some resemblance to them, as powerful female figures who work destructive magic: Circe and Medea. Circe uses a combination of a potion and a wand to turn men into animals, and Medea uses *pharmaka* for various magical ends, including murder. Neither, however, is human, Circe being explicitly a goddess, daughter of the sun and a sea nymph, while Medea is her niece, product of a union between Circe's brother and either another ocean nymph or the goddess of magic, Hecate herself. Nor are they unequivocally evil, Circe becoming the lover and helper of the hero Odysseus once he overcomes her with the aid of the god Hermes, and Medea assisting and marrying the hero Jason. Medea certainly murders to help her beloved, and then again in an orgy of vengeance when he casts her off; but the attitudes of the Greek texts towards her remain ambivalent, and (like Circe) she escapes retribution for her actions. Both were to be immensely influential figures in later European literature, as ultimate ancestresses of many of its magic-wielding females; but it is difficult to see either, in their original context, as a witch as defined in this book.[40]

Certainly magicians were stereotypically feminine in ancient Greek literature, and also assumed to come from the lower social ranks: it was believed that respectable women did not have the necessary knowledge. Sources that refer to the different kinds of service magician operating in real life, however, generally treat them as male: women were regarded as working mostly for their own personal benefit. Undoubtedly, the great majority of all attributed curse tablets were composed by men.[41] There is a possibility that women were more vulnerable to actual prosecution for working or trying to work magic, to judge from the Athenian evidence, but it seems dangerous to generalize from such a small number of trials. When literary sources portray women as using magic, it is generally not of an aggressive kind, motivated by pure wickedness and aimed at subverting society in general, but a defensive variety, intended to win or retain a man's affection or punish him for withdrawing it.[42] There was a tradition, established by the fifth century BC and

enduring till the end of antiquity, that Thessaly, the north-eastern part of Greece, was especially noted for *pharmakides* powerful enough to drag the moon down from the sky at their command.[43] Why Thessalian women should have acquired this fearsome reputation has never been explained, though it signalled that the region was not quite part of Greece proper. Not much seems to have changed as the classical age of ancient Greek civilization, extending across the fifth and fourth centuries, gave way to the Hellenistic one after the conquests of Alexander the Great extended Greek culture around the whole of the eastern Mediterranean. The Sicilian poet Theocritus, who probably worked in Egypt, produced an enduringly famous work about an Alexandrian woman enacting a rite to retrieve or punish a faithless boyfriend with the help of her maid. It was entitled the *Pharmakeutria*, but shows how much the concept of *pharmaka* had moved beyond drugs, because her methods consist entirely of a mixture of incantations, material substances of different kinds and special tools.

The one distinctly new development of the age was the educated collector of magical lore, publishing books on the arcane properties of animal, vegetable and mineral substances. Like Hellenistic culture itself, this took in lands far beyond Greece, and indeed drew heavily on the accumulated traditions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Syria: the first and most famous author in the genre, Bolus of Mendes, came from Egypt.[44] Accordingly, save that they are written in the Greek language, there is some question over how far such texts can be termed Greek. Otherwise, in the older Greek world itself, things look like classical business as usual, and it is equally hard to find the witch figure in it. An oracle from Claros in Asia Minor responded to a city in the region which blamed an outbreak of plague on an evil *magos* and wanted a remedy: the answer was to destroy the wax figurines used by the magician by invoking the power of the goddess Artemis. There is no indication of whether any action was also intended against an actual person identified as the culprit. Likewise, a lead tablet offered to the oracle at Dodona to the north-west of Greece posed the question, 'Did Timo harm Aristobola magically?' but we cannot tell who Timo was, and what would have been done if the reply had been affirmative.[45]

Rome

The pagan Romans, both in their republican and imperial periods, were heavily influenced by Greek culture, and it is not surprising to find them embracing the same distinction between religion and magic; though it may equally be argued that the distinction concerned must have appealed to their own attitudes for it to have taken root. In the first century of the

imperial period, and Christian era, both the playwright and philosopher Seneca and the scholar Pliny condemned magic as a wish to give orders to deities.[46] In the third century, the biographer of the holy man Apollonius of Tyana portrayed his hero as securing his acquittal from a charge of being a magician by claiming that he merely prayed to the god Heracles, who answered his plea.[47] Apuleius of Madaura, tried on a similar accusation, defended himself by contrasting somebody like him, who obeyed the deities, with a genuine magician who was popularly believed to 'have the power to do everything that he wanted by the mysterious force of certain incantations'.[48] In the same century the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus accused some rivals of making incantations designed to draw down the higher divine powers to serve them.[49]

There seems to be a consensus among historians that Roman attitudes to magic crystallized between the last century BC and the first one AD, and had hardened into legal and social convention by AD 250.[50] Some have attributed this development to a new desire to categorize varieties of religious experience, and to exclude activities which appeared to conflict with normative expressions of it. This has been related in turn to a greater definition of outsiders and threats to society produced by the incorporation of more and more people, and classes of people, within Roman citizenship. Others have laid more emphasis on the appearance of an individualized elite soaked in Greek ideas. The definition of the magician as an outsider and menace is generally reckoned to have appeared between the time of writers such as the poet Catullus and the politician and scholar Cicero in the mid-first century BC and that of Pliny in the late first century AD. The former still used the term *magus*, taken from the Greek, in its original sense of a Persian priest, but none the less Cicero could speak of the invocation of underworld spirits as a new and perverse religious practice. Pliny lambasted '*magia*', the practices of the *magi*, as 'the most fraudulent of crafts', designed to 'give commands to the gods' by discovering and wielding the occult powers within the natural world, and traced its progress from Persia and the Hebrews through Greece to the Roman world, so emphasizing its foreign origin as well as its pernicious character.[51]

At first sight, the development of Roman law seems to follow the same trajectory.[52] The code of the Twelve Tables, from the early republic – as far as it can be reconstructed from later evidence – forbade the specific act of luring away the profit of crops from somebody else's land to one's own, as an infringement of property rights; but did not specify that the means was by magic. It also outlawed 'an evil song', which could signify a magical incantation or merely an insult. Likewise, the Lex Cornelia of 81 BC forbade a number of means of killing by stealth, one of which was *veneficium*, a

term which to modern eyes has the same frustrating imprecision as the Greek *pharmaka*, as it could mean both poison and magic: once more, ancient people would in practice often find it impossible to distinguish between the two. Things become clearer only in the second century AD, when the work of the *magus* in general became equated with *veneficium* and with *maleficium*, meaning the intentional causing of harm to others. By the third century, Roman law codes were adapting to this change, extending the Lex Cornelia to cover the making of love potions, the enactment of rites to enchant, bind or restrain, the possession of books containing magical recipes, and the 'arts of magic' in general. To own such a book now meant death for the poor and exile for the rich (with loss of property), while to practise magical rites incurred the death penalty, with those who offered them for money being burned alive. As the possession of books and the provision of commercial services were activities that could readily be proved objectively, these were relatively easy laws to enforce.

Two major problems attend any attempt to understand the actual status of magic in the Roman world. One is that very little information survives on how these laws were actually enforced; the other, that it was perfectly possible to conduct witch-hunts without having any law against magic itself, if the victims were accused simply of committing murder by magical means. It was recorded, centuries later, that in 331 BC an epidemic hit Rome, with high mortality, and over 170 female citizens, two of them noblewomen, were put to death for causing it with *veneficium*. This may have meant straightforward potions, as the first suspects, having claimed to be healers instead, were made to drink their alleged medicine and died, triggering the mass arrests. The years 184 to 180 BC were also a time of epidemic disease in Italy, and much bigger trials were held in provincial towns, claiming over two thousand victims in the first wave and over three thousand in the second. Again the charge was *veneficium*, and it is impossible to tell whether this meant poisoning in the straightforward sense, or killing by magical rites, or a mixture.[53] If the second or third sense of the word was what counted, and the reports are accurate, then the republican Romans hunted witches on a scale unknown anywhere else in the ancient world, and at any other time in European history, as the body counts recorded – however imprecise – surpass anything in a single wave of early modern trials.[54] Nothing like this is known under the pagan Roman Empire, but individuals were certainly prosecuted then for working magic, whether or not it resulted in physical harm to anybody else. The (alleged) case of Apollonius and the (historical) one of Apuleius have already been cited: the former was accused of using divinatory rites to predict a plague, and the latter of securing a woman's love by casting a spell. Hadrian of Tyre, a second-century legal

expert, was quoted as pronouncing that those who offered *pharmaka* for hire (he wrote in Greek) should be punished 'simply because we hate their power, because each of them has a natural poison', and they offer a 'craft of injury'.[55] The Chronicle of the Year 354 claimed that Tiberius, the second emperor of Rome in the early first century AD, executed forty-five male and eighty-five female *veneficiarii* and *malefici* in the course of his reign.[56] Again the terminology is cloudy, and the terms could just mean respectively poison-sellers and criminals in general; but if so, the totals seem far too low, and it is more likely that magicians are intended. Furthermore, whether or not the Romans were hunting witches by the opening of the imperial period, they were certainly imagining them in a way that the Egyptians and Greeks did not, but the Mesopotamians, Persians, Hittites and Hebrews did. Indeed, the literary images that they produced were the main ancient source cited by early modern authors to prove the long existence of the menace from witchcraft. Some of them echo, and indeed copy, the Greek and Hellenistic model of the lovelorn woman seeking to use magic to secure or retrieve a partner.[57]

In addition, however, there are characters that have no parallel in Greek literature: women who habitually work a powerful and evil magic, using disgusting materials and rites and invoking underworld and nocturnal deities and spirits, and human ghosts. They appear in the later first century BC and continue into the later centuries of the empire. Such is Horace's Canidia, a hag who poisons food with her own breath and viper's blood, has 'books of incantations', and enacts rites with her accomplices to manufacture love potions or blight those who have offended her. They burn materials such as twigs grown from tombs, owl feathers and eggs, toad's blood and venomous herbs, and tear a black lamb apart, as offerings to the powers of night. They also make images of people, and murder a child to use his body parts in their concoctions. It is predicted that they will be stoned to death by a mob, and their bodies left for animals to eat.[58] Another is Lucan's Erictho, another repulsive old woman who understands 'the mysteries of the magicians which the gods abominate', because they can 'bind the reluctant deity'. Even ordinary practitioners, Lucan assures his audience, can induce helpless love, stop the sun in its course, bring rain, halt tides and rivers, tame beasts of prey and pull down the moon. Erictho possesses in addition the ability to learn the future by reanimating corpses with a potion of dog's froth, lynx entrails, hyena hump, stag marrow, chunk of sea monster, dragons' eyes, stones from eagles' nests, serpents and deadly herbs: like Canidia's, her mixtures are the apotheosis of *veneficium*. Like her, too, she practises human sacrifice, but on a grander scale, even cutting children from wombs to offer up burnt on altars.[59] The rituals of both women invert all the norms of conventional religious practice. Similar figures appear in

the work of other poets, though drawn in less detail. Virgil wrote of a foreign priestess with the power to inflict joy or agony on other humans by her spells, reverse the movements of rivers and stars, make trees march and the earth bellow, and summon the spirits of darkness.[60] Ovid produced a drunken hag called Dipsas, who understood the power of herbs and magical tools and could control the weather, raise the dead and make stars drip blood and turn the moon red, as well as performing the usual trick with rivers.[61] Propertius' equivalent was Acanthis, whose potions could make a magnet fail to attract iron, a mother bird abandon her chicks and the most faithful woman betray her husband. She also had the power to move the moon at her will, and turn herself into a wolf.[62] Tibullus' equivalent, called a *saga*, could perform the same feats with the moon, rivers, the weather and the dead, and (with an incantation) deceive the eyes: Roman witches inverted the natural as well as the religious order.[63] Apuleius, himself no stranger to charges of magic, put a range of magic-working women of different ages and degrees of wickedness and power into a novel. They are all murderous, lecherous or sacrilegious, and use magic to get their way: Apuleius remarks that women as a sex often do this. His most terrifying such invention, Meroe, can lower the level of the sky, stop the planet turning, melt mountains, put out the stars and summon the deities. Routinely, his witches can change their own shapes, and those of others, into animals.[64] In the same period, an older character occasionally got the same makeover: above all Medea, whom Roman poets and playwrights transformed into a darker figure, performing the kind of elaborate nocturnal rites, to dark powers, credited to these witch figures.[65] The satirist Petronius testified to the familiarity of the stereotype of the terrifying and mighty witch by the mid-first century AD, by sending it up in his own novel. The anti-hero, needing a cure for sexual impotence, which he has blamed on witchcraft, turns for help to an old priestess who boasts of possessing all the powers over nature attributed to Canidia, Erictho, Meroe and their kind, yet who lives in poverty and squalor and proves farcically to be a charlatan.[66]

It may fairly be wondered whether any of this was intended to be taken as seriously at the time as early modern demonologists were later to take it. These are, after all, literary inventions appearing in genres equivalent to romantic fantasy, Gothic fiction, satire and comedy. A major element of preposterous exaggeration was plainly present. On the other hand, such images – of potent magic worked by evil women – would not have been chosen had they not resonated to some extent with the prejudices and preconceptions of the intended audience. Kimberley Stratton has plausibly linked their appearance to a concern with the perceived sexual licence and luxury of Roman women in the same period, combined with an ideal of female

chastity as an indicator of social stability and order. The image of the witch, in her view, emerged as the antithesis of this idealized and politicized version of female behaviour.[67] However persuasive an argument, this still needs once again to take into account the likelihood that the image flowered so rapidly and luxuriantly because it was planted in soil made fertile for it. After all, the Romans who produced and consumed it had a historical memory of having put to death almost two hundred women in their city, centuries before, for having deliberately produced a major epidemic that claimed huge numbers of lives, by using *veneficium*. According to medical realities, all of them would have been innocent of this offence, and so their society would already have needed to believe in the capacity and will of women to commit it. An unknown number of women, perhaps the majority, would have been among the thousands of victims of the mass trials for the same crime in the 180s BC. Rome therefore already had a sense of wicked women as agents of murder and social disruption who used hidden means. Likewise, though with much more muted consequences both in social reality and in literature, it must be significant that when the Greeks conceived of divine or semi-divine figures who used dangerous magic, like Circe and Medea, these were female. It seems that cultures which had defined magic as an illicit, disreputable and impious activity, and in which women were excluded from most political and social power, such as the Greek and Roman (and Hebrew and Mesopotamian), were inclined to bring the two together into a single stereotype of the menacing Other. In the Roman case, however, the results, both practical and literary, were the most dramatic.

It is not clear how much a belief in the 'evil eye' tempered, or meshed with, Rome's fear of witchcraft. Romans certainly had one. Virgil described a shepherd who blamed 'the eye' for a sickness in his flock, while Pliny and Varro both wrote of the use of amulets to avert it from children and Pliny of the efficacy of spitting three times to break its power. Pliny and Plutarch discuss the details of belief in it, and testify that it was believed to be wielded both deliberately and inadvertently, and the willingness to recognize the latter effect should in theory have damped down one to blame witches for injury. They also record, however, that it was thought to be a special property of foreigners, fathers and women with double pupils (a rare condition). This would not have affected the great majority of people suspected of witchcraft, and so the belief would probably not, in practice, have mitigated very much.[68] One further indication that the Romans took witchcraft seriously is that they became the first people in Europe and the Near East since the Hittites, over a thousand years before, recurrently to make accusations of it as a political weapon. These studded the first two

reigns of the first imperial dynasty, as a feature of its attempts to establish its authority and the stability of the state. The first emperor, Augustus, linked that stability to a suspicion of magicians by declaring war on all unofficial attempts to predict the future, which might serve to encourage people in disruptive political ambitions. One decree early in his reign ordered the expulsion of all *goētes* and *magoi* from the city, and the retention only of the native and traditional forms of seeking oracles from the deities and natural world. This measure was repeated nine times in the following hundred years (testifying either to its continued importance or to its lack of effect), and Augustus was said to have ordered the burning of more than two thousand books of prophetic writings by unauthorized persons.[69] The next emperor, Tiberius, drove a prominent senator to suicide by investigating charges against the man of consulting *magi* and Babylonian astrologers and trying to summon underworld spirits with 'incantations'. Another leading senator then resorted to suicide when accused of implication in the death of the heir presumptive to the throne, Germanicus, by having remains of human bodies, curse tablets, charred and blood-stained ashes and other instruments of evil magic concealed about the prince's house. It was claimed that the empress dowager Livia, Tiberius' mother, had accused a friend of her hated step-granddaughter Agrippina of *veneficia*, while Agrippina's own daughter, who bore her name, charged three rivals with using magic, one of whom was also driven to suicide. A noblewoman was accused of driving her husband insane with 'incantations and potions'. After that, such charges disappeared from high politics, only to reappear spectacularly in the fourth century, when two more dynasties struggled to establish themselves, the Flavian and that of Valentinian. They seem to have been a feature solely of that occasional phenomenon in Roman history, the protracted stabilization of a new imperial family.[70]

It remains to consider the evidence for the actual working of destructive magic, and the fear of it, among people in the Roman Empire. By its very nature, this is relatively sparse, but it exists; and that is even when excluding for the time being the texts of complex ceremonial magic, which will be the concern of a later chapter. Curse tablets persisted in their original Greek homeland, and spread out from it across much of the empire.[71] An inscribed lead tablet placed in the tomb of a woman at Larzac, in southern France, alleged the existence of two rival groups of 'women endowed with magic'. One had cast malicious spells against the other by 'sticking' or 'pricking', perhaps of images of their intended victims, and been foiled by counter-magic aided by an additional 'wise woman': the person in the tomb may have been one of the presumed casualties of the conflict, or one of those who had triumphed in it, or the tablet may simply have been lodged in a

grave as part of a rite to work with the dead or their deities.[72] Andrew Wilburn has conducted a study of the material evidence for the working of magic, and especially of curses, at three sites, in the Roman provinces of Egypt, Cyprus and Spain respectively. His conclusion is that the cursing of opponents or oppressors, often using the services of experts, was a regular and important aspect of life under imperial rule, though not a respectable one.[73] It seems to substantiate the famous declaration of the Roman scholar and administrator Pliny, in the first century, that 'nobody is unafraid of falling victim to an evil spell'.[74]

It is also clear that people identified individuals whom they loved as having fallen victim to such spells. In the 20s AD, the princess Livia Julia, daughter-in-law of the emperor Tiberius, left an inscription to lament the loss of her little slave boy, whom she believed to have been either killed or abducted by a *saga*, one of the Roman words for a female magician.[75] This is vivid testimony that the accusations of witchcraft made by the imperial family during that reign were not merely the product of cynical political opportunism. One of the leading scholars of Greek and Roman magic in recent decades, Fritz Graf, has made a systematic study of epitaphs similar to that commissioned by Livia Julia, for people, usually young, who were thought to have been killed by magic. He found thirty-five, most from the eastern, Greek half of the empire and from the second and third centuries. They were not common among tomb inscriptions for young persons, suggesting that untimely death was not usually ascribed to witchcraft, and they called for divine vengeance upon the assailants, who were sometimes unknown and sometimes suspected and named (women being only slightly more common than men among these suspects). Graf suggested that this tactic of appealing to deities averted the need for legal accusations.[76]

How far this is true is hard to tell given the lack of surviving legal archives from the pagan period of the empire. We can be reasonably certain that there were no mass hunts and trials, because these would surely have left traces in historical records. It is much harder to judge whether or not individual accusations often reached the courts, and if so how seriously they were treated. Occasionally one is revealed by a chance survival of evidence, such as the Egyptian papyrus which records that a farmer in the Fayum had denounced neighbours to the local governor for using magic to steal his crops. The outcome of the case is unknown.[77] Livia Julia's passionate outburst on the death of her slave boy included an appeal to Roman mothers to protect their own children against such evil spells. It is only possible to wonder whether they needed such a warning, and if they shared the same reaction when their children died or disappeared, and what steps, if any, they took against the presumed killers.

The Night-demoness

Some societies in different parts of the world have held two concurrent concepts of the witch, one taking the form of a theoretical being, which operates by night and performs effectively superhuman feats, and one representing genuine human beings who are suspected and accused of witchcraft in day-to-day life. The Tswana of Botswana, for example, distinguished 'night witches' from 'day sorcerers'. The former were supposed to be evil old women, who gathered at night in small groups and went, naked and smeared with white ash or human blood, around homesteads to harm the inhabitants. They were said to get through locked doors, having thrown the inmates into a deep sleep. In practice, these beings were treated as more or less fictional, few claiming to have seen them and many openly refusing to believe in them. The 'day sorcerers' were ordinary members of the tribe who were supposed to try to harm personal enemies with combinations of spells and material substances. Everybody believed in them.[78] On the far side of the Old World, in the Trobriand Islands, the inhabitants spoke of women who flew around at night naked, but invisible to victims, met on reefs in the sea to plot evil, and removed organs from living humans for cannibal feasts, thus blighting their victims with weakness and illness. They also believed that certain male members of the community learned how to use a combination of magic, natural materials and animal helpers to inflict illness and death on chosen victims. It was the latter who were feared in everyday life, while the former were held responsible for occasional major catastrophes such as epidemics.[79] Such dual belief systems have been fairly common, though not ubiquitous, among societies that have believed in witchcraft.

The ancient Romans were one people who possessed such a thought system, and in doing so tapped into another well-scattered aspect of human belief, the tendency to associate witches with owls. This family of birds has, after all, five features that people often find sinister: nocturnal habits, silent movements, predation, a direct stare and an ability to turn the head completely round. In the Native American languages of the Cherokee and the Menominee the word for the owl and the witch is the same, and the belief that witches could take the form of owls was found from Peru to Alaska. Even more widespread is the idea that owls, or humans in their shape, were responsible for the ubiquitous human tragedy of the sudden, unexpected and mysterious sickening and deaths of babies and small children. It was found among many North American peoples, but also in Central and West Africa and Malaya.[80] This was also a feature of Roman culture, but as one corner of a complex of ideas spanning the Near East and

Mediterranean, which also allows us some opportunity to penetrate the thought world of pagan Germany.

This complex is first revealed in Mesopotamia, where by the early second millennium BC the lists of demons or ghosts compiled in the rites of purification and exorcism include a closely related group with seven different names that share the component *lil*. The first four were female, the last three male. They seem to have been erotic spirits who coupled with humans in their dreams, wearing them out and tormenting them. By the first millennium they also appear to have been regarded as dangers to women in childbirth, though the Mesopotamian demoness who was the special enemy of infants, pregnant women and new mothers was a lioness-headed one called Lamashtu.[81] A Phoenician exorcism text of the seventh century BC calls a *lili* 'flyer in a dark chamber', which would suit these roles, and portrays her as a winged sphinx.[82] In the Hebrew Bible there is a famous reference to a *lilith* (at Isaiah 34:14), in a list of beings that haunt a land devastated by divine anger; but it has been suggested that as the others in the list are genuine wild animals, the *lilith* may here signify a night bird, probably, indeed, the 'screech owl' of the King James translation.[83] If so, the linguistic connection between nocturnal demons or malevolent ghosts, and a nocturnal bird, is suggestive for what is to follow.

These demons or ghosts represent the strongest and most convincing continuity between the belief system of ancient Mesopotamia and that of the incantation bowls fashioned in the same region between (probably) AD 400 and 800. It has been mentioned that 90 per cent of the protective spells upon them were aimed at demons, rather than humans, and about half of these were 'liliths' and *lilin*. The former were female, and preserved the dual character of the older *lil-* spirits, of coming to men in erotic dreams and endangering women, as virgins, during menstruation, and at conception, pregnancy and childbirth, along with their infants: this was because a 'lilith' regarded herself as the true paramour of the man on whom she preyed sexually, and so treated his human wife and their children with murderous jealousy. The male *lilin* brought erotic dreams to women. A drawing and a few inscriptions indicate the appearance of a *lilith*, as a young naked woman with long dishevelled hair and prominent breasts and genitals: in her aggressive and immodest sexuality and unkempt, wild state, the antithesis of the well-behaved Jewish wife or daughter of the age. Sometimes the same figure is mentioned on the bowls as a single being, Lilith, who also features in texts of the Talmud, which agree upon her long hair, and one of which also credits her with wings. In an eighth-century Jewish text, the Alphabet of Ben Sira, Lilith suddenly took a quantum leap in her mythological persona, being given a back story as the first wife of Adam and

integrated into the Hebrew Bible. She was on her way to becoming the most feared demon of Judaism and one of the great imagined figures of the Western world.[84]

The Greeks spoke of various child-killing demons abroad at night, called (in the singular) *mormō, mormoluke, gellō* and *lamia*, who were, as in Mesopotamia, also dangerous to young women, on the eve of marriage or while or after giving birth. The *lamiai* were furthermore credited with being predators on young men, whom they tempted sexually before devouring. Most – in the Greek style – were made into personalities with their own myths, in which they generally featured as human women who had died prematurely or lost their own children tragically.[85] Their similarity to the spirits of Mesopotamia may be the result of direct transference, as Lamashtu may be the original of *lamia*, and a type of Mesopotamian demon called a *galla* may stand behind *gellō*, though this is not conclusively proved.[86] It is the Romans, however, who are most significant for the present enquiry, for the most commonly mentioned of their child-murdering horrors was the *strix* (plural form *striges* or *strigae*), a figure which they had given to the Greeks by the last centuries BC. What was distinctive about the *strix* was that, whereas the Greek monsters were like ugly humans or serpents, it strongly resembled an owl, or (to a lesser extent) a bat, being a winged, clawed creature, which flew by night and had a hideous screeching cry. The resemblance was the stronger in that the Romans sometimes seemed to use the same name for a species of actual screeching owl.[87] The actions and role of the strix varied from teller to teller, but everybody agreed that it was bad news. To some it was a creature of ill omen, a harbinger of foreign and civil war, which hung upside down. Its main function, however, was to prey on young children at night, weakening or killing them by feeding on their blood, life force or internal organs. When a victim was dead, it could eat the corpse. Unlike the child-killing monsters from further east, it seems to have had no inherent connection with sexuality. The would-be scientist Pliny was not sure whether *striges* were genuine or fictional creatures, while the poet Horace mocked the belief in them; and indeed they feature almost wholly in works of imaginative literature, and not in law codes or histories. On the other hand, in the seventh century AD John Damascenus could still note that the common people of his time, despite the teachings of Christianity, still believed in ghosts and *striges*, which slipped into locked houses and strangled sleeping infants.

One thing that was distinctively Roman about the *strix* was its connection with witchcraft, which was based on a quality of Roman witches, mentioned earlier, that was not shared by their Near and Middle Eastern counterparts: they were shape-shifters, able to change into animal forms in

order to go abroad. This opened the possibility that *striges* were in fact temporarily transformed witches. Ovid's Dipsas possessed, in addition to all her other powers, that of flying at night clad in feathers. In another work, Ovid left open the question of whether *striges* were actual birds, or crones who had been turned into bird form by spells.[88] By the first century AD, the grammarian Sextus Pompeius Festus could define *strigae* simply as 'the name given to women who practise magic, and are also called flying women'.[89] Novelists subsequently took advantage of the idea, as both Lucian (or somebody writing like him) and Apuleius produced accounts of a woman undressing, rubbing her body with ointment while carrying out particular rites, and then turning into an owl and flying out through a window into the night.[90] As in each case she is going in quest of a lover, and is a highly sexed woman in her prime, fond of young men and inclined to destroy those who reject her, this image supplies the link between *striges* and predatory sexuality which was missing earlier; and so fits them more neatly into the wider pattern of belief in such figures stretching as far as Mesopotamia. Apuleius, indeed, collapsed distinctions further, by twice referring to one of his human witches as a *lamia*.[91]

This evolving complex of beliefs may also supply a key to unlock the attitudes to witchcraft of the pagan Germanic tribes that lived to the north of the Roman Empire, and broke into it from the late fourth century onwards to conquer its western half and substitute successor kingdoms of their own.[92] To do so involves stepping far across the conventional boundary between ancient and medieval, to consider some later texts which cast light on earlier belief. One of the steps taken in the formation of those successor kingdoms was usually the proclamation of a law code, in the Roman manner and in the Roman language, of Latin. The oldest of these to survive, and possibly the first to be issued, is that of King Clovis of the Franks, for the northern part of his kingdom, later France, in 507–11. It is accordingly the least Romanized and, as it was created only a couple of decades after the Franks accepted Christianity, retains many echoes of pagan culture. Two of its clauses apparently concern bad magic. One prescribes a huge fine for anybody who commits *maleficia* against another person, or kills with a potion: both acts were probably regarded here as magical, as they are in the Roman codes being copied. The other imposes the same heavy penalty on a *stria* who 'eats' a person. This is a version of the word *strix* and suggests a native belief in a night-roaming female who consumes a person's life magically. Two more clauses provide further information. One fines anybody who falsely accuses anyone of being a *herburgius*, and glosses the term as meaning 'one who carries a cauldron to where *striae* do their cooking'. This suggests that the nocturnal women concerned were believed to meet to cook and eat the fat or organs

they subtracted from their victims: a tradition also found in parts of Africa. A larger fine was directed for anybody who falsely called a freeborn woman a *stria*, which was clearly a very serious insult.[93] Other Germanic tribes had the same fear of the same figure. The law code of the Alamanni, from the early seventh century, ordered fining for a woman who called another a *stria*.[94] In the same period the Lombard king Rothari fined anybody who called a young woman over whom they stood as guardian a *striga* or *masca*, presumably at times to lay hands on her inheritance: the second term, 'masked one', could be another word for the same being, or for a different magician who harms by stealth. Another fine was inflicted on anybody who killed another person's female servant or slave for being a *striga* or *masca*, 'because in no way should Christian minds believe that a woman can eat up a living human being from within'.[95] In 789 the first Holy Roman Emperor to emerge from the Germanic peoples, Charlemagne, informed the recently conquered Saxons, who were undergoing a forcible conversion to Christianity, that, 'If anyone, deceived by the Devil, believes, as is customary among pagans, that any man or woman is a *striga*, and eats men, and shall on that account burn that person to death or eat his or her flesh, he shall be executed.'[96]

It may be noted that the successor kingdoms had adopted the attitude of learned Romans: that beings such as the *strix* probably did not exist. The codes are themselves, however, testimony that in pagan times all classes of German society had believed in them. This was a significant difference from the Roman situation, and, moreover, while the Roman *strix* was primarily a danger to children, the Germanic equivalent allegedly attacked people of all ages. That belief continued as a tenacious popular tradition far into the Middle Ages.[97] Around the year 1000 the Swiss monk Notker Labeo commented that whereas savage foreign tribes were said to practise cannibalism, 'here at home' witches were said to do the same.[98] Soon afterwards, Burchard of Worms prescribed a penance for the belief among women that while their bodies lay in their beds at night they could go out as spirits through closed doors to join other women of the same kind. They would then band together to kill people and cook and eat their organs, restoring them to a brief and weakened life by substituting straw or wooden replicas for the parts that had been taken. He thought this a devilish delusion.[99] In the early thirteenth century Gervase of Tilbury dismissed as the product of hallucinations a tradition found in Germany and France that women known as *lamiae, mascae* or *striae* flew by night across great distances to enter the homes of chosen victims, dissolve their bones inside their bodies, suck their blood, and steal their babies.[100]

Older sources may help to reconstruct more of the cultural context in which such ideas played a part. A succession of Roman authors noted that

the Germans credited women with especial powers as diviners and prophetesses. Julius Caesar heard that a German army had not attacked him as expected because the 'matrons' in it had pronounced that battle would be unfortunate if joined before the next full moon: Caesar added that it was customary for such women to make such decisions by 'lots and divination'.[101] In the next century the Roman historian Tacitus reported that Germans regarded women as 'endowed with something celestial', which gave them the power to see the future, and that several of their most famous prophetesses had been venerated almost as goddesses.[102] A succession of such figures is recorded among the Germanic tribes and kingdoms by other ancient and early medieval historians, causing the nineteenth-century folklorist Jacob Grimm to suggest that ancient German culture had invested females with greater inherent powers than males, both for divination and for magic in general – which would certainly make a fit with the fear of night-roaming, flesh-eating women.[103]

What is missing from this picture is any sense of how good and bad magic in general were conceived and gendered among the pagan Germanic peoples. Likewise, there is far too little information on how magic and its practitioners were characterized, deployed and averted among ordinary people in the pagan Roman Empire. We have some striking images of certain kinds of it, and them, which are significant and allow some conclusions to be drawn, but large areas of relevant knowledge are absent.

Summary

It may be argued from all the data above that when magic is the subject under scrutiny, the ancient European world can indeed be divided into different regions, with contrasting attitudes and traditions. The Egyptians made no distinction between religion and magic, did not distinguish demons as a class of supernatural being, and had no concept of the witch figure. The Mesopotamians feared both demons and witches, and the Persians combined this fear with a division of the cosmos into opposed good and evil powers, the Hittites introduced it into high political life, and the Hebrews blended it with a belief in a single, good, deity with a single permissible cult. The Greeks (or at least some of them) made a distinction between religion and magic, to the detriment of the latter and some of its practitioners, but do not seem to have had an idea of witchcraft. The Romans made the same distinction, and accompanied it with a vivid concept of both witchcraft and witches, which extended to a criminalization of many forms of magic. The Germans feared a mythical sect of night-flying cannibal witches, which projected into real life, and criminal

prosecution, a much more widespread mythology – found as far as Mesopotamia – about nocturnal demonesses.

It is possible to draw a simple and crude conclusion from all this: that the early modern witch trials derived ultimately from the fact that Western Christianity managed to blend the Mesopotamian belief in demons and witches, the Persian one in a stark cosmic dualism, the Hebrew one in a single true, jealous and ultimately all-powerful deity, the Greek one in a difference between religion and magic, the Roman one in witches and (perhaps) the need for witch-hunts in times of especial need, and the German one in night-flying, murderous human cannibals who were mostly or wholly female. There would be some truth in such an idea, but it would ignore a whole range of complications and subtleties which are needed to explain why the early modern trials took so long to occur after the triumph of Christianity across most of Europe, why they were relatively short-lived and why they happened when and where they did. Instead, ancient traditions played an important role in the formation of European witchcraft beliefs in more complicated and subtle ways, and over a long period of time: and this process will be the subject matter of most of the rest of this book.

3

THE SHAMANIC CONTEXT

The term 'shamanism' is one entirely created by Western scholarship, and dependent in all its current public usages on the definitions that this scholarship has made of it. Its utility in everyday language, academic and popular, has largely been due to the fact that those definitions are so diverse that they no longer represent a classification: in the words of one expert, Graham Harvey, they are more of a 'semantic field'.[1] The term itself was coined by German authors in the eighteenth century, and has continued to develop, and expand its meanings, ever since. Although anthropologists have supplied much of the material for the study of it, they have often been wary of it since the mid twentieth century, because of its imprecision, and it has been applied more freely in the disciplines of comparative religion, the history of religion, and religious studies, and by some historians, archaeologists, experts in literature, and psychologists, as well as having a large non-academic currency.[2] At its widest application, it is used to describe the practice of anybody who is believed, or claims, to communicate regularly with spirits, as defined at the opening of this book. More often the term is applied to the techniques of a person who regularly communicates with spirits in a traditional non-Western society, and does so for the benefit of other members of it. It is accorded even more frequently to such a person who apparently makes the communication with spirits in an altered state of consciousness, most commonly described as a trance. Quite often, some further refinement is required to meet the definition of shamanism, such as the ability always to control spirits, rather than being controlled by them; or to send out the person's own spirit into other worlds, leaving the body temporarily; or the use of a dramatic performance to make the necessary contact with spirits. At the most restricted extreme of the semantic field are those who would confine the term to the specific techniques of such figures

in native Siberia and neighbouring parts of Eurasia, as it is derived from the word 'shaman', used of these people in one of the linguistic groups of Siberia, the Tungus. Some authors indeed employ it to mean the whole religious system of the inhabitants of this region.[3] There is no means by which any of these usages of the expression can be objectively judged to be more legitimate than the others: in practice, academic and non-academic authors choose one or another according to the convenience of it for their particular argument. In this respect the ivory tower of professional scholarship has become a Tower of Babel.

Shamanism, and the problem of its definitions, became an issue in the study of early modern witchcraft because of the work of one of Italy's most celebrated historians, Carlo Ginzburg. Between the 1960s and 1980s, he developed an approach to it based originally on his discovery of an early modern tradition in the Friuli district of the north-east of his country, concerning people called the *benandanti*, 'those who go well'. These claimed that at night, when their bodies lay in sleep or some kind of trance, their spirits went forth to do battle with those of witches for the welfare of the community. He saw immediately that this idea corresponded to some of the activities associated with shamans, and detected other traditions of similar figures at places spanning the whole expanse of Eastern Europe. He suggested both that they derived from a common body of ancient ideas, which once covered Eurasia, and that memories of these ideas had helped to create the early modern stereotype of the witches' sabbath. He was aware of the difficulty of characterizing shamanism, and dealt with it by speaking of 'elements of shamanistic origin which were by now rooted in folk culture, such as the magic flight and animal metamorphosis': in other words, people like the *benandanti* did not necessarily practise shamanism themselves, but drew on old practices which had derived from it or resembled it.[4] Carlo Ginzburg's sense of what shamanism should be bore a striking resemblance to the dominant one during the period in which his ideas were developing. This was a very particular one, articulated by Mircea Eliade, a Romanian refugee who settled in America and became its leading authority on the history of religion: in the 1970s half of all American full professors in that discipline had been his pupils.[5] He was also the most influential Western scholar of shamanism during the mid-twentieth century, defining it as a formerly universal and very ancient tradition whereby an elite of warrior magicians sent out their own souls and the platoon of spirits they controlled to do battle with evil forces for the good of their communities.[6] The apparent relevance of this model to Ginzburg's *benandanti* should be obvious, and Eliade himself perceived and commented on it, proposing that it be extended to other figures found in the folk cultures of south-eastern Europe.[7]

Support was forthcoming from Hungarian scholars for an association between particular kinds of European folk magician and shamans. The Hungarian people, the Magyars, had migrated westward into their present homeland from the Eurasian steppes in the early Middle Ages, and spoke a language from the same (Uralic) family as some used by western Siberian peoples who practised classical shamanism. Some Hungarians had by the mid-twentieth century perceived a similarity between shamans and a figure from their own society, the *táltos*, who was believed to have magical powers which were worked to help others, sometimes in trance or dream and by engaging in spiritual battles with evil powers.[8] In the 1980s and 1990s two such scholars became especially active and influential in pursuing such parallels and following up Ginzburg's suggestions, one a historian, Gábor Klaniczay, and the other a folklorist, Éva Pócs. Together they enlarged upon the fact that the different peoples of south-eastern Europe had obtained a range of purveyors of good magic, under different names, who had allegedly possessed the gift of sending out their own spirits at night to work for the benefit of others, often by fighting destructive forces.[9] They were as cautious in the equation of these with shamans as Ginzburg had been. For Klaniczay, the similarities consisted only of 'shamanistic elements', while Pócs stated roundly that the European magicians and seers in question 'cannot be seen as shamans in the strictest sense of the word'. They could indeed only be described as 'shamanistic', although she still believed that they were 'vestiges of a European agrarian shamanism' which had been practised in a prehistoric past, as Ginzburg had proposed.[10] By the 2000s, she also acknowledged that Carlo Ginzburg's own books made 'great spatial and temporal leaps without sufficient evidence', while they remained an important influence upon her. She had come to believe by then both that the definition of shamanism was overgeneralized and that figures such as the *benandanti* should be better related to European and Middle Eastern cults than Siberian shamans. None the less, she persisted in accepting the idea of a 'European shamanistic substratum', though she recognized that it had become controversial. Klaniczay had become still more careful, warning against bringing together remote and perhaps incompatible motifs to construct such a hypothetical 'substratum', and emphasizing that the imagery of the witches' sabbath kept on being reinvented as the early modern period progressed. Ginzburg himself acknowledged by the 2000s that he had possibly underestimated the intricacies of the relationship between the different components of his 'shamanistic' complex, and that shamanism might be no more than an analogue to the magical traditions of Europe.[11]

By then, however, the association between European magic and shamanism had been enthusiastically adopted by one of the leading

historians of the German witch trials, Wolfgang Behringer, in his valuable case study of the prosecution in 1586 of a folk magician from the Bavarian Alps. This man had claimed to have gained his powers as a healer and witch-finder on long journeys at night, in which his soul left his body to accompany either a train of nocturnal spirits, or else an angel. Behringer had no apparent hesitation in dubbing him the 'Shaman of Oberstdorf'.[12] At the same time the association was subjected to consistent criticism, and rejection, by an equally distinguished scholar of the witch trials, the Dane Gustav Henningsen, who was expert in both Scandinavian and Mediterranean Europe. He proposed that the *benandanti* and similar figures in south-eastern Europe differed from the 'classical', Siberian, shamans in four key respects: they were not in control of their trances; they were usually alone when they entered them and only encountered other humans in the course of their soul journeys; they held no public position; and they normally in fact did not enter trance at all, instead dreaming of their journeys while sleeping. He proposed that they be placed in a separate category from shamanism, or indeed from any kind of activity, under any name, which depended on apparently sending out one's soul or spirit from the body in a public performance. He held that this category consisted of private and passive experiences of seeming soul-journeying, sustained mostly when asleep and dreaming.[13] Meanwhile experts in the witch trials of Western Europe, especially those from the English-speaking world, have tended until recently to regard the whole debate as irrelevant to their concerns, largely because of the apparent lack of equivalent figures in their nations to the *benandanti* and their Hungarian and Balkan parallels.[14]

Fairly clearly, the total lack of an agreed definition of shamanism makes it impossible to decide objectively how far it is applicable to European magicians who were believed to send out their souls during trance or dream: some usages of the term certainly comprehend them and some as patently do not. It is equally obvious that there are some similarities between them and the 'classic' shamans of Siberia, and some differences, and how far those determine whether the former is analogous to the latter must likewise be a matter for subjective opinion. None the less, a study such as the present one cannot shirk the issue. If its preoccupation is with regional variations in beliefs concerning the witch figure, and their relevance to the early modern trials, then some attempt must be made as part of it to decide whether or not there was a generalized ancient shamanism in Europe, or a shamanic province in it during historic times. To make that possible, the question of definition must now be faced head-on.[15] In doing so, the work of providing a global contextualization of European witchcraft beliefs, largely undertaken in the first chapter of the present book, will be completed.

Setting the Terms

Éva Pócs, when puzzling over the problem of terminology herself, perceptively noted that ecstatic visionary experience is 'widespread, commonplace and non-culture-specific', and as such was found throughout medieval and early modern Europe, among the elite and the populace and in religious and lay contexts.[16] A few examples from very different cultures in the European and Mediterranean world may serve to bring home the point. At the end of the eighth century a historian of the Lombard kingdom, recalling a monarch who had reigned 200 years before, said that he was believed to have the power to send out his spirit through his mouth while asleep, in the form of a tiny snake. In this shape, it had the power to achieve feats such as detecting buried treasure.[17] In the 1180s the churchman Gerald of Wales noted the existence in his native country of individuals known collectively as *awenyddion* or inspired persons. When consulted by clients who wanted to know whether or not to undertake a venture they apparently became possessed by spirits, roaring violently and babbling what seemed nonsense but from which an answer to the question could generally be pieced together. At the end they had to be shaken hard to break their trance and preserved no memory of what they had said. They claimed to acquire their ability in dreams and as a result of profound Christian piety, as they invoked the Holy Trinity and saints before making their prophecies. Gerald found analogies for them in the pagan oracles of the ancient world and in the biblical Hebrew prophets.[18] Just over four centuries later, in 1591, a Scot called John Fian claimed that he would 'lie by the space of two or three hours dead, his spirit taken, and suffered himself to be carried and transported . . . through all the world'. He was confessing (under torture) to dealings with the Devil, and may have been recalling the temptation of Christ, as recorded in the Bible, but could also have been describing an ecstatic experience.[19] In 1665, the Jewish sage Nathan of Gaza entered an altered state induced by the singing of hymns by his pupils, in which he danced about before suddenly falling and lying as if dead, with little trace of breathing. In this state, he spoke, in a voice other than his own, the words of a divine entity. He had learned this technique from Hebrew instruction manuals, composed in the sixteenth century.[20] Also in the mid-seventeenth century, a friar, Marco Bandini, described a particular class of popular magicians in the Balkan province of Moldavia, then under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. They professed, like service magicians all over Europe, to heal, divine the future and find stolen goods, but did so by going into fits and then falling to the ground to lie motionless for up to four hours. On regaining consciousness they would go into paroxysms again and then

emerge from these to reveal the visions that they had received, which would provide what their clients needed. We are not told if they performed these acts in private or before others.[21]

All of these people, by entering altered states of consciousness in which they contacted spirits, sent out their own spirits or obtained visions, easily fit the definition of shamanism in some of its most commonly applied formulations. There is a clear value, therefore, in cross-cultural, multi-period comparisons that bring out common patterns in human experience and behaviour. Recognizing and understanding those patterns may in turn assist an analysis of specific phenomena such as attitudes to witchcraft and magic at particular places and times. Broad-brush, inclusive definitions of shamanism could therefore indeed be of genuine use to a historian. They also, however, pose problems. One is that the category of altered states of consciousness can cover markedly different kinds of experience, such as trance, dream, hallucination, delusion, dementia and reverie (each one of which is itself a loose category), and pre-modern sources can make it very difficult to distinguish between them, not least because pre-modern people only sometimes did so. To group all together as shamanism, or 'shamanistic' behaviour, does nothing to ameliorate this difficulty. It is certainly important to discuss what traditional human societies have in common, and shamanism provides a convenient umbrella term for direct contacts with spirit worlds by human specialists in other than normal consciousness. The danger is that the umbrella may turn into a dustbin. All human societies until the eighteenth century believed that they had to deal with spirits; what is significant is the range of different ways in which they responded to that belief. A levelling and universalizing language may deprive us of our best chances to explain varying patterns in the historical record, and – as the greatest single aim of a historian – to elicit why particular changes happened in particular places at particular times. Another problem is that it is by no means obvious that scattered case studies such as those noted above represent survivals of a widespread archaic 'substratum' of shamanism, as opposed to experiences and techniques which are possible in most societies at most times and are aspects of the non-culture-specific visionary activity noted by Éva Pócs. If shamans are defined as experts in communicating with a spirit world on behalf of others, then it must be beyond doubt that they existed in ancient Europe, because every traditional society has had such experts; such a definition cannot in itself, therefore, offer the potential to say anything very interesting about ancient Europeans in particular. The slightly tighter definition, of experts who perform that communication in an altered state of consciousness, is not a lot more helpful, because it seems that most human beings who claim or are claimed to make direct contact

with spirits (including deities) seem to do that in such a state, and in European history have done so under the names of sibyls, oracles, seers, prophets, visionaries, saints and mystics. The quest for shamans is therefore in essence one for individuals who made such contact in ways perceptively different from all those figures, and the fundamental problem of the quest for a 'substratum' of them in prehistoric Europe is that such a phenomenon can only be inferred from historical evidence. In other words, it can only be demonstrated if practices surviving in historic times can be proved to be remnants of a more ancient and universal tradition, because material evidence alone (which is all that prehistory leaves) cannot testify to the nature of belief or ritual action. As the only certain proof that such historical practices were survivals of a prehistoric tradition would be direct knowledge of what actually was believed and enacted in prehistory (which is impossible), the investigation starts to go round in a circle.

It is certainly possible to try to discern from prehistoric European remains apparent traces of activities or beliefs associated with what anthropologists have called shamanism among traditional peoples in the non-European world. These include unusual burial postures, or grave-goods, or personal ornaments; particular motifs in art or architecture; musical instruments; representations of human figures that show them dancing or in the company of animals; possible traces of the consumption of mind-altering substances; and various other phenomena.[22] The checklist of possible evidence is, however, so long, and the evidence itself is so ambivalent, that the quest is ultimately fruitless. Each piece of data can be interpreted in ways that have no connection with shamanism, however defined, and although plenty of such ambivalent data can be found in each epoch of European prehistory, the amassing of it does nothing to solve this omnipresent difficulty. So far at least, archaeology has only provided secure testimony to the nature of ritual behaviour when dealing with societies in which material evidence is combined with that of texts.[23] The way out of this complex of difficulties chosen here is to go back to basics and ask what it was that first made Europeans take up the word 'shaman', and invent that of 'shamanism', and find either of them so interesting. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans were familiar with a world of traditional spirituality, in which most people dwelt in small rural communities, were overawed by the forces of nature, feared and negotiated with the empowering entities of those forces, and had local specialists for that work of negotiation. They were also familiar with trance states and ecstatic visions. What they encountered in Siberia still seemed so new and remarkable to them that they had to adopt a native word for its practitioners, to distinguish them from priests, witches, cunning folk, oracles, Druids, prophets, seers,

visionaries or any others of the spiritual practitioners already familiar in European culture. By establishing what that alien quality was, it is possible to define with some precision what the essence of shamanism was to the people who first identified it, and then to determine whether that essence was indeed present anywhere in historical Europe.

Classical Shamanism

What struck (and generally shocked and appalled) Europeans who entered Siberia between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, was the manner in which specialists among its native peoples contacted spirit worlds to safeguard the well-being of their societies: by a dramatic public performance which commonly included the use of music, song, chant or dance, or any combination of those. It was an impressive piece of drama which held the attention, and engaged the senses and imagination, of an audience. In essence, therefore, shamanism was originally defined as a particular 'rite technique', and it was something that Europeans found utterly strange, and for which most of them were aware of no real parallel – contemporary or historical – from within their own societies.[24] The nature of that technique, and of its practitioners, may be summed up as follows.

The shamans of Siberia were rarely at the centre of social or religious life, in that they were not usually the political leaders of groups or the people who performed the regular rites in honour of deities. Nor was shamanism a single social institution, as practitioners might serve only their own family, or its neighbours or relatives as well, or a clan or a tribe, or take on any clients. Their most widespread and common function consisted of healing, by driving out or propitiating the spirits believed to cause disease; and indeed treatment of the sick is a major function of service magic worldwide. Next in order of importance in the Siberian shaman's work came divination, another major aspect of magic globally; and in Siberia it could take the form of clairvoyance, to trace lost or stolen property, or prophecy, to advise people on how best to prepare for activities such as hunting, fishing or migration. In addition to these two big roles, there were others which were only important in some regions, such as conducting the souls of the recently deceased to the land of the dead; or repairing the psychic defences of the community and launching magical counter-strikes against its enemies; or negotiating with the spirits or deities believed to control the local supply of game animals; or conducting special rites of sacrifice.

To effect any of these tasks, shamans generally worked with spirits, as part of a world view which divided the uncanny universe into entities that were naturally hostile to humans and those which were either benevolent

or could be forced to serve human needs. Such work took place within the context of local cosmologies which tended to possess three beliefs in common: that even apparently inanimate objects were inhabited by spirit forms; that the cosmos was divided into different levels or stacks of worlds, between which travel was possible (in spirit rather than physical form); and that living beings possessed more than one soul, or animating force. All over Siberia shamans were believed to depend for much of their work on the superhuman powers of their spirit helpers, who were usually regarded as taking the form of animals. This was probably for a practical reason: that it endowed the servitor spirits with mobile forms that enabled them to traverse different environments and deal with different challenges at the greatest speed. The nature of the animals concerned was a highly individual and personal matter which varied from shaman to shaman, and most made their own combinations of different species, choosing or being granted them from a very wide possible range. Some peoples believed that each shaman was assisted by one or two spirits in particular, which functioned as their spiritual doubles. The ability to call on these entities at will generally left a Siberian shaman with no need to transform into an animal in person, or to send out their own soul in such a form; though the matter could be confused by the central Siberian belief in animal spirit-doubles, with whom a shaman's own spirit might fuse, mentioned above. There seems to be no trace, however, throughout Siberia, of a shaman changing his or her own body into that of an animal in the physical world, as Roman witches (for example) were thought to do. That is why an assumption of humans' ability to turn themselves into animals as a sign of shamanism appears to be incorrect. The relationship between shaman and spirit helpers varied greatly across Siberia, covering broad spectra of fear and affection, and of voluntary association and coercion. Some shamans were very clearly in absolute control of their invisible assistants, while others were with equal clarity serving the wishes of theirs.

The apprenticeship of a Siberian shaman was generally divided into three phases. The first consisted of the discovery of a vocation for shamanism. This often ran in families, but the hereditary principle was qualified heavily by the fact that in theory the spirits concerned had to consent to the transfer to a new owner, and they often chose individuals with no shaman forebears, especially if those who did have such forebears did not seem as talented. In some regions they were thought to come to a new shaman unbidden on the death of the old one, and their arrival was marked in the person concerned by a physical or mental illness. Once the connection with the spirits was made, the apprentice shaman had to be trained, both by a veteran one, and by the spirits themselves in a series of

often terrifying visions and dreams. The final phase of maturation consisted of acceptance as a qualified practitioner by existing shamans and by clients. All three of these stages of development varied greatly in form across Siberia and no one model can be regarded as normative; and even less generalization can be made about the relationships between shamans and the human communities they served, or indeed between different shamans.

Universally, Siberian shamans performed with some ritual costume or equipment, which distinguished them on sight from others of their community. Across most of the region they put on a special form of dress, and in the central areas this was usually ornate, consisting of a heavily decorated gown and elaborate headpiece. In most peripheral areas, however, ceremonial costume was vestigial or absent though shamanism just as important. The employment of special implements or objects was more general, and of these by far the most widespread was the drum, the beat of which usually played a major part in the performance. None the less, stringed instruments replaced it in some places and among southern areas a staff was the main shamanic accessory, and occasionally a rattle. The key characteristic of shamans for European observers, their rite technique, was naturally also varied in character, though it was usually dramatic and demanded considerable performative skills. It consisted in essence of a summoning of spirits and the direction or persuasion of them to carry out specific tasks, by a process of which the possible component parts were singing, dancing, chanting, playing of music (usually drumming), and recitation. Some of the shamanic rites were for the general benefit of communities, and others to aid individuals. Shamans often used assistants, and the audiences at the performances were almost as frequently expected to contribute to them by chanting, or singing refrains: in this manner the shamanic rite technique was often a group one led by the shaman. Siberian shamans were mostly male, but women made up a large minority in most areas and probably predominated in one (the lower Amur Valley), and they served as shamans throughout Siberia: indeed, the role gave them a unique opportunity to wield public power and influence in its native societies. No two shamans, however, performed in exactly the same way, even in the same community or family. Some induced an atmosphere of gentleness, melancholy and reflection, while others were menacing and maniacal and terrified onlookers. Some apparently sent out their own souls on journeys to accomplish the task needed, while others took their spirits into their own bodies and were possessed by, and became mouthpieces for, them in the classic manner of the spirit-medium, and yet others carried on an external dialogue with the entities on whom they had called, eliciting information from them. Some remained conscious and

active throughout the whole performance, while others fell and then lay motionless and seemingly unconscious for the central part of it.

It may be seen from this that Mircea Eliade's choice of the personal spirit journey as the definitive feat of the true shaman was mistaken, and his concern to distinguish shamanism from passive spirit mediumship was needless. Shamanism of this sort was found throughout the whole vast region of Siberia, and in neighbouring regions of Central Asia and parts of South Asia. It was also found in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of Alaska and Canada, round to Greenland, the Bering Strait between Asia and North America representing no barrier to communication between the peoples on either side. How far it can be said to extend into other parts of the world, such as East Asia, the Middle East, the rest of the Americas, Africa and Australia, is a matter of protracted controversy among experts, a resolution to which always founders on the lack of accepted definitions of shamanism. Mercifully, it is not a concern here, where the focus is firmly on Europe. What can be emphasized is that whereas a belief in the witch figure, while widespread globally, made up a patchwork in most regions, peoples who feared witches fervently being interspersed with those who did not regard them as a serious problem or did not believe in them at all, the North Asian and North American shamanic province forms a compact mass covering Siberia and the Canadian Arctic and sub-Arctic. However hazy its boundaries may be south of that core area, due to the definitional problem, within it all the native peoples had shamanism of the classic kind described above.

The relationship between the two belief systems, in the shaman and the witch, took a strikingly different form on either side of the Bering Strait. Across most of Siberia, as has been noted before, the witch figure was completely absent, as uncanny misfortune was blamed on hostile spirits in the natural world, or some normally benevolent or harmless spirits whom humans had offended, or occasionally on shamans working for enemy clans, who had sent their spirits to inflict damage as an act of invisible warfare. Among some peoples in the north-east of the region, some slight qualifications were found to this rule. The Koryak believed that some individuals had the power to suck life and good luck out of their neighbours, but this was regarded as innate and involuntary, and they were not thought to be possessed by evil spirits. They were therefore avoided rather than persecuted.[25] Among the Sakha, a Turkic people who had migrated up into Siberia from the south-west, it was accepted that some shamans could turn bad and secretly attack the persons and property of neighbours. In those cases the culprits could be punished; but they seem to have been treated as delinquents rather than embodiments of evil, and the usual penalty was a fine.[26] By contrast, many of the peoples in sub-Arctic and Arctic North America

who possessed shamans of the Siberian sort also feared and hunted witches; and there the shamans used their powers to detect and unmask alleged practitioners of witchcraft in the manner of service magicians across the world, including those in Europe. This is true around the north of the New World from the Tlingit of Alaska to the Eskimo of Greenland.[27]

One further point needs to be made in this portrait of the 'classical' shamanism of Siberia: that it was assembled by selecting certain characteristics from the members of what were often quite complex local assemblages of magico-religious specialists. Thus, for example, a study of the Sakha divided such specialists among them into the *oyun*, or man who worked with spirits in a trance by means of a public performance, and the *udaghan*, his female equivalent; the *körbüöchhü*, or diviner; the *otohut*, or healer; the *iicheen*, or 'wise person'; and the *tüülleekh kihi*, or dream interpreter.[28] Their work clearly overlapped, and it is no longer possible to distinguish them absolutely. To the scholar interested in shamanism, it is the *oyun* and *udaghan* who are the figures corresponding to that category, but to the anthropologist interested in the spiritual world of the Sakha, all are important; and across Siberia the individuals identified as shamans often engaged in other kinds of magic as well, such as the use of symbolic natural substances, and incantations. In making comparisons between Europe and Siberia, such complexity is an important factor within European societies themselves. The service magicians who featured in early modern Hungarian witch trials included not only the *táltos*, the spirit-warrior who has been mentioned earlier, but the 'healing woman', the 'woman doctor', the 'herb woman', the 'learned woman', the 'midwife', the 'seer', the 'bed-maker', the 'smearer' and the 'wise woman'. Nor does it seem as if many of these terms could be used as alternatives for the same sort of functionary: the 'learned woman' and 'woman doctor' were of greater status than most of the others, and most could generally be distinguished by their methods.[29] Equivalents found in Finnish records between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries were led by the *tietäjä*, who was the most high-grade and usually male, and the *noita*, who was less respected, less reliably benevolent, and mostly female, but there were also five other kinds of magician of lower status, each with its own name.[30]

It is easy to see why scholars concerned with an understanding of how the concepts of magic and witchcraft have operated in particular human groups might feel uneasy about cultural cross-comparisons made by concentrating on particular figures and features without reference to the local contexts in which they are embedded. None the less, without some such exercise such comparisons can hardly be made at all, and they seem to have some validity. In the case of the historical debate with which this chapter

commenced, it should be readily apparent now why some of the participants should have seen some similarities between Siberian shamans and specific kinds of folk magician in early modern and modern south-eastern Europe. It should also be apparent, however, why Gustav Henningsen placed more emphasis on the differences, and his view may be borne out further by the means by which some of the positive comparisons were made. For example, the Hungarian *táltos* was held to have the following features in common with the Siberian shaman: being born with a distinguishing physical feature (such as teeth or an extra bone); an initiatory experience in childhood (a convulsive illness, a mysterious period of disappearance, or a visionary dream); the acquisition of unusual powers (such as vanishing at will, changing shape into an animal, or duelling with enemies in spirit flight); and the use of special equipment (such as a head-dress, drum or sieve). The first of those, however, is rarely found in Siberia, and this is also true of the first two of the three unusual powers mentioned. Missing in Hungary is the distinctive shamanic performance and much reference to work with spirits. Moreover, the features of the *táltos* listed above as significant do not appear together in descriptions of actual individuals: rather, they have been constructed from different morsels of (mostly modern) folklore to create an ideal type. In the earlier accounts, Siberian features such as the special equipment seem to be rarer or missing.[31] For this reason the *táltos, benandanti* and similar functionaries from south-eastern Europe cannot readily be accepted here as part of a historical Eurasian shamanic province, and the different question of whether they were survivors from an ancient one cannot be resolved. What can be attempted more readily is a solution to the question of whether any figures unambiguously similar to Siberian shamans can be identified in Europe at a period for which records survive, and the logical place to seek these is in areas closest to Siberia itself: in Russia and the Arctic and sub-Arctic north.

A European Shamanic Province

One obvious point at which to commence this quest is among northern peoples belonging to the Uralic linguistic and ethnic group, which straddles the Ural Mountains that separate Siberia from Russia and also includes the Magyars as an isolated component. The members of this group who live in western Siberia have practised classic shamanism of the universal Siberian sort, so what of those just on the opposite side of the mountains, in Russia itself: the Mordvins, Cheremises, Chuvashes and Votyaks? Here the information available seems to derive mostly from nineteenth-century folklore collections. The Mordvins had people who specialized in communing with

the dead, and old men who put on white robes at festivals to bless food. The Cheremises had diviners who cast beans and gazed into water, and the Chuvashes people who healed with herbs, told fortunes and recited charms to banish diseases. None of these sounds very much like a Siberian shaman, and most are no different from forms of popular magician found across the rest of Europe. The Votyaks, however (a people also known as the Udmurts or Chuds), had a figure called the *tuno*, who told fortunes, healed diseases and found stolen or lost property, either by prayer or by going into trance. Sometimes the trance state was achieved by dancing with a sword and whip to the music of a psaltery, until he cried out the answers to questions in delirium. The vocation was mostly hereditary, although gifted individuals could take it up without such a qualification, and trainees were instructed at night by spirits. This does sound close enough to Siberian shamanism to suggest that it was an offshoot.[32] There is also an isolated medieval reference to a similar practice among the same people under the year 1071 in the Russian Primary Chronicle, which was written in 1377 but drew on an original work from the early twelfth century, which in turn was based on older material. It tells how a man from the major Russian city of Novgorod went among the Votyaks. He paid to have his fortune told by a tribal magician, who called spirits to himself to provide the answers, which came to him while lying in a trance inside his dwelling.[33]

The great European parallel for Siberian shamanism has, however, been located precisely where, perhaps, it would be logical to look for it, in the Arctic and sub-Arctic where it more or less completes the circumpolar shamanic province which extends across Siberia, North America and Greenland. It has been detected among the Sámi or Lapps, a Uralic hunting, fishing and herding people who occupy northern areas of Finland, Scandinavia and Russia and formerly extended their range far into the central portion of the Scandinavian peninsula and further across the top of Russia. The first record of shamanism among them occurs in the twelfth-century *Historia Norwegiae*, which described the Sámi as having people who were claimed to divine the future, attract desirable things from a great geographical distance, heal, and find hidden treasure, with the aid of spirits. It included a report from Norse traders of how their Sámi hosts had attributed the sudden apparent death of a woman to the theft of her soul by spirits sent by enemies. A magician then took up residence under a cloth hanging and picked up a drum or tambourine painted with pictures of beasts, shoes and a ship, which represented forms of locomotion for his attendant spirit. He then played this, chanted and danced until he suddenly died himself, allegedly because his spirit-double had been killed in a battle with those of the enemies. Another magician was consulted, and performed

the same rite, this time with success, as he survived, and revived the woman.[34] In every detail, this could be a description of a Siberian shaman at work, and it is small wonder, if they used the classic, dramatic, shamanic rite technique, that Sámi magicians became famed for their prowess among the medieval Norse. It aided their reputation for arcane powers that whereas the other Scandinavian peoples converted to Christianity around the year 1000, the Sámi remained pagan for more than half a millennium longer. Particular examples in Old Norse literature of magic worked by them testify again to the importance of ecstatic trance to their mode of operation. The thirteenth-century *Vatnsdalers' Saga* features a group of three of them being hired by Norse chieftains to trace a missing amulet, and doing so by shutting themselves indoors for three days and nights while their spirits wandered abroad and found it.[35] Sámi magic also features as a distinctive, exotic and potent phenomenon in other sagas, though none of these literary sources portrays the Siberian performance rite in connection with it.[36] What continued to fascinate other Europeans was its reputed ability to send out the magician's spirit from its body at will to roam freely about the world. When the German Cornelius Agrippa wrote his major study of ceremonial magic in the early sixteenth century, he discussed this ability with reference to the Greek sages, and commented that in his own day it was still found among many in 'Norway and Lapland'.[37] The expression 'Lapland witches' became a commonplace one in early modern English literature for especially potent magicians, being found in Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe and Swift, in addition to lesser writers.[38]

Among the Sámi themselves, a fresh body of information upon their magical practices was generated in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the monarchies of Denmark and Sweden, that had partitioned northern Scandinavia and Finland between them, brought the native population under direct government. As part of this process, Sámi magicians were sometimes accused of witchcraft, and also caught up in the more general process of the enforced conversion of their people to Christianity. This generated further descriptions of their practices, even as the practices themselves were wiped out. The main magical practitioners were called *noaidis* or *noaidies*, who attempted to divine, influence the weather and heal. These were mostly male, and generally went into deep trances and lay immobile while their spirits left their bodies to work with attendant spirits, which often took animal form. Sometimes their own spirits duelled with each other for supremacy, and the loser sickened or died. Their main piece of equipment was a drum, usually painted with symbols, and at least at times their rites took the form of dramatic public performances. At some of these they had assistants dressed in special costumes.[39]

All this sounds like absolutely classic Siberian shamanism. It is true that the data are not quite as good as may be wished. All of these early modern sources seem to be second-hand, and there appears to be no eye-witness account of a performance by a *noaidi* among them. The drums survive in large numbers, but it is not proven that they were used to induce trance, as in Siberia, although magic was certainly made by chanting or singing while playing them. Still, the detail of the descriptions has been sufficient for most scholars of the subject, from the nineteenth century to the present, to describe the *noaidis* as shamans.[40] Recently, however, a leading expert on north Norwegian witch trials, Rune Blix Hagen, has questioned this tradition, noting that none of the actual testimony of *noaidis* themselves speaks of sending their souls from their bodies; which he takes (in the Eliade tradition) to be the definitive ability of a shaman.[41] He has therefore suggested either that the label of shamanism be withdrawn from the Sámi or that the category of shamanism be broadened beyond spirit-flight. It may be suggested here that the latter course is by far the more appropriate, as the emphasis on sending out a spirit from a human body as the hallmark of shamanism is largely a legacy of Eliade's work that does not match up, as stated above, to the records of actual Siberian practice. The *noaidi* is clearly portrayed by the trial records used by Hagen himself as playing the drum in order to contact spirits in order to aid other humans, in a dramatic public performance, and that is enough to fit the Siberian model.[42] In addition, however, the chain of detailed reports by outsiders of the performances of Sámi magicians from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, are so strikingly like those of Siberian shamans that if they are not representing reality, this in itself is an anomaly remarkable enough to demand explanation.[43]

A form of shamanism of the Siberian sort was also found among the neighbours of the Sámi to the south-east of their range, the Finns, who were another Uralic people. This was centred on the figure mentioned above, the *tietäjä*, who is recorded both in early modern trial records and modern folklore. Such people dealt with the same human needs as the *noaidi*, which were indeed the concerns of service magicians across Europe, and did so by going into altered states in which they sent out spirit helpers in human or animal shapes to do battle with evil spirits. Those states sometimes consisted of dream or intoxication, but mostly of exaltation or frenzied anger, accompanied by chants or songs and attained in front of clients and sometimes a larger audience. Their incantations, like the songs of many Siberian shamans, depicted the topography of spirit worlds.[44] One of the foremost recent experts on these figures, Anna-Leena Siikala, has stated that it is 'universally agreed' that they were descended from shamans; indeed, those who had all of the characteristics delineated above could quite accurately

be described as continuing to practise it, as only the lack of special equipment is missing in comparison to the Siberian template.[45] The medieval Norse referred to the Sámi and the Finns indifferently as 'Finnar', and if both had the shamanic rite technique it is easy to see why they retained such a reputation for magical potency among other Northern Europeans. Modern British and American seamen still believed 'Finns' to be wizards of frightening power, especially over the weather.[46]

A European Sub-Shamanic Province

It may therefore now be proposed that the 'classical' Siberian shamanic province had an extension into Europe that crossed parts of northern Russia to Finland and northern Scandinavia. What may be asked next is whether this produced any borderlands in which shamanic features of magical practice were blended with those more familiar across most of the European Continent. Here an answer has been proposed regularly since the nineteenth century: that elements of shamanism were found among the medieval Norse who were neighbours of the Sámi and Finns, especially in the specific practice known to the Norse as *seiðr*. This has, however, been controversial for most of the time in which it has been stated, and the debate continues to the present. In 2002, as part of an extensive and much-admired work on Viking spirituality, which united textual and archaeological evidence, Neil Price argued that many aspects of its ritual were 'fundamentally shamanistic' in nature. He also concluded that the seeresses of medieval Norse literature exactly resembled the shamans of the circumpolar region and that *seiðr* was a 'shamanic' belief system.[47] In another major study published seven years later, Clive Tolley responded that virtually all of the sources on which such suggestions rely are works of imaginative fiction produced long after the end of the pagan Viking era and so completely unreliable as evidence for its beliefs and practices. He was also concerned that the apparent elements of shamanism in representations of *seiðr* and other Norse magic could have derived from other belief systems and cultural contexts. None the less, he allowed that the literary portraits had to reflect notions of what was likely to have existed, and that those notions would in part have derived from tradition; and he concluded that the 'evidence does, however, support the likelihood of *some* ritual and belief of a broadly shamanic nature'.[48]

The present study has the advantage that it can avoid the whole issue of the reliability of the sources and the actual practices of Viking Age Scandinavians, because it is concerned with representations of, and beliefs concerning, magic and witchcraft. In other words, if the medieval Norse

conceived of magical practices in a certain way, then it does not matter much to the needs of this book that we apparently cannot tell whether they were actually practised. That the portrayals took one form rather than another is significant enough. It is clear that the authors of medieval Norse sagas and romances often used the term *seiðr* as one for magic, without going into details with regard to its nature, but also that they had a particular tradition of it: as a form of divination, practised mainly by women who went into trance in a raised seat or on a platform. Such people often roamed around districts being entertained by landowners, who sought their services to find answers to problems or learn their future or that of their household members. The most elaborate and famous description of one, in the *Saga of Erik the Red*, concerns Thorbjorg, a Greenland seeress with an elaborate and decorative costume of mantle, hood, belt, shoes, staff and pouch (for charms). A retinue of women sat round her as she took her place on the ceremonial platform, and one sang incantations to call her spirits to her so that she could provide answers to the questions asked of her. She was the most famous and long-lived of nine sisters with the same gift.[49] All this – the hereditary vocation, the visit to the home, the costume, the assistants, the sedate practitioner and the calling of spirits – is paralleled in Siberia: it is a classic shamanic performance. Only the platform is missing in Siberia, and a special seat or framework is sometimes found there. *Arrow Odd's Saga* has farmers invite a similar woman to their homes to tell fortunes and predict the weather; she travels with a retinue of thirty young women and men to make a great incantation about her when she performs.[50] *Frithiof's Saga* tells of two *seiðkonur* (women who know *seiðr*) hired to drown some enemies of their paymaster at sea. They 'moved onto the platform with their charms and spells', and sent out their spirits to ride a huge whale and raise a storm. Their intended victim, however, saw their shapes on the whale and sailed his ship at them and struck them. The whale dived and vanished and their bodies fell dead off the platform, with broken backs.[51] This associates *seiðr* with the other shamanic trick of sending the shaman's spirit out, in collaboration with an animal one, to achieve an effect. In *Gongu-Hrolf's Saga*, twelve men are paid to use *seiðr* to kill a pair of victims, and set up a high dais in a house in a wood to do so, making a great din with their spells.[52] *Hrolf Kraki's Saga* tells of a king who engages a prophetess to locate two concealed rivals of his; she mounts a tall platform, yawns deeply (perhaps to take in spirits) and speaks verses to disclose the necessary information. Later in the story a queen sits on a *seiðr* platform, and perhaps animated by a servitor spirit, sends a huge boar to join a battle she is fighting against enemy warriors, and also seems to make the dead among her own followers revive to renew the battle.[53]

Sometimes such shamanic features are found in stories without any explicit connection to *seiðr*. A famous case in *Hrolf Kraki's Saga* concerns a warrior who sits motionless aside from a battle while a huge bear (either containing his spirit or one that he has summoned) attacks the enemy to great effect; it vanishes when his body is disturbed.[54] The god Oðinn was believed to send his spirit to range the world in a variety of animal forms while his body lay asleep or dead.[55] A magician in the *Saga of Howard the Halt* sent out his in fox shape to spy out a hall full of enemies. He had proofed his animal form against swords but was killed when somebody bit out its throat.[56] A man in the *Vatnsdalers' Saga* could make his friends invulnerable in a fight if he lay down motionless nearby (presumably sending out his spirit to aid them).[57] Another much-cited Norse form of magic, *ùtiseta*, 'sitting out', seems to have consisted of sitting in a special place out of doors at night and waiting, perhaps in a trance state, to see the future or obtain other wisdom: as this is also found (forbidden) in medieval Norse laws, it was certainly believed to be practised.[58] The staff which features as an important accessory of Thorbjorg appears as a significant magical tool in the saga tradition in general. In *Laxdaela Saga*, the bones of a woman are found beneath the site of a church, with a large '*seiðr* staff'. It is identified as the grave of an evil pagan magician.[59] *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* has two women who could send their spirits to spy out the land at night, each riding a magic staff, while their bodies slept.[60]

In a fine discussion of the place of the staff in this literature, Neil Price notes that it was used for divination by the Chukchi people of Siberia; but the parallel is even closer than that, because it was, after the drum, the most common piece of shamanic equipment among Siberians.[61] None the less, none of the examples quoted above, except the first four, which illustrate *seiðr*, amounts to the full Siberian (and Sámi and Finnish) rite technique. Rather, they represent aspects of that technique which are found without the whole assemblage, just as elements of *seiðr* sometimes appear in stories without the whole package of that tradition, such as women wandering the land to tell fortunes or one sitting in a chair at a feast to do so.[62] The ritual platform is sometimes used by a magician or groups of magicians simply to send out spells or curses from it.[63] A queen in one tale 'moves her spirit' to bring fierce animals to fight for her.[64]

The idea that people can send out their spirits from their bodies in a shamanic performance to roam spirit worlds blends by degrees into that mentioned above, in which their spirit goes about in the form of a physically solid animal in the human world, while their body remains at home. It is a short step from that to straightforward shape-shifting, in which a human body turns into an animal one, while retaining a human mind, something not a feature of Siberian shamanism. A female magician turns

herself into a walrus in *Kormák's Saga* in order to attack a ship, but her opponent sees that it has her eyes and spears it, killing her.[65] *The Saga of the Volsungs* held that *seiðkonur* had the power to change themselves into she-wolves or to take the shape of other humans; and two characters in it become wolves temporarily by donning enchanted wolf skins.[66] A mother in *Eyrbyggja Saga* tries to hide her son from enemies come to kill him by turning him successively into a distaff, a goat and a boar; her power came from her eyes and was thwarted when a bag was put over her head.[67] In addition, there is plenty of magic in the sagas which is not in the least shamanic, and is recognizable across most of Europe, such as passing hands over a person and chanting, or reciting spells, or cutting letters and speaking over them, or walking anticlockwise about a space while reciting or sniffing, or offering sacrifices to spirits with invocations.[68] The medieval Norse language was replete with a proportionately wide range of terms for different kinds of magic.[69]

It looks, therefore, as if this literature, virtually all of which was written in Iceland in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, represents a hybrid culture which blended elements of genuine shamanism with features of magic more familiar from elsewhere in Europe. Both Neil Price and Clive Tolley therefore seem to be correct: Price that the shamanic elements are both major and significant and Tolley that they may not be fundamental to medieval Norse concepts of magic. It is possible that they were survivals from a prehistoric past, and so native to the Norse, but it could also be that they were the result of contact with the Sámi and Finns who were such near neighbours and made an impact on the same literature.[70] This would explain why such strong shamanic features as those manifested by Thorbjorg do not appear in the literature of the mainland of medieval Europe, south of the Baltic. If such an influence took place, then the Norse refashioned shamanism in their own way, dropping the drum, for example, and substituting the staff. The hybrid nature of the result also helps us to clarify the components of medieval Norse magic that are *not* shamanic, and seem to derive from a different tradition. One of these is the prominence given to women as prophetesses and diviners: as said, they formed a minority of Siberian shamans and a small minority of Sámi *noaidis*. Following a tradition going back to Jacob Grimm in the early nineteenth century, Clive Tolley has linked the Norse pattern to the ancient Germanic reverence for women as possessors of prophetic wisdom, discussed in the previous chapter of this book.[71] He is surely right to do so, and his distinction between the two, that *seiðrkonur* were figures on the fringes of society and the ancient Germanic prophetesses central to it, does not really stand up. The *seiðrkonur* were invited into the heart of communities in the sagas, even if

their peripatetic lifestyle prevented them from belonging to any, while the only ancient Germanic equivalent of whom we have relevant details, Veleda in the first century AD, lived isolated in a tower, and communicated with the local tribes by messenger.[72] The semi-detachment of both seems equivalent. A comparison of Norse and Germanic cultures, however, also reveals distinctions between the two. The Icelandic sagas and romances and Norse law codes show none of the fear of the cannibal female witch, preying on her fellow humans at night, which features in the early medieval Germanic sources. Indeed, there seems to be no actual presence of a witch figure in the early medieval Scandinavian texts: no terror of a malevolent worker of magic concealed within local society who causes misfortune to others because of pure evil. Women and men both feature as destructive magicians, but always as part of the feuding that was a key activity of early medieval Scandinavian society and a major theme of its stories. Magic is one more weapon in the waging of factional and personal violence, though a cowardly and disreputable one except when used in defence against other magic or the supernatural.

There are, however, figures in the Norse literature that can in some respects be equated with witches: women who ride around at night on enchanted physical objects or animals. In *The Saga of Gunnlaug*, a wolf is called *svaru skaer*, rendered by its English translator as 'witch's steed'.[73] At times it is clearly their spirits that are making the ride while their bodies remain asleep at home, as in the *Saga of the Sworn Brothers*. The staff that is the means of transport for those characters is not the only such object used: there is mention in the literature of *tunriður*, those who ride on a hurdle, fence or roof. In the famous poem *Hávamál*, the god Oðinn boasts of his ability to see such people 'play frenzied in the air', and thwart them by rendering them incapable of finding their 'home shapes', and their 'true homes' or 'own skins' again, once more suggesting that they need to get back to their everyday bodies by morning.[74] A law from West Gotland of the early thirteenth century forbids various terms of slander against a woman, one of which is 'I saw you ride on a hurdle, with hair dishevelled, in the shape of a troll, between night and day'.[75] The 'troll' here would be one of the human-like, often malevolent, beings famously thought to haunt wild places in Scandinavian mythology, often with homes underground. The women who send out their spirits to ride a whale in *Frithiof's Saga* are essentially performing the same trick in animal form. The reference to such night riders as 'playing in the air' suggests that they were thought to assemble for revels, and this is borne out by other sources; but where such assemblies are mentioned, they are not always thought to be composed of humans. In *Ketil's Saga*, the hero meets a female troll, hurrying to join a gathering of her kind.

It is on an island, where the tale states that 'there was no lack of *gandr* rides' that night: the term *gandr* could refer to a spirit, or perhaps an enchanted object such as a staff or hurdle.[76] In the *Tale of Thorstein*, that hero follows a Sámi boy in a '*gandr* ride' upon a staff to an underworld, to join a festival of its beings.[77] Trolls and other underground beings were thought to possess, and to confer, magical powers, and twelfth- and thirteenth-century Norse law codes forbade the 'raising up' of trolls to gain such powers: the standard term for witchcraft in all Scandinavian languages later became *trolldromr*, and witches *trollfolk*.[78] The night riders could be dangerous to humans as well as helpful to them: in *Eyrbyggja Saga* a boy is attacked while walking home alone after dark and wounded on head and shoulders. A local woman, suspected of being a 'hurdle-rider', is accused of having used him as her steed, though she is acquitted when twelve neighbours swear to her innocence.[79] The literature, however, does not attest to any great fear of them, or belief that they affected other people as long as the latter kept to their homes at night. It seems, therefore, as if in some accounts of *seiðr*, spirit-projection of the Siberian and Sámi shamanic sort was being combined with a native Norse one of nocturnal revels, generally of superhuman or non-human creatures, to which humans could ride or fly in spirit using objects, animals or other people as steeds. It may therefore be concluded that there is good evidence for an extensive and compact province of 'classical' shamanism in the northern hemisphere, covering not just Siberia and adjacent parts of Central Asia, but the Arctic and sub-Arctic zones of North America, and extending into Russia and Scandinavia. In addition, the influence of this shamanism can be detected in a 'sub-shamanic' zone covering other parts of the Nordic world, such as Norway and Iceland. It is entirely legitimate to propose the existence of shamanic elements in magical practices elsewhere in Europe, if only because of the lack of any generally accepted definition of shamanism; but such a proposal cannot be made conclusively, and the evidence for it can be read in alternative ways.

PART II

CONTINENTAL PERSPECTIVES

4

CEREMONIAL MAGIC – THE EGYPTIAN LEGACY?

It may be remembered (from the first chapter) that when Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard wrote his famous and very influential study of beliefs concerning magic among the Azande people of Central Africa, he distinguished between 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' as means of causing magical harm. The former was more of an innate power, wielded spontaneously by those born to possess it, while the latter was something that anybody could learn and which required the manipulation of certain material substances in concert with the casting of spells. It was also noted that a similar division of beliefs was held by many other traditional societies, but not by all or even by most, which is why the distinction was abandoned by anthropologists as a general one. What is worth emphasizing now is that Sir Edward found it easy to employ these terms because they had been used traditionally in his own language to characterize forms of magic, although these did not map exactly onto those in which the Azande believed. 'Sorcery', a term of which the origins will be considered later, has heavily overlapped in its meaning with 'witchcraft', but has been used even more broadly to cover most forms of magic. Unlike witchcraft, it was often extended to include the most elaborate and sophisticated variety of magical activity as a whole. I will refer to this here – as historians frequently do – as 'ceremonial magic', meaning the employment of elaborate rites and special materials to achieve magical ends, normally learned from written texts. The difference between this kind of magic and witchcraft (as defined earlier) was discussed in early modern Europe. One of the main apologists for ceremonial magic in seventeenth-century England, Robert Turner, declared that 'magic and witchcraft are far differing sciences'. He explained that witchcraft was the work of the Devil, produced by a pact which he made with a witch, while a ceremonial magician, or 'magus', was a priest or philosopher dedicated to the worship of the

one true God: 'a studious observer and expounder of divine things'.[1] Two generations before, another Englishman, the clergyman George Gifford who was one of his land's first demonologists, had articulated a similar distinction. He quoted an assertion that the witch was a person who entered into the service of Satan, while the ceremonial magician 'bindeth him [Satan] with the names of God and by the virtue of Christ's passion and resurrection'.[2] In the early sixteenth century the best-known of all early modern theorists of magic, the German Cornelius Agrippa, had made the same kind of claim at greater length.[3] Likewise, Johann Weyer, the sixteenth-century author who argued most famously against prosecutions for witchcraft, distinguished the witch (*lamia* or *venefica*), reputed to make a pact with a demon to be granted her malevolent wishes, and the magician (*magus*), reputed to summon and bind a demon to his own service.[4] The distinction has become part of the common parlance of historians, so that one of the leading twentieth-century experts in medieval beliefs concerning witchcraft and magic, Norman Cohn, could say that it was 'generally believed' by the 1970s that ceremonial magic had nothing to do with witchcraft because the former was mostly the preserve of men, who sought to control demons, while the latter was mostly that of women, who were servants and allies to them.[5] The self-image of such magicians, in the medieval and early modern periods, drew on the established ideals of the clerical, monastic and scholarly professions, representing themselves as part of the elite of pious and learned men.[6]

At the time, those who engaged in ceremonial magic would have been aware of two considerable problems with its public reputation. One was that in practice it overlapped with witchcraft as some of its texts contained rites designed to gain power over others and to injure or kill them. It also blended seamlessly into the officially disreputable world of common magicians, who offered services such as divination, healing, counter-magic and detection of witches for a fee. The other and larger problem was that mainstream Christian theology completely rejected the distinction between witchcraft and ceremonial magic, holding that all magical operations were effected (or apparently effected) by demons, and magicians therefore entered into a pact with those whether they realized it or not. This was precisely the point that Gifford himself argued in order to refute the contrast between magician and witch that he had just made; and in doing so he was adhering to a view which had been enunciated by leading churchmen for over a thousand years.[7] None the less, during the period of the early modern witch trials, people who offered magic for benevolent purposes were in practice punished less severely than those accused of witchcraft, while the scholarly ceremonial magicians were very rarely tried as witches. The later Middle Ages was a much more dangerous time for such magicians, largely because consultation of one was

made a frequent political charge as part of factional fighting within regimes; but the rate of execution of them was still low compared with that in the subsequent witch trials.[8] Even Jean Bodin, one of the most famous and effective proponents of those trials, gave ceremonial magicians the benefit of the doubt by saying that those who attempted to invoke good spirits, or those of the planets or elements, were not witches, though they might be idolaters.[9] As it was largely dependent on the transmission of texts, ceremonial magic has left a documentary trail for historians to follow despite its character as an officially proscribed and persecuted tradition. Sufficient manuscripts of it survive from the ancient world, the Middle Ages and the early modern period to allow the identification of key works and genres and the tracing of their passage between different cultures and languages, above all from Greek to Arabic and Latin, from Arabic to Latin and Greek, from Hebrew to Latin and vice versa, and from all of these into the vernacular of different peoples.[10] If all this research – by now a considerable body – were synthesized, then a full sense of the development of scripted forms of magical knowledge, over the past couple of millennia, would be achieved. Such an enterprise, however, still awaits its executor. In 1997 Richard Kieckhefer, who had emerged by that time as the foremost scholar of medieval magic, could say that 'One might easily be persuaded that there is a history of the uses of magic and reactions to magic, but not a history of magic itself: virtually every magical technique seems timeless and perennial.' He accordingly declined the temptation to 'wander endlessly through thickets of the history of magic, from the Greek magical papyri of antiquity through Arabic and Byzantine sources onto the grimoires of the early modern era'.[11] Kieckhefer's fellow American, Michael Bailey, argued in return that there was indeed a history of ceremonial magic in Europe which extended from the fourth to the eighteenth centuries, being framed by the two big ruptures of the triumph of Christianity and the Enlightenment. He thought, however, that it was only a unified tradition from the twelfth century onwards, and the (very good) historical survey that he provided was concerned mainly with uses of magic and reactions to it, in Kieckhefer's sense, rather than with its components.[12] What is proposed here is to try to cut a path through Richard Kieckhefer's 'thickets', along the route that he mapped out, and see if any continuous tradition may in fact be identified, and whether that may be traced from the regional cultures of attitudes to the supernatural mapped out earlier in the ancient world.[13]

The Magical Papyri and their Relations

It was suggested earlier that the ancient Egyptians made no distinction between religion and magic, had no concept of the witch figure and had no

hostility to magic, while the ancient Romans made a distinction between religion and magic, had a well-developed concept of the witch figure, and passed increasingly stringent laws against the practice of magic. An obvious question to ask may be what happened when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire and these starkly contrasted sets of cultural attitudes ran into each other. The answer seems to have been an extremely creative response on the part of the Egyptians. Roman rule eroded both financial support for the temple system and the privileges of its priests.[14] This forced the lectors out into wider society to offer their magical services, and the process seems to have been associated with the development of the texts mentioned above, the Greek magical papyri.[15] These were mostly written, as the name suggests, in Greek, the dominant language since Alexander's conquest, though some are in Demotic, a script embodying the native tongue. They are difficult to date, and have been generally consigned vaguely to a period spanning the first four hundred years AD, though where some can be ascribed to a narrower span of time, it is the late third and fourth centuries. While the attitudes, techniques and contents of the operations prescribed in them represented a continuation of previous Egyptian tradition, the scope of those operations became more extensive.

One aspect of this change was that they became more elaborate and ambitious. The basic nature of their rites was to invite or summon a deity to a consecrated space and then state a request to her or him. Sometimes the being concerned was under compulsion, and was dismissed as well as made to manifest, likewise by set procedures.[16] In several texts the deity was expected to be invoked by the magician into the living body of another person, usually a young boy, through whose mouth the divinity answered questions and gave addresses.[17] The earlier concept of arcane correspondences between various components of the natural world was developed into very complex ritual combinations of speech, action, timing, colours, tools, vegetable matter, incenses, fluids, animal parts and animal sacrifices. One, fairly typical, operation required unbaked bricks, an 'Anubian head of wheat', a falconwood plant, the fibre of a male date palm, frankincense, a choice of libations (wine, beer, honey or the milk of a black cow), grapevine wood, charcoal, wormwood, sesame seeds and black cumin.[18] Solid objects, notably rings, were invested with permanent divine power (the ancient Egyptian *heka*) by deities in special rites. The belief that superhuman beings could be made responsive or obedient by knowledge of their secret or 'true' names was retained, so that one spell could claim that the hidden name of Aphrodite was Nepherieri, Egyptian for 'beautiful eye', and repetition of it would win a woman's love.[19] Another informed the sun god Helios that he had to grant the speaker's wishes, 'because I know your signs and forms,

who you are each hour and what your name is'.[20] This tradition was also developed into the recitation of (often lengthy) formulae of apparently meaningless words, supposed to be charged with power. At times the magician actually assumed, or pretended to assume, the identity of a deity.[21] The second novel feature of these texts was their cosmopolitan nature, which was, again, an extension of native practice that had long been to add deities and spirits from other cultures to the existing stock. In keeping with the Hellenistic culture that had dominated the whole Near East since the time of Alexander, they incorporated Graeco-Roman deities, heroes and sages into invocations. The deities concerned tended either to be associated with supreme power and wisdom, such as Helios, Zeus and Mithras, or with magic itself such as Hermes and Hecate, or with love spells, such as Aphrodite and Eros. From Jewish culture came Jehovah (usually known as Iao), Moses and Solomon, and angels. The result was very often a luxuriant eclecticism, so that one rite included an invocation to the Greek god Apollo, identifying him with Helios, the Hebrew archangel Raphael, the Hebrew demon Abrasax and the Hebrew divine titles Adonai and Sabaoth, and calling him 'flaming messenger of Zeus, divine Iao'. Another made Helios into an archangel, while yet another addressed a single male deity by the names of Zeus, Helios, Mithras and Serapis, fusing four major pagan gods.[22] A third new feature was an interest in enabling practitioners and clients to achieve power, knowledge and worldly desires. The old lector priests had been more concerned to aid people who came to their temples seeking protection against ill fortune or enemies. The authors of these texts needed to be able to provide whatever customers asked of them. Some expressed an assumption that their skills would be passed on by the training of pupils and the transmission of writings.[23]

A final new feature of the recipes found in these papyri was that they appropriated for the practical purposes of magic the language and atmosphere of the late Roman mystery cults. These were closed initiatory societies devoted to particular deities, in which the members were given through ritual the sense of an especially intense and individual relationship with the beings to whom the cults were devoted. One papyrus defined the highest object of magic as being 'to persuade all the gods and goddesses'. It then termed the practitioner 'blessed initiate of the sacred magic', destined to 'be worshipped as a god since you have a god as a friend'.[24] A 'charm of Hecate Ereschigal against fear of punishment' (which thus twinned a Greek-Anatolian goddess with a Mesopotamian one) proclaims, 'I have been initiated, and I went down into the underground chamber … and I saw the other things below, virgin, bitch and all the rest.' A 'spell to establish a relationship with Helios' asks to be 'maintained in knowledge of you' (the god)

in order to achieve all worldly desires.[25] A rite to Typhon, 'god of gods', promises the power to 'attain both the ruler of the universe and whatever you command', as a consequence of the 'godlike nature which is accomplished through this divine encounter'.[26] The most famous of these texts, the so-called Mithras Liturgy, prescribes a means to ascend to the realms of the celestial deities, obtain a vision of the greatest of these, and come to the brink of achieving immortality. It refers to its practitioners as 'initiates'. The object of this mighty enterprise, however, is to obtain a divine answer to any question concerning earthly as well as heavenly matters.[27] The magical papyri, therefore, bear witness to an attempt made in the Greek-speaking world during late antiquity to apply religious forms to magical purposes.

Simultaneously, a parallel, or perhaps a connected, attempt was being made to apply magical techniques to religious purposes embodied in the concept of theurgy. This has eluded any modern scholarly consensus over either the literal meaning of the term or the practices which it signified, but there is apparent agreement that it consisted of the harnessing of magical forms in order to assist the ascent of the human soul to the divine, and personal encounters or unions between humans and deities.[28] This process was similar to some of those just described in the magical papyri, but there was an essential difference, that those encounters were regarded in theurgy as ends in themselves and not as means to greater practical knowledge and power for the practitioner. The first known text to articulate this was the lost one known as the *Chaldean Oracles*, which survives only in fragments quoted by later authors. Its name cashed in on the Graeco-Roman respect for (and fear of) Mesopotamian magicians, commonly called Chaldeans in the Roman world, though it seems that the text itself emerged in Syria in the second century AD.[29] It has brief references to rites intended to achieve union with or acceptance by the greatest of deities, including magical names in 'barbaric' languages and the use of a special sort of stone.[30] There are also passages doubtfully attributed to the *Chaldean Oracles* which speak of compelling deities to manifest, of using a human being as a medium through which they can speak, and making a magical statue of a goddess from special plant and animal materials; all practices familiar from the papyri.[31]

The concept of theurgy as expressed in the *Oracles* made a potentially good fit with one of the main contemporary schools of pagan philosophy, Neoplatonism, which likewise emphasized the need for humans to reunite with the primal divine. However, the first Neoplatonist to deal with it, Porphyry, drew a very clear distinction between Greek philosophical tradition and the methods of the magical papyri, condemning the notion that deities could be compelled by human will, ridiculing the use of 'secret' names in invocations and warning that those who sought to call deities to

them could summon evil spirits instead. This was a clear assertion of the Graeco-Roman distinction between religion and magic, and suspicion of the latter, and moreover he made it in explicit opposition to Egyptian views, which he thought a contamination of European beliefs. Written around the year 300, his argument was contained in his *Letter to Anebo*, a remonstrance addressed to a probably fictional Egyptian priest.[32] This was answered by another leading philosopher from Porphyry's tradition, Iamblichus, who recommended the magical practices of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and especially the former, as a means of revitalizing Graeco-Roman paganism. He defended them as having been revealed to humans by deities themselves, as channels by which those humans could communicate with the divine, with which deities willingly co-operated. This being the case, virtuous and pious people had nothing to fear from evil spirits. He defined theurgy as the power to manipulate symbols that enabled direct contact with goddesses and gods, such as special stones, herbs, animal parts and incenses. According to him it had this power because the natural world, being ultimately the product of a single supreme deity from whom all things emanated, was essentially interconnected. The theurgist understood the precise identity of the material substances, numbers and words that could be combined to encourage deities to respond to overtures. On the other hand, Iamblichus advised most of his readers to work with lesser spirits rather than actual deities, and warned that it was dangerous for all but the most experienced practitioners to attempt a union with the celestial powers. He also condemned common magicians as impious and reckless fools who attempted to control the system of mystical correspondences for their own selfish benefit, and probably would fall prey to evil entities.[33]

Later Neoplatonists also seem to have worked in this tradition. Maximus, who lived in Asia Minor in the mid-fourth century, was later reputed to have animated a statue (of Hekate) in classic Egyptian and Mesopotamian tradition.[34] Proclus, the leading philosopher of fifth-century Athens, seems to have acknowledged the ability of priests to mix stones, plants and incenses that corresponded to particular deities, to call upon those, and repel unwanted spirits.[35] It is possible that he also referred to rites to animate statues, and others to call a deity into a human being (after magician and medium had been ritually purified), and speak through that person, in the manner of some in the magical papyri.[36] He appears to have believed that special incantations could summon divine beings.[37] A successor of Proclus at Athens, Damascius, likewise seems to have stated that by whirling a top, or sphere, it was possible to summon or dismiss supernatural beings.[38]

In the same period of late antiquity in which the magical papyri and theurgy appeared, Jewish magic apparently became a textual tradition with

a specialized apparatus, expressed in manuals, amulets and the incantation bowls. Two handbooks survive which embody this tradition and may date back to the ancient world. The more likely to be ancient is *Sepher ha-Razim*, the 'Book of the Mysteries', which was conjecturally reconstructed in 1966 from fragments of different dates in different languages. It was written at some point between the late fourth and the ninth centuries, probably in Egypt or Palestine. It describes seven different categories of angel, with rites to deploy their power in the service of the magician – for a great range of constructive and destructive purposes – by using animal sacrifice, elaborate conjurations and favourable positions of planets. The author was an educated Jew, familiar with the Graeco-Egyptian magic of the kind found in the papyri and using similar recipes and long lines of Greek words and technical terms: in addition, Helios, Hermes and Aphrodite make guest appearances.[39] The other is *Harbe de-Moshe*, the 'Sword of Moses', which existed by the eleventh century but survives only in three different late medieval and early modern versions. The core of it consists of a succession of adjurations of angels for practical purposes, mostly healing but also a range of other desires from winning love and destroying enemies to controlling demons. These mostly use apparently meaningless words, the *voces magicae*, combined with material substances such as potsherds, vegetable, animal and mineral matter, and oil and water.[40]

Gideon Bohak has made a study of the cultural influences on late antique Jewish magic, including its lesser but much more numerous manifestations as amulets, and concluded that its burgeoning as a scribal tradition in the period was a direct consequence of the development of Graeco-Egyptian magic. Its texts show many Greek words and a particular borrowing of those developed specifically by the Graeco-Egyptian magicians for conjuration and invocation, individually or in long phrases. Jewish authors took over the *voces magicae* in particular, on a large scale, and with them the associated tradition of making geometric shapes out of words to combine the power of texts and mathematics. Graeco-Egyptian formulae were retained by Jews far into the Middle Ages, appearing regularly in the hundreds of amulets and spells found in the Genizah or store room of a synagogue in Cairo, dating from the ninth century onwards. These promised the control of demons, the finding of treasure, enhanced popularity, winning of love, ruin to enemies and healing of illnesses. Bohak has also emphasized, however, that Jews embedded the large quantity of pagan magical technology that they borrowed in rites and texts which were entirely their own. They very rarely included pagan deities, although they transformed a few into angels, or drawn figures and symbols, and placed a much greater emphasis on biblical verses and heroes. They also avoided the

threatening of superhuman beings, and positive references to magic itself.[41] Alongside Jewish ceremonial magic developed a Christian equivalent, and its first extended text to survive seems to be the Testament of Solomon, which appears to have been in existence by the sixth or seventh century. Written in Greek, and most probably in Egypt or Palestine, it provides the reader with names, words or formulae and the use of plants, stones and animal parts, to control and banish a long list of demons, and especially those that cause disease. This is done for the good of humanity, and with protective angels, and the book mixes together Jewish ideas with some from the magical papyri and Graeco-Egyptian astrology.[42] In Egypt itself the adoption of Christianity by the whole population between the fourth and sixth centuries finally made the Graeco-Roman suspicion of magic general, and extinguished the ancient ease with it. None the less, Christian magical texts continued to be produced in Coptic, the language into which the native one evolved in the same period. This provided one medium whereby features of the magic in the pagan papyri, especially rites of protection and execration, got through to medieval Arabic works. The Coptic texts mostly (though not always) replaced pagan deities with angels and biblical figures, but they retained the native tradition of wielding power over the beings they summoned by claiming knowledge of their true names, and the use of *voces magicae*.[43]

Thus it can be demonstrated that, just as official attitudes across the Roman Empire were hardening further against magic as a means of manipulating divine power for selfish ends, an unprecedentedly sophisticated form of magic had appeared which was dedicated to achieving exactly that kind of manipulation. It is most obviously recorded among Graeco-Egyptian pagans, but aspects of it also leaked into Greek philosophy and Jewish and Christian culture. One obvious question is whether it was Egypt that produced this new kind of magic and then exported it to the rest of the eastern Mediterranean world, and beyond, or whether Egypt represented just one corner of a development occurring all over that region, and possibly all over the Roman world. There are references to magical books in other parts of that world, from Rome to Syria, usually getting confiscated and burned by the authorities.[44] None, however, has survived to show whether they contained complex ritual magic, and if so, whether that was influenced by the kind recorded in Egypt. If we could be certain that *Sepher ha-Razim* and the Testament of Solomon were produced either inside or outside Egypt, then we would be further towards reaching an answer, but we are not. It may be, moreover, that the survival of the Egyptian material is itself an accident created by the dry climate of the country, which preserved material such as papyrus exceptionally well, and may have caused

records of late antique ceremonial magic to survive there and not elsewhere. Indeed, even that survival may have been to a great extent fortuitous, as most of the magical papyri may have come from a single deposit, probably in a tomb.

The two sides of the case may be summed up as follows. In favour of the arguments that the sophisticated magic found in the Graeco-Egyptian texts was home-grown, and diffused from there across the empire, it can be argued both that the country possessed an ideology unusually favourable to the use of magic and that all the essential features of the magical papyri were already long present in its culture. These included a heavy emphasis on the need for magicians to purify themselves physically and morally before carrying out a rite (an old requirement for Egyptian priests); the willingness to command, and sometimes personify, deities; an eclecticism which allowed the importation of foreign divinities and lesser spirits into the lists of those invoked or opposed; the employment of mineral, animal and vegetable substances, and incense, in ritual; the use of images in it, especially animated statues and statuettes; a belief in the numinous power of words spoken aloud; the emphasis on knowledge of a being's true name; *voces magicae*; the importance of choosing the correct day and hour for an operation, and of purifying the ritual space; a stress on the proper objects and colours for use in rites; a disposition to treat writing, and the act of writing, as something magical in itself; the use of a human medium to speak messages from deities; and the gathering of collections of rites in books.[45] Above all, Egyptians had long been accustomed to the concept of complex ceremonies designed to manipulate humans and superhumans in order to make things happen, regarded as acceptable to morality and religion. Moreover, the non-Egyptian deities and spirits that feature in the magical papyri are drawn overwhelmingly from those ethnic groups heavily settled in Egypt, and above all in its Hellenistic capital of Alexandria: the Greeks and Jews. Only three Mesopotamian or Syrian deities are included, while possible Persian elements are scattered and few, and there is no specifically Roman content.[46] The making of long lists of lesser spirits seems to have been originally a Mesopotamian custom, as remarked earlier, but by the time of the magical papyri it was thoroughly naturalized in Egypt. Astrology provides a famous case of an occult tradition which can be demonstrated beyond doubt to have reached Egypt from outside but was transformed there into the enduring model which it was to retain in Western civilization. It definitely developed in Mesopotamia, where an early exceptional interest in heavenly bodies evolved during the second millennium BC into an omen-literature based on their movements and changing conditions, which required increasingly exact observation during the first millennium. The

Greeks took this tradition over once Alexander had conquered Mesopotamia, and it was they who extended it into the idea of the horoscope. The Greek-speaking communities in Egypt then produced the zodiac, and the first true astrological texts, and so put predictive astrology into the form in which it was to endure, with some lesser accretions, until the present.[47] Against all this must be lodged the powerful argument that most if not all of the features of the magical papyri noted as being found in earlier Egyptian attitudes and practices may be found in other ancient cultures, above all Mesopotamian. The Egyptian evidence could after all quite credibly represent only one corner of a phenomenon happening all over the Fertile Crescent and Mediterranean basin in late antiquity, and have assumed an unwonted prominence because of unusually favourable conditions for survival. It may, however, be worth adding here that the chances that Egypt was crucial to the development of complex ritual magic are still very good. It alone can be demonstrated to have possessed all the cultural, political and social contexts for such a development, at just the right time, as well as the best surviving evidence for one. A further factor may also be added to the issue: that in exactly the period at which the complex magic of the papyri was appearing, Egyptian magicians were acquiring an even greater reputation as magicians in the Roman world. They had, as said earlier, long enjoyed such a reputation, but the literary works of the Roman Empire make the skilled Egyptian worker of magic – and usually a learned, sophisticated magic embodied in books – a key figure. In keeping with general Graeco-Roman attitudes to magic, he is usually a disreputable one, ranging from the shady to the downright villainous.[48]

There is an immediate rejoinder to be made to any attempt to relate this development to reality: that Greeks and Romans habitually regarded the practice of magic as a coherent learned tradition as one associated with foreigners, Persians and Mesopotamians being specific targets of this linkage as well as Egyptians. Mesopotamians, and even the occasional Hyperborean (literally from the back of the north wind, in this context effectively Never-Never Land) continued to feature in literature as magicians, though not as frequently as Egyptians. They may all fairly, therefore, be considered to be manifestations of the propensity of human societies to create stereotypical portraits of the Other, against which to define their own values.[49] The problem here, however, is that – as seen – Mesopotamians and Egyptians could in reality be considered to have developed sophisticated systems of magic, which impressed Europeans, and during the late antique period Egyptians were actually doing what Greek and Roman authors were representing, by developing such systems further into unprecedentedly complex and sophisticated forms, for private hire. Moreover, portraits of

mighty Egyptian magicians of the sort portrayed in the Graeco-Roman sources (though more admiring) are found in *Egyptian* texts dating back as far as the Middle Kingdom of the early second millennium BC.[50] Indeed, there is one reference that seems to go beyond caricature and generalization to show how Egyptian magic might actually have made its impact on the Roman world. It is from an attack on Christianity by a pagan called Celsus, preserved because quoted by a Christian opponent, which portrays self-described magicians (*goētes*) wandering that world who for a few coins

> make known their sacred lore in the middle of the market place and drive evil spirits out of people, expel diseases, call up the ghosts of heroes, display illusions of banquets and dinners with food and drink, and make things move as though they were alive although they are not really so, but only appear as such in the imagination.[51]

Celsus adds that they have learned these tricks from Egyptians. Again, this could have been pandering to a stereotype, but it does prove that there were real people around at the time who were claimed, or claimed, to have learned the kind of magic contained in the papyri from the kind of people who wrote those texts. Finally, one of the few surviving kinds of source material for magical practices in the European lands of the empire consists of metal amulets bearing protective texts in Greek. These support the sense of a form of magic spreading from the Near East, and perhaps from Egypt in particular. Two examples from the opposite end of the empire, the province of Britain, may make the point. One from the Roman fort at Caernarvon had magical figures and *voces magicae* of the sort found in the papyri, with Hebrew words and mention of the Egyptian god Thoth.[52] Another, from the temple complex at Woodeaton in Oxfordshire, uses a Hebrew divine name in its invocation.[53] Throughout the empire in general, these amulets lack appeals to mainstream Greek or Roman deities, or those of other European provinces: instead they use the deity and spirit forms, the *voces magicae* and the drawn figures, of the magical papyri.[54] None of this proves that it was Egypt that developed and exported the tradition of complex ceremonial magic; but it does perhaps make it very likely.

The European Magical Tradition

It may be seen whether a path can indeed be made through Richard Kieckhefer's 'thickets' now that the starting point has been established in late antiquity. Occasionally, complete works can be traced directly across the subsequent millennia, and the best example here may be the *Kyranides*,

an exposition of the medical properties of animal, vegetable and mineral materials and the way in which they might be transfused into amulets. This appears in fourth-century Egypt, as the work of an Alexandrian scholar called Harpokration, though he seems to have drawn on an earlier text. It then passed into the use of medieval Western Europe through a Latin translation of a Byzantine Greek one made in the twelfth century from what was claimed to be an Arabic version made out of the original ancient Greek one.[55] Sometimes also, the literary equivalent of living fossils can be found in works of ceremonial magic, which signal a transmission from the ancient Mediterranean and indeed specifically from Egypt. Perhaps most striking is the charm 'to see visions and cause dreams', calling on the power of the god Bes and the goddess Isis, which is found in one of the Greek magical papyri and has also apparently survived in an English manuscript of the sixteenth century.[56] A study of divine names in two Latin manuscripts from the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries found a substantial continuity in them of the Hebrew collection found in the Greek magical papyri, and even those of the Graeco-Egyptian pagan deities Helios, Mithras, Selene, Horus, Apollo, Isis, Osiris, and Thoth – so much more alien to Christian tradition – had survived.[57] The Magical Treatise of Solomon, a handbook that exists in copies made between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, includes garbled forms of the names of the Egyptian gods Osiris, Serapis, Apis and Kephra among the spirits it lists for adjuration. It also has directions for the making of reed pens for the writing of spells, which are ill suited to parchment and vellum, the usual materials for medieval books, which respond much better to the usual quill pens of the period.[58] They are, however, perfectly matched to papyrus, the ancient material for literature, most closely associated with Egypt.

The same game can be played with other relics of the ancient Mediterranean in northern texts, such as the use of an olive oil lamp in a spell copied in England in 1622.[59] A case study of this effect is that of the magical reputation of the hoopoe, one of the most striking birds of the Mediterranean region, with its prominent crest and colourful plumage. Its body parts, and especially its heart, were already regarded as efficacious in magical rites during ancient times, and feature as such in both the Greek and the Demotic magical papyri.[60] This belief passed into Coptic magic, and into that of the Arabs who conquered Egypt in the seventh century, where it became the most prominent bird to be used in spells.[61] This association crossed subsequently into European magic, a fifteenth-century German manual of which could recommend it as 'possessed of great virtue for necromancers and invokers of demons'.[62] The hoopoe does breed in Germany, but it is a rare summer visitor to England, and was probably still rarer in the colder climate of the late medieval and

early modern periods. When manuscripts copied in England from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries also recommend the use of a hoopoe's heart in spells, therefore, we are looking at another living fossil of ancient Levantine tradition.[63] Another scholar has noted that a formula used in love (or lust) spells of the magical papyri, 'let the woman not eat or drink' (until she succumbs), is then found in late Roman tablets, late medieval Dutch and German books of magic, seventeenth-century Italian and Spanish magical recipes, and those in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Slavonic texts.[64]

These details establish a continuous transmission of lore from the ancient eastern Mediterranean, and sometimes specifically from ancient Egypt, to early modern Europe. It is also significant that the same basic techniques recur in ceremonial magic all the way from the magical papyri in which they first appear until the modern period: complex rites which unify actions, materials and words; an emphasis on the power of special names and of *voces magicae*; a stress on the purification of the magician and the working space before the rite; a use of particular equipment, often specially made; care to find a special time at which to work; measures to protect the magician against the forces raised; the quest for a servitor spirit to carry out the magician's will; and an eclectic and multicultural range of source material. It should be made clear that all of these characteristics were by no means present in all works of ceremonial magic compiled between the fourth and nineteenth centuries; rather, they were a list of actions and artefacts from which magicians could choose according to will and tradition to make up their own assemblages. Nor is there a steady succession of relevant material across that period, as the survival of texts becomes much greater in the late Middle Ages. Nor is there any suggestion of steady progression towards greater sophistication over time. On the contrary, for example, the operations in the Coptic magical papyri are generally less elaborate and cosmopolitan than those in their pagan predecessors, and the handbooks of magicians in Renaissance Europe were only as ornate and ambitious as those of late antique Egypt. None the less, those Renaissance handbooks were compiled using the collection of techniques listed above, which had descended to them from the ancient world, and which appears there now only in the Egyptian texts.

It is striking also that, just as the complex magic in the late antique papyri was developed in clear opposition to the values (and the law) articulated by Roman imperial rulers, so it survived as an often self-conscious and explicit counter-culture. One of the most famous, or notorious, handbooks of the later Middle Ages, the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, was intended as a direct response to a papal campaign against ceremonial magic as demonic, probably

that of John XXII in the 1310s and 1320s. Its introduction audaciously asserted that the pope and his cardinals were themselves possessed by demons, and that it was the magicians who served the cause of truth, under the inspiration of the Christian God, and were exemplars of piety and offered a sure means to salvation.[65] The introduction to an equally famous grimoire from the early modern period, the *Key of Solomon*, claimed that its contents had been explained to the author by an angel sent deliberately by the true God for the education of humanity.[66] A treatise *On the Virtues of Herbs, Stones and Animals*, known from the early fourteenth century and popular until the seventeenth, asserted that although magic could be used for evil ends, it was not inherently bad, 'since through knowledge of it evil can be avoided and good obtained'.[67] As early as the thirteenth century, its greatest Christian theologian, Thomas Aquinas, noted (with disgust) the argument used by practitioners of ceremonial magic that it was no sin to achieve good ends by using (captive) demons, because the true God had made scientific truths subject to human knowledge, and demons understood more of those than humans.[68]

Generally, as said, late medieval and early modern European magicians drew on the established ideals of the clerical, monastic and scholarly professions, and presented themselves as exemplars of pious and learned masculinity.[69] As one aspect of this attitude, Roman Catholic magicians rapidly enlisted religious forms in the service of magical goals in a manner that would have been wholly intelligible to the authors of some of the magical papyri. By the early thirteenth century, soon after ceremonial magic had established itself in the world of Roman Christianity, some of them had developed the *ars notoria*, or 'notary art', named after the images and diagrams – a form of aid to magic, once again, found in the Egyptian papyri – which were a feature of it. Its aim was to achieve intellectual skills, and comprehensive knowledge, by prayers to the Christian God and the company of heaven, usually accompanied by purifications and rites that included *voces magicae* and had to be enacted at propitious times. It emphasized its descent from the ancient Levantine magical tradition by including passages in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, a language of ancient Mesopotamia.[70] Its texts continued to be copied until the seventeenth century, and by the fourteenth it had produced two spin-off traditions. A French monk called John de Morigny composed a version that removed the images and *voces magicae* and so purged it of those aspects most readily associated with magic, emphasizing instead the appeal to heavenly powers.[71] The *Sworn Book of Honorius* employed some of its techniques for the ambition of obtaining one of the greatest desires of pious Christians, the beatific vision of their God in his glory. This duplicated the ambition of the Neoplatonists, of using magical rites to achieve religious

aims, and the rites prescribed not only demanded a fervent Christianity and a life of monastic austerity but incorporated some of the established liturgies of the Roman Church. Some versions at least of the book, however, accompanied this devout aim with promises that the successful operator would also learn how to command angels and demons, and so acquire superhuman powers that could accomplish every worldly wish.[72]

Thus far the enduring and general characteristics of the European tradition of ceremonial magic have been emphasized, as derived from ancient roots most apparent in the Egyptian papyri. It is worth asking now whether particular ethnic and cultural groups might have contributed special features to it since the end of antiquity; and the answer seems to be that there have been three such contributions, associated with each of the three great religions of the book. Though they overlapped in time, each one was also broadly consecutive. The Jewish element has been identified, from the work of Joshua Trachtenburg in the 1930s onwards, as taking the form of a stress on the employment of angels as magical helpers, and the efficacy of the hidden name or names of the one true God.[73] Both were rooted in ancient magic, the magical papyri having already fully embodied a sense of the importance both of enlisting spiritual assistants and allies and of knowledge of their true names to effect this process. Both were also associated with major features of Judaism, its interest in angelic beings, its preoccupation with the sanctity of language rather than of visual imagery, and its intense monotheism. Neither of them accorded well with orthodox Christianity. Church Fathers and ecclesiastical councils condemned the invocation of angels, and recognized only the archangels mentioned in the Bible as possessing individual names, while the idea that the speaking of special names galvanized or even controlled heavenly powers did not accord with the concept of divine majesty.[74] None the less, Christian magic eventually assimilated both, and especially communion with angels, as major themes.[75] The distinctive Islamic contribution to the European magical tradition, probably most emphasized among scholars by David Pingree, was astral magic, rites designed to harness the powers of heavenly bodies to influence earthly affairs and above all to draw them into material objects, known as talismans.[76] This tradition seems to have developed in Mesopotamia, then the heart of the Arab Empire with its capital at Baghdad, in the ninth century, though such a conclusion must be drawn from possibly misattributed later copies of texts and this kind of magic was known throughout the Islamic world, including seemingly its major western outlier in Spain, by the eleventh century.[77] If it did develop in Mesopotamia, it is tempting to suggest that this was a natural outgrowth from the ancient preoccupation of the region with celestial powers and the movements of

the heavens, and indeed this is exactly what may have happened. On the other hand it is difficult to trace a direct development for astral magic from the Babylonian and Assyrian texts through the intervening millennium to the Islamic period. The Arab Empire itself functioned for a few centuries as an information superhighway extending from the Pyrenees to India, and its core territories embraced most of the old Hellenistic cultural zone including Egypt, in which Mesopotamian ideas might have mutated into astral magic outside their homeland, as a parallel case to that of astrology. If the earliest texts of that magic were said to have been produced at Baghdad, this may simply reflect the fact that it was the imperial and cultural capital by the date concerned.

Astral magic depended heavily on the idea of concealed correspondences which linked different parts of the cosmos and meant that the right combination of words, animal, vegetable and mineral matter, and times, could work magical effects. Such correspondences informed the handbook by Bolus of Mendes, and underlie most of the operations in the magical papyri, and the contents of the *Kyranides* and Neoplatonist theurgy. The papyri contain several recipes for charging material objects, above all rings, with magical power. They also include a love spell consisting of an invocation to the planet Venus, involving a special incense and a charm worn on the person, and, elsewhere, a set address to an angel thought to animate the sun, using laurel leaves inscribed with zodiacal signs, to gain a prophetic dream.[78] The Hermetic texts, produced in Egypt at around the same time, accord a major role to the planets, as immediate agents of an all-powerful creator god.[79] Late antique Egypt therefore already had all the raw material for the system which subsequently appeared in the Islamic world, whether or not it proved directly influential in its development. What is not in doubt is the means of its transmission to Christian Europe, by the mass translation of Arabic texts into Latin during the twelfth century. There it caught the imagination of intellectuals, and became part of the medieval Christian tradition of ceremonial magic.[80]

The distinctive contribution made by Christian Europe itself to that tradition seems to have been geometric: the use of the consecrated circle as the normal venue for a magical operation, with special significance often given to its four cardinal directions (east, south, west and north), and the identification of the pentagram as the most potent symbol of magic. All of these figures undoubtedly had ancient roots. One ancient Mesopotamian rite of exorcism had the *āshipu* sprinkle an *usurtu*, usually translated as a ring, of lime around the images of the deities on whose power he intended to call.[81] Another had one fumigate 'the circle of your great deity' into which two protector gods were to be invited.[82] A genuine – though occasional –

practice may therefore have lain behind the description of the rites of a Mesopotamian *magos* by the Greek satirist Lucian, to prepare a client for a journey to the underworld. One consisted of the magician 'walking all around' the client to protect him from the dead during the journey.[83] Circumambulation, the ritual processing around a sacred space before use of it, was a feature of native Egyptian religion from the earliest times, though it did not have the same significance in the magical papyri.[84] Instead those occasionally included a circle as one of the figures drawn as part of a rite, to have signs inscribed inside it, and just once, the magician stands inside one.[85] It features in (legendary) ancient Jewish magic in one story from the Roman period, of 'Onias the circle-maker', who ended a drought in Palestine by drawing the figure and then standing inside it to pray to Yahweh for rain.[86] In Anglo-Saxon magic it was sometimes drawn round injured or diseased parts of the body to contain an infection, or dug round plants before gathering them, to concentrate their power.[87]

The significance of the cardinal points of the compass had been known since ancient Mesopotamia, where as far back as the third millennium BC kings of the Sumerian city states had styled themselves rulers 'of the four quarters'.[88] One Muslim writer claimed (at second hand and with unknown accuracy) that the people of Harran in northern Syria, who were believed in the early Middle Ages to practise a religion which represented a continuation or a development of Hellenistic paganism, prayed to the cardinal points.[89] Those points feature in a few operations in the magical papyri, but – like the circle – not regularly.[90] Some Anglo-Saxon charms were designed to be hung around the four sides of a byre or sty to protect the animals inside, or cut into the four sides of a wound, or onto a stick to charge it with power.[91] As for the pentagram, five-pointed stars are found in ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman art or on coins, and also in the Christian early Middle Ages, but without any single tradition concerning their meaning and use: in many contexts they seem simply to have been decorative.[92] The satirist Lucian said that the followers of the philosopher Pythagoras used the sign as a password, indicating the wishing of health; which would make sense if it acted (as it did in part later) as a symbol of the human body, though a satire is not perhaps the best place in which to seek solid information about a private belief system.[93] There is no real evidence that the pentagram had any special association with magic in the ancient world. It appears once on a warrior's shield painted on a Greek cup, which may have reflected a belief in its protective qualities, or it may just have been a decorative star. The most careful study of its ancient significance, to date, concludes (reluctantly) that its wide distribution in ancient times may have been 'simply a question of the taking over of a motif, say a

decorative motif, with or without any particular meaning, together with numerous others', and 'the magic meaning of the pentagram . . . was not yet apparent' (before the later Middle Ages).[94]

As soon as Western Europeans acquired complex ceremonial magic in the twelfth century, seemingly as the result of their translation of Greek, Hebrew and Arabic texts, they showed their own preference for the quartered circle and the pentagram. In the course of his condemnation of that magic, in the early thirteenth century, William of Auvergne, archbishop of Paris, described an operation called 'The Major Circle' which involved summoning spirits from the four quarters. He also denounced the belief that the pentagram had an active magical power, and was especially associated with Solomon, the wisest of biblical kings, who had been reimagined in the late antique period as a mighty magician.[95] The *Sworn Book of Honorius*, from its earliest surviving manuscripts, of the fourteenth century, put the figure at the centre of the 'Seal of God', which was the most important work in the achievement of the beatific vision. Consecrated circles also feature in it.[96] In that same century one of the most famous pieces of medieval English chivalric literature, produced by one of its most devout authors, the poem 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', placed the image on the shield of its hero.[97] An Italian scholar from that century, Antonio de Montolmo, called the circle the most perfect figure for magical operations, and gave his own instructions for consecrating it.[98] A contemporary of both the Gawain poet and Antonio, the inquisitor Nicholas Eymeric, included in his celebrated manual for heresy-hunters a description of an operation involving the use of a set text to invoke a spirit into a boy, through whom it would then answer questions. This is a practice familiar from the magical papyri, with the difference that now the boy had to stand in a ring drawn on the earth.[99] By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from which books of ritual magic survive in relative abundance, the circle, often with its cardinal points marked, and the pentagram, are the standard figures of magical operations.[100] The pentagram had also penetrated popular culture, as it appears in many parts of Western Europe by the end of the Middle Ages, on houses, cradles, bedsteads and church porches, as a protective symbol.[101] The reasons for the new importance of the design are easy to propose. One of the prime concerns of the considerable intellectual ferment of Western Europe in the twelfth century, often called the 'Twelfth-century Renaissance', was the reconciliation of ancient learning with creative literature, Christian beliefs and knowledge of the natural world, to bring humans into harmony with the divine plan for the universe. As part of it both Honorius of Autun and Hildegard of Bingen asserted that the human body is constructed on a base formed by the number five, having five senses, five limbs (including

the head as one) and five digits on hands and feet. This made the pentagram an obvious symbol of the microcosm that the human form represented of the divine image in which it had been shaped.[102] The fourteenth-century author of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' repeated its association with Solomon and the divine form, and added one with the five wounds of Christ, an increasingly important symbol in the Western Christianity of the period. As such, he added, it was especially potent in repelling evil. As for the circle, the Italian scholar Antonio da Montolmo, working around the same time, declared that it was the essential symbol of the true God, as the prime mover of the universe (presumably referring to the circuits of the sun, moon and seasons and the spheres of the universe).[103] The special interest in those spheres in later medieval cosmology might account in itself for the circle's new arcane importance. Neither the moralists who condemned ceremonial magic in the medieval and Renaissance periods, nor the authors of the books of it, could agree on its actual function in operations. To some it was a fortress for the magician, which protected him from the demons (and sometimes from irritable angels) whom he conjured; to others it was a focus of power in itself, which could be radiated outwards from it.[104] How much the importance of these figures may be called a general hallmark of later medieval Christian magic, and how much one of Western Christianity in particular, is debatable. They appear abundantly in the different versions of the *Magical Treatise of Solomon*, which, as it is written in Greek, is generally presumed to be a Byzantine work and so would make them characteristic of magic in both the great halves of medieval European Christianity. They do not seem to feature, however, in the actual records of Byzantine magic and nor are there references to the *Magical Treatise* there, while none of its copies can be proved to come from the Byzantine Empire; where the origin of the medieval examples can be located, it is Italian.[105] It is possible that it was composed in a Greek-speaking area of the Latin Christian world, such as Sicily, and that the importance of the circle, quarters and pentagrams was a feature of that world alone.

What may emerge from this sequence of suggestions is how small the European contribution to the Western tradition of ceremonial magic was, even though some Europeans took it up with enthusiasm in all centuries since the twelfth. Whatever the priority of Egypt in it, this magic was essentially a product of the Near East, which may be proposed to have made three huge contributions to European views of the supernatural, in successive waves. The first affected European paganism, by encouraging it to treat its deities as a squabbling family, with individual and collective stories attached to its members. The second was the delivery of Christianity, and the third was the provision of ceremonial magic, as an ideology and

practice that could be combined with most religions. At the same time, this magic represented a way of dealing with superhuman beings that was at odds with Christianity, and indeed with pre-Christian European tradition. Each successive flowering of it was part of a more general period of intense creativity in European and Near Eastern religiosity. Its appearance was contemporary with the burgeoning of the pagan mystery religions and of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and Hermetism, the development of rabbinical Judaism, and the growth and triumph of Christianity. Its next period of development was that of the maturation of Islam as a major religion, and the next accompanied the twelfth-century renaissance of Western Christianity. The period of the Renaissance proper and the Reformation saw another great flowering of ceremonial magic, and then another followed in the spiritual ferment of late nineteenth-century Europe, and then (arguably) another in that of the late twentieth-century West. Its story seems to be inseparable from that of European and Near Eastern religion as a whole.

5

THE HOSTS OF THE NIGHT

In the popular imagination, the nights of medieval and early modern Europe abounded with spectral armies and processions, and these phantasms have come to play an important part in the explanations made by some leading scholars of the mental construct that became the early modern witches' sabbath. The major historiographical development which led to a linkage between them and that construct was the collapse of an earlier system of explanation for the early modern witch trials: the belief, held by a succession of authors between the early nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, that the people tried for witchcraft had been practitioners of a pagan religion that had survived from antiquity and was now annihilated by the witch-hunts. This was first developed by German academics, and spread from them to the French, becoming widely adopted among English-speaking writers by the end of the nineteenth century. It was never orthodoxy among experts in the trials themselves, though those remained few until the later twentieth century; rather, it was taken up by professional scholars in other fields and disciplines, and by non-academic authors. It ably served a range of those. To conservatives and reactionaries, it was initially a way of defending the trials, by arguing that although witchcraft itself could no longer be taken seriously, the people accused of it were still adherents of bloodthirsty and orgiastic old cults that deserved to be punished and repressed. Liberals, radicals and feminists could reverse these claims, by portraying the pagan witch religion as being a joyous, life-affirming, liberating one which venerated the natural world and elevated the status of women, strongest among the common people and pitted against everything that the established Churches, aristocracies and patriarchies represented; which is why (this tradition could claim) the latter brutally crushed it. Those who disliked all religion could use this theory of

witchcraft to undermine the idea that the medieval and early modern periods had been ages of universal and passionate Christian faith, because Europe had apparently harboured a rival religious allegiance, which had exercised most attraction among ordinary people. This did not necessarily involve any greater admiration for the imagined pagan witches, who could be regarded as followers of a different sort of ignorance and superstition from that of the elite. In England an increasingly fervent idealization of the shrinking countryside, and yearning for a sense of timeless and organic continuity there to offset the traumatic processes of urbanization and industrialization, found comfort in the idea that it had long hidden a paganism that had revered the natural, green and fertile.[1] In the early and mid-twentieth century, one British writer came to be especially associated with the hypothesis, a distinguished Egyptologist called Margaret Murray, who wrote about witchcraft (among other subjects) as a sideline to her own, primary, discipline. Her prominence as an advocate of witchcraft as a pagan survival derived from a number of factors. One was her remarkable longevity, so that she continued to publish on the subject for forty years, and another was the passionate certainty with which she argued her case. Also significant was that she wrote at greater length upon it than most of her predecessors, and unlike most of them drew upon primary historical sources (though always published texts, mostly British) to support her assertions. It reinforced her dominance of the idea that witchcraft had been a pagan fertility cult that she tended not to credit any predecessors with it and that when she wrote of it in a popular forum (such as the entry on witchcraft in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which she was invited to contribute) she did so as if it were established fact. That is why by the mid-twentieth century the idea had commonly become known as 'the Murray thesis', which gave a misleading impression both of its longevity and of the number of previous writers who had embraced it. Her passionate advocacy meant that by then it not only made a considerable impression on the general public in the English-reading world, but had also been accepted by a number of historians who were expert in other fields, some very eminent. By the 1960s doubts were being raised about it, but general belief in it only really collapsed among specialists in medieval and early modern studies during the years around 1970, with the publication of detailed studies of local witch trials based on comprehensive studies of the archival records (which Margaret Murray had neglected).[2] These have continued to the present and left no doubt that witchcraft was not a surviving pagan religion, or any other kind of separate and coherent religion. The idea that it had been was never accepted by historians whose primary expertise lay in the witch trials, and all that was needed to sink it was for those scholars to

become more numerous and better known. None the less, it had been a hypothesis worth testing.

Its demise in a sense put back the historiographical clock to the beginning of the nineteenth century, returning to general acceptance the idea that the concept that had inspired the trials, of witchcraft as a religion dedicated to Satan and the systematic commission of evil magic, had been a tremendous delusion. This in turn posed the question more acutely of how, in that case, such a delusion could have arisen, and one of the first coherent answers was provided by Norman Cohn in 1975. His whole book was effectively a reply to the notion that witchcraft had been an actual religion, and he suggested that the satanic stereotype for one had derived instead from two different sources. One was the tradition, which had originated in pagan Rome and been taken into medieval Christianity, of accusing groups within society, who embraced a religion which did not conform to the dominant norm, of a collection of antisocial activities which usually included sexual orgies, ritual murder and cannibalism. The other strand had consisted of popular beliefs in night-flying and night-prowling beings, some again descended from pagan times. Here Cohn drew attention to the figures of the *strix* and the Germanic cannibal-witch, but also to the importance of very widespread medieval reports of night-roving processions and bands, some consisting of the dead and some of the followers of a superhuman female figure. He suggested that these two separate streams of fantasy had combined to create the late medieval and early modern myth of the satanic conspiracy of witches, and of the assembly, the 'sabbath', at which they met and worshipped the Devil.[3] In its essentials, Cohn's model has stood the test of time, and remains the basic one for the understanding of the early modern persecution of alleged witches.

These developments presented problems for Carlo Ginzburg, who was unusually conscious of the importance of folk beliefs in witch trials because of his work on the Italian *benandanti*, who represented an extreme case of that importance. His first publication of that work was in Italian, in 1966, at a time when the 'Murray thesis' was being questioned but still widely accepted. He accordingly temporized when speaking of the reality of a witch religion: after all, Margaret Murray had used records derived from the far side of Western Europe to his own, and so their accounts did not really interconnect. He made it clear that the *benandanti* conducted their presumed magical abilities in a state of trance or in dreams, while holding out the possibility that they represented a sectarian association with common beliefs which might have met in reality (something the evidence does not disprove but nowhere proves). In 1983 the English edition of his work came out, and by then the 'Murray thesis' had perished among

professional historians. He therefore made plain that his own work had not confirmed that witches had met for communal rites in the early modern period, but felt that it was still true that the images and ideas that had underpinned the notion of the early modern witch religion drew heavily on folk traditions which themselves derived ultimately from an ancient pagan fertility cult. He did not, however, suggest that the cult concerned had itself survived through the Middle Ages and that the people accused of witchcraft had still practised it.[4] At the end of the 1980s Ginzburg produced his own general study of the origins of the image of the witches' sabbath, in which he restated this idea on a grander scale. He made full acknowledgement of the fall of the 'Murray thesis', declaring that by that date 'almost all historians of witchcraft' agreed that it was 'amateurish, absurd, bereft of any scientific merit'. He agreed that this polemic was 'justified', but feared that it had diverted his colleagues from an interest in the origins of the symbols of which the stereotype of the sabbath was composed, even though they 'document myths and not rituals'. In this fear he was correct, as the new wave of local studies tended to neglect the question of how the popular elements in beliefs and accusations had originated. In stating it he chose to distance himself from Norman Cohn, one of the few authors who had faced that question directly, and did so in two ways. The first was to argue that the short-term development of the image of the religious and social deviant – in the fourteenth century – was more important than the long-term history of European stereotyping of deviancy that Cohn had reconstructed. The second was to minimize the importance of the ancient and folkloric elements in Cohn's model, by claiming that Cohn had shown no interest in their origins, treating them instead as examples of human psychology or anthropology.[5]

In reality, these two gifted historians had much fundamentally in common, as both emphasized the twin streams of tradition which had fused to create the idea of the sabbath: that of the stereotype of the religious and moral deviant (save that Ginzburg emphasized the final, fourteenth-century, development of it) and that of fantasies, also rooted in ancient belief, about night-roaming beings (save that Ginzburg, taking the *benandanti* as his normative group, neglected the predatory demoness and concentrated on bands and processions). Ginzburg also differed in that he was interested in tracking that ancient belief beyond its historical manifestations into a reconstructed prehistoric mental world, being willing in the process to make analogies, notably that with shamanism, and to presume the former existence of a *single* fertility religion or shamanic rite technique, or at least a single complex of either, which had spanned Eurasia. In doing this, he was actually adhering to a much older tradition of scholarship, which, like the

idea that early modern witches had been pagans, had developed in the nineteenth century. This depended on two assumptions. The first was that the further back in human time one went, the more unified and cohesive human belief tended to become, so that the plurality of religions found in ancient Europe and of folkloric motifs found in medieval and modern Europe were actually fragments of a single prehistoric tradition; this idea was greatly encouraged by, if it did not actually derive from, the Bible. The other was that modern folk customs and stories were often if not mostly fragmentary survivals from a pre-Christian past, and thus could be treated as the historic equivalent of fossils. This view produced the belief that, if collected and reassembled, and sometimes also combined with the customs and stories of 'primitive' peoples in the non-European world, they could be used to reconstruct a convincing picture of prehistoric religion, and so perhaps of human mental evolution. Both ideas were developed primarily in Germany, but then taken up enthusiastically by the Victorian and Edwardian British, of whom the most celebrated became Sir James Frazer. They were rejected by most historians and anthropologists in the course of the early twentieth century, both because their conclusions were incapable of objective proof and because the technique of putting together so much heterogeneous data, without regard for context (and often with none for its actual history) began to worry too many people.[6] Both, however, underpinned the representation by Mircea Eliade of shamanism as an archaic and once universal tradition of spiritual combat; and Eliade had been inspired by Frazer.[7] Not only is Eliade's formulation of shamanism similar to that of Ginzburg, but Farzer's influence played a part in Ginzburg's interpretation of the *benandanti*.[8]

A few other authors accomplished the same work as Cohn and Ginzburg, of rejecting Margaret Murray while retaining an interest in the folkloric roots of beliefs in witchcraft. One was Éva Pócs, who used mainly south-eastern European material both to emphasize the element of popular lore in those beliefs and its derivation from ancient thought systems, and the difference of this exercise from that enacted by Murray and her predecessors. The distinction, as Pócs formulated it, was that the latter had believed in the reality of witches' gatherings, whereas she was identifying memories, preserved in accounts of witchcraft, which combined recollections of real societies of folk magicians (whom she nowhere suggests were pagans) with ultimately ancient beliefs in fairies, demons and battles between the spirits of special humans. In the process she generously and correctly drew attention to the importance of Norman Cohn in first pointing to the significance of that popular lore.[9] Another was Gustav Henningsen, who wrote a large book to show explicitly how the kind of material used by Margaret Murray

to demonstrate the existence of a witch religion in fact did nothing of the kind, while also providing one of the most fascinating local studies of how a popular belief in night-flying spirits could get mixed up with notions of witchcraft.[10] The present study naturally follows in this dual tradition, and its precise concern now is with the medieval tradition of nocturnal hosts of spirits, which looms large in the work of all these distinguished predecessors from Norman Cohn onwards. It is time to look more closely at the ancient beliefs from which it is supposed to derive, and also at the exact nature of the tradition itself.

The Construct of the Wild Hunt

In modern times the roaming nocturnal spirit-bands of the medieval imagination have often been blended together under the label of 'the Wild Hunt', an umbrella which can cover an assembly of the human dead, or of living women and men, in spirit or bodily form, or of non-human spirits or demons. Sometimes such an assembly has been called the Furious Army, or the Herlathing, or Herlewin's Army, or Hellequin's Army. It often has an identifiable divine or semi-divine leader, either female (called Diana, Herodias, Holda, Perchte or by other names or by variants on those names) or male (called Odin or Wotan, Herla or Herne the Hunter or sometimes identified as King Herod or Pontius Pilate); and sometimes both, in partnership.[11] In his first work on the *benandanti*, Carlo Ginzburg drew attention to the importance of the Hunt in creating key images for the witch trials, calling it a night ride of prematurely dead humans led by a fertility goddess. To him it 'expressed an ancient, pre-Christian, fear of the dead seen as mere objects of terror, as unrelenting maleficent entities without the possibility of any sort of expiation', which became Christianized in the twelfth century.[12] Éva Pócs duly followed suit, declaring that when popular traditions of night-roaming spirits are examined,

> from the Celts to the people of the Baltic, the outlines of a common Indo-European heritage seem to emerge. This is connected to the cult of the dead, the dead bringing fertility, to sorcery and shamanism in relation to the different gods of the dead, who are linked to shamanism that ensured fertility by way of the dead.[13]

This idea was still in full force in 2011, when the French historian Claude Lecouteux made a comprehensive survey of medieval traditions of the nocturnal spirit bands. He asserted that

> the Wild Hunt is a band of the dead whose passage over the earth at certain times of the year is accompanied by diverse phenomena. Beyond those elements, all else varies: the makeup of the troop; the appearance of its members; the presence or absence of animals; noise or silence; the existence of a male or female leader who, depending on the country and the region, bears different names.

He added that

> the dead presided over the fertility of the soil and livestock, and needed to be propitiated, or driven off if wicked. In one way or another, the Wild Hunt fell into the vast complex of ancestor worship, the cult of the dead, who are the go-betweens between man and the gods.[14]

The emphasis on fertility in all this should alert those familiar with modern historiography and folklore studies to the influence of nineteenth-century scholarship, of the kind which culminated with Frazer and which was largely preoccupied with the idea of ancient pagan religion as a set of fertility rites. In this case, a single book lies behind the whole construct of the Wild Hunt, Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (German, or 'Teutonic' mythology), first published in 1835. It was this which developed the composite image of a nocturnal ride of dead heroes, led by a pagan god and his female consort, and popularized the term 'Wild Hunt', *Wilde Jagd*, for it. In doing so he relied heavily on the two assumptions, so influential in his century and after, mentioned above: that variant forms of a popular belief recorded in historic times must be fragments of an original, unified, archaic myth; and that folklore recorded in modern times can be assumed to represent remnants of prehistoric ritual and belief, and used to reconstruct that. It should be emphasized now that some modern folk customs and beliefs can indeed be traced back to ancient origins; but that these are relatively few and the descent has to be demonstrated, from documentary evidence in the intervening millennia.[15] Grimm, like most nineteenth-century folklorists, assumed that the contemporary beliefs and rites of common people, especially in rural areas, represented an unthinking and unchanging re-enactment or repetition, century by century, of ancient forms and ideas by communities which no longer understood them (so that these forms and ideas had to be studied and properly interpreted by trained intellectuals). It was a deeply patronizing attitude, which greatly underestimated the dynamic and creative aspects of popular culture.[16] His construct of the Wild Hunt was therefore a melange of modern folklore from various different areas and scraps of medieval and early modern literature, mixed

together to produce an imagined original that removed distinctions and discrepancies within his component material. It perfectly served his own agenda to foster a modern German nationalism by providing a politically fragmented Germany with a single ancient mythology uniting all parts of the German and Scandinavian world. His construct of the Wild Hunt has proved influential in two different contexts. One has inevitably been in twentieth-century scholarship written in German, and here the main debate was started in 1934 by Otto Höfler, who argued that it was a memory of an ancient German warrior cult dedicated to the god Wotan, alias Odin; a controversy that petered out for lack of any ability either to prove or to refute his hypothesis.[17] The other has been the more recent attempt to make the Hunt one of the sources for the idea of the witches' sabbath, as described. The idea most commonly articulated by the German and Austrian authors – that the basis for the belief in the Hunt lay in ancient cults of the dead, often connected with fertility – clearly influenced the writers interested in witchcraft; and one of the German studies from the 1930s provided the collection of medieval and early modern texts for the subject on which subsequent writers from both groups have chiefly relied.[18] Mostly, however, the two contexts have hardly connected, and generally authors interested in German mythology have emphasized armies of the dead, and those interested in witchcraft, journeys led by a supernatural woman. Since the mid-twentieth century there has been greater willingness to acknowledge that the concept of the Wild Hunt is a composite, of materials of different kinds and from different dates.[19] None the less, there remains a general acceptance of two major points of Grimm's methodology: that ultimately the concept derives from ancient paganism and in particular from a cult of the dead; and that modern folklore can be used to patch up the gaps in the medieval and early modern record.

It is proposed here to examine medieval and early modern accounts of nocturnal spirit processions without any prior assumption that they were underpinned by a unified system of ancient belief; and with a concentration only on sources compiled before 1600, by which time the concept of the witches' sabbath was fully formed. Some recent progress has already been made in deconstructing the modern notion of the Wild Hunt by use of the second tactic. Claude Lecouteux has shown that medieval and sixteenth-century sources refer to three different kinds of spectral huntsman: a demon, chasing sinners; a sinful human huntsman, condemned to hunt without rest as a punishment; and a wild man who chases otherworldly quarries, and sometimes human livestock.[20] What can be extrapolated from his work is that as none of these figures has a retinue and none is connected with the nocturnal armies and processions, the term 'Wild

Hunt' is itself inappropriate as an umbrella term for the latter. Jeremy Harte has subtracted the character of Herne the Hunter from the mix, finding him to appear first as a solitary ghost in a play by William Shakespeare, and perhaps to have been the playwright's own creation. It was Grimm who added him to the regional leaders of his composite Hunt, purely because of Herne's name.[21] Finally, the ghosts of heroes, especially King Arthur, were sometimes seen by medieval witnesses on a hunt, but this seems to have been viewed as a natural aristocratic pursuit, rather than having any cosmological significance.[22]

When these accretions are stripped away, two different kinds of medieval nocturnal procession are found at the core of Grimm's construct: those of the dead, and of the followers of the supernatural female. These may now be examined in turn.

The Wandering Dead[23]

Ancient Greek and Roman literature provides ample testimony that the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean often regarded the night as a dangerous and frightening place in which witches, ghosts and evil spirits were loose. Among these were phantom armies, sometimes haunting the battlefields where they perished and sometimes warning of great events in the world of the living. What is missing is any clear reference to companies of the dead roaming the earth, and Ginzburg himself concluded from the evidence that the image of a nocturnal cavalcade was basically alien to Greek and Roman mythology. In ancient Northern Europe there is an almost complete lack of contemporary source material in which such an image could be recorded: there is a single equivocal remark by the Roman historian Tacitus, and otherwise attempts to find spirit-processions in the ancient north depend wholly on back-projection from later sources. Occasional reports of phantom armies at particular places and times continued into the early Middle Ages, and Christianity added hosts of demons to the other terrors of the night. A tradition of visible companies of the dead travelling the earth, however, only started to develop in the eleventh century, as part of a much greater interest taken by Christian authors in the fate of the individual soul. Accounts of ghosts in general became more common and more detailed, and as part of them the dead were more often represented as gathering in groups. In particular, stories were told of crowds of dead people doomed to roam the earth as a penance for their sins.

This new concept forms the backdrop to a remarkable set of French and German texts produced in the 1120s and 1130s, of which the most famous

is that of the Anglo-Norman monk Orderic Vitalis. All featured travelling hosts of dead sinners, usually knights and usually seeking the prayers of the living to gain their release from wandering. That by Orderic is distinguished by its detail and by the fact that he gave the procession which he reported a name, 'the retinue of Herlechin', which is never explained. By the late twelfth century the existence of bodies of tormented and penitential phantoms, usually soldiers, known as the army or retinue of Herlewin, Hellequin or Herla, was an established literary trope. It is recorded in England, France and the Rhineland, having apparently spread out from a northern French epicentre. Different storytellers perceived different figures in these processions, according to their own class and preoccupations, but most reported armed men. None seemed to know how or where the idea had started, and some made up their own (mythical) solutions to this problem. Only one of the descriptions, and that the most anomalous (an English fantasy-tale) represented these processions as having a recognizable leader, even though they were all seemingly named after one. It seems most likely that 'Herlechin' (a word which may derive from various different possible sources) was originally the name of the procession itself and was later mistaken for that of a chief. There seems to be no evidence in all this of a derivation from an ancient model: rather, it shows every sign of being an exemplary story created by churchmen.

By the thirteenth century, it had percolated into popular culture, and some clerics were coming to believe that it had originated there and to regard it with suspicion, suggesting that the ghosts could be devils in disguise. Some reports of it accordingly grew more demonic, though this was a shift of degree as it had always been disturbing and forbidding, and sometimes dangerous; and this more negative view of it affected popular perceptions in turn. It also spread further afield, into Spain and Germany, and in the latter region the spectral vagrants acquired the distinctive name of *das wütende Heer*, the 'furious army'. In some places heroes from other traditions were brought into the ghostly company, above all King Arthur and his knights. Little new development occurred to the myth in the rest of the Middle Ages. The marching figures were identified variously as people who had suffered violent deaths, usually in battle or on the scaffold; or had died unbaptized; or who had committed grievous sins; or else as devils who had assumed human form to lead the living astray. Late medieval references to these nocturnal parades are recorded from England to the Austrian Alps, and veer between the two thirteenth-century poles of regarding them as a divinely legitimized procession of penitential dead and as an evil and demonic host. In the sixteenth century references grew slightly more detailed and give a better sense of local belief systems. A theme not heard

before, of seasonality, is now present, as the apparitions are said in some places to be especially common in midwinter, or during the four annual sets of feasts called the Ember Days. By now, however, the tradition was contracting geographically, having vanished from England and rarely being reported in France: it was becoming increasingly characteristic of the German-speaking lands.

The Followers of the Lady

The tradition of the roving retinue of a superhuman female has a different history, point of origin and geographical range to that of the wandering dead. It is probably first recorded in the ninth century, in what became one of the most famous of early medieval ecclesiastical texts, the so-called *canon Episcopi*. One passage of this denounced the belief of many women that they rode upon animals across the world on particular nights with the pagan goddess Diana. They did so with a huge company of other women, whom Diana had likewise called to her service and who obeyed her as their mistress. The canon ordered clergy to contest this claim, as a demonically inspired delusion, and so expel *sortilegam et magicam artem*, fortune-telling and the magical art, from their parishes.[24] This strongly suggests that the women who made the claim were the local providers of magical services. The point of origin of the text is unknown, but it was included in a collection of canon law made around the year 900 by the abbot of Prüm in the central Rhineland, and it almost certainly derived from somewhere in the lands of the Franks. About a century later, Burchard, bishop of Worms, included it in his own collection of church decrees, and added that another name for the superhuman leader of the rides was Herodias. Burchard, however, also repeated five more condemnations of the tradition and of similar beliefs in nght-roving spirits or magicians, from unknown sources. One referred to women who believed that they rode at night on special dates upon animals among a host of other women called *holda* or (in one version of the text) with a *strix* or *striga* called Holda.[25] The second concerned a belief by women that they flew off at night through closed doors to do battle with others in the clouds. The third was the denunciation, quoted in the second chapter of this book, of women who thought that they travelled in spirit bands at night to kill and eat other humans, and then restore them to life. The fourth accused women who claimed to be part of the night rides of also boasting of the ability to work magic which could induce either love or hate; another indication that the rides were associated with females who offered magical services. The fifth condemned a belief among women that at certain times of the year they should 'spread a table with food and drink and three knives, so that if those

three sisters come, whom past generations and ancient stupidity called *parcae* [the Roman word for the Fates] they can regale themselves'. The succeeding passage suggests that the 'sisters' concerned were expected to provide benefits to the household in return for this entertainment.[26]

Worms is also in the Rhineland, but Burchard gathered his material from a wide range of earlier texts, spanning Western Europe from Italy to Ireland, and going back hundreds of years, and so this does not locate the traditions concerned. Those traditions were repeated by disapproving churchmen through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, disapproval of them becoming part of the common heritage of orthodoxy. John of Salisbury said that one of the names of the leader of the rides was Herodias, and that she convened assemblies at which her followers feasted and sported; he also crossed this story with that of the cannibal night-witches by saying that the night-roamers ate babies and then restored them to life. He called all this a diabolical illusion and commented that only 'poor old women and the simple minded sort of men' believed in this. One thirteenth-century French bishop, Angerius of Conserans in the Pyrenees, called the superhuman leader interchangeably Diana, Herodias or Bensozia, and another, William of Auvergne, named her Satia or Abundia and stated that she and her attendant spirits, called 'the ladies', were said to visit human houses at night. If food and drink were left out for them, they would enjoy these and then magically replenish them, and bless the household with prosperity; if none were on offer, they would abandon the household to ill fortune. He commented that it was mostly elderly women who told these stories.

It seems as if two different earlier traditions, of women who joined night rides with a superhuman female, and superhuman females who visited houses to bless them, were now merging. Another famous French source of the thirteenth century, the courtly poem *Roman de la Rose*, cites the same tradition, concerning those who followed 'Lady Habonde'. It called her entourage 'the good ladies' and stated that it roved on three nights of each week, accompanied by humans whose spirits flew out to them while their bodies remained in bed: it was said that every third child born had this gift. The 'lady' and her companions were themselves spirits, who could get into and out of houses through any crack and so were never obstructed by locks or bars.[27] Around the same time, the Italian Jacobus of Voragine told how a saint had exposed as demons a company of 'the good women who enter at night' for whom food and drink had been left by a family.[28] Likewise a preacher in south-eastern France, Stephen of Bourbon, had a story from the region about a man who told his parish priest that he went out at night and feasted with women called 'the good things', whom this priest also proved to be demons.[29]

The tradition of the night rides had reached Iceland before the end of the thirteenth century, where it appears unsurprisingly in a saga remarkable for its number of Continental European influences. None the less, the author transmuted the passage from Burchard into a native form, declaring that the people who followed Diana or Herodias rode on whales, seals, birds and other northern wildlife.[30] Finally among these high medieval texts, mid thirteenth-century sermons by the German Bertold of Regensburg warned against giving credence to a range of nocturnal spirits, called variously the 'night-wanderers', the 'Benevolent Ones', the 'Malevolent Ones', the 'night women', those who rode on 'this or that', and the 'blessed ladies' or 'ladies of the night' for whom peasant women left tables laid when they retired to bed.[31] He did not attempt to distinguish them, if he knew how. The names for each were in German, save for the 'blessed ladies', who were in Latin, and those for the benevolent and malevolent, *hulden* and *unhulden*, recall the *holda* mentioned by Burchard.

Wherever it had originated, therefore – and the evidence suggests somewhere in the broad Franco-German region – by the high Middle Ages the idea of the night journeys led by a superhuman female or females was spread over a wide area of Western Europe which included England, France, Italy and Germany. It is possible that in some parts of this range, such as England, churchmen were simply repeating reports from elsewhere that they had heard or read, but the thirteenth-century French and German material seems to reflect genuine popular belief. During the late Middle Ages references to it continued, following much the same model as those earlier but with some local idioms. One French text from the early fourteenth century satirized the belief with a story of how criminals robbed the house of a rich and gullible peasant by dressing as women and pretending to be the 'good beings' visiting the house to bless it. The same collection reported how an old woman tried to get a reward from a parish priest by claiming that she had visited his home with 'the ladies of the night'.[32] By the mid-fourteenth century, the lady for whom people left out food at night was known in some German districts as 'Perchte' or 'Berchten'; and she seemed as such to have a more forbidding or unattractive character as she was nicknamed 'of the iron nose' or 'the long nose'.[33] It is hard to identify these districts with any precision, although one of the first authors to refer to her came from Bavaria.[34] In Italy around this time a Dominican friar reported that it was believed, especially by women, that living people of both sexes went about at night in a parade called the *tregenda*, led by Diana or Herodias.[35] In the fifteenth century such descriptions multiply further, so that a professor at Vienna, Thomas von Haselbach, could name different kinds of spectral nocturnal visitor as 'Habundia', 'Phinzen', 'Sack Semper'

and 'Sacria'. He also termed Perchte an alias of Habundia and said that she was active at the feast of Epiphany, which ended the Christmas season. Successive editions of a set of sermons preached at Nuremberg equated Diana with 'Unholde' or 'Frau Berthe' or 'Frau Helt', and a penitential from the same century equated Perchte with the ancient Roman Fates. In 1484 an Austrian author identified Diana, Herodias, 'Frau Perchte' and 'Frau Hult' as the same being. A dictionary of 1468 stated that the lady for whom refreshments were left out at night was called Abundia or Satia, or by the common people Frau Perchte or Perchtum, and that she came with a retinue. She was by now especially believed to visit during the Christmas season, and the old tropes that the food and drink taken would be magically replenished, and that she would bless the generous household in return, were preserved.[36] Again, these references point to a southern German distribution, which was indeed the one evident in stories about her in later folklore.[37] In that folklore, likewise, Dame Holda, Hulda, Holle or Hulle had become Perchte's equivalent, as a night-roving female spirit of winter, in central Germany.[38] On the other hand, she may at times have got further afield. The English homily *Dives and Pauper*, from the 1400s, condemned the leaving out of food and drink at New Year 'to feed All-holde'.[39] The author may, however, have been quoting from a foreign source, as he soon after repeated the much older *canon Episcopi* concerning night spirit-rides. In North Italy the celebrated preacher Bernadino of Siena delivered sermons during the 1420s in which he condemned 'the followers of Diana' and old women who claimed to travel with Herodias on the night of Epiphany, the end of the Christmas holidays. He added that these women offered divination, healing and the breaking of bewitchment, to customers.[40]

It is not clear whether the earlier stories and warnings reflected claims that people made themselves about riding with the lady or ladies or claims that others made about them. By the fourteenth century, however, trial records are appearing in the archives in which those who had said that they joined the spirit rides were allowed to give testimony, although filtered through the perceptions and preoccupations of inquisitors, magistrates and clerks. In a now celebrated pair of trials at Milan in 1384 and 1390, two women stated that they had gone to the 'society' or 'game' of 'Lady Oriente', whom the inquisitor dutifully called Diana or Herodias, and paid homage to her. Her following included every kind of animal except the donkey and fox. It feasted off beasts which were then restored to life, and visited neatly kept homes to bless them, and Oriente instructed her human followers in the arts of herb lore and divination. These they put to the usual ends of benevolent magic, to heal, break bewitchment and find stolen goods. One of them said that Oriente ruled her own followers even as Christ did the world.[41] The famous churchman Nicholas of Cusa

presided over a trial of two old women when he was bishop of Brixen, in the South Tyrolese Alps, in 1457. They confessed to belonging to the society led by a 'good woman' whom they called 'Richella' (and the erudite Nicholas equated with Diana, Fortuna and Hulda). She came to them at night as a well-dressed woman riding in a cart, who, once they had renounced the Christian faith, led them to a gathering of people who feasted and revelled and (in part contradiction of the repudiation of Christianity) hairy men ate those attending who had not been properly baptized. They had attended these parties for several years, during the Ember Days, famed by the late Middle Ages as a time when spirits were especially active.[42] It may be seen, therefore, that by the end of the Middle Ages the popular tradition of night-roving and generally benevolent female spirits occupied a region covering the southern half of Germany, the Alps and Lombardy. Within this zone, however, it took three different forms. In northern Italy, as seen, it very clearly had a leader, who was sometimes but not generally named, and humans regularly claimed to have joined it. On the German side of the Alpine watershed, the idea of a benign society of nocturnal rovers, which privileged people could join, also flourished, but there is less emphasis on a leader of it. Wolfgang Behringer's 'shaman of Oberstdorf', a healer and witch-hunter from the Bavarian Alps who was tried as a witch himself in 1586, claimed to travel long distances with the *Nachtschar*, the 'night company', which consisted of both sexes.[43] In the west of the German-speaking Alpine zone, at the Swiss city of Luzern, a citizen wrote up a chronicle of its affairs in the early seventeenth century which relied heavily on his own memory of them, stretching far back into the sixteenth. He recorded a belief in the 'good army' or 'blessed people', who visited favoured and deserving individuals. It included individuals who were yet alive and who claimed to have been given the special privilege of being allowed to join it at times on its wanderings, thereby winning the admiration of their neighbours. Again, he spoke of no leading figure in connection with it.[44] To the north of the Alps, across central and south Germany, and lowland Austria, the nocturnal host which gave blessings certainly had one, in Hulda or Perchte; but here things differed again, in that nobody seems to have claimed to travel with it themselves. It does not seem to feature in any trial for witchcraft or magic in this region.

By the end of the Middle Ages if not earlier, the Italian tradition featuring the benevolent phantom women of the night extended to the southern part of the peninsula and beyond. Gustav Henningsen discovered it in a set of inquisitorial records compiled in Sicily between 1579 and 1651, concerning the *donas de fuera*, 'ladies from outside'. These were described as being small groups of beautiful fairy-like women, often with animal hands or feet,

which were formed around a figure called 'the queen of the fairies', 'the mistress', 'the teacher', 'the Greek lady' (Greeks being exotic to the Sicilians), 'the graceful lady', 'Lady Inguanta', 'Lady Zabella' or 'the Wise Sibilia' (again): the lack of a standard name for her is itself interesting. Sometimes she had a male consort, and sometimes the group had a male attendant. Knowledge of them was claimed by popular healers and diviners, usually female, who said that they went forth in spirit at night to join them, and learned their skills from them. Sometimes one of these informants claimed to have been elected queen for the night herself. At times the 'ladies' visited houses to bless them, and at others danced and feasted, or did both. The number of witnesses who informed against each of those accused before the inquisitors indicates that the latter had talked avidly of these alleged experiences. All were commoners, often poor and often old, who experienced pleasures and honours in these dreams, visions or fantasies that they could never have enjoyed in daily life; while the skills they claimed earned them money or food from clients. Though trial records of them are found only from the late sixteenth century, the offence of claiming to travel with the 'ladies' is mentioned in a Sicilian penitential from the late fifteenth.[45] Sicily therefore had its own local version of the northern Italian tradition of night-roving groups of female spirits with a recognized leader, which privileged humans could join. In the central and southern expanses of Italy between, the tradition seems less well recorded.[46] There is however a reference in a sixteenth-century work of theology to a belief by some women in the south of Italy in spirits called *fatae* (fates or fairies), for whom they prepared banquets and kept clean houses, in the hope that they would visit and bless the children.[47] This sounds like a secure reference to a local version of the same idea, and others may have existed in other parts of the northern side of the Mediterranean basin, such as in Catalonia.[48]

Thus there is plenty of evidence for a widespread medieval belief in a benevolent nocturnal travelling company of superhuman women, usually with a leader and usually open to membership by privileged human beings, and especially women who practised popular magic, who could join the company by sending out their spirits from their bodies. The last ability was a characteristic shared with the shamans of Siberia and Scandinavia, as was the claim to magical abilities conferred by superhuman beings with whom they associated; but those were the only things that the shamans and the women who claimed to join the night journeys had in common. Taking the evidence purely on face value, the belief in the night-journeying women first appears, as already widespread, somewhere in the future French or German lands at some point in the ninth century. It was certainly found over a large part of both France and Germany by the twelfth century,

perhaps extending into England, before being recorded in a slightly different range in the late Middle Ages and early modern period (and indeed thereafter), from central Germany across the Alps into Italy and Sicily. Even within this area it seems to have taken three or four distinctive regional forms. As it is both attested earlier than the bands of the night-roaming dead and features a figure more similar to a pagan deity – indeed, under the name of Diana, explicitly one – it is much easier to regard it as a survival from ancient pre-Christian religion; but can such an assumption be proved?

Who Was She?

As said, the first name given to the leader of the night-riding superhuman women was that of the goddess Diana. At first sight the identification makes a perfect fit, because Diana was indeed a Roman deity especially associated with the night, wild nature (and above all wild animals), women and witchcraft: Horace's ancient Roman witches pray to her. Moreover, Jacob Grimm, in the process of combining different medieval and modern traditions of literature and folklore to create his composite ancient pagan tradition, noted that there are apparent references to a continuing cult of Diana in the lands which became France and Germany, precisely the region in which the medieval stories of the night rides are first recorded.[49] A life of the sixth-century bishop Caesarius of Arles in southern France mentioned 'a demon whom the simple people call Diana'. A history written by another bishop later in the same century told how a Christian hermit near Trier, in what became north-western Germany, destroyed a statue of Diana which was worshipped by local people. Finally, the later life of a Christian missionary to the region of Franconia in central Germany asserted that he was martyred when he tried to convert the inhabitants from their veneration of the same goddess.[50] What looks like a neat fit, however, disintegrates on closer inspection. Whatever the German-speaking people of Franconia called their goddess, assuming that the story has any basis in fact, it would not have been by the Roman name of Diana; and indeed there seems, to judge by the epigraphic evidence from the Roman Empire, to have been no widespread and local cult of Diana north of the Alps, although she is certainly attested there, as far as Britain. Conversely, the various condemnations of popular belief by ecclesiastical decrees and law codes issued south of the Alps in the whole of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages never seem to refer to night-riding women who follow a goddess figure, even though this was Diana's homeland. There is indeed no classical myth of Diana that portrays her as scooping up human followers in cavalcades in this way. Carlo Ginzburg saw this problem and confronted it, concluding

that it 'leads us to suspect the presence of an *interpretatio romana*', in other words, the imposition of a classical Roman model on what were in actuality different local traditions.[51] He went on to show how the inquisitors in the Milanese trials brought Diana's name into records in which the accused themselves had used the name Oriente for their superhuman mistress.[52] This effect may have operated all the way back to the *canon Episcopi*. Not only would Diana's actual classical associations have fitted the bill for educated clerics describing a night-roaming goddess of women, but even the less educated would have known that she is the only pagan goddess mentioned in the New Testament, and so could easily do duty as a shorthand for all.

Carlo Ginzburg was eager to find a pagan goddess behind the other figure identified at an early stage with the night rides, Herodias. On the face of it, there seems to be no doubt of her origin, in the wickedest human woman in the New Testament, who brings about the death of John the Baptist; she and Diana would therefore make a perfect fit for orthodox early medieval Christians as disreputable female figures. It may be supposed accordingly that she was applied to the stories of a night-riding goddess figure much as Ginzburg has shown later medieval churchmen as intruding Diana (and indeed, in the same example, Herodias herself) into testimonies which used other names. Ginzburg none the less proposed that 'Herodias' was a misreading of Hera Diana, a compound constructed by twinning the Roman goddess with a leading Greek one.

This may be so, but there are two problems with it. The first is that no such goddess is attested anywhere in the ancient or medieval record. Ginzburg cited as evidence for one inscriptions to the Greek Hera (or more specifically to a goddess called Haerecura or Aere-cura) in Switzerland and North Italy, though these do not furnish proof of a widespread cult of her there. There is also a roof tile, found in a late Roman period grave in Dauphiné, south-eastern France, and scratched with a human-like figure riding on an animal or ship and the words 'Fera Comhera', which may mean 'with Hera the savage'. In its context, it looks like a curse tablet, and Hera could be a good fit with that, as a notoriously vengeful goddess, especially where marital infidelity was concerned: in which case the steed of the figure would be a peacock, her special animal. Ginzburg also cited Grimm's discovery of a fifteenth-century reference to a belief by peasants in the Rhine Palatinate of Germany that a being called Hera roamed about in the Christmas season and brought abundance.[53] This is clearly the same as the one called Holda in central Germany, and Perchte further south and east, and the question does arise of how a Greek name for a goddess should have lingered through the Middle Ages in what had been a Latin-speaking

area of the Roman Empire and was now a German-speaking one. The suspicion that a well-educated churchman was imposing a classical goddess on a local piece of folklore, as Ginzburg himself showed happened in Milan, must be obvious. None of these reservations refutes his hypothesis, but they indicate that the evidence for it is patchy and ambivalent.

The other problem is that the medieval people who spoke of Herodias in connection with the night rides were certain that they meant the biblical character. By the twelfth century an apocryphal legend had been created to link the two, of how the royal woman Herodias had unwittingly brought about the death of John the Baptist by falling in love with him, so causing the king, Herod, to behead the saint in a rage. When she tried to kiss the severed head, it whirled up in the sky, where she has wandered in search of it ever since, coming down to earth at night.[54] The same story added that she still had the allegiance of a third of humanity, a statement also made of her two centuries before by Ratherius, bishop of Verona on the Plain of Lombardy, who complained that many people claimed Herodias as their spiritual mistress, and said that a third of the world belonged to her.[55] This of course chimes with the claim made by *Le Roman de la Rose* about Lady Habonde, that a third of humanity was born with the gift of joining her company. Ratherius's statement needs to be taken seriously, for it attests to a genuinely popular cult of Herodias by his time, the tenth century. He does not mention night rides, which is a shame as otherwise this might have extended that tradition by the early Middle Ages across the Alps into north Italy, where it is so abundantly present later, although Ratherius himself came from the southern Netherlands, and might have picked up the information at any point between there and Verona. He does, however, present a strong possibility that, whether or not the character of Herodias was imposed on a night-roaming benevolent female spirit by hostile churchmen, it was genuinely taken up by ordinary people as a tradition of their own.

We are still left with the problem of finding a goddess or set of goddesses honoured across a wide swathe of Western and Central Europe in antiquity who could have retained loyalty among ordinary people sufficient to have generated the medieval tradition of the lady or ladies of the night. One possible candidate is the Greek goddess Hekate or Hecate, who was certainly well known to Roman writers and was associated with the night, witchcraft and ghosts. As such she has been useful to those who want a composite medieval tradition of wandering dead humans and a wandering goddess to derive from a common ancient fertility cult associated with the dead, down to the present.[56] The problem is that, while she was regarded as the guide of souls to the land of the dead, and of newborn babies into this world, it is hard to find Hecate described clearly as the leader of a retinue of earthbound

spirits, and that is never portrayed in her iconography (as opposed to her pack of dogs).[57] The *Orphic Hymn* to her describes her as 'mystery-raving with the souls of the dead', which may be a reference to her role as their escort to Hades.[58] There may be a reference to a permanent entourage for her in a fragment of Greek tragedy which reads, 'if a night-time vision should frighten you, or you have received a visit from chthonic Hekate's troop'.[59] This could signify a retinue, or just be a joking reference to ghosts in general.

It would make more sense to look for the original of the medieval night-roaming lady in an ancient goddess worshipped widely in her heartland of the Alps and the land to the north. This was where Carlo Ginzburg located the birth of the tradition. He also made some fascinating connections across time, such as to point out that the fifteenth-century women interrogated by Nicholas of Cusa claimed that the face of their supernatural mistress was obscured by an ornament which sounds like the headdresses found on ancient statuary in Greece and Spain: the resemblance may or may not be coincidental.[60] The main point is whether the Rhineland, Alps and southern Germany contained any deities in ancient times who may be regarded as ancestors of the medieval lady; and here there are two, at first sight excellent, possibilities, Epona and the Matres.

Epona was a goddess popular across most of the northern Roman world, as she is recorded from Britain to Hungary and as far south as Rome itself and Africa: over two hundred undoubted images of her survive, and thirty-three inscriptions. The epicentre of her cult was, however, in Gaul, and especially its eastern parts, now eastern France and the Rhineland, and was spread from there largely by the cavalry units of the Roman army stationed along the northern frontier, as she was pre-eminently a deity of horses and patroness of their welfare and breeding. She may have had wider associations with fertility or prosperity, because she sometimes carries ears of corn, or a dish of it, but these may just have been intended as treats for her equine charges, whom she rides or with whom she stands or sits in her icons.[61] In view of her activity of riding, and her ancient popularity in an area in which the medieval night rides were recorded, it is not surprising that Ginzburg took her to be one of the origin points for the mistress of those rides.[62] There are, however, points of divergence on either side of the equation: Epona is never shown with a retinue of followers, and the medieval rides were not really associated with horses but with wild beasts. Their leader corresponds more to a type of goddess found in various world mythologies and known to experts in comparative religion as 'the Mistress of the Animals'; and there seems to be no such figure in the material of Roman France, Germany and the Alps, though particular goddesses there were associated with particular animals.

The Matres or Matronae, the 'Mothers' or 'Ladies', were even more popular and widely venerated than Epona, being found across most of the western Roman Empire, though likewise the centre of their worship seems to have been in eastern Gaul. Images of them took the standard form of three stately women, standing or (more usually) seated in a row, and often holding dishes, bread, fruit or flowers: emblems of prosperity. Sometimes one of them, in the same form, was shown alone. Once again, they were particularly loved by soldiers, who accounted for much of the far extent of their cult. It is not always clear that the same three goddesses were being represented by their images and inscriptions, as the latter often honour them specifically as the Mothers of particular provinces or institutions.[63] As apparent givers of the blessings of prosperity and abundance, they would make good ancestresses of superhuman ladies who came to bless houses; but again there are discrepancies: the Matres or Matronae were never shown with a retinue or in motion, instead of standing or sitting, and never associated with animals; and the various medieval 'ladies' did not usually travel in trios. No other figures in the abundant evidence for religious belief in the northern Roman Empire, moreover, make any better fit with the medieval images of the night rides. On the other hand, the benevolent Matres could make a good fit with the 'three sisters' mentioned by Burchard as visiting houses, and may have been the root of the whole house-blessing function attributed later to the 'Lady' and her retinue. It is also true that Burchard may also have been recording a separate, Italian, tradition that awarded that function to the Fates, as he indeed named them, or – given the European tendency to put superhuman females into threes – that an independent belief had grown up in the early Middle Ages which gave it to three other 'sisters'.

East of the Rhine, in ancient Germany, there is no comparable evidence and attempts to produce some have usually consisted of back-projections of medieval material. The results of this are inconclusive. Of the two principal goddess-like figures in the medieval German accounts, Holda, Holle or Hulda may have been generated in the Middle Ages as a personification of the night-journeys themselves. If his Latin is read correctly, in all but one of its surviving versions Burchard used the term *holda* to describe not the leader of female night rides but the actual rides. As said above, a single recension of his text speaks instead of Holda as the leader of them, and calls her a *strix* or *striga*, identifying her with the demoness or witch of Roman mythology and the cannibal witch of German; but this usage does not seem to work grammatically in the passage as the more normal one does, and the manuscript in which it appears is not one of the earliest. A character called Holda does appear much earlier, in a praise-poem for

Judith, wife of the Holy Roman Emperor Louis the Pious, composed by the monastic scholar Walahfrid Strabo, who lived on an island in Lake Constance in the early ninth century.[64] The passage, however, pairs Holda with Sappho, the great Greek poetess, to both of whom Judith is compared.

A natural companion to a classical Greek heroine as a compliment to a Christian empress, by a learned churchman, would be a biblical one, and the obvious candidate here is the godly Old Testament prophetess Huldah, called Olda in the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate.[65] As well as being completely admirable, indeed a mouthpiece for Jehovah, Huldah like Sappho spoke in verse. It is possible that she became confused with the night rides in the popular imagination because of the similarity of her name to that of the rides, but this is speculation. As for Perchte (and so on), Holda's counterpart to the south and east, Jacob Grimm was scrupulous enough to admit that there is no mention of her before the fourteenth century; but he went on to conclude that she surely had to have been an ancient goddess, simply because to Grimm figures like her had to have been ancient goddesses.[66] It has recently been plausibly suggested on linguistic evidence that Perchte's name derives from the medieval German one for the Christian feast of the Epiphany, of which she was a late medieval personification; this would fit a general medieval pattern of personifying feasts as (usually female) figures.[67] On the whole, when trying to reconstruct ancient Germanic mythology, writers from Grimm down to Claude Lecouteux have turned to that portrayed in medieval Norse literature to plug the many gaps in the record.[68] This literature did, as has been seen in a previous chapter, contain references to nocturnal revels, apparently mostly of trolls and other non-human beings to which human magicians could fly in spirit. These were not, however, mainly female and (more important) had no identifiable leader.

A different sort of superhuman female rider, who traversed great stretches of land and sea, is represented in the same literature: the Valkyries, warrior maidens who in some accounts attended Oðinn and gathered slain warriors from battlefields as recruits for his host. Some are described in Old Norse poetry as winged and some on supernatural horses which could cross sea and sky. They blend with the Disir, troops of superhuman female warriors on horseback, clad in white or black, who seek the favour of human fighters and sometimes destroy them.[69] None of these Norse figures, however, ride in troops together at night behind a leader, and invite selected living humans to join them. Oðinn himself certainly did not lead such rides, although modern folklore came to associate him with them and so did Grimm: he was, on the contrary, a solitary traveller, and his one connection with the night revels of spirits and their human friends, quoted earlier in

this book, was to disrupt them. It may therefore be worth listening once more to medieval commoners themselves, and considering the names they gave to the superhuman female whom they claimed to follow, and which feature in descriptions of this belief by churchmen without deriving clearly from classical myth or the Bible. They are quite revealing: Bensozia, 'good partner' or 'good company'; Abundia or Habonde ('abundance'); Satia ('satisfaction of appetite'); Oriente (the opulent east); Sibilla (evoking the all-knowing Roman prophetess) or just 'the mistress of the game'. Richella and Perchte seem to be personal names, but *Holda* has been derived from terms meaning 'benevolent' or 'well-disposed'.[70] The connotations are all of a generous, bountiful, powerful and caring patroness, who provides fun and feasting to poor people, and especially to poor women, and in doing so supplies them not merely with the revelry and plenty usually missing from their daytime lives, but often, when they become associated with her service in popular repute, with greater respect in their communities as wielders of arcane power and knowledge.

That, surely, must be the crux of the matter. It remains entirely possible that popular memories of Diana, Hera, Hecate, Epona, the Matres or other less well-known ancient goddesses operated in the construction of the medieval images of the night journeys led by a superhuman female. It does not, however, seem to be susceptible of actual proof, while it does appear that in no case was an ancient cult simply developed into the medieval myth; rather, the latter took a distinctive form with no precise or even near correspondence to what is known of ancient religions. It is even possible that none of these goddesses is really relevant to the medieval beliefs, and that the latter were generated as a new system in the centuries between the official conversion of the lands concerned to Christianity and the writing of the *canon Episcopi*. What must be emphasized here is the striking total absence of any reference to the night rides in the surviving copious denunciations made by churchmen of popular beliefs between the fifth and ninth centuries.[71] Whatever the truth, the belief system that had appeared by the year 900 was to prove remarkably widespread and tenacious, surviving far into modern times. It clearly served a powerful need among some medieval commoners, especially female, and represents as such a genuinely counter-cultural tradition, part of an imperfectly 'hidden transcript', which enabled people to cope with aspects of established social and religious structures that worked to their disadvantage.

It seems now that we can probably jettison the nineteenth-century concept of a general prehistoric fertility religion centred on the dead, and in default of better evidence leave open the question of how much the medieval belief in good night-roaming spirits was derived from ancient paganism.

Instead we can concentrate on the processes by which a medieval world of dream and fantasy, focused on these spirits, was developed and sustained.

A Tying of Ends

It has been suggested here that two different concepts of nocturnal spirit procession existed in the high and later Middle Ages: one of evil or penitential dead humans, and one of benevolent female spirits, often with a recognized leader. The former seems likely to have been a high medieval, Christian, development, while the latter appeared earlier and may have been based on pagan antecedents. The former was a phenomenon which virtually all living humans preferred to avoid, and which none would wish to join, while the latter was something in which many people claimed to have participated, and which gave them prestige among their communities. The former was mostly a male society, especially of soldiers, while the latter was associated especially with women. By Grimm's time, the two had become generally mixed together, and he compounded this mixture to produce his construct of 'the Wild Hunt'. The mixing had, however, commenced long before, and is apparent in some of the medieval and early modern sources, which mention either or both of the kinds of procession concerned. Literary sources virtually always distinguished between the two quite clearly, but at a popular level the blurring of categories is evident in places by the later Middle Ages.[72]

As early as 1319 in the French Pyrenees, a local magician examined by an inquisitor claimed to have gained his knowledge by travelling with 'the good ladies and the souls of the dead', to visit clean and orderly homes with both. A woman questioned by the same churchman asserted that the 'good ladies' who travelled by night were former rich and powerful women who were punished for their sins by being compelled to wander by demons. The women tried at Milan in 1384 and 1390 claimed that Lady Oriente's company included some dead people, including a few executed criminals who showed their shame. The citizen of Luzern mentioned earlier, recalling beliefs among the citizens in the mid and late sixteenth century, included the souls of good individuals who had suffered premature and violent deaths among the 'good army' or 'blessed people' who visited virtuous houses. He also, however, recorded a belief in a parallel, evil, 'furious army', and in nocturnal apparitions which made frightening noises, both clearly different from the 'good army'. What is significant about these examples, however, is their rarity. Where the two kinds of spectral procession appear together in trials for witchcraft and magic (something which is itself rare), they are usually distinguished clearly from each other. Indeed, whereas the

followers of the 'lady' or 'ladies', as shown, quite often appeared in court in the Alpine lands and north Italy, it was very unusual for people accused of being witches or magicians anywhere to speak of taking part in the processions of the dead. Some claimed to be able to see dead people and sometimes to converse with them, but this is not the same thing as joining their travels. Only a couple of Carlo Ginzburg's *benandanti*, and a few individuals elsewhere, such as a local magician tried at Luzern in 1499–1500, said that they had travelled or processed with the dead, or were married to somebody who did. If travel with spirits was therefore largely something confined to the followers of the superhuman woman or women, it is worth asking what they actually meant by this; and often very hard to find out. None the less, there is testimony that provides some answers, and they occupy various categories. One consists of apparent simple deception: to make the claim, as it brought respect and customers, without actually meaning it. Two of the women brought to trial in Sicily for saying that they consorted with the *donas de fuera* admitted that they had made their stories up; and one who acted out the drama of the arrival of an invisible company of the spirits in front of her clients may charitably be described as in a trance but was more probably play-acting to secure the desired impression.[73] Another category may be represented by the decision reached by Nicholas of Cusa: that the old women whom he was interrogating in South Tyrol were simply half mad and experienced vivid dreams, taking what happened in sleep to be reality.[74] Some accounts may reflect visionary experience, hallucination or deceit, such as that of the eleven-year-old Sicilian girl who insisted that she had seen seven women in beautiful red and white dresses appear dancing to a tambourine, and talk to her, while another girl with her could see nothing.[75]

In a category of their own are apparent out-of-body experiences of the sort mentioned in the chapter on shamanism. Wolfgang Behringer's horseherd and magician in the Vorarlberg said that he travelled with the 'night company' and a Christian angel when he 'fell as if unconscious' or 'was overcome by lethargy or unconsciousness', and left his body motionless while his spirit roamed. These episodes lasted two to three hours, took place four times a year at any time of day or night, were involuntary, and were sometimes painful to him.[76] Unusually deep sleep, with vivid dreams, could possibly account for them, but there was probably an entirely different catatonic effect involved. His angelic guide revealed to him the names of the witches who had afflicted local people, and whom he then (he claimed) compelled with Christian zeal to remove their spells. The demonologist Johann Nider, writing in the 1430s, told a story of a Dominican friar who had tried to convince a peasant woman who claimed to fly by night with

'Diana' that she was deluding herself. One night she agreed to let him watch her with another witness, as she put herself into a basket, rubbed herself with an ointment, uttered a spell, and fell into a stupor. When she awoke, she was convinced that she had been with 'Diana'. A Spanish author in the same decade said that he had heard of women who became so deeply unconscious that they were insensible to blows or burns, and claimed that they had been travelling.[77] An anecdote inserted into a fifteenth-century manuscript at Breslau tells of an old woman who swooned and dreamed that she was being transported in flight by 'Herodiana'. In an impulse of joy she threw open her arms, spilled a container of water and awoke to find herself lying on the ground.[78]

As Norman Cohn pointed out, these are not first-hand accounts; so it may be that they reflect what educated people wanted to believe was going on rather than what was actually happening.[79] When Carlo Ginzburg calls such reports evidence of 'an ecstatic cult', he may be right, but we do not really know if the experiences concerned added up to that, or remained at the level of a culturally determined set of dreams and fantasies.[80] He calls the description of the headdress of 'Richella' provided by the women questioned by Nicholas of Cusa 'words of visionary precision', even though he acknowledges that they are filtered through Nicholas's account.[81] Visionary experiences they may have been, but it is difficult to distinguish them from an image remembered by one of the women from a vivid dream; which was the churchman's own conclusion. Tellingly, and mercifully, between the ninth and early fourteenth centuries, none of the clerics and other members of medieval elites who recorded the tradition of the night-roaming bands following a superhuman woman, seems to have thought that they were dealing with an actual cult. The accounts of the night journeys were never treated as a heresy, but as a ridiculous delusion, of ignorant and silly people, intended by them to complement rather than oppose Christianity and so to be punished with relatively mild penances. It is true that the delusion concerned was blamed on the mischief of demons, and by the thirteenth century it was suggested by some commentators that the demons were creating actual images of the spectral processions, instead of simply planting the thought of them in peoples' minds. There was still, however, no inclination to persecute as a heretical sect those who believed that they joined them.

Only at the end of the fourteenth century, with a new fear of ceremonial magic as demonically inspired and assisted, did the taint of genuine heresy begin to affect those who believed in the 'lady' or 'ladies', and then only as individuals: the two women at Milan who believed in Oriente were burned in 1390, after six years in which they had repeated their claims despite being

formally warned to desist.[82] One now confessed (or was obliged to confess) to having a demon lover, and they were sentenced to death as relapsed heretics. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as Carlo Ginzburg and Wolfgang Behringer have masterfully shown, the tradition of the good night-roaming spirits gradually became assimilated, at places in the Alps and Lombard Plain, to the new stereotype of the demonic witch and the witches' sabbath which underlay the early modern European trials.[83] The construction of that stereotype is a process to which this book must now turn its attention at last.

6

WHAT THE MIDDLE AGES MADE OF THE WITCH

Thus far, an examination of the relationship between specific themes in medieval culture and their ancient antecedents has revealed some perhaps unexpected contrasts. In the case of ceremonial magic, dependent on the transmission of texts copied by a literate elite, the continuity with the ancient world, and the survival of names and ideas from it, seems to have been greater than has traditionally been considered. On the other hand, in the case of beliefs concerning spectral processions of the night, which have long been thought by scholars to have derived directly from pre-Christian tradition, the lines of transmission seem to be a lot harder to prove than has been presumed. It remains to confront directly the issue of how the Middle Ages dealt with the central theme of this book, the figure of the witch. This chapter will tackle that problem and in doing so propose answers to three more: what difference the establishment of Christianity as the dominant religion of Europe made to attitudes to magic and witchcraft; how seriously witchcraft was treated in the course of the Middle Ages; and how the stereotype of the witch as a practitioner of a satanic religion, which underpinned the early modern witchcraft trials, came to evolve.

The Immediate Impact of Christianity

It was remarked earlier that the Christian religion which underpinned the early modern witch trials combined the whole range of ancient traditions which individually established parts of a context for witch-hunting: Mesopotamian demonology; Persian cosmic dualism; a Graeco-Roman fear of magic as intrinsically impious; Roman images of the evil witch; and the Germanic concept of night-roaming cannibal women. Comments by respected scholars have not been lacking, indeed, to credit the Christian

faith with an inherent propensity to encourage the persecution of magicians. Valerie Flint has argued that its institutionalized and monopolistic traits made it automatically into a state religion that demanded tighter control of human dealings with spirits, most of which became evil by definition.[1] Richard Kieckhefer has pointed out that Christianity redefined magic in a totally new way, as the worship of false gods, alias demons.[2] Michael Bailey has agreed, observing that Christians always posited a more fundamental distinction between religion and magic than that imagined by pagans and Jews.[3] All this is correct, but there are two obvious features of the history of magic that provoke counterbalancing reflections. One is that the early European witch trials commenced a thousand years after the triumph of the new religion, raising the problem of why, if its ideology was so well suited to hunt witches, it took so long to do so. The second is that, as discussed earlier in this book, the pagan Roman Empire had proved perfectly capable of enacting a savage code of laws against magicians, based on wholly traditional attitudes, at precisely the same time as it was persecuting Christians with an equal brutality. It is, in fact, that legal and cultural context, of established and intense official hostility towards magic, that provides the reasons for the Christian perspective on the subject. It presented early Christians with an acute problem: that the miracles credited by them to their Messiah and his apostles could look like those promised by, or attributed to, ceremonial magicians. This charge was levied against them by some of their most effective pagan critics, such as Celsus, who wrote the first comprehensive attack on the new religion in the second century. The reply provided by the leading Christian theologian Origen became the standard one: magicians used rites and incantations, but true Christians only the name of Jesus and the words of the Bible, and a reliance on the power of their deity: a formula which plugged directly into the long-established Graeco-Roman distinction between religion and magic.[4] Almost two hundred years later, Augustine of Hippo worked it up into its enduring form, which persisted through the Middle Ages: that the acts of magicians were accomplished with the aid of demons, whereas the miracles of Christian saints were made possible by the intervention of the one true God.[5]

The polemical position that Christianity established with regard to magic, therefore, was a defensive one formulated to cope with a serious challenge to its own credibility and public image, and set firmly in the context of existing Graeco-Roman attitudes. It also, however, drew on essential traits of its own, one of which was an extreme manifestation of the Mesopotamian (and thus the Hebrew) fear of demons. Even by the traditional standards of the Fertile Crescent, early Christian demonology was

uniquely polarized, depending on the acceptance of a cosmic force of pure evil in the universe, and all-pervasive. The driving of demons out of people whom they had possessed and were afflicting was a chief task of Christ himself, his apostles and the early saints, and these evil spirits were their main enemies, as any perusal of the New Testament, Apocrypha and early hagiographies reveals. On the whole, however, these same texts were much more concerned with direct confrontations between Christian champions and demons than between those champions and human servants of the demons. The problem that early Christians had with (pagan or Jewish) magicians focused on them as rival exorcists and healers, and also as objects of official suspicion and condemnation with whom Christians might too readily be conflated, as Celsus actually did conflate them. The 'magicians' Simon Magus and Elymas, and itinerant Jewish exorcists of the classic ancient Mesopotamian sort, already feature in the Acts of the Apostles as fools or charlatans, and one of the traits of the Whore of Babylon in the Book of Revelation is *pharmakeia*, still the standard Greek word for potion-based magic.[6] These motifs were multiplied and amplified in subsequent early Christian literature, but never add up to make that literature a body of witch-hunting documents. The magicians portrayed are too weak, and easily bested by Christian holy men, to represent dangerous opponents, and there is none of the special association of women with bad magic found in ancient Roman and Jewish sources.[7] Jesus himself was not interested in magic, and when the apostle Paul condemned it, he did so as a sin on a level with anger and lechery, and not as a lethal crime.[8] All this forms the background to what happened after the year 312, as Christianity became the dominant religion in the empire and the one professed by most of its emperors (and by all after the year 363). In the fourth century, a series of church councils passed decrees which forbade Christians, and clergy in particular, to have anything to do with ceremonial magic, and included divination as part of that.[9] Imperial law adapted accordingly during the same century and the next, the big shift in it being to redefine practices that had been normative in ancient paganism, such as divination by official temple personnel and sacrifice as a religious act, as superstitious or magical, and therefore forbidden. When dealing with ceremonial magic, however, and harm caused by magical means, the laws did little more than reinforce what had already been laid down under pagan emperors.[10] This continuity would none the less still mask significant change if the existing laws against ceremonial magic, and all forms of harmful magic, were enforced more rigorously than before.

An impression that this was indeed the case is provided in a series of famous passages by the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus.

He recorded that following a law of Constantius II, in 358, which declared that magicians across the empire were enemies of humanity, anybody who wore an amulet to cure a disease, or passed a tomb after dark, was in danger of denunciation and execution. Being seen near a tomb was fatal because of suspicion that the person concerned was hunting for human body parts for use in spells. This wave of trials was followed by three more, at intervals between 364 and 371, under the brother emperors Valentinian and Valens. Those began by mainly affecting the Roman senatorial class, but expanded over time to target commoners. Whole libraries were burned by their owners for fear they might be thought to contain magical texts. These persecutions affected both Rome itself and the eastern provinces, and torture was freely used to obtain evidence. Ammianus made clear that in most cases the pressure to prosecute came from the top, from emperors leading recently established and insecure dynasties and afraid of conspiracy: the charge of using magic had returned, for the first time in three hundred years, as a weapon in central politics.[11] His picture of serious persecution in that century is supported by a text from the 330s, a handbook on astrology, one of the main forms of divination, by Firmicus Maternus. It contains no less than seven examples of horoscopes cast to determine whether the person concerned would be charged with using magic![12] The sense of a fourth-century society at least at times gripped by a fear both of magic itself and of accusations of using it, is further confirmed by the work of Libanius, a pagan scholar of the mid to late part of the century. Having moved around the eastern provinces, he settled in Antioch, one of the four most important cities of the empire, to become its leading philosopher and orator. His writings contain many reflections on his career, which reveal that the charge of employing magic to overcome competitors was a standard one in the professional rivalries of the age. Libanius himself incurred it four times, once being formally tried and acquitted, and once banished from the imperial court and the city in which it resided. In old age he found himself apparently on the receiving end of a spell, when he was prostrated by headaches, which ceased when the dried corpse of a chameleon was found in his lecture hall, its head between its legs and one forefoot closing its mouth. He recovered when it was removed, and though now convinced that he had been bewitched, he magnanimously made no attempt to find the culprit.[13] Libanius also composed a model speech, put into the mouth of an imaginary citizen in an eastern Roman city, which described how magicians used both demons and the spirits of the dead as agents to inflict quarrels, poverty, injury and disease upon living humans. The ghosts were helpless servants, but the demons actively delighted in causing harm.[14] This is a fictional example of rhetoric, given to an imagined character, but there is nothing in

Libanius's other writings to show that he would have disagreed with it, and the speaker seems to be a pagan like himself, showing how such beliefs spanned the different religions. One of Libanius's pupils later became the leading Christian churchman John Chrysostom, who recalled how as a boy he had almost been caught up in a hunt conducted by soldiers for ceremonial magicians at Antioch. He and a friend had fished a book out of the river, inspired by curiosity, and found to their horror that it was a handbook of magic, flung away by its owner to avoid detection. As it was now in their possession, they were themselves in mortal danger of being accused as magicians, and remained so until they found a safe means of getting rid of it in turn.[15]

It seems then that at times and places in the fourth century the laws against magic were enacted with great severity, and that both the fear of bewitchment and the fear of accusation of it, and of other forms of magic, could be powerful in this period. What is less easily deduced is that Christianity had any decisive role in producing this situation. Certainly, it sought to profit from the latter, by increasingly demonizing paganism and associating magic with it, but the fourth-century drive against magicians seems to have been a direct development of earlier, pagan, attitudes, and united the various religious groups. It was a natural projection of the increasingly savage hostility towards magic found in the third-century codes, which may itself have been provoked by the new and sophisticated, text-based ceremonial magic which appeared in the period and may have come from Egypt. Neither Ammianus nor Libanius gave Christians any credit for orchestrating the fourth-century persecutions in the name of their faith; rather, Ammianus blamed insecure new imperial dynasties, led by ruthless new men, who appointed other parvenus to conduct investigations designed to root out treason and criminality in their administrative districts. A succession of historians has studied the trials concerned, and, while they have disagreed over the extent to which these were an expression of hostility between different social groups, they have tended to play down the religious factor, seeing Christianity as abetting rather than causing the persecution.[16] The latter slackened during the fifth century, although the grip of Christianity was by then stronger and the laws against magic had been further augmented and codified. No convincing explanation has been proposed for this, and it may be simply that the imperial authorities were too preoccupied with invasion, civil war and heresy, as the western half of the empire collapsed, to give much attention to magicians.[17]

Recent studies have examined different ways in which the new religion adapted to, and exploited, contemporary attitudes to magic. One has traced the manner in which Christian leaders in the late Roman Empire such as

Augustine, John Chrysostom and Basil of Caesarea (another pupil of Libanius) used old Roman literary tropes of women casting spells to deceive or ensnare men in order to damn magic in general as pagan: another example of the way in which pre-Christian ideas and images could be employed by the new religion for its own purposes.[18] Another has pointed to the ways in which tales recorded by monks between the fourth and seventh centuries reflected and propagated hostility to magicians. The latter are portrayed as working for hire to cause harm to the rivals or enemies of their paymasters, and as being thwarted by good Christians, after which some of them are burnt and others beheaded.[19] Other historians have examined the ways in which Christians used magic itself, mostly relying on Egyptian evidence. Some carried it on with rites, in the manner of the pagan magical papyri, though often in simplified fashion, combining Christian expressions with esoteric figures and names.[20] Others attempted to stay within the ground rules laid down by Origen, offering spells to help clients obtain their desires which depended on scriptural quotations, appeals to the true God and his angels, versions of Christian liturgy, and consecrated oil or water. The authors seem often or mostly to have been monks, who thereby fulfilled much the same role as the ancient Egyptian lector priests.[21]

Witchcraft and Magic in the Early and High Middle Ages

There long existed a scholarly belief that the first thousand years of Christian supremacy in Europe witnessed very little witch-hunting. Back in the 1920s a pioneering historian of European magic, the American Lynn Thorndike, commented of the period up to 1300 that 'of the later witchcraft delusion . . . we have found relatively few harbingers'.[22] At the opening of the recent surge of research into the early modern trials, in the late 1960s, the leading British scholar Hugh Trevor-Roper stated firmly that 'in the Dark Age there was at least no witch-craze', and that the early modern belief in witches was 'a new and explosive force'.[23] In the mid-1970s, in a pair of works which laid down much of the agenda for the subsequent quest for the meaning of the early modern trials, his compatriot Norman Cohn and the American Richard Kieckhefer both agreed. The former wrote that 'there is little positive evidence of *maleficium* [i.e. witchcraft] trials before 1300', while the latter concurred that before 1300 'the incidence of witchcraft was so rare that it is impossible to detect patterns of accusation'. Certainly, even in the early fourteenth century 'the rate of prosecution was low indeed', and diminished still further in the middle decades.[24] In 2004, however, Wolfgang Behringer mounted a challenge to this orthodoxy, arguing that early medieval law still prescribed the death penalty for witchcraft, and that the lack of

legal records for the time could conceal many trials. He pointed out that chronicles from the period referred to executions of suspected witches across Europe, in some places more frequently than in the early modern period.[25] His argument is not wholly polarized against the preceding belief, as Cohn had accepted that while trials were rare, there were some dramatic cases of the lynching of suspects by mobs, which Behringer counted in his record of persecution. Moreover, Behringer himself conceded that there did seem to be a relative lull in action against witchcraft in Western Europe between 1100 and 1300, which he ascribed to an improved climate, which generated greater security. None the less, his challenge to the twentieth-century portrait of relative medieval tolerance has reopened the question of how much witch-hunting actually went on in early and high medieval Europe; and that must now be considered.

Before confronting it directly, it must be acknowledged that the official attitude of early medieval Christians to magic, as defined by orthodox churchmen, was generally uncompromisingly hostile. Following the argument developed by the time of Augustine, it regarded all attempts to wield spiritual power to achieve material ends as demonic unless deployed by its own accredited representatives, and using only prayer, Scripture or its liturgy as instruments. It had, moreover, greatly enlarged the category of demons by consigning to it all the deities of paganism, and its definition of magic, and thus of forbidden uses of ritual power, including most if not all forms of divination and of traditional charms and spells used to heal and protect. It may be pointed out once again that this was in many ways a development of pagan attitudes. Roman emperors had striven to control or banish forms of divination that were not associated with traditional religion, and (as said) increasingly ferocious laws were passed against magicians in general. None the less, it was a development, and an enlargement, summed up in the fact that all forms of magic became officially described as *maleficium*, a term reserved before for deeds which caused actual harm.[26] By an opposite process of linguistic cross-fertilization, the Roman word *sortiligium* or *sortilegium*, meaning divination by the casting of lots, transformed in the course of the early Middle Ages into one frequently used for all forms of magic, and in particular for the least reputable kinds, involving the invocation of spirits (and therefore, to the orthodox, of demons). In step with this, the Roman *sortiarius*, the term for somebody who told fortunes with lots, turned into the Old French *sorcerie* and through it into the English 'sorcery', which had the same broad usage as the medieval Latin *sortiligium*.

On the ground, things could be different, as the very complaints and invectives of medieval churchmen testify to the fact that magicians

continued to flourish even at royal courts, while commoners still resorted in large numbers to lower-grade counterparts for their ills, worries and desires. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries Christian thought itself, at least as articulated by certain writers, adapted to legitimize some forms of divination and healing charms anew. None the less, for the most part the new religion condemned magic in general more fiercely and uncompromisingly than its predecessors had done, and this persisted through the whole medieval period.[27] Moreover, Wolfgang Behringer is correct that medieval law codes, starting with those of the Germanic kingdoms which supplanted the western Roman Empire, continued to prescribe penalties for the deliberate working of harmful magic. If the harm done was serious, such as murder, then the penalties were as severe as those specified for doing equivalent damage by physical means; which is logical in societies, such as those in medieval Europe, which believed in the literal potency of spells and curses.[28]

The results of these laws can be divided into two categories. One consisted of accusations of the use of magic to harm or constrain as a political weapon, of the sort that had been found among the Hittites and in imperial Rome. As such, it was deployed to promote feuds within families, allocate blame for the sudden death or mysterious illness of a ruler, assert the authority of one, or remove a minister. It remained a widespread and persistent, if occasional, feature of the Middle Ages, occurring in the Frankish kingdom in the sixth century and the Frankish empire in the ninth (thrice), at the French royal court and in that of the count of Maine in the tenth, in Aquitaine and Aragon in the eleventh, and in Flanders and Byzantium in the twelfth.[29] Fewer than a dozen cases, however, spread over eight hundred years and most of Europe, do not represent a significant element in medieval political life and state-building; and such charges were spectacular enough to be recorded by chroniclers.

The second category of actions against suspected evil magicians consisted of local trials and mob actions, and here again there is a succession of episodes, some long well known.[30] Women were put to death for practising magic at Cologne in 1075, Ghent in 1175, in France in 1190 and 1282 and in Austria in 1296. Most of these cases involved one or two victims, but there is a chronicle reference to the burning of thirty women in a single day in the south-east Austrian province of Styria during 1115, for an unrecorded offence that, given the penalty, was probably witchcraft. A priest was burned as a magician in a Westphalian town in about 1200. These all seem to have been legal executions, but in addition there were lynchings, especially a notorious case at Freising in Bavaria in 1090 when three women were burned to death by their peasant neighbours who blamed them for

poisoning people and destroying crops by uncanny means. Bishop Agobard of Lyons published a now famous sermon concerning the murder by mobs in the 810s of people suspected of using magic to cause storms that annihilated crops, and epidemics among humans. In Denmark in 1080 women were also blamed for bad weather and disease. Medieval Russia seems to have been particularly prone to such responses, and a string of reports between 1000 and 1300 testify to the killing of old people, with or without legal sanction, by crowds that blamed them for engineering crop failures and so causing famines: this was a reaction which had died out by the early modern period when witch trials were at their height elsewhere in Europe. Around 1080 King Wratislaw II of Bohemia allegedly supported his brother, the bishop of Prague, in punishing individuals accused of using magic to cause madness and storms, and purloin the milk and grain of other farmers. According to this account, he beheaded or burned the male suspects and drowned the women, to a total above a hundred.[31]

Wolfgang Behringer seems right again, therefore, that in some countries murders or executions of people for destructive magic were more common in the allegedly tolerant early and high Middle Ages than during the main, succeeding, period of trials. None the less, the pattern revealed by the surviving records is one of occasional executions or murders of isolated individuals or very small groups in Western Europe, and sporadic savage outbreaks of worse persecution, especially in eastern parts of the Continent, triggered by unusual calamities of hunger or disease. The recorded cases must undoubtedly represent only a proportion of an unknown number that has been lost to history, but the records of them suggest that these were events dramatic and rare enough to be worth chronicling. What seems to be especially significant in those records is the part played by churchmen. As said, they regularly and vehemently condemned all or most kinds of magic as demonically inspired and assisted, and none seems to have argued against a belief in witchcraft: indeed, the most influential theologian of the central Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, ruled firmly that the Christian faith proclaimed that to dispute the existence and effectiveness of harmful magic was to deny the reality of demons.[32] On the other hand, they did not develop any theology that demanded and encouraged the hunting of witches either, and, in practice, seem to have acted more frequently to encourage than to discourage it before 1300. It is true that the bishop of Beauvais in northern France led the citizens in trying and executing a woman for practising magic in 1190.[33] Against this it must be recorded that we know that women were blamed for storms and epidemics in Denmark in 1080 because the Pope himself, Gregory VII, wrote to the king to stop it, as a barbaric custom which prevented the realization that such disasters were divine

punishments.[34] When Bishop Agobard preached against the murder of presumed storm-raisers and disease-bringers, it was to denounce the practice vehemently on the same grounds. Agobard claimed to have intervened to save the lives of some of those accused, while noting that the persecution had to some extent been provoked by men who tried to work a protection racket on farmers, demanding money from them to spare their crops from being magically attacked.[35] One of the Russian persecutions of people for causing famine, in the diocese of Vladimir in the 1270s, was recorded because the bishop condemned it with the same theological argument as Pope Gregory.[36] The three women murdered at Freising in 1090 only suffered because the local bishop had died and a successor had not been appointed, creating a gap in formal authority, and monks from a nearby religious house interred the burned remains in their own cemetery, as those of martyrs.[37]

Such clerical attitudes would perhaps have done much to discourage precisely that popular tendency to blame magic for natural disasters, which seem to have had the greatest potential to generate local witch-hunts in the period. It appears to have been of a piece with them that when, in the thirteenth century, the Catholic Church developed a formidable inquisitorial machinery to detect and annihilate heresy – the holding of false religious opinions – Pope Alexander IV ruled that magic in itself should not be the concern of inquisitors.[38] Dominican friars were the most active staff of the new inquisitions, but in 1279 some of them stopped the burning of a woman as a witch by peasants in Alsace.[39] Churchmen between 500 and 1300 were also generally consistent in condemning as illusions and superstitions some widely held popular beliefs which would, had they taken them literally instead, have encouraged witch-hunting. One of these was the belief in the night rides undertaken by followers of Diana or Herodias, or the other names attributed to the roving superhuman lady or ladies, declared illusory from the *canon Episcopi* onwards. Another belief was that in night-roaming cannibal women who attacked sleeping people, children or adults, and consumed their organs. It was seen in the second chapter of this book that this idea, embodied in the earliest surviving Germanic law code, was outlawed in subsequent codes as the effect of Christianity (and perhaps of educated Roman opinion, which had questioned the reality of the *strix* demon from pagan times) was felt. Early medieval sermons and penitentials continued to condemn belief in such figures as a fiction.[40] Thus it can be suggested that early and high medieval churchmen both believed in the existence of magicians – and indeed this was beyond doubt as there were always plenty of people offering magical services, and also probably some who did attempt to use magic to harm enemies – and the need to stop them;

and yet operated in many ways to reduce the likelihood of frequent and large-scale witch-hunting.

What at first sight appears to be a notable exception to this rule turns out on closer inspection to prove it: the case of Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, who in 860 came to the defence of Theutberga, the wife of the emperor Lothar II, whom her husband wished to divorce. He accused the supporters of the annulment, and especially Lothar's mistress Waldburga, of using magic to further their ends. He made clear that he believed their powers to be real, and gained in alliance with demons. In accordance with the custom of the time, he lumped together practices such as divination with those designed to afflict others, in the same general category of evil and forbidden craft, to be fought with the rites of the Church. Moreover he believed that the workers of magic were usually female, and motivated by a desire for power over men. At no point, however, did he call for their trial and execution, so confident was he that the effects of Christian ritual, and especially of consecrated salt and oil, were sufficient to undo their work without need of any further measures.[41] In addition, Norman Cohn drew attention to the importance of the medieval legal system itself in damping down accusations, by confronting those who accused others of crimes with a substantial penalty if they lost their cases. As the use of magic was in its very nature hard to demonstrate, this could present a formidable obstacle.[42] Cohn's argument is almost certainly correct in as far as it concerns private charges brought between individuals (although, as shall be seen, it was not impossible to provide evidence which could convince a court even under these conditions). What is clear, however, is that such barriers to prosecution and conviction could be flimsy indeed if large numbers of people in a community rounded on presumed workers of magic and believed the charges against them, or if a ruler gave such an accusation full credence. This was true under the Romans, who developed the legal system concerned, and remained so as long as that system endured; otherwise the cases listed above would not have occurred. It may be suggested, therefore, that a will to hunt, at least regularly and intensely, was what was missing, and that allowed a judicial process unfavourable to accusations of witchcraft to persist. Wolfgang Behringer's suggestion that the climatic upturn of the high Middle Ages left people more prosperous and secure, and so less likely to fear witchcraft, may have some bearing on the relative absence of trials and murders at that time. The extent of decline was, however, slight, given that such events had always been few; and the idea is somewhat difficult to prove. A warmer climate is not necessarily less stormy or unhealthy, and the witch-hunts in Russia were provoked by famines caused by droughts, not floods, and continued through the climatic optimum. It may be that, once

again, ideological factors were more significant than functional factors in producing a low and intermittent rate of persecution of presumed witches. After all, exactly the same period, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, saw what has been called 'the formation of a persecuting society' in Europe, as its peoples turned upon Jews and homosexuals with a new hostility and introduced ever more rigorous measures and structures to deal with a new problem of widespread and mass Christian heresy.[43] The witch figure, however, did not get caught up in these developments. These seem to be the conclusions that can be drawn from a Continent-wide survey, but a closer and more detailed survey of a single country may contribute more to knowledge of the matter; and here England provides an obvious choice, not merely because of convenience to the present author but because of the range and quantity of its surviving records. Here as elsewhere, early medieval churchmen denounced magic in all its forms, and prescribed penances for the practice of it, though it is now difficult to distinguish destructive forms of it because of the imprecision of the terminology used. As said before, the Latin *maleficium* could now be applied to neutral or even beneficial objectives if magical operations were used to secure them, and Anglo-Saxon expressions (to be discussed below) were apparently used as broadly in clerical texts.[44] Things are only a little clearer when turning to secular law codes written in the native language. The latter had more than thirty terms for magical practices and practitioners, but a few recur with especial frequency, and were criminalized most often. Their meaning can only be recovered vaguely, and by association with other words in Anglo-Saxon that include their components. *Gaeldorcraeft* seems to have had connotations of song or incantation; *libcraeft* of potions; and *scincraeft* of delusion and phantasm. That leaves *wiccecraeft*, the ancestor of 'witchcraft', practised by a female *wicce* or male *wicca*, from which of course comes 'witch': as the 'cc' was pronounced as 'ch', the derivation is even closer than the spelling suggests. This is more difficult to match with other expressions, and so we rely on context to reconstruct a meaning.[45] Such a meaning does seem to emerge from the criminal law codes. The earliest, of Alfred the Great at the end of the ninth century, is also the least helpful, because as a self-consciously devout Christian king he paraphrased the Hebrew injunction in the Book of Exodus. Thus, *gealdorcraeftigan, scinlaecan* and *wiccan*, and those who resorted to them, were not to be allowed to live; but Alfred provided no further definitions of these (and the original biblical reference is itself, as discussed earlier, obscure). His law was augmented by one issued by his grandson Athelstan in the late 920s, which made death the penalty for killing by *wiccecraeftum, lyblacum* and *morðdaedum*: in other words by the three dishonourable means which were alternatives to homicide

committed in a fair fight: magic, poison and murder by stealth. This set of provisions was further amplified by a series of law codes issued by successive regimes between 1000 and 1022 which all seem to have been drafted by the same reforming churchman, Archbishop Wulfstan II of York. They prescribed banishment, or death on refusal to depart, for *wiccan* and *wigleras* (the latter being another term for a magician). The significant thing here is the list of other offenders placed in the same clause: perjurers, murderers by stealth and either prostitutes or flagrant serial adultresses. All these could be regarded, once more, as committers of offences against the person, and so *wiccan* and *wigleras* were probably, in this context, workers of destructive magic. The clause was repeated, with some amendments such as the inclusion of *scincraeft* or *libcraeft*, in the other codes drafted by Wulfstan.[46]

There does not appear to have been any stereotypical witch figure in Anglo-Saxon England: people seem just to have been expected to yield to the temptation to use magic against their fellow humans at particular moments and for particular reasons. The terminology applied to magicians also suggests that there were individuals who had a reputation for expertise in particular kinds of magical technique, who might provide their services for malicious as well as beneficial ends; and the terms show that these were expected to be of both sexes. To churchmen, of course, all magical practitioners were probably colluding, consciously or not, with demons, and persisting in ways which came out of a pagan past in which these devils were openly worshipped; but the concern of clerics was mainly with condemning acts of healing and divination, which still attracted much belief and support from the populace, and they paid little attention to destructive magic.[47] There are traces of belief in supernatural female figures who could protect or harm humans, but especially the latter. Again, different terms were used for these, most of them rarely encountered and now difficult to understand, but one, *haegtis* or *haegtesse*, occurs more commonly in texts, and was to engender the word *hag*, for a malevolent old human woman.[48] Early English glossaries equate it with the Latin word *striga*, for the murderous night-roaming female demon.[49] One now very famous healing charm, 'against a sudden stitch', brings such figures momentarily sharply into focus, as 'mighty wives', who ride across the land yelling and sending darts which cause stabbing pain in the humans at whom they are aimed. They are equated with both elves and pagan deities, so are clearly not supposed to be mortal. The charm aims a magical spear back against them in turn.[50]

What is missing in the early English texts is the cannibal woman, who preys upon people in the night, found in the first Germanic law codes. It

could be that Christianity had stamped out the belief in her before the sources mentioning hags began to be written; but a number of pagan elements, including hags themselves, got through into those. The figures in the charm sound a lot more like the night-riding women of medieval Scandinavian literature – though there is no sign in the charm that the pain-inflicting females there are thought to be active specially by night – and indeed this northern literature, produced by peoples who neighboured the original Anglo-Saxons, likewise has no stereotypical witch figure in it. It could be that the concept of the cannibal night-witch was confined to certain Germanic tribes. In addition, there is a trace in one Anglo-Saxon text of a belief in people who have intimate dealings with demons, to the detriment of their fellows: it prescribes a protective salve against the 'elf-kin', 'night-walkers' and 'people with whom the devil has sex'.[51] It may be suggested, therefore, that most of the components of the early modern idea of witchcraft were already present in Anglo-Saxon England, but were as yet far from being assembled into that later construct. Of actual signs of enforcement of the laws against witchcraft, there is only one, now celebrated, case. It is that of a tenth-century widow living in Northamptonshire, who drove an iron pin into an image of a man whom she and her son disliked. When suspicion fell on her, her room was searched and the image found, and this proof was sufficient to get her executed, by drowning in a river: her son fled and was outlawed and their land confiscated.[52]

This record is only preserved, however, because the land concerned swiftly became part of another transaction, in which its new ownership needed to be explained. It is impossible to tell simply from the lack of other evidence whether such cases were as rare as the written sources would suggest, or were routine but, for lack of the keeping of legal records, only likely to emerge into the light of history by accident, as happened in this instance. It may, however, be possible to suggest an answer to this problem by approaching it from other angles. Anglo-Saxon royal families were divided by often vicious internal rivalries, and yet there is no contemporary or near-contemporary mention of magic being used as a charge in these, as it was occasionally in similar dynastic feuds on the Continent. It is also revealing to consult the very large collections of healing and protective charms and herbal medicine that survive from Anglo-Saxon England. Only four such charms were designed, even in part, as remedies against malicious human magic, and non-human beings, such as elves, demons and hags, and depersonalized menaces such as the 'flying venom' which caused disease, appear to have provoked more concern.[53] It seems that the early English may be counted among the peoples who credited most uncanny misfortune to other sources than their fellow humans; which would have damped down

an impulse to hunt witches. Not much altered after the Norman Conquest with respect to attitudes to magic, despite the tremendous political, social and cultural changes it brought in general. Twelfth-century authors did occasionally produce portraits of wicked English female magicians: in total, of a queen who used potions to turn herself into a mare; a woman hired by a stepmother to brew an evil potion to be administered to a rightful heir; another at Berkeley in Gloucestershire, who knew spells and could learn the future by listening to birds; and another hired by the Normans to help them against Saxon rebels, and who delivered a curse (ineffectually) from a platform. All these were, however, literary constructs designed to carry moral messages, set in a past age before that of the writer and involving formulaic activities, so that the image of the woman on the platform, for example, may have been borrowed from Norse accounts of *seiðr*.[54] The law itself altered little, William the Conqueror himself forbidding the use of spells to kill people or animals, while a treatise written in the reign of his son Henry confirmed that the penalty for achieving this should be death, but for merely attempting it those convicted should pay compensation.[55] Legal records exist from the late twelfth century onwards and show a few trials for magic: a woman arrested for it in Essex or Hertfordshire in 1168 and a Norfolk woman tried and acquitted in 1199 or 1209; while in 1280 an abbot of Selby, Yorkshire, was accused of employing a male magician to find the body of his drowned brother. There is no indication in the first two cases that destructive magic was at issue, and in the third it was not, but a thirteenth-century man at King's Lynn was fined for drawing blood from a woman upon false suspicions; and in later centuries this was a standard means of averting bewitchment. In Northumberland in 1279 a man's goods were confiscated because he had struck and killed a woman. Her body had been burned, probably indicating that she was believed to have been a witch.[56] In the late twelfth century Henry II banished all magicians from his court, and by the thirteenth the charge of using magic for personal gain had at last entered the toolkit of high political rivalry: in the first half of the century the main royal minister, and in the second half a high financial officer, the Chamberlain of the Exchequer, were accused of it.[57] So the fear of witchcraft remained, with laws against it, but does not seem to have been intense or to have manifested frequently in action. The English case seems to prove the European rule for the early to high Middle Ages.

When all this is said, there is a general agreement among historians that official attitudes to magic underwent a significant change in Western Europe during the decades around 1300, because of the impact of the elaborate and ceremonial variety that first appears in late antique Egypt.[58] This was imported during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries through the translation

of Greek and Arabic texts, and represented a serious challenge to Christian orthodoxy. For one thing, it represented a new form of magic to medieval Western Europeans, unprecedented in its elaboration and sophistication and disproving the long-cherished expectation that continued condemnation of the traditional, simpler kinds of magical remedy would gradually eradicate resort to them or at least confine it to the poorest and least influential levels of society. On the contrary, the newly arrived texts of complex magic relied heavily on transmission of written figures and formulae, and those subsequently developed from them often demanded knowledge of Christian liturgy and clerical conventions of behaviour. Hence they appealed to the most educated, wealthy and sophisticated social groups, and above all to the churchmen who should have been the guardians of religious orthodoxy. While texts that openly required the invocation of demons would always remain outside the likely bounds of officially acceptable practice, those that claimed to manipulate the natural forces of the universe, and above all the influence of heavenly bodies, were far less easy to condemn out of hand. Even the sub-class which recommended the employment of demons sometimes made a direct and reasoned riposte to orthodox teaching by claiming that the proficient magician could compel and control evil spirits and so force them to work for benevolent ends, so striking a resounding blow for Christianity. For two hundred years, learned authors in Western Europe conducted a debate over how far forms of the new complex magic could be assimilated into orthodoxy and be used for human benefit. By the early fourteenth century, however, the majority of them had swung firmly against such a rapprochement and reinstated the Augustinian orthodoxy that all magic was inherently demonic, whether its practitioners were conscious or not that they were working with demons.

This development accompanied and overlapped with another, which was inspired largely by the appearance of widespread heresy in Western Europe between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and the increasingly savage, and successful, Catholic counter-attack upon it, using crusade and inquisition as its main weapons: it was between 1224 and 1240 that burning came to be adopted as the standard mode of execution for heretics, as it had long been for magicians. They were routinely portrayed as devil-worshippers as part of that counter-attack, and this strategy encouraged an outbreak of political trials between 1300 and 1320 in which prominent individuals and organizations were accused of worshipping Satan in secret, and often ruined as a consequence. King Philip the Fair of France became the most ardent practitioner of this technique, using it to attack a bishop who was one of his own councillors, a pope and

then the crusading order of the Knights Templar, and it was continued under his successor Louis X. In England, the bishop of Lichfield was accused in 1303, and suspicion of magic seems to have quickened at a local level, as a woman was banished from Exeter in 1302 for entertaining notorious magicians from South Devon, and in 1311 the bishop of London ordered measures to be taken to curb the growth of fortune-tellers.[59] Both developments, the condemnation of magic and the escalation of political trials for devil-worship, were accompanied by a growing fear of the power of Satan in the world; which may itself have been generated, and was certainly reinforced, by the twin new threats posed by large-scale heresy and ceremonial magic.[60]

In this manner the scene was set for a direct and comprehensive attack on ceremonial magic, as demonic, launched by Pope John XXII between 1318 and 1326. He was already inclined to use the charge of malicious magic against personal opponents, having had a bishop burned as a result of it in 1317 and going on to deploy it again thereafter. In 1318 he appointed a commission to root out ceremonial magic from his own court at Avignon, and in the 1320s four other trials of alleged magicians were held in different parts of France, some directly encouraged by the pope: churchmen were accused in all of them, although sometimes assisted by lay practitioners. In 1326 John decreed that ceremonial magic had grown to the proportions of a plague, and excommunicated all concerned in it.[61] Magic was thus at last identified directly with heresy. His actions seem to have had knock-on effects, as the use of magic as a political charge returned to nearby royal courts, once in that of England and twice in that of France between 1327 and 1331; while a woman was burned in the south-west German province of Swabia in 1322 for using a consecrated communion wafer in a magical rite.[62] Pope John's influence reached as far as Ireland, where one of his protégés became bishop of Ossory and provoked a sensational and subsequently notorious trial at Kilkenny in 1324–5. Twelve people were accused, of whom the most prominent was Alice, Lady Kyteler. The charges arose out of a feud within a prominent local family, and became the subject of a power struggle between different factions in Church and state among the English settlers in Ireland. In the short term the bishop won this, and the accused were convicted of being 'heretic sorcerers'[63] who abandoned Christianity to worship demons, and gained from them the ability to obtain their own desires, which included the injury and murder of selected human victims. Some of them, including Lady Alice, escaped by fleeing, and others were absolved upon doing penance, but one woman, Petronilla of Meath, was tortured into confession and then burned to death, the first person in Ireland to suffer this fate for heresy.[64]

In 1331 the English royal council ordered a hunt for magicians in London, and three goldsmiths were caught in the act of a magical ceremony in the suburb of Southwark: one was a semi-professional, hired by the others, and he and his main accomplice were remanded in custody while their bishop was consulted about whether their actions were heretical.[65] The bishop concerned was that of Winchester, whose jurisdiction extended to Southwark, and the case seems to have triggered a wider crackdown on magic in his diocese, where two more trials were held, over the next six years, of villagers who had sought or provided magical aid. The punishments were confined to whipping, however, while the Southwark magus was exiled.[66] The next pope, Benedict XII, had himself been a notable inquisitor, and an avid hunter of heresy and magical practices, and in 1336–7 he took a personal interest in legal cases involving magic in various parts of Italy and France.[67] At about that time an Italian professor of theology, Bartolus of Sassoferrato, redefined the ancient terms for child-killing nocturnal demonesses, *striga* and *lamia*, to mean 'a woman who renounces Christianity, and deserves death'.[68]

There was, however, no sustained momentum behind this sequence of persecution. Benedict seems to have been as interested in ensuring that justice was done in the cases in which he involved himself as in pursuing the accused, and in one instance he directed fresh investigation of a charge of using image-magic to kill John XXII, which the latter had believed but which Benedict thought could be fraudulent.[69] The pope who followed him in 1342, Clement VI, was apparently not concerned with the issue, while the French and English royal families entered a period of internal unity and stability. No local tradition seems to have been established of a popular fear of magic-workers or a crusade against them by inquisitors or secular magistrates, and so prosecutions seem to have died away at all levels of society. This makes their revival from the mid-1370s all the more remarkable. It was not led by the papacy, which in 1378 ruptured into the Great Schism, forty years in which rival popes strove for supremacy with the different Catholic states supporting one or the other. One of the last pontiffs before the division occurred, Gregory XI, was asked in 1374 by the chief inquisitor for France for renewed powers to repress ceremonial magic, which was allegedly rife and attracting priests: he thought that no such authority remained to him from the earlier period. Gregory gave them, but only for two years.[70]

There is more purchase for the idea that renewed political insecurity readmitted the charge of magic to high-level dirty politics, which put it back into the limelight. In 1377 England found itself with a senile king besotted with a mistress, and a child heir. The mistress was promptly

accused of using spells to gain the old king's love. When that child heir succeeded, one of his ministers was accused of demonic magic after that man's fall and execution. The young king concerned, Richard II, was subsequently deposed, inaugurating a long period of turbulence in English dynastic politics which culminated in the Wars of the Roses; and five out of the six reigns between 1411 and 1509 were marked by at least one accusation against somebody, usually a member of the royal family, of using magic to try to kill the current monarch.[71] In the 1390s the reigning king of France went mad, and this was blamed on witchcraft, especially as the resulting power vacuum engendered a particularly vicious and prolonged struggle between other members of his family in which the same charge played a prominent part; as it continued to do when that struggle led to the collapse of France into civil war during the following decades. By 1398 it had already provoked the University of Paris into reaffirming the doctrine that ceremonial magic, as assisted by devils, constituted heresy, and further discussions and condemnations of it by intellectuals associated with the warring parties followed.[72] The duke of neighbouring Savoy duly claimed to uncover a magical murder plot against himself in 1417.[73]

Most of this renewed royal, aristocratic and scholarly interest seems, however, to have followed and become meshed with a new hostility to magic at a local, and especially an urban, level. In 1376 the inquisitor for Aragon in Spain, a Dominican friar called Nicholas Eymeric, issued what was to become an immensely influential handbook for the definition and detection of heresy.[74] This made the first unambiguous declaration that ceremonial magicians were to be regarded, hunted down and punished as heretics. Even Eymeric ruled that some of the simpler practices of service magicians which did not require the conjuration of spirits, such as reading palms and drawing lots, were not to be the concern of inquisitors, but in practice the new drive against magicians, of which his manual seems as much a symptom as a cause, sometimes seems to have elided the two. In 1390 the Parlement of Paris declared sorcery to be an offence within its own jurisdiction, and proceeded subsequently to try two women from the city for attempting to work love spells, a third who had offered a range of magic to customers and fourth who had tried to use it against her abusive husband, and burned them all for devil-worship.[75] The same thing happened in the same year at Milan to two women who had sold magical services to clients, services which they claimed to have learned from the superhuman 'lady' whom they followed by night.[76] A confession of diabolism was likewise wrested from a woman at Geneva in 1401, who had claimed to consult a spirit in order to help clients find stolen goods and protect livestock.[77] There were no cases of magic in the secular courts of Florence between

1343 and 1375, but three convictions and two executions between 1375 and 1412: all seem to have been of people who had practised it for their own ends or offered to perform it for a fee.[78] The same courts at Lucca tried nobody for magic between 1346 and 1388, yet convicted three between 1388 and 1415, two of them foreigners offering services for hire.[79] The element of diabolism appeared occasionally in cases in both cities. In London, people who offered magic for hire were punished in the 1390s and 1400s, and the bishop of Lincoln received a royal order to do the same to all in his diocese in 1406.[80]

The reasons for this upsurge in accusation and prosecution, across Western Europe and at different levels of society, may not be possible to discern confidently in the present state of knowledge. Michael Bailey has noted the number of treatises published between 1405 and 1425, by French and German scholars, which applied demonological theories to simple and mundane spells and charms; and related these to a broader move among churchmen to a practical and pastoral, rather than a cosmological, theology.[81] The groundswell of such a movement may have helped create the conditions for the renewed persecution of magicians, though the texts concerned are all too late to have played a part in starting it. It is easy to believe that most of the people accused of practising ceremonial magic actually did so, because many examples of it have survived, which contain rites and spells, both to help the practitioner and to hamper or injure enemies, similar to those cited in the court records. It is also quite credible that some practitioners would actually have invoked demons, as those surviving texts of ritual magic sometimes contain instructions on how to do so; the presumption, of course, being that the magician would be constraining the devils concerned to his or her own will.[82] When a Greek woman tried at Lucca in 1388 is recorded as summoning infernal spirits in the names of God and the Virgin Mary, to aid in rites to gratify her clients, there is no paradox in the statement: she would have been using these holy names to gain power over the demons concerned.[83]

What is much more in doubt is that any of those tried in this period actually worshipped Satan or his lesser devils, as some were convicted of doing. For the charge of heresy to stick to magicians, this is what they had to admit. Norman Cohn made a convincing argument that no widespread sect of Satanist magicians existed.[84] It is considerably harder to determine whether or not individuals, or even small groups like that around Alice Kyteler, forsook Christianity to give allegiance to the Devil or a devil. It would have been against the whole tradition of ceremonial magic, as expressed in its known texts, to do so; but the existing evidence is not adequate to suggest any final answer to the problem. What it does strongly

suggest is that some of the magical practitioners who were accused claimed to have relationships with spirits, as helpers or servants, which those interrogating them turned into demons; but how far this explains the charges of devil-worship in general is, again, hard to decide.

There is, on the face of things, no reason why the upsurge in official attacks on magic at the end of the fourteenth century should not have subsided as those in the early part of the century had done. Instead it blended seamlessly into what turned out to be the beginning of the early modern European witch-hunt. In 1409 one of the contending popes in the still persistent schism, Alexander V, sent a decree to the inquisitor general whose territory covered the western Alps, ordering him to proceed against new forms of deviance which practised heresy, usury and magic there. The definition of magic included the elaborate literary kind, divination and peasant superstitions: so if the groups that practised them were thought to be new, there is no real evidence that what they did was regarded as novel.[85] The document was probably sought by the inquisitor himself, and there is nothing out of the ordinary about it: its treatment of magic fits into the general crackdown of the age and is a papal equivalent to (for example) the order sent to the bishop of Lincoln, so that the pope concerned was belatedly following current trends rather than leading them. What makes it more significant is that the inquisitor in question was Ponce Feugeyron, a Franciscan who less than three decades later was to be involved in some of the earliest witch trials of the early modern kind.

It may be helpful at this point, therefore, to emphasize how the image of the magician which underpinned the fourteenth-century trials differed from that of the satanic witch which underpinned those of the early modern period. There was no sense in the late medieval attack on magic that magicians were part of an organized and widespread new religious sect, which posed a serious menace to Christianity. They were, rather, viewed just as individuals or small individual groups, in particular places at particular times, who yielded to the temptation to gain access to normally superhuman powers for their own ends. The ends concerned, though selfish, were generally just for personal profit rather than dedicated to the commission of evil as an end in itself, and most of those targeted offered their services for sale to others or sought assistance from such experts. The acts with which they were charged were usually heavy in the paraphernalia – special objects, substances and spoken words – on which ceremonial magic generally relied. In most cases the element of apostasy from Christianity was not central to the charges, and because those accused were not expected to belong to a sect, there was no cumulative effect of arrests, as those already under interrogation were not required to name accomplices. As a result of all these

features, the overall body count produced by the persecution was low: between 1375 and 1420 the total number of people executed for offences related to magic, across Western Europe, was probably in the scores rather than hundreds. In this period as throughout the previous Middle Ages, there was in practice no significant element of gender among those tried, save that – mirroring educational patterns in society as a whole – men were more likely to be accused of the more text-based and learned kinds of magic, and women of the less. The stereotype of a witch that underlay the early modern trials had not yet appeared by the opening of the fifteenth century.

The Making of the Early Modern Witch

The most important feature of the concept of the satanic witch that appeared at the end of the Middle Ages was that it was new. This was, as shall be seen, fully acknowledged at the time of its appearance. In 1835 Jacob Grimm, as part of his pioneering work into the history of Germanic folklore, came up with a two-stranded explanation for its development. One strand, the more dynamic, consisted of the increasing concern of the medieval Catholic Church to purify the societies which it controlled, by identifying and eliminating heresy. This supplied the basis for the imagination of an organized sect of devil-worshipping witches, but Grimm also suggested that the forms which that imaginative creation took were conditioned by his second strand, popular beliefs inherited ultimately from the pagan ancient world.[86]

It will be the contention here that Grimm's model was correct, but it must be noted too that historians developed its two components largely separately in the century and a half after he wrote. That of folk beliefs rooted in the ancient world acquired momentum in the rather different form of seeing the people prosecuted as witches as practitioners of a surviving pagan religion, which, as said earlier, finally ran into a dead end in the 1970s. Scholars who were themselves expert in the later Middle Ages and early modern period tended to emphasize the other component, of a medieval Western Church determined to identify and eradicate heresy, as not merely false but as satanic religion. One of the greatest of these was an archivist from Cologne, Joseph Hansen, who at the beginning of the twentieth century edited and published many of the primary texts relating to the medieval and early modern persecution of magicians and witches. His collections have been an invaluable resource for historians ever since, and are prominent in the endnotes to this present chapter. It was also he who pinpointed the apparent place and time at which the stereotype of a satanic sect of witches first appeared: in the western Alps during the early fifteenth century.[87] The collapse of the theory of a surviving pagan religion, and the beginning of sustained and large-scale

research into the witch trials, cleared the way for a new investigation of the origins of that stereotype. In circumstances considered in the last chapter, one was provided in 1975 by Norman Cohn, who essentially restated Grimm's explanatory model, starting afresh and with much more extensive evidence.[88] Once more the primacy of importance of the Church's drive against heresy was stated, but with much deeper roots, going back to ancient Roman stereotypes of antisocial behaviour by groups with aberrant religious beliefs, especially early Christians themselves. He also drew attention to the orthodox reaction to ceremonial magic in creating the particular context for a drive against witchcraft. None the less, Cohn also emphasized the significance of the folkloric element, likewise rooted in antiquity, in contributing important images to the new concept of the witch. His interpretative model was robust and convincing enough to secure general assent. In 2004 one author on the subject, Steven Marrone, could commence a study of his own by declaring that 'there is no need to rehearse Cohn's argument here or re-examine his evidence. Both have been so well received as to constitute a fixture of current understanding of the rise of the witch-craze.'[89]

This being so, two other first-rate historians who were also working on the same problem, Richard Kieckhefer and Carlo Ginzburg, had to signal their differences from Cohn in order to draw attention to the value of their own ideas. Both actually endorsed his basic model, of witch-hunting as a spin-off from heretic-hunting but informed by folkloric traditions. All three of them agreed also with Hansen's identified place and time as the most important origin-point for the new concept of witchcraft. Kieckhefer indeed only disagreed with Cohn over details, tackled in footnotes, but Ginzburg was much more emphatic in drawing attention to his differences from both Cohn, and Kieckhefer.[90] Those differences embraced both parts of Cohn's (and Grimm's) model. With respect to the folkloric elements, Ginzburg related those which had been found relevant before to a much broader and deeper cultural substratum in ancient Europe which he termed shamanistic; and which has been considered at length in Chapter Three of the present book. With respect to the heresy-hunting element, he placed a new emphasis on the importance of specific persecutions of lepers and Jews as secret enemies of society in fourteenth-century France, in preparing the way for a novel stereotype of witchcraft. In 1996 Michael Bailey summed up Ginzburg's book as 'one of the most controversial studies of witchcraft', and its status in this respect has not much altered.[91] The inspiration it gave to authors such as Éva Pócs and Wolfgang Behringer, considered earlier, is not relevant here, because they were really concerned with the manner in which folkloric motifs coloured local witch trials, and not with the origins of the stereotype of the satanic witch itself. Historians who have been

concerned with those origins have tended instead to elaborate the part of Cohn's model that referred to heresy-hunting. Michael Bailey has found the conception of the early modern witch in the conflation by clergymen of elite ceremonial magic, the common tradition of practical spells, and the general fear of malevolent magic, in a single demonic construct. This mixture was then grafted onto standard medieval caricatures of heretical sects. Bailey faulted Ginzburg for overstating the factor of night flight in the creation of the image of demonic witchcraft, such flight being a crucial element in Ginzburg's argument for the importance of shamanistic traditions in that process of creation.[92] Bailey's fellow American, Steven Marrone, has emphasized the impact of ceremonial magic, and the greater agency which orthodox churchmen allowed to demons in response to that impact.[93] Wolfgang Behringer and the Swiss historian Kathrin Utz Tremp have restated the importance of attitudes to heresy, showing how trials of heretics in parts of the western Alps turned seamlessly into trials of satanic witches.[94] The Dutch historical anthropologist Willem de Blécourt has rejected Ginzburg's model comprehensively, arguing that the shamanistic analogy is completely unhelpful and that Ginzburg had made an inappropriate projection of atypical south-eastern European folk customs onto Western Europe.[95] It has actually been Richard Kieckhefer who has applied Ginzburg's ideas most closely to the question of origins, agreeing that popular mythologies were important but suggesting that there was no unified imaginative construct of witchcraft in the fifteenth century; instead he has argued for multiple mythologies, in regional varieties, which functioned differently under different circumstances.[96]

There is thus a considerable recent debate over the matter; but there is also a large amount of new material available with which to take that debate forward. One conclusion that can be drawn from that material is that the western Alps alone were not the birthplace of the construct of the satanic witch. Indeed, the earliest clearly dated reference to that construct is in another range of mountains, the Pyrenees. There, in 1424, the leading men of the Aneu Valley, high in the Catalan end of the range, were summoned by the local count and agreed to act against local people who accompanied *bruxas* by night to do homage to the Devil. They would then steal sleeping children from their homes and murder them, and use poisonous substances to harm adults. Some had already been apprehended and confessed to this crime, and it was decided that they and any convicted of it in future would be burned to death.[97]

Bruxas was a medieval Catalan term for the nocturnal demons known in ancient times from Italy to Mesopotamia who were believed to kill children: the Roman *striges*. In the course of the fifteenth century, as the belief in gatherings like those in the Aneu Valley spread slowly across northern

Spain, it came to be applied to the women who attended them, until it became the standard Spanish term for witches.[98] A leading expert in the Spanish material ascribes the appearance of the demonic witch stereotype in Catalonia to the activities of Vincent Ferrer and his disciples, Dominican friars who staged preaching campaigns between central France and north-eastern Spain between 1408 and 1422, calling in particular for the punishment of magicians as part of the new Western European crackdown on them. He notes likewise that from the 1420s onwards, secular courts in the Languedoc area of France, bordering Catalonia, began to prosecute individual women for doing homage to the Devil and thus acquiring the power to enter houses through closed doors and poison the inhabitants.[99]

In the same year in which the stereotype of a sect of satanic witches appeared in the Pyrenees, it surfaced at Rome itself, where two women were executed for killing large numbers of children by sucking their blood on the orders of the Devil. They gained entry to the homes of their victims by anointing themselves with ointments and turning themselves into cats.[100] More details of the sect were provided in a trial held by the captain of the city of Todi, to the north, in 1428.[101] It was of a celebrated local service magician who sold spells and charms to secure health and love, and break bewitchments. She became caught up in the continuing drive against magic, but what was new about her case was that she was also charged with sucking the blood and life force of children, like a *strix*, when going abroad at night in the shape of a fly. Moreover, she was accused of riding a demon in the form of a goat (when herself in human form) to join other people of her kind in revelling and worshipping Lucifer, who ordered her to destroy the children. To make it possible for her to fly on the demon's back, she was supposed to anoint herself with substances such as the blood of babies, and of bats, and the fat of vultures. She was sentenced to burn. Once again a preaching campaign has been associated with this case, this time that of Bernadino of Siena which covered central Italy between 1424 and 1426 and directly encouraged his audiences to report practitioners of magic to the authorities. He had spoken at Todi and co-operated with the reigning pope in launching the hunt at Rome. Bernadino did not believe in the reality of gatherings of witches to which participants flew in order to worship Satan, or that the spells of witches had any power over virtuous Christians, or that they could transform their shape into that of animals. In opposing these ideas, he remained an early medieval churchman. He did, however, think that demons acted for the witches with whom they made pacts, taking the form of animals and sucking the blood of babies to kill them; and in this manner he unleashed ancient and widespread fears which earlier clerics had damped down.[102]

Between Bernadino's territory of central Italy and that of Vincent Ferrer and his pupils, which extended from eastern Spain to the River Rhone, stretched the western Alps, recognized since Hansen's time as the birthplace of the early modern witch-hunt. The three areas were all connected by the networks of preaching friars: Bernadino, for example, cited a fellow Franciscan who had told him of a group of child-murdering heretics in Piedmont, at the north-west end of Italy, who used the bodies for a potion which conferred invisibility.[103] The Alpine one was, however, to be the most influential in propagating the new image of witchcraft. Understanding what happened there has become much easier in recent years because of a remarkable cluster of scholars centred on the Swiss university of Lausanne, which lies at the centre of the main region for early witch trials. This group has edited and published the surviving records of those trials, with the literary texts associated with them.[104] The import of their work suggests that the appearance of the new image of witchcraft in the Alps can first be securely dated in the region to 1428, the year of the Todi case and four years after the hunts in the Aneu Valley and at Rome. This was when a vicious series of prosecutions began in the Valais region, in the heart of the western Alps to the east of Lake Leman. It lay at an intersection of linguistic, cultural and political boundaries, where the French-, German- and Romansh-speaking areas of Switzerland met, and with them a complex of territories ruled by the local bishop (of Sion or Valais), the duke of Savoy, and other petty states. The trials started in two French-speaking valleys, Anniviers and Hérens, as high in the Alps as Aneu is in the Pyrenees, but they spread across most of the region. They were recorded, about a decade later, by Hans Fründ, a chronicler at the city of Luzern to the north, who was clearly well informed about events in Valais.[105] What Fründ recorded was the finding of a conspiracy of 'sorcerers'[106] to kill their fellow humans at the behest of the Devil, whom they worshipped after he had transported them to nocturnal group meetings on chairs into which a flying ointment had been rubbed. Satan, who manifested in animal form, turned some into wolves, to kill sheep, gave others herbs which made them invisible, and changed the appearances of yet others into those of innocent people. Aided by him, they murdered, paralyzed and blinded their neighbours, and produced miscarriages and impotence among them, as well as destroying their crops, stealing milk from their cows, and rendering their wagons and carts useless. In particular, they killed their children by making them sicken at night, so that they could then dig up and eat the bodies. This conspiracy was said to have been growing so fast that its adherents believed they would have taken over the area, and destroyed Christianity, after another year.

Fründ made clear in this case what may be suspected in those of the Aneu Valley, Rome and Todi: that the confessions were extracted by torture,

sometimes applied so brutally that people died under it. He estimated that the hunt resulted in the burning of more than two hundred individuals, both female and male, in one and a half years; which is a large body count even by the standards of the early modern witch trials at their height. It was probably the largest for at least a millennium of people put to death for working magic. Local legal records show that it was conducted by petty lords who were driven by a sudden popular fear of witchcraft, and that the trials began in 1427 and lasted until 1436. These records mention all the details recorded by Fründ except the flight to meetings, and make his estimate of the number of executions credible.[107] Once again, a preaching campaign to raise awareness of the threat from magic seems likely to have provided the context for the trials. These mountain valleys may have been remote from the main centres of contemporary population, but were not sleepy places ignored by political and religious authorities: on the contrary, they were on the front line of religious evangelism and state-building.[108] Two aggressive states in particular, the duchy of Savoy and the city of Berne, were seeking to extend their power in the western Alps, while vassals like the landowners in the territory of the bishop of Sion were trying to assert independence of their overlords. In the process the economy was being shifted from self-sufficiency to production for the market, with proportionate social tension. Moreover, mountains had become refuges for members of heretical Christian sects driven from or wiped out in more accessible areas, and so by the late Middle Ages were especial targets for the friars who acted as evangelists and inquisitors, supported by religious and secular authorities. In the Pyrenees, these heretics were above all the Cathars, and in the western Alps another austere and idealistic branch of unorthodox Christianity, the Waldensians. The latter were subjected to especially intense persecution in the western Alpine region in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and the trials of them merged into those of the new kind of witchcraft, as both were accused of worshipping the Devil in groups with similar rites; indeed, in parts of the region, the same word, *Vaudois*, was used of both heresies.[109] The territory in which Ponce Feugeyron acted as inquisitor general, and in which the pope in 1409 had ordered him to root out heresies, including specifically any associated with magic, bordered directly on the Valais. His powers to do this were renewed in 1418 by Martin V, the pope whose election ended the Great Schism and who co-operated later with Bernadino of Siena in the latter's witch-hunt at Rome.[110]

The record therefore shows that a belief in a conspiracy of devil-worshipping magicians, to harm other people, and especially to kill babies and children, appeared in the mid- to late 1420s at different points widely dispersed across a broad area, stretching in an arc from north-eastern Spain

to central Italy. The single factor which can link them all is the preaching of friars who were co-operating in a campaign against popular heresy and unusually conscious of the danger posed by magic, as part of the resurgence in the prosecution of its practitioners which had commenced in Western Christendom in the 1370s. This seems to have ignited responses among the populace, amounting at times to panics, in particular places where the circumstances were propitious, perhaps because of unusual infant mortality and other misfortunes, and certainly where justice was in the hands of local secular lords and captains who were easily carried away by public feeling, in a period of political and economic instability. There was a clear connection between these responses and folk beliefs derived from ancient origins, but those did not so obviously derive from 'shamanistic' motifs of spirit-flight so much as the figure of the child-murdering demoness, the Roman *strix* and the Germanic nocturnal cannibal woman. The main part of the new construct, of a group of people who gathered secretly by night to worship the Devil, who appeared to them in animal form, was absolutely standard as an orthodox accusation against heretics in the high and later Middle Ages.[111] Richard Kieckhefer has pointed, correctly, to the differences of detail between the Swiss and Italian cases as mirroring distinctive local folkloric traditions, and argued from them that there was no single imaginative model of satanic witchcraft in the fifteenth century; only multiple regional mythologies.[112] It is proposed here instead that there actually was such a single construct involved, right at the beginning, and that it took on local forms as it was propagated. The obvious creators and propagators of it were the preaching friars of the mendicant orders, Dominican and Franciscan. Moreover, they were not just any members of those orders, but leaders of a particular movement within them, the Observant, which believed in purging Christendom of all laxity and ungodliness as part of the period of reform, which succeeded the Great Schism of rival popes that had riven the Western Church in the decades around 1400. A study of pastoral literature published in and around Siena in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries provides an important microcosm of this movement at work.[113] It reveals that most of it, following earlier medieval tradition, treated popular magic as the product of ignorance and credulity and not as heresy, saw harmful magic as antisocial rather than demonic, and condemned belief in the *strix*. Bernadino took the opposite view on the first two counts and identified the *strix* as a human woman empowered to fly by the Devil. In the process, he and his fellow reformist preachers gave a new power and terror to the image of the *strix* and launched a new kind of witch-hunt. The bricolage of elements that went into the creation of that new model is clearly displayed in the second of the famous texts which have recently

been edited by the Lausanne cluster, the *Formicarius* (Ant Hill) of Johannes Nider, a prominent Dominican, written in the 1430s.[114] Nider relied on others for his knowledge, and combined into his model of satanic witchcraft phenomena reported to him by three different people. One was a former ceremonial magician, who had hired out his services, and another a Dominican inquisitor at Autun in central France, who described the local magicians, many apparently serving clients, whom he had prosecuted. The latter man also reported the exposure of a sect of devil-worshipping sorcerers in an area near Lausanne and the Duchy of Savoy, which was presumably the Valais. Most interesting to historians, however, has been Nider's third source, a 'Judge Peter' from Berne, who governed the Simmen Valley on behalf of his city, which had just annexed it. This valley ran into the mountains south of Berne, which divided its region from the Valais. 'Peter' became concerned about magic because of a panic created in the district by rumours of 'evil-doers'[115] who were using spells to kill babies in their cradles in such a manner as to resemble natural death. The murderers then dug up the little corpses and ate them, using some of the flesh to make an ointment that conferred magical powers, including flight and shape-shifting. The judge used torture to extract confessions from the accused, not just of baby-killing but of causing a range of injuries to people, as well as offering magical aid to customers. Some seem to have been solitary operators, but 'Peter' had no doubt that many belonged to a devil-worshipping sect with an initiation rite which included abjuring Christianity and drinking a liquid distilled from a dead infant. He burned both those who were made to confess and those who refused to do so, and seems to have claimed many victims.

For a long time, historians thought that this was the earliest datable reference to the new construct of the satanic witch cult, because Nider said that 'Peter' had conducted his campaign sixty years before. Joseph Hansen identified him in 1900 as a Peter von Greyerz who had governed the upper Simmen Valley in the 1390s, and this became generally accepted. Recently, however, the 'Lausanne cluster' has found two other judges called Peter who ruled the district between 1407 and 1417, while those in office between 1418 and 1424, and 1429 and 1434, are unknown, and could also have included a Peter. Moreover, von Greyerz had a son of the same name, active between 1421 and 1448, who would have been known to Nider, and who may have been confused by the friar with his father, just as reports of the Valais witch-hunt could have contaminated memories of what had happened in the Simmen Valley. Legal records survive from that valley which cover the years 1389–1415, and show no trials for witchcraft.[116] The Valais hunt is therefore now the earliest based on the new stereotype of a

satanic witch cult to be dated in the western Alps.[117] What is significant about the *Formicarius* is that Nider unhesitatingly integrated all forms of magic, including the complex ceremonial kind and simpler spells sold to benefit clients, into that stereotype.

The next of the early texts from the region is the anonymous *Errores gazariorum*, 'The Errors of the Cathars', which was produced in the period 1435 to 1439 in two successive versions.[118] Ponce Feugeyron has been suggested as a plausible candidate for its authorship, and another is George of Saluzzo, successively bishop of Aosta, to the south of the Valais, and of Lausanne: cases cited in the work were drawn from both dioceses. The name 'Cathars', coined for one of the most famous heresies of the high Middle Ages, was applied by this time to a range of outlawed sects, and was now given in the treatise to the imagined one of witches. This was defined as meeting in 'synagogues' (the word reflecting the contemporary suspicion and persecution of Jews as non-Christians) to worship the Devil, usually in animal form. The tract laid especial emphasis on the activities at these meetings, which included the eating of murdered babies (specifically under three years of age), dancing, and a sexual orgy without regard to the gender or kinship ties of partners. Initiates were given a box of ointment, consisting in part of baby fat, and a stick to anoint with it, on which they might ride easily to the 'synagogue'. They also received powders manufactured of similar horrific materials in order to kill people – inflicting waves of lethal epidemics on communities – or to render them impotent or infertile, or blight their farmlands. The children were murdered in their beds at night, as alleged in the Valais trials, and then, as was also claimed there, dug from their graves and taken to the 'synagogue'. Members of the sect pretended to be devout Catholics in daily life, and to offer comfort to the parents whose children they had killed.

The final work of significance among these early texts is that by Claude Tholosan, a lay judge in the French district of Dauphiné, who between 1426 and 1448 conducted 258 trials in the Alpine areas of that province and neighbouring parts of Piedmont, a region lying to the south and south-west of Lake Leman.[119] His book, like that by Nider, grouped together all kinds of magical practitioner as members of the new sect of satanic witches, called by him 'magicians' or 'evil-doers'. His portrait of the sect matches that in Fründ, Nider and the *Errores gazariorum*, save that he did not believe in the reality of its members' ability to fly by night and he incorporated a theme from the folk tradition of the 'good ladies': that demons led initiates into wealthy homes to feast and make merry there, magically restoring the food and drink that they consumed. Records of trials conducted by Tholosan survive, and match the evidence provided in his book. Other trial

records are preserved from the districts north of Lake Leman between 1438 and 1464, and show the imposition by clerical inquisitors, most partnered with Bishop George of Saluzzo, of the portrait of the witches' 'synagogue'; especially that provided in the *Errores gazariorum* which had drawn in turn on the earliest surviving trials in that region for its second edition. Those accused by other local people were arrested and systematically threatened, cajoled and tortured until they confessed to engagement in the list of activities attributed to the sect and named other members of it. Most were then burned, men forming a slight majority of the victims.[120]

The literary works and the trials therefore had an interdependent relationship, drawing on a compact set of territories in the western Alps, which was – as Hansen long ago pointed out – to play a decisive role in engendering the early modern witch trials as the literary works produced there developed between them the portrait of what became widely known in the next century as the witches' sabbath. These Alpine sources bear out Grimm's model of a mixture of orthodox Christian portraits of heresy and folklore: but the two are not evenly balanced. The basic framework of the new image of satanic witchcraft in the two kinds of Alpine source was taken from images of heresy: the nocturnal gathering to worship Satan or one of his lesser demons, often in animal form; the indiscriminate sexual orgy; and child-murder and cannibalism; all adding up to an incarnation of the anti-human, derived from ancient times, as well as the anti-Christian. What the new stereotype did was to combine the Church's two prior stereotypes of demonic heretics and demonic magicians, in an atmosphere ultimately produced by the persecution of magical practitioners, which commenced in the 1370s. The true emotive power of the combination was that it produced an heretical sect in which Satan empowered its members with the ability to work harm against their neighbours on a grand scale, with the aid of devils; and above all to kill their small children. This provided the context in which local panics could occur which led immediately – as seen in the Valais – to trials and executions on a scale out of all proportion to those of medieval magicians hitherto. The western Alps matter because they generated the texts that were to propagate this new concept of heresy; but as seen, they were but one district in a much wider region over which it had been hunted in the 1420s.

Carlo Ginzburg has argued (against Cohn) that older stereotypes of heresy were less important in the formulation of that of satanic witchcraft than specific persecutions of lepers and Jews in the mid-fourteenth century.[121] It is true that the most serious accusation against Jews, of spreading plague, arose at a popular level in the western Alps, where the first texts concerning the witches' sabbath were produced less than a century later. He is also correct that whereas the other constituent parts of older

images of heresy continued in action during the fourteenth-century persecutions, child-murder and cannibalism did not. On the other hand, the lepers and Jews attacked in that century were not accused of most of the practices attributed to the new-style witches; but heretics such as the Waldensians were. The reintroduction of child-killing to the model, which it was suggested here was carried out by a campaign of preaching friars in the early fifteenth century, may have embodied ideas derived from older works of literature, or may have been a fresh start sparked by specific local anxieties. Ginzburg also, as has often been stated in the present book, emphasized the folkloric contributions to the new model, and especially those of night flight and shape-shifting to animals. However, the association between demons and animal forms was long established, as shall be discussed in a later chapter of this book. Michael Bailey has questioned Ginzburg's stress on night flight, pointing out correctly that not all of the early texts mention it.[122] It is not recorded in the Aneu Valley either; but it is at Todi, and is cited sufficiently in the early trials in western Switzerland to give it real importance. These citations, however, do not emphasize the spontaneous flight, or riding on animals, of the processions of the 'good ladies'. Instead an ointment is portrayed as vital to the process, applied to the body at Todi or, in the Alps, to a chair or stick; which is not a motif found in the accounts of followers of the 'ladies'. It is a much more ancient one, associated with the figure of the *strix*, and of the Roman witch. This had persisted through the Middle Ages, as proved by a Tyrolese poet of the mid-thirteenth century who mocked those who feared female cannibal witches who flew to attack people by night on a calf-skin, broom or distaff.[123] It is tempting to relate the animated stick to the staff on which some magicians ride in the early medieval Norse literature, but the distance in time and space may be too large to make this tenable. It may therefore be proposed that Norman Cohn's model of the origin of the early modern witch figure (which was itself an updating of Jacob Grimm's) remains essentially correct, and may be restated now with better evidence and greater detail. Ideas derived from official notions of heresy were most important in the construction of the new belief system, and the most probable underlying ancient myth is that of the Mediterranean child-killing night-demoness, blending in the Alps into that of the Germanic cannibal witch. That belief system might, however, still have proved a short-lived phenomenon had not the Alpine hunts produced a body of texts to codify and promote it. As is well known to historians, fortune provided a perfect vehicle for this work, in that a major church council met at Basel, on the fringe of the western Alps, between 1431 and 1449 and represented for that time the major point for the development and exchange of ideas in Western

Christendom. Nider, Feugeyron and George of Saluzzo were all present, and the *Formicarius* and *Errores gazariorum* seem to have been written there.[124] Others who attended the council, from outside the Alpine region, subsequently wrote works of their own to propagate belief in the new satanic conspiracy of witches, and these formed part of an extensive body of publication by French, Italian, Spanish and German authors which debated the reality of the conspiracy, and, increasingly, supported the idea of it.[125] Occasionally, it is possible to see in them once more the process by which existing local practices of magic were sucked up into the stereotype. One clear example of this is in the work of Pierre Marmoris, a professor at the University of Poitiers, who wrote in the early 1460s. He was as yet bereft of examples of the new satanic witch cult in his part of western France, and so he cobbled together cases of local magic which he had himself encountered, as examples of the menace from witches: people whom he had seen speaking incantations to heal animal bites or scare crows off crops; a man of whom he had heard at Chalons sur Marne who could make himself invisible; a Poitiers woman he had exorcized who claimed to be bound by an erotic spell; a Bourges man who offered to teach him how to refine wine at a distance; and legal prosecutions of which he heard for magic to cause impotence, and for the use of the hand of a corpse to put men to sleep.[126] From such trivialities a portrait of a major new satanic cult could be fabricated. The spread of trials of people alleged to belong to it, across parts of France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands during the rest of the fifteenth century, showed the same ability to pick up pieces of local practice and lore. Likewise, although the basic stereotype of satanic witchcraft (secret assemblies to worship the Devil, followed by acts of destructive magic) remained constant, specific features of it – acts of homage to Satan, cannibalism, child-murder and orgiastic sex – were adopted selectively in these trials. Some had all these features, while others only a few, and not always the same selection, so that in practice a series of local variants was created, as they had been ever since the 1420s.[127] None the less, just as had been the case at that first appearance, a single basic concept was the driving force for local persecutions, and this was to remain more or less unchanged to produce the much more extensive trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

7

THE EARLY MODERN PATCHWORK

The executions inspired by the new concept of the satanic witch lasted from those first known examples in the Pyrenees and at Rome in 1424 until the final one in Switzerland in 1782. Four decades of intensive work by experts drawn from virtually every European nation have resulted in a consensual picture with regard to most features of the trials that produced them.[1] Between those two dates between forty and sixty thousand people were legally put to death for the alleged crime of witchcraft, with the true figure more probably in the lower half of that range. This figure is, however, deceptive in two ways, for the trials were concentrated both in space and in time. They were found mostly in a zone extending across Northern Europe from Britain and Iceland to Poland and Hungary, and from the extreme north of Scandinavia to the Alps and Pyrenees. Furthermore, even within the region across which trials were relatively common, the new concept of the demonic witch proved to be a slow-burning fuse. During the fifteenth century it was confined mainly to the western Alps, northern Italy and Spain, the Rhineland, the Netherlands and parts of France; and does not seem to have claimed more than a few thousand victims at most. Between 1500 and 1560 this range did not much expand, and the overall number of trials seems to have decreased, before an explosion in the second half of the century.

Most of the victims claimed by the early modern witch-hunts in fact died in the course of a single long lifetime, between 1560 and 1640. Two factors may account for this. One is that it was the period in which the crisis in European religion ushered in by the Reformation came to a peak, and Catholic and Protestant engaged in a series of all-out contests. This sent the religious temperature to fever level in many places and individuals, and produced a greater willingness to perceive the world as a battleground

between the forces of heaven and hell. The typical proponent of witch trials was a pious reformer, the age's equivalent to the Observant friars of the early fifteenth century, who wanted to purge society of wickedness and ungodliness; to such people the destruction of witches was usually only a single item on a list of measures to achieve an ideal Christian polity. The period was, however, also marked by the nadir of a long climatic downturn producing colder and wetter weather and decreased crop yields. Although this only rarely acted as a direct provocation to witch trials, it probably produced a general atmosphere of heightened vulnerability and insecurity which encouraged them. After the 1640s they diminished in their heartland but spread out to the fringes of Europe instead, and were most numerous in Poland, Hungary, Croatia, the Austrian lands, Sweden, northern Norway, Finland and New England in this later period: in most of those areas, they were produced by the introduction of heightened religious reform and intolerance.

Unlike the earliest proponents of the new stereotype of the demonic witch, those who warned against it in the most intense period of trials no longer claimed that it was a recently appeared menace. Instead, they portrayed it as one known since ancient times, but suddenly swollen to unprecedented proportions as Satan reacted to the opportunities created by religious division and the challenge presented by the extension of Christianity to large areas of the Americas and some of Asia. In their view the crisis represented by a novel superabundance of witches required a proportionately determined response to detect and destroy them.[2] The results of such a response differed markedly from place to place. It seems likely that the majority of European villages, even in areas of relatively intense witch-hunting, never produced a single arrest for witchcraft, and trials were notably rare in large cities. Averaged out across the Continent, about three-quarters of those tried were women, but this figure conceals major local variations. Likewise, the majority of victims were drawn neither from the wealthier ranks of society nor from the very poor, being ordinary peasants and artisans like their accusers, but, again, local experience threw up exceptions to this rule. If they conformed to a particular human type it was that of the bad neighbour, quarrelsome and inclined to curse and insult; yet very many were generally normal personalities who happened to have the wrong friends or enemies at the wrong moment.

On the whole, trials were most frequent, and execution rates highest, where the people in charge of the criminal justice system were most closely involved in the local fears and hatreds that produced the accusations. These could include very small states, such as many in Germany, which had over two thousand different jurisdictions, or the Swiss Federation, or where a

relatively decentralized machinery of justice prevailed, as in Scotland or Norway.[3] Where such areas were also characterized during this period by local elites or a local ruler determined to purify religion and morals, and economic, religious and social tensions, the preconditions for witch trials were in place. Religious identities were in general irrelevant to the matter, as the most intense regions of witch-hunting were Calvinist Scotland, Lutheran northern Norway, and some Catholic states in western and central Germany and in the Franco-German borderland. In most places the pressure to prosecute came from below in society, originating among the common people, but in a minority it was imposed by the rulers of the state concerned.[4] Some of the worst rates and totals of execution were produced by 'chain-reaction trials', in which large numbers of people were arrested and forced to denounce yet more; but territories such as Lorraine, where one or two people were accused at a time, could still accumulate large overall death tolls. Ultimately, the incidence of witch-hunting in a particular area, even one with all the necessary preconditions of trials, could be a matter of caprice in which factors of fortune and personality were dominant: in the 1610s the lordship of L'Isle, in the Swiss Pays de Vaud, had all the preconditions identified above, and yet of the four villages in it, only one produced accusations (though those escalated into a particularly savage hunt there).[5] It seems that across most of Central and Western Europe there were substantial numbers of suspected witches living among their neighbours but who were never denounced to a magistrate.

It is abundantly clear that personal and factional enmities, and political ambitions, often formed a context for accusations. The latter never seem, however, to have been merely a pretext for the resolution of such other tensions: rather, they were generated by very real fears of bewitchment. In most places a legal proceeding was an expensive, difficult and inconvenient solution to those fears, with counter-magic, or the reconciliation or intimidation of the presumed witch, much easier options. Service magicians were sometimes denounced as witches, but seem to have made up a minority of the accused in any area studied. They were often more prominent in the process of accusation as providers of initial magical counter-measures against suspected witches or detectors of them. The period of witch trials may be regarded in many ways as a scientific experiment, fitted for an age of geographical and scientific discovery, and as such it failed. Witch trials did not seem to yield obvious and measurable benefits to communities that engaged in them, and the problem of providing clear evidence of guilt came to seem worse rather than better over time. Their context of religious conflict and intolerant confessional states faded away as European elites came to feel more prosperous and secure, and judicial machinery was

subjected to greater central supervision and direction. Suspected witches, Christians from other denominations, and fornicators and adulterers, were all increasingly tolerated together, by central and local rulers inhabiting a more rational and less demonic universe, ordered by a less demanding and more remote God. By the end of the twentieth century it had become common for experts to reject single-cause explanations for the witch trials, and to adopt an approach to accounting for them summed up in the phrase 'many reasons why'.[6] As a means of finding the reasons for why trials occurred in particular places at particular times, which was the main business of those who propounded it, this was certainly the best theoretical perspective: the mesh of preconditions and triggers differed significantly between locations. As a means of accounting for the trials as a whole, however, it suffers from a flaw: that the single obvious reason for them was the appearance of the stereotype of the demonic witch in the fifteenth century, and its eventual application to a wide swathe of Europe. As one of the best-known witch-hunters, the French judge Pierre de Lancre, put it, the description of witches' assemblies 'which occurs in various lands, seems to be somewhat diverse . . . But, taking everything into consideration, the most important ceremonies are all consistent.'[7] It is the manner in which local people emphasized certain aspects of the stereotype rather than others, and infused it with their own traditions and preoccupations, that gives regional studies of their trials their especial importance: but the centrality of the stereotype remains, even if it was not in itself a sufficient cause of witch trials. What is proposed in this chapter is to survey the findings of those regional studies, made across Continental Europe mostly during the past five decades. This exercise is undertaken with the particular intention of enquiring into what effect, if any, ancient and folkloric beliefs had in determining the incidence of witch-hunting, the images expressed in it, and the identity of the victims of it.

Such an undertaking has to reckon with two problems of evidence which beset anyone with an interest in the popular component in witchcraft beliefs and witch-prosecution. The first is that evidence for the ideas that propelled trials is found in only a minority of the surviving records of them. The second is that by definition, virtually all those records were made by members of the social and political elite. They were almost always concerned to prove what they were hearing to be either illusory or demonic, rather than asking the kind of questions about belief and identity in which historians would now be most interested. Moreover, both accusers and accused in court cases were operating under conditions of restraint, by which their statements were expected to conform to certain predetermined models to enable a trial. These problems have, however, been obvious to

most of the scholars who have carried out the studies on which the synthesis here is based, and they have developed strategies to cope with them. It remains apparent that ordinary people sometimes made statements which the investigating authorities found surprising, disturbing or irrelevant, and which were still incorporated into the record; and that there were distinct differences between early modern images of witchcraft and patterns of prosecution in particular regions, which can be accounted for in terms of local tradition. It is that relationship, between tradition, action and written record, which is at the heart of this chapter.

The Dream Warriors

The proposed survey might well begin with Carlo Ginzburg's *benandanti*, the most spectacular example of a magical folk tradition yet uncovered in early modern trial records. In general, they were simply service magicians in the extreme north-eastern Italian province of Friuli, healing, divining and breaking bewitchments like all of their kind. As said before, however, they also sent out their spirits at night (in the 'Ember' fast days which fell in each of the four seasons) to fight witches for the fertility of local farmlands. Like those of the witches, their spirits rode horses, cats, hares or other animals to the battlefield, formed into battalions with flags and captains and duelled with plant stalks. If they won, a good harvest resulted, and in any event they returned at the end to their sleeping or entranced bodies. They were not invested with this power but gained it naturally by being born with a membrane, the caul, over their heads at birth, and were called to fight when they grew to adulthood. A few claimed to visit the dead on their spirit-journeys and learn their fate. They battled in the name of God and Christ against witches as servants of the Devil – representing in Ginzburg's words 'a Christian peasant army' – but their identity as magicians drew the attention of local inquisitors from the late sixteenth century. *Benandanti* began to denounce people to the inquisition as witches, and to be denounced themselves, and their night flights were assimilated into the image of demonic witchcraft. In the mid-eighteenth century they disappear from history.[8]

Immediately to the east of Friuli, in Slovenia and the Istrian Peninsula, the south Slavonic cultural zone began, and in Istria an Italian commentator recorded in the seventeenth century a belief in people called *cresnichi* or *vucodlachi*. These were born with a caul, and their souls were believed to go by night, especially in the Ember Days, to fight in bands for the fertility of the coming season. Unlike the *benandanti* these retained a presence in folklore collected in later centuries, as *kresniks* or *kudlaks*. The former were almost identical to the *benandanti*, save that their spirits went forth at night

in animal form rather than riding animals. The latter were malicious magicians, who took the place of witches in some places in the role of fighting the *kresniks* (like them, taking animal shape), who protected sleeping humans and the farmlands.[9] In the huge south Slav region to the south-east, comprising Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, the equivalent figure was the *zduhač*, also born with a caul and able to wage spirit-combats in the clouds to protect their clan territory, although these were fought against the *zduhač*s of rival clans. They are recorded in relatively modern folklore, as are similar personalities under other names in parts of the same region and of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Croatia. Some of these went in animal form, some waged battle against the spirit-champions of rival communities, and some opposed witches or evil spirits. All, however, were distinguished by a caul or other unusual features at birth, and all fought in spirit form at night, usually at special seasons, to protect their villages, and especially the crops of those. Most of this area was under Muslim rule in the early modern period, of the Ottoman Turks, and so bereft of the sort of records that could throw up references to them in Christian areas: but an inquisitor in Dalmatia, the Croatian coastal region, in 1661, reported a belief in good spirits who chased away bad weather.[10]

In other parts of the same huge region, and further east and south-east, bands of young women or men acted out the spirit-battles in physical form, by touring their neighbourhoods in the Whitsun season, when fairies and devils were supposed to be especially menacing, to perform dances, plays or blessings to protect homes and farmlands. This custom was recorded in southern Macedonia as early as 1230, and in modern folklore collections in Croatia, Slavonia, Serbia and Romania, where it persists to the present day. In the Romanian districts, the modern dancers also acted as healers, of people thought to be afflicted by fairies or demons, and their patron, who was also in places the queen of the fairies, was 'Irodeasa'. This was probably the Herodias of the medieval night rides, and shows how far the tradition of her as a nocturnal spirit had travelled from its apparent Western European source.[11] To the north of the south Slav region lies Hungary, and its figure of the *táltos*, which has been discussed above. It was argued there that neither this figure nor the *benandanti* could be confidently assigned to a pan-Eurasian shamanic province, and it may be considered here whether the *táltos* makes a better fit with the Balkan one of spirit-battles. It seems that it makes a remarkably good one. Like the other figures in the Balkan tradition, the *táltos* was marked out by special signs at birth, and sometimes operated through dream or trance, and fought for the good of local people in spirit form and animal shape or on animal steeds as well as carrying out all the usual functions of a service magician. *Táltosok* tended to portray themselves

as Christian saints fighting satanic opponents, witches and demons. Their battles were also sometimes against each other and against foreign magicians.[12] They are mentioned in medieval Hungarian records, and quite good early modern accounts of their beliefs and claims were provided by witch trials, and indeed other elements of those Hungarian trials seem to derive from the same folk tradition. Early modern Hungarian witches were often thought to send out their souls to work evil, through their mouths, in the form of a small animal such as an insect. They were said to ride on animals or take their form, and fight over the fertility of land, occasionally on behalf of their own villages, although they generally worked harm instead.[13] One Hungarian scholar has noted from the trial records that a characteristic of Hungary was the 'duel of magicians: healer, *táltos*, midwives and witches all fight each other'.[14] People tried as witches in Croatia in the same period spoke of forming into military companies at their gatherings.[15] In modern Romania it was believed that witches were born with a caul, transformed into animals, and went out in spirit guise at night to form bands that fought each other.[16] Modern Serbs thought that witches worked evil by letting their spirits leave their bodies in the shape of insects or birds.[17]

There seems to be good evidence here of a compact expanse of territory, with its centre in the south Slav cultural province, characterized by a belief that both service magicians and witches sent out their spirits on special nights, in dreaming or entranced states, to do battle with opponents. Whether this had existed from pre-Christian times, or was a popular tradition that had developed in the Middle Ages, is impossible to tell. In this perspective the *benandanti* become Italians who learned the idea from Slavonic neighbours, and the *táltosok* are Magyars who did the same, whatever remote and unproven connection they may have had with Siberian shamans which may have predisposed them towards the idea. The idea that to be born with a caul conferred abilities to communicate with spirits, or send out one's own spirit, is found across Europe, but only in this area was it associated with the dream or trance battles.[18] Here, therefore, the early modern trials of witches and other magicians did uncover a distinctive regional belief system, and so provide historical records of it; but the system itself neither provoked nor transformed the trials. Those were introduced into the region as part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation movement of spiritual purgation and renewal, and in much of it as part of German (or Austrian) cultural imperialism. The *benandanti* were not the main business of the inquisition in Friuli, and only twenty-six of 2,275 witch trials recorded in Hungary mention a *táltos*.[19] Rather, the Balkan 'dream warriors' only served to tinge the trials slightly with aspects of their belief system, at the extreme northern and western limits of their range.

The Northern Shamanic Region

Earlier in this book, it was suggested both that the Sámi of northern Scandinavia represented a people who had a 'classic' shamanism of the sort found in Siberia, definitely descending from a pagan past, and that Sámi influence created a 'sub-shamanic' zone among the Norse, including their settlements in Iceland. Another such zone existed among the Finns, either because of their own ancestral connection with western Siberian peoples or because of Sámi influence. As the Sámi retained a formidable reputation as magicians all through the early modern period – which has also been discussed earlier – it is an obvious question how far they attracted charges of witchcraft when the Scandinavian kingdoms to which they belonged became notable centres of witch-hunting in the seventeenth century. The answer is that they certainly featured in witch trials, a total of 113 being prosecuted, and over thirty of them executed, in both the Norwegian and Swedish provinces of Lapland: the Norwegians tried about half the number that the Swedes did, but put to death three-quarters of them while the Swedes spared the lives of all but a few of those tried. Two other features of these statistics are significant. The first is that they reversed the typical European gender balance, for seventy-three of the seventy-six Sámi tried for magic by the Swedes were male, and so were nineteen of the twenty-seven burned by the Norwegians. This simply reflected the balance within Sámi culture itself, in which the practice of magic, with its shamanic rites, was associated mainly with men. The other feature is that despite their reputation, the Sámi magicians were not the main target of the witch-hunts in the far north. Finnmark, the extreme north-east province of Norway, was the scene of one of the most intense witch-hunts in Europe. It took place, however, principally among the Norse settlers in the fishing villages, and – in conformity with the Norwegian as well as the European norm – its victims were overwhelmingly female. The same is true of the main Swedish witch trials, which claimed hundreds of lives in the heartland of the kingdom. One reason why the Sámi tried by the Swedes normally escaped execution was that they were regarded as savages practising tribal superstitions rather than as recruits to the satanic witch conspiracy. Even the more severe Norwegians tended not to accuse Sámi of consciously worshipping the Devil, which is why about a third of those tried for magic escaped execution; and several of those who did not were found guilty of more routine crimes as well. Though they made up almost half the population of Finnmark, they represented 18 per cent of those accused of magical offences. Nor were the spectacular shamanic rites recorded among the Sámi apparent among those actually put on trial: they feature, if at all, in

muted form.[20] So, the existence of what has been described before as a genuine shamanic province in northernmost Europe definitely left its distinctive mark on the pattern of witch trials there; but even within this region, it did this as a side-show.

What of the wider 'sub-shamanic' zone suggested earlier as embracing much of medieval Fenno-Scandinavia? In Finland its influence on the early modern trials again seems apparent, because there they also bucked the European trend. Overall, about half of those accused of magic-related offences were male, and men formed a clear majority until the late seventeenth century, and male defendants were especially numerous among the native population. The association of witchcraft both with devil-worship and with women was stronger in areas of Swedish influence and settlement, and took a long time to gain purchase on the Finns. This matches the native association of magic mainly with a male practitioner, the *tietäjä*, even though, as across most of Europe, service magicians themselves were rarely accused of destructive acts.[21] As among the Sámi, shamanism itself has a muted presence in the Finnish court records. One expert has concluded that 'the shamanistic witch culture appears not to have played any major role in witch trials during the early modern era'; another, that 'my sources do not point towards shamanistic remnants, let alone practicing shamans. These materials mention no trance or describe no magical travel to this or another world in any detail.'[22] None the less, the impact of native tradition on the patterning and gendering of trials seems clear.

The same may be true of Estonia, to the south in the Baltic ethnic zone, where a similar situation is recorded: the concept of satanic witchcraft was mostly imposed following the conquest of the area by Sweden, and 60 per cent of those accused of harmful magic were male, though slightly more women were executed.[23] One study has emphasized the rooting of local beliefs in a persisting popular paganism, comprising worship at sacred groves and stones, especially on Midsummer Eve, in almost every south Estonian parish.[24] It would not, on the face of things, be strange to find such a survival here, on the eastern edge of the European world, where the last state on the Continent to convert formally to Christianity had been neighbouring Lithuania, in the late Middle Ages. On closer inspection, however, the single example provided of such practices is less convincing. It portrays a continuing devotion to St John the Baptist, whose feast was on Midsummer Day, and the stone at the centre of this was an altar to him. The rite was a curing of the sick, with prayers to the saint, and the 'sacrifices' were the bandages of those who thought themselves healed, and offerings of wax, of the sort familiar at medieval shrines. Other such rites were also conducted on saints' days. There are also records of peasants counselling their fellows

not to attend church, and to blame their misfortunes on doing so. The author presents this as pagan resistance to Christianity, but the context is that of the first attempt by the Swedish authorities to survey the results of imposing Lutheran Protestantism as the new official religion on a native Baltic populace that had been accustomed to medieval Catholicism. It is therefore not clear that what was going on was a clash between Christianity and paganism, rather than between different kinds of Christianity.[25] The early modern Estonian records do, however, connect with a very convincing and well-recorded folk belief system among the Baltic peoples, which may well have pagan roots: twenty-one people (out of a total of 205 in surviving witch trials records) were accused of killing livestock while in the shape of wolves.[26] To early modern European demonologists, Livonia, the territory of the Liv people, which extended across much of modern Estonia and Latvia, was the land of werewolves par excellence.[27] They tended to tell two stories about them: that once a year at midwinter all Livonian werewolves held a great assembly, or series of them, and that they were locally supposed to be the great foes of witches, and protect communities from them. One included a report of an encounter with a man at Riga who claimed to be one and to send out his spirit in wolf form to fight a witch disguised as a butterfly, while lying entranced. In a now famous trial held in what has become Latvia in 1692, an old service magician also asserted that he was a werewolf, and battled with witches and demons in hell three times a year alongside his fellows, in wolf form, for the fertility of the farmlands and in the name of the Christian God.[28] This account caused Carlo Ginzburg to make an understandable connection with the *benandanti*, and join the two together as survivals in different places of an ancient shamanistic cult extending across Central Europe. His hypothesis remains, as said before, possible but unprovable: it may well be that the Livonian tradition had a completely independent point of origin from the Balkan one.[29] What is interesting in the present context is the proven existence of a belief among the Balts that special people possessed a magic that could transform their spirits into wolves, to fight those of witches for the common good. This left its imprint upon local witch trials (though again in a minority of cases). It may help explain the high proportion of men among the accused in general, if men were prominent among such magicians – although most of those actually denounced for being destructive werewolves were female – and may also (perhaps) extend the 'sub-shamanic' province of Northern Europe from the northern to the eastern side of the Baltic Sea.[30]

In a previous chapter, the argument was made that the effects of shamanism could be found in the magical beliefs of medieval Scandinavians in general, but none of those seems to be present in the witch trials of the

bulk of the peninsula. Elements of older belief systems not necessarily related to shamanism do feature at times. The idea of the witches' sabbath was probably digested more easily because of the pre-existing concept of women, human or supernatural, who flew by night.[31] As said before, magical knowledge, including witchcraft, had been associated with trolls. By the early modern period, educated Scandinavians no longer believed in trolls, or cared much about people who tried to commune with them, but in popular testimony in Norwegian witch trials, demons sometimes took troll form. Furthermore, two service magicians prosecuted in 1689 claimed to have gained their powers from 'earth trolls'.[32] Nature spirits make slightly more frequent appearances in Swedish cases, such as that of the service magician at Söderkoping in 1640 who confessed that he had enjoyed years of sex with a being shaped like a beautiful woman with a foal's tail who came to him in his boat or in the woods and gave him good luck in fishing and hunting. In a neighbouring district another man claimed to get his own luck in hunting from a forest nymph, who opposed an old, ugly and black being which tried to prevent him from killing the animals. Three other men testified in later decades to having had similar relationships with wood or mountain spirits in the form of lovely women (though two of these had shaggy legs). Vivid and important though these examples are, they represent just five out of many hundreds of trials for witchcraft and magic in early modern Sweden.[33] More often pagan elements in early modern Scandinavian magic seem to exist in the eye of the modern beholder. One historian has described Danish love spells as 'a mix of pagan and Christian symbols and rituals'; but while her Christian example is an invocation of St Thomas Aquinas, her pagan one is the use of chickens' eggs.[34] In such contexts, 'pagan' seems to be shorthand for 'natural' or 'secular'.

There is, however, one very striking form in which a definite element of Norse paganism survived into the early modern period, and that was in ceremonial magic. Just as elsewhere that magic had preserved the names of Egyptian deities as powerful spirits, so the most famed of Scandinavian gods continued to be associated with magical workings, although as devils. It seemed that in the north the Christian tactic of demonizing the divinities of older religions had worked with particular effect. Those divinities certainly remained known to educated Scandinavians throughout the Christian period, as characters in myth (much as Greek and Roman deities were throughout Europe and former Irish deities in Gaelic lands). As demons, however, they, and especially their leader, Oðinn, retained a supposedly 'real' presence. A late fourteenth-century Norse rune stick invokes Oðinn as 'greatest among devils', as well as calling on Christian powers. In 1484 a man tried for theft in Stockholm confessed to having

'served Oðinn' for seven years. Nine years later another thief was executed, for having dedicated himself in a cemetery to 'the devil Oðinn' to get rich, and a text from the late 1530s stated that people who suddenly became mysteriously wealthy were suspected of having made a pact with Oðinn. Another Swedish case, from 1632, involved advice to find wealth by going to a crossroads at night to make exactly such a pact, with Oðinn as a devil. A trial in 1693 said that he came to those who invited him with black servants, dogs and coach horses, the latter having flaming eyes.[35] From Iceland comes a seventeenth-century book of magic which contains a curse in the names of Lord God the Creator (repeatedly addressed), Christ ('Saviour'), Oðinn, Thor, Frey, Freya, Satan, Beelzebub and spirits with unknown names: the powers of heaven and hell are thus indiscriminately enlisted.[36] All this provides a spectacular example of how ancient gods could be fully assimilated into Christian mythology, though they do not seem to feature in the witch trials themselves.

The crossing has now been made to Iceland, the medieval literature of which provided some of the best material for the argument, made earlier, for a hybrid Norse magical culture that incorporated elements of shamanism. It may readily be expected that this would influence the nature of early modern Icelandic trials; and indeed this has been claimed. Of the 120 people tried for witchcraft in Iceland, only ten were female, and only one woman was among the twenty-two individuals who were burned. One of the first scholars to write of this in English related it directly to medieval tradition, and through that (vaguely) to paganism and shamanism.[37] Things are, however, not quite that simple: in the medieval Icelandic literature, destructive magic is as much a female as a male practice, and the most apparently shamanic aspects of magical technique, such as *seidr*, are much more female. The key to explaining the Icelandic anomaly lies instead in a broader European phenomenon: that ceremonial magic was, throughout the medieval and early modern periods, essentially the preserve of men. In seventeenth-century Danish law, which was enforced in Norway and Iceland, the possession of books of magic was a criminal offence, and the Icelanders took that very seriously. The people charged with magic in their island tended to be possessors of such books, and therefore male, and those executed were the men who were proved to own them and believed to have used them to harm others.[38] The concept of a diabolic witch conspiracy, with assemblies and rites, was almost wholly missing. There may however still be an informing link with the ancient past, and that lies in the heavy stress placed in medieval Icelandic texts on the importance of written words and characters – runes – in working magic. It seems to have been the combination of that with the importation of book-centred

ceremonial magic that produced the peculiar nature, and gendering, of the Icelandic trials.

Another loose end that could usefully be tied up in this context concerns Russia, and the neighbouring territory of the Ukraine which became part of the Russian state in the seventeenth century. That state bordered on Siberia itself, homeland of classical shamanism, contained large numbers of Sámi in its northernmost parts and linked the 'dream warrior' zone of the Balkans and Hungary to the 'northern shamanic zone' of the Baltic and Fenno-Scandinavian regions. It should therefore logically play a pivotal role in the mapping of ancient and medieval traditions onto early modern belief systems, as expressed in the witch trials. At first sight the trial evidence supports such an expectation, because in the mainstream European context Russia was anomalous as so much of the Fenno-Baltic and Sámi areas were: it had relatively few witch trials and even fewer executions for a state of its size – around five hundred trials in the seventeenth century with a 15 per cent death rate – and three-quarters of those accused were male.[39] On closer inspection, however, a relationship between these results and ancient tradition seems to be missing. In the words of a prominent Western expert, 'Neither shamanism nor paganism makes the least detectable appearance in Muscovite [early modern Russian] magical practices.'[40] Once again, the eye of the beholder may be partly at work here, as the same historian summed up the spells which feature in Russian witch trials as mostly poetic nature imagery glossed with Christianity.[41] An older generation of scholars might well have characterized that imagery as pagan, but this would also be an arbitrary and subjective judgement, and it certainly seems as if nothing that can be called shamanism by any definition is present, and as if ancient and folk tradition cannot explain the particular nature of Russian witch trials. Russian folklore collected in the modern period abounds with spirits, of the household and the wild, but they make no more than two appearances in the trials, and few in spell books.[42]

The reasons for that lie elsewhere, in the peculiar cultural isolation of seventeenth-century Russia, which meant that the new concept of the satanic witch had not got in. The raw materials for it were there, for Russians already had a strong belief in the Devil and lesser demons and thought that humans could make pacts with them; feared witchcraft; and embedded a strong distrust of women within male culture. None the less, these traits were never brought together into the mainstream European idea of a demonic conspiracy, because neither Protestantism nor Catholicism made any inroads into Russia's Orthodox Christianity, which itself never generated that idea. Russian elites had virtually no contact with foreign cultures. As a result, attitudes to magic simply continued the medieval European

norm, individual people being prosecuted for using or attempting to use magical operations to harm others; and indeed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this remained a weapon in the factional politics of the imperial court, as it had in those of medieval Europe. The spells alleged to have been used were relatively simple and employed mundane objects and ingredients. As most of the accusations arose from local and personal tensions over power (such as those between social superiors and inferiors), and men were most commonly involved in these, it was natural that men should bear the brunt of them more often. The medieval Russian propensity to turn on presumed witches at times of natural disaster seems to have vanished. Ironically, the early modern European construct of satanic witchcraft was eventually introduced to Russia, in the reforms of Peter the Great, which were intended to bring his nation into conformity with general European norms and are often taken as commencing its 'modernization'. This was in the early eighteenth century, when witch-hunting had died out in most of the Continent (though not in neighbouring Poland and Hungary). Fortunately, its late introduction was not accompanied by a rise in the religious temperature, which would have ensured large numbers of trials, and so the effect was limited and short-lived.

It may be useful, at this point, to look quickly at the other areas of Europe in which men were usually prominent as victims in the witch trials and see what cultural factors may have underpinned such an outcome there. One of these was western and central France, which remains relatively understudied in this regard.[43] An immediately identifiable reason for the high proportion of men among the accused (about half) was the significant presence among them of two groups: churchmen and shepherds. The former may have been vulnerable because of their continued association with learned ceremonial magic, which had been linked to them in the region in trials since the fourteenth century. The latter appear to have been regarded as practising an especially magical occupation in these parts of France, and there is a good study of the prosecution of them as witches in Normandy, where local belief held that shepherds could work harm with toad venom and stolen consecrated hosts.[44] There seems to be no evidence of the origins and age of this folk tradition. The final area in which men were prominent was most of what is now Austria, and there is even less information as yet available to account for this.[45] A study of Carinthia, where two-thirds of the accused were male, suggests that this was because witches there were especially associated with bringing bad weather, and weather magic was locally thought of as more of a male interest. This could well reflect a distinctive local tradition with long roots.[46]

On the other hand, the same study also notes that persecution of witches was also linked strongly to a legal drive against begging, and this occurred elsewhere in Austria, and especially in the territories of the archbishop of Salzburg. There, in the same period of the late seventeenth century, a savage hunt was launched against young male beggars in what became one of the last major series of witch trials in German-speaking lands. This was the end product of a sharp reversal of the local tradition of charity, made in response to changing economic circumstances, and the charge that beggars cursed the more fortunate members of society, in jealousy and as vengeance, justified the change.[47] The hunt for beggar-witches in parts of Austria, which may do much to explain the high profile of men in the trials there, cannot therefore be ascribed to any traditional stereotypes. It seems, rather, a late development propelled by a specific crisis in economic and social relations. All in all, therefore, the witch trials sustain the concept of a 'shamanic' and 'sub-shamanic' province confined to the far north-east of Europe, which had some impact on the gendering of accusations there, even while archaic elements were rare in the trials themselves.

Bloodsuckers, Wolf-riders and Ladies

In the Alps and Pyrenees, and the lands immediately south of them, a rich crop of folkloric motifs features in prosecutions for witchcraft, one of them certainly very ancient. This is the figure of the *strix*, the night-flying, child-killing female demon. By the Middle Ages, if not earlier, it was, as said, being merged with that of the human witch, and this composite directly underlay the formation of the early modern stereotype of the satanic witch. It has been shown how it appeared in the first trials which embodied that stereotype, in 1424, and how in the Pyrenees the word for that kind of demoness, *bruja*, changed into that for a witch; in Italy the same thing happened, as *striges*, the Latin plural for *strix*, became the standard learned term for witches, and gave rise to the modern Italian *strega*, meaning a witch. The persona remained with the name. When an Italian witch-hunter, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, wrote a book to justify his activities in 1523, he called it simply *Strix*.[48] Among the characteristics of the stereotypical witch which he assembled was that of killing babies by pricking them with needles and sucking their blood. His principality of Mirandola was on the northern plain of Italy, near Modena; further south, at Perugia and Siena, women were also tried for this offence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[49] In northern Spain, likewise, the initial outbreak of accusations against child-murdering witches in the 1420s was followed by others, over a broader area, in the following hundred years.[50] In about 1450 a Castilian

bishop denounced the new concept of the satanic witch as a fantasy, and especially the belief that these *bruxas* got through chinks or turned themselves into animals in order to enter houses to suck babies' blood.[51] This belief underlay accusations of witchcraft in northern Spain until the end of witch trials there: it was the major spur behind the great Basque witch-hunt of 1609–14.[52]

Across most of early modern Europe, killing infants and young children was one of the most important crimes alleged against witches, and was, as said, fundamental to the development of the new idea of witchcraft; but this vampiric element, derived from the *strix*, was confined to the northern edge of the Mediterranean basin. It continued eastwards to the limits of Italy, in Friuli, where the witches fought by *benandanti* were said slowly to consume the flesh or blood of small children, so that they wasted away.[53] As ancient Roman rule had done, and as the belief in dream warriors also did, this concept crossed the boundary between Italian and Slavonic linguistic zones, so that in the modern folklore of Serbia, the special crime of witches was to kill babies in this manner. During the witch trials in Croatia, women confessed to eating the hearts of children, and leaving them to die slowly. Croats also believed that witches, in the form of cats, sucked the blood of adults.[54] The special characteristic of the modern vampire, as a blood-sucker, may indeed have developed from this concept of the witch, as it came to be applied to the restless dead in the eighteenth century.[55]

In a part of the western Alps, a completely different local tradition obtained: that witches rode wolves to go about their nocturnal attacks. This was found in north-west Switzerland, from Basel to Luzern and Konstanz, a region in which wolves represented as great a menace from the natural world as witches did in the human one; so in this sense it was natural that they were twinned. Wolves abounded, however, in other parts of Europe without becoming steeds for witches, so the element of the caprice of local imagination is also at work here. Elsewhere in the regions where wolves and witches were both feared, and associated, the wolves were regarded as being either disguised demons serving or commanding the witches, or the witches themselves, changed by demons into wolf form or given the appearance of one by illusion.[56] The exception, of course, was Livonia, where some locals at least believed that it was benevolent service magicians who were the werewolves. At any rate, the motif of the wolf-ride occurred in both trials and literary works across this particular expanse of Swiss mountains and valleys, and the roots of it seem lost.[57]

The important medieval belief in the nocturnal travels of the 'lady' or 'ladies' also played a notable part in the trials, but only in a few locations: the Alps, northern Italy and Sicily. The stereotypical witch portrayed by

Pico della Mirandola not only fed on babies but attended 'the game of the Mistress' to feast and have sex; in his diabolized view of this event, she offered consecrated hosts to the Mistress, for defilement. Pico's territory was close to that of Modena, where one woman confessed in 1532 to going to 'the game of Diana', where she profaned the Christian cross and danced with demons on the orders of 'the lady of the game'. Another in 1539 was recorded as saying that she went to a witches' sabbath over which 'a certain woman' presided.[58] Across the Plain of Lombardy from Modena, at the foot of the Alps, was Brescia, where a woman tried in 1518 said her mistress was a beautiful lady called 'Signora del Zuogo' (Lady of the Game), who was served by other human followers and by devils. Up in the mountains of south Tyrol, in the Italian-speaking Val di Fiemme, it is the goddess Venus, or 'Erodiade' (Herodias) who features in the confessions taken there in 1504–6. Venus had probably migrated from the German-speaking lands to the north, where the legend of her court in a mountain, the Venusberg, was well established by the end of the fifteenth century: a confession by a man in 1504 directly reflected that legend, by speaking of entering that mountain and finding its most famous inhabitant, the knight Tannhäuser, there, as well as 'the woman of the good game' (who was not, apparently, Venus). All were, again, demonized for the trials: Venus was said to travel with a retinue of black horses, and to turn into a snake from the waist down for half of each week, while 'Erodiade' was now an ugly black woman in black clothes who travelled on black cats.[59] The 'good game' or 'good society', with or without its lady, also featured in trials in Lombardy and the Italian Alps in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries at Como, Mantua, Ferrara, and the Valtellina. Its westernmost occurrence in this context was in the Val di Susa in west Piedmont, and its easternmost involved one of the *benandanti* of Friuli: it spanned trials for magic in the northern Italian linguistic zone.[60]

North of that, in the German-speaking Alps, nocturnal spirit cavalcades and processions featured much less in the early modern trials, unless described purely as those of witches and demons making for the sabbath. The outstanding exception was Wolfgang Behringer's 'Shaman of Oberstdorf', the service magician condemned for witchcraft who came from Germany's most southerly village in a remote valley near the border between Bavaria and Austria. In Behringer's skilful reconstruction of his belief system, he had mixed together mainstream Christian concepts such as angels, heaven and purgatory with a local folk one of the *Nachtschar* ('night company'), benevolent night-flying spirits.[61] The only other apparent reference to such phenomena in a judicial process in the northern half of the Alpine zone comes from Interlaken, far to the west, in 1572, when the local Bernese

governor reported a woman who claimed to travel with the *Nachtvolk* ('night people').[62] This paucity of records from trials is the more remarkable in that popular traditions of such spectral night-wanderers were common in this region, as discussed earlier, as were prosecutions for witchcraft. It may be that the lack of any recognized leader for the spirits concerned, north of the Alpine watershed, made them more difficult to assimilate to the stereotypical witches' assemblies; but the assimilation should still have been easy to make had people wished it. Far south of its northern Italian stronghold, however, the tradition of the roaming nocturnal ladies, with a leading goddess-like figure and selected human adherents, was very much alive, and prominent in trials, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This was in Sicily, where Gustav Henningsen found around seventy cases from that period in which the local inquisitors tried *donas di fuera* (ladies from outside), the service magicians described earlier, who claimed to have gained their knowledge from the superhuman 'ladies' – bearing the same name – with whom they made contact at night.[63]

One other old, and possibly very ancient, folkloric motif was found in the north Italian trials involving the 'lady' and her 'good game': a magical rite whereby an animal, normally an ox, which had been consumed in the feast at the 'game', was restored to life at the end. This has been extensively studied by Maurizio Bertolotti, and usually involved an alleged process of gathering the bones and hide of the animal together and touching them with a staff or stuffing them with straw. The trick was essentially a deceit, because the animals died permanently soon after or were lastingly enfeebled: it was really portrayed as a means of diverting suspicion from the witches.[64] It is recorded in confessions of people tried for diabolic magic at Milan, Canavese, the Val di Fiemme, Modena and Bologna between 1390 and 1559, and represents an extension of the convenient medieval belief, commonly found in accounts of visits by spirit hosts to houses, that after they and their human friends feasted there, the food and drink that they consumed was magically replenished, to leave no trace of the theft. It had, however, an independent origin from this more general belief, for it was attested in two successive accounts of the miracles of St Germanus, both dating from the eighth century, in which the saint restores a calf. It is also in Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century stories of the pagan Norse deities, presumably based on older tradition, where it concerns the resurrection by the god Thor of a flock of goats, using his hammer. Bertolotti argued that the saint's miracle was derived from the story of Thor, and that behind Thor in turn stood a prehistoric hunting myth centred on a superhuman 'Lord of the Animals' who caused the prey of hunters to be reborn and so ensured a continuing supply of food.

Wolfgang Behringer has made a further contribution to the study of the motif, by bringing in more miracles attributed to medieval Christian holy men from the Netherlands – St Pharaildis, St Thomas of Cantimpré and Wilhelm Villers – who were all said to have restored animals to life in a similar fashion. He acknowledged that all these stories may have been inspired by the Bible, and specifically by the vision of the valley of dry bones in the Book of Ezekiel, but thought this less likely than Bertolotti's hypothesis of a pagan hunting myth as the point of origin. In support of this, he cited not just Snorri but Burchard's condemnation, quoted before, of the enduring popular belief that the cannibal witches of Germanic mythology restored to a brief life the people whom they killed and ate. He also produced ethnographic parallels, of a Caucasian tribe that thought that its god of the hunt revived animals killed by his devotees and the habit of Siberian hunters who left the bones of their kills unbroken to make resurrection possible. He referred to similar beliefs from elsewhere in Asia, and Africa.[65] All this is entirely plausible, though the absence of the resurrection of an animal from bones and hide in any actual ancient pagan source, Greek or Roman, must give some pause to a conclusive acceptance of it. What the ancient world gives us instead is an idea, expressed most vividly in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, that witches could magically restore a human being whom they had killed in the night to a brief, but convincing, appearance of full life; this would harmonize with the Germanic tradition quoted by Burchard. As things stand, the European tradition of the use of miracle and magic to resurrect a slaughtered animal from its body parts is a medieval one; and its most obvious function in the witch trials is to represent a fantasy whereby relatively poor people could enjoy huge free meals of beef without payment or retribution. This sense of privilege and gratification lies, as has been suggested before, at the heart of the medieval beliefs in spirit hosts of the night who swept up favoured humans.

Mediterranean Mildness

As was said earlier, the great majority of the early modern executions for witchcraft occurred between 1560 and 1640. This was also the period in which the regional inquisitions that defended the purity of the Roman Catholic religion in the Western Mediterranean basin, and which represented some of the most formidably efficient investigative and punitive machines in Europe, launched a determined attack on magical practices of all kinds. The results, however, have come to be recognized as remarkably mild: several thousand prosecutions for magic yielded at the very most five hundred death sentences.[66] This was because of a general lack of a sense of

danger from a satanic conspiracy, so that charges of collective devil-worship, and of pacts with Satan, were very rare. Torture was seldom used on those arrested, and there was little pressure on them to name accomplices: on the whole, witches were treated as ignorant folk deluded by the Devil, not as dangerous criminals.[67] At Venice the inquisitors held over six hundred trials concerning magic between 1550 and 1650, about a fifth of which were for witchcraft, but most ended in acquittal and none in execution.[68] Similarly, no executions are recorded in Sicily, and the notorious Spanish Inquisition managed to try more than five thousand people for using magic between 1610 and 1700, without burning any.[69] The Portuguese one put one person to death for such an offence, although it regularly tried cases that concerned magic and sometimes prosecution of them rose to peaks.[70] The inquisitors in Malta not only regularly prosecuted people for using magic but held two mass trials in the seventeenth century, one involving forty women, and yet passed no death sentences.[71] When Louise Nyholm Kallestrup compared the sentences passed by seventeenth-century courts for acts of magic in Denmark and the district of Orbetello in the Papal States of Italy, she found that the lightest sentence in the secular Danish system more or less matched the harshest pronounced by the inquisitors at Orbetello.[72]

Such a pattern calls out for explanation, and at first sight the presence of deep-rooted popular traditions in the Mediterranean lands concerned, which worked against savage witch-hunting, seems a plausible potential answer. Such a factor has in fact been argued for Spain by Gunnar Knutsen, who has drawn attention to the hundreds of executions recorded in the northernmost provinces in the decades around 1600, mostly by secular courts, and the absence of them further south. In a study of Catalonia and Valencia, he has contrasted the situation in the former, where the idea of demonic witchcraft took root readily among a traditionally Christian rural population in close contact with French culture, with that in the latter. There the peasantry consisted largely of recently converted Muslims, who retained from Islam a belief that magicians should be able to control demons rather than become their servants, together with a weak fear of witchcraft and a limited concept of Satan. They transmitted these notions to at least some of their Christian neighbours.[73] There must be truth in this picture: after all, it has been shown how existing folkloric concepts enabled the new stereotype of the satanic witch to root itself very early in the Spanish Pyrenees, and spread through that region. There was no Islamic influence in mainland Italy, but in much of the peninsula (as in much of Spain) there was a lively belief in the power of the 'evil eye' to blight unintentionally and as a force of nature rather than of the Devil, of the sort which has been identified as dampening down a fear of witches elsewhere in the world.[74]

It is very likely that such cultural factors did act to prevent a ready reception of the image of the demonic witch in much of the Catholic Mediterranean world; and more may be uncovered by local studies.[75] It is also, however, apparent that in themselves those factors are insufficient to explain the relative absence of witch-hunting in that world during the period when it was most prevalent elsewhere in Europe. After all, northern Spain and Italy had been cradles of the new image of witchcraft and settings for many of the early trials for it, and northern Italy had produced some notable early proponents of the need to hunt witches. The bishop of Brescia burned sixty people in 1510 and sixty-four in 1518.[76] The Italian Alps and the Plain of Lombardy were indeed probably the area of most regular and lethal witch-hunting during the first century in which the new stereotype of the witch was in existence. Even in the southern Spanish region of La Mancha, six people were executed for offences related to magic between 1491 and 1510.[77] Moreover, there is plenty of evidence that the concept of the demonic witch was spreading far across the Mediterranean basin, and that there was sufficient public belief in it to create the conditions for savage witch-hunting had the authorities been inclined to that. At Venice, people regularly confessed to making pacts with demons to obtain their desires, and the witches' sabbath featured in six confessions from rural areas of the republic. Crowds called for women to be burned as witches, and churchmen read the works of demonologists who advocated witch-hunting.[78] Novara, at the extreme northern end of Piedmont, and the extreme north-western end of Italy, was exactly the sort of Alpine environment that had fostered the new image of satanic witchcraft; yet in 1609–11, at the height of the trials in Northern Europe, the episcopal inquisition there prosecuted eleven people who confessed to full participation in the sabbath, and all escaped with prison sentences.[79] In Tuscany in 1594 a friar drunk on demonology tortured a midwife into admitting that she worshipped Satan at the sabbath and murdered children on his instructions.[80] In the Otranto region of south-eastern Italy, it is plain from the legal records that fear and hatred of witchcraft were much stronger among the general populace than among churchmen.[81] In Valencia in 1588 the inquisitors were faced with a teenage girl who claimed to have had sex with the Devil, and in the following century with a woman accused of flying into houses to bewitch the inhabitants, and a man offering his services as a witch-finder.[82] Sicily produced a woman in 1587 who claimed to ride with others through the air on billy-goats to worship a royal couple of spirits who presided over a feast and orgy.[83] Malta contained people who confessed to invoking Satan, and the early modern Portuguese frequently talked of demonic pacts, and occasionally of night flights by witches and of the sabbath.[84]

Clearly, then, popular belief throughout Italy and Iberia, and their attendant islands, could have assimilated the new model of witchcraft, and counter-balancing cultural traits could only have slowed down that assimilation. Another factor must have been at work, and Gunnar Knutsen spotted it in his comparison between Catalonia and Valencia: in the former, the Spanish Inquisition was much weaker than in the latter, and less able to restrain the lay magistrates who responded more avidly to a public fear of witchcraft. Such restraint was the crucial determinant of result: in Valencia the girl who confessed to having sex with Satan was sentenced to religious instruction (after a beating), the woman accused of night flight was acquitted, and the would-be witch-finder was punished. In all the other cases of alleged diabolism cited above, similar moderation was observed and the diabolic elements played down by the inquisitors: the woman who was forced to confess to demonic witchcraft by the Italian friar was then released on the orders of his superior. General studies of the history of the respective inquisitions reveal a gradual formulation of central policy that made such outcomes at first possible and then mandatory.

In 1542 a central tribunal was established in Rome to oversee local Italian inquisitions, and by the 1580s this was advising caution in local trials of witches and enforcing it on some. In 1575 Pope Gregory XIII ruled that nobody could be arrested simply because of a denunciation by somebody already under trial for witchcraft, while in 1594 Pope Clement VIII banished a southern Italian bishop whom he thought had prosecuted it too recklessly. Around 1600 the tribunal accepted a protocol which was sent out to most Italian inquisitors from the 1610s: all alleged deaths from witchcraft were to be investigated by medical experts operating under oath; suspects were to be held in different cells to prevent them from mutually reinforcing their fantasies; and investigators were to avoid any leading questions, identify local hatreds operating in accusations, and consider only objective evidence. This made convictions for witchcraft practically impossible, and after 1630 papal authority effectively ended witch trials in the Italian peninsula.[85]

A parallel process occurred in Spain, where from 1525 the Supreme Council of the national Inquisition began to reduce death sentences imposed on suspected witches by its local representatives, accusing the latter of excessive credulity and use of torture to force confessions. In 1526 it anticipated the later papal decree by decades, ordering that nobody should be arrested simply on the testimony of somebody already accused of witchcraft. It also sought to take over itself the cases of those formally charged with witchcraft who pleaded innocence. The last execution of somebody for witchcraft by a member of the Inquisition in Aragon was in 1535, and the last in Catalonia in 1548. Trials persisted in Navarre, and in

1609 a serious witch-hunt on the French side of the border spilled over into that province, and produced a major panic, with almost two thousand accusations. The first inquisitors to deal with them were persuaded of the reality of some, and burned six people. Subsequently, however, the Supreme Council sent out a more scrupulous representative, Alonso de Salazar y Frias, who became convinced of the patent falsity of most confessions, and the impossibility of clear proof in the case of the remainder. His report convinced his superiors, who were also shocked by the expense of the investigation. Thereafter they adopted a code of rules for trials of alleged satanic witches which demanded such stringent proofs that it rendered convictions virtually impossible. Witch-hunting was now confined to those parts of north-eastern Spain, especially Catalonia, where the authority of the Inquisition was weakest and trials could be conducted by secular courts with relative freedom. Even there, however, the inquisitors did their best to halt the proceedings, reinforced by royal authority from 1620, and by the end of the 1620s Spain was apparently free of trials for diabolic witchcraft.[86]

The great influence of the Papacy and the Spanish upon the western Mediterranean lands in general explains why the other territories in the region followed the same trajectory in the same period. The new oversight and professionalism injected into the inquisitorial process by the foundation of central supervisory bodies seems in itself to have engendered a more rigorous and sceptical attitude towards accusations of demonic witchcraft, and a growing disposition to view even those people who confessed to dealings with the Devil as deluded and in need of redemption. This change then became a factor in regional power politics, as interventions to prevent credulous and destructive witch-hunting enabled the central tribunals to enforce their authority more effectively over the localities. Eventually a cautious attitude to accusations of witchcraft, and a programme of correction and not extermination for those convicted of attempting to work magic, became a matter of ethnic identity. Seventeenth-century Italians, in particular, could be surprised and horrified by the huge body counts being stacked up by witch-hunts in Northern Europe.[87] The Mediterranean inquisitions remained forbiddingly effective machines for the persecution of magical practices, and even moderate punishments such as imprisonment, flogging and public penance would have been traumatic for those who suffered them. None the less, they rescued a region representing about a quarter of Europe from the most concentrated and deadly period of the early modern witch trials. They seem to have done so, moreover, because of political and ideological developments among the religious elite, in which popular beliefs played only a supporting role, in certain places, and not a decisive one.

The Silent Centre

What, however, of the core area of the early modern witch trials, where the majority of their victims perished: the German-speaking lands, the French-speaking parts of the Rhine and Moselle basins to their west and Poland to their east? It has already been noted that these had sprouted rich medieval popular traditions, such as those of the 'furious army', Holle and Perchte, which should have meshed easily with the concept of the witches' sabbath. Modern folklorists, led by Jacob Grimm, uncovered a still flourishing lore of nocturnal spirits of this sort, with strong regional hallmarks. All this testifies to a prolific set of beliefs, grounded in the culture of ordinary people, which should have informed the nature of witch trials in the way in which *striges*, wolf-riders, superhuman ladies and dream warriors did further south; and yet most of the evidence suggests that it did not.[88]

In saying this, it is important once again not to forget the deeper perspectives. The image of the satanic witch that was transmitted to Northern Europe was based partly on an ancient concept, that of the *strix*, and the facility with which the Germanic cultural zone picked it up may well have owed much to its own ancient native tradition, of the cannibal witch who attacked all age groups rather than specifically children.[89] This tradition might also help to explain why the majority of those accused in this region were women. Moreover, the basic concept of witchcraft was itself ancient, as was the spectrum of magic-working which extended from witches to service magicians, and which many early modern people often saw as more of a polarity between the two. The belief that bewitchment could be cured if the witch agreed to recall it was so common, widespread and ingrained that it must also have been very old. It can, moreover, be readily suggested that pre-existing beliefs in spirits that flew or rode by night would make that of the witches' sabbath easier to adopt. The basic narrative of temptation by a devil (or the Devil) with which most confessions to satanic witchcraft were supposed to commence must have drawn on the common and widespread folk-tale motif of friendly spirits who encounter distressed human beings, usually in a place out of doors, and become their helpers. It is not surprising in view of this that the names given to attendant demons in confessions of witchcraft made in the northern part of Continental Europe were sometimes those attributed to fairies or equivalent beings.[90] Beyond these historical truisms, however fundamental and important, there is not a lot to record. The offences credited to witches varied slightly between regions: for example, they were commonly charged with raising destructive storms in the Alps, southern Germany and southern France, with sending wolves to kill livestock in Lorraine, and with stealing milk in Scandinavia, Poland and much of northern Germany. These

distinctions may well rest on much older traditions, but had probably in addition a functional aspect, reflecting the nature of the local economy. Other specific regional or national characteristics attributed to witchcraft could likewise rest on old folkloric motifs: Danish witches were thought more likely to cause illness than death, and those imagined in northern France and the southern Netherlands were especially given to inflicting impotence.[91] Whilst the demonic pact was central to witch trials in most parts of this heartland, the concept of witches' assemblies – the sabbath – was rarer in some than others, and it is not clear whether this was because of predispositions of belief based on local notions of the supernatural, or accidents in the importation of the new idea of the witch. The same is true in the portraits of witches' activities. In the German-speaking districts of Lorraine, they were believed to meet in groups of varying size and attack other humans collectively; while in the French-speaking parts they met in standard-sized assemblies and operated as individuals. It is certainly tempting to see ancient cultural differences behind these variations, but impossible to prove them.[92]

Specific folk motifs are rarely easier to detect in the trials across the region. Poland had folk traditions of a more harmless and playful Devil than the one generally imagined elsewhere; and these *may* have been influenced by pre-Christian beliefs in wood and water spirits, and household spirits which could be placated with gifts. Traces of playful demons do appear in the Polish trials, but the historian who has noted them has also pointed out that the relationship between ancient pagan and early modern popular beliefs in nature spirits, and between both and images of devils, remains speculative.[93] German trials sometimes threw up folkloric images. In one at Rottenburg, in the south-west, a man was accused of appearing at the sabbath as a mounted hunter, a ghostly figure from local lore; and across southern Germany some of the misdeeds alleged against witches were those associated with malevolent local spirits.[94] When the villagers of Gebsattel in central Germany asserted in a case in 1627 that witches were especially abroad on Walpurgis Night (30 April), they were echoing a tradition found across Northern Europe that attributed uncanny qualities to this date.[95] Such details are, however, both relatively rare and incidental. When Edward Bever considered the records of trials in south-western Germany, he acknowledged that the region abounded with traditions of a parallel spirit world, operating largely independently of the orthodox Christian one, in which some people could participate; but this made remarkably little appearance in the actual cases he studied.[96]

A major example of the way in which people in the European heartland constructed stories about satanic witchcraft is provided by their answers to the question of how witches travelled to the sabbath. Presented with it, usually

under interrogation and often under torture, individuals came up with a variety of answers, partly reflecting local belief, but also what they could imagine or invent on the spot in response to a Europe-wide stereotype being articulated by the prosecutors. As a result, those methods presented in demonologies multiplied with time. In the *Malleus maleficarum* of 1486, the same idea as that recorded in the earliest Alpine witch trials was retained: that witches rode on a piece of wood greased with an ointment made partly from human baby fat.[97] By the time that Jean Bodin wrote, almost a century later and basing his information on trials in southern France and Italy, the ideas had elaborated. Some people were now said to apply the ointment to their own bodies, and then fly, while others, with or without using the grease, rode animals of different kinds, or a broom or a pole.[98] Older notions were thus surfacing, as the use of an unguent on one's own body was attributed to the Roman witches in the fictions of Apuleius and Lucian (or whomever was writing in his style), while the hosts of Diana had ridden on beasts in the *canon Episcopi*. Shortly after Bodin, Nicholas Remy recorded that people he had tried for witchcraft in Lorraine in the mid-1580s had confessed to flying up the chimney to the sabbath, or anointing themselves and putting one foot in a basket, or putting one on an anointed broomstick. Others rode a wicker net or reeds after speaking a spell, or on a pig, bull, black dog or forked stick; or just walked.[99] On the far side of Central Europe, in the records of Polish trials, the tales told were equally varied: one woman claimed to fly up her chimney, another to ride a normal carriage, another a horse, and a fourth a bewitched labouring man, while a fifth flew after smearing on ointment.[100] German records show the same pattern.[101] Some peoples had a more restrictive view of the options: in Swedish trials witches were just said to ride either animals or bewitched humans.[102] In 1612 Pierre de Lancre tried to rationalize the bewildering range of testimony available from his own experience as a trial judge. He decided that some people only attended the sabbath in dreams or thoughts, while their bodies stayed in bed. Those who went in physical form did so by walking, or by use of the baby-fat ointment, on their own bodies or on staffs, brooms or animals, which gave the apparent power of flight to any of these – though he himself concluded that this apparent power was always a devilish illusion.[103]

It is difficult amid all this to find any distinctive local formulations of such an important aspect of the construct of satanic witchcraft. What is striking instead is the propagation across Europe of what became a remarkably standard range of options, from which people selected according to local or individual choice. While the options originally arose as a result of particular trials, and some drew on ancient ideas, their propagation was the work of the elites who introduced the construct of the sabbath into area after area.

This conclusion may stand with respect to the general part played by specific folkloric and ancient motifs in witch trials in the central zone of Europe in which most of those trials occurred. The mass of recent research suggests not only that such motifs played an occasional, incidental and marginal role, but that the opposite phenomenon was immensely powerful: the newly developed stereotype of satanic witchcraft developed by late medieval preachers and inquisitors made a considerable impact on the popular imagination, once introduced into an area. To be sure it did so slowly, patchily and with some features emphasized or adopted more in particular places than others, but it none the less became very widely accepted and understood by the people who feature in trials as accusers and accused; indeed, trials represented an especially vivid means of transmitting it. In many parts of Europe, especially outside the central zone, people were prosecuted for alleged acts of harmful magic alone, without any reference to a pact with Satan or organized assemblies. Nevertheless, it can be strongly argued that the readiness of European elites to allow such prosecutions was itself driven by an enhanced consciousness, and fear, of witchcraft produced by the stereotype of a satanic religion.

In this context it is worth asking how much any aspects of such a religion were acted out by any of the people subsequently charged with witchcraft: did any of them actually try to be satanic witches? This question of the 'reality' of witchcraft was posed in the global context as part of the first chapter of the present book (a passage which readers may wish at this point to revisit), and it was suggested there that it is very hard to reach any firm conclusions with respect to it even in contexts in which living people could be interviewed by scholars. It is even harder to do so when testimony is refracted through old written texts. This problem is summed up by two statements from recent experts. One is Robin Briggs, who has declared that 'historical European witchcraft is quite simply a fiction'; the other is Brian Levack, who stated that it 'has a solid basis in reality, in that certain individuals in virtually all societies do in fact practise harmful or evil magic'.[104] Both are in fact complementary, because they refer to different phenomena. To Briggs witchcraft represented the belief that people made pacts with the Devil to enable them to work genuine magical harm on other humans, and met in assemblies to worship him and engage in murderous and disgusting activities. Levack was speaking solely of attempts to hurt others by means of magic. Both, however, require further interrogation.

There is a great deal of evidence in favour of Levack's dictum. As he pointed out himself, curse tablets and images stuck with pins are solid evidence of ancient attempts to harm or coerce others, while medieval and early modern books of ceremonial magic contain destructive spells. The

court records of early modern Europe are full of proven cases of individuals who attempted to damage or kill by physical means, and who were heard to utter curses against others. It seems unthinkable that some of them would not have used spells aggressively if they believed that they would work. The problem is that of proving it in any individual case. This was the reason why the inquisitors in the republic of Venice never convicted anybody for the specific crime of magical harm: even in cases where material evidence – of suspicious objects like bones, feathers and inscriptions – was produced from the homes of alleged victims, it could all either have been planted or got there by innocent means.[105] Where such trained professionals could not find solutions on the spot, historians cannot hope to do better. The matter ends in a paradox whereby there is virtual certainty in principle that people attempted to work witchcraft across early modern Europe, but no apparent way of demonstrating it conclusively in the case of any named individuals. A similar problem attends Edward Bever's bold attempt to extend to Europe the insights gained by doctors working in the developing world and discussed in the first chapter of the present book: that somebody who believed with utter certainty that they had been bewitched could fall ill as a result and even die. He has assembled a range of more recent medical and psychological insights to show the manner in which such fear can weaken the immune system and put pressure on vulnerable organs, of both humans and livestock: in this sense, in Europe as elsewhere, witchcraft could 'work'.[106] At this distance in time, however, it is medically impossible to prove that this actually happened in the case of any of the alleged early modern victims of witches, let alone that any of those accused actually performed the actions needed to create such an effect. Once again a reasonable presumption cannot be grounded in conclusive evidence.

A rather different, but equally considerable, problem attends the diabolic elements of early modern witchcraft, and the whole mental assemblage of the satanic witch cult developed in the fifteenth century. Here in a sense there is no bridging an enormous conceptual gulf, because modern historians completely reject the literal reality of that cult, however much they may attempt to understand and explain belief in it. In this they are simply following the path laid out by early modern scholarly opinion itself, which came, first in practice and then in theory, to abandon that belief. After all, medieval Europeans did not have it either, until the fifteenth century, and in long historical perspective it was a relatively short-lived phenomenon. Its abandonment does, however, mean that there is a point at which every historian of it simply chooses to disbelieve the testimony of those who held it, as an arbitrary decision: there is, after all, ample apparent first-hand evidence on record that people worked witchcraft in partnership with

demons whom they worshipped, and no objective means of proving conclusively that all of it is false. We simply decide to reject it as anything other than a fiction or a metaphor. This is an area of enquiry in which no academic investigator ever goes native, as there are no known cases of a professional scholar of the early modern witch-hunts coming to believe in the ideology that underpinned them.[107] Nor are there any agnostics: no academic historian overtly gives the benefit of the doubt to the idea that Satan might have been active in early modern Europe in the ways described by so many alleged confessing witches. We all choose not to believe, because of the grim record of the results of believing.

That still leaves open the question whether there were any actual would-be satanic witches in early modern Europe. In other words, once the demons are out of the picture, except as fictional characters, were there people who assembled to worship them and committed the actions involved in that worship, as described in accounts of the sabbath? Here again, despite so much apparent testimony, all the professional research of the past half century seems to unite behind the conclusion that there were not, and that all the witches' assemblies described in the records were illusory. Furthermore, as described earlier, there is an equal consensus that accounts of those assemblies were not mistaken or distorted portraits of some other religious tradition, such as a pagan one: they just never happened. It seems therefore that in the case of the attempted use of witchcraft by early modern people we have a strong presumption that something happened without quite being able to prove that it did, while in that of the satanic witch religion, we have ample evidence for the existence of something, which we disregard on the grounds that it is incredible. Using the logic that was applied to the attempted use of witchcraft itself, it is easy to believe that some individuals, in moments of despair and pain, prayed to the Devil, or devils, for aid against their enemies or persecutors, and some may have offered him a pact to gain it. In a post-Reformation era in which large numbers of people changed their allegiance from one form of Christianity to another, stigmatized by their former denomination as a satanic parody, this may not have been such a difficult step for them to take. Furthermore, there is solid evidence that during the period after the witch trials, in which the offence was less lethal, individuals did draw up pacts which they hoped to make with Satan in an effort to obtain their worldly desires: the evidence consists of the written pacts themselves, to which the writers (mostly urban men and soldiers) admitted.[108] The problem is that when most demonic pacts are described in witch-trial records and demonological literature, they are attended by elements that the modern age regards as fantastic; and any attempt to reconstruct what actually happened

must be both speculative and depend on an arbitrary and subjective reordering of the source material. All these factors converge on the final problem of how those fantastic elements arrived in the testimony in the first place. In very many cases they were clearly induced by torture, confinement in appalling physical and emotional conditions, browbeating and brainwashing.[109] In others, however, they were not. When the sceptical inquisitor Salazar arrived in Navarre determined to get to the bottom of the panic over witchcraft there, his problem was not in discerning the untruths told by the accusers, but in discerning those told by the accused, who were providing detailed confessions in huge quantity. Only the most patient analysis succeeded in revealing their contradictions and inconsistencies, so that he could report back flatly to his superiors that 'the witches are not to be believed'.[110] Vivid dreaming, trance states, hallucinations, schizophrenia, false memory syndrome and Stockholm syndrome, and a prominence among those making voluntary and detailed confessions of children and young adolescents, may in sum account for this phenomenon; but ultimately they may not. Gustav Henningsen, studying the confessions of the Sicilian women who claimed to interact with 'ladies from outside', decided that dreaming could not account for the manner in which these people told of travelling in groups together three nights a week. In his opinion, such regular and purposeful imaginary activity could only be explained by some kind of technique that induced an entranced sleep that enabled collective mental experiences using telepathic communication. He wondered if experiences of the witches' sabbath had been achieved by the same means.[111] At that moment, he had stepped over the boundaries of current scientific knowledge; and this is the territory into which the study of early modern witchcraft may ultimately lead us. Such a step would depend, however, on certainty that the Sicilian women concerned were not exaggerating the regularity and coherence of dream experiences as part of defending their reputations as service magicians empowered by good spirits. It is hard to see how to achieve such certainty.

All this, moreover, still leaves a broader problem of whether any sort of group activity, involving any kind of magical rites, lay behind accusations and confessions of satanic witchcraft. Nobody has tried harder to find some in the Continental sources than Edward Bever, working on the records of trials in the German state of Württemberg. He has shown how the idea of diabolic witchcraft reached the elite there through printed works and the local university, and was then spread to the populace, mostly by the local Lutheran Church. He attributes the content of most accusations and confessions of it to dreams, delirium, psychoactive substances, out of body experiences, false memories, lies, self-hypnosis, errors of perception,

personality disorders and other forms of cognitive dissociation. He also rules out the possibility that those accused formed anything like a religious or counter-religious sect, but leaves open one that a few people engaged in collective activity in which they shared ideas about magic, and even initiated others into means of working it. The problem with this, again, is one of proof. His prime witness is a would-be service magician tried for witchcraft, who claimed to have learned his magic in the realm of the goddess Venus, hidden in a mountain in the manner in which it is described in the famous late medieval romance of Tannhäuser, which has already made an appearance in the present book. Bever was impressed by the personal tone of the account, and the way in which it conformed to internationally reported experiences defined as shamanic by many scholars: but he wisely acknowledged that it could have been the result of dreams or an active imagination rather than of a local shamanic tradition, and indeed much of it sounds fantastic.[112] What is certain is that magicians did sometimes band together for ad hoc operations in which numbers could count, most obviously the detection of buried treasure; but that is all the certainty that we possess.[113]

There is thus a curious paradox in the relationship between the early modern witch trials and ancient and folkloric tradition. On the one hand it has repeatedly been emphasized that the construct of the satanic witch that underlay the trials drew on very ancient images and ideas; indeed, to some extent it let loose the fears associated with these after about six centuries in which they had been damped down by the reluctance of Christian churchmen to take them very seriously. On the other hand, the new construct took a long time to develop and an even longer time to spread widely, and was a thoroughly late medieval one based on orthodox Christian ideas and preoccupations. Moreover, the direct contribution of older motifs and traditions to the actual incidence and nature of the trials was minimal. It was most marked around the periphery of the main zone of the trials, in the far north and south-east of Europe and in a belt running along the southern watershed of the Pyrenees and Alps and in the lowland areas below that. In the heartland of the trials it was very small indeed, despite the existence of a flourishing and ample folklore concerning nocturnal spirit worlds, and even in the peripheral areas in which it featured more strongly, it appeared in only a minority, and usually a small minority, of trials. In a belt of territory running from Finnmark through Finland to the Baltic lands, it probably did affect the gendering of accusations, but in general the trial evidence serves incidentally to expose folk beliefs rather than folk beliefs serving to explain much about the trials. The latter were propelled and dominated, instead, by a new, almost pan-European concept of witch-

craft propagated by elites and accepted into general culture. Such a conclusion is, however, based on a general survey of the evidence generated by local studies spanning the Continent. There is still a chance that an investigation of issues relating to the witch trials, focused on a particular region, may employ insights taken from ancient and medieval cultures to explain patterns which other perspectives do not. This sort of close reading may yet throw up new answers to existing problems within the subject, and the last part of this book will consist of a series of them focused on Britain: an island at once furnished with the right sort of records, a rich medley of cultures and an ample tradition of existing scholarship, all readily accessible to the author.

PART III

BRITISH PERSPECTIVES

8

WITCHES AND FAIRIES

Ever since folklore studies became recognized as a discipline, towards the end of the nineteenth century, its practitioners have identified an early modern British belief in a connection between alleged witches and the terrestrial, human-like beings commonly called elves or fairies. This is especially apparent in the records of Scottish witch trials, and the latter have long been an important source for the study of British fairy tradition.[1] This importance has been reinforced in recent years by Carlo Ginzburg, who made them a major prop of his argument that an ancient shamanistic sub-stratum of ideas underlay the concept of the witches' sabbath. He drew attention to confessions by some of the accused that they had gone to visit the fairies, and especially their queen. These he deemed to be trance experiences and analogous to the claims of Continental Europeans to travel with the 'Lady' or 'ladies' by night. He concluded that, with the Scottish evidence added to that from the Alps, Italy and south-eastern Europe, 'we can now recognize the distorted echo of an ecstatic cult of Celtic tradition', dedicated to nocturnal goddesses.[2]

Ginzburg's hypothesis has been ignored by most experts in the Scottish trials and Scottish fairy lore but has influenced two British authors who represent the main exceptions to the lack of impact made by his ideas concerning witchcraft on English-speaking scholars. The first was Emma Wilby, who has followed his approach, and that of associated scholars such as Éva Pócs and Gábor Klaniczay, in two books. One, published in 2005, considered the relationship between fairies and magic in early modern Britain, to argue that both witches and service magicians at least in many cases drew their ideas and practices from envisioned encounters with a spirit world.[3] They did so, she suggested, in altered states of consciousness similar to those employed by shamans, and by drawing on a pre-Christian animist concept of the world from which most of the spirits with whom

they dealt, and especially fairies, descended. She was careful not to refer to this concept as 'pagan' (any more than Ginzburg himself had done), emphasizing that early modern commoners generally had a cosmos populated by supernatural figures of both Christian and pre-Christian origin.[4] She also avoided any attempt to prove continuity between ancient shamanism and early modern beliefs, preferring cross-cultural comparisons, mostly with shamans in modern Siberia and the Americas. These, she suggested, had much in common with British witches and service magicians, although she conceded that the evidence for trance states among those was very limited.

Her second book, in 2010, was an extended case study which applied her ideas to the most sensational individual witch trial in Scottish history, that of Isobel Gowdie at Auldearn on the Moray Firth in 1662: it is the one that has given the word 'coven' to the world as the most common term for a group of witches. Gowdie had made unusually detailed and lurid confessions of her activities as a witch, including a succession of malevolent misdeeds and night flights and a relationship both with the Devil and the fairy queen and king. She had usually been presumed mad by previous scholars but Wilby argued for an interpretation of her as a service magician and storyteller inspired by visionary encounters with spirits, real or not. In the process, Wilby made an excellent reconstruction of the local social and cultural context within which Gowdie operated, and incidentally a particularly good case that she and her friends *might* actually have been Satanists engaged in malefic magic.[5] Wilby acknowledged the strong likelihood of the presence of false confession and false memory syndrome in her testimony, and she had also become aware of how controversial Carlo Ginzburg's ideas were among experts, especially in Britain and America. None the less, she felt that the latter needed to acknowledge the possibility that some kind of visionary experience lay behind Gowdie's claims, and that it was related to shamanistic practices, perhaps even as a member of a local 'cult'.

Thus far the effect of Emma Wilby's ideas on experts in early modern British history has been muted, and it is true that they are highly speculative readings of records which could be interpreted in other ways.[6] There is, for example, no hard evidence that Isobel Gowdie was either a magical practitioner or a storyteller, or had visionary experiences of any sort. If she had the latter, it is still possible that she was a psychotic fantasist, whose delusions were strongly conditioned by prevailing cultural motifs. None the less, for most of the time, what Wilby has striven to do is to persuade scholars who have hitherto ignored the possibility that visionary experience may lie behind British witchcraft confessions and the work of magical practitioners to accept it as one feasible interpretation of the evidence.[7] It is suggested here that she has succeeded in making this case.

The second British scholar to be influenced by Carlo Ginzburg's ideas was Julian Goodare, who had already established himself as one of the leading experts on early modern Scotland. He distinguished his own arguments from those of both Ginzburg and Wilby, noting that nobody had adopted the former's theories in full, and refusing to imitate Ginzburg's 'plunge into the archaic past', while disagreeing with some of the latter's suggestions, but thought that the ideas of both had value. He asserted that 'deep folkloric beliefs or mythic structures mattered to the way in which the common folk conceptualized witchcraft', and credited Ginzburg with drawing attention to that idea.[8] His main personal illustration of it came in 2012 – to highlight a Scottish text of the mid-1530s, which spoke of fairies and stated that 'some say they hold meetings with a countless multitude of simple women whom they call in our tongue seely wights'. The latter expression signified blessed or lucky beings, and recurred in Scotland until the nineteenth century. Goodare interpreted it as meaning a class of superhuman entity similar to but distinct from fairies. From this and other mentions of them in Scottish sources, and analogy with the Sicilian belief in the 'ladies from outside', he hypothesized the existence in early modern Scotland of a 'cult'[9] of 'shamanistic magical practitioners', mostly female, who claimed to commune with these beings and were sometimes called 'seely wights' themselves. He suggested that they claimed to make that communication by flying at night with the 'wights', in the manner of the followers of the Continental 'Lady', and that in reality they engaged in trance states and ecstatic visions. The influence of both Ginzburg and Wilby on this reconstruction must be plain, as must that of the work of Éva Pócs and Gustav Henningsen, but its form was Goodare's own.[10] Not enough time has passed at the present point of writing for reactions to it to be registered among colleagues, but Goodare himself has subsequently followed it up with another essay in which he speculated how the 'cult' of the 'wights' might fit into the wider picture of early modern Scottish culture, especially with regard to fairy belief and visionary experience.[11] The work of these scholars therefore cumulatively poses some important questions for the history of early modern Britain: what was the relationship between service magicians and accused witches, and fairies; was that relationship the same all over Britain; and can its development, and that of ideas concerning fairies in general, be traced over time? It remains to be seen how far the approaches taken in the current book can provide answers.

Fairies and Magicians

The book's general technique of narrowing circles of perspective can be applied to the first question posed above. A global survey reveals that in

every inhabited continent, service magicians were often (though apparently not necessarily) believed to derive at least some of their ability and knowledge from dealings with superhuman beings, the latter most commonly in spirit form. Likewise, witches were commonly thought to co-operate with evil spirits in their works of destruction.[12] The 'classic' shamans of Siberia were therefore an extreme example of a widespread pattern, in their reliance on assistant spirits to carry out their service magic. It will be clear from preceding chapters, also, that European service magicians likewise often claimed to gain their powers and knowledge through communion with spirits. This was true of followers of the 'Lady' or 'ladies' from their first appearance in the ninth century, across their range. The man who said that he had learned his magical craft in the Venusberg, and the Scandinavians who confessed to doing so by communing with trolls or forest spirits, may also be remembered. On the other hand, in most parts of Europe there is an apparent absence of evidence that most service magicians identified themselves, or were identified, as coming by their reputed skills by this means. Indeed, there were some marked regional traditions that derived the powers of such figures from other sources. The 'dream warriors' of the south-east, including the *benandanti*, provide a striking example of one, in which special ability was attributed to being born with a caul. None the less, in the 'dream warriors' own region there was also a parallel kind of practitioner, to whom Éva Pócs has given the name of 'fairy magicians'.[13] These were found all over south-eastern Europe, from Greece through the Balkans to Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and (possibly) Hungary, and reputedly learned their skills, especially healing, from local beings who may be equated with the British fairies. Those beings, often taking the form of groups of beautiful women, were believed to cause many of the problems that their human pupils cured, but could also give good fortune and abundance. Some of the magicians who interacted with them were formed into societies, and most were female; many were believed to travel with these spirit patronesses at night, making them look like a south-eastern extension of the tradition first recorded in the *canon Episcopi*, and its longest recorded survival, perhaps together with Gustav Henningsen's Sicilian *donas*. Much of the information on these people consists of folklore collected in modern times, but there are stray references to them in early modern records from Dalmatia and Croatia, functioning as healers and witch-finders.[14] However, it is worth repeating that even within their region they represented only one variety of service magician, and that most of Europe seems to have lacked collective traditions of their kind. Moreover, fairy-like beings were only one sort of superhuman entity to whom magicians could reputedly turn for aid: in Spain and Portugal, the most common

kind of person offering magical services was believed to be empowered by particular saints.[15]

The European record is therefore patchy, but Britain looks like especially promising ground for a connection between magicians and fairies. For a long time, it has been noted by scholars of fairy lore, and the occasional historian interested in the subject, that British service magicians often claimed to be instructed by these beings.[16] A connection between such beings and accused witches has also long been recognized, as stated above. It is worth laying out the (now mostly well-known) evidence for these relationships, to align it with the questions posed earlier. Starting in Scotland, such a connection appears in the very first trial for witchcraft to leave a detailed indictment, that of Janet Boyman of Edinburgh, probably in 1572. She said that she had learned healing skills from a rite taught by a fellow service magician which had called up the 'good neighbours', a normal pseudonym for fairies, and with them gained knowledge of the ways of the 'seely wights', which enabled her to protect people against them. Unhappily, her cures were clearly not sufficiently effective, and she dabbled in political prophecy as well, and was arrested.[17] In 1576 an Ayrshire woman, Elizabeth Dunlop, confessed that a man called Tom Reid, who had died in battle almost thirty years before, had introduced her to the 'good wights' of the 'court of Elf-home', where she saw another man whom she knew to be dead. Reid's mistress, the elf queen, visited her at her home. From Tom and his superhuman companions, Dunlop said she had learned healing with herbs and the ability to see the future and trace lost or stolen goods; which ended disastrously when men whom she had identified as thieves denounced her to the authorities in self-defence.[18] A dozen years later Alison Pearson, from Fife, stated that she had learned the arts of healing by observing a group of green-clad superhuman men and women, who were sometimes fair-looking and merry, and sometimes fearsome. She had learned much more of these arts from a dead male cousin of hers, who told her that the same beings had carried him out of the human world.[19] Her mistake was probably to include an archbishop of St Andrews among her medical clients, so that his political enemies turned upon her.[20] When the first great wave of Scottish witch trials began in 1590 it was alleged that Lady Foulis, in Cromarty, had consulted a local magician about a means to kill some of her relatives, and was advised to talk to fairies on a local hill.[21] That same year Isobel Watson at Stirling claimed to have taken service with them as midwife to their queen, befriending a human man who may have been a ghost, and learning how to heal from them. She also, however, said she was aided by an angel.[22] In 1597 the trial took place at Edinburgh of Christian Lewinston, who testified that she had learned witchcraft from her daughter, who had herself

been abducted and taught by fairies.[23] In that year Isobel Strachan attributed her magical skills to the teaching of her mother, who had learned them in turn from an elf-lover.[24] Andrew Man, who boasted of working healing and protective (but also blighting) magic on humans, animals and farmland, was tried at Aberdeen in 1598. He spoke of two superhuman helpers, the queen of Elf-home, who had known him since visiting his family when he was a child, and an angel called Christsonday, whom he thought to be the son of God and seemed at times to identify with Jesus. The two beings were associates, but Man's magical powers appear to have derived from the queen. He said that he had seen dead men in her court, including the famous Thomas the Rhymer, reputed to have been her lover in legend, and King James IV, who had been killed at Flodden Field.[25]

In 1615 Janet Drever was accused on Orkney, in the Northern Isles of Scotland, of keeping up a relationship with the 'fairy folk' for twenty-six years. The following year, Elspeth Reoch appeared in the same court, with the relation that she had been given the ability to gain access to hidden knowledge concerning human affairs, and power to heal with herbs, by two mysterious males. One had identified himself as a 'fairy man', a kinsman of hers killed in a quarrel.[26] Another healer from the far north, Catherine Caray, said she had met a 'great number of fairy men' with their leader in nearby hills at sunset.[27] Two years later John Stewart, a wandering juggler and fortune-teller, was tried at Irvine in Ayrshire for using magic to sink a ship. He told the court that he had gained his skill in divination by weekly visits to the fairies, and especially their king, and had seen many dead people with them, as all who died suddenly went to Elfland.[28] In 1623, a Perthshire woman, Isobel Haldane, replied to interrogators that she had been given healing abilities and the power to predict people's deaths during a stay in a fairy hill to which she had been magically transported from her bed. She had also, however, been enabled to curse, and was reported to the authorities for using this resource on a man who had caught her stealing grain. Examined with her was her friend Janet Trall, another well-known magical healer, who said she had been taught to heal and blight by a company of fairy folk that had likewise carried her off from her bed.[29] In 1628 a popular healer operating near Stirling, Stein (Steven) Maltman, ended up in court because he was suspected of transferring the sufferings of his clients to other people. He said that he acquired his techniques from fairies, but also emphasized his devotion to 'God and all unearthly creatures' and the fact that the fairies caused many of the ills that he cured.[30] Back in Orkney in 1633 Isobel Sinclair was accused of having boasted of gaining the 'second sight' by being six times 'controlled with the fairy'.[31] In 1640 one John Gothrey appeared before the presbytery at Perth and told it

that he had likewise been kidnapped by fairies, and taught healing spells with them by a little lad who claimed to be John's own brother, stolen by the fairy folk as a baby.[32] At Livingston, west of Edinburgh, in 1647, Margaret Alexander testified to having befriended the fairies thirty years before and having an affair with their king: she learned a healing technique but also magic with which she murdered two people.[33] That same year Janet Cowie was tried at Elgin on charges of harming several people with witchcraft, and accused also of explaining away her frequent absences at night as jaunts with fairies.[34]

Isobel Gowdie claimed to have visited the fairy queen and king in their realm within some nearby hills, though not to have acquired any powers from them: perhaps significantly, she never referred to herself as a service magician.[35] A male magician at Duns in the south-east, tried in 1669 and called Harry Wills, said he had spent nineteen days with fairies at the start of his career, and retained a female spirit who came to him at night to advise him.[36] In 1677 one of two men accused of cattle-rustling at Inveraray in Argyll claimed to have the power to recover stolen goods, gained by befriending a people whom he had first seen dancing inside a hollow hill, which represented the court of their king.[37] Margaret Fulton, one of the Renfrewshire women accused of multiple murders by witchcraft in 1697, declared with reference to her magical dealings that her husband had 'brought her back from the fairies'.[38]

Most of the people whose stories are recorded here ended up sentenced to death for the crime of satanic witchcraft, as in Scotland the crucial element in such a conviction was confession to the making of a pact with a demon; and fairies could very easily be assimilated to demons by magistrates. Indeed, the Devil himself, or his minions, often made appearances in these narratives, and the fairies themselves were often credited with satanic behaviour such as demanding a renunciation of Christianity. Conversely, Christian elements – in addition to those mentioned – peeped out of accounts of the actual service magic provided by the accused: their spells were often uttered in the name of the Trinity, or involved water taken from a well formerly dedicated to a saint. It seems likely that the cases cited make up the great majority of those surviving from Scottish witch trials that mention fairies.[39] Despite their number, they are still a small minority of the total number of trials from which records exist; but it is also possible that they represent the majority of cases in which service magicians were accused of witchcraft, and that makes the connection between such practitioners and fairy lore much closer. The service magicians concerned seem mainly to have been those who stepped outside the normal bounds of their kind, by making enemies, failing clients or becoming embroiled in

political rivalries. Certainly there are other sources that reinforce the sense of association between human magicians and fairies in Scotland. A study of trials of magic held in local church courts found that people denounced for selling magical services claimed that their skills were fairy-given all across the central Lowlands from Angus and East Lothian to Ayrshire. It concluded that all social classes resorted to these magicians and that they were safe from prosecution if their clients prospered.[40] A genteel commentator in 1677 complained to a correspondent that the 'white devils' known as fairies 'to this day, make daily service to severals in quality of familiars'.[41]

On the other hand, it would not be safe to assume that all early modern Scottish service magicians, or even perhaps the majority, claimed a fairy origin for their abilities. Julian Goodare has shown that when people accused of witchcraft confessed to receiving powers from a superhuman entity other than an unambiguous demon, they spoke of a range of such beings, including angels, ghosts and (often) vaguely defined 'spirits'.[42] Something of a case study of the range of sources claimed by Scottish service magicians for their powers may be provided by one particular and specialist branch of the genre, the Gaelic seers or predictors of future events. In the later seventeenth century, they became a focus of deliberate research by British scholars interested in gathering evidence for the reality of a spirit world, and the records thereby gathered have been collected and published.[43] The seers too were regarded at least by some as gaining their powers from the fairy realm. A writer from the eastern Highland region of Strathspey in the 1690s said that the main Gaelic name for them indicated somebody who conversed with 'the fairies or fairy-folk' while a correspondent of his agreed that some said that the second sight was gained from 'those demons, we call fairies'.[44] Yet, when the seers and their associates were consulted, a range of beliefs for the origin of the 'sight' was manifested, including inheriting it, achieving it spontaneously, or inducing it by looking through the knot of a tree or the blades of shears, or placing hands or feet over those of an existing seer. Some practitioners offered to sell it to enquirers, and others confessed that nobody had any real idea whence it came.[45]

None the less, the connection between fairies and the gift of magical ability was clearly very strong, and it is time in this context to consider Julian Goodare's 'seely wights'. He started his essay on them by quoting a popular Scottish verse, published in 1826, which warned that to refer to fairies directly was to invite their hostility, but to use a flattering circumlocution such as 'good neighbours' or 'seely wights' would win their favour. So, by 1800 the latter expression was recognized as simply another one for fairies, and 'good neighbours' was certainly used as such in the early modern period: but was 'seely wights'? The term occurs twice in the trial records

cited above, where it could very well have that connotation, so if the 'wights' are to be distinguished from fairies, as a related but different kind of being, everything hangs on the earliest source for them. That is the text from the 1530s, by a theologian at Aberdeen University called William Hay, and it is unhappily a far from straightforward one. It starts by declaring that there are certain women who say that they have dealings with Diana, queen of the fairies. This is apparently a repetition of the oft-rehearsed and by now very old clause in the *canon Episcopi*, updated linguistically by calling Diana's retinue 'fairies'. It goes on to gloss this by saying that there are others (in the context, presumably other women) who say that the fairies are demons and that they have no dealings with them. This is actually to repeat the *canon* again, but to put the author's condemnation of Diana and her spirits as a demonic delusion into the mouths of contemporaries. Transplanted to sixteenth-century Scotland, this could work well as a declaration that some women – who in this context could well be service magicians – claimed to have dealings with the fairy kingdom, which as shown is well established in the early modern records. It would also be credible to declare that other commoners had internalized the official message that such beings were likely to be demonic. A third sentence is added, however, and this is the problem, for it seems to state that 'they' (presumably the women who will not deal with fairies) themselves gather together with an 'innumerable host' of uneducated or common women whom 'they call in our language seely wights'.[46] Literally read, this means that the women who will not deal with fairies assert that instead they attend huge meetings with other women which have nothing disreputable, or supernatural, about them: but they give those other women a name always elsewhere associated with fairies.

Clearly something is wrong here, and our ability to determine what it is must be severely compromised by the fact that we have no idea from whom Hay obtained his information, and how garbled it had become in transmission to him. Julian Goodare chose, as said, to read the passage to mean that the women who condemned dealings with fairies insisted they themselves dealt with a different kind of fairy-like being called seely wights. He also presumes that Hay received his data, directly or indirectly, from a member of the 'cult' of these 'wights', and hypothesizes at length on ways in which he could have interviewed one.[47] I am inclined to think that Hay was repeating things that he had been told by others and did not fully understand, and that 'seely wights' was actually an expression used for fairies by women – probably service magicians – who claimed to deal with them and denied that they were demons. Readers may choose between our differing readings, or decline the task as inevitably inconclusive.[48]

What of England and Wales? Here there are also many examples of service magicians claiming to have learned their skills from fairies.[49] They are recorded in Somerset around 1440, Suffolk in 1499 (conjoined with 'God and the Blessed Mary'), Somerset again in 1555 (with the 'help of God' added), Dorset in 1566 (where a male magician contacted them in their homes inside prehistoric burial mounds) and Yorkshire in 1567.[50] As for Wales, in 1587 an author called for the suppression of 'swarms' of magicians there who claimed 'to walk, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at night, with the fairies, of whom they brag themselves to have their knowledge'.[51] A rare and now famous English case of somebody accused of witchcraft for dealings with fairies was that of Susan Swapper, a reputed service magician at the Sussex port of Rye, in 1609. Her alleged encounters began in what we can now regard as the classic manner, with a group of green-clad people coming to her to offer aid and teach her a healing skill; after which she went on to meet their fairy queen. In her case, however, the relationship turned into a hunt for treasure, and so, through the operation of local factional politics, into a witch trial, though one ending in a pardon.[52]

The same tradition continued through the seventeenth century. During the late 1640s a maid in a Cornish household, Ann Jeffries, established a considerable reputation for herself as a magical healer, which was associated with her claim to have conversations with fairies (and her profound Christian piety). Her career was ended because she added political prophecies to her repertoire that were unfavourable to the current government.[53] In the middle of the century a man was accused of witchcraft in the north of England after attempting to cure people with a white powder. He told the court that he obtained it from fairies living in a knoll under the rule of their queen, and the jury acquitted him because his cures seemed generally to work.[54] A London woman called Mary Parish provided a range of magical services in the later seventeenth century, and claimed to have befriended the fairies, and especially their king and queen, entering their realm through a hillock on Hounslow Heath. She led her aristocratic patron, Goodwin Wharton, a merry dance in the 1680s by offering to introduce him to them and reporting each time a colourful new impediment that prevented it. As usual, her charms had Christian references.[55] A writer in 1705 recorded the story of a Gloucestershire woman tried for her claim to predict the deaths or recovery of sick people, who maintained that she learned these results from fairies who visited her at night.[56] As in Scotland, therefore, the linkage between service magic and fairies seems very strong, though again it does not seem universally associated with providers of such magic, and may not, indeed, have been a characteristic of the majority. Once more, also, most of the known cases of it concern women, who represent eight of the ten

English instances described above; it is not clear, however, whether this fact results from a special tendency for female service magicians to identify with fairies, or because most such magicians were female, or because female magicians were more likely to get into trouble, and so enter the record. Certainly in England and Wales, and possibly in Scotland, the association of fairies with human magic faded away in the eighteenth century. By the end of that century, service magicians were believed to be empowered by the books they possessed or the humans who instructed them, and there does not seem to be a single recorded case thereafter of one who made the claim to knowledge transmitted by fairy folk. Perhaps the latter had simply ceased to seem so credible.[57]

The early modern period appears therefore to have been a heyday, and perhaps *the* heyday, of the association, and it is now worth enquiring what was actually going on in it; especially in view of the concentration instigated by Carlo Ginzburg on 'shamanistic' practices. As absolutely none of the people accused of witchcraft or known as service magicians in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Britain carried out a rite technique like that of Siberian or Sámi shamans, the term used by Ginzburg must be taken in the broadest sense of the root word 'shaman': of somebody communicating with non-human beings, usually spirits, while in an altered state of consciousness. Excitingly, there are records from seventeenth-century Scotland that refer to such states in the terms still most commonly used for them. The presbytery of Alford, in the north-east, questioned a beggar reputed to be 'a seducer under pretence of lying in a trance or having converse with familiar spirits'.[58] A higher ecclesiastical body, the synod of nearby Aberdeen, received complaints 'that some under pretence of trances or of spirits commonly called the fairies, hath spoken reproachfully on some persons' (presumably by accusing them of offences).[59] These sound very much like service magicians or seers hired to divine answers to clients' questions, and it would be convenient had these sources made clear that to converse with spirits or fairies meant employing the method of trance, rather than making the two activities sound like alternative methods of divination; but they do not. Likewise, from the late seventeenth-century Hebridean Isle of Tiree came an account of a woman who lay as if dead for a whole night while her spirit (as she reported) visited the Christian heaven.[60] This sounds like a classic ecstatic trance, of the shamanic kind, but she was not a shaman, or even a service magician, but a religious mystic. When the carefully collected accounts of Highland seers from the end of the century are studied, none of them shows the practitioners concerned as entering an ecstatic trance, or any kind of trance that an observer could notice. Instead their flashes of perception come spontaneously and

unbidden.[61] When an interviewer specifically asked the notorious seeress (and witch-finder) Janet Douglas, in 1678, if she underwent any alteration when the 'sight' came on her, she insisted that she was 'in the same temper' as before, 'without any trouble, disorder or consternation of mind', and remained so when the vision passed.[62]

It therefore matters greatly in this context that absolutely none of the people who confessed to dealing with fairies in Scottish trials for witchcraft or English trials for witchcraft or magic spoke of doing so while in trance, or of engaging in spirit-flight. On the contrary, they seem very much in their own bodies, and the contact is often made by the fairies appearing to them while they are in bed, in a house or a garden, or walking out of doors, and (once awake) fully in possession of their faculties. Often also it happens at a special place out of doors such as a holy well or (mostly) a hollow hill. A few claimed to have been transported from their beds to fairy land, but they are taken in body not spirit and they walk back, or are left exhausted on the ground near home. This does not mean of course that they were not in some kind of altered mental state when they thought themselves to be having such experiences, but this seems impossible to prove, and there is a range of other explanations. Some may have been making up their stories to promote their reputations as magicians, while others, in Scottish witch trials, may have been submitted to mental or physical torture to extract satisfactory confessions; and both groups would have used local folklore to fill out what they said. If the possibility of altered consciousness is admitted (and it surely must be), then there are many other kinds of that which might have operated instead of shamanistic trances. Julian Goodare has made an excellent consideration of these, with respect to Scottish witch trials in general, and included sleep-walking, sleep paralysis, hallucination and fantasy.[63] In addition, to be perfectly just, one might admit the final possibility that some of the people concerned actually met non-human beings.

What emerges as certain from all this is that all across Britain, from Orkney to Cornwall, and throughout the early modern period, service magicians were often believed to gain their powers and knowledge from fairies, and claimed to do so. They reported a variety of means by which they did this, which probably reflected different personal dispositions and experiences, and of which 'shamanistic' trance was only one. This in itself works against the idea of a 'cult' among them that practised such methods, although small local groups which did, on the lines suggested by Emma Wilby, remain possible, if completely unproven. Julian Goodare was probably closer to the early modern reality when, having adopted Ginzburg's term 'cult' for the 'seely wights', he considered Janet Boyman's one of 'craft', as used by her for her kind, as an alternative, and then went on to look at that

of 'tradition'. He suggested that rather than being an organized group with a membership structure, the followers of his 'wights' had just a shared occupational identity: and that is exactly what service magicians in general did have, and they were certainly a 'craft' and a 'tradition'.

Nor do the resemblances between the Scottish fairies and the Continental followers of the 'Lady' seem close enough to establish a common descent rather than representing converging traditions of separate origin. Scottish fairies were certainly believed to ride together like the retinue of the 'Lady', and Bessie Dunlop, Janet Trall and Andrew Man claimed to have seen them do it; but Scottish service magicians did not claim to ride with them as Continental equivalents had allegedly done with Diana or Herodias. Scottish fairies had a dominant female figure, but she was usually paired with a king. A common means of locomotion for the Scottish beings seems to have been in the wind, which the confessions listed earlier repeatedly recorded as being used both to blight people and to carry them off; and this tradition spilled over the English border.[64] Unlike the 'Lady', moreover, the British fairies operated both by day and by night. It may be suggested, therefore, that Carlo Ginzburg's ideas have had a distorting effect on the study of perceived relationships between fairies and magicians in Britain, both by producing an overemphasis on 'shamanistic' states of consciousness in the making of the relationships and by encouraging historians to think in terms of 'cults'. On the other hand, it can also be proposed that they have had an extremely beneficial effect in drawing renewed attention to the importance of those relationships, and that both Emma Wilby and Julian Goodare have compounded it with valuable work; and all three deserve acknowledgement for that.

Where do Fairies Come From?

There is, however, one further way in which Carlo Ginzburg's ideas may be examined, and although both Wilby and Goodare understandably declined to adopt it, it is amenable to the methodology of the present book: to look at the apparent continuities between the ancient and early modern worlds, with respect to British fairy belief, and see how strong they are. It may be presumed that the prehistoric British would have believed in spirits, as defined at the opening of this book, because traditional cultures always do. Some would have been intrinsically associated with natural environments such as forests and bodies of water, and probably others with domestic spaces such as the hearth, to judge from the abundant evidence for this from the literate ancient world and indigenous peoples on other continents. It is probably safe to refer to the early modern British fairies as spirits,

because they very frequently had an ability to appear and vanish, and transcend normal physical limitations. Contemporaries generally regarded them as such. On the other hand, in some accounts they seem to be physical beings who achieve by the use of magic feats impossible to humans.[65] To refer to them as 'nature spirits' is more questionable, because they do not represent natural phenomena such as trees or water, and do not seem to live more 'naturally' than most pre-modern humans. They have instead a parallel, regal and aristocratic society, with industries and furnishings, which is based underground rather than on the surface of the earth.[66] It can be argued that the (widely used) recent identification of fairies with the natural world reflects a modern literary image of them in which they function as representatives of an older land being reshaped by urbanization and industrialization. If so, then such a perception may actually distort an understanding of medieval and pre-industrial attitudes. So, to restate the question, how far back can they be traced?[67]

It is generally accepted that the term 'fairy' arrived in Britain from France only in the later Middle Ages; before then the beings to whom it was to be applied were known wherever English and Scots were spoken as 'elves'. They retained this name thereafter, of course, as an alternative to fairies. The Anglo-Saxons certainly believed in elves, and certainly feared them for maliciously afflicting humans and their animals with physical ailments. A few texts attempted to demonize them, but there are hints in others that they were models of seductive female beauty. There is no unequivocal evidence that they were regarded as sources of knowledge for magicians – the earliest certain sign of that is from the fifteenth century – but a possible link with diviners or prophets. No clear sense of a coherent tradition emerges from the texts, which may be a reflection of reality or just a consequence of the patchy survival of evidence.

The likelihood that no coherent view of elves was in fact held in Anglo-Saxon England is, however, increased by reference to authors from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries who describe encounters between humans and non-human beings which could not easily be fitted into conventional Christian concepts of angels and demons: above all Gerald of Wales, Ralph of Coggeshall, Gervase of Tilbury, Walter Map and William of Newburgh. These include several motifs (scattered across various anecdotes) that were to be enduring components of fairy lore. The first is a belief in a parallel world with human-like inhabitants who have their own ruler and society and are in some ways superior to people. The second is the ability of such beings to enter our own world, and sometimes to steal human children away from it, while humans could sometimes enter their realm. The third is that portals between this otherworld and our

own exist in particular places such as lakes, woods, natural hills or prehistoric tumuli. The fourth is a belief in beautiful supernatural women, who dance in secluded areas at night, and who can be wooed or abducted by mortal men, but who almost always return to their own realm. The fifth is that such non-human beings are often associated with the colour green. The sixth is that they can give blessings to people who entertain them or otherwise treat them graciously, but also torment them, notably by leading them astray at night. Associated with this is the seventh, a tradition of human-like creatures who live in or come into homes, where they make themselves useful to the human occupants or play mischievous tricks on them.

What is missing in these accounts is any sense of a coherent belief system to contain and explain the stories being repeated by the authors. There is nothing about any of them that suggests they were strictly the preserve of the social elite. The medieval intellectuals who collected them and grouped them together were struggling to create a category for them, specifically because none seemed to exist already either in Christian cosmology or established folk belief. A similar lack of definition exists in a parallel stream of literature from the same period between 1100 and 1250, chivalric romances featuring encounters between human characters and beings who have sumptuous lifestyles, mirroring those of the contemporary human social elite, and wield apparently superhuman powers. In particular, these beings function as lovers, advisers and protectors for the knights and ladies with whom they make relationships, and sometimes as predators upon, or seducers (and seductresses) of, them. By the twelfth century they were represented in literary works composed across north-western Europe from France to Ireland.[68] Whereas the scholarly texts discussed above were dealing with encounters that were believed to have taken place, the romances were uninhibited works of fiction. Those written in French supplied the genesis of the word 'fairy' itself, associated with the term *fai, fae* or *fay*, applied to female representatives of the beings described above. Little attempt was made to define those beings within a theological framework, or indeed to explain who they were at all or to explore their motivation: they were usually just assumed to be mysterious. At times it was explicitly stated that they were human beings who had learned powerful magic, while at others they appeared essentially to be superhuman; but in most cases they were not assigned to either category, and the problem was not considered in the tale.

None the less, they are important to this investigation. For one thing, they represent, as said, the linguistic root of the whole concept of the fairy. The word *fai* or *fay* itself originally functioned more often as a verb than a noun, to denote the making of something magical and strange, in both Old

French and the English texts into which the French themes were transposed. Its derivation or parallel development 'faierie' was evolved to refer to uncanny events and phenomena, rather than creatures, and only began to refer to a type of being in English in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it enabled the eventual creation of such a type. Furthermore, among the kinds of 'fay' found in the romances of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are some who would later populate the category concerned: enchantresses who capture humans who wander into their hidden realms or abduct them to those, and Auberon, a king of a forest realm who is possessed of great magical powers. Such entities also feature in the priest Layamon's reworking of the legendary history of Britain. He recounts how King Arthur was brought up by them, and endowed with magical qualities, and returned to their domain of Avalon, ruled by a queen, at the end of his reign. Layamon's use of English for his history enabled him to cross the romance with the vernacular genres, by giving those beings the native name of elves.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, therefore, the materials for a fairy tradition were present, in a popular tradition of elves, as blighting and perhaps as healing and seductive beings; an elite literary one of beautiful, wealthy and powerful fays; and a third category of diverse human-like creatures who overlapped with the first two types but did not really fit into either, and seemed to span elite and popular culture. What did not yet exist was an actual tradition that combined and systematized most, at least, of these forms. Throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, indeed, references continued to supernatural beings, inherent in the British landscape, which had vague, functional identities and no known relationship to each other. The 'puck' was known from Anglo-Saxon times as a name for a spirit who led nocturnal wayfarers into pitfalls, while the bug (a term with a variety of related words) featured from the later Middle Ages onwards as another entity of the night, distinguished by striking terror into people. In the fourteenth century the term 'goblin' arrived, probably from French, for a similarly unpleasant and hazily characterized nocturnal sprite, whose activities overlapped with both puck and bug. None the less, by the end of the thirteenth century moves were being made to put a systematic structure of belief around at least some such figures.

Two closely related texts, the *South English Legendary* and the *Metrical Chronicle* of Robert of Gloucester, defined elves as spirits in the shape of beautiful women who danced and played in secluded places, and with whom humans could have sex, but at their peril. By the early fourteenth century, a preacher's manual, *Fasciculus Morum*, could condemn as a devilish illusion a widespread belief in elves who took the form of beautiful

women dancing at night with their queen or goddess, whom the author equated with the Roman Diana: the *canon Episcopi* tradition was starting to influence English views of nocturnal beings. The belief concerned, according to the manual, included the detail that these elves could carry off humans to their own land, where heroes of the past dwelt.

Meanwhile, in the romances, classical influences were providing another framework for systematizing the fays. In a French one composed around 1300 and later translated into English as *Arthur of Little Britain*, the ancient goddess Proserpine was made 'Queen of the Fayrye' and featured as the helper and would-be lover of the hero. This was the classic role of a fay, underlined by the fact that she tended to appear at night and on the edge of a forest. The Middle English *Sir Orfeo*, of about the same date, undertook a similar makeover in its retelling of the ancient myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In this version Orfeo has to retrieve his wife, not from a pagan underworld as before but from the land of a nameless 'King of Fayré' (or 'Fare' or 'Fairy'), who takes the role of the Roman god Pluto as ruler of a realm of the human dead, though in this case of those who have met untimely ends. Even so, it is a fair, green land, where the king reigns over splendid non-human beings in state with his queen and sometimes invades the human world with a retinue to hunt beasts or abduct people. It is a well-rounded picture of a fairyland. These steps made possible the leap taken by the end of the fourteenth century, when Chaucer could speak, famously, of how in the days of King Arthur 'the elf-queen, with her jolly company, danced full oft in many a green mead'. He was taking a composite image of a fay, from the high medieval romances (and especially those of Arthur and his knights) and giving it the definite article that established her as an archetype that was becoming a personality in her own right. Thus concepts are still fluid, but a set of associations is crystallizing around the words 'fairy' and 'elf' which is defining an increasingly familiar place and set of characters. This process is equally visible in a contemporary English romance by Thomas Chestre, *Sir Launfal*, a reworking of a twelfth-century Old French tale. It is a classic plot of how a mysterious and beautiful fay gives her love and aid to a true knight, but the contrast between the two versions is striking: in the earlier, the nature of the heroine is left undefined, and she dresses in royal purple, while in the latter, she is explicitly the daughter of 'the King of Faërie', and dressed in the distinctive fairy colour of green. At its close, the later version indeed has her take the hero back 'into the faërie' with her.

By the fifteenth century, the literary construct of the fairy kingdom was both fully formed and truly pan-British. The famous Scottish romance *Thomas of Erceldoune*, dating from somewhere between 1401 and 1430, tells of how its genteel human hero became the lover of a lady from 'the wild

fee'. She takes him to her own land (entered through the side of a hill), where she turns out to be the wife of its king, and returns him to the mortal world with gifts, of truth telling and knowledge of the future: the tradition associated with so many later service magicians was already established in Scotland. By the end of the century the concept of this kingdom was a recurrent motif of Scottish poetry, and firmly linked to the label 'fairy'. Over the same period, Welsh literature absorbed the motif as well. *Buchedd Collen*, which is late medieval and represents a saint's life written in the style of a romance, has its hero encounter Gwyn ap Nudd, the traditional lord of Annwn, the medieval Welsh underworld or otherworld. Gwyn has now become 'King of the Fairies' as well as of Annwn, and when the saint sprinkles him and his sumptuous court with holy water, all vanish leaving green mounds behind. By the mid-fifteenth century, also, English records survive which provide direct insights into popular culture, and the concept of the fairy realm had got there as well. From the 1440s and 1450s come reports of a vagrant claiming to be 'Queen of the Fayre' in Kent and Essex; a gang of disguised poachers in Kent calling themselves 'servants of the queen of the fairies'; and of course the female service magician in Somerset, who claimed to have obtained magical powers from 'spirits of the air which the common people call feyry'.[69] The imported French word had already come to signify among English commoners, apparently in general, the beings that were known in their own language as elves.

During the late medieval period, also, further additions seem to have been made to British beliefs concerning the sort of beings who were now getting this name. There seems to be no certain record in any British medieval text, for example, of the tradition well attested in France and Germany during the high Middle Ages, that terrestrial spirits not only stole human children but substituted sickly or difficult offspring of their own ('changelings') for them. This belief does, however, appear unequivocally in a school handbook of model Latin translations published in 1519, and becomes a regular feature of first English and then British fairy lore thereafter. Another innovation was the appearance of 'Robin Goodfellow' as a particular name for a fairy-like being. This is first recorded as used by one of the correspondents of the Paston family in 1489, and in 1531 William Tyndale allotted this character a role, of leading nocturnal travellers astray as the puck had been said to do since Anglo-Saxon times and the goblin since the later medieval period. Reginald Scot, writing in 1584, aligned him with another long-established type of magical being, the household spirit who performs helpful practical tasks in exchange for reward: in his case bread and milk. Scot also, however, referred to Robin Goodfellow in another place as a 'great bullbeggar', who was once 'much feared', suggesting a more hostile

nature for him: the attributes of such characters had not yet become precisely fixed.

It may be argued, therefore, that the concept of fairies which prevailed in early modern Britain formed between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the fourteenth representing the decisive period in its gestation. By 1400 it had become a stock component of most types of literature, across the island, and was also an established feature of popular belief, certainly in England and probably elsewhere. Although it drew on older images and ideas, its appearance was a distinctively late medieval phenomenon. There is a slight possibility that it had existed earlier in popular culture, while not making an impact on literature, but the tales about contacts between humans and magical beings recorded by writers between 1100 and 1250 seem to have reflected traditions and experiences which spanned the whole of contemporary society. The absence in those stories of such a generally shared construct, of a supernatural kingdom with recognized rulers and characteristics, is striking, and the evolution of one seems to be visible, through successive stages, in the succeeding period. The French word 'fairy' was transmitted to Britain through the medium of romances, and attached to the idea of a kingdom, before either word or concept appeared in popular belief, and the two were firmly linked by the time that such an appearance occurred. The idea of the kingdom itself was based firmly on distinctively elite forms such as chivalric romance and classical mythology. This sequence of development would explain, incidentally, why it came to be found throughout the parts of Britain penetrated by French literary forms – England, Wales and Lowland Scotland – but not the Gaelic cultural province. The Highlands and Western Isles had a widespread belief in beings very similar to fairies or elves – the *sithean* – but never gave them monarchs.[70] It would also explain why nothing like the early modern British fairies is found in ancient European mythologies, and why they seem so different from the indigenous spirits of wood, water or the home also found in British folklore from the early modern and modern periods.

If these suggestions are correct, then the fairy kingdom was as much a late medieval development as the concept of the satanic conspiracy of witches, and may (almost certainly) join the wandering nocturnal hosts of the dead and (possibly) the nocturnal retinue of the Lady, as products of the Middle Ages rather than survivals from the ancient world. In this case, Carlo Ginzburg's idea that the British fairy queen and the Continental Lady and wandering dead were all surviving fragments of the same prehistoric 'substratum' of pagan shamanism is no longer tenable. Emma Wilby's emphasis on British fairy belief as a remnant of an ancient animist cosmos is still ultimately sound, as the Anglo-Saxon elves must surely have derived

from that, but it misses out the vital component of development in beliefs concerning such beings during the medieval period.

Fairies and Witches in Scotland and England

A pair of unanswered questions remains concerning the role played by fairies in early modern British witch trials, centred upon the differences between the two kingdoms: why did fairies feature more often in witch trials in Scotland and why were they so much more strongly associated with dead humans there? It may be suggested at once that there is no easy answer to either; but a consideration of both may throw up some interesting viewpoints on early modern British cultures. The second is more swiftly treated. It is plain from the confessions that the people who were described as being with the fairies had suffered untimely, and often violent, deaths, making them Scottish equivalents of some versions of the Germanic 'furious army'. Three possible reasons may be proposed for this. The first is that the tradition of the 'furious army' crossed the North Sea to Britain. This is possible, but there is no actual evidence for it, and the two traditions are not very alike and may have different points of origin. The second is that an association between elves and the dead was a feature of prehistoric northern Britain, and carried through into the early modern period. This is also possible, and might be given some greater plausibility in that both Scottish and Irish folk tales collected in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show a common belief that people who had died prematurely had been taken by the fairies.[71] We may be looking here at a primeval Gaelic myth. On the other hand, the people taken in these later stories are almost always young women, and a seventeenth-century source from the southern Highlands states that young mothers were abducted in particular to act as nurses in fairyland.[72] The idea that the fairies played host to a much larger cross-section of the untimely dead was found, as shown, across the early modern Lowlands and, as will now be demonstrated, before then in England as well.

The third possibility is that the association between the fairies and the dead was rooted in the same medieval romances from which the word 'fairy' and the concept of a fairy kingdom developed. Its earliest manifestation there was in the belief that after his last battle King Arthur had been taken to the land of the fays, which developed out of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history in the 1140s. By the time of *Sir Orfeo* and *Arthur of Little Britain*, the fairy kingdom was (as has been said) identified with that of Pluto and Proserpine, classical rulers of the dead. This may have been partly because of the Arthurian tradition of the fays as hostesses to dead or lost heroes, and

partly because of the idea, already apparent in the high medieval texts, that the home of fairy-like beings was underground, like Pluto's realm. At the other end of the fourteenth century, Chaucer could likewise make Pluto and Proserpine monarchs of 'faierye'.[73] By contrast, the earliest Scottish texts to speak of fairyland, such as *Thomas of Erceldoune*, do not place any dead humans or Graeco-Roman deities there. That connection was only apparently made in the late fifteenth century, when once again the Orpheus legend enabled the identification of the fairy king and queen with Pluto and Proserpine, in the version of the story composed by the Dunfermline notary and schoolmaster Robert Henryson.[74] His contemporary and fellow poet William Dunbar could likewise make Pluto 'the elrich incubus / In cloak of green'.[75] The association was firmly established by the early sixteenth century, when elite poetry could portray the court of the fairy monarchs as a desirable destination on death, where heroes and great medieval poets now resided.[76]

There is, therefore, a sustainable argument that the common source of the linkage between fairyland and the human dead lay in high medieval romance, and that it was transmitted across Britain, through that medium, in the course of the late Middle Ages. It took longer to reach Scotland, but having done so it not only became a literary motif but put down deep roots into popular culture, and may have lingered there in subsequent centuries in the reduced form of the idea that fairies abducted young women by making them seem to die, which spread to Ireland. In England, by contrast (according to this theory), it never became more than a literary concept, unlike that of the fairy kingdom, and vanished before the end of the medieval period. At least so the argument would run; but it is no more capable of proof than the other two, and by no means incompatible with them. It is possible, for example, that the Gaelic cultural province had a different and native tradition that the *sithean* carried off young women; or that Continental images of the hosts of penitent dead influenced the portrait of Pluto's kingdom in *Sir Orfeo*. There is ultimately no decisive solution to the puzzle.

The other issue, of why fairies feature more in Scottish than in English witch trials, requires more extended consideration. A simple answer to it would be that Scots making accusations of witchcraft tended to think of demons as fairies and English equivalents tended to think of them as animals; but things are not quite as straightforward as that and, even if they were, the question would still be begged of why that was so. It will be confronted in the last chapter of this book. Another superficially easy solution might be that fairies were associated especially with service magicians, and the Scots tended to prosecute such magicians more frequently for

witchcraft. It is not, however, clear that that was the case, and, if it were, the difference would seem to be one of slight rather than dramatic dimensions. A third prima facie answer is that the local Scottish political and social elites who controlled the nature of criminal trials came to regard fairies or elves differently from English equivalents. This can be tested from good evidence, and a conclusion reached upon it, and that exercise will now be undertaken.

In England, attitudes to such beings in the late medieval and early Tudor period took two forms, neither of which dominated the other. One, most prevalent in literary fiction, treated them as imaginary figures, representing varying mixtures of hedonistic pleasure, ideal beauty and menace. Those texts that dealt with apparent reality sometimes considered the possibility that the beings concerned could be demonic, but the overall tendency was to question their existence or to admit to doubt as to how they should be classified.[77] Pre-Reformation Scottish attitudes were very similar. The first recorded, in *Thomas of Erceldoune*, suggested that the land of the 'wild fee' was subject to the Devil, who seized anybody who ate the fruit of a certain tree there and sent a fiend every seven years to carry off an inhabitant to Hell as tribute. It was made clear, however, that the 'fee' were not fiends themselves and that they had no affection for their satanic overlord.

In Scottish poetry of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, fairies were viewed in various different ways. 'King Berdok' made them creatures of whimsy, having a tiny hero who lives in a cabbage stalk or cockle shell, and woos the daughter of the 'king of fary'.[78] William Dunbar associated 'ane farie queyne' with 'sossery' (sorcery), but also explored images of fairy-like beings with a mixture of anxiety and attraction.[79] Sir David Lindsay likewise repeatedly made his characters refer to the fairy queen or king in passing, with sentiments either of affection or fear; so attitudes to them varied even in the work of one writer, or indeed within a single poem.[80] The Scottish Reformation does seem to have altered this situation decisively, towards a negative view. In a now famous poem by Alexander Montgomerie, from about 1580, the host of the 'King of Pharie' and the 'elf queen' includes overtly demonic figures such as incubi.[81] Montgomerie's monarch and patron was James VI, a formidable writer himself, who in the next decade condemned all apparent manifestations of the fairy realm as devilish delusions designed to ensnare souls: a perfect theoretical justification for the identification of fairies with demons that had been made, and would be made, in witch trials.[82] After that it had to be more or less official orthodoxy to make that identification in Scotland. It cannot be concluded with certainty that views might have been more variable had better media for them existed there: had not Scots poetry

apparently declined in the early seventeenth century or had a flourishing theatrical tradition developed in the period. None the less, the indications are not promising. In 1567, for example, a comic play was performed at the Scottish royal court, and it already made 'the Farie' an alternative destination to Hell.[83] Post-Reformation Scottish culture does not seem friendly to fairies, and the hostility crossed confessional divides, as Montgomerie was a Catholic and so was the monarch for whom the play was performed in 1567, Mary Queen of Scots.

In England, by contrast, the Reformation provoked an intense new interest in fairy mythology, expressed in a great range of source genres. It was one aspect of a general increase among the English in interest in the nature and operation of superhuman entities during the period from 1560 to 1700, also manifesting – for example – in a new level of interest in demonology and angelology. It is especially significant for present purposes that this did not result in any consensus, let alone orthodoxy, concerning the nature of fairies or even their existence, but in a wide variety of attitudes expressed with more or less equal freedom.[84] It is easy to find English writers between 1598 and 1675 who agreed with the Protestant Scots that fairies were demons pure and simple. William Warner included 'elves and fairies' among the spirits of Hell.[85] John Florio, Thomas Jackson, Robert Burton, Thomas Heywood, William Vaughan and Henry Smith all likewise summed them up unequivocally as demons, or (more rarely) as deceiving phantasms produced by demons.[86] A comedy staged in about 1600 included an evil enchanter who conjured them as servitor spirits.[87] Subsequently a much greater writer of comic drama, Ben Jonson, twice turned to demonic fairy-like figures for material. In *The Divell is an Asse*, he made the puck, the tormenting trickster figure of traditional folklore, into one of Satan's lesser demons; though he also cast doubt on some charges of witchcraft by saying that women hanged for it took the blame falsely for the puck's own misdeeds.[88] In *The Sad Shepherd*, however, he brought on a thoroughly evil and malicious human witch, with true magical powers and servitor demons such as 'Puck-hairy', who also associates with 'white Faies' and 'span-long elves'.[89] It seems difficult to position these authors in any particular religious or cultural group: demonic fairies were certainly not specifically a belief of godly Protestants in England.

The evil conjuror in the comedy raises the question of how far fairy-like beings actually did feature in ceremonial magic in the late Tudor and Stuart periods, and it admits of a clear answer: while they were associated with service magicians working for a popular clientele from the early fifteenth century, they did not have the same position in elite ritual magic. The latter long remained true to its ancient and early medieval roots, calling on spirits

who were in origin pagan deities and spirits or Judaeo-Christian angels. However, five manuscripts of this kind of magic, from the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, do include directions for the invocation and control of fairies, treating them as a distinct sub-class of spirits, while a published treatise includes extracts from a sixth.[90] The purposes for which their services are to be obtained are generally whatever the magician wills, in common with other invoked spirits. This inclusion of fairies as such is new in texts of ritual magic, and must reflect the new intensity of interest in them in English society at large, something borne out by the records of individual learned magicians. John Dee recorded in his diary for 1582 that a 'learned man' had offered to 'further my knowledge in magic … with fairies', while Simon Forman subsequently noted down data concerning the powers of the fairy king.[91] A woman accused of malefic witchcraft in 1618 claimed that her teacher of magic had offered 'to blow into her a fairy which should do her good'.[92]

For those who wished to regard fairies as minor devils, their ancient reputation for afflicting humans with illness and misfortune made a very good fit; not least because it persisted into the early modern period without any necessary assimilation to Christian theology. William Shakespeare's 'no fairy takes, nor witch has power to harm', is only the most famous of a number of casual references to it in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature.[93] It also remained a live issue in everyday life, to which the persistence of charms against the ills which fairies were held to cause, and the mention of cunning folk who specialized in curing them, bear witness.[94] Likewise, the apparently only recently imported belief that a human child could be stolen from its cradle and a changeling substituted is well attested in the English literature of the age.[95] Autobiographical and legal records make clear that this had also become a genuine dread within English popular culture, although there is less evidence of one in Scotland or Ireland, even though it was to be very prevalent there in later periods.[96]

Thus far the fairy could be perceived as the object of a cultural consensus among literate English people, with mainstream authors demonizing the figure and magicians ignoring the exercise even as they ignored or discounted attempts to demonize the other beings they invoked. At this point, however, things begin to get more complex. Even people who were ready to class fairies as demonic often thought that they were somehow different from demons in general. The Elizabethan *Mirror for Magistrates* described a witch as commanding 'fiends and fayries', while a comedy from the 1580s includes a conjuration of 'Robin goodfellow, Hobgoblin, the devil and his dam'.[97] In the 1610s a character in a comedy by John Fletcher asked the protection of Heaven against 'Elves, Hobs and Fayries … fire-drakes

and fiends, and such as the devil sends'.[98] In each case it is not clear how far all the places or beings described are to be equated or distinguished, and indeed ten years after writing that passage, Fletcher penned another play which described 'Faeries' cautiously as 'demi-devils'.[99] Most curious in this respect is an Elizabethan play, *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, which features Robin Goodfellow as a minor demon, sent from Hell to torment humanity, who none the less only acts against sinners and villains, while aiding the virtuous in their work and ambitions. The hero hails him gratefully as 'one of the honestest merry devils that ever I saw'.[100]

There was, moreover, a completely different tactic used in England during the same period for the condemnation of a belief in or an affection for fairies and related beings, and it was one which more or less ruled them out as features of witch trials: that they were non-existent, being the products of a deluded and foolish human imagination. It was given especial potency in that it featured mainly as a Protestant polemic against Roman Catholicism, as fostering fairy lore as part of its general encouragement of ignorance and superstition. In 1575 the annotator of Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* called any literal belief in fairies a 'rank opinion' inculcated by 'bald Friars and knavish shavelings' to delude the common people.[101] It was developed by a pamphleteer in 1625 with the assertion that householders were induced to leave out food and drink overnight for the fairy folk so that wandering friars could secretly consume it; and it recurred in other anti-Catholic polemics of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[102] Other Elizabethan and early Stuart authors declared, more generally, that belief in such beings should not persist in a land enlightened by the Gospel.[103]

Credulity was also undermined by authors of comedies that, while not disowning the fairy tradition in general, hinged plots on impersonations of fairies and similar beings, such as bugs and goblins, by human beings, or on pretended conjurations of them. Sometimes this action is undertaken by villains, and sometimes by heroes and heroines, but the aim is always to persuade gullible victims to part with their wealth or act against their natural inclinations. Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Jonson's *The Alchemist* are the most famous of a series of these works.[104] As scholars of them have long recognized, they were accompanied by well-publicized instances of real confidence trickery in which criminals attempted to part victims from possessions or sums of money on the pretence of introducing them to the fairy queen, and sometimes the king as well, who would allegedly grant them riches or other favours. There are three such cases listed in pamphlets and legal records between 1595 and 1614 alone.[105] They must have further encouraged scepticism.

In addition, moreover, even the cultural elite among the post-Reformation English were capable of discussing fairies in positive and even admiring ways. To do so they drew on the medieval literary tradition of royal and aristocratic fays, who acted as protectors and advisors to heroic knights and lovers to noblewomen. This was kept very much alive by the enduring popularity of medieval romances in the post-Reformation period: indeed, the impact of these may have been enhanced by their publication in printed versions. Beyond doubt the most influential of these was Lord Berners' translation of *Huon de Bordeaux*, which introduced many English people to the magician king Auberon, Anglicized as Oberon.[106] By 1593 or 1594 this story had been made into a play, and in 1594 Oberon 'King of Fayries' became a gentle, kind and wise commentator upon the action in a new dramatic work by Robert Greene.[107] Almost immediately, Shakespeare took him to much more enduring glory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and thereafter he appeared in the work of Ben Jonson and the poet Robert Herrick, as well as that of lesser authors, keeping the same admirable character.[108] The Elizabethans produced at least one brand new romance in the medieval tradition, Christopher Middleton's *Chinon of England*, where the fairy king and his followers act as hosts, guides and helpers to the chivalric hero.[109] More often they transplanted the spirit of the romances into new forms of literature, most famously in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Shakespeare redeployed the medieval tradition of combining the fays of romance with classical deities, to produce his king and queen, Oberon and Titania. As many have noted, he also made his fairies explicitly noble in nature, having Oberon clearly distinguish them from 'damned spirits' and they intervene to aid mortals despite the misbehaviour of the latter. The stealing of a human child is turned into an act of compassion for its dead mother, and, famously, Robin Goodfellow, crossed with the puck, is turned into a courtier of Oberon, whose tricks amount to no more than harmless mischief, used against those who do not treat him with respect.[110]

There was much about the fairies of the romance tradition that early modern elites could find attractive. They were, after all, natural monarchists and aristocrats, who led lives of opulence, leisure and frivolity unqualified by the ills that afflict mortals.[111] As such, their appeal could indeed extend well beyond the elite: one did not need to be rich, beautiful and leisured to dream of a land in which all inhabitants were. Thus fairies could play a benevolent role in a popular chapbook like *Tom Thumbe*, which features a tiny human champion, brought up in poverty, who has the 'Fayry Queene' as his godmother and patroness.[112] These traits could also make them obvious counterparts in allegory to real royalty, above all Elizabeth I. Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, from the 1590s, is of course

the best-known work in this genre, at once flattering Elizabeth by making her the implied sovereign of his fairy land and keeping her from centre stage in the story, to avoid any close comparisons. Thomas Dekker could allow himself to be more precise in the next reign, in a Protestant allegory in which Henry VIII is Oberon and Elizabeth his successor Titania, fighting and defeating the hosts of the (Catholic) Whore of Babylon.[113] Elizabeth herself regularly encountered people costumed as fairy monarchs (usually queens) and their retinues during her progresses during the 1590s, provided by aristocratic hosts to praise and entertain her with songs and dances. At other times she was saluted in poetry with a fairy theme. Spenser's work may have encouraged this device, but it had first been employed long before, in 1575, and probably simply reflected the high profile of fairies at the time and the dramatic potential of having a supposedly superhuman monarch flatter a genuine one.[114]

Ben Jonson carried on the tradition into the next reign, composing a similar entertainment to greet James VI's queen and eldest son when they visited Althorp House on arrival in England. He subsequently went further, to have Henry, Prince of Wales, himself personify Oberon in a court masque, with a retinue of Arthurian knights who have been 'preserved in Faery land'.[115] At all levels of English literature between 1550 and 1640, the inhabitants of that land could function as embodiments of hedonism, leading lives of joy unaffected by mortal cares, and summed up by their addiction to song and dance. As such they were a gift to poets writing English equivalents to classical pastoral lyrics, and in fact when translations of actual Greek and Roman texts were made in the period, nymphs and equivalent beings such as naiads and dryads were routinely rendered into English as 'fairies'.[116] They were also welcome to playwrights who wanted to introduce a musical interlude to relieve a plot.[117] A subset of this tradition among authors of the period was to treat a belief in fairies and similar spirits, or indeed the actual existence of such beings, as a feature of a vanished and better time of honesty, simplicity and innocence: in this manner they had become by the year 1600 inhabitants of the recalled or imagined world of Merry England.[118] John Selden summed up such a feeling with the comment that 'there never was a merry world since the Fairies left dancing'.[119]

Yet another positive view of them expressed in England during the period developed from the older tradition of the household helper spirit, who, usually in return for a reward such as food and drink, would perform useful tasks overnight for the human inhabitants of a home. This particular refinement held that fairies rewarded people who performed their own household tasks neatly and punctually but punished the dirty and the lazy, often by pinching them while they slept so that they awoke bruised. This

could certainly be a means of encouraging servants to better performance, but was a general incentive to cleanliness and diligence among those who carried out housework. It has a clear relationship with the Continental tradition, discussed in an earlier chapter, of troops of spirits who visited clean and orderly houses at night to bless them, but like the changeling motif it seems to appear late in Britain. It had done so by 1600, and rapidly became a fairly frequent literary motif.[120] It also, however, came to represent a genuinely popular belief, remembered by John Aubrey in the Wiltshire countryside of his youth in the 1630s. It included the detail that fairies would leave coins overnight in the shoes of those who performed especially diligent housework, which sounds like an actual custom carried out by employers or members of families.[121] One of the spirits who allegedly helped out with household jobs was Robin Goodfellow, who became from the 1590s a figure of morality, inspecting and commenting on the follies of the human race.[122] By the 1620s he had developed into an ethical hero, son of King Oberon, who went about using his superhuman powers to aid people who had suffered wrong, and punish the wrongdoers.[123]

All these images illustrate how richly diverse were the ways in which the English regarded fairies in the late Tudor and Stuart periods, and especially between 1570 and 1640. Even in the case of individual authors the consequences could be complex and even contradictory: Shakespeare made them imposing and benevolent in one play, ridiculous in another, a vehicle for human fraud in another, and a danger comparable with witches in a fourth. None the less, this very diversity of attitude prevented the development of any consensus that they were either demons in themselves or delusions conjured by demons; and so of any clear role for them in witch trials of the Scottish sort. This was despite a common association of fairies with service magicians in both kingdoms. The contrasting attitudes of monarchs are significant: in Scotland King James condemned belief in them as submission to demonic tricks, while in England Queen Elizabeth was happy to be compared with their queen and to be saluted by players in their guise. Even more striking is the transformation wrought in James himself on inheriting Elizabeth's crown: within a few years he could preside with apparent equanimity over an English court entertainment in which his son personified a fairy as a noble and admirable being. Nothing could sum up so dramatically the different impact made by the respective national post-Reformation cultures on what had been a relatively coherent late medieval construct of the fairy kingdom.

9

WITCHES AND CELTICITY

It was noted in the first chapter of this book that, across the world, there have been instances of peoples who either have not believed in witches or have not feared them much. One of the obvious questions to be asked of the European witch-hunts, in this context, is therefore whether such peoples existed in early modern Europe, and, if they did, whether their presence exerted an influence on the incidence of witch trials there. In another chapter, the possible presence of earlier beliefs that mitigated a fear of witchcraft was considered as an explanation for the striking rarity of lethal witch-hunting across the Mediterranean basin in much of the early modern period. In that case, such beliefs were not accorded decisive importance as an explanatory factor; but the British Isles may represent a more promising hunting ground. When one of the leading recent historians of the early modern witch trials, Robin Briggs, published a map of Europe showing the local incidence of prosecution, it depicted a striking line bisecting the archipelago. To the south and east of it were England, Lowland Scotland and the fringe of the Scottish Highlands, areas that had seen a significant number of trials, and in places a very large number. To the north and west, the map was blank. There lay most of the Scottish Highlands, the Western Isles, the Isle of Man, Wales and Ireland: the regions commonly known as the main Celtic areas of the British Isles.[1]

The word 'Celtic' has already made an appearance in this book, in the last chapter where Carlo Ginzburg was quoted as suggesting that the 'shamanistic' cult of nocturnal goddesses, which he identified as underlying the early modern construct of the witches' sabbath, had been a Celtic tradition. The term will, however, be used here in a different sense from that which he intended, and between the two usages lies a major shift in scholarly conventions. Until the 1990s, the Celts were generally regarded as having

been an ancient family of peoples, united by a common language group, culture and art as well as ethnic ties, which had extended across the whole area between Ireland and Asia Minor, and Scotland and northern Italy and Spain, in the last century BC. They were thought to have spread outwards across it from an original homeland in Central Europe. This academic convention underpinned Ginzburg's putative cult, because it suggested strongly that phenomena recorded in northern Italy and northern Scotland drew on the same ancient cultural roots. It was, however, a relatively recent one, which had developed fully only in the early twentieth century, and at the end of the century it collapsed almost completely among British experts in the Iron Age, joined by some colleagues in other nations. It was now recognized that the convention concerned depended upon using the term 'Celtic' simultaneously for a group of peoples, a group of languages and a style of art, and that the three of them did not in fact correspond exactly in ancient times.[2]

The result has been that most British scholars, and some elsewhere, have abandoned the term when referring to ancient history. Those who still try to find a place for it there have likewise rejected the idea that it refers to a racial or cultural group, and argue instead that it could be applied to a set of languages and values, embraced by different ethnic groups, which spread peacefully from the Atlantic seaboard across much of Europe during late prehistory. The debate over the matter is still continuing, but no party to it would have time for the idea of a single ethnic and cultural ancient Celtic province of the sort which had been envisioned when Carlo Ginzburg wrote. Instead, there is an apparently complete consensus that the term 'Celtic' can still be legitimately and precisely applied to a group of languages, and so by extension to the ethnic and cultural identities developed around those languages since the Middle Ages, by the Bretons, Cornish, Welsh and Manx, Irish and Scottish Gaels.[3] The last four peoples all appear to have been characterized by a remarkably low level of witch-hunting in the early modern period, and therefore the question is worth posing of whether there was anything inherent in their cultures that predisposed them to such a characteristic.

The Debate over Witch Trials in Celtic Societies

From the 1970s, historians began to notice the apparent scarcity of witch trials in areas with Celtic languages, but most preferred explanations for it that disregarded any common factors. In Ireland it was ascribed to reluctance on the part of the native population, who remained overwhelmingly Catholic, to denounce their own people for crimes that would be tried by a

legal system dominated by British conquerors who professed a rival, Protestant, religion. It was suggested that these tensions between the two ethnic and religious groups replaced those within communities of the kind that generated accusations of witchcraft.[4] Experts in early modern Wales were also inclined to adopt local, and functional, explanations, that Welsh communities were more cohesive and less fractured by economic tensions than those in England, and so neighbours less likely to accuse each other of being witches.[5] It was also noted that they held to a customary law that emphasized compensation of victims rather than punishment of criminals, and so was less likely to lead to the execution of people for witchcraft.[6] Historians of the Scottish witch trials tended to deny that there was anything to explain. Some pointed out that a couple of Lowland counties also produced few prosecutions, especially in relation to population, making the Highlands seem less exceptional.[7] Another came up with a quite large figure for Highland witch trials, by including in it all those in the fringe of the Highland area where indeed many took place.[8] They were especially found in the islands and peninsulas at the mouth of the Firth of Clyde and the coastal region of the Moray Firth and the inlets north of that. It was the Moray Firth coast that had produced Isobel Gowdie. These regions were relatively easy of access from the Lowlands and the north-eastern one contained a string of towns characterized by a hybrid Lowland-Gaelic culture.

Over the same period, however, a different approach was more slowly developing. It was presaged by a passing suggestion by a historian of Gaelic Scotland in 1994, both that its lack of witch-hunting was significant, and that it had been due to cultural differences, Gaels conceiving of supernatural activity in ways distinct from those of Lowlanders.[9] In 2002 a further suggestion was made, again without any sustained research or argument to support it, that the apparent absence of trials in both Gaelic Scotland and Gaelic Ireland was due to such differences, Gaels tending to blame fairies for the kind of misfortunes which elsewhere were charged against witches.[10] Half a decade later, a leading historian of English witchcraft beliefs turned his attention to the Isle of Man, which possessed the best records for any early modern Gaelic society. He found that the island had produced few trials, but had a strong image of the malignant fairy, and agreed that the two might be related.[11] Meanwhile further research was under way in the early modern Welsh criminal records, which are also very rich, and proved that neither community solidarity nor customary law had prevented the Welsh from accusing and executing each other on a grand scale for other offences than witchcraft. In particular, late sixteenth-century Wales had seen a 'thief hunt', which had claimed about four thousand lives.

Furthermore the Devil had a high profile in the Welsh popular culture of the age; and yet witch trials were few and a demonic element even rarer in them. They were, moreover, mostly found in geographical areas, and historical periods, of greater English influence. It was suggested that this pattern might be explained by cultural factors.[12]

In 2011, I published an article of my own which attempted to draw these converging strands of enquiry together.[13] It concluded that the core area of Scottish Gaeldom – the Central and Western Highlands and the Hebrides, representing about a third of Scotland – had barely participated in the early modern Scottish witch-hunts, which were among the worst in Europe. It provided in fact eight known cases, out of 3,837 identified in the whole nation, and these were often of a special kind, in which witchcraft was a subsidiary offence to another, such as cattle-stealing, or they were launched as part of a deliberate attack on native culture. This pattern was sustained on the Isle of Man, which produced just four cases, two of which (a double trial) ended in execution, after which no more were brought. This is the more noteworthy in that across Northern Europe, islands were exactly the kind of small self-contained communities in which witchcraft accusations flourished. This was true in the Baltic and at the north-eastern extreme of Norway, and also in the Channel Islands of the English Crown, where a Norman culture predominated, and the Orkney and Shetland Isles of Scotland, where a Scandinavian one was dominant. Man however seemed almost as disinclined to them as those other Gaelic islands, the Hebrides. Witch trials seem to have been totally absent among the native Irish, and the rich Welsh source material reveals just thirty-four of them, the majority in regions under some English influence, with just eight convictions and five executions. My article proposed that in the case of Gaelic Scotland, the local spirits of land and water were regarded as being especially ferocious and dangerous, perhaps because of the formidable nature of the terrain, and the same exceptional fear was accorded to the local equivalent of elves and fairies, the *sithean*. These seem to have been dreaded more acutely and persistently than in Lowland Scotland or England, for committing precisely those attacks upon humans and their animals and homes that were credited elsewhere to witches. Gaelic Scots did also have a belief in witches and some fear of their deeds, especially the use of magic to wreck vessels at sea and steal the profits of dairy farming; but this fear was considerably tempered by other factors. One was that to an extent the Gaels regarded curses and spells as a legitimate means of furthering their own designs and thwarting or punishing enemies. Use of them did incur censure if the action concerned seemed disproportionate or unjust, or was conducted with deception or spite, but this was also true of actions involving physical tools or weapons.

There was little sense of witchcraft as an inherent force of evil that menaced the whole community. Another factor was that Scottish Gaels also disposed of an unusually wide range of rites and objects – such as pieces of iron or bread, the Bible, special stones, salt, burning embers, specially made and shaped holes, sprigs of juniper or rowan, and an array of prayers, blessings, rhymes, chants and spoken formulae – which were trusted as effective in averting hostile magic. A third factor which would have damped down accusations of witchcraft was a widespread Gaelic belief in the 'evil eye', the damage inflicted by which was in many, and perhaps most, cases presumed to be unintentional. The damage concerned was, as in other regions where this belief was held, the blighting of humans, beasts, crops and domestic processes in a manner generally credited to witches, with the difference that the perpetrator could not automatically be held responsible. It was counteracted, instead, by a variety of charms, spoken or material, or by the avoidance of individuals credited with the power, or by expecting them to avoid gazing directly at others, or their property. The 'evil eye' is recorded elsewhere in Britain, but much more rarely, and there it was generally regarded as a deliberately wielded weapon, being one of the vehicles of witchcraft. That is why it never features in the defences presented in British witch trials.

My article then turned to the other early modern societies with Celtic social groups and cultures to ascertain whether similar beliefs were found there, and the result was uniformly positive. The study mentioned earlier of witch trials in the Isle of Man found that the early modern Manx were not only characterized by a strong belief in fairies, but also an acceptance of the legitimacy of the formal cursing of people who had wronged the person delivering the curse. After trials for witchcraft were abandoned there, the normal response to an accusation was an attempt to reconcile the people involved, and to make an accused person, if they admitted placing a curse on the accuser, apologize and withdraw the action.[14] This was exactly what the new research into early modern Wales also disclosed. That portrayed a society in which the image of the morally depraved witch, an inherent menace to her community, was rarer than in England and Lowland Scotland. The native Welsh attributed uncanny misfortune to the involuntary evil eye, or spells cast by service magicians hired to help prosecute personal feuds. Counter-magic and the blessings of priests and power of prayer were regarded as being effective against both. Likewise, cursing an adversary was regarded as acceptable if employed as retaliation for injustice, and a common response to an accusation of witchcraft was to arbitrate between the parties and win an apology and the retraction of the curse if the person making it was found to be in the wrong. Wales was also revealed to have a

fear of the depredations of fairies greater than that in England and perhaps more than that in Lowland Scotland.[15]

The remaining Celtic society to be considered in the article was Gaelic Ireland, and the same pattern held there. That was revealed to have a pronounced belief in witches, but the main activity charged against these was the magical theft of dairy produce, a belief also found in Gaelic Scotland and Man. This could be a serious matter for subsistence farmers, but was normally regarded as being on the level of an annoyance and irritation, and used as a whispered mechanism to explain why some people prospered and others did not, without apparent reason. Apparently almost missing from Irish culture was an image of the witch as a killer, of humans and livestock, who was motivated by natural malevolence. That role was allotted to the fairies, which were dreaded as the source of uncanny illness and death, to people, crops and beasts, and uncanny misfortune in the home and business, as well as as abductors of vulnerable humans, especially children. Much care was expended on avoiding, propitiating and repelling them; and scholars noted that the deeper into purely Gaelic areas they went, the more the fear of fairies seemed to wax and that of witches to wane. There was also a persistent Irish fear of the evil eye, often used unintentionally, and, just as in Gaelic Scotland, belief in a wide range of magical remedies that were believed to ward it off.

Recent Reflections on Gaelic Witch Beliefs

The article was published with the intention of developing the debate and of testing the ideas proposed within it, and not of concluding matters. At the time of writing the present book, initial responses to it seem to have been favourable. A well-researched essay on witch trials and beliefs in the early modern northern Highlands has accepted its conclusions.[16] So has Andrew Sneddon, who has emerged as the leading expert in early modern Irish witch trials, and filled out knowledge of the Irish context considerably. He has confirmed the lack of prosecutions among the Gaelic majority in the island, but also among the medieval English settler population, the 'Old English', who continued to adhere to Roman Catholicism. Even the 'New English' settlers, who arrived as Protestants in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, only produced four known trials, with one execution (making a glaring contrast with the usual estimate of around five hundred executions in England, let alone those in Lowland and Scandinavian Scotland, where in relation to population witch-hunting was twelve times as intense as in England). This was, he shows, despite the fact that both Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants believed in witches during the period: Old

English aristocrats and the wife of one Gaelic nobleman accused relatives of attempting to use witchcraft in family feuds, and there were many rumours of it among the New English. It was also despite the fact that Ireland had more or less the same laws against it as England, and the same legal machinery with which to take action. To make the contrast still more glaring, it is now clear that Irish Catholics, including Gaels, made regular use of law courts controlled by Protestant English officials, with respect to offences other than witchcraft.[17]

Sneddon has demonstrated that the lack of trials among the Protestant settler population was largely due to the fact that the bulk of that population arrived in the seventeenth century, when the judges who dominated the law courts were starting to become cautious in accepting accusations of witchcraft. With respect to the native majority of the population, he held to the view that cultural factors among it left it disinclined to make such accusations at all. He accepted that it lacked the concept of the satanic witch, and thought that witches did not normally injure humans or livestock. He agreed with the significance in preventing witch trials of a belief in the evil eye and in fairies, and in the efficacy of counter-magic, and documented those more securely back into the early modern period. He also emphasized the importance of the belief, which the Irish shared with other Gaels, in the chief activity of witches as being the lesser one of stealing milk or butter by magical means. This, he pointed out, had existed since the high Middle Ages, if not before, as in the late twelfth century Gerald of Wales had reported the tradition, which he said was found in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, that 'old women' turned into hares to suck milk from cattle.[18] Sneddon also documented from folklore studies, some of which had been cited in my own article, the endurance of this belief into modern times.

The prevalence of the concept of the witch as thief of dairy produce by the twelfth century across the regions named by Gerald might indicate that it was specifically a Celtic motif, as the lands concerned are areas in which Celtic languages were found. It must count for more, however, that they were the main areas of the British Isles in which a pastoral economy was predominant, because the same idea was found in such regions across much of Northern Europe. It is condemned as a vain superstition (and one specifically concerning women) in the eleventh-century penitential of Burchard of Worms, in the Rhineland, which drew in turn on earlier texts.[19] It was found in modern folklore in much of Scandinavia, including the motif of transformation into a hare, and there it has been documented back to the early fourteenth century in the more general form that witches were believed to steal milk. During the late Middle Ages that belief became a standard component of church paintings in Sweden and Denmark, with outliers in Finland

and northern Germany: and again women were specifically the targets.[20] In the early modern period, milk-stealing was one of the most common crimes of which women were accused in Polish witch trials.[21] The abundance of Polish witch-hunting, and that of trials in the Scandinavian regions named, is proof that an association between women and magical milk-stealing was not in itself a disincentive to witch-hunting. Instead, like the voluntary evil eye, it could be readily incorporated into the construct of satanic and dangerous witchcraft. It may be suggested that the other factors that existed alongside it made Gaelic culture less inclined to witch-hunting; and this exercise in building on Andrew Sneddon's valuable research may illustrate, again, the potential of the comparative method, across societies and regions, when studying the subject. One further reflection is relevant before leaving the figure of the milk-stealing witch, and that is that, across the Gaelic world, the magical theft of dairy produce was not thought to be confined to certain women: it was also, or became, one of the many injuries and nuisances which were blamed on fairies. At any rate, it features as such in nineteenth-century folklore, as collected in Ireland, Wales and the Scottish Highlands.[22] If the same feature was a part of earlier belief systems in those regions, then even a malpractice commonly associated with witchcraft would not necessarily be blamed upon it, thereby reducing further the inclination to hunt witches in these regions. Another striking characteristic of the rich nineteenth-century Irish folklore collections is the overall balance of misfortunes ascribed to witches and fairies. Not only were the latter feared more in general, but they struck at the core of human concerns. The attacks of witches tended to be on farming produce and processes, but fairies killed and injured people, and their animals, and were especially dangerous to children and young adults, the prime targets of witchcraft in both popular and learned belief across most of the Continent and indeed most of Britain.[23] If these beliefs perpetuated those held by the same societies in the early modern period – and the societies concerned were little different then, at the level of rural commoners at which the folklore concerned was collected – then much of the absence of apparent animosity towards witches would be explained.

These considerations may well beg a further question: what of the remaining areas that have been the home of surviving Celtic languages? Did they show the same pattern with respect to witch persecution in early modern times? Two such areas may readily be identified – Cornwall and Brittany – and in both cases there appears to be a paucity of relevant research. In both cases also, however, that may itself reflect a paucity of actual trials. At first sight it might seem as if Cornwall might simply be disregarded, as too small and too Anglicized to be included in the sample, its native language reduced by the early modern period to the extreme

western districts. On the other hand, it certainly did retain a distinctive ethnic and cultural identity in that period,[24] and had few known trials for witchcraft, especially in comparison with most of the West Country. It had, in fact, just twelve, compared with sixty-nine in neighbouring Devon and sixty-seven in Somerset, and all but one of those twelve trials occurred after 1646, when Cornwall had effectively been conquered by an English army at the end of the English Civil War and submitted to an exceptionally Anglicized administration. On the other hand, Dorset, the fourth county of the West Country, had only thirteen known trials, so Cornish particularism may not account for the contrast in itself.[25] Brittany is a different matter, being a substantial region and the European Continent's major centre of Celtic culture. There seem, however, to be no available published studies of witch trials or early modern beliefs concerning witchcraft in it. All that can be said so far is that it does not seem to have been notable for witch-hunting.

A little earlier in this chapter, the issue was raised of the use of modern folklore to extend or interpret the early modern evidence for a predisposition against witch-hunts in Gaelic parts of the British Isles and in Wales. In the fifth chapter of the present book a warning was delivered against the back-projection of folklore collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to fill gaps in the evidence for particular beliefs and customs in earlier periods with the assumption that folk culture was essentially timeless. The argument for a fundamental cultural element in the lack of witch trials in at least the majority of Celtic societies has not quite fallen into that trap. My article in 2011 did draw heavily on nineteenth-century folklore collections to illustrate Gaelic and Welsh beliefs concerning magic, but also emphasized that the collections themselves contained much internal evidence of change and development; and considered that evidence. It furthermore pointed out that much of the material recorded in the nineteenth century was collected from elderly people who learned it when young, pushing it back into the previous century and so effectively to the brink of the early modern period. Moreover, the argument in that article was based on using folklore collections to flesh out and add insight to the scarcer material from early periods. It attempted to avoid the error of treating them as though they represented a body of information about significantly older times, which could be uncritically back-projected into them.[26] For example, Martin Martin's account of the Hebrides at the end of the seventeenth century, which is an important source for early modern Scottish Gaeldom, contains brief accounts of local beliefs in the efficacy of specific forms of counter-magic in allaying magically induced misfortune; of the theft of milk and butter by women using magical means; and of traditions concerning the evil eye.[27] It is surely legitimate in such a case to join this

information with fuller descriptions of the same beliefs as held in the same communities a couple of generations later, as long as the sources for them are clearly identified and distinguished.

To employ modern folklore in this cautious way is to follow a precedent established by other sorts of recent, highly regarded, research into early modern Scottish belief systems.[28] This precedent has been continued in subsequent work on witch trials in Celtic-speaking areas, notably that of Andrew Sneddon, who, when considering Ireland, was careful to cite early modern (and where available, medieval) sources together with more recent folklore, to show that together they represented a continuum. My article in 2011, moreover, proposed a further control mechanism on the use of modern folklore to add depth to early modern material: the employment of medieval Irish literature, which together with modern folklore could allow the early modern data to be reflected both backwards and forwards in time, building up, if this strategy were successful, a very strong case for particular and persistent elements in Celtic societies which could explain the pattern of prosecution for witchcraft.[29] There was no space in the article to offer more than a cursory summary of the Irish material concerned, but the present book provides an excellent opportunity to carry out just such an exercise, and extend it to other classes of medieval Irish record and to Welsh sources. Such an investigation of a possible ancient and medieval backdrop for an early modern phenomenon is wholly in keeping with the aims and methods of this book, and the results may either substantiate the argument for a cultural explanation for the apparent reluctance to hunt witches in Celtic societies, or force a major rethinking of it.

The Medieval Context

The written sources for medieval Gaelic Ireland are very rich, comprising for the present purpose devotional works, law codes, secular poetry and secular prose tales of the deeds of heroes. There is unhappily no similar body of evidence for medieval Man and Gaelic Scotland, although careful projection of the Irish material onto both is possible as place names and incidental references show both shared many cultural traits, and in the Scottish case some saints and heroes. Wales, on the other hand, possesses every class of medieval record that is found in Ireland, though in smaller quantity. To commence with the Irish sources, the secular laws, encoded between the sixth and ninth centuries, show little sign of a concern about magic. There are a few specific prohibitions which really reflect other priorities, such as a banning of love magic, as to coerce somebody else into falling in love with the magician could affect marriage alliances and inheritances;

a prohibition on casting spells to cause impotence, which could have much the same consequences; and one on the taking of human bones from churches for use in magical recipes, which dishonoured the dead and desecrated the place.[30] Similarly, a legal treatise declared that the fine for causing somebody's death by a spell should be the same as that for murdering somebody and then concealing the corpse: the concern here was with killing by stealth, as dishonourable, instead of disposing of an enemy openly.[31] There is no sign of the witch figure in these law codes, and the situation remains similar in the penitentials, composed between the late sixth and eighth centuries by churchmen concerned with imposing punishments to expiate specific sins. One forbids the use of magic in general, or perhaps destructive magic in general (the word used, *malifica*, could mean either when used by a cleric) in orthodox early medieval Christian fashion, and regards clerics and women as being especially prone to teach it. Another condemns the employment of magical practices for love potions and to induce abortions and (above all) to commit murder; and with that the concern of these documents for such matters seems to run out.[32]

Moving to the saints' *Lives* and heroic literature, it is clear that the medieval Irish had a considerable interest in magic as a literary motif, but the figure at the centre of it is not the witch, but the druid; and this is for the absolutely straightforward reason that druid (*drui* or *drai*) was simply the medieval Irish word for somebody who worked magic. This breadth of definition made the category extremely porous, as anybody could be called a druid at the time at which that person was working magic; conversely, full-time specialists in working magic could be considered to be full-time druids, and so members of a distinctive class or order of person.[33] To blur boundaries (and perhaps to confuse matters) still further, certain occupations, notably that of high-grade poet, or blacksmith, were often regarded as inherently able to wield arcane powers, and those members of them who did so were credited with such powers because of their trades, and not automatically called druids. In the literature, people who are called druids often carry out acts of destructive or deluding magic of the sort associated with witches all over the world: they curse and blight people and their possessions, raise tempests and fogs, cause delusions, and transform human beings into animal shape or into stone, subdue and bind them to their will, and raise magical barriers to their activities. To increase the resemblance, the pagan druid features as the favourite foe of Christian saints, to be defeated and so converted, humiliated or destroyed by them. So are druids simply the medieval Irish equivalent to witches?

The answer must be negative, for two different reasons. The first is that magic is treated in the heroic literature, at least, as a neutral force. There are

therefore plenty of good druids in these tales, especially in the guise of counsellors to kings and defenders of their peoples, who function as admired, wise and benevolent figures. The main role of the druid in this class of literature, indeed, is not as a wielder of harmful magic but as a diviner or prophet. The second reason spins off from the first: that even the bad druids are not regarded as inherently evil in their activities, though some may be unpleasant as people. They are cast in the role of villains, for the most part, because they are opposed to the characters in the tales with whom the audience is expected to empathize. The partial exception to this rule only serves to confirm it: the druids who are pitted against saints in hagiographies, as the prime defenders of the old and wrong religion against the new and correct one. As pagans, they are defending a bad cause, but are still the misguided or self-seeking champions of their native societies, and not self-consciously the foes of humanity. At worst, they exemplify the evils of paganism as a false belief system, and the negative images of them draw heavily on those of magicians at ancient royal courts in the Bible, who are defeated by Hebrew prophets, or of false prophets exposed by Christian apostles.

In both the heroic stories and the saints' *Lives*, druids are usually male when their sex is indicated, while at times they are specifically identified as female. Given the hazy linguistic status of the role of 'druid' in Ireland, however, this may simply mean that both women and men were expected to work magic, and that in most of the contexts depicted in the literature that concerned magic, the protagonists were men. At times, however, there seem to be references to specifically female forms of magic, or to women as especially feared forms of magician. The reference to them in a penitential has already been cited, and the epic story of the second battle of Mag Tuired portrays an army about to engage in battle, supported by curses placed upon its enemies by druids, but also by four other specialist kinds of magic-workers, including 'sorceresses'.[34] A hymn credited to St Patrick asks for divine protection against the 'spells of women, smiths and druids', while a prayer credited to St Columcille claimed that the speaker heeded (at the end of a list of superstitions) neither 'omens nor women'. [35] None of these sources, however, explains what, if anything, was distinctive about women's magic. A saint's *Life*, that of Berach, describes a group of malevolent female magicians in action, led by a pagan one who was determined to kill her young stepson, who was under the protection of the saint. She summoned her 'band of women of power . . . to ply druidism, and craft, and paganism, and diabolical science' to destroy the boy, but Berach's prayers caused the earth to swallow them all up.[36]

The Irish texts are replete with technical terms for curses, such as *áer* and *glám dícenn*, kinds of poetic malediction recited in verse; *corrguinecht*,

(a particular mode of cursing uttered while standing on one leg with one eye closed and one arm outstretched); *congain connail* (magical wounding); and *tuaithe* (a spoken charm). One law text states that such techniques were sometimes used while piercing an image of the person to be harmed.[37] Jacqueline Borsje, perhaps the leading recent expert on the treatment of magic in medieval Irish sources, has commented that

> when we look at the Irish terms for supernatural verbal power, we are stunned by their variety. Many of these words are translated simply as 'magic, incantation, charm, spell', but the variety of terms seems to reflect a variety of meanings. The definitions of what they stood for have been lost.[38]

Her words have to be heeded by anybody considering the place of destructive magic in the medieval Irish imagination. It is plain, however, that such magic is wielded in the tales in pursuit of private and specific ends, with practical benefits in mind, rather than for the general joy of working harm. When deployed on behalf of characters of whom the storyteller approved, it was regarded with proportionate approval; and indeed down to the early modern period, poets who allegedly possessed the ability to wound or kill adversaries with their verses (when provoked) were greatly admired for their prowess.[39]

All this needs to be borne in mind when reading accounts of apparently bad magicians in the heroic stories (often called 'witches' in English translation). Perhaps the best known of these magicians are those responsible for the death of the greatest hero of the Ulster Cycle of stories, Cú Chulainn. Their identity developed as the Middle Ages progressed. In the earliest version, found in eleventh- or twelfth-century texts, the kin of two warriors killed by the hero decide to avenge them by hiring three old women, each blind in the left eye (often a sign of magical prowess in Irish tradition) to bring about Cú Chulainn's doom. These do so by trapping him into breaking a prohibition laid upon him against the eating of dog flesh, so ensuring that death must come upon him.[40] In later medieval versions, the same trap with the same result is sprung by the children of one of the dead warriors, Calatin. They learn magic of specific kinds, which are carefully itemized but can mostly be translated now only with the imprecision of which Jacqueline Borsje warned: the sons acquire *druidecht* (druid-craft), *coimlecht* (hostile spells), *admilliud* (blighting) and *toshúgad* ('bringing forth'), and the daughters *dúile* (magic which could relate to books, elements or animals) and *amaitecht* (lethal magic). All sacrifice an eye as part of the process of education in magical abilities. Once proficient, they use enchantments to

handicap Cú Chulainn's people, the Ulaid, as well as to destroy him.[41] They are clearly to be regarded as villainous, because they employ an underhand trick to get rid of somebody who is an honourable and admirable man as well as a great hero, and are the enemies of the people with whom the story identifies. Their action, however, has an entirely understandable and legitimate motivation in itself: to avenge a parent.

The taking of a long chronological perspective enables a comparison between these elite sources from the Middle Ages with the folklore collected from Irish commoners in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those commoners considered it a customary expression of enmity with somebody else in the same community to curse the land farmed by that person. It was done by depositing rotting matter on that land secretly with an imprecation, which would cause the luck of a farm to decay even as the materials concerned did. Such action was countered by discovering and burning the deposit, coupled with prayers for protection and blessing with holy water.[42] The same moral economy therefore prevailed as that found among the elites in the medieval stories: that the use of magic as a weapon was a neutral force in itself, which was awarded virtue or vice according both to the manner in which it was wielded and where a person's sympathies lay in the dispute. Another abiding link between these two bodies of evidence is belief in the evil eye, as a danger to both humans and livestock. In both cases, it was regarded as a force that could be used both intentionally and by accident, and the issue of intent was the vital one in determining whether its use was culpable.[43]

There is, however, a different way in which the medieval Irish texts may connect with the witch figure, and that is through their inclusion of terrifying and dangerous women with superhuman powers. Whether or how these connect with the Graeco-Roman child-killing demons or the Germanic cannibal witch is a difficult issue to resolve. One penitential, from the late sixth or the seventh century, forbids Christians to believe in *lamia* or *striga*, as delusions.[44] By these Latin terms it seems clearly to mean either the predatory Mediterranean night demons or else the women who were associated with those demons, but the ruling may simply echo those in contemporary European law codes, without specific reference to native Irish belief. A correspondence with that belief does, however, seem to be established by a glossary of names from heroic tales, composed at any point between 1050 and 1200.[45] It tells of how certain women of Munster, the south-west Irish kingdom, had a habit of invading houses to kill new-born boys. Their powers, which seem at least partly magical, were too great to resist, but one hero was saved from them as an infant because one of the women had a fondness for him and hid him under a cauldron. The others

detected him there and attacked him, but only blasted one ear, which remained permanently reddened. This sounds authentically Gaelic, but there seems to be no other appearance of such figures in the literature and there are no precise equivalents to them in the modern Irish folklore. Spectral child murderesses are recorded from various regions in that, but are the ghosts of specific evil women, haunting their former neighbourhoods because of their sins in life, and best fought with the exorcisms of Catholic priests.[46]

None the less, medieval Irish literature is full of violent and scary women, who are usually described in English translations as 'hags' or 'witches'. A typical appearance of these in a tale is represented by the seven who were defeated by the hero Art mac Cuinn when they attacked him at night in an oak forest.[47] To describe them as witches in the sense of this book is, however, difficult for two reasons. The first is that there is no sign that they use magic, as such, as their weapons seem to be physical, with piercings and hackings. The second is that it is not absolutely clear that they are human. They are sent against Art by a superhuman queen, dwelling in a parallel otherworld, whose enmity he had incurred. Likewise, in one of the stories which make up the Fenian Cycle, that group of tales concerning the warriors led by Finn mac Cumaill, Finn himself and some of his men are trapped and bound by magic in a cave by three hideous hags, with coarse and dishevelled hair, red and bleary eyes, sharp and crooked teeth, very long arms, and fingernails like the tips of cows' horns. They intend to kill the heroes with swords, but one of their comrades breaks in and slays two of them with his own sword, before forcing the last to release his friends. This time the hags concerned are definitely not human, but the daughters of a being from a parallel world who wants to punish Finn for having offended him.[48]

More often the nature of the murderous hags of medieval Irish literature, whether they use magical or physical weapons, is left ambiguous. That literature abounds with images of divine females, apparently former pagan goddesses, who delight in battle, incite it and engage in it, and as such inspire terror among humans. The savage crones of the stories often look more like downsized versions of these than human beings who have learned magic. In another Fenian story, from the high to late medieval period, 'demonic females of the glen' join 'the hounds and the whelps and the crows' and 'the powers of the air, and the wolves of the forests' in 'howls from every quarter' to urge armies to destroy each other.[49] Likewise, the twelfth-century historical saga entitled *The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* portrays another list of bogey figures as eager for the bloodshed of the great battle which concludes the story, which may be translated as 'battlefield spirits

and goat-like battlefield spirits, and maniacs of the valleys, and destructive witches and shape-shifting supernatural beings and the ancient birds and the destroying demons of the air and the heavens, and the misfortune-giving demonic supernatural host'.[50] Once more, however, the term rendered as 'destructive witches', *amati adgaill*, is a relatively rare one for 'females with destructive supernatural powers', who might be human or might not, and if human might be ghosts or might not: it might equally be rendered 'frenzied women of destruction'.[51] In appearance the medieval Irish hags bear a clear resemblance to some of the Roman portraits of witches (which passed in turn into early modern and modern European currency), but their nature seems essentially different. Moreover, they represent external enemies to the heroes and communities of which the Irish stories are told, and not a hidden and internal threat to them; and so, again, hardly qualify as witches under the definition adopted in this book.

The same consideration applies to the much rarer appearances in the stories of beautiful and alluring human enchantresses, of whom the most obvious example is the one who seduces a king, Muircertach mac Erca, in order to bring about his death, in a twelfth-century story.[52] He and his followers are inclined to regard her as superhuman, but she insists that she is not, but a Christian woman, and at the end she confesses that she was motivated to her deed by a desire to avenge her family and people, whom the king concerned had destroyed. None the less, she disposes of extraordinary powers of deception, such as appearing to turn water into wine and fern leaves into pigs, and stones, clods and stalks into warriors. Such abilities were associated with demons in Christian theology, and an alliance with such beings would explain why she insists that no churchmen be allowed to enter the royal household while she resides there. Despite all this, having secured her revenge she dies a penitent Christian, and the narrative does not entirely censure her for what is, after all, an understandable original reason for her behaviour. Once more in medieval Irish tradition, a witch-like figure is shown to have been propelled into using destructive magic by personal and specific grievances and not a general malevolence.

This discussion has already drawn attention to the importance in this literature of relations between human beings and a superhuman race in human form, possessed of innate magical powers, who inhabit a parallel otherworld with ready access to the apparent world. This otherworld is often situated within hills or prehistoric tumuli, and its inhabitants are commonly termed the *Túatha Dé Danann*. They have an aristocratic or royal lifestyle and a small number of them were almost certainly pre-Christian native deities. Their relationship with people is very close to that of fairies and elves in early modern and modern Gaelic folklore, and they

are themselves fairly clearly ancestral to at least some of those beings. Although their treatment of humans is often more benevolent and patronal than that of the later fairies, they are also very dangerous when provoked, as Art and Finn found out to their cost (together with many other heroes). Spells represent some of their main weapons in dealing with the human race, as also with superhuman enemies and with each other, and both fear and admiration of them run through all the major cycles of medieval Irish stories. The later Gaelic situation, in which serious misfortune is blamed more on non-human than human beings, is already prefigured in these fictional representations.

A very similar race of semi-divine beings in human form, sumptuously dressed and equipped and naturally adroit in magical arts, features prominently in medieval Welsh prose and poetry. It inhabits in particular a parallel otherworld called Annwn or Annwfn. In the early twentieth century, indeed, it was more or less orthodoxy among scholars of medieval romance that the fays that play such a major part in chivalric tales across Western Europe are descended directly from these Irish and Welsh figures.[53] If that were indeed the case, then the latter would ultimately be ancestral to the later English and Lowland Scottish 'royal fairies' as well. It has, however, now been abandoned by most experts in the field, not because it has been disproved but because it seems impossible to prove, and so to be a sterile quest.[54] This problem is of no consequence to the present study, which needs only to note that the later Welsh fear of fairies is like the Irish one presaged by the presence of these beings in the medieval imagination.

Another figure held in common by both medieval Celtic cultures is the murderous hag. A classic group of these appears in the Welsh romance *Peredur fab Efrawg*, and is often rendered into English as 'the Nine Witches of Gloucester'. In the Welsh, however, the term for them, *gwinodot*, is a broader one for fearsome old women, and though they seem to have insight into the future they possess no other apparent magical powers. Instead they use conventional weapons with terrifying strength, and devastate whole districts until they are killed by Arthur and his band. Another of the same kind is disposed of by the same group of heroes in a different story, *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and, again, she uses physical strength to overcome, wound and cast out warriors who invade her cave, until Arthur himself slays her with the throw of a knife, so avoiding grappling with her.[55] Once more, it is not clear how much these beings belong to the human race. They lingered in popular Welsh lore as the figure of the *gwrach*, a hideous old female being who haunts wild and lonely places and terrifies travellers: it is significant that this being never appears in an actual early modern witch trial, but belongs wholly to imagined situations.[56]

Two historians of early modern Welsh society and culture, Richard Suggett and Lisa Tallis, have recently assembled a great deal of material, dating from between the late fifteenth and the early eighteenth centuries, which is relevant to this investigation and plugs the gap between the medieval literature and the modern folklore in a way that does not at present seem possible for Gaelic Ireland.[57] Belief in the evil eye, often involuntarily used, is well attested as is also one in the power of charms and prayers to ward it off. So also is a considerable degree of acceptance of the validity of cursing, usually performed before the Reformation by a priest and used against people who had hurt good parishioners. After the change of religion it became an individual act, commonly in the form of a prayer to the Christian God for retribution, taking the form of the death of the person concerned or the loss of her or his property. It was often a weapon of the socially weak against the strong, and so especially used by women. The respectable remedy against it was to pray for protection, often enlisting the help of saints and employing the water of holy wells, both of which continued to enjoy a greater popularity in Wales than in other parts of Protestant Britain. There was also, however, a flourishing culture of folk magic, much of it provided by service magicians, which could also be used to avert and remove ill fortune and ill wishing. In addition, a fear of fairies, as malicious and predatory beings, is recorded back to the sixteenth century. All these features would act to damp down animosity against witches.

This belief system was, however, also susceptible to remoulding by external influence: in technical scholarly terms, 'acculturation'. Richard Suggett has shown how from the 1540s the new word *wits*, a direct borrowing of the English 'witch', was starting to make an impact, and with it a new sense of a specific enemy who harmed people deliberately and from malice. By 1600 it could be coupled with a further association, of a communal devil-worshipping sect dedicated to working evil. This figure became quite deeply embedded in Welsh society during the seventeenth century, especially in the more Anglicized southern counties, and began to play a part in the articulation of enmity and suspicion between neighbours. Wales was on its way to becoming a witch-hunting society, even as the fringe of Scottish Gaeldom, especially the eastern coastal strip, actually did by the seventeenth century. That Wales did not really become one may be attributed to the fact that the process of acculturation began too late and was too incomplete to have made sufficient impact before the time that educated opinion in Britain as a whole began to turn against witch trials. This may also be suggested as the reason why the main Gaelic hinterland of Scotland remained immune to them; while the Manx effectively experimented with the execution of alleged witches and then backed off from it,

and were thereafter exposed to no further external pressure to change their minds again. It may therefore be concluded that there is now a sufficient accumulation of evidence, gathered from periods spanning the medieval, early modern and modern, to enable a confident proposal that Wales, Man and Gaelic Ireland and Scotland represented a set of societies that traditionally lacked a serious fear of witchcraft, in the manner of others found across the world, as discussed in the first chapter of this book. This lack was sufficient to enable them to resist the adoption of large-scale witch-hunting, and in many areas witch-hunting at all, even though for a time that became a characteristic of the English and Scottish states that dominated them. If accurate, this conclusion represents a striking example of the manner in which ancient and medieval tradition could, at a regional level, play a decisive part in preventing as well as encouraging the persecution of people suspected of witchcraft.

10

WITCHES AND ANIMALS

During the later twentieth century, historians interested in early modern English witchcraft beliefs and witch trials became increasingly aware that these contained a feature which apparently set them apart from those of most of the Continent: a widespread tradition that witches were assisted in their evil deeds by demons in the form of animals.[1] These beings usually formed a close attachment to individual witches and functioned as their allies or servants. They were most commonly described in contemporary sources as 'spirits', 'imps' or just 'devils', but quite often as 'familiars', and modern scholars have generally settled on the term 'animal familiar' to distinguish one. They were agents and instigators of witchcraft, whose intentions and actions were almost wholly malevolent, and although they most frequently took the form of dogs, cats and toads, they could also appear as ferrets, hares, hedgehogs, mice, rats, rabbits, squirrels, weasels, polecats, snails, snakes, calves and different kinds of bird and insect. In other words, they usually chose the shapes of commonly found beasts which could easily escape notice, though occasionally more monstrous alternatives, formed of blends of different kinds of natural creature or of animals with humans, were adopted. Some individual familiars could assume the appearance of a range of animals, as well as shape-shifting to that of a human.

The formation of their relationship with witches was the most frequently attested English version of the diabolic pact which represented a central feature of the pan-European construct of the demonic witch underlying the early modern trials. By extension, they were an equally important aspect of witchcraft beliefs in the English colonies in America. Most English cases of witchcraft made no reference to them, but they were still prominent in an important minority, and especially in published accounts of trials, which helped to shape the image of witches in the public mind, and later in the

minds of historians. As sustained and large-scale research into the early modern trials began in the 1970s, it was noted that the English fondness for imagining animal familiars was as yet completely unexplained;[2] but discussion of the matter did not really begin until the year 2000. What has resulted since could not really be termed a debate, because no clearly defined schools of thought, with steady adherents, have developed. Instead, a growing number of people have made contributions, but some have either suggested several possible explanations for the animal familiar at once, as alternatives, or else moved from one to another over time. Moreover, few of the historians concerned have directly addressed each other. None the less, a number of different ideas have emerged. One is that the animal familiar developed from the tradition of learned ceremonial magic, and its fondness, attested since its first appearance in ancient Egypt, for summoning spirits to serve the magician.[3] Another is that it grew out of fairy tradition, especially from the figure of the household helper spirit, and from the claims often made by service magicians to have been taught their skills by the fairy folk.[4] It is certainly true that fairies, as has been seen, played much the same role as helpers in some Scottish witch trials as the animal familiar in English equivalents (though they rarely acted as destructive agents of the witch in the way of the familiar). The person who has taken this association furthest has naturally been Emma Wilby, who has suggested that they represented alternative versions of the same being, and that both descended from a pre-Christian, animist, view of the world, connected to shamanistic practices.[5]

As more contributors entered the debate, so the proposed explanations multiplied. Another was that the animal familiar should be related to a whole broad range of folkloric phenomena, from Wilby's shamanistic helper spirits to the animal mascots of pagan deities and followers of saints. All of these phenomena needed instead to be put under the general, and very widespread, folk motif of the 'grateful animal', of which the familiar was one aspect.[6] It was also argued, in riposte to the derivation from fairy lore, that the animal familiar belonged instead firmly in a demonic framework, being derived from the satanic imps of the Middle Ages.[7] Other interpretations were more multifaceted, such as that which termed the familiar the result of a combination of the tradition of the ceremonial magician's servitor spirit with an increasing (and yet also therefore controversial) English fashion for real animal pets, and with the belief that witches were assisted by demons.[8]

It is unlikely that any major new primary sources for the early modern English belief in the witch's animal familiar now remain to be discovered, and the discussion of its origins has thrown up so many possible explanations, some general and some specific, that it is equally unlikely that any

more can be suggested. None the less, it is possible that the broader and deeper perspectives adopted for the present book may still add something to the discussion, and also something concerning the perceived relationship between witches and animals in a global and Continental European context. The structure of the whole work, of contracting concentric circles of vision, will be reproduced in miniature now in an attempt to achieve that outcome.

The Global Context

From the earliest systematic scholarly studies of early modern English witchcraft beliefs down to the recent work just surveyed, parallels have been drawn between the tradition of the animal familiar and associations between witches and animals in the extra-European world.[9] None of these parallels have, however, been pursued in any sustained or relatively comprehensive fashion, and the size of the ethnographic database assembled for the present book now permits such an exercise. It reveals three different ways in which witches have been associated with animals around the globe, which often overlap but are also commonly distinct from each other: that witches turn themselves into animal form; that they employ real animals to accomplish their deeds; and that they make use of spirit servants which take animal form. These will now be considered in turn.

The belief that witches can shift their shape into that of beasts has been recorded in every inhabited continent of the world, being particularly common in some regions. One of these is the Americas, and especially Central America.[10] Another is a swathe of Central Africa, from Sierra Leone to Tanzania and Mozambique.[11] A third is South Asia, consisting of India, Nepal, Burma and Thailand, with an extension eastwards through Indonesia and New Guinea into Melanesia.[12] In some cases, found in each of these regions, it was thought that any animal form could be employed. More often specific species were named, though these varied widely between cultures, and could be either wild or domestic. They often tended to be of kinds associated with the night, when witchcraft was supposed to be most active, or to be dangerous and predatory by nature, to suit the working of harm, or to provide witches with powers of flight or rapid movement, to enable them to range across wide distances or accomplish their work speedily. Where witchcraft was thought to be a communal matter, worked by groups who met together secretly for ghastly rites, the animal shape could provide a convenient means of transport to the meeting place. Among certain peoples the bestial connection could explain some of the characteristics attributed to witches: for example, the propensity credited to witch

societies across much of Central Africa, to dig up and eat human corpses, may have derived from their affinity with hyenas. Sometimes the witch's own body was thought to transform into an animal, but more often that body was expected to lie asleep at night while their spirit went forth and took animal form. This belief is so widespread among societies that have never been considered to possess shamans, that it may be coupled with the fact that most classical, Siberian, shamans were not thought themselves to take on animal shape, to render shape-shifting in itself valueless as an indicator of shamanistic beliefs and practices. A further accompanying belief, found across the range in which witches were believed to shift shape, was that to kill or injure a witch in altered form would inflict the same damage on the witch's normal body; such an act was, in story, one of the most common ways in which witchcraft could be countered.

Some peoples set the idea that witches could take animal shape among more complex systems of the belief. The Kuranko of Sierra Leone thought that witches, whom they called *suwagenu* and believed were always women, had this power and used it to work their malicious harm on other humans: the death penalty was imposed for those convicted of it. They also, however, believed that certain men called *yelemaphent-iginu* had the same power, and were respected for it even when they used it to destroy the crops and livestock of enemies; some even boasted of it.[13] A range of such patterning can be found across the whole Central American zone in which shape-shifting was a common concept. In one nation of the region, Mexico, the Tzotzil thought that everybody had a soul that took animal form which differed according to rank – the rich and powerful had jaguars, the poor rabbits – but only magicians could consciously activate that soul and use it for practical effects. Witches, moreover, had a second animal soul, of another species, and combined the two to work their evil deeds.[14] The Tzeltal, more simply, believed that everybody was born with a detachable animal soul and that magicians could learn to use it, but healers chose to do so for good, and witches for bad, purposes.[15] The Tlaxcalan spoke of two types of magician who could shift shape into an animal one. The first was the *nahuatl* or *nakual*, who could be of either sex and could use the ability to work harm or to play harmless tricks, acquiring it by tuition. The best could impersonate up to five kinds of animal, and they were not much hated or feared, as metal charms could ward them off. Hatred and fear were reserved for the *tlahuelpuchis*, people, mostly female, who took animal form, especially that of birds, to inflict damage on other humans, especially by sucking the blood of babies. They were utterly evil and their powers were innate.[16]

The second kind of traditional relationship between witches and animals, that which involved a supposedly real animal, could take various different

related forms. One was that the witch used an animal as a steed in order to travel to meetings or to inflict harm. The beast concerned was usually one that was itself a danger to humans, their livestock or their crops, such as a tiger, alligator, hyena or baboon, and this belief was found scattered across most of sub-Saharan Africa and parts of India.[17] More widespread was the idea that witches employed specific kinds of animal to accompany and assist them in working their deeds, and often as agents to carry out their wishes. This was recorded across most of Africa and south-east Asia, extending eastwards to New Guinea, and also in the south-western USA. The animals involved here were usually nocturnal, and often one specific species was employed, such as the owl, hyena or snake.[18] Among some peoples witches were said to work with a more eclectic range. In the Sudan the Azande spoke of bats, wild cats and owls, and the Mandari of cats, owls and hares, while the Dinka included dark-skinned snakes, owls, nightjars, scorpions, toads, frogs and wild cats.[19] The Lubara of Uganda associated witches with jackals, leopards, wild cats, bats, owls, snakes, frogs and toads.[20]

Most accounts of the witches' relationships with these helpers did not specify whether the animals concerned were casually swept up and employed for tasks, or whether they were particular individuals that served a witch regularly and repeatedly. Occasionally, however, it is clear that the latter situation obtained, and the creatures concerned were effectively maintained as pets. Some Australian tribes suspected members who kept cats or lizards in their homes of sending them out to injure neighbours while they slept.[21] A woman from a Nigerian people, living in the North African port of Tripoli at the opening of the twentieth century, had a formidable reputation as a service magician, and had a snake, a hare and scorpions in her house, which she was said to send out against her enemies.[22] Tribes in the Roro district of New Guinea believed that witches used snakes and crocodiles to murder people, and that the snakes were kept in pots in their homes: most deaths by snakebite were attributed to these animals.[23] The anthropologists who recorded the stories about the animal assistants of witches generally used the early modern English term 'familiar' when speaking of these creatures.

In England itself, of course, the term had actually been applied to an evil spirit that had taken animal shape, and such entities also appeared in witchcraft traditions in the extra-European world. Worldwide, as has been said, most societies have believed that magicians gained or augmented their special powers by working with spirits, and those which assisted witches were usually thought to be malevolent in proportion. Often these took human shape, often in a diminutive size, and occasionally manifested as hybrids of human and beast. However, among certain peoples they were

thought to appear as animals, and specifically as those species locally presumed to assist witches in a physical and natural form. The distribution of this belief may have extended much more widely, because researchers reporting on native cultures often failed to make clear whether the animal servants and allies of witches were real creatures or spirits; and indeed their informants may have been unsure. However, where it is made explicit that the beings concerned were conceived of as spirits, and independent of the witch's own person instead of being projections of it, the reports congregate in two regions. One was a broad zone across Central and Southern Africa, from Zaire and Tanzania south to the Cape coast.[24] The other was the island fringe of eastern Asia, in New Guinea and the Philippines.[25] The belief is also, however, recorded among the Nez Perce of the north-western United States, who held that certain malevolent tutelary spirits, especially in the form of rattlesnakes, blue grouse and badgers, sought out susceptible human beings and assisted them in becoming witches.[26]

It was rare for anthropologists to make any detailed study of traditions regarding animal familiars among the societies they studied, but a few have emerged. Several tribes of Cape Province believed that their witches, who were always female, had a large bestiary of such beings, but above all a supernatural 'storm bird', which could become a handsome youth and make love to the witch. Other favourite forms were snake, baboon and wild-cat spirits, small hairy man-like creatures and reanimated human corpses. To these societies witchcraft was essentially an act of female vengeance directed against males, above all for marital infidelity.[27] It is clear that they had a general idea that spirits were the usual agents of this revenge, and often appeared as animals, but in practice there was a very wide range of forms which the spirits were regarded as taking. These were apparently derived from individual perceptions or fantasies of witchcraft at work, which turned into parallel traditions co-existing under the same broad umbrella of belief: such an effect would explain the variety of shapes taken by the early modern English familiar. A similar pattern is found northward in Zimbabwe, where every witch was expected to have a number of familiars, most commonly in the forms of ant-bears, hyenas, owls and crocodiles. The nature of the relationship between these and the witches was thought to vary, from a functional and emotionless to a close and affectionate one.[28] Again, a basic idea was recounted in different ways, not just by different tribal cultures but also by individuals within those.

It is clear that the distribution of beliefs regarding relationships between witches and animals across the world heavily overlapped in places, but the three main forms did so relatively rarely. Rather, like the map of societies that greatly feared witchcraft, that believed in it without great fear, and that

did not believe in it, that of different traditions embodying those three relationships tended to form a patchwork across regions. After all, they were to an extent functionally exclusive: a witch who could transform into animal shape had less need to employ an animal, while one who had a 'real' animal as a servant had less need to retain a spirit in the guise of one, and so forth. However, there are some clearly recorded cases of peoples who articulated more than one of these traditions. The Amba of Western Uganda thought that witches both turned into leopards and used leopard familiars.[29] The North American Navaho held that witches took animal form, but that each was also allied with some aspect in the natural world: the sun, owls, snakes, etc.[30] In Zimbabwe Shona witches allegedly both rode hyenas and kept familiars, while those of the Gă of Ghana rode snakes, used them as agents or turned themselves into them.[31] The Nalumin of New Guinea likewise thought that witches could either become animals or else befriend them, and this was also true of the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico, and the Tonga-speakers of South Zambia.[32]

Rodney Needham, the social scientist quoted near the beginning of this book, listed possession of an animal familiar or the ability to assume animal shape as one of the factors that constitute the 'steady image' of the witch worldwide.[33] It is easy to see why, although there are some areas of the globe – much of the Americas away from the central zone, for example – in which the association of witches and animals seems less strong, and some peoples in regions where the association does exist among whom it also seems weak or absent. Nevertheless, it is found so widely on the earth, among human societies with no contact with each other, as to represent one way in which humans who believed in witches thought easily and spontaneously about them. Even if ethnographic parallels for the English witch's familiar are reduced to the most specific possible, of a regular relationship made between a witch and a spirit in animal form, who acts as an assistant and agent, they are found across a broad span of the planet which includes three different continents, although representing a minority of the societies that have believed in witchcraft, within each. The obvious question to be posed at this stage is how far the continent not yet considered in this survey, Europe, matches up to this pattern, and the answer is that it fits it perfectly. All three of the main divisions of belief in a connection between witches and animals are represented in the early modern trial records. The idea that witches could transform into animal shape is found across most of the Continent. In Poland people accused of witchcraft confessed to such transformations, cats and pigs being the preferred species.[34] At the northern extreme of Norway, in most cases where women confessed to raising storms to sink boats, they claimed to have changed into sea mammals, fish or birds

to do so.[35] In much of Western Europe, including Lorraine, France and that Spanish-ruled area of Burgundy called Franche Comté, they were especially thought to turn into wolves, in which shape they could inflict especial harm; though other animal shapes were also recorded.[36] In Italy they were believed to prefer to look like cats.[37] Basque witches were reputed to be very eclectic in their choice of species, as were those of the Balkans, from Croatia southwards.[38] These stories troubled early modern demonologists sufficiently for them to debate the implications at length, generally concluding that the apparent change had to be a demonic delusion.[39] The belief that witches shifted shape into animals, especially dogs, cats and hares, was also strong in most parts of the British Isles.[40] It is certainly an ancient one in Europe, being recorded in the Roman Empire, and in the British Isles from the twelfth century, as has also been noted.

The use of 'real' animals as aids to witches is a rarer feature of the trial testimony, but there is the tradition of wolf-riding in the western Alps that has been cited, and the much broader one of the animal steeds of the women who rode to join 'Diana' in the *canon Episcopi*. That of the spirit-familiar is also present, of course, though seemingly confined to England. The only case approaching a Continental parallel consists of the toads kept by witches in Basque tradition, as recorded on both sides of the Franco-Spanish frontier, in the early seventeenth century.[41] The toads were allegedly each given to a witch when the latter made the original pact with Satan, and kept like pets, some being dressed by their owners in coloured clothes. This makes them sound demonic, but there is actually no apparent trace in these accounts of the animals being used as agents of witchcraft. From a passage that mentions them being 'pastured' by children at the sabbath, it sounds very much as if they were kept for the poison which could be secreted from their skin.

In a global perspective, therefore, it would have been strange either if some part of early modern Europe did not have a popular belief in an association between witchcraft and evil spirits disguised as animals, or if this belief had been held by most Europeans. To find that it was a fervently held tradition found in one part of the Continent, in this case among the English, is in fact exactly what an enquirer should expect in the worldwide context. Such a conclusion to the present enquiry, however, would be to shirk the problem of how this belief fitted into the unique European context of a blending of old ideas of witchcraft with a monopolistic and strongly dualistic religion. Nor would it answer the question of why England in particular had that form of the belief. To seek answers to these issues it is necessary to employ the second of the contracting foci of this book, the specifically European.

The European Context

All over the world, traditional peoples have frequently visualized evil spirits as taking the visible form of fierce, menacing and predatory animals, or of hybrids of those with human shapes. The peoples of ancient Europe and the Near East were no exception, as any glance at the demons represented in Assyrian art in museums, or the underworld monsters in that of the Egyptians, will confirm. The Roman tendency to identify the demonic *strix* as owl-like is another manifestation of this. The habit carried over naturally into Christianity, so that its Satan and his minor devils were habitually portrayed in word or image as possessing visual traits from a range of repulsive creatures. The tradition was established by the fourth century, when Athanasius's *Life* of St Anthony recounts how its hero was beset by a demonic mob which swarmed round him disguised as lions, bears, leopards, bulls, vipers, cobras and wolves.[42] These images carried over into the high Middle Ages, to inform portraits of Christian heretics meeting to worship Satan and his minions. One of the earliest such groups to be identified and suppressed, at Orléans in 1022, was described a couple of generations later as worshipping the Devil as he manifested in one animal form or another. By the twelfth century this was a commonplace of accounts of heretical rites, the favourite shape ascribed to the demon who presided over them – either Satan or a subordinate – being that of a cat.[43] This trope persisted through out the later medieval period as a routine aspect of accusations of heresy, in the British Isles as elsewhere: those against Alice Kyteler in Ireland in the 1320s included having an attendant devil who appeared variously as a cat, shaggy black dog or black man.[44] Unsurprisingly, along with so many other standard features of medieval stereotypes of heresy, it was a trope carried over into the construction of the new image of the satanic witch religion in the early fifteenth century. In the earliest dated manifestation of that, the account by Hans Fründ of the Valais trials of 1428, Satan was said to appear to the witches at their meetings in the form of a black animal, such as a bear or ram.[45] The *Errores gazariorum* agreed that the animal chosen was black, but thought a cat to be his most favoured species.[46] This idea was found also in the earliest recorded trials associated with the new image of witchcraft. The woman executed at Todi in 1428 allegedly confessed that she had joined the revels of witches riding on Lucifer, who took the form of a goat or fly.[47] A man tried in the Pays de Vaud in 1438 claimed after torture that witches rode to the sabbath on a (presumably demonic) black bull or colt, to venerate the Devil himself, who moved between the shapes of a man, a cat and a lizard.[48] The idea that those travelling to the sabbath rode

animals, which seem for practical reasons to have been disguised demons, is also found in another famous early text to describe the new stereotype of witchcraft, Martin le Franc's *Le Champion des Dames*, written in 1440–42. That describes the steeds as having the form of black cats or dogs.[49] The riding of a demonic animal was from near the beginning an alternative and lesser form of locomotion to the anointed stick for getting witches to their meetings. These early trials in the western Alps also contained the idea that witches were assigned a personal devil as a helper after swearing allegiance to the supreme one, or even made the original pact with such a minor demon; and these too could take the shape of beasts. They had individual names, those described at hearings in the diocese of Lausanne during the 1440s, 1450s and 1460s being called Mamiet, Figuret, Perrot, Raphiel, Usart or Rabiel, and described as appearing as black cats and dogs, foxes or birds.[50] As considered in a previous chapter, riding on animals, which in at least some cases were thought to be transformed demons, remained one of the standard ways in which witches were supposed to get to the sabbath during the major period of early modern trials. During that period some Continental demonologists considered the rationale behind the taste of demons for shape-shifting. Nicholas Remy, in Lorraine, thought that there were practical reasons: as dogs, they could attend on witches without automatically arousing suspicion; as horses they could carry them to the sabbath; as cats they could get into houses to work evil for their human allies; as wolves they could kill livestock for them; and they enjoyed appearing at sabbaths as goats because their rank smell added to the diabolic atmosphere.[51] Pierre de Lancre, near Bordeaux, was more theological, suggesting that confessing witches described the Devil as taking so many forms that he was clearly a compulsive shape-shifter, as part of his general hatred of order and stability. De Lancre confirmed that the animals ridden to satanic rites could not be real beasts but were transformed devils, as they usually flew through the sky while the species concerned were not designed by nature to do.[52]

It may therefore be suggested that the idea of attendant demons, which had special relationships with individual witches and took animal shape, was actually built into the new stereotype of satanic witchcraft from the very beginning. As the sabbath was central to most Continental European concepts of witchcraft during the early modern period, however, and most witchcraft was thought to be transacted there, the main purpose of the servitor demonic animal was to transport the witch thither. In England, where the sabbath was not central to images of witchcraft, the relationship ended up as being conceived differently, and how this happened must be the final stage of enquiry in this chapter.

British Perspectives

The concept of the demonic animal made a considerable impact on both the early modern British kingdoms, but in different ways. Highly educated Scots imbibed the idea of witches riding on such beasts, so that Alexander Montgomerie could make witches travel on pigs, dogs, stags and monkeys in the poem of around 1580, discussed before, in which he satirized fairies as satanic. This idea does not, however, seem to feature much in records of actual trials. By the late seventeenth century some Scots were starting to acquire the English concept of the animal familiar. When a group of Presbyterian rebels assassinated Archbishop Sharpe of St Andrews in 1679, a bumble bee flew out of his tobacco box; one of his killers called it his familiar, but then had to explain the meaning of this to some of the others.[53] Again, the idea does not seem to have surfaced in actual trials during the short period that remained until they died out. Scotland embraced the notion of demonic animals enthusiastically in a different form. When the online Survey of Scottish Witchcraft is searched under the heading 'animal devils', forty-four different cases show up. All, however, refer to Satan himself, or much more rarely his demonic minions as well, appearing to humans in animal form, both to seduce them into witchcraft initially and to return to do their bidding.[54] None seems to have settled into a domestic or nurturing relationship with a witch as was believed to happen in England. None the less, the number of them serves as a reminder that the standard relationship imagined between a witch and a spirit guide in early modern Scotland was with the Devil, or one of his demonic minions, in human or bestial shape. Encounters with fairy-like beings were rarer, and the clearest contrast between the Scottish and English concepts of the dealings of witches with spirits is not between a fairy and an animal familiar, but between a more intermittent and a more intimate partnership with a demon in animal form.

Turning away from Scotland, the English-style animal familiar is, unsurprisingly, recorded in the parts of the British Isles under English control and influence. Belief in it manifested among Protestant settlers in Ireland during the seventeenth century, and in an Elizabethan Welsh tract and an Elizabethan Welsh trial.[55] England itself was, however, the stronghold of the tradition, although there too Satan and his minions often manifested in human form instead or as well. Moreover, its concept of the animal familiar seems on present evidence to be an innovation of the Tudor period, because there is no certain reference to it in any known medieval source. A mid-fourteenth-century chronicle commences with a horrific story of how Eleanor, queen of Henry II, had murdered her husband's famous mistress Fair Rosamund, almost two centuries before, by paying a sorceress to use a

pair of toads to suck the wretched girl's blood out through her breasts.[56] There is no sign, however, that these were other than genuine animals. Conversely, when individuals were accused for political reasons of consorting with the Devil or a devil, the latter was often said to have manifested to them in animal form, because (as said) medieval demons frequently did. Such a charge was Christian business as usual, whether it was levied against the Earl of Cornwall in the thirteenth century, a man accused of Lollard heresy in 1409, or the rebel leader Jack Cade in 1450.[57] The apparent complete absence of the early modern English witch's familiar from late medieval records, which are reasonably good for trials for magic at all levels of society, may argue against the idea that it was a long-established folk tradition.

The earliest definite references to the animal familiar are usually thought to occur in two now well-known documents from the early sixteenth century. The first is a charge against a Yorkshire service magician in 1510, of keeping three beings like bumble bees under a stone and calling them out one by one to give each of them a drop of blood from his finger. This was intended to damn him as a Satanist after he had been arrested for genuine complicity in a scandalous attempt, involving local clergy and a former mayor of York, to find buried treasure by magical means. The accusation was made not by a churchman but a lay witness, a common man, and the accused utterly denied it. The court was not much interested in it, while convicting the magician and his accomplices on the treasure-hunting charge.[58] The second case was heard in Somerset in 1530, in which suspicion was cast upon a woman for being a witch because, among other signs, a toad was seen in her house.[59] This is not an absolutely foolproof testimony to belief in an animal familiar, as there is a slight chance that the toad was thought to be a genuine one, kept to milk its venom, but the likelihood is that it was indeed viewed as demonic. It is therefore probable that the keeping of demons in bestial form and a pet-like relationship was credited to magicians across England by the second quarter of the sixteenth century, at the latest. It is absolutely certain that by the first quarter of the century (at the latest) the ancient tradition of the magician's servitor spirit had been combined in England with the equally venerable one of the evil spirit in animal form, to produce a genuinely popular belief that wicked magicians kept demons disguised as beasts, whom they fed on their own blood. Naturally enough, this idea went straight into English witch trials almost as soon as they were made possible by the parliamentary act of 1563, which criminalized magic and imposed the death penalty both for use of witchcraft to kill humans or livestock and for the invocation of evil spirits, for any purpose (and orthodox Elizabethan Christians would have regarded

any spirit conjured by a magician as at least potentially evil). Moreover, the idea went as swiftly into the popular literature, which publicized trials and helped to form opinion with regard to what a witch should be. The very first of these pamphlets to survive, and perhaps to be published, concerned three women tried in Essex in 1566, who confessed to sharing a demon that variously took the form of a cat, a toad and a dog, and carried out their wishes.[60] It is apparent from the accounts given that they elaborated their portrait of this being in successive confessions, which informed and encouraged each other; or else that their interrogators or the author of the pamphlet performed this work.[61] One woman described how the demon, in cat form, was normally fed bread and milk, but that for each evil deed it committed for her, it required a drop of blood as sustenance, and each prick inflicted on her to draw the blood left a red mark. Another agreed that it had required the blood for most missions, but also was fed a chicken in reward for the killing of animals. It is clear that a basic set of ideas was being elaborated in different ways which derived from individual imaginations, sometimes converging and sometimes not; much as in the case of the stories from Cape Province and Zimbabwe.

In the same year a service magician from Dorset told a church court that he had learned how to break bewitchment from fairies, but how to trace stolen goods from a familiar spirit which he had called to him in a classic rite of ceremonial magic. It had appeared to him at times in the form of a dog, and had to be given a drop of his blood in order first to bind it to him. Once engaged, however, it only required the gift of a chicken, cat or dog in sacrifice once a year. He added that witches kept toads as familiars, and used them to harm people, while he only employed his powers for good.[62] So, the same complex of beliefs was being articulated across southern England, in different contexts, in the years during which the trials for witchcraft were commencing. For a couple of decades it remained unstable: in 1579, for example, the sister of one of the Essex women tried in 1566 allegedly confessed that when she first acquired her familiar, in the form of a small, rough-coated white dog, she sealed the bargain not by giving it blood, but bread and milk alone. In the same year, an alleged confession of a witch in Berkshire made drops of blood the central recompense to familiars owned by different women, but milk and breadcrumbs were added as additional forms of regular sustenance.[63] Even in the 1580s, although the blood-sucking motif persisted as a familiar's reward, the demonic animal was fed more regular foodstuffs, such as beer, bread, cheese, cake and milk, as well. The Essex confessions are remarkable for their degree of domestication of the familiar, the creatures usually being kept like pets in pots or boxes in the home, lined with wool.[64] Trial narratives of the 1580s also at

times afford additional insights into how images of the animal familiar were built up in particular cases. One such is that of Joan Cason, in the northern Kent market town of Faversham. Those who witnessed against her claimed variously to have seen her familiar in the form of a rat, cat or toad, or heard it as a cricket, but when Joan herself came to confess she settled on a rat and humanized it and related it to her own life by giving it the face of her now dead master and lover.[65] A sufficiently imaginative witness, once convinced that a person was a witch, could start to see animal devils everywhere: one boy from Burton-on-Trent in the northern Midlands, thinking himself bewitched by six women, identified their respective imps as taking the forms of a horse, dog, cat, fulmer petrel (a kind of seabird) and two different species of fish.[66]

In the course of the late 1570s and the 1580s, the expected act of giving blood to a familiar slowly became more regular in the reports, as an ongoing and sometimes even daily tribute to it, rather than a reward for specific acts or a rite to seal the initial making of the relationship.[67] By 1580 the idea had appeared that the sucking was taken from the same part of the body each time, and that the act would leave a permanent mark, which, if found on a suspected witch's body, could provide evidence in favour of the charges against her or (far more rarely) him.[68] As has long been recognized among specialist scholars, this notion blended with the belief, by then widespread in Europe, that when making the initial pact with a witch, the Devil or a devil put a special mark, like a brand, on the person's body. By 1600 British demonologists were expressing the concept as one of the proofs that could be used to determine guilt in a charge of witchcraft.[69]

In the ensuing decades it took an especially influential form: that the mark took the shape of a special teat to suckle the familiar, often concealed in or near the genitals. The spread of these ideas seems to have been fitful and patchy, with initial regional variations. It is tempting to regard the south-east as their main point of generation and diffusion, but less easy to prove. Certainly the concept of the special teat or teats was prominent there by the early seventeenth century. It provided crucial evidence in a celebrated trial at Edmonton, just north of London, in 1621, and was a central feature of England's biggest witch-hunt, the major series of East Anglian trials in 1645–7, propelled by the team of witch-finders led by Matthew Hopkins.[70] However, the body of a woman accused of witchcraft at Warboys, on the edge of the Huntingdonshire fenland, in 1593, was noted as having a teat on it after she was hanged, and it was implied that this was proof of her guilt.[71] When the women were accused by the boy from Burton-on-Trent in 1597, local justices ordered a picked group of other women to search the suspects for 'marks', and those homed in on 'teats' and 'warts' as damning examples.[72]

Bedfordshire women tried in 1613 were convicted of suckling imps from teats on their thighs, and suspects in Northamptonshire were automatically searched for such marks in the previous year.[73] The importance of them was therefore grasped early in the North and East Midlands. By contrast, during the famous trial at Lancaster in 1612 which was the largest in the nation until that date, it is clear that the notion that each witch received a personal attendant demon in animal form, which sometimes sucked blood from its human ally, was firmly established in that area, but not that of searching the accused for a visible spot left by the action. Instead, the blood-sucking had retained its earlier Tudor status as a special act intended to seal the original compact between familiar and witch: once that was made, as in early Elizabethan Essex, the demonic animals were fed such food as humans enjoyed.[74] By 1621 in neighbouring Yorkshire, however, it was considered imperative to inspect suspects 'for marks upon their bodies'.[75] This procedure became routine in that county during subsequent decades, and was central to the next big trial at Lancaster in 1634.[76] By the mid-seventeenth century it was seemingly a regular procedure across most of the nation, and features prominently in the last English trial definitely to result in an execution, in Devon in 1682, and the last to result in a conviction, in Hertfordshire in 1712.[77] None the less, some confusion remained regarding the significance of suckling a familiar. Even in the Hopkins cases, which were part of a concentrated and programmatic campaign, some people still thought that the blood was taken as a drop at the original making of the relationship, and some that it was a regular tribute. Nor is it clear from these confessions whether regular suckling was thought to be for sustenance or as reward for services, and whether other food needed to be given to familiars as well.

These seventeenth-century trials afford further insights into the ways in which the people involved, or those presenting their views in pamphlets, struggled with the concept of the animal familiar. At times this idea blended with the essentially different one that a witch could change shape into an animal or send out her or his spirit in animal form: at King's Lynn in 1616 it was recorded that a woman there had sent one of her imps in the appearance of a toad to invade the house of a man whom she disliked. A servant caught it and put it into the fire, where it took an unnatural fifteen minutes to burn, in which time the alleged witch was screaming in pain. The woman was also accused of attacking victims herself disguised as a cat or a 'great water dog'.[78] The alleged witch from Edmonton confessed to suckling the Devil in the shape of a large black dog or a small white one, but was anxious to insist that the white ferrets seen about her house were nothing other than real animals.[79] One interrogated at Framlingham in Suffolk during the Hopkins trials can be seen struggling to satisfy her questioners (and, given Hopkins's methods,

her torturers) by referring to what sounds like real experience, before giving in to the theological imperatives demanded by them. She was recorded as saying first that 'about a year since, she felt a thing like a small cat come over her legs, which scratched her mightily. After that she rubbed and killed two things like butterflies in her secret parts.' At this point, however, she allegedly succumbed and provided what was urged upon her by stating that 'Another time when spinning, a polecat skipped into her lap and promised that if she would deny Christ and God, he would bring her victuals.'[80] Another woman questioned at the same town during the same witch-hunt seemingly added vivid and idiosyncratic corroborative detail to get her statement accepted and the process ended, saying that she 'had seven imps like flies, dores [beetles], spiders, mice etc, and having but five teats, they fought like pigs with a sow'.[81] A young girl in Northumberland in 1645, accusing somebody of having sent a spirit against her, claimed that it had appeared variously as a dragon, bear, horse and cow, and while in these forms had somehow managed to wield a club, staff, sword and dagger upon her (the same girl also declared that she had been visited by angels, in the form of birds the size of turkeys, with human faces). Clearly the individual imagination (or visionary facility) ran riot at times among witnesses as well as those under interrogation.[82] In view of all this, it must be significant that the idea of the animal familiar none the less does not seem to have put down deep roots in popular folklore, because by the nineteenth century it had mostly contracted into East Anglia, to become a distinctive regional tradition there. That of the mark left by suckling largely evaporated once it was no longer of value as legal evidence after the law against witchcraft was repealed in 1736. By contrast, a belief in witches themselves, and in their ability to shift shape into animals, remained a vibrant aspect of popular culture all over England and Wales until the twentieth century.[83]

It is time to sum up, and most contributors to the recent debates seem to emerge with honour from such a process.[84] A comparison with beliefs in non-European societies certainly does establish the English animal familiar in a recurrent worldwide pattern. As a tradition it is indeed ultimately rooted in ancient animist ideas, though only in the attenuated and remote sense that it derives ultimately both from the servitor spirits of ceremonial magicians and the very widespread human disposition to give evil spirits in particular bestial characteristics. There is no good evidence in the sources that it was especially a popular tradition, detached and remote from the ideological systems of people in general. This conclusion is reinforced both by its apparent absence from medieval records and its later disappearance from modern folklore across most of England and Wales, but is based also on the close association between demons and animal disguises in

mainstream medieval Christian culture. Those who have emphasized the demonological origin of the familiar deserve credit here, as they do when considering that the raw imaginative materials from which the animal familiar was constructed were all present in the stereotype of the conspiracy of organized demonic witchcraft from its fifteenth-century beginning. Those who have looked for an origin point in the servitor spirits of ceremonial magic score with the point that one direct root of the English concept lies in the evolving idea, widespread by the 1500s, that magicians compacted with their servitors with drops of their own blood. None of these considerations, however, fully explains why the English (and Welsh) ended up with their particular, and unusual, concept of the witch's familiar. It may be, after all, that the reason relates to an attitude they had developed to pet animals, which set them apart from other Europeans and from the Scots; but there seems to be a lack of solid comparative evidence on which to base such a conclusion. In the last analysis the problem may actually not be susceptible to resolution, save by the observation that across the world different peoples have evolved different belief systems concerning magic and witchcraft which seem to have no obvious relationship with their political, social, economic and gender structures. In the case of Britain, the early modern English and Scots drew on a common stock of late medieval and older European ideas about demons, and came up with strikingly different variations upon it, which diverged further with time. This may be simply what human beings do, as one aspect of identity formation.

CONCLUSION

It was remarked at the opening of this book that there are at least four different definitions of a witch operating in the contemporary Western world, and it is worth emphasizing what an extraordinary power they possess in combination, and what a remarkable range of meaning and emotion they encompass. The witch figure now occupies a spectrum from functioning as the ultimate tragic victim to functioning as the ultimate embodiment of evil. The definition of a witch as anybody who practises magic, or claims to do so, and of witchcraft as any kind of magic, was developed, and sustained for many centuries as a means of smearing magic in general with the taint of evil and antisocial associations. It functions more now, however, as a means of rehabilitating magic, and thus also often of promoting alternative forms of therapy, especially in healing. In doing so it blends the traditional figures of the witch and the service magician, sometimes distinguishing them by additions such as 'bad' and 'good' or 'white' and 'black' witches but often serving to absolve the word 'witch' of any automatic negative associations. The modern concept of witchcraft as a pagan nature religion, standing for a wild and green spirituality of feminism, environmentalism, humanitarianism and personal liberation and self-realization, itself based in nineteenth-century scholarship, has produced a constellation of successful, viable and (to my mind) thoroughly worthwhile religious traditions. That which has characterized the early modern European witch trials as essentially a war waged by men against women has drawn on the undoubted fact that the witch figure remains one of the very few embodiments of independent female power that traditional Western culture has bequeathed to the present.

All of these usages of the word have operated in effect as strategies of redemption of it, from the fear and hatred evoked by the fourth, and perhaps

most fundamental, employment of it, to mean a person who uses magic to harm others. By focusing entirely on that usage, the book has – as must by now be readily apparent – not been designed to restore that fear and hatred but to annihilate them, by providing a better understanding of the roots of belief in such a figure and how they developed in a European context. A global survey of similar beliefs has found those to be well represented in all inhabited continents of the world, and indeed among the majority of human societies; though not among all of them. In various places they have provoked witch-hunting of an intensity and deadliness matching or even exceeding that found in Europe. This remains a very live issue in the present world, and one that may well be worsening. A worldwide perspective, indeed, makes Europe look fairly typical in its attitudes to witchcraft, with two resounding exceptions: that Europeans alone turned witches into practitioners of an evil anti-religion, and Europeans alone represent a complex of peoples who have traditionally feared and hunted witches, and subsequently and spontaneously ceased officially to believe in them. In fact, both developments came relatively late in their history and are probably best viewed as parts of a single process of modernization, driven by a spirit of scientific experimentation. The construction of the image of the satanic witch religion, and the trials which resulted, represented a new and extreme application of high medieval Christian theology, designed both to defend society against a serious new threat and to purify it religiously and morally to an extent never achieved before. Its abandonment occurred when the reality of the threat was not satisfactorily demonstrated and the drive for purification failed to produce any convincing improvements. Instead, Europeans developed another, much more radical, final solution to the threat of witchcraft, by defusing belief in it.

One striking feature of a global survey of witchcraft beliefs is the great variation in local forms which they take, usually corresponding to different peoples and cultures, and forming at times large regional traditions but more often a patchwork of ideological systems, not one of which is exactly like another. The same pattern is found across the ancient European and Near Eastern worlds wherever the cultures concerned can be reconstructed from surviving records. The consequences of these ancient variants for later European belief systems were considerable, and this was overwhelmingly because the dominant religion of the Continent became Christianity, a Western Asiatic faith first given established status by the Roman Empire. As a result it absorbed a mixture of cultural traits of crucial importance to its attitudes, which derived from sources spanning the whole extent of the world between the Atlantic and the Indus Valley. From the Persians it derived a view of the cosmos as divided between opposed utterly

good and utterly evil divine personalities, with witches serving the evil one. From Mesopotamia came a fear of demons, as constantly active and malevolent spirits abroad in the world seeking human allies and victims. The Hebrews contributed a belief in a single true God, all-powerful and all-knowing. The Greeks stigmatized magic, defining it in opposition to religion as an illegitimate manipulation by shady human beings of normally superhuman power and knowledge, for their own ends and those of those who paid them. The Romans supplied a highly coloured image of the witch as a person of total evil, in league with evil forces, and dedicated to unnatural, antisocial and murderous activities. They also provided apparent precedents for the large-scale trial and execution of people for engaging in magic. Finally, two different kinds of ancient nocturnal bogey were bequeathed to the medieval Christian folk memory, both associated with witchcraft. The Roman one was a bird-like demoness, sometimes confused with a human witch, which attacked small children. The Germanic one was a woman who used magic, sometimes in co-operation with others, to drain the life force, or remove internal organs, from adult people and feast upon the proceeds.

Although the Hebrews, Mesopotamians and Romans, at the least, all feared witchcraft and prosecuted people for it, only the Romans engaged in large-scale, chain-reaction, trials for magic, and then only apparently at two widely separated points in their history. In a global context, the peoples of ancient Europe and the Near East were not, on present evidence, keen witch-hunters, and the Greeks do not appear to have had a belief in the witch figure until the Roman period, and may not have prosecuted people for magic much at all; although they publicly disapproved of magicians and contributed elements of the later image of witchcraft to Europeans. Nor did Christianity initially result in any intensification of accusations for witchcraft. Early medieval Christian states retained a belief in magic, now much of it firmly linked to demons in mainstream theology, and a readiness to punish people convicted of using it to harm others. There is not much evidence for most of the medieval period, on the other hand, that this produced more than a trickle of individual prosecutions in most regions. Indeed, early medieval Christian churchmen seem to have discouraged witch-hunting across much of the Continent, in three different ways. They cast doubt on the existence of both of the nocturnal bogey figures described above, and this doubt was embodied in laws designed to prevent the persecution of people for association with such figures. They placed a heavy emphasis on the power of their Church to defeat and banish demons, rather than on the necessity of action against the human allies and dupes of those evil spirits. Finally, individual churchmen sometimes wrote and acted

to challenge and prevent the persecution of individuals for alleged acts of destructive magic.

There was, however, one major state and culture in the Mediterranean ancient world that neither feared witchcraft nor disapproved of magic, and that was Egypt. A category of its temple priesthood, indeed, supplied magical services to ordinary people, on request, often using written texts resting on beliefs and methods developed over millennia. When it came under Roman rule, and so eventually encountered a hardening Roman social and legal attitude to magic and an atrophying of resources to support the temples and their priesthood, this tradition became privatized. The result was an unprecedentedly sophisticated form of highly literate ceremonial magic, spread by texts and training and devoted to the needs of clients and the magicians themselves. Aspects of it soon leaked into Greek philosophy and Jewish and Christian culture, and can be found reflected in magical objects discovered across the pagan Roman Empire, as well as helping to make the Egyptian magician a stock character in Greek and Roman fiction. One major aspect of it was the manner in which many of its rites sought to harness superhuman power on behalf of selfish human needs, and (in a wholly traditional Egyptian manner) to compel deities as well as lesser spirits to act in response to the magician's wishes. This not only directly flouted the Graeco-Roman disapproval of magic as an affront to the majesty of divine beings and a menace to religion, but ran against the hardening of official attitudes and legal sanctions with respect to magicians across the Roman Empire. One consequence of this clash was the hostility with which the Egyptian magician is treated in the Graeco-Roman literature of the imperial period, and another was the savage and widespread waves of persecution launched against practitioners of ceremonial magic, across much of the empire, in the mid-fourth century.

Despite continued official disapproval, in varying degrees, learned ceremonial magic remained a clandestine tradition, based on direct textual transmission, in Jewish, Greek and Arabic culture throughout the early Middle Ages, and was indeed perpetuated and augmented there by transfusion into forms adapted to Judaic, Byzantine and Muslim religious thought. Despite repeated attempts to reconcile it with religious orthodoxy in each case, it retained much of its late antique character as a strongly marked and cosmopolitan learned counter-culture, offering human beings empowerment and direct self-improvement in a way which mainstream religious teaching did not. A strong if not conclusive case can be made that Egypt, both in terms of philosophical and religious attitude, and textual transmission, was the origin point of this whole tradition. It is certain that it was one of the most important of the likely sources for that tradition, and almost

certainly the most important. Latin Christianity came late to the adoption of ceremonial magic of this sort, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the importation and translation of texts, mostly from Greek and Arabic, introduced it. However, some Latin Christians then took at least to aspects of it with great excitement, rapidly developing their own distinctive version of it, based on the quartered circle as the standard location for rites and the pentagram as the most powerful geometrical figure for use in them. An effort was made to secure for astral magic, in particular, the status of a respectable branch of learning. This failed, and in the thirteenth century a growing orthodox backlash developed against ceremonial magic which resulted in its effective demonization by the end of that century. During the fourteenth century ecclesiastical machinery, which had been developed in the course of the thirteenth to hunt adherents of Christian heresies, began, fitfully but cumulatively, to add ceremonial magic to its targets, and define it as a form of heresy in itself. This redefinition contaminated service magic in turn, for the simple reason that the two forms blended indistinguishably into each other at their boundaries, relatively unlearned popular magicians sometimes adopting ideas and motifs from ceremonial magic and learned ceremonial magicians sometimes working for clients. As a result, the two were targeted together in a very widespread official drive against magic, which began among local communities in Western Europe in the mid-1370s and continued unabated into the early fifteenth century.

This campaign provided the background for the development of the stereotype of the satanic witch conspiracy that appeared in the 1420s, across an arc of territory from Catalonia through the western Alps to Rome, and was spread by preaching campaigns associated with the observant reform movement among friars. It immediately produced serious public panics, as local people were encouraged to blame the members of this conspiracy for all their apparently unusual misfortunes, and especially for the deaths of young children. The use of torture, in at least some areas, ensured confessions, which in turn reinforced the stereotype; and this also immediately produced a scale of execution unknown in trials for magic at least since the late Roman period. The stereotype concerned was created by fusing an enhanced fear of murderous witchcraft with by then standard images of the horrific rites committed at devil-worshipping assemblies which orthodox Latin Christianity alleged against Christian heretics; and mixing in by then ancient folkloric figures. Two of those seem to have been especially influential in this case: the child-killing nocturnal demoness of the Mediterranean world and the cannibal witch of the South German one.

The technique adopted here in telling this story, of apportioning ancient Europe and the Near East between distinctive belief systems, associated

with particular cultures and treating magic in contrasting ways, throws up different insights and produces different perspectives from one employed by some other historians: of deriving many of the ideas and motifs that came to make up the stereotypical early modern European witch figure from a prehistoric pan-Eurasian 'shamanistic' tradition. To suggest this is not in itself to invalidate broader cross-cultural comparisons based on the concept of shamanism, which may yet have importance in inducing broad thinking about the nature of ecstatic visionary states across Europe, Eurasia or humanity. When considering the nature of the early modern European witch trials, however, the emphasis on regional tradition does have the value of enabling the identification of a specific shamanic and sub-shamanic province in northern and north-eastern Europe, with its own characteristic magical practices and figures, and its own experience of the early modern witch-hunts. Other zones can be mapped out around the Continent in which the trials were tinged by distinctive regional traditions of belief, especially a succession of those occupying the northern edge of the Mediterranean basin, and the Alpine areas above it, with a projection into the Balkans and lower Danube basin. Another consists of the British Isles, and another is Iceland. These represent, however, peripheral areas bordering the core regions of the trials in which most cases and executions occurred, and in those core regions the direct contribution of local popular motifs and traditions was minimal despite the existence of a flourishing and ample folklore concerning nocturnal spirit worlds. Even in the peripheral areas in which it featured more strongly, it usually appeared in only a minority, and often a small minority, of trials. In general the legal records serve at times and in particular places to expose folk beliefs rather than folk beliefs serving to explain much about the trials. The latter were propelled and dominated, instead, by a new, almost pan-European concept of witchcraft propagated by elites and accepted into general culture. On the other hand, in two important senses an awareness of a deeper time scale does reveal significant new things about early modern European beliefs concerning witches. If the microcosm of local folkloric traditions is only peripherally important in explaining the nature and incidence of witch trials, then the macrocosm of fundamental and general ideas does rest firmly on ancient foundations. These include the figures of the witch and service magician themselves; a willingness to credit the power of magic, especially as expressed in words and images; a balancing faith in the efficacy of measures to counter hostile magic, sometimes by using magical remedies and sometimes by propitiating or attacking the hostile magician; a sense of an animate universe teeming with spirits, some inherently malevolent and some willing to approach and assist humans; and one of the night

as an unfriendly place haunted by especially dangerous non-human entities. If the construction of the satanic witch conspiracy was generated by the particular circumstances of the later Middle Ages, all of the component parts of it were in existence by the end of the ancient world, and existed within Latin Christianity long before they were put into that particular, and for a short period lethally potent, combination.

The other sense in which a deeper time scale and cross-global comparisons may provide interesting insights into early modern witch trials consists of the application of that time scale and those comparisons to the nature and incidence of trials in particular regions. That argument has been illustrated by the three case studies from Britain. In each, an individual aspect of the early modern British evidence – the appearance of fairies as figures in certain trials, especially in Scotland; the apparent rarity of trials in areas with Celtic languages and cultures; and the demonic animal familiar which features prominently in English accounts of witchcraft – was submitted to this approach. In each it may be suggested that new understandings resulted. A global context revealed that both witches and service magicians were often thought to work with the assistance, and sometimes the tuition, of terrestrial spirits equivalent to the British fairies, and that this was indeed true of early modern Britain as a whole. The appearance of fairies in Scottish witch trials was to some extent a spin-off from their association with service magicians, and so with magic in general, and the British belief in such beings was derived ultimately from ancient tradition. However, the particular concept of fairies that featured in the trials was a late medieval creation. Likewise, a global context proved that across the world a minority of societies had not believed in witchcraft or not feared it very much in practice, because uncanny misfortune was blamed on other sources. It was suggested that the Celtic societies of the British Isles manifested an unusually low level of early modern witch-hunting, and an exploration of medieval Irish and Welsh literature, compared with early modern and modern folk beliefs in Welsh and Gaelic cultures, seemed to support a conclusion that this disinclination was indeed rooted in native belief systems. The animal familiar was related to a belief in terrestrial spirits which took animal form, and one in the ability of witches to do so, found in many parts of the world and in ancient and medieval Europe. It was also, however, related to the specific Christian manifestation of that, the demon in animal shape, and the linkage of that to the late medieval satanic anti-religion of witches, to suggest that the early modern English witch's familiar appeared only at the end of the Middle Ages.

If the reconstruction of the background to the early modern witch trials provided here is correct, it suggests that a shift in approach is made to the

study of medieval popular cultures, meaning collections of beliefs and customs held by the mass of the population of a given society, as distinguished from those developed and propagated by intellectual and social elites. Hitherto, and especially when dealing with traditions of popular lore which may have contributed to the development of the early modern stereotype of the satanic witch, scholars have often tended to follow the nineteenth-century convention of assuming that they were survivals from a hazily defined pagan past. It remains true that important elements of them, listed above, indisputably were rooted in pre-Christian antiquity. None the less, all of those were significantly reworked in the course of the Middle Ages. It has long been accepted by scholars that the construct of the devil-worshipping conspiratorial sect of witches, which underlay the early modern hunts, was a fifteenth-century creation. It has now been suggested here that the construct of a medieval tradition of nocturnal spirit processions, made by Jacob Grimm and characterized by him as the remnant of a widespread pagan cult of the dead, needs to be unpicked. Within his materials may be found images of penitential processions of the dead, which seem fairly clearly to have an origin in eleventh- and twelfth-century concerns for the fate of the soul and in clerical exemplars. Another major strand of those materials consists of stories about night-roving bands of spirits, especially female, which living humans could join, and which often visited and blessed houses and which were often led by a superhuman woman. These are more likely to derive from a pagan source, but there seems to be no such source in the surviving evidence that matches them. Even if they drew on ancient elements, therefore – and this remains unproved – these were worked up into a distinctively medieval form, which spread out alongside the accounts of the wandering dead, across much of Europe, before increasingly blending with them in some folk tales to produce a set of composite legends on which Grimm drew. Likewise, although the early modern British images of fairies were ultimately based on an ancient tradition of land spirits, known to the English and Lowland Scots as elves, they were transformed during the later Middle Ages into a new model of a fairy kingdom, which became central to ideas concerning such beings.

Similarly, a worldwide tendency to believe in spirits in animal form must have underlaid the early modern English concept of the witch's animal familiar, but the lack of any sign of that concept in the Middle Ages and the lack of an enduring widespread imprint of it in modern folklore both suggest that it was a development of the early Tudor period and drew heavily on late medieval Christian demonology. What emerges from this is the remarkable dynamism, creativity and mutability of medieval and early

modern popular cultures, which were at least the equal in those respects of literate and elite cultures. In none of those three cases does the belief concerned feature as part of a self-contained world of commoners. That in night-roaming superhuman ladies or a lady comes closest to that, but the very names first credited to the lady concerned, Diana and Herodias, seem to be derived ultimately from classical and scriptural learning. The development of a popular British concept of a fairy kingdom seems to have drawn heavily on literary romance, while that of the English animal familiar depended on a common stock of images of demons in animal shapes, known throughout society.

This portrait of creative and mutable medieval cultures, at all levels of society, calls further into question the former tendency of many scholars, developed during the nineteenth century but remaining strong for most of the twentieth, to categorize many of the beliefs discussed above as 'pagan survivals'. It might also be proposed, however, that to characterize them as 'Christian' instead would be equally inappropriate, save in the broad and not very informative sense that the medieval people who held them were all apparently Christian in at least a formal way. To class all expressions of medieval spirituality according to a polarity between Christianity and paganism is itself a polemical tactic developed by zealous medieval Christians, intent on defining and policing the limits of orthodoxy. It became equally attractive in the nineteenth century to three other kinds of polemic, which retained considerable traction far into the twentieth. One was an attack on Christianity itself, by attempting to prove that during the Middle Ages, often represented as the period of triumphant and largely harmonious Christian piety par excellence, the established religion was actually no more than an elite veneer over a populace still largely faithful to older and more primeval beliefs. The second was a specifically Protestant version of the first, concentrating on demonstrating that Roman Catholicism in particular had failed properly to evangelize the medieval populace, and in some ways encouraged them in superstitious attitudes. The third was a glorification of material and moral progress. This portrayed rural commoners in particular as given historically to the maintenance of outdated and erroneous beliefs and customs, rooted and mired in an ignorant antiquity, and bolstered a call for their education and redemption. What especially matters about the portrait of medieval and early modern culture provided in this book is that it lays an unusually heavy stress on the ability of commoners to develop new beliefs that had little relevance to Christianity rather than simply retaining ideas that predated that religion. The nocturnal processions of the 'Lady' or 'ladies' provide one striking apparent example of that; the fairy kingdom is another. The first was probably rooted in ancient

concepts and the latter certainly so, but the forms they took seem distinctively medieval. Neither made a fit with Christianity, unless by thoroughly demonizing them in a way with which commoners, and in the latter case many members of the elite, were often unwilling to co-operate. There is no sign, however, that any who held these beliefs regarded themselves as pagans, or as adherents of any religion other than Christianity: they seemed to have maintained different cosmologies in parallel to each other, without any adversarial relationship. Nor, indeed, did the orthodox clergy and their lay partners who tried to stamp out these ideas end up regarding those who held them as pagans. Instead, at worst they assimilated those people to established doctrine as heretics and Satanists, fitting them into a Christian framework. The old scholarly classificatory dichotomy between pagan and Christian therefore seems doubly inappropriate. Perhaps in an increasingly post-Christian age, of multi-faith, multi-ethnic and culturally pluralist Western societies, we can develop a new terminology to take account of such phenomena.

The big research question posed at the opening of this book was that of the relevance of ethnographic comparisons, and ancient and earlier medieval ideas as expressed both in the transmission of written texts and in local popular traditions, to the formation of early modern beliefs in witchcraft and the patterning and nature of the trials which resulted. The answers proposed to it have been many and complex, and often not those provided before by historians who have considered the same problem. None the less, it can be suggested that the overall response to the question remains affirmative: that the early modern beliefs and trials can indeed be better understood when worldwide parallels are considered and when the roots of those ideas and events are sought in previous periods of time, extending back as far as history itself. If that suggestion succeeds in encouraging others to follow it up and engender different applications, of their own, then this book will have served a still more useful purpose than it has done by drawing any of the specific conclusions that feature within it.

APPENDIX

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NOTES

A Note on Referencing

In setting out these endnotes, a compromise has needed to be made between providing the fullest possible source references and pressing the boundaries of a generous but still strict word limit. The following conventions have therefore been observed. Instead of a bibliography, full publication details are given of each work cited, afresh, in the notes to each chapter, so they should be relatively easy to trace. When the sources involved are literary texts that exist in a number of different editions (much augmented now by the Internet), references are made to the section and chapter of the original work, to make them easy to trace in any of those editions. Only if a given text exists in only a single edition are references made to page numbers of that.

Author's Note

1. Rodney Needham, *Primordial Characters*, Charlottesville, 1978, 26.
2. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, Cambridge, 2004, 4.
3. Katherine Luongo, *Witchcraft and Colonial Rule in Kenya 1900–1955*, Cambridge, 2011, 49.
4. As before, I follow the practice of referring to the pre-Christian religions of Europe and the Near East as 'pagan', and modern religions which draw on images and ideas from them as 'Pagan', as a simple mark of distinction. For the development of these modern senses of the witch figure, see Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, 1999.
5. I intend to argue this point in detail in a subsequent publication.
6. Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur: Studies in Paganism, Myth and Magic*, London, 2003, 98–135.
7. On this see Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*, Chicago, 2005, 50–61.
8. Ronald Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, London, 2013, viii–ix.

1 The Global Context

1. Most of the material in the first part of this section was published by me as 'Anthropological and Historical Approaches to Witchcraft: Potential for a New Collaboration?', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 413–34, where full quotation and citation are to be found.
2. Keith Thomas, 'The Relevance of Social Anthropology to the Historical Study of English Witchcraft', in Mary Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, London, 1970, 47–8; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, London, 1970, 211–53; Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, Falmer, 1975, 220–3.

3. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*; Max Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Harmondsworth, 1970.
4. Rodney Needham, *Primordial Characters*, Charlottesville, 1978, 23–50.
5. H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562–1684*, Stanford, 1972, 5; E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland*, Ithaca, NY, 1976, 11.
6. T. O. Beidelman, 'Towards More Open Theoretical Interpretations', in Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, 351–6.
7. For example, E. P. Thompson, 'Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context', *Midland History*, 1 (1972), 46–55; and Max Marwick, review of Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, in *Man*, N.S. 6 (1971), 320–21.
8. Hence Edwin Ardener, 'The New Anthropology and its Critics', *Man*, N.S. 6 (1971), 449–67.
9. Hildred Geertz and Keith Thomas, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (1975), 71–110.
10. Malcolm Crick, 'Two Styles in the Study of Witchcraft', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, 4 (1973), 17–31 (quotation on p. 18); and *Expositions in Language and Meaning*, London, 1976, 109–27.
11. For example, Robert Rowland, '"Fantasticall and Devilishe Persons": European Witch Beliefs in Comparative Perspective', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, Oxford, 1990, 161–90.
12. J.H.M. Salmon, 'History without Anthropology: A New Witchcraft Analysis', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 19 (1989), 481–6. Historians in general had internalized this message, which became obvious to me when, from 1991, I began to suggest in guest lectures and seminar papers at other universities that a new attempt to compare data from different parts of the world might be useful, and was invariably told that anthropologists had ruled any such exercise invalid.
13. A.-L. Siikala, 'Introduction', in A.-L. Siikala and M. Hoppal (eds), *Studies on Shamanism*, Helsinki, 1992, 15–16.
14. Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, London, 1992, 83–101; and 'Sorcery Accusations Unleashed', *Africa*, 69 (1999), 177–93.
15. J. S. La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*, Cambridge, 1998, esp. 180–92.
16. Andrew Sanders, *A Deed without a Name*, Oxford, 1995.
17. Ralph A. Austen, 'The Moral Economy of Witchcraft', in Jean and John Comaroff (eds), *Modernity and its Malcontents*, Chicago, 1993, 94; Ray Abrahams (ed.), *Witchcraft in Contemporary Tanzania*, Cambridge, 1994, 12; Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft*, Stanford, 1997.
18. Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, Charlottesville, 1997, 188–223.
19. George Clement Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy (eds), *Witchcraft Dialogues*, Athens, OH, 2001, 5.
20. Adam Ashforth, 'Of Secrecy and the Commonplace', *Social Research*, 63 (1996), 1183–1234.
21. 'The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-hunt', in Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, Manchester, 2002, 16–32; and 'Anthropological and Historical Approaches to Witchcraft'.
22. Published at Cambridge.
23. Of recent examples of anthropological use of history, see Soma Chaudhuri, 'Women as Easy Scapegoats: Witchcraft Accusations and Women as Targets in Tea Plantations of India', *Violence Against Women*, 18 (2012), 1213–34; and Niek Koning, who will be discussed in detail below. A few notable historians of the early modern European trials have recently taken notice of the existence of non-European material. Johannes Dillinger, *Evil People: A Comparative Study of Witch Hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, Charlottesville, VA, 2009, 4–5, urged others to compare it with European concepts of magic. Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2010, used it intermittently to leaven the European data in his necessarily brief study, and tended to emphasize its differences from European patterns. Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-hunt*, London, 2016, 173–6, 375–81, commendably added short global comparisons to his subject matter, and drew attention to the potential value of a more extended application of this method.
24. All are listed either in the endnotes to the book or in its appendix.
25. None the less, though other relevant studies do exist in French, German and Spanish, their number is relatively small: it is notable that the great majority of material used by Behringer for his survey of the globe was in English, though he himself is German. My sample may thus be deemed to contain most of the information actually in print on the subject.

26. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, London, 1996, 394.
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204. Miranda Forsyth and Richard Eves (eds), *Talking It Through: Responses to Sorcery and Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia* (Canberra, 2015) gathers seventeen essays on the problem.
205. Dawn Perlemutter, 'The Politics of Muslim Magic', *Middle East Quarterly*, 20 (2013), 73–80.

206. Slaats and Porter, 'Sorcery and the Law in Modern Indonesia'.
207. Douglas, 'Introduction', in Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, xiii–xxi.
208. On this see particularly Douglas, 'Techniques of Sorcery Control in Central Africa'; and Winter, 'The Enemy Within'.
209. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*, chs 1.1, 1.4, 1.8; John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, Oxford, 1960, 238–50; Jean La Fontaine, 'Witchcraft in Bugisu', in ibid., 187–220; Lawrence and Meggitt, 'Introduction', in Lawrence and Meggitt (eds), *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia*, 16–18; Bowie, 'Witchcraft and Healing among the Bangwa of Cameroon', 71; Lieban, *Cebuano Sorcery*, 19.
210. Geschiere and Fisiy, 'Domesticating Personal Violence'; Drucker-Brown, 'Mamprusi Witchcraft'; Comaroff and Comaroff, 'Occult Economics'; Geschiere, 'Witchcraft and New Forms of Wealth', in Paul Clough and Jon P. Mitchell (eds), *Powers of Good and Evil*, New York, 43–76.
211. Niehaus, 'Witch-hunting and Political Legitimacy', 503; James Howard Smith, *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya*, Chicago, 2008; Brantley, 'An Historical Perspective of the Giriama and Witchcraft Control'.
212. Ibid.
213. Colson, 'The Father as Witch'.
214. BBC3, 'Branded a Witch'.
215. Gerald W. Hartwig, 'Long-Distance Trade and the Evolution of Sorcery among the Kerebe', *African Historical Studies*, 4 (1971), 505–24.
216. Honigman, 'Witch-Fear in Post-contact Kaska Society'.
217. Shapera, 'Sorcery and Witchcraft in Bechuanaland', and Martin Zelenietz, *The Effects of Sorcery in Kilenge, West New Britain Province*, Port Moresby, 1979, are examples of respected scholars who have asserted that witchcraft did occur among the peoples whom they studied, but they do not provide evidence.
218. Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witch-finders'; Parrinder, *Witchcraft*, 173–4.
219. Shirley Lindenbaum, *Kuru Sorcery: Disease and Danger in the New Guinea Highlands*, Palo Alto, CA, 1979, 65.
220. Robert A. Levine, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community', in Middleton and Winter (eds), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, 221–55; Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, ch. 1.
221. Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy*, 63–87.
222. Tina Hamrin-Dahl, 'Witch Accusations, Rapes and Burnings in South Africa', in Tore Ahlbäck (ed.), *Ritualistics*, Åbo, 2003, 56–70.
223. Luongo, *Witchcraft and Colonial Rule in Kenya*, 50–51.
224. Margaret Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gă People*, Oxford, 1937, 138–49.
225. Emmons, *The Tlingit Indians*, 410.
226. Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, ch. 2. The scholars of European witch trials to have taken the most sustained interest in this aspect of the subject have been Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, Falmer, 2010, and Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, Basingstoke, 2008.
227. Walter B. Cannon, 'Voodoo Death', *American Anthropologist*, 44 (1942), 169–81.
228. C. P. Richter, 'On the Phenomenon of Sudden Death in Animals and Men', *Psychosomatic Medicine* 19 (1957), 190–98; G. L. Engel, 'A Life Setting Conducive to Illness', *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 32 (1968), 355–65; David Lester, 'Voodoo Death: Some New Thoughts on an Old Phenomenon', *American Anthropologist*, 74 (1972), 378–85. For a rare examination of this theme in the early modern European context, with an updating of the medical literature, see Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic*, 5–39, 287–303.
229. 'The Sorcerer and His Magic', in John Middleton (ed.), *Magic, Witchcraft and Curing*, New York, 1967, 23–41.
230. The official title of the panel was the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murder in the Northern Province. A copy of its report is available at http://policyresearch.limpopo.gov.za/handle/123456789/406, accessed 15 March 2014. The resulting debate is well summed up by the essays collected in Hund (ed.), *Witchcraft, Violence and the Law in South Africa*.
231. Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*, 261–8.

232. I have already committed myself to this stance during my own minor intervention in the recent debates in South Africa, when its Pagan Federation called me in as an advisor for the development of a common policy that the country's modern Pagans and Pagan witches could adopt in response to the issues. I am especially grateful to the Federation's president at the time, Donna Voss, for the gift of John Hund's edited collection, which was hard to obtain in Britain.
233. For example, Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736–1951*, Manchester, 1999; and *A People Bewitched: Witchcraft and Magic in Nineteenth-century Somerset*, Bruton, 1999; Owen Davies and Willem de Blecourt (eds), *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe*, Manchester, 2004; and *Witchcraft Continued: Popular Magic in Modern Europe*, Manchester, 2004; Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words; Witchcraft in the Bocage*, Cambridge, 1980. The last case personally known to me in England of a persecution of people by their neighbours, among an indigenous community and solely because the latter suspected them of witchcraft in a wholly traditional way, occurred in the Cornish village of Four Lanes in 1984.
234. Nick Britten and Victoria Ward, 'Witchcraft Threat to Children', *Daily Telegraph* (2 March 2012), 1, and Nick Britten, 'Witchcraft Murder that Exposed Hidden Wave of Faith-Based Child Abuse', on p. 6. For helpful historical context, see Thomas Waters, 'Maleficent Witchcraft in Britain since 1900', *History Workshop Journal*, 80 (2015), 99–122.
235. James T. Richardson et al. (eds), *The Satanism Scare*, New York, 1991; David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumours of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History*, Princeton, 2006; La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil*.
236. Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religion and the Media*, Lexington, 2000; Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West*, New Haven, 2013, 240–53.
237. Smith, *Bewitching Development*; Colson, 'The Father as Witch'.

2 The Ancient Context

1. The citations are indeed too numerous for page references: 'passim' is the best one to be attributed to any edition. The *Malleus maleficarum* cited Aristotle, Cicero, Lucan, Ptolemy and Seneca; Boguet cited Plutarch, Virgil, Ovid, Pliny and Philostratus; and del Rio cited Ammianus Marcellinus, Proclus, Apuleius, Antoninus Liberalis, Diodorus Siculus, Aristotle, Cicero, Herodotus, Hesiod, Pomponius Mela, Heliodorus, Virgil, Pliny, Epicurus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, Plotinus, Julian the Apostate, Ovid, Lucan, Tibullus, Plutarch, Seneca, Lucretius, Martial, Hippocrates, Petronius, Plato and Suetonius.
2. The best brief summary of the development of the Macbeth legend seems to be Kenneth D. Farrow, 'The Historiographical Evolution of the Macbeth Narrative', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 21 (1994), 5–23 (I thank Julian Goodare for this reference): the 'Weird Sisters' appear in Andrew of Wyntoun's chronicle *c.* 1420, and become witches in John Bellenden's English translation of Hector Boece's history, in 1536.
3. Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queenes*, London, 1609 edition, lines 1–357.
4. Thus, Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Europe*, Basingstoke, 2001, give two pages (11–12) to show that the Greeks and Romans believed in harmful magic and had a concept of the night-flying witch. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, Cambridge, 2004, allots three (47–50) to demonstrate that the persecution of alleged witches was known in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Rome. Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2010, has passages on four (9, 14, 30 and 47) which argue that the 'nuts and bolts' of witchcraft were already present in Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Palestine. Again, he emphasizes uniformity, as in comments like 'We know a lot about ancient Mesopotamian religion, enough to see how closely it resembles all religions', on p. 9. Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-hunt*, London, 2016, is the main author to draw attention to difference, on three pages (31–3).
5. Fritz Graf, 'Excluding the Charming: The Development of the Greek Concept of Magic', in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, 1995, 29.
6. These are the words of the strongest exponent of such a course, Kimberly B. Stratton, in *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology and Stereotype in the Ancient World*, Columbia, 2007, ix. She herself makes a comparison of definitions of magic among the ancient Hebrews, the pagan Greeks and Romans, and the early Christians.

7. The main recent exponent of this view of Egyptian magic has been Robert Kriech Ritner, in *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago, 1993; and 'The Religious, Social and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic', in Meyer and Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 43–60. It has been endorsed by Geraldine Pinch, *Ancient Egyptian Magic*, London, 1994; Jan Assman, 'Magic and Theology in Ancient Egypt', in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden, 1997, 1–18; David Frankfurter, 'Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category "Magician"', in ibid., 115–35; Dominic Montserrat, *Ancient Egypt*, Glasgow, 2000, 22–3; David Frankfurter, 'Curses, Blessings and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 6 (2005), 157–85; Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, Cambridge, 2009; and Friedhelm Hoffmann, 'Ancient Egypt', in David J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West*, Cambridge, 2015, 52–82. It was, however, stated in outline at the very beginning of the sustained study of the subject, by E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, London, 1899. The whole of the following section of this chapter draws on these authorities, and also on Raymond O. Faulkner's editions of key primary sources: *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Oxford, 1969; *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, Warminster, 3 vols, 1973–6; and *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Plymouth, 1985.
8. The text is translated in Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, 173–7.
9. For what follows here, see Pinch, *Ancient Egyptian Magic*, 33–46; and Panagiotis Kousoulis (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Demonology*, Leuven, 2011.
10. Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 4, lines 216–48.
11. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Book 8, lines 42–5. For a bibliography of recent scholarly references to the trope of Egypt as the land of magic par excellence, see Jan Bremmer's list in Dietrich Boschung and Jan Bremmer (eds), *The Materiality of Magic*, Paderborn, 2015, p. 254, no. 53.
12. Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, viii.
13. The sources for this paragraph are the sum of those in the notes below.
14. Marie-Louise Thomsen, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia', in Marie-Louise Thomsen and Frederick H. Cryer (eds), *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume One*, London, 2001, 93.
15. Thomsen, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia', 88–92; Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture*, Cambridge, 2004; A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, Chicago, 1964, 206–27; Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, Philadelphia, 1995. A key set of primary texts in translation is R. Campbell Thompson (ed.), *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon*, 2 vols, London, 1900.
16. Tzvi Abusch, 'The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature', in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Religion, Science and Magic*, Oxford, 1989, 27–31. Anthony Green, 'Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons', *Visible Religion*, 3 (1984), 80–105; O. R. Gurney, 'Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and their Rituals', *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, 22 (1935), 31–96; Daniel Schwemer, 'Magic Rituals', in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, Oxford, 2011, 418–42; and 'The Ancient Near East', in Collins (ed.), *Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West*, 17–51. Primary texts of rites are found translated in Gurney, above; Erica Reiner (ed.), *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations*, Graz, 1958; and R. Campbell Thompson (ed.), *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, 2 vols, London, 1903.
17. G. R. Driver and John C. Miles (eds), *The Babylonian Laws*, Oxford, 1952, vol. 1, 13–14, 58–9. The use of such a river ordeal was common for settling both criminal charges and civil suits throughout ancient Mesopotamian history: the sources are summarized by Peter Tóth, 'River Ordeal', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions*, Budapest, 2008, 131. Russell Zguta, 'The Ordeal by Water (Swimming of Witches) in the East Slavic World', *Slavic Review*, 36 (1977), 220–30, was seemingly the first to suggest that this could be the origin of the notorious medieval and early modern popular European custom of detecting witches by putting suspects into deep water and declaring guilty those who floated. I accepted this idea myself in 'Witchcraft and Modernity', in Marko Nenonen and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Writing Witch-hunt Histories*, Leiden, 2014, 199, but now have doubts. The test of innocence in the Babylonian ordeal was precisely the opposite of that in the later European one, and the latter may have been an independent development after all, based on the

Christian rite of baptism. Peter Tóth, in 'River Ordeal', expresses a similar possibility, while still holding out hope for Zguta's suggestion.

18. The essential femininity of the ancient Mesopotamian witch is stressed by almost all the secondary sources cited here, but there is possibly room for some qualification of it. The Code of Hammurabi, cited above, assumed that witches were male, which may mean that the gender stereotype changed between the second and first millennia. Also, Daniel Schwemer, in 'Magic Rituals', 432–4, has noted that there are references to a kind of evil male magician, the *bēl dabābi*, who is mentioned more often than his female equivalent, the *bēlet dabābi*, and also seems equivalent to a witch. The balance of gendering may therefore be to some extent a linguistic illusion.
19. Thomsen, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia', 23–56; Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, Leiden, 2002; H.W.F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, London, 1962; Sue Rollin, 'Women and Witchcraft in Ancient Assyria', in Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Images of Women in Antiquity*, London, 1983, 34–46; Schwemer, 'Magic Rituals'. The editions of primary texts referenced above remain very relevant here, and to them should be added Tzvi Abusch (ed.), *Babylonian Witchcraft Literature*, Atlanta, 1987; Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer (eds), *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, Leiden, 2011; and Stephen Langdon (ed.), *Babylonian Liturgies*, Paris, 1913.
20. There is one recent substantial study: Satnan Mendoza Forrest, *Witches, Whores and Sorcerers: The Concept of Evil in Early Iran*, Austin, TX, 2011.
21. Gabriella Frantz-Szabó, 'Hittite Witchcraft, Magic and Divination', in Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, New York, 1995, vol. 3, 2007–19. For other works on Hittite magic, see Richard H. Beal, 'Hittite Military Rituals', in Meyer and Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 63–76; O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, Oxford, 1977, 44–63; and Alice Mouton, 'Hittite Witchcraft', in *VII Uluslarasi Hititoloji Kongresi Bildirileri*, Ankara, 2010 (no editors named), vol. 2, 515–28. I am grateful to Jan Bremmer for drawing my attention to the last piece.
22. This is based primarily on Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, Cambridge, 2008, 8–19, which confirms ideas and evidence found in Stephen D. Ricks, 'The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament', in Meyer and Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 131–43. Ann Jeffries, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden, 1996; Frederick H. Cryer, 'Magic in Ancient Syria-Palestine and in the Old Testament', in Thomsen and Cryer, *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume One*, 102–44; and Yitschak Sefati and Jacob Klein, 'The Law of the Sorceress', in Chaim Cohen et al. (eds), *Sefer Moshe*, Winona Lake, IN, 2004, 171–90; and is supplemented by Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 34–7.
23. Again, Bohak is my main authority: *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 70–142, supplemented by Florentino Garcia Martinez, 'Magic in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Leuven, 2002, 13–33; and Brian B. Schmidt, 'Canaanite Magic vs Israelite Religion', in Mirecki and Meyer (eds), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden, 2002, 242–59.
24. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 351–434; Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 143–64; Simcha Fishbane, '"Most Women Engage in Sorcery": An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud', *Jewish History*, 7 (1993), 27–42; Meir Bar-Ilan, 'Witches in the Bible and in the Talmud', in H. W. Basser and Simcha Fishbane (eds), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, Atlanta, 1993, 7–32; Jonathan Seidel, 'Charming Criminals: Classification of Magic in the Babylonian Talmud', in Meyer and Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 145–66; Leo Mock, 'Were the Rabbis Troubled by Witches?', *Zutot*, 1 (2001), 33–43; Rebecca Lesses, 'Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 69 (2001), 342–75; M. J. Geller, 'Deconstructing Talmudic Magic', in Charles Burnett and W. F. Ryan (eds), *Magic and the Classical Tradition*, London, 2006, 1–18; Michael D. Swartz, 'Jewish Magic in Late Antiquity', in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Cambridge, 2006, vol. 4, 706–7; Michele Murray, 'The Magical Female in Graeco-Roman Rabbinical Literature', *Religion and Theology*, 14 (2007), 284–309; Daniel Breslaver, 'Secrecy and Magic, Publicity and Torah', in Mirecki and Meyer (eds), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 263–82.
25. This was noted by H. S. Versnel, 'Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion', *Numen*, 38 (1991), 177–97; and (more fully) by Graf, 'Excluding the Charming', but seems to have been largely forgotten in the debate reviewed by me (with my own contribution) in *Witches, Druids*

and King Arthur, London, 2003, 98–117. The key ancient texts are printed in Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Ancient World*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 2009, 1–50.

26. 'Hippocrates', *On the Sacred Disease*, 1.10–46: quotation at 1.31.
27. Plato, *Laws*, 909B.
28. This change over time was valuably emphasized by Jan Bremmer, 'Appendix', in Bremmer and Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 267–71.
29. Primary sources include Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, lines 380–403; Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, c. 10; Euripides, *Suppliants*, line 1110; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, line 1338; and *Orestes*, line 1497; Plato, *Republic*, 364B–E and *Laws*, 10.909A–D; Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, lines 749–51; and the Derveni Papyrus (printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 23). Important discussions are in Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, MA, 1994, 21–31; Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London, 2001, 28–36; Georg Luck, 'Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature', in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume Three: Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, 1999, 98–107; Sarah Iles Johnston, 'Songs for the Ghosts', in David R. Jordan et al. (eds), *The World of Ancient Magic*, Bergen, 1999, 83–102; and *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1999), 82–123; Jan Bremmer, 'The Birth of the Term "Magic" ', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 126 (1999), 1–12; Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*, Oxford, 2007, 26–41; Michael Attyah Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley, 2008; and Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 39–69.
30. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 27–9; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 22–33; Richard Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', in Ankarloo and Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume Two*, 178–80; Johnston, 'Songs for the Ghosts'; and *Restless Dead*, 82–123; Bremmer, 'The Birth of the Term "Magic" '; Stratton, *Naming the Witch,* 39–47.
31. The probable influence of Mesopotamian models on Greek ideas of magic, and practitioners, has been emphasized by Walter Burkert, 'Itinerant Diviners and Magicians', in Robin Hägg (ed.), *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century*, Stockholm, 1983, 115–19; and M. L West, *The East Face of Helicon*, Oxford, 1997, 46–51.
32. Heraclitus, writing around 500 BC, might be interpreted as providing one. However, this passage of his work is only preserved in a much later text, Clement of Alexandria's, *Protrepticus*, c. 22, and may be distorted. Moreover, he condemns *magoi* not as magicians, but in their original role as Persian priests, as part of a warning against novel and exotic forms of religion.
33. Plato, *Laws*, 909A–D.
34. The main sources for the case, and for those of accidental poisoning, are printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 106–7; in addition there is Plutarch, *Demosthenes*, 14.4. They are discussed in Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses and Risk*, 145–55; and 'Patterns of Persecution: "Witchcraft" Trials in Classical Athens', *Past and Present*, 208 (2010), 9–35; Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, Oxford, 2008, 133–6; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 51–4; and Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', 251. Another woman, called Ninon, was tried and executed for impiety in introducing unfamiliar religious rites, but this had no obvious relevance to magic.
35. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 55–61.
36. Aesop, *Fables*, no. 26.
37. Both inscriptions are translated in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 275–7.
38. Termed *agurtai* and *manteis*.
39. Many are translated in John Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, Oxford, 1992; and there is a catalogue in Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses and Risk*, 352–454. They are discussed by those historians, and by Christopher A. Faraone, 'The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells', in Faraone and Dirk Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford, 1991, 3–32; Daniel Ogden, 'Binding Spells', in Ankarloo and Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume Two*, 38–86; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 48–50; Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 64–103. Plato's reference is in his *Republic*, 364B-C.
40. The main primary texts are Homer, *Odyssey*, c. 10; Euripides, *Medea*; Hesiod, *Theogony*; Eumelus, fragments of *Corinthiaca*; fragments of *Naupactica* and *Nostoi*; Pindar, *Fourth Pythian Ode*; and Sophocles, *Rhizotomoi*. Most are printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 82–95, 312–13. Ogden himself, in *Night's Black Agents*, London, 2008, 7–35, makes a

spirited defence of the idea that both Circe and Medea could be regarded as witches, against a current apparent majority view that they cannot. I hold here (for reasons given) to the majority, summed up by Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 5, 15, 34, 128, 135. A lot, however, hinges on the definition made of a witch, which varies between the different commentators, and within his own one, Ogden is correct.

41. On this see Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 79–95; and 'Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and the Ancient World', *Classical Quarterly*, N.S. 50 (2000), 563–83; Ogden, 'Binding Spells', 62–5; and Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, 211–39.
42. This is a point especially made by Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 49–71.
43. It first appears in Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, lines 749–57. This and other sources are reproduced in D. E. Hill, 'The Thessalian Trick', *Rheisches Museum für Philologie*, 116 (1973), 221–38; and (of course) Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 226–40. For academic considerations of the trope, see the list compiled by Jan Bremmer in Boschung and Bremmer (eds), *The Materiality of Magic*, 252, to which can be added P. J. Bicknell, 'The Dark Side of the Moon', in Ann Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Canberra, 1984, 67–75.
44. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 97–123.
45. Fritz Graf, 'Magic and Divination: Two Apolline Oracles on Magic', in Gideon Bohak at al. (eds), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, Leiden, 2011, 119–33.
46. Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.1–20; Seneca, *Oedipus*, lines 561–3.
47. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 8.7.9–10.
48. Apuleius, *Apologia*, 26.6.
49. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.9.14.1–8.
50. For what follows, see Mary Beard et al., *Religions of Rome*, Cambridge, 1998, vol. 1, 154–6; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 135–9; Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, London, 2001, 1–16; Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 79–99; James B. Rives, '"Magus" and its Cognates in Classical Latin', in Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simon (eds), *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, Leiden, 2010, 53–77; J. A. North, 'Novelty and Choice in Roman Religion', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 70 (1980), 86–91; and Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 36–60.
51. Reference at n. 46.
52. What follows is based on the sources at n. 50, plus James Rives, 'Magic in the XII Tables Revisited', *Classical Quarterly*, 52 (2002), 270–90; and 'Magic in Roman Law', *Classical Antiquity*, 22 (2003), 313–39; and Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 141–62. For the pivotal third-century ruling, see Julius Paulus, *Sententiae*, 5.23.14–19.
53. Livy, *History*, 8.18, 39.41 and 40.43.
54. Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman Magic', 254–5, is an example of a distinguished historian who believes that the word signified magic.
55. Printed by Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 284.
56. Printed in ibid., 333.
57. For example, Virgil, *Eclogue* 8.2.
58. Horace, *Epodes*, 3.6–8; 5, passim; and 17; and *Satires*, 1.8; 2.1.48; and 2.8.95–6.
59. Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 6.415–830.
60. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.478–508.
61. Ovid, *Amores*, 1.8.
62. Propertius, *Poems*, 4.5.5–18.
63. Tibullus, *Poems*, 1.2.41–58.
64. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 1.3–8; 2.22–8; 9.29.
65. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.159–351; and *Heroides*, 6.83–94; Seneca, *Medea*, passim; *Orphic Argonautica*, lines 887–1021; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 26.
66. Petronius, *Satyricon*, cc. 133–4.
67. Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 79–96.
68. The references are collected in Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion*, Cambridge, 2006, 96; and printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 222–6. I think those to Catullus and Horace ambiguous, but accept and cite the rest.
69. The main sources are printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 281–4.
70. Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.27; 2.55; 2.69; 3.22–3; 4.52. These texts are well collated and discussed by Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 100–105.

71. Sources at n. 39; plus Beard et al., *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1, 220. I accept the argument of Henk Versnel, that many of the tablets from the imperial period often grouped together with curse tablets are found in temples and shrines, and should be regarded instead as prayers to deities to avenge misdoings, and so not part of the traditional category of magic at all: his latest salvo in this, summing up the evidence and the debate to date, is in his essay 'Prayers for Justice, East and West', in Gordon and Simon (eds), *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 275–354.
72. Published in Wolfgang Meid, *Gaulish Inscriptions*, Budapest, 1992, 40–46.
73. Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, Ann Arbor, 2012.
74. Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.19.
75. Printed in Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts*, 48.
76. Fritz Graf, 'Victimology', in Kimberly B. Stratton with Dayna S. Kalleres (eds), *Daughters of Hecate*, Oxford, 2014, 386–417.
77. David Frankfurter, 'Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 46 (2006), 37–62.
78. Isaac Shapera, 'Sorcery and Witchcraft in Bechuanaland', *African Affairs*, 51 (1952), 41–52.
79. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, 1922, 73–7, 239–42, 393.
80. Alex Scobie, 'Strigiform Witches in Roman and Other Cultures', *Fabula*, 19 (1978), 74–101.
81. For original texts, see O. R. Gurney, 'Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and their Rituals'; and Langdon, *Babylonian Liturgies*, 12–15. For commentaries, Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, Detroit, 3rd edition, 1990, 221–2; Thompson, *Semitic Magic*, 65–8; Schwemer, 'Magic Rituals', 427–8; Markham J. Geller, 'Tablets and Magical Bowls', in Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, Leiden, 2005, 53–72; Kathrin Trattner, 'From Lamashtu to Lilith', *Disputatio Philosophica*, 15 (2014), 109–18.
82. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 222. A much more famous terracotta figure of a nude winged female figure with clawed feet in the British Museum, known as the Burney Relief, or more romantically as the Queen of the Night, has often been used uncritically as a depiction of a *lilitu*, or simply of 'Lilith'. From her iconography, however, she is certainly not a demoness but a goddess: Dominique Collon, *The Queen of the Night*, London, 2005.
83. This has been strongly argued by Judit M. Blair, *De-Demonising the Old Testament*, Tübingen, 2009, 63–95.
84. Original texts can be found in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked (eds), *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem, 3rd edition, 1998. Commentaries on them and on Lilith(s) in the Talmud and after are in Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 223–40; Lesses, 'Exe(o)rcizing Power'; Geller, 'Tablets and Magical Bowls'; and Blair, *De-Demonising the Old Testament*, 24–30.
85. The main texts for the *lamia* are printed in Daniel Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents and Slayers in the Classical and Early Christian Worlds: A Sourcebook*, Oxford, 2013, 68–107. Discussions are in Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 119–23, 165–79; and 'Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon', in Meyer and Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 361–87; Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford, 2013, 86–92; and Stamatios Zochios, 'Lamia', *Trictrac*, 4 (2011), 96–112 (I am grateful to the author for the gift of this article).
86. For discussion, see Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, Cambridge MA, 1992, 82–7; Ogden, *Drakōn*, 95; Johnston, 'Defining the Dreadful', 380.
87. All the more important primary texts are printed in Samuel Grant Oliphant, 'The Story of the Strix', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 44 (1913), 133–49; and 45 (1914), 49–63, to which material can be added from Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.131–68. Discussions are found in Oliphant's article and in David Walter Leinweber, 'Witchcraft and Lamiae in "The Golden Ass"', *Folklore*, 105 (1994), 77–82; Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 165–9; and Laura Cherubini, 'The Virgin, the Bear and the Upside-Down Strix', *Arethusa*, 42 (2009), 77–97. The following observations are based on these sources.
88. Ovid, *Amores*, 1.8.2; and *Fasti*, 6.131–68.
89. Sextus Pompeius Festus, *De verborum significatione*, 314.33, printed in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 95, col. 1668. Festus probably wrote in the second century, but was summarizing a work of Verrius Flaccus from the first.
90. (?Pseudo-) Lucian, *Lucius or the Ass*, c. 12; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, c. 16.
91. Apuleius, Metamorphoses, 1.17, 5.11.

92. It was Norman Cohn who first noticed and exploited the full potential of this, in *Europe's Inner Demons*, London, 2nd edition, 1993, 162–6. Some of the primary texts were published in P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, Basingstoke, 2005, 135–6.
93. *Pactus legis Salicae*, texts 19 and 64, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges. Section One. Volume Four. Part One*, Hanover, 1962, 81–2, 230–31.
94. *Leges Alamannorum*, Fragmentum II, paragraph 31, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges. Section One. Volume Five*, Hanover, 1962, 23.
95. *Edictus Rothari*, nos 197–8, 376, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges. Section One. Volume Four*, Witzenhausen, 1962, 53, 91.
96. *Capitularia Regum Francorum, Capitulatio de partibus Saxonicae*, paragraph 6, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges. Section Two. Volume One*, Hanover, 1973, pp. 68–9.
97. Again, it was Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 164–6, who drew attention to the trail of texts leading into the medieval period.
98. Paul Piper (ed.), *Notkers und seiner Schule Schriften*, Freiburg, 1883, vol. 1, 787. The term used for witches is the standard medieval German one.
99. Burchard, *Decretum*, Book 19, c. 170.
100. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, Book 3, cc. 85–8.
101. Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.50.
102. Tacitus, *Germania*, c. 8.
103. Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. James Steven Stallybrass, London, 1883, vol. 1, 95–7, 396; Grimm quotes the other relevant primary sources, Strabo, Dio Cassius, Gregory of Tours and Saxo Grammaticus.

3 The Shamanic Context

1. Graham Harvey, 'Introduction', in Harvey (ed.), *Shamanism: A Reader*, London, 2003, 18.
2. For accounts of its development, see Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton, 1992; Jane Monnig Atkinson, 'Shamanisms Today', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21 (1992), 307–30; Peter N. Jones, 'Shamanism', *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 17 (2006), 4–32; Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and the Western Imagination*, Oxford, 2007; and Jeroen W. Boekhoven, *Genealogies of Shamanism*, Groningen, 2011.
3. Examples of all these employments of the term are found in works cited in the sources above. For a range of discussions and characterizations since the century began, see Alice Beck Kehoe, *Shamans and Religion*, Prospect Heights, 2000; Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley (eds), *Shamans Through Time*, London, 2001; Henri-Paul Francfort and Roberte N. Hamayon (eds), *The Concept of Shamanism*, Budapest, 2001; Alby Stone, *Explore Shamanism*, Loughborough, 2003; Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 2006, 174–96; Graham Harvey and Robert J. Wallis, *Historical Dictionary of Shamanism*, Lanham MD, 2007, 2; Aldo Colleoni, 'Shamanism', in Colleoni (ed.), *Mongolian Shamanism*, Ulan Bator, 2007, 25–35; Angela Sumegi, *Dreamworlds of Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism*, New York, 2008, 1–25; Thomas A. Dubois, *An Introduction to Shamanism*, Cambridge, 2009; Christine S. Van Pool, 'The Signs of the Sacred', *Journal of Anthropology and Archaeology*, 28 (2009), 177–90; H. Sidky, 'Ethnographic Perspectives on Differentiating Shamans from other Ritual Intercessors', *Asian Ethnology*, 69 (2010), 213–40; Adam J. Rock and Stanley Krippner, *Demystifying Shamans and their World*, Exeter, 2011, x–xi, 1–40; Diana Riboli and Davide Torri (eds), *Shamanism and Violence*, Farnham, 2013, 1; Marcel de Lima, *The Ethnopoetics of Shamanism*, Basingstoke, 2014, 1–5.
4. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, London, 1983; and *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, London, 1992; quotation on p. 300. His argument, based on older theories, was that shamanic practices had been brought to Europe by prehistoric migrations across the steppes: for the subsequent fate of these theories see Jan N. Bremmer, 'Shamanism in Classical Scholarship: Where Are We Now?', in Peter Jackson (ed) *Horizons of Shamanism*, *Stockholm*, 2016, 52–78, which also reflects on Ginzburg's use of them.
5. Boekhoven, *Genealogies of Shamanism*, 129.
6. His great book was *Shamanism*, the English edition of which was first published in London in 1964. For my own critique of his definition, see Ronald Hutton, *Shamans*, London, 2001, especially at pp. 120–31; others may be found in works cited at nn.1, 2 and 4 above.

7. Mircea Eliade, 'Some Observations on European Witchcraft', *History of Religions*, 14 (1975), 149–72. For the apparent influence of Eliade on Ginzburg see also Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive*, Oxford, 2007, 170–86: Znamenski also emphasizes the importance to Ginzburg's thought of his appointment to a chair at the University of California Los Angeles, a particular centre of enthusiasm for Eliade's concept of shamanism.
8. This connection was especially made in the publications of Vilmos Dioszegi, the great mid-twentieth-century Magyar scholar of Siberian shamanism.
9. From a long list of their publications, some edited in partnership, the most relevant here are probably Gábor Klaniczay, 'Shamanistic Elements in Central European Witchcraft', in Mihály Hoppál (ed.), *Shamanism in Eurasia*, Göttingen, 1984, 404–22; and Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, Budapest, 1999.
10. Klaniczay, 'Shamanistic Elements'; Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 14–15.
11. Gábor Klaniczay, Éva Pócs and Carlo Ginzburg, contributions to the Round Table Discussion, in Klaniczay and Pócs (eds), *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions*, Budapest, 2008, 37–42, 45–9. See also Klaniczay, 'Shamanism and Witchcraft', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 214–21.
12. At least in the English translation of his microhistory, bearing that title, made by Erik Midelfort and published at Charlottesville in 1998.
13. Eleven years of articulation of this opinion are summed up neatly in Henningsen's contribution to the Round Table Discussion at n. 11, on pp. 35–7. For its first expression see Henningsen, 'The White Sabbath and Other Archaic Patterns of Witchcraft', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Witch Beliefs and Witch Hunting in Central and Southern Europe*, Budapest, 1992, 293–304.
14. The critiques of Ginzburg's ideas by Anglophone historians are summed up with references by Yme Kuiper, 'Witchcraft, Fertility Cults and Shamanism', in Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (eds), *Religion in Cultural Discourse*, Berlin, 2006, 35–59. Since 2005 two British scholars, Emma Wilby and Julian Goodare, have applied them to material from their island, with results that will be considered later in this book.
15. I have made exploratory attempts at this exercise in 'Shamanism: Mapping the Boundaries', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 209–13; and before expert audiences at Åbo University, Finland, in 2007 and Harvard University in 2009. I am very grateful to members of those for their helpful and supportive comments, and above all to Carlo Ginzburg himself, at Harvard, for his generosity.
16. In *Between the Living and the Dead*, 7.
17. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, Book 3, c. 34.
18. Gerald of Wales, *Itinerary Through Wales*, c. 16.
19. Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, Exeter, 2000, 226.
20. Matt Goldish, 'Vision and Possession: Nathan of Gaza's Earliest Prophecies in Historical Context', in Goldish (ed.), *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, Detroit, 2003, 217–36.
21. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 188.
22. The classic work of this kind is Miranda and Stephen Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman*, London, 2005.
23. For other considerations of this problem, see Neil Price (ed.), *The Archaeology of Shamanism*, London, 2001; Michael Winkelman, 'Archaeology and Shamanism', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 12 (2002), 268–70; Christine S. Van Pool, 'The Signs of the Sacred', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 28 (2009), 177–90; and Homayun Sidky, 'On the Antiquity of Shamanism and its Role in Human Religiosity', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22 (2010), 68–92.
24. The term 'rite technique' is adopted from Anna-Leena Siikala's *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*, Helsinki, 1987. The summary of Siberian shamanism that follows is based on my own *Shamans*, a book which was designed specifically as one of the foundations of the present one. It was based on a survey of the texts that recorded Siberian shamanism, in all languages, up to the early twentieth century.
25. Alexander D. King, 'Soul-Suckers', *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 10 (1999), 59–68. This study is of recent beliefs among the people concerned, but the author treats them as traditional.
26. The two classic studies of the Sakha's traditional culture, Waclaw Sieroszewski, *Yakuti*, St Petersburg, 1896, and Waldemar Jochelson, *The Yakut*, New York, 1933, do not seem to mention this belief, but it is recorded in Russian legal records from the seventeenth century,

studied in S. Tokarev, 'Shamanstvo u Iakutov v 17 veke', translated in Andrei A. Znamenski (ed.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Dordrecht, 2003, 260–63. I am grateful to Professor Znamenski for the gift of this book.

27. Frederica de Laguna, 'The Tlingit', in William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell (eds), *Crossroads of Continents*, Washington DC, 1988, 58–63; Merete D. Jakobsen, *Shamanism*, New York, 1999, 94–100; George Thornton Emmons, *The Tlingit Indians*, ed. Frederica de Laguna, Seattle, 1991, 398–410; Daniel Merkur, 'Contrary to Nature', in Tore Ahlbäck (ed.), *Saami Religion*, Abo, 1987, 279–93.
28. Piers Vitebsky, *The Shaman*, London, 1995, 25.
29. Ágnes Várkonyi, 'Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Hygiene', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 37 (1991–2), 427–31.
30. Laura Stark-Arola, *Magic, Body and Social Order*, Helsinki, 2006, 44–9.
31. Vilmos Dioszegi, *Tracing Shamans in Siberia*, Oosteehout, 1968, 61–5; Jeno Fazekas, 'Hungarian Shamanism', in Henry N. Michael (ed.), *Studies in Siberian Shamanism*, Toronto, 1963, 97–119; Mihály Hoppál, *Shamans and Traditions*, Budapest, 2007, 60–96: Tekla Dömötör, 'The Cunning Folk in English and Hungarian Witch Trials', in Venetia Newall (ed.), *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century*, Woodbridge, 1980, 183–7. Dioszegi found parallels between Hungarian and Siberian folk myth, which may be telling, but are not directly associated with the *táltos*.
32. V. M. Mikhailowskii, 'Shamanism in Siberia and European Russia', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 24 (1895), 151–7.
33. This reference was turned up by Clive Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, Helsinki, 2009, vol. 1, 81, who provides the text and a translation.
34. *Historia Norwegiae*, 4.13.23.
35. *Vatnsdaela saga*, c. 12.
36. *Ynglinga saga* c. 13; *Ólafs saga helga*, in *Heimskringla*, ed. Erling Monson, Cambridge, 1932, 222; *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, c. 25; *Thorsteins thattr boejarmagns*, c. 14.
37. Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson, St Paul MN, 2000, 629.
38. Rune Hagen, 'Lapland', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, Santa Barbara, 2006, 125.
39. The original texts are quoted and analysed in Ahlbäck (ed.), *Saami Religion*; Carl-Martin Edsman, 'A Manuscript Concerning Inquiries into Witchcraft in Swedish Lapland', *Arv*, 39 (1983), 121–39; Juha Pentinkäinen, 'The Saami Shaman', in Hoppál (ed.), *Shamanism in Eurasia*, 125–48; Tore Ahlbäck and Jan Bergman (eds), *The Saami Shaman Drum*, Abo, 1987; Ake Hultkranz, 'Aspects of Saami (Lapp) Shamanism', in Mihály Hoppál and Juha Pentikäinen (eds), *Northern Religions and Shamanism*, Budapest, 1992, 138–45.
40. Prominent examples since 1990 have included Ake Hultkranz, Juha Pentinkäinen, Clive Tolley, Neil Price, John Lindow, Anna-Leena Siikala and Liv Helene Willumsen.
41. Rune Blix Hagen, 'Sami Shamanism', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 227–33; and 'Witchcraft and Ethnicity', in Marko Nenonen and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Writing Witch-hunt Histories*, Leiden, 2014, 141–66.
42. Furthermore, Hagen quotes the trial record on which he chiefly relies as stating that the *noaidi* concerned 'shed tears and appeared to be in a state of utmost devotion' while playing his drum before the court. This – an eyewitness account – does sound rather like an altered state of consciousness: 'Sami Shamanism', 229.
43. The early modern account which I have been able to read in its entirety myself, by Knud Leem and translated in John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*, London, 1808, vol. 1, 477–8, could be, in every detail, a report of a Siberian shamanic performance.
44. Laura Stark-Arola, *Magic, Body and Social Order*, Helsinki, 2006, passim; Anna-Leena Siikala, *Mythic Images and Shamanism*, Helsinki, 2002, passim.
45. Siikala, *Mythic Images*, 17.
46. Sophia Kingsmill and Jennifer Westwood, *The Fabled Coast*, London, 2012, 330–31.
47. Neil Price, *The Viking Way*, Uppsala, 2002; quotations on pp. 315, 328, 390. He outlines previous debates over the issue on pp. 76–8, 233–5, and provides an excellent account of Sámi shamanism on pp. 233–75. Subsequent to this, Peter Buchholtz has succinctly restated the

case for clear shamanic traits in Old Norse literature: 'Shamanism in Medieval Scandinavian Literature', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Communicating with the Spirits*, Budapest, 2005, 234–45.

48. Clive Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, 2 vols, Helsinki, 2009: quotation on vol.1, p. 581 (with his emphasis). On pp. 3–4 of the same volume he sums up the historical debate over the issue (giving more weight than Price to the negative view), and in his second volume helpfully reprints most of the relevant medieval texts with translations.
49. *Eiriks saga rauða*, c. 4. In his discussion of the text in *The Viking Way*, 119–22, 162–71, Neil Price criticizes me for calling Thorbjorg unique in medieval Norse literature (in *Shamans*, 140), while praising my book in general. He points out rightly that this literature has several other seeresses. I meant only that none of the others has all her attributes together, including the costume, and when that misunderstanding is removed, he and I are in general agreement.
50. *Örvar-Odds saga*, c. 3.
51. *Friðthjofs saga fraekna*, c. 5.
52. *Gongu-Hrólfs saga*, c. 3.
53. *Hrólfs saga Kraka*, cc. 3, 48.
54. *Hrólfs saga Kraka*, c. 48.
55. *Ynglinga saga*, c. 7. Katherine Morris, *Sorceress or Witch? The Image of Gender in Medieval Iceland and Northern Europe*, Lanham, MD, 1991, 97–117 has a discussion of shape-shifting among Norse deities in general; see also H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Shape-changing in the Old Norse Sagas', in J. R. Porter and W.M.S. Russell (eds), *Animals in Folklore*, Cambridge, 1978, 126–42.
56. *The Saga of Howard the Halt*, ed. William Morris and Eikíkr Magnússon, London, 1891, 58–91.
57. *Vatnsdaela saga*, c. 29.
58. The sources are collected in Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, vol. 2, 133–6.
59. *Laxdaela saga*, c. 76.
60. *Fóstbraeðra saga*, c. 23.
61. Price, *The Viking Way*, 175–80, 325–7.
62. *Norna-Gests Háttr*, c. 11; *Orms háttr Stórólfssonar*, cc. 5–6.
63. *Laxdaela saga*, cc. 35–7; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, c. 18. John McKinnell, *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend*, Cambridge, 2005, 97, argues that the motif of the *seiðr* platform is ancient, because in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Life of Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus (c. 13) a pagan magician is shown cursing a Christian party from a hill: but there is nothing in that text to suggest that mounting the hill is a magical act, as opposed to the gaining of a practical vantage point. The antiquity of the concept is therefore an open question.
64. *Thiðreks saga*, c. 352.
65. *Kormáks saga*, c. 22.
66. *Völsunga saga*, cc. 5, 7, 8.
67. *Eyrbyggja saga*, c. 20. More examples of shape-shifting in Icelandic literature may be found in Morris, *Sorceress or Witch?*, 93–128.
68. *Bosi and Herraud,* in *Seven Viking Romances*, ed. Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards, London, 1985, 204–8; *Grettis saga*, c. 79; *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, c. 18; *Kormáks saga*, c. 22; *Fóstbraeðra saga*, c. 9; *Vatnsdaela saga*, c. 19; *Faereyinga saga*, cc. 34, 37.
69. For which see Gísli Pálsson, 'The Name of the Witch', in Ross Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, Glasgow, 1991, 157–68.
70. Such a suggestion has been made, and opposed, since the 1930s: see Price, *The Viking Way*, 315–17 for a summary of that debate.
71. Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, 152–66. Morris, *Sorceress or Witch?*, 26–92, provides ample data for prophetic women in general, in medieval Scandinavian and German sources.
72. Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.65.
73. *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue*, ed. R. Quirk, London, 1957, 18.
74. *Hávamál*, line 155.
75. Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, 129–30.
76. *Ketils saga haengs*, c. 3.
77. *Thorsteins thattr boejarmagns*, c. 2.
78. Tolley collects the medieval legal references, in *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, 133–4.
79. *Eyrbyggja saga*, c. 16.

4 Ceremonial Magic – The Egyptian Legacy?

1. Robert Turner (ed.), *Henry Cornelius Agrippa His Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, London, 1655, Sig A2.
2. George Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraft*, London, 1593, 54.
3. Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson, St Paul, MN, 2000, li.
4. Johann Weyer, *De Lamiis*, c. 1.
5. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 2nd edition, London, 1993, 102.
6. This self-image is expressed especially well in Frank Klaassen, 'Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Sixteenth-century Journal*, 38 (2007), 49–76; and Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Holy and the Unholy: Sainthood, Witchcraft and Magic in Late Medieval Europe', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 24 (1994), 355–85.
7. For general surveys of this tradition, see Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1989; and Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton, 1993.
8. The sources for the first statement would comprise most of those to be cited in Chapter Seven. The second one is readily supported, inter alia, by Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 102–43; J. R. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France*, Leiden, 1998; and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The British Witch*, Stroud, 2014, 1–114.
9. Jean Bodin, *De la demonomanie des sorciers*, Paris, 1580, Book 1, c. 1.
10. For a selection of such studies, see T. Fahd, 'Retour à Ibn Wahshiyya', *Arabica*, 16 (1963), 83–8; Jack Lindsay, *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, London, 1970; David Pingree, 'Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-Hakim', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43 (1980), 1–15; 'Between the "Ghaya" and "Picatrix"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 44 (1981), 27–56; 'The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe', in *La Diffusione delle Scienze Islamiche nel Medio Evo Europeo*, Rome, 1987, 57–102; 'Indian Planetary Images and the Tradition of Astral Magic', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), 1–13; and 'Learned Magic in the Time of Frederick II', *Micrologus*, 2 (1994), 39–56; Peter Kingsley, 'From Pythagoras to the "Turba Philosophorum"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 57 (1994), 1–13; Charles Burnett, *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England*, London, 1997; and 'Late Antique and Medieval Latin Translations of Greek Texts on Astrology and Magic', in Paul Magdalino and Maria Mauroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, Geneva, 2006, 325–59; W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, Stroud, 1999; and Charles Burnett and W. F. Ryan (eds), *Magic and the Classical Tradition*, London, 2006.
11. Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, Stroud, 1997, 11.
12. Michael D. Bailey, 'The Meanings of Magic', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 1–23; 'The Age of the Magicians', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 3 (2008), 3–28; and *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*, Lanham, MD, 2007. Other good recent books which provide histories of Western magic, of different kinds from that attempted here, are Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie*, Berlin, 2011 (I am very grateful to the author for the gift of this); Brian P. Copenhaver, *Magic in Western Culture*, Cambridge, 2015; and Steven P. Marrone, *A History of Science, Magic and Belief from Medieval to Early Modern Europe*, New York, 2015. The first is a survey of the main movements, works and characters in Europe from antiquity to the present. The second is really an intensive study of Renaissance magic, above all that of Marsilio Ficino, and the way in which it has been viewed by modern scholars. The third is a consideration of the relationship between learned attitudes to religion, science and magic between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries, with its heaviest emphasis on the high and late Middle Ages.
13. After I had written this, Jan Bremmer drew my attention to Bernd-Christian Otto's fine article, 'Historicising "Western Learned Magic"', *Aries*, 16 (2016), 161–240, in which he maps out a prospectus for a history of ceremonial magic to which, I believe, my own work here has – in parallel – conformed.
14. For comments on this process, see Jonathan Z. Smith, 'The Temple and the Magician', in Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks (eds), *God's Christ and his People*, Oslo, 1977, 233–48; Robert K. Ritner, 'Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire', *Aufsteig und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II.18.5 (1995), 3333–79; Richard Gordon, 'Reporting the Marvellous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri', in Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (eds),

Envisioning Magic, Leiden, 1997, 65–92; David Frankfurter, 'Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category "Magician"', in ibid., 115–35; and *Religion in Roman Egypt*, Princeton, 1998, 198–233.

15. The current standard translation is that of Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago, 1986. The papyri in Greek are usually abbreviated to PGM (Papyri Graecae Magicae), and those in Demotic to PDM (Papyri Demoticae Magicae). For commentaries, see Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Oxford, 1972, 176–94; Hans Dieter Betz, 'The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papryi', in Ben F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders (eds), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, London, 1982, 161–70; and 'Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri', in Christopher D. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, Oxford, 1991, 244–59; William M. Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II.18.5 (1995), 3380–84; Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Trading Places', in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden, 1995, 23–7; Leda Jean Ciriao, 'Supernatural Assistants in the Greek Magical Papyri', in ibid., 279–95; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, MA, 1997, 97–116; Sarah Iles Johnston, 'Sacrifice in the Greek Magical Papyri', in Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (eds), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden, 2002, 344–58; Anna Scibilia, 'Supernatural Assistance in the Greek Magical Papyri', in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Leuven, 2002, 71–86.
16. For example, PGM III.494–501; IV.930–1114; and XIa.1–40.
17. For example, PGM IV.850–929; V.1–53; VII.540–78; and XIV.1–92, 150–231.
18. PGM IV.850–929.
19. PGM IV.1265–74.
20. PGM III.494–501.
21. For example, PGM V.146–50.
22. PGM III.211–29; V.5; and XIII.335–9.
23. For example, PGM IV.475–7; and XII.92–4.
24. PGM 1.53, 127 and 191.
25. PGM LXX.5–16; and III.559–610.
26. PGM IV.164–221.
27. PGM IV.75–750.
28. The nature of the debate, and the main sources for it, up until the year 2003, are summed up and appraised in my *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, London, 2003, 117–18.
29. Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, Atlanta, 1990, 2; Rowland Smith, *Julian's Gods*, London, 1995, 93; Polymnia Athanassiadi, 'The Chaldean Oracles', in Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frere (eds), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 1999, 153–5. The current standard edition is that of Edouard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaiques*, Paris, 1971, with an English translation by Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, Leiden, 1989. The numbering of the fragments here is that of des Places.
30. Fragments nos 2, 109, 132–3, 135 and 149–50.
31. Fragments nos 219, 221, and 223–5.
32. The best and most recent edition seems to be that by Henri Dominique Saffrey in Paris in 2012.
33. Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians*, 5.22–3; 96.13–97.8; 161.10–15; 197.12–199.5; 218.5–10; 227.1–230.16; 233.7–16; and 264.14–265.6. I have used the standard edition by Edouard des Places, published in Paris in 1966.
34. Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, sections 474–80.
35. Proclus, *Of the Priestly Art according to the Greeks*, trans. Brian Copenhaver in 'Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus and the Question of a Philosophy of Magic in the Renaissance', in Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (eds), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance*, Washington, DC, 1988, 103–5.
36. This was argued by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, 1951, 296; and Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Ancient World*, London, 2001, 317–18.
37. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, line 3.41.3, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, 1906.
38. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 90; Stephen Ronan, 'Hekate's Iynx', *Alexandria*, 1 (1991), 326. For a more extended discussion of theurgy, see my *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 117–28, which also provides an extensive bibliography. Notable publications since then have included Emma

C. Clarke, *Iamblichus's 'De Mysteriis'*, Aldershot, 2001; and Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, Göttingen, 2013.

39. M. A. Morgan (ed.), *Sepher ha-Razim*, Chico, CA, 1983. For its dating, see the introduction to this edition, and P. S. Alexander, 'Incantations and Books of Magic', in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. Geza Vermes, Edinburgh, 1986, vol. 3, 347–8; and 'Sepher ha-Razim and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism', in Todd E. Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World*, London, 2003, 184–90; Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King*, Leiden, 2002, 192–244; and Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, Cambridge, 2008, 169–83. The reconstruction of the text was the achievement of Mordecai Margaliouth, who published the definitive Hebrew edition.
40. I have used the edition by Moses Gaster published in London in 1896. For commentaries, see Gaster's introduction; Alexander, 'Incantations and Books of Magic', 350–52; and Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 169–83.
41. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 143–350. See also Rebecca Lesses, 'Speaking Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjurations', *Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 41–60, which draws similar conclusions. Texts on which they are based can be found in Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz (eds), *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Sheffield, 1992.
42. I have compared the editions by F. C. Conybeare, in London in 1898 and D. C. Duling, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, London,1983, vol. 1, 935–87. For commentaries see the introductions to those editions, and to that by Charles Chariton McCown in Leipzig in 1922; and also Sarah Iles Johnston, 'The "Testament of Solomon" from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance', in Bremmer and Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 35–49; Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King*, 41–87; Alexander, 'Incantations and Books of Magic', 372–4; Todd E. Klutz, *Rewriting the 'Testament of Solomon'*, New York, 2005; and James Harding and Loveday Alexander, 'Dating the Testament of Solomon', www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/rt/otp/guestlectures/harding, accessed 9 May 2014.
43. Key texts were edited by Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, as *Ancient Christian Magic*, Princeton, 1994. See also Nicole B. Hansen, 'Ancient Execration Magic in Coptic and Islamic Egypt', in Mirecki and Meyer (eds), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 427–45; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 257–64; and Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri', 3470–73.
44. The references are collected in Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, Oxford, 2009, 19–21.
45. These data may be found in Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago, 1993, 36–8, 72, 111–90; and 'Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire', 3345–58; Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1994, 62–164; Frankfurter, 'Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt'; Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri', 3429; Ian Meyer, 'The Initiation of the Magician', in David B. Dodd and Christopher A. Faraone (eds), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives*, London, 2003, 223–4; John Gee, 'The Structure of Lamp Divination', in Kim Ryholt (ed.), *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies*, Copenhagen, 1999, 207–18; and Joachim Friedrich Quack, 'From Ritual to Magic', in Gideon Bohak et al. (eds), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, Leiden, 2011, 43–84.
46. Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri', 3422–40.
47. S. J. Tester, *A History of Western Astrology*, Woodbridge, 1987, 11–29.
48. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 212–14, collects most of the references, and some of these, plus others which he does not cite, are translated in Daniel Ogden (ed.), *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford, 2009, 49–58.
49. The most prominent proponent of this view in recent years has probably been Christopher Faraone, in his various (splendid) publications.
50. Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, Cambridge, 2009, 165–7.
51. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.6.8.
52. It is now in the National Museum of Wales.
53. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum.
54. Roy Kotansky (ed.), *Greek Magical Amulets*, Opladen, 1994 supplies the texts.
55. It has been available in English since its appearance as *The Magick of Kiranus* in 1685, with a modern edition by Demetrios Kaimakis, *Die Kyraniden*, Frankfurt, 1980. For commentaries, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, London, 1923, vol. 2, 229–31; Henry and Renée Kahane and Angelina Pietrangli, 'Picatrix and the Talismans',

Romance Philology, 19 (1966), 574–93; and Klaus Alpers, 'Untersuchungen zum griechischen Physiologus und den Kyraniden', *Vestigia Bibliae*, 6 (1984), 13–87.

56. I have not yet located this manuscript myself, but the charm is recorded as present in it by C.J.S. Thompson, *The Mysteries and Secrets of Magic*, London, 1927, 58, and I have found him to be a reliable scholar when I have been able to check other parts of his work. In my *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 186, I reprinted it with the suggestion that it probably represented a direct transmission from ancient to Tudor times, though there was a slighter chance that an early modern scholar had obtained a Graeco-Egyptian text. Since then I have realized that it appears in PGM VIII.65–85, proving its ancient provenance. It is very difficult to believe that an original magical papyrus with the charm could have been obtained from Egypt in the early modern period, though it is not utterly impossible.
57. David Porreca, 'Divine Names: A Cross-Cultural Comparison', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 5 (2010), 17–29.
58. Ioannis Marathakis (ed.), *The Magical Treatise of Solomon*, Singapore, 2011, 56, 60, 64, 85, 159, 231. The Golden Hoard Press, which published this edition, has done much valuable work recently in producing good editions of European magical handbooks. The reed pen is also found in Book 1 of a sixteenth-century copy of another famous late medieval grimoire, Sepher Raziel, at British Library, Sloane MS 3846, now published on the Internet at www.esotericarchives.com/raziel/raziel.htm, accessed 9 May 2014.
59. Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 243, fo. 26.
60. PGM II.18; III.425; VII.412; PDM XIV.116.
61. Warren R. Dawson, 'The Lore of the Hoopoe', *The Ibis*, 121 (1925), 32–5.
62. Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, Stroud, 1997.
63. Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 219, fo. 186v; British Library, Sloane MS 3132, fo. 56v.
64. Andrei Torporkou, 'Russian Love Charms in a Comparative Light', in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, Basingstoke, 2009, 126–49.
65. There are different versions in British Library Royal MS 17A.XLII, fos 15r–23, and Sloane MSS 313, fos 27–45; 3826, fos 58–83; 3854, fos 112–39; 3853, fos 1–25; and 3885, fos 1–25, 58–125. Joseph Peterson has edited a composite one at www.esotericarchives.com/juratus/juratus.htm, accessed 28 May 2014, and Gösta Hedegård another at Stockholm in 2002, with careful attention to the different recensions. For commentaries, see these editions, Robert Mathiesen, 'A Thirteenth-century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the "Sworn Book" of Honorius of Thebes'; and Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Devil's Contemplatives', in Claire Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits*, Stroud, 1998, 143–62 and 250–65; Katelyn Mesler, 'The "Liber Iuratus Honorii" and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic'; and Jan R. Veenstra, 'Honorius and the Sigil of God', in Claire Fanger (ed.), *Invoking Angels*, University Park, PA, 2012, 113–91.
66. The standard edition is the composite one of Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, in London in 1888. The introduction, printed on pp. 2–4, is taken from British Library, Additional MS 10862, a work of the mid-sixteenth century.
67. 'Albertus Magnus', *De virtutibus herbarum, lapidum et animalium*, Amsterdam, 1648, 128.
68. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a–2ae, Quaestio 96.
69. See sources at n. 6.
70. Julien Véronèse, *L'Ars notoria au Moyen Age et à l'époque moderne*, Florence, 2007, includes a critical edition of the text. A seventeenth-century version is translated and edited by Joseph H. Peterson, in *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, York Beach, MN, 2001, 155–220. For commentaries see Michael Camille, 'Visual Art in Two Manuscripts of the Ars Notoria', in Claire Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, Stroud, 1998, 110–39; and Julien Véronèse, 'Magic, Theurgy and Spirituality in the Medieval Ritual of the "Ars Notoria" ', in Fanger (ed.), *Invoking Angels*, 37–78.
71. Nicholas Watson, 'John the Monk's "Book of Visions of the Blessed and Undefiled Virgin Mary" '; and Claire Fanger, 'Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk's "Book of Visions" and its Relation to the Ars Notoria of Solomon', in Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits*, 163–29 (providing the text between them); Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson, 'The Prologue to John of Morigny's "Liber Visionum" ', *Esoterica*, 3 (2001), 108–17 (with the text).
72. These features are especially apparent in British Library, Sloane MS 3854.
73. Joshua Trachtenburg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, New York, 1939. The same idea is repeated with further material in John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*,

London, 1974, 31–5; Kieckhefer, 'The Devil's Contemplatives'; and Mesler, 'The "Liber Iuratus Honori"'.

74. Giancarlo Lacerenza, 'Jewish Magicians and their Clients in Late Antiquity', in Leonard V. Rutgers (ed.), *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem*, Leuven, 2003, 401–19. For original early medieval texts by churchmen condemning the invocation of angels and naming of them, see P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, Basingstoke, 2003, 142, 145.
75. As well as the sources in n. 71, see Jan R. Veenstra, 'The Holy Almandel', in Bremmer and Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 189–229; Peter Schäfer, 'Jewish Magical Literature in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 41 (1990), 75–91; Alexander, 'Incantations and Books of Magic', 361–3; Michael Swartz, *Scholastic Magic,* Princeton, 1996; Rebecca Lesses, 'Speaking Angels', *Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 41–60; and Julien Véronèse, 'God's Names and their Uses in the Books of Magic Attributed to King Solomon', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 5 (2010), 30–50. For early examples of Jewish angelic magic, see the Book of Tobit, 8.1–3; *Sepher ha-Razim* and *Harba de-Moshe*, above; and Schiffman and Swartz (eds), *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts*. For Christian magical texts involving heavy use of angels and holy names, see the *Testament of Solomon, Magical Treatise of Solomon, Sworn Book*, and *Sepher Raziel*, above; Turner, *Henry Cornelius Agrippa His Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, sigs F–K ('Of Occult Philosophy or of Magical Ceremonies', L–P2 ('The Heptameron'), and Z–Dd2 ('The Arbatel'); Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS D252, fos 85–87v; Peterson (ed.), *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, 109–45 ('The Art Pauline'), and 147–54 ('The Almadel'); and Stepher Skinner and David Rankine (eds), *Practical Angel Magic of Dr John Dee's Enochian Tables*, Singapore, 2004.
76. Pingree's main relevant publications are listed at n. 10.
77. For a detailed discussion of this, see my *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 144–58. Key texts include Al-Kindi, *De Radiis*, ed. M. T. D'Alverny and F. Hudry, *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Litteraire du Moyen Age*, 41 (1974), 139–260; Frank Carmody (ed.), *The Astronomical Works of Thabit b. Qurra*, Berkeley, 1960; Abu Bakr ibn Washiyya al-Nabati, *Kitab al-Filaha al-nabatiyya*, ed. Toufic Fahd as *L'agriculture Nabateene*, Damascus, 1993; and David Pingree (ed.), *Picatrix*, London, 1986. See also now Liana Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy*, London, 2015, for the impact of Arabic astral magic on Western views of the cosmos.
78. PGM IV.2891–2942 and VII.795–845.
79. Corpus Hermeticum II and XVI, and Asclepius I.3. I have used the edition published by Walter Scott as *Hermetica*, Oxford, 1924.
80. For a discussion of this process and its results, see my *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 159–63. Work on it published since then includes Burnett and Ryan (eds), *Magic and the Classical Tradition*; Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic*, University Park, PA, 2013; and Sophie Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, University Park, PA, 2013, 73–92.
81. Thompson, *The Mysteries and Secrets of Magic*, 157–8.
82. Samuel Daiches, *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and Later Jewish Literature*, London, 1913, 32–3.
83. Lucian, *Menippus*, c. 7.
84. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 57–67.
85. PGM IV.2006–25; and VII.846–61.
86. C. K. Barrett (ed.), *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, 2nd edition, London, 1987, 191–2.
87. G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, The Hague, 1948, 86–7.
88. Nicholas Campion, *The Great Year*, London, 1994, 87–94.
89. Al-Nadim, *The Fihrist*, ed. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970, 746–7.
90. PGM IV.3172–86, VII.478–83 and XIII.821–88.
91. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 87–8.
92. J. E. Circlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, London, 1962, 196–7.
93. Lucian, *A Slip of the Tongue in Salutation*, c. 5.
94. C. J. de Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism*, Assen, 1966, 28–49 and 292–7; quotations on pp. 36 and 44, while the cup with the shield is on 47–8.
95. William of Auvergne, *De legibus*, c. 27.
96. Sources at n. 72.
97. In verse 27.
98. Antonio da Montolmo, *De ocultis et manifestis*, c.6.

99. Nicholas Eymeric, *Directorium inquisitorium*, Roman edition of 1587, 338. Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 120, finds other fourteenth-century references to magic circles.
100. They are found, for example, in the various versions of the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, the *Magical Treatise of Solomon* and the *Key of Solomon*, cited above, 'The Heptameron', and the 'Munich Handbook', ed. Kieckhefer in *Forbidden Rites*. See also Veenstra, 'The Holy Almandel', and 'Sepher Raziel' and 'The Dannel' in British Library, Sloane MS 3853, fos 46–81 and 176–260; plus Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 173 and Rawlinson MS D252, fos 160–65.
101. J. Schouten, *The Pentagram as a Medical Symbol*, Nieuwkoop, 1968, 29–45.
102. Circlot, *Dictionary of Symbols*, 196–7.
103. 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', Fit 2, verses 27–8; Antonio da Montolmo, *De occultis et manifestis*. c.6.
104. This is discussed by Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 175.
105. See the commentary on the manuscripts in Ioannis Marathakis's edition. For overviews of Byzantine texts, see Richard P. H. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*, Amsterdam, 1988; Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington DC, 1995; and Paul Magdalino and Maria Maroudi (eds), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, Geneva, 2006.

5 The Hosts of the Night

1. I have discussed these developments more fully, with references, in *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, 1999, 111–50; and in 'Witchcraft and Modernity', in Marko Nennonen and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Writing Witch-hunt Histories*, Leiden, 2014, 191–212.
2. Again, I have discussed Margaret Murray's career, ideas and impact in *Triumph of the Moon*, 194–201, 272–6 and 362. Other considerations of them have been generated from within the Folklore Society, of which she was a leader: Jacqueline Simpson, 'Margaret Murray', *Folklore*, 105 (1994), 89–96; and Caroline Oates and Juliette Wood, *A Coven of Scholars*, London, 1998.
3. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, London, 1975.
4. The book concerned is the one translated into English as *The Night Battles*, London, 1983. I have supplied an extensive analysis of its relationship to the 'Murray thesis' in *Triumph of the Moon*, 276–8.
5. Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal, London, 1992, 7–15: quotations on pp. 8–9.
6. In *Triumph of the Moon*, 112–31, I outlined the development of this complex of ideas, with full references.
7. Jeroen W. Boekhoven, *Genealogies of Shamanism*, Groningen, 2011, 134.
8. The Frazerian element in Ginzburg's *The Night Battles* is discussed in detail in my *Triumph of the Moon*, 277–8.
9. All these statements can be found in Éva Pócs, 'The Popular Foundations of the Witches' Sabbath and the Devil's Pact in Central and Southern Europe', in Gábor Klaniczay and Pócs (eds), *Witch Beliefs and Witch Hunting in Central and Southern Europe*, Budapest, 1992, 305, 335.
10. Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, Reno, 1980; and '"The Ladies from Outside"', in Bengt Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern Witchcraft*, Oxford, 1990, 191–218.
11. For succinct recent summaries of the concept, from opposite sides of the Atlantic, see Jonathan Durrant and Michael Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, Lanham, 2003, 204; and Doris Boden et al. (eds), *Enzyklopädie des Marchens*, Berlin, 2011, vol. 14, part 2, cols 795–804.
12. Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 40–48; quotation on pp. 47–8.
13. Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, Budapest, 1999, 25.
14. Claude Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies of the Night*, trans. Jon E. Graham, Rochester, VT, 2011, 2, 199. For a shorter recent publication which embodies the Grimm construct in full, see Alan E. Bernstein, 'The Ghostly Troop and the Battle over Death', in Mu-Chou Poo (ed.), *Rethinking Ghosts in World Religions*, Leiden, 2009, 115–16. See also Steven P. Marrone, *A History of Science, Magic and Belief from Medieval to Early Modern Europe*, London, 2015, 62–3, for a still more recent and very good work which still swallows whole the Ginzburg and Lecouteux vision of the Wild Hunt.

15. An extended illustration of this argument, with reference to British calendar customs, can be found in my *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Oxford, 1996.
16. I have, again, considered this at length in *Stations*, and in *Triumph of the Moon*, 112–31. For a particular critique of Grimm's methodology, see Beate Kellner, *Grimms Mythen*, Frankfurt, 1994.
17. The German studies are summarized, with references, in Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 202–8; the milestone works for the debate mentioned are Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen*, vol. 1, Frankfurt, 1934; and Friedrich Ranke, *Kleinere Schriften*, Munich, 1971, 380–408. To Lecouteux's list can be added Jan de Vries, 'Wodan und die wilde Jagd', *Die Nachbarn*, 3 (1962), 31–59; and Edmund Mudrak, 'Die Herkunft der Sagen vom wütenden Heere und vom wilden Jäger', *Laographia*, 22 (1965), 304–23.
18. Karl Meisen, *Die Sagen vom Wütenden Heer und wilden Jäger*, Münster, 1935. Among writers of most relevance here, Meisen's texts underpin the work of Carlo Ginzburg, Wolfgang Behringer and Claude Lecouteux.
19. Meisen was a pioneer of this. For later reflections of it, see Mudrak, 'Die Herkunft'; Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, passim; and Wolfgang Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, Charlottesville, VA, 1998, passim.
20. Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 56–84.
21. Jeremy Harte, 'Herne the Hunter', *At the Edge*, 3 (1996), 27–33.
22. The references are gathered in Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, Chicago, 1994, 118–19.
23. The argument summarized in this section will be found given in full, with the source references, in my article 'The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath', *Folklore*, 125 (2014), 161–78.
24. *Regionis abbati Prumiensis libris duo*, ed. F.W.H. Wasserschleben, Leipzig, 1840, 355. Translations are now in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 167; Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 9; and Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 89–90.
25. The problem here is that Burchard's text survives in variant copies. The most generally used is that published by Jacques-Paul Migne in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 140, which relies on the 1549 Paris edition, and which I have employed. For other versions, and discussions, see F. W. Hermann Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche nebst einer rechtsgeschichtlichen Einleitung*, Halle, 1851, 624–82; Hermann Joseph Schmitz, *Due Bussbücher und das Kanonische Bussverfahnen*, Düsseldorf, 1898, 403–67; Paul Fournier, 'Études critiques sur le Décret de Burchard de Worms', *Nouvelle revue historique de droit français et etranger*, 34 (1910), 41–112, 289–331, 564–84; John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (eds), *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, New York, 1938, 321–3; and Greta Austin, *Shaping Church Law around the Year 1000*, Farnham, 2004. Cohn, Ginzburg and Lecouteux did not reckon with this problem when discussing Holda, while Behringer did, in *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, 50–51, without being able to resolve it; and nor can I.
26. Burchard, *Decretum*, Books 10, c. 29; and 19, cc. 70, 90, 170–71.
27. These texts are printed, in the original Latin and medieval French, in Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. James Steven Stallybrass, London, 1882, vol. 1, 282, 286–8. Grimm only prints part of John of Salisbury, *Polycraticus*, 2.17. To his sources can be added British Library, Cotton MS Faust. A.8, fo. 32 (the late twelfth-century penitential of Bishop Iscanus of Exeter).
28. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, c. 102.
29. Stephen of Bourbon, *Septem doni spiritus sancti*, no. 97.
30. *Jons saga baptista* c. 35.
31. Quoted in Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 15.
32. Cited in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 170–71.
33. The Middle High German references are collected in Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 1, 277–8.
34. Martin of Amberg.
35. Jacopo Passvanti, *Lo specchio della vera penitenza*, quoted in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 171–2. Carlo Ginzburg adds another reference to a nocturnal society led by Diana or Herodias recorded at Verona in the earlier party of the century: *Ecstasies*, 94.
36. These references are collected in Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 15–17; Ginzburg providing more detail for the Nuremburg sermons in *Ecstasies*, 101; and the *Thesaurus pauperum* text being printed in Claude Lecouteux, *Mondes Paralleles: l'Universe des Croyances du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1994, 51–2; and von Haselbach's in Anton E. Schonbach, 'Zeugnisse zur deutschen Volkskunde des Mittelalters', *Zeitschrift des vereins für Volkskunde*, 12 (1902), 5–6.

37. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 1, 272–82.
38. Ibid., vol. 1, 267–72.
39. *Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum, Early English Text Society, vol. 275, 1976, 157. The *canon Episcop*i is on the next page.
40. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 297–9.
41. These records were first published in 1899 and are discussed by Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 173–4; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 91–3; and Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, 54–5, 173–4, who provides original texts and a translation.
42. *Nicolai Cusae Cardinalis Opera*, Paris, 1514, vol. 2, fos 170v–172r.
43. Ibid., 17–46. Behringer supplies the missing details from modern folklore, as had Grimm, an approach that is avoided here for reasons stated: though both of us, by different routes, agree on the apparent absence of a leader for the spirits concerned, and his general treatment of the distinctive nature of different regional traditions of night-roaming spirits also seems to me correct.
44. Renward Cysat's *Chronicle*, printed in Meisen, *Die Sagen*, 111–20.
45. Gustav Henningsen, '"The Ladies from Outside"'.
46. For example, there is no sign of it in David Genticore's study of trials for magic in the heel of Italy, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra D'Otranto*, Manchester, 1992.
47. This is Giovanni Lorenzo Anania, quoted in Giuseppe Bonomo, *Caccia alle Streghe*, Palumbo, 1971, 30.
48. There Pau Castell Granados speaks of a late medieval belief in 'good ladies' who visited houses and with whom women were sometimes said to go: '"Wine Vat Witches Suffocate Children": The Mythical Components of the Iberian Witch', *EHumanista*, 26 (2014), 70–95. He does not, however, go into the evidence for this, and so establish whether it is a securely recorded local tradition or one cited by Catalan churchmen who may have been quoting references to it from elsewhere in Europe.
49. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 1, 285–6.
50. Grimm's references were repeated, with full citation of the original sources, in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 168.
51. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 91.
52. Ibid., 91–3.
53. Ibid., 104. On p. 116 Ginzburg dismisses the identification of the steed as a peacock, already made by the French scholar Benoît, as unconvincing, without saying why.
54. *Reinardus Vulpes*, Book 1, lines 1143–64, translated into French as *Le Roman de Renart*; there are various modern editions.
55. Ratherius, *Praeloquiorum libri*, 1.10, most accessibly edited in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 136, col. 157.
56. Her latest appearance as such seems to be in Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 25 and 33.
57. J. R. Farnell, 'Hekate in Art', in Stephen Ronan (ed.), *The Goddes Hecate*, Hastings, 1992, 36–54.
58. Line 13.
59. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. Bruno Snell, Göttingen, vol. 1, 115.
60. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 132–3.
61. The classic catalogue of material relating to her is René Magnen and Émile Thenevot, *Épona*, Bordeaux, 1956, updated by Claude Sterckx, *Élements de cosmogonie celtique*, Brussels, 1986, 9–54; and Katheryn M. Linduff, 'Epona: A Celt among the Romans', *Latomus*, 38 (1979), 817–37.
62. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 104–5.
63. The basic study of them remains F. Haverfield, 'The Mother Goddesses', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 15 (1892), 314–36. See also Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, London, 1986, ch. 3; and *Celtic Goddesses*, London, 1995, 106–11.
64. Most accessibly edited in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 114, col. 1094.
65. 2 Kings 22:14–20; and 2 Chronicles 34:22–33. Grimm was uneasily aware that in 1522 Martin Luther had suggested that Huldah could be the origin of the Holda of the night rides, but rejected this because of the prominence of Holda in modern German folklore, which Grimm took as an article of faith to be an unchanged survival from the ancient world. He therefore missed the link between the biblical heroine and Walahfrid's poem: *Teutonic Mythology*, vols 1, 271, and 3, 1367.

66. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 1, 281.
67. John B. Smith, 'Perchta the Belly-Slitter and her Kin', *Folklore*, 115 (2004), 167–86. Compare the interpretation of Lotte Motz, 'The Winter Goddess', *Folklore*, 96 (1984), 167–86, who makes the argument that Perchte and Holda were different aspects of a northern pagan goddess. She wrote firmly in the Grimm tradition, and indeed relied for most of her material on a work published in 1914. I would emphasize that her hypothesis remains possible, though it is highly speculative and back-projects modern folklore wholesale onto an imagined ancient past, a method avoided by Smith.
68. Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 19–20.
69. *Volundark vida*, verse 1; Helgakviða Hundingsbana II, in the *Poetic Edda*, verse 4, prose opening fit 2, and prose opening fit 4. Lecouteux prints the relevant passage concerning the Disir, from the *Flateyarbók*, in *Phantom Armies*, 20–21.
70. Claude Lecouteux, 'Hagazussa-Striga-Hexe', *Hessische Blätter für Volks- und- Kulturforschung*, 18 (1985), 59–60.
71. Most of these are helpfully described in Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton, 1993, 36–58.
72. This and what follows is a summary of the arguments made with source references in Hutton, 'The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath', 171–5; with further material added from *Le register d'Inquisition de Jacques Fournier*, ed. Jean Duvernoy, Paris, vol. 1, 544.
73. Henningsen, ' "The Ladies from Outside" '.
74. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 94–5. The contribution of dreams to the development of the concept of the sabbath in general is considered by Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, Chicago, 2002, 125–44; and the whole subject of how early modern people sought to distinguish reality from fantasy or dream in Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, Oxford, 2007.
75. Henningsen, ' "The Ladies from Outside" '.
76. Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, 17–21.
77. Nider and Alfonso Tostato, both quoted in Josef Hansen, *Quellen und Unterschungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, Bonn, 1901, 89–90, 109 n. 1.
78. Quoted, in the original Latin, in Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 145.
79. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 176.
80. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 103; the latter view is Cohn's: *Europe's Inner Demons*, 176–9.
81. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 132.
82. They could thus be viewed, with equal plausibility, as genuine martyrs, who died for defending their own faith; reckless and self-important fools; or tragic simpletons, whom Nicholas of Cusa would have dismissed as demented.
83. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 296–307; Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, 54–67, 82–133.

6 What the Middle Ages Made of the Witch

1. Valerie Flint, 'The Demonization of Magic in Late Antiquity', in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume Two: Ancient Greece and Rome*, London, 1999, 279.
2. Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1989, 35–41.
3. Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, Lanham, MD, 2007, 43.
4. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.6.8–15.
5. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 7.34–5; 8.18–26; 9.1; 10.9–10; 13.18; 21.6; and *De consensu Evangelistarum*, 1.9–11.
6. Acts 8:9–24; 13:6–12; 19:13–17; Revelation 17:3–6.
7. A recent analysis of the early Christian attitude to magic is found in Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, New York, 2007, 107–41.
8. Galatians, 22:18.
9. These measures are listed in Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, 52–3; and Spyros N. Trojanus, 'Magic and the Devil: From the Old to the New Rome', in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic*, London, 2008, 44–52.
10. The relevant sections of the Theodosian Code and Digest of Justinian are listed in Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford, 2009, 280, 333–6. To these can be added Theodosian Code 3.9.16.
11. Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 19.12.1–18; 26.3; 28.1.8–21; 29.1–2.

12. The importance of Maternus's text in this context was first noticed by Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London, 2001, 150.
13. Libanius, *Orations*, 1.43, 62–3, 98, 194, 243–50. For an overview of Libanius's relationship with magic, see Campbell Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room of Libanius', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 63 (1932), 34–44.
14. Libanius, *Declamations*, 41.7, 29, 51.
15. John Chrysostom, *Homily XXXVIII on Acts xvii.16, 17*. I am very grateful to my colleague at Bristol, Bella Sandwell, for providing me with this reference after I had mislaid an original note of it.
16. Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine*, London, 1972, 119–46; John O. Ward, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Later Roman Empire', *Prudentia*, 12 (1980), 93–108; Natasha Sheldon, *Roman Magic and Witchcraft in Late Antiquity*, Coalville, UT, 2002.
17. Brown and Ward, above, debate possibilities to no ultimate effect; the one offered here is my own.
18. Dayna S. Kalleres, 'Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells', in Kimberly B. Stratton with Dayna S. Kalleres (eds), *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, Oxford, 2014, 219–51.
19. John Wortley, 'Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 42 (2001), 289–307.
20. Walter M. Shandruk, 'Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 20 (2012), 31–57.
21. David Frankfurter, 'The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), 480–500.
22. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science during the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era*, New York, 1923, 973.
23. H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, 1969, 12.
24. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 2nd edition, London, 1993, 213; Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1550*, London, 1976, 8–16.
25. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, Cambridge, 2004, 52–6.
26. First found in the Theodosian Code, 9.16.4.
27. For all this see especially Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton, 1993; but also Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law*, Hassocks, Sussex, 1978, 1–62; Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Basingstoke, 2003, 11–51; Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, Oxford, 2010, 29–75; Karen Jolly, 'Medieval Magic', in Karen Jolly et al. (eds), *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume Three*, London, 2002, 1–65; Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 35–51; and Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, 60–91. Henry Charles Lea, *Materials towards a History of Witchcraft*, ed. Arthur C. Howland, Philadelphia, PA, 1939, vol. 1, 137–43, prints a succession of early medieval condemnations.
28. See *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges. Section 1. Volume 1*, Hanover and Leipzig, 1902, 95. 257 (for the Visigoths); Theodore John Rivers (ed.), *Laws of the Salian and Ripuarian Franks*, New York, 1986, 210–11; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, Basingstoke, 2005, 140 (for Charlemagne). For subsequent medieval laws, spanning Western Europe, see Joseph Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozess im Mittelalter und die Entstehung der grossen Hexenverfolgung*, Munich, 1900, 55–60, 387.
29. Most of the primary texts are printed in Hansen, *Zauberwahn*, 113–21; and another by Maxwell-Stuart, *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, 90. Two more incidents are recounted in Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century*, trans. Patrick, J. Geary, Chicago, 1984, 322.
30. They are gathered and listed in Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, 53–6, with the exception of the Bohemian reference below.
31. Though this entry only seems to survive in an early modern source, Dubravius's history of Bohemia, quoted in Lea, *Materials towards a History of Witchcraft*, ed. Howland, vol. iii, 1280.
32. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet*,11.9.10; *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*, Distinctio 34, Article 3, ad. 3; and *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book 3, Part 2, cc. 104–16.
33. Source printed in Hansen, *Zauberwahn*, 118–19.

34. *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Epistolae Selectae. Volume 2, Part 2*, 2nd edition, Berlin, 1955, 498.
35. Agobard of Lyons, *Contra insulam vulgi opinionem de brandine*, most accessibly edited in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 104, cols 147–58. The existence of these protection racketeers makes readily understandable the fact that churchmen could both denounce magicians who claimed to be able to raise storms and declare that their claims were in fact erroneous: see the texts discussed in Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. James Stephen Stallybrass, London, 1882, vol. 3, 1086; and Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, 110–14.
36. Russell Zguta, 'The Ordeal by Water (Swimming of Witches) in the East Slavic World', *Slavic Review*, 36 (1977), 224.
37. *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptores XIII*, Hanover, 1881, 57.
38. Printed in Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, Bonn, 1901, 1.
39. Source printed in Hansen, *Zauberwahn*, 381.
40. The references are collected in Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature*, Toronto, 2005, 310–12.
41. Hincmar of Rheims, *De Divortio Lotharii*, most accessibly edited in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 125, cols 718–25.
42. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 214–17.
43. This concept was most clearly introduced by R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, Oxford, 1987.
44. The decrees and homilies are listed in George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, New York, 1929, 28–31, 378–80; Ronald Holmes, *Witchcraft in British History*, London, 1974, 37; Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1996, 71–95; and Stephen Pollington, *Leechcraft*, Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk, 2000, 33, 52–3, to which can be added material from Dorothy Whitelock et al. (eds), *Councils and Synods*, Oxford, 1981, vol. 1, 320, 371, 366. The classic example of a leading churchman using a range of native words for magic, and magicians, to signify magic in general and to condemn the lot, is Aelfric of Eynsham: see his *De Auguriis*, ed. Walter W. Skeat in *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, Early English Text Society, 76 (1881), 364–83; and his sermon in *The Sermones Catholici*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, Aelfric Society, 1844, vol. 1, 476–7. Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. T. Northcote Toller, Oxford, 1898, 1213, shows how Anglo-Saxon words were used to gloss a range of Latin terms signifying different sorts of magician, including healers and diviners.
45. This discussion is based on the three standard Anglo-Saxon dictionaries of Borden, Bosworth and Wright.
46. The measures concerned are respectively the *Laws of Alfred*, Introduction, section 30; *Laws of Athelstan*, c. 6; (so-called) *Laws of Edward and Guthrum*, c. 11; *Laws of Ethelred*, 6, c. 6; and *Laws of Canute*, c. 5.1. Editions and translations can be found in Benjamin Thorpe (ed.), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, London, 1840; F. L. Attenborough (ed.), *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, New York, 1963; and Whitelock et al. (eds), *Councils and Synods*.
47. All these points were well made by Jane Crawford, 'Evidences for Witchcraft in Anglo-Saxon England', *Medium Aevum*, 32 (1963), 99–116; and Audrey L. Meaney, 'Women, Witchcraft and Magic in Anglo-Saxon England', and Anthony Davies, 'Witches in Anglo-Saxon England', in D. G. Scragg (ed.), *Superstition and Popular Medicine in Anglo-Saxon England*, Manchester, 1989, 9–56.
48. Meaney, 'Women, Witchcraft and Magic', deals with the terminology.
49. Henry Sweet (ed.), *The Oldest English Texts*, Early English Text Society, 83 (1885), 94, 99, 116.
50. *Lacnunga*, c. 76.
51. *Leechbook III*, fos 123a–125v. For different translations, see Crawford, 'Evidences for Witchcraft', 110; and Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England*, Woodbridge, 2007, 104.
52. The record is edited and translated in Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, 89, and discussed by Crawford and Davies, above.
53. The spells and charms against evil magicians are in the *Herbarium of Apuleius Platonicus*, c. 86.4; *Leechbook*, 1.45.6 and 1.54, and the 'Aecerbot' rite, printed in Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, Halle, 1948, 172–87. These works, and the *Lacnunga*, represent the major collections of such remedies.
54. They are all studied in detail by Davies, 'Witches in Anglo-Saxon England', who draws the same conclusion.

55. Thorpe (ed.), *Ancient Laws and Institutes*, 251; Holmes, *Witchcraft in British History*, 38–9.
56. These cases were carefully detected and assembled by C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, London, 1933, 27–8.
57. Holmes, *Witchcraft in British History*, 39; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 3.45.6; Bartholomaeus de Cotton, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, London, 1859, 171–3.
58. For what follows below, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY, 1972, 132–94; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 102–43; Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law*, 33–176; Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle* Ages, 116–70; Jolly, 'Medieval Magic', 20–62; and Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, 79–130.
59. For the English material see Hansen, *Quellen*, 2; and Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 29.
60. For the growing fear of the Devil, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer*, Ithaca, NY, 1984, 295–6; Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Jean Birrell, Cambridge, 2003, 20–21; and Alain Bougereau, *Satan the Heretic*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan, Chicago, 2006, passim.
61. The documents are printed in Hansen, *Quellen*, 2–6; and Henry Charles Lea, *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, London, 1888, vol. 3, 455, 657. For the background, and supporting data, see Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 130–33; Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law*, 129–35; and Bougereau, *Satan the Heretic*.
62. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 186–7, 193–4.
63. *haeretici sortilagae*.
64. The primary sources are edited with commentary by L. S. Davidson and J. O. Ward, as *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler*, Asheville, NC, 2004. For analyses, see Anne Neary, 'The Origins and Character of the Kilkenny Witchcraft Case of 1324', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 83C (1983), 333–50; Bernadette Williams, 'The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler', *History Ireland*, 2 (1993), 20–24; and Maeve Brigid Callan, *The Templars, the Witch and the Wild Irish*, Dublin, 2015.
65. G. O. Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench under Edward III. Volume Five*, Selden Society, 1958, 53–7.
66. Ralph A. Houlbrooke, 'Magic and Witchcraft in the Diocese of Winchester', in David J. B. Trim and Peter J. Balderstone (eds), *Cross, Crown and Community*, Oxford, 2004, 113–20.
67. The documents are printed in Hansen, *Quellen*, 8–11.
68. Ibid., 64–6.
69. Ibid., 11–12.
70. Ibid., 15–16.
71. The cases are listed in Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law*, 120–25; Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 34–5; and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The British Witch*, Stroud, 2014, 68–83.
72. For all this, see Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Basingstoke, 2003, 34–8; Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, 104–12; J. R. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France*, Leiden, 1998; and Tracy Adams 'Valentina Visconti, Charles VI, and the Politics of Witchcraft', *Parergon*, 30 (2013), 11–32.
73. Hansen, *Quellen*, 528.
74. *Directorium inquisitorum*, 335–8. The most readily available edition is the Venice one of 1595.
75. The records were published by Hansen, *Quellen*, 518–23.
76. This case was discussed in the previous chapter.
77. Hansen, *Quellen*, 524–6.
78. Gene A. Brucker, 'Sorcery in Renaissance Florence', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 10 (1963), 7–24.
79. Christine Meek, 'Man, Woman and Magic: Some Cases from Late Medieval Lucca', in Christine Meek (ed.), *Women in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe*, Dublin, 2000, 43–66.
80. The cases are collected in Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 35.
81. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, 126–30.
82. For all this, see the medieval sources, and commentaries upon them, cited in Chapter Four.
83. Meek, 'Man, Woman and Magic'.
84. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 118–43.
85. It is printed in P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages*, London, 2011, 30–31. Carlo Ginzburg has drawn attention to the Pope's emphasis on seeking new heresies as especially significant, in *Ecstasies*, 68–9, but I do not.
86. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 3, 946–52, 1046–7.
87. In Hansen, *Zauberwahn*.

88. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*.
89. Steven P. Marrone, 'Magic, Bodies, University Masters, and the Invention of the Late Medieval Witch', in Rachel Fulton and Bruce W. Holsinger (eds), *History in the Comic Mode*, New York, 2007, 266.
90. Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*.
91. Bailey's comment is in 'The Medieval Concept of the Witches' Sabbath', *Exemplaria*, 8 (1996), 419–39. For an appraisal of the overall reputation of the Ginzburg thesis, see Yme Kuiper's essay in Chapter 3, n. 15. For immediate critiques of it, see the reviews by Robert Bartlett in the *New York Review of Books*, 13 June 1991, 37–8; Richard Kieckhefer in the *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), 837–8; and John Martin in *Speculum*, 67 (1992), 148–50.
92. Michael Bailey, 'The Medieval Concept of the Witches' Sabbath'; 'From Sorcery to Witchcraft', *Speculum*, 76 (2001), 960–90; 'The Feminization of Magic and the Emerging Idea of the Female Witch in the Late Middle Ages', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 19 (2002), 120–34; *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*, University Park, PA, 2003, 32–48; and 'A Late Medieval Crisis of Superstition?', *Speculum*, 3 (2009), 633–61.
93. Marrone, 'Magic, Bodies, University Masters'; and see also now his *A History of Science, Magic and Belief from Medieval to Early Modern Europe*, London, 2015, 163–96.
94. Tremp's ideas are most accessibly summed up in her article on 'Heresy' in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, Santa Barbara, CA, 2006, vol. 2, 485–7, with another summary in 'The Heresy of Witchcraft in Western Switzerland and Dauphiné', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 6 (2011), 1–10; and Behringer's in 'How the Waldensians Became Witches', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Communicating with the Spirits*, Budapest, 2005, 155–92.
95. Willem de Blécourt, 'The Return of the Sabbat', in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds), *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, Basingstoke, 2007, 125–45.
96. Richard Kieckhefer, 'Avenging the Blood of Children', in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, 1998, 91–110; 'Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 79–107.
97. The document is now translated in Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Occult in Medieval Europe*, 158–60.
98. Pau Castell Granados, '"Wine Vat Witches Suffocate Children": The Mythical Components of the Iberian Witch', *EHumanista*, 26 (2014), 170–95.
99. Ibid.
100. Bernadette Paton, '"To the Fire! To the Fire"', in Charles Zika (ed.), *No Gods Except Me: Orthodoxy and Religious Practice in Europe 1200–1600*, Melbourne, 1991, 7–10.
101. Dommenico Mammoli (ed.), *The Record of the Trial and Condemnation of a Witch, Matteuccia di Francesco, at Todi, 20 March 1428*, Rome, 1972.
102. Franco Normando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernadino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy*, Chicago, 1999, 52–87.
103. Ibid., 86.
104. Martine Ostorero, *Folâtrer avec les démons: sabbat et chasse aux sorciers à Vevey (1448)*, Lausanne, 1995; Martine Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, Lausanne, 1999; Georg Modestin, *Le diable chez l'éveque*, Lausanne, 1999; Martine Ostorero et al. (eds), *Inquisition et sorcellerie en Suisse Romande*, Lausanne, 2007; Kathrin Utz Tremp, *Von der Haresie zur Hexerei*, Hanover, 2008; Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, Florence, 2011. For an account of the cluster and its work, see Kathrin Utz Tremp, 'Witches' Brooms and Magic Ointments', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 5 (2010), 173–87.
105. The text is edited in Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 30–45, with a commentary based on the local records by Chantal Amman-Doubliez at pp. 63–93. For two of those records, see Hansen, *Quellen*, 531–9. See also Tremp, 'Witches' Brooms and Magic Ointments', for Fründ.
106. *Sortiligi* or *sortileia*.
107. This is based on Amman-Doubliez's account, at n. 105.
108. For what follows, see the works at n. 105, plus Edward Peters, 'The Medieval Church and State on Superstition, Magic and Witchcraft', in Jolly et al. (eds), *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume Three*, 233–6; and Arno Borst, *Medieval Worlds*, Cambridge, 1991, 101–22.

109. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 51–60, 203–7; Tremp, *Von der Haresie zur Hexerei*; Andreas Blauert, *Frühe Hexenverfolgungen*, Hamburg, 1989, 27–43.
110. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages*, 30–31.
111. On this see, especially, Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 35–101. He also emphasized the importance of the *strix*, on pp. 162–80.
112. Kieckhefer, 'Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century'. He does, however, also emphasize the importance of child murder as a motif in these early hunts, in 'Avenging the Blood of Children'.
113. Paton, '"To the Fire! To the Fire!"', 7–36.
114. Edited, with commentary, in Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 122–248.
115. *Malefici*.
116. Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 223–48.
117. This revised chronology throws out, in particular, that suggested for the evolution of the stereotype of satanic witchcraft in Ginzburg's *Ecstasies*.
118. Edited with commentary in Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 272–99. For a further discussion of authorship, see Martine Ostorero, 'Itinéraire d'un inquisiteur gâté', *Médiévales*, 43 (2002), 115–16. For George of Saluzzo, see Georg Modestin, 'Church Reform and Witch-hunting in the Diocese of Lausanne', in Andrew P. Roach and James R. Simpson (eds), *Heresy and the Making of European Culture*, Farnham, 2013, 405–10.
119. Tholosan's book is *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores*, edited with commentary in Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 363–438. References to the trial records of Dauphiné are found in the commentary; an example was edited by Hansen, *Quellen*, 459–66.
120. Edited in Ostorero et al. (eds), *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 339–53; Modestin, *Le diable chez l'éveque*; Ostorero et al. (eds), *Inquisition et sorcellerie en Suisse Romande*; Ostorero, *Folâtrer avec les démons*.
121. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 33–88.
122. See sources at n. 93.
123. Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, 584.
124. For recent testimonies to its importance, see Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, 'A Sabbat of Demonologists', *The Historian*, 65 (2003), 1375–96; and Hans Peter Broedel, 'Fifteenth-century Witchcraft Beliefs', in Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Oxford, 2013, 42.
125. These have been listed, edited or discussed in Hansen, *Quellen*, 44–231; Lea, *Materials towards a History of Witchcraft*, vol. I, 348–404; and Ostorero, *Le diable du sabbat*.
126. Marmoris's work is *Flagellum maleficorum*. It is extensively discussed by Ostorero, *Le diable du sabbat*, 503–58.
127. For accounts of this spread, see Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, 66–82; Franck Mercier, *La Vauderie d'Arras*, Rennes, 2006; Laura Stokes, 'Early Witch-hunting in Germany and Switzerland', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 4 (2009), 54–61; Broedel, 'Fifteenth-century Witchcraft Beliefs', 43–5; and Richard Kieckhefer, 'The First Wave of Trials for Diabolical Witchcraft', in Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 169–78; and the original documents edited in Hansen, *Quellen*, 34–5, 547–600, are still worth consideration.

7 The Early Modern Patchwork

1. This has been summed up in textbooks on differing scales, from a pocket size to a weighty volume, of which the following represent some of the best: Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2010; Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Europe*, 2nd edition, Basingstoke, 2001; Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edition, London, 2006; Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, Cambridge, 2004; and Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-hunt*, London, 2016. Those who prefer composite volumes by different hands may try Bengt Ankarloo et al., *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume Four: The Period of the Witch Trials*, London, 2002; and Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Oxford, 2013. The classic work on the learned texts that underpinned the trials remains Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford, 1997. All the information summarized in this introductory section may be found in these surveys, and the detailed studies listed in them and in the references below.

2. For example, Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, Paris, 1580, preface; Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* (*sic*), Paris, 1612, Book 1, Discourse 1.5; Henri Boguet, *Discours des sorciers*, Lyon, 1610, dedication; Martín del Rio, *Disquisitiones Magicae*, Leuven, 1608, prologue.
3. The importance of Germany's localized system of judicial authority, in explaining the exceptionally large number of witch trials there, was noticed as long ago as the 1840s: Karl Friedrich Koppen, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, Leipzig, 1844, 60.
4. Two fairly recent and equally good studies of witch trials in different German states, Johannes Dillinger, *Evil People: A Comparative Study of Witch Hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, trans. Laura Stokes, Charlottesville, VA, 2009, and Jonathan B. Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender and Society in Early Modern Germany*, Leiden, 2007, have provided perfect portraits of the pressure to prosecute emanating from below and above in society, respectively.
5. Fabienne Taric Zumsteg, *Les Sorciers à l'Assaut du Village Gollion*, Lausanne, 2000.
6. The phrase was coined by Robin Briggs for a conference paper in 1991, published as 'Many Reasons Why', in Jonathan Barry et al. (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 1996, 49–63. Similar arguments were made by Wolfgang Behringer, 'Witchcraft Studies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland', in the same volume, 64–5; and Bengt Ankarloo, 'Witch Trials in Northern Europe 1400–1700', in Ankarloo et al., *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* vol.4, 55–63.
7. De Lancre, *Tableau*, Book 1, Discourse 1.1.
8. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, London, 1983 (quotation on p. 25). His research has now been challenged by Franco Nardon, but not in respects that are a concern here: Franco Nardon, 'Benandanti', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, Santa Barbara, CA, 2006), vol. 1, 108–9; Willem de Blecourt, 'The Roots of the Sabbat', in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds), *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, Basingstoke, 2007, 135–45; William Monter, 'Gendering the Extended Family of Ginzburg's Benandanti', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 88–92.
9. Friedrich Salomon Krauss, *Slavische Volksforschungen*, Leipzig, 1908, 41–3; Maya Boškovič-Stulli, 'Kresnik-Krsnik, *Fabula*, 3 (1960), 275–98; Gàbor Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, trans. Susan Singerman and ed. Karen Margolis, Cambridge, 1990, 133–5.
10. Boškovič-Stulli, 'Kresnik-Krsnik'; Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, 136–7, 228; Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, trans. Szilvia Redley and Michael Webb, Budapest, 1999, 127–30.
11. This information is all found in Gail Kligman's famous study *Călus*, Bucharest, 1999.
12. Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, 137–43; 'Hungary', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, Oxford, 1990, 244–53; and 'Learned Systems and Popular Narratives of Vision and Bewitchment', in Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions. Volume Three*, Budapest, 2008, 50–58; Mihály Hoppál, 'Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs', in Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál (eds), *Studies on Shamanism*, Helsinki, 1992, 156–68; Jeno Fazekas, 'Hungarian Shamanism', in Carl-Martin Edsman (ed.), *Studies in Shamanism*, Stockholm, 1967, 97–119; Tekla Dömötör, 'The Problem of the Hungarian Female Táltos', in Mihály Hoppál (ed.), *Shamanism in Eurasia*, Göttingen, 1984, 423–9; 'The Cunning Folk in English and Hungarian Witch Trials', in Venetia Newall (ed.), *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century*, Woodbridge, 1980, 183–7; and *Hungarian Folk Beliefs*, Budapest, 1982, 63–70, 132–57; Ágnes Várkonyi, 'Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 37 (1991–2), 427–34; Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 37–87, 134–49; and '*Tündéres* and the *Order of St Ilona*', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 54 (2009), 379–96.
13. Sources as above.
14. Dömötör, 'The Cunning Folk', 185.
15. T. P. Vukanovič, 'Witchcraft in the Central Balkans', *Folklore*, 100 (1989), 9–24.
16. Mircea Eliade, 'Some Observations on European Witchcraft', *History of Religions*, 14 (1975), 158–9.
17. Vukanovič, 'Witchcraft in the Central Balkans'.
18. Nicole Belmont, *Les signes de la naissance*, Paris, 1971.
19. Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 134; Klaniczay, 'Learned Systems and Popular Narratives', 65.

20. Rune Blix Hagen, 'Sami Shamanism', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 93–9; and 'Female Witches and Sami Sorcerers in the Witch Trials of Arctic Norway (1593–1695)', *Arv*, 62 (2006), 122–42; and 'Witchcraft and Ethnicity' in Marko Nenonen and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Writing Witch-hunt Histories*, Leiden, 2014, 141–66; Liv Helene Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, Leiden, 2013, 255–9, 300–19. I am very grateful to Rune for sending me some of his work in draft, and initiating a valuable correspondence. We differ slightly over the element of shamanism in the trials, but this does not affect our overall agreement on the main issues. Willumsen helpfully prints much material from a well-recorded trial, again allowing room for differences of interpretation which show how polyvalent this material can be. The fact that the Sámi accused seemingly moved between expressing belief in the Christian God and in several lesser deities is taken by her as showing his unreliability and wish to please his interrogators; but it could equally express a genuine, syncretic, belief system.
21. Antero Heikkinen and Timo Kervinen, 'Finland', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 319–38; Anna-Keena Siikala, *Mythic Images and Shamanism*, Helsinki, 2002; Laura Stark-Arola, *Magic, Body and Social Order*, Helsinki, 2006; Marko Nenonen, 'Envious are the People, Witches Watch at Every Gate', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 18 (1993), 77–91; Raisa Maria Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society*, Aldershot, 2008.
22. Nenonen, 'Envious are the People', 79; Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society*, 61. I am very grateful to both Marko and Raisa for gestures of friendship, and gifts of their work, over the years.
23. Maia Madar, 'Estonia I', and Juhan Kalik, 'Estonia II', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 257–72; Ülo Valk, 'Reflections of Folk Beliefs and Legends at the Witch Trials of Estonia', in Klaniczay and Pócs (eds), *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions*, 269–82.
24. Kalik, 'Estonia II'.
25. I also have some reservations about the way in which Valk, 'Reflections of Folk Beliefs and Legends', tried to plug gaps in the witch trial evidence with modern folklore. There are possible references to fairy-like beings in the trial records, but what is much more apparent from Valk's material is the way in which the Christian Devil, and demonic witches' assemblies, were absorbed, lastingly, into Estonian folk belief.
26. Madar, 'Estonia I'.
27. Petrus Valderama, *Histoire generale du monde*, Paris, 1617, Book 1, pp. 257–61; Johann Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, Basel, 1568, Book 1, c. 10; Bodin, *De la démonomanie*, Book 2, c. 6; De Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance*, Book 4, Discourse 1.1. See also the earlier account, which attributed the annual assembly to the werewolves of all the Baltic peoples, in Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Rome, 1555, 442–3; and other sixteenth-century references to the Livonian kind cited by Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal, London, 1991, 156–9, including the Caspar Peucer one to the man at Riga.
28. Discussed in Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 28–30.
29. This argument has been made, and the superficiality of the resemblances emphasized, by Rudolf Schende, 'Ein Benandante, ein Wolf oder Wer?', and Christoph Daxelmüller, 'Der Werwolf', *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 82 (1986), 200–208; and Willem de Blecourt, 'A Journey to Hell', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 21 (2007), 49–67.
30. Valk, 'Reflections of Folk Beliefs and Legends', was convinced that Estonian witch-beliefs had emerged from 'Balto-Finnish shamanism'; but he was heavily influenced by Ginzburg's model. It would be so nice if he were right, and a compact sub-shamanic province could be constructed around two sides of the Baltic with a core of genuine shamanism among the Sámi, but that seems too much to conclude firmly on the known evidence.
31. On this see Bengt Ankarloo, 'Sweden', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 285–318; and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 2011, 119–45.
32. Gunnar W. Knutsen and Anne Irene Rilsøy, 'Trolls and Witches', *Arv*, 63 (2007), 31–69. I am very grateful to Gunnar for the gift of this article.
33. Jonas Liliequist, 'Sexual Encounters with Spirits and Demons in Early Modern Sweden', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (eds), *Christian Demonology*, Budapest, 2006, 152–67.
34. Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark*, Basingstoke, 2015, 151.
35. Stephen Mitchell, 'Odin Magic', *Scandinavian Studies*, 81 (2003), 263–86.

36. Magnus Rafnsson, *Angurgapi*, Holmnavik, Iceland, 2003, 46.
37. Kirsten Hastrup, 'Iceland', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds) *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 383–402.
38. The best extant study of the Icelandic witch-hunt in English is Rafnsson, *Angurgapi*, which seemingly does not exist in any British library and can be obtained only directly from the author. There are also Hastrup, 'Iceland'; and R. C. Ellison, 'The Kirkjuból Affair', *Seventeenth Century*, 8 (1993), 17–43.
39. Russell Zguta, 'Witchcraft Trials in Seventeenth-century Russia', *American Historical Review*, 82 (1977), 1187–1207; 'Was There a Witch Craze in Muscovite Russia?', *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 41, 1977, 119–28; and 'Witchcraft and Medicine in Pre-Petrine Russia', *Russian Review*, 37 (1978), 438–48; Linda J. Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief*, Armonk, NY, 1989, 83–91; Valerie A. Kivelson, 'Through the Prism of Witchcraft', in Barbara Evans Clements et al. (eds), *Russia's Women*, Berkeley, 1991, 74–94; 'Lethal Convictions', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 6 (2011), 34–61; and *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-century Russia*, Ithaca, NY, 2013; William F. Ryan, 'The Witchcraft Hysteria in Early Modern Europe: Was Russia an Exception?', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 76, 1998, 49–84; and 'Witchcraft and the Russian State', in Johannes S. Dillinger et al. (eds), *Hexenprozess und Staatsbildung*, Bielefeld, 2008, 135–47; Kateryna Dysa, 'Attitudes towards Witches in the Multi-Confessional Regions of Germany and the Ukraine', in Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (eds), *Frontiers of Faith*, Budapest, 2001, 285–9; 'Orthodox Demonology and the Perception of Witchcraft in Early Modern Ukraine', in Jaroslav Miller and László Kontler (eds), *Friars, Nobles and Burghers*, Budapest, 2010, 341–60; Maureen Perrie, 'The Tsaritsa, the Needlewoman and the Witches', *Russian History*, 40 (2013), 297–314; Marianna G. Muravyeva, 'Russian Witchcraft on Trial', in Nenonen and Toivo (eds), *Writing Witch-hunt Histories*, 109–40.
40. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*, 21.
41. Kivelson, 'Through the Prism of Witchcraft', 84.
42. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*, 22, 31–2.
43. What is known is summarized in William Monter, 'Witch Trials in Continental Europe 1560–1660', in Clark et al., *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic*, 40–44; and 'Witch Trials in France', in Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 218–31. Most of it is filtered through the appeals system of the Parlement of Paris, of which the classic study is Alfred Soman, *Sorcellerie et Justice Criminelle*, Aldershot, 1992. One good study of local records for a set of trials in central France, Nicole Jacques-Chaquin and Maxime Préaud (eds), *Les sorciers du carroi de Marlou*, Grenoble, 1996, is not helpful in this context, though it is in many others.
44. William Monter, 'Toads and Eucharists', *French Historical Studies*, 20, 1997, 563–95.
45. That is summarized in Wolfgang Behringer, 'Witchcraft Studies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland', in Barry et al. (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 93–5; a more recent study of Tyrol, Hansjörg Rabanser, *Hexenwahn*, Innsbruck, 2006, does not shed much light on the problem of gendering.
46. Rolf Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, Basingstoke, 2009, 218–45.
47. William Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn, Cambridge, 2002, 236–92.
48. The most accessible edition is the Strasbourg one of 1612.
49. Richard Kieckhefer, 'Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 1 (2006), 88–91; and 'Avenging the Blood of Children', in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, 1998, 91–110.
50. Maria Tausiet Carlés, 'Witchcraft as Metaphor: Infanticide and its Translations in 16th-Century Aragon', in Stuart Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft*, Basingstoke, 2000, 179–96.
51. Pau Castell Granados, ' "Wine Vat Witches Suffocate Children" ', *EHumanista*, 26 (2014), 181.
52. Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, Reno, CA, 1980, 27–9.
53. Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 69–70, 91, 99.
54. Vukanovič, 'Witchcraft in the Central Balkans', 9–17.
55. Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, ch. 10, shows that blood-sucking only became strongly associated with vampires in the mid-eighteenth century.
56. This will be discussed in a later chapter.
57. Laura Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform*, Basingstoke, 2011, 16–26, 181–3. See also Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, Bonn, 1901, 553–5; and Henry Charles Lea, *Materials towards a History of Witchcraft*,

ed. Arthur C. Howland, Philadelphia, PA, 1939, vol. 1, 348–9. On pp. 65–6 Stokes suggests that elements of a case at Luzern in about 1450 provide evidence of a local fertility cult like that of the *benandanti*, but it seems to describe a routine assembly of witches to raise storms, not anything resembling a combat with adversaries. Likewise, I cannot confidently extend the range of the medieval and early modern 'dream warrior' tradition westwards to Corsica, where a twentieth-century folk belief was recorded in *mazzeri*, people born with the need to send out their spirits to kill animals at night, and the power to predict human deaths in their community: Dorothy Carrington, *The Dream-hunters of Corsica*, London, 1995. On one night each year, the *mazzeri* of a village would band together in their dreams to fight those of another village, and those killed in these battles would die in reality within the year. The similarities with the South Slav complex of beliefs are obvious, but also the differences (the *mazzeri* were of no benefit to their communities), and the records of the early modern Corsican Inquisition, though well stocked with cases regarding magic, have no mention of this belief.

58. Peter Burke, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Renaissance Italy', in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art*, London, 1977, 45.
59. These accounts are all collected in Alice Azul Palau-Giovanetti, 'Pagan Traces in Medieval and Early Modern Witch-Beliefs', York University MA thesis, 2012, 79–99 and Appendix; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 100, 108–9, 131–2; and Wolfgang Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort, Charlottesville, VA, 1998, 55–6.
60. The references here are collected by Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 96, 131–2, 302; and *The Night Battles*, 54–5.
61. Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, esp. 148–52.
62. Ibid., 34.
63. Gustav Henningsen, '"The Ladies from Outside"', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern Witchcraft*, 191–218. See also Giovanna Fiume, 'The Old Vinegar Lady', in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds), *History from Crime*, Baltimore, MD, 1994, 45–87.
64. Maurizio Bertolotti, 'The Ox Bones and the Ox Hide', in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, Baltimore, MD, 1991, 42–70. See also Palau-Giovanetti, 'Pagan Traces', 50–53; and Rainer Decker, *Witchcraft and the Papacy*, trans. H. R. Erik Midelfort, Charlottesville, VA, 2008, 91–4.
65. Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, 39–46.
66. Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edition, London, 2006, 237–42.
67. In addition to the sources cited below, see 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*, Beckenham, 1987, 88–114; Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions*, Oxford, 1993; Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark*, Basingstoke, 2015; and Tamar Herzig, 'Witchcraft Prosecutions in Italy', in Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Oxford, 2013, 249–67; Matteo Duni, *Under the Devil's Spell*, Florence, 2007 (I am very grateful to Debora Moretti for the gift of this book).
68. Jonathan Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice*, Cambridge, 2011, 35–44.
69. Gustav Henningsen, 'The Witches' Flying and the Spanish Inquisitors', *Folklore*, 120 (2009), 57–8.
70. Francisco Bethencourt, 'Portugal', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 403–24.
71. Carmel Cassar, 'Witchcraft Beliefs and Social Control in Seventeenth-century Malta', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 3 (1993), 316–34.
72. Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark*, Basingstoke, 2015, 61.
73. Gunnar W. Knutsen, *Servants of Satan and Masters of Demons*, Oslo, 2004. I am very grateful to Gunnar for the gift of this book.
74. Francesca Matteoni, 'Blood Beliefs in Early Modern Europe', University of Hertfordshire PhD thesis, 2009, 194–6.
75. For example by Debora Moretti's comparative study of Novara and Siena, in research being conducted under my supervision.
76. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts*, Cambridge, 2004, 78.
77. Sara T. Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, Baltimore, MD, 1992, 179–81.

78. Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550–1650*, Oxford, 1989, passim, and Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice*, 35–8, 135.
79. Thomas Deutscher, 'The Role of the Episcopal Tribunal of Novara in the Suppression of Heresy and Witchcraft, 1563–1615', *Catholic Historical Review*, 77 (1991), 403–21.
80. Anne Jacobsen Schutte, 'Asmodea', in Kathryn A. Edwards (ed.), *Werewolves, Witches and Wandering Spirits*, Kirksville, MO, 2002, 119–25.
81. David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*, Manchester, 1992, ch. 8.
82. Knutsen, *Servants of Satan and Masters of Demons*, 117–34.
83. Henningsen, ' "The Ladies from Outside" ', 196–200.
84. Cassar, 'Witchcraft Beliefs and Social Control'; Bethencourt, 'Portugal', 403.
85. Decker, *Witchcraft and the Papacy*, 61–145, is the latest and best study of the process, supplemented by Duni, *Under the Devil's Spell*, 32–45; and Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice*, 196–244.
86. Ana Conde, 'Sorcellerie et inquisition au XVIe siècle en Espagne', in Annie Molinié and Jean-Paul Duviols (eds), *Inquisition d'Espagne*, Paris, 2003, 95–107; William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, Cambridge, 1990, 255–75; María Tausiet, *Urban Magic in Early Modern Spain*, Basingstoke, 2014; Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, passim; Agusti Alcoberro, 'The Catalan Witch and the Witch Hunt', *EHumanista*, 26 (2014), 153–69.
87. Decker, *Witchcraft and the Papacy*, 113–31.
88. This is based on the studies cited above and below, and also listed in the bibliographies of the general works listed in n. 1 above.
89. Without reference to this tradition, Eva Labouvie, Martin Moeller and Alison Rowlands have suggested that folk belief among Germans associated women more with malevolent magic: Labouvie, 'Men in Witchcraft Trials', in Ulinka Rublack (ed.), *Gender in Early Modern German History*, Cambridge, 2002, 49–70; Moeller, *Dass Willkür über Recht ginge*, Bielefeld, 2007, 228–31; and Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany*, Manchester, 2003, 170–79.
90. This has been especially well pointed out by Dillinger, *Evil People*, 44–6. Dillinger also, however, warns (on p. 51) that the sabbath is best perceived as an imagined early modern anti-society rather than as 'a condensation of older traditions'.
91. Jens Christian V. Johansen, 'Denmark', in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 360–66.
92. Robin Briggs, *The Witches of Lorraine*, Oxford, 2007, 143–6.
93. Wanda Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, Basingstoke, 2013, 97–101. Another historian of the Polish trials, Michael Ostling, carefully considers the relationship of Christian and non-Christian elements in early modern Polish ideas of magic, and household or nature spirits, and concludes that those ideas were thoroughly, if unorthodoxly, Christianized: 'Ordinary peasants did not perform a thinly Christianized magic; rather, they protected themselves from Christian devils by means of Christian holy objects.' See *Between the Devil and the Host*, Oxford, 2011, 183–236; quotation on p. 188.
94. Dillinger, *Evil People*, 55–6.
95. Alison Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Popular Religion in Early Modern Rothenburg ob der Tauber', in Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (eds), *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe*, London, 1995, 108. The traditions associated with May Eve (to use the English name) are considered by me in *The Stations of the Sun*, Oxford, 1996, 218–43.
96. Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, Basingstoke, 2008, 96 and passim.
97. Heinrich Kramer (?and Jacob Sprenger), *Malleus maleficarum*, Mainz, 1486, 104A.
98. Bodin, *De la démonomanie*, Book 2, c. 4.
99. Nicholas Remy, *Daemonolatreiae libri tres*, Lyon, 1595, Book 1, c. 14.
100. Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, 39.
101. For example, Rita Volmer, 'Hexenprozesse in der Stadt Trier und im Herzogtum Luxemburg Geständnisse', in Rosemaries Beier-De Haan (ed.), *Hexenwahn*, Wolfratshausen, 2002, 72–81 (for Trier); George L. Burr, *The Witch Persecutions*, Philadelphia, PA, 1902, 23–8 (for Bamberg); Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, London, 2004, 207 (for Eichstätt); Peter A Morton (ed.), *The Trial of Tempel Anneke*, trans. Barbara Dahms, Peterborough, Ontario, 2006 (for Brunswick); Thomas Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg*, New York, 2009, 164 (for Hohenlohe).
102. Per Sorlin, 'Child Witches and the Construction of the Witches' Sabbath', in Klaniczay and Pócs (eds), *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions*, 99–126.

103. De Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance*, Book 2.2.1, 5; 2.31. For other examples of demonologists working similar material, see Boguet, *Discours des sorciers*, c. 14; Francesco Maria Guaccio, *Compendium maleficarum*, Milan, 1626, p. 70; and Del Rio, *Disquisitiones magicae*, Book 2.6.16.
104. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, London, 1996, 6; Brian Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe*, London, 3rd edition, 2006, 13.
105. Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice*, 67–8, 196–218, 236–7. See also Frans Ciappara, *Society and Inquisition in Early Modern Malta*, San Gwann, 2001, 261–300.
106. Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic*, 5–40.
107. Since 1900, indeed the only apparent case of any scholar doing this is the thoroughly eccentric Montague Summers, of whose work Julian Goodare reminded me.
108. For the Swedish evidence, see Soili-Maria Olli, 'How to Make a Pact with the Devil', *Studia Neophilologica*, 84 (2012), 88–96.
109. For especially good studies of the manner in which confessions could be achieved in these circumstances, in the Continental heartland of the trials, see Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze*, London, 2004; and Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg*. It is also very apparent in the trial records edited by the Lausanne cluster and by older scholars such as George Lincoln Burr.
110. Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, 350.
111. Gustav Henningsen, 'The Witches' Flying and the Spanish Inquisitors', *Folklore*, 120 (2009), 57–74.
112. Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic*, 65–214. Bever provides two different definitions of shamanism, both viable and in actual use by authors, one narrower and one broader: the problem is that he then applies both to his own material, sliding between one and the other according to occasion. In general, I find his approach to an understanding of early modern beliefs and accusations a worthwhile one. John Demos pioneered the use of psychoanalysis in the understanding of witch trials, in *Entertaining Satan*, Oxford, 1982, and it was adopted fruitfully by a number of other scholars, most notably Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, London, 1994, and Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, London, 1996. What is needed now is for some more historians of the subject to follow Bever's example in engaging with psychology and neuroscience, as those disciplines continue to evolve, and debate ways in which better insights may emerge from such an engagement.
113. Bever mentioned the significance of magical treasure hunting in his discussion cited above, and see also Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America*, Basingstoke, 2012.

8 Witches and Fairies

1. For example, J. A. MacCulloch, 'The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Scotland', *Folklore*, 32 (1921), 227–44; Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, New York, 1930, 148–75; K. M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*, London, 1959, 99–116; Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, London, 2000, 85–115; Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, East Linton, 2001, passim; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan's Conspiracy*, East Linton, 2001, 63–141.
2. Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, Harmondsworth, 1992, 96–109; quotation on p. 109.
3. Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, Brighton, 2005. I am very grateful to Emma for the gift of this book and its successor.
4. Furthermore, she distanced herself from what she termed the 'ideological excesses' of Margaret Murray and the 'imaginative abandon' with which modern Pagans have 'spiritualized beliefs and practices associated with early modern witchcraft and magic': ibid., 190. She has, however, a deep respect for modern Western shamanism. Ginzburg himself, as a secular rationalist, has never shown any interest in modern Paganism or modern shamanism, and referred to Margaret Murray's interpretation of the Scottish material as 'obviously absurd', a blunter term than many other critics of her work have used: *Ecstasies*, 112.
5. Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, Brighton, 2010. The case that some Scottish people accused as witches might actually have been guilty both of devil-worship and attempted destructive magic had also been argued by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, in *Satan's Conspiracy*. It is indeed conceivable, though seems impossible to prove from the evidence and does not explain the fantastic elements in the confessions.

6. For a range of reviews see the *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 1083–5; *Shaman*, 19 (2011), 89–95; *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 32 (2012), 93–4; *Time and Mind*, 6 (2012), 361–6; and *Folklore*, 124 (2013), 111–12. I am very grateful to Clive Tolley and Malcolm Gaskill for reminding me of the locations of two of these. See also Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk*, London, 2003, 177–86. Emma Wilby herself has gone on to develop her own theories in essays on what she terms 'dark shamanism' in Britain, but they add nothing to her earlier work for the purposes of the present book, instead enlarging on other aspects of it.
7. Admittedly she sometimes steps beyond the bounds of caution – for example in *Cunning Folk*, 243 and *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 281, where what is usually admirably suggestive and tentative in her work suddenly becomes certain and conclusive – but these moments are rare.
8. Julian Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context', in Julian Goodare et al. (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Basingstoke, 2008, 30–38; quotations on p. 31.
9. He both adopted this term, from Ginzburg, and problematized it.
10. Julian Goodare, 'The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland', *Folklore*, 123 (2012), 198–219.
11. Julian Goodare, 'Seely Wights, Fairies and Nature Spirits', forthcoming in Éva Pócs (ed.), *Body, Soul, Spirits and Supernatural Communication*. I am very grateful to Julian for sending me an advance copy of this paper.
12. The sources for this are those that underpin Chapter One, and are listed there and in the appendix: the particular case of animal spirits will be considered in Chapter Ten.
13. Éva Pócs, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South-eastern and Central Europe*, Helsinki, 1989; and '*Tundéres* and the *Order of St Ilona*, or, Did the Hungarians Have Fairy Magicians?', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 54 (2009), 379–96.
14. Zoran Čiča, 'Vilenica; Vilenjak', *Narodna umjetnost*, 39 (2002), 31–64.
15. Fabián Alejandro Campagne, 'Charismatic Healers on Iberian Soil', *Folklore*, 118 (2007), 44–64.
16. For example, Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 140–47, 163–4; Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*, 99. The great example of a historian who used such materials is Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, 1971, 608–9.
17. National Records of Scotland, JC26/1/67.
18. The most recent publication of the trial is in Wilby, *Cunning Folk*, viii–xv.
19. Robert Pitcairn (ed.), *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1833, vol. 1, part 3, 161–5.
20. See the satire on him that mocks and slanders her as an evil magician consorting with 'seely wights', 'The Legend of the Bischop of St Androis Lyfe', lines 371–89; printed in James Cranstoun (ed.), *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, Edinburgh, 1891, vol. 1, 365.
21. Pitcairn (ed.), *Ancient Criminal Trials*, vol. 1, part 3, 192–204.
22. Stirling Council Archives, CH2/722/2.
23. Pitcairn (ed.), *Ancient Criminal Trials*, vol. 2, part 2, 25–6.
24. John Stuart (ed.), *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club: Volume One*, Aberdeen, 1841, 177.
25. Ibid., 119–25.
26. G. F. Black, *Examples of Printed Folk-lore Concerning the Orkney and Shetland Islands*, ed. Northcote W. Thomas, London, 1903, 72–4, 111–15.
27. John Graham Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1835 536, puts her encounter in Caithness, but she herself was from Orkney.
28. *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol. 11, 366–7, 401. See Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 130–31.
29. John Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Presbytery Book of Strathbogie*, Aberdeen, 1843, xi–xiii.
30. The record is printed in Alaric Hall, 'Folk-healing, Fairies and Witchcraft', *Studia Celtica Fennica*, 2 (2006), 10–25.
31. Black, *Examples of Printed Folk-lore*, 124.
32. Described in Margo Todd, 'Fairies, Egyptians and Elders', in Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell (eds), *The Impact of the European Reformation*, Aldershot, 2008, 193.
33. Survey of Scottish Witchcraft.
34. William Cramond (ed.), *Records of Elgin 1234–1830: Volume Two*, Aberdeen, 1908, 357.
35. Her confession is most recently published in Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 37–52.
36. Cited in P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, Stroud, 2005, 112–13.
37. J.R.N. MacPhail (ed.), *Highland Papers. Volume Three*, Edinburgh, 1920, 36–8.

38. Page 7 of an *Account of Two Letters*, appended to *A True Narrative of the Sufferings and Relief of a Young Girl*, Edinburgh, 1697.
39. I have excluded beings described in the trial records who, from their characteristics, such as being green-clad spirits, could well be fairies but are not clearly so.
40. Todd, 'Fairies, Egyptians and Elders'.
41. Robert Law, *Memorialls*, ed. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Edinburgh, 1818, lxxv.
42. Julian Goodare, 'Boundaries of the Fairy Realm in Scotland', in Karin E. Olsen and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *Airy Nothings*, Leiden, 139–70; and 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context'. I am very grateful to Julian for the gift of this essay.
43. By Michael Hunter, as *The Occult Laboratory*, Woodbridge, 2001.
44. Ibid., 143, 150.
45. Ibid., 51–191, passim.
46. William Hay, *Lectures on Marriage*, ed. John C. Barry, Edinburgh, 1967, 126–7: 'Nam quaedam sunt mulieres que dicunt se habere commercium cum diana regina pharorum Alie sunt que dicunt pharos esse demones et eas nullum commertium cum eis habere Sed se convenisse cum innumera multitudine mulierum simplicium quas vocant lingua nostra celly vichtys'.
47. This is in an essay on 'Seely Wights, Fairies and Nature Spirits in Scotland', forthcoming in a collection edited by Michael Ostling for Palgrave Macmillan and entitled *Small Gods*. I am very grateful to Julian for sending me an advance copy of it.
48. Julian Goodare also notes that Hay describes the women of the *canon Episcopi*, uniquely, as riding on swallows, and argues that this was one of the characteristics of the 'cult' of the seely wights, whose adherents thought they did so in ecstatic visions. This is possible, but it is not actually what Hay says, and nobody accused of magic before a Scottish court claimed to fly in that manner: the closest Julian can find was Bessie Henderson, who spoke of meeting fairy-like beings who 'flew like a swallow'.
49. Incidentally, while including the Northern and Western Isles in my survey of this subject with respect to Scotland, I am leaving the Channel Islands out of my consideration of southern Britain. This might be justified by geography, as they are properly part of Normandy, and legally a remnant of its duchy. It is also, however, for lack of material. Some public excitement, and confusion, has been caused by Darryl Ogier's article 'Night Revels and Werewolfery in Calvinist Guernsey', *Folklore*, 109 (1998), 53–62, which dealt with the prosecution in 1630 of youthful male merrymakers for going about at Christmastide disguised as (perhaps) were-wolves. However, nobody at the time associated them with witchcraft, magic or a 'cult', the case record concerns only one or (possibly) two incidents involving the same small group, and the translation of a term as 'werewolf' is uncertain as it might equally mean 'outlaw'. The post-Reformation authorities in Guernsey were cracking down on traditional seasonal customs, especially those involving rowdiness and disguise. The penalty exacted was merely suspension from communion. This episode had nothing to do with the intense and lethal witch-hunt conducted in the early modern Channel Islands, for which see John Linwood Pitts, *Witchcraft and Devil Lore in the Channel Islands*, Guernsey, 1886; G. R. Balleine, 'Witch Trials in Jersey', *Société Jersaise Bulletin Annuel*, 13 (1939), 379–98; and Darryl Ogier, 'Glimpses of the Obscure', in Angela McShane and Garthine Walker (eds), *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England*, Basingstoke, 2010, 177–91.
50. Thomas Scott Holmes (ed.), *The Register of John Stafford*, Somerset Record Society 31–2 (1915–16), 225–7; Claude Jenkins, 'Cardinal Morton's Register', in R. W. Seton-Watson (ed.), *Tudor Studies*, London, 1924, 72–4; *The Examination of John Walsh*, London, 1566; Somerset Record Office, D/D/Ca/21–2; Borthwick Institute, R.vi.A2, fo. 22.
51. John Penry, *A Treatise Concerning the Aequity of an Humble Supplication*, Oxford, 1587, 46.
52. East Sussex Record Office, RYE 13/1–21. The social and political context of the case has been intensively studied by Annabel Gregory in 'Witchcraft, Politics and "Good Neighbourhood" in Early Seventeenth-century Rye', *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), 31–66; and *Rye Spirits*, London, 2013.
53. Moses Pitt, *An Account of one Ann Jeffries*, London, 1696; *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, 13 (1924), 312–14. The case has been well studied by Peter Marshall, 'Ann Jeffries and the Fairies', in McShane and Walker (eds), *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England*, 127–42.
54. Durant Hotham, *The Life of Jacob Behmen*, London, 1654, C3; John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, London, 1677, 301.

55. All this is recorded in Wharton's journals, British Library, Add. MSS 20006–7. A full-length study of Parish, which treats her with deep sympathy, has been produced by Frances Timbers, *The Magical Adventures of Mary Parish*, Kirksville, MO, 2016.
56. John Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits*, London, 1705, 104–5.
57. This was noticed particularly by Davies, *Cunning Folk*, 70.
58. Thomas Bell (ed.), *Records of the Meeting of the Exercise of Alford*, Aberdeen, 1897, 257.
59. John Stuart (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery and Synod of Aberdeen*, Aberdeen, 1846, 310.
60. Hunter, *The Occult Laboratory*, 196.
61. Ibid., 51–3, 60, 142–7, 161–72. This makes the more curious and anomalous the statement of Thomas Pennant from the late eighteenth century, that those who claimed to possess second sight on the Hebridean island of Rhum gained visions during 'paroxysms', in which they 'fall into trances, grow pale, and feign to abstain from food for a month': cited in Julian Goodare, 'Visionaries and Nature Spirits in Scotland', in Bela Mosia (ed.), *Book of Scientific Works of the Conference of Belief Narrative Network of ISFNR, 1–4 October 2014*, Zugdidi, Georgia, 2015), 106. Online at www.zssu.ge/zssu2/sites/default/files/page/Book%20of%20Scientific%20Works.pdf. It could be that such figures had developed a new technique in the intervening century, but more likely that such a method had been part of their repertoire earlier, but – to judge from those earlier reports – a minor one.
62. Hunter, *The Occult Laboratory*, 177.
63. Goodare, 'Visionaries and Nature Spirits', 102–16; Margaret Dudley and Julian Goodare, 'Outside In or Inside Out', and Julian Goodare, 'Flying Witches in Scotland', in *Scottish Witches and Witch-hunters*, Basingstoke, 2013, 121–39, 159–76.
64. This motif features in the cases of Bessie Dunlop, Janet Boyman and Alison Pearson. For English cases see C.M.L. Bouch, *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties*, Kendal, 1948, 215–16; William Lilly, *History of his Life and Times*, London, 1715, 102–3.
65. For general accounts of British fairy belief, see the sources in n. 1, plus Jeremy Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions*, Wymeswold, 2004.
66. A point emphasized by Katharine Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, London, 1967, 48–50; and Gillian Edwards, *Hobgoblin and Sweet Puck*, London, 1974, 33–48.
67. What follows in this section, unless otherwise referenced, is a summary of Ronald Hutton, 'The Making of the Early Modern British Fairy Tradition', *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), 1157–75. Full arguments and source references, and tributes to other scholars in the field, are to be found there.
68. For much of the twentieth century it was more or less orthodoxy that the fays were intrusions into the French romance tradition from Celtic culture, but this has now been abandoned as unprovable: see the references in my article.
69. For the Somerset magician, see the first source in n. 50. In a Latin treatise on the Ten Commandments, a magical text is known as a 'helvenbook', i.e. elven book, as further proof of the widely perceived connection between fairies and magic by this date. The treatise may actually be earlier, but exists only in fifteenth-century copies: Siegfried Wenzel, 'The Middle English Lexicon', in Michael Korhammer (ed.), *Words, Texts and Manuscripts*, Woodbridge, 1992, 472.
70. A point emphasized by William Grant Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland*, London, 1851, 49–51; and Donald A. Mackenzie, *Scottish Folk-Lore and Folk Life*, London, 1935, 195–210. Although they relied mainly on modern folklore, their view is borne out in the rare cases where a seventeenth-century source for Gaelic fairy belief survives, such as Robert Kirk's *The Secret Commonwealth* (for which I have used the edition in Hunter, *The Occult Laboratory*, 77–106).
71. Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions*, 96–107, is especially good on these.
72. Robert Kirk, in Hunter, *The Occult Laboratory*, 81.
73. Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Merchant's Tale', lines 2225–2318.
74. Robert Henryson, 'Orpheus and Eurydice', anthologized in various editions.
75. William Dunbar, 'The Goldyn Targe', lines 125–6.
76. For example, Sir David Lyndsay, 'The Testament and Complaynt of our Soverane Lordis Papyngo', lines 1132–5; and Anon., 'The Manner of the Crying of ane Playe', in W. A. Craigie (ed.), *The Asluan Manuscript*, Edinburgh, 1925, vol. 2, 149.

77. Source references are provided in my *Historical Journal* article cited above.
78. This poem occurs in the Bannatyne Manuscript and is published in the various editions of that, sometimes catalogued under the first line, 'Syn of Lyntoun'.
79. See the discussion of his poetry in Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 155–6.
80. Compare Lindsay's 'The Testament, and Complaynt', as above, with his 'Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estates', lines 732, 1245–6, 1536–7, 4188–9; literary scholars spell him 'Lyndsay'.
81. 'Ane Flytting or Invective be Capitane Alexander Montgomerie aganis the Laird of Pollart', Book 2, lines 14–26.
82. James VI, *Daemonologie*, Edinburgh, 1597, 73–4.
83. *Philotus*, eventually published in Edinburgh in 1603, stanza 132. I am grateful to Julian Goodare for pointing out the 1567 date for its performance.
84. The context of this is considered in my *Historical Journal* article, but I can go into the details of early modern English portrayals of fairies further here. Previous work into the subject has concentrated mainly on the literary manifestations of those portrayals, but with some regard for the social context: Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*; Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*; Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, 124–85; Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Taken by the Fairies', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 277–311; Marjorie Swann, 'The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53 (2000), 449–73; Matthew Woodcock, *Fairy in The Faerie Queene*, Aldershot, 2005; Regina Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith*, Selinsgrove, 2006; Peter Marshall, 'Protestants and Fairies in Early Modern England', in L. Scott Dixon (ed.), *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe*, Farnham, 2009, 139–61. The last of these provides the best overview of attitudes to date, but a more comprehensive and integrated one, with the cross-British comparison, can be given here.
85. In two editions of *Albions England*, London, 1602, 85, and London 1612, c. 91.
86. John Florio, *A Worlde of Words*, London, 1598, 401–2; Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise Concerning the Original of Unbeliefe*, London, 1625, 178; Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas Faulkner et al., Oxford, 1989, 185–8; Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels*, London, 1635, 567–8; William Vaughan, *The Souls Exercise*, London, 1641, 113; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part 4, c. 47; Henry Smith, *Christian Religions Appeal*, London, 1675, 45.
87. *The Wisdom of Dr Dodypoll*, London, *c*. 1600.
88. *The Divell is an Asse*, London, 1616, esp. Act 1, Scene 1.
89. *The Sad Shepherd*, London, 1640, Acts 2 and 3.
90. British Library, Sloane MS 1727, pp. 23, 28; and MS 3851, fos 106v, 115v, 129; Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 1406, fos 50–55; and MS e. MUS 173, fo. 72r; Folger Library MS V626, pp. 80, 185; Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Book 15, cc. 8–9.
91. Edward Fenton (ed.), *The Diaries of John Dee*, Charlbury, 1998, 25; Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 1491, fo. 1362v.
92. *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philip Flower*, London, 1618, sig. E3.
93. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 1, line 162; John Day, *Works* (London, 1881), vol. 2, 70; Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (London, 1594), Act 5, Scene 1, lines 212–15; *Gammer Gurton's Nedle* (London, 1575), Act 1, Scene 2, lines 67–9; *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (London, 1608), Act 3, Scene 3; John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act 1, Scene 1, lines 114–17, in *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher*, ed. A. Glover and A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1906–12), vol. 2.
94. For an example of a charm from the Elizabethan period, see Bodleian Library, Add. MS B1, fo. 20r. For English service magicians acting against fairy-caused ills, see Bouch, *Prelates and People*, 230; and Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 184.
95. Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 150–61, collected the references.
96. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, London, 1589, c. 15; John Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, ed. John Buchanan Brown, Fontwell, 1972, 203; R. Willis, *Mount Tabor*, London, 1639, 92–3; Hertfordshire Record Office, HAT/SR 2/100. For the later history of the changeling tradition in the British Isles, see Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, 236–45; and Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions*, 108–22. Julian Goodare tells me that there is evidence for the changeling belief in early modern Scotland as well.

97. *A Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell, Cambridge, 1938, 435; Anthony Munday, *Fidele and Fortunio*, London, 1584, line 566.
98. *Monsieur Thomas*, London, 1639, Act 5, Scene 1.
99. *The Pilgrim*, London 1647, Act 5, Scene 4.
100. *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, London 1662, passim.
101. See the gloss for 'June', in line 25.
102. *The Friers Chronicle*, London, 1625, sig. B3v; see also Henry Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft*, Cambridge, 1590, 8; Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of egregious popish Impostures*, London, 1603, 135–6; Richard Flecknoe, *Aenigmatical Characters*, London, 1665, 17; Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, 175–6; Thomas Heyrick, *The New Atlantis*, London, 1687, 15–16.
103. George Chapman, *An Humerous Dayes Mirth*, London, 1599, 209–11; *A Discourse of Witchcraft*, London, 1621, 17; Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know No Body*, London, 1605, vol. 1, pp. 3–23 in the 1874 version of his *Dramatic Works*. See also Reginald Scot's declaration that fairies were the inventions of maids to frighten or entertain children: *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Book 4, c. 10.
104. William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act 4, Scene 4 and Act 5, Scene 5; Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, London, 1616, Act 1, Scene 2 and Act 3, Scene 5; *The Buggbears*, London, *c.* 1564–5, passim; *The Valiant Welshman*, London, 1663, Act 2, Scene 5; *Wily Beguilde*, London, 1606, passim; Munday, *Fidele and Fortunio*, passim.
105. *The Brideling, Saddling and Ryding, of a rich Churle in Hampshire*, London, 1595; *The Several Notorious and lewd Cousnages of Iohn West, and Alice West, falsely called the King and Queene of the Fayries*, London, 1613; Historical Manuscripts Commission, Hatfield House MSS, vol. 5 (1894), 81–3; C. J. Sisson, 'A Topical Reference in "The Alchemist"', in James G. McManaway et al. (eds), *Joseph Quincy Adams: Memorial Studies*, Washington, DC, 1948, 739–41.
106. Berners' translation is now best known in the 1882 Early English Text Society edition by S. L. Lee.
107. See Lee's comments in ibid., xxiv–li; and Robert Greene, *The Scottish Historie of James IV*, London, 1598.
108. Ben Jonson, *Oberon, the Fairy*, London, 1616; Robert Herrick, 'Oberon's Feast' and 'Oberon's Palace' in *Hesperides*, London, 1648, much anthologized since; Christopher Middleton, *The Famous Historie of Chinon of England*, London, 1597. See also Thomas Randolph, *The Jealous Lovers*, London, 1643, Act 3, Scene 7; *The Midnight's Watch*, London, 1643 and *Amyntas*, London, 1638; [? Thomas Dekker], *Lust's Dominion*, London, 1657, lines 1583–605.
109. See n.108.
110. On this see Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 176–218; Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, 176–80; Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith*, 58–82; Lamb, 'Taken by the Fairies', 300–311.
111. In 'The Politics of Fairylore', Marjorie Swann has argued that the emphasis on conspicuous consumption in early modern English literature on fairies reflected the emergence of a consumer society. The problem here is that medieval aristocrats were no strangers to such consumption, and gorgeous lifestyles had always been associated with fays.
112. London, 1630. Following Shakespeare, fairies themselves were often treated in English literary works as diminutive beings, allowing writers to explore the imaginative implications of a world populated by such midgets. This genre has been well studied by literary scholars, including Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 176–218; Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*, 44–70; and Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, 181–3. Its (self-consciously) ridiculous nature may have made it still harder to take fairies seriously, and so as characters in witch trials, but devils could also be small: some of Alexander Montgomerie's demonic fairies rode on beans and stalks.
113. Thomas Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, London, 1607.
114. Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, Woodbridge, 1980, 99–118, 122, 126–42; Thomas Churchyarde, *A Handful of Gladsome Verses, Given to the Queenes Maiesty at Woodstocke*, Oxford, 1593, Sig. B4; Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 143–4.
115. Ben Jonson, *The Entertainment at Althorp*, London, 1616; and *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, London, 1616.
116. *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine*, London, 1595, Act 3, Scene 1, line 203; Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act 1, Scene 2, lines 100–105; A. H. Bullen (ed.), *The Works of*

Dr Thomas Campion, London, 1889, 21–2; Michael Drayton, 'The Quest of Cynthia', in *The Battaile of Agincourt*, 1627; and 'The Third Nimphall', in *The Muses Elizium*, London, 1630; *Selections from the Writings of Thomas Ravenscroft*, Edinburgh, 1822, nos XXI–XXII; A. H. Bullen, *Lyrics from the Song Books of the Elizabethan Age*, London, 1889, 34–5. For translations of classical texts, see Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, 59–73.

117. *The Maydes Metamorphosis*, London, 1600, Act 2, Scene 2, Sig. c4 and D1; Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2, Scene 2, lines 9–25; John Lyly, *Gallathea*, London, 1592, Act 2, Scene 3; Walter W. Greg (ed.), *Henslowe Papers*, London, 1907, 135.
118. Samuel Rowlands, *More Knaves Yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds*, London, 1600, Sig. F2; *The Cobler of Canterburie*, London, 1590, Epistle; Churchyarde, *A Handeful of Gladsome Verses*, Sig. B4.
119. John Selden, *Table Talk*, ed. Edward Arber, London, 1868, 82.
120. Rowlands, *More Knaves Yet? The Knave of Spades*, 40; John Marston, *The Mountebanks Masque*, printed in Peter Cunningham, *Inigo Jones*, London, 1898, 114; Jonson, *The Entertainment at Althorp*; Richard Corbet, *Certain Elegant Poems*, London, 1647, 47–9 and sources in n. 1.
121. Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, 203.
122. He seems to appear as such in *Tell-Trothes New Yeares Gift*, London, 1593. Fairy monarchs sometimes shared this trait: the satirist Samuel Rowlands, *Humors Antique Faces*, London, 1605, prologue, claimed that 'the Faerie King' had charged him 'to scourge the humours of this age'.
123. James Orchard Halliwell reprinted the three main pamphlets in this genre, in *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of A Midsummer Night's Dream*, London, 1845, 120–54, 155–70. Only one, apparently the first in sequence, is dated, at 1628, but an earlier Victorian editor, J. Payne Collier, *The Mad Pranks and Merry Jests of Robin Goodfellow*, London, 1841, was convinced that it had been in existence since 1588, and was followed in this opinion by Robert Rentoul Reed, *The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage*, Boston, 1965, 194–233. Their evidence, however, lay in references to Robin Goodfellow in general rather than to his actions in this tract in particular. His role as a champion of virtue had been presaged in *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, undated but seemingly Elizabethan in style, discussed above.

9 Witches and Celticity

1. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, London, 1996, xi.
2. This debate is summarized with full references in Ronald Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, London, 2013, 166–71.
3. All this is, again, summarized with full references in *Pagan Britain*, as above.
4. Raymond Gillespie, 'Women and Crime in Seventeenth-century Ireland', in Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd (eds), *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, Edinburgh, 1991, 43–52; Elwyn C. Lapoint, 'Irish Immunity to Witch-hunting, 1534–1711', *Éire-Ireland*, 27 (1992), 76–92.
5. J. Gwynn Williams, 'Witchcraft in Seventeenth-century Flintshire', *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, 26 (1973–4), 16–33, and 27 (1975–6), 5–35; Geraint H. Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs in Wales from the Restoration to Methodism', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 27 (1977), 440–62.
6. Sally Parkin, 'Witchcraft, Women's Honour and Customary Law in Early Modern Wales', *Social History*, 31 (2006), 295–318.
7. Stuart MacDonald, *The Witches of Fife*, East Linton, 2002, 22–3; Lauren Martin, 'Scottish Witch Panics Re-examined', in Julian Goodare et al. (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Basingstoke, 2008, 125.
8. Lizanne Henderson, 'Witch-hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*', in Goodare et al. (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, 95–118.
9. Jane Dawson, 'Calvinism and the *Gàidhealtachd* in Scotland', in Andrew Pettegree et al. (eds), *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620*, Cambridge, 1994, 250–51.
10. Ronald Hutton, 'The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-hunt', in Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, Manchester, 2002, 31–2.
11. James Sharpe, 'Witchcraft in the Early Modern Isle of Man', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (2007), 11–28. I am very grateful to him for the gift of a copy of this article.

12. Richard Suggett, 'Witchcraft Dynamics in Early Modern Wales', in Michael Roberts and Simone Clark (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, Cardiff, 2003, 75–103; and *A History of Magic and Witchcraft in Wales*, Stroud, 2008. I am very grateful for the gift by the author of a copy of the essay.
13. Ronald Hutton, 'Witch-hunting in Celtic Societies', *Past and Present*, 212 (2011), 43–71. What follows in the rest of this section may be found there, fully argued and referenced.
14. Here James Sharpe's research is complemented and supported by my own: three years after he published it I followed it up with a piece of my own in the same journal: 'The Changing Faces of Manx Witchcraft', *Cultural and Social History*, 7 (2010), 153–70.
15. Here, as well as the work of Suggett and Parkin, cited earlier, there is important material in Lisa Mari Tallis, 'The Conjuror, the Fairy, the Devil and the Preacher', Swansea University PhD thesis, 2007. I am very grateful to Owen Davies for lending me a copy of this work.
16. Thomas Brochard, 'Scottish Witchcraft in a Regional and Northern European Context', *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, 10 (2015), 41–74.
17. Andrew Sneddon, 'Witchcraft Beliefs and Trials in Early Modern Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 39 (2012), 1–25; and *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*, Basingstoke, 2015. In the former work he is wholly in agreement with me, while in the latter he tries to find minor differences, pointing to his emphasis that Catholic nobles, at least, feared witchcraft, and that the 'evil eye' could be regarded as intentional. In reality, there is no dispute between us, as I never denied the first point and stated quite firmly in my article that the 'evil eye' was not always treated as innocent of malice in Gaelic regions.
18. His word is *vetulas*, i.e. crones: *Topgraphia Hibernica*, c. 19. Not all translated editions include this passage.
19. Burchard, *Decreta*, Book 19.
20. Bodil Nildin and Jan Wall, 'The Witch as Hare or the Witch's Hare', *Folklore*, 104 (1993), 67–76; Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, PA, 2011, 118, 138–45, 181–7.
21. Wanda Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, Basingstoke, 2013, 1–2, 22, 32–3, 39, 48, 61, 93.
22. Jeremiah Curtin, *Tales of Fairies and of the Ghost World Collected from Oral Tradition in South-west Munster*, London, 1895, 23–8; Jane Francesca Wilde, *Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland*, London, 1890, 75–83; Robin Gwyndaf, 'Fairylore: Memorates and Legends from Welsh Oral Tradition', in Peter Narvaez (ed.), *The Good People*, New York, 1991, 159–70; W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, Oxford, 1911, 37–9; James MacDougall, *Highland Fairy Legends*, ed. George Calder, Cambridge, 1978, 80–81.
23. The folklore collections concerned are listed in Hutton, 'Witch-hunting in Celtic Societies', 50–68. An especially good analysis of the implications of it in Ireland may be found in Richard P. Jenkins, 'Witches and Fairies: Supernatural Aggression and Deviance amongst the Irish Peasantry', in Narvaez (ed.), *The Good People*, 302–35.
24. This is a general feature of histories of Cornwall. Mark Stoyle has perhaps been the most prominent recent author to highlight Cornish exceptionalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in a series of publications culminating in *Soldiers and Strangers*, London, 2005. I am very grateful to him for sending me copies of these.
25. Janet A. Thompson, *Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches*, New York, 1993, 106–7, provides all the figures. It may be noted that other southern English counties could also have few known trials: Hampshire's figure is twelve, and Sussex's thirteen.
26. Hutton, 'Witch-hunting in Celtic Societies', 50–68.
27. Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*, London, 1703, 115–16, 179–82 (references are to the Stirling reprint of 1934).
28. Most notably Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, in *Scottish Fairy Belief*, East Linton, 2001, who concluded that such belief changed little between the fifteenth and late eighteenth centuries. Emma Wilby has also employed the same approach in both of her books, discussed in the previous chapter. All three have in fact been rather less cautious in their application of modern folklore to early modern issues than the approach taken here.
29. Hutton, 'Witch-hunting in Celtic Societies', 64.
30. Alexander Thom (ed.), *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, 5 vols, Dublin, 1865–1901, vol. 1, 181, 203 and vol. 5, 295–7.
31. *Cáin Adomnáin*, no. 46.

32. Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials*, Dublin, 1963, 78–81, 101.
33. This and what follows is a summary of the discussion, with full source references, in Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, London, 2009, 30–44.
34. The word is *ban-tua*: the text, *Cath MaigeTuired*, was most notably edited by Whitley Stokes in *Revue Celtique*, 12 (1891), with this passage on p. 91.
35. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (eds), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, Cambridge, 1901, vol. 2, 357; R. I. Best, 'Prognostications from the Raven and the Wren', *Eriu*, 8 (1916), 120.
36. Edited by Charles Plummer, in *Lives of Irish Saints*, Oxford, 1922, vol. 2, 29.
37. Liam Breatnach (ed.), *Uraicecht na Riár*, Dublin, 1987, 114–15.
38. Jacqueline Borsje, 'Celtic Spells and Counterspells', in Katja Ritari (ed.), *Understanding Celtic Religion*, Cardiff, 2015, 18. I am very grateful to her for sending me copies of most of her publications over the years. See also, in particular, her essay 'Witchcraft and Magic', in Séan Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland*, London, 2005, 518–20.
39. Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin, 1988, 46.
40. This is the story known and edited as *Aided Con Culainn*.
41. This is the story known and edited as *Brislech Mór Maige Muirtheimne*.
42. On this see particularly Richard Breen, 'The Ritual Expression of Inter-Household Relations In Ireland', *Cambridge Anthropology*, 6 (1980), 33–59.
43. The classic study of the phenomenon in the medieval texts is Jacqueline Borsje, 'The Evil Eye in Early Irish Literature and Law', *Celtica*, 24 (2003), 1–39. One that uses both bodies of evidence, drawing direct comparisons between those texts and modern Gaelic (in this case Scottish) folklore, is R. C. MacLagan, *The Evil Eye in the Western Highlands*, London, 1902.
44. Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials*, 56.
45. *Cóir Anmann*, c. 54. There are editions by Whitley Stokes, Leipzig, 1897, and Sharon Arbuthnot, for the Irish Texts Society, 2005.
46. Anne O'Connor, 'Images of the Evil Woman in Irish Folklore', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11 (1988), 281–5.
47. This is in the story known as *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn*, trans. R. I. Best in *Eriu*, 3 (1906), 149–73.
48. This is the story called *Bruidhean Chéise Corainn*.
49. The story is entitled *Cath Finntrágha*.
50. The traditional translation of the saga by J. H. Todd in the Rolls Series, London, 1867, 174–5 has the term 'destructive witches' rendered simply as 'witches', but Mark Williams assures me that Todd's version is misleading, and has suggested the alternative one employed here.
51. I am very grateful to Mark Williams for discussing the term with me, and greatly extending my knowledge of it. He also recommended William Sayers, 'Airdreach, Sirite and Other Early Irish Battlefield Spirits', *Éigse*, 25 (1991), 45–55, which discusses 'spirits of the glen' as featuring as spectres in other stories, and notes that *ammait* could mean either a woman or a spirit with supernatural power.
52. This is in the story called *Aided Muirchertach Mac Erca*. I am very grateful to Mark Williams, again, for bringing it to my attention. Mark's own close reading of the tale, and especially of the character of the enchantress, can be found as 'Lady Vengeance', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 62 (2011), 1–33.
53. See especially Alfred Nutt, *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, London, 1900; Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, New York, 1903; and Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, New York, 1927.
54. For recent studies of the fays, see inter alia Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, Oxford, 2004; Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England*, Woodbridge, 2007; Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, Cambridge, 2010; and James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, London, 2011.
55. She appears in lines 1205–29, and is known as the *Gwidon Ordu*, the 'Very Dark Hag'. More of these beings (in groups of nine as in *Peredur*) are overcome by heroes in the poem 'Pa gur yv y porthaur' and the hagiographical *Life of Samson*: see Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in Rachel Bromwich at al. (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh*, Cardiff, 1991, 44–5.
56. Suggett, *A History of Magic and Witchcraft in Wales*, 42–3.
57. Ibid., passim; Tallis, 'The Conjuror, the Fairy, the Devil and the Preacher', passim.

10 Witches and Animals

1. For example, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, 1971 (references to 1997 edition), 569; James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, London, 1996, 71–4; and 'The Witch's Familiar in Elizabethan England', in G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn (eds), *Authority and Consent in Tudor England*, Aldershot, 219–20; Philip C. Almond, *The Witches of Warboys*, London, 2008, 51–5.
2. By Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 569.
3. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 71–4; Andrew Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*, London, 2015, 7.
4. Sharpe, 'The Witch's Familiar', 228; Almond, *The Witches of Warboys*, 51–5; and his *The Lancashire Witches*, London, 2012, 26; Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories*, London, 2000, 153; and 'Fairies', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, Santa Barbara, CA, 2006, 346–7
5. Emma Wilby, 'The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland', *Folklore*, 111 (2000), 283–305; *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, Brighton, 2005.
6. Boria Sax, 'The Magic of Animals', *Anthrozoos*, 22 (2009), 317–32. I am very grateful to the author for sending me a copy of this article.
7. Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'The Witch's Familiar in Sixteenth-century England', *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 38 (2010), 113–30; Victoria Carr, 'The Witch's Animal Familiar in England, 1300–1700', Bristol University PhD thesis, 2017. I am very grateful to Victoria Carr for giving me a copy of this article, which was itself presented to her by the author, and to Dr Millar herself for subsequently showing me the relevant chapter of her forthcoming book with Routledge, *The Devil in the Pamphlets*, in draft. Both she and Victoria also commented on this chapter of mine.
8. James A. Serpell, 'Guardian Spirits or Demonic Pets', in Angela N. H. Creager and William Chester Jordan (eds), *The Animal / Human Boundary*, Rochester, NY, 2002, 157–92. This essay is remarkable for the way in which it incorporates many hypotheses and invalidates none: thus, it states that a survival of pre-Christian beliefs is difficult to demonstrate convincingly in the case of the English witch's familiar but then goes on to say that the role of animals in European conceptions of witchcraft suggests 'at least vestigial traces' of shamanism (p. 184). In doing so it follows Ginzburg in assuming that shape-shifting is automatically a sign of shamanism.
9. For example, from George Lyman Kitteredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, New York, 1929, 174–5; to Serpell, 'Guardian Spirits or Demonic Pets'; and Sax, 'The Magic of Animals'.
10. Elsie Clews Parsons, 'Witchcraft among the Pueblos', in Max Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Harmondsworth, 1970, 204–9; Benson Saler, 'Nagual, Witch and Sorcerer in a Quiché Village', *Ethnology*, 3 (1964), 305–28; J. Robin Fox, 'Witchcraft and Clanship in Conchiti Therapy', in Ari Kiev (ed.), *Magic, Faith and Healing*, Glencoe, 1964, 174–200; William and Claudia Madson, 'Witchcraft in Tecopsa and Tepepan'; Benson Sales, 'Sorcery in Santiago El Palmar'; and Annemarie Shimony, 'Iroquois Witchcraft at Six Nations', in Dewar E. Walker (ed.), *Systems of North American Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Moscow, ID, 1970, 73–94, 124–46, 239–65; Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, Chicago, 1941, 303–37; Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Spiritual Power in Central America', in Mary Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, London, 1970, 183–206; Florence H. Ellis, 'Pueblo Witchcraft and Medicine'; and Louise Spindler, 'Menomini Witchcraft', in Walker (ed.), *Systems of North American Witchcraft and Sorcery*, 37–72, 183–220.
11. John Middleton, 'The Concept of "Bewitching" in Lugbara', *Africa*, 25 (1955), 252–60; Daryll Forde, 'Spirits, Witches and Sorcerers in the Supernatural Economy of the Yakö', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 88 (1958), 165–78; Robert Brain, 'Child-witches'; Esther Goody, 'Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State'; and Malcolm Ruel, 'Were-animals and the Introverted Witch', in Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, 161–79, 207–44, 333–50; Alan Harwood, *Witchcraft, Sorcery and Social Categories among the Safwa*, Oxford, 1970, ch. 3; Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour, 'Witchcraft and the Avoidance of Physical Violence in Cameroon', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, N.S. 1 (1995), 599–609; Fiona Bowie, 'Witchcraft and Healing among the Bangwa of Cameroon', in Graham Harvey (ed.), *Indigenous Religions*, London, 2000, 72; John Parker, 'Northern Gothic', *Africa*, 76 (2006), 352–79; C. K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*, Oxford, 1937, 79–80; E. C. Rapp, 'Akan', 8, *Africa* (1935), 553–4; Michael Jackson, 'The

Man Who Could Turn into an Elephant', in Michael Jackson and Ivan Karp (eds), *Personhood and Agency*, Uppsala, 1990, 59–78; Harry G. West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*, Chicago, 2007, passim.

12. Ajay Skaria, 'Women, Witchcraft and Gratuitous Violence in Colonial Western India', *Past and Present*, 155 (1997), 109–41; David N. Gellner, 'Priests, Healers, Mediums and Witches', *Man*, N.S. 29 (1994), 33–7; Knut Rio, 'The Sorcerer as an Absented Third Person', in Bruce Kapferer (ed.), *Beyond Rationalism*, New York, 2002, 129–54; Melford E. Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, Philadelphia, PA, 1974, 21–32; Nicola Tannenbaum, 'Witches, Fortune and Misfortune among the Dhan of Northwestern Thailand'; Roy Ellen, 'Anger, Society and Sorcery'; and Gregory Forth, 'Social and Symbolic Aspects of the Witch among the Nage of Eastern Indonesia', in C. W. Watson and Roy Ellen (eds), *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, 1993, 67–80 and 81–97.
13. Jackson, 'The Man Who Could Turn into an Elephant'.
14. Gary H. Gosan, 'Animal Souls, Co-Essences, and Human Destiny in Mesoamerica', in A. James Arnold (ed.), *Monsters, Tricksters and Sacred Cows*, Charlottesville, NC, 1996, 80–107.
15. Manning Nash, 'Witchcraft as Social Process in a Tzeltal Community', *American Indigena*, 20 (1961), 121–6.
16. Hugo G. Nutini and John M. Roberts (eds), *Bloodsucking Witchcraft*, Tucson, AZ, 1993, passim.
17. Isaac Schapera, 'Sorcery and Witchcraft in Bechuanaland', in Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, 108–20; Robert F. Gray, 'Some Structural Aspects of Mbugwe Witchcraft', in John Middleton and E. H. Winter (eds), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, London, 1963, 143–73; Harriet Ngubane, 'Aspects of Zulu Treatment', in J. B. Loudon (ed.), *Social Anthroplogy and Medicine*, London, 1976, 328–37; Brigit Meyer, 'If You are a Devil, You are a Witch, and if you are a Witch, you are a Devil', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 22 (1992), 98–132; W. Crooke, *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Allahabad, 1894, 353–6.
18. M. G. Marwick, 'The Sociology of Sorcery in a Central African Tribe', *African Studies*, 22 (1963), 1–21; Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Neuchatel, 1912, vol. 2, 461–71; Hugh A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, Oxford, 1931, 273–6; Isak A. Niehaus, 'Witch-hunting and Political Legitimacy', *Africa*, 63 (1993), 498–530; Suzette Heald, 'Witches and Thieves', *Man*, N.S. 21 (1986), 65–78; Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, Charlottesville, VA, 1997), 61–8; George Clement Bond, 'Ancestors and Witches', in George Clement Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy (eds), *Witchcraft Dialogues*, Athens, OH, 2001, 131–57; Simeon Mesaki, 'Witch-killing in Sukumaland', in Ray Abrahams (ed.), *Witchcraft in Contemporary Tanzania*, Cambridge, 1994, 47–60; Roy Ellen, 'Introduction', in Watson and Ellen (eds), *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia*, 1–25; Gerald W. Hartwig, 'Long-Distance Trade and the Evolution of Sorcery among the Kerebe', *African Historical Studies*, 4 (1971), 505–24; and see nn. 30 and 33 below.
19. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, 1937, 1.3; Godfrey Lienhardt, 'Some Notions of Witchcraft amongst the Dinka', *Africa*, 21 (1951), 303–18; Jean Buxton, 'Mandari Witchcraft', in Middleton and Winter (eds), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, 99–121.
20. John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, Oxford, 1960, 238–50.
21. A. W. Howitt, 'On Australian Medicine Men', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 16 (1887), 34.
22. A.J.N. Tremearne, *The Ban of the Bori*, London, 1914, 151.
23. C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*, Cambridge, 1910, 282–4.
24. Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, Oxford, 1961, ch. 6; J. T. Munday, 'Witchcraft in England and in Central Africa', in J. T. Munday et al. (eds), *Witchcraft*, London, 1951, 8–13; Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics*, London, 2001, 25–6; T. O. Beidelman, 'Witchcraft in Ukaguru'; and Mary Douglas, 'Techniques of Sorcery Control in Central Africa', in Middleton and Winter (eds), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, 57–98, 123–41; Barrie Reynolds, *Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, London, 1963, ch. 1; C.M.N. White, 'Witchcraft, Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes', *Africa*, 18 (1948), 81–104; Jensen Krige and J. D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen*, Oxford, 1943, 250–70; Greta Bloomhill, *Witchcraft in Africa*, London, 1962, 67–76; Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Oxford, 1961, 253–9.

25. Bruce M. Knauft, *Good Company and Violence*, Berkeley, 1985, 112; Richard W. Lieban, *Cebuano Sorcery*, Berkeley, 1967, 65–79.
26. Deward E. Walker, 'Nez Perce Sorcery', *Ethnology*, 6 (1967), 66–96.
27. W. D. Hammond-Tooke, 'The Cape Nguni Witch Familiar as a Mediatory Construct', *Man*, N.S. 9 (1974), 128–36; Monica Hunter Wilson, 'Witch Beliefs and Social Structure', *American Journal of Sociology*, 56 (1951), 307–12.
28. J. R. Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, Oxford, 1967, 115–22.
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84. Especial honour, perhaps, is due to James Sharpe, long the presiding figure of studies of English witch trials, for launching the whole discussion, and to the American veterinary scientist James Serpell, who back in 2002 noted in passing the importance of the wider context of early modern European beliefs in servitor spirits and demons in animal shape, and the manner in which English beliefs developed in the Elizabethan period: see nn. 1–8, above. Among the younger scholars, both Charlotte-Rose Millar and Victoria Carr come out especially well, for looking to demonology as the most important single theme in the development of the English idea of the familiar.

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