

Males, 'Masculine Honour' and Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century Germany

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Throughout the last few years, scholars of Europe's early modern witch-hunt have suddenly begun to pay increasing attention to the views that contemporaries held about witchcraft. Although witch-beliefs were considered in the older histories of witchcraft, historians traditionally adopted a purely 'intellectual' approach to ideas and tended simply to dismiss such notions as irrational superstitions. The recent interest in disinterring and exploring the belief-systems in witchcraft is not concerned with disparaging these ideas, but with examining the reasons why, in the context of the time, it 'made sense' for contemporaries to hold such beliefs (Clark 1997). This emphasis on investigating the meanings, values and fantasies embodied in witchcraft conceptions is indicative of an emerging trend in the study of history towards focusing more closely on cultural issues such as past notions of the world; it represents a move away from traditional historical preoccupations with the search for causal explanations of specific events. One of the advantages of concentrating on the beliefs of those who witnessed and experienced witchcraft is that it helps historians to view the subject from a wider perspective and integrate it more fully into the cultural world of early modern communities. This type of approach certainly avoids categorising witchcraft prosecutions into somewhat reductive interpretative models, such as products of social tension and strained relationships, which have been advanced by some scholars in their quest for an explanation (Macfarlane 1970). The move towards regarding witchcraft as a consequence of people's world-views and cognitive frameworks has resulted in closer scrutiny of the documentary sources, and especially the language in which contemporary attitudes were

expressed and embodied. Witchcraft trial documents, in particular, have begun to be explored in an almost ethnographical manner for the insights they might provide into early modern beliefs and mentalities (see, for example, Behringer 1996). This paper aims to contribute further to the emerging cultural study of witchcraft, by examining one particular prosecution from southern Germany – a region that experienced very intensive witch-hunting activity. The main concern will be with a man accused of witchcraft, rather than with a female victim of the persecutions because, to date, far less detailed scrutiny has been undertaken of suspected male witches. Focusing on the prosecution of a male may also help to shed light on gender issues that historians have only fairly recently begun to explore seriously: the meanings of early modern manhood and ‘masculinity’. The historian, Lyndal Roper (1994), has specifically emphasised the possible utility of German judicial interrogations for offering understanding into aspects of early modern gender. She has argued that ‘the language of those interrogated reveals much about class and gender in these people’s world’ (P.55). In view of Roper’s comments, it seems appropriate to pay closer attention to this kind of historical source.

While many surviving witchcraft interrogations are rather fragmentary documents, providing only a paucity of relevant information, the trial of the burgomaster, Johannes Junius, from the ecclesiastical territory of Bamberg is quite rich in detail and is, consequently, a suitable text to concentrate on. This judicial document is also one of the few German witch-trials that was supplemented by a letter from the prisoner describing his interrogation.¹ We are, therefore, in the unique position of being able to compare the statements Junius made under examination with his subsequent personal account of the legal proceedings. Junius provides us with a brief text that incorporates his own thoughts

and feelings, or what can be termed an ‘Ego-Document’ of his experience as an accused witch (Behringer 1996).

Although women predominated as accused witches throughout much of early modern Europe, learned contemporaries did not rule out the possibility that a man such as Junius could perpetrate witchcraft. Intellectuals who formulated the academic doctrines of demonology may have associated females with witchcraft, but they never made the crime gender-specific. Descriptions of men’s supposed demonic activities which were outlined in the influential late-sixteenth-century demonological treatises did not differ intrinsically from the portrayals of female witchcraft. Jean Bodin’s widely-read treatise, On the demon-mania of witches ([1580] 1995), contained references to male witches who had flown to witches’ meetings, been marked by Satan and indulged in demonic copulation – all activities that were routinely ascribed to female witches. The very first witches discussed in Nicolas Remy’s study, the Demonolatry ([1595] 1970), were actually male. In his opening chapter Remy observed that:

The truth is that, when Satan cannot move a man by fair words, he compels him by fear and threats of danger. When Claude Morèle, who was convicted of witchcraft at Serre (5th Dec.,1586), was asked what was the chief inducement that had first led him to give himself to the Demon, he answered that he had withstood the temptation of all the Demon’s fair words, and had only yielded when Satan had threatened to kill his wife and children. At Guermingen,

19th Dec., 1589, Antoine Welch no longer dared to oppose the Demon in anything after he had threatened to twist his neck unless he obeyed his commands, for he seemed on the very point of fulfilling his threat.(P.2)

It is also noteworthy that, when Peter Binsfeld, the Rhineland demonologist, discussed the theory of the demonic pact in his 1589 study, he referred specifically to the male sorcerer ('der Zauberer') rather than the female sorceress ([1589] 1988, 206). Constant references were made to the behaviour of male witches in Henry Boguet's treatise, An examen of witches ([1602] 1971). Throughout this study, the father and son, Pierre and George Gandillon, were recorded as being present at all the major events associated with demonic witchcraft: renunciation of God; sexual intercourse with Satan; attendance at the sabbat; the production of harmful magic such as hail-making. Furthermore, in the wood-cut illustrations that accompanied Francesco Guazzo's work, the Compendium maleficarum ([1608] 1970), males as well as females were depicted as participants at the demonic ceremonies.

Many demonologists were clearly less interested in explicitly identifying witches with females than has commonly been assumed. The kind of misogyny found in the extreme and in many ways unrepresentative demonological text, the Malleus maleficarum ([1487] 1948), was present in a far more muted form in much of the subsequent literature. Demonologists may have felt it unnecessary to elaborate on female witches because it seemed self-evident to them that women had a greater propensity to demonic temptation. Here the writers would simply be adhering to the patriarchal,

misogynistic assumptions, stretching back to antiquity, that had associated females with intellectual and moral weakness. Writers may also have been reluctant to identify witchcraft almost exclusively with females because of their growing conviction that the world in which they were living was increasingly threatened by vast hordes of treacherous people of both sexes who had rejected Christianity completely in order to worship Satan and undermine society. Bodin dramatically highlighted his concerns and suggested that the Christian world had to act against a powerful demonic organisation comprising between 100,000 and 300,000 adherents (see Schulte 1999, 273). For those demonologists, convinced they were witnessing a grand cosmic struggle between the Godly forces and Satan's allies, the central concern was the danger posed by this subversive sect rather than the specific sex of the adherents.

By the 1580s - at just the moment when demonologists such as Bodin and Binsfeld were focusing keenly on the threat of organised, conspiratorial witchcraft - the pattern of witchcraft prosecutions in southern Germany began to change, and male suspects started to appear more frequently before the courts. The ecclesiastical Rhineland territory of Trier was one of the first to experience a significant number of male prosecutions during the severe persecutions that continued from 1585 until 1596: in one region 84 of the 306 executed witches were men (Vltmer and Weisenstein 1996, intro. 23). Similarly, in the early-seventeenth-century witch-hunt that erupted in Ellwangen between 1611 and 1618, at least 63 of the 283 victims were male (Midelfort 1972, 180). The number of male executions rose during southern Germany's most intensive witch-hunts: these occurred throughout the 1620s in territories such as Würzburg, Bamberg, Baden-Baden and Mergentheim. Although the proportion of male executions in southern

Germany rarely exceeded 25%, the presence of men as victims cannot be dismissed as negligible.

The Catholic Bishopric of Bamberg witnessed some of southern Germany's largest persecutions of suspected witches during the panic years of the 1620s: between 1625 and 1630 approximately 642 persons were arrested and at least 415 condemned to death (Gehm 2000, 109-111). Burgomaster Johannes Junius - the main focus of this paper - was one of at least 174 males who fell victim to the persecutions throughout this period. The 55-year-old burgomaster's gender and high social status clearly differentiated him from the poor old-woman witch-stereotype, but males, even wealthy ones, were certainly not immune from witchcraft accusations, particularly by the early seventeenth century. However, Junius' career as a local politician provides no clues for the reasons behind his arrest, and he does not appear to have been an especially unpopular civic official who cultivated enemies. Junius had been active in urban politics since 1608, when he first became a member of the city council. He was elevated to the position of burgomaster during the following years: 1614; 1617; 1621; 1624-28 (Leitschuh 1883, 48). The frequent occasions that Junius was appointed burgomaster suggests he undertook official tasks diligently and that his imprisonment for witchcraft was not related directly to the manner in which he conducted civic duties. It should be noted that Junius was not, in fact, the first Bamberg burgomaster to be arrested for the crime. This dubious honour fell to the 50-year-old burgomaster, Georg Neudecker, who was imprisoned in late April 1628 (Gehm 2000, 174-5). Neudecker had been a Lutheran but converted in 1604 to Catholicism. Bamberg's intensive witch-hunts were at their height during the reign of a prince-bishop who had embarked on an aggressive Counter-Reformation mission, and

Neudecker's former Protestant sympathies may have represented the kind of negative trait that made him particularly vulnerable to suspicions of witchcraft. Burgomaster Neudecker was also one of the wealthiest men in the entire bishopric; he was worth at least 100,000 Gulden. His extreme wealth may have caused the sort of resentment and jealousy within the urban community that led to him being widely disliked and, consequently, an easy target for a witchcraft accusation. Under judicial interrogation, Neudecker named Junius and other city councillors as fellow witch-conspirators. Junius' arrest and imprisonment, therefore, becomes more explicable if it is, first of all, related more closely to the specific judicial circumstances in which individuals could find themselves charged with witchcraft.

Early modern Europe's vast majority of witch-trials involved accusations between villagers, and focused on fears about malevolent sorcery; these rural prosecutions were usually concerned with a small number of suspects who were frequently female and came mostly from peasant stock. However, during intensive persecutions that were especially prevalent in some German states such as Bamberg, judges who were obsessed with fears about vast conspiracies of demon-worshipping witches used judicial torture repeatedly, in order to extract from suspects names of accomplices supposedly seen at the witches' secret gatherings. Through a combination of fear and pain, tortured prisoners on occasions named scores of sabbat accomplices, and lists of denunciations could include the better-known and wealthy members of the urban community, such as burgomasters. Some of these denounced urban élites - particularly if they had been named often - were subsequently imprisoned. Junius' interrogation reveals that he had been named as a sabbat accomplice by a number of incarcerated suspects in

1628 and, as a result, he was arrested. His wife had already been executed for witchcraft when he was taken into custody in June 1628 (Parigger, 29), and it is highly likely that this also contributed to his incarceration, because witchcraft was a crime believed by many to be heritable and to contaminate whole families.

At Junius' first examination on June 28, he was confronted by a number of citizens from Bamberg who claimed to have seen him at various witches' meetings. The burgomaster steadfastly maintained his innocence:

Says he is wholly innocent, knows nothing of the crime,
has never in his life renounced God; says that he is
wronged before God and the world ...

Throughout this initial examination, as was the judicial practice in German courts, no torture was applied, and Junius was able to deny confidently the allegations made against him. His claim that he was 'wronged before God' was not just a rhetorical device, but was used to associate him firmly with the symbol of goodness that was completely at variance with the demonic vice of witchcraft. It should be noted that for his contemporaries, demonic witchcraft was comprehended through an intellectual process whereby the articulation of a series of oppositions progressed the argument. This was related to the prevailing predisposition of learned élites to make sense of the world by adopting 'thought-processes' characterised by inversion and classification of phenomena into polarities. The discourse, therefore, that defined the crime in the academic demonological literature was organised dialectically, and each particular issue was considered with regard to its antithesis (Clark 1997). By emphasising the parody and inversion of Christian rituals at the witches' secret meeting, the sabbat

notion, in particular, forcefully stressed to readers the depravity of the witches' actions. A similar kind of polarised classification to that undertaken in the demonological literature was also at work during the actual judicial examinations: the language used throughout the interrogations of suspects was structured around binary oppositions between good and evil.

When Junius was examined next on June 30, torture was inflicted because his first interrogation had not resulted in an admission of guilt; but he still refused to confess. In order to assert his innocence, Junius continued to appeal to God. While he was subjected to the strappado, the burgomaster exclaimed:

He has never renounced God; God will not forsake him; if he were such a wretch he would not let himself be so tortured; God must show some token of his innocence. He knows nothing about witchcraft ...

Unfortunately, Junius' beseechings for God to intervene and relieve his sufferings were viewed by his examiners with suspicion. They adhered to the logic of the demonologists that an inability to confess was not a result of God's protection, but was caused instead by the devil aiding his followers and making them insensitive to pain. Junius' interrogators, therefore, responded to his protestations of innocence by simply increasing the amount of torture.

By the time Junius attended his third examination on July 5, he was already a broken man; he now made 'without torture, but with urgent persuasions' a full confession of guilt. He began by describing his introduction to witchcraft: When in the year 1624 his law-suit at Rothweil cost him some six hundred florins, he

had gone out, in the month of August, into his orchard at Friedrichsbronnen; and, as he sat there in thought, there had come to him a woman like a grass-maid, who had asked him why he sat there so sorrowful; he had answered that he was not despondent, but she had led him by seductive speeches to yield him to her will ...

The circumstances alluded to here - depression following expensive litigation - may indeed have occurred. On the other hand, too much time should not be spent in trying to isolate 'real' events from fantasy, because demonic witchcraft confessions were narratives where both elements could combine and co-exist. Junius' confession was the product of a dramatic type of dialogue between prosecutor and defendant, and his interrogation can be viewed as a kind of literary text, constructed using narrative techniques and 'story telling' (see Gibson 1999, 7). The overall structure of the narrative was significantly shaped by the judicial interrogator, who consequently emerges as the main author of the 'text'. However, a process of collaboration occurred between examiner and suspect, so that an agreed version was eventually created that made sense and was acceptable to both parties; clearly, the prisoner's contribution to the final form in which the demonic witchcraft events were represented in the narrative needs to be taken into account.

In confessions, the devil was usually represented as having appeared in locations that were appropriate to a suspect's gender and social status. The very banality of the initial meeting with the devil may have helped to make the confessions more plausible for both examiner and suspect. It would also seem to be the case that, by placing the demonic encounter in prosaic everyday settings, a sharp contrast was drawn between

the first meeting, when a suspect was still 'innocent', and the terrifying perverse anti-world that the initiate subsequently entered once Christianity had been renounced.

Junius' introduction into witchcraft was preceded by him engaging in sexual relations with a female farm worker, a grass-maid, who subsequently turned into a demon. By suggesting that he had succumbed to 'her will', Junius may have been trying to place most of the blame for the seduction on the maid and thereby preserve an element of respectability. During the early modern era, heterosexual acts were usually described in terms of patriarchal notions of female submission to the 'male will' but, when accusations involving sexual offences reached the courts, a man's defence rested on allegations of female incitement (Roper 1994, 60-4). The occupation of Junius' female seducer as a 'grass-maid' is itself not without importance, because this was a term popularly used as a swear word against the Virgin Mary (Parigger 1990, 30).² This indicates that, even at an early stage in the burgomaster's confession, images of antithesis and inversion that were such important components of learned witchcraft ideas were present.

The fact that Junius claimed he had been initiated into witchcraft shortly after having yielded to the sexual advances of a female farm-worker is also significant. Surviving trial documents deposited in Bamberg's regional archives indicate that most accused witches, whether male or female, admitted to having been introduced into witchcraft as a direct result of sexual seduction by persons who subsequently revealed themselves to be the devil. This identification of desires for immediate sexual gratification with satanic seduction may have reflected some of the intense moralism characteristic of invigorated Counter-Reformation Catholicism. The era witnessed,

after all, great concern among many Catholic regimes with imposing social discipline on subjects who were perceived to be ungodly and immoral. Bamberg's witch-hunts, in particular, coincided with the rule of prince-bishops, such as Johann Gottfried von Aschhausen (1609-22) and Johann Georg II Fuchs von Dornheim (1623-33), who were intransigent moral entrepreneurs, obsessed with the process of social and moral disciplining in an attempt to create devout, conformist, obedient citizens (Walinski-Kiehl 1988). According to the Counter-Reformation propaganda of some moralists, sex outside marriage was not only sinful; it was devilish. The testimony of Bamberg's witch-suspects certainly reflected such harsh moralist sentiments, for the emphasis in confessions was on discrediting and demonising more permissive sexual attitudes. Burgomaster Junius' prosecution becomes more meaningful if it is not viewed in isolation but related instead to wider historical developments, such as the process of social disciplining that affected Bamberg during the early seventeenth century, especially the attempt at morality policing and the imposition of more rigorous Christian ethics.

After describing his sexual seduction, Junius then went on to tell his interrogators that the maid was suddenly transformed into a demonic goat and threatened to break his neck if he refused to renounce God. At this point in the narrative, the burgomaster still tried to preserve fragments of his identity as a pious person; he claimed that the demon quickly vanished when he refused to submit and uttered God's name. However, the diabolic goat returned immediately, and Junius presented himself to his interrogators as being overwhelmed by persistent 'terrible threatening' so that eventually he felt compelled to 'recognize the Devil as my God'.

Following his admission of this apostatical act, Junius' confession focused on an extreme image of inversion of Christian practices: rebaptism in Satan's name. The burgomaster noted that:

After the renunciation he was so far persuaded by those present and by the evil spirit that he suffered himself to be otherwise baptized in the evil spirit's name ... He was then named Krix. His paramour he had to call Vixen. Those present had congratulated him in Beelzebub's name and said that they were now all alike. At this baptism of his there were among others the aforesaid Christiana Morhauptin, the young Geiserlin, Paul Glaser, [and others].

After this they had dispersed.

Subsequent to this satanic rebaptism, visits were made to various witches' gatherings. It is noteworthy that, in keeping with his social position as a local politician, he admitted to having attended a witch-meeting in the electoral council-chamber itself. At this gathering, he saw that 'Above at a table were seated the Chancellor, the Burgomaster Neydekher, Dr. George Haan, [and many others]'. Junius' reputation as a trustworthy public figure was, of course, undermined completely by this admission; instead of meeting in the council-room to consider civic matters and the weighty affairs of the local state, the burgomaster and his powerful associates were using this prestigious location to engage in demonic activities that mocked the piety of the episcopal city – a piety that the reforming prince-bishop was intent on imposing on his more errant subjects. Junius' further admission that 'he had taken the holy wafer out of

his mouth and given it to her [his demonic paramour]', so that it could be desecrated, placed the Burgomaster even further down into the category of a despicable person guilty of the most grave spiritual crimes. Throughout his interrogation, Junius tried to preserve the one aspect of his male identity that was possibly most precious to him: his role as a father and head of the household. Junius told his examiners that he refused to obey his demonic paramour's demands to kill his son and daughter in spite of being 'maltreated with blows by the evil spirit' for his disobedience.

While in prison, Junius attempted to communicate directly with Veronica, one of his two daughters, by smuggling out a letter that maintained his innocence, and also described the judicial torments he had been subjected to. Besides trying to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of his daughter, Junius also wanted to warn her to leave the territory before she was similarly implicated in the witchcraft denunciations. Junius possibly tried to bribe one of his guards to smuggle the letter out of prison. Unfortunately, the letter seems to have been intercepted; it never reached Veronica and was placed among the legal records of Junius' trial proceedings. Although Veronica never received the letter, it is likely that she wisely fled the territory (Gehm 2000, 178). This was probably her fate, for there are no references among Bamberg's surviving judicial documents to a Veronica Junius having been prosecuted for witchcraft.

At the beginning of the letter, written on 24 July 1628, the burgomaster tried dramatically to establish himself as a wronged citizen by repeating thrice the word 'innocent' in almost a biblical manner:

Many hundred thousand good-nights, dearly beloved daughter Veronica. Innocent have I come into prison, innocent have I been tortured, innocent must I die.

The next sentence succinctly summarised the judicial process that inevitably led to an admission of guilt:

For whoever comes into the witch prison must become a witch or be tortured until he invents something out of his head ...

During the rest of the letter, Junius systematically deconstructed his previous judicial discourse by painstakingly re-tracing each stage of the examination and outlining the brutal measures adopted to obtain his confession. He vividly described the physical pain and suffering caused by the variety of tortures inflicted on him. Junius wrote:

And then came also - God in highest Heaven have mercy – the executioner, and put the thumb-screws on me, both hands bound together, so that the blood ran out at the nails and everywhere, so that for four weeks I could not use my hands, as you can see from the writing ... Thereafter they first stripped me, bound my hands behind me, and drew me up in the torture. Then I thought heaven and earth were at an end; eight times did they draw me up and let me fall again, so that I suffered terrible agony ...

Besides his graphic descriptions of suffering and judicial excess, Junius' letter drew attention to the essential dilemma, faced by accused innocent persons, of having an

infamous public identity thrust upon them that they personally knew was false. The burgomaster exclaimed:

Now, my dear child, see in what hazard I stood and still stand. I must say that I am a witch, though I am not , - must now renounce God, though I have never done it before.

Day and night I was deeply troubled ...

In Junius' case, this evil identity was not only established through the machinery of judicial torture but also by the language of insult. During his examination, Junius was verbally abused mainly by Dr. Braun, his principal interrogator, who called him names, such as 'scoundrel' and 'rascal'. These derogatory terms were not insignificant or trivial, for they helped to categorise the burgomaster as the kind of disreputable person commonly associated with witchcraft. Junius was possibly well-acquainted with the examiner who was insulting him for, at the start of the interrogation, Dr. Braun referred to the burgomaster as 'Kinsman'. It is not known if there had been any animosity between the two men before Junius' imprisonment. However, Dr Braun may have felt it necessary to demonstrate publicly great contempt for the prisoner in order to keep his distance from a kinsman who had been charged with a terrible crime that was believed to be capable of easily corrupting others. The indignities that Dr. Braun hurled at Junius must have been intensely demeaning and hard for him to bear, particularly since they were uttered by someone who probably knew the burgomaster closely when he had been a well-respected member of the city council. Junius recalled one specific exchange in the torture chamber between Dr. Braun and himself:

Dr. Braun replied: You are a scoundrel. Oh no, I cried, I am certainly not that, not in the slightest, I am as honourable as all of you, but if it continues like this, then no honourable man in Bamberg is safe, you just as little as me or anyone else. (my trans.)³

In addition to revealing the insults he was subjected to, this brief passage demonstrates the strong attachment that Junius felt for preserving his male honour, which was being seriously undermined by one of Bamberg's leading witch-hunting magistrates.

Historians have begun to recognise the significance of 'honour' as an essential component in defining identity and social relationships in early modern Europe. Honour provided a vital link between people's notion of individual worth and the view that others had of their personality and behaviour. Although this concept was somewhat vague and malleable, it is helpful in understanding the process of gender definition and identity (Roper 1994; Wiesner 1996). Both sexes seem to have set great store by the concept of honour, and in the close-knit, face-to-face communities of the early modern era, it was an important quality in outlining social recognition. Honour was clearly not simply a moral condition but also a social one, for it provided a means whereby an individual's associations could be judged as pure or impure. Loss of honour could lead to social isolation and stigma and, therefore, it constituted a vital form of 'social capital' that men and women were very careful to preserve (Lambrecht 1995, 192-8; Walz 1993, 422-5). To a certain extent, honour was defined according to gender: for females it was more private and personal, and was closely associated with 'respectable' sexual behaviour. Male honour was a more public affair that focused

greatly on trustworthiness and with issues relating to work; it emphasised qualities such as good citizenship, honesty, sound workmanship, loyalty to trade associations. However, it has been suggested by some recent historians that a too distinct demarcation between male and female spheres of honour may be inappropriate, for a man's 'public' reputation could be harmed by issues relating to 'private' concerns (Turner 1999; Foyster 1999). It should also be noted that masculine ideals of honour were not uniform, but could differ among various social groupings. The traditional nobility equated male honour essentially with military prowess, while those lower down the social scale, such as craftsmen, associated honour with economic independence and the freedom to practise their trade; any work that involved dependence and lack of autonomy did not bestow honour on practitioners.

Males were believed to be endowed with specific 'masculine' qualities, such as reason, stamina and bravery; qualities associated with virtuous females were more passive and included piety, obedience, quietude and chastity. However, the ideal of chastity was not confined exclusively to females. Marriage, after all, conferred public esteem on both sexes and, consequently, the sexual incontinence of a husband shattered this social unity and placed in doubt his honourable status. While adultery was perceived as a worse offence for females, married men indulging in illicit sex also risked losing their reputation as honourable men. Honour may have been a vital substance in the conceptualisation of masculine identity but it was a quite fragile notion that, under various circumstances, could be quickly lost.

Burgomaster Junius' honour was, of course, directly threatened by his imprisonment as a suspected witch. The importance that Junius attributed to his

honour was revealed by the intense manner in which he tried to defend it. His attempt to retrieve his lost identity as an honourable man can be seen to have assumed almost hyperbolic proportions. He dramatised his plight to his daughter by a process of ‘self-fashioning’ and identity construction that was the complete opposite of the demonic witch, namely the Christian martyr. Junius wrote:

So I die then innocent and as a martyr ... And pray for me,
your father, who is truly a martyr. (my trans.)⁴

This is yet further evidence of the centrality of inversionary imagery within various forms of witchcraft discourse. Junius could justify his adoption of the martyr’s role on the grounds that he, a steadfast Christian, had been unjustly compelled by his callous examiners to make a false admission of having renounced God. His cruel judicial interrogators were, therefore, the real sinners, whereas the ‘guilty’ Junius would die innocent and a true martyr to his faith. It is difficult to think of a more dramatic device that Junius could have utilised to re-habilitate himself in the eyes of his daughter than by assuming the identity of the most extreme antithetical subject to that of the demon-worshipping witch: the pious Christian martyr. In a similar manner to martyrs, saints were the opposite of witches, and martyrdom itself had been a frequent path to sanctity. Junius’ appropriation of the martyr’s rôle may indicate that he had been influenced specifically by the emerging Counter-Reformation culture in Catholic Germany which gave new significance to the veneration of particular saints. Interest in the cult of saints was especially marked in southern German states during the early seventeenth century. In Bavaria between 1604 and 1627 Matthäus Rader, a Jesuit, published two influential works in numerous volumes which celebrated the lives of

saints and martyrs: Garden of the Saints; Bavaria, Holy and Pious (Hsia 1989; Bireley 1999). Junius certainly attempted in the letter to transform his dishonourable death as an executed witch into the more elevated martyr's demise chronicled in Catholic devotional literature, such as Rader's hagiographies.

Taken together, the two texts - Junius' confession and the letter to his daughter - can themselves be read in terms of binary opposition. The trial's public judicial discourse established Junius' identity as the main enemy of God: the demonic witch. By contrast, in the private letter to his daughter, the burgomaster tried to forge a completely contradictory self-image as a Christian martyr, the ultimate honourable man.

The significance of honour for males was clearly demonstrated by the actions of a man without a distinctly bad reputation, such as Burgomaster Junius, who tried to counter the witchcraft allegations made against him by referring to his honourable status within the community. Junius' attempt to defend and preserve his male honour was obviously to no avail once he had been arrested, for the judicial interrogation was a kind of 'degradation ceremony', designed to destroy ritually an individual's former identity and reconstitute it firmly within the category of the dishonourable (Garfinkel 1973). The questions that the interrogators posed - framed in the language of demonology and punctuated by bouts of torture - demanded answers that simply echoed the themes found in the learned witchcraft treatises. During the examinations, particular judicial rituals were performed that were specifically designed to depersonalise suspects and emphasise that they no longer belonged to 'respectable' society. These rituals often shamed prisoners by exposing their naked bodies to the

judiciary's public gaze. Junius, in common with other witch-suspects, was stripped and his naked body searched to ensure that he was not concealing on his person any secret magical amulets which could harm the court officials. His body was also scrupulously examined for the Devil's Mark: an anaesthetic spot on a witch's person that had been supposedly scratched by Satan as a sign of membership of the demonic cult.

The disrobing of prisoners obviously helped to draw attention to the sudden loss of their previous public identity. Clothes were, after all, important signifiers of status in early modern societies, and social distinctions were often rigidly maintained by sumptuary laws regulating dress codes. After being stripped and searched, the accused witches were usually clothed in a special witch-shift (Drudenhemd) that was designed to mark them out as disgraced persons and make them conscious of their new shameful status. However, Junius suffered the ultimate indignity of having to remain completely naked when he was examined and subjected to severe torture on 30 June, 1628. This humiliation was doubtless designed to demoralise completely the burgomaster and make him acutely aware of his dramatic fall from grace. Vestiges of honour that a man such as Junius may have felt he still possessed at the start of the judicial proceedings were rapidly expunged at its conclusion, when an admission of guilt consigned him to permanent social ostracism. Junius' exclusion from society was made all the more apparent by the fact that there were no references to him in the chronicle, covering the years 1622-34, compiled by his second daughter, Anna Maria Junius (Hümmer 1890); she was a nun who had entered in 1622 Bamberg's Holy Sepulchre Convent. Anna Maria wrote briefly in her Bamberg chronicle about the

witch-hunts of the 1620s, and noted that many distinguished people had been arrested and eventually executed; no specific mention was made though of her father and his sad fate – he had simply been obliterated from memory.⁵

Unlike Junius - a man without a bad reputation - males who before arrest had failed to adhere to notions of masculine honour seem to have been especially vulnerable to witchcraft accusations. The still rather limited research on German men accused of witchcraft suggests that male suspects' behaviour often violated expectations of masculinity embodied in the ideal of the honest, reliable, married household head. Prosecuted males had frequently acquired over the years reputations as persons who did not adhere to the behavioural standards expected of their sex, and they tended to display the following negative social and moral characteristics: bringing the family into debt, involvement in questionable business practices, theft, drunkenness, gambling, bigamy, adultery.

In a region such as the Saarland which experienced many male witch-trials (at least 157 were prosecuted between 1575 and 1634), typical suspects were villagers such as Augustin Mattheis and Schneider Augustin (Labouvie 1990). The former engaged in dishonest business transactions, while the latter frequently quarrelled, slandered his neighbours and refused to pay back money he had borrowed; both men were adulterers. A similar pattern of behaviour can be observed in the Duchy of Lippe where male suspects were prone to a range of moral lapses: theft, drunkenness, bigamy, adultery, lack of church attendance and blasphemy (Walz 1993). In the village of Hillentrup the local pastor, Johannes Stephani, was even suspected of witchcraft and also various sexual assaults on females, including one on a woman who

was pregnant. The same kind of negative characteristics were displayed by some of Lübeck's male witches, such as the peasant, Hanss Struck. He not only owed villagers money and had committed adultery but also voluntarily confessed to perpetrating sodomy with livestock (Schulte 1999).

It is perhaps not surprising that, among the sexual offences supposedly committed by accused males, allegations involving sodomy should feature. Sixteenth-century Imperial legislation had included sodomy with other grave spiritual offences against God's majesty, and it was consequently closely connected with heresy and witchcraft (Monter 1987). Homosexual sodomy, in particular, constituted a threat to notions of masculine honour that focused on marriage and the household and it was, therefore, the kind of offence that could be readily associated with male witches. A series of trials that occurred in the 1660s, in the Protestant city of Esslingen, provide a useful example of prosecutions involving both allegations of sodomy and witchcraft (Jerouschek 1992). The trials were triggered by the claims of Hans Elsässer, a seventeen-year-old youth, that he had actually engaged in homosexual acts with the devil himself. Elsässer described how the devil had, on at least five occasions, placed 'his thing in his backside ... and thrust until something wet and warm poured into him, it did not hurt ...'.⁶ The youth's testimony may have been prompted partly by guilt and anger at a real homosexual seduction, perpetrated by his father's apprentice, Georg Scheffel; Elsässer accused Scheffel of having initiated him into witchcraft. As a result of the youth's claims, Scheffel and a number of other males were arrested, and they swiftly confessed to engaging in demonic witchcraft and a range of deviant sexual practices that included incest, buggery and bestiality. Some of the accused

males had reputations as disreputable characters, which would have made their confessions appear all the more plausible. For example, Georg Laumayer, a smith, was a notorious drunkard, while Hans Zwenck, a weaver, was a lazy, slovenly worker addicted to gambling. The conduct and content of these prosecutions was heavily influenced by the examining magistrate, Dr. Daniel Hauff - an obsessive moral entrepreneur whose concern with unorthodox sexuality certainly appears to have been excessive. Hauff was, without doubt, the driving force behind the witch-trials, for he not only conducted the initial prosecution involving allegations of sodomy in 1662, but the trials also ended abruptly after his untimely death in 1665.

The male witches just considered seem in many respects to have resembled those females, identified by historians, who also flouted conventions of behaviour deemed appropriate to their gender and found themselves accused of witchcraft (see, for example, Lerner 1981; Bever 1983). However, it should be emphasised that witchcraft accusations were complex, multifaceted phenomena and did not always neatly target persons who behaved in a manner that challenged gender ideals. Burgomaster Junius' prosecution obviously fell into the latter category. Similarly, the arrest and execution of Dr. Georg Haan, the Prince-Bishop of Bamberg's Chancellor, was not brought about because he possessed negative moral characteristics; in this case, criticisms of the witch-trial procedures were at issue (Renczes 1990). Haan wanted to reform and modify the judicial excesses of Bamberg's witch-prosecution procedures and ensure that trials were conducted according to the more orderly guidelines laid down in legal codes such as the 1532 Constitutio Criminalis Carolina . The Chancellor's relative moderation aroused suspicion amongst those witch-hunting

judges who adhered to the views of the demonologist, Martin Del Rio; he suggested that powerful individuals who discouraged witch-prosecutions were not only witches themselves, but were also abusing their authority by shielding subordinate demonic conspirators (Robbins 1959).⁷ During Bamberg's large-scale persecution, anxiety and fear of God's hidden enemies, the witches, must have been so intense that an emotional climate could have been quickly generated in which the motives of any person in authority, such as Chancellor Haan, who appeared to question the proceedings would have aroused deep feelings of distrust. It is also just possible that, prior to arrest, Burgomaster Junius had voiced similar procedural criticisms, and that such utterances contributed significantly to his own eventual incarceration. Junius hinted in his letter that this may have occurred (Parigger 1990, 18; 29). While languishing in prison, his fellow prisoner, Chancellor Haan, had informed him that the Prince-Bishop wanted to make a specific example of Junius. The burgomaster may have aroused the suspicions of Bamberg's zealous persecutors and suffered the consequences of expressing doubts about the witch-detection procedures during a time when he still held civic office and a major panic was in full force.

Under the circumstances of an intense witch-hunt, males who neither voiced criticisms of the persecutions nor displayed any signs of unconventional behaviour could, of course, fall victim to the persecutions simply as a result of being named as a sabbat accomplice. This was, after all, the principal dynamic behind the arrest of hundreds of suspects. However, it is still extremely difficult to ascertain why, during the persecutions, particular individuals were frequently named and denounced as witches. Enmity, jealousy and rivalry may have all played their part in the

denunciations of some suspects, especially those who came from the ranks of social élites - élites who were often themselves beset with internal political tensions. Unfortunately, such behind-the-scenes machinations are notoriously hard to substantiate, and there is mostly a lack of evidence, other than purely circumstantial, to demonstrate that accusations were prompted by various kinds of political factionalism (Briggs 1996). It is perhaps helpful when considering the dynamics of the accusations to divide accused males into 'primary' and 'secondary' suspects (Schulte 1999, 215-42). Males with bad reputations who transgressed notions of masculine honour tended to constitute the primary suspects; they were usually the first persons arrested and, consequently, initiated a series of prosecutions, especially the smaller-scale trials in rural areas. Both the prosecuting magistrate and the community could identify more easily these males as witches, precisely because their unorthodox behaviour corresponded closely with general assumptions about deviancy and witchcraft. Primary suspects may have denounced more respectable men out of spite or resentment at their wealth, but without any firm evidence such motives can only remain at the level of conjecture. In contrast to the primary group, males of good repute were mostly part of a more heterogeneous cluster of secondary suspects who frequently became implicated in on-going prosecutions as a direct result of accomplice testimony. These categories of 'primary' and 'secondary' suspected persons should not, though, be imposed too rigidly, for the situation could be quite fluid. During mass persecutions, those males displaying the 'deviant' tendencies associated with primary suspects who were arrested at the height of a panic would swiftly join the ranks of the secondary category.

Whatever the category of suspect, and regardless of the person's former reputation, the accused witch's public identity was irrevocably transformed once a confession to the crime of demonic witchcraft had been made. Suspects now acknowledged to the examining magistrates that they did not belong any longer to humanity but were instead members of a secret 'terrorist-type' organisation determined to undermine and destroy early modern society. Burgomaster Junius' prosecution has vividly demonstrated that this transformation from human to anti-human devil-worshipper was accomplished during a judicial examination where torture was employed, often relentlessly, and a suspect responded to a list of questions. Although enthusiastic interrogators such as Dr. Braun played a prominent part in the elaboration of Junius' demonic witchcraft account, the burgomaster's contribution to the narrative of his own downfall needs to be taken into consideration. It has already been noted that, for witchcraft confessions to appear plausible to contemporaries, a degree of collaboration was necessary between examiner and defendant. However, it would be slightly myopic to regard only the trial document as a constructed text and the letter to his daughter, Veronica, as an entirely authentic record of events and Junius' emotional reactions to them. After all, in order to salvage his honour and present himself in a positive light to his daughter, the disgraced burgomaster had to transform creatively his identity from that of a prosaic local government official into a heroic Christian martyr. Both documents, therefore, need to be perceived as textual representations rather than as completely 'objective' accounts of historical episodes.

If an interrogated suspect such as Junius tried to defend himself against witchcraft allegations by referring to his honour, it is noteworthy that Germany's over-

zealous witch-hunters also made use of this concept; they often justified the persecutions by claiming that their attack on the Almighty's greatest enemies, the witches, helped to preserve and promote God's Honour (Behringer 1995). The notion of honour was, therefore, flexible and could be used by various parties in the war against witchcraft. However, it is unlikely to have provided much comfort for any convicted male witches of previous good character to know that God's Honour was enhanced by the prosecutions, while their own more mortal form of public esteem was irretrievably lost. The cost in human lives of preserving this divine honour could indeed be extremely high; the grim testimony of Burgomaster Junius, the martyr, graphically reminds us that this was a price paid by males as well as females.

Junius' prosecution does not, of course, simply draw attention to the fact that men together with women suffered at the hands of witch-hunters. A consideration of the language used in the burgomaster's trial and letter to his daughter provides points of entry into aspects of early modern history that still require greater scholarly attention: the construction of 'masculinity' and the possible importance the notion of honour played in establishing and maintaining this identity. The emphasis on notions of good and evil throughout Junius' discourse similarly helps to confirm the observations of the historian, Stuart Clark (1997), that demonic witchcraft was rendered intelligible to contemporaries because it drew on principles of binary opposition - a method of classification central to the prevailing modes of thinking. Studying witchcraft texts certainly offers insights into fundamental issues of early modern society such as gender formation and modes of perceiving the world. The days

are now over when historians can look disparagingly at research into witchcraft as the sole preserve of idiosyncratic students of the arcane and the bizarre.

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NOTES

¹ Burgomaster Junius' trial manuscript and the letter to his daughter are deposited in the Staatliche Bibliothek Bamberg: Hexenprozessakten, R B Msc. 148, nos. 299-301. An edited version of the documents was reproduced by Leitschuh (1883), 49-55; Appendix, I-VI. For an English translation of this version, see Monter (1969), 82-8. The text of Junius' letter has been reproduced in its entirety, together with a valuable critical commentary; see Parigger (1990), 17-34. All quotations in this paper have been taken from Monter (1969), unless otherwise indicated.

² Protestant preachers, in particular, liked to refer to the Virgin Mary as the 'Grasmagd', because this implied that the mother of Christ was similar to a lowly female farm labourer and, consequently, unworthy of adoration. Although it was a derogatory expression, 'Grasmagd' was not associated directly with disparaging terms implying prostitution. I am grateful to Dr. Johannes Dillinger for clarification on this issue.

³ ‘Dr.Braun erwiderte: Du bist ein Lump! Oh nein, rief ich, das bin ich nicht, auch nicht im entferntesten, ich bin so ehrbar wie Ihr alle, aber wenn es so zugeht, dann ist kein ehrlicher Mann in Bamberg mehr sicher, Ihr genauso wenig wie ich oder irgendein anderer’ (Parigger 1990, 18). These lines were not included in the English translation of the letter in Monter (1969).

⁴ ‘So sterbe ich denn unschuldig und als Märtyrer ... Und bete für mich, Deinen Vater, der wahrhaftig ein Märtyrer ist’ (Parigger 1990, 20-1). These lines were also not included in the English translation of the letter in Monter (1969).

⁵ Anna Maria Junius equivocally observed about the witch-executions: ‘if now justice was done to all, only God knew (‘ob nun allen recht geschehen / ist allein gott bewust’): Hümmer (1890), 13.

⁶ ‘sein ding zum hindern ...in ihn gethan und gestossen, biss etwas nass und warmes in ihn geloffen, hab ihm nichts wehe gethon ...’ (Jerouschek 1992, 139).

⁷ Del Rio warned that:

Judges are bound under pain of mortal sin to condemn witches to death who have confessed their crimes; anyone who pronounces against the death sentence is reasonably suspected of secret complicity; no one is to urge the judges to desist from the prosecution; nay, it is an indicium of witchcraft to defend witches, or to affirm that witch stories which are told as certain are mere deceptions or illusions (quoted in Robbins

1959, 123).

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