

Witchcraft, Demonology, and Confession in Early Modern France. Virginia Krause. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xii + 192 pp. \$95.

Virginia Krause's compelling study examines what she considers the purloined letter of recent work on early modern demonology: the role played by the witch's confession. Adopting a broadly Foucauldian perspective, Krause views the judicial incitement to confess as the instrument by which demonologists in this period were able to constitute their own object: namely, witches' nocturnal assemblies or "Sabbats." From the legal perspective of writers like Jean Bodin, Henri Boguet, and Pierre de Lancre, the crimes committed by and while attending the Sabbath were *facti transeuntis* (i.e., crimes whose traces vanished with the act). Thus both in the particular cases judged by magistrates and in the theoretical elaborations of demonologists, the Sabbath had to be constructed discursively, an airy nothing fabricated in the space between the witch's mouth and judge's ear. Krause shows the careful assembly, and eventual collapse, of what she calls demonology's "auricular regime."

Currently coediting Bodin's *Démonomanie*, Krause ranks among the foremost authorities on European demonology writing today, her knowledge of which is here brought together with the legal history of the period (notably John Langbein's *Torture and the Law of Proof* [1977]). What elevates this study, however, is the combination of these with the kind of literary-critical approach developed in recent French scholarship (by Sophie Houdard, Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, and Thibaut Maus de Rolley, whose 2011 *Élévations* is a rare gap in Krause's bibliography). Thus chapter 1 shows how demonology employed the tools of humanist textual scholarship to foreground the "intertextual coherence" of witchcraft testimony in the absence of a referent. Chapter 2 considers the primacy of aural over visual mediation in demonological discourse (Jan Ziarnko's famous engraving for Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance* being the exception of an incorrigible eye-man, proving the rule). Chapter 3 reads Montaigne's "Des boyteux" in light of shifting attitudes to the Roman canon law of proof. Finally, and brilliantly, chapter 4 adopts the viewpoint of the witch herself, surveying the range of subject positions available to the accused.

This is a short, tightly focused book, leaving space both for further exploration and, occasionally, disagreement. Some may take issue with the narrowness of Krause's corpus.

Demonology in this book actually means judicial demonology (principally, the works of Bodin, Boguet, Lancre, and Pierre Le Loyer), but sometimes this distinction is elided, as though witchcraft prosecutors and the obstacles they faced were representative of the whole field. As Krause would acknowledge, a large number of other demonological works published in French in this period were written by authors professionally unconnected to the law; often these downplay the Sabbat, being much more concerned with the relation between witchcraft and heresy (Jean Maldonat, Pierre Crespet, Jude Serclier), witchcraft and divination (Pierre Massé), or devotional regimes for avoiding *maleficia* (René Benoist). Le Loyer himself devotes only a fraction of his *III Livres des spectres* to the Sabbat and, as Krause admits, never presided over a witchcraft prosecution. Given this heterogeneity it seems a stretch to write, as she does at one point, of “the institution of demonology” (101) and of demonologists’ sensitivity to “the singularity of their methods” (16).

Others may find the opposition, borrowed from Françoise Lavocat, between the “realist” and “illusionist” hypotheses of travel to the Sabbat — i.e., where the witch is either truly transported or only in imagination — overly reductive. Prosecuting witches did not necessarily depend on the “realist” hypothesis, as Krause seems to imply (19); both Boguet and Le Loyer claim that a witch sufficiently proves her devotion to Satan by believing his illusions, and thus remains deserving of punishment. This argument boldly circumvents Johannes Weyer’s “illusionist” objections to the trials; it also shifts the center of demonological focus toward witchcraft as a crime of belief, in which the pact, not the Sabbat, is the central aberration. Future scholars may wish to develop this last point in conjunction with Krause’s passing remarks on the debt shown by witchcraft prosecutions to inquisitorial methods for investigating heresy (Sébastien Michaëlis might be a key reference). Finally, widening the scope to include other theologically trained demonologists (including Protestants) would allow us to test her undeveloped claim that the Council of Trent indirectly buttressed demonology by restating its support for confession as a sacrament.

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