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## Notes from the Chair

Welcome to another edition of the *R111*! I trust this issue will lift you out of the winter doldrums...

If you've not joined us recently on our branch Zoom meetings, you've missed out on excellent presentations, including Elaine Duncanson's *The English Language in the Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century*; Sheilah O'Connor describing *Aliens in Yorkist England* and Sheila Smith sharing *Music at the Yorkist Court*. These presentations are researched and prepared by our own branch members and kudos to them for their efforts!

If you missed the meeting, you can look forward to reading these papers in upcoming issues of the *R111*.

In January, we asked you to send in Ricardian topics that you wish to explore further, and we were pleased to receive a few suggestions. Consequently, at our upcoming meeting on **May 8**, we'll open the floor to all members to discuss: **The bond between Edward, Richard, and George throughout their lives and how events influenced their relationships with each other.**

Please give some thought to this topic and jot down a few discussion notes or questions in advance. To prepare, you may wish to read a good biography, such as Matthew Lewis' *Richard III: Loyalty Binds Me*, John Ashdown-Hill's *The Third Plantagenet: George, Duke of Clarence* or David Santiuste's *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*. Check out our Buyers Library catalogue on our Branch website at [www.richardiii.ca](http://www.richardiii.ca) > Membership > The Buyers Library for suggestions of other titles you can borrow from our library or one local to you.

To add to the mix, we are currently sourcing guest speakers; subject-matter experts on medieval or Ricardian related topics, prepared to present via Zoom on topics of interest to members. If you can recommend a speaker who fits these criteria, please email their details to me.

A member had a suggestion to create a Ricardian-themed calendar to commemorate our 55th anniversary year. While we're late off the mark for 2022, we would like to pursue this project for 2023. If you have photos you would like to contribute to the calendar, please contact me. They should be personal photos (not stock photos from the internet), high resolution jpeg images related to Richard III or the Wars of the Roses, with accreditation.

And speaking of members, we are delighted to welcome newest member **Katlin Kelly** from Vancouver. I hope you find your membership entertaining and enlightening!

Stay healthy, stay safe, and I hope to see many of you at upcoming meetings.

Vivat Rex Ricardus!

— *Tracy*

## **From the Editor**

Do you remember the excitement just 10 years ago when a skeleton was found in the ruins of a Leicester monastery? That created renewed interest in the Society.... and now there are tantalizing hints from Devon of "markers" in a church suggesting the possible survival of one of the Princes. Are we on the verge of an answer to one of our long-standing mysteries? Time will tell, and unraveling the clues may lead to the answers to more queries.

This issue contains the second part of Jamie Pratt's interesting examination of Witchcraft. Though this is a major paper, there's still lots of room in this journal by and for all members of our Society. So my plea continues... send in recipes, photos, questions or reviews! Thanks!

*Christine Hurlbut,*  
*Editor*

## **Membership inquiries**

Please contact Sheilah O'Connor at [membership@richardIII.ca](mailto:membership@richardIII.ca).

## **Did Prince Edward survive his uncle?**

Phillipa Langley is leading a research group which found "extraordinary" new evidence that Prince Edward may have survived long after he fell out of the public eye. John Dike is the lead researcher of the four-year 'Missing Princes Project. Follow this link:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/397558-new-evidence-britains-king-didnt-kill-princes-in-the-tower-unearthed>.

Decorations in a church in Devon and a carving of a man named John Evans give hints that one of the princes in the tower was allowed to live anonymously after being declared illegitimate.

This links to a video presentation by royal historian and professor Kate Williams, who published a "docuseries" called "Secrets of the Royal Palace."

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1560373/richard-iii-murder-princes-in-the-tower-new-evidence-channel-5-kate-williams-spt>

## The Transformation of Witchcraft in the 15th Century, Part 2

— James Pratt, East York, Ontario

*The first part of this paper, appeared in the previous issue, Vol. 54, No. 3. —Ed.*

### Law in the Hands of Theologians

In 1401 was passed statute 2 H.4 c.15, which came to be called, after the writ, *de hæretico comburendo*. Its lengthy and rambling preamble complains of the rise of “divers false and perverse people of a certain new sect,” — presumably the Lollards, though the name is not mentioned — which it describes in precisely the same vague but damning terms that would come to be applied to witches: they are “false and perverse people” responsible for “wicked and false preachings” and sundry “enormities horrible to be heard.”<sup>1</sup>

The statute authorized the diocesan courts to try heretics. As before, those found guilty of a first offense had the opportunity to abjure their heretical opinions. However, it now required that the “the sheriffs, mayors and bailiffs of the said counties, cities, boroughs and towns shall be attending, aiding, and supporting to the said diocesans and their commissaries.” If the convict refused to abjure (contumacy) or had abjured but was convicted again (relapse), the prescribed sentence was burning, and now the secular arm was right there in the courtroom and instructed by the statute itself to carry out the execution. No more troublesome applications to the King for a writ of execution.

Given the tenuousness of the usurper Henry IV’s new regime, it is no surprise that he might wish to curry favour with the bishops, and that the statute seems very concerned with Lollards’ potential to “wickedly instruct and inform people, and as such they may excite and stir them to sedition and insurrection.” Sir Edward Coke was later to note the fact that “in proceeding against Lollards, the prelates, besides their opinions, did charge them with hainous offenses: as conspiracy with multitudes of people, insurrection, rebellion, or some other treason, or great crimes.”<sup>2</sup> Occasionally, this fear of Lollard political subversion was justified, as in the case of John Oldcastle, Baron Cobham, who after being convicted of Lollard heresy and refusing to abjure, was given a period of time by his friend Henry V to think again, during which time he escaped prison and led a rebellion. He was eventually recaptured and burnt at the stake in 1417. In Oldcastle, we have the most paranoid fears of Church and State seemingly realized: the diabolical marriage of heresy and treason. Reading the account of his examination and trial, one

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<sup>1</sup> For the text of the statute: <http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/heretico.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Coke, III *Inst.* ch. 5, p. 43.

finds remarkable the terms used to describe heretics.<sup>3</sup> Completely absent is any notion that these were people in need of correction for merely *erroneous* beliefs. Instead, they are “vile,” “detestable,” “wicked.” The tone indicates that the Church had begun to feel threatened by the rise of various proto-Protestant groups.

Churchmen were not overly discriminating in their use of nomenclature to describe these various heretical groups. For example, Heinrich Krämer, co-author of the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* or “Hammer of Witches” (1486) had also written a work whose English translation is *The Shield of Defense of the Holy Roman Church against the Heresy of the Waldensians or Picards*. “Picards” were not a sect but rather the inhabitants of a region that happened to have a higher concentration of religious dissenters. To make matters more confusing, the work was not aimed at Waldensians at all, but rather at Hussites!<sup>4</sup> It is all reminiscent of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century struggle against international communism. To those of us on this side of the Cold War, it made little practical difference whether we were battling Trotskyites, Leninists, Stalinists, or Maoists. They were all the same and they all stood for an ideology that was explicitly equated with evil (think of Ronald Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech).

The Church’s paranoia of these subversive heretical sects, which in England meant Lollards in particular, began to lead to a confusion between heresy, treason, and witchcraft, with the three concepts bleeding into each other. For example, Roger Bolingbroke, one of the co-conspirators in the trial of Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (more on her later) for treasonable necromancy, suffered the traitor’s death of hanging, disemboweling, and quartering, with the added touch that “his quarters were sent to several notoriously active centres of Lollardy and heresy.”<sup>5</sup> Heretics came to be seen as acting under the special tutelage of the devil. Thomas Netter (a.k.a. Thomas of Walden), Henry V’s chaplain, and a noted persecutor of Lollards, claimed to be an eyewitness at the trial of William Taylor before the Archbishop of Canterbury. Taylor

was finally ordered to do reverence to the Host. But he blasphemously replied: ‘Truly a spider is more worthy to be revered.’ Immediately there descended from the top of the roof a huge and hideous spider, and came straight on its thread for the

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<sup>3</sup> John Bale, *A Brefe Chronycle, concerning the Examinacion and Death of... Sir Johan Oldcastell, the Lord Cobham* (1544). Reprinted in Oldys and Johnson (eds.), *Harleian Miscellany* (London: Robert Dutton, 1808-1811), Vol. I, pp. 246-286.

<sup>4</sup> Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, “The Trial of Eleanor Cobham,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 51 (1968-69), p. 395; Jessica Freeman, “Sorcery at court and manor: Margery Jourdemayne, the witch of Eye next Westminster,” *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004), p. 352.

blasphemer's mouth, and persistently tried, while he was yet speaking, to gain an entrance through his polluted lips.... The Archbishop immediately arose... and expounded to the whole congregation there gathered what the avenging hand of the Lord had done to the blasphemer. A demon in the form of the spider possessed the blasphemer and so avenged the dishonor done to God.<sup>6</sup>

A similar phenomenon of equating of heresy with the forces of darkness was happening on the Continent, as shown by the following story with a Canadian connection. In 2005, a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta was searching the library collection there for medieval Burgundian manuscripts on behalf of his doctoral supervisor. He found two, one of which was at risk of being overlooked because it had been mis-catalogued under the wrong title, listing the codex as containing a collection of sermons on good and fallen angels. The actual title of the work was no less misleading: *Invectives contre la secte de vauderie* ("Invectives against the Sect of Waldensians"). Nevertheless, the student consulted this c. 1460 text by Johannes Tinctor and found it to be a witch-hunter's treatise rather than an anti-Waldensian tract. It was the product of a notorious witch-craze in the town of Arras at the time. The book is extremely rare, with only three other copies known to exist.<sup>7</sup> The source of the confusion around the book's subject matter lay in the fact that by 1460, the French words *vaudois* and *vauderie* ("Waldensian" and "Waldensianism") had taken on the alternate meanings "witch" and "witchcraft" respectively, as Waldensian heretics came to be accused of every wicked crime.<sup>8</sup>

Another example: at the same time that Tinctor wrote his book, Jacques du Bois wrote his own first-hand account of the Arras witch trials, entitled *Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum* ("A History of the Case, State, and Condition of the Waldensian Heretics"). Throughout the

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<sup>6</sup> The story is recounted in Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, Bk. II, ch. 19, p. 114. Guazzo places the trial in 1384, but this is wrong, as Netter would have been only about nine years old at that time. The trial actually took place in 1410.

<sup>7</sup> After researching the volume's provenance, it is believed that it either belonged to Edward IV or to someone in his retinue and came to England when Edward returned from his exile in Burgundy. The work has now been translated, along with another tract on the Arras witch trials by Jacques du Bois, in Andrew Colin Gow *et al.* (eds. and trans.), *The Arras Witch Treatises* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016). An interesting episode of CBC Radio's *Ideas* program was made about the discovery of the Alberta copy of Tinctor's book: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/tinctor-s-foul-manual-1.2913889>.

<sup>8</sup> This shift in meaning is also remarked on by Joseph Klaitz, *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 40: "Indeed, in the minds of the authorities, the Waldensian or Vaudois heresy was now conflated with witchcraft, as can be seen in the name they assigned to this heretical activity: *vauderie*."

work, du Bois slides back and forth between these two senses of “Waldensian.” His use of the term was so unstable that in one chapter du Bois’ translator has a difficult time of making clear to the reader which sense the author has in mind.<sup>9</sup>

There is a very famous 1451 manuscript copy of Martin le Franc’s *Le champion des dames* that gives a striking visual representation of this confusion between Waldensianism and witchcraft: in the margin of one leaf are two female “Vaudoises” portrayed riding broomsticks. One suspects that the fact that Waldensians allowed women to preach contributed to the increasingly gendered conception of witchcraft that was developing, and which reached full flowering in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), a work incredibly misogynistic, even by the standards of witch-hunter’s manuals.

On the Continent, witch hunters tended to be most active in mountainous areas, such as Tyrol, Savoy, Swabia, and Switzerland. Nicholas Remy (1530-1616) claimed responsibility for executing 800 witches over a 16-year period. His area of activity was in the Vosges mountains of Alsace. Henry Boguet (1550-1619) was active as a witch hunter in the town of Saint-Claude, Burgundy, in the Jura mountains near the Swiss Border.<sup>10</sup>

There are a few interrelated reasons for the prevalence of witch-mania in mountain areas. One reason is that, much like today, isolated mountain folk had a reputation for being backwards and superstitious (think of Appalachian snake handlers). Secondly, mountain areas tended to attract heretical sects looking to escape persecution (for example, Cathars in Languedoc and Waldensians in the Alps of Piedmont). Thirdly, and relatedly, the spread of witch-paranoia seemed to follow in the wake of the Dominican inquisitors, as they worked their way along mountain chains over the decades in search of heretics, much as plague followed trade routes. One is tempted to think that perhaps the inquisitors in these areas “went native,” picking up some of the local superstitions they were supposed to be there to stamp out.

As the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga wrote in connection with the Arras witch trials, the “terrible delusion of which the persecution of witches is

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques du Bois [?], *A History of the Case, State, and Condition of the Waldensian Heretics*, in Andrew Colin Gow et al. (eds. and trans.), op. cit., pp. 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> During the Second World War, Saint-Claude was occupied by the Germans. Because the locals were notoriously harbouring Jews trying to flee to Switzerland, the Germans executed all Saint-Claude’s males of military age in the town centre.



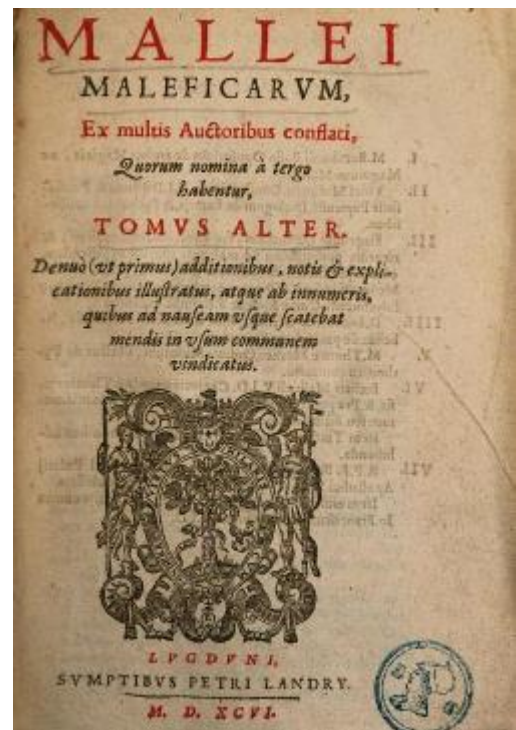
in part the result was contributed to by the fact that the concepts of magic and heresy had become confused.”<sup>11</sup>

In discussing the connection between Church theology and witchcraft, and the blending of the concepts of witchcraft with heresy, there is one development in this period that should be mentioned, though briefly: the change in status of the so-called “Canon Episcopi.” This was a passage in medieval canon law, probably dating to the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, which effectively denied the real existence of witchcraft and other superstitions. The canon did not deny that there were people who *thought* they could ride around on broomsticks, but it characterized such people as deluded, and those who believed that such things were real were guilty of heresy. In essence, according to the Canon Episcopi the witch is a heretic; but she is not someone who can harness the power of demons, because this is an impossibility. The heresy lies in part in believing that God would allow the existence of such evil powers.<sup>12</sup>

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the authority of this canon was eroding, mostly in the hands of Dominican inquisitors such as the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The Canon made it difficult for an inquisitor to hunt witches without himself becoming guilty of heresy for believing they existed. Therefore, much ink is spilled in the *Malleus Maleficarum* to reinterpret the Canon Episcopi to allow for the real existence of such evil and unnatural powers in God’s creation.

Before moving on from the subject of theology and witchcraft, one more bit of historical context should be mentioned. The *Malleus Maleficarum* seems to have been emblematic of a rise in apocalyptic thinking during this period. I hesitate to lay too much stress on this, since one can point to such thinking in almost every age.

However, the authors of the *Malleus* are very specific in that they date the rise of increased wickedness and demonic activity to the year 1400 (around the same time, incidentally, as Henry IV’s *De hæretico comburendo*). For instance, according to the authors, before that time, although there was sexual congress between women and demons, it had usually been non-consensual. But since 1400 such congress had become frequent and



<sup>11</sup> Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 288.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 46.

consensual. The forces of darkness were gathering strength. Like many others, the authors also believed that when Satan fell, about one-tenth of the angels fell with him, becoming demons. It was supposed that the end of the world and God's final triumph over Satan would occur when the number of the elect admitted to heaven equaled the number of angels who remained there. There was a feeling that this number was being approached, and in order to forestall this event demons and their human servants were redoubling their efforts. This is why so many of the diabolical activities portrayed in the witch-hunters' manuals seem aimed at thwarting fertility, by making men impotent or bewitching them into marrying old women. Many midwives were accused of smuggling newborns away for sacrifice or using witchcraft to induce stillbirths. By doing so they were supposedly preventing these unbaptized infants from getting into heaven, thereby delaying the apocalypse.<sup>13</sup>

I have an alternative hypothesis for this obsession with fertility: acute demographic anxiety. The first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a time of recurring plague epidemics in many parts of Europe, and European population levels did not really begin to see positive growth trends again until about 1470.<sup>14</sup> In this context, anything which interfered with fertility would have been seen as especially threatening, aside from the above theological implications. Carrying this further, one can imagine, for example, that public attitudes would have been very hostile towards a local woman suspected of administering a drug to a female client to induce an abortion, even if the client *hired her to do so*. And under the circumstances, the client would have a strong incentive to make a witchcraft accusation if their collusive activities came to light.

### **Sorcery in High Places**

In 1419, Joan of Navarre, widow of Henry IV, was accused of hiring two magicians to use witchcraft to poison her stepson, Henry V. Although the accusation came from her confessor, the real story is that she made the mistake of pleading for her son, Arthur of Brittany, who was Henry's prisoner. Despite a lack of any formal legal process, she was imprisoned, but released a few years later.

In 1431, in a notorious abuse of justice, Joan of Arc was tried and executed, formally for heresy, but witchcraft was among the many charges included

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher S Mackay, "General Introduction," *op. cit.* pp. 59-62. See also *Malleus Maleficarum*, Pt. II, Quest. I, ch. 13, p. 141: "And by this means the Last Judgement is delayed, when the devils will be condemned to eternal torture; since the number of the elect is more slowly completed, on the fulfilment of which the world will be consumed."

<sup>14</sup> Josiah C. Russell, "Population in Europe," in Carlo M. Cipolla (ed.), *The Fontana Economic History of Europe (Vol. I: The Middle Ages)* (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1972), 25-71.

under that umbrella. In 1435, Agnes Bernauer was arrested and summarily drowned in the Danube on charges of witchcraft. Agnes had been the mistress and possible first wife of the future Albert III, Duke of Bavaria.<sup>15</sup> Albert's father Ernst considered her an unsuitable connection, due to her common origins, hence her elimination. As in the case of Joan of Navarre, there was no formal process; an inconvenient woman was eliminated in what was seemingly treated as an internal "family matter" rather than a formal criminal case.

In 1441, Gilles, Baron de Rais, war hero and Joan of Arc's companion-in-arms, was tried and executed for the gruesome murders of possibly hundreds of children, as well as for witchcraft, since his dabbling in necromancy with a couple of clerics was made public at his trial.

Leaving aside the perhaps apocryphal story we began with, of Lord Hasting's mistress conspiring with Edward IV's widow to wither Richard III's arm, we also have Richard's own *Titulus Regius* (1484) claiming that his brother Edward's infatuation with Elizabeth Woodville was the product of the latter's bewitchment, in conspiracy with her mother.

These are all cases of witchcraft or accusations of witchcraft leveled against members of the upper class, and they were all notorious in their respective countries and beyond. And we could add many more. It would be surprising if, taken together, they did not foster a public perception that sorcery was everywhere, and that it had infiltrated and corrupted the halls of the mighty. One certainly finds this sentiment echoed in the witch treatises that began to proliferate in the second half of the century. We find Johannes Hartlieb writing in the 1450s of the growing superstition of the upper classes, adopting practices – divination using a goose's breastbone, for example – that were once the preserve of ignorant peasants:

In times gone by, the old peasants practiced this sort of thing on their remote farms, but now the superstition has spread among kings, princes, and the entire nobility, who believe in such things. I scarcely dare mention the clergy, since they want to punish but remain unpunished [!] — and yet I know quite a few great prelates,

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<sup>15</sup> Interesting side note: Johannes Hartlieb (c. 1410-1468) was a physician and author of the *Book of All Forbidden Arts* (1456), which contained an exhortation to rulers to give their aid in stamping out witchcraft. Hartlieb was in the employment of the aforementioned Albert III of Bavaria from 1440 until 1456, and it is believed by some that his wife Sibilla, whom he married in 1444, was the daughter of Duke Albert and Agnes Bernauer, the supposed witch.

archbishops, abbots, provosts, and many other quite honorable priests... who believe in the goose bone.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, he mentions “a great prince who uses an old executioner’s sword” to practice divination, in the belief that a sword that has killed many people attracts more demons, making its magic more powerful.<sup>17</sup>

Some writers believed that the Devil specifically aims his efforts at recruiting from the nobility, since they are better placed to corrupt others (precisely the same recruiting strategy used by Scientology today). For instance, writing in about 1460, Jacques du Bois says that the Devil gives witches power to withstand the pains of torture, since this “helps them to avoid accusing others, especially people of higher social rank, who can do greater villainies in obedience to the Devil, and who, by their authority and ability to act, are most able to promote this damned sect.”<sup>18</sup>

No doubt the reluctance of some secular authorities – in England at least – to execute witches partly explains the prevalence of clerical exhortations to princes and nobles to assist in stamping out this heresy and desist from harbouring witches. In the context of the Arras witch trials of 1459-60, we find du Bois and Tinctore addressing their works to princes and noblemen in order to solicit their aid against the witches. However, ironically, their willingness to also implicate their betters in the conspiracy was probably the factor that led the Arras craze to fizzle out.

### **Necromancy and the Clerical Underworld**

Let us return to Johannes Hartlieb’s comment earlier about the growing prevalence of superstitious practices among churchmen. In 1997, the eminent historian of medieval magic, Richard Kieckhefer, published the text of an early 15<sup>th</sup>-century necromancer’s handbook in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, along with extensive commentary.<sup>19</sup> “Necromancy,” from its Greek roots, means divination by the dead. Originally it meant the conjuration of the spirits of the dead in order to obtain information. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, necromancy meant the conjuring of spirits or demons (not just of the dead) for

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<sup>16</sup> Johannes Hartlieb, *The Book of All Forbidden Arts*, printed in Richard Kieckhefer (trans.), *Hazards of the Dark Arts: Advice for Medieval Princes on Witchcraft and Magic* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), p. 87.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques du Bois, *A History of the Case, State, and Condition of the Waldensian Heretics*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1997).

any purpose. Of these purposes, Kieckhefer groups the conjurations in the Munich handbook into three classes:

1. *Illusion*, making things appear to be what they are not (e.g., making castles or banquets appear, making dead men seem to speak).
2. *Divination*, gaining hidden knowledge (e.g., finding out the location of a stolen object or the identity of its thief).
3. *Psychological* experiments, to manipulate people (e.g., gaining favour at court, obtaining a woman's sexual favours, making a person go mad, sowing enmity between friends).

The psychological experiments were obviously the most sinister and tended to give necromancers a bad name, and this bad name rubbed off on female witches. Says Kieckhefer,

In so far as necromancers contributed to the plausibility of claims about witches, they bear indirect responsibility for the rise of the European witch trials in the fifteenth and following centuries. To the extent that those early witch trials focused on female victims, they thus provide a particularly tragic case of women being blamed and punished for the misconduct of men: women who were not invoking demons could more easily be thought to do so at a time when certain men were in fact doing so.<sup>20</sup>

Necromancers were almost exclusively men, more specifically, men with knowledge of Latin. In fact, the ranks of the necromancers were filled by members of what Kieckhefer calls the "clerical underworld." By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Church was producing more clerics than it could consume (much like academia overproduces scholars today). It was natural that many surplus clerics would seek alternative employment. As Kieckhefer puts it, a "society that had a surplus of clergy inevitably spawned an underemployed and largely unsupervised 'clerical underworld' capable of various forms of mischief, including necromancy, and indeed this underworld seems to have been the primary locus for this explicitly demonic magic."<sup>21</sup> There is evidence in the Munich handbook that its anonymous author wrote the book with the intention of gaining favour at some prince or nobleman's court. It is natural to expect that underemployed clerics peddling necromantic wares would gravitate to markets with the surplus income to spend on it. This may explain the

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<sup>20</sup> Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

perception, noted earlier, that the nobility was harbouring and protecting witches and sorcerers.

The assertion that the literature of necromancy was being generated by a clerical underworld is supported not only by its Latinity but also by its use of liturgy. Almost all of the “experiments” or spells in the Munich handbook have a similar structure. First, there is the *declaration* (“I conjure/adjure/exorcise you...”), followed by the *address*, naming the addressees (“demons X, Y, Z”). Then there is the *invocation*, naming the source from which power is given to the necromancer over the demons conjured (“by the virtue and power of the Divine Majesty/Christ/the Virgin/higher-order demons...”). Finally, there is the *instruction*, specifying – preferably in great detail, since demons are capricious and difficult to control – what the conjured demon is being commanded to do.<sup>22</sup>

Latin terms used in the declaration, *coniuro*, *adiuro*, *exorciso*, *praecipio*, are interchangeable terms essentially meaning “I command,” and “the conjurations of the necromancer are identical in form to the exorcisms designed to dispel demons.”<sup>23</sup> The same form is used both to summon demons and to dismiss or expel them. Thus, note how closely the Catholic rite of exorcism follows the formula used in the conjurations of the medieval necromancers:

1. Declaration: “I command you...” (*Praecipio tibi...*).
2. Address: “unclean spirit, whoever you are...” (*quicumque es, spíritus immúnde...*).
3. Invocation: “by the mysteries of the incarnation, passion... etc.” (*ut per mystéria incarnatiónis...*).
4. Instruction: “that you tell me by some sign your name, and the day and hour of your departure” (*dicas mihi nomen tuum, die et horam éxitus tui, cum áliquo signo*).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128ff.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 146. Reginald Scot, writing in 1584, noted the similarities between the experiments of the necromancers and the rites of the Catholic Church, and used them as grounds for his attack on the latter in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. See Bk. 15. ch. 26, pp. 252-253 for the parallel with exorcism.

<sup>24</sup> “PRAECÍPIO tibi, quicumque es, spíritus immúnde, et ómnibus sóciis tuis hunc dei fámulum (hanc dei fámulam) obsidéntibus: ut per mystéria incarnatiónis, passiónis, resurrectiόnis et ascensiόnis Dómini nostri Jesu Christi, per missiόnem Spíritus Sancti, et per advéntum ejúsdem Dómini nostri ad judicium, dicas mihi nomen tuum, die et horam éxitus tui, cum áliquo signo: et ut mihi Dei minístro licet indígno, prorsus in ómnibus obédias: neque hanc creatúram Dei, vel circunstántes, aut eórum bona ullo modo offéndas.” [“I command you, unclean spirit, whoever you are, along with all your minions now attacking this servant of God, by the mysteries of the incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the descent of the Holy Spirit, by the coming of our Lord for judgment, that you tell me by some sign your name, and the day and hour of your departure. I command you, moreover, to obey me to the letter, I who am a minister of God despite my unworthiness; nor shall you be emboldened to harm in any way this creature of God, or the bystanders, or any of their possessions.”] Latin text

A similar formulaic structure is used by Paul – though lacking the address – when casting out a demon from a woman in Acts 16:18: “But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.” Also worth pointing out is the Catholic exorcist’s command to the demon to “obey me to the letter.” Again, demons are devious and, lawyer-like, are not to be implicitly trusted. Careful language must be used with them.<sup>25</sup>

This mirroring of necromancy’s spells and the liturgical spells of the Catholic Church has been characterized by Kieckhefer as two sides of a tapestry:

The beliefs and ritual operations found in necromancy mimic those of established rites, somewhat as the threads are the same on both sides of a tapestry, and the patterns they form on the underside are recognizably related to those on the front. One might even suggest that a culture in which ritual occupies so central a place will naturally if not inevitably engender forbidden rituals, somewhat as the production of a tapestry necessarily produces on the underside a distorted version of the intended image. The study of late medieval necromancy gives an exceptionally clear and forceful picture of the abuses likely to arise in a culture so keenly attentive to ritual display of sacerdotal power. Our own society, more fascinated with sexuality and its abuse, has its own concerns about miscreant priests and their abuse of young boys; the clerical misconduct most feared in the late Middle Ages was of a different order.<sup>26</sup>

As already noted, this fear of a male clerical underworld dabbling in dark and forbidden arts was unfortunately transferred to the female practitioners of magical arts that were less liturgical and perhaps less nefarious. It is also easy to imagine that some mainstream clerics would be happy to point fingers at female “witches” if it would serve to turn the public gaze away from what some of their fallen brethren were getting up to. In any case, in at least one high profile incident, these two worlds of male necromancy and feminine witchcraft collided, with disastrous results for one such woman.

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from the Catholic Church, *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam* (Vatican: Typis Vaticanis, 2004). To my knowledge, this revised (1998) text has not been officially translated into the vernacular, so the English is the pre-1998 unrevised version. See John L. Allen, “Exorcism – Revised rite,” *National Catholic Reporter* (September 1, 2000), cover story.

<sup>25</sup> Though this phrase seems to have been excised when the Latin rite was revised in 1998. The English translation represents the pre-1998 version.

<sup>26</sup> Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, p. 13.

## Margery Jourdemayne, the Witch of Eye

We have already mentioned in passing the case of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester. It is worth examining in greater detail, since in this notable medieval scandal, most of the threads we have been exploring intersect: The question of whether witchcraft is a crime, and if a crime, whether it be treason or heresy? Also, if a crime, should it be tried as a secular or spiritual one? The Duchess of Gloucester's case also involved the popular perception that malevolent witchcraft had infiltrated the manors and castles of the highborn. And it illustrates how the clerical underworld's bad reputation could rub off on female practitioners of the more acceptable magical arts.

In the third part of his *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1642), in his chapter on witchcraft and sorcery, Sir Edward Coke wrote: "I have seen a report of a case in an ancient Register, that in October *anno* 20 H. 6 Margery Gurdeman of Eye, in the county of Suffolk, was for witchcraft and consultation with the devil, after sentence and a relapse, burnt by the king's writ de hæretico comburendo."<sup>27</sup> Coke makes two errors in this passage. First, the woman in question was Margery *Jourdemayne* (not "Gurdeman"). Second, in contemporary sources, she is described as "the witch of Eye next Westminster" (not Suffolk). It seems Coke did not realize that this case was related to that of Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester.

We should begin with the actors. Eleanor Cobham was wife to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, uncle to Henry VI and heir presumptive to his then-childless nephew. Eleanor was of relatively low birth, mere gentry, and seems to have been proud and ambitious. She was very unpopular and proved to be a political liability to her husband. It was suspected that the Duke was bewitched into marrying her.

Eleanor's ambitions seem to have led her into some nefarious company. She was very anxious to conceive a child and was willing to use the services of practitioners in magic to achieve this goal. For this she employed Margery Jourdemayne, a married woman who brought extra income into her household by plying her skills in fertility magic. "Witches" of her sort were not uncommon,



*The Duchess and Duke of Gloucester*

<sup>27</sup> III *Inst.* ch. 6, p. 44. Most of what follows on this case has been drawn from Jessica Freeman, "Sorcery at Court and Manor: Margery Jourdemayne, the Witch of Eye next Westminster," *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004), 343–357.



and the courts wasted little effort prosecuting them. However, Margery had been previously imprisoned for sorcery in November 1431 but was released the following May upon her good behaviour, after promising not to engage further in any witchcraft or sorcery. As we will see, this earlier encounter with the law would come back to haunt her.

Besides wishing to conceive, Duchess Eleanor was also unduly curious as to her husband's chances of eventually sitting on his nephew's throne. To gain insight into this possibility she made use of the services of three men whom we can safely regard as members of the above-described clerical underworld. Master Roger Bolingbroke was an Oxford scholar and Duke Humphrey's personal clerk. Master Thomas Southwell, a physician, was canon of St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster. John Home, canon of Hereford and St. Asaph, was Humphrey and Eleanor's chaplain. As subsequent events show, this team had been assisting Eleanor by employing the dark arts to gain knowledge of future royal events.

In late June 1441, Bolingbroke, Southwell, and Home were accused of conspiring to harm the king. Bolingbroke had cast Eleanor's horoscope to see if she would become queen. He and Southwell had also cast the king's horoscope, attempting to foretell the date of the king's death. This activity would therefore fall under the treason laws as "compassing the king's death."

Bolingbroke was then examined before the church authorities for suspicion of heresy. He confessed to practising magic and was forced to publicly renounce his heretical and magical practices. His confession would of course have been bad news for the Duke and Duchess. So much illegal activity in the Duke's household triggered a pile-on of Humphrey's enemies against him. In addition, Southwell was further accused of preaching mass unlawfully and heretically.

Eleanor was summoned before an ecclesiastical court, charged with several counts of witchcraft, heresy, and treason (it is worth noting that the latter was not an ecclesiastical offense). Roger Bolingbroke testified against her, upon which she pleaded guilty to five of the charges against her, but not to treason. Part of Eleanor's confession involved the admission that she had long used witchcraft through the counsels of Margery Jourdemayne, the witch of Eye. Margery was then taken up and imprisoned. She joined Southwell in blaming Eleanor for the whole affair. In the Archbishop of Canterbury's court, Margery was found guilty of heresy and witchcraft and, due to her previous conviction, was sentenced to be burned, which took place in late October.

All of these events had been used by Humphrey and Eleanor's enemies to initiate a secular commission to undertake a treason investigation into her activities, along with those of Bolingbroke, Southwell, and Home. Margery was left out of these charges, presumably because any charges against her would

have fallen under ecclesiastical jurisdiction and she had already been sentenced to death anyway. To cut a long story short, Eleanor was found guilty of sorcery and witchcraft, but not of heresy or treason. She escaped death but was sentenced to humiliating public penance followed by life imprisonment. Because she had supposedly used sorcery to entice Duke Humphrey to marry her, that marriage was also declared null and void.

Roger Bolingbroke was found guilty of treason. He was hung, drawn and quartered. It is worth noting that his quarters were sent out to Oxford, Cambridge, Hereford and York (or Bristol), all notable centres of Lollardy. Thomas Southwell had already died in the Tower, at around the time that Margery Jourdemayne was executed. John Home was pardoned. His lenient treatment had to do with the fact that he was deemed an accessory rather than a full participant in the crimes.<sup>28</sup>

The case brings together many of the themes of this paper. First, we can see how the formal distinctions between witchcraft, heresy, and treason were not clearly observed, nor were the jurisdictional differences between ecclesiastical and secular offenses, treason being included among the charges heard in an ecclesiastical court, while death was the sentence for a purely ecclesiastical offense. This serious erosion of the rule of law could partly be seen as a natural result of the blurring of lines introduced by Henry IV's unwise statute *de hæretico comburendo*.

Second, we see the involvement of unsavoury but entrepreneurial members of a clerical underworld, priests who dabbled in heresy and the dark arts.

Third, we observed that there was a public perception that practitioners of these dark arts seemed to be prevalent in the households of the wealthy and powerful. In the case of the Duchess of Gloucester, we see that this public perception was not entirely unfounded.

Fourth, we see how a relatively low-status female practitioner of natural magic, who in the previous century might be allowed to ply her trade with little intervention by the authorities, could now find herself criminalized and made to suffer exemplary punishment for merely being associated with the nefarious activities of her betters.

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<sup>28</sup> Though Freeman believes it helped that he came from a good gentry family (p. 352).

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## Vellum

— by Christine Hurlbut, Willowdale, Ontario



Basel, 1400 CE: Medieval tanning vats

I'm always awestruck by the variety of trades which though obscure, achieve viability in the UK market. People make charcoal or carve wooden spoons using traditional methods, and there is wide interest in the revival of such skills which have practical uses. One such craft, which we could justifiably think of as medieval is parchment/vellum making.

Since 1850 the firm of **William Cowley Parchment Works**, in Buckinghamshire, has carried on the ancient craft of preparing animal skins for parchment. They use a series of non-toxic chemical baths and precise scraping to produce fine materials which find use as drum tops and furniture coverings, as well as in calligraphy projects.

In fact, the House of Lords has voted to use vellum to record Acts of Parliament,

recognizing the longevity of the material. After all, if vellum was good enough to hold the terms of the Magna Carta in 1215...

## Sharon Kay Penman legacy

— by Mona Albano, North York, Ontario

The late Sharon Kay Penman, author of *The Sunne in Splendor*, donated her papers to the Parent Society. They are presently with the acting Chair of the American Branch Susan Troxell and will eventually be lodged in England and available to Society members and the public.

Sharon Kay Penman (13 August 1945 - 22 January 2021)

Novels include:

- The Sunne in Splendour
- A King's Ransom
- Prince of Darkness
- The Land Beyond the Sea
- Cruel as the Grave
- The Queen's Man
- Lionheart
- Here be Dragons
- Falls the Shadow
- The Reckoning
- Devil's Brood
- When Christ and His Saints Slept



*A novel of Richard III*

Papers pertaining to her Welsh Princes trilogy will be kept in Aberystwyth, Wales.

## A punishment for stealing water

— by Sheilah O'Connor, Toronto, Ontario

In 1477, a man illegally tapped a pipe carrying water, to bring it into his own house and the punishment was to put him on a horse, with a container like a conduit on his head, full of water, with small pipes coming out, emptying the water onto him. It was to be refilled as needed, and he was to be taken around the city with his misdeeds proclaimed. Considering that this was November, he might have had a very chilly time of it!

This is from The Calender of Letterbooks of the City of London 1477:

12 Nov., 18 Edward IV. [A. D. 1478], sentence passed by the Mayor and Aldermen upon William Campion for unlawfully tapping a conduit pipe and bringing water into his house in Fleet Street and elsewhere, viz., that he should be taken out of the Bread Street Compter, where he was confined, and set upon a horse "wt a vessell like unto a conduyt full of water uppon his hede, the same water Rennyng by smale pipes oute of the same vessell, and that when the water is wasted newe water to be put in the saide vessell ayein"; and further, that he should be conveyed to divers parts of the City and proclamation made in each place of his misdoing, and finally be brought back to the Compter, there to remain at the will of the Mayor and Aldermen.

## Richard III Memorabilia

— by Catya Hynard, Toronto, Ontario

In addition to a number of custom-order items featuring Ms. Glasgow's illustration, you will also find, a variety of items available for you to personally purchase through other sources.

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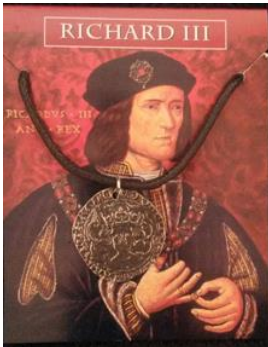


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If you are looking for something specific and need assistance with online research, do not hesitate to reach out to me at the sales address and I'll be happy to provide what information (and online links) I can. Happy online shopping! —Catya

## Meetings, Early 2022

Look for these in upcoming issues of *R111*.

### November meeting

Elaine Duncanson presented a delightful talk on “The English Language in the Late Fifteenth Century,” with audio examples.

### January meeting

Sheilah O’Connor presented her very interesting webinar on “Aliens in Yorkist England” — not little green men, but immigrants and residents.

### Meeting schedule

During the pandemic, our meetings will be conducted remotely. Currently, we are using Zoom. Meetings are usually on the second Sunday of the month and are at 2 p.m. Eastern time.

Meeting Date	Host/Hostess	Paper/Activity
March 13, 2022	Zoom	Chris Dickie <i>Bosworth after the Battle: Protection and Preservation of Ricardian Battlefields</i>
April 10, 2022	Zoom	Victoria Moorshead <i>Richard’s London Today</i>
May 8, 2022	Zoom Discussion	<i>The bond between Edward, Richard, and George throughout their lives and how events influenced their relationships with each other.</i>
June 12, 2022		Ray Rawlings <i>Bishop Stillington</i>

Please also look for our emails about remote meetings in other areas.

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