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Invincible blades and invulnerable bodies: weapons magic in early-modern Germany

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In the world of the occult, as in other realms, the tools and methods chosen by women and men reflected acceptable ways of ‘doing’ gender. This paper will concentrate on magical spells and blessings intended to give men an advantage in sword fights, make them invulnerable, or turn them into perfect marksmen. Because magical practices associated with guns and blades were related to early-modern thinking about masculine power and performance, they were less harshly treated than the kind of magic more often associated with women. Many of these hypermasculine spells drew on contemporary medical beliefs about natural sympathies, including the idea that sympathies existed between the dead and the living. For this reason, invulnerability and weapon spells usually included materials from male corpses (for example, body parts, moss growing on dead men’s skulls, and so on). As learned belief in natural magic waned during the Enlightenment, stories of magic blades and bullets retreated from courts and battlefields into the world of fiction and fantasy.

Keywords: magic; masculinity; Germany; medicine; early-modern; executioner; corpse; swords; guns

Stories about magic weapons have an ancient history. From the sacred weapons of Norse myth to the magical powers of Excalibur, weapons represented a physical extension of the supremacy of the male gods or heroes who wielded them. The greater the hero, the more power was vested in his weapon. This mystical association applied not only to blades but also to arrows and eventually to bullets, which, given the state of projectile technology prior to the nineteenth century, were all the more dependent on otherworldly forces to guide them to their targets.¹

The early-modern period provided particularly fertile ground for weapons magic of all kinds to flourish. To begin with, the advent of printing during the fifteenth century together with the rise of a bureaucracy increasingly dependent on the written word led to an explosion in written culture and a rapid increase in rates of literacy. The information revolution that resulted helped to spread magical beliefs even as it demonised them. Witch-hunting tracts like the *Malleus Maleficarum*² advanced new theories of demonology, while an increasingly literate populace collected and disseminated all kinds of spells, blessings and magical recipes. At the same time, the majority of the populace who still could not read were all the more convinced by the notion that written words and characters could hold special power.³

This period also marked a high point in the widespread identification of individual freemen with military virtue and skill with weapons, especially in Germany.⁴ This very

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strong martial identity combines with the particular intensity of the German witch-hunts to make the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire an especially interesting case study for examining weapons magic and spells of invulnerability. Because all men were potentially soldiers, magic employed in order to enhance military skills was not as easy to demonise as were forms of magic more often associated with women. At the same time, the fact that resorting to magic could reduce risk to one fighter at the expense of the other created another kind of tension. Male magic that aimed at increasing prowess in battle could come into competition with other masculine values such as willingness to face risk, natural physical competence and fair play.

Hypermasculine magic

Historians of the early-modern period often locate the framework for masculine identity as embedded in household patriarchy, a system which conferred upon householders political rights and the authority to rule over subordinates that included women, children, journeymen, apprentices and servants.⁵ According to R. W. Connell's oft-cited model of hegemonic masculinity, adult men who occupied marginal or subordinate social positions in this system would necessarily have been viewed as less successful on the scale of masculine values, therefore less manly. As demonstrated by Lyndal Roper, Alexandra Shepard and other historians who concentrate on the early-modern period, however, this model fails to consider alternative, sometimes actively resistant meanings of manhood. Masculine values that included largess, bravado, resort to violence, pursuit of illicit sex and so on existed in opposition to patriarchal expectations of social order and social ordering.⁶ Some men even viewed patriarchal success as less of a requirement for achieving the status of a manly man than it was a hindrance; in their view, the proximity of women in the household made the householder less manly than men who belonged to all-male journeymen's associations or lived the transient life of an unmarried soldier.⁷

In fact, as famously and unequivocally noted by Baldassare Castiglione in the sixteenth century, it was identity with arms that was the mark of a truly manly man, and this was as true of men of lower and middling social status as it was of the courtiers that were the subjects of Castiglione's popular tract. According to Roper, it was the very act of taking up arms in defence of city, household, person and honour that guaranteed masculinity.⁸ Resort to arms was a symbolic act that demonstrated the political and personal power associated with manhood and distinguished men from women. Social and political requirements for German men to keep, bear and use arms did not only apply to military readiness; rather, willingness to demonstrate that one was not a coward by taking up arms in defence of personal honour was also a mark of early-modern manhood.⁹

If competency with a weapon and willingness to take risks were masculine skills, then supernatural fighting competencies and no fear of risk at all might be understood as hypermasculine qualities. The term hypermasculinity is used in different ways according to contexts, thus requires some definition for its application here. Lately the word has become popular among those studying media violence, who categorise certain film heroes, video games and types of pornography as hypermasculine, while social psychologists discuss the role of hypermasculine culture on military and prison populations.¹⁰ In most of these cases, the word refers specifically to negative stereotypes of masculine domination¹¹, a value-laden definition that is not particularly relevant to my analysis here. I refer instead to the use of the term by historians of the early-modern period to characterise extremes of behaviour associated with Renaissance constructs of masculinity, or the ideal of the 'manly man'.¹²

In early-modern Europe, competence in behaviours that were particularly reviled in women could enhance the masculine reputations of men among their peers. Copious drinking, high-risk fighting and gambling, sexual prowess, provocative blasphemy and willingness to wear colourful, attention-getting clothing may have been condemned by moralists, but they remained hallmarks of the manly man.¹³ Early modernists also use hypermasculinity as a label for diabolical conduct, for example in the context of demons consorting with witches, Protestants accusing Catholic clerics of unnatural sexual debauchery, and antisemitic stereotypes of demonic Jews.¹⁴ The term thus provides a useful shorthand for describing early-modern men who attempted to transcend the normal limits of their masculine competencies through resort to natural or supernatural magic. I use it here only in the narrow sense in which it is typically applied to early-modern masculine stereotypes – that is, as an unnatural exaggeration of skills associated with early-modern manhood, in this case specifically that of being a good warrior. Such attempts appear both as real behaviour – as in men caught in possession of magical spells and talismans – and as behaviour that may only have been imagined, much like activities at witches' sabbaths that the accused confessed to only under torture.

Magical practice that was aimed at gaining a hypermasculine advantage included spells for enhancing sexual performance or becoming rich (through treasure-hunting, gambling or even theft) as well as conferring special prowess in fighting. Weapons, which served as both metaphor and mechanism for the related masculine virtues of political agency and social potency, could be instrumentalised in all of these categories, as well as for other purposes, through the application of what early-modern theorists understood as either natural or supernatural magic. Examples include not only magical swords and bullets, but also employment of swords and knives as magical objects (for treasure-hunting, spell-casting and cures); weapons salves used in healing (that is, salves applied to the blade that caused the wound, rather than to the wound itself); judicial magic (the belief that the murder weapon could react with a corpse through sympathetic magic or divine intervention, so that it would move or otherwise provide evidence to identify the killer); and blades inscribed with magical blessings or characters employed as protective talismans.¹⁵

Of course, men not only wielded weapons, but also faced those of their enemies, and winning the fight required both powerful weapons and bodies that could resist harm. Soldiers in particular were desperate to believe in spells of protection¹⁶, including charms of invulnerability, spells that could make an enemy's weapons break, and magical cures for wounds. Those who resorted to such magic not only assumed that they were improving their chances of survival, but also that they could enhance their masculine advantage by appearing more courageous and competent in a fight. Most men did not assume that the unseen forces they were attempting to manipulate in order to achieve these aims were demonic, or necessarily even supernatural. Many of their methods were associated with what was understood as natural magic or science. My goal here is to present a first step in exploring the masculine nature of this particular set of problem-solving spells and their relationship to prevailing ideas about science, medicine and the sacred.

When popular magic that was aimed specifically at enhancing masculine performance is considered within the context of learned debate on sympathetic forces, an interesting pattern emerges. First, what we see are early-modern men of ordinary status attempting to manipulate the same invisible powers, both natural and supernatural, that were at the centre of many of the learned debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a result of this connection, both the practice of masculine magic and learned reactions to it shifted with the prevailing winds of early-modern development, which included the rise

and fall of a sword-carrying culture. During the eighteenth century, by which time mercenary soldiers were being replaced by national armies and masculine skill with a sword was no longer decisive either on the battlefield or on the field of honour, the use of magic in pursuit of a hypermasculine advantage had begun to have the opposite effect. As we shall see, this was not only because belief in magic was in decline, but also because seeking an unnatural advantage on the field of battle had become an affront to rules of enlightened civility.

Natural sympathy

One weapons-related form of natural magic that has received a fair amount of scholarly attention is the weapons salve. In part, the interest of modern scholars in weapons salves is a natural response to the attention given to it by early-modern theorists themselves, especially within the medical community.¹⁷ Here it serves as a useful starting place because the principles at work in using weapons salves as described by physicians are the same as or similar to those depicted in many of the cases of masculine magic explored below.

The idea of the weapons salve – which, as already noted, surgeons applied to the weapon that made the wound rather than to the wound itself – is that it cured as a result of the natural sympathy between the vital forces left behind on the blade by the blood, and those left in the wound by the blade. These forces or spirits then travelled through the air as the result of their affinity, reuniting in the victim's body to heal the wound.¹⁸ Weapons salves worked on any kind of instrument, so that surgeons reported success treating stones, sticks and even deer antlers along with knives and swords.¹⁹

Although in theory, women could be cured by this method as easily as men, the fact that recipes and instructions for weapons salves always described treating blades suggests that men were meant to be its primary beneficiaries. Many such recipes are found in medical treatises written by military field surgeons, whose patients were mostly soldiers. Even among civilians, willingness to draw or face a blade was understood as a masculine virtue, and evidence suggests that it was internalised as such by most early-modern men and women. Men were in fact overwhelmingly more likely than women to use knives and swords in a fight.²⁰ Thus it comes as no surprise that early-modern theorists describing the use of weapons salves concentrate almost entirely on examples involving male patients.

At the root of belief in weapons salves was the assumption that a kind of natural sympathy exists between the dead and the living²¹, a notion that, as we will see, links many kinds of weapons magic and also draws on beliefs about gendered bodies. According to theories of natural magic accepted by occult writers throughout Europe and propagated by Agrippa, Fracastoro, Paracelsus and others, natural actions could be physically affected by affinities and antipathies that worked from a distance in a process similar to gravity and magnetism.²² In the case of human bodies, sympathies and antipathies, along with other vital forces, were concentrated at the moment of death and remained active in the body for some time afterwards. A key ingredient in most weapons salve recipes was thus mummified human flesh, called *mumia* in medical and pharmaceutical terminology.

Paracelsus also referred to the body's natural healing powers or vital spirit as the *mumia*, and asserted that these forces would be the most vital in the bodies of healthy young men who had died suddenly and violently. The power and virtue of this *mumia* was strengthened even more if the body died outside and remained exposed, where the head could absorb the influences of the sun, moon and air. Only male bodies appear in *mumia* recipes, for according to early-modern constructs of gender hierarchy, it was the male head that was the seat of reason and virtue, while the weaker and more passive female body was

ruled by its lower regions.²³ These qualities were concentrated in the mummified flesh. Accordingly, bodies of executed male criminals were in great demand throughout Europe for processing into *mumia*, especially those of men who were hanged or broken on the wheel and, in accordance with early-modern theories of post-mortem punishment, were then left exposed to the elements.²⁴

Although there was disagreement between followers of Paracelsus and those belonging to the more orthodox Galenic tradition about why exactly these human body parts worked as medicines, most agreed that they did, and that the cures they effected were perfectly natural. Debates in the medical field were more likely to centre on the relative merits of Egyptian versus fresh *mumia* than to raise questions about the overall value of corpse medicine.²⁵ Even after the flesh was gone from the body, vital life forces remained in the bones, leaving a nearly permanent kind of power behind.²⁶ For this reason, along with actual body parts, moss that grew on human bones was highly praised for its healing properties, in particular that which appeared on the skulls of hanged men, which was called *usnea*.²⁷ This material was thought especially efficacious because it was assumed to incorporate both the concentration of masculine virtues in the brain that had dissolved within the skull, and the celestial influences necessary for it to grow. Virtually every recipe for weapons salve included body parts, and often *usnea* as well, normally specifying that the source for both should be a male body. The gender of the body thus survived even after death.²⁸

It may seem obvious to us that applying human remains to the weapon, and leaving the injury alone, would indeed be more effective than early-modern treatments applied directly to the wound; typical ingredients for wound salves also included bits of Egyptian mummy mixed into fat from bears or pigs, along with powdered earthworms or maggots. In any case, enough empirical evidence existed of the efficacy of weapons salves to convince more than just the Paracelsians, although not all physicians accepted the idea that the cure could work at a distance. But because it was a cure, most debates on whether and how the weapons salve worked took place in the realm of medical and alchemical studies, rarely drawing connections to more occult realms that depended on the same belief systems. Instead, these theorists typically made a point of distinguishing between weapon salves, which, they explained, worked by natural sympathy, and wound and sword treatments they considered to be magical or superstitious. The latter category included blessings that were spoken over the injury or weapon, as well as procedures involving magical characters.²⁹

Among medical writers, Catholics and Protestants were fairly evenly divided on the question of the efficacy of weapons salves, with only a few condemning them as demonic. Theologians in both camps, however, were very clear about rejecting sympathetic healing as superstitious at best, and satanic at worst.³⁰ Protestant polemicists in particular regularly drew connections between the practice of natural magic and Catholic beliefs in the sacred power of priests' blessings, saints' relics and sacramentals.³¹

Despite a lack of consensus in the medical profession and disapproval by most clerics, belief in the sympathetic powers of the recently dead was pervasive enough to support a lively international trade in corpse parts and *usnea* beginning in the fifteenth century and peaking in the seventeenth, most of it for pharmaceutical use.³² The trade in corpses, however, was not limited to medical practitioners or to those seeking medical treatment. Much as materials believed to have sacred power such as blessed candles and holy water were co-opted by the populace for practical applications as sacramentals, ingredients assumed to have special healing power were also incorporated into popular beliefs about protection and good fortune. Stealing body parts from the place of execution to use as

magical talismans was widespread during the early-modern period, especially in Germany. And it is no coincidence that both the gallows thieves and the corpses they desecrated were nearly always male.

Drawing on the dead to stay alive

We now turn, then, to evidence produced by a less learned category of men. It is hard to say to what extent learned arguments about natural sympathies and the power of corpse medicine might have affected healing and magical practice among the wider populace, or, in fact, whether the process might have worked the other way around. Certainly, Paracelsus is known to have absorbed many of his ideas from folk healers and others that he met on his travels.³³ What is clear is that assumptions about the power of dead body parts, as well as related beliefs about the tools of the executioner's trade, had taken hold in the popular imagination by the sixteenth century and would remain in place for centuries. Increasingly over the course of the early-modern period, men attempted to instrumentalise the powers ascribed to the corpses of other men who had died suddenly in the pursuit of hypermasculine performance. Fingers, toes, strips of skin, skulls and skull moss, bits of bone, and internal organs all disappeared both from the gallows and from the bodies of enemies fallen in battle. Gallows parts including rope, chain, wood and nails also found their way into people's homes and pockets, along with needles used to sew up shrouds and other artefacts associated with the dead. These talismans appear as ingredients for a variety of folk uses involving both black and white magic, including for luck in gambling; to protect thieves from being caught in the act; for healing, love and weather spells; and even for use by innkeepers to encourage drinking among their tavern company.³⁴ But according to both printed literature and archival records, the most common reason for trying to harness the power of the dead among the populace was the pursuit of hypermasculine skills such as invulnerability, sharpshooting and invincible sword-fighting.

Illustrative is the case of Thomas Trummer, a cloth-shearer who admitted in 1577 that he and another craftsman had stolen a finger from a dead criminal displayed on the wheel in Passau, as well as a rope and some bits of wood from the wheel and gallows. Trummer's explanation when interrogated was that he had heard that such things were good for shooting and gambling. Two years later, a carpenter named Georg Schott arrested in Augsburg for healing by magic testified that he had also been arrested and banished from Schongau for cutting out the intestines of a suicide victim.³⁵ Schott explained that he had read in a little manual (*Kunstbüchlein*) that mixing human intestines burned to ashes with gunpowder would ensure accurate shooting. Other gallows-robbers were caught with bits of chain, clothes, fingers and toes, and even genitals, all of them taken from male corpses.³⁶ According to a witness, Thomas Trummer had also removed the genitals from his dead victim in Passau along with hair, fingernails and part of the skull.³⁷ In one particularly gruesome robbery in 1588 the entire bottom half of a hanged thief was cut off from the gallows in Nuremberg, so that the hangman was forced to remove the rest of the cadaver 'as it looked too horrible'.³⁸

To early-modern Germans, the bodies of executed criminals made particularly potent talismans. This was not only because they were filled with the concentrated masculine life force assumed to result from sudden death, but also because of their association with the executioner and the martyrdom they endured under his hand. In facing the ultimate sacrifice in order to pay for their sins, condemned criminals, always referred to as 'poor sinners' in German sources, took on a role analogous to saints, and their bodies were infused with sacred power. This power was understood by the learned as a natural source

for healing; to many laymen, it created relics similar to those from the bodies of saints that were imbued with supernatural gifts.³⁹

A ritual execution was not necessary, however, to concentrate enough vital force in a corpse that it could be instrumentalised by the living. When it came to hypermasculine spells, the body of any man who had died suddenly would do in a pinch, including those who fell on the field of battle. Naturally, no Christian soldier would admit to defiling the remains of his brethren, but soldiers apparently had few qualms about collecting relics from the corpses of non-Christian foreigners. Thus the former mercenary Job Körnlein, executed in Nuremberg in 1617 for theft and sorcery, explained the human finger found in his possession as one of a number of body parts that he and his comrades had cut from a dead Turkish soldier near Graz. Körnlein reported taking strips of skin from the dead man along with the finger in order to use them in shooting spells. Other shooting talismans among his possessions included a bit of skull and other human bones, a bullet taken from a dead man's head, and a piece of a hangman's rope. The last of these, Körnlein testified, he had tested by tying it around his arm while shooting, but it had not seemed to work, for he continued to miss his mark just as he had before.⁴⁰

Körnlein claimed to have purchased the bits of skull and bone from a wine handler and counterfeiter named Georg Carl Lamprecht, who in turn said that he got them in Kitzingen from a skinner (or knacker). Skinners were responsible for disposing of the carcasses of animals that died of disease and typically worked closely with executioners, sharing with them a dishonourable status that made them social pariahs. On the one hand untouchable (for the wrong kind of contact could pollute the honour of others), executioners were nonetheless privileged economically, and were also unique in that they had easy access to executed bodies. This privilege could be shared by the skinners who often assisted them in torturing and executing criminals. According to Lamprecht, the skinner had told him that the human bones would make Lamprecht invulnerable. Like Körnlein, Lamprecht had tested the power of the relics, in this case by tying them around the neck of a dog and shooting at it. Not surprisingly, the dog did not survive. However unfortunate for the dog, Lamprecht's test was at least more prudent than that of an Austrian servant who, according to a jurist describing the incident in 1751, killed himself on his own sword while testing a spell of invulnerability.⁴¹

Because executed bodies were usually left on the wheel and gallows until they fell apart and were devoured by birds and insects, it was not always necessary to cut parts off them or purchase them from an executioner or skinner in order to harness their power. Eventually, bones could simply be gathered from the ground underneath.⁴² There was more to this space beneath the gallows, however, than dried-out bones. The ground under the hanged delinquent's feet was a natural recipient of the power of death as it was shed from the bodies above in the form of fresh blood, urine and semen as well, all of which could emanate from the criminal at the moment of death when vital life forces were at their height. For this reason, certain kinds of plants growing beneath the gallows were also understood to be infused with the power to impart invulnerability, especially the hallucinogenic mandrake, which according to legend sprang directly from the semen of a dead man.⁴³ We have already seen that the moss that appeared on exposed skulls was held to have similar properties.

The mystery surrounding the execution ritual extended not only to the bodies of criminals, the wood and ropes with which they were executed, and the plants that grew on their skulls and beneath their feet, but also to the executioner's sword, which represented the masculine power of ultimate justice that was conferred by his office.⁴⁴ According to legends in some parts of Germany, the executioner's sword would shake in the presence of

people destined to die on the scaffold, or ring to warn its master of forthcoming beheadings. Executioners' swords were also understood to be particularly useful as tools for healing and treasure-hunting.⁴⁵

Executioners regularly exploited their unusual position by selling off materials to which only they had legal access. Those body parts that had applications in healing considered legitimate by the medical community – which included among other things the rendered fat of executed criminals (called 'poor sinner's fat'), powdered skull and bone, strips of human skin (used as belts during childbirth), and mummified or marinated flesh – the executioners either sold to apothecaries and physicians, or used themselves in their capacity as healers.⁴⁶ But some executioners apparently traded in less legitimate materials as well. Georg Schott, who as we have already seen was banished from Schongau in the 1570s for stealing human intestines, insisted in his testimony that he had not stolen them at all, but purchased them from the executioner; other hangmen supplemented their income by selling bits of rope and wood from the scaffold.⁴⁷

The most well-known story about an entrepreneurial executioner, however, describes the hangman in Passau credited with creating an invulnerability pill in 1611 so popular that it became known throughout Europe as the 'Passau method' (*Passauer Kunst*).⁴⁸ To what extent stories of the origin of the Passau method were based on fact or on legend is not clear, but there is no arguing that use of these capsules and packets, which generally contained magical words or characters inscribed on parchment, was widespread by the onset of the Thirty Years' War in 1618, as was belief in their power.⁴⁹ Naturally, this art drew the ire of theologians, who condemned it as demonic. As was the case with most forms of popular magic, however, those who practised it were more often calling on what they understood as sacred power than demonic forces. Weapons spells, including the Passau pills, regularly mixed magical characters with religious symbols and biblical quotations along with the occasional male body part or bit of mandrake, in some cases in bundles secretly slipped under the altar for good measure in order to receive a sacred blessing from an unsuspecting priest.⁵⁰

Another way of enlisting body parts or skull moss for magic was the oft-decried practice of *Einheilen*, literally 'healing in'. In this common folk practice, men placed a powerful or sacred substance, such as *usnea* or a fragment of a blessed communion wafer, into a wound they made on their own body and then allowed the wound to heal over it. The result was supposed to be invulnerability.⁵¹ In the case of *Einheilen* with communion wafers, the body part utilised was understood either literally or metaphorically (depending on one's religious confession) to be the flesh of the executed Christ. Given that many invulnerability recipes combined religious blessings and prayers with ingredients gathered at the gallows, which in turn were thought to share characteristics of saints' relics, no great shift in mentality is required to assume that *usnea* and the blessed Host might have similar powers. But to religious authorities the use of the Host for profane reasons was a form of blasphemy, and thus appeared diabolical rather than Christian. Their concerns were no doubt supported by the fact that related forms of blasphemy are attributed to male witches in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which describes demonic marksmen using the Host or an image of Christ for target practice. For every shot that hit the mark, the shooter could kill any man shot at with deadly intent on the same day.⁵²

Witches or soldiers?

All of these practices, real or imagined, were illegal, whether they involved spells, charms, blessings, body parts or consecrated communion wafers. The practice of magic was

forbidden by Emperor Charles V's *Constitutio Carolina* of 1530 (the primary instrument governing imperial law during the sixteenth century), as well as by numerous military and local ordinances.⁵³ Beginning in the sixteenth century, practitioners of invulnerability and weapons spells, like other cunning folk, thus increasingly found themselves being accused of witchcraft. And although weapon and invulnerability spells did not always meet the standards of harmful magic (the capital crime of *maleficia* according to the Carolina), they also were not viewed by the authorities as victimless crimes. The need to be invulnerable or to have a magic weapon suggested enmity and deadly intentions towards someone. Masculine honour was also at stake, for although men who turned to magic hoped to appear as super warriors, they were in reality attempting to gain an unfair advantage that would violate the rules of a fair fight. Thus the fact that the soldier Hans Prieggle from Nördlingen was suspected in 1595 of using spells on his sword led his interrogators in Augsburg to accuse him of harbouring premeditated intent to kill a local guardsman whom he engaged in a duel. Similarly, Theophile D'Amars, a French mercenary arrested in Germany during the Thirty Years' War after a tavern brawl, faced accusations of using black magic to make himself and his sword invincible after he successfully stood up to multiple opponents. To the local authorities, such a display of masculine competency appeared too good to be true, whereas D'Amars could only respond that his success was either due to protection from God, or perhaps his doublet possessed qualities of which he was not aware.⁵⁴

An apparent disconnect between accused and accusers during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emerges in interrogations in which male defendants repeatedly deny that their arts constituted magic. Instead, they insist, they were only using religious blessings or natural products. Some also claimed that their spells were practised only in fun, most likely in an attempt to play down the seriousness of their illegal activities. When Job Körnlein was first accused of sorcery in 1617, he responded that he had '[o]nly his little fur, a bit of white chicory root, and some Passau characters [that is, used to make Passau pills] [which are] supposed to be good against being shot'.⁵⁵ He had printed the Passau characters himself with metal stamps, he admitted, but didn't take it seriously, rather assumed it was only 'foolishness'. Thomas Trummer, whose collection of bits from the scaffold was accompanied by a book of spells, also insisted that '[h]e did not practice these arts, he was just having fun writing them down and reading them.' A similar argument was made by the weaver Mattheus Schwayer a century later in 1699, when he was arrested in Nördlingen for possession of a booklet of characters and blessings that included weapons and invulnerability spells. Schwayer insisted that he had written them down years before for fun and that none of it was serious, although the fact that a witness placed him in a graveyard about the time that he wrote down the spells raised questions about how far he was actually willing to go in the pursuit of his unusual hobby.⁵⁶

Of course, one can never assume that persons testifying under threat of torture are entirely forthcoming about their actual motives. What we can ascertain, based on the many references to invulnerability spells, sword spells and magic bullets that appear in tracts by demonologists, military chaplains and other early-modern theorists, is that weapons magic of one kind or another was very common in Germany, especially during the seventeenth century, and records of arrests for possession of such spells are not uncommon either. Why, then, do we so rarely encounter descriptions of these behaviours in typical witch trials of the sort that have fascinated historians for decades? The answer to this question may rest both in the way in which larger witch hunts took hold and developed, and in the gendered way that modern historians have tended to identify and categorise them.

Most existing research on witchcraft and magic concentrates either on the sensational trials that led to execution for witchcraft, or on the intellectual underpinnings that made

such trials possible. The confessions extracted in such cases, which are dominated by female defendants, tend to mirror one another even when men are also caught up in them. Although narratives vary in accordance with local conditions, confessions within each locality, at least in their final form, are often all nearly alike. Most common in these trials are the very crimes described by the *Malleus Maleficarum* as typical of female witches: entering into a pact with the devil; killing infants and offering them up to Satan; causing impotency; making storms; and killing people, animals and crops. In the course of larger trials resulting in multiple arrests, this holds true even when the confessions came from male witches.⁵⁷ Men in such cases were rarely encouraged to confess to the one crime that this well-known misogynist tract associated most closely with the male witch, namely bewitching weapons. Instead, weapons magic was more likely to appear as a spontaneous confession in individual trials that were not part of a larger witch hunt.

The published trials of the District of Steinbach may serve in this context as a typical example of a larger witch hunt during the height of the witch trials. Each of the witches in Steinbach, male or female, confessed to essentially the same crimes: killing people and livestock, brewing up storms, marrying and bedding a demon, and flying to the sabbath.⁵⁸ This is hardly surprising – in a negotiation that could be intensely personal, repeated applications of torture ensured that witches under interrogation shaped their stories to satisfy the magistrates and the executioner. As Lyndal Roper has suggested, in order to reach this goal, the narratives that resulted needed both to include standard components that established the crime of witchcraft and to have enough individual detail to make them believable.⁵⁹ Thus the stories of men accused of witchcraft might deviate from those of women in minor details – riding a pitchfork or a halberd to the sabbath rather than the more common pot fork, for example, or killing horses more often than cattle⁶⁰ – but otherwise, they conformed to standard or typical witch behaviour.

In contrast, a well-known example of the individual trial phenomenon is the trial of Anna ‘Tempel Anneke’ Roleffes, published in English in 2006. Among other things, Anneke confessed apparently without prompting to slipping communion wafers out of her mouth and selling them to men who wanted them in order to ‘shoot reliably’, in exact conformance to the expectations of male witches described in the *Malleus*. Residing in the Protestant lands of Lower Saxony, Anneke also reported spitting the communion wine out of her mouth into the same cloth in which she saved the consecrated wafers, which suggests that belief in the quasi-magical power of the Host was not limited to Catholics.⁶¹ Also interesting about this case is that interrogators did not follow up on this aspect of Anneke’s confession, as they did after confessions about the more standard crimes of harming livestock, bewitching people and consorting with the devil. Nor was any attempt made to identify the men to whom Anneke sold the Hosts. The final judgment ultimately records only the typical accusation ‘often abused the H[oly] Host’ without any reference to how or why.⁶²

As was often the case when torture was applied, Anneke’s narrative of witchcraft was shaped by her interrogators to conform to what was expected of a witch. Men and women who were not tortured or threatened with torture were freer to create their own narrative. In the case of male cunning folk accused of practising magic but not charged with the capital crime of witchcraft, that narrative much more often did include spells aimed at hypermasculine performance. But just as in the case of female witches like Anneke, the story could change if the authorities decided that torture was justified. Instructive here is the case of Hans Hellinger, a 19-year-old deserter arrested for theft in Augsburg in 1642. Hellinger’s case provides an example of how a defendant’s practice of masculine magic could be redefined into a narrative of witchcraft as a result of repeated torture.

Initially, the young soldier tried to excuse acts of robbery as the kind of wartime plunder necessary for troop survival, particularly during this difficult phase of the Thirty Years' War when both pay and provisions were scarce. However, the interrogation took a turn for the worse when Hellinger's younger companion, Hans Georg Haselmann, mentioned in passing that Hellinger had once been attacked by peasants with pitchforks, but they could not stab him because he was 'frozen solid', that is, invulnerable.⁶³ According to Haselmann, Hellinger later told him that he had something with him that protected him from swords.

Hellinger's apparent admission to his companion that he was in possession of a protection spell is interesting. As we have seen, invulnerability would theoretically make a man into a hypermasculine, super soldier who could not be beaten. At the same time, it could also decrease his status as a risk-taker and cause him to appear cowardly in the face of a threat, which is why using magic to win a duel was considered dishonourable as well as illegal. But particularly for those lower on the social scale who lacked political power, there was also status to be gained from having access to dangerous secrets. The presumption that Hellinger had magical powers could have increased his control over his younger companion. In addition, his ability and willingness to enlist the forces of magic were also evidence of another and even more dangerous form of risk-taking. Invoking spirits, desecrating the Host or stealing parts from the gallows themselves were risky endeavours, which could have translated into social capital for some men.⁶⁴ Particularly in Germany, where the gallows was a place understood to be populated by unhappy spirits and contaminated with the danger of social dishonour, it took some masculine prowess to approach a hanged man during the night and cut off a toe or a bit of rope.

When confronted with Haselmann's accusation before the court, however, Hellinger initially confessed only to enlisting the powers of the sacred. While he couldn't deny Haselmann's assertion that he was invulnerable, Hellinger said, it was only due to a thunder-stone⁶⁵ hidden in the hilt of his sword that he had secretly placed under the altar in church so that a Mass had been said over it. When he used this sword against an adversary, he claimed, it caused his opponent's sword to break so that Hellinger would always win.

If secretly exploiting the sacred power of the priesthood had been Hellinger's only offence, it is unlikely that he would have faced worse than an escort out of town. But Hellinger and his companion were also accused of highway robbery and murder. When questions about Hellinger's invulnerability resurfaced under torture on the strappado at the hand of the executioner (who was responsible for interrogative torture as well as capital punishment), the invulnerability charm was reshaped into a spell that called upon the devil, and the thunder-stone into a talisman that was supposed to make Hellinger invulnerable to swords and bullets. After that, it took only two more sessions with the executioner for Hellinger's interrogation to blossom into a full-blown witch trial, complete with a demonic pact, spells cast to harm people and animals, unlocking chains by blowing on them, and riding to the sabbath on headless horses. In this context, the Catholic magistrates⁶⁶ also demanded details about abusing the Holy Host, upon which Hellinger admitted to taking communion wafers out of his mouth, hiding them in his clothes, and later trampling them and spitting on them in the presence of the Devil. Initially, however, he denied using the Host for any kind of spell. Only under more intense torture did he finally admit to using the wafers for *Einheilen* in order to become invulnerable.⁶⁷

Hellinger's lengthy interrogation, which took place over a period of more than five months, illustrates a number of standard patterns in trials of men accused of weapons magic and invulnerability spells. To begin with, the authorities showed little interest in Haselmann's claim that Hellinger was invulnerable. They simply ignored it. Only after it

became clear that Hellinger was facing the death penalty did they return to this question, and then, under torture, it was redefined and reshaped from a protective amulet blessed by a priest to a demonic pact and a sacrilege. As implied by the *Malleus*, weapons magic of this kind was as logical a masculine crime as the 'malevolent nurture' model was a feminine one – perhaps even more so, because bewitching weapons more closely resembled what appears to have been the actual practice of many men.⁶⁸

Both kinds of gendered magic also instrumentalised dead bodies, but in different ways. According to typical female witch accusations and confessional narratives, witches murdered innocent babies in their cradles with evil spells or dug them up from cemeteries, then cooked and ate them at demonic feasts, processing their fat and bones into salves for flying and powders that could be used for malevolent magic. We assume now that it is unlikely that these women, or the men who followed them to the stake after similar confessions, had actually participated in these cannibalistic rituals. But as we have seen, the body parts harvested by men for the purpose of hypermasculine spells were often real, although in order to be effective, most of them had to come from other men who had died violently (a category that includes the body of Christ as present in the Eucharist) rather than from babies. The cannibalism may have been real as well, for example in some applications of the Passau method that mirrored medical uses of cadavers for ingestion.

Murdered babies also appeared in some isolated male confessions. These could be either unborn fetuses cut out of the wombs of pregnant women or newborn infants, and they were always male. Questioned under torture, some accused sorcerers admitted cutting off the right hands of these tiny babies in order to use them for spells.⁶⁹ Although heinous, the act would have been believable from the early-modern perspective, as popular belief ascribed special powers to the right hand of male babies, supposedly useful for spells of invulnerability as well to protect thieves from discovery. Naturally such confessions are difficult to interpret. Murdering unborn children for the purpose of magical spells may have been a real motive, or it may have been a way to explain the act of a serial killer that had no rational explanation. On the other hand, there is nothing in any of these cases to suggest that any body or body part had actually been found. More likely these confessions were fantasies akin to that of flying to the sabbath to consort with demons.

But unlike many fantasies of the sabbath, such confessions, like the other examples of weapons and invulnerability spells considered here, tended to originate with the defendant rather than with the interrogators. This pattern requires further investigation, but so far I have not found a case in which the interrogators asked defendants specifically if they had been involved in shooting or invulnerability spells prior to the defendant, or a peer accuser, having already volunteered the information. Even when torture was applied, defendants could be stubborn about sticking to their understanding of folk magic as opposed to conforming to their interrogators' demands for a demonic narrative. Hans Hellinger, for example, after being forced on the strappado to admit to using the Host in his spells rather than a thunder-stone, nonetheless refused to give in entirely to the magistrate's version of this process. Hellinger had described using only part of the Host for *Einheilen* and ingesting the rest. When his interrogators pushed him on this point and insisted that the rest of the Host must have been used in satanic ceremonies as well, presumably on the basis that a witch could not ingest the Eucharist, Hellinger would not cede this point. Although he admitted to taking the wafer out of his mouth and cursing at it before introducing half of it into a wound in his head, he continued to maintain that the other half had to be ingested in order for the spell to work. In fact, he volunteered, this was the case when communion wafers were used for wound blessings as well. Hellinger's insistence on this point suggests that he was trying to describe a process he had at least heard about, and perhaps even tried.

Of course, men who admitted to blaspheming the Host and making pacts with the devil during the seventeenth century could expect to face execution, as could those who admitted to murdering babies and harvesting their hands. But just casting spells of protection, if they did not involve murder or a satanic pact, was not a capital offence, thus did not normally warrant interrogation under torture. Cases of weapons magic that resulted in torture and execution typically involved other major crimes, less often witchcraft than property crimes such as theft and false coinage. If Hellinger and Haselmann had not already admitted to murder and robbery, so that the death penalty became a certainty, it is unlikely that their interrogators would have turned the corner towards accusations of witchcraft. More typical is the case of Georg Eisenhut, a shoemaker who was arrested with a book of weapons spells in Mühlendorf am Inn in 1643 (the same year that Hellinger and Haselmann were executed). Since the Mühlendorf authorities did not consider the case important enough to bother sending up to the higher court, Eisenhut was released after four weeks in jail and told to resolve the matter by going to confession.⁷⁰ A decade later in Protestant Frankfurt, vine dresser Veit Widmann also confessed that he had become invulnerable after having a communion wafer healed into his arm with the help of a Capuchin monk. Widmann's excuse was that he 'didn't know that making oneself invulnerable was a sin;' and if it were a sin, he added, then he was sorry. Apparently his argument of simple ignorance was convincing enough for the Frankfurt authorities, who released him after he had been examined by two Lutheran pastors.⁷¹

Secularised courts and civilised battles

The seventeenth-century debate over weapons salves coincided with a period of obsession with witchcraft and demonology that found some of its most terrifying expressions in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire. At the same time, witch persecutions always had their critics. While few dared question the existence of Satan, challenges were raised regularly in Germany as elsewhere by those who doubted that witches had any real power to manipulate their environment. As the seventeenth century neared its end, the scales were slowly tipping in favour of these more measured voices.

To be sure, the practice of magic persisted throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. Belief in the supernatural and the existence of demons continued even among many intellectuals, while a burgeoning popular press responded to demands from an increasingly literate populace for books on fortune-telling, love and protection spells, and astrology. But aggressive action against those accused of witchcraft by rulers, courts and the church declined.⁷² In the later eighteenth century, trials instigated by witchcraft accusations were more likely to result in charges of libel against the accuser than punishment for the purported witch. These changes ensured that practitioners of magic had easier access to occult information and less to fear for using it, which could potentially have led to a rise rather than a decline in occult practices. What was no longer in place, however, was the support system provided in earlier centuries from the side of legal theorists, theologians, surgeons, apothecaries and executioners, all of whose practices and opinions had given credence to the efficacy of hypermasculine magic.

Also declining was access to talismans taken from the gallows along with belief in their power. To begin with, gruesome public executions were increasingly offensive to empathetic, eighteenth-century sensibilities. Thus criminal bodies no longer remained exposed to rot on the gallows. At the same time and for many of the same reasons, torture ceased to be viewed as an acceptable interrogation technique. To the enlightened and secular German court, no longer tied to assumptions about God's intervention and the

saintliness of suffering, torture was redefined from a sacred cleansing to a cruel and unusual punishment. As a result, Germany's executioners, along with the tools and products of their trade, were gradually stripped of their mystical cachet. With it went the livelihoods of many executioners – and eventually, albeit more slowly, their dishonourable status.⁷³

These developments were accompanied by another relevant change, namely a shift in the cultural relationship between men and their weapons. Prior to the eighteenth century, in Germany as in much of Europe, wars were fought primarily by hired troops, while village and town defence systems depended on individual householders tasked with maintaining their own personal stockpiles of weapons. As a result, wearing a sword was a symbol of civic freedom for German townsmen and demonstrations of martial skill were crucial to the performance of masculinity at nearly all levels of status. For the middling classes, identity with the sword peaked during the sixteenth century. Over the course of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, mercenaries and home guards were gradually replaced by professional standing armies and policemen. The process of military professionalisation with its emphasis on drill, uniforms and group discipline led to a decline in individual identification with weapons among the burgher classes and a conscious effort from absolute rulers to ensure that symbols of military power were concentrated at the top. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, new sumptuary laws gradually limited the right to wear swords to soldiers, students and aristocrats, while men of the middling classes made do with walking sticks, the new symbol of bourgeois respectability.⁷⁴

In a parallel trend, as the need to demonstrate martial skill as a mark of manhood declined among civilians of middling status, the weapon of choice for duels of honour also shifted away from swords in favour of pistols. This was a logical development not only because of growing interest in firearms, but even more because of changes in the definition of martial honour. In its earlier stages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the goal of a duel was to subdue the opponent in a demonstration of skilled swordplay. By the later eighteenth century, however, winning or losing the fight had become insignificant. Instead, the honour code required only participation in the duel as a demonstration of valour. Duels with swords naturally favoured the better fighter, but because pre-nineteenth century pistols were rarely either dependable or accurate, pistol duels left a great deal more up to fate. This seemed more appropriate for a duel in which the actual outcome was less important than the participants' demonstrated willingness to face death. Pistol duels during the eighteenth century were also less likely to be fatal than duels with swords, so that proponents of the duel could argue that they were actually less violent. The logical result of all of these developments was a drop in interest in magical swords and spells of invulnerability. As skill with a weapon had become less important to masculine performance, men had less reason to resort to questionable practices in order to win, and losers in a fight were also less likely to accuse their opponents of using magic to gain the upper hand. The trend was naturally supported by the rise in scepticism about magic in general.

These contextual shifts are all evident in the way hypermasculine magic was treated in published sources, especially military handbooks. Although spells of invulnerability continued to appear in these manuals, there was a new tension around them that relates not to demonology or even scepticism, but to constructs of masculine honour in battle. In his popular 1726 tract *Der Vollkommene Teutsche Soldat*, for example, Hans Friedrich von Fleming saw no contradiction in including spells of invulnerability that employed skull moss simultaneously with a warning against using them. What is new is Fleming's reason for decrying masculine spells. While barbarians were prepared to use any kind of weapon against their enemies, Fleming tells his readers, such behaviour is not commensurate with

valour or appropriate for rational, Christian soldiers. The enemy's troops, after all, are only soldiers themselves, following the orders of their commander. Thus they deserve to be faced on even ground.⁷⁵ This argument is founded on the same empathetic notions that characterised enlightened attacks on torture and public execution; if all men are born equal, then even criminals and military foes are worthy of fair and humane treatment. Fleming's book thus manages to propagate belief in weapons spells while at the same time demonising them – not because they were demonic, but because they were simply uncivilised.

Conclusion

In the world of the occult, as in other realms, the tools and behaviours chosen by women and men reflect acceptable ways of 'doing' gender. In order both to protect themselves and to become better men, early-modern males of common status co-opted medical knowledge, which was partly based on natural magic, and also employed materials they understood to be infused with sacred power in order to manipulate the material world. Masculine spells and blessings thus often included a mix of religious prayers and magical incantations, medical and fanciful ingredients, and rituals both written and performed. The convergence of scientific, religious, and magical beliefs about blades and bullets just when the sword was at the apex of its association with masculine identity created a distinct hypermasculine ideal of invincibility.

Men who used magic to gain a hypermasculine advantage during the early-modern period were thus reacting logically to the pressures of masculine performance. Trial records of those arrested for these arts suggest that they were widespread among poorer artisans as well as among soldiers and former soldiers, groups who were less likely to achieve masculine success by adhering to the norms of household patriarchy and social order than by challenging them. These practitioners rarely viewed weapons and invulnerability spells as demonic. In fact, those interrogated generally offered up evidence of weapons magic before they were asked, refashioning them into diabolical or blasphemous acts only if tortured. But hypermasculine magic was condemned by most members of the learned community throughout the early-modern period, first (during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries) as a form of witchcraft, and later (from the late seventeenth through the early eighteenth centuries) as unethical or uncivilised.

By the later eighteenth century, the intellectual shifts associated with the Enlightenment redefined these beliefs again, which according to scientific and religious writers now became foolish superstitions rather than demonic pacts or manipulations of natural magic. By the time the last witch was executed in Germany in 1750, men found with books of spells and magical characters were more likely to be accused of charlatantry than of practising magic, and accusations of invulnerability, still very real to the accusers, were generally dismissed by the courts as nonsense.⁷⁶ Although defendants in such cases could also be subject to a good scolding from an offended cleric, superstition was not a capital crime.

But weapons spells never really lost their hypermasculine attraction. It was nearly 100 years after Fleming published his ambiguous views on invulnerability that a householder of the Vahldieck family from the village of Ellierode in Lower Saxony began keeping a list of household remedies and wound blessings, among them instructions for curing wounds using sympathetic magic in a process reminiscent of seventeenth-century weapons salves. The booklet was maintained at least until 1852 and then passed on to heirs.⁷⁷ Spells of invulnerability also made a comeback among German soldiers during the First World War,

perhaps not surprisingly given the desperate situation faced by many soldiers in that war. These nineteenth- and early twentieth-century spells, however, did not include *mumia* or other corpse-related ingredients.⁷⁸

And at about the same time that Vahldieck was recording his remedies in Ellierode, Carl Maria von Weber began penning his opera *Der Freischütz*, about a forester tricked into putting his faith in a magic bullet that will never miss its mark. By this time the magic bullet had joined the unbeatable sword as a *topos* of German saga and legend. In Weber's dark story of masculine pride and romantic love, the bullets were indeed diabolical, forged with the help of Satan playing the role of a 'Black Huntsman'. The opera was an instant success after its 1821 premiere, and was particularly praised for capturing the essence of German Romanticism.

Magic bullets, enchanted swords and spells of invulnerability thus survived in the world of fantasy and fiction in a process similar to that which relegated witches to children's fairy tales.⁷⁹ In the twentieth century, hypermasculine magic became a common theme in comic books and eventually entered the virtual realms of gaming and film as well. In these worlds magical weapons remain ubiquitous; and even if their users now recognise the damage they inflict as a fantasy rather than a physical reality, enchanted weapons have not lost their power as masculine symbols. Recent studies of media violence suggest that when it comes to weapons-based games, advertisers continue to target primarily male audiences.⁸⁰ Apparently, exploiting the search for a hypermasculine edge remains a lucrative business even in the twenty-first century.

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Notes

1. During its infancy in the Middle Ages, the production of gunpowder had been understood as an alchemical secret, associated with necromancy and other black arts.
2. Heinrich Kramer (1487).
3. Cambers, "Books," 136–7; Oates, "Words, Power of," 1224–7.
4. Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, 1–10, 265–76.
5. Hardwick, "Did Gender Have a Renaissance?," 354–5; Fletcher, *Gender*, 97.
6. Dinges, *Männer*, 7–33; Shepard, *Meanings*, 1–7, 247–52; Roper, *Oedipus*, 108–24.
7. Wiesner, "'Wandervogels,'" 767–82.
8. Roper, *Oedipus* 108, 116.
9. Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, 89–132; see also Castiglione, *The Courtier*.
10. As examples: Scharrer, "Men, Muscles, and Machismo;" idem, "Virtual Violence;" Rosen, Knudson, and Fancher, "Cohesion and the Culture of Hypermasculinity;" Toch, "Hypermasculinity and Prison Violence."
11. Pitt and Sanders criticised use of the term as a marginalising label for behaviours of certain groups, for example, black, hispanic and gay men; see Pitt and Sanders, "Revisiting Hypermasculinity," 33–51.
12. This definition has much in common with that of Varda Burstyn, who defines hypermasculinity as "an exaggerated ideal of manhood linked mythically and practically to the role of the warrior": Burstyn, *Rites of Men*, 4.
13. Roper, *Oedipus*, 107–24; Tlusty, *Bacchus*, 122–33; Rublack, "Renaissance Fashion," 26; Shepard, *Meanings*, 252.

14. Timbers, "Liminal Language," 190; Roper, *Oedipus*, 43; Thomas, *Religion*, 68; Trokhimenko, "'Believing That Which Cannot Be'," 125; Biberman, *Masculinity*.
15. For some examples among many see Künssberg, *Messerbräuche*, 71–6; Schulte, *Man as Witch*, 200; Basler, "Gewehr," 806–11; Rider, *Magic and Impotence*, 81; Moeller, *Dass Willkür über Recht ginge*, 228–31.
16. On magic as a counter to fear of death among soldiers see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 33–4.
17. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 269–70; Schott, "Paracelsus und die Magie der Natur," 104–7; Müller-Jahncke, "Magische Medizin," 43–55; Debus, "Robert Fludd," 389–417.
18. Purmann, *Lorbeer-Krantz*, 357–8; Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universalllexicon* 52: 547–57; Glorez, *Eröffnetes Wunderbuch*, 293–327; Schott, "Paracelsus," 104–6. If the weapon that made the wound was not available to the physician, some proponents suggested that a similar effect could be achieved by inserting a piece of wood into the wound to bloody it. Once the blood thus collected had dried, the wooden stick could be treated with the salve in place of the actual offending blade: Agricola, *Chirurgia Parva*, 249; Purmann, *Lorbeer-Krantz*, 365; Croll, *Basilica Chymica*, 245.
19. That is, according to Purmann, *Lorbeer-Krantz*, 354–68; idem, *Schuß-Wunden Curen*, 399.
20. Tlusty *Martial Ethic*, 154–6.
21. Glorez, *Eröffnetes Wunderbuch*, 14.
22. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 224–9; Glorez, *Eröffnetes Wunderbuch*, 305–8.
23. Fletcher, *Gender*, 60–82.
24. Croll, *Basilica Chymica*, 243; Wiedemann, "Mumie als Heilmittel," 15–16; Noble, *Medical Cannibalism*, 20. Fresh blood of those executed by the sword was also assumed to cure epilepsy; see Sugg, *Mummies*, 180; Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 158–9.
25. Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 160–1; Sugg, *Mummies*, 24–5. There was debate on the efficacy of mummified flesh, especially over the value of fresh *mumia* as opposed to the ancient variety imported from Egypt: Dannenfeldt, "Egyptian Mumia."
26. Sugg, *Mummies*, 180.
27. Specifically, *usnea cranii humani*.
28. Sugg, *Mummies*, 181; Dannenfeldt, "Egyptian Mumia," 173–4; Jackson, "Sympathetic Ointment," 10–13; Park, "Life of the Corpse," 116; Thorndike, *History of Magic*, 8: 88–9, 415–16.
29. For example, Paracelsus, *grossenn Wundartzney*, 33r; Glorez, *Eröffnetes Wunderbuch*, 305–27.
30. Hartwiss, *Magiologia*, 751–9, 814. The statistic is based on an initial reading of 50 early-modern Protestant theorists, of which 25 can be identified as medical writers and 14 as theologians, and 25 Catholic theorists, eight of them medical writers and 11 theologians (the rest being jurists and natural philosophers).
31. Holy water, blessed candles and so on. Kaysersberg, *Die Emeis*, 53r; Scribner, "The Reformation," 475–94. Confessional attacks moved in both directions, however, as is demonstrated by the well-known dispute over the efficacy of weapons salves between the Jesuit theologian Johannes Roberti and the Calvinist physician Rodolphus Goclenius, in which Roberti accused Goclenius of basing his theories on "Calvinist heresies": see Carmenietzki, "Jesuits and Alchemy," 83–101.
32. For numerous examples of medical uses for dead body parts see Glorez, *Wunderbuch*, 14–26.
33. Ball, *Devil's Doctor*, 79; Guinsburg, "Counterthrust to Sixteenth Century Misogyny," 8.
34. Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 20, 24–5, 27–8, 32–4; Müller-Bergström, "Hingerichteter, Armsünder, Hinrichtung," 43–53.
35. Stadtarchiv Augsburg (hereafter StAA), Urgicht Thomas Trummer, 8–11 Feb. 1577; Urgicht Georg Schott, 11 Feb. 1579. The executioner was responsible for disposing of the bodies of suicide victims, also considered to be dishonourable after death: Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 197–200.
36. StAA, Urgicht Hans Bader, 12 Jan. 1583; Schuhmann, *Der Scharfrichter*, 220; Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 161; Harrington, *Faithful Executioner*, 180–9; Oppelt, *Unehrllichkeit*, 739–41.
37. StAA, Urgicht Thomas Trummer, 8–11 Feb. 1577.
38. Harrington, *Faithful Executioner*, 108.
39. Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 179–81; Oppelt, *Unehrllichkeit*, 760. On lay belief in the power of body parts from executed criminals and their relationship to saint's relics in Italy, see Park, "Criminal and Saintly Body," especially 26–9.
40. Staatsarchiv Nürnberg (hereafter SAN), Reichstadt, Amts- und Standbücher 218, Achtsbuch 1615–1618, 296r–322r.

41. *Ibid.*, 326r–28r; **Bratsch**, *Peinliche Land-Gerichts-Ordnung*, 187. This was apparently not an isolated incident – for similar cases see: **Peuckert**, “festmachen II,” 1364; **Hartmann**, *Neue Teuffels-Stücklein*, 36–7.
42. Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 7–8.
43. **Marzell**, “Alraun,” 318; **Hellwig**, *Medicina renunciatoria*, 981–4.
44. On the masculine nature of dishonour associated with the executioner and skinner, see **Stuart**, *Defiled Trades*, 213–19.
45. **Angstmann**, *Der Henker*, 111–12; **Oppelt**, *Unehrllichkeit*, 659–63.
46. On executioners as healers see **Stuart**, “The Executioner’s Healing Touch.”
47. **Oppelt**, *Unehrllichkeit*, 670–1.
48. An alternate explanation for the name is as an evolution from “Pessulanten” (student slang for vagabonds) who engaged in magical arts: **Stübe**, “Passauer Kunst,” 1460–1.
49. **Warhafter Bericht**; **Hartmann**, *Neue Teuffels-Stücklein*; **Stübe**, “Passauer Kunst;” **Ludwig**, “Der Zauber des Tötens,” 33–49; **Funke**, “‘Naturali legitimâque Magica’,” 16–32. The Passau method was credited with making entire armies invulnerable: **Kronfeld**, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben*, 86; **Ruff**, *Zauberpraktiken als Lebenshilfe*, 233; **Peuckert**, “festmachen II,” 1354–5.
50. Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 20–1; **Scribner**, *Popular Culture*, 43.
51. Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 20, 27–8; **Glorenz**, *Eröffnetes Wunderbuch*, 22; **Sugg**, *Mummies*, 41; **Peuckert**, “festmachen II,” 1358; **Ludwig**, “Der Zauber des Tötens,” 39–40; **Valentinitich**, “Der Vorwurf der Hostienschändung,” 7, 14.
52. **Kramer**, *Malleus Maleficarum*, II/1,16; **Peuckert**, “festmachen II,” 1358; **Ludwig**, “Der Zauber des Tötens,” 39–40. Although the practice of *Einheilen* is fairly well documented, the extent to which men actually employed communion wafers for target shooting was likely exaggerated in theological texts, as were the common claims that soldiers and hunters were putting bits of the consecrated Host in their gun stocks or mixing them with lead to make bullets. See also Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 27–8; **Karle**, “Hostie,” 415.
53. **Lünig**, *Corpus Juris Militaris* includes dozens of examples of military ordinances from throughout the Empire and beyond that forbade weapons magic and spells of invulnerability during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century; see for example I: 102; 115; 147; 426; 584; 614; 671; II: 749; 864; 928; 1031; 1060; 1075; 1100; 1129; 1131; 1136; 1141; 1153; 1157; 1192; 1197; 1204; 1223; 1261; 1297; 1339; 1391–2.
54. StAA, Urgicht Hans Prieggle, 26 July 1595; Urgicht Theophile D’Amars, 29 Aug. 1646.
55. SAN, Reichstadt, Amts- und Standbücher 218, Achtsbuch 1615–1618, 308v. What the “little fur” was used for is not clear.
56. Stadtarchiv Nördlingen, Kriminalakten, 1699.
57. According to some scholars male witches were “feminised” in the process of accusation; see **Apps and Gow**, *Male Witches*, 7; and a critique of this view in **Durrant**, “Why some Men and Not Others?,” 113–14.
58. These observations are based on collections of witch trials from Steinbach published by **Daferner and Rumpf** as *Hexen-Protokolle 1628–1630 im Amt Steinbach*, as well as a comparative look at collections from Eichstatt (SAN, Eichstätter Archivalien 4015–42) and Harburg (Fürstlich Oettingen-Wallersteinisches Archiv, Harburg, Archival-Akten I.3.9, 1689). On the lack of masculine specifics in larger witch hunts see also **Roper**, *Witch Craze*, 31–2.
59. **Roper**, *Witch Craze*, 44–66.
60. **Daferner and Rumpf**, *Hexen-Protokolle*; SAN, Eichstätter Archivalien 4037, Lorenz Brandt, Feb 3 1627; **Schulte**, *Man as Witch*, 172.
61. **Morton**, *Trial of Tempel Anneke*, 114.
62. *Ibid.*, 148.
63. StAA, Urgicht Hans Hellinger and Hans Georg Haselmann, 1 Oct. 1642–11 Mar. 1643.
64. **Carroll**, *Blood and Violence*, 96–7; on blasphemy and risk see Gerd **Schwerhoff**, “Der blasphemische Spieler.”
65. *Donnerstein*: Pyrite or meteorite.
66. Normally bi-confessional, Augsburg was occupied by Catholic Bavaria in 1642.
67. See also **Valentinitich**, “Hostienschändung,” 13–14, in which two beggars also admit first to *Einheilen* and then to even more blasphemous abuse of the host only under torture.
68. While men confessed to using spells to influence shooting, I have not yet found any evidence that they actually shot at the Holy Host or at crucifixes for this purpose, as described in the

- Malleus*. On the late seventeenth-century rise in numbers of witch prosecutions against men and boys, many of whom were in fact practising magic, see Behringer, *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern*, 347–55.
69. Harrington, *Faithful Executioner*, 71, 186–7; StAA, Urgicht Michael Schwartzkopf, 17 Feb. 1568; witnesses in the infamous Zauberer-Jackl trials reported that Jackl murdered pregnant women to use the unborn babies for magic, but only if they were boys: Nagl, “Der Zauberer-Jackl-Prozeß,” 417.
 70. Stadtarchiv Mühldorf, Raths Verhørs Prothocoll BI/31, April–May 1643. Mühldorf’s upper court was at Salzburg, about 50 miles away.
 71. Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, Criminalia 1.145, 1654.
 72. Doering-Manteuffel, “The Supernatural,” 187–8; Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 310–15.
 73. Stuart, *Defiled Trades*, 222–60.
 74. Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, 158–65, 269–72.
 75. Fleming, *Der vollkommene Teutsche Soldat*, 199–200, 355–6.
 76. Byloff, *Volkskundliches aus Strafprozessen*, 55–6; StAA, Strafbuch 1654–99, 683–4; Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover, BaCI Hann. 84. Nr. 00384, Inquisitionsakte Georg Schmidt, 1720–1; BaCI Hann. 84 Nr. 00416, 1747; Davies and Blécourt, “Introduction,” 1–7.
 77. Staatsarchiv Wolfenbüttel, 30 Slg 32 Nr. 10.
 78. *Ibid.*; Marzell, “Allermannsharnisch,” 265.
 79. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 256.
 80. Wilson, “Media and Children’s Aggression,” 102; Peterson, “Gamer Girls Rising,” 5–7; Gentile, “Pathological Video-Game Use,” 594–602.

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