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### Children accused of witchcraft in 17th-century Finnmark

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# Liv Helene Willumsen

## CHILDREN ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT IN 17TH-CENTURY FINNMARK

*This article deals with six children accused of witchcraft in the district of Finnmark, Northern Norway, during a witchcraft panic in 1663. Through a narratological approach, the article presents close-readings of court records, trying to detect the various voices heard in the documents: the voice of the accused person, the voice of the law and the voice of the scribe. The article draws attention to four points discussed within ongoing witchcraft research: the role of the scribe, the individualized character of the children's confessions, oral transference of witchcraft ideas and the speed of transmission of ideas about witchcraft. The analyses show that children confessed to similar demonological elements as adults, similarly seen in other European countries. The contents must be known before the children were brought before the court, as their answers to leading questions were detailed. The voices of the children are individualized, there is no indication that the confessions are constructions made by the scribe. The influence of specific persons had great influence on transference of demonological ideas.*

**Keywords** witchcraft trials, child witches, demonology, northern Norway, Finnmark, discourse analysis, narratology

### Introduction

This article deals with children accused of witchcraft in the district of Finnmark, which is the northernmost district of Norway. Finnmark suffered severe witchcraft persecution during the 17th century. From 1600–1692, 135 people were accused in local courts in Finnmark of practicing witchcraft, of which 91 were executed, most of them burned at the stake.<sup>1</sup> Among those accused were six small girls, all of them brought before the court in 1663.<sup>2</sup> The primary purpose of this article is to analyse witchcraft trials wherein children were accused, with regard to the content as well as the narrative structures of the children's confessions. The secondary purpose, via the textual analyses performed, is to approach some actual methodological questions related to the study of court records, namely how the court records were formed and the potential influence on court records by judicial officials. On the one hand, the article focuses on the semantic content of witchcraft trials, while on the other, on the linguistic level and the discourse rendered in court records, and thus it relates to the study of language structures and early modern history in general. Methodologically, the article touches upon an ongoing debate within witchcraft research, namely the role of the scribe, the individualization of the voices of

the accused as rendered in the court records, the influence of specific persons in the transference of ideas about witchcraft and the dissemination of witchcraft ideas within an oral community.

The Finnmark witchcraft trials were part of a European phenomenon. During the early modern period, persecution of alleged witches took place throughout Europe. Those suspected of practising witchcraft were brought before the court and tried in criminal cases, alongside people accused of murder, theft and other crimes. Among the general works on European witchcraft trials published during the last three decades are Brian P. Levack's *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (1987, 3rd ed. 2006) and Wolfgang Behringer's *Witches and Witch-Hunts* (2004). Rolf Schulte's regional study, *Hexenverfolgung in Schleswig-Holstein* (2001) is also of interest. The witchcraft trials in Europe took place from c.1450–c.1750, reaching their most intensive period in 1570–1680.<sup>3</sup> The witchcraft researchers estimate the number of executions during the period of European witchcraft trials at 40,000 to 60,000.<sup>4</sup> The worst hit areas with regard to witchcraft persecution, with high numbers of accused in relation to the population and with high rates of execution for those who were accused of witchcraft, are central Germany, Scotland and Finnmark.

Witchcraft prosecution took place in all Scandinavian countries during the early modern period. Research during the last 30 years on witchcraft trials in the Nordic countries is published in, for example, Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen's volume *Early Modern European Witchcraft. Centres and Peripheries* (1990) and a collection of articles in *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* (2006).<sup>5</sup> With regard to Nordic witchcraft research not mentioned in these publications, for Denmark a comparative study of Italy and Denmark by Louise Kallestrup, *I pagt med Djævelen*, has been published. For Sweden, Maria Lennerstrand and Linda Oja's study *Livet går vidare* and Linda Oja's studies related to traditional magic may be mentioned.<sup>6</sup> For Iceland, studies by Már Jónsson and Magnús Rafnsson have been published.<sup>7</sup> For Norway, studies by, among others, Hans Eivind Næss, Bente Alver, Gunnar Knutsen, Rune Blix Hagen and Nils Gilje can be mentioned.<sup>8</sup> Regarding the Finnmark witchcraft trials, a considerable amount of research has been conducted in the last three decades.<sup>9</sup> I have myself published articles and books, in addition to a text-critical edition of the complete sources of the Finnmark witchcraft trials.<sup>10</sup> I have also written texts for the exhibition at Steilneset Memorial for the victims of the Finnmark witchcraft trials, also published as a book.<sup>11</sup> These contributions in total display witchcraft research as an active field, for Europe as well as for Scandinavia.

When it comes to studies of children in witchcraft trials, this article refers to studies based on German sources made by Wolfgang Behringer, Rolf Schulte, Lyndal Roper, Alison Rowlands and Robert S. Walinski-Kiehl.<sup>12</sup> Diane Purkiss has studied incest in connection with Scottish witchcraft research.<sup>13</sup> In a European context, Sweden and Spain are well known for their high number of child witches, which may be seen in works by Bengt Ankarloo, Per Sörlin, Per-Anders Östling, Maria Lennerstrand, Linda Oja, Jari Eilola, Gustav Henningsen and Gunnar Knutsen.<sup>14</sup> As for discourse analyses related to child witches, the studies made by Rowlands, Roper, Sörlin and Eilola are of interest for comparison with my analyses. Particularly Eilola's study is interesting, as his findings related to personalization of the voices of those involved in trials correspond with my findings.

Two types of trials occurred during the Finnmark witch-hunt, corresponding to two different concepts of witchcraft. On the one hand there were isolated trials, where one person at a time was brought before the court accused of practising witchcraft. This type of trial was based on the perception of traditional sorcery practised on an individual basis, called *maleficium* within witchcraft research, that is, evil-doing by means of traditional sorcery. On the other hand there were linked witchcraft trials, also called panics, consisting of successive trials during a concentrated period of time. These trials were based on the learned European doctrine of demonology, and brought on by denunciation of new suspects who allegedly had participated in witches' gatherings and collective witchcraft operations. Witchcraft confessions related to demonology were considered very severe by the judicial apparatus, and such confessions frequently led to sentences of execution. For the accusation of children, demonological ideas were of the utmost importance.

As for legal procedures in witchcraft trials, there was a wide diversity in Europe. There was a blend of accusatorial and inquisitorial approaches in several countries, including Scotland, Hungary and the Scandinavian kingdoms, as pointed out by Næss, Sörlin and Levack.<sup>15</sup> As for judicial conditions, what was even more important for the Finnmark witchcraft trials was a decree of 1617, regarding witches and their accomplices. For the first time in Danish-Norwegian laws, a demonological definition of witches was adopted into law. The 'real' witches, originally 'rette troldfolk', are those who have given themselves to the Devil or have any kind of dealings with him.<sup>16</sup> The terminology used points to those who have entered into a Devil's pact and therefore belong to a particularly dangerous group of witches. This decree probably had an impact on the first Finnmark witchcraft panic, starting in 1620, when demonological ideas appeared for the first time in Finnmark.<sup>17</sup> However, a more particular influence, when it comes to the introduction of demonological ideas in Finnmark, was made by the Scotsman John Cunningham, who was installed as District Governor at Vardøhus in 1619, one year before the first panic broke out. He brought with him demonological ideas from Scotland and was active in interrogations during the 1620–1621 panic.<sup>18</sup> The peripheral geographical conditions of Finnmark, combined with ethnic conditions, a rapid spread of demonological ideas, and an eagerness on the part of central as well as local government officials to hunt witches, seem to have had an impact on the witchcraft trials.

The main sources documenting the Finnmark witchcraft trials are local court records. They are very well preserved, with a continuous series from 1620 onwards in the archives of the Finnmark District Magistrate. The court records of local courts were mainly written by the district magistrate, called the 'sorenskriver' in Norwegian.<sup>19</sup> Initially, the 'sorenskriver' was the court recorder, a position established in 1591.<sup>20</sup> A jury of trustworthy men from the local communities was elected to judge in local courts. However, the magistrate was gradually granted added responsibility and, in 1687, he replaced the jury altogether in all minor cases.<sup>21</sup> Most of the 17th-century district magistrates in Norway were Danish, and educated in Denmark.<sup>22</sup> The language must have been a challenge for them, as many of the accused spoke a northern Norwegian dialect.<sup>23</sup> The documents are written in Gothic script, and the original language is Danish, with some vernacular words inserted. The vernacular words were dialectical variants of Danish-Norwegian, used in the particular dialects of northern Norway. Latin words have been kept in some cases, particularly unassimilated words. The court records

in the archives of the Finnmark District Magistrate are fair copies made from detailed notes taken during the trials. These sources are valuable for witchcraft research because the trials are recorded from beginning to end. The documents offer a multi-layered potential for interpretation of the witch-hunt, particularly with regard to the accused persons' confessions before the court. There was no standardization of spelling in 17th-century court records. For the quotations in this article, the original sources have been translated into English.<sup>24</sup> People's names and place names in quotations from the original sources are rendered verbatim. In running text people's names and place names have been standardized.

### Methodological approach

My methodological approach is based on narratology, as presented in Gérard Genette's influential study *Discours du récit* (1972).<sup>25</sup> Genette's two following works, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* and *Fiction and Diction*, expand his original narratological framework and discuss the boundaries between fictional and factual narratives.<sup>26</sup> Narratology has to do with the study of structures in narrative texts, an exploration of the narrator's function.<sup>27</sup> Genette uses the terms 'diction' and 'factual narratives' for non-fictional texts, stating that 'it is unlikely to exempt us from having to undertake a specific study of factual narrative [. . .] Such a study would require a large-scale inquiry into discursive practices such as those of *history*, biography, personal diaries, newspaper accounts, police reports, *judicial narratives*' (my italics).<sup>28</sup> When it comes to interpretation of factual narratives, the necessity for an interpretation related to the historical context is underlined by Genette. There is a fundamental difference between factual narratives and fictional narratives.<sup>29</sup> As Lubomír Doležel formulates it, 'historical worlds are subject to restrictions that are not imposed on fictional worlds'.<sup>30</sup> In factual narratives there is a textual layer of reference to historical events, which does not occur in fiction. As for court records, the whole document might be seen as a narrative and the function of the scribe similar to the function of the narrator, structuring and compiling the text.<sup>31</sup> From this authoritative centre of narration, the voices of the various trial participants are rendered. As a narratologist, Genette has been particularly known for his handling of voices.<sup>32</sup> In witchcraft court records, the confession of the accused person is an embedded narrative within the larger narrative of the entire trial. Rendered in indirect discourse, the confession is formed as a coherent story about learning and performing witchcraft.

Discourse studies and studies of narrative textual structures related to court records are an ongoing field of research within several disciplines, particularly among linguists and literary scholars. The interpretations seem to take two directions: either arguing that the court records are strongly influenced by the scribe, even pure constructions made by him during interrogations, or that it is possible to hear and distinguish the voices of the participants during the trial, thus accessing the language of the individuals. In my view, the argument that court records are constructions by the scribe during interrogation does not fit the Finnmark trial documents. The scribe there was a professional who produced reliable records, as close to the courtroom discourse as possible. Therefore witchcraft records must be seen as texts with the possibility for semantic interpretation.

Source-critical questions about the intention and motivation of the narrative contextualized in a legal framework will always be central for analyses of court records. However, in my view one has to distinguish between form and content. The influence of

legal conventions when it comes to the scribe's rendering of discourse in the courtroom has mostly to do with form. With regard to the content of the confessions, however, the knowledge of the accused person is decisive. As will be seen, the children's confessions all have a personal touch. Thus it is difficult to argue that the content of the confessions is constructed by the scribe during interrogation. It is also important to consider the authority of the scribe and the possibility that he is able to influence the interrogation. Differences between parts of Europe probably arose. Because '*Fragekatalogen*' (questionnaires) were common in southern Germany, the confession followed the questionnaire closely, while in northern Europe, the interrogation was of a more open nature, which gave room for differentiated confessions. In Finnmark the interrogator was most often the District Governor or the bailiff. He would be the one posing leading questions, thus influencing the contents of a confession. The scribe could abbreviate the records as well as emphasize words and passages. However, as a professional, it is not likely that he changed the content of the utterances made. As I see it, a confession gives access to the language of the accused person. My position is similar to Stuart Clark's, stating that it should not be thought that the rules and conventions dictated what came to be said by the accused to satisfy legal requirements.<sup>33</sup> Interpreted in this way, the court records contain much more than a scribe's textual construction. My narratological approach is based on different voices heard in the records: the voice of the accused, the voices of the witnesses, the voice of the law and the voice of the scribe.<sup>34</sup>

In the following, the main emphasis will be on one of the child cases, supplemented with examples from the other cases. Afterwards I will summarize the main factors relevant to children in witchcraft cases in Finnmark, thus focusing on how this material can add information to the field of witchcraft research when it is seen parallel to similar cases in other areas of Europe. Finally, I would like to give a few reflections on the methodological questions mentioned in the introduction.

### The 1662–1663 witchcraft panic in Finnmark

There were three witchcraft panics in Finnmark, all of them taking place in east Finnmark, with Vardøhus Castle as the main arena. The panics occurred in 1620–1621, 1652–1653 and 1662–1663. The accused came from the villages of Vardø and Vadsø and the immediate surroundings. The most severe of these panics, involving more than 30 people, took place in the winter months of 1662–1663, from November 1662 until April 1663. The women accused of witchcraft were incarcerated for weeks and months in a room called 'the witches' hole' at Vardøhus, and severe torture was applied to obtain confessions. Twenty women were executed, two of them tortured to death before sentences were passed. The place of execution was Steilneset, next to Vardøhus Castle.<sup>35</sup> This panic can be said to represent the last throes of serious collective witch-hunting in Finnmark. After this panic had come to an end, three people lost their lives during the Finnmark witchcraft trials, in 1670, 1678 and 1692, respectively. The most important collective elements mentioned during the 1662–1663 panic were casting spells on ships, chasing the fish from land, casting a spell on the District Governor's hand and foot and trying to set fire to the castle.

More than any of the previous panics in Finnmark, the 1662–1663 panic may illustrate how specific demonological notions came to the far north of Europe. During these

linked trials, concepts from the intricate science of demonology even percolated down to the women's and the children's own confessions, ideas that had never been mentioned in Finnmark until then. Such ideas include maternal child-sacrifice to the Devil, the Devil's mark, the idea that the Devil fathered a woman's child, and the idea that the mother witch taught witchcraft to her eldest daughter. These ideas were well known in Copenhagen and the rest of Europe. The 1662–1663 witchcraft panic is unique in the way that the introduction of new ideas to a group of people may be followed closely in court records and supplementary sources. These ideas were first told to a group of women imprisoned as witchcraft suspects at Vardøhus Castle and could easily be recalled and retold by the suspects in front of the court. However, these ideas also found their way outside the castle walls. They were spread orally among the common people in the villages, adding new elements to the familiar narratives about the Devil. The sources demonstrate how specific ideas were transferred from one geographical area to another, and show that the ideological influence of one specific person triggered the outset of this panic.

What happened was that a learned couple from the south of Norway, Ambrosius Rhodius and Anne Friedrichsdatter Rhodius, both imprisoned at Akershus Castle near Christiania, or today's Oslo, were transported to Vardøhus on the coast of northern Norway during the winter months of 1662, just a few months before the panic started.<sup>36</sup> They were placed in one of the houses within the Castle walls. Ambrosius Rhodius was an astrologer and physician from Kemberg in Saxony.<sup>37</sup> He was considered to be politically dangerous because, as a result of a vision in 1657, he had predicted the result of an ongoing war.<sup>38</sup> His wife was a grandchild of the private physician to King Fredrik II (1534–1588). She was imprisoned after a serious disagreement with the governor and the mayor of Christiania, where the couple were living before they were imprisoned. The Rhodius couple were supposed to be a threat to the security of the kingdom, and consequently kept under strict watch. Especially the wife, Anne Friedrichsdatter Rhodius, would come to have a tremendous impact on the panic of 1662–1663. Because the children suspected of witchcraft came to Vardøhus at a time when the Castle was crowded with adult suspects, at least one of the children, Maren Olsdatter, had to stay in the same house as the Rhodius couple, which provided a good opportunity for Anne to influence her. In addition, there is documentation that she influenced the other accused children. Anne Friedrichsdatter Rhodius had her own key to the 'witches' hole' and talked with imprisoned women. The sources document that she had been very active in influencing the suspected adults and children during the panic of 1662–1663, teaching them specific demonological ideas and trying to make them confess.<sup>39</sup>

### The witch children in Finnmark

Before going into close-readings of the sources, I would like to give a short presentation of the children involved.

*Ingeborg Iversdatter* was from Vadsø. She was denounced by an adult woman, Sigrid Olsdatter, on 12 January 1663. Ingeborg had allegedly participated at a party in Anders Pedersen's cellar, where the Devil was present. She had been imprisoned at Vardøhus since before Christmas 1662. Ingeborg was brought before the court at Vardøhus on 26 January 1663, the first child in Finnmark accused of witchcraft, and was referred to

as ‘a little girl’; her age was not mentioned. She confessed to having learned witchcraft from her mother, Maren Sigvaldsdatter, who had already been burned for witchcraft.

*Maren Olsdatter* was from Vadsø. She was denounced by Ingeborg Iversdatter and brought before the court at Vardøhus on 26 January 1663, the same day as Ingeborg. She was 12 years old. Maren confessed to having learned witchcraft from her father’s sister, who had already been burned for witchcraft.<sup>40</sup>

*Karen Iversdatter* was from Vadsø. She was brought before the court in Vadsø on 27 February 1663. She was eight years old. She was the daughter of Maren Sigvaldsdatter, burned the previous November, and sister of Ingeborg Iversdatter. She confessed to having learned witchcraft from her mother.

*Karen Nilsdatter* was from Vadsø. Her age is not mentioned. Her mother, Barbra Olsdatter, confessed on 2 April 1663 that she ‘taught her own eldest daughter the craft about two months ago’. The mother was sentenced to death by burning at the stake on 8 April 1663. Karen was brought before the court on 7 April, the day before her mother received her death sentence, ‘and asked by the District Governor whether it was true that her mother Barbra had taught her witchcraft and, if so, how’.<sup>41</sup> She confessed that it was so.

*Kirsten Sørensdatter* was from Vardø. She was denounced by Barbra Olsdatter, mother of the above-mentioned Karen Nilsdatter, on 7 April, at Vardøhus. Her age is not mentioned, but she is described as ‘a small child’. Kirsten was imprisoned at Vardøhus together with her mother, Gjertrud Siversdatter, who was said to have taught her eldest daughter witchcraft.

*Sigri Pedersdatter* was from Vardø. She was denounced together with her mother, Karen Nilsdatter, by Barbra Olsdatter on 2 April 1663. Her age is not mentioned. Sigri and her mother must have been released from Vardøhus between April and June, for Peder Olsen, the father of Sigri, was the one who brought his daughter and wife before the Court of Appeal in June the same year.

### The case of Maren Olsdatter

The voice of the scribe is withdrawn in the case of Maren Olsdatter. His main task seems to have been inserting words of coherence like ‘also’ in sentences like ‘she also confesses’ and ‘the little girl confesses’. The function of the scribe, in other words, was to keep the itemized confession together. Maren herself fluently answered the questions posed to her. There was no need for the questioners to press her. She did not hesitate, nor did she show any despair, so there was nothing unusual about her manner of confession that might be of interest to the scribe. Thus he does not give any description of Maren or any evaluative comments on her behalf. Instead Maren’s own voice may be clearly heard in her confession. The scribe shows scepticism as to whether Maren always told the truth. When she later persistently named Peder Olsen’s wife and daughter, contrary to the confessions of the other accused adults, the District Governor

*cautioned her to tell the truth if she wanted to be reckoned amongst God’s children. To which she answered, saying that it was certain that she and her daughter were witches and that they had both been in the shape of cats, as has been narrated, and that they were at the Castle for that great convention and that she does not want to vilify them, as the truth will always prevail in the end (my italics).*<sup>42</sup>



The scribe found it appropriate to include the District Governor's precautionary statement in the records. The philosophical concluding remark of Maren, which functions as a kind of a threat, is also given space in the records, maybe to show that Maren's discourse was very insistent.

The voice of Maren is rendered by the scribe in just the same way as the voices of the adults questioned. Like many of her fellow accused, she told how she acquired sorcery through a special drink, 'and the said Maritte gave her a little beer in a bowl, and as she was drinking, she saw something lying in the bottom of the bowl, something that was black as dirt,<sup>43</sup> something she refused to drink and threw out onto the floor'.<sup>44</sup> Afterwards, 'the Devil came in to her as a black dog. And it had horns on its head, like goat horns'.<sup>45</sup> The image of the Devil as a creature with horns is widespread in oral tales and visual art. The notion of the Devil disguised as a dog is also frequent in folklore, as we in Scandinavia know from traditional stories written at a later point in time. Popular beliefs in Finnmark at the beginning of the 17th century are difficult to get hold of. What has been written down from popular belief mostly derives from the 19th century, and was an activity related to the Romantic movement.<sup>46</sup> As for court records, it is possible to say is that the confessions have the same form and use the same literary devices as the tales later known to be characteristic of folk tradition.

However, in Maren's narrative about the Devil tempting her to be his servant, she also presented a more detailed portrait:

And he asked her twice whether she would serve him, to which she replied, No, she did not believe a dog could speak. On that same day, a little later, the Devil came to her in the likeness of a man, black with horns on his knees. On his hands and feet there were claws, and he wore a black hat and had a black beard, and he asked her once again to serve him, but she kept her silence and refused to answer. Then he asked her once more to serve him for then he would give her money. Then she replied, yes, and agreed to offer him her services.<sup>47</sup>

As may be seen, the images of the Devil were internalized among children as well as adults. What was retold by the accused in court must have been part of an oral folk culture, heard and learned by old and young. The oral touch is prominent in Maren's narrative of temptation. The number three is well known within folk tradition, and here we hear that the Devil asked her on three occasions to serve him. In fact he actually asked her four times, and not until the fourth time did she answer yes. And the fact that the Devil offered her money seemed to be decisive. Considering that this is the voice of a child, it is interesting to see that in rendering this story, she maintained her autonomy vis-à-vis the Evil One, refusing several times to be his servant. She even revealed a sense of humour during her encounter with the Devil, telling him that she did not believe a dog could speak. Maren had several fanciful elements in her confession, as was the case with the confessions of the other children as well. This is how Maren described a visit to hell:

The Devil then told her that she should accompany him to Hell. She submitted to his demand and accompanied him to Hell, and she says that the route was very long, and when she got to Hell, she saw a very large lake in which a fire was burning, and the

water was boiling, and the lake was full of people lying in the water, many of them flat on their faces, boiling. Now, the Devil had an iron pipe out of which he blew flames, saying that she should enjoy as much. The Devil also had a leg of ham which he dipped into the said water, bringing it up again at once, and now it was cooked. The said girl narrates that this lake was in a valley, and it was surrounded by a great darkness, and the people burning in the water, women and men alike, howled like cats, and then she saw these summoned women who had gone with her to Hell, the bell ringer Sigrj from Kjberg in the likeness of a crow, a woman from Madkorffue by the name of Ingeborg, using crutches and in the likeness of a dove, Lirren from Waarøen, in the likeness of a long-tailed duck, Solwe from Andersby, in the likeness of an auk, Gurrj from Eckerøen, in the likeness of a fledgling cormorant. As for herself, she was in the likeness of a crow. When they had been in Hell for a while, they all went their separate ways, home.<sup>48</sup>

Descriptions such as these may have seeped into popular beliefs through religious doctrine. Maren must have been an observant child with a talent for story-telling, managing to bring into the narrative the detail about the Devil dipping a ham into the boiling water in hell. In fact, she is later reproached by an adult woman, who confessed that she had also taken part in the trip to hell, but she had not seen this.<sup>49</sup> The detail about the ham might be an innocent echo of the idea that the Devil boiled infant flesh in pots over the fire at Sabbaths, as painted by Salvator Rosa.<sup>50</sup> This milder aspect of the contents of the witchcraft confessions in Finnmark is typical of the documents there, as the tone on the whole is less harsh than in mainland Europe. Maren, to increase the dramatic nature of her confession, also added to her description of the people boiling in hell, that many of them were lying flat on their faces in the water. Such notions of hell were also common among Swedish child witnesses during the Blåkulla trials some years later.<sup>51</sup> But the Devil was a playful figure, as may be seen from numerous descriptions of witches' covens. He entertains his guests, trying to create a merry atmosphere, thus emphasizing the agony of the people who are being boiled and the relaxed attitude of the master of this place. Maren also managed to insert the location of hell, lying in a valley surrounded by a great darkness, thus playing upon the well-known dichotomy between the light related to heaven and the darkness related to evil forces.<sup>52</sup> The whole narrative is framed by literary devices as we know them from traditional oral tales: first they left the human, recognizable world and at the end they went back to their daily lives. To what extent a child could understand all the aspects of such a narrative, not least the religious aspect, is difficult to say. The image of hell, however, the children managed to remember and retell, as may be seen in Maren's case.

Maren's confession also contained a story about a witches' coven at the Domen Mountain, not far from Vardø, where witches from the north allegedly met:

But somewhat later, on the eve of St Hans,<sup>53</sup> last year, these aforementioned women came to her and took her with them to Dommen. And there was the Devil with a red fiddle which he played for them, dancing with them. Solwe held his hand, the bellringer's Sigrj held Solwe's hand, Lirren held Sigrj's hand, little Maren held Lirren's hand, Guren held this small child's hand and Ingeborg from Madkorff held Guren's hand. And when they had finished dancing, the Devil produced a small silver bowl and let them drink beer from it, saying that when they had served him,

they would be compensated with that very water which burned and boiled in Hell. And when they had made their arrangements and finished dancing with the Devil, each went back to her home led by the Evil One.<sup>54</sup>

This description emphasizes the joyfulness and sisterhood of the witches' coven: dancing in a ring, holding each other's hands. This image is often found in adult women's confessions.<sup>55</sup> The witches' coven seemed to represent an opportunity for the women to live out their wishes and desires. A certain refined touch can be seen, symbolized by the silver bowl. The confession of Maren additionally contained the mention of certain rituals related to traditional sorcery or *maleficium*, for instance stealing milk from other people's cows:

She also confesses and gives an account of how she learnt from her father's sister, on the eve of St Hans, before she was brought to Dommen, how to milk a cow. To this end, the father's sister gave her a medium-sized white horn, which she tried out by milking Mortten Jensen's cow, placing it on the cow's abdomen, saying that she wanted to milk in the name of the Devil. Then she got more milk than would fill a pail and after that, blood came out, and then the cow died.<sup>56</sup>

Cows giving blood was a well-known indication that they had been bewitched. Still, it is interesting to note that the girl was so aware of the size of the horn to be used, where to place it on the cow and what to say in order to perform sorcery. Even specific days of the year, often associated with witches, are attended to, like the eve of St Hans. The fact that a child was so aware of all the details related to sorcery indicates that this was common knowledge among people and that she had heard stories about sorcery and the Devil. Maren's confession is probably representative of the knowledge found among ordinary people, both those who were taken to court and accused of witchcraft and those who were not accused. This is supported by the court records of the Blåkulla trials in Sweden, where child witnesses were examined in detail about traditional sorcery.<sup>57</sup>

During the Finnmark trials, the active interrogators were the District Governor and other judicial officials. Maren was asked 'from whom she had learnt witchcraft' when she was first called before the court.<sup>58</sup> Afterwards all she knew about sorcery was revealed. The ability to transform themselves into different shapes was an element of demonology frequently confessed to by the women suspected of witchcraft. Maren was as detailed about this element as about the rest: 'She also confessed that she could turn herself into a cat, but only if the Devil brought her some cat's blood to smear over her body and the fur of a cat to coat herself with. When she had done so, she was a cat'.<sup>59</sup> Naming other women was a compulsory element of a demonological witchcraft confession, and important because it brought forth new names. In her confession, Maren named five other women. All of them were subsequently accused of witchcraft and interrogated:

She also confessed that her father's sister taught sorcery to two women in Omgang. She also confesses that she was with the bellringer's Sigrj, who had her small child with her, and Solwe, in Anders Persen's cellar in Kjberg where they drank beer. The bellringer's Sigrj poured it for them, and she placed her child on a barrel while she was tapping the beer and drinking it. Afterwards, they went to Rev. Hans's cellar in Waarøen and drank a bit there. After that, *the bellringer's Sigrj and Solwe wanted to set*

*fire to the castle*, but they couldn't get to it because the District Governor was always reading the Bible and prayed to God for mercy, so they had to leave in shame. And the same girl-child confesses that Solwe cast a spell upon the foot of the reverend's wife, Karen Rasmusdatter, but that they could obtain no power over Reverend Hans. Having done all this, they each went their separate ways home (my italics).<sup>60</sup>

Maren's confession thus far contained all the elements of interest to the witch-hunters. One might think that this was sufficient and the questioning considered finished. But this was not the case. There was something more at stake during this linked trial. The District Governor thought that the witches had conspired against him. In the quotation above, Maren mentioned that after the visit to Anders Persen's cellar, Sigrid and Solve wanted to set fire to the castle. However, they were prevented because of the governor's trust in God. He also suspected the witches of having caused pains in his arms and foot, and he wanted this confirmed. Related to this, Maren's confessed that Solve had used an object when casting a spell on the District Governor. The belief in physical objects' power to perform sorcery seems to have been strong. Thus the possibility of showing this object to the court was used, strengthening the reliability of Maren's confession:

This same girl-child Maren also gives an account of how Solwe allegedly had a piece of linen with black yarn held together by witchcraft, which she [the child] saw Solwe tucking into a hole in her [prison cell] wall. Her intention was allegedly to cast a spell on the District Governor with it, and when this child saw it, the Evil One gave her [Solwe] the likeness of a cat. And this was all done because the District Governor wanted to put Solwe in ball and chains, and when she finally was shackled, she threw away the bewitched thing, but *it was subsequently diligently searched for and found and presented before the court*, and it was just as this girl-child has described it (my italics).<sup>61</sup>

Judging from the confessions, Maren seems to have been accepted by the adult suspects as being able to perform sorcery at the same level as a grown-up. She was questioned by the representatives of the law in the same way as the imprisoned adult women, and her confession was taken seriously. Her voice does not differ much from the voices of the adult suspects. She answered the leading questions thoroughly and knew how to colour her narrative with details. All the essential elements of a demonological witchcraft confession are present in her confession. She named other women so that the trials could go on. Maren's voice was strong and convincing with regards to her participation in witchcraft.

### The cases of the other children

Ingeborg Iversdatter confessed that her mother had taught her witchcraft by giving her a bowl of milk in the sheep shed: 'When she drank the milk she saw some black stuff in the bottom of the bowl, and she poured it out onto the floor, refusing to drink it. Afterwards, she got a tummy ache'.<sup>62</sup> Subsequently, her mother called for the Evil One, and he came in the likeness of a black dog and grabbed the child by the arm with his fangs, so that she bled, and led her out into the fields. After her mother had been arrested, the Evil One came to her and threatened her that she would also burn. 'He took her out into the snow and dragged her around the courtyard and hit her, after which he threw

the clothes over [her] head'.<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, this description might be associated with a rape, and it is the only place in the Finnmark witchcraft sources that we find this particular kind of situation mentioned. On the other hand, the passage does not suggest that Ingeborg shows fear or anger towards the Evil One, as one would expect if this were an assault. The textual passage is difficult to interpret. She also confessed to partying in Anders Pedersen's cellar together with adult women and the Evil One. Afterwards, 'the Evil Sattan came to the child Ingeborg again, at the castle, in the likeness of a cat, saying he would burn her. She kicked him, telling him to go away, and he left her'.<sup>64</sup> The voice of Ingeborg must be said to be a strong voice, not subordinate to the Devil, but in fact showing anger against him. It also shows mastery of storytelling and in this respect that of a mature language user.

Karen Iversdatter was brought before the court in Vadsø, her home town, not at Vardøhus. This was almost four months after her mother received her death sentence and about a month after her elder sister, Ingeborg, was brought before the court at Vardøhus, naming her little sister:

So now she, this little girl Karen, confesses and admits exactly what her sister maintained, that her mother gave it to her in some milk. When she went out of the cottage the day after, the wicked Sattan immediately came to her, at first in the doorway, in the likeness of a black dog, and bit her hand, and the marks are [now] exhibited [to the court]. After that, the wicked Sattan came in when she was with her mother, but now he was in the likeness of a black man, and her mother gave him her hand upon it that she would serve him, and his hand was black, whereupon she promised to serve him, saying she would invoke him, and she calls him her god and names him Christopher.<sup>65</sup>

Even though Karen Iversdatter is not more than eight years old, she knows about learning witchcraft by drinking milk, about the shape of the Devil as a black dog and as a black man, about the Devil's mark and about the ritual pledging of her service to the Devil. She also knows about shape-shifting, the naming of other suspects and the plot against the District Governor. She knows about witches' covens on mountains, but underlines that at first she refused to join the others. The tendency to minimize their own responsibility is also seen among child witnesses in the Swedish Blåkulla trials.<sup>66</sup> All in all she seems to know many points of a demonological witchcraft confession, retelling them with many details and with a personal accent. In my view, this strengthens an understanding that witchcraft narratives were known among common people and that children were acquainted with these stories at an early age.

Karen Nilsdatter was the fourth child accused of witchcraft in Finnmark. When brought before the court, the District Governor asked her whether it was true that her mother had taught her witchcraft, and by what means she had taught her:

She confesses that it is certain that she had taught her, giving it to her in a drink of milk in her animal shed, and the mother admits this is so, and she had a headache afterwards from it. Later, a black dog came to her asking her to serve him, to which she allegedly said, "Yes." He promised her good fortune in every way, and made her call him her god Jsach, and again *she was told to forswear her God and creator in Heaven*, which she did, whereupon he bit her and left his mark on her right hand. Afterwards

she tested the power of her craft on one of her mother's sheep, giving it the craft together with something that was black, with a little moss and fish, saying, as she did so, *Burst asunder, in the name of the Devil, and at that, it burst asunder and died (my italics).*<sup>67</sup>

Karen was in a situation where her mother had a death sentence hanging over her. Daughter and mother were interrogated on the same day. Karen also confesses that she went with her mother Barbra to Waardøehuus Castle, in the likeness of a crow.<sup>68</sup> At this stage, in April 1663, the panic had come to a point where the plot against the District Governor was the most important accusation. The confession of Karen contributed to increasing the District Governor's fear that he was personally exposed to witchcraft.

Kirsten Sørensdatter was apparently a very small girl, although her age is not given. Her voice is not rendered in the same detail as those of the children mentioned above. Kirsten was denounced by an adult woman, Barbra Olsdatter, together with her mother, Gjertrud Siversdatter. The major issue was again the plot against the District Governor. In retrospect, through the confession of Sigri Pedersdatter at the Court of Appeal, we get to know that Anne Rhodius tried to make Kirsten Sørensdatter memorize several demonological points, which she in turn should retell when interrogated before the court. In the case of Kirsten Sørensdatter and her mother, the husband in the family played an active part in trying to help his wife. On 25 June 1663, at the Court of Appeal, a letter from Kirsten's father, Søren Christensen, was read in court, concerning the reputation and good name of his wife. At this session of the Court of Appeal, Kirsten Sørensdatter admitted that Anne Rhodius had led her to lie against her parents.

Sigri Pedersdatter was the last child accused of witchcraft in Finnmark. She and her mother, Karen, were denounced by Barbra Olsdatter, and again the plot against the District Governor was in focus. They were 'said to be just as adept and active in the matter of witchcraft as she and the little girl Maren Olsdatter, and also, that she was with them when the large crowd of devilish witches was at the castle just recently'.<sup>69</sup> To oppose this, the father of Sigri, Peder Olsen, stood up in court and asked Barbra Olsdatter to tell the truth and not to defame his wife, whereupon Barbra fully retracted what she had just said.<sup>70</sup> The voice of Sigri Pedersdatter is heard most clearly in the Court of Appeal records, in which she explained how Anne Rhodius tried to persuade Kirsten Sørensdatter and herself to confess. Sigri said that Anne Rhodius had threatened her as she sat in her room and told her to confess all she knew, then she would become a child of God and Anne Rhodius would then have her as her own child. It is a regretful voice, and at the same time she is acting as the one responsible and trying to explain, both on behalf of herself and of Kirsten Sørensdatter, who was probably younger than she.

### The voice of the law

Since this was the first time children were accused during the Finnmark witchcraft trials, it is interesting to see how the legal authorities treated their cases. Maren Olsdatter, the sisters Ingeborg and Karen Iversdatter were treated together. The local court considered the cases to be difficult:

Furthermore, since these two children, Ingeborg and Maren, have so often confessed, at Waardøeshuus Castle, that they have learnt and practised witchcraft, and also since they are held at the castle where *the District Governor repeatedly urges them, and the priest daily and assiduously admonishes them, to turn away from the Evil One and be converted to the ways of God in Heaven, to no avail, for they still, according to their own confessions, have the Evil One at their sides and cannot tear themselves away from him, and since, moreover, this little girl-child Karen, who is the sister of Ingeborg, who also, according to the latter's own confession, has learnt witchcraft, and they both saw it at their mother's, for the Evil One was always with them in the past, and they cannot be rid of him, no matter how the priests work on them and try to convert them to Our Lord the Christ, he will never relinquish them, since they have been given to him by the mother;*

In view of such circumstances and of the clergymen's considerations, *His Royal Majesty's bailiff puts before the court whether they should not be punished with loss of life and prevented from learning more mischief from the Devil and enticing other children, at the whim of the Devil.*

Then, after indictment and responses, and in accordance with the circumstances of the case, and since the aforementioned children cannot deny having learnt witchcraft, according to their own lengthy confessions, which is self-evident, as has been recorded, and also *since they are but small underage children who have not reached an age to make their own decisions, nor have they ever been to God's altar to receive the blessed sacrament, but are utterly ignorant, this is a difficult case to decide.* We therefore, in this case, know no other course than to decide and to judge that we, in this case, defer to a superior judge, our illustrious Court of Appeal judge (my italics).<sup>71</sup>

The argument in the local court for execution seems based on the children's alleged relationship with the Devil and the danger of influencing other children. Their young age and lack of Christian knowledge weighs in the opposite direction, as does the importance of having not yet been given the blessed sacrament. Karen Nilsdatter was not mentioned in the verdict in the local court, but she was tried together with the other three children when this case came up in the Court of Appeal. The presiding Court of Appeal judge acquitted all four children. He did not give specific arguments.<sup>72</sup> Maren Olsdatter was asked by the Court of Appeal judge whether she could read, answered yes and read something for him. She said that Anne Rhodius had misled her to lie against other people, denouncing them for witchcraft.<sup>73</sup> Karen Iversdatter cried when she was asked by the Court of Appeal judge whether she knew witchcraft. To show repentance was regarded as a positive sign, for then the child showed insight into her own sinful behaviour. This was similar to the child witnesses during the Blåkulla trials: the children wanted to show at the end that they had returned to God.<sup>74</sup> Ingeborg Iversdatter was also asked if she knew witchcraft, but did not answer. Karen Nilsdatter was asked the same question, and answered that she knew nothing of the kind. For all these four children it was decided that those who had parents living should stay with their parents, the rest would be taken care of and fostered by other mothers living at the same place, and brought up as their own children.

Kirsten Sørensdatter's case was heard by the Court of Appeal on 25 June 1663 in Vardø. She was asked in the presence of common people who had taught her to lie against her parents, to which she answered that Anne Rhodius had told her to do so and

in addition threatened her and told her that if she did not confess what she herself or her mother knew, she would first be thrown into the sea and afterwards stretched on the rack and in other ways maltreated with iron. Kirsten Sørensdatter was acquitted the same day by the Court of Appeal Judge together with her mother, Gjertrud Siversdatter.<sup>75</sup>

Sigri Pedersdatter's case was likewise heard the same day in Vardø.<sup>76</sup> The girl's father, Peder Olsen, came to court with his wife and daughter, as both of them were denounced for knowing witchcraft. Common people present at court testified that they did not know anything other than what was Christian and honest about Sigri Pedersdatter and her mother, and then, after such testimony, they were acquitted by the Court of Appeal judge. In the last two cases mentioned, the verdicts and sentences of the Court of Appeal are very brief, and there is no argumentation about whether or not they should be acquitted.

### **The witch children in Finnmark in a wider context**

That children were accused in Finnmark had to do with the spread of specific ideas. Compared to the range of demonological ideas appearing during the previous Finnmark witchcraft panics, the 1662–1663 panic offers some interesting new additions. In demonological writing, the difficulty of getting rid of the Evil One once he has found a foothold in a family is emphasized, and this idea is rendered in the local court's final considerations of the children's cases.<sup>77</sup> Another demonological notion, that children were sacrificed to the Devil by their mothers, is, for instance, found in the confession of Ingeborg Iversdatter. She said of her sister Karen and herself that 'they both learnt it from their mother, for the Evil One was always with them in the past, and they cannot be rid of him, no matter how the priests work on them and try to convert them to Our Lord the Christ, he will never relinquish them, since they have been sacrificed to him by the mother'.<sup>78</sup> A third notion was introduced by Anne Rhodius in a conversation with Ragnilde Endresdatter. Ragnilde's case was first heard at Vardøhus before the local court and was subsequently heard before the Court of Appeal. When read retrospectively, the court records from the Court of Appeal give information about what happened at Vardøhus outside the courtroom but within the walls of the castle when Ragnilde Endresdatter was pressed to confess. The records show that Anne Rhodius tried to make Ragnilde Endresdatter confess. First, she threatened Ragnilde, evoking every conceivable form of torture. Ragnilde is said to have answered: 'Then I must lie about myself so that my life will end when I give birth to my child'. The answer she received from Ane M. Rodj was: 'You are carrying not a child but a devil'.<sup>79</sup> This is the only instance where I have found evidence in the Finnmark material of the notion that the Devil has fathered a woman's child. The last new notion that arose during this panic was that a mother taught her eldest daughter witchcraft. Like several of the ideas seen in the above quotations from court records, this one spread rapidly from one confession to the next, like a contagion, obviously transferred by word of mouth. The ideas about witch children must have led to mothers fearing that their children might be accused of witchcraft.

The personal factor cannot be overlooked when children in the Finnmark witchcraft trials are discussed. As we often see in witchcraft research, one or more individuals must have been in a position to set demonological notions into circulation among people later brought before the court accused of witchcraft, and there must have been people in a



position to activate these ideas during interrogation in court to make the trials continue. In Finnmark, Anne Rhodius played such a role, bringing new demonological ideas into circulation. However, there must also have been judicial representatives who believed in these ideas and furthered them through the proceedings of the legal apparatus.

Females, family relations and sexuality are factors that are prominent in the children's cases: mother and daughter, mother and eldest daughter, aunt and niece. Lyndal Roper has emphasized the role of sexuality in the post-Reformation period, where the source of evil was located 'in an old woman'.<sup>80</sup> She argues that the dynamics of witch-hunting have to be sought in this symbolic shift and in the conflicted feelings about motherhood. With regard to the Finnmark area, however, where similarly the accusation of children came rather late during the persecution, there are no historical indications pointing to a transformation in the view of motherhood. Neither is the stereotypical image of the witch as an old, barren woman fitting for the Finnmark trials. The alleged witches there were young and old, many of them married with children. I think the explanation of cases against children can simply be traced to demonological works. The accentuation of females and female relations, though, which we see in the child cases in Finnmark, underpin women's vulnerability to accusations of witchcraft.

The occurrence of child witchcraft trials rather late during the trial period in Finnmark might well have to do with the persecution needing 'new' ideas as fuel in order to continue. The ideas about children in witchcraft trials underline what I would like to call 'the fashion syndrome': ideas reaching their zenith for a short period of time and then after a while being forgotten and forced back into oblivion by new and more interesting ideas, like our contemporary expression '15 minutes of fame'. In my view this has to do with the strong influence of the moment – what is in fashion today is not necessarily in fashion tomorrow – so it seems was also the case with the spectrum of notions about witchcraft during the Finnmark witchcraft trials: the ideas pop up and survive for a short time, being repeated in confession after confession, only to fade away. Related to children, some demonological notions seem to be easily learned and easily retold in court.

Looking at the content of the children's confessions, it did not differ much from the content of adults' confessions. An interesting difference, however, is that the children are the only ones who touch upon the topic of sexual relations with the devil, even perhaps sexual abuse, in a vague way. In addition, religious terminology is rarer in children's confessions than in adults' confessions. The children's confessions in Finnmark are also similar to children's confessions in other countries. In southern Germany and Austria, it became more and more common for children to be accused of witchcraft towards the end of the 17th century, which is pointed out in several studies.<sup>81</sup> The reliability of children's confessions was the rule. Both in Finnmark and elsewhere, their confessions were taken absolutely seriously. Their denunciations led to imprisonment and executions. Several adult women in Finnmark were denounced solely by children, and these adult women were subsequently found guilty and sentenced to death. The same is seen in other countries, for instance in Germany and Sweden.<sup>82</sup>

Looking at the children accused of witchcraft in Finnmark, each of them could be viewed as a victim as well as a culprit. The four first girls accused could be labelled culprits in the sense that they were active in denouncing other children and other adults of witchcraft. Especially Maren Olsdatter is seen as a hard nut by the legal officials. At the same time, the children could be seen as victims, in that they were brought into

the spotlight of the judicial apparatus because their mothers and aunts were burned for witchcraft shortly before, at a time when the children were utterly alone and vulnerable. In a way, they became victims of the notion of witches sacrificing their children to the Devil. There is no evidence that the children accused of witchcraft in Finnmark were tortured during interrogation. However, awareness of what might await them next must have been a heavy burden to bear.

The last two girls accused of witchcraft in Finnmark I would tend to call victims rather than culprits. They were accused together with their mothers, being the eldest daughters, at a stage when this panic was certainly coming close to its end and at the point of drying up. New names did not pop up easily, and when they came, they were followed up eagerly. These two girls were not active in denouncing other persons, but answered in the affirmative when interrogated about what they had apparently been trained to retell. However, they lied about their mothers, and regardless of their age, which we do not know, they probably knew that this was wrong. How far they could foresee the consequences of their answers is in my view difficult to judge today. What is certain is that they withdrew their confessions when tried before the Court of Appeal, maintaining that Anne Rhodius had persuaded them to lie about their mothers and to confess about pacts with the Devil as well as other demonological notions. Examples of false witchcraft confessions by children are found in several studies.<sup>83</sup>

### **The oral aspects and narrative features in the children's confessions**

The confessions of the children are structured like narratives, a point underlined by Toivo, Rowlands, Eilola and myself. Apparently these structures were important in order to remember the stories they presented. Close-readings of the children's confessions strengthen my view that the study of oral transmission of demonological notions is significant in order to trace the impact such ideas had on the witchcraft trials. To do this, the researcher needs detailed and accurate court records, of which the Finnmark court records are a splendid example. From the documents it is possible to conclude that notions of a demonological character were a 'hot topic' and that new ideas that supplemented what people knew already were warmly welcomed and regarded as interesting.

Individual features, distinguishing the children's voices from one another, can be seen in small additions, creating diversity, resulting in separate versions of an original story. For instance, Maren Olsdatter told about a trip to hell, where the Devil boiled a ham in the hot water, apparently a playful device to colour the story. One of the adult women said that she was also on the trip to hell, but she did not see the Devil boiling the ham, indicating that this was an invention by Maren. Other features of orality, such as repetitions, occur frequently in the children's confessions, for instance related to the ritual of learning witchcraft.

Jari Eilola's article on the Blåkulla trials is a study which very clearly points to the complexity of the children's narratives, which cannot as a rule be said to be produced only to satisfy the interrogators. In the same way as has been pointed out for English court records, and consequently the closeness to spoken language this displays, Eilola maintains that the language in court records, next to spontaneous sermons, is closest to spoken language of all the text corpora from this period.<sup>84</sup> Features of the local and the individual are prominent also in records from child cases. Even though the children's

stories were formed in a dialogue between the child and the interrogatory commission, it was not the commission alone which defined the content of children's testimonies. Eilola maintains that earlier witchcraft research has overemphasized the influence of the commissions, as it was not possible for such a commission to dictate what the children should say. Related to the Finnmark child trials, Eilola's points of view are interesting because of the emphasis on individual features and differences between the voices heard.

## Conclusion

Through close-readings of primary sources, this article has drawn attention to four points discussed within ongoing witchcraft research. The first of these is the role of the scribe. The analyses performed above indicate a professional scribe, performing his job as a recorder as best he could. There are no indications that the scribe has a major influence on the confessions, as those who interrogate are primarily the District Governor and the bailiff. The confession is rendered in indirect discourse. The scribe renders the confession with accuracy, keeping the oral features intact, thus letting the individual voice come to the fore. This indicates a professional scribe, whose task it is to give a detailed account of what was said in the courtroom, not a scribe contributing actively to the form and content of the confessions. In order to make the text coherent, he has probably added some words, but the content remains intact. No distancing devices, such as words expressing irony or sympathy, are used by the scribe when rendering the confession. This indicates that the scribe's attitude is the same as that of the other judicial officials, which means he shared the fear of witchcraft which was widespread at the time. The analyses from Finnmark do not support the scribe having constructed the records.

Secondly, the individualized character of the children's confessions was focused on. It is maintained that the confessions of the children analysed contain personalized details, in the same way as is found in studies by Diane Purkiss for Scottish, Lyndal Roper and Alison Rowlands for German, myself for Norwegian and Scottish, and Jari Eilola for Swedish confessions. It is argued that individualized features of language come to the fore through features of orality in children's witchcraft confessions. This argument is based on linguistic grounds, such as details and individualized formulations in the rendered discourse, evidenced through close-reading of sources. There is an openness related to the form of the interrogation as well as a richness of detail related to the content of the confessions, letting the voice of the accused person come to the fore.

Mentioned thirdly was the oral transference of witchcraft ideas. It is argued that ideas related to the European doctrines of demonology were closely related to the personal factor and that individuals strongly influenced the introduction and spread of these ideas in Finnmark. The introduction of demonological ideas to the local communities may be seen in connection with information reaching the local peasants and fishermen from court sessions and church sermons. In an oral society, such as the Finnmark fishing villages, the presence of common people at court sessions, hearing the confessions given, must have been important for passing on this interesting news to their fellow villagers. The same was the case with orally passing on information from church preaching, and the frightening image of the Devil must have especially been a central element here. However, the initial phase, in which the ideas were first put forward, seemed to depend on particular persons with knowledge of these learned European ideas, like John Cunningham in the 1620s and the Rhodius couple in the 1660s. Thus the importance

of the personal factor should not be overlooked when working with transference of knowledge in the early modern period.

Fourthly, the speed of transmission of ideas about witchcraft was discussed. It is argued that new ideas about witchcraft spread rapidly, also the ideas about children alleged to practise witchcraft. Both within a defined group of prisoners as well as in the vicinity of Vardøhus, the ideas of children in alliance with the devil spread quickly. The children were acquainted with demonological ideas at an early age. These ideas must have been rapidly included by young and old in the folklore culture. This means that children too listened to interesting 'news' of this type and they were also able to learn the ideas and were ready to accept these notions. However, it should be borne in mind that the meetings between learned and popular culture in the villages were a continuous process, as pointed out by Sörlin.<sup>85</sup> The merging of ideas in the local communities was not the result of one meeting, but of many.

## Notes

- 1 Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials*, 11.
- 2 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 99.
- 3 Levack, 'Themes', 8; Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 38; Hagen, *Dei europeiske trolldomsprosessane*, 28–31.
- 4 Nennonen, 'Witch Hunts', 165; Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, 156; Voltmer, 'Vom getrübeten Blick', 66; Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, 23.
- 5 This volume has contributions from Brian P. Levack, Jari Eilola, Per Sörlin, Per-Anders Östling, Rune Blix Hagen, Gunnar W. Knutsen, Marko Nennonen and Raisa Maria Toivo.
- 6 Lenners and Oja, *Livet går vidare*; Oja, 'Kvinnligt, mannlig, magisk'.
- 7 M. Rafnsson, *The Witch-hunts*; M. Jónsson, *Galdrar og siðferði*.
- 8 Næss, *For rett og rettferdighet*; Næss, *Trolldomsprosessene i Norge*; Alver, *Heksetro og trolldom*; Alver, *Mellom mennesker og magter*; Knutsen, 'Norwegian witchcraft trials', 185–200; Knutsen, *Trolldomsprosessene*; Hagen, *Hekser*; Gilje, *Heksen og humanisten*; The journal *Heimen*, no. 1 (2010) has articles by Margit Løyland, Terje Sødal, Rune Blix Hagen and Mink Chan.
- 9 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 5–6.
- 10 Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials*.
- 11 Willumsen, *Steilneset*.
- 12 Behringer, 'Kinderhexenprozesse', 31–47; Schulte, 'Ein Kinderhexenprozess', 48–55; Roper, 'Evil imaginings and fantasies', 107–39; Roper, *Witch Craze*; Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, 16–26; Walinski-Kiehl, 'The Devil's Children', 171–89.
- 13 Purkiss, 'Sounds of Silence'.
- 14 Ankarloo, 'Sweden', 295–6; Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 131–52; Östling, 'Blåkulla Journeys', 81–122; Lennersand, 'Rättvik', 375–596; Eilola, 'Lapsitodistajien'; Henningsen, *The Witches Advocate*; Knutsen, *Servants of Satan*, 69, 91, 103–4, 119–24.
- 15 Næss, 'Norway', 375–7; Sörlin, *Wicked Arts*, 48–9; Levack, 'Themes', 20.
- 16 Original: 'som med diefvelen sig bebundit hafver eller med hannom omgaais'.
- 17 Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord*, 57.
- 18 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 260–3.
- 19 Næss, *For rett og rettferdighet*, 11.

- 20 This followed a decree from the previous year, imposing considerable new administrative and judicial burdens on the local courts. Cf. Willumsen, *Witchcraft Trials*, 11.
- 21 In a revised Act of 1634, the 'sorenskriver' was to judge together with the jury. In a new Act of 1687, he replaced the jury altogether in all minor cases. Cf. Willumsen, *Witchcraft Trials*, 11.
- 22 Næss, *For rett og rettferdighet*, 23–43.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 11, 23–35.
- 24 The translation into English is by Katjana Edwardsen.
- 25 Genette's main work, a study developing a narratological methodology through the analysis of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (published in seven volumes, in 1913–1927), was published in English as *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (1980).
- 26 The original titles are *Nouveaux Discours du Recit* and *Fiction et diction*.
- 27 The narrator is seen as an absolutely necessary textual device. Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 101.
- 28 Genette, *Fiction and Diction*, 55–6.
- 29 In English the term for non-fictional prose is not as distinct as in Norwegian, where the word 'sakprosa' is used, a term used almost exclusively in Nordic countries. Johan Tønnesson has discussed different terms in English for this type of prose. He maintains that a negative definition like 'non-fiction', which literally means 'everything other than fiction', is too superficial. Tønnesson discusses whether the terms 'factual prose' and 'subject-oriented prose' could be used to denote this type of prose, and maintains that the latter of the two is the best, but that neither of these terms catches the history of meaning related to the Norwegian 'sakprosa'. Cf. Tønnesson, *Hva er sakprosa*, 24.
- 30 Doležel, 'Fictional and Historical Narrative', 247.
- 31 Willumsen, 'Narratologi som tekstanalytisk metode', 61–4.
- 32 Onega and Landa, *Narratology*, 172–3.
- 33 Clark, *Languages of Witchcraft*, 12.
- 34 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 30–2.
- 35 At Steilneset, a memorial to the victims of the Finnmark witchcraft trials was opened by Queen Sonja of Norway in June 2011.
- 36 Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord*, 37; Wessel, *Ambrosius Rhodius*, 21. Wessel notes that a royal writ from Ivar Krabbe pronounced that they should be imprisoned in Vardøhus, having previously been kept in Akershus.
- 37 Bergh, 'Til ild og bål', 140.
- 38 Krabbekrigen 1657–1658 and Revansjekrigen 1658–1660.
- 39 Regional State Archives of Tromsø (RSAT), The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 11, fos. 96v–114r.
- 40 This was Maritte Rasmusdatter, who was sentenced to death on 1 December 1662.
- 41 RSAT, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 270r.
- 42 *Ibid.*, fo. 269r.
- 43 'Scharn', in the original, what is cut off or secreted, for instance mouse droppings.
- 44 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 245r.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 In Germany, the Grimm brothers started to publish *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1812. In Norway, Asbjørnsen and Moe collected traditional tales and published them first in small pamphlets, and later in books in the 1840s.
- 47 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 245r–245v.
- 48 *Ibid.*, fo. 245v–246r.

- 49 Ibid., fos. 248rv.
- 50 Cf. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 108.
- 51 Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 136.
- 52 The character of darkness is also mentioned in the Blåkulla trials, as a contrasting element to Blåkulla as a beautiful place; cf. Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 146.
- 53 St John's Eve, a noted witchcraft time.
- 54 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 246r.
- 55 Larner, *Enemies of God*, 153; Roper, *Witch Craze*, 109–11; Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials', 212.
- 56 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 246r–246v.
- 57 Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 141.
- 58 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 245r.
- 59 Ibid., fo. 246v.
- 60 Ibid., fos. 246v–247r.
- 61 Ibid., fo. 247r–247v.
- 62 Ibid., fo. 242v.
- 63 Ibid., fos. 243v–244r.
- 64 Ibid., fo. 244v.
- 65 Ibid., fo. 252r.
- 66 Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 145.
- 67 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fos. 270r–270v.
- 68 Ibid., fo. 270v.
- 69 Ibid., fo. 269r.
- 70 Ibid., fos. 269r–269v.
- 71 Ibid., fos. 257v–258r.
- 72 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–1668, fo. 152.
- 73 Maren Olsdatter seems to have been considered by the prosecuting authorities the most depraved of the accused children. There is a document in The Archives of the Regional Governor of Finnmark, mentioning that she should be sent to the penitentiary in Bergen; cf. RSAT, The Archives of the Regional Governor of Finnmark, Copies of sentences 1631–1670. However, the sentence in the Court of Appeal is acquittal, and this sentence is not annulled. Maren is mentioned as a potential witness in a trial at Vardøhus in 1666, so she obviously continued to live in Vardø; cf. RSAT, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 11, fo. 102r.
- 74 Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 145.
- 75 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–1668, fo. 162.
- 76 Ibid., fo. 163.
- 77 Cf. for instance Remy, *Demonolatry*, chapter 3.
- 78 RSAT, The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fo. 257v.
- 79 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–1668, fo. 155.
- 80 Roper, 'Child witches', 123.
- 81 In Würzburg in 1627–1629, 163 persons were accused, of which 25% were children. In Salzburg in 1680, 140 persons were accused of witchcraft, of which 70% were under the age of 22; cf. Schulte, 'Ein Kinderhexenprozess', 53; Behringer, 'Kinderhexenprozesse', 32.
- 82 Behringer, 'Kinderhexenprozesse', 35; Ankarloo, 'Sweden', 302.

- 83 For instance, Lyndal Roper has studied the German adolescent girl, Regina Gröninger, who in 1702 claimed to be a witch. In the third interrogation she began to laugh, and insisted that the whole affair was caused by gossip. The council decided that she should be taken away from her stepmother, who maltreated her, and transferred to the care of a relative; cf. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 204.
- 84 Eilola, 'Lapsitodistajien'; Kryk-Kastovsky, 'Historical Courtroom Discourse', 167–8; Kryk-Kastovsky, 'Representations of orality', 201–30.
- 85 Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story', 149.

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