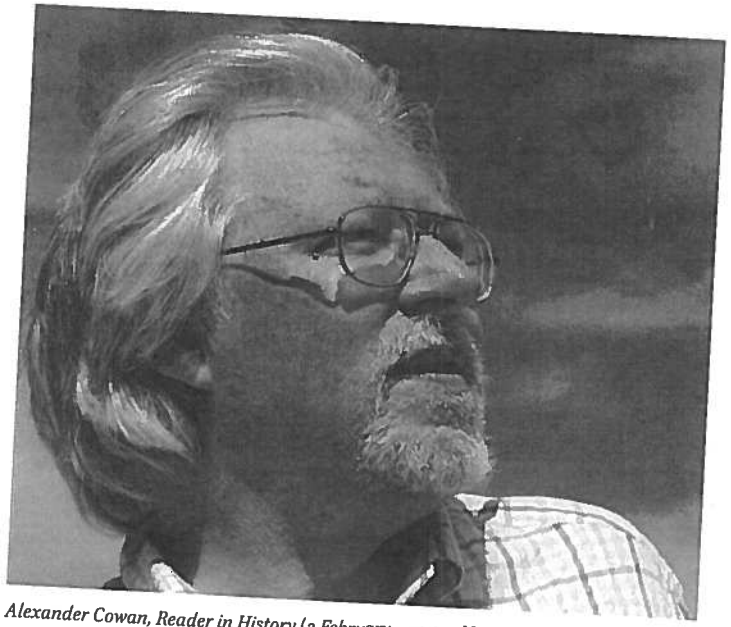

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Orality in Europe (1400–1700)

Edited by

Thomas V. Cohen and Lesley K. Twomey

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CHAPTER 1

Oral Transfer of Ideas about Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Norway

Liv Helene Willumsen

This essay deals with ideas related to the learned doctrine of demonology prevalent in the northernmost part of Europe in the seventeenth century. Through oral transfer these notions found a foothold among the peasants living in the district of Finnmark, with disastrous results for a number of women accused of witchcraft. This essay will show how these local voices, so nicely audible in the court records, illustrate how rapidly the old North Norwegian folk beliefs about witches, under the impact of the prosecution, became assimilated to learned West European doctrines about witchcraft.

The aim of the essay is twofold: first, to analyse the records of local courts for recurrent ideas about witchcraft and oral transfer of such ideas. It will therefore sift witchcraft cases for notions about witchcraft seemingly transmitted orally during the witch-hunt, with a focus on the confessions of the accused. A heavy stamp of orality surfaces in these confessions, underlining how accurately the scribe transcribed speech, and, thus, made visible in the records such markers of orality as additive sentence structures, redundancy, sequential ordering, cause-effect relations, as well as features from folklore and dialectal expressions. Second, the essay will examine the speed of oral transmission of particular ideas after they were first introduced to a group of witchcraft suspects, until the same ideas resurfaced in a confession. I argue that new ideas spread rapidly, like gossip, and that with these new ideas, it very much mattered who introduced them. During the witchcraft trials, new ideas fused with traditional beliefs about witchcraft, already widespread, and these were reworked and blended in court. The sources for the Finnmark trials are very well suited for study and discourse analysis, as the records are detailed and rich in linguistic nuance. A variety of ideas about witchcraft appears in the confessions, evincing a widening spectrum of ideas on witchcraft as the witch-hunt went on. My methodological approach is based on Gérard Genette's narratology.[1] Genette's

1 Genette's main work, *Discours du récit* (Paris, 1972), is a study developing a narratological methodology through the analysis of a fictional work, Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 7 volumes published during the years 1913–1927. *Discours du récit* is published in

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main work, *Discours du récit* (Paris, 1972), is a study developing a narratological methodology through the analysis of a fictional work.[2] Genette's next two works, *Nouveaux Discours du récit* (Paris, 1983) and *Fiction et diction* (Paris, 1991), expand his original narratology and discuss the boundaries between fictional and factual narratives.[3] Genette has been particularly known for his methodological handling of the voices of the different persons in a narrative.[4] He is frequently acknowledged in narratological studies, and his methodological approach has been used for studying stylistic and rhetorical mechanisms that emerge from historical documents.[5] Genette uses for non-fictional texts the term 'diction' and 'factual narratives', 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*' [*Chapter author's italics*].[6] Narratology examines structures in narrative texts – to explore the narrator's function in fictional as well as factual narratives, which includes judicial narratives.[7] Such an approach makes it possible to distinguish between different voices heard in the records: the voice of the law,[8] the voice of the accused person, the voices of the witnesses, and the voice of the scribe. One can detect a meta-level of language in the voice of the scribe.[9] For all factual narratives, interpretation, Genette says, must heed

English with the title *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY, 1980). The original titles are *Nouveaux Discours du Recit* (Paris, 1983) and *Fiction et diction* (Paris, 1991).

2 Genette's first study is based on Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 7 volumes published during the years 1913–1927. *Discours du récit* is published in English with the title *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY, 1980).

3 *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY, 1988) and *Fiction and Diction*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY, 1993).

4 Susana Onega and José Á.G. Landa, Introduction to Gérard Genette: 'Voice', *Narratology*, ed. by S. Onega and J.Á.G. Landa (London, 1996), 172–173; A. Ferraiuolo, 'Pro exoneratione sua propria coscientia: Magic, Witchcraft, and Church in Early Eighteenth-century Capua', in *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. by Owen Davies & Willem de Blécourt (Manchester, 2004), pp. 26–44.

5 See for instance David Herman, ed., *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis* (Columbus, OH, 1999), p. 390.

6 Genette, *Fiction and Diction*, pp. 55–56.

7 The narrator is seen as an absolutely necessary textual device. Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, p. 101.

8 Understood as the voices of the representatives of the law in the courtroom as well as the letter of the law.

9 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008, pp. 30–32; Onega & Landa, Introduction to Gérard Genette: 'Voice', *Narratology* (London, 1996), pp. 172–173.

context.[10] While a close reading of the historical document might give access to shades of meaning that would otherwise have been overlooked, this analysis has to be placed in an historical context for further interpretation.

The heart of witchcraft persecution in Finnmark was the Castle of Vardøhus, on the coast, east of North Cape and close to the Russian border, where the highest regional official of the kingdom of Denmark-Norway, the District Governor of Finnmark, resided. Demonological ideas spread rapidly to the neighbouring village of Vadsø and to the castle's immediate surroundings. As I see it, demonological ideas were introduced to the peasants in Finnmark by courtroom officials during interrogation, in witchcraft trials, and during preaching in church. Then, assimilation took place – stories about the devil started to be retold in the local communities. The meetings between learned and popular culture in the villages was a continuous process, as pointed out by Per Sörlin.[11] Orality, I claim, was crucial to the transmission of these new demonological ideas from learned persons who knew contemporary demonologies to the populace in a barren, cold area of Europe. Without this oral transfer, whether by means of the court or the church, the accused peasants would not have had them in mind. The accused seemed to know the narratives about the devil, before they came into the courtroom, and responded to leading questions with long and detailed confessions. Had these new beliefs not infected local folklore, one woman after another would not have confessed to the fictitious deeds of a pact with the devil and to joining witches' meetings. In a society where very few peasants could read and write, oral transfer of ideas was the means by which elite ideas could reach ordinary men and women. In eastern Finnmark these same ideas were then retold by women accused of witchcraft in a series of trials of the cruellest kind.

The Scene

The scene in which the extraordinary drama of trials took place is unusual. Situated north of the Arctic Circle, the Castle of Vardøhus lay in darkness for about two months in winter and in endless sunshine for the same stretch in summer. Against a background of the Northern Lights and snow-covered fields, the burning of women at the stake flared much more often in the winter. In this landscape, in the seventeenth century, an ethnically mixed population lived side by side – Norwegians and Samis. Among the 3000 in the district

10 Genette, *Fiction and Diction*, pp. 55–56.

11 Per Sörlin, 'The Blåkulla Story: Absurdity and Rationality', *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 52 (1997): 131–152, at p. 149.

were some 660 Samis.[12] Norwegians spoke Norwegian, Samis Sami. Norwegian settlements lay along the coast, where the population lived from fishery and small-holdings. The Norwegian population was in part long-established locals, in part migrants who had come north in the previous century, settling in Finnmark, well known for rich fisheries. Sami settlements were partly inland and partly along the coast, particularly up the fjords. The inland Sami settlements were reindeer-keepers, migrating coastwards in summer. Each ethnic group had its culture, making Finnmark a meeting place for coastal and inland people, fishermen and reindeer herders. Due to the fish trade on the west coast of Norway, several Bergen merchants had settled in Finnmark. In addition, people had come from many European countries, including Scots, Danes, Germans, and Dutch. In this colourful melting pot, the hybrid witch-hunt had some strong similarities to the Central European witchcraft persecution, but in some ways local particularities were kept intact.

The local courts were the main arenas for witchcraft trials. Finnmark's local courts were at the lowest judicial level in Denmark-Norway. Present in the courtroom were the bailiff, the deputy bailiff, the magistrate, a jury of trustworthy men, often the District Governor, the accused person, the witnesses, and the local people who attended the session. The local courts held sessions all along the coast. Cases from local courts could be sent to the Court of Appeal, presided over by the Court-of-Appeal Judge, who came to Finnmark every third year to hold sessions, also on the coast. If a case was not settled there, it could be referred to Copenhagen for a final decision. It took several weeks to receive any answer from Copenhagen. For this reason Finnmark's local courts were largely autonomous.

The district magistrate, the *sorenskriver*, was charged with making records at the local trials.[13] In the seventeenth century, he was usually Danish, and educated in Copenhagen.[14] Therefore, he sometimes found it hard to

12 In 1597 there were 561 Norwegian families and 154 Sami families in Finnmark. With a family size of five, the number of Norwegians would be 2805 and the number of Samis 770 in the seventeenth century. With a hypothetical family size of four, which is also used for stipulations of Finnmark population at this time, the number of Norwegians would be nearly 2100, and the number of Samis would be 660. See Vilhelm A. Bâkte, 'Den samiske befolkning i Nord-Norge' [The Sami population in Northern Norway]. Artikler fra Statistisk Sentralbyrå [Articles from the Central Bureau of Statistics] no. 107 (Oslo, 1978), p. 14.

13 Etymologically the word means 'a sworn writer', a writer who had sworn an oath, in Norwegian 'en ed'.

14 The University was placed in Copenhagen. Hans E. Næss, 'Innledning', *For rett og rettferdighet i 400 år* [For law and justice over 400 years], ed. by Hans E. Næss (Oslo, 1991), p. 11.

understand the dialect and its local terms. The main sources for the Finnmark witchcraft trials are the exceptionally well-preserved records from local courts. They invite detailed reading. The series of court records is almost continuous from 1620 onwards in the archives of the Finnmark District Magistrate.[15] These records have been published in full in English.[16] There exist a few complementary sources for the two first decades of the witch-hunt.[17] For a lacuna period from 1633 till 1647, there are some alternative sources.[18] There was a jury of trustworthy men from the local communities elected to judge in local courts. Initially, from 1591, the *sorenskriver* was the court recorder.[19] The magistrates' powers increased throughout the seventeenth century. The recorder was gradually accorded more responsibilities, increasingly becoming to all intents and purposes a full magistrate in function. Finally, in 1687, in minor cases, he replaced the jury altogether.[20]

The records in the archives are fair copies made from detailed notes taken during the trials. The documents are in the Gothic hand, in Danish, with some

15 The Archives of the Finnmark District Magistrate are held in the Regional State Archives of Tromsø, Norway. There is a gap between 1633 and 1647.

16 Liv H. Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, trans. by Katjana Edwardsen (Bergen, 2010).

17 Because court records of local courts in Finnmark are lacking before 1620, other sources are needed to document witchcraft trials during the period from 1600 to 1619. Documents in the archives of the Finnmark District Governor and district accounts supplement the court records of local courts for the early years of the witch-hunt. Cf. Willumsen, *Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, pp. 11–12. The Archives of the Finnmark District Governor are held in the Regional State Archives of Tromsø, Norway. The District Accounts of Vardøhus are held in Riksarkivet, The National Archives of Norway, Oslo.

18 In addition to district accounts, there is a document by Hans H. Lilienskiold, 'Troldom oc anden ugudelighed udi dette seculo sig hafuer tildragen blant fin som Nordmand' [Sorcery and Ungodliness which has happened in this century among Sami as well as Norwegians], Thott's collection, 950, 2°, National Library of Denmark, Copenhagen, containing a number of copied and edited court records of local courts. The manuscript was written at the very end of the seventeenth century by Lilienskiold, who was Regional Governor at Vardøhus. Also a book by Hulda Rutberg, *Häxprocesser i norska Finnmarken* (Stockholm, 1918), contains edited copies of a number of the Finnmark court records.

19 This was following a decree from the previous year imposing considerable new administrative and judicial burdens on the local courts. Cf. Willumsen, *Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 11.

20 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 in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 11.

words from the local North Norwegian dialect inserted.[21] Some Latin words have been kept, particularly unassimilated words. The records were in third person, but the recorder strove to catch speech verbatim. These sources are instructive because they record trials from beginning to end. They invite a multi-layered interpretation of the witch-hunt, particularly of confessions.

The Trials

From 1600–1692, 135 persons were accused of witchcraft in the Finnmark local courts; 91 were executed, almost all burned at the stake.[22] Two types of trial in the witch-hunt corresponded to two different concepts of witchcraft. There were isolated trials, with just one suspect, based on the perception of traditional sorcery practised alone. Such trials pursued solitary traditional sorcery, what both early modern courts and modern historians call *maleficium*. And there were closely linked witchcraft trials, now called panics. There were three notable panics in Finnmark, in 1620–21, 1652–53, and 1662–63. The accused came from the village of Vardø, where Vardøhus Castle was situated, the neighbouring village of Vadsø, and the immediate surroundings. See figures 1.1 and 1.2, for maps. This type of trial was based on a learned European doctrine, demonology, often called by modern witchcraft research 'the cumulative concept of witchcraft', a term encompassing a pact with the devil, witches' meetings with the devil present, night flights, metamorphosis, and collective witchcraft operations.[23] According to this doctrine, a suspect's ability to do evil was based on transfer of power from the devil through a pact. Confessions of witches' meetings and collective acts of sorcery led to several new suspects being denounced, who then in turn were brought to court.

The witchcraft trials in Finnmark were intense, with many accused, given the tiny population. With an average of 1.5 persons per year, in 20 years, 1% of the population (30/3,000) would be accused. About four fifths of the accused

21 The language situation in contemporary Norway, with several variants of the Norwegian language on the same formal level, like 'bokmål' and 'nynorsk', differs a great deal from what was the case in the seventeenth century. At that time the written language was Danish. The distinction between 'bokmål' and 'nynorsk' developed in the nineteenth century.

22 Liv H. Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 93–94; Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials of Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 11.

23 Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edn (London, 2006), pp. 32–51.

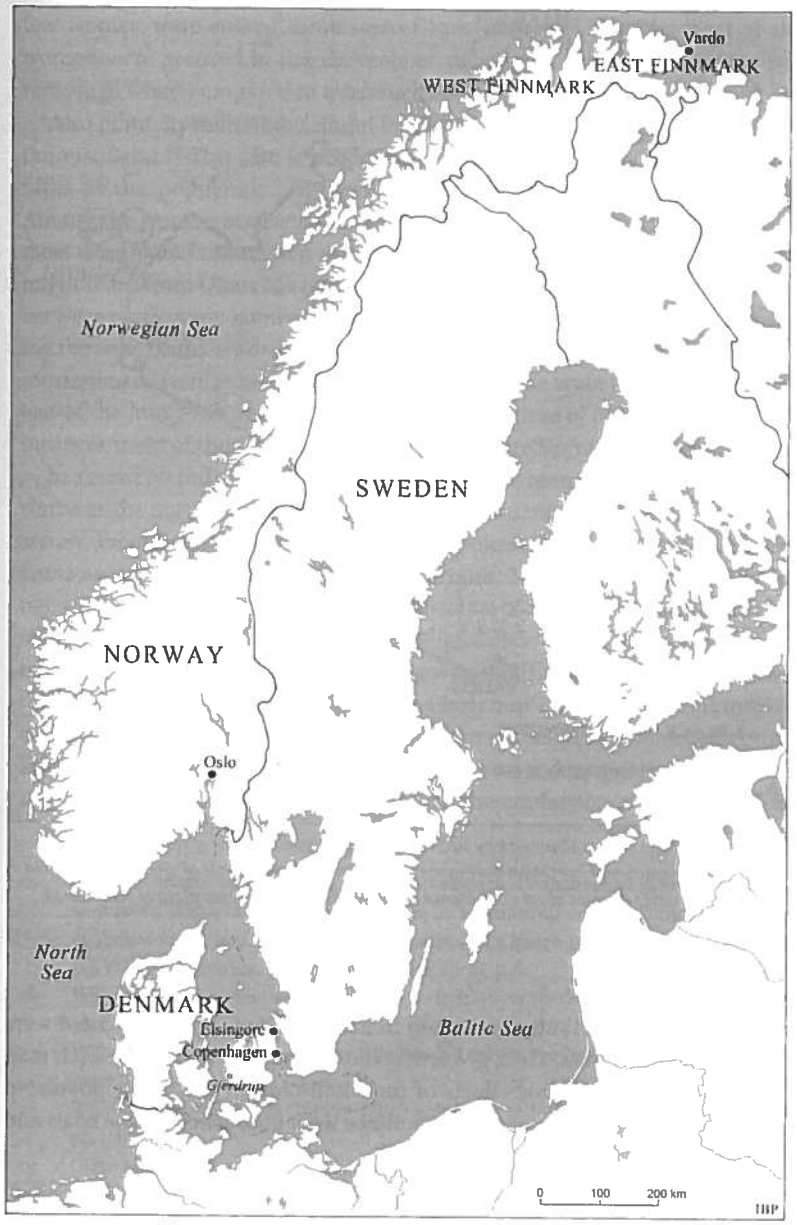

FIGURE 1.1 *Map of Scandinavia by Inger Bjerg Poulsen.*

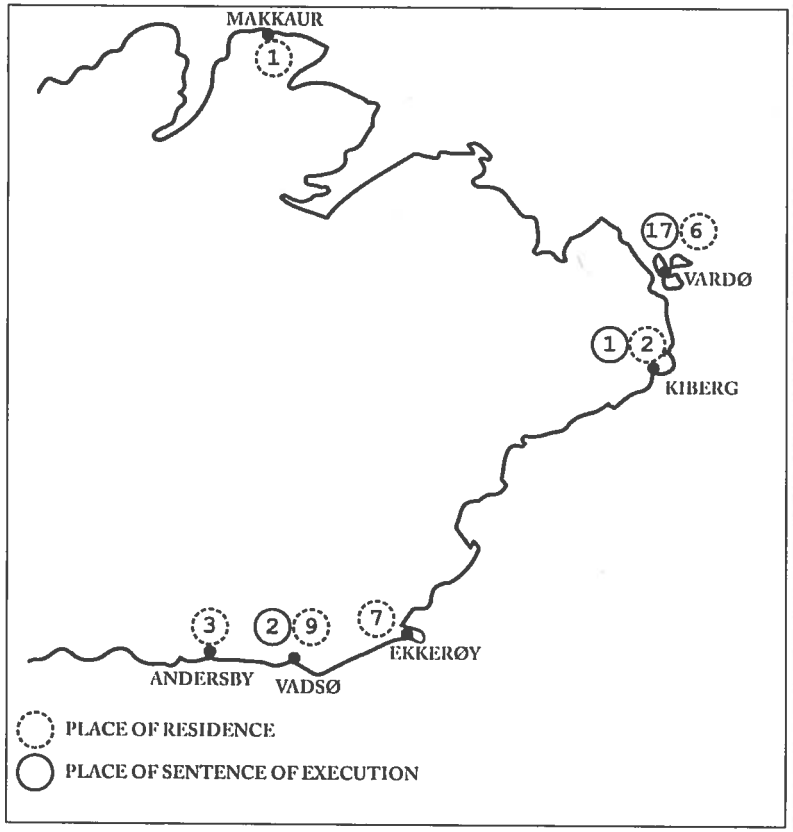

FIGURE 1.2 *Map of East Finnmark by Tomas Willumsen Vassdal. Place of residence and place of sentence of execution during the Finnmark witchcraft panic of 1662–63. The dotted circle denotes place of residence and the solid circle denotes place of sentence of execution.*

were women, a distribution common in Europe.[24] Among the executed were 77 women and 14 men. Thus, given that there were four women for each man accused, the demographic effects of the witch-hunt in this thinly populated district were tremendous. Very few families were untouched by the trials and

24 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 93, 96.

few women were spared some sort of involvement.[25] Notably, most of the women were accused in the six years of the panics. The execution rate was 67%, high when compared to most such trials.[26]

Also ethnicity mattered. Around four fifths of the accused were Norwegian, the rest Sami.[27] This rate is proportional; Norwegians made up around four fifths of the population. The gender of the accused varied with ethnicity. Among the women accused, the majority were Norwegians. Among the men, most were Sami.[28] Sami men were well versed in sorcery, as European readers might learn from Olaus Magnus's *History of the Nordic Peoples*.[29] Sami sorcerers were particularly known for selling wind to boats and for shamanism, playing the rune drum. During first twenty years of the Finnmark witchcraft trials, most accused were Sami men. Also Sami sorcery was again targeted at the very end of the hunt.[30] During the middle period, the time of panics (1620 to 1663), however, most of those accused and executed were Norwegian women.

In a court record, the whole document might be seen as a narrative, with the scribe as the narrator, structuring his text.[31] This scribe is much like the *sorenskriver*, recording the Finnmark trials. The voices of the various trial participants are filtered by this authoritative narrator. The accused's confession is a narrative embedded within the larger narrative of the entire trial. The confession, which the scribe transposes into indirect discourse, is formed as a coherent story about learning and performing witchcraft. Thanks to their closeness to spoken language, court records, particularly confessions, represent individualized discourse, even though the words are rendered in indirect discourse. Features of orality like additive sentence structure and magical numbers echoing folkloric tales are seen, for instance, in the confession of twelve-year-old

25 Ole Lindhartsen, 'Lensherrer, heksejakt og justismord i Finnmark på 1600-tallet' [District Governors, Witch-hunt and Legal Murder in Seventeenth-century Finnmark], *Flytting og forandring i Finnmarks fortid* [Movement and Change in Finnmark's Past], ed. by G.J. Valen, K. Skavhaug, & K. Schanche (Alta, 2002), p. 61.

26 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 54–56.

27 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', p. 107.

28 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 106–108.

29 Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555).

30 Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 13.

31 Liv H. Willumsen, 'Narratologi som tekstanalytisk metode' [Narratology as text-analytical method], *Å begripe teksten* [To understand the text], ed. by Mary Brekke (Kristiansand, 2006), pp. 61–64.

Maren Olsdatter, who spoke about entering into a pact with the devil by drinking a little beer in a bowl: 'And when she finished drinking, the Devil came in to her as a black dog. And it had horns on its head, like goat horns. And he asked her twice to serve him.'[32] However, Maren did not accept this offer at once. 'Now 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.'[33] Individualized discourse is rendered by a personal detail inserted when Maren told about a trip to hell, where people were screaming, lying in the water, boiling: '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.'[34] This detail about the leg of ham was not given by other accused persons telling about the same trip to hell, it was Maren's own invention. Another orality feature is that the whole narrative about the trip to hell 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: 'And when they had made their arrangements and finished dancing with the Devil, each went back to her home led by the Evil One.'[35] Linguistic research has analysed historical courtroom discourse. Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky, in a study of early modern English court papers, has found that trial records preserved many traces of orality.[36] Kryk-Kastovsky and Kathleen L. Doty maintain that courtroom records reflect language spoken in some historical periods more faithfully than in others, depending on the degree of orality.[37] In the Finnmark records, too, many of the orality markers

32 Cf. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 245r.

33 Cf. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 245v.

34 Cf. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 245v.

35 Cf. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 246r.

36 The study is based on two features: turn-taking and closeness to the socio-cultural context. Turn-taking is defined as 'involving such detailed issues closely related to spoken language as responding to the interlocutor, power relations, the use of performatives and discourse markers'. Closeness to the present sociocultural context encompasses among other meta-comments and forms of address. See Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky, 'Representations of Orality in Early Modern English Trial Records', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 1.2 (2000): 201–230, at p. 209.

37 Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky, 'Historical Courtroom Discourse', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 7.2 (2006): 213–245; Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky, 'How Bad is "Bad Data"? In Search of the Features of Orality in Early Modern English Legal Texts', *Current Issues in Unity and Diversity of Languages. Collection of Papers Selected from the CIL 18, held at Korea University in Seoul on July 21–26, 2008*. Seoul; The Linguistic Society of Korea; Kathleen L. Doty, 'Telling Tales. The Role of Scribes in Constructing the Discourse of the Salem Witchcraft Trials', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 8.1 (2007): 25–41, at pp. 26, 27, 39.

pointed out by Walter J. Ong are present, such as additive sentence structures, aggregative language elements, redundancy, closeness to the human life world, and an agonistical tone.[38]

Nevertheless, the confessions, and the entire court records, are still written texts, demanding interpretation as writings too. This particular position of court records, between oral and written text, is pointed out by Elizabeth S. Cohen.[39] In an article on testimonies before the Governor's criminal tribunal in early modern Rome, Cohen says:

> These testimonies and additional texts all occupy in-between positions on a spectrum between oral and written domains of expression. Sharing an intermediate textual zone that has attracted increasing scholarly attention in early modern cultural studies, these several sorts of non-literary sources invite a comparative analysis and double modes of reading. On the one hand, they are 'documents' to be read as straightforward descriptions of the world; on the other, they are constructed texts conceived strategically to represent their speakers and negotiate more complex meanings.[40]

Through close readings that engage both modes, Cohen uncovers a variety of accents in the documents: 'Not only do they speak, but they tell, assert, complain, argue, and correct'.[41] Each voice seems distinct, even if the agendas are common. They resist marginalization, claim legitimacy, and seek, 'within the bounds of law and convention, a greater measure of respect and security'.[42] Cohen's interpretations argue for the individualization of voices in northern confessions too, as attested to by witchcraft researchers of Nordic Europe,

38 Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1982), pp. 37–45.

39 Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Back Talk: Two Prostitutes' Voices from Rome c. 1600', *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2 (2007): 95–126; Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Between Oral and Written Culture: The Social Meaning of an Illustrated Love Letter', *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800): Essays in Honour of Natalie Zemon Davis*, ed. by Barbara B. Diefendorf & Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), pp. 181–201.

40 Cohen, 'Back Talk', p. 95.

41 Cohen, 'Back Talk', p. 95.

42 Cohen, 'Back Talk', p. 96.

among them Jari Eilola, Marie Lennersand, Linda Oja, Per-Anders Östling, Raisa Maria Toivo, and myself.[43]

Other researchers have worked with discourse perspectives in court records and witchcraft trials. Some linguistic research from southern Germany has argued that witchcraft confessions are merely confections by the scribe.[44] In a study of testimonies, in particular witness narratives, from English cases, Peter Rushton focuses more on structure than on content. He maintains that the type of narrative we hear from the witnesses 'depends on a number of shared understandings'.[45] These understandings are all intended to substantiate signs of the diabolical. On structural grounds, these linguistic findings posit a pattern. Rushton's argument is that 'bewitchment is constituted in the depositions themselves, we cannot go behind the testimonies to find another source'.[46] If he is right, the suspects and witnesses are essentially inaudible to us. This cramped reading of testimonies as constructions created during the trial has

43 An in-depth study of narrative structures inherent in a Swedish 'non-panic witchcraft case', a case which did not end with execution, is seen in Raisa Maria Toivo's *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society*. See also Per-Anders Östling, 'Blåkulla Journeys in Swedish Folklore', *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 62 (2006): 81–122; Marie Lennersand, 'Rättvik', 375–596, in *Livet går vidare* [Life goes on], ed. by Marie Lennersand and Linda Oja; Marie Lennersand and Linda Oja, 'Vitnande visionärer. Guds och Djävulens redskap i Dalarnas häxprocesser' [Witnessing Visionaries. God's and the Devil's Tools in the Witchcraft Trials in Dalarne], in *Mellom Gud og Djævelen. Religiose og magiske verdensbilleder i Norden 1500–1800* [Between God and the Devil. Religious and magical world images in the Nordic countries 1500–1700], ed. by Hanne Sanders (Copenhagen, 2001), pp. 177–184; Jari Eilola, 'Lapsitodistajien kertomukset Ruotsin noitatapaukissa 1668–1676' [Child witnesses' stories in witchcraft trials in Sweden 1668–1676], E-journal *Kasvatus and Aika*, 3 (2009), unpaginated; Liv H. Willumsen, 'Children accused of witchcraft in 17th century Finnmark', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 38 (1) (2013): 18–41.

44 Cf. Jürgen Macha, 'Redewiedergabe in Verhörprotokollen und der Hintergrund gesprochener Sprache', *Bayerische Dialektologie. Akten der Internationalen Dialektologischen Konferenz 26.–28. Februar 2002*, ed. by Sabine Krämer-Neubert & Norbert R. Wolf, Schriften zum Bayerischen Sprachatlas, 8 (Heidelberg, 2005), pp. 171–178; *Deutsche Kanzleisprache in Hexenverhörprotokollen der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Jürgen Macha, Eva Topalovic, Iris Hille, Uta Nolting, & Anja Wilke, Auswahledition 1 (Berlin, 2005); Eva Topalovic, '"Ick kike in die Stern vndt versake Gott den Herrn". Versprachligung des Teufelspaktes in westfälishen Verhörsprotokollen des 16./17. Jahrhunderts', *Augustin Wibbelt-Gesellschaft. Jahrbuch 20*, pp. 69–86.

45 Peter Rushton, 'Texts of Authority: Witchcraft Accusations and the Demonstration of Truth in Early Modern England', *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Stuart Clark (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 21–39, at p. 31.

46 Rushton, 'Texts of Authority', p. 35.

been challenged by Malcolm Gaskill, among others. He allows access to the minds of the people who made the confessions, and not just to the expectations of those who demanded them or wrote them down.[47] In my view, Gaskill is right that historical narratives are complex texts that permit semantic interpretation based on sources behind the documents. There is a fundamental difference between factual narratives and fictional narratives. In factual narratives, the narrator is obliged to recount events which really happened. Johan Tønnesson says that 'subject-oriented prose', or 'factual prose' (in Norwegian *sakprosa*), has a mainly direct relationship to reality.[48] There is a layer of reference to factual, historical events, missing in fiction. This is the case with court records, as with all historical narratives; 'historical worlds are subject to restrictions that are not imposed on fictional worlds'.[49] Obvious source-critical questions – such as who the speaker is, and what the intention and motivation of the narrative in its legal frame are – prove crucial to the analysis of court records. However, one must distinguish between form and content. The influence of legal conventions on courtroom records mostly affect form. With the content of the confessions, it is the accused's own knowledge which is decisive and which demonstrates language's ability to convey meaning.

As we will see, confessions all have a personal touch, and no two are identical. In content, they seem not to be subject to the scribe's dictation. The authority of the magistrate to shape interrogation was probably weaker in Scandinavia than in Germany. Questioning in northern Europe and Scotland was open, engendering a wide variety of answers, very unlike in southern Germany, where question lists, *Fragenkatalogen*, with a rigid set of questions,

47 Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witches and Witnesses in New and Old England', *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. by Stuart Clark (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 55–80, at p. 56–58.

48 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. Johan Tønnesson, *Hva er sakprosa* [What is non-fictional prose] (Oslo, 2008), p. 24.

49 Lubomír Doleźel, 'Fictional and Historical Narrative: Meeting the Postmodernist Challenge', *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analyses*, ed. by David Herman (Columbus, OH, 1999), pp. 247–273, at p. 247.

prompted stereotyped answers.[50] Collins argues a similar thing for Russia as is the case for Northern Norway, that legal procedures – who interrogated and by which steps – influenced closeness to spoken language.[51] In Finnmark the interrogator was the district governor or the bailiff, not the magistrate. There the scribe may have influenced the form of the records as a professional of the pen. However, it is unlikely that he changed the contents of utterances.

Like Stuart Clark, I argue against assuming that the rules and conventions dictated that the accused merely shape their statements to satisfy legal requirements: 'Through the adaptation of narrative themes, idioms, and motifs of their own and their culture, they were able to give voice to their interests and suspicions, their feelings and desire, all within the formal setting of persuasive storytelling.'[52] The documents do not just show 'the expectations of those who demanded them or wrote them down'; they also reveal the 'mental and psychological worlds of people who made them'.[53] The court records give access to the voices of the participants. This understanding underpins all discourse analysis of such papers. Kryk-Kastovsky and Doty share this stance, that the language in trial proceedings provides rich historical and socio-cultural information.[54] The same point is also made by Norman Fairclough.[55] As for the Finnmark records, because the scribe knew how to preserve faithfully words spoken, they not only reveal courtroom events, but also illustrate discourse.

In general, court records may be rendered in direct as well as indirect speech, the latter being the case for the Finnmark court records. Linguists find that the use of direct speech makes it easier to reconstruct an actual dialogue.[56] However, also the use of indirect speech in court records fit orality, as argued

50 Rita Voltmer, 'Hexenjagd im Territorium der Reichsabtei St Maximin vor Trier', *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rhein- Maas- Raumes*, ed. by Winfried Reichert, Gisela Minn, & Rita Voltmer (Trier, 2006), pp. 249–250; Wolfgang Behringer, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse* (Munich, 1995), pp. 279–281.

51 Daniel Collins, *Reanimated Voices Speech Reporting in a Historical-Pragmatic Perspective*, Pragmatics and Beyond New Series, 85 (Amsterdam, 2001).

52 Stuart Clark, 'Introduction', *Languages of Witchcraft*, p. 12.

53 Clark, 'Introduction', *Languages of Witchcraft*, p. 12.

54 Kryk-Kastovsky, 'Historical Courtroom Discourse', pp. 167–168; Kryk-Kastovsky, 'How Bad is "Bad Data"?', pp. 1, 8; Doty, 'Telling Tales', pp. 26, 27, 39.

55 Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge, 1992).

56 Matti Rissanen, '"Candy No Witch, Barbados": Salem Witchcraft Trials as Evidence of Early American English', *Language in Time and Space: Studies in Honour of Wolfgang Viereck on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, ed. by Heinrich Ramish and Kenneth Wynne, (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 183–193.

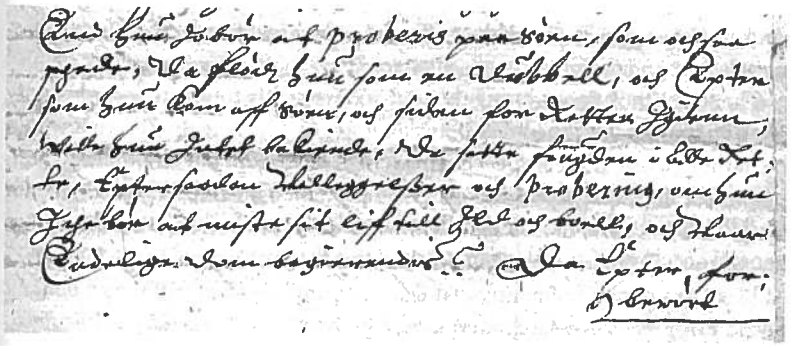

FIGURE 1.3 *Part of a page from the Finnmark court records containing at line 2 the vernacular word 'dubbell', which means a bob. Regional State Archives of Tromso, the Archives of Finnmark Regional Governor, no. 2543, Witchcraft Sentences 1634.*

by Kathleen Doty and Daniel Collins from studies of Salem witchcraft papers and Russian court records.[57] Collins even suggests that the shift to indirect speech may signal suppression of orality. He concludes that this shift can be traced to changes in the law's needs and structure. The same might hold true for Finnmark.

Oral features stand out in Finnmark's records. Nevertheless, the scribe, like court recorders elsewhere, had ways of amending records. He could omit passages and abbreviate what was said. He could also stress certain words. The spoken language challenged him, as he had to puzzle out dialect and render unfamiliar terms phonetically. He recorded unfamiliar words in distinct lettering, and Latinized terms like names of months. The vernacular and Latinized terms are often written larger, with more space between the letters than ordinary words. Thus the page flags the unfamiliar words the scribe took down phonetically. Figure 1.3 shows part of a page from the Finnmark court records containing italicized words. Often, a modern Norwegian reader must now read aloud such vernacular words rendered in the records to catch their meaning. They are frequently obsolete, even in today's dialect areas. But specific words only occasionally troubled the scribe; the Norwegian and the Danish languages are so similar that a Danish scribe most of the time had no problem in rendering

57 Doty, 'Telling Tales', p. 26; Collins, *Reanimated Voices*, pp. 46, 47, 56, 204, 253–259, 274–280, 283, 286–302.

spoken Norwegian.[58] The dialect affected only a few words, of different pronunciation, and the prosody of sentences.[59]

The scribe took notes during the trial and wrote his complete record shortly after. So there was a time lapse between notes and writing up. Hence it would be natural to use indirect speech. This scribal device did not eliminate all orality; rather, note-taking and transcription preserved oral features. As Malcolm Gaskill has noted, 'vernacular authenticity', fidelity to diction, attests to a more general accuracy of such written testimonies.[60]

The First Ideas about Demonology in the 1620s

There came a radical shift in the Finnmark witchcraft trials in 1620. The first witchcraft panic flared up, introducing demonological ideas, and causing chains of trials. In the 1620–21 panic, 12 women were executed. While the first two decades of witchcraft trials in Finnmark had been characterized by isolated accusations and *maleficium*, for the next five decades linked trials took over.[61] This affected the geographical pattern of the trials as well. Until 1620 trials had been spread across the whole coastline of Finnmark; after 1620 they took place largely in East Finnmark.

The increase in persecution after 1620 may have had several causes. In 1617, Christian IV issued a decree against 'Witches and their Accomplices'. The Finnmark courts referred to this decree repeatedly, from 1620. In it, witchcraft is – for the first time in Danish-Norwegian legislation – linked to a connection with the devil. *Real* witches are defined as persons 'who have attached themselves to the Devil or who consort with him'. Mere use of charms, meanwhile, is to be punished with banishment and 'forfeiture of real property'.

For these ideas to spread, oral transfer was necessary, as most peasants were illiterate. Information could have passed orally from the court to the common people, as many local people gathered at court sessions. Furthermore, preaching

58 There was no standardization of spelling in seventeenth-century Norwegian court records. In this essay, 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.

59 Næss, *For rett og rettferdighet i 400 år*, pp. 11, 23–35.

60 Gaskill, 'Witches and Witnesses in Old and New England', *Languages of Witchcraft*, ed. by Clark, p. 55; Gaskill, 'Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 23 (1) (1998): 1–29.

61 From 1600 till 1620 nine persons were executed for practice of witchcraft, seven men and two women. Six of the men were Sami. Liv H. Willumsen, *Steilneset. Memorial to the Victims of the Finnmark Witchcraft Trials* (Oslo, 2011), pp. 11–19.

may also have contributed to rapid oral transfer, especially of ideas of the devil's seductive power. Books of sermons and psalms, by leading Danish theologians, were in use in Finnmark.[62] These post-Reformation liturgical texts portray the devil as a menace and stress his battle with God for supremacy over souls.[63]

Certain men connected to the courts may have helped transmit ideas. Thus, the persecution of the 1620s may trace back to the Scotsman John Cunningham, who took up office as District Governor of Finnmark from 1619.[64] Cunningham hailed from Fife; he knew James VI, who recommended him in service of the Danish King Christian IV, where he had a remarkable career.[65] After serving two Danish expeditions to Greenland, Cunningham was a naval captain on the North Sea.[66] Based at Vardøhus Castle, he was charged with strengthening the northern border and introducing stricter taxes.[67] He was reputedly a strong and decisive leader. His firm hand may have extended to chastening witches. During Cunningham's time in office, 41 Finnmarkers were executed for witchcraft, thirty-five of them women.[68]

62 Among the authors of these books are Niels Hemmingsen, Jesper Brochmand and Poul Andersen Medelby, in addition to psalm books by Hans Tommesen and Thomas Kingo. Cf. Liv H. Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord* [Witch in the North] (Tromsø, 1994), 'The Role of the Church', pp. 60–65, at pp. 60–62.

63 The Reformation took place in Denmark in 1536 and in Norway in 1537.

64 This was the position of the king's highest representative in Northern Norway. Cunningham had this position until 1651. Liv H. Willumsen, 'Exporting the Devil across the North Sea. John Cunningham and the Finnmark Witch-Hunt', *Scottish Witches and Witch-hunters*, ed. by Julian Goodare (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 49–66; Liv H. Willumsen, 'Von Fife nach Finnmark – John Cunninghams Weg nach Norden', in *Europaeische Hexenforschung und Landesgeschichte – Methoden, Regionen, Vergleiche*, ed. by Rita Voltmer (Trier, 2015).

65 National Archives of Denmark, Tyske Kancelli, Udenrigske Afdeling 1223–1770, Topografisk henlagte sager, England Brevveksling mellom Kongehusene 1602–1625, 63–2, England A1 85. Letters from King James VI/1 to Christian IV dated 18 February 1605; *Letters from James I to Christian IV, 1603–1625*, ed. by R.M. Meldrum (Washington, 1977), p. 41; Diane Baptie & Liv H. Willumsen, 'From Fife to Finnmark – John Cunningham's Way to the North', *The Genealogist*, 28 (2) (2014), pp. 180–199.

66 *Jon Olafsons oplevelser som bøsseskytte under Christian IV, nedskrevne af ham selv* [Jon Olafsen's experience as gunman during the reign of Christian IV], Memoirer og Breve, ed. by J. Clausen & P. Fr. Rist (Copenhagen 1905), pp. 130–131; H.D. Lind, *Kong Kristian den fjerde og hans mænd paa Bremerholm* [King Christian IV and his men at Bremerholm], 2nd edn (Copenhagen, 1899), pp. 166–167.

67 Rune B. Hagen, 'At the Edge of Civilisation. John Cunningham, lensmann of Finnmark 1619–51', *Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers c. 1600–1800*, ed. by Andrew Mackillop & Steve Murdoch (Leiden, 2003), pp. 29–51, at p. 30.

68 Willumsen, *Steilneset: Memorial to the Victims of the Finnmark Witchcraft Trials*, pp. 20–60.

Cunningham took part in interrogations in Finnmark, and was in a position to introduce demonological notions into the questioning, just like King James did during the North Berwick trials in 1590–91. Born in *c.* 1575, Cunningham as a young man must have been familiar with King James's 1597 treatise on witchcraft, as he was acquainted with the Scottish king.[69] In his 1597 treatise King James emphasized two types of circumstantial evidence to be used during witchcraft trials, witch pricking and the water ordeal. Of these, witch pricking was used intensively in Scotland, whereas the water ordeal was frequently used during the Finnmark trials, introduced by Cunningham.[70] Cunningham would also have known about the North Berwick witch-hunt of the early 1590s, where most of the accused persons came from villages near his home, even if the trials were central trials held in Edinburgh. Cunningham would also have knowledge of the 1597 Aberdeen witchcraft panic, where the king again participated in interrogation.[71] In addition to the letter of recommendation for serving the Danish king, James VI wrote a letter of support for John Cunningham two years later in a situation of conflict between the Danish king and the Scotsman.[72] Thus the acquaintance between Cunningham and the Scottish king, Cunningham's knowledge of demonological ideas as he was a young man when the North Berwick trials took place and when King James published his treatise, Cunningham's installation as district governor one year before the first Finnmark panic started, and Cunningham's introduction of demonological ideas during interrogation in the 1620–21 Finnmark witchcraft trials, all point to his role as crucial as for bringing demonological ideas to Finnmark.

After Cunningham came to Finnmark, narratives containing demonological concepts spread rapidly. The witchcraft confessions attest to an oral assimilation of demonological ideas among the peasants, who retold them before the local courts. In addition to the links between the Scottish governor and the

69 King James was the only monarch in Europe to publish a demonological treatise, *Demonology*, in 1597. Cf. *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's* Demonology *and the North Berwick Witches*, ed. by Laurence Normand & Gareth Roberts (Exeter, 2000), pp. 327–426.

70 One third of those executed in Finnmark were subjected to the water ordeal. There were 30 water ordeals carried out during the Finnmark witchcraft trials, 21 during the period John Cunningham was in office. See Liv Helene Willumsen, *Steilneset: Memorial to the Victims of the Finnmark Witchcraft Trials*, pp. 6; 11–101.

71 Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife: Witch-hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560–1710* (East Linton, 2002); Julian Goodare, 'The Scottish Witchcraft Panic of 1597', in *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, ed. by Julian Goodare (Manchester, 2002), pp. 51–72.

72 Letter from King James VI/I to Christian IV dated 18 February 1605; *Letters from James I to Christian IV, 1603–1625*, ed. by R.M. Meldrum (Washington, 1977), p. 41.

Finnmark witchcraft trials mentioned above, namely his acquaintance with the Scottish monarch, his knowledge of Scottish demonological trials in the 1590s, the time of his instalment at Vardøhus, and his participation during interrogation in the 1620 trials, two examples of parallel linguistic terminology in Scottish and Finnmark witchcraft records support a Scottish connection: the words 'admiral' and 'Balduolden'. In both Scotland and Finnmark, we find the notion of a woman being 'admiral' or leader for the other witches in a group. The same title for the leader surfaces in both areas. In Finnmark, seven women denounced Kirsten Sørensdatter for witchcraft in 1621, and claimed that she was their 'admiral and master'.[73] In the North Berwick trial of Euphame McCalzean, 1591, a man is said to be her 'admerall and m[aiste]r'.[74] The same string of words is used both places, a fact which points to oral transfer. The evidence is far stronger than had it just been a single word which appeared in both places. An 'officer' or 'Oberst' occurs in other European witchcraft cases as a leader's title, but the word is not connected to the sea, as admiral is.[75]

Another language usage found in both areas is the name of a meeting place for witches at a field. The accused in Finnmark confessed to witches' gatherings at 'Balduolden', while in Scotland they had met at 'the Ball Ley'.[76] In seventeenth-century Norway 'Ball', could be written 'Ball', 'Bald' or 'Bal'; all were pronounced in the same way. (Today the toponym is written 'ball'.) The second part of the word may surface as 'Volden/ Uolden/ Vollen/ Uollen'. The word denotes an open field, a slope, or just a piece of land. Today this word in Norwegian is written 'voll' and in Danish 'vold'. In Norway, meanwhile, most earlier place-names ending in 'ld' have changed to 'll'.

Now note the meanings of this word in Scotland: seventeenth-century Scots orthography was not standardized either. 'Ball' was 'Ball', but 'Ley' took many forms: 'lee', 'ley', 'lay' are closest. The Scots 'Ball Ley' denotes a piece of

73 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 6, fol. 27r. A similar image is found in Sweden, see Lars Manfred Svenungsson, *Rannsakningarna om trolldom i Bohuslän 1669–1672* (Uddevalla, 1970), pp. 59, 89.

74 Cf. National Archives of Scotland, JC2/2, fol. 224r; Cf. Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 169, 262.

75 In German sources 'Die Oberste' is mentioned related to a leader of a group of alleged witches for instance in the trial against Susanna Gretchen Sundtgen zu Fell, 1588, Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz, 211/ no. 2222, fols 8 and 9.

76 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 261–263; Liv H. Willumsen, *Witches of the North: Scotland and Finnmark* (Leiden, 2013), p. 183; Arne Kruse and Liv H. Willumsen, 'Ordet Ballvollen knytt til transnasjonal overføring av idéar' [The word Ballvollen related to transnational transference of ideas], *Historisk Tidsskrift*, b. 93, no. 3 (2014), pp. 407–423.

grassland, used for games and sports. Hence the Norwegian scribe, to render a name he heard within the orthography he knew, had one option for 'ball' but several for the rest of the word. Thirdly, the comparison: it is the particular meaning of the first syllable that makes the word interesting. 'Ball' is literally a ball to throw, as has been argued by a Norwegian toponymist.[77] He, however, did not know the connection to Scotland, nor the use of 'Ball Ley' in Scottish and Orkney seventeenth-century witch trials, with their famous ball-play, so he failed to link together the whole North and Norwegian Seas. So my argument cites the similarity of sounds, as well as the similarity of meaning in two countries connected with another by just one man, Cunningham. Norwegians and Danes listened to Scots. The migrant word was pronounced in a Finnmark courtroom by the District Governor himself.

Probably Cunningham knew from Scotland that witches met at the Ball Ley. He came from Fife, not far from North Berwick and the first tremendous hunts, in the 1590s. He had lived in Denmark since 1603, and knew Danish well. I think he used this word in an interrogation in 1621, two years after he came to Finnmark. He probably translated Ball Ley into Danish to ask, had a woman met other witches at Baldvolden. The scribe sat struggling to get all words down on paper. So 'Balduolden' entered the Finnmark records, via an oral exchange. The name is devoid of local sense, as neither in the seventeenth century nor today is there a place near Vardø called Ballvollen. In Germany, witches met, supposedly, at a 'Tanzenplatz'.[78] In Scotland and Finnmark they met at a place for sports and ball-games. The Scottish notion that the witches met at a field near the village, not at a witches' mountain, is found in Finnmark just temporarily during the early 1620s, when Cunningham was in position to influence the trials. Thus semantically and phonetically, the Finnmark court records point not to the continent but to Scotland.

To exemplify the oral features I will now turn to one separate case. Karen Edisdatter was the first woman accused in the 1620–21 panic. She was an unmarried Sami, a maid, from the fishing village of Omgang, about two hours by boat from Vardø. First testimonies raised *maleficium*, causing sickness. A more serious accusation linked Karen to Abraham Nielsen, who disappeared from a boat and drowned, after having threatened to hit Karen's fiancé on the

77 Nils Hallan, 'Balvolden (Baluolden)', *Hålogymminne*, 14, pp. 276–287.

78 For instance trial against Eva Zeihen, Greth Schlossel, and Greth Kettern from Kenn and Kirsch, 1572, Bibliotek des Bischöflichen Priesterseminars Trier, Handschrift 30, fols 317v and 325v.

mouth.[79] The interrogation moved towards demonology. Karen, tried by water, floated like a bob.[80] Afterwards she confessed

> that she was far too *involved with the evil Devil* [...] *The first time she was involved with the Devil* was when she was but a lass and was tending herds in the fields. A heaviness came over her near a hill, and presently a big headless man came to her asking her whether she was asleep. She said, *I am neither asleep nor awake*. In his hand, he was holding a large ring of keys *which he offered her*, saying, If you accept these keys, *all you wish to undertake in this world will come to pass*. She noticed he had a beautiful ribbon and she said, Give me that ribbon, I do not know how to use the keys. She got her ribbon, and *when she reached home, she became demented*, and *since then*, she confessed, the Devil has always been with her, unless the minister was present.[81] [*Chapter author's italics*]

The pact is crucial. The confession features a narrative of temptation, as in numerous other witchcraft confessions, where the devil offers his victim something to become his servant and hold part of his kingdom on earth. The devil's offers of money or gifts are frequent in witchcraft confessions, as is his reassurance that she who enters into the pact should lack nothing.[82] Also the topos of confusion after the pact is frequently found in the Finnmark confessions.[83] Oral features are strong in Karen's confession, for instance additive structures like 'and presently', 'and she said', 'and she went home', all Ong's markers.[84] There is a clear linear progression, emphasizing the order of events, for example 'The first time she was involved with the Devil' and 'since then'. The dialogue with the devil enlivens the narrative and draws attention to the context, which is oral. There is a clear exit point, much as in oral tales: 'when

79 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 6, fol. 11v.

80 The procedure of the water ordeal consisted of throwing the accused person into the sea with his or her hands and feet tied. Water, which was considered a sacred element, was thought to repel evil, so the suspect's rising to the surface and floating, was an indication of guilt. Sinking was a sign of innocence. Cf. Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials in Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 15.

81 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 6, fol. 12rv.

82 In Scottish sources the formulation is often 'never want'. Cf. Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 102, 169, 247.

83 I have not seen this feature often mentioned in trials from Norway, Scotland or Germany.

84 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 36–75.

she reached home'. Resonance with traditional Norwegian folk tales surfaces, for example in the expression 'neither asleep nor awake'.[85]

This confession suggests fusion between traditional folk belief and new demonological ideas, on both structural and semantic levels. The pact with the devil clearly evinces new demonological ideas, from abroad. Karen confirmed her confession, denounced two other women, and was sentenced to the stake. Traces of orality are visible firstly in the structure of the narrative, secondly in the stock phrasing, thirdly in the oral-style mnemonic practices, fourthly in memory-signs, fifthly in connection to traditional oral tales, sixthly in repetition of very similar phrases. All these devices which Karen uses reflect bonds with spoken language. Although her confession is in indirect discourse, the accurate scribe keeps its oral features intact. The strong oral features taken down initially survive in the reported speech. This signals the expertise of the recorder, whose task it was to give a detailed account of what was said. In order to make the text cohere, he has probably added words, but the contents, I sustain, are Karen's own.

The trial itself, lasting just one day, seems to have left the scribe unmoved. Whether torture was applied beforehand is unclear; it was not legal before the sentence. Afterwards it was allowed, to get names of accomplices. Therefore torture seldom surfaces in the court records. The water ordeal, however, not regarded as torture, was recorded openly, as in Karen's case. Recording the confession, the scribe used no distancing devices, neither irony nor sympathetic words. So he must have shared with his fellow officers the prevalent fear of witchcraft. He has been listening to a very dramatic set of speeches, leading to a terrible conclusion. And yet he, the hearer, the writer, keeps calm and professional. His equanimity is no surprise, given institutional practices. Judicial routine and appetite for structure seem to have overwhelmed any urge to reveal emotion.

Consolidation of Demonological Ideas in the 1650s

To judge from the confessions, by the second panic (1652 to 1653), knowledge of demonological ideas seems more established. Thirteen women were burned during this panic.[86] A new District Governor, Jørgen Friis, was installed in 1651.

85 Cf. The Norwegian fairy tale 'Ikke kjørende og ikke ridende' [Not driving and not riding], Peter Chr. Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, *Norske folkeeventyr* 2 [Norwegian folk tales] (Oslo, 1983), pp. 47–48. Originally published 1841–44.

86 Three death sentences were given in February and March 1652, and ten similarly from January till March 1653. Cf. Willumsen, *Steilneset: Memorial to the Victims of the Finnmark Witchcraft Trials*, pp. 61–73.

FIGURE 1.4 *Vardøhus Castle.*
Watercolour by Hans H. Lilienskiold. Archive: Finnmark County Library.

The next year a panic arose, perhaps because of him. The witchcraft fires, usually in winter, must have been spectacular. Darkness, snow, frozen ground, howling wind, storms, shipwrecks – surrounded the women brought to the execution place at Steilneset.[87] They had endured long weeks in 'the witches' hole', at Vardøhus Castle. (The seventeenth-century fortress appears in Figure 1.4, a watercolour made at the end of the seventeenth century by Regional Governor Hans H. Lilienskiold.) There must have been fear everywhere, everyone wondering who would be denounced next.

The women were accused of raising storms, causing two shipwrecks and damaging Vardø, and of preventing fish from coming in-shore, ruining the

87 Steilneset, which etymologically means a headland where persons were executed by means of 'steile og hjul'. This was a method of execution using a heavy *hjul*, a wheel, which crushed the knuckles of the victim. Then the parts of the body were put on display on a stick, *steile*, which often had a wheel placed horizontally at the top, where the parts of the body were put. Steilneset is today the location of a memorial commemorating the victims of the Finnmark witchcraft trials, Steilneset Memorial, opened June 2011. See Reidun L. Andreassen & Liv H. Willumsen, eds., *Steilneset Memorial: Art Architecture History* (Stamsund, 2014).

catch.[88] The panic had two winter waves, the first lasting from January 1652 until February 1652, and the second lasting from December 1652 until March 1653. Bodelle Danielsdatter was the second woman accused in this panic. A married woman from Vadsø, she was denounced by the first accused, Gundelle Omundsdatter, at Vardøhus on 24 January 1652, for wrecking a Bergen merchant ship. After confession, Gundelle was transported to Vadsø, where her death sentence was passed on 5 February 1652. The same day, Bodelle Danielsdatter was imprisoned in Vadsø and interrogated. She confessed, then retracted. She was then brought to Vardøhus Castle and put before the court again on 23 February, where once more she repudiated her confession. As the accused had to confirm a confession before sentence, 'it was found, in view of her previous confession, given of her own accord before worthy people, that she should be interrogated under torture'.[89] Such entries are unusual. Here the argument for torture seems to be her previous confession before certain dignitaries, probably the jury. Most torture took place at Vardøhus, so torture was decided upon after her arrival there. Five days later, Bodelle was brought before the court again, at Vardøhus; this time she confessed 'willingly'.[90] Witchcraft trial records often contain such formulae after documented use of torture: 'she confessed of her own free will' or 'she confessed without torture'. So, even when no torture is recorded, such expressions suggest that torture had first been used. The voice of Bodelle Danielsdatter is recorded in the records in this way, as seen in Figure 1.5:

> Now the said Bodelle is once again brought before the court, and *she willingly upholds her first confession*, in the sense that she says that what Gundelle has said about her is true. She initially *learned witchcraft* from Kierstenn, Niels Pedersenn's wife in Waadtzøe, who gave it to her *in a drink*, and she says that *her apostle is called Belsebou*, and she first *tried out such crafts* on her own sheep, which then burst asunder. Item, last autumn, *in the likeness of a swan*, she went *with the others*, namely Mette who was in the likeness of a raven, Wilanndt's wife Baarnne, in the likeness of a goose, Bergite the wife of Little Jffuer from Eckerøe, and the said Gundelle, to *cast a spell on the ship* belonging to Captain Jonn Jonnsenn from Bergenn, which was lost at sea, all *because of Lauridtz Braas*, because

88 Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord*, pp. 29–31.

89 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 8, fo. 65r.

90 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 8, fo. 65v.

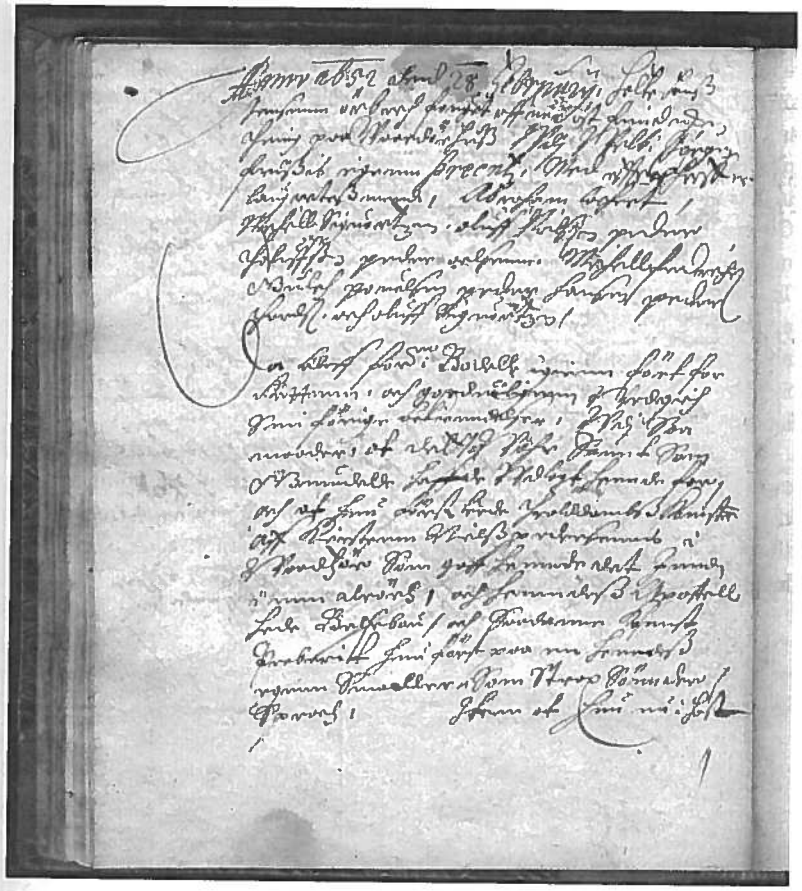

FIGURE 1.5 *Court records of the trial of Bodelle Danielsdatter, Vardøhus, Finnmark, 1652. Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 8, fol. 65v.*

> he was always cursing and quarrelling with her and her husband. After such confessions from the said Bodelle Danielsdatr herself, Bailiff Hans Jennsenn Ørbech put to the court that she should be punished with loss of life in fire at the stake. [*Chapter author's italics*][91]

91 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 8, fols 65v–66r.

This brief confession contains key demonological notions. The motif of a pact with the devil by means of food or drink given by a female mentor appears often in Finnmark records. This idea also appears in other parts of Scandinavia, in Germany, and in Scotland. So does testing the newly acquired art on an animal. Similarly the idea of persuading an 'apostle', a personal demon, to join her in acts of mischief, is often found in Finnmark. Then there is metamorphosis. Often Finnmark's alleged witches confess to shaping as befitted the environment and the operation's intent, even becoming a whale to overturn a boat. The names of assorted birds also colour the narrative. Those mentioned here appear in the area. Swans summer in Finnmark, as do geese. (See figures 1.6 and 1.7 for watercolours by Hans H. Lilienskiold.) Ravens were also found there. Swans and ravens also inhabit Norwegian fairy tales, albeit recorded at a much later date.

In the panic, new names led to the imprisonment of new suspects and to swift escalation. The panic must be seen against the economic conditions at the time, with fishermen chronically indebted to Bergen merchants and to their agents up the coast. Bodelle's confessed revenge motive, a quarrel with local factors, points to social inequality and economic stress.

FIGURE 1.6 *Domen Witch Mountain outside Vardø.*
Watercolour by Hans H. Lilienskiold. Archive: Finnmark County Library.

FIGURE 1.7 *About the Taxes.*
Watercolour by Hans H. Lilienskiold. Archive: Finnmark County Library.

Bodelle Danielsdatter's confession was more purely demonological than Karen Edisdatter's in 1620. Like hers, it is very oral. It is especially additive, using 'and' to link sentences. The confession is marked by linearity, using time markers such as 'now', 'initially', 'first', 'last autumn', and 'after'. In a more scriptual fashion, however, it also has subordinating grammatical structures to signal cause-and-effect connections: *first* witchcraft was learned, *then* it was tried out on an animal and death occurred *as a consequence* [*Chapter author's italics*].

Bodelle's demonology bore the marks of rapid oral contagion. Her demon, for instance, Belsebou, was internationally known.[92] The name, of Hebrew origin, means 'Lord of the Flies'.[93] Demons in Finnmark trials bore a mix of international and local names.[94] Moreover, Bodelle's motif of flight was an import. Confessing to all these elements, she drew on her own knowledge of witchcraft. Interrogated soon after she was imprisoned, she most probably knew these ideas already. Such courtroom stories had an oral starting point, as is documented for instance in Scotland.[95] Orality moved ideas both into and out of court. Many inhabitants attended court sessions, and probably relayed demonological ideas to the world outside.

Bodelle shared the fate of many others: 'The said Bodelle Danielsdatter [...] delivered herself from God unto the Devil and by means of his craft caused the wrecking of Captain Jon Jonsen's ship, the court finds she is to be sentenced to loss of life by fire at the stake'.[96] Here we hear the voice of the representative of the law, his discourse formal. Weight is put on Bodelle's allegiance to the devil and on the devil's capacity to transfer his evil power to human beings.

92 Cf. Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord*, p. 31.

93 It is also known in Arabic, Greek and Latin. Beelzebub was a Semitic deity worshipped in the Philistine city of Ekron. In later Christian and Biblical sources, he appears as a demon and the name of one of the seven princes of Hell.

94 Cf. Willumsen, *Trollkvinne i nord*, p. 31.

95 In an Orkney witchcraft trial from 1643, as part of her confession, Barbara Bowndie said, referring to a story with demonological content known among the populace, that it was eleven years since 'The dancers of Munes' were first spoken of. Cf. Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', p. 169; Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, pp. 186, 194, 196.

96 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 8, fol. 66r.

Additional Demonological Ideas in the 1660s

The last Finnmark witchcraft panic was the most severe. It lasted from November 1662 until April 1663, again in the dark of winter. This final spasm executed 20 women.[97] Also six small girls were accused of witchcraft during this panic. New demonological ideas surfaced. The precision of the sources permits us to say when these latest witchcraft ideas first came into circulation and when they were retold in the court-room. Thus the Finnmark sources testify to the speed of oral transfer of ideas in general. Adam Fox, using court records to study the oral transmission of news, proved that among the lower social orders of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, news spread rapidly across networks.[98] Likewise in Finnmark, where the ideas first spread among women jailed at Vardøhus Castle, and later diffused across communities. Witchcraft lore seemingly spread like gossip; it was easily accessible and of broad public interest.

The new ideas were brought to the North by a learned couple, Ambrosius and Anne Friedrichsdatter Rhodius. The husband and wife, considered subversive, were first imprisoned at Akershus Castle in Norway's capital,[99] and then transferred to Vardøhus.[100] Anne Rhodius was the granddaughter of the king's physician; Ambrosius Rhodius was a physician and astrologist from Germany. The couple was well acquainted with the ideas of demonology. At Vardøhus, they were incarcerated in a house within the castle walls. From the start, Anne Rhodius had much contact with women imprisoned for witchcraft, and later also with imprisoned children.[101] The Rhodius couple arrived in May 1662. Next October, the first suspect of the third panic was imprisoned.

We know exactly what was said by Anne Rhodius and how she influenced adults and children, from records from the Court of Appeal, from its summer

97 After this panic only three persons lost their lives during the witch-hunt in Finnmark.

98 Adam Fox, 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, 11 (3) (1997), pp. 597–620.

99 The capital of Norway, nowadays Oslo, was then called Christiania.

100 Willumsen, 'Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Trials in Scotland and Northern Norway', pp. 212–214.

101 It was most likely that at least one of the small girls imprisoned for witchcraft, Maren Olsdatter, was placed in the same house as the Rhodius couple. See Liv H. Willumsen, 'Children Accused of Witchcraft', p. 23; Kirsten Bergh, 'Til ild og bål', *Vardøhus festning 650 år*, ed. by G.I. Willoch (Oslo, 1960), pp. 126–144, at p. 135.

1663 sessions at Vardoe.[102] The reason is that there are sources written down later than the witchcraft trials in local court that retrospectively throw light on Anne Rhodius's influence on adults and children accused of witchcraft during the early 1660s. First, there are the records from the Court of Appeal, from its summer 1663 sessions at Vardoe, just a few months after the severe panic was finished.[103] When questioned by the Court-of-Appeal Judge, adult women confessed that Anne Rhodius threatened them with the rack and being burned with hot irons, if they did not confess to having practised witchcraft. Even the accused children were threatened that they would be tortured, if they did not confess, and they were instructed by Anne Rhodius what the name of their devil was and where on their bodies they had the devil's mark. One of the small girls, Sigri Pedersdatter, 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 God's child and Anne Rhodius would then have her as her own child, therefore, it was better she confessed.[104] Also the other children confessed in the Court of Appeal that Anne Rhodius had led them astray, to lie about their parents, saying that they had learned witchcraft from their mothers.[105] The six small girls accused of witchcraft during the 1662–63 panic were all acquitted by the Court-of-Appeal Judge in summer 1663.

We have further information from the local court in 1666, when Ambrosius Rhodius entered a plea to have his wife cleared of suspicion of influencing witchcraft suspects.[106] These records reveal that Anne Rhodius had contact with the imprisoned adults and children during the 1662–63 panic. She had a key to the 'witches' hole', where most of the suspected women were imprisoned, she helped with medical examination of the women, and she even assisted when one of the imprisoned women delivered a child.[107] It seems that Anne Rhodius had plenty of opportunity to influence the children about what to confess. The bailiff said: 'It may well be that the late Rev. Herr Hans, as well as myself, interrogated Peder Oelsen's daughter, at the District Governor's orders, *though never the way Magister Rhodius's Anne tried to persuade her*, something

102 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court records of Court of Appeal 1647–83, fols 152–157.

103 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court records of Court of Appeal 1647–83, fols 152–157.

104 Willumsen, 'Children Accused of Witchcraft', p. 30.

105 Willumsen, 'Children Accused of Witchcraft', pp. 24, 30–32.

106 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 11, fols 96v–114r.

107 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 11, fol. 103v.

that may be confirmed by the said Peder Oelsen's daughter who is still alive, as well as by the Appeal Court Judge's passed sentences' [*Chapter author's italics*].[108] Both documents throw light on Anne Rhodius's activity within the walls of the Castle before and during the panic. The sources portray her as keen to coax adults and children to confess to demonological ideas.

The new demonological ideas made much of the mother-daughter relationship. Of the imprisoned six girls, we learn the age of two; one twelve, the other eight. Among the new ideas were child-sacrifices to the devil by mothers, the devil's mark, the devil as impregnator, and difficulty of jettisoning the Evil One once he found a foothold in a family. One girl, Ingeborg Iversdatter, spoke about her sister Karen and herself, saying '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*' [*Chapter author's italics*].[109] Also, the idea that a mother taught her eldest daughter witchcraft, appeared.[110] Barbra Olsdatter confessed in April 1663 'that she taught her own eldest daughter the craft about two months ago'.[111] She then denounced Gjertrud Siversdatter for the same, saying that 'Giertrud allegedly taught her own eldest daughter witchcraft'.[112] Both these sentences appear in Barbra's long, fluent confession, and so not seem to be the result of leading questions. The first confession, about teaching her own daughter, comes after a confession of how she herself entered a pact with the devil, ratified by the devil's 'pinching her with his claws on her left thigh'.[113] This stamp was exhibited in court. Barbra was given a god called Isach, and tried her craft on her dog, 'giving it the craft in a piece of fish, whereupon it burst asunder and died'.[114] The other sentence, against Gjertrud, is also

108 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 11, fol. 105r.

109 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 257v.

110 For instance Nicolas Remy, *Demonolatry* (London 1970), chapter 3. Originally published 1595.

111 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 267v.

112 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 268r.

113 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 267r.

114 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 267v.

inserted in a part of Barbra's confession, where Barbra tells how 'they set off and conjured up the storm from the Castle to the ship'.[115] The whole confession has clear oral features. Barbra's tale of teaching daughters witchcraft seems not to have been a response to leading questions, but comes embedded in her discourse, as if she knew these notions before the trial started. She acquired them within the year, after Anne Rhodius came to Vardøhus. Thus, ideas first were first brought within the walls of Vardøhus by Anne Rhodius, to imprisoned women, and then confessed by the same women, then spread in the community, and finally confessed by local women, never before imprisoned, who were brought straight to court, all this in the course of less than one year.

The idea that a pregnant woman carried a devil foetus came to the fore in a conversation Anne Rhodius had with Ragnilde Endresdatter. Ragnilde, pregnant when first imprisoned, gave birth in prison. Anne Rhodius tried to make Ragnilde confess to witchcraft. First, she threatened her, evoking every conceivable form of torture. Ragnilde answered, the record says, 'then I must lie about myself so that my life will end when I give birth to my child. Then the answer she got from Anne Rhodius was, *you are carrying not a child but a Devil*' [*Chapter author's italics*].[116] Nowhere else in the Finnmark material does this notion surface. The allegation smacks of Anne Rhodius's brush with learning. Ragnilde escaped the flames; she had her case brought to the Court of Appeal, in Vardoe, in the summer of 1663. The records do not tell how this happened. At the Court of Appeal she was acquitted.[117]

These new ideas about witchcraft spread rapidly. It took less than half a year from when the ideas were launched among prisoners at Vardøhus until they were recounted in court by others. However, this dissemination was not restricted to the Castle area alone. The ideas spread widely around Vardø as well, as several suspects lived in neighbouring villages and were imprisoned close to home. The ideas quickly reached common people near Vardøhus. For instance, the younger sister of Ingeborg Iversdatter, Karen Iversdatter, who lived in Vadsø, was imprisoned there. Karen also knew a range of witchcraft ideas:

115 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 268r.

116 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–68, fol. 155.

117 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–68, fol. 157; Willumsen, *The Witchcraft Trials of Finnmark, Northern Norway*, p. 257.

> 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 Satan 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 Satan 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.[118]

Karen Iversdatter, not more than eight years old, knew 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 of promising the devil her service. She also knew about shape-shifting, the naming of other suspects, and an imagined plot against the District Governor. All this suggests that demonological ideas were known in the fishing villages, among not only adults but children, who seem to have learned just as fast.[119] Karen Iversdatter confessed to having practised witchcraft against the District Governor together with adults:

> She also confesses that she went to Waardøhuus Castle a short while back, and *then she was in the likeness of a crow*, together with *the bell ringer's wife*, also from here, and *a lass ibidem, by the name of Elen*, who at the time was staying with big Per Gundersen in Andersbye, and a woman from Echerøen whom she does not know. And she maintains that *they, too, were attired as crows*. She believes *their intention was to kill the District Governor with pins, all except for her, for she had none*, and it was night. They could not accomplish their deed, as the District Governor often listened to God's word and was very God-fearing. So they each went their separate ways again. [*Chapter author's italics.*][120]

118 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 252r.

119 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 252r.

120 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fols. 252r–252v.

Karen Iversdatter was apparently aware of the seriousness of a confession, that it endangered those denounced. She told how Nils the transport purveyor's wife came to her in Nils Pedersen's cottage in the likeness of a crow, and forbade her to confess anything at all:[121]

> She also gives an account of how the said transport purveyor's wife came to her last summer, in the likeness of a white bird, and asked her to go with her from the said Andersbye up onto a mountain. *She refused*, but she [*the transport purveyor's wife*] took her with her anyway and then *she, too, was attired as a bird*, and there were many other people there in their various shapes, people she did not know, and they were drinking beer poured out for them from a pitcher by the wicked Satan, *but she did not get any*. [*Chapter author's italics.*][122]

Just like one of the other girls, in her confession Karen Iversdatter touches upon sexual relations with the devil: 'She also confesses how the wicked Satan, in the likeness of a medium-sized, black man, came to her in Wadtzøe, when her mother was there, and slept with her in the animal shed one night.'[123] It is unclear whether 'her' refers to the girl or to the mother. The many notions recounted by this small girl, who lived in Vadsø, and was brought before the court in Vadsø, help argue for rapid transfer of demonological notions. Karen confessed to both new ideas, like learning from her mother and the devil's mark, and older notions, like the appearance of the devil and getting an apostle of her own.

Oral transmission suggests the importance of a carrier. Clearly, the activity of one person was often crucial for the spread of new ideas. As for the children, it turns out that Anne Rhodius had trained them in memorizing particular demonological ideas, for instance, that they should know where they had their devil's mark.[124] This came clear when the Judge of Appeal questioned the children in June 1663, and it became clear that Anne Rhodius had manipulated

121 Orig.: 'Schydtzschaffer'; a public servant responsible for providing means of transport for the gentry.

122 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 252v.

123 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 252v.

124 Ibid.

them in many ways.[125] Other small girls were influenced by Anne Rhodius. One of them was Kirsten Sørensdatter, the daughter of Gjertrud Siversdatter, mentioned above, denounced by Barbra Olsdatter for joining the plot against the District Governor:

> Likewise the aforementioned Barbra confesses that when she was with the large crowd of witches at the Castle, before the District Governor and his young woman sailed in to Wadtzøen, the said Giertrud and her daughter were allegedly amongst those who wanted to cast a spell on His Honour. But since His Honour always feared God so much, they had no power over him.[126]

In retrospect, through the confession of Sigri Pedersdatter at the Court of Appeal, we learn that Anne Rhodius tried to teach Kirsten Sørensdatter several points to retell when interrogated. Anne Rhodius had also put little Kirsten on her lap and asked her if the devil was with her. The girl said no. Then Anne Rhodius asked Kirsten what was the name of Sigri's god, and Kirsten answered: it was Isach. Then Anne Rhodius asked Kirsten what mark Sigri had, and she answered that she did not know where Sigri's mark was, but her own was on her right arm. Apparently, Kirsten Sørensdatter had confessed that she had learned witchcraft from her mother. Then the court asked after Anne Rhodius's influence on the children, and she was fetched to counter the accused persons:

> Likewise, the said M. Rodius's wife, Anne Fredrichsdatter, asked Sørenn Christensen's oldest daughter Kiersten, who is currently at the Castle, whether she [*Anne Fredrichsdatter*] ever coaxed her into lying about her own mother or anybody else. Whereupon she [*Kiersten*] denies this; she has not done so in any way, merely urging her to be guided by the truth and to say what is true.[127]

In the case of Kirsten Sørensdatter and her mother, the husband played an active part, 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

125 Regional State Archives of Trondheim, Court Records of the Court of Appeal for Nordland and Finnmark 1647–68, fols 152–157.

126 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fols 268r–268v.

127 Regional State Archives of Tromsø, the Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate, no. 10, fol. 269v.

the rumour and good name of his wife. At this session, Kirsten admitted that Anne Rhodius had led her to lie about her parents.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that oral transfer of demonological ideas from learned persons to peasants took place during the seventeenth-century Finnmark witchcraft trials. In an early phase of the witch-hunt, demonological ideas circulated in Finnmark's settlements and fused with already-known popular narratives. On linguistic grounds it might be argued that structural similarities between demonological and traditional narratives facilitated this assimilation. These older mental structures may have eased the memorizing process. When imprisoned and interrogated, the accused retold the narratives they had heard about the devil, the witches' gatherings, and the pact. Stories about the devil had a narrative structure. They attached easily to structures that linked them to folk beliefs. Many traits of the confessions – their demonological content, their length, their rich details, and their language – all testify to an assimilation of demonological notions in the local communities and a retelling of such ideas before the court. This retelling indicated that the ideas were already known by the accused before the interrogation started. The personalized character of the confessions support this argument; each of the accused knew the demonological notions and retold them in an individual way. Prominent oral features in the confessions indicate fusions between traditional and demonological narratives; the same holds true for vernacular words.

The Finnmark witchcraft trials documents two types of oral transfer of ideas. Firstly, oral transfer of demonological ideas may have taken place within the walls of Vardøhus Castle, among suspects held for long periods. This transmission was swift. Nothing in the sources suggests that the transfer happened during the trial itself. Even if leading questions were asked, these were short, the record shows, and directed towards certain demonological points to be answered, while the answers were long and comprehensive.

However, while an oral transfer of notions among imprisoned witchcraft suspects was quick, learned ideas about witchcraft were known not only among prisoners, but also in the areas round about Vardøhus. A contagion of new witchcraft ideas and their retelling in a trial took only a few months. Ideas most probably spread from judicial officials to the populace by transmission of information from the local courts, where many people from the local communities attended. Also events like the water ordeal and the burnings attracted

many spectators and helped ideas to spread, particularly since peasants were ordered to attend. Moreover, preaching must have fostered the transmission of demonological ideas in a Lutheran, post-Reformation area.

With regard to the two modes of reading of court records mentioned, the Finnmark court records give comprehensive and fluent information about the witchcraft trials. Meanwhile, the records can be analysed using a narratological approach, focusing on the role of the scribe, textual structures, and accused persons' voices. Then various accents come to the fore. In the Finnmark witchcraft records, the voice of the scribe very rarely can be heard through comments. His voice seems withdrawn. But the scribe is accurate in rendering questions posed by the District Governor and the bailiff during the interrogation, as well as the answers. The confessions by the accused persons are rendered with a strong oral accent, with regard to contents as well as form. Individualizing features distinguish the persons' voices from one another, creating diversity, resulting in separate versions of an original story. These features suggest that the scribe has tried to preserve the individual touch. Repetitions might occur during one confession, for the scribe was following the oral presentation.

This essay has concentrated on the voices of the accused. The proliferation of demonological notions in confessions during the witch-hunt argues that oral transfer of ideas about witchcraft was central. However, the other voices heard during the trials, like the voice of the law and the voices of the witnesses, are rendered in an authentic way as well. So there was an oral accent in the records as a whole. They are not constructed by the scribe to content the governors alone, but to attempt to deliver a correct transcript, rendering the discourse of learned and lay persons alike. In all this investigation, oral history enriches our understanding.