

Discussion of the Papers by Paul K. Monod and Will Pooley

Paul K. Monod (PKM): Thanks so much for those remarks—I appreciate them very deeply. I think you’ve very clearly understood what I wrote, and I can’t really add much to what you’ve said.

Rebecca Spang (RS): What about the question of periodization? Do we want to periodize?

PKM: I am a bit of a maniac when it comes to periodization.

Nush Powell (NP): A monomaniac? [Laughter]

PKM: Well, to put it a little differently, I don’t think that periodization can ever be fully justified because there are always things that happen on either side of the divide that are significant. People didn’t wake up in 1789 or 1800 and decide that we live in a different era. But I do think that historians are obliged to make certain breaks. Otherwise, we’re just writing continuous history, which doesn’t really work. And I think there is a break at the end of the eighteenth century, and it comes with the French Revolution and the wars against France with virtually every other country—which stimulates reactions. And it stimulates reactions in the field of magic as well. A lot of the themes that I was talking about become even more twisted and take on a different character of almost ideological pleading. And I’m thinking here of the prophetesses that arose in France in the 1790s, who were enlisted on the one side to justify the French Revolution and by Royalists on the other side to denounce the Revolution, but who had to occupy a much more public role than they would have if they emerged ten years earlier. Something of the same sort is happening in Britain, in Germany, and in other parts of Europe as well. People who are interested in magic suddenly had to fit in a set of facts that didn’t fit with anyone’s sense of how the world was unfolding, and that does produce new reactions.

And it does produce a much more secularized judicial system, at least in France, and one that can produce the type of psychologizing that you can see in Will’s essay. There isn’t a lot of attempt at psychologizing in the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century justice is usually a negotiation between the accused, who is usually lower-class, and the judge, who is usually upper-class. And that negotiation is not an attempt to read the mind of the accused. It’s a much more basic type of negotiation: how can I get out of this, on the one hand, and how can I trap you into admitting your guilt? But by the nineteenth century, you have a much broader understanding of psychology, and an attempt in court to bring that psychology to bear. I’ve actually written about this in Britain, and I think it may have come out of the reporting on criminal cases. A lot of the reporting on criminal cases takes the form of dialogues—not between prosecutors and defense attorneys but between the judge, the prosecuting attorneys, and the accused. I suspect that might have turned into the type of psychologizing that you find in nineteenth-century France. But I think Will might be able to answer that question himself...

Will Pooley (WP): Let me thank Rebecca first for the comments as well. If any of you don't know, there's a wonderful book by Owen Davies that came out this year about supernatural beliefs in the asylum—it's a really great book. I think the question of period is one that we have to tackle right from the start. I was just noting how many of the papers focus on that turning point at the end of the eighteenth century. It does seem like there is something important happening then. I would say that period has dogged me for such a long time because if you work on magic and witchcraft, you will constantly find people accusing you of being an early modernist! People always take my topic to be period specific. To give a counterexample, there's a book by a Finnish historian, Laura Stark, about magic and the body, and it has "early modern" in the title but its source material goes into the twentieth century! So she's decided to embrace that very long early modern period.

I'm very chary of chronologies in the history of magic, and I put some brief comments at the start of the paper about this because I get worried about the legalistic. I think it's very easy to imagine that the contours of the history of magic—the actual practices, what people think, what they're doing—follow the legal system in some meaningful way. There are many candidates for the last witch trial in Europe. We can decide when this occurs using the legislation against witchcraft—but there continue to be people prosecuted for witchcraft under different legislation in France in the nineteenth century. I have a lot of suspicion of allowing, say, decriminalization of witchcraft or the criminalization of fraudulence, which happens around the same time in many contexts, to dictate how we think about the contours of the history, even though that is what I've ended up doing in my project. I suppose the other option, which Paul's paper touches on nicely, is the historiography of Catholicism, because that's a historiography where there's so much on resurgence. There's this wonderful work on French Catholicism, and a lot of it is about things that people don't associate with the twentieth century, things that just come back and come back. So continuities but also resurgence.

When we get to questions of periodization, I always want to say "things change, don't they?" But every time we settle on specific timelines, again, as Paul's paper was showing, they don't work for many geographical contexts—and I also don't think they work on the level that matters for people actually living in these situations. I put the example in my paper of my favorite, Jean-Joseph Lenfer, and he's there in the 1790s saying to the revolutionary authorities, "You've changed the law! You've got to let me out of prison!" And he's wrong—I think he was still guilty even though the law had changed. But there's that sense, on the personal level, that he thinks the law has changed. So sometimes even continuity can be shocking.

RS: Questions? Comments? Andrei.

Andrei Molotiu (AM): I have a long comment, if I may. I was trying to put some things together, so I don't know if I have a question. And they come primarily from Will's discussion of laughter—which I loved. To begin with, the trial scenes you were discussing sound like something from Flaubert. Even the way the judge was trying to play with the public, it seemed

like something from Flaubert, in character. But the closest parallel I could think of was the rise of laughter at the Paris salon. In the nineteenth century, increasingly, the response of the audience was laughter, in regard to things they don't like—as opposed to criticizing it. I don't really know of any eighteenth-century responses to art that were laughter—but certainly by the 1860s, we know for example that Manet was very much hurt by the fact that people went to see his paintings only to laugh at them.

So there is this connection to rise of laughter, which is sometimes seen in the context of disenchantment (or the disenchantment of the greatness of art, so to speak). This could only have happened in a post-Revolutionary, rising democratic society. It almost feels as though a response of laughter, in the courts of the eighteenth century, I don't think would have worked in the same way. It is precisely in a society where democracy is being negotiated, and where judges no longer take their authority purely from the aristocracy or the Crown but from the public themselves, where laughter can actually play. And the same is true in the salon.

But this also addresses a topic that Paul refers to at one point: the transformation of magic into entertainment. So much of what we're talking about here is actual miracles, and so on, but what's rising in the late eighteenth century is magic as performance, and all the great magicians of the nineteenth century, and of the early twentieth century, and so on. Where magic no longer actually becomes a claim of performing a miracle but more of a trick or performance. Again, this is more of any attempt to draw connections without knowing the core that holds all these things together. I think that was the main gist of my comment.

RS: Wonderful. Responses?

WP: Paul, I'd love to know what you think of laughter in the eighteenth century.

PKM: There's probably more laughter in the eighteenth century than you're suggesting—but it may be a different type of laughter. I think Voltaire was very funny...

AM: No, no, no, I was thinking more in terms of public laughter...

PKM: Yes, I think that's right. I think the idea of public laughter comes out of the idea of ridicule. And that's what seems to worry people in the nineteenth century. I do see ridicule as an eighteenth-century, maybe even a late-seventeenth-century, phenomenon. So there's a development there.

AM: Well, there's ridicule in front of other state aristocrats, but this is ridicule in terms of the wide general population.

PKM: I think that what you're identifying is that by the nineteenth century, you have a wider general population that claims to know something. And that didn't exist in the eighteenth century or in the seventeenth century. But there is laughter and ridicule among the cognoscenti and those who know—but it's just not as widespread or as broad. And that would be something that I think changes toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century.

Oh, you mentioned magic as trickery. That has a long history, but you're right, there is a new phase of it that comes into place at the end of the eighteenth century, which is that anyone can learn it. If you really put your mind to it, you'll be able to do these tricks. Books of illusions are published at the end of the eighteenth century, that allow you to act as a magician. And that becomes a mania in the nineteenth century.

RS: Paul, because of your book, I assigned some of those how-to-be-a-magician books to my Enlightenment class last semester, and they would say, "I still can't do any tricks!" [Laughter]

PKM: The instructions often would leave out something.

RS: They are incredibly opaque! But it was really fun! Will, did you want to respond?

WP: There's a couple of things I wanted to say about laughter and the criminal proceedings. The first important context is that part of the Revolutionary reform of the criminal justice system is about opening up the courts to be a public space, where the public is invited to be there to witness state justice being performed. So this is of course associated with the introduction of a jury of your peers. There's a sense that citizens should be judging other citizens in the most important crimes. And this is something that people have written about, that it becomes like theatre. And so in the early nineteenth century, I think it's a lot to do with melodrama—and there's an instance where one of the cases actually ends up as a melodrama on the stage in Paris. And so that's one bit of context that's really important about laughter.

The other thing I was going to say is that there's a colonialism aspect on this, which is really interesting. So, Robert-Houdin, the stage magician, is sent, according to his memoirs, to Algeria in the 1840s to pacify the population by performing magic for them, that will impress the magical powers of the French state on the supposedly ignorant population there—and to outdo the marabouts in their own magic. And there's a really great article by Graham Jones about that, and he says that by this logic colonial populations are not meant to understand the difference between illusions and real magic. So, there's a whole set of things going on there...

RS: So, I have Jesse and then Reva.

Jesse Molesworth (JM): This one is maybe more for you, Rebecca. I just wonder how these papers wouldn't be seen as political in nature? Is this really an "escapist" topic? I don't feel that way at all. Will, you're talking about criminal responsibility. I think you probably have a moral component to your argument. When I think of other writers on magic, I think of Theodor Adorno, who wrote on the practice of astrology in the twentieth century – there certainly was a political component to his writing on magic. So I would ask you, Will, do you feel a particular political aim or purpose to your writing?

RS: Let me just clarify, Jesse, that when I said that it was in 2017 that I thought it would be too escapist. I didn't mean to say that it was escapist. That was the feeling of the group at that

moment. So, then we didn't do it. But now after however many years it has been—seven—now it's the time for magic because it is all of these things. Will?

WP: I think the politics of the kind of magic that I'm interested in, magic that lots of ordinary people might be interested in, are very complicated. Because I don't think it would be very original to point out that a lot of the historiography on magic from the twentieth century is really overshadowed by a lot of condescension. A lot of the writers I look at from the last fifty years basically repeat what the elite at the time said about magic. It's the province of the stupid, and the ignorant, and especially women, of course. And I don't think that that's true. But I do think the problem with the politics of magic, of taking the popular sensibility toward magic seriously, is that it is not a good thing in many contexts. I write about a lot of people who were killed. I write about a lot of unhappiness. I would never pretend that the type of magic that I study is a good force in the world.

The politics for me, as someone who has always wanted to do history from below, is that we have to take people's sensibility of magic seriously and give it the same respect that we would give, say, the theology of Catholic officials. There's a value to that. And we do learn things that are quite political. I do think there are aspects of public politics that one could draw out from that popular sensibility of magic, which is very geographically different. I work in France, and within France it's completely different from one place to another.

RS: Reva?

Reva Wolf (RW): I was provoked by this idea of magic transforming into performance into the nineteenth century, and I thought how magic had been associated with performance earlier. For instance, the development of the peep show in the eighteenth century as something magical or illusionistic. I'm just throwing that out as something to think about, those connections.

RS: Richard?

Richard Nash (RN): I have a hook on Jesse's politics question. Just listening to that conversation, I wonder if it might be useful to think about the politics of magic through the question, does knowledge have a politics? Because it seems to me that so much of what we talk about with magic has to do with kinds of knowledge—public, or private, or secret. What's available and what's obscure.

RS: And I had thought, is there a chronology or a pattern as to when magic is or is not thought of as democratic or democratizing? If you think about people today who are drawn to Wicca, the idea is that it is something that they can all participate in. It's not a hierarchical body of knowledge. And you might say that some of that vaguely democratic ethos is to be found in fringe Freemasonry, where it goes into the occult. On the other hand, I think we have lots of places where magic is understood as being very hierarchical. Right, there's a magus, there's a structure of knowledge. So to think about democratic magic versus non-democratic magic—it's not exactly authoritarian magic, I don't think. It's something else...

Tili Boon Cuillé (TBC): I was really interested in something that I saw as a shift evoked in both papers. I'm very interested in the question about magic as entertainment versus illusion, which I think has to do with art and the question of aesthetics. I was unaware of the extent to which magic, sorcery, and witchcraft was associated with diabolism until I read your paper, Paul. And that continued in terms of what religion was attempting to identify—in terms of Protestants and Catholics and more polytheistic religions. And toward the end of your contribution, names like Lavater, and Gassner, and Mesmer cropped up, which I associate much more with the history of medicine. And in your contribution, Will, you mentioned shutting a door and opening a window:

After the theologians and demonologists had retreated from associating the devil with witchcraft in the eighteenth century, Satan and his sabbaths disappeared almost completely from the discussions of witchcraft in criminal trials. But when the criminal justice system closed the door to the Devil, somewhere else a window opened. That window was the medicine of the insane.

And so I was really interested in this shift that was almost imperceptible in the chronology you were tracing until you put your finger on it and said, "There. That's when it happened." So I'm hoping you could expand a bit more. Are these contemporaneous? Or co-extant? How does that transition work?

WP: Shall I go first?

PKM: Sure.

WP: So, I do think there is a consensus among early modernists, from what I understand of that scholarship, that the witch going to the Sabbath packed with devils, that that was an elite imposition on popular belief, rather than something that people actually worried about. So my thing is that that Devil, that well-organized, theologically developed Devil, with a capital "D," loses his place, as soon as you stop prosecuting witchcraft as a crime. Although I would say—and I don't think anyone has done the work—looking at eighteenth-century France, there are a lot of prosecutions in the eighteenth century. From 1683 to 1790, people are prosecuted for what would have been called "witchcraft" before 1682 but is instead called "blasphemy" or "sacrilege." But it's the same stuff. So, I think there is something going on there.

"The Devil" and "devils." There are a whole series of spirits. The terminology depends on where you are in Europe. Sometimes it gets translated as "devils" when people think about it in religious terms. A lot of it comes from the folk tradition of fairies. But also the grimoire tradition, the written tradition of invoking spirits, which is connected to the magus tradition. The "demonomania" that I trace is definitely a preview of the return to the Devil as a real threat in the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century in France, you've got people who are probably Satanists. They are actually doing Satanic rituals, and there is a lot of concern about that. I think the "demonomania" idea sets that up in a lot of ways. Does that answer your question?

TBC: Yes, but I was really interested in the shift to medicine and the extent to which one is perceived as a replacement for the other, or a stand-in for the other? Or a better explanation for the other?

WP: It's a complicated history, it really is. There's really good scholarship on this. In the witchcraft trials, lots of people always thought there was a good possibility that people were mad. And medical doctors were involved, in trying to work that out. So, there is quite a long conversation there. I used to think that first there were demonologists, and then you'd get doctors in the nineteenth century. And it's not at all that. Yes, medicine is in the ascendant—doctors become the ones to whom people turn for their expert opinion about what is going on. But it's very, very hard to say exactly when that shift is cemented. And even in the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, there are always people, including doctors—Catholic doctors—who are willing to say, “that's the work of the Devil.” It's theologically sound, in Catholicism, and there are plenty of Catholics who still believe in diabolic possession.

PKM: Very few clerics can give up the Devil in the eighteenth century. And I think not that many in the nineteenth century. They continue to think that the Devil is at least a theoretical possibility. But some of the people you mentioned, like Mesmer and Lavater, they are really utilizing a combination of traditional ideas about magic. Though Mesmer never talks about magic, he is obviously using experiences like Gassner's and combining that with a medical terminology. And many people see through it at the time. He's condemned in France by a commission appointed by Louis XVI—I think it had Benjamin Franklin on it. So, Mesmer's scientific approach is not universally acceptable, but it gains a lot of traction in various parts in Europe—in France through Puysegur, who is a disciple of Mesmer.

I don't think it's really until the nineteenth century that the medical profession is established enough to claim its own distinct body of knowledge. In the eighteenth century, it's still cobbling things together from various sources, including at times magical sources. It's very much in competition by the nineteenth century with clergyman, who were initially the friends of medicine and natural philosophy, but by the end of the eighteenth are getting much more suspicious of it. They've got to stick to the Devil. It's part of their belief. They don't necessarily believe the Devil has to be active in the world, but they have to stick at least to belief in the Devil. So you have on the one hand this continuity among the clerical profession and, on the other hand, this almost astonishing heterogeneity in medical and scientific ideas that becomes all the more complicated at the end of the eighteenth century. And then in the nineteenth century, you get professional associations, professional journals—they are beginning to sort this out. The doctors know what they accept as medicine. It's not what we might accept...

TBC: That was what I was thinking of, what they choose to accept. Because it seems to me, in this transitional moment, of religion, science, pseudo-science, and the advent of psychology—right, the power of suggestion—they are beginning to suss out what they are and are not going to accept as evidence. Or as a plausible statement.

WP: The thing is, it's not very linear. There's this moment that I write about, when the doctors are laying claim to this area as their expertise. Then in the 1850s, there's this famous poltergeist case in Normandy. I've read the court case: they get this guy who's a kind of anti-occultist, as the star, expert witness. And on the basis of his evidence, it becomes a slander case. Actually, a slander and assault case, where someone takes someone to court, for calling them a "witch" and for beating them with a stick. In fact, it is a priest who is taken to court. And the priest is let off, on the basis of the evidence of this anti-occultist, who basically says, "You need to be more careful with the Devil." And the judge agrees! So it's not at all linear. And again, at the end the nineteenth century, that's when people take the force of the Devil very seriously. So, there's a shift at the end of the nineteenth century, but I don't mean that it replaces everything that comes before.

PKM: If I could just get back to something said earlier. I think that people who are interested in magic often combine an alternative attitude—we're outside of the mainstream—with a deep desire for hierarchy. The problem is, from their point of view, that the hierarchy is something that has passed. I thought of this very much when I was reading the article on Tiepolo's *scherzi*. This really struck me, that he is also evoking this sense that magic is something that owes its authority to the very distant past, and that authority is all the more venerable because it goes so far back. The problem is the hierarchy is that of the ancient Egyptians, and it's now more or less gone. So, there is a desire for hierarchical authority, but that authority is seen as something that has passed away or is now a thing of the past.

RS: Fascinating. David?

David Brewer (DB): Perhaps I'm imposing too much of a linear path, but one of the things that's always struck me about early modern witch trials is how uniform the confessions are. Sometimes they are solicited under torture, and tortures are usually asking directed questions, but there seems to be a general contentedness on the part of magistrates and other legal authorities to say, "here's another instance of the general pattern: this person made a pact with the Devil, or went to a Sabbath, etc. etc." But, Will, what you're describing seems much more individualist. Even if Pierre Courtin is a monomaniac, the way he is a monomaniac doesn't seem as interchangeable with other monomaniacs, in the way that one witch in seventeenth-century Germany seems to be interchangeable with another. So, I'm wondering: is there more individuation in the trials you study, and if so why wouldn't the courts care more? Why wouldn't they shift from one one-size-fits-all explanation to another?

WP: I guess the first important thing to say is that they don't care, in the modern period. In theory they don't care about content, of the beliefs that people are describing. And that's the big difference from the early modern trials, where they are specifically trying to elicit certain information in a confession to do with witchcraft. Whereas in the modern case, the only interest they have in eliciting the details of witchcraft beliefs has to do with the thing that I wrote about, which has to do with, "does this sound deranged? Does this sound like someone who is mad?"

And I don't know about individualization. If you read the textbooks on witchcraft up to the witch trials, there are various arguments about this. There is individualization, depersonalization, and feminization, when people start accusing women specifically, more than they had in the past. Which is definitely not true in France, where men continue to be the dominant suspects in witch trials all the way through my period, just as they were in the early modern period.

I haven't read enough of the early modern records themselves to think about individuation. I have a lot of cases myself, but not as many as someone like Robert Briggs, working in the early modern period. And the problem with working with a lot of cases is that you get into the mindset where you see things that look similar, similar, similar, and you're looking for the things that look different. There's definitely a case where digital humanities can help to say, "what kinds of similarities are we talking about? Are there the same phrasings, or the same topics that keep coming up?" So I wouldn't be confident in giving an answer to that.

PKM: I think also that you have to keep in mind that in the early modern period, except for a very few places in Europe, a witch trial was very unusual, and was likely to happen once in a town or village, and was not likely to happen again in a generation. Which is, I suppose, a kind of individuation. A judge would only have to deal with one witch, or three or four who were accused as a group, and then would never have to deal with that crime again.

The other thing that is mysterious to me is that there is a consistency in confessions, as you mentioned, but no one has found an actual written text that reflects the things that witches are saying about themselves. And I've seen various explanations of this, that they are responding to questions that are asked by the prosecuting judges, or that they just participated in a kind of group mentality when they were brought to trial and they all responded in similar ways. But I've never seen a text referred to.

WP: There's Louis Gaufridi in the early modern period. Louis Gaufridi is a priest and he's convicted of witchcraft and executed, and he writes his confession in jail. And so, there's a first-person text about how he became a witch.

PKM: But he's an educated person, and he would have been able to read texts. Many of the witches who were accused in France and Germany and England are not even literate. There's no way they could even have read a text, and how they came up with the same thing is very difficult to determine.

RS: Now I have a hook from Michael.

Michael Lynn (ML): One of the comments about that commonality that seems mildly convincing and that they kept asking the same question until they got the answer that they wanted. And that's what gets recorded.

PKM: Yes, that's one theory.

ML: So you are able to ignore the fact that they don't know the answer. It's like having a play where one person knows their lines and the other person has to make them up. And the accused are making up their lines until they get their lines correct. And then you go on to the next question.

PKM: But the weird thing about that is that there are cases—quite a few cases in France and Germany—where the witch really goes on a role. She doesn't just say, “oh yes, I used a potion and I kissed the Devil's buttocks,” and that kind of thing. She really elaborates in a way that suggests that she's really going with the question and almost enjoying her response to it. And where that comes from, I don't know.

RS: Now Will has a hook, and then I have a question from Nush and a question from Rhi.

WP: I think Lyndal Roper's stuff on this pretty clear: they are getting something out of it for complex reasons.

PKM: But there's no evidence of it. It's an interpretation of their psychology, which I'm very wary of. You can't just interpret and say that they liked the attention.

Katrina Olds (KO): Maybe this is too simple, but I've always been told that it was *Malleus Maleficarum* being preached, so that it's oral tradition by way of learned text. *Malleus Maleficarum* doesn't have every single elaboration that they come up with, but isn't that generally a source...?

PKM: You couldn't relate many of these confessions to the *Malleus*...

KO: But there is a written text, a guide to...

PKM: But that's basically a guide for the witch hunter.

KO: Right, but they use it in sermons, to preach about what to look out for. And that informs how people learn about how to be a witch: “Oh, it turns out that I'm supposed to have sex with the Devil...”

PKM: But here's one that I found was very, very widespread and really confused me. The number of women in France and Germany who say that the Devil was a young, good-looking guy, whom I met at a village *fête* or something, and he took me home, and we had great sex—except that he was impotent.

NP: I was with you until then. [Laughter]

PKM: It doesn't seem to make sense—but maybe it does. And then he comes back to me in a different form. None of that is in the *Malleus*. None of that is any text about witchcraft that I know. I mean, did women in different places just intuit it? Was it some kind of folk wisdom that was conveyed to them that had nothing to do with witchcraft? I don't know. I am at the stage of my career where I don't care if I say, “I don't know.” [Laughter]

I just don't have an explanation. I used to assign the Lyndal Roper book on the witch hunt and would tell my students, "Well, she's got it all explained." But then, when you would read these, you start to wonder if you can really assume the same psychology for women in different situations. And would the same psychology produce such similar responses. And maybe it is the inquisitors—I just don't know. But they seem more elaborate than that. And very often the confessions don't emerge until later. The witch is questioned, and she won't tell them anything. Then she's tortured, and out comes a stream of confessions. The longest confession imaginable, in which she goes into intricate detail about how she worshipped the Devil. And often she'll arrive at a certain point, and the inquisitor will ask a question, and she'll say, "no, I wasn't like that. It was like this." And then you wonder, is she just inventing it? Is this some kind of incredible insight into the way in which ordinary people's minds worked in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? I don't know.

RS: I've got Richard with a hook.

Richard Nash (RN): Is there any reason to believe that she's imagining it and not the inquisitor who's recording it?

PKM: Well, you don't really know. You can't really know. He's writing it down. He could edit it in any way that he wants. In most legal systems he's supposed to record what she says. He doesn't have to put down his questions or his leading comments.

RS: Nush and then Rhi.

NP: Ok, this comes out of total ignorance. And Paul, when you were responding to David, you started answer my question. As I was reading these papers, I was thinking about all the things that don't get denounced as witchcraft. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think that Mary Toft was ever accused of witchcraft, in any serious way.

PKM: She couldn't have been because she came after they repealed the legislation condemning witchcraft.

NP: Sure, but what about in the newspapers? I do not remember the discourse around Mary Toft, which was tremendous, invoking the idea that there was something witch-like about her case. Rather, it was "everyone knows that if a pregnant woman sees something, her womb will do womb-y things, very scientifically, and create an effect on the fetal material. Hence, rabbit parts." Or, Elizabeth Canning, right, who supposedly was locked up without food or water for eight days, or something. People pointed out everywhere, "well, she should have died." But there's no explanation, "well, she must have been a witch to have survived." It was like, "no, she must be lying." But she stuck to her story: "no, I just didn't die without food and water for eight days." But in the public discourse, to my memory, witchcraft never gets invoked. Even though there are certainly accusations of witchcraft flying around publicly, if not legally.

PKM: It does actually get invoked in Toft's case, in one instance I can think of. There's a cartoon by Hogarth of enthusiasm. It's a caricature of a Methodist preacher, and the cartoon represents Toft giving birth to rabbits. And the assumption is that if you believe him, you'll believe her. She's not outright represented as a witch, but the implication is that witchcraft is there. I think it's in the title?

RN: *Incredulity, Enthusiasm, and Superstition?*

PKM: That's right.

ML: There's a demonic figure looking down.

PKM: Yes, there's a devil looking through the window.

NP: It might be a devil, but it's not the Devil.

JM: There is also a witch at the top of the image.

RS: Will has a hook now.

WP: It might be good to distinguish here between magic and witchcraft. Because magic is a very broad field, which is a problem that we'll come back to, I'm sure. There's good anthropological work on witchcraft—I think of Ronald Hutton, specifically. He managed to get it down to a definition. There are elements of witchcraft that seem to be stable across a variety of cultures: it's a living human being within your community, who is causing harm to you. So, I think witchcraft is not an accusation does not tend to get levelled when you do not have that dynamic, within a community, especially through the issue of envy.

NP: Ok, the Hogarth print is actually called *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism*. And in it, the Devil and witch are toys.

RN: There's also another print, *Cunicularii*. It's another representation of Mary Toft giving birth, also by Hogarth, which imitates the Virgin birth.

PKM: So, linking it with superstition.

RS: Oz, and then Rhi.

Oz Kenshur (OK): I just wanted to point out something that may or may not be relevant. We've been seeing how certain phenomena gets explained as magical, medical, religious—all these different ways of classifying things. One term that didn't come up—I'm not sure how relevant it is—is mysticism. For instance, Paul, your paper is encyclopedic—it touched on everything—but when I finished it, I wondered why no mention of mysticism? Is it that it's too vague? Or is it not understood to be harmful?

RS: There is half a sentence about Jewish belief in it. Kabbalah.

PKM: A lot of the people I mention in the article have previously been deal with as mystics. So, Jakob Böhme, for example. Göttinger, the eighteenth-century preacher. There's a whole literature there. Lavater also. And Swedenbourg. I think you have to be a little careful in applying the term "mysticism" too broadly and mixing up the categories. Many of the critics of superstitious beliefs would classify them all together and say they are all the same things—they are all superstition. But to their practitioners, they are often quite separate. So, Böhme is interested in alchemy, and he's interested in astrology. He's not particularly interested in any kind of divinatory magic. Swedenbourg says he's not interested in magic at all, but he invents a lot of things, like people visiting him from other planets. And his followers become very interested in traditional magic. So, if you can keep those things separate—which is not easy—then there is a fair bit of mysticism that works its way into the discussion.

RW: So, I was thinking about how people at the time—in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—made distinctions between magic and medicine. And one thing that came to mind was this amazing portrait he did of himself with his doctor, Doctor Arrieta, which I believe is at the Detroit Institute of Art.

PKM: It's in Minneapolis.

RW: Yes, Minneapolis, thank you. It shows the doctor in place of the saint, who is the savior of the artist. So it's interesting to think of in terms of how people at the time made those distinctions. It's another way of looking at the question.

RS: Rhi, did you have a question?

Rhi Johnson (RJ): I'm actually going to comment on what Reva is saying. The first painting where Goya has a supernatural figure is also medical in theme, where it's the attendance of the death of St. Francis Borgia.

RW: Which is in Valencia.

RJ: So you have this conflation of the unknown in the scientific world and then bringing in the supernatural.

RW: Yes, it's interesting to think of how it developed in his mind during those decades.

WP: People at the time were confused about what the boundary between those things should be—and it's definitely not the sense that we have. So one of the most common terms that ordinary people to refer to magicians who they considered powerful was their "*science*." They call it their "*science*"! And I've got a wonderful case from the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century, where the police are interviewing the clients of this magical healer. One of the clients protests, "But he's got approval from the approval of patent medicines from government of Paris," which is an institution that hasn't existed for seventy years! But he's been telling people that that's the approval he's got.

And certainly, from the early modern period to today, people are convinced that priests can perform all kinds of magic. It doesn't matter how many times that priests tell people that magic is neither within their power, nor with the kind of things that they do, they continue to be solicited for this, and it's widely believed. It's all sorts of stuff, like the classic example, ringing of the bells to stop a thunderstorm. Para-Catholic magic. So the boundaries are definitely not what the elite authorities want to draw.

RS: Now I have hooks from Rhi and Michael.

RJ: In the descriptions of the *Zugarramudi* process at Logroño, some of the crimes of witchcraft had to do with the use of relics to do healing, but by people who were not of the Church. So, they were essentially appropriating a Catholic rite for magic.

ML: In the eighteenth century it is still largely the case that people with medical degrees, doctors, are not actually practitioners or theorists. And so, you don't go to them if you are sick, unless you are really rich, and then you might. Most people down the social scale are going to their local practitioners for medical help, who are just as likely to be using as wide a swathe of cures that they can find. Some of which look magical, some of which might look medical. So, that distinction didn't really exist for most people. All those things were conflated in practice.

RS: We have ten minutes.

SP: Chris, you're next.

Chris Chiasson (CC): I'm trying to figure out how we'll get from this historical discussion to more literary and musical discussions. Andrei's comment from earlier about laughter at the salon made me think of René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, where the novel apparently does nothing between *Don Quixote* and Stendhal. [Laughter]. But the whole point of that is that we leave a hierarchical social order for a democratizing social order, where snobbism from our equals feels annihilating. But that already brings up the question of whether we should trust that? And then the idea that magic is something that should have a hierarchy but that is located in the past reminded me of Benjamin's "Storyteller" essay, where he says that the authority of the storyteller is of the person who is dying and this what gives it its authority. I know it's an important text of literary theory, but why on Earth should anyone believe that? So there is the question of whether or not there are magical holdovers, in certain kinds of theory, that we might invoke, as we go along. That's more offered as a confusion.

I also just wanted to ask, off the cuff: Ken Russell's *The Devils*? How do we feel about it?

WP: That's the one based on *The Devils of Loudun*?

CC: Yes.

WP: You know, I don't think I've ever watched it.

CC: I just wanted to know if it's one of the bad things from fifty years ago, or if it's OK.

PKM: It's one of the least crazy of his films.

RS: So, we have two questions for Paul. One from Hannah?

Hannah Malcolm (HM): I had a question about the place where you talked about how the belief in miracles was not very different from magic, and how it wraps into superstition. And then building on this discussion we had early about evidence, there's this movement in the French Benedictines in the eighteenth century to do research on which miracles were actually miracles, and which were false and just made up. So, I was wondering about how that might fit into this? And if that goes along with the attempt to figure out who do you believe?

PKM: That's a good question. I don't know when, exactly, the Church began examining miracles through what are in effect court cases, but I think it's the nineteenth century. But even in the eighteenth century, there is a desire among the higher clergy to keep questionable miracles out of Church teachings. You can actually find that in the seventeenth century as well. So it goes back a long way. What I am certain of is that the clerics would never, ever have admitted that this had anything to do with separating miracles from magic. Rather, they would have said that unlike people who believe in magic, what we believe is rational, and therefore we have to examine it. And determine its actual truth content. I think you can put the two things in the same time frame, and see them as coming from the same fixations, but I don't think that clerics would argue that they had anything to do with one another.

Now, the question of who you believe is a very difficult one because to be a rational miracle—which sounds like a contradiction of terms—it has to have been observed by reputable witnesses. Then, in the nineteenth century, they adopt a procedure as to how these things are to be judged. But the reputable witnesses have to be believers, and their belief has to be an acceptable type of belief. They can't believe other strange things. I don't know of any other criteria they are using in the eighteenth century. Because they do accept the testimony of women, and of uneducated people. And of people outside of Europe, who are non-white, and are giving testimony of miracles in places like Mexico and Peru. They will accept those testimonies, but they have to be sure that the person bringing the testimony is a reliable, Catholic, Christian. And that seems their main concern, in these earlier periods.

RS: OK, we do have time for Andrei.

AM: Picking up on the idea of the ancient authority of magic, and the transformation of actual magic to performance and trickery, it reminds me of the phantasmagoria shows that took place in Paris in the 1790s. One thing that is interesting about them, if you actually read their speeches, they always say, "I'm here to perform magic for you, but it's not actual magic. And you will see that all the magic of the past actually was trickery." It's interesting to me because it's very much participating in this Enlightenment project of demystification while performing magic. Someone like Robertson keeps wanting to pay lip service to demystification while wanting to dazzle

people, who are still not sure how they are doing things onstage. They become like the modern magicians, who almost never reveal their tricks.

PKM: And Robertson depends a lot on projecting things that have to do with Devil.

AM: And also witches!

PKM: Yes, that's right. Very traditional magical stuff. And he's clearly using it to overcome what he's just said: "You're not going to see any actual magic, but take a look at this!" [Laughter].

AM: In early magic lantern shows, you could see the magic lantern.

PKM: But Robertson was using back projection, wasn't he?

AM: But they started hiding the magic lantern, so you were only seeing the images. So, in a way, the mechanism is not shown, but you're still being told that I'm tricking you.

PKM: Although I've seen slides that were supposed to be used by Robertson, and while they are beautiful—they are beautifully painted—they are not that convincing! I can't imagine that they would actually convince an audience that they were showing something real.

AM: Well, they were always shown through smoke! You had the smoke. You had the darkness. You had the glass harmonica playing. You were walked through a long corridor with skulls. It was very much like a Halloween haunted house.

TBC: But it's very much attuned the history of special effects. We still do this to ourselves today.

ML: And scientific popularizers did the same thing. There wasn't such a neat distinction between science and magic.

RS: Wonderful! Great! I think that was a very useful place to end this first session. I think it was a great introduction to this topic. Thank you to Paul. Thank you to Will. [Applause]