

Michael Wirth's *Kunstbüchlein*: Books of Arts and Weapons Magic in a Sorcery Trial from Seventeenth-Century Germany*

Michael Wirth was a wheelwright and citizen of the Lutheran imperial city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber who was accused in late December 1662 of having used magic to murder Georg Leupold, his neighbour on Gallows Street for more than twenty years. Leupold initiated the accusation a few days before he died on 28 December 1662; it was pursued thereafter by his widow, Appolonia. The city councillors, in their capacity as the highest court of criminal law in Rothenburg, began an *ex officio* investigation against Wirth in January 1663.¹ They were unwilling to proceed too hastily against one of their citizen-craftsmen, however, so questioned Wirth at the town hall and otherwise left him free to ply his trade, rather than incarcerating him in the city gaol. Wirth was thus able to flee to the neighbouring territory of Brandenburg-Ansbach in June, after learning that he was, finally, to be arrested. Wirth abandoned his wife Barbara, who had become implicated in his trial, in Rothenburg, to suffer arrest and interrogation in gaol on her own there in July. The trial ended on 1 August 1663 with the Wirths' lifelong banishment from Rothenburg, Wirth (*in absentia*) for sorcery and Barbara for probable complicity in her husband's sorcery.²

Men were rarely tried for harmful magic in Rothenburg and other Lutheran parts of Germany; Wirth's trial thus enables us to explore how a man could be re-imagined as a sorcerer and what this tells us about the gendering of beliefs about magic in seventeenth-century Germany.³

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1. As an imperial city Rothenburg was self-governing, answerable only to the Holy Roman Emperor. The sixteen-man council governed c.5,000–7,000 subjects in the city and c.10,000–11,000 in the city's rural hinterland. The territory became Lutheran in 1544.

2. See A. Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives in Germany: Rothenburg, 1561–1652* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 164–8, for a summary of the trial. Its records consist of fifty-two documents (my numbering), covering over 200 pages in Stadtarchiv Rothenburg [hereafter StAR], A902, Interrogation Book, 1662–1663, unpaginated. The documents were bound in chronological order into A902. For the verdict, see StAR, A902, document 50, Barbara Wirth's *Urfebde* (oath of truce), 1 Aug. 1663.

3. Wirth was the only man tried for harmful magic in early modern Rothenburg who was accused in his own right (that is, not as a secondary suspect to a female relative, and without

His trial is noteworthy for other reasons. The investigation into the murder charge against Wirth exposed the fact that his accusers believed he was a practitioner of weapons magic as well as sorcery, who drew his magical power from the *Kunstabüchlein* (little books of arts) they thought he possessed.⁴ Four of Wirth's *Kunstabüchlein* were discussed in the course of his trial, and one of them was surrendered to the authorities by Wirth and bound into his trial records; it is the only book of its kind to survive from early modern Rothenburg. Moreover, Wirth had an unusual degree of agency during his trial, as his patriarchal privilege kept him out of custody and gave him some hope of being able to escape the worst consequences of the Leupolds' allegations against him.⁵ This meant that, while his testimony was shaped by the legal context in which it was elicited, his words were surprisingly unguarded in places, giving exceptional insight into his relationships with the people and things involved in his trial.

A major strand of Wirth's trial centred on his interactions with Georg Leupold, the main alleged victim of his sorcery. Their relationship is analysed in another article;⁶ in this article, I focus on Wirth's relationship with the most important magical objects in his trial, his books of arts, exploring the role they played in his practice of magic and his acquisition of a reputation for sorcery. I begin with a discussion of the wider context of literary magic and weapons magic, both of which were conceptualised as masculine fields of magical endeavour in early modern Germany. I then discuss Wirth's four books of arts

a pre-existing reputation as a cunning man); see Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 160–72. Significantly lower numbers of men were tried for sorcery and witchcraft in Lutheran territories of the Holy Roman Empire compared with Catholic territories; see R. Schulte, 'Men as Accused Witches in the Holy Roman Empire', in A. Rowlands, ed., *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 52–73, esp. p. 66.

4. I translate *Kunstabüchlein* as 'little book of arts'; the diminutive form suggests a small book which could be hidden and carried about easily. That Wirth's books were believed to contain magical arts was implied rather than stated explicitly in his trial; the councillors began Wirth's first interrogation on 28 February 1663 (StAR, A902, document 18) by suggesting he could work 'ein vnd and[er] Künsten' ('one art or another'), while the pedlar who had supposedly given Wirth a *Kunstabüchlein* was called 'ein gewaltiger Künstler' ('a powerful [male] worker of arts'), *ibid.*, document 4. Johannes Georg's statement, 17 Jan. 1663. On the generic use of the term *Kunstabüchlein* in early modern German, see n. 7 below; on the cautious way in which Wirth's accusers talked about magic, see n. 28.

5. Harmful magic was punishable by death by fire; see *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung Kaiser Karls V. von 1532*, ed. G. Radbruch and A. Kaufmann (6th edn, Stuttgart, 1996), p. 78 (clause 109). However, the Rothenburg councillors were cautious in their prosecution of sorcery and witchcraft, treating them as ordinary rather than exceptional crimes; see Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 55–75. As a result, there were 'only' three executions for witchcraft, in 1629, 1673, and 1692 (all of women); *ibid.*, pp. 212–28. The severest punishment suffered by a citizen-craftsman for a magical crime before 1663 was the banishment of Hans Georg Hofmann for spirit-conjuring in 1605; see n. 12 below. Hofmann was arrested and interrogated (without torture); his case generated discussion about the need to treat citizen-craftsmen with legal restraint. The councillors' initially cautious treatment of Wirth was therefore unsurprising; it was overcome by the advice of Johann Höfel (the Schweinfurt-based jurist who counselled them on the case) and the fact that Wirth's accuser, Georg Leupold, was a citizen-blacksmith and thus Wirth's social equal.

6. A. Rowlands, 'Emotions and the Early Modern Sick-bed: Revisiting "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany"' (forthcoming).

in turn, analysing what his accusers said about his use of them and how Wirth and his wife responded to these allegations. How did these accounts differ, and why did some change over time? Who controlled the meanings of the books, and did the books have any agency in these meaning-making processes? Were all of Wirth's books real or were some imagined, and how much did their materiality matter? In answering these questions, this article advances our understanding of the beliefs held about, and the use made of, magical books and weapons magic by urban craftsmen in seventeenth-century Germany, and concludes with some thoughts about how research into the material culture of early modern magic might be taken forward most fruitfully.

I

Books of magical arts were one genre of early modern *Kunstbüchlein*, the German term used to refer to a range of books characterised by their claims to share previously secret knowledge with their readers and by their instructional format. They included treatises of medical remedies and household recipes, manuals of craft techniques, books on alchemy and metallurgy, and compilations which ranged across these specialist fields. Such books were usually made up of recipes which instructed readers how best to carry out myriad different processes in order to achieve desired effects, although Pamela H. Smith's work on craft manuals has shown that they were much more than the sum of their parts, constituting 'an articulation of the experiential knowledge of craftspeople and practitioners'.⁷ Some books of arts (such as grimoires and medical and household recipe books) continued to be handwritten even after the advent of print technology.⁸ However, printed 'how-to' books proliferated alongside manuscript formats and became more affordable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; a group of craft manuals known collectively as the *Kunstbüchlein* achieved extremely wide circulation across Europe after being printed in Germany in the 1530s.⁹

Print technology and rising post-Reformation levels of education, particularly among men of middling clerical and urban status, also

7. P.H. Smith, 'What Is a Secret? Secrets and Craft Knowledge in Early Modern Europe', in E. Leong and A. Rankin, eds, *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500–1800* (London, 2016), pp. 47–66, quotation at 49. William Eamon defines a recipe as a 'prescription for taking action': W. Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), p. 131. Eamon translates *Kunstbüchlein* as books of secrets or skills; I think 'arts' is a more accurate translation; see n. 4 above.

8. On the impact of print on 'how-to' texts, see Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, pp. 92–133. On the compilation of medical recipe manuscripts by elite women in early modern Germany, see A. Rankin, *Panacea's Daughters: Noblewomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago, IL, 2013), pp. 61–89; Rankin notes, however, that overall 'men were responsible for a far larger number of premodern medical recipe collections than women': *ibid.*, p. 62.

9. Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, pp. 112–20.

created the context for what Owen Davies has called the democratisation of literary magic, a process most clearly seen in ‘the possession of magic books by artisans, tradesmen, apothecaries, and craftsmen’.¹⁰ Literary magic was a predominantly male field of magical endeavour; men had higher literacy rates than women and easier access to the networks along which magical books and knowledge of literary magic were transmitted.¹¹ The male dominance of literary magic helps explain why the efforts of early modern authorities to police its practice were patchy and usually restricted to recidivist practitioners (such as cunning men) or those who conjured spirits. This was the case in Rothenburg, where books of arts featured in only two criminal trials before 1663. In 1605 a joiner and cunning man named Hans Georg Hofmann was banished for ‘banning’ (seeking to control and drive away) the devil in a ritual he had performed to try to find a hoard of lost coins; in custody, Hofmann admitted possessing three *Kunstabüchlein* (one containing arts for finding lost things, a second medical remedies, and a third weapons magic).¹² Another joiner, Michael Pfund, escaped punishment for spirit-conjuring alongside Hofmann by explaining that he had burned his own *Kunstabüchlein* before 1605.¹³ In an even more sensational case in 1659, a miller named Ulrich Helffer was banished from Rothenburg and the neighbouring town of Bad Windsheim for banning demons in a treasure-seeking ritual he had performed in a Bad Windsheim cellar. Helffer’s crime was compounded by the fact that he had parodied the communion ceremony as part of the ritual, created his own *Kunstabüchlein* by recording his arts in writing, and given his book of arts to be copied out by the son of a leading Bad Windsheim family.¹⁴

Weapons magic, which included invulnerability spells and weapons salves as well as methods used to achieve accurate marksmanship, overlapped with literary magic; some weapons magic involved

10. O. Davies, *Grimoires. A History of Magic Books* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 61–7, quotation at 64.

11. Even when women admitted possessing magical texts, they usually said they had obtained ‘their book knowledge from male practitioners’: *ibid.*, p. 66. The transmission networks of literary magic in seventeenth-century Rothenburg were entirely male; see A. Rowlands, ‘“Superstition”, Magic, and Clerical Polemic in Seventeenth-century Germany’, in S.A. Smith and A. Knight, eds, *The Religion of Fools? Superstition Past and Present* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 157–77, esp. pp. 163–4.

12. StAR, A884, Interrogation Book, 1603–1605, fos 532v, 549r; Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 162–4.

13. StAR, A884, fos 544r, 569v–570r. This case was pursued at law because of the disquiet caused by rumours that began to circulate in Rothenburg after the house of a customer for whom Hofmann and Pfund had made a table became haunted; the implication was that they had lost control of the spirits they had conjured to help them in their work.

14. Staatsarchiv Nürnberg (hereafter StAN), Rothenburg Repertorium (Church Consistorium Records), vol. 2087, fos 315r–318r, especially 317r. The young man, Hans Georg Ramminger, had been present, along with Eva Bärbel Nagel, the daughter of another eminent Bad Windsheim family, at the ritual Helffer performed in the Nagels’ cellar. Helffer was arrested close to Rothenburg, so was tried there at the request of the Bad Windsheim city council. Johannes Dillinger notes that treasure-seeking was a magical art ‘specifically attributed to men’: J. Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 147–74, quotation at 161.

written charms, while books of shooting arts were another genre of *Kunstbüchlein*. Weapons magic was even more strongly gendered as a male field of activity than literary magic, however.¹⁵ This may have been especially so among civilian men (as well as soldiers) in early modern Germany, where the bearing of arms was strongly linked to the political rights and duties of male household heads.¹⁶ Demonstrating martial skill was therefore an important way in which men could enhance their reputations, particularly in competition with other men. This was why some men turned to weapons magic to gain what B. Ann Tlusty has called 'a hypermasculine advantage' in this field of masculine performance.¹⁷ Tlusty has shown that 'weapons magic of one kind or another was very common in Germany, especially during the seventeenth century'.¹⁸ This was because the Thirty Years War (1618–48) created a context in which interest in weapons magic, and the opportunities for its dissemination via troop movements, increased significantly.¹⁹ As with literary magic, however, it was not in the interests of a patriarchal society, where 'all men were potentially soldiers', to demonise practitioners of weapons magic too readily.²⁰ This reluctance was probably especially marked in cities like Rothenburg, where all citizen-craftsmen had to bear arms in the city's defence and where the citizens' militia became more militarised in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War.²¹

15. The only men singled out for condemnation as practitioners of witchcraft in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the first demonology to appear in print (in 1486), were archer-sorcerers who were believed to use magic to achieve accuracy in their bowmanship; see *Heinrich Kramer (Institoris). Der Hexenhammer/Malleus Maleficarum: Kommentierte Neuübersetzung*, ed. and tr. W. Behringer, G. Jeruschek and W. Tschacher (Munich, 2000), pp. 496–510. Kramer referred briefly to a type of siege cannon (*die Bombarde*, *ibid.*, p. 497) in his section on archer-sorcerers, showing that shooting-accuracy magic was beginning to be used on guns as well as bows.

16. B.A. Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms* (Basingstoke, 2011), especially pp. 133–65. All Rothenburg citizens had to keep weapons in their household for use in emergencies; armed citizens were organised into a militia according to which of the six watches they lived in. Widows who headed households were listed in weapon audits, but they were asked to send a son, journeyman or male apprentice to do militia duties in their place. The legal, political and cultural prohibition of arms-bearing by women was so powerful in early modern Rothenburg that only a handful of women were prosecuted for using weapons (and at most, a knife or cudgel, never a sword or gun); see A. Rowlands, 'Women, Gender and Power in Rothenburg ob der Tauber and its Rural Environs, 1500–c.1618' (Univ. of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1994), pp. 137–85, esp. 152–5.

17. B.A. Tlusty, 'Invincible Blades and Invulnerable Bodies: Weapons Magic in Early-modern Germany', *European Review of History*, xxii (2015), pp. 658–79, quotation at 672.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 666.

19. Rowlands, "'Superstition', Magic, and Clerical Polemic'. Rothenburg was at a crossroads of troop movement during the war and was besieged three times; the spread of soldier arts (known as *die Passauer Kunst*) to civilian men was condemned by the Rothenburg Church Superintendent, Johann Ludwig Hartmann, in *Neue Teuffels-Strücklein* (Frankfurt, 1678). Hartmann gave the same example of a man's magical shooting accuracy (the ability to shoot a penny off someone's head without injuring them: *ibid.*, p. 19) as Kramer had cited in the *Malleus* (see n. 15 above), suggesting that this was an enduring cross-confessional trope.

20. Tlusty, 'Invincible Blades', p. 659.

21. The councillors reorganised Rothenburg's six neighbourhood watches into three companies in 1659; citizens now had to possess muskets and attend target practice at the municipal shooting-range on eighteen Sundays a year, marching there and back with pipes, drums and flag; see the

Men who used weapons magic might be regarded as dishonest by their peers for resorting to unfair means to beat rivals, or condemned as blasphemous by clerical commentators if they used religious words or objects in their rituals, but they were seldom prosecuted by secular courts or redefined as sorcerers or witches.²² Wirth's trial thus offers a rare opportunity to analyse how a man who possessed magical books and practised weapons magic was re-imagined as a sorcerer by his neighbours.

II

Wirth's main accuser, Appolonia Leupold, alleged that Wirth possessed a book of shooting arts (*Kunstbüchlein I*) at the start of his trial in 1663, showing how important she believed it was to Wirth's practice of sorcery.²³ Appolonia had first gone to the Rothenburg councillors on 22 December 1662 at her dying husband Georg's behest, to claim that his fatal illness had been caused originally by 'a deadly drink' Wirth had given him as they had socialised one evening in October 1660.²⁴ Wirth tried to nip this allegation in the bud by accusing Appolonia of slander on 13 January 1663, but this only galvanised Appolonia (who otherwise risked serious punishment for defamation) into bringing four additional pieces of evidence against Wirth to the councillors' attention.²⁵ On 17 January Appolonia claimed that she and her son, Georg Adam Leupold, had heard Wirth say he could blind a person if he had some of their urine. She had also heard Wirth repeat a threat he had made at a shooting contest held in Rothenburg in the summer of 1662 (to shrivel up another marksman named Burckhard Roth like a turnip)

ordinance to this effect: StAR, A1286, Marksmen and Shooting Records, 1502–1681, fos 192r–193v, 28 Mar. 1659.

22. Tlusty concludes that few men who used weapons magic were reconfigured as sorcerers or witches, and then only after they were arrested and tortured into making confessions to this effect; see Tlusty, 'Invincible Blades', pp. 666–70. However, Wirth's trial shows that such a reconfiguration was possible before the judicial authorities intervened and without any forced confession.

23. I number Wirth's books I–IV to distinguish between the four books spoken of by different protagonists.

24. StAR, A902, document 1, Appolonia Leupold's report, 22 Dec. 1662: *ein tödtlicher trunck*. Leupold's deathbed accusation was significant; contemporaries believed that someone about to die would not lie. Leupold had been born in the hinterland village of Wettringen; he fled to Rothenburg during the Thirty Years War, gaining citizenship in 1639; see StAR, B42, Citizenship Book, 1584–1745, fo. 94v. He and Appolonia married in 1638; see Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern (hereafter LAELKB), Dekanat Rothenburg ob der Tauber-St. Jakob (hereafter RodT DStJ), Marriage Register 1626–1726, fo. 73/Bild 37 (digitised copy of the original parish registers accessed via *ARCHION Kirchenbücher Online* (Kirchenbuchportal GmbH, 2015–), available at <https://www.archion.de>).

25. Wirth complained about Appolonia to the councillors verbally; had the matter been less serious, they would have mediated to resolve it, leaving no written record (council meeting records were kept from 1664). On 3 February 1663, Appolonia referred to Wirth accusing her of slander three weeks earlier; StAR, A902, document 9, Appolonia Leupold's report, 3 Feb. 1663.

when Wirth had turned up drunk at her house shortly after the contest. Appolonia also claimed that Wirth's touch had destroyed a tree belonging to the Rothenburg gravedigger, Michael Klein, and that Wirth's wife, Barbara, had been heard to say that Wirth had forgotten *sein büchlein* (his 'little book', i.e. *Kunstbüchlein* I) when he went shooting at Waldmannshofen.²⁶ This was a reference to a shooting contest that had been held in October 1662 at Waldmannshofen, a castle near Creglingen belonging to the Count of Hatzfeldt; Wirth and three other Rothenburgers had taken part in it, with Wirth performing poorly.²⁷ By setting Wirth's 'little book' in this context, Appolonia implied it was a book of arts he normally took with him to such contests to ensure he shot accurately.²⁸

Appolonia's evidence, which she confirmed under oath on 21 January, was potentially very damaging to Wirth.²⁹ According to the prevailing code of criminal legal procedure, use of 'suspicious things, gestures, words and habits, suggestive of sorcery' was sufficient to justify the arrest and interrogation under torture of a reputed sorcerer.³⁰ Appolonia's reference to Barbara's talk about Wirth's book also implicated Barbara in his magical crimes. However, the case against Wirth relied heavily on what Appolonia claimed her deceased husband had said about Wirth, and on what she claimed to have heard Wirth say herself. As Appolonia was a partisan (and female) witness, the councillors sought as much corroboration of her allegations from other—ideally male—witnesses as possible. Ten of the twelve people called on to testify were men (seven of them master-craftsmen), although some did so more willingly than others.³¹

26. *Ibid.*, document 4, Appolonia Leupold's statement, 17 Jan. 1663.

27. The marksmen's expenses (to travel to and stay at Waldmannshofen) were paid by the city council: StAR, R530, Municipal Account Book, 1656–1670, fo. 354v; they represented Rothenburg at the contest. On the importance of shooting-contests in late medieval/early modern Rothenburg, see L. Schnurrer, 'Zur Geschichte der Rothenburger Schützengesellschaft', in *600 Jahre Kgl. Priv. Schützengilde 1374 Rothenburg o. Tauber*, ed. Kgl.-priv. Schützengilde 1374 (Rothenburg, 1974), pp. 11–31, esp. pp. 21–6.

28. Wirth's accusers used cautious language about him. They never called him a sorcerer and implied rather than stating explicitly that he was a worker of magical arts (see n. 4 above). Wirth and the councillors were the only trial protagonists who referred to a *Zauberbuch* (book of sorcery), with Wirth introducing this term during his first interrogation when denying possession of a *Kunstbüchlein* or *Zaubereibüchlein*: StAR, A902, document 19, 28 Feb. 1663. His accusers' caution stemmed from the councillors' tendency to treat malicious or unfounded public talk about magic as slander; see Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 14–29.

29. StAR, A902, document 5, Appolonia Leupold's statement, 21 Jan. 1663. Appolonia was the driving force of the case against Wirth; she gave five statements; introduced new pieces of evidence at key points (*ibid.*, document 4, 17 Jan. 1663; document 21, 6 Mar. 1663); and was active in soliciting support against Wirth (Georg Lauterer's testimony makes it clear that Appolonia used the pretext of an errand to visit him to talk about Wirth's book; see n. 48 below).

30. *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, ed. Radbruch and Kaufmann, p. 52.

31. StAR, A902, documents 4–6, 9–17, 21, 24. The testimony of four of the master craftsmen was either reluctantly given or too vague to be of much legal weight; two master craftsmen one would have expected to testify were not called (see n. 43 below). This suggests that some master craftsmen were hesitant about supporting Wirth's prosecution, at least at the outset.

The key witness on the question of *Kunstabüchlein* I was another Gallows Street wheelwright called Johannes Georg, who confirmed Appolonia Leupold's claim that Barbara Wirth had spoken publicly about a 'little book' belonging to her husband.³² Johannes explained to the councillors that Barbara had come to his workshop door in October 1662 and started a conversation about the Waldmannshofen shooting contest. She had told Johannes that her husband had been prevented from shooting properly at Waldmannshofen by someone who had caused a fiery broom to fly across his musket-barrel.³³ She had added that Wirth would have been able to counteract this and win the best prize had he taken his 'little book' with him; she had reminded Wirth to do so before he set off. He had not wanted to take the book, however, telling Barbara that 'things must be done honestly at such places'.³⁴ Barbara had also told Johannes that Wirth had been given the book by a pedlar from Ansbach who was a 'powerful worker of arts'.³⁵ Johannes's journeyman, Georg Kemm, had been working in the workshop at the time of Barbara's conversation with his master; he had not heard everything that had been said, but testified that Barbara had spoken of Wirth's gun being affected by a broom and of reminding Wirth to take his book with him to Waldmannshofen.³⁶ After talking with Barbara, Johannes had crossed the street to tell another neighbour what she had said.³⁷

Johannes and Kemm proved to be pivotal witnesses against the Wirths, sticking to their sworn statements consistently, even in face-to-face confrontations.³⁸ Johannes may have had initial qualms about testifying against Wirth, a fellow master wheelwright, as he discussed the matter with senior work colleagues (two sworn masters of the craft association of smiths and wheelwrights to which he and Wirth belonged) before first testifying on 17 January.³⁹ Johannes was also keen to insist that

32. StAR, A902, document 4, Johannes Georg's statement, 17 Jan. 1663. His testimony mattered so much because rumour only counted legally against a suspect if it could be traced to an honourable witness; see Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 14–29. I refer to Johannes by his first name to avoid confusion with Georg Leupold, Georg Lauterer and Georg Kemm.

33. This reference was damaging, as anything fiery had demonic connotations; see n. 55 below.

34. StAR, A902, document 4, Johannes Georg's statement, 17 Jan. 1663: 'es müsse an denen Orten redlich hergehen'.

35. *Ibid.*; *gewaltiger Künstler*; see n. 4 above.

36. *Ibid.*, document 4, Georg Kemm's statement, 19 Jan. 1663.

37. This neighbour was a man called Schreiners Caspar, who was leaning out of his window and asked Johannes what *die blauterin* ('the prattler', i.e. Barbara) had said.

38. *Ibid.*, document 24, confrontation between Johannes Georg, Georg Kemm and Barbara Wirth, 21 Mar. 1663; document 43, confrontation between Johannes Georg and Barbara Wirth, 23 July 1663. Kemm started crying on 21 March, showing the depth of emotion face-to-face confrontations elicited.

39. *Ibid.*, document 17, Georg Lauterer's statement, 21 Feb. 1663. Gunsmith Lauterer was one of the sworn masters, wheelwright Cyriacus Lehr the other. Guilds were prohibited in Rothenburg; instead, complementary crafts were grouped into associations which were managed on the council's behalf by sworn masters (the oldest, most experienced master craftsmen). Johannes Georg died in 1714, so was considerably younger than Lauterer (who called him the 'young' master) and Wirth: LAELKB, RodT DSJ, Burial Register 1642–1779, fo. 321/Bild 165. Blacksmith Georg Leupold had also been a member of this craft association.

he was an impartial witness who had nothing to gain by bearing false witness.⁴⁰ On the contrary, his involvement in the trial exposed him to Michael Wirth's anger; on 21 March Johannes asked the councillors for protection against Wirth, as he was concerned that Wirth would 'do him a mischief at their craft meetings'.⁴¹ This was because—as Wirth admitted—Wirth had threatened to throw a glass into Johannes's face, after hearing Johannes say that he would refuse to accept a drink from Wirth at their craft gatherings. This mattered so much to Wirth because such a refusal would have suggested that Johannes—like the Leupolds—believed that drinks offered by Wirth were 'deadly'; it would also have symbolised the breakdown of trust between Johannes and Wirth as craft colleagues.⁴²

The councillors sought more information about *Kunstbüchlein* I from two of the other master craftsmen who had travelled to the Waldmannshofen shooting contest with Wirth.⁴³ On 7 February 1663, the gunpowder-maker Hans Lippert confirmed that Wirth had shot badly at Waldmannshofen and that the explanation for his poor performance—his failure to take his little book with him—had become common talk in Rothenburg afterwards. Lippert's testimony was, however, brief and lacking in detail.⁴⁴ The gunsmith Georg Lauterer was questioned more intensively than Lippert, on 17 and 26 January and (under oath) on 21 February.⁴⁵ This was because, as well as accompanying Wirth to Waldmannshofen, Lauterer had gone with him to the Leupolds' house after the shooting contest held in Rothenburg in the summer of 1662; according to Appolonia Leupold, Lauterer had also heard the threat she claimed Wirth had made on that occasion (to shrivel Burckhard Roth like a turnip).⁴⁶ Lauterer testified against Wirth in more detail than Lippert, albeit reluctantly. He had to be questioned in his own house on 21 February after ignoring two requests from the councillors to appear at the town hall, claiming he was too ill to walk there. Moreover, although Lauterer confirmed general suspicions and

40. StAR, A902, document 24, confrontation between Johannes Georg and Barbara Wirth, 21 Mar. 1663.

41. *Ibid.*; 'bey dem handtwerck od[er] sonstenes anmachen wolle'.

42. Wirth admitted having made this threat against Johannes on 23 Mar. 1663; *ibid.*, document 24, confrontations between the Wirths and their accusers, 21 and 23 Mar. 1663. Wirth and Johannes seem to have had a good working relationship before Georg Leupold died; the three of them (plus blacksmith Heinrich Rühl) co-wrote a petition to the city council in June 1662, complaining about the threat posed to their livelihoods by rural craftsmen: StAR, A1340b, Wheelwright Craft Documents, 1521–1710, fos 206r–208r. Johannes's fear of Wirth seems to have grown after Leupold's death and because of Johannes's involvement in Wirth's trial.

43. The fourth marksman, master blacksmith Ludwig Rühel, did not testify, and nor did Burckhard Roth, the master joiner Appolonia Leupold claimed had been threatened by Wirth (see n. 26 above); this suggests that other marksmen were unwilling to testify against Wirth. The two who did testify against him were vague (Lippert, see n. 44) and reluctant (Lauterer, see n. 45).

44. StAR, A902, document 12, Hans Lippert's statement, 7 Feb. 1663.

45. *Ibid.*, document 4, Georg Lauterer's statements, 17 Jan. 1663; document 6, 26 Jan. 1663; document 17, 21 Feb. 1663.

46. See n. 26 above.

other people's talk about Wirth, he would not give personal support to the most serious allegations against him.

For example, despite significant pressure from the councillors questioning him, Lauterer refused to confirm Appolonia Leupold's assertion that he had heard Wirth threaten to shrivel Roth. However, Lauterer admitted that Wirth had a habit of becoming angry when he shot poorly and of making general threats against other marksmen, saying that if he knew who was hindering him, 'he would do them such a mischief they would remember him for the rest of their life'.⁴⁷ Lauterer also denied all personal knowledge of Wirth possessing or using a book of shooting arts. However, on 21 February Lauterer repeated what the wheelwright Johannes Georg had told him of Barbara Wirth's conversation about her husband's *Kunstabüchlein*. Lauterer was then asked what he knew about Wirth's acquisition of the book. He replied that Appolonia Leupold had come to him with a gun-part to be mended in late January 1663 and had told him that Wirth must have been given the book by a pedlar some years previously, as her husband, Georg Leupold, had heard the man reading aloud from it to Wirth and been horrified by what he had heard.⁴⁸

Lauterer expressed himself with similar reluctance about Waldmannshofen. He testified that some of the other marksmen there had said there was a 'rogue' amongst the Rothenburgers; a marksman from Aub had entered the Waldmannshofen shooting house in Wirth's absence to tell the other Rothenburgers that they dealt with things honestly and did not shoot with arts, implying that Wirth did, although without naming him. Lauterer also confirmed that Wirth had shot badly at Waldmannshofen. However, Lauterer explained that Wirth had blamed his poor performance on a mist that had fallen in front of his eyes, making him miss the target three times (saying nothing about brooms, fiery or otherwise).⁴⁹ Lauterer was probably unwilling to testify any more explicitly against Wirth because they were, or had been, friends. He had known Wirth since at least 1643, when he was one of three sworn master craftsmen to witness Wirth's completion of his three-year apprenticeship to his father, Hans, and was still shooting and socialising with Wirth in the autumn of 1662, despite Wirth's angry outbursts.⁵⁰ However, it is also likely that Lauterer—as a gunsmith and marksman—knew and practised weapons magic himself and wanted to dissuade the councillors from any closer investigation of his own magical arts.⁵¹

47. StAR, A902, document 6, Georg Lauterer's statement, 26 Jan. 1663: 'er wolle einem eine schalckheit thun, daß er sein lebtag daran gedenckhen solle'.

48. Ibid., document 17, Georg Lauterer's statement, 21 Feb. 1663. Appolonia confirmed what she had said to Lauterer about the pedlar giving Wirth the book on 6 March 1663: *ibid.*, document 21.

49. Ibid., document 17, Georg Lauterer's statement, 21 Feb. 1663.

50. StAR, B755, Apprenticeship Book of the Blacksmiths, Locksmiths and Wheelwrights, 1577–1735, unpaginated. Lauterer was probably at least a generation older than Wirth: he died in 1666: LAELKB, RodT DStJ, Burial Register 1642–1779, fo. 86/Bild 45.

51. See n. 66 below.

Other witnesses were more eager to tell the councillors about Wirth's allegedly malevolent powers. The Rothenburg gravedigger, Michael Klein, testified on 17 January 1663 with a degree of detail which suggested that he was grateful for the chance (finally) to air his suspicions about Wirth's destruction of his tree in 1660. Klein confirmed that his 'exceedingly beautiful' ('überaus schöner') pear tree had died after Wirth had touched it 'with his hand, strongly and heartily' ('mit der hand, starck und herzhafftig'), leaving finger-marks which looked as if they had been made by red-hot iron.⁵² Klein had shown the finger-marks to another man, der Reutshöfer, warning him to beware of Wirth's presence in his own garden; Klein's attempts to cure the tree by cutting away the burnt part had failed. Klein's account of Wirth's destruction of the tree bears striking similarity to a story about the (in)famous magician Faust blasting or burning a tree in a wood near Wittenberg, which circulated orally in Germany from the late sixteenth century onwards.⁵³ Klein's testimony thus suggests that some people had begun to imagine Wirth as like Faust, the sorcerer who used magical books and made a pact with the devil to gain more knowledge and power.

Two other witnesses also hinted at an association between Wirth and the devil which might have been explored in more depth by the councillors, had they arrested Wirth and interrogated him in custody. A maidservant called Anna Maria Zipflin, who had worked for the Wirths in 1659, testified on 21 January 1663 that she had heard a mysterious knocking on the front and back doors of the Wirths' house on Christmas Eve 1659, as Michael and Barbara had argued and come to blows. Zipflin had seen nothing on looking outside, however; this implied that an evil spirit had been haunting the house. Zipflin added that Wirth had run a disorderly household, had drunk to excess, and had once come home raving as if the Evil One were in him; she had gladly left the house before her allotted term of service ended.⁵⁴

Appolonia Leupold also suggested that Wirth was haunted by an evil spirit no one else could see in her description of an incident she mentioned to the councillors on 6 March 1663. Appolonia claimed that her husband, Georg Leupold, had told her about something strange which had happened while he and Wirth were out debt-collecting in the summer of 1660. According to Leupold, Wirth had stopped suddenly on their journey home and exclaimed in terror, 'Alas, there stands the Evil One!', after seeing a fiery apparition that was invisible to

52. StAR, A902, document 4, Michael Klein's statement, 17 Jan. 1663.

53. J.A. Walz, 'An English Faustsplitter', *Modern Language Notes*, xlii (1927), pp. 353–65.

54. StAR, A902, document 5, Anna Maria Zipflin's statement, 21 Jan. 1663. Zipflin presented the Wirths' quarrel as significant because she claimed Barbara had gone to church on Christmas Day with black eyes; Barbara denied this. For another allegedly haunted house, see n. 13 above. Like Klein, Zipflin seems to have relished the opportunity given by the council's investigation of Wirth to air her suspicions about him.

Leupold.⁵⁵ Appolonia could have fabricated this evidence to strengthen her case against Wirth, but it is more likely that she and Georg believed that Wirth, as the owner of a *Kunstbüchlein*, really did have dealings with the devil. The power to ban demons was claimed by men such as Hans Georg Hofmann and Ulrich Helffer, who worked book-based magic; Helffer's sensational trial in 1659 may have encouraged some Rothenburgers (including Zipflin and the Leupolds) to believe that a man with a magical book could also conjure spirits.⁵⁶

III

Michael Wirth was not called to the town hall for questioning by the city councillors until 28 February 1663, even though Johann Höfel, the Schweinfurt-based lawyer from whom they sought advice on the trial, had recommended arresting him a month earlier.⁵⁷ Wirth had lived in Rothenburg for more than twenty years by 1663. His wheelwright father, Hans, moved there from the hinterland village of Gammesfeld, becoming a citizen in 1641. Michael was apprenticed to his father from 1640 to 1643, then gained mastership and citizenship in 1646, marrying his first wife (Sabina Elisabeth Falck) that year as well. She and Wirth's father died in 1647, leaving Wirth to inherit the family house and workshop on Gallows Street and re-marry in October 1647. Born in 1613, his second wife, Barbara, was the daughter of a Rothenburg butcher; she brought a generous financial settlement, links to the butchers' craft association, and an eight-year-old son by her first husband to the marriage. The Wirths had five children: Johannes (born 1648), Stefan (born 1651), Margaretha Barbara (born 1653), Helene Barbara (born 1655), and Joseph (born 1657).⁵⁸

As a wheelwright, Wirth had particular skill in making ploughs and also took on coach-building work from local noblemen, involving other

55. StAR, A902, document 21, Appolonia Leupold's statement, 6 Mar. 1663: 'öwehe da stehet Er (d[er] böse feind)'.
56. See n. 14 above.

57. StAR, A902, document 8, Johann Höfel's letter to the councillors, 31 Jan. 1663, in response to the councillors' letter requesting advice, *ibid.*, document 7, 26 Jan. 1663. The councillors usually relied on Rothenburg jurists in legal matters; they consulted external jurists about witchcraft once before 1663 (in 1582) and did not seek advice in witch-trials from university faculties until 1671 (Tübingen) and 1673 (Altdorf); see A. Rowlands, 'Demonological Texts, Judicial Procedure, and the Spread of Ideas about Witchcraft in Early Modern Rothenburg ob der Tauber', in J. Goodare, R. Voltmer and L.H. Willumsen, eds, *Demonology and Witch-Hunting in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2020), pp. 208–32, esp. pp. 210, 223. One Rothenburg jurist, Johann Georg Albrecht, attended Wirth's interrogation on 28 February 1663; it is unclear why he wrote no opinion on the case (he was probably busy with other municipal business).

58. For the Wirths' family history, see A. Rowlands, 'Gender, Ungodly Parents and a Witch Family in Seventeenth-Century Germany', *Past and Present*, no. 232 (2016), pp. 45–86, at 51, 55–6. For the Wirths' marriage settlement, see StAR, AA455, Guardianship Papers, unpaginated bundle pertaining to the Wirths, document 1 (my numbering), 10 Sept. 1647. I explore Wirth's biography further in A. Rowlands, 'Social Self-hood and Intersectional Identity in Seventeenth-Century Germany: A Case-Study of Artisan/Sorcerer Michael Wirth' (forthcoming).

Rothenburg craftsmen in his enterprise.⁵⁹ His position in the city's socio-economic and political hierarchy was therefore relatively secure, although he jeopardised it in July 1660 by sexually assaulting a married maidservant from another Gallows Street household, an act of 'lechery' ('unkeuschheit') for which he was fined twenty Reichsthaler by the councillors.⁶⁰ No one mentioned the assault in Wirth's 1663 trial, apart from Wirth himself, in a tangential comment made during his second interrogation on 14 March. This suggests that sexual misdemeanours did not have the irredeemably devastating impact on a craftsman's reputation in seventeenth-century Rothenburg that they are believed to have had in other cities.⁶¹ However, Wirth's conviction for lechery confirmed that he was a man who struggled to keep his sexual desire within the permitted bounds of marriage. As a result, he would have been subjected to closer communal surveillance after the assault, creating a context in which his words and actions could be more easily interpreted as sinister and in which he needed to work harder to convince others that he was an honest man rather than a sorcerer.

Wirth struggled to do this during his first interrogation on 28 February 1663. The councillors questioning him (Johann Balthasar Staudt and Jeremias Karcher) began by telling him that he was rumoured to have killed Georg Leupold and to be a worker of magical arts; they exhorted him to unburden his heart by telling them the truth of the matter.⁶² A lengthy interrogation involving twelve questions followed. Wirth denied murdering Georg Leupold, pointing out that Leupold had been ill before 1660 and had died of natural causes. He also denied that he had damaged Michael Klein's pear tree, threatened to shrivel Burckhard Roth, or been haunted by evil spirits.⁶³ Wirth stuck to these denials

59. Wirth worked with Georg Leupold making coaches; see references made during Wirth's trial, StAR, A902, documents 19, 21. See StAR, B522, Testimonies of Honourable Birth and Apprenticeship, 1633–1670, fo. 142r, for reference to the completion in 1649 of Linhard Gackstatt's apprenticeship to Wirth in the craft of wheelwrighting and plough-making. Wirth would have made the wooden frames of carts, ploughs, and coaches as well as the wheels (blacksmiths made the metal parts).

60. StAR, A901, Interrogation Book 1659–1662, fos 89r–102v. Wirth assaulted Susanna Schmidt; he was prosecuted by the councillors after his attempt to mediate the matter with Susanna, her father, and her husband failed.

61. StAR, A902, document 22, Michael Wirth's interrogation, 14 Mar. 1663. No reference was made to the assault in the Rothenburg smiths' and wheelwrights' craft association records either, perhaps because Wirth had attempted but not completed the act of intercourse with Susanna or because a labour shortage in Rothenburg after the Thirty Years War encouraged greater tolerance of an act of 'lechery' by a master craftsman. This contrasts with the stricter code of sexual conduct Wiest suggests prevailed for Nuremberg craftsmen; see E. Wiest, *Die Entwicklung des Nürnberger Gewerbes zwischen 1649 und 1806* (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 159–60.

62. Staudt and Karcher were the 'lords of the tower', the two most recently appointed councillors whose job it was to question suspected criminals: StAR, Br86a, List of Council Membership, 1300–1720, unpaginated, inner council list, 1662.

63. StAR, A902, document 19, Michael Wirth's interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12. Wirth denied the allegation about seeing the devil which Appolonia Leupold made against him on 6 March 1663 (see n. 55 above) during his second interrogation on 14 March 1663: *ibid.*, document 22.

consistently throughout his trial, although the manner of his denials would have counted against him. He expressed himself with great anger against Leupold, whom he blamed for having died before Wirth could sort out the matter of Leupold's suspicions against him. Wirth's anger was understandable but counter-productive, as it suggested malevolence against his alleged victim.⁶⁴ In response to questions about other allegations, Wirth's insistence that he was not a sorcerer was weakened by the fact that he admitted possessing knowledge of weapons magic and—after first denying this—two *Kunstbüchlein*. For example, Wirth rejected the claim made by Appolonia Leupold and her 18-year-old son, Georg Adam, that they had heard him say he could blind a person if he had some of their urine.⁶⁵ However, Wirth admitted that he knew an art involving urine, which a huntsman from Röttingen (a town in the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg) had told him about when they had once met at Georg Lauterer's house. Wirth described the art; it entailed a marksman whose shooting had been magically impaired washing his gun out with his own urine, then hanging it in the smoke of a hearth. This would blind the person who had affected the gun in the first place. Wirth insisted that he had never desired to try it out and had a low opinion of it anyway but conceded that he might once have spoken of it.⁶⁶

Wirth ran into more difficulty when asked about the Waldmannshofen shooting contest and whether he owned a book of shooting arts. Wirth denied that anyone's gun had been affected by a fiery broom at Waldmannshofen but claimed that his hat and coat had been smeared with human excrement the night before he shot badly, implying he had been the target of another man's magic. Wirth also confirmed what Georg Lauterer had said about other Waldmannshofen marksmen talking of the Rothenburgers shooting with arts, although Wirth told Staudt and Karcher that he had attributed these comments to drunkenness.⁶⁷ Wirth thus gave the councillors questioning him an impression

64. Wirth stuck to his denials in confrontations with his accusers on 21 and 23 Mar. 1663: *ibid.*, document 24. For discussion of Wirth and Leupold's relationship and the emotions it engendered, see Rowlands, 'Emotions and the Early Modern Sick-bed'.

65. Appolonia added that she and her family were afraid of emptying their chamber-pots onto Gallows Street, for fear of what Wirth might do with their urine: StAR, A902, document 24, Appolonia Leupold's confrontation with Wirth, 21 Mar. 1663.

66. *Ibid.*, document 19, Wirth's interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 8. Wirth's reference to meeting the huntsman at gunsmith Lauterer's house suggests that it was a place where knowledge of weapons magic was exchanged; huntsmen were strongly associated with shooting magic.

67. *Ibid.*, response to question 9. The magical aggression and rumour-mongering that occurred at Waldmannshofen suggests that shooting-houses were sites of real and potential disorder between marksmen. For a pioneering discussion of shooting-houses, see M. Schaffner, 'Through the Stained-Glass: The Basel *Schützenhaus* as a Site of Encounter', in S. Burghartz, L. Burkart and C. Götler, eds, *Sites of Mediation: Connected Histories of Places, Processes, and Objects in Europe and Beyond, 1450–1650* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 125–58, although Schaffner looks mainly at the martial masculinity expressed through artwork in the Basel shooting-house, which he suggests functioned like a stage on which the boundaries of civic identity were expressed and tested.

of the shooting contest as a time and space teeming with magical arts, while insisting he had not performed any of them. Wirth also denied that he had been given a *Kunstbüchlein* by a pedlar from Ansbach, as had been suggested by Appolonia Leupold. Wirth said he had only traded wheel-parts with the pedlar, a man called Hans Stanninger, from the village of Külbingen in the territory of Brandenburg-Ansbach, who had visited Wirth two or three years running before 1659. Wirth asked the councillors to write to Stanninger's overlord, Johann Christoph von Eyb, requesting him to question Stanninger on oath to prove that no *Kunstbüchlein* had been exchanged between them. However, Wirth added that Stanninger's father had been a skilful marksman and that he and Stanninger had discussed methods for unblocking bewitched guns, one of which involved wiping one's backside with scraps of cloth and using them to clean the affected gun-barrel.⁶⁸ Here Wirth—again—admitted that he had discussed weapons magic with another man interested in its practice.

In addition to denying that Stanninger had given him a book of shooting arts, Wirth denied ever owning any *Kunstbüchlein*, saying he would willingly unlock all the chests in his house for the councillors to search, implying he had nothing to hide.⁶⁹ However, after repeated exhortations by Staudt and Karcher, Wirth recalled that he had possessed two *Kunstbüchlein* during his life. Wirth's *volte-face* weakened his position significantly. It demonstrated that he had lied on this point initially and was, therefore, untrustworthy, and implied that he possessed magical objects he wanted to keep secret from the authorities. Wirth tried to make the best of the difficult position he had got himself into. He explained that he had been given one *Kunstbüchlein* (II), about three pages long, by his father, Hans, who had acquired it from a man called Hans Tauberschmitt of Brettheim, but that he had burnt it fifteen years previously for the sake of his children.⁷⁰ This *Kunstbüchlein* had probably existed materially; Wirth's account of it fits with what we know about the transmission of books of arts between men in seventeenth-century Rothenburg,⁷¹ and the date he gave for its destruction (1648) was the birth-year of his eldest child, Johannes.⁷² However, Wirth's account of *Kunstbüchlein* II's destruction was doubtless also intended to make the

68. StAR, A902, document 19, Wirth's interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 10. Either Wirth got the name of Stanninger's village wrong (he said it was Nicolauskreuth, meaning Wicklesgreuth) or Stanninger had moved by 1663, when von Eyb said that Stanninger lived in Külbingen; see *ibid.*, document 44, von Eyb's letter to the councillors, 22 July 1663. This letter contained Stanninger's sworn statement about his dealings with Wirth; see Stanninger's response to question 4 for his discussion of shooting arts with Wirth. Von Eyb was a *Freiherr* (baron) with a castle at Vestenberg.

69. *Ibid.*, document 19, Wirth's interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 9.

70. *Ibid.*, response to question 10. Brettheim was a village near Gammesfeld, where the Wirths had lived before moving to Rothenburg.

71. Rowlands, "Superstition", Magic, and Clerical Polemic", pp. 162–5, 168–71.

72. See n. 58 above.

point to the councillors that he was a good Lutheran father who had rid his household of an ungodly book. This was a risky strategy, however. It suggested that *Kunstabüchlein* II had contained things that would have been deemed particularly superstitious by the authorities and implied an arrogance on Wirth's part as a man claiming the expertise to be able to distinguish between dangerous and acceptable books of arts.

Wirth explained that he had acquired his other *Kunstabüchlein* (III) while a journeyman in Nuremberg (perhaps from another craftsman); this would have occurred at some point between 1643, when Wirth finished his apprenticeship, and 1646, when he completed his masterpiece.⁷³ *Kunstabüchlein* III was still in Wirth's possession, although he insisted it contained nothing 'improper' ('unrecht'), just arts which he had never tried anyway, for things like cutting *Wundholz* ('wound-wood' or ash-wood, which contemporaries believed had curative properties).⁷⁴ Wirth had to surrender *Kunstabüchlein* III to the councillors after his interrogation on 28 February.⁷⁵ They added it—as a 'suspicious thing ... suggestive of sorcery'—to his trial dossier, which was sent to jurist Höfel in Schweinfurt, returned by Höfel to Rothenburg, and later bound into Interrogation Book A902, one of the many volumes of criminal-law records preserved in the Rothenburg City Archive.⁷⁶ As an item of ephemeral and forbidden literary magic, it is unlikely that the book would have survived to the present day otherwise. It gathered layers of meaning during its lifetime, according to where it was and who was using it; initially acquired and kept secretly as a magical book by Wirth, it became an item of legal evidence once surrendered to the councillors, and a piece of historical evidence on being found and analysed by me. As a female historian I am probably the first woman to have used the booklet in nearly 400 years.

IV

What does *Kunstabüchlein* III tell us? It lacks a cover and consists of six 16 x 10 cm pages;⁷⁷ the outside pages are dirty and worn, while a thin strip of

73. Ibid., document 19, Wirth's first interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 10. For Wirth's biography, see n. 58.

74. See Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, digitised at *Wörterbuchnetz* (Trier Centre for Digital Humanities), Version 01/21, available at <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB>, s.v. 'Wundholz' (accessed 22 Dec. 2022).

75. StAR, A902, *ibid.*, document 20 by my numbering (it was originally numbered 18 by the clerk who sent the trial dossier to Höfel), *Kunstabüchlein* III.

76. See n. 30 above on the book as a piece of physical evidence against Wirth; n. 2 on A902. The councillors sent Höfel the dossier on 6 June 1663 and he returned it on 11 June 1663; StAR, A902, documents 31 and 32.

77. This suggests either that *Kunstabüchlein* III had been made from three pieces of 16 x 20 cm paper (each folded in half to make four sides) or that the pages had been taken from a longer booklet made in the more standard multiples of four pages. For comparison with manuscript grimoires in early modern Norway, see A. Ohrvik, *Medicine, Magic and Art in Early Modern Norway: Conceptualizing Knowledge* (Basingstoke, 2018), pp. 67–98, esp. 68–72. Wirth's book was probably stitched together but its spine is hidden in the binding of A902.

paper has been torn from the top of page 3r.⁷⁸ Pages 1r–3r contain seven short recipes, written in the same hand; apart from four words at the top of page 4r, the remaining pages are blank.⁷⁹ The person who recorded the recipes spelled idiosyncratically, suggesting someone who was not a polished writer. Wirth was literate; two letters written by him in 1663 and 1665 survive among his trial records.⁸⁰ However, a comparison of these letters with the *Kunstbüchlein* entries suggests they are in different hands.⁸¹ The *Kunstbüchlein* entries had probably been made by the man from whom Wirth acquired it, perhaps copied in at Wirth's request.⁸² The fact that the *Kunstbüchlein* was handwritten but not entirely filled suggests that Wirth regarded it as an *aide-mémoire* and talismanic object rather than an ongoing compilation of entries. The wear and tear on the outer pages suggest that the book had been well used and—probably—carried about by its owner; it could have been the book of arts Wirth was reputed to take with him to shooting contests.

Six of the book's entries can be categorised as medical; they explain how to staunch blood and heal toothache, bodily wasting,⁸³ and old wounds⁸⁴ in humans; how to treat the inability to urinate in horses;⁸⁵ and how to cut *Wundholz*.⁸⁶ The other entry, reproduced and translated below, is a type of weapons magic:

<u>Für dass rohr zu verschmach[en]</u>	<u>To block a gun/barrel</u>
Gutte Morgen ir reutter vnd fu[hr?]	Good morning you cavalrymen and
Gnecht ich wull eüch alleer eure	Footsoldiers I want to [block] all your
Rohr Mussgettern Pantlier v[nd?]	Barrels muskets Pantellier and
Pustellen versagern ich wuel ne[hmen?]	Pistols I will take (?)
Die Hl dreÿ blutss Tropffen	The Holy three blood drops
Vnd wiell eüch allen rohr M[us?]	And will block all your mus-
Getten Panttenlier vnd Pustel[en?]	kets Pantellier and pistols
Verstopfen im namen gottes [der?]	In the name of God [the?]
V[ater] d[er] S[ohn] v[nd] H[eiligen]	F[ather] t[he] S[on] a[nd] H[o]ly
g[eist]	G[host]. ⁸⁷

78. My numbering (the book is unpaginated). The tear is too neat to be accidental; the paper strip may have been used for a written charm.

79. This was so that new material could be added; see Ohrvik, *Medicine, Magic and Art*, p. 74. See n. 7 above for the early modern definition of a recipe.

80. StAR, A902, document 25, Wirth's letter to the councillors (explaining he had left Rothenburg to seek out Johann Christoph von Eÿb, to get a statement from Hans Stanning), 30 Mar. 1663; Wirth's letter to friends in Rothenburg, written from Saxony after his banishment, *ibid.*, document 52, 8 Apr. 1665.

81. The hands are similar (suggesting writers of similar status) but not identical.

82. For another example of men transcribing magical arts, see n. 14. The fact that two arts in *Kunstbüchlein* III dealt with wood and guns suggests that the book had been tailored to Wirth's interests as a wheelwright and marksman. The copying out and writing down of arts added magical value to them; see Davies, *Grimoires*, p. 54.

83. StAR, A902, document 20, fo. 2r.

84. *Ibid.*, fo. 2v.

85. *Ibid.*, fo. 3r.

86. *Ibid.*, fo. 3r.

87. *Ibid.*, fo. iv. Question-marks denote unclear letters, where the writing goes into the binding of A902. A *Fuhrknecht* was a soldier who defended an army's baggage train from attack; see

The entries to staunch blood and cure wasting also involved the recitation of the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; the toothache cure had to be carried out on Maundy Thursday, while the entries for staunching blood and cutting *Wundholz* referred to the grave and cross of Christ respectively. The ritual and quasi-religious elements of the recipes, plus the fact that they are short and rhythmic, containing rhyming words and abbreviations, show they are written copies of charms or—as they were called in Lutheran Germany—blessings (*Segen*) which had to be spoken to have effect.⁸⁸ The Rothenburg authorities regarded the speaking of blessings (*Segensprechen*) as blasphemous and repeatedly exhorted their subjects to desist from it on pain of fines, excommunication or corporal punishment.⁸⁹ Wirth must have known that the arts in *Kunstabchlein* III would be deemed improper by the councillors, despite claiming otherwise.

Wirth's assertion that he had never tried any of the shooting arts he knew of was likewise almost certainly untrue. He was a keen marksman; all Rothenburg craftsmen had to join the citizens' militia, but Wirth had also become a member of the city's *Schützengilde* (marksmen's association), so he could spend more time shooting competitively.⁹⁰ Shooting accurately mattered to Wirth. He boasted to the pedlar Hans Stanninger about the many items of pewterware he had won at shooting contests;⁹¹ his disappointment about his poor performance at Waldmannshofen was probably compounded by the fact that he was representing Rothenburg there against other towns.⁹² The pressure—and desire—to maintain his shooting prowess, perhaps especially after his punishment for lechery in 1660, help explain why

Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. 'Fuhrknecht' (accessed 21 Dec. 2022). *Pantellier* is a French word for a small gun carried at a man's side; the Jesuit Johann Kraus referred to a satirical image of a Catholic saint depicted armed with a dagger and *Pantellier*; Johann Kraus, *Ovicula Ex Lutheranismo Ad Ecclesiam Dei Redux* (Prague, 1709), p. 31.

88. For comparison, see É. Pócs, 'Church Benedictions and Popular Charms in Hungary', in J. Kapáló, E. Pócs and W. Ryan, eds, *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe* (Budapest, 2013), pp. 165–97. For examples of blessings from seventeenth-century Rothenburg, see Rowlands, "'Superstition', Magic, and Clerical Polemic', pp. 168–9.

89. On the condemnation of *Segensprechen* in Rothenburg before 1663, see A. Rowlands, 'Witchcraft and Popular Religion in Early Modern Rothenburg ob der Tauber', in B. Scribner and T. Johnson, eds, *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400–1800* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 101–18, esp. 111. For ordinances issued by the city council condemning *Segensprechen* which Wirth would have been aware of, see StAR, AA122a, fos 355r–386r, 1654, and fos 387r–398r, 1656; StAR, AA119, fo. 119, 1662. Despite their condemnatory rhetoric, the Rothenburg authorities were slow to punish their subjects for speaking blessings; Rothenburg's Church Superintendent Johann Ludwig Hartmann was still condemning the practice as widespread in 1680: Johann Ludwig Hartmann, *Greuel des Segensprechens* (Nuremberg, 1680).

90. This was why Wirth was one of four marksmen whose expenses for the Waldmannshofen contest were paid by the council; see n. 27 above. Gunsmith Georg Lauterer claimed he had tried to curb Wirth's swearing by reminding him that their marksmen's ordinance levied a fine for each curse: StAR, A902, document 17, Lauterer's statement, 21 Feb. 1663.

91. *Ibid.*, document 44, Stanninger's statement, 9 Apr. 1663.

92. See n. 27 above.

Würth blamed other men's magic rather than his own failings or bad luck when he shot poorly. This can be seen in the angry threats Wirth made against his shooting companions which Georg Lauterer reported to the councillors, and in Wirth's statement about having his clothing smeared with excrement at Waldmannshofen.⁹³ As a man who imagined his marksmanship as vulnerable to magical attack, Wirth would have regarded magic as necessary to its defence. It is therefore highly likely that he tried the huntsman of Röttingen's method for unwitching a bewitched gun, using his urine to wash out his gun before hanging it over a hearth, as well as the method he discussed with Stanningner, which involved wiping his backside with scraps of cloth and using them to clean his magically blocked gun. Both rituals could have been performed in relative secrecy, used things that were easy to obtain, and drew on widespread beliefs about the power of bodily fluids to help effect medical, magical, and craft processes.⁹⁴ Wirth would have understood his excreta as containing some of his body's life force, which he had to bring into intimate contact with his gun to regain his physical control over it.⁹⁵

Other aspects of Wirth's shooting arts were more problematic, however. In addition to unwitching one's own gun, the Röttingen huntsman's ritual aimed to blind the marksman who had bewitched it; this was an act of magical harm, even if the blindness was only intended as a temporary hindrance to a rival's accuracy. The gun-blocking entry in *Kunstbüchlein* III reads like a blessing a soldier in the Thirty Years War would have used to protect himself against enemy gunfire. However, blocking another man's gun had the potential to injure him by making his gun misfire. Wirth mentioned two examples of the risks posed by misfiring guns in trial testimony on 21 March 1663, referring to a Dr Amling of Würzburg, who had lost a thumb, and Georg Lauterer, whose face had nearly been blown off, by a backfiring musket.⁹⁶ To shoot accurately, then, a man had to protect his gun and body against magical attack, but in so doing he risked or intended harming the guns and bodies of other men.

By 1662, Wirth seems to have gained a reputation for trying too hard to gain an advantage over rivals by shooting with arts and for being too close to the harming end of a spectrum of weapons-magic

93. See nn. 47 and 67 above.

94. See C. Priesner, "Der zu vielen Wissenschaften anweisende curiöse Künstler": Alchemie, Volksmagie und Volksmedizin in barocken Hausbüchern', *Sudhoffs Archiv*, xcvi, no. 2 (2011), pp. 170–208, esp. 189–92; P.H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, IL, 2004), pp. 112–13.

95. Some practitioners of weapons magic used the body parts of male criminals or men who had died suddenly, as they were believed to be 'filled with the concentrated masculine life force assumed to result from sudden death'; see Tlusty, 'Invincible Blades', p. 663. Men like Wirth probably resorted to use of their own excreta as these were easier to obtain than such body parts.

96. StAR, A902, document 24, Wirth's confrontations with his accusers, 21 Mar. 1663.

practices.⁹⁷ This helps explain why the Leupolds began to link Georg Leupold's illness with Wirth's marksmanship, interpreting the progress of Leupold's protracted illness in terms of a *Hexenschuss* (witches' shot), a method of bewitching someone by magically shooting a small object into their body.⁹⁸ In her first report to the councillors on 22 December 1662, Appolonia Leupold said that her husband Georg had felt strange and vomited immediately after consuming the 'deadly' drink at Wirth's house in October 1660; the affliction had then 'shot' into Leupold's loins the following day.⁹⁹ A Rothenburg barber-surgeon named Andreas Falckenberger, who treated Leupold in late 1662, used similar language, testifying that the Leupolds believed Georg had been given a 'shot' by 'evil people' (that is, witches or sorcerers).¹⁰⁰ Wirth even hinted at this idea himself, telling the councillors during his first interrogation on 28 February 1663 that a cunning woman whom the Leupolds had consulted had told them that Georg had a small, strange object in his leg, a body part often believed to be the target of a *Hexenschuss* in the early modern period.¹⁰¹ Leupold may have imagined his bewitched body as like a magically blocked gun, as two of the main symptoms he claimed to have experienced were the inability to urinate and defecate without medical help.¹⁰² Wirth's perceived desire and ability to harm other men by bewitching their guns thus seems to have moved beyond the relatively self-contained context of competitive marksmanship into the wider context of neighbourhood.

V

Wirth's trial had reached an impasse by May 1663. This was because the Wirths and their accusers had stuck to their different versions of events in confrontations in late March, and because the Rothenburg

97. See the testimony of Appolonia Leupold and Georg Lauterer about Wirth's threats against other marksmen (nn. 26, 47 above); the rumours at Waldmannshofen that Wirth shot with arts (nn. 49, 67); Barbara Wirth's comment about her husband's explanation for not taking his *Kunstbüchlein* to Waldmannshofen (nn. 32–5).

98. Priesner, "Der zu vielen Wissenschaften anweisende curiöse Künstler", pp. 195, 200–201.

99. StAR, A902, document 1, Appolonia Leupold's report, 22 Dec. 1662: 'des andern Tages seÿe es ihm in die Lenden geschossen'.

100. Ibid., document 3, Andreas Falckenberger's report, 29 Dec. 1662: 'Von bösen leuthen einen schuß bekom[m]en haben'. Ulrich Molitor's 1489 demonology contains the earliest (and to my knowledge only) early modern image of 'witch-shot', depicting a female witch ritually shooting an arrow to lame a man's leg; see N. Kwan, 'Woodcuts and Witches: Ulrich Molitor's *De lamis et pythonicis mulieribus*, 1489–1669', *German History*, xxx (2012), pp. 493–27, image at 494. This image is completely different from the masculine shooting-accuracy magic described in the *Malleus* in 1486 (see n. 15 above), however; it suggests that Molitor was trying (probably with limited success) to code 'witch-shot' as a type of malevolent weapons magic practised by women. Kieckhefer notes that Molitor's text represents the bewitchment as reality, without describing it in detail; see R. Kieckhefer, *Hazards of the Dark Arts: Advice for Medieval Princes on Witchcraft and Magic* (University Park, PA, 2017), pp. 17–18.

101. StAR, A902, document 19, Wirth's first interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 2. Wirth mentioned this point (which was potentially damaging for his defence) to discredit Leupold for having consulted cunning folk.

102. See n. 99 above.

councillors had not yet received a sworn statement from the pedlar Hans Stanninger about his dealings with Wirth.¹⁰³ Stanninger's overlord, Johann Christoph von Eyb, questioned Stanninger on 9 April at the councillors' request but delayed sending them his statement until 22 July.¹⁰⁴ In the statement, Stanninger admitted having discussed weapons magic with Wirth, but denied that he had ever owned a *Kunstabüchlein*, sold one to Wirth, or read anything out of such a book to Wirth. Stanninger's statement might, therefore, have helped Wirth's defence had von Eyb sent it to Rothenburg earlier, as it challenged Appolonia Leupold's testimony about Wirth's acquisition of the book of arts she claimed he possessed.¹⁰⁵ By July, however, it was too late. On 6 June the councillors had again sought advice about how to proceed from the jurist Johann Höfel in Schweinfurt, sending him Wirth's trial dossier and *Kunstabüchlein* III.¹⁰⁶ Höfel responded on 11 June, recommending that Michael and Barbara Wirth be arrested, threatened with torture, and—even if no new information came to light—banished, as 'obstinate evil-doers', whose presence in Rothenburg could no longer be tolerated.¹⁰⁷ After being tipped off about his imminent arrest, Wirth left Rothenburg on 22 June for Ansbach, claiming he had coach-building business there. From Ansbach, Wirth tried again (this time with a lawyer's help) to begin a slander suit against Appolonia Leupold.¹⁰⁸ He met his wife, Barbara, beyond the boundaries of the Rothenburg hinterland in early July to discuss their situation, and was also seen outside the city wall of Rothenburg in mid-July.¹⁰⁹ However, Wirth refused two requests from the councillors to return to the city to resolve the allegations against him, thereby abandoning his family and effectively banishing himself from Rothenburg.¹¹⁰

In Wirth's absence, and following Höfel's advice, the councillors arrested Barbara Wirth and interrogated her in the city gaol on 21,

103. StAR, A902, document 24, confrontations on 21 and 23 Mar. 1663. Wirth went to Ansbach (without the council's permission) to contact von Eyb in late March; the councillors then wrote to von Eyb on 30 March, sending him six questions to ask Stanninger; von Eyb acknowledged receipt of these on 31 March (*ibid.*, documents 25–27).

104. The councillors reminded von Eyb about the matter on 27 June (*ibid.*, document 35); in his response dated 22 July, von Eyb said he had delayed sending Stanninger's statement to the councillors because they had not helped him with a petition he had made to them: *ibid.*, document 44. His letter reached Rothenburg on 24 July and was read by the councillors on 27 July.

105. *Ibid.*, document 44, Stanninger's statement, 9 Apr. 1663.

106. *Ibid.*, document 31, councillors' letter to Höfel, 6 June 1663.

107. *Ibid.*, document 32, Höfel's letter to the councillors: 'halsstarrer Misstäter'.

108. *Ibid.*, documents 36 and 37, letters written on Wirth's behalf by an unknown Ansbach lawyer, 1 and 6 July 1663. The councillors again asked Höfel for advice (*ibid.*, document 38, letter dated 6 July 1663); Höfel said Wirth could be banished if he refused to return to Rothenburg by 13 July: *ibid.*, document 39, Höfel's letter to the councillors, 10 July 1663.

109. Barbara had met Wirth in Dombühl, then asked her eldest son to write to Wirth on her behalf; the letter was returned unopened from Ansbach: *ibid.*, document 42, Barbara Wirth's first interrogation, 21 July 1663. A carter saw Wirth on the outskirts of Rothenburg on 13 or 14 July: *ibid.*, document 45, Adam Eydoppler's statement, 25 July 1663.

110. The councillors' requests (that Wirth return to Rothenburg by 6 July, then 13 July) were recorded on the wrappers of the two lawyer's letters Wirth sent from Ansbach; see n. 108 above.

23 and 27 July.¹¹¹ Barbara's interrogations focused mainly on what the Gallows Street wheelwright, Johannes Georg, and his journeyman, Georg Kemm, claimed she had said in October 1662 about her husband's book of arts in relation to the Waldmannshofen shooting contest.¹¹² In confrontation with Johannes and Kemm on 21 March, Barbara had admitted speaking to Johannes about Waldmannshofen and saying something about her husband's gun having been affected there by a 'soiled' ('besudelt') broom, rather than a fiery one; she had, however, rejected any suggestion that Wirth possessed a book of arts or that she had reminded him to take this book with him to Waldmannshofen.¹¹³ Barbara maintained this position on 21 July but began to break down during her second interrogation on 23 July after the councillors threatened her with the municipal executioner, who was also the torturer. Barbara now said that she had reminded Wirth to take his 'little book' ('Büchlein') with him to Waldmannshofen but added that she had meant his little prayer book. She also referred to two little books (meaning *Kunstabüchlein* II and III) Wirth had already told the councillors about, while insisting she had never seen either of them. Johannes Georg was then brought into the room where Barbara was being questioned to reaffirm his original statement; Barbara now admitted that his version of their conversation was true, explaining that her 'imprudent disposition' had prompted her to speak so publicly about Waldmannshofen in October 1662.¹¹⁴

Barbara's admission that Wirth had possessed a book of shooting arts which she had known about did not satisfy the councillors, however. They pressed her for more details about the book and its whereabouts, but she said nothing further, despite being shown the torture instruments by the executioner at the end of her second interrogation.¹¹⁵ Barbara's final interrogation on 27 July was very different. She began it by telling the councillors about Wirth's destruction of a book of arts (*Kunstabüchlein* IV) which she said she had not remembered until this point in the trial. Barbara claimed that Wirth had returned home from the town hall on 23 March and thrown a book into the fire she had started on their hearth to heat a copper of water for her laundry.

111. StAR, A902, documents 42, 43 and 46, Barbara Wirth's interrogations, 21, 23 and 27 July 1663.

112. See nn. 32–5 above. Barbara was also asked whether she had heard her husband's threat to shrivel Burckhard Roth or the strange knocking on the Wirths' doors on Christmas Eve 1659 (both of which she denied) and about a pair of plough-wheels Wirth had made; see the four questions put to Barbara on 28 February 1663: StAR, A902, document 19 (after Wirth's interrogation). On the plough-wheels, see n. 125 below.

113. StAR, A902, document 24, confrontation between Barbara Wirth, Johannes Georg and Georg Kemm, 21 Mar. 1663; Barbara conceded the point about the 'soiled' broom as Wirth had already testified that his clothing had been smeared with excrement at Waldmannshofen.

114. *Ibid.*, document 43, Barbara Wirth's second interrogation, 23 July 1663: 'doch möge sie es aus unbedachten gemuth geredet haben'.

115. This would have been terrifying; it involved the executioner (Jonas Schneller) taking Barbara down to the torture-chamber in the cellar from the upper interrogation room.

The book had been the size and thickness of a catechism, bound in parchment; Wirth had poked the fire with a stick to ensure it blazed fiercely (to destroy the book completely). Barbara told her interrogators that she had asked Wirth what he was about and that he had wept and—with clasped hands—replied that ‘it was the wanton book (‘das lose Buch’) on account of which he must suffer so; he wanted to burn it in order not to endanger his soul’s salvation’.¹¹⁶

Barbara was brought to the point of collapse by her cruel treatment in custody. At the end of her second and the beginning of her third interrogations, it was noted that she could barely stand or walk, while she likened the experience of being incarcerated and interrogated to the ‘torments of hell’.¹¹⁷ The councillors interpreted her distress as a sham, however. They noted that, despite her repeated lamentations, she shed no tears (in their eyes, a sign of witchcraft) and that she had feigned the epileptic fit she suffered at the start of her second interrogation (to elicit their sympathy dishonestly).¹¹⁸ They also rejected her desperate plea for mercy on account of her six children, made at the end of her third interrogation.¹¹⁹ The problem for Barbara was that Wirth’s flight left her to bear the full investigative weight of the trial alone and that the councillors wanted to gather as much evidence as possible against Wirth to justify his banishment. As Wirth’s wife and possible accomplice, Barbara’s testimony carried great weight against him, even though he was still regarded as the main culprit; as one local woman commented, if Barbara could work sorcery, she must have learnt it from her husband.¹²⁰

In this context, it seems likely that Barbara fabricated the account she gave of Wirth’s destruction of *Kunstbüchlein* IV at the start of her third interrogation on 27 July. She instigated the interrogation by sending a message via one of the gaolers to the councillors, telling them she wanted to add something to her testimony. This suggests that she had spent the four days since her second interrogation devising an account she hoped would satisfy the councillors (by giving them the desired details of a *Kunstbüchlein* belonging to Wirth) and encourage them to show her mercy (by emphasising that she had had nothing to do with the book, apart from witness its burning).¹²¹ She began the interrogation with her account, without any prompts by the councillors; her

116. StAR, A902, document 46, Barbara Wirth’s third interrogation, 27 July 1663: ‘das seye das lose buch, desswegen er so viel leiden musse, wolle es verbrennen und seine seelen seligkeit kein hindernus damit bringen’.

117. Ibid., document 43, Barbara Wirth’s second interrogation, 23 July 1663: *hölle Qual*.

118. Barbara’s alleged inability to cry had been noted in her confrontation with Georg Kemm (who had cried) on 21 March; see n. 38 above. Barbara’s grandson, Hans Adam Knöspel, was also epileptic; see Rowlands, ‘Gender, Ungodly Parents’, pp. 52–4.

119. StAR, A902, document 46, 27 July 1663.

120. Ibid., document 49, statement by municipal executioner Jonas Schneller, 31 July 1663, reporting that a woman named Rummel Meigel had said this about Barbara.

121. Ibid., document 46, Barbara Wirth’s third interrogation, 27 July 1663.

description of the book's complete destruction and Wirth's dramatically pious explanation for his actions sound too convenient to be true. Moreover, after giving her account, which she set with some confidence and detail in the domestic context of washing, her responses to further questions faltered, suggesting she had not thought them through in as much depth beforehand. For example, on being asked if the allegedly destroyed book of arts was the one she had reminded Wirth to take to Waldmannshofen she said 'it must have been', although she did not know how long Wirth had possessed it or how he had obtained it.¹²²

Overall, the trial evidence suggests that it was most likely that Barbara had talked to Johannes Georg along the lines he had first suggested to the councillors in January 1663. Barbara admitted that she had done so at the end of her second interrogation, adding that she wished she had cut her tongue in two and smashed her teeth in with a stone instead. The violence of her words suggests the bitter regret she felt at having spoken about Waldmannshofen to Johannes.¹²³ Barbara's reference to her 'imprudent disposition' and the fact that she sometimes forgot what she had said to people suggests that she was a woman who, either because of her poor health or desperation to stay on good terms with her neighbours, spoke unguardedly.¹²⁴ Barbara's unguardedness can also be seen in another strand of Wirth's trial, which centred on a pair of plough wheels Wirth had made for another neighbour but which had been borrowed by Leupold for use in a ritual to try to cure his illness in December 1662.¹²⁵ Here again Barbara emerged as a disorderly and unsettling presence in her neighbours' eyes, as she ran about anxiously on Gallows Street and swore in her efforts to retrieve the wheels from the Leupolds.

Barbara's desperation before and after her arrest was understandable. Wirth treated her harshly, beating her for any perceived acts of disobedience.¹²⁶ She therefore probably tried initially to play down what she had said to Johannes Georg because she feared Wirth's violence as much as the damage that Wirth's burgeoning reputation for sorcery posed to their family. Her final gamble—that the councillors would

122. *Ibid.*: 'Ess müse das gewesen seyn'.

123. *Ibid.*, document 43, Barbara Wirth's second interrogation, 23 July 1663.

124. Barbara suffered from epilepsy; see n. 118 above. Neighbours referred to her pejoratively as 'the prattler'; see n. 37. However, her words gained significance because of Georg Leupold's death on 28 December 1663; had Leupold recovered his health, they might have been dismissed as gossip or boasting by neighbours.

125. Discussed in Rowlands, 'Emotions and the Early Modern Sick-bed'.

126. Barbara referred to her harsh treatment by Michael in her first interrogation: StAR, A902, document 42, 21 July 1663, response to question 3; see also the testimony of their maidservant Anna Maria Zipflin (n. 54 above). Wirth confirmed he was violent towards Barbara in his response to Zipflin's allegation that he had blacked Barbara's eyes on Christmas Eve 1659. Wirth said he would not have beaten Barbara then, as this would have rendered him unable to take communion on Christmas Day; if she had gone to communion with black eyes it was because he had beaten her deservedly at an earlier date: StAR, A902, document 19, Michael Wirth's interrogation, 28 Feb. 1663, response to question 12.

show her mercy in return for the account she gave them of Wirth's book-burning—was, likewise, misjudged; she was banished, with her fugitive husband, from Rothenburg and its hinterland on 1 August 1663, leaving their children and property behind.¹²⁷ The final summary of her crimes concluded that she must have had knowledge of—and perhaps helped practise—the forbidden arts Wirth had learned from his books, because of what she had said to Johannes Georg about Wirth's book in October 1662 and because of the 'free' confession she had made in custody about Wirth's destruction of a book in March 1663.¹²⁸

VI

Wirth's *Kunstbüchlein* were central to his trial and his acquisition of a reputation for sorcery; his neighbours and the councillors came to perceive them as crucial sources of his ability to work magic. Wirth's *Kunstbüchlein* therefore had much in common with the Black Books of magic possessed by Norwegian sorcerers, which Ane Ohrvik has shown were potent objects, whose physical existence and 'presence in proximity to the owner' enabled his magical powers.¹²⁹ The intrinsic potency of Wirth's *Kunstbüchlein* gave them a high degree of agency as objects, in so far as they made a significant difference to Wirth's accumulation of magical knowledge; to his identity and reputation as a practitioner of weapons magic and sorcery; and to the dynamic and outcome of the legal case against him.¹³⁰ The potency of *Kunstbüchlein* meant that they were also high-risk objects which 'carried meanings that could not easily be controlled'.¹³¹ Wirth claimed he could tell the difference between harmless and forbidden books of arts, while he and Barbara claimed he had destroyed the books belonging to him that

127. Barbara was asked if she wanted to take her children with her when she was banished. She said no, as she did not know Wirth's whereabouts and had no desire to go to him. She would have been unable to provide for the children (as the councillors must have known) as the four youngest were aged between five and 12; *ibid.*, document 46, Barbara Wirth's third interrogation, 27 July 1663. She and Wirth hoped to be allowed back into Rothenburg, petitioning the council (separately) to this effect; see their letters at *ibid.*, document 51 (Barbara), 8 Apr. 1665, and document 52 (Wirth). Their requests were denied.

128. *Ibid.*, document 50, Barbara Wirth's *Urfehde*, 1 Aug. 1663; it stated she had confessed freely, meaning without torture, not mentioning the pressure she had been subjected to. By bringing Barbara's two confessions together in her *Urfehde*, the councillors implied that these two books were the same, although at this stage of the trial they had no need, desire or (given Wirth's flight) ability to prove this.

129. Ohrvik, *Medicine, Magic and Art*, pp. 85–6.

130. Here I use Edwin Sayes's helpful definition of agency as 'the ability to make a difference' in another entity or network, regardless of whether the actor is human or non-human; see E. Sayes, 'Actor–Network Theory and Methodology: Just What Does it Mean to Say that Nonhumans Have Agency?', *Social Studies of Science*, xlv (2014), pp. 134–49, at 141–2.

131. This idea is taken from Matt Houlbrook's analysis of the agency of cosmetic items in identifying the men who carried them in twentieth-century London as sexually transgressive; see M. Houlbrook, 'Queer Things: Men and Make-up Between the Wars', in H. Greig, J. Hamlett and L. Hannan, eds, *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 120–37, quotation at 127.

fell into the latter category. Ultimately, however, the power to fix the meaning of Wirth's books of arts in 1663 lay with the councillors, who decided (finally) that all of them were ungodly.

Apart from *Kunstabüchlein* III, we cannot know for certain which of Wirth's books existed materially. Nor can we be sure which book he took with him when he went shooting, although my analysis suggests *Kunstabüchlein* III was the most likely candidate, and that *Kunstabüchlein* IV was an invention of Barbara Wirth's which the councillors chose to take seriously. Wirth's trial thus shows that fictive books of arts could also be agentive objects, and that fictive elements—such as Wirth's alleged acquisition of his *Kunstabüchlein* from another powerful sorcerer, and the association of Wirth with the Faust legend—could become intertwined with the life-stories of material books, rendering them more potent in the process. Thus, while *Kunstabüchlein* III is incredibly valuable as a rare physical survival from the material culture of seventeenth-century German magic, grimoires that were imagined and talked about in relation to Wirth mattered as well, even if they no longer exist—or had never existed—materially. The same was true of other non-embodied actors in Wirth's trial (such as the deceased Georg Leupold and the evil spirit that allegedly haunted Wirth) who influenced proceedings despite not having a material presence in them. Moreover, Wirth's references to discussions of weapons magic with other marksmen remind us that the verbal transmission of magical knowledge was as important to seventeenth-century practitioners as its textual transmission, although harder to capture in written sources.

Like his *Kunstabüchlein*, Wirth's behaviour was potent and agentive, with meanings that became harder for him to control, in his acquisition of a reputation for sorcery. This supports the conclusion reached by Elizabeth Kent about male witches in early modern England and New England, that they 'were agential players in the "stories told about them"'.¹³² I would, however, argue that this was the case for all people (male or female) imagined to be practitioners of magical crime in early modern Europe, as anything a reputed witch or sorcerer said or did risked being interpreted as sinister by others. Men probably appeared more agential than women in trials because men had more leeway to behave in 'witch-like' ways before they were formally prosecuted and—like Wirth—more scope to escape the worst legal consequences once accused. It is therefore most fruitful to think about all actors (human and non-human) in any trial for magical crimes on a spectrum of agency, with their relative positions on such a spectrum shaped by the local legal, social and cultural context, as well as their gendered identity and status.

Wirth's magical agency stemmed from the fact that he almost certainly practised a type of shooting-accuracy magic on his own musket

¹³² E.J. Kent, *Cases of Male Witchcraft in Old and New England, 1592–1692* (Turnhout, 2013), p. 13.

and other men's guns. Analysis of his trial thus supports Tlusty's emphasis on the importance of weapons magic as a category of real magical practice in early modern Germany, through which some men performed their masculinity. However, Wirth's trial alerts us to new areas for exploration in the still sparsely covered field of weapons-magic research. We need to explore further the relationship between masculine performance and weapons magic in the context of civilian marksmanship, and the times (of marksmanship practice and contest) and spaces (such as the shooting-houses and ranges) associated with it. How did marksmanship play into the assertion of masculine identity, and when and where did this happen? We need to analyse the impact of new weaponry technologies and periods of warfare on 'martial masculinity' and its potential for change over time. B. Ann Tlusty argues that the practice of weapons magic declined between the sixteenth and eighteenth century as German men identified less strongly with their weapons because of the rise of professional armies, but this chronology needs nuancing, with more focus on the war-ravaged seventeenth century and greater emphasis on the importance of guns to civilian marksmen.¹³³ We need also to think about how much marksmanship was like early modern craftsmanship, which Pamela H. Smith has shown was a form of embodied cognition, developed over years by groups of men who learnt their craft through the sensory and corporeal practices of 'observing, attending, imitating and doing'.¹³⁴ Wirth seems to have acquired his shooting skills in similar fashion, developing close relationships with other men—and his musket—in the process.

The patriarchal privilege enjoyed by early modern men kept most of those who used weapons magic or books of arts beneath the legal radar of their governing authorities. What was unusual in Wirth's case was that his practice of shooting arts became characterised as malevolent at the same time as it was imagined as seeping out of the context of competitive marksmanship into his other networks of social interaction, most notably with the Leupolds. Two interlinked behavioural traits of Wirth's helped drive this process. These were his verbal aggression and his inability to demonstrate a rational control of his emotions, as evidenced by his anger, his threats against other men, his desire to win at shooting, and his conviction for lechery. Contemporaries believed that verbal aggression and uncontrolled passions could disrupt social harmony and effect harm in the material world, and often interpreted them as evidence of an individual's magical malevolence.¹³⁵ Excessive anger, sexual desire and ambition for knowledge and power were the emotions commonly associated with male witches and other

133. Tlusty, 'Invincible Blades', esp. pp. 670–71.

134. Smith, 'What Is a Secret?', p. 50.

135. Sorcerers were widely imagined as effecting harm through threats; see *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, ed. Radbruch and Kaufmann, p. 52.

deviant masculinities; they were also emotions Wirth expressed (or was perceived to express) in word and deed before and during his trial.¹³⁶

Perceptions of Wirth's body also changed as people began to imagine him as a worker of magical harm, with the gravedigger Klein's testimony suggesting that some people in Rothenburg regarded Wirth as a man of such choleric temperament and bodily heat that his touch could burn a tree. The idea that Wirth's contact with things endowed them with magical potency was underscored in the reference made in 1689, during the trial of his step-grandson for witchcraft, to the magical significance of a small tin Wirth had left behind in the family's Gallows Street house after his banishment in 1663.¹³⁷ Wirth had kept grease for cleaning his musket-barrel in the tin. The fact that his descendants (and the Rothenburg councillors) regarded as magical an object which Wirth had used in his marksmanship, and (like his *Kunstbüchlein*) probably carried about on his person, suggests that Wirth's body came to be seen as capable of rendering things magical simply by touch or proximity. In this sense, it is useful to think of magic—like memory in early modern culture—as sticking tenaciously to things and places, even after its original source was long gone.¹³⁸ In the owner/object relationship, then, power and agency flowed more strongly from Wirth to his things than *vice versa*, suggesting that male sorcerers were perceived as embodying a magical malevolence they struggled to control.

Analysis of Wirth's relationship with his *Kunstbüchlein* thus supports the conclusions of Andreas Reckwitz, who has argued that, while objects are indispensable components of social practices, they have less agency than human actors, on whose handling and understanding they depend for their efficacy. Reckwitz's idea that objects and embodied humans do social practices together is, I suggest, an important methodological starting point for further research on magic as a set of social practices, as long as we remember that imagined and 'non-material' actors also played powerful roles in the magical culture of early modern Europe.¹³⁹ Thinking about magic as a social practice in this way encourages us to identify and analyse the relationships people had with objects that carried intrinsic magical power (like grimoires) or were made magical by the ritual, touch or proximity of a magically powerful person. Historians can also enrich social practice analysis

136. For comparison, see E.J. Kent, 'Tyrannical Beasts: Male Witchcraft in Early Modern English Culture', in L. Kounine and M. Ostling, eds, *Emotions in the History of Witchcraft* (Basingstoke, 2017), pp. 77–94.

137. Rowlands, 'Gender, Ungodly Parents', pp. 71–2.

138. On the stickiness of early modern memory, see the discussion forum 'Memory before Modernity: Cultures and Practices in Early Modern Germany', *German History*, xxxiii (2015), pp. 100–122, comment by M. Lundin, at 107.

139. See A. Reckwitz, 'The Status of the "Material" in Theories of Culture: From "Social Structure" to "Artefacts"', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, xxxii (2002), pp. 195–217, and A. Reckwitz, 'Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook', *Rethinking History*, xvi (2012), pp. 241–58.

by showing how and why the chronological and spatial specificity of people–object interactions mattered, shaping their meaning and the agency of the actors involved in them. We can also bring knowledge of the previous life histories of people and things to bear in an analysis of their interactions and show how and why their relationships, and the meanings they carried, changed over time. By August 1663, Michael Wirth's *Kunstabüchlein* had become powerful pieces of legal evidence against him, helping to turn the citizen-craftsman into a fugitive sorcerer.

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