

# Trials of the Witches

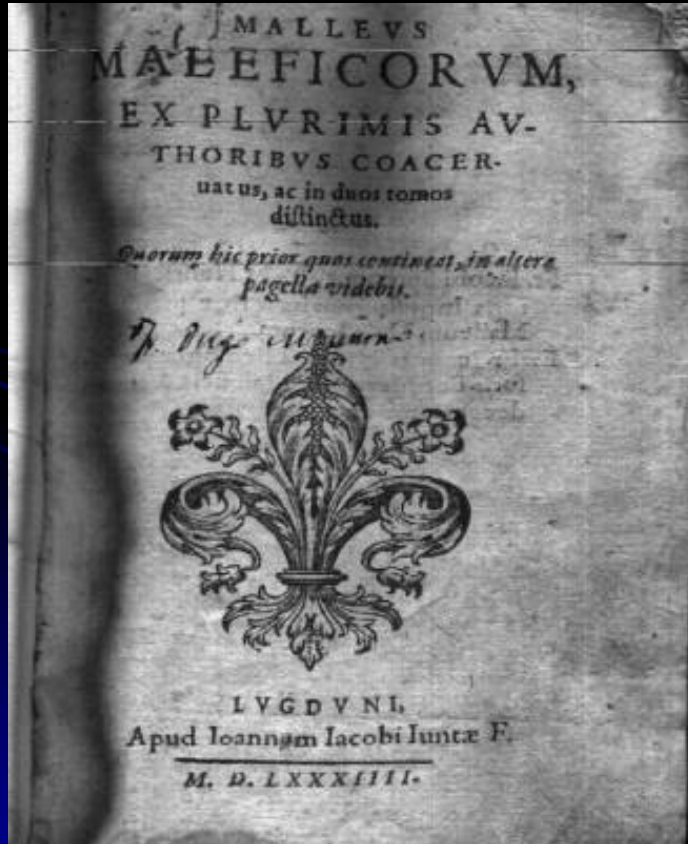


# In the beginning:

- In Europe, mostly women were accused.
  - Characteristics: Older, single, midwife, social outcast, disabled, disfigured, “difficult”, and/or unconventional



Witchcraft was seen as sorcery or *maleficia*.  
Maleficia: Use of spirits and/or magic to  
attack a person or commit a crime.



*The Malleus Maleficarum*  
(1486)  
“The Witches Hammer”

# *The Malleus Maleficarum*

- Broken into Three Parts
  - Part One: Treating of the three necessary concomitants of witchcraft which are the Devil, a witch, and the permission of Almighty God
  - Treating of the methods by which the works of witchcraft are wrought and directed, and how they may be successfully annulled and dissolved
  - Relating to the Judicial proceedings in both the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts against all witches and indeed all heretics


# Part One

- Those who consult or resorted to witches were punished with exile and the confiscation of all their property
- Devils by their art do bring about evil effects through witchcraft, yet it is true that without the assistance of some agent they cannot make any form
- The devil works by means of a witch; he is merely employing an instrument

# Four Principle Arguments Against those who deny Witchcraft

- Spiritual substances cannot change bodies to some other natural form unless through the mediumship of some agent.
- An enchanter can simply direct their gaze upon something and influence it.
- Blood will flow from a corpse in the presence of a murderer (permeated by violence and hatred)
- Divination-the operations of which are performed by the express and explicit invocations of the devil; is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation through occult rituals

# Divination

- Necromancy
    - One of the Seven Deadly Arts
    - By popular association with *negro* "black"
    - The practitioner seeks to summon the spirit of a deceased person, as an apparition/ghost, or to raise them bodily, for the purpose of divination
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# Geomancy

- Interprets markings on the ground or the patterns formed by tossing handfuls of rocks, sand, or soil

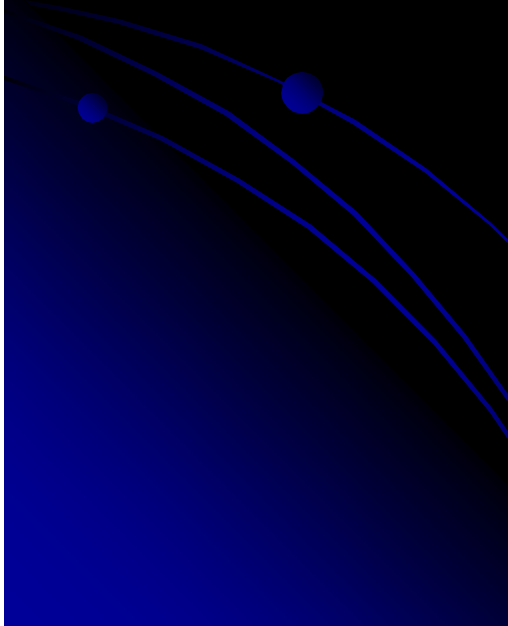


When turning the dials, random designs of dots would appear, which were then interpreted



# Hydromancy

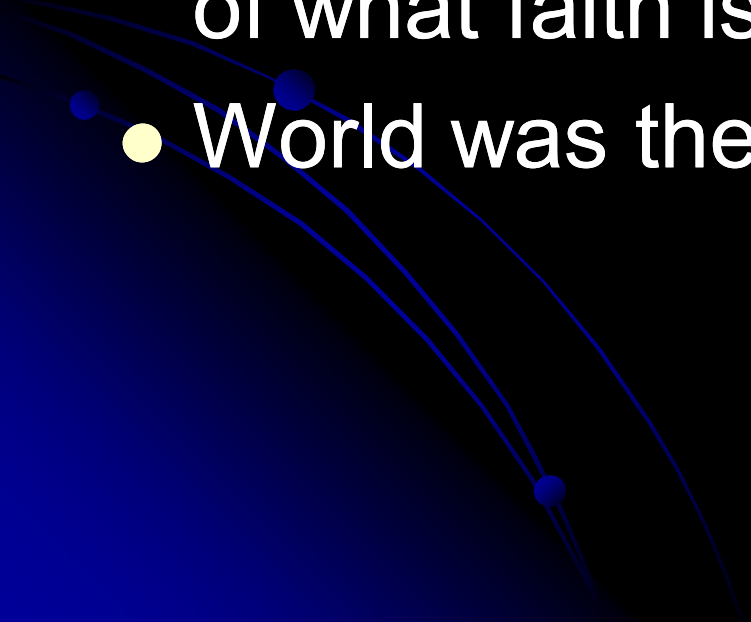
- by means of water, including the color, ebb and flow, or ripples produced by pebbles dropped in a pool.



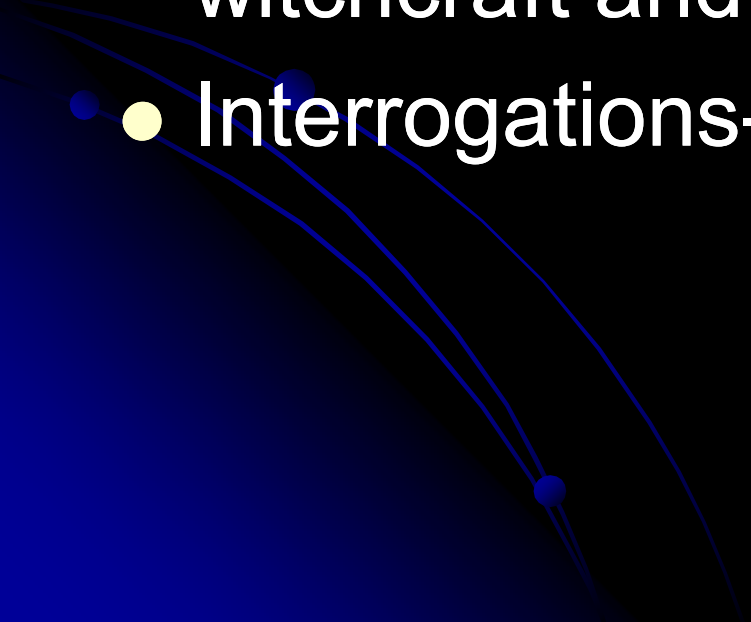
# Conspiracy against the Church

- Diabolical witchcraft: witches worshiped Devil and, therefore, conspired with him against the Church
  - Witches would have contracts with the Devil, sex with the Devil, desecrate religious objects, fly, shape shift, abuse/murder children
  - Sabbat- the meeting of witches who practice the craft


# Protestant Beliefs and Witchcraft

- Salvation through grace of God only.
  - “Sola scriptura”- Bible is the only source of Christian practices and beliefs
  - Emphasis on an individual’s understanding of what faith is
  - World was the Devil’s playground
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# The Witch Craze

- Salem witch trials- came at end of mass hysteria which began in England (14-17 century)
  - Confessions- confirmation of diabolical witchcraft and accomplices
  - Interrogations- Trials and Tortures
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# Puritans and Witchcraft

- Wanted to purify the Church of England
  - Used power to serve God and his word
  - Tension built during trials
    - Decline in church membership
    - Land shortage
    - Indian raids
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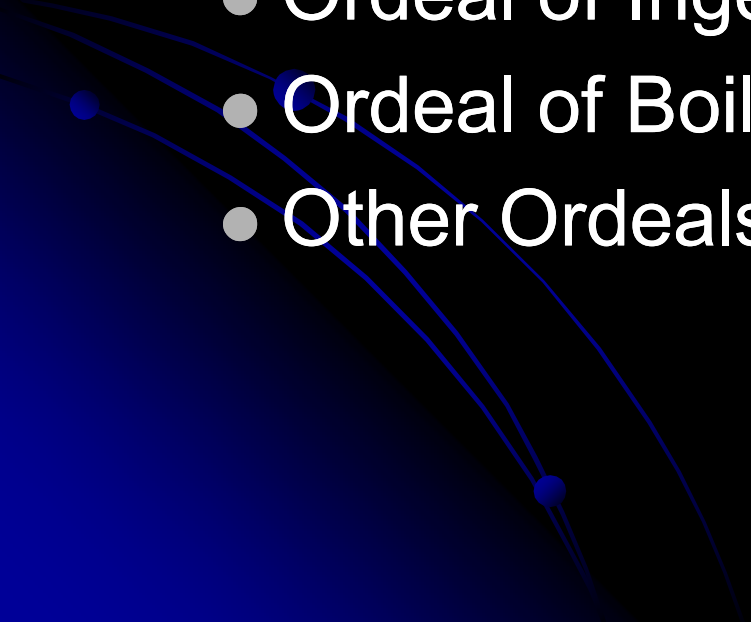
# Salem Witch Trials

- 1692
- 175 arrested
- 22 executed
- Began with possession-like illness of Parris' daughter
- Tituba- West Indian slave
- Trials made use of spectral evidence

# Spectral Evidence

- “Evidence” based upon dreams and visions
- Problem????????
- The Crucible Courtroom Scene

# Testing of the Witches

- Trial by Ordeal- Benign to deadly
    - Ordeal of Fire
    - Ordeal of Water
    - Ordeal of the Cross
    - Ordeal of Ingestion
    - Ordeal of Boiling Oil
    - Other Ordeals
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# Trial by Ordeal

- Practice by which accused or guilty person must undergo an unpleasant/dangerous experience.
- Innocent: If survived the test/ or injuries healed-depending on ordeal/ trial.
- Death typically only consideration of innocence.



# Ordeal of Fire



- Required the accused to walk, usually nine feet, over red hot coals.
- Sometimes required to hold a hot iron as well.
- Innocence established by lack of injury
- Bandage wounds, wait three days, have priest check if God healed it.
  - If festered- WITCH!!!- exiled or executed



# Ordeal of Water



- Hot Water

- Retrieve a stone from a pot of boiling water.
- To wrist for one accusation/ elbow for three
- Take place in a church- all in attendance praying for God to show the truth
- Burns were bandaged and examined in three days. If healed: not witch. If festering: WITCH!!!!!!!

# Ordeal of Water



- Cold Water
  - A millstone is tied around the neck.
  - Accused is thrown into water.
  - If sink and drown: Innocent.
  - If float: **WITCH!!!!** And then hung.



# Ordeal of the Cross



- Created to discourage judicial duels
- Accuser and Accused faced trial together
  - Each stood on a side of a single cross
  - Arms were raised to symbolize the cross
  - First one to lower lost



# Ordeal of Ingestion

- Adultery

- Woman made to swallow “bitter water” of the curse.
- Found guilty if Belly swelled (Meaning?)
- Found guilty if thigh rotted (Meaning?)
- Accused given dry bread and cheese
  - If choke= WITCH!!!





## Ordeal of Boiling Oil

- Accused Only
- Accused and Accuser
- Retrieve an item from a pot of boiling oil.
- Refuse=WITCH!!
- Burned=WITCH!!

# Other Ordeals

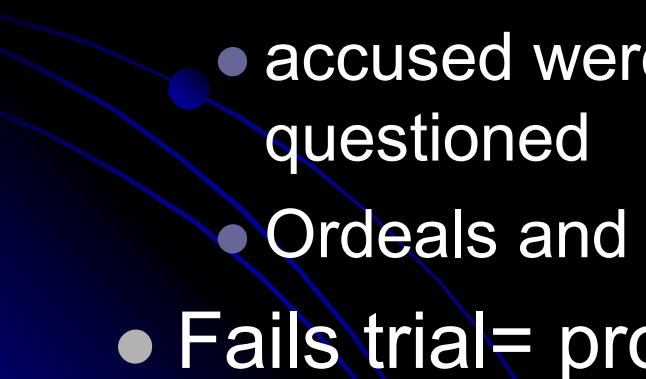
- Both accused and accuser hold a candle- “winner’s” candle last longer
- Tied to pole on windy day- if pole breaks or bends=WITCH!!
- Satan’s Mark- Search for an odd black mark on the body. If mark found, then poked with a pin. If no pain or blood=WITCH!!!!!!
- Prayer Test- Recite Lord’s Prayer precisely. If perfect=innocent. If not=WITCH!!!!
- Scales Test- Metal bound Bible and accused weighed against each other.
  - Outweigh Bible= innocent
  - Lighter than Bible= WITCH!!!



# Accusation: The Process

- Held for examination
- Questioning of witnesses
- Careful questioning of witnesses: being truthful OR making claims based on a grudge against the accused. Important because: a person could be convicted of witchcraft based on the testimony of a single witness

# Accusation: The Process

- Questioning the Witch to gain confession
    - At any point if the Witch confesses= process ends!
    - Court prepared to do anything to get to the truth
      - accused were deprived of sleep and repeatedly questioned
      - Ordeals and Trials
      - Fails trial= process ends
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# Punishment for Confessions

- Tests “proved” that the accused was a witch (and the person refused to confess)=  
**TORTURE!!**
  - Shown instruments of torture and questioned
  - Light torture. Thumb screws/ Foot clamps
  - Question again.
  - Third degree!!!!!!!
    - Rack
    - Burned with tongs
    - Pressed
    - Few refused to confess during the Third Degree