

#6. Counter-Witches from Friuli, Italy:
Transcript of Trial against
Paolo Gasparutto & Battista Moduco

APPENDIX

from: Carlo Ginzburg, The Night Battles: Witchcraft
and Agrarian Cults in 16th & 17th C. (1983)
(English translation of I benandanti, 1965)

To illustrate the kind of source material on which the present research is based, the records of the trial against Paolo Gasparutto and Battista Moduco are included here. In a few cases, as already noted in the course of the book, obvious errors have been corrected.

(ACAU, S. *Uffizio*, 'Ab anno 1574 usque ad annum 1578 incl. a n. 57 usque ad 76 incl.' proc. n. 64.)

In the city of Cividale, on 21 March 1575. Trial for heresy against certain witches, completed on 26 November 1581.

March
Monday 21 ~~November~~ 1575

Before the most reverend lord Iacobo Maracco, etc., vicar general of Aquileia and apostolic commissioner, and the reverend father, master Giulio d'Assisi, inquisitor against heretical pravity in the diocese of Aquileia, in Cividale, in the convent of San Francesco, there appeared the venerable priest Bartolomeo Sgarbarizza, rector of the parish church of Brazzano, who was received as a witness. After he took an oath from the hands of the aforementioned reverend vicar, having been cautioned, examined and interrogated, he stated:

I heard that in Brazzano a child, the son of M. Piero Rotaro, was sick from an unknown ailment, and that to learn about this ailment a certain *madonna* Aquilina had been consulted who was reputed to know if a person was bewitched. And the answer came in letters from the noble M. Raimondo Raimondi, M. Piero's father-in-law, that the child was under a spell cast by a woman who supposedly ate meat on Fridays, as I read in M. Raimondo's letter. I was astonished to learn this and in the course of discussing all the possibilities in the case with M. Piero, he told me that it was said that in Iassico there lived a certain Paolo de Gasparutto who claimed that he roamed about at night with witches and goblins, and that it was possible to bewitch children. I begged M. Piero to summon the aforesaid Paolo, and to inquire diligently of him what might serve in the present case. And he promptly had Paolo come and when he was there he questioned him on the doorstep of his shop. Since I was passing by I went up to them and asked: 'What are you two discussing here?' And M. Piero replied that they were talking about his little boy, and was asking Paolo if there was any way to heal him. And I turned to Paolo and inquired, well, what was his opinion about these spells; and he replied that this little boy had been possessed by witches, but at the time of the witchery the vagabonds were about and they snatched him from the witches' hands, and if they had not done so he would have died. At this point I interrupted, saying, 'Do you by any

chance have some way to cure this child?' And he said that he did not have anything else besides what he had already taught M. Piero, namely to weigh him for three Thursdays, and that if the child gained in weight the second Thursday he would be cured, but if he decreased, he would die. Since I wanted to learn more I asked him how and when they did such things. He told me that on Thursdays during the Ember Days of the year they were forced to go with these witches to many places, such as Cormons, in front of the church at Iassico, and even into the countryside about Verona. When I asked him what they did in these places, he said that they fought, played, leaped about and rode various animals, and did different things among themselves; and the women beat the men who were with them with sorghum stalks, while the men only had bunches of fennel, and for this reason he begged me not to sow sorghum in my field and whenever he finds any growing he pulls it up, and he curses whoever plants it. And when I said that I wanted to sow it, he began to swear. Because this all seemed very strange to me I came to Cividale to talk with you sir, or with the father inquisitor. And since I chanced upon this Paolo here in Cividale I brought him to the father inquisitor in San Francesco, to whom he admitted all these things, and also, as he had told me before, that when the witches, warlocks and vagabonds return from these games all hot and tired, and pass in front of houses, where they find clear, clean water in pails they drink it, if not they also go into the cellars and overturn all the wine, and he urged me always to keep clean water in the house. When I said that I did not believe these stories, he invited me to accompany him and he would show them to me. And he told me all the above things in the presence of M. Piero [Rotaro] and repeated them before the father inquisitor.

Questioned, he said:

He told me that there were some of these people in Brazzano, Iassico, Cormons, Gorizia and Cividale, but he did not want to say who they were.

Questioned again, he said:

After the father inquisitor and I had promised to go with him so that we might get him to talk, he said that he would go twice before Easter, and even if the father inquisitor was in Cividale and I in Brazzano, he would arrange it for us to be together, and having promised, one was then obliged to go. Once we were there we were to say nothing, even if we were to see certain wild dancing, otherwise we would be compelled to remain there, and he also told me that he had been badly beaten by the witches for having spoken about these things; and some of these who are good, called vagabonds, and in their own words *benandanti*¹ prevent evil, and some of them commit it.

Questioned as to the time, he said:

It was last week.

And about the place and the witnesses, as above.

Questioned, he said:

Today I left the above mentioned child who was dying.

Thursday 7 April 1575

Before the most reverend lord, Iacobo Maracco, etc., vicar general of Aquileia and commissioner, etc., and the above named reverend father, master Giulio, in the presence and with the participation of the most illustrious lord, Giovanni Baduario, *provveditore* of the city of Cividale, on the lower level of the palace of the most reverend *provveditore* of Udine, there again appeared the priest Bartolomeo Sgabarizza as a witness. After taking an oath at the hands of the most reverend vicar, cautioned, examined and interrogated anew about the aforementioned matters, and after his earlier testimony was read back to him as a reminder, he declared:

What I stated in that deposition of mine before your lordship and the reverend father inquisitor is true and I hereby ratify and confirm it anew.

And he also added:

On the second day of the celebration of Easter I went to say Mass at Iassico, a village attached and subject to my church of Brazzano, to which Paolo Gasparutto belongs. It is customary on the day that one goes to celebrate Mass to prepare a meal for the priest, and since Paolo is one of the commissioners, he too came to eat with me in the home of his colleague, the chief administrator in the parish, whose name is Simon di Natale. During the meal I spoke about matters appropriate to the season, that is, guarding against sin and pursuing good and holy works. But Paolo interrupted this discussion to say: 'My father, this would have been the night to conduct the father inquisitor to that place you know about,' and so he went on to tell me that the night before he had been to the customary games with his companions. They crossed several great bodies of water in a boat and at the river Iudri one of his companions became afraid because a fierce wind had come up, and the waters were rough, and he remained behind the others, and he [Paolo] had stopped to give him courage. The boat reached shore and he had crossed safely, and then they were in the countryside not far away, and they joust and busied themselves with their usual pastimes. And so I brought him home with me, and treated him kindly so as to draw other details out of him, if I could. He confirmed everything contained in my first deposition, adding that he had discussed with his companion that I might promise to accompany him to see those jousts and pleasures, and that his companion had replied that this would please him very much. And I, to get him to talk, dealt gently with him and asked him: 'Dear friend, tell me who this companion of yours is and where he is.' He replied that he lived ten miles from Brazzano, but he would not tell me his name.

He said:

I also asked him what games took place in these fields, and he told me what I stated in my first deposition.

Questioned again, he said:

The child about whom I spoke in my first deposition who was the cause of this discussion died a few days ago from this malady.

Questioned, he said:

I asked Paolo Gasparutto if he had been one of those who had snatched that child out of the witches' hands, and he replied: 'It suffices that he was taken away by the witches called vagabonds,' and he would not say more, neither about himself nor about the others.

Questioned, he said:

It is openly rumoured about Brazzano and other neighbouring places that this Paolo is one of the *benandanti* witches, as they say, and this reputation is based on his own words, because he freely admits to anyone with whom he has occasion to speak, even taking an oath on it, that he goes to those entertainments.

Interrogated about who could be questioned for the truth, he replied that Pietro Rotaro, the aforementioned Simone the administrator, and others in the village of Iassico could be questioned. Gasparutto has confessed these things in the presence of M. Pietro and Simone the administrator.

Questioned again, he said:

I could not get any other details out of him, but even without talking he did say that if I wanted to go with him I would see them, but I never promised him I would go; I exhorted him to seek out the father inquisitor and he promised to come Saturday next to lead him to these games.

Master Pietro Rotaro of Brazzano, witness received as above, sworn, cautioned and interrogated under the oath previously taken, stated:

A few weeks ago, a child of mine, a little boy of four months fell sick, and suspecting that he had been bewitched, as it was rumoured about by certain women, I went looking for Paolo of Iassico, called Gasparutto, who is known to go about with these witches and to be one of the *benandanti*. I asked him to provide me with some remedy for the little

child if he had been bewitched. And he came to see him and no sooner had he seen him but he said that a spell had been cast on him by the witches and that he had been rescued from their hands by the benandanti. And when I asked him for a remedy he told me that if we weighed him in the morning and he had gained in weight he would be cured, and he made me weigh him then, saying that the illness would not proceed further; but my little boy died three days later, without our learning the reason.

Questioned again, he said:

The aforementioned Paolo has admitted many times, even just yesterday to me, and to Father Bartolomeo, that he goes about with these witches, but he belongs to those who oppose the evil, called benandanti. They go out to one country region or another, perhaps to Gradisca or even as far away as Verona, and they appear together jousting and playing games; and the men and women who are the evil-doers carry and use sorghum stalks which grow in the fields, and the men and women who are benandanti use fennel stalks; and they go now one day and now another, but always on Thursdays, and when they make their great displays they go to the biggest farms, and they have days fixed for this; and when the warlocks and witches set out it is to do evil, and they must be pursued by the benandanti to thwart them, and also to stop them from entering the houses, because if they do not find clear water in the pails they go into the cellars and spoil the wine with certain things, throwing filth in the bungholes.

He stated, questioned again:

The above named Paolo said that when they go to these games some may travel on horseback, others on a hare or a cat, on one animal or another, but he would not name the men and women who attended.

He stated, questioned again:

He [Paolo] told me that when he goes to these games his body stayed in bed and the spirit went forth, and that while he was out if someone approached the bed where the body lay and called to it, it would not answer, nor could he get it to move even if he should try for a hundred years, but if he did not look at it and called it, it would respond at once; and when they err, or speak with someone, their bodies are beaten, and they are found all black and blue, and he has been beaten and mistreated because he spoke with others. He told me that he would be mistreated for fifteen days for having told me these things, and if I did not believe him, that I should promise to go with him, and I would see them for myself.

He also stated:

He said that for any who wait twenty-four hours before returning, and who might say or do something, the spirit would remain separated from the body, and after it was buried the spirit would wander forever and be called *malandante*.

Questioned again, he said:

In Udine in the quarter of Grazzano there is a woman called Aquilina who is reputed to know when a person has been bewitched if she is brought something that had been worn by the stricken person. M. Raimondo de Raimondi, my father-in-law, went to this woman a few days ago, and brought her a quilt which had been over my child; and she told him that he had come to her too late, and therefore she could not help him and the boy would die. My father-in-law told me this after the child's death, excusing himself that he had not wanted to tell me so as not to worry me, although he had written to me that he had been to visit that woman and she had given him good hope. I believe I have that letter at home and if I find it I will send it.

Questioned, he said:

Signor Belforte Mintino of Cividale told me a short while ago that Battista Moduco, an official of the magnificent commune, confessed here in the square to him, and to signor Troiano d'Attimis and other gentlemen that he is one of the benandanti, and that he goes about in their company.

Adding also:

This Paolo told me that these *malandanti* eat children.

Interrogated about witnesses, he mentioned himself and the aforementioned priest Bartolomeo; concerning the place and time, he stated in Brazzano in the shop of the above named Pietro. And so forth, etc.

In general, he stated that it was public knowledge in Iassico and other neighbouring places.

The noble Belforte Mintino called as witness, sworn, cautioned, examined and interrogated as above, stated:

I do not know anything for a fact of the things about which your lordships are questioning me, except that signor Troiano d'Attimis, my brother-in-law, told me that the official Battista Moduco said to him a short while ago in the square that he too belonged to those benandanti and went out at night, and especially Thursdays.

And the rest, etc. About generalities, etc.

The nobleman, Troiano de Attimis, citizen of Cividale, called as a witness, sworn, cautioned, examined and interrogated as above, said:

Finding myself a short while ago in the square with signor Belforte, my brother-in-law, and the gentlemen Cornelio Gallo and Ettore Lavarello, signor Belforte stated that he had heard that some of these witches were in Brazzano, and that there was one even in Cividale, not far from us, and we left at once. When I saw the official Battista Moduco, I called him and asked him: 'And you, are you one of those witches?' He told me that he is a benandante, and that at night, especially on Thursdays, he goes with the others, and they congregate in certain places to perform marriages, to dance and eat and drink; and on their way home the evil-doers go into the cellars to drink, and then urinate in the casks. If the benandanti did not go along the wine would be spilt. And he told other tall tales like these which I did not believe, and so I did not question him further.

About generalities, etc. Magnassuto of the magnificent commune reported that the aforesaid witnesses were sworn and ready to testify.

27 June 1580

Done in Cividale in the palace of the illustrious *provveditore* in the customary hall of audiences before the above mentioned illustrious assistant, and before the reverend father inquisitor, master Felice Montefalco, inquisitor general for the entire patriarchate of Aquileia and Concordia, as well as his reverend commissioner, master Bonaventura Vivaruccio.² There appeared Paolo who, as above, sworn, cautioned, examined, and interrogated, replied:

I do not know the reason why I have been summoned and commanded by the officer of your illustrious signory.

Questioned about the place, he replied:

I am a native of the village of Iassico.

Questioned about his father, he replied:

I do not have a father, he is dead.

Questioned about his father's name, he replied:

Hieronimo Gasparutto, and my mother Maddalena of Gradisca, and she too is dead.

Questioned, he replied:

I have gone to confession and received communion every year from my priest.

Questioned, he replied:

I do not know if there is anyone in our village who is a Lutheran and leads an evil life.

Interrogated if he had heard about or knew personally anyone who was a witch or a benandante, he replied:

Of witches I do not know any, nor even of benandanti.

And when he had said this, laughingly he added:
 Father, no. I really do not know.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I am not a benandante, that is not my calling.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I do not know whether any child in our village has been bewitched.
 Questioned, he replied:
 M. Pietro Ruota called for me, saying: 'Come a moment to see what my little boy has.'
 Questioned, he replied:
 And I went to see the child and told him I did not know anything about it.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I have never spoken with our priest about being a witch or a benandante.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I spoke with the previous inquisitor and with our priest about benandanti.
 Questioned, he replied laughingly:
 I talked with the last father inquisitor and told him that I dreamt I fought with the witches.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I have not invited anyone to the games to which the benandanti go.
 Interrogated whether when he was called by M. Piero he went to eat or drink in the shop of the aforesaid M. Pietro Ruota and when the priest arrived they spoke about matters concerning the benandanti, he replied:
 No, sir.
 Questioned: have you ever spoken with that M. Piero about benandanti in his shop in the presence of the priest? he replied:
 No, sir.
 Questioned: did you ever promise the priest or the father inquisitor to take them to the games of the benandanti? Laughingly, he replied:
 No, sir.
 Questioned: why did you laugh? he replied:
 Because these are not things to inquire about, because they are against the will of God.
 Questioned: why is it against God's will to ask about these things? he replied:
 Because you are asking about things that I know nothing about.
 Questioned: have you ever told the priest Bartolomeo that at night you go into the countryside around Verona and Vicenza and that you fight, going with the benandanti? he replied:
 No, father.
 Questioned: did you say to the father inquisitor and to the priest Bartolomeo 'promise me that, whether you like it or not, you will come with me at night?' he replied:
 No, father, not that I can remember (and while saying this he closed his eyes).
 Questioned: how can it be that you assert you do not perform this art when, at the time that monsignor Maracco was here, you said to the last father inquisitor, 'tonight is the time to go to these games?' he replied:
 I do not know that I said these things and I do not remember.
 Questioned: did you ever yell at the priest Bartolomeo not to plant canes in his field? he replied:
 No, sir.
 Questioned: have you ever told the last father inquisitor and the priest Bartolomeo that when the witches and benandanti return from their games slack and weary, if they do not find clear water in the houses, they go into the cellars, and they urinate and spoil the wine? he replied:
 No, father. And then he added, laughing: 'Oh, what a world.'

Questioned: did you ever promise the priest Bartolomeo to take him to these games? he replied:
 No, father.
 Questioned: have you ever told anyone you were of the benandanti? he replied:
 No father.
 Questioned: have you ever been beaten by the devils for having said and revealed the things the benandanti do? he replied:
 No, father.
 Questioned: do you have any enemies? he replied:
 No, father.
 Then, cautioned to tell the truth, and exhorted by the reverend father inquisitor to be truthful, because if he did so, he would be received and treated with mercy, interrogated, he responded:
 Father, I cannot say anything else, because this is all I know.
 Having heard this the reverend father inquisitor decreed that he be placed in custody so that he might be led to find humility, and reconsider better, etc.

The same day as above

Held in the same place, in the presence and with the participation of those above. There appeared the official Battista Moduco, nicknamed *Gamba Secura*, cited, cautioned, sworn, examined and interrogated, he testified as follows. Interrogated, he replied:
 Father, no I do not know why I was summoned here.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I came because I was called by the official.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I have confessed myself and taken communion every year, confession from priest Martino and communion from priest Iacomo, who resides here in Cividale.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I was born in Trevignano, but I have lived thirty years continuously in Cividale.
 Questioned, he replied:
 My father was from Trevignano and was called Iacomo Moduco, and my mother was called Maria of Gonars.
 Questioned, he replied:
 Father, I have not heard about nor know anyone who is a heretic.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I have not known anyone who is a heretic, nor had any dealings with them.
 Questioned, he replied:
 Of witches I do not know if there are any; and of benandanti I do not know of any others besides myself.
 Questioned: what does this word 'benandante' mean? he replied:
 Benandanti I call those who pay me well, I go willingly.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I have spoken with the illustrious one (*clarissimo*) and with others about being a benandante.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I cannot speak about the others because I do not want to go against divine will.
 Questioned, he replied:
 I am a benandante because I go with the others to fight four times a year, that is during the Ember Days, at night; I go invisibly in spirit and the body remains behind; we go forth in the service of Christ, and the witches of the devil; we fight each other, we with bundles of fennel and they with sorghum stalks. And if we are the victors, that year there is abundance, but if we lose there is famine.

Questioned: how long have you been involved in this, and are you now? he replied:
It is eight years and more that I have not participated. One enters at the age of twenty, and is freed at forty, if he so wishes.

Questioned: how does one enter this company of the benandanti? he replied:

All those who have been born with the caul belong to it, and when they reach the age of twenty they are summoned by means of a drum the same as soldiers, and they are obliged to respond.

Questioned: how can it be that we know so many gentlemen who are born with the caul, and nevertheless are not vagabonds? he replied:

I am saying everybody born with the caul must go.

Cautioned to tell the truth about the way one entered in this profession, he replied:

Nothing else happens, except that the spirit leaves the body and goes wandering.

Questioned: who is it that comes to summon you, God, or an angel, a man, or a devil? he replied:

He is a man just like us, who is placed above us all and beats a drum, and calls us.

Questioned: are there many of you who go? he replied:

We are a great multitude, and at times we are five-thousand and more.

Questioned: do you know one another? he replied:

Some who belong to the village know one another, and others do not.

Questioned: who placed that being above you? he replied:

I do not know, but we believe he is sent by God, because we fight for the faith of Christ.

Questioned about the name of that captain, he replied:

I cannot say.

Questioned, he replied:

He is head of the company until he reaches the age of forty, or until he renounces it.

Questioned, he replied:

This man who is captain is from Cologne.

Questioned about his stature and his age, he replied:

He is a man of twenty-eight, very tall, red-bearded, pale complexioned, of noble birth, and he has a wife.

Questioned about the captain's insignia, he replied:

It is white, and the flag, that is the cross-bar that he carries above him, is black.

Questioned, he replied:

Our standard bearer carries a banner of white silk stuff, gilded, with a lion.

Questioned, he replied:

The banner of the witches is of red silk with four black devils, gilded.

Questioned, he replied:

The captain of the witches had a black beard, he is big and tall, of the German nation.

Questioned about the places, he replied:

Sometimes we go to fight in a large field in the territory of Azzano, other times in a field near Cuniano, and other times still on German soil, in certain meadows near Cirghinis.

Questioned, he replied:

We all go on foot, and we benandanti fight with bundles of fennel, and the witches with stalks of sorghum.

Questioned: do you eat fennel and garlic? he replied:

Yes, father we do, because they serve against the witches.

Questioned, he replied:

There are no women among us, but it is true that there are women benandanti, and women go against women.

Questioned, he replied:

In the fighting that we do, one time we fight over the wheat and all the other grains,

another time over the livestock, and at other times over the vineyards. And so, on four occasions we fight over all the fruits of the earth and for those things won by the benandanti that year there is abundance.

Questioned, he replied:

I cannot say the names of my companions because I would be beaten by the entire company.

Questioned: tell me the names of your enemies, of the witches, that is, he replied:

Sir, I cannot do it.

Questioned: if you say that you fight for God, I want you to tell me the names of these witches, he replied:

I cannot name nor accuse anyone, whether he be friend or foe.

Repeatedly admonished and asked to give the names of the witches, he replied:

I cannot say them.

Questioned: for what reason can't you tell me this? he replied:

Because we have a life-long edict not to reveal secrets about one side or the other.

Questioned, he replied:

This commandment was made by the captains of each side, whom we are obliged to obey.

Questioned: this is just a dodge; since you assert that you are no longer one of them, you cannot be obliged to obey them. So, tell me who these witches are, he replied:

The woman who used to be the wife of Paulo Tirlicher of Mersio in Slavonia near Santo Leonardo, and another named Piero di Cecho of Zuz from Prestento, thirty-six years of age.

Questioned, he replied:

This woman has dried up the milk of animals, putting some things over the covers and roofs of houses, such as certain pieces of wood tied with ropes, and I think that if she isn't dead she could still be found today.

Having heard these things the reverend father inquisitor dismissed him, so that he might reconsider, etc.

Tuesday 28 June 1580, in the morning, held in the same place, in the presence and with the participation of the above

After the aforementioned Paolo was led from prison, sworn, admonished, examined and interrogated under oath, he testified as follows.

Questioned: have you thought better about speaking the truth than before, he replied:

Yes, father, and I will tell it rightly.

Questioned: are you of the benandanti? he replied:

Yes, father.

Questioned: how long have you been in this company? he replied:

Ten years.

Questioned: are you still in this company? he replied:

For four years I have not been in it.

Questioned: what did you have to do to enter this company, and what age were you? he replied:

I was twenty-eight and when I entered it was because I was summoned by the captain of the benandanti of Verona.

Questioned: what time of the year were you called? he replied:

During the Ember Days of Saint Matthias.

Questioned: why didn't you tell me this yesterday? he replied:

Because I was afraid of the witches, who would have attacked me in bed and killed me.

Questioned: the first time that you went did you know that you were going with benandanti, he replied:

Yes, father, because I had been warned first by a benandante of Vicenza, Battista Vicentino by name.

Questioned about his family name, he replied:

I don't know it.

Questioned whether that man had a father, he replied:

No, sir.

Questioned about his age, he replied:

At that time Battista was thirty-five years of age, tall in stature, with a round black beard, well-built, a peasant, but I do not know what village he was from.

Questioned: when that man came to warn you, what time of the year was it? he replied:

It was the month of December, during the Ember season of Christmas, on Thursday about the fourth hour of the night, at first sleep.

Questioned: what did he say when he came to warn you? he replied:

He told me that the captain of the benandanti was summoning me to come out and fight for the crops. And I answered him, 'I do want to come, for the sake of the crops.'

Questioned: when he spoke to you were you awake or asleep? he replied:

When Battista appeared before me I was sleeping.

Questioned: if you were asleep, how did you answer him and how did you hear his voice? he replied:

My spirit replied to him.

Questioned: when you went forth, did you go with your body? he replied:

No, father, but with the spirit, and if by chance while we are out someone should come with a light, and look for a long time at the body, the spirit would never re-enter it until there was no one left around to see it that night; and if the body, seeming to be dead, should be buried, the spirit would have to wander around the world until the hour fixed for that body to die; and if the body wasn't buried, the spirit would not re-enter that body that day until the following night, provided no one had looked at it.

Questioned: before you were called, that is the day before by this Battista, had you known this Battista? he replied:

No, father, but they know who is a benandante.

Questioned: how do they know who is a benandante? he replied:

The captain of the benandanti knows it.

Questioned: how many are you in your company? he replied:

We are only six.

Questioned: what weapons do you use to fight? he replied:

We fight with viburnum branches, that is, with the staff which we carry behind the crosses in the processions of the Rogation Days; and we have a banner of white silk, all gilded, and the witches have one that is yellow, with four devils on it.

Questioned: where did you go to fight? he replied:

In the countryside around Verona and Gradisca.

Questioned: how do you know where you are supposed to go? he replied:

During the Ember Days preceding, the benandanti and the witches challenge each other, and they name the place.

Questioned: have you ever promised to take anyone to these games? he replied:

Yes, the last father inquisitor; and if he had come along, you would not be questioning me now.

Questioned: do you go other times than these four? he replied:

No, father.

Questioned: how can this be if you told father Bartolomeo the second day of Easter in the month of April, 1575, when he was eating with you in your village, that you had been out the night before? he replied:

Tell father Bartolomeo that it isn't true.

Questioned: who is your captain? he replied:

He is a person from Verona, I do not know his name, and I believe he is a peasant, of average height, a plump man with a red beard, about thirty years old.

Questioned: how did he become captain? he replied:

I don't know.

Questioned: who are your companions here? he replied:

They are from beyond Vicenza and Verona and I do not know their names.

Questioned: fighting with those witches, didn't you get to know any? he replied:

One is called Stefano of Gorizia, a peasant, short in stature, about forty years of age, with a thick black beard; the other is called Martino Spizzica from the village of Chians in the territory of Capo d'Istria, about three miles from the village of Risan, a man with a gray beard, big chested, he could have been about thirty-nine years of age at the time.

After hearing these words, the reverend father inquisitor dismissed him, ordering him to reappear in twenty days in the monastery of our order, San Francesco, in Udine, in the chamber which served as the customary residence of the aforementioned father inquisitor.

24 September 1580

Held in the convent of San Francesco in the chamber of the reverend father inquisitor.

Papinus, an officer of the illustrious *provveditore* of the city of Cividale, reported that he had personally cited Paolo, son of the deceased Gasparutto of the village of Iassico and the aforementioned Paolo appeared, together with the above named Papino in the monastery of San Francesco, as above, before the reverend father inquisitor, etc. Then the reverend father inquisitor ordered that he be imprisoned and it was so done.

Monday 26 September 1580

Held in the palace of the illustrious *provveditore* of the city of Cividale, Giovanni Baduario, in the customary audience chamber, before the reverend father inquisitor, master Felice da Montefalco apostolic general for the entire patriarchate of Aquileia and the city of Concordia and of its dioceses, in the presence of the aforementioned illustrious *provveditore* and of his most excellent vicar, Paolo Patavino.

Led from his cell was Paolo, son of the deceased Gasparutto, of the village of Iassico and arraigned, sworn, examined, interrogated under oath, he testified as follows.

Questioned, he replied:

I did not come to Udine as I had promised because I was sick the whole month of July.

Questioned, he replied:

I have come to think that I should tell the truth.

Questioned: who led you to enter the company of these benandanti? he replied:

The angel of God.

Questioned: when did this angel appear before you? he replied:

At night, in my house, perhaps during the fourth hour of the night, at first sleep.

Questioned: how did it appear? he replied:

An angel appeared before me, all made of gold, like those on altars, and he called me, and my spirit went out.

Questioned, he said:

He called me by name, saying: 'Paolo, I will send you forth as a benandante, and you will have to fight for the crops.'

Questioned, he said:
 I answered him: 'I will go, I am obedient.'
 Questioned: what did he promise you, women, food, dancing, and what else? he said:
 He did not promise me anything, but those others do dance and leap about, and I saw them because we fought them.
 Questioned: where did your spirit go when the angel summoned you? he replied:
 It came out because in the body it cannot speak.
 Questioned: who told you that your spirit had to come out if it was to speak to the angel? he replied:
 The angel himself told me.
 Questioned: how many times have you seen this angel? he replied:
 Every time that I went out, because he always came with me.
 Questioned: when he appears before you or takes his leave, does this angel frighten you? he replied:
 He never frightens us, but when the company breaks up, he gives a benediction.
 Questioned: doesn't this angel ask to be adored? he replied:
 Yes, we adore him just as we adore our Lord Jesus Christ in church, and it isn't many angels but one only who leads the company.
 Questioned: when he appears before you, does he show himself seated? he replied:
 We all appear at once and he stays in person by our flag.
 It was asked of him: does this angel conduct you where that other one is seated on that beautiful throne? he replied:
 But he is not of our company, God forbid that we should get involved with that false enemy!
 Then he added: it is the witches that have the beautiful thrones.
 It was asked of him: did you ever see witches by that beautiful throne? he replied, gesturing with his arms:
 No, sir, we did nothing but fight!
 Questioned: which is the more beautiful angel, yours or the one on the beautiful throne? he replied:
 Didn't I tell you that I have not seen those thrones?
 Adding: our angel is beautiful and white; theirs is black and is the devil.
 Questioned: who was the first benandante sent by the angel to call you? he replied:
 It was Battista of Vicenza, as I stated on another occasion.
 Questioned: when that angel appeared before you, were you married, and was your wife in bed? he replied:
 I was not married then, and this happened more than four years before I married.
 Questioned: how old were you at that time? he replied:
 Twenty-four or maybe twenty.
 Questioned: have you ever told your wife that you went out? he replied:
 No, father. (And with an immediate change of expression): so that she would not be afraid.
 It was asked of him: if this is a good thing and the will of God, why did you think she might be afraid? he replied:
 I did not want to reveal all my secrets to my wife.
 It was asked of him: you have told me that women go to fight women; why didn't you tell it or reveal it to her, and get her to do it herself since you say it is a good thing? he replied:
 I cannot teach this art to anyone when our Lord God has chosen not to teach it himself.
 Questioned: have you ever been beaten? he replied:
 Yes, father, when I told these things to our priest, the aforesaid father Bartolomeo,

and got two whacks across the shoulders.
 Questioned whether the marks could be seen on the body? he replied:
 My whole body ached, but I could not see if there were marks.
 Questioned: how long were you ill? he replied:
 Six or eight days.
 Questioned: who was it who gave them to you? he replied:
 A witch, whom I only know by sight.
 Questioned: how did you decide that he was a witch? he replied:
 Because we fought with him.
 Questioned: who are the people in your company? he replied:
 One is Battista of Vicenza, as I said before; I do not know the others.
 After hearing the above, the reverend father inquisitor ordered that the aforesaid Paolo be returned to his cell.

1 October 1580

Held in the palace of the illustrious *provveditore* in the chamber of audiences before the reverend father inquisitor of Aquileia, in the presence of the illustrious *provveditore* Giovanni Baduaro, his most excellent vicar, etc.

There appeared the woman Maria, wife of Paolo of Iassico, sworn, admonished, examined and interrogated under oath, she testified as follows:

Questioned, she replied:

No, sir, I do not know why I have been called here.

Questioned, she replied:

Yes, sir, I have gone to confession and received communion from father Gasparo.

Questioned again, she replied:

I have been married to Paolo de Gasparutto of the village of Iassico for eight years.

Questioned, she replied:

In the time that I have been married I never noticed any of the things that you ask about my husband, whether he went out in spirit and was a benandante. However, one night, about the fourth hour before daylight, I had to get up, and because I was afraid I called to my husband Paolo so that he would get up too, and even though I called him perhaps ten times and shook him, I could not manage to wake him, and he lay face up. So I went off without having him rise from bed, and when I returned I saw that he was awake, saying: 'These benandanti assert that when their spirit leaves the body it has the appearance of a mouse, and also when it returns, and that if the body should be rolled over while it is without its spirit, it would remain dead, and its spirit could never return to it.'

Questioned, she replied:

It could have been about four years ago that what I mentioned above happened, and it was winter but I do not remember what day, but it wasn't during the Ember Days.

Questioned, she replied:

I heard from Pietro Rotaro who used to be a miller, that one day in his mill he saw a person who might have been Paolo my husband. He was like a dead man, and he did not wake even when he was turned over and over, and a little later he saw a mouse circling his body, and I do not know if it entered his mouth.

Questioned about different things, she said she did not know anything else, and so was dismissed for the present; and although she cried and wailed considerably at first, she was never seen emitting tears.

Held as above, but in the hall, in the presence of the above mentioned.

There appeared Battista Moduco, led first from his cell in the convent of San Francesco in Cividale, cautioned, examined and interrogated, he testified as follows. Questioned, he replied:

Ever since I heard from that friend of mine who is in prison that an angel appeared to him, I have come to think that this is a diabolical thing, because our Lord God does not send angels to lead spirits out of bodies, but only to provide them with good inspiration.

And questioned again, he replied:

A certain invisible thing appeared to me in my sleep which had the form of a man, and I thought I was asleep but I was not, and it seemed to me that he was from Trivigniano, and because I had about my neck that caul with which I was born, I thought I heard him say: 'You must come with me because you have something of mine'; and so I told him that if I had to go, I would, but that I did not want to depart from God; and since he said this was God's work, I went at age twenty-two, or twenty-three.

Questioned again, he said:

Yes, sir I always wore that caul about my neck, but I lost it, and after that I never went again.

Questioned, he said:

Those who have the caul and do not wear it, do not go out.

Questioned, he said:

The one who appeared seemed to be a certain Zan de Micon of Trivignano, who is dead now.

Questioned, he said:

It was a Thursday night in the Ember season of Christmas.

Questioned, he said:

No, sir I did not know that he was going to come to me that night, nor that he was a benandante, and I had never talked to him before about such things.

And he added of his own accord:

I have never said anything, except after I stopped going forth because he told me: 'Don't say anything, otherwise you will be beaten.'

It was asked of him: do you know if anyone has ever been beaten for this? he replied:

Yes sir, and I among them, because once I wanted to just say a little word and was beaten and left for dead.

It was asked of him: who beat you? he replied:

Those who used to come with me, perhaps ten people from that village of Trivignano, who now are all dead.

Questioned, he said:

Yes sir, there were witches in that village, including a certain Seraphino who is dead now.

It was asked of him: did you see what the witches did when they went out? he replied:

No sir, except the Ember Days when they fought with us: but they also go out on Thursdays.

Questioned, he said:

On Thursdays the witches are always hurting this or that person; I do not know if they are called by anyone.

Questioned, he said:

The witches do reverence and pray to their masters who go about with great solemnity in black dress and with chains around their necks, and who insist on being kneeled to.

It was asked of him: do you benandanti kneel before your captain? he replied:

No, sir, we only pay our respects to him with our caps, like soldiers to their captain.

It was asked of him: after they have knelt, do the witches play other games? he replied:

Sir, this I have not seen because they go hither and yon.

It was asked of him: when did you see the witches kneel down, and where? he replied:

In the field of Mazzone, after we had fought, when they were setting out in every direction.

It was asked of him: how could you make yourself believe that these were God's works? Men do not have the power either to render themselves invisible or to lead the spirit away, nor are God's works carried out in secrecy. He replied:

That one begged me so much, saying: 'Dear Battista, get up,' and it seemed as if I was both sleeping and not sleeping. Since he was older than me, I allowed myself to be persuaded, thinking it was proper.

Questioned, he said:

Yes sir, now I do believe that this was a diabolical work, after that other one told me of that angel of his, which I mentioned before.

Questioned, he said: the first time I was summoned that person led me to the field of Mazzone and the captain took me by the hand and said: 'Will you be a good servant?' and I replied, yes.

Questioned, he said:

He did not promise me anything, but did say that I was carrying out one of God's works, and that when I died I would go to heaven.

Questioned, he said:

The captain had a white insignia as I said before, and he did not have a cross, not even over his clothing, which was black.

Afterwards he added: they were of black cloth with gold.

It was asked of him: what difference was there between your captain and the one of the witches? he replied:

Ours was somewhat pale of face, and the other one swarthy.

Questioned, he said:

There we did not mention Christ by name, nor the Madonna, nor any saint specifically, nor did I ever see anyone cross himself or make the sign of the cross; but in truth they did talk of God and the saints in general, saying: 'May God and the saints be with us,' but without naming anyone.

Questioned, he said:

There were no horses while we fought, except for some belonging to certain gentlemen of each band mounted on certain four-footed animals, black and white and red, of I don't know what kind, who stood watching.

Questioned, he said:

Those of the witches were on one side and ours opposite, but they didn't bother with one another.

Questioned, he said:

Yes, I did indeed know some benandanti, but I didn't know any of those gentlemen, because they came now in one way, now in another. But we benandanti and witches always came the same way.

Questioned, he said:

While waiting for the company we did not do anything, we neither ate nor drank; but on our way home, I wish I had a *scudo* for every time we drank in the wine cellars, entering through the cracks, and getting on the casks. We drank with a pipe, as did the witches; but after they had drunk, they pissed in the casks.

Questioned, he said:

Dear sir, have I not told you that simply because I said a couple of things I was

beaten terribly, so my sides were all black and blue and also my back and arms? And this is why I never told it to the confessor.

After these facts were heard, he was returned to his cell, so that he might reflect better, etc.

Monday 3 October 1580

Held as above before the reverend father inquisitor of Aquileia, master Felice Montefalco, in the presence of the illustrious *provveditore*, Giovanni Baduario,³ and the magnificent and excellent vicar.

Conducted from the prison assigned to him, Paolo Gasparutto of the village of Iassico, examined and interrogated, testified as follows:

Questioned, he replied:

I believe that the apparition of that angel was really the devil tempting me, since you have told me that he can transform himself into an angel.

Questioned, he replied:

About a year before the angel appeared to me, my mother gave me the caul in which I had been born, saying that she had it baptized with me, and had nine Masses said over it, and had it blessed with certain prayers and scriptural readings; and she told me that I was born a benandante, and that when I grew up I would go forth at night, and that I must wear it on my person, and that I would go with the benandanti to fight the witches.

Questioned, he replied:

My mother did not go forth and she was not a benandante.

Questioned, he said:

From the time I received the caul until the angel came to me, nothing was said to me, nor was I taught anything.

Questioned, he replied:

When that angel, which I believe is the devil, called me, he did not promise me anything, but told me that he would summon me through a benandante called Battista of Vicenza, whom he did indeed send.

Questioned, he said:

I did not know this Battista, whom I had never seen, but when he came he said: 'I am Battista of Vicenza.'

Questioned, he replied:

We went out by the door, even though it was locked tight.

Questioned: in what way can you tell when children have been bewitched? he replied:

It can be determined because they do not leave any flesh on the body, and they leave them with nothing, and they remain dried up and withered, nothing but skin and bones.

It was asked of him: what remedy was it that you used for the child of that man of Brazzano? he replied:

I told him to weigh him three Thursdays.

Questioned, he replied:

The remedy is this, that while the child is weighed on the scale, the captain of the benandanti uses the scale to torment the witch that has caused the injury, even to the point of killing him.

Questioned, he replied:

The child died because they were late in weighing it.

And he added:

When the child gains in weight on the three Thursdays he is weighed, the witch withers and dies, and if the child withers, it is the witch that lives.

Questioned, he replied:

While I was a benandante I could call upon one to accompany me, and every

benandante can do this: but first he is asked to swear that he will disclose nothing, because if he said something, it would bring harm to him and to his companion.

Questioned: who would harm them? he replied:

Those witches.

This testimony having been received, the reverend father inquisitor, with the concurrence of the illustrious *provveditore* and of the most excellent Paolo Pradiola, vicar of his magnificence, released him for the present, on condition that he reappear when summoned, etc.

Led from the prison assigned to him was the official Battista Moduco, alias *Gamba Secura*, and examined, cautioned and interrogated he testified as follows. Questioned, he replied:

I have already said that I could not go without the caul which my mother gave me. She told me that I was born with it and that she had it baptized with me and had some Masses said over it, and that I must wear it, and over that caul I too had more than thirty Masses and benedictions said when I was in Rome with the former Signor Mario Savorgnano.

And questioned, he said:

Yes, indeed, Sir, the priest who blessed it knew, and he used to place it under the altar cloth while he said Mass.

Questioned, he said:

I had it blessed by a monk in that church named for the Madonna near the gate to enter Rome.

And questioned, he said:

It was one monk only who said the Masses, which I don't know if they were thirty or thirty-two, and he held the caul in his hand and I gave him a golden *scudo* as an act of courtesy.

Having received this testimony the reverend father inquisitor as above dismissed him for the present, with the concurrence of the aforementioned and with the same injunction to reflect better, etc.

25 November 1581

Leonardo Colloredo, public crier of Cividale, reported under oath that he had been assigned to go to the village of Iassico and summon Paolo, son of the deceased Gasparutto, of the village of Iassico, to appear on Sunday before the father inquisitor to hear his sentence read in the Church of San Francesco in Cividale, on 26 November 1581. Similarly, Colloredo reported that he had summoned Battista Moduco to appear on Sunday, 26 November 1581 to hear his sentence read in the same Church of San Francesco in Cividale.

(ACAU, S. *Uffizio*, 'Sententiarum contra reos S. Officii liber primus'.)

In the name of Christ, amen.

We, brother Felice da Montefalco, doctor in sacred theology and inquisitor general against heretical pravity for the entire patriarchate of Aquileia and diocese of Concordia, especially delegated by the Holy Apostolic See.

Since you, Battista Moduco, public crier in the city of Cividale, diocese of Aquileia, was denounced to us by individuals worthy of belief as a suspect of heretical pravity, and that you had been so infected for many years, to the great detriment of your soul, therefore, we upon whom falls the responsibility, in view of the office that we fill, to instill the holy Catholic faith in the hearts of men and eradicate heretical pravity from their minds, desiring (as we were and are obliged) to become better informed about these matters, and determine whether the disturbance which has come to our ears is supported

by some measure of truth, and, if it did possess truth, to supply a wholesome and opportune remedy, began to make inquiries, examining witnesses, summoning you, and in the most suitable way that we could, interrogate you under oath about the things of which you were accused, and pursuing all and each individually, which we did, as justice demands, and as we are obliged to do by the laws of the Church.

Therefore, since we wanted to bring your trial to a fitting conclusion and examine clearly what had been uncovered, and whether you walked in the shadows or in the light, and whether you were infected by the stain of heresy or not, to study the merits of the trial we have solemnly convoked before us experts in both canon and civil law, in the presence of the illustrious Giovanni Baduario, worthy *provveditore* of the city of Cividale, in the venerable convent of San Francesco in that city, fully aware that in the eyes of canon law, sound is the judgment which is confirmed by the opinions of many. And after having received and digested the advice, and after having seen and diligently pondered the evidence of the trial, and after having weighed each and every element on a single scale, we came to the determination that you, by your own confession pronounced before us under oath, have been caught up in numerous perversities and heresies, and first of all:

That for twenty-two years you abided in these errors and heresies, since you confessed that you were with the benandanti for that length of time, and that you entered in the Ember season of December, that your mother gave you the cloth or caul with which you were born, saying that she had it baptized with you and also had Masses said over it, and that you had to carry it with you, because you were going with the benandanti. You also stated that you had the caul the night that man of Trivignano whom you knew, but not as a benandante, appeared to you. And he told you that you had to go with him, because you had something of his, and you responded that you would go with him if you were obliged to do so, and, indeed, you did journey forth with that man time and again for twenty-two years.

Moreover, we heard from your own mouth that when you were in Rome, without the slightest fear of God, you had twenty Masses celebrated over that caul and numerous prayers and scriptural readings performed by a priest.

In addition, you dared to say many times, and dared to assert it before us, that all those born with the caul belong to that society, and when they reach age twenty they are obliged to join that society.

That the days when you went forth were the Ember seasons of the year, at night, between Thursdays and Fridays; that the places where you were accustomed to go to do battle were the great field situated near Azzano, and sometimes in the countryside about Conegliano, and sometimes even in German lands in a field near a place called Circnis [Cirghinis], and that the first time you went it was to the great field.

It is also our understanding that you said that when you went to these places weddings were performed, with leaping about, drinking and eating, and that there was fighting with spears of fennel.

Furthermore, so great was your audacity and so small your fear of God, that you dared to affirm before us that to reveal the names of the witches and benandanti was to go against divine will; and you also declared that you believed and firmly held that these impious games were permitted by God, and that you fought for God. Similarly, you asserted that you seriously believed that the captain, under whom you went to these games, had been placed there by God.

In addition, so great was your perseverance and credulity in committing evil, that you believed and firmly held, that not only were these the works of God, but that indeed after death you would enter heaven because of them.

You also said with your own mouth that in these games and combats of yours, the standard-bearer of the benandanti carried a banner of white silk gilded with a lion depicted, and that one of the witches carried a red silk banner, gilded, depicting four black devils.

That on the return from these games you entered wine cellars to drink and commit other things.

Moreover, you dared to believe and affirm that the spirit and the soul could leave the body at will and return to go to these battles. And what is a sign of your enormous error and wickedness is that you received the most sacred sacrament of the Eucharist without ever having confessed these great wickednesses and errors of yours.

But since the merciful and compassionate God occasionally permits some to fall into heresy and error, not only so that Catholic and educated men may become exercised in praise of the holy, but also so that the fallen henceforth be made more humble and take up the works of penitence, therefore, after having diligently discussed the merits of the trial, as indicated above, we have ascertained that in following our frequent instructions and those of other virtuous men, you have returned, adhering to a healthier opinion, to the bosom of Holy Mother Church and to its unity, salubriously fleeing the aforesaid heresies and detesting the errors, and acknowledging the irrefutable truth of the faith of the Holy Church, impressing it within the very viscera of your body. Consequently, we have admitted you (and we admit you) as a warning to publicly abjure the aforementioned heresies and any other, according to the following formula. After the abjuration we shall absolve you from the sentence of greater excommunication by which you became bound after your fall into heresy; and in reconciling you to Holy Mother Church, we restore the sacraments to you, provided that with a true heart and unfeigned faith you return to the unity of the Church, just as we believe and hope you have done.

Proceed then with the following abjuration:

I, Battista Moduco, official of Cividale in the Friuli in the diocese of Aquileia, here in the presence of you the father inquisitor against heretical pravity for the entire diocese of Aquileia and Concordia, with the sacred Gospels before me, and with my hands laid on them, I promise to believe with my heart and confess with my tongue that holy, Catholic and apostolic faith which Holy Mother Church believes, confesses, proclaims and observes. Consequently, I abjure, revoke, detest and disown every heresy of whatever kind it might be, and sect raised up against the Holy, Roman and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, I promise to believe with my heart, and confess with my tongue having committed evil in staying with the benandanti for twenty-two years and having believed and declared that it was a work of God, and that those who opposed it opposed God.

Equally, I confess to having committed evil during the Ember Days when I went out with the other benandanti and witches to fight for the crops and the wine.

I confess and believe that our spirit and soul cannot leave the body nor return to it at will. I also declare and admit that I grievously sinned by never unburdening myself of these errors in confession. Likewise, I abjure and detest the wrong I did wearing the caul in which I was born and having Masses celebrated over it, a thing detested by Holy Mother Church.

Similarly, I abjure and detest having gone in those places I mentioned, to those games and nuptials and to the combats with fennel stalks.

Similarly, I abjure and detest having spoken badly and against Holy Mother Church that whoever reveals the names of these witches and benandanti acts against the will of God, and that these games are God's, and the fighting is for God.

I also abjure and detest the wrong I did in having believed and affirmed that the captain under whom I served had been placed there by God.

Similarly, I abjure and detest my persistence and opinion in believing that not only were those works of God but that after my death I would go to heaven because of them.

I also abjure and detest having said that in those games and combats the standard bearer of the benandanti carried an insignia of white silk, gilded, with a lion, and the one of the witches an insignia of red silk with four black devils on it, gilded.

Similarly, I abjure and detest having affirmed that I believe and hold for true that the soul can leave the body and return at pleasure when it goes to these games.

Finally, I detest and abjure any and every possible evil act and heresy that I have committed against Holy Mother Church, which with all my spirit and affection I approach and kneel before, beseeching pardon from the most exalted creator.

Moreover, I swear and promise that in the future I shall not hold or believe any heresy, nor have familiarity with any, nor teach them to others, but if I learn that someone is infected with heresy or belongs to the witches, or to the witches and benandanti, I will reveal this information to you the father inquisitor or to your successors.

I also promise and swear to fulfil to the best of my ability any penance imposed upon me or that you will impose on me; nor shall I flee nor absent myself, but whenever I shall be called I will respond as quickly as possible and so God help me, and these holy Gospels. But if in the future I should fall again into the above abjured things (may God forbid), I want to be immediately considered relapsed, and I oblige and bind myself now and in the future to the punishments reserved to the relapsed, provided that they be legitimately proved in court or confessed by me.

Truly, since it is most unworthy to avenge injuries against temporal lords, while calmly tolerating injuries against the Lord of the heavens and creator of all things, since it is so much more serious to offend the eternal than the temporal majesty; therefore, in order that he who shows mercy towards sinners also show mercy towards you, so that you may be an example to others and crimes not remain unpunished, and that you may come to act more cautiously in the future and be rendered less disposed and in fact more hesitant about committing the aforesaid and any other illicit acts,

We, father Felice Montefalco, the above named inquisitor general and judge over cases of the faith, in session as a tribunal, for the purpose of passing judgment, according to judicial custom, together with the authority of the reverend lord the bishop of Cattaro, patriarchal vicar and suffragan, with the counsel of the aforesaid lord *provveditore* and of others who are expert in sacred theology and both [canon and civil] laws, with the sacrosanct Gospels before us, as if our judgment emanated from the countenance of God and our eyes discern what is just, having only God before them and the inviolable truth of the orthodox faith, you, Battista Moduco, are arraigned in our presence, to make the aforesaid abjuration in this place at this day and hour, and to hear the definitive sentence or penance to be imposed, as follows:

First:

We condemn you to a term of six months in a prison which we shall assign to you, which you will not leave without our express permission, obtained in writing.

Second, on every Friday of the Ember Days you will fast and beseech God to forgive you the sins which you committed on those days, and you will observe this for two continuous years.

Third, three times a year, at the Resurrection, at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the month of August and at the Nativity of our Lord, for five years you will confess your sins and receive the most sacred sacrament of the Eucharist, bringing or sending an attestation from your priest to the Holy Office that this was fulfilled.

Fourth, you are and will be obliged to send to the Holy Office of the Inquisition all the wrappings or cauls in which your children were or will be born, without burning these cauls by fire.

Moreover, as salutary penances on individual holy days for a period of three years you will recite the Rosary, praying to God to forgive the sins and errors you have committed.

We reserve to ourselves the authority to reduce these penalties or absolve you, in whole or in part, as we may deem best.

The aforesaid sentence was moved, given and in writing judicially promulgated by the above named reverend father, Felice da Montefalco, inquisitor, etc., seated as a court; forthwith, after the sermon uttered in the presence of all the people, also performed was the above written abjuration by the aforesaid Battista Moduco before his reverend lordship in the venerable church of the convent of San Francesco in the city of Cividale by the altar of St Anthony.

Read by me, Antonio Masetto, notary of Cividale, functioning as secretary, with a large multitude as before present and listening.

The same day.

The above named Battista Moduco, humbly praying and beseeching the reverend father inquisitor named above to permit the said Battista to provide for his family, remitted the punishment or penance of six months in prison, in accordance with the provision contained in the sentence, on condition that for the fifteen days following, Battista not leave nor escape from the territory of this city. With this transacted, only the above penalty of imprisonment was for the time being remitted.

In the presence of the reverend father, master Bonaventura Tivarutio, and the most excellent lord, Giulio Delaiolo, honorable vicar to the illustrious *provveditore* of the city.

In the name of Christ, amen.

We, father Felice Montefalco, doctor of sacred theology and inquisitor against heretical pravity for the entire patriarchate of Aquileia and diocese of Concordia, specially delegated by the Holy Apostolic See.

Since it came to our attention that you, Paolo, son of the deceased Gasparutto, of the village of Iassico in the diocese of Aquileia, was denounced to us by individuals worthy of belief as a suspect of heretical pravity, and that you had been so infected for many years, to the great detriment of your soul, a denunciation which struck us sharply in the heart, therefore, we, upon whom falls the responsibility, in view of the office that we fill, to instill the holy Catholic faith in the hearts of men and eradicate heretical pravity from their minds, desiring (as we were and are obliged) to become better informed about these matters, and determine whether the disturbance which has come to our ears is supported by some measure of truth, and, if it did possess truth, to supply a wholesome and opportune remedy, began to make inquiries, examining witnesses, summoning you, and in the most suitable way that we could, interrogate you under oath about the things of which you were accused, and pursuing all and each individually, which we did, as justice demands, and as we are obliged to do by the laws of the Church.

Therefore, since we wanted to bring your trial to a fitting conclusion and examine clearly what had been uncovered, and whether you walked in the shadows or in the light, and whether you were infected by the stain of heresy or not, to study the merits of the trial we have solemnly convoked before us experts in both canon and civil law, in the presence of the illustrious Giovanni Baduario, worthy *provveditore* of the city of Cividale, in the venerable convent of San Francesco in that city, fully aware that in the eyes of canon law, sound is the judgment which is confirmed by the opinions of many. And after having received and digested the advice, and after having seen and diligently pondered the evidence of the trial, and after having weighed each and every element on a single scale, we came to the determination that you, by your own confession pronounced before us under oath, have been caught up in numerous perversities and heresies, and first of all:

For ten continuous years you abided among witches, called by you benandanti, believed in your heart, and time and again confirmed with your mouth that this was one of God's works. Indeed, most execrable of all, you affirmed and firmly believed and said that whoever went against this sect acted against the will of God. And you dared to

affirm this before our tribunal and, a matter of no small interest, not only did you follow this diabolical sect during all the years you dedicated yourself to these works, but you also urged others to accompany you, and once they had promised, they were compelled in the future, whether they wanted to or not, to attend your spectacles and crimes. And you taught those who came that they must not name the holy name of God nor of his saints, or they would have to remain there. Moreover, you confessed to us out of your own mouth that when you were twenty-eight, during the Ember Days in the month of December, in the night following Thursday at about the fourth hour, a devil appeared before you in the form of an angel who called you by your own name and said: 'Paolo, you must go to fight for and sustain the crops against the witches.' You promised him to go and the angel promised to send you a man of Vicenza who would summon you and lead you. And he came precisely in the month of December, on a Thursday, at the fourth hour of the night, and spoke to you, saying: 'The captain calls you forth to battle.' Thus, repeatedly, you went to these diabolical pastimes, led by the devil and by the captain from Verona, and gave yourself over to these works. And what is impious and most execrable, you committed idolatry every time you attended a spectacle of this kind and adored the aforesaid evil angel in the same way that our Lord Jesus Christ must and ought to be adored in churches and other places.

The localities to which you used to go were the country places around Gradisca, Verona, Cormons near Iassico, in all the Ember seasons of the year on the night following Thursday. In these places, as it appears to us from the trial, you and your companions played, leaped about and rode various animals. And it was always during the Ember Days that you were accustomed to fight for the harvests, one time for the corn and the wheat, a second for all the small crops, a third for the wine and a fourth for the animals. The arms which you were accustomed to bear in these games and battles were either stalks of fennel or sticks commonly called viburnum.

On the way back, thirsty, you and your companions entered homes and cellars, and did many evil things while drinking.

We have also learned from you that you held and firmly believed, when you were conversing with the evil angel and attending those games, that the spirit can leave the body and return at its pleasure. You also tenaciously asserted this falsehood, that while you were involved in this wantonness, if someone should draw near with a candle or a light where your body lay to observe it and never took his eyes from it and cried out as loudly as he could, it [the body] would never answer, but if this someone moved his eyes and then called, it would respond immediately.

Moreover, you said that if a person looked at your body lying in bed the whole night long, your spirit would not return to the body, neither the next day nor the one after that, except at night. And if during that time your body was placed in a grave, your spirit would have to wander vagabond about the world until the day and hour fixed by God for its death.

Similarly you asserted that if you should reveal to anyone the names of your companions and what they did during these activities, you would be beaten at night by your accomplices, as in fact you affirm happened to you.

We also gathered from you that the year before the angel appeared to you, your mother gave you the membrane or caul with which you were born, saying: 'I had this caul baptized with you and nine Masses celebrated over it, as well as benedictions, prayers and scripture recited. Therefore, accept it and wear it, because you are destined to become a benandante when it will be time.'

Finally, while you were performing all these diabolical things, you received the most sacred Eucharist and confession, but you chose not to reveal these crimes to your confessor, which is the most obvious sign of your impiety and perdition.

But since the merciful and compassionate God occasionally permits some to fall into heresy and error, not only so that Catholic and educated men may become exercised in praise of the holy, but also so that the fallen henceforth be made more humble and take

up the works of penitence, therefore, after having diligently discussed the merits of the trial, as indicated above, we have ascertained that in following our frequent instructions and those of other virtuous men, you have returned, adhering to a healthier opinion, to the bosom of Holy Mother Church and to its unity, salubriously fleeing the aforesaid heresies and detesting the errors, and acknowledging the irrefutable truth of the faith of the holy Church, impressing it within the very viscera of your body. Consequently, we have admitted you (and we admit you) as a warning to publicly abjure the aforementioned heresies and any other, according to the following formula. After the abjuration we shall absolve you from the sentence of greater excommunication by which you became bound after your fall into heresy; and in reconciling you to Holy Mother Church, we restore the sacraments to you, provided that with a true heart and unfeigned faith you return to the unity of the Church, just as we believe and hope you have done.

Proceed then with the following abjuration:

I, Paolo Gasparutto of Iassico in the diocese of Aquileia, in the presence of you the father inquisitor against heretical pravity for the entire aforesaid diocese and that of Concordia, specially delegated by the Holy Apostolic See, with the sacred Gospels before me, and with my hands laid on them, I promise to believe with my heart and confess with my tongue that holy Catholic and apostolic faith which the Holy Roman Church believes, confesses, proclaims and observes. Consequently, I abjure, revoke, detest and disown every heresy of whatever kind it might be, and sect raised up against the Holy, Roman and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, I promise to believe with my heart, and confess with my tongue having committed evil in staying with the benandanti for ten years and having believed and declared that it was a work of God, and that those who opposed it opposed God.

Likewise, I confess having done wrong in getting others to come to see these spectacles.

Similarly, I detest and abjure that honour and adoration which I displayed in my adoration of the angel.

I also confess having done a great wrong during the Ember Days of the year going out with the other benandanti and witches to fight for the crops and wines.

I also confess and believe that our spirit and soul cannot leave and return to the body at will.

In addition I confess that souls (even though the body is placed in a grave) do not and cannot go wandering about the world.

I also admit that I was wrong in never confessing these errors of mine.

I abjure and detest whatever sort of heresy is or shall be condemned by the Holy, Roman and Apostolic Mother Church.

Moreover, I swear and promise that in the future I shall not fall again into the aforesaid heresy, nor in others, and will not believe them, draw near to them, nor teach them to others; and if I learn that someone is infected with heresy or belongs to the witches, or to the witches and benandanti, I will reveal this information to you the father inquisitor or to your successors.

I also promise and swear to fulfil to the best of my ability any penance imposed upon me or that you will impose upon me.

I also swear and promise that I shall not flee nor absent myself, but whenever I shall be called by you or by your successors, I shall present myself as quickly as possible, and so God help me, and these holy Gospels. But if in the future I should fall again into the above abjured things (may God forbid), I want to be immediately considered relapsed, and I oblige and bind myself now and in the future to the punishments reserved to the relapsed, provided that they be legitimately proved in court or confessed by me.

Truly, since it is seriously unworthy to avenge injuries against temporal lords, while calmly tolerating injuries against the Lord of the heavens and creator of all things, since it is so much more serious to offend the eternal than the temporal majesty; therefore, in order that he who shows mercy towards sinners also show mercy towards

you and so that you may be an example to others and crimes not remain unpunished, and that you may come to act more cautiously in the future and be rendered less disposed and in fact more hesitant about committing the aforesaid and any other illicit acts.

We, father Felice Montefalco, the above named inquisitor general and judge over cases of the faith, in session as a tribunal for the purpose of passing judgment, according to judicial custom, together with the authority of the reverend lord the bishop of Cattaro, patriarchal vicar and suffragan, with the counsel of the aforesaid lord *provveditore* and of others who are expert in sacred theology and both [canon and civil] laws, with the sacrosanct Gospels before us, as if our judgment emanated from the countenance of God and our eyes discern what is just, having only God before them and the inviolable truth of the orthodox faith, you, Paolo Gasparutto, are arraigned in our presence, to make the aforesaid abjuration in this place at this day and hour, and to hear the definitive sentence or penance to be imposed, as follows:

First:

We condemn you to a term of six months in a prison which we shall assign to you, which you will not leave without our express permission, obtained in writing.

Second, on every Friday of the Ember Days you will fast and beseech God to forgive you the sins which you committed on those days, and you will observe this for two continuous years.

Third, three times a year, at the Resurrection, at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the month of August and at the Nativity of our Lord, for five years you will confess your sins and receive the most sacred sacrament of the Eucharist, bringing or sending an attestation from your priest to the Holy Office that this was fulfilled.

Fourth, you are and will be obliged to send to the Holy Office of the Inquisition all the wrappings or cauls in which your children were or will be born, without burning these cauls by fire.

Fifth, in the Rogation processions before the Ascension of our Lord, it will be prohibited to you and to your domestics to carry viburnum branches, nor are you to keep said viburnum in any form in your home.

Moreover, as salutary penances on individual holy days for a period of three years you will recite the Rosary, praying to God to forgive the sins and errors you have committed.

We reserve to ourselves the authority to reduce these penalties or absolve you, in whole or in part, as we may deem best.

Sunday 26 November 1581

The aforesaid sentence was moved, given and in writing judicially promulgated by the above named reverend father, Felice da Montefalco, inquisitor, etc., seated as a court; forthwith, after the sermon uttered in the presence of all the people, also performed was the above written abjuration by the aforesaid Paolo Gasparutto⁴ before his reverend lordship in the venerable church of the convent of San Francesco in the city of Cividale by the altar of St Anthony.

Read by me, Antonio Masetto, notary of Cividale, functioning as secretary, with a large multitude as before present and listening.

The same day

The above named Paolo Gasparutto,⁵ humbly praying and beseeching the reverend father inquisitor named above, so that the said Paolo might be able to return to his home, and provide for his family and children, remitted the punishment or penance of six

months in prison, in accordance with the provision contained in the sentence, on condition that for fifteen days following, Paolo not leave nor escape from the territory of this city and the village of Iassico. With this transacted, only the above penalty of imprisonment was for the time being remitted.

In the presence of the reverend father, master Bonaventura Tivarutio, a fellow brother in the above named minorite convent, and the most excellent lord, Giulio Delaiolo, honorable vicar to the illustrious *provveditore* of the city.