

FROM:

Understanding Popular Culture

Europe from the Middle Ages
to the Nineteenth Century

Edited by
Steven L. Kaplan

#5. Remedies to W/C in Catholicism

Sacerdote ovvero strione: (Priest or witch) Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy

MARY R. O'NEIL

Both Catholic and Protestant orthodoxies of the 16th century responded to the "ignorance and superstition" of the European people with a mixture of catechesis and repression. Preachers, schoolmasters, and church courts all participated in an intensive effort to raise the religious and moral level of society by enforcing stricter standards of belief and behavior. But despite similarities in learned laments and in the apparatus of indoctrination, important differences existed between Protestant and Catholic approaches to this "reform of popular culture," differences that are clearly visible in their programs for the suppression of magical beliefs and practices.¹

The Protestant Reformation eliminated ecclesiastically sanctioned remedies against misfortunes of both natural and supernatural origin, urging reliance on prayer and trust in divine providence as the correct approach to adversity. By contrast, active mediation with supernatural forces for human benefit remained basic to the sacramental and ceremonial core of Catholicism. The Roman Church did, however, wish to redirect popular attempts at independent access to the supernatural into orthodox channels, thus consolidating its monopoly on dealing with positive and negative supernatural forces alike.² Magical self-help was to be combatted not with Protestant stoicism but through the liberal provision of authorized, clerically administered relief.

A clear statement of orthodox responsibility for combatting the effects commonly attributed to negative supernatural forces (*maleficium*³ and possession) is presented in Fra Girolamo Menghi's *Compendio dell'arte essorcista* of 1576. Citing a range of evidence including Scripture, canon law, and the "testimony of the common people of practically every nation who suffer in great numbers from various maleficial infirmities," Menghi defended the reality of diabolical harm against the skeptics who wished to trace such injuries to natural (if hidden) causes.⁴ The recapitulation of traditional demonology and witch lore in Books I and II of the *Compendio* served as background to the central purpose of the treatise, the discussion of orthodox remedies against such dangers.

It would be a shameful and indecent thing for an expert physician to describe in his writings the symptoms of various illnesses, unless he also knew the preventative and curative remedies that applied in each case. In order that no one should judge this modest effort of ours to be curious, vain, superfluous and composed to no purpose, we wish, like an expert physician who first diagnoses the sickness and then applies the appropriate remedies, to speak in this third book of the protective and curative remedies which correspond to the infirmities discussed above, so that with these remedies each person can defend himself against the assaults of demons and witches.⁵

The remedies to which Menghi counseled recourse were "exorcisms and other forces of ecclesiastical medicine," among which he included pilgrimages, confession, and the sign of the cross. Although he took no overt stand against witch hunting, that option is conspicuously absent. For Menghi, the *medicine ecclesiastiche* are sufficient to thwart or reverse the actions of demons and witches alike. An experienced Franciscan exorcist, Menghi gave particular emphasis to the broadly remedial functions of exorcism, which could be used to undo the effects of *maleficia* as well as possession.⁶

The *Compendio*'s assertion of the efficacy of traditional ecclesiastical remedies was aimed at several different groups. The most sophisticated consisted of those "elevated intellects" who denied the utility of exorcism along with the reality of possession and *maleficia*. Mistaking demonic presence for madness or disease, they discouraged people from calling in exorcists and thus served as tools of a carefully planned diabolical ploy to achieve the unilateral disarmament of the human race.⁷ At the other end

of the cultural spectrum were those who firmly believed in the necessity for protection against *maleficia* but who turned to magical and superstitious remedies rather than to those approved by the Church. Somewhere between these extremes lay the central audience for Menghi's manual, the clerics and exorcists whose task it was to dispense the various *medicine ecclesiastiche* in an orthodox manner.⁸

In both timing and content, Menghi's work forms part of the post-Tridentine effort to reform various aspects of popular belief and behavior, an effort that involved clergy of all levels in the struggle against popular error. The regional offices of the Roman Inquisition stepped up prosecution of superstitious offenses in the period after 1570, leading to a marked increase in trials against lay persons involved in magical healing, divination, and love magic.⁹ The parallel task of preventing recourse to magical remedies was delegated to the local representatives of orthodoxy, the parish clergy and the friars. The quasi-ethnographic character of the campaign to detect and catalogue the possible forms of superstitious error can be seen in the recommendation made in 1577 to the curates of Bologna by the annual congregation of parish priests meeting under episcopal auspices.

They should seek to collect all the superstitions, incantations and *brevi da portar adosso* [handwritten prayers or charms, worn or carried on one's person] containing superstitious words, unapproved names and similar abuses. Even if they do not appear to be evil, they should be collected and notice given of them, for it is planned that a small book warning of these matters should be compiled.¹⁰

Inquisitorial edicts required preachers to use sermons as an occasion for exhortations against magical remedies and gave detailed instructions on the precise types of possible offenses. Absolution in confession was made contingent on denunciation not just of one's own failings in this regard but of the observed lapses of neighbors and relatives as well.¹¹ Such decrees were aimed in particular at the illiterate and uneducated, the *pusillis et rudibus Christifidelibus*, and the clergymen who read the edicts constituted, in the Tridentine model, the front line of defense against such rustic errors.¹²

As a program for the elimination of superstition, this model required that clerics themselves be of certified orthodoxy so that in the most remote village there would be at least one person

qualified to tell a legitimate prayer from a superstitious charm, a natural remedy from a magical cure. The trials that the Inquisition conducted against clerics and exorcists for superstitious offenses in the late 16th century therefore indicate both a flaw in the model and a determination to remedy that flaw. Out of sixty-four trials held in Modena between 1580 and 1600 on charges of superstition, twelve, or close to 20 percent, were directed against clerics, four of whom were exorcists.¹³ Thus the specialists in orthodox alternatives to superstitious remedies were repeatedly found guilty of complicity in the very errors they were charged to eradicate.

Drawing on Inquisition records from Modena, Bologna, and Venice in the late 16th century, this essay examines the exercise of the remedial function by the lower clergy.¹⁴ Recruited from among artisans or peasants, this group occupied a crucial position as mediators between the cultural levels of early modern society. They acted as the local representatives of orthodoxy but nonetheless they often shared both milieu and *mentalité* with their parishioners. The trials of ordinary clerics for superstitious offenses reflect ambiguities that stemmed from their incomplete personal transitions between *culture folklorique* and *culture cléricale*, as well as from their role as administrators of one of a set of parallel and competing remedies for maleficial injuries.¹⁵ This essay considers the church's concern for detecting clerical complicity in popular errors, the laity's expectations from clerically administered remedies, and the predicaments of individual clerics as they attempted to respond to often-conflicting demands.

Given the sacramental and teaching functions entrusted to the lowliest priest, clerical superstition was inherently far more dangerous to orthodoxy than the lay variety. The lengthy and probing interrogations to which clerics were subjected when arrested reveal the hierarchy's concern for assuring that its own delegates, at least, acted only within authorized channels. The laymen and women tried by the Inquisition in the late 16th century were more frequently involved in the actual practice of magical remedies; but clerical trials provide more information about the development and application of the orthodox category of "superstition" itself. For although lay persons were asked whether they knew a given procedure to be forbidden, only clerics were questioned in any depth about the *assumptions*

underlying their suspect actions or about their understanding of *why* a given action might be considered superstitious. This difference in style of interrogation of lay and clerical defendants can be illustrated by comparing the trial of an uneducated, sixty-year-old Modenese with that of a literate Franciscan in Venice.

The Modenese Inquisition found Antonio de Correggi guilty in 1595 of the superstitious offenses of "vain observance of times and abuse of the Gospel" in connection with his technique of curing fevers by reciting the opening verses of Saint John's Gospel over the sick person on a hilltop at sunrise, on Good Friday, or on the feast of Saint John the Baptist. The court's sentence indicated that his error was essentially a jurisdictional one, that of believing the "holy words, the most holy gospel and holy days . . . can be used for ends other than those instituted by the Holy Church."¹⁶

Antonio's replies show, however, that he did not categorize his admitted actions in the court's terms. He had heard the "priest say many times, both at the altar and in confession, that one should not practice superstitious customs." But when pressed on what this meant, Antonio replied, "by superstitious things, I mean doing harm to one's neighbor, taking another person's goods and so forth." The numerous edicts against superstition read in church and aimed at the illiterate had succeeded only partially in Antonio's case. He knew that superstition was "wrong" but it remained simply a synonym for a generic concept of sin as doing harm to others.¹⁷ Significantly the Inquisitor made no comment on Antonio's lack of understanding of the concept, and hence of the charges against him, but moved to the next on a list of prepared questions. If the trial did not expand Antonio's theological understanding, it did alert him to the fact that his sunrise healing, effective though it might have been, had to be discontinued. Such reliance on the coercive setting of the trial and the lack of any attempt to convey just what made a given action "superstitious" is typical of Inquisitorial procedure against the uneducated laity.

By contrast a Franciscan in Venice, also charged with superstitious healing, faced more intensive and doctrinally revealing interrogations in his 1590 trial. As a cure for fevers, Fra Geronima da Udine dispensed pieces of paper (*bollettini* or *polizze*) on each of which he had written the name of one of the twelve

Apostles. The sick person was to open one of these folded papers each day, burning it if the fever persisted; but if the fever abated, he should vow to fast on the vigil of the Apostle named for that day and should not burn the paper. Fra Geremia's open distribution of this charm from the *scuola* of the Franciscan convent constituted an informal imprimatur that caused the Inquisition to regard his case with particular seriousness.

Since he did not simply offer this to people, but they came to ask for the cure even without his knowing them, this is a clear sign that it was public knowledge in Venice that he dispensed this medication. . . . This *dottrina* or *secreta* of his was notorious and the people flocked to him to get these *bollettini*.¹⁸

Directed insistently at the defendant's grasp of the concept of superstition, the interrogation of Fra Geremia was undertaken to educate as well as to convict. It goes well beyond the coercive scope of Antonio's trial and attempts to isolate precisely the error in Geremia's healing procedure.

I: If it seemed to him that this was licit, knowing it rather to be pure and simple superstition, and furthermore irreverence towards the name of the Apostle which was to be burned.

R: It seems bad to me, but I did it for the benefit of those persons, and I never received anything for it.

I: If it seems just to him to do evil for the benefit of others.

R: It no longer seems just, no. I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did it to heal them of that sickness.¹⁹

Although it is not specified that the fevers cured by Fra Geremia's procedure were of maleficial origin, a standard issue in the literature on the prevention and cure of witchcraft was "whether it is permissible to do harm in order to do good." The debate centered on the legitimacy of dissolving *maleficia* by means of further *maleficia*; supporters of strictly orthodox remedies like Girolamo Menghi argued that death should be preferred to a maleficial cure.²⁰ Fra Geremia's good intentions and his desire to respond to people's needs by any available means are thus dismissed as irrelevant for only the character of the means employed was at issue, not the worthiness of the goal.

Seeking to "clarify in what way it seemed to him that he had done wrong," the court asked

whether he saw it as the act of a faithful Christian to burn the paper with the name of an Apostle on it when the fever persisted, as if in scorn and resentment for not having been granted this favor (*gratia*).²¹

Fra Geremia explained that the *bollettino* was to be burned without being opened, implying that if one did not know the name of the Apostle no disrespect could be construed. The judges were unimpressed, noting that "this amounts to the same thing, for it is the act of throwing it on the fire that creates the superstition and shows neglect of that Apostle."²²

Nowhere does this interrogation hint that this cure is superstitious because it does not work; together with Geremia and his Venetian following the court accepts, or at least does not contest, the efficacy of the charm. Rather, the cure was judged superstitious precisely because of the manner in which it *did* work — through an inappropriate method of appeal to the Apostles.²³ Responding to his explanation that the *bollettino* was to be burned so that it would take on the sickness, the court noted that "from this reply of his, it seems that he wanted to force the Apostles. If they wanted to free themselves, they must heal the sick person in order not to be burned at the end of the day."²⁴ The cure, then, went beyond simple irreverence to active coercion of the Apostles through a classic combination of bribery and threats. A tacit acceptance of the magical principle that the written name represents the Apostle, so that burning the name is tantamount to an assault on the Apostle himself, underlies the court's concern for this aspect of the cure.²⁵ While less attention is given to the reward held out to the cooperative saint, the assumption that the cure was indeed effected through Apostolic agency may explain the absence in this trial of the standard charge of implicit diabolism.

Although often accepted by the Inquisition in cases of lay superstition, Fra Geremia's last line of defense, "I did this out of simplicity and not out of disrespect towards any saint," was rejected out of hand: "since he is a religious and lettered, his claim of simplicity is not credible."²⁶ Holding clerics to stricter standards than the laity is consonant with the Church's definition of their role in society. Yet the frequency of clerical activity judged superstitious by the Church indicates that the actual position of clerics vis-à-vis the beliefs and practices of the *pusillis et rudibus* was less distant than hoped.

Considered in this light, Fra Geremia's defense of *semplicità* emerges as more than a last-ditch effort to exculpate himself. It was also a description of his own participation in a milieu and a set of beliefs that he had learned to perceive as characteristic of simple, uneducated people.²⁷ His explanation that "I learned this thing at Udine when I was a boy, but I never taught it to anyone," reflects a division in his own experience that was both geographic and ideological: a childhood in Friuli, about which we know only that he learned this cure, and a clerical adulthood in Venice, where his provincial lore, though well received by the people "who flocked to him to get these *bollettini*," was readily discerned as superstitious by the enforcers of public orthodoxy and, after some coerced reflection, by Fra Geremia himself.²⁸

However, not all clerical remedies were unorthodox. The legitimate healing activities of clerics included simple blessings, reading prayers, and dispensing handwritten *brevi* containing orthodox texts. Mothers frequently brought their sick children to priests to have them blessed with the sign of the cross (*segnati*) or to have prayers read over them (*legere sopra*); these routine, noncontroversial matters are encountered throughout the trial records. The Bolognese plan of 1577 to collect even those *brevi* that "do not appear to be evil" reflects the suspicions aroused by the circulation of unapproved formulae. Yet if the words they contained could be shown to be orthodox, the wearing or carrying of such *brevi* was permissible, even advisable.²⁹ All of these less formal measures could be appropriately invoked to mitigate any illness, including those of natural origin, but the more potent clerical remedies of conjuration (*scongiurare*) and exorcism (*esorcizzare*) were reserved for maleficial conditions of negative supernatural origin.

Although Italian exorcist literature does describe public dispossessions similar to the famous episodes of post-Reformation France, the exorcist activity that Inquisition trials describe was of a far less spectacular variety. It focused on undoing the effects of *maleficia* rather than on direct encounters with possessing demons.³⁰ The concentration on curing disease placed exorcists squarely in the ranks of the healers; to their public they represented a source of concrete aid, an alternative to either medical advice or the local village healer.

Since an exorcist could not deal effectively with diseases of natural origin, his first order of business was discerning *maleficia*, a task complicated by the fact that the same disease could arise from either natural or maleficial causes. Exorcist manuals attempted to introduce some rigor into this inherently difficult process by spelling out criteria for distinguishing the different sources of identical symptoms.³¹ In practice, however, adherence to such guidelines was lax; Girolamo Menghi inveighed at length against exorcists' ignorance of "the knowledge required for the exercise of this art," and cited examples from his own experience.

In a certain city of Lombardy, I saw one of these [exorcists] with my own eyes, who had never had a book of this art in his hands, and nevertheless promised that he could recognize and cure all the *maleficati* that he saw, and they flocked to his hands. So widely had his reputation spread that people came to him from all parts of Italy to have their ailments cured. He maintained that he discerned and cured them by certain powders and waters which he offered to them. He went to such lengths in this that although he might be at a great distance from the sick person, he declared that he could nonetheless recognize illnesses, often divining symptoms as well at a distance.³²

The manuals did not provide for detecting *maleficia* in the absence of the victim; to Menghi, such abilities implied either fraud or divination.

Although this function was officially within the competence of the exorcist alone, in practice the relatives and neighbors of a sick person often made initial diagnoses of *maleficium* before calling in an expert. Testifying in the 1582 trial of Don Teofilo Zani, official exorcist of the Cathedral Church in Modena, Francesca dei Vincenzi described the exorcism of her nephew.

Thomaso, the little son of my brother, was sick. He was so distressed and screamed so loudly that he was judged by various people to be *maleficato*. So it was suggested by his grandmother that we call in Don Teofilo to exorcize Thomaso.³³

Though presumably he could have made an independent diagnosis, reversing or confirming the untutored perceptions of the family, Don Teofilo seems to have felt no need for a conclusive verdict on the origin of Thomaso's illness; he went ahead with his standard procedure as the family wished.

Twice I signed and exorcized a child suspected of being *maleficato*; this I

did at the request of the mother of Madonna Francheschina who came in person to ask me, and also had her *capellano*, Don Sebastian Sassolo, ask me. . . . But to tell the truth, I had little desire to do so.³⁴

Familial pressure overcame Zani's professional doubts but his reservations about the efficacy of exorcism in this case were shared by Francesca, who witnessed the procedure.

[Zani] tried all the remedies customarily used on the *maleficati*; I was present at the beginning, but seeing those ointments of his it appeared to me that Thomaso continued to scream and cry, so I doubted it was having any effect.³⁵

In her opinion, the boy had always been and still was sickly (*mal conditionato*); he had not been exorcized since. Like the original diagnosis, the decision to abandon exorcism was not made by the clerical expert but by the family, which seems to have retreated to a naturalistic explanation.

It was at this crucial point – deciding whether and where to seek relief – that many lay persons fell into error. The alternatives open to them were posed with particular clarity during the interrogation of a woman whose *maleficato* child had been cured by Don Teofilo Zani in 1578. A pious widow, Gasparina Ballotta, testified to the Inquisition that she was regularly visited by an apparition that took the form of various deceased relatives. She was accustomed to consult with her *cosa spirituale* on issues of importance, such as that under urgent consideration by the Livizzano family, to which she was related by marriage.³⁶ Their daughter Laura was *fatturata* (bewitched) and her mother Margarita wished to know "whether there is a remedy to the sickness of Madonna Laura, whether of witches or of priests – *sia di strlone hover di sacerdote*."

Gasparina's vision assured her that they "didn't want any witches involved, but only ministers of Christ," and approved the choice of Zani as exorcist on the condition that he would do this "as a work of charity."³⁷ The reply served the cause of orthodoxy but the initial question illustrates the options that the worried family considered. Clearly, the remedial powers of the *sacerdote* were perceived as parallel to those of other local healers of *maleficia*, here classified as *strioni*.

Laura's mother was willing to follow the recommendation to seek out an exorcist rather than a witch but she felt the need to

know more than just how to remove the *fattura*. Gasparina was thus instructed to question her vision on a further point.

Madonna Margarita wanted to know if she had been harmed (*guasta*) by her husband's mother or by her brother-in-law, and whether her children too had been harmed by them, as she assumed to be the case.³⁸

Her acceptance of the orthodox remedy notwithstanding, Margarita suspected that the root cause of the problem lay in the hostility of her husband's family and wanted this confirmed. Later witnesses would testify that Gasparina's vision had indeed "caused discord and dissension between many people by saying this person had bewitched (*maleficavit*) this or that one."³⁹ But Gasparina's own version of the apparition's response to Margarita – "My child, let Jesus Christ look to souls and sins" – piously deflected concern away from identifying the agents of the *maleficium* (the essential impulse behind witch hunting) and toward the remedial approach of undoing their effects through orthodox means.⁴⁰

In fact, not everyone who perceived an act of *maleficium* sought to identify the perpetrator. But such an approach is certainly underrepresented in the sources since it produced no charges and no trial records. The stoic response is however occasionally visible, as in the testimony of a reluctant witness, Isabella, called in 1579 during Maria de Mariani's trial on charges of *maleficium*. In answer to the court's questioning about Maria's reputation in the rural Villa di Fre, she replied:

I know of not a single *malefica*. Although six of my little children have been *guasti* and all of them died, from the first to the last, I never wanted to find out who had undone them.⁴¹

Since the desire to identify the source of such injuries had more drastic consequences than this silent endurance, it is the various methods by which such identification took place that have become the focus of historical interest.

In the case of Gasparina and her vision, the stoic response was accompanied by recourse to the ecclesiastical remedy of exorcism, thus lending support to Keith Thomas's argument that there was an inverse correlation between witch hunting and the availability of orthodox remedies for maleficial conditions in the post-Reformation period.⁴² However, the concept of *maleficium* re-

mained incomplete without its perpetrator for it was only through the identification of someone who wished the victim harm that suffering became meaningful.⁴³ The idea tends strongly toward the naming of a culprit, whether or not that person is punished, and despite their role as custodians of the *medicines ecclesiastiche* clerics were no more immune than their parishioners to such culturally grounded thought processes. Indeed, if Gasparina's edifying account of her role in urging Margarita to let higher powers settle the accounts is a reliable one, she was being far more careful than her clerical advisor.

For, once having accepted the invitation to exorcize Madonna Laura, Don Teofilo Zani displayed an unseemly interest in the circumstances and authors of her maleficial condition. As Margarita Livizzano explained,

he said it had been necessary to recite a Gospel at Santa Chiara, and that all the evildoers who had bewitched (*fatturato*) the girl had gone one by one to that church while he recited the Gospel. After this he had a Vesper said in San Domenico . . . saying this was necessary for the health of the girl, because another Vesper had been said in that church in *maleficio* against her.⁴⁴

In the opinion of the official exorcist of the Modenese *Duomo* it was thus possible to use a liturgical ceremony both to cast a maleficial spell and to undo one, and to use the Mass as a charm to ferret out the agents of such a *maleficio*. To Gasparina, he disclosed exactly who they were.

While he sang the Gospel, he saw them going back and forth past the doors of the Church, and he said there was Madonna Orsolina, the mother of Augusto Livizzano, and Giovanni Maria, her son.⁴⁵

Questioned by the Inquisition on these points, Zani denied none of Margarita's allegations.

I: Whether he had held it opportune to recite a Gospel in the Church of Santa Chiara to which those who had harmed (*maleficavit*) the oppressed girl had gone?

R: It is true that I sang a Passion during Holy Week in that church, and that I told them I had seen those enemies whom they [Laura's family] blamed for making her sick and causing her *fattura*.

I: Whether he had a Vesper said in the Church of San Domenico saying it was necessary to heal the above mentioned sick person because a Vesper had been celebrated in that church in order to cause her *maleficio*?

R: It is true.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the surviving records of Zani's trial lack both a final summary of charges and a sentence. Although there is thus no clear statement by the court about exactly where his errors lay, it is clear that the exorcist's zeal for combatting *maleficia* had extended far beyond the limits of orthodox relief. Whether fraudulent or sincere in motive, his confirmation of Margarita's suspicions about the link between familial hostilities and Laura's condition, as well as the strict parallelism of his undoing the *maleficio* by the same means used to cause it, could readily be classified as superstitious misuses of liturgical ceremonies.

So even if one chose the *sacerdote* over the *strione*, there was no guarantee that the choice would result in an orthodox cure. The functional equivalence of orthodox and superstitious remedies asserted in Gasparina's formula indicates that people went to priests with many of the same expectations that they brought to magical healers, creating pressures that these men were often ill-equipped to resist. Moreover, the Church's identification of clerics as an authorized source of relief itself contributed to the demands made upon them. The resulting tensions often led them to expand their healing activities well beyond orthodox boundaries.

While the Church expected clerics to perceive clearly and to enforce the jurisdictional line separating superstitious from religiously acceptable techniques, other forces diluted this capacity. Even if a cleric had a fairly solid grasp of the limits of assistance he could legitimately offer, an insistent parishioner could confuse the issues in his mind. Thus Madonna Margarita Simonini of Modena approached her parish priest, Don Camillo Malpiglia, for aid in writing the names of Christ and the twelve Apostles on thirteen almonds; she wished to give them to her son as a cure for fever. Rebuffed by Don Camillo on the grounds that he was too busy, rather than on any stated objection to the procedure, Margarita then turned to Don Teofilo Zani. As he testified, the procedure was a familiar one.

Many times I have heard it said in Modena that the sick person was to eat each day, at random, one of those thirteen almonds on which the names were written. When he ate that bearing the name of Christ, the fever would immediately leave.⁴⁷

This cure is closely related to the apostolic lottery of Fra Geremia da Udine, though here the role of the Apostles is subordinated to that of Christ and the retribution for nonperformance is eliminated. Whether Margarita's request stemmed from an inability to write these words herself or whether the power of priestly script was an element in the efficacy of the charm is not clear.

Zani indignantly denied having consecrated Mass over these almonds, although he did admit to having written the holy names on them. Asked "whether or not he believed in this sort of superstition," Zani explained that he had attempted to keep his distance and had initially refused Margarita's request. But in a striking reversal of the prescribed direction of the lay-clerical relationship, she was able to convince him of the devout and religious content of her healing method.

No, Father, I did not believe in it, nor do I believe it now. On the contrary, I resisted this woman's demands, saying I didn't want to write those names. But when she said that she did this for the devotion she bore to the name of Jesus Christ, I let myself be worn down (*mi lasciai ridur*) and so I wrote those names on the almonds to give her satisfaction. . . . This custom is used by many people, and for these reasons I wrote those names on the almonds, thinking it was a matter of devotion.⁴⁸

As further evidence that it had indeed been a "matter of devotion," Zani cited Margarita's request that he say the Mass of the Centurion for her son; she had offered the *elemosina* of one *canalotto* for this service. There was clearly no question in Margarita's mind that this combination of a devout healing charm and a Mass was appropriate, and the strength of her understanding of what belonged in the sphere of religion was instrumental in overcoming Zani's hesitation. But other statements made by Zani — "so it is said in Modena . . . this custom is used by many people" — indicate that the noncontroversial nature of such methods in the community at large was also at work, eating away at the cleric's ability to categorize such procedure in a correct, orthodox manner.

The indelible mark of Holy Orders and the Church's efforts to hold the clergy to stricter standards notwithstanding, individual priests came from and often continued to participate actively in the popular milieux where superstitious remedies were sought after and highly valued. Moreover, the cleric's ac-

cess to such liturgical apparatus as holy oils, together with his linguistic and ceremonial knowledge, made his cooperation crucial to various magical procedures. The pressures that could be brought to bear on clerics by their unabashed parishioners again emerge in the 1585 trial of Don Gian Battista, a priest in the Cathedral Church of Modena. Asked by a noblewoman to baptize a piece of magnet (*calamita*) for her use as a love charm, he resisted at first, well aware that this was a sacrilegious misuse of the baptismal ceremony. "But although I had refused her more than ten times, in the end I was obliged by the many importunities of the Signora, and I promised to serve her in this matter."⁴⁹ The language of service in which his acquiescence is couched and the social importance of the Signora Costanza, wife of Signor Camillo Superechio, *cittadino modenese*, suggest that Don Gian Battista found it difficult to resist a social superior.

While this case illustrates pressures from above, the expectations of social equals and especially of relatives could prove even more compelling. For, unlike Fra Geremia, not all clerics left their provincial birthplace; village priests often continued to function as members of a kinship group even when the demands such a role placed upon them conflicted directly with their role as representatives of orthodoxy.⁵⁰ Don Camillo Forbicino, curate of the Church of San Matteo in Villa Nova, a rural community in Modenese territory, was called before the Inquisitor in 1594 for having requested a local seer to perform a magical procedure aimed at finding a relative's stolen property. He described a situation in which his familial position forced him to prove his innocence of theft by consenting to superstition. A store of sausage had been stolen from Don Camillo's aunt:

since I took care of my aunt's affairs, she told several people, in the presence of my mother, that no one was familiar with her house except me, so that suspicions focused on me. When she told me that she wanted to draw lots (*tirar le sorte*) to identify the thief, I put up some resistance, reminding her that it was a sin. Still I could not really oppose her, lest she then become certain that I had stolen these things.⁵¹

This priest's close involvement with his female relatives implicated him in a traditional method of detecting theft; despite his show

of resistance, their sense of how to proceed overrode his mild clerical scruples.

Alert to his predicament, the court displayed a certain protectiveness for this cleric caught in a web of rustic female error, asking solicitously whether "the above named women forced him into doing this through sorcery?" To his credit, Don Camillo did not avail himself of this classic opportunity to transfer blame. Though finding him guilty, the court noted that his error derived "not from lack of faith, but from the requests of others and for your own honor."⁵² The close ties between the village priest and the people were thus recognized, though certainly not approved, by the 16th century enforcers of orthodoxy.

While Don Gian Battista and Don Camillo were aware of being drawn into explicitly superstitious remedies (love magic and divination), the cases of Fra Geremia and Don Teofilo Zani suggest that clerics' own sense of the limits of orthodox assistance was often unsure and conflicted with other assumptions operative in their environment. If the laity viewed the functions of the *sacerdote* as continuous with those of the *strione*, so did some clerics. An extreme case of the functional equivalence of orthodox and magical remedies is found in the trial of a Franciscan Tertiary in Modena in 1599. Fra Girolamo Azzolini, "who makes a profession of exorcizing and of telling who had been bewitched," was commonly consulted for information about whether a given sickness was of maleficial origin and victims of *maleficium* were brought to him to be blessed (*segnati*). The court's summary of his trial focused on his reply to a woman who brought her sick child (*creatura guasta*) to him for this purpose.

'My lady, this child of yours is bewitched (*striata*) and I cannot heal her. If you want her cured you must take her to a witch (*strega*) so that she can look at her and free her.' When the woman replied that she didn't know any witches, Fra Azzolini added, 'Go to Villa Franca, to such and such a person, and tell her on my behalf that she should cure this child of yours, and she will do it.'⁵³

Thus the central accusation against Fra Azzolini was that of "having commerce with a witch" by referring a trusting Christian soul to an implicitly diabolical source of relief. Aware of the limits of his own healing powers, he acknowledged the superior abilities of a local healer (here called *strega*) and sent serious cases to her.

Though Fra Azzolini admitted having given this advice, he was reticent about the circumstances in which he had made his acquaintance with this *strega*. Not until his third interrogation did he explain that his relatives had sent for the "old woman who *may have been a witch*" during his own recent illness (*italics added*).

But when she arrived and learned for what purpose she had been called, she refused to heal him, saying that her confessor no longer wanted to absolve her when she did such things. To which you [Fra Azzolini] replied that since she had performed this remedy before, and had been absolved, you could assure her that she would be absolved again. Encouraged by your words, she signed you with her superstitious remedy.⁵⁴

After his recovery, Fra Azzolini had taken to sending people with an illness similar to his to this woman, although "being a religious, I was ashamed to have done this." All the parties to this procedure were thus aware that it was forbidden "to call for witches in one's own infirmity and to make use of their superstitious secrets and remedies."⁵⁵ But under the duress of illness such recourse remained a culturally valid option, even when the Church's prohibitions were fully understood.

Fra Azzolini's case was treated with severity by the court, both because of the "seriousness of the crimes to which you have confessed and especially because of the quality of your person and of the office of exorcist exercised by you." For a specialist in ecclesiastical medicine to send his clients to a *strega*, acknowledging the relative deficiency of his own powers, constituted propaganda in favor of the opposition and clear evidence of his unworthiness to hold the office. Fra Azzolini was duly condemned to exile from the city of Modena and ordered "under pain of *ipso facto* suspension from holy orders, that you should never again exercise the office of exorcist."⁵⁶

While reciprocity between lay and clerical healers was possible, competition between them was more common and certainly more orthodox. In 1600, Gasparino da Carpo called on a Modenese Dominican, Fra Benedetto, because he suspected that his wife Madalena had been *affatturata*. The friar, "having seen and blessed (*segnata*) Madalena three times, confirmed that she was *guasta* and *amaliata*." This recourse to ecclesiastical healing power angered a local woman who had often boasted of knowing various secret remedies of her own.

Having learned that my wife had come to have herself signed by Fra Benedetto, Hippolita arrived at our house and said these or similar words to my wife: 'Why have you not allowed me to heal? Didn't you think I could heal you without going to the friar of San Domenico?'⁵⁷

Protecting her territory and her healing function from the intrusion of an orthodox clerical healer, Hippolita was seen by Gasparino as practically announcing herself as the cause of his wife's illness. For on the principle that *qui scit sanare, scit damnare*, healers were commonly suspected of inducing the very symptoms they offered to cure.⁵⁸ Hippolita was in fact denounced to the Inquisition as a *malefica* on the basis of this incident.

The perception that the power to heal implied its opposite has been noted in various areas of Europe in this period; in the Modenese trials it is first invoked by witnesses testifying against healers and may therefore be of popular origin.⁵⁹ In the 1579 trial of Maria de Mariani, various former clients cited her healing abilities as evidence against her. Asked *an cognoscat aliquam maleficam?* one witness replied carefully:

Father, I don't know any *malefica* or *stria*, but I do know well a woman named Maria de Mariani, a widow who lives in the Villa di Fre and is held to be a *stria* though she denies it. I have heard Maria say that she has healed and restored more children than she has hairs on her head, and it is commonly said that those who know how to heal know how to harm. . . . *si dice comunemente che quelli che li sano conzare li sano anco guastare.*⁶⁰

Presented here as everyday common knowledge, the principle was also incorporated into learned analyses of the same phenomenon. The theological category used to describe superstitious lay healing – *maleficia ad sananda* – succinctly expresses this ambivalence.⁶¹ Learned discussions of the legitimacy of lay healing were thus included in the question of "whether it is permissible to remove a *maleficium* by means of another *maleficium*" for, though such healing was prohibited as implicitly diabolical, its efficacy was nonetheless recognized.⁶²

The pressures that these alternative remedies created led to clerical toleration of their use in certain instances, despite their illicit nature. But unlike the situation described by Delcambre in Lorraine, where recourse to a priest annulled the therapeutic powers of the *malefica*, drastic mutual exclusiveness of lay and clerical healing is not present in the Modenese setting.⁶³ The dominant tone is rather one of competitive antagonism like that

present in the case of Thomaso Salani, who called in Don Giacomo Bernardo Lamburano to deal with his violent illness.

When Ludovica Guardasone learned that the priest had come to conjure (*scongiurare*) me, she went to his house, bringing him a garland of onions, entreating him to do no more for me. She also confessed that she had bewitched me . . . but that little by little she should heal me. The Reverend Father answered that she should heal me, otherwise he would find another remedy.⁶⁴

In fact Ludovica's visit may have been as much defensive as competitive in tone, for the vaguely menacing tone of Don Giacomo's reply indicates his intention to have her denounced to the Inquisition – as he later did.

Although the Church's delegation of powers against *maleficia* to clerics gave priestly healing a solid orthodox basis, certain accusations against exorcists bear a striking resemblance to those arising from the ambivalence of lay healing powers. Testimony against Don Teofilo Zani included allegations of causing the death of an elderly patient by administering hellebore and unconsecrated hosts during a sick-bed exorcism.⁶⁵ Since this was done against medical advice the physician in the case, named Arlotto, attempted to have Zani tried by the Bishop of Reggio, where the patient, Alessandro Pattacio, had been a prominent citizen. Though Zani was able to justify his intervention to the Bishop, suspicions about him continued to mount within the family. The original idea that Zani had inadvertently provoked Pattacio's death began to shift to the more sinister interpretation that he had caused the death by occult means. When the physician Arlotto himself became sick shortly thereafter, the cause was clear to him. His widow later testified that "her husband had been *guasto* by Don Teofilo, and on these charges he denounced him to the Bishopric" before his own death, which resulted from his maleficial condition.⁶⁶

A fundamental ambivalence thus adhered to the perception of the exorcist and underlay his transition from a healer of *maleficia* to a suspected perpetrator. Charges against Fra Girolamo Azzolini in 1599 included similar allegations that he had *guastato* a young girl whom he was later called to heal.⁶⁷ Why were exorcists so easily suspect of causing the conditions they should have cured? The trial of Fra Basileo da Parma in 1584 is illuminating. Formerly prior of the Carmelite convent in Sabbioneta, Fra

Basileo had been banned by city officials from exorcizing in Venice. Relicensed by his superiors in Bologna, he continued to exorcize until his ill-advised boasting about his prowess with women resulted in his denunciation to the Inquisition. His accuser, a scandalized Capuchin, testified:

He told me that when he was in Parma hardly a day passed that he did not commit some sin with a woman, and that this did not at all prevent his exorcizing, *since he knew secrets through which the spirits had of necessity to obey him.*⁶⁸

The idea that the moral state of the practitioner might limit his ability to deal with demons was not Donatist in its implications, for exorcism was not a sacrament and did not achieve its effects *ex opere operato*. Relating its efficacy to the exorcist's personal morality was therefore theologically justified and reformers like Menghi placed great emphasis on this point.⁶⁹

The Capuchin's fear that it was through "some superstition that these marvels were done" was echoed by Basileo's superior in the Carmelite convent in Bologna, Aurelio da Crema:

I know that he is famous for expelling spirits, but what seems amazing to myself and to others in our convent is that this Fra Basileo is ignorant and leads a rather low life. Nonetheless wherever he goes, though there may have been no rumor of spirits, as soon as he shows up, cities and villages begin to move, and many possessed persons (*spiritati*) are discovered. At times it has been wondered if he has some Key of Solomon or pact with the demon or some other special secret for discovering spirits. . . . especially since he himself has said . . . that with a word spoken in the ear of the *spiritati*, he can uncover spirits. This generates a certain suspicion of evil.⁷⁰

Aurelio's doubts express the recurrent suspicion that such famous and successful exorcists were in league with the very demons they purported to expel, inducing them to enter a person so profits and reputation could be generated through their expulsion. If the specialists in controlling the demonic should be suspect of complicity with the enemy, the central orthodox remedy against negative supernatural forces would be severely undermined.

Accusations and implications of this sort reflect the deep mistrust aroused by the exorcists' close contact with demons and by their control over demons in the exorcist ritual. The close parallel with the common charge of witchcraft against lay

healers shows that the principle of *qui scit sanare, scit damnare* could be easily extended to clerics. Contact with the supernatural, even when specifically remedial in intent, was, perforce, dangerous to orthodox and independent practitioners alike.

To avoid such damaging suspicions, exorcist manuals such as those by Girolamo Menghi, the prolific Franciscan expert, established guidelines for interacting with demons and above all warned against even the appearance of "familiarity or fraternization" with them.⁷¹ For abuses of exorcism like those of Fra Basileo created opposition and even calls for its suppression by critics and skeptics, the "enemies of adjuration." But discerning observers like Menghi understood that the source of such a suggestion, as of the abuses themselves, lay in the demons' fear of exorcism, which led them to devote much of their energy to combatting this potent ecclesiastical remedy.

Through the services of his assistants, who unfairly and impiously usurp the name of exorcist, instigated to do that which no other Christian would agree to do, the Demon manages to disgrace and tries to destroy the practice of adjuration itself.⁷²

The implication that many exorcists are indeed servants of the demon, if not demons in disguise, is striking in a militant defender of exorcism; but the clear message is that this demonic ploy must be thwarted by carrying on with the task, as Menghi himself did during his long exorcist career.⁷³

The protection of orthodox remedies therefore demanded the reform of exorcism, carried out through trials against abusive and superstitious exorcists, on the one hand, and through better preparation and stricter licensing of the average exorcist, on the other. All exorcists were to be approved by the episcopal authorities of the area in which they operated; a rigorously reforming prelate like Cardinal Federigo Borromeo granted exorcist authorization to no more than "four or six men of conspicuous piety and learning" for the whole large diocese of Milan.⁷⁴ The various exorcist manuals written by Menghi between 1555 and 1595, from the vernacular *Compendio dell'arte essorcista* through the *Flagellum Daemonum*, *Fustis Daemonum*, and *Fuga Daemonum*, were directed specifically at practitioners in the field and against the errors and abuses associated with exorcism.⁷⁵

Evidence that Menghi's manuals reached the marginally educated exorcists for whom they were intended is provided by the Inquisition's trials against exorcists. When called before the court, the exorcist could use the basic defense that he had only acted, as Fra Basileo da Parma testified, "according to the rules set forth in the printed books of this art."⁷⁶ And in every such case, the books cited by exorcists on trial were those of Girolamo Menghi; many of the accused arrived in court with the *Flagellum* in hand, hoping that this would suffice to convince the judges of their orthodoxy.

In some cases it did. Don Bartolomeo, a Celestine friar and formerly a licensed exorcist, was able to defend the orthodoxy of the *brevi* that he had dispensed to heal victims of maleficial illness by explaining that he had "taken them from this book which I have brought with me to show Your Reverences."⁷⁷ The court duly noted that the title of the book in question was the *Flagellum Daemonum*, bound in the same volume as the *Fustis Daemonum*. A search of the friar's room turned up a copy of the Italian *Compendio*, which he had left behind when called to Modena, thus giving indirect testimony to his perception of the superior authority of the Latin version.

Similarly, Don Teofilo Zani defended his practice of administering both hellebore and unconsecrated hosts during routine exorcisms of the sick by citing not only Menghi but personal Inquisitorial approval of his use of Menghi's works.

I did not consecrate those hosts which I customarily gave to the sick who were in my care, but rather I blessed the hosts in the manner taught in the book *Flagellum Daemonum*, the book from which I learned the art of exorcizing. I showed this book to the Inquisitor of Ferrara; His Reverence approved it as good and gave me permission to keep it. . . . I neither add nor delete in the office of exorcizing from that which the books teach.⁷⁸

Accused of deviating from normal exorcist procedures, Zani simply cited the authorized text and asserted the identity of the ritual as prescribed and as performed, extending the authoritative repeatability of the printed work from the page to the realm of action.⁷⁹ However, the other charges against Zani, which included sexual misconduct, performing an exorcism while dressed in Carneval costume (as a gypsy), and causing the death of Alessandro Pattacio by acting against medical advice, provide a text-book case of the pattern of abuses that Menghi denounced.

Finding his books in the hands of exorcists whose unorthodox practices and immoral lives were similar to those he had denounced is certainly an ambiguous compliment to Menghi's work. But despite the many examples of superstitious and charlatan exorcists presented in his last work, the *Fuga Daemonum* of 1595, Menghi remained optimistic that the trend of events favored the enforcement of orthodoxy.

In these days, there are few superstitious exorcists to be found, for by the grace of God and through the vigilance of pastors and Inquisitors, they have no place except in the galleys or in perpetual prison.⁸⁰

Menghi's self-satisfied judgment was somewhat premature, for problems in the practice of exorcism and trials for superstition against exorcists continued throughout the 17th century. In 1636, for example, the Sacred Congregation at Rome instructed local Inquisitors to issue edicts directed against the "many disorders that continually arise in exorcisms, which many perform with little knowledge and less prudence."⁸¹

What do these Inquisitorial records contribute to a study of popular culture in the 16th century? The existence of parallel and competing remedies to fundamental problems of everyday life is one indication of the tensions between cultural levels in early modern society. At the same time, the identity of purpose and the structural similarities shared by orthodox and superstitious remedies indicate that these alternatives existed within the same universe rather than deriving from fundamentally antagonistic world views.

These trials demonstrate the pivotal position of the lower clergy in mediating between popular demands and the requirements of orthodoxy. As the local representatives of the Roman Church, the clergy should have constituted the primary barrier against rustic error. But the line between orthodox and popular cultures, if such a line can be drawn, cut through the biographies, personalities, and experience of these men. Their individual transitions between *culture folklorique* and *culture cléricale* led them inevitably to improvisations and compromises that, creative though they may have been, were unacceptable to the Church. No reform of popular culture was therefore possible without a corresponding reform of the clergy in general and of exorcists in particular.⁸²

The efforts of the Tridentine Church to erect secure boundaries between clergy and laity, or between religion and superstition, aimed to define and control an often resistant social reality. But the complexity and multiplicity of that reality meant that these ultimately jurisdictional efforts resulted not in achieved cultural facts but in an ongoing historical process to which the records of these trials bear witness.

NOTES:

1. The pejorative orthodox categories of "ignorance and superstition" were used on both sides of the 16th century schism with social as well as doctrinal connotations. For the Protestant version, see Jean Delumeau, "Les réformateurs et la superstition," in *Actes du colloque l'Admiral de Coligny et son temps*, Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (Paris: 1972), pp. 451-87.

More neutral language to describe this campaign is proposed by Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1978), pp. 207-43; his phrase, the "reform of popular culture," remains useful despite the ambiguities of each of its terms. Discussing similar difficulties inherent in the phrase "popular religion," J. C. Schmitt has urged that historians avoid such ambiguities by enumerating "in every case the social categories of which [they] speak and the precise nature of the cultural contacts being analyzed"; Jean-Claude Schmitt, "'Religion populaire' et culture folklorique," *Annales: E.S.C.* 31 (1976), p. 942.

Assumptions that cultural influences proceed unidirectionally or that the "people" represent a unified social or cultural entity are to be avoided; these points are stressed by Carlo Ginzburg in his introduction to *Le religioni delle classi popolari*, a special edition of *Quaderni storici*, An. XIV, No. 41 (1979), pp. 393-97. The increasing use of the plural "cultural levels" by historians is based on the recognition that the distinctions to be made are multiple and contextually varied. This paper, which examines the ambiguous position of the lower clergy in the reform of popular beliefs, is intended as a contribution to this ongoing discussion.

2. The Protestant rejection of the "magic of the medieval Church" is a central theme of Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: 1971). The problems encountered by Lutheran reformers in their efforts to suppress magical beliefs are discussed by Gerald Strauss in "Success and Failure in the German Reformation," *Past and Present* 67 (1975), pp. 30-63, and in *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: 1978). Analogous Catholic efforts in the period following the Council of Trent are

described as a program of "Christianization" by Jean Delumeau, *Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris: 1971). The Catholic definition of superstition at the Council of Malines in 1607 reflects the desire to achieve an ecclesiastical monopoly on supernatural effects: "It is superstitious to expect any effect from anything when such an effect cannot be produced by natural causes, by divine institution, or by the ordination and approval of the Church." Quoted by Thomas, *Religion*, p. 49, from Jean-Baptist Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions qui regardent les Sacramens* (1679) 5th ed. (Paris: 1741), Vol. 2, p. i.

3. *Maleficium* refers to any harm done by occult means; it is the basic Latin term used throughout Europe for describing the effects of witchcraft. For a discussion of this concept in the middle ages see Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch Hunt* (New York: 1975), pp. 147-63. A *malefica* is a female perpetrator of maleficial deeds (a witch).
4. Girolamo Menghi, O.F.M., *Compendio dell'arte essorcista e possibilità delle mirabili e stupende operationi delli demoni e dei malefici con i rimedii opportuni all'infermità maleficali* (Bologna: 1578). For the skeptics, see below, note 7.
5. Menghi, *Compendio*, p. 225. For a review of the medieval polemic against *curiositas*, the vice of intellectuals, see Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth Century England* (Baltimore: 1976), pp. 18-41.
6. For biographical information on Menghi, see the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Vol. 10, pt. 1 (Paris: 1928), pp. 550-51, which cites the various Franciscan sources. Born in 1529, Menghi entered the Franciscan order in 1550, published his first exorcist work in 1555, practiced his art in Venice, Bologna, and Lombardy, and died in his home town of Viadana in 1609. The inscription on his tombstone there relates the "joy of the infernal hosts" at the death of their "most rigorous assailant" and describes him as the greatest exorcist of his century. The text is given in full by Melchiorri de Cerreto, O.F.M., *Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco Institutorum*, vol. 24: 1601-1611 (Florence: 1934), pp. 304-5.
7. It is not clear exactly who the "*curiosi et elevanti intelletti*" are, but the arguments attributed to them are similar to those of Pomponazzi in *De naturalium effectuum causis sive de Incantationibus*. Although manuscript copies circulated in Italy from the 1520s on, this work was only published in Basel in 1556 under Protestant auspices. It is, however, possible that Menghi was aware of Pomponazzi's attack on traditional demonology.
8. For Menghi's list of the *medicine ecclesiastiche*, see *Compendio*, p. 253.
9. On these trials, see my "Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Response in Late Sixteenth Century Italy" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1982). For an examination of similar offenses earlier in the century, see Albano Biondi, "Streghe ed eretici nei domini estensi all'epoca dell'Ariosto," in *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane* (Bari: 1977), pp. 165-98.

10. Canon 12 of *Alcune cose per memoria dei Reverendi Curati di Bologna, tratte nelle Congregazione fatta in Vescovado alli 24 d'ottobre 1577*, in *Stabilimenti e Dichiarazione delli Congregazioni annuali dei R. R. Arcipreti, Pievani e Vicari Foranei* (Bologna: 1577), quoted in Cleto Corrain and Pier-Luigi Zampini, *Documenti etnografici e folkloristici nei sinodi diocesani italiani* (Bologna: 1970), p. 36.
11. The requirement of reporting on superstitious or magical activity is outlined in a Bolognese Inquisitorial Edict of 1636, which states: "Si raccorda a tutti li fedeli l'obbligo che hanno sotto pena di scomunica riservata, di rivelare e notificare giuridicamente al S. Ufficio (e non con bollettini, o lettere senza nomi) tutti quelli che sanno, hanno saputo, conoscono o hanno conosciuto o conosceranno, che siano heretici, o sospetti d'heresia, negromantia, che faccino o habbino fatti incanti, stregarie, maleficii, sortilegi e sperimenti magicio negromantia, come di tirar fave, far martelli con allume di rocco, sale, piombo, e pignattini con cuori d'animali nel fuoco, misurare o spannare il braccio, tirar le sorti, et altre simili, specialmente con l'invocazione de Demoni esplicitamente o implicitamente" (Aviso della Santa Inquisizione de Bologna, 4 March 1636, Biblioteca Comunale di Bologna [BCB], ms B1891, f. 119). It is clear from trial testimony referring to similar edicts that they were issued from at least the 1580s on.
12. The phrase "*pusillis et rudibus*" recurs in official documents referring to the uneducated lower orders of society. See for instance the papal bull of 1571 on the reform of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, "*Officii B. Mariae nuper reformati*," Pius V, An. VI, *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* 4, pt. 3 (Austria: 1965), p. 153.
13. These figures are based on the trials preserved in the Fondo dell'Inquisizione, Archivio di Stato di Modena (ASM). This fondo was renumbered in 1983; references given here use the new numbering system.
14. The surviving but fragmentary records of the Bolognese Holy Office are preserved in the manuscript collection of the Biblioteca Comunale di Bologna (BCB). The intact Venetian Inquisition records are in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Fondo del Sant'Uffizio.
15. These categories have been elaborated by Jacques Le Goff in "Culture cléricale et traditions folkloriques dans la civilisation merovingienne," *Annales: E.S.C.* (1967), pp. 780–91, and in "Culture ecclésiastique et culture folklorique au Moyen Age: Saint Marcel de Paris et le Dragon," in *Ricerche storiche ed economiche in memoria di Corrado Barbagallo*, ed. L. De Rosa, vol. 2 (Naples: 1970), pp. 51–90. Both are now available in J. Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: 1980). An argument supporting the use of these categories is made by Schmitt, " 'Religion populaire' et culture folklorique," pp. 941–53.
16. Trial of Antonio de Correggi, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 9, f.i, 1595.
17. For a similar concept of sin in 14th century France, see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error* (New York: 1978), pp. 327ff.

18. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590. Choosing among various saints by lot was traditional in Western Europe; it was not necessarily an unorthodox procedure, for when performed with proper reverence it represented an appeal to divine judgment. For its use in Spain, see William A. Christian Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain* (Princeton: 1981), pp. 47–53; for similar practices in medieval England, see Ronald Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: 1977), pp. 63–85.
19. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590.
20. Opinion was surprisingly divided on this issue; witch hunters, in their zeal to ferret out witches, tolerated a wide array of superstitious remedies most of which were mechanisms for detecting witches and forcing them to undo their spells; for a discussion of the permissible range of "Methods of Curing and Destroying Witchcraft," see Part II, Question 2 of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, English translation by Montague Summers (New York, 1971), pp. 155–64. Menghi's *Compendio* discusses the same issue in Book III, chap. 2, "Of remedies in general: that is, how one can undo and dissolve *maleficia*, and whether it is permitted to true Christians to destroy them by means of further *maleficia*," pp. 236ff., where he takes a much harder line against superstitious remedies. This opposition is, of course, motivated by the assumption that all nonecclesiastical remedies are implicitly diabolical.
21. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590.
22. Ibid.
23. A systematic survey of the evolution of the category of superstition in medieval theological and canon law literature has been undertaken by Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: 1979). For discussions of the modern meaning of the term, see Giuseppe Cochiara, *Sul concetto della superstizione* (Palermo: 1940), and Gustav Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition* (London: 1969).
24. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590.
25. On the principles underlying magical actions, see Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (New York: 1972).
26. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590.
27. The popular beliefs systems of Friuli, the province of Fra Geremia's origin, are depicted in the works of Carlo Ginzburg, *I benandanti: Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: 1966) and *Il formaggio ed i vermi: Il cosmo di un mugnaio del Cinquecento* (Turin: 1976).
28. Trial of Fra Geremia da Udine, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 66, 1590. His sentence of 17 October required him to fast and recite psalms on feast days for a year and to perform private penances, including *la disciplina*. His trial is particularly interesting for the information it provides, not so much on the abstract content of the category "superstition" but

- about the *process* by which superstition was detected and defined in a specific case.
29. Indeed, the charges against Antonio de Correggi included "lack of reverence for the holy things," including *brevi*, contained in a small sack which he removed from the neck of a sick child during his healing procedure: ASM, Inquisizione, b. 9, f. i, 1595. A case in which a cleric was able to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the *brevi* he dispensed is discussed below, note 77.
 30. On exorcism as Counter-Reformation propaganda in 16th century France, see D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: 1981).
 31. Among Menghi's requirements for the office of exorcist was the ability to tell natural from maleficial symptoms. The techniques are described in his *Fuga Daemonum* (Venice: 1596), Cap. XII, "De modo quo infirmitates maleficiales cognoscuntur et signis ad hoc pertinentibus," p. 59r.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 49v.
 33. Trial of Don Teofilo Zani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, testimony of 21 May 1582, f. 21r.
 34. *Ibid.*, testimony of 1 June 1582, f. 24r-v.
 35. *Ibid.*, testimony of 23 May 1582, f. 21r.
 36. It should be noted that the family in question was representative of the upper levels of Modenese society. The Livizzano were wealthy bankers and merchants whose members occupied important local positions in both secular and ecclesiastical life throughout the 16th century. See Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, *Speranze e crisi nel cinquecento modenese. Tensioni religiose e vita cittadina ai tempi di Giovanni Morone* (Milan: 1979), pp. 102, 162.
 37. Trial of Don Teofilo Zani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, testimony of Gasparina Ballotta, 16 October 1582, f. 14r: "Mi apparve un'altra volta con gran splendore in effigie di sua Madre, cioè di Madonna Caterina, et mi disse, 'Che vuoi tu da me, che cosa domandi?' 'Vorei sapere se gli è rimedio all'infirmità di Madonna Laura, sia di strione hover di sacerdote, et questo m'a detto Madonna Zia che io vi adimandi.' Mi ripose lei che non gli voleva strioni ma ministri di Christo. Et essendo proposto un Don Teofilo dal Padre Desiderio a mia Zia, lei mi disse ch'io dovessi interrogar la vision se era al proposito, et mi rispose che si, se lui faceva l'opra per charità."
 38. *Ibid.*, testimony of Gasparina Ballotta, 16 October 1582, f. 15r.
 39. *Ibid.*, testimony of Don Teofilo Zani, 8 September 1582, f. 31r.
 40. *Ibid.*, testimony of Gasparina Ballotta, 16 October 1582, f. 15r: "Madonna Margarita una volta mi disse che io gli adimandasse se lei era stata guasta da sua Madonna o da suoi cuginati, et ancora da loro sera stato guaste le sue figliole come lei prosupponeva che fusse vero, et apparendomi [la visione] mi disse, 'Che cosa vuoi? Mia figliola, e sulle anime e sul far de peccati, che attendi Iesu Christo.'"
 41. Trial of Maria de Mariani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 7, f.i, 1579.

42. On the inverse correlation between witch hunting and exorcism, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 70-77 and 493-501. The question of the validity of this correlation in Catholic countries, where exorcism and witch hunting coexisted, emerged during a round-table discussion held at Vicenza in 1976 on the theme of "Religione e religiosità popolare," the proceedings of which are collected in *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, n.s., 6, no. 11 (January - June 1977), pp. 5-205. Carlo Ginzburg, though doubtful of the applicability of Thomas's formula outside England, stressed the need for comparative studies to deal with this issue (p. 175). It would be possible to argue that the relative infrequency of witch trials in Italy, as compared with the contemporary "witch panic" in northern Europe, is related to the reinforcement of exorcism as an orthodox remedy.
43. Lucy Mair's account of the general structure of witch beliefs and their function as an explanation for misfortune sees the need to identify a known person as basic to African witch beliefs; see Mair, *Witchcraft* (New York: 1970).
44. Trial of Don Teofilo Zani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, testimony of Margarita Livizzano, 29 June 1581, f. 7r. There is confirming testimony about these events by Gasparina on 16 October 1582, f. 16r.
45. *Ibid.*, testimony of Gasparina, 16 October 1582, f. 16r.
46. *Ibid.*, testimony of Don Teofilo Zani, 18 October 1582, f. 18r.
47. *Ibid.*, testimony of Don Teofilo Zani, 28 April 1582, f. 14r.
48. *Ibid.*, testimony of 29 April 1582, f. 11r.
49. Trial of Don Gian Battista, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, 1585. The use of the *calamita baptizata*, as of other love charms, was most often associated with prostitutes; Don Gian Battista was won over in part by the Signora's assurance that she only wanted the magnet to shore up the marital bond, rather than for any illicit purposes. This case is discussed by Luciano Allegra, in "Il parroco: un mediatore fra alta e bassa cultura," *Storia d'Italia Einaudi, Annali*, Vol. 4 (Turin, 1981), pp. 899-900, an important article which came to my attention only after the present paper had been written.
50. The now classic figure of the village priest as head of a kinship network is Pierre Clergue of Montaillou, as portrayed by Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou*, pp. 53ff and passim.
51. Trial of Don Camillo Forbicino, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.ii, 1594, testimony of 6 May 1594.
52. *Ibid.* Found to be "sospetto leggermente d'apostasia da Dio al Diavolo" for his participation in this superstition, Don Camillo's sentence required recitation of litanies and psalms each month for a year, and of a Rosary each Friday for the same year. He was also suspended *a divinis* for one month and required to pay all the expenses of his trial (Sentence dated 18 June 1594).
53. Trial of Fra Girolamo Azzolini, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, testimony of Madonna Geneva Buoncuggino, 25 August 1599 (in court's summary).

54. *Ibid.*, summary of trial included with sentence of 9 March 1600.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, sentence of 9 May 1600; a note appended to the trial records dated 17 December 1604 indicates that Fra Girolamo Azzolini was granted permission to return to Modena after five years in exile.
57. Trial of Hippolita de Figarolo and Bernardina de Forli, 1600, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 11.
58. Such a principle had long been recognized in Modena; one of the earliest surviving trials of 1499 includes an identical statement, *qui scit sanare, scit destruere*, made by a witness in a case of *maleficium*. This case is discussed by Ginzburg, *I benandanti*, pp. 116–17; he notes similar principles in trials from Lucca.
59. In his study of Jura witch beliefs, E. William Monter has stressed this point, placing the initiative for the equation of healing and harming with the peasantry and arguing that the demonologists learned it from them: Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation* (Ithaca: 1976), p. 179.
60. Trial of Maria de Mariani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 7 f.i, 1579, testimony of Andreas di Saviolis.
61. One example of the usage of this term in the 17th century by the Inquisition: "Di piu avvertano i Giudici, che quantunque alcuna donna resti convinta o confessa d'haver fatta incanti . . . o vero ad sananda maleficia o a qual si voglia altro effetto, non segue pero necessariamente che ella sia strega formale, potendo il sortilegio farsi senza formale apostasi al Demonio"; in Eliseo Masini, *Sacro Arsenal, ovvero Pratica dell'Officio della S. Inquisitione ampliata* (Rome: 1639), p. 178.
62. For discussion of this issue by Kramer and Sprenger and by Menghi, see above, note 20.
63. "Cette même vertu thérapeutique était en outre suspendue . . . si le malade avait reçu la visite du prêtre ou du médecin ou avait été administré," Étienne Delcambre, *Les Devins-guérisseurs*, Vol. 3 of *Le concept de la sorcellerie dans le Duché de Lorraine au XVI et au XVII siècle* (Nancy: 1951) p. 207.
64. Trial of Ludovica Guardasone, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, 1589.
65. Hellebore was the name given to a group of plants considered medically effective both for mental disease and for maleficial conditions.
66. These allegations are included in the trial of Don Teofilo Zani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, testimony of Beatrice Pattacio and Cambius Cambiator, May 1582.
67. Trial of Fra Girolamo Azzolini, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 9, 1599, testimony of Geneva Buoncuggino, 25 August 1599.
68. Trial of Fra Basileo da Parma, BCB, ms B1877, processo 6, 1584, testimony of Fra Angelo da Bologna. Italics in original.
69. The "first condition" listed by Menghi for an exorcist's efficacy is "goodness of life, that is that he not be in a state of mortal sin." The full twelve conditions are described in *Fuga Daemonum*, Cap. V, pp. 18r–23r.

70. Trial of Fra Basileo da Parma, BCB, ms B1877, processo 6, 1584, testimony of R. M. Aurelio da Crema.
71. Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcista*, p. 20.
72. Menghi, *Fuga Daemonum*, p. 47v.
73. For biographical information on Menghi, see above, note 6.
74. The conditions required for lawful exercise of the exorcist office are summarized by Menghi, *Fuga Daemonum*, Cap. V, pp. 18ff. On Borromeo, see Cesare Carena, *Tractatus de Officio Sanctissimae Inquisitione, et modo procedendi in causis fidei* (Cremona: 1636), p. 494.
75. For a brief survey of the Italian exorcist literature, see Massimo Petrocchi, *Esorcismi e magia nell'Italia del Cinquecento e del Seicento* (Naples: 1951). The various works of Menghi are also outlined by Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 6 (New York: 1941), pp. 556–59.
76. Trial of Basileo da Parma, BCB, ms B1877, processo 6, 1584.
77. Trial of Don Bartolomeo, Fratre Celestini, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 9, testimony of 20 February 1599.
78. Trial of Don Teofilo Zani, ASM, Inquisizione, b. 8, f.i, testimony of 28 August 1582, ff. 26v–27r.
79. Despite his protestations of fidelity to Menghi, Zani clearly missed some points, especially those warning exorcists against practicing medicine or interfering with physicians. Given the difficulty of finding evidence on how books were read and perceived, the appeal to Menghi by exorcists on trial is important evidence of the ways in which a practical manual was actually used. Some of the problems associated with how books were read are considered by Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio ed i vermi*, pp. 33–61.
80. Menghi, *Fuga Daemonum*, p. 53r. Besides being overly optimistic, this conclusion is exaggerated; the most serious penalty imposed in any of these trials was that against Fra Azzolini, exiled from Modena and stripped of the order of exorcist. Fra Basileo's trial records unfortunately contain no sentence; he was subjected to extensive torture because of the "lack of verisimilitude" in much of his defense.
81. Form letter to the vicars of the Modenese Inquisition, 1636; ASM, Inquisizione, b. 277–78, Miscellanea.
82. The Tridentine model of a reformed clergy is outlined by G. G. Meersseman, O.P., "Il tipo ideale di parroco secondo la riforma tridentina nelle sue fonti letterarie," *Il concilio di Trento e la riforma tridentina*, vol. 1 (Rome: 1965), pp. 27–44; for the decrees concerning the reform, see H. J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: 1951).