APPENDIX

JOHANNES JUNIUS: BAMBERG'S FAMOUS MALE WITCH

Dated 24 July 1628
Johannes Junius, burgomaster of Bamberg

Many hundred thousand times good night, my daughter Veronica so dear to my heart. Innocent I came to jail, innocent I was tortured, innocent I must die. For whoever comes to the house either must become a witch or be tortured for so long that he claims something pulled from his imagination, and, God have mercy, figures out something to say. I want to tell you how things have gone for me. When I was put to the question the first time, Doctor Braun, Doctor Kötzendörffer and the two foreign Doctors were there … Then Doctor Braun from Abtswerth asked me: ‘Kinsman, how did you end up here?’ I answered: ‘Through lies, misfortune.’ ‘Listen, you’ he said, ‘you are a witch. Do you wish to confess it freely? If not, witnesses will be brought forward, along with the executioner.’ I said ‘I am no witch, I have a clean conscience in this matter, even if there were a thousand witnesses, so I am not at all worried, but I will gladly hear the witnesses.’ Then the son of the chancellor [Dr Haan] was brought in, and I asked him, ‘Sir Doctor, what do you know of me? I have never had anything to do [with you?], neither for good nor for ill, at any time in my life.’ Then he answered me, ‘Sir Colleague, on account of the regional court [Landgericht].’ ‘I beg you, produce your witnesses.’ ‘I saw you when they held court.’ ‘Well, but how?’ He did not know. So I asked the Commissioners to place him under oath and examine him properly. Doctor Braun said they would
not do it ‘as you would have it done, it is enough that he saw you.’ ‘Go on, Sir Doctor!’ I said, ‘So, sir, what kind of a witness is this? If things can be done this way, then you are no more certain [of the facts] than I or any other honest man. There was no questioning [of the witness].’ Then the chancellor came, and said the same thing as his son, namely that he also had seen me, but he had not looked at my feet to see what I was. Then came Hopffens Else [an accused day-labourer]. She claimed to have seen me dancing in the Haupts Moor forest. I asked her how she saw. She answered that she did not know. I appealed to my lords for God’s sake, they heard that these were all poor witnesses, they should be sworn to an oath and properly questioned, but that was not to be; rather said, I should confess voluntarily or the executioner would certainly force me to do so. I answered: ‘I have never renounced God, and did not plan to do so, and God should mercifully prevent me from doing so. I would rather endure what I had to.’ And then came – God in highest Heaven have mercy – the executioner, and put the thumbscrews on me, both hands bound together, so that the blood ran out at the nails and everywhere, so that for four weeks I could not use my hands, as you can see from the writing. So I put myself in the care of God in his five sacred wounds and said, because this concerns God’s honour and name, which I have never denied, therefore I will commend my innocence and all the tortures and harm to his five wounds and he will lessen my pain, so that I can endure such pain. Thereafter they first stripped me, bound my hands behind me, and drew me up in the torture. Then I thought heaven and earth were at an end; eight times did they draw me up and let me fall again, so that I suffered horrible agony. [In the margin, sideways:] Dear child, six witnesses have testified at the same time against me: the chancellor, his son, Neudecker, Zaner, Hoffmaisters Ursel and Hopffens Else, all falsely, through coercion as they all have told me, and begged me [to forgive them] for God’s sake before their sentences were executed … they knew nothing but good and nice things about me. They were forced to say it, just as I myself would experience … I can have no priest, take careful note of this letter.
And all this happened when I was utterly naked, as they had me undress completely. And when our Lord God came to my aid, I said to them: ‘God forgive you for attacking an innocent man in this way, wanting to take not only his life and soul, but also his goods and possessions.’ Doctor Braun said ‘You are a rascal.’ I said ‘I am no rascal, nor any such man and am just as honest as you all are, but so long as things go this way, no honest man in Bamberg will be safe, you no more than I or anyone else.’ The Doctor said he was not subject to diabolical temptations; I said ‘Nor am I, but your false witnesses, they are the devils, as well as your vicious tortures. For you let no one go, not even if he withstands all tortures.’ And this happened on Friday the 30th of June. I had to endure all the tortures with God’s help. And I was unable to get dressed this whole time or use my hands without the other pain that I had to suffer innocently. When the executioner took me back to jail, he said to me: ‘Sir, I beg you, for God’s sake confess something, whether it be true or not. Invent something, for you cannot bear the torture which you shall suffer; and even if you bear it all, you still shall not escape, not even if you were a count, but one torture will follow another until you say you are a witch. Not before that will they let you go, as you may see by their trials, for one is just like another.’ Then Georg came to me and said my Lord [Bishop Johann Georg II] wanted to set such an example with me that people would be amazed. The executioners had been saying this the whole time and wanted to torture me again, and he begged me for God’s sake to think something up because even if I were entirely innocent, I would never go free; Candellgiesser, Neudecker and others said the same thing to me. So I made a plea, saying that I was in very bad shape, they should give me a day to think about it and send me a priest. They refused me a priest, but gave me the time to think. Now dearest daughter, can you imagine in what kind of danger I was and still am! I was supposed to say that I was a witch, though I am not, and I am supposed to renounce God for the first time, though I have never done so before. I worried myself sick day and night, and finally I hit upon a
plan. I would not worry about it, as I had not been allowed to see a priest who could advise me whether I should think something up and say it. I would surely be better to say it with my mouth and with words, even though I had not really done it; and afterwards I would confess it to the priest, and let those answer for it who compel me to do it. Then I asked to see the Father Prior in the Dominican monastery, but was not allowed to see him. And then my statement, as follows, is entirely made up.

Now follows, dear child, the statement I made, such that I escaped the worst and hardest tortures, which I could not possibly have withstood any longer. Namely: when I had a commission from Rottweil in the year 1624 or 1625, I had to give the Doctor [the Imperial Court Advocate Lukas Schlee zu Rottweil\textsuperscript{10}] 600 gulden for the commission [in my report for Rottweil?], and that I addressed many honest people who had been of assistance to me. That is all true. Now follows my statement which is pure lies, which I [would have?] had to say under questioning accompanied by even greater tortures, and for which I must die. After that, I said that I was walking in a depressed state in my field near the Friedrichsbrunnen, and sat down there, and a wild [young?] girl came to me and said: ‘Sir, what are you doing, why are you so sad?’ I answered that I did not know, so she came closer. As soon as that happened, she became a billy-goat and said to me: ‘See, now you see with whom you are dealing.’ It grabbed me by the throat and said ‘You must be mine or I will kill you!’ Then I said ‘God save me from that!’ So he disappeared and came back quickly, bringing two women and three men with him. I was to deny God, and I have confessed that I\textsuperscript{11} did so; I was to deny God and the heavenly host, and I have confessed that I did so; I have confessed that he then baptised me and the two women were the sponsors; that he gave me a ducat, but that it turned out to be a shard.

Then, thinking that I had finished, but they sent the executioner to me, and [asked] where I had been to go dancing, and I did not know which way was up. I remembered that the chancellor, his son and
Hopffens Else had named the old court, the council chambers and the Hauptsmoor, as well as other things I heard them read out in such cases, and I named those same places as well. Then I was supposed to say what sort of people I had seen there. I said that I had not recognised them. ‘You old rascal, must I set the executioner on you?’ … ‘Wasn’t the chancellor there?’ I said yes. ‘Who else?’ I recognised no one, I said. ‘So,’ he said, ‘take one street after the other in turn. First go out to the market and then back in again.’ So I had to name a number of people, and then turned to the Lange Gasse. I recognised no one from there. But I had to name eight persons from there, then Zinckenwert, another person, and then onto the Upper Bridge and out to the George Gate on both sides. I said I didn’t recognise anyone from there either. I was asked if I hadn’t recognised someone from the castle, whoever it might be, I should say so without hesitation. And they asked me about all the streets in this way, and I neither wanted nor could say anything more. So they turned me over to the executioner, who was told to unclothe me, cut my hair off and put me on the rack.¹² ‘This rascal knows someone in the market place, spends time with him every day, and refuses to name him.’ Then they named Dietmeyer,¹³ and I was forced to name him too. Then I was to say what sort of evil things I had done. I said nothing.

He expected something from me but because I would not do it, he struck me. ‘Hoist the rascal up!’ So I said that I had been told to kill my children, but instead I killed a horse. It didn’t help. I said I had also taken a [consecrated] host and buried it. Once I said that, they left me in peace.

Now dear child, here you have all my confession and [the record of] my trial, for which I must die. And they are sheer lies and inventions, so help me God. For I was forced to say all this through fear of the torture that was threatened beyond what I had already endured. For they never leave off with the torture till one confesses something; no matter how pious he really is, he must be a witch. Nobody escapes, even if he is a count. And if God does not provide the means to bring things back into the clear light of day, all [our?] kin will be burnt. For each must first
confess out loud things he does not know to be the truth about other people, just as I had to do. Now God in Heaven knows that I cannot do and do not know the slightest thing [about the activities with which he was charged]. Therefore I die innocent and as a martyr. Child, I know you are as pious as I am, such that you already have much pain and if I were to counsel you, you should take as much money and letters [of credit, of protection?] as you have and go on a pilgrimage for around half a year, or if you can get out of the diocese for a time, I suggest you do so until it becomes clear what turn things will take. Many honourable men and woman in Bamberg go to church and do their other business, have no knowledge of evil, have a good conscience, just as I have had until now, as you know … and nonetheless are taken to the witches’ house ['Trudenhaus']. As long as he has his voice,14 he must go, whether it is just or not. Neudecker,15 the chancellor’s son, Candelgesser, the daughter of Hofmeister Wolff16 and Hopffens Else all have confessed against me, all at the same time. I was truly forced into it, just as many others are and will be unless God provides some remedy. Dear child, keep this letter hidden so that it does not circulate, otherwise I will be tortured so severely that it does not bear thinking about, and the jailers will be beheaded. That is how strictly it is forbidden. You can let cousin Stamer read this letter quickly and in confidence. He will keep it quiet. Dear child, give this man a Reichstaler … I have been writing this letter for many days. My hands are badly lamed, I have in fact been very badly injured. I beg you for the sake of the Last Judgement, keep this letter under careful watch and pray for me as your father for a true martyr after my death … But be sure you do not make this letter public. Have Anna Maria17 pray for me as well. You may boldly swear on my behalf that I am no witch ['Trudner, sorcerer] but a martyr, and thus I die in readiness [for judgement]. Good night, for your father Johannes Junius will never see you again. 24 July a[n]o 1628.

These passages have been published in excerpts in a number of venues: the slightly abridged text that we have translated was published in its
original orthography by Friedrich Leitschuh in 1883; an English translation was published by George Lincoln Burr in a pamphlet titled The Witch-Persecutions, another German version was printed by Soldan, Heppe and Bauer in their polemical Geschichte der Hexenprozesse of 1911–12, and a German version in modernised orthography and form was published by Wolfgang Behringer in German. A rather stilted and highly abridged translation drawn from Burr’s was published by Alan Kors and Edward Peters in 1972.

Notes

1 Johannes Junius was, according to Friedrich Leitschuh, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hexenwesens, born in 1573 in Niderweisach in the Wetterau. The Freiherr von Horn wrote, in a report that was in 1883 in the possession of Freiherr Emil von Marschalk, that Junius was a Bamberg city councillor (Ratsherr) from 1608 to 1613, mayor or burgomaster in 1614, city councillor again in 1615–16, burgomaster again from 1617, councillor in 1618–20, burgomaster 1621, councillor 1622–23, and burgomaster 1624–28. This letter, edited (in part) by Leitschuh, was in the Royal Library at Bamberg. Many other city councillors and five other Bamberg mayors, along with the bishop’s chancellor, Dr Georg Adam Haan (and his entire family), were also executed for witchcraft (48).

2 The Bamberg witch-house, specially erected during the peak of the panic in 1627. See figure 2, taken from the illustration in Soldan and Heppe, Hexenprozesse, vol. 2, between pages 2 and 3, and adapted by George Frost, whom the authors would like to thank.

3 Drudner a Bavarian word (also Trudner) for sorcerer, witch.

4 According to a footnote in Friedrich Leitschuh’s edition of the letter, pages 49–55 (Hexenwesen), these were Doctors of Canon and Civil Law, Schwartzcontz and Herrnberger: 49 n. 2.

5 Leitschuh, Hexenwesen, 49 n. 3.

6 Ibid., 50 n. 2.

7 A sandy-soil forest near Bamberg, known for its special species of pine, the Hauptsmoorhiefer; now a ‘municipal forest’ which until the second World War reached all the way to the main railway station; not a putative ‘Haupts-moor’, as Burr as well as Kors and Peters render it. This forest is correctly identified by Leitschuh, Hexenwesen, 50 n. 3 and by Soldan

8 Referring to Jesus’ wounds incurred during his crucifixion.

9 Cf. the incorrect translation in Kors and Peters, Witchcraft in Europe 1100–1700, 259: ‘just as I myself was’; this is reported speech set before his torture.


11 The original is in the subjunctive of reported speech: Junius is reporting that he confessed to the judges that he denied God.

12 ‘[1]f die Tortur zieh[en]’.

13 According to Soldan’s note (p. 7), a distinguished and accomplished civil servant.

14 ‘Wenn er nur seine Stimme hat’: Soldan also marks this obscure passage with a question mark (p. 12).

15 According to Leitschuh, this was doubtless the burgomaster Georg Neudecker, who was one of the four burgomasters of Bamberg uninterrupted from 1612 to his arrest on 28 April 1628: Hexenwesen, 54 n. 1.

16 The daughter of the Prince-Bishop’s Zahlmeister (paymaster, treasurer) Wolfgang Hofmeister, named Ursula: Leitschuh, Hexenwesen, 54 n. 2.

17 Anna Maria was Junius’ daughter, a nun in the cloister of the Holy Sepulchre at Bamberg; Leitschuh, Hexenwesen, 55 n. 1.


19 Soldan and Heppe, Hexenprozesse, vol. 2: Junius’ letter to his daughter in German (original orthography) and a facsimile of the first sheet, 6–12.

20 Behringers, Hexen und Hexenprozesse, 305–310.

21 Kors and Peters, Witchcraft in Europe 1100–1700.