Introduction

This book is a study of the trials involving allegations and confessions of maleficent or demonic witchcraft that took place in the German city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber between c. 1561 and c. 1652. It has two aims. First, it will explain why Rothenburg had a restrained pattern of witch-hunting during this period, with relatively few trials (even fewer of which ended in guilty verdicts against alleged witches); no mass-panics involving large numbers of accused witches; and the execution of only one alleged witch.¹ Second, it will offer detailed readings of the exceptionally rich records from the Rothenburg witch-trials to explore the social and psychic tensions that lay behind the making of witchcraft accusations and confessions, the popular and elite reactions to these accusations and confessions, and the ways in which participants in witch-trials pursued strategies, expressed emotions and negotiated conflicts through what they said about witchcraft.

These aims are important for various reasons. In 1996, Robin Briggs suggested that what was surprising about the early modern period was not how many people were prosecuted as witches, but – given the widespread belief in witchcraft and the existence of laws against it – how few were. Briggs argued that the witch-persecution of the early modern period ‘was a relative failure, which only gained momentum in relatively few exceptional instances’. Persecution of witches was patchy both chronologically and geographically, Briggs concluded, with ‘genuine witch-crazes’ only touching ‘the lives of a tiny fraction of Europeans’.² We still know little about where, when and why witch-hunts failed to gain momentum in early modern Europe, however, because so few historians have devoted attention to these questions since 1970. This is probably partly because it has been deemed less exciting and thus less marketable than accounts of large witch-hunts by publishers, partly because more radically feminist scholars have little interest in any work which apparently seeks to downplay the impact of witch-hunts on early modern women, and partly because cases of witchcraft that did not end in execution are harder to

identify and tease out from early modern legal records. The corpus of published work on the 'relative failure' of witch-hunts in Germany thus remains small: Wolfgang Behringer and Bob Scribner published pioneering articles on this theme in 1983 and 1990, respectively, while Hartmut H. Kunstmann's account of witch-trials in Nuremberg (published in 1970) and Jürgen Michael Schmidt's excellent analysis of witch-trials in the Palatinate (published in 2000) are the only book-length studies of German territories that were characterised by a restrained pattern of witch-trials throughout the early modern period.³ My study of Rothenburg will make a significant addition to this small but important corpus, thereby adding weight to Briggs' idea that areas which did not experience large-scale witch-hunts may well have been the early modern norm rather than the exception. In the chapters that follow I will demonstrate that complex and mutually reinforcing sets of beliefs and social, political and religious priorities held not only by the ruling elites but also by the lower orders of Rothenburg and its rural hinterland interacted to keep enthusiasm for prosecuting witches at a low ebb at all social levels and to ensure that accusations and confessions of witchcraft did not herald an inevitable journey to the stake for alleged witches.

Close reading of the records of the Rothenburg witch-trials is essential to the analysis, as it is only at this level of detail, where the motives of the various trial-participants can be re-created, where the complexity of their competing narratives can be unpicked and evaluated, and where the twists and turning-points of trial processes can be identified and interpreted, that explanations about why things did or did not happen can be reached with any confidence. Focusing on one area over a lengthy period of time also makes it possible to show how ideas about witches and witchcraft developed over time, how the experiences of early trials influenced the manner in which subsequent trials were handled, and how individual trials were influenced by the specific circumstances in which they occurred. Last but by no means least, the personal testimonies from the Rothenburg witch-trials give us uniquely detailed insights into the otherwise often hidden social, cultural and imaginative worlds of early modern peasants and townspeople. Through them we can explore communal and domestic disharmony; perceptions of honour; experiences of motherhood, childhood, marriage, illness and war; and beliefs about magic and religion, as well as obtaining a vivid sense of the lives and personalities of individuals about whom historical records are usually silent because of their gender, age and low social status.

This book is organised around the following themes. Chapter 1 explores popular speech about witchcraft, explains why the inhabitants of Rothenburg and its hinterland were generally unwilling to accuse suspected witches at law, and details the non-legal methods with which they more usually coped with

witches. Chapter 2 discusses elite beliefs about witchcraft and explains why the city councillors were unwilling to overstep the boundaries of due legal procedure in their prosecution of alleged witches. Chapter 3 analyses the first Rothenburg case involving a self-confessed child-witch from 1587 and explains why the councillors found such cases hard to deal with and what precedents this case set for the future. Chapter 4 analyses two trials from 1627 and 1629 to illustrate the ways in which they were shaped by the events of the Thirty Years' War and particularly by Catholic challenges to the city council's authority. Chapter 5 gives a new explanation for the gender-relatedness of witchcraft accusations through the prism of several seventeenth-century cases. Chapter 6 offers a detailed analysis of one accused witch's strategy of denying her guilt in council custody from 1652 and also shows how elite and popular attitudes towards witchcraft began to change in the course of the seventeenth century.

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Rothenburg ob der Tauber is situated on a promontory overlooking the Tauber, the river from which it takes its name, about 66 kilometres due west from Nuremberg and 48 kilometres due south-east from Würzburg in south-central Germany. It was annexed by Bavaria in 1802 and forms part of that federal state today, its status reduced to that of a county town. From the fourteenth century, however, and until 1802, it was an imperial city, one of six such cities in Franconia, one of the Imperial Circles, or territorial sub-divisions of the early modern Holy Roman Empire. This meant that Rothenburg was autonomous, its city council subject to no higher authority other than that of the Holy Roman Emperor himself. As a result, the sixteen-member city council, constituted as the criminal court for Rothenburg and its rural hinterland, had the right to try all crimes committed by its subjects or on its territory, including cases of witchcraft. From the mid-sixteenth century the council appointed university-educated jurists to municipal posts and drew on their advice in particularly problematic legal cases, although the decision-making power in all cases always remained with the council.⁴

In the sixteenth century Rothenburg was one of the Empire's middle-sized urban settlements, with 5,000–7,000 inhabitants. Its population was dominated by craftsmen and their households, who produced goods for local and regional markets. These craftsmen belonged to guilds which regulated the standards of their particular craft, but they lacked political power within the city. Individual craftsmen might gain admission to the political elite if they made enough money and the right connections, but as a whole the craftsmen had no automatic right to representation on the city council. This was dominated by an

urban patriciate which made its money chiefly from land-rents rather than trade and which became increasingly exclusive during the early modern period, particularly after 1650. The tension between the urban patriciate and craftsmen over the question of access to political power periodically reached breaking point in Rothenburg.⁵ This occurred most spectacularly during the Peasants' War of 1525, when the craftsmen seized the chance offered by widespread rural rebellion to take over the government of the city, albeit for only a brief time.⁶ The urban patriciate learnt the lesson of the events of 1525: for the rest of the early modern period its main aim was to defend its own power within the city – and the autonomy of Rothenburg externally – without antagonising either its urban or rural subjects to the point of unrest.

Starting in the fourteenth century, and spurred on by an awareness of the importance of possessing land and subjects beyond the city walls, successive generations of Rothenburg councillors gradually acquired a hinterland which became the fourth largest rural territory governed by a city in the early modern Empire. Covering about 400 square kilometres, it had 10,000–11,000 inhabitants living in 118 villages varying in size from tiny settlements like Hummertsweiler, with three households, to Gebssattel, the largest village, with eighty households. Most of these people were peasants, but the hinterland also contained rural craftsmen, blacksmiths, millers and parish clergymen. In 1430 the council had a barrier of hedges and ditches, punctuated by gates and towers, erected around the hinterland to protect the area against attack by rival neighbouring lords. However, the consolidation of power by the council within the hinterland was never as complete as this physical delineation of its territorial claims suggested. Rothenburg was situated in a part of the Empire where lordship rights over land and people were extremely fragmented and often the subject of competing claims. This meant that even by the sixteenth century, and despite the fact that the Rothenburg council had achieved its aim of becoming the dominant power within the hinterland, a thousand hinterland inhabitants were still the subjects of foreign lords, owing their land-rents and dues to them rather than to Rothenburg, while foreign lords still had the right to oversee four of the thirteen minor courts and to appoint pastors to several of the parish-livings in the hinterland.⁷

The period c. 1561–c. 1652 was one of extreme contrasts for Rothenburg. After the upheaval of the Peasants' War of 1525, the second half of the sixteenth century was a time of relative political and social calm. The council had increased its power as a result of its adoption of Lutheranism in 1544; the institutionalisation of its reformation was finally completed in 1559, by which time the council was no longer subject to the authority of the Bishop of Würzburg, within whose diocese Rothenburg had formerly lain, or to the Mergentheim chapter of the Order of Teutonic Knights, which had formerly held benefice-rights over the

parish church in Rothenburg.⁸ The council's confidence and the city's prosperity can be seen in the fact that the council undertook a variety of construction projects in the late sixteenth century, building a new town-hall, a grammar school, and several other municipal structures. There were, of course, short- and long-term problems in the late sixteenth century, suffered mainly by the lower orders: severe famine affected the area between 1570 and 1575, and population increase caused a subdivision of landholdings and social tension between wealthier peasants and poorer cottagers in some of the hinterland villages by the early seventeenth century. On the whole, however, the economic position of Rothenburg's peasant subjects before the Thirty Years' War was reasonably good: the council had not exploited rising land-prices by raising rents or special taxes and peasant indebtedness was not widespread.⁹

The Thirty Years' War of 1618–48 changed this picture completely. Rothenburg was at the crossroads of important north–south and east–west routes for troop movements during the war. This, and the vacillating political stance of the council, meant that from the 1620s the area suffered severely as troops marched through it or were quartered there for long periods, usually pillaging and demanding vast financial contributions from the peasants and citizenry as they went. The worst year was 1631, when the city was first taken over by Swedish troops, then besieged and captured by Catholic League troops under Tilly. By 1648 Rothenburg had been ruined financially, while its hinterland had been devastated. Scores of houses and many churches lay in ruins; most things of value, including livestock, had been stolen from those peasants who had been unable to flee to the city when the soldiers came; many of its parishes had been without pastors for long periods of time during the war; population loss, as a result of epidemic disease or flight, stood at an average of 58 per cent for the hinterland, and reached 75–100 per cent in certain villages; and agrarian production was virtually at a standstill.¹⁰ This was arguably the worst experience ever suffered by the area and its inhabitants; I will suggest later that the events and aftermath of the Thirty Years' War also had subtle effects on popular and elite attitudes towards witchcraft that became apparent in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The Rothenburg witch-trials: historiography, sources, methodology

Little has hitherto been written about the Rothenburg witch-trials. The only substantial piece of research and writing that exists on the subject – although unfortunately without references – are the two articles published by

Rothenburg archivist Heinrich Schmidt in 1954 and 1959 as part of his broader project on seventeenth-century Rothenburg.¹¹ In them he identifies and summarises, in varying degrees of detail, twelve witchcraft cases from the period 1602–73, which provided a useful starting point for my own work on the seventeenth century. However, Schmidt did not analyse or contextualise these cases in depth, nor did he know of the witchcraft cases from the pre-1602 or post-1673 periods. Friedrich Merzbacher relies primarily on Schmidt's work in his brief discussion of Rothenburg in his 1957 monograph on witch-trials in early modern Franconia, as does Wolfgang Behringer for his discussion of Rothenburg in his 1987 book on witch-persecution in the territories covered by modern-day Bavaria – although in this excellent survey this was one of the few areas for which Behringer cited no manuscript sources.¹² Behringer was also correct in hypothesising in his book that the absence of evidence of executions in Rothenburg indicated elite unwillingness to hunt witches,¹³ although my research will prove and explain this unwillingness in detail and will also factor in the role the lower orders played in the restrained pattern of witch-trials in Rothenburg. For the late medieval period the punishment of sorcery is discussed briefly in Klaus-Peter Herzog's 1971 dissertation on criminal law in late medieval Rothenburg,¹⁴ while Rothenburg archivist Ludwig Schnurrer was kind enough to share with me references from his own, unpublished research to cases of sorcery from the same period.

Unlike previous work on witch-trials in Rothenburg, this book is based on extensive and systematic research of a wide variety of manuscript sources from 1500 to 1800. I used the city Account Books, meticulously kept on an annual basis from 1530 until the twentieth century, to identify all the serious witchcraft cases tried by the council during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 'Serious' cases were those that ended in execution or that involved a stay of more than a few days in gaol for the parties involved or the use of torture against them, as gaoling, torturing or executing suspects cost the council money which it accounted for carefully. Account Book entries usually specified the crime for which particular suspects had been gaoled or executed: where this was not made clear it was usually possible to find the relevant trial-records from the names and dates given in the Account Books in order to check whether or not it was a witch-trial. I am therefore confident that I have identified all of the serious witch-trials that occurred in Rothenburg from 1500 to 1800. There are doubtless more witchcraft cases yet to be found in the city's criminal-court records, but it would have taken decades to examine the many hundreds of huge volumes of these records – which usually lack indices and are unpaginated – still held in the city archive. However, as cases which were not recorded in the Account Books would not have involved executions, torture or long spells in gaol for the suspects, future unearthing of hitherto-unknown

cases from the criminal records will doubtless strengthen rather than weaken my arguments about the relatively restrained pattern of witch-hunting and treatment of suspected witches in Rothenburg.

These criminal-court records are the most important sources for the detailed analysis of the Rothenburg witch-trials. They fall into three categories. The *Urgichtenbücher* or Interrogation Books are the most important. Individuals arrested on suspicion of a crime were held in cells in the city gaol, where they were questioned by the two most junior members of the council (the *Turmherren*) about their alleged crimes, in an ordinary room if the interrogation occurred without torture, or in a subterranean dungeon if torture was to be inflicted by the municipal executioner. Records as close as possible to verbatim were made of these interrogations as they took place: these were then read and discussed by the rest of the council. When a trial was over these records were bound into the Interrogation Books, along with all other documents pertaining to the case: witnesses' statements, the opinions of legal, theological or medical experts and any letters written to or by the council about the case. The Rothenburg Interrogation Books therefore provide the historian with an exceptionally rich source, in some trials running to hundreds of pages, of personal testimonies from suspects, their accusers, witnesses and elite experts.

Once a verdict had been reached in a case, suspects might be released without punishment, at which point they had to swear a surety in which they promised not to revenge themselves on the council or its subjects for their treatment in custody: these were recorded and bound into *Urfehdenbücher*, or Surety Books. Suspects sentenced to corporal or capital punishment had their sentences recorded in the aptly named *Blutbücher*, or Blood Books. Records of sureties or sentences contained summaries of the respective criminals' crimes, which constitute a useful overview of the case and also the council's ultimate opinion about it. However, this neat division of source-types into Interrogation, Surety and Blood Books collapsed in Rothenburg in the early seventeenth century: thereafter the interrogations, sureties and/or sentences pertaining to particular cases were usually all bound into the Interrogation Books. Moreover, in the second half of the seventeenth century some witchcraft cases were bound into a special volume of the records of the Rothenburg Consistorium, or Church Council. This is why the Account Books rather than the Blood Books are the safest way to check on overall numbers of serious witchcraft cases, although all the Blood Books were also examined, as were most of the sixteenth-century Surety Books.

My analysis of the Rothenburg witch-trials is based on a careful reading of case-documents in order to capture nuances of meaning, the ways in which stories were shaped and told, and the personalities and perspectives of their tellers. In seeking to understand these texts and to offer explanations for why particular

individuals – as either alleged or self-confessed witches, their accusers, or witnesses – said what they did, in the way that they did, about witchcraft, I privilege no single theoretical perspective. I have, for example, drawn on literary theory in my treatment of trial-records as created texts, on anthropological and psychoanalytic theory in my analysis of the verbal and social exchanges and personal crises that lay behind accusations and confessions of witchcraft, and on gender theory in order to explain why the alleged Rothenburg witches were most easily imagined as women.¹⁵ I also seek to contextualise the witch-trials as carefully as possible, using a range of other sources in order to establish the life-histories of trial-participants, the immediate circumstances of particular trials, and the broader social and cultural context of the beliefs and conflicts expressed and negotiated within them. It is only in this most detailed of contexts that we can best explain why inhabitants of early modern Rothenburg and its hinterland said particular things about witches at particular times in their lives, whether strategically – in order to pursue feuds, exact revenge or articulate defiance – or in order to ‘express and relieve their unconscious (and sometimes their conscious) fears, conflicts and anxieties’.¹⁶

I privilege trial-records in this book because they are the best sources through which to fulfil its two main aims, outlined at the beginning of the Introduction. I say relatively little about demonology, other than where I can show that a particular text had influence on a particular trial, as I am of Ian Bostridge’s opinion that the persecution of witches and discourses about witchcraft have distinct, if overlapping, histories.¹⁷ Feminists and literary scholars in particular sometimes too readily assume simple causal relationships between what was written by demonologists and how witches were treated by judicial elites, without teasing out the many complex influences at work in trial-processes.¹⁸ Trial-records are, of course, the product of an often lengthy legal process in which alleged witches, their accusers and witnesses were constrained in the giving of their testimony by various factors: alleged witches by the possible threat and infliction of torture and the use of suggestive questioning techniques, witnesses by the threat of sanctions governing slanderous speech, and all trial-participants by the cultural resources available to them for the construction of credible narratives, either of witchcraft or of its denial. These constraints do not, however, render trial-records valueless: to paraphrase Carlo Ginzburg, historical records produced in the ‘hostile’ environment of the interrogation process can still ‘furnish precious testimony’ about the motives, emotions and cultural worlds of members of the lower orders.¹⁹ The different ways – desperate, measured, artful, enthusiastic, unwilling – in which accusers and witnesses shaped their stories of witchcraft and participated in trial-processes to the advantage or disadvantage of the accused witch tell us a great deal about their reasons for so doing and about their pre-trial relationship with the accused witch, as well as

about the narrative-telling strategies available to them and their awareness of the risks that they ran in speaking openly about witchcraft.²⁰

Alleged witches were also not without agency in the interrogation process, primarily because of the fact that torture was used with considerable restraint – and often not at all – in the Rothenburg witch-trials. This meant that alleged witches were never simply forced through repeated torture into confessing guilt and on the contrary were likely to be able to maintain – sometimes sophisticated and usually impassioned – narratives of their innocence which often told a tale of bitter social conflict with their accusers but one lacking the sinister subtext of witchcraft. It was – ironically – usually individuals (children and weak-minded adults) who had suffered little or no physical or mental torment who admitted most freely to being witches, much to the bewilderment of the city councillors. The councillors were left with the problematic and unenviable task of trying to decide which of the competing testimonies they had heard was most likely to be true: their decisions in all cases were made in the context of broader legal, political and social concerns. The trial process was a complex one in which all participants operated under certain, albeit varying, constraints, yet at the same time had a certain, albeit varying, degree of agency. To imply, as some feminists do, that all parties to early modern witch-trials were simply the cowed or brutalised mouth-pieces of all-powerful patriarchal elites over-estimates levels of elite enthusiasm for witch-hunts, ignores the importance of the motives and personalities of alleged witches and their accusers to the trial-process, and misunderstands fundamentally how the law worked in early modern Germany.²¹

Chronology and the late medieval background

Between the late fourteenth and late fifteenth century no-one found guilty of using sorcery was executed in Rothenburg. The usual punishment was banishment, for a specified number of years or eternally. It was not, however, the automatic punishment. In 1435 two women who had used sorcery escaped any form of punishment, although records fail to explain why this happened.²² Corporal punishments were inflicted only rarely in addition to banishment: I know of just one example from 1409 in which a woman was branded through both cheeks before being banished after she had promised, in return for payment, to teach many Rothenburg women how to find buried treasure and to work love-magic.²³ It is unclear, however, whether this punishment was inflicted for sorcery or for fraud: the boundaries between the two crimes remained blurred throughout the early modern period.

The same pattern – with its absence of executions, the possibility of escaping punishment for sorcery altogether if one's crimes were deemed insufficiently

grave, and the infliction of corporal punishments only in particularly heinous cases – persisted in Rothenburg in the early sixteenth century.²⁴ Between 1500 and 1544, however, the council inflicted branding more frequently on individuals found guilty of using sorcery in especially serious cases. Two women were branded through their cheeks and one man and two women were branded with the sign of the cross before being banished for crimes involving the use of black magic in 1519, 1525 and 1540, respectively.²⁵ This increased severity towards sorcery, however, appears to have reflected the council's growing concern with what it perceived to be growing irreligiosity on the part of its subjects in the early sixteenth century, and must be set against the backdrop of the social and spiritual unrest of the period which culminated in the Reformation and the Peasants' War.²⁶ As this book will show, Rothenburg's newly reformed Lutheran elites discontinued this severity from the mid-sixteenth century, largely discarding the use of branding in cases of sorcery and witchcraft and reverting to banishment as the normal, although by no means automatic, punishment. The policy of treating certain allegations of witchcraft as cases of slander was also well established in Rothenburg by the first half of the sixteenth century. Criminal and civil court records from this period show several cases in which allegations of witchcraft were handled as instances of slander to the advantage of the alleged witch, a trend which was to become arguably even more important in the second half of the sixteenth century.²⁷

This book focuses on the period *c.* 1561–*c.* 1652 for several reasons. Apart from seven earlier volumes dealing with participants in the Peasants' War of 1525, Interrogation Books – the richest source for the study of witch-trials – are extant for the city only from 1550. The council adopted Lutheranism in 1544 and formalised its reformation between then and 1559. The focus on the post-1544 period thus allows us to see how a Lutheran city council treated witchcraft and how the reformation in Rothenburg affected its subjects' beliefs about magic and witchcraft. Moreover, although the restrained pattern of witch-trials in Rothenburg remained relatively constant throughout the entire early modern period, the ways in which witchcraft was imagined and treated changed subtly during the seventeenth century. The post-1652 period thus forms a distinct chapter in the history of Rothenburg witch-trials and one which I intend to discuss in depth elsewhere. Finally, the western European witch-hunts were generally at their worst in the second half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. It therefore makes sense to look at Rothenburg for the same period to show how the inhabitants of this area lived through this period without experiencing large- or even small-scale episodes of witch-persecution. Details of all of the trials involving allegations or confessions of maleficent or demonic witchcraft that occurred in early modern Rothenburg are provided in an Appendix to this book,

enabling the reader to set the cases from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century in context.

Popular witchcraft belief

This book focuses primarily on the ways in which women, children and men of the lower orders in Rothenburg and its hinterland talked about witches. While they shaped their stories in idiosyncratic ways, they drew on common cultural resources of popular witchcraft belief which, by the mid-sixteenth century, coalesced around two main ways of imagining the witch. The first was as a worker of maleficent or harmful magic – someone who was believed capable of depleting and stealing, by magical means, the good health and material resources of other people, and causing them to fall ill, to become poorer, and even to die. These witches were often but by no means exclusively imagined as women. Witches were also popularly imagined as women who were capable of flying through the night sky and of entering buildings in order to plague people and livestock while they slept by means of ‘pressing’ or ‘riding’ them, also to the point of death. These ideas stemmed from pre-Christian beliefs in the wild ride which, as Charles Zika has shown, were still current in the sixteenth century and ‘told of women who rode out on wild animals during certain nights of the year with Diana, Holda and other female goddesses, engaging in much feasting and often too in considerable destruction’.²⁸ These two ways of imagining witches could overlap in witch-trials in Rothenburg, but they could also remain conceptually distinct: allegedly maleficent witches were not necessarily also accused of night-flying, while women believed to have attended nocturnal gatherings of alleged witches did not necessarily also have reputations as workers of harmful magic.

During the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries these beliefs were influenced by, and in their turn helped shape, elite beliefs about witches and their relationship with the devil. Elite belief in the witches’ dance, or sabbat, as a gathering of witches overseen by the devil was easily incorporated into extant popular beliefs about night-flying women and was first formally encountered in Rothenburg in a story of witchcraft told by six-year-old Hans Gackstatt in 1587.²⁹ The idea that witchcraft was a form of heresy, involving the giving of one’s soul to the devil, influenced popular belief more slowly and patchily, however, emerging in attenuated form for the first time in a story of witchcraft told by thirteen-year-old Margaretha Hörber in 1627.³⁰ Of more importance to many of the Rothenburg witchcraft narratives than the devil, however, was the figure of the adult female witch who was believed responsible for enticing or forcing other, younger people – especially

children – into witchcraft. The way in which this particular witch-figure came to occupy such an important position in both elite and popular imaginings of the witch in early modern Rothenburg, and the consequences this had for women actually accused of witchcraft, is one of the key themes of this book.

Notes

- 1 Magdalena Dürr, who had also committed infanticide, was the only person executed for witchcraft before 1652: see Chapter 5. Two further executions for witchcraft took place in the late seventeenth century: that of self-confessed witch Anna Margaretha Rohn in 1673 and of Barbara Ehness, who had also attempted murder by means of poison in 1692: see Appendix for full list of all early modern trials.
- 2 Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, pp. 397–411, especially pp. 400, 402.
- 3 See Behringer, 'Scheiternde Hexenprozesse'; Scribner, 'Witchcraft and judgement'; Kunstmann, *Zauberwahn*; Schmidt, *Glaube und Skepsis*.
- 4 For narrative histories of Rothenburg's political development, see Bensen, *Historische Untersuchungen*, and von Bezold, *Die Verfassung und Verwaltung*. See Rowlands, 'Women, gender and power', pp. 10–29, for discussion of the council's accretion of legal power.
- 5 Schnurrer, *Rothenburg im Mittelalter*, pp. 272–286.
- 6 Vice, 'The German Peasants' War', pp. 30–193.
- 7 Woltering, *Die Reichsstadt Rothenburg*, especially vol. II.
- 8 Schattenmann, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, especially pp. 87–129.
- 9 Moritz, 'Die Folgen des Dreissigjährigen Krieges', pp. 44–52.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 54–131; Rank, *Die Finanzwirtschaft*, pp. 125–129; Heller, *Rothenburg ob der Tauber*, pp. 36–190.
- 11 Schmidt, 'Vordringender Hexenwahn', and 'Aberglaube, Hexenwahn'.
- 12 Behringer, *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern*, pp. 43–47, 155–161, 228, 322–324, 338; Merzbacher, *Die Hexenprozesse in Franken*, pp. 46–47. Merzbacher also cites a witchcraft case involving Michael Würth from a reference to it by Weigel in his *Rothenburger Chronik*, p. 222, although Weigel wrongly dates it to 1649: it occurred in 1663.
- 13 Behringer, *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern*, pp. 46–47, 155, 228, 322.
- 14 Herzog, 'Das Strafsystem', pp. 12–14.
- 15 My approach to the reading of early modern witch-trials has been particularly influenced by the work of Diane Purkiss, Tom Robisheaux, Lyndal Roper, David Sabean and Bob Scribner.
- 16 Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, p. 93.
- 17 Bostridge, 'Witchcraft repealed', p. 310.
- 18 See for example Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion*; Brauner, *Fearless Wives*; Barstow, *Witch-craze*. The works by Scholz Williams and Brauner are, however, helpful in suggesting ways in which elite thinking about witchcraft may have been influenced by particular demonological texts.
- 19 Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, Preface, especially pp. xvii–xviii.
- 20 Natalie Zemon Davis points to similar constraints on the shaping of narratives in her analysis of pardon-tales in sixteenth-century France, see Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, pp. 2–35.
- 21 Purkiss discusses the work of radical feminists in *The Witch in History*, pp. 7–29, and is critical of their emphasis on the witch as the helpless, silent victim of patriarchy.
- 22 Herzog, 'Das Strafsystem', pp. 12–14. The pattern was similar in other late medieval Franconian and Swabian imperial cities, although there were very rare instances of executions in, for example, Nuremberg and Lindau: Behringer, *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern*, pp. 44–46.
- 23 Herzog, 'Das Strafsystem', p. 84.
- 24 This conclusion is based on analysis of Rothenburg's Blood Books and Surety Books for the period 1501–50; see Stadtarchiv Rothenburg (hereafter abbreviated to RStA) Blood Book B329; Surety Books A842, A843, A844.
- 25 For the case from 1519, see RStA Blood Book B329 fol. 41verso (hereafter abbreviated to

- v); from 1525, see Vice, 'The village clergy', pp.127–133; from 1540, see RStA Blood Book B329 fol. 91recto (hereafter abbreviated to r).
- 26 Quester, *Das Rad der Fortuna*, pp. 1–5, 122–137, 170–206.
- 27 For examples of allegations of witchcraft being treated as slander cases in this period, see RStA Peasants' Court Books B317 fols 20v, 76r, and B316 fol. 196r; Detwang Village Court Book B328 fol. 110v; Wörnitz Village Acts A769 fols 75r–76v; Surety Book A842 fols 94r–94v.
- 28 Zika, 'Fears of flying', p. 39.
- 29 See Chapter 3.
- 30 See Chapter 4.