Introduction

Early modern Venice, much like its peers, was a dangerous city by modern standards. One need only page through the handwritten necrologies, compiled by the health magistracy, that record deaths in the city to see how often drowning or other accidents took the lives of residents. One also sees entries marked with small drawings of daggers and the like to indicate murders – malice as well as bad luck took its toll. But even darker forces were understood to be at work in this self-styled "Most Serene Republic." In one of the necrologies, we find an entry from August 1610 that records the death of a young woman named Isabella from the parish of S. Martino and married to a certain Rizzardo da Valentin. The cause of her death, according to the file, was "Strigarie" – witchcraft. The same fate is recorded for a 26-year-old woman from the parish of S. Giovanni in Bragora in 1636; she had died suddenly after long suffering from *strigarie*. In a volume covering 1641 we see a 50-year-old bookseller from the parish of S. Moisè who died as a result of witchcraft.[1]

But early modern Venice was not just a dangerous city; it was also a highly litigious city, which meant victims of malevolent attacks, whether by dagger or by witchcraft, could seek justice in many different fora. The Republic featured a wide array of courts with responsibilities ranging from the regulation of commerce and crafts to the enforcement of proper conduct by nuns and Jews. If a Venetian was assaulted on the street late one night, he or she could go to a court called the Cinque alla Pace to seek

[1] ASV Provveditori alla Sanità, bb. 840 (17 August 1610), 867 (6 April 1636), and 870 (7 February 1641 m.v.). My thanks to Laura McGough for bringing these entries to my attention.

compensation from the assailant. But when a Venetian suspected witchcraft a different approach, and a different court, was required.

In the winter of 1625, a silk merchant named Domenico Scalabrin came to believe that his wife, Veneranda, was suffering from just such an unnatural ailment. Veneranda had been sick in bed for four months, and her physician, a certain Doctor Luchini, had tried "everything that one can do" but the illness only increased and the physician finally ran out of ideas. That, Scalabrin later said, was when he realized that his wife's affliction "is not a natural illness, but is witchcraft."[2] Scalabrin also believed he knew who was responsible for Veneranda's suffering: a prostitute named Marina Fachinetti. So, like any good Venetian, Scalabrin went to court. But Scalabrin did not go to the Cinque alla Pace. Instead, when he made his case for "this Marina [to] be punished and chastised in accordance with her wrongdoing," Scalabrin turned to the Holy Office, otherwise known as the Inquisition.[3] The Inquisition was the tribunal charged with uncovering, correcting, and punishing heresy within the Catholic population of Venice. Although in some areas of early modern Europe witchcraft was prosecuted by civil authorities and in other areas jurisdiction was shared or contested, in Venice the pursuit of crimes of magic was exclusively the business of the Inquisition. So Scalabrin had certainly picked the right forum for his complaint.

But now the members of the Holy Office tribunal had a problem: the litigious inclination of the Venetian population meant that magistracies frequently received complaints intended not to further justice but rather to further personal feuds, and the inquisitors were well aware of this. The tribunal thus had to evaluate cases with great care, sifting the honest accusations from the dishonest and separating the guilty from the innocent. This was not an easy task. As one authoritative inquisition manual declared, "The issue of witchcraft is without doubt difficult and very complex."[4] Direct evidence of witchcraft was fragile, as eyewitnesses were

[2] Trial of Maria Fachinetti, ASV SU b. 81. Denunc. by Scalabrin, presented 9 December 1625, f. 6r: "essendo stata Madonna veneranda consorte di me domenico scalabrin gia quatro mesi in circa inferma nel letto, mà prima chiamai il Dottor luchini Medico, qual ha fatto tutto quello si può fare, e niente ha fatto opera, mà sempre il mal andava crescendo … il medico non sapeva che fare … che ho per certo che questo mal di mia moglie non sia mal naturale, mà che siano strigarie."

[3] Ibid. Denunc. by Scalabrin, presented to the tribunal on 18 November 1625, f. 1r: "che essa Marina sia punita, et castigata in conformita de suoi demeriti."

[4] Eliseo Masini, *Sacro arsenale, overo Prattica dell'Officio della s. inquisitione* (Rome: Apresso gl'Heredi del Corbelletti, 1639), p. 175: "Difficile per certo, ed intricata molto è la materia delle Streghe."

rare and claims that certain clues, such as symptoms or suspicious objects, suggested witchcraft could be met with counterclaims of natural explanations. How do you tell a case of witchcraft from a case of poisoning or from a case of the French Disease? What characteristics distinguish supernatural illnesses from natural illnesses? Can medical professionals help to make this distinction? Which ones? In practice, the Inquisition's evaluation of witchcraft allegations often turned on definitions of "natural" and "supernatural": the characteristics that established events or causes as belonging to one category or the other and the criteria, knowledge, or expertise needed to distinguish between them. Consequently, these investigations are exceptionally revealing of the conceptions of nature and supernature held by Venetians throughout society, even if their views were unstable and only occasionally discussed explicitly.[5]

These issues were particularly important, and fraught, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as Reformation conflicts burned brightly over the proper understanding of the characteristics and limits of supernatural powers and how humans did and should interact with those powers. In practice, the Venetian Holy Office was distinctly reluctant to convict individuals of harmful witchcraft, seemingly circumscribing the reach of the supernatural. Is this a sign of the oft-cited disenchantment of the early modern world? In a word, no – the story is much more complicated than that.

Reform and Questions of Nature and Supernature

The decades around the turn of the 1500s saw a swirl of proposals for the reform of Christianity and widespread efforts among different religious factions to find common ground. Even an inquisition could be a forum in which the inquisitor and the dissenter engaged in a delicate negotiation in order to find a religious framework that both could accept, such that the dissenter could be reconciled.[6] As time passed, however, positions hardened and compromise was increasingly difficult. By the

[5] I seek here to follow an approach parallel to that used by Brian Copenhaver, who sought to identify the "set of theoretical principles" to which early modern adherents to natural magic were (at least implicitly) committed. Brian Copenhaver, "Natural Magic, Hermetism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science," in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 261–301, p. 281.

[6] Silvana Seidel Menchi, "The Inquisitor as Mediator," in *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations*, ed. Ronald K. Delph, Michelle Fontaine, and John Jeffries Martin (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2006), 173–92.

later sixteenth century, the establishment of new institutions such as the Society of Jesus and the Congregations of the Index and the Inquisition in the wake of the Council of Trent, and other moves, show the leadership of the Catholic Church increasingly emphasizing correction over accommodation. The precise details of this shift have been much debated by historians. Was the turning point in the Catholic Church's attitudes in the 1540s with the calling of the Council of Trent and the establishment of the Inquisition? Or in the 1550s with the (ultimately unsuccessful) prosecution of the reformist cardinal Giovanni Morone? Or in the 1560s with the ascension to the papacy of the ex-head of the Inquisition, the hard-liner Michele Ghisleri (Pius V)? Perhaps it was even later, or perhaps there were multiple turning points.[7]

Finer details of chronology aside, Venice experienced the same turn that Italian Catholicism in general experienced. Several key early reformers who remained within the Church (or who initially desired to remain within the Church) had close ties to Venice. The *Libellus ad Leonem X*, a set of reforms offered to the Pope in 1513, was authored by the high-born and highly educated Venetians Vincenzo Querini and Tommaso Giustiniani, who agitated for reform from their strict Camaldolese community.[8] The Venetian patrician-made-cardinal Gasparo Contarini was appointed by Paul III to preside over the committee of reformers that produced the *Consilium de emandanda ecclesia* in 1537, a document that

[7] The literature on Reformation-era Catholicism generally, and on the Church in Italy more specifically, has grown substantially in recent years. Two excellent entries into the historiography are John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Periodization of Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious History: The Post-Cantimori Paradigm Shift," *Journal of Modern History* 61 (1989): 269–84. Arguments for 1542 as the crucial year can be found in Adriano Prosperi, "Riforma cattolica, Controriforma, disciplinamento sociale," in *Storia dell'Italia religiosa*, ed. Gabriele De Rosa, et al. (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1994), 3–48; *Il Concilio di Trento e la controriforma* (Trento: UCT, 1999); for the 1550s, see Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Kirksville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press at Truman State University, 1999); and for the 1560s see Schutte, "Periodization." Delio Cantimori, for his part, saw three phases, with turning points around 1540 and 1560. Linked to the issue of periodization is the issue of labels, with widespread and continuing discussion of whether the 1500s should be divided into eras of "Catholic Reform" and "Counter-Reformation," or if there was a fundamental unity better captured under a single heading such as "Tridentine Catholicism" or "early modern Catholicism." Again, see O'Malley, *Trent*.

[8] On the place of these Venetian reformers and the *Libellus* in the context of the Fifth Lateran Council, see Nelson H. Minnich, "Concepts of Reform Proposed at the Fifth Lateran Council," *Archivium historiae pontificiae* 7 (1969): 163–251, especially pp. 222–7.

recommended institutional reforms within the Church, including an end to some of the abuses that fueled lay discontent as well as Protestant propaganda. But in Venice, just as in Rome, criticism and dissent became more perilous over the course of the *Cinquecento*.

Even though the arc of reform in Venice closely paralleled that of the broader Catholic Church, the history of the relationship between Rome and the Most Serene Republic was long wracked by (mostly politically based) tensions, rising occasionally to the level of interdict or outright warfare. In fact, many religious reformers in the early sixteenth century had high hopes that they might find a sympathetic patron in the Venetian government. Such optimism was based on the reputation Venice had as an open society, relatively tolerant of religious diversity and protective of its residents even (or perhaps especially) when called to account by Rome. The Church hierarchy similarly subscribed to the "myth of Venice" as a lax watchdog of orthodoxy at best and as an active protector of heretics at worst. But even though both sides in this increasingly acrimonious struggle hoped or worried that the Most Serene Republic might be "in play," the city remained firmly committed to its Catholic identity – though equally firmly committed to protecting its political prerogatives as well as it could.[9]

Historians have also highlighted a gradual shift in emphasis within the late sixteenth-century effort by ecclesiastical authorities to assert greater control over the lay population. The early years of inquisitorial activity, for instance, focused on heretics, but by the 1580s the inquisitions sought primarily to police behaviors and beliefs *within* the Catholic community, hunting down what Ottavia Niccoli called "concrete behaviors" or what Adriano Prosperi called "inadvertent heresies": such acts as blasphemy,

[9] On the hopes of the reformers and the fears of Rome for Venetian state cooperation, see Federica Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi e di eresia nella Venezia del '500* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1999); Gaetano Cozzi, "I rapporti tra stato e chiesa," in *La chiesa di Venezia tra riforma protestante e riforma cattolica*, ed. Giuseppe Gullino (Venice: Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1990), 11–36; Paolo Prodi, "La chiesa di Venezia nell'età delle riforme," in *La chiesa di Venezia tra riforma protestante e riforma cattolica*, ed. Giuseppe Gullino (Venice: Edizioni Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1990), 36–75; Antonio Santosuosso, "Religious Orthodoxy, Dissent and Suppression in Venice in the 1540s," *Church History* 42 (1973): 476–85; and Manfred E. Welti, *Breve storia della Riforma italiana* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1985), 21–2, 78–97. Of course, the Republic did, in fact, shelter individuals who were highly unorthodox, to say the least – see Edward Muir's study of conflict between libertines and conservatives in early modern Venice, for instance, in *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007). But note that the conservatives carried the day in the end.

magic, and the exceedingly malleable category of "superstition."[10] This effort was part of a larger trend among early modern authorities (Catholic and Protestant alike) to "discipline" the public, to try to force the broad population to conform to the ideals endorsed by the political and religious leadership. As Niccoli also noted, this shift made the late 1500s and early 1600s a difficult time to be a parishioner, as time-honored religious practices were, in relatively short order, reclassified as illegitimate or prosecuted with a new vigor by ecclesiastical authorities. The Church enforced these new limits with a variety of tools: through the revitalized and reformatted inquisitions, the confessional, confraternities, preaching, catechism, and more, all generally supported by political authorities who saw ecclesiastical control of the broader population as an effort that could serve their own goals to centralize and intensify civil control of their citizens.[11]

One aspect of early modern social disciplining which is of particular interest to us here is the effort to enforce more strictly the boundaries between sacred and profane and consequently to limit access to the supernatural to specifically authorized groups working in specifically authorized contexts. This meant redefining as inappropriate for sacred spaces such activities as commerce and cooking, dance and theater – activities one could regularly encounter in the churches of the day. Authorities also sought to heighten the differences between clergy and lay by enforcing codes of dress and comportment among the former and by barring the latter from (mis)using sacramentals or other religious elements in, say, healing practices, divination, love magic, or worse, heretical religious ceremonies.[12] And the Church began to police more strictly claims of holiness made by the mystics whom Anne Jacobson Schutte dubbed "aspiring saints," especially those from social groups the ecclesiastical leadership deemed most given to delusion or deception: women and the poor.[13] In practice,

[10] Ottavia Niccoli, *La vita religiosa nell'Italia moderna: Secoli XV–XVIII* (Rome: Carocci, 1998), p. 117; Prosperi, *Concilio*, p. 87.

[11] Niccoli, *Vita religiosa*, p. 118. On the new tools of control, see John Martin, "Religion, Renewal, and Reform in the Sixteenth Century," in *Early Modern Italy, 1550–1796*, ed. John A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30–47; Prosperi, "Riforma cattolica" and *Concilio*, especially ch. 9.

[12] John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe," *Past and Present* 47 (1970): 51–70, pp. 61–2; John Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 165–6; and Niccoli, *Vita religiosa*, pp. 133–4.

[13] Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

though, drawing the lines between licit and illicit was quite difficult – not only because the categories of legitimate users and illegitimate users of supernatural powers were ill-defined and unstable, but also because the categories of natural and supernatural were themselves ill-defined and unstable. Laypeople baptizing a leech for love magic was pretty clearly illegitimate.[14] But what of the exorcist giving naturalistic remedies rather than or in addition to ritual remedies? Or the healing woman praying over her herbal oils as she applied them? Could a physician diagnose cases of witchcraft or miraculous healings?

The Venetian Church's concerns evolved in parallel with these trends in the broader Church, moving from pursuit of heretics to enforcing new limits on doctrine and practice among the faithful, especially by means of the Inquisition. Indeed, Paolo Prodi has suggested that Venice's participation in this larger process caused it to lose its "alterità" – its uniqueness – as it became more integrated into the Western European system, religiously and politically.[15] Notwithstanding its conflicts with Rome, the Venetian government considered religious insubordination a potential way station on the road to political insubordination, and it was willing to allow the inquisitors relative freedom of operation when the government thought the Holy Office's activities would serve the state's interests, or at least not impede them.[16] The turn to reforming the practices and beliefs of the faithful was one of the Holy Office's activities that the state generally saw as no threat. Consequently, as inquisitors stepped up their pursuit of witchcraft and other magical misconduct in the final decades of the sixteenth century the Republic made no effort to rein them in.

The Venetian Inquisition is one of the better-known local branches of the Holy Office, as a number of scholars have delved into aspects of its

[14] ASV SU b. 82, Trial of Orsola Marcello. The defendants had dipped the leech into holy water from seven churches and then wrapped it in paper for safekeeping. Whatever their final plans for the leech, it thwarted them by escaping.

[15] Prodi, "Rapporti," p. 66. Prodi emphasizes, to a fault perhaps, the link between state-formation and social disciplining, noting that the Venetian ecclesiastical authorities were actually late to this particular party. The civil authorities, he notes, had already been regulating blasphemy and other areas of life for some time when the Inquisition began to emphasize such matters in the later 1500s.

[16] Adriano Prosperi outlines the way in which the discovery of hidden Anabaptist groups in the mid-sixteenth century spurred the civil authorities to greater heights of vigilance and intervention (and cooperation with the Roman authorities) – an approach actively encouraged by the Venetian inquisitor – in "Ortodossia, diversità, dissenso: Venezia e il governo della religion intorno alla metà del Cinquecento," in *Andrea Palladio: nuovi contributi: Settimo seminario internazionale di storia dell'architettura*, ed. André Chastel and Renato Cervese (Milan: Electa, 1990), 27–31, pp. 29–30.

history.[17] Studies of the Inquisition trials of Jews, "false" saints, publishers and booksellers, and practitioners of popular medicine, among other groups, have shown how the inquisitors treated these individuals and have uncovered aspects of early modern society and culture that otherwise left few traces in the historical record. Trials of individuals charged with practicing magic and witchcraft have also garnered attention as part of the surge in the last few decades of studies of early modern witches and witchcraft.[18]

Two decades ago, Ruth Martin provided the most comprehensive view to date of inquisition trials for magic in Venice, surveying the whole spectrum of such activities from theory-laden necromancy to simple divinatory rituals to vernacular healing practices. Given that broad scope, Martin was able to give only a limited amount of attention to the mental worlds of ordinary early modern Venetians, and especially to the conceptions of natural and supernatural revealed in trials involving harmful magic, or *maleficio*. Moreover, while Martin relates the difficulties the inquisitors had

[17] Nicholas S. Davidson, "Rome and the Venetian Inquisition in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1988): 16–36; Andrea Del Col, "Organizzazione, composizione e giurisdizione dei tribunali dell'Inquisizione romana nella repubblica di Venezia (1500–1550)," *Studi storici* 25 (1988): 244–94; "L'Inquisizione romana e il potere politico nella repubblica di Venezia (1540–1560)," *Critica storica* 28 (1991): 189–250; Paul F. Grendler, "The 'Tre Savii sopra Eresia' 1547–1605: A Prosopographical Study," *Studi veneziani* 3 (1979): 283–340; Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*; and Antonio Santosuosso, "The Moderate Inquisitor. Giovanni Della Casa's Venetian Nunciature, 1544–1549," *Studi veneziani* n.s. 2 (1978): 119–210. The works of Del Col, Adriano Prosperi, and John Tedeschi on the Roman Inquisition more broadly also contain much that applies to the Venetian case in particular. See, for example, Andrea Del Col, *L'Inquisizione in Italia: dal XII al XXI secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006); Adriano Prosperi, *L'Inquisizione romana: letture e ricerche* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003); and John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991). See also the next chapter.

[18] Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, 14 vols. (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1980–1999); Marisa Milani, *Antiche pratiche di medicina popolare nei processi del S. Uffizio (Venezia, 1572–1591)* (Padua: Centro Stampa Palazzo Maldura, 1986); Brian S. Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550–1670* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); and Schutte, *Aspiring Saints*. On the subject of witchcraft in Italy, fundamental work has been done in Oscar Di Simplicio, *Autunno della stregoneria: Maleficio e magia nell'Italia moderna* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2005); David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d'Otranto* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Anne Tedeschi and John A. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Marisa Milani, *Streghe e diavoli nei processi del S. Uffizio: Venezia, 1554–1587* (Bassano del Grappa: Ghedina e Tassotti, 1994); and Giovanni Romeo, *Inquisitori, esorcisti e streghe nell'Italia della Controriforma*, 2nd ed. (Florence: Sansoni, 2003).

in establishing that *maleficio* cases involved heresy and were thus subject to their jurisdiction, she understates another problem the inquisitors faced in their prosecutions: establishing the corpus delicti, that is, establishing that the sickness or death of the alleged victim was indeed supernatural. This medical and natural philosophical problem turned out to be much more intractable than the jurisdictional impediment to prosecuting maleficent witchcraft in Venice, notwithstanding the Inquisition's often considerable efforts to achieve certainty about the true character of the illnesses in particular trials. Until now we have had little insight into exactly how the inquisitors sought to solve this problem or how other participants in trials (accusers, defendants, witnesses) approached these issues.

Venice, it turns out, is an especially fruitful context in which to pursue these issues: here, perhaps more than elsewhere, trials hinged on the ability of witnesses and the members of the Holy Office to identify and distinguish between natural and supernatural phenomena. The Venetian Inquisition's efforts to prosecute witchcraft have been preserved in hundreds of trial transcripts and other documents produced by the tribunal from the mid-1500s to the mid-1600s. In these trials, the inquisitors asked a wide variety of Venetians their beliefs about a variety of unusual, possibly supernatural events. The tribunal recorded their responses in a more or less unfiltered fashion, making the trial documents an unparalleled source for accessing early modern views. These records let us observe how the criteria for distinctions between the natural and supernatural varied from the cleric to the university-trained physician to the wise-woman healer to the medically unskilled noble, tailor, or gondolier.

In addition to the richness of these sources, examining these issues in the context of Venice allows us an especially strong vantage point from which to observe the interaction of vernacular culture with contemporary learned medicine and natural philosophy. The Venetian Church regularly (and increasingly) relied on medical experts to help them distinguish natural illnesses from witchcraft, just as they used healers to assist them in evaluating putative miracles in canonization investigations and in trials of the (living) mystics aspiring to sainthood. Significantly, the practitioners that the inquisitors most valued in witchcraft trials were not fellow clerics – exorcists – but rather lay physicians.[19] The physicians who testified

[19] Note that Schutte observes a rather limited role for physicians in trials of aspiring saints; as we will see, context matters immensely in understanding the relationship between lay medical practitioners and the ecclesiastical authorities. Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Religion, Spirituality, and the Post-Tridentine Church," in *Early Modern Italy, 1550–1796*, ed. John A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 125–42.

in these trials were largely educated at the nearby University of Padua, which was a leading center of work in both natural philosophy and medicine (Galileo and Vesalius, for example, each lurked the University's halls for a time). Indeed, the story of a physician named Pietro Spiera, whose overly zealous embrace of Paduan philosophy brought him into conflict with the Holy Office, illuminates the balance Venetian physicians struck between medical naturalism and orthodox belief in supernatural activity. Moreover, examining the Venetian approach to distinguishing witchcraft provides a useful counterexample to the much better-known accounts of witch trials north of the Alps.

As the height of early modern witchcraft prosecutions occurred contemporaneously with the changes in learned natural knowledge often dubbed the Scientific Revolution and with the upheavals in religious belief, practice, and authority of the Reformation, the witch trials make visible these shifts taking place throughout society. The Venetian documents reveal that changes occurred not just in individuals' conceptual universes but also in the authority that attended knowledge of nature and supernature, and in the kinds of people early modern Europeans believed possessed such knowledge.

Witchcraft and Magic, Natural and Supernatural

Before we begin to unpack the Venetian Inquisition's trials, however, we need to clarify the terms and concepts under discussion. The natural versus supernatural dichotomy is not one I am imposing on early modern Venetians, but neither was it a straightforward distinction at the time. In fact, my use of the terms "the natural" and "the supernatural" is only a grammatical convenience; neither one was a simple unity at the time. Different kinds of supernatural phenomena and powers existed, and there was no consensus about precisely which phenomena and powers were properly classified in one category or the other. It was precisely these debates that occupied the attention of the Holy Office's members in witchcraft trials.[20]

"Magic" is a troublesome concept as well. So-called natural magic referred to practices based on learned theories of nature and performed mostly by the educated elite. Such magic made use of hidden and mysterious

[20] For a survey of the natural/supernatural divide in medieval Christendom, see Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages: The Wiles Lectures Given at the Queen's University of Belfast, 2006* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).