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978-1-107-07440-8 - Witchcraft, Demonology, and Confession in Early Modern France

Virginia Krause

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WITCHCRAFT, DEMONOLOGY, AND CONFESSION IN EARLY MODERN FRANCE

Denounced by neighbors and scrutinized by demonologists, the early modern French witch also confessed, self-identified as a witch and as the author of horrific deeds. What led her to this point? Despair, solitude, perhaps even physical pain, but most decisively, demonology's two-pronged prosecutorial and truth-seeking confessional apparatus. This book examines the systematic and well-oiled machinery that served to extract, interpret, and disseminate witches' confessions in early modern France.

For the demonologist, confession was the only way to find out the truth about the clandestine activities of witches. For the witch, however, trial confessions opened new horizons of selfhood. In this book, Virginia Krause unravels the threads that wove together the demonologist's will to know and the witch's subjectivity. By examining textual and visual evidence, Krause shows how confession not only generated demonological theory but also brought forth a specific kind of self, which we now recognize as the modern subject.

Virginia Krause is Associate Professor of French Studies at Brown University. She is the author of *Idle Pursuits: Literature and "Oisiveté" in the French Renaissance* and is currently finishing a critical edition of Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (coedited with Christian Martin and Eric MacPhail).

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For Emilio

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Or j'alloys espiaut et escoutant ce qu'elles [les sorcières] confessoient de
nouveau et de rare.

– Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais
anges et demons* (1612)

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When citing from early modern editions, I have expanded abbreviations and resolved characters according to modern usage, such as u/v and i/j. In some instances, I have emended a spelling when it obviously contained an error that might obstruct comprehension. Otherwise, the quotations are as they appear in the editions cited. For the passages discussed in detail, I have included modern English translations when available or provided my own.

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