

Anna Ebeler



In January 1669, Anna Ebeler found herself accused of murdering the woman for whom she had worked as a lying-in-maid. The means were a bowl of soup. Instead of restoring the young mother's strength, the soup, made of malmsey and brandy in place of rhine wine, had increased her fever. The mother became delirious but, as the watchers at her deathbed claimed, she was of sound mind when she blamed the lying in maid for her death. As word spread, other women came forward stating that Ebeler had poisoned their young children too. The child of one had lost its baby flesh and its whole little body had become pitifully thin and dried out. Another's child had been unable to suckle from its mother, even though it was greedy for milk and able to suck vigorously from other women: shortly after, it died in agony. In a third house, an infant had died after its body had suddenly become covered in hot, poisonous pustules and blisters which broke open.

The baby's seven-year old brother suffered from aches and pains caused by sorcery and saw strange visions, his mother suffered from headaches, and the whole household started to notice strange growths on their bodies. And a fourth woman found her infant covered with red splotches and blisters, her baby's skin drying out until it could be peeled off like a shirt. The child died most piteously, and its mother's menstruation ceased. All had employed Ebeler as their lying-in-maid. Anna Ebeler was interrogated six times and confessed at the end of the second interrogation, when torture was threatened. She was executed and her body burnt on March 23, 1669 - a 'merciful' punishment practised in place of burning in the humane city of Augsburg. She was aged 67. Just two months had elapsed since she was first accused.

Kilde: Teksten er hentet fra innledningen til artikkelen "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany" av Lyndal Roper. Teksten kan i sin helhet lastes ned fra Virtual Special Issue: Psychoanalysis and History | History Workshop. Historien som blir fortalt er basert på rettsdokumentene fra Statsarkivet i Augsburg fra 28. april 1669. Illustrasjonen er også hentet fra de samme dokumentene.