

The beneficent effect of the caul was sometimes regarded as extending to the offspring of the original owner, but, according to a superstition of the Middle Ages and later, this effect would be lost if the caul were given away or sold outside the family.^(4, 50) On 20 May 1658 the will of "Sir John Offley, Knight of Madely Manor, Staffordshire" was probated. The document includes the following bequest: "Item, I will and devise one Jewell done all in Gold enamelled, wherein there is a Caul that covered my face and shoulders when I first came into the world, the use thereof to my loving Daughter the Lady Elizabeth Jenny, as long as she shall live... ⁽²⁰⁾ It was directed that the caul be passed on to the males of succeeding generations and that "the same Jewell be not concealed nor sold by any of them," One notes that the bequest refers not only to the possession but also to the "use" of this curious heirloom.

Lemnius discussed the caul in his *De Miraculis . . . Naturae*, first published in 1559. A 1658 edition, in English, of this work⁽⁶⁰⁾ includes the chapter heading: "Of the Helmets of Children newly born, or of the thin and soft caul, wherewith the face is covered as with a vizard, or covering, when they come first into the world." He quotes "old Wives . . . who do but dote, and know not what they say" to the effect that a black caul presages accidents, misfortunes, and haunting by evil spirits unless the caul "be broken and given in drink, which against my will many have done to the great hurt of the child." But if the caul is red or clings to the crown of the head, the child is expected later to achieve great success.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Such interpretations were examples of *amniomancy*, the practice of foretelling the future by inspection of the caul.^(57, 88) If the caul were "white" (i.e., colorless) or red, it would bring good fortune; if black or lead-colored, the child would be unlucky.^(57, 80, 88.) In Herzegovinia, a part of Jugoslavia, it was thought that a baby born with a black caul would grow up to become a witch or sorcerer unless, on the first night after the birth, a woman carried the caul to the roof top and announced that "A child was born at our house in a bloody shirt" [*Hemde*]. Elsewhere in Jugoslavia the midwife carried the newborn baby itself to the threshold and announced three times that a real baby had been born, and not a witch or sorcerer.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Whether these procedures were regarded as charms or simply as attempts to prevent superstitious rumors among the neighbors is not reported.