Terrible Crimes and Wicked Pleasures: Witches in the Art of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Art
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Early modern representations of witchcraft have been the subject of considerable recent scholarship; however, three significant aspects of the corpus have not received sufficient attention and are treated independently here for the first time. This dissertation will examine how witchcraft imagery invited discourse concerning the reality of magic and witchcraft and suggested connections to contemporary issues through the themes of the witch’s violent autonomy, bestial passions, and unnatural interactions with the demonic and the dead. These three themes address specific features of the multifaceted identity of the witch and participate in a larger discussion that questioned the nature of humanity. Analysis of each issue reveals a complex, ambiguous, and often radically open treatment of the subject that necessitates a revision of how witchcraft imagery from this period is understood.

Each understudied aspect of witchcraft imagery is explored through a series of case studies that have not appeared together until now. Previously unexamined artworks with inventive content are introduced and canonical pictures are examined from new perspectives. These images were created in the principal artistic centers, the Italian city-states, the German provinces, and the Low Countries, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the
controversy over witchcraft was at its peak. Although they are few in number, these highly innovative images are the most effective and illuminating means by which to access these themes. These works of art provide valuable insights into important issues that troubled early modern society.

Chapter 1 reveals how witchcraft imagery produced in the Low Countries is concerned with the witch’s violent rejection of the social bonds and practices upon which the community depends for survival. Chapter 2 examines how the figure of the witch was used to explore concerns about the delineation and transgression of the human-animal boundary. Chapter 3 exposes an interest in the physical possibility of witchcraft; artists questioned the ability of witches and demons to manipulate the material world. Issues include the witches’ capacity to reanimate dead bodies and create monstrous creatures. Together these images demonstrate active and meaningful engagement with the theories, beliefs, and practices associated with witchcraft.
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Introduction

Witchcraft presented a serious problem in the early modern period, as authorities struggled to comprehend the extent of the witches’ power and the danger they posed. While some theologians, jurists, and physicians challenged the reality of witchcraft, the majority of the populace perceived witches to be a genuine threat to society. The stakes were high; not only the lives but more importantly the souls of the community were at risk. To root out the problem some communities conducted witch hunts, employing torturous interrogation techniques, and administering horrendous punishments, while others tried and released the accused. It is in this environment of conflicting opinion and grave consequences that images of witchcraft were produced.

Witches were both members of the community, until discovered and dealt with, and outsiders by virtue of their willingness to cause harm. The figure of the witch provided a negative foil against which the community could delineate its ideal self-image. In this way, the witch became a model that helped to establish and entrench ideas about social status, gender roles, sexuality, and criminal behaviour. Exciting and dangerous, the witch transgressed boundaries, including those distinguishing human and animal, mortal and immortal, living and dead, and in this manner, visualized notions of and challenges to the contemporary understanding of what it meant to be human. The witch was a central figure in the construction of early modern identity. Artists probed the possibilities of this identity in their works of art, constructing a visual discourse in a multitude of media.

Early modern depictions of witchcraft include a large group of images which were designed to exist independently of any text. As purely pictorial representations, these artworks are creative responses to a complex and fiercely debated subject. The breadth of treatment the

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1 The images should not be considered to be accurate depictions of specific individuals or events without the requisite evidence. Agostino Veneziano’s *Lo stregozzo* has been a locus for this controversy, see Patricia Emison, “Truth and ‘Bizarria’ in an Engraving of ‘Lo stregozzo’,” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 4 (December, 1999): 623-636; Margaret A. Sullivan, “The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 333-401; and Christopher Wood, “Countermagical Combinations by Dosso Dossi,” *RES* 49/50 (Spring/Autumn, 2006): 151-170.
theme of witchcraft receives in these images demonstrates that artists engaged with an exciting
genre of imagery, exploiting conscious and subconscious associations with the subject. Whereas
authors of witchcraft treatises were constrained by the need to provide a succinct argument for or
against particular aspects of witchcraft and demonological theory in their treatises, artists were
free to develop their own interpretation of the subject matter and in so doing, frequently drew
upon existing visual traditions, including book illustrations and broadsheets treating both
witchcraft and unrelated subjects. The freedom to make broader associations enabled artists to
allude to uncomfortable social issues that were intimately related to the witch’s activities.
Witchcraft imagery is valuable for its insight into cultural anxieties, particularly those practices
which, despite a long existence, were in the process of being challenged or re-evaluated in the
early modern period. The pictorial nature of their craft thus enabled artists to expand,
problematize, and complicate witchcraft theory, thereby affording a perspective that is exclusive
to the visual tradition. As a result, representations of witchcraft often present a highly
ambiguous and radically open treatment of the subject matter.

Witchcraft is an often-treated subject, especially of late. Yet three important aspects of
witchcraft imagery have escaped sufficient comment. The first concerns the societal impact of
the violent witch; representations of this theme reflect upon the anxieties concerning social
responsibilities and issues of trust. The second treats the bestial characteristics of the witch,
thereby addressing apprehensions about the state of the human race as a species and the activities
that might compromise or complicate the distinction between humans and animals. The third
examines the witch’s inappropriate interactions with the demonic and the dead, revealing how
materiality provided an avenue through which artists could question the structure of the world
and the operation of magic, the demonic, and the dead within it.

The images that provide the focus for this study have not been addressed adequately, or
in some cases, even at all. Two paintings have not received any attention in the art historical

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Authors of witchcraft treatises were anxious to ensure that their readers were not encouraged to undertake
the activities described therein and so edited the content accordingly. Despite their efforts, however, demonological
and witchcraft treatises were sometimes used as grimoires, as in the case of texts published by Johann Weyer and
69-70].
scholarship on witchcraft: the anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* and the *Scene of Witchcraft* by an anonymous artist from the circle of Cornelis Saftleven, while a third, Roelandt Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches*, has received little attention. These works have been neglected, despite the fact that they are of great consequence to the interpretation of their respective themes and can assist in the analysis of other issues relating to the corpus and early modern art in general.

This is the first time that these three aspects of witchcraft imagery have been treated individually. These issues appear in a variety of representations, but are of particular importance in depictions of witchcraft. In terms of the corpus of witchcraft imagery, the pictures that have been selected for study offer the most effective and most illuminating treatments of the themes and are therefore the best means by which to investigate these issues. Indeed, each is represented by a series of images in which the theme in question is a crucial feature of the artwork. By approaching the material in this way, thematic similarities between previously unconnected images reveal themselves. It becomes clear that there are underlying themes pervading works of art from both Italy and northern Europe, providing evidence of shared cultural concerns expressed through the figure of the witch.

These images demonstrate how artists were actively engaging with the witchcraft discourse, providing a primary response to and perspective on this material. The themes treated in this study offer critical insight into how the witch functioned for artists and their audiences. In seeking to relate their pictures to their viewers, artists portrayed their witches in familiar terms, drawing upon contemporary witchcraft theory, beliefs, and practices, as well as material that would resonate with and thus serve to connect the pictures to the art buying public. Thus the images contribute to the discussion of issues that were central to early modern society, such as identity and gender. Due to its ability to shed light on these concerns, witchcraft imagery could offer other disciplines in the humanities a new resource through which to achieve understanding. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how witchcraft imagery can contribute significantly to the art historical discipline, if approached from a broader thematic perspective rather than as simply pictures of witches.
Non-textual witchcraft imagery deserves study precisely because of the considerable variety and unusual qualities of many of these works. In considering these images as a corpus, a long-standing artistic discourse reveals itself. Accompanying this is an active engagement with contemporary witchcraft theory, practices, and beliefs. These images, then, are able to offer another cultural segment’s – artists’ – understanding of and response to witchcraft. Since the artists of witchcraft imagery suggested associations with other related cultural practices and beliefs in their works, this body of images can serve to enrich our comprehension of a number of related topics.

Analysis of the three under-explored themes is best achieved through the use of a case-study format. In each of the case studies, the theme in question is a critical feature of the work of art; the composition is constructed around this central issue. In addition to facilitating close scrutiny of specific aspects of witchcraft imagery, the case study format allows these artworks to be presented and considered together for the first time. The image sets are bound together by their effort to depict the same topic from different perspectives. Viewed as a group, these artworks are able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how artists and their clients approached, engaged with, and viewed the issue. While the case studies are few in number, collectively they address significant issues that offer a new contribution to the comprehension of the corpus as a whole. They demonstrate how deeply artists engaged with witchcraft and closely related material. Additionally, they reveal the innovative nature of this pictorial genre.

The images examined in this study are noteworthy for their innovative treatment of their central themes. These images diverge from established traditions, often incorporating existing compositional types and modes of representation in new ways. The visual qualities of the works – the stylistic treatments, artistic techniques, and choice of motifs – are integrally tied to the artist’s effort to question and expand upon the witchcraft discourse. Each of the images represents a pivotal moment in the development of this genre, whether as an establishment of an influential model inspiring subsequent works of art, as an unexpected synthesis of existing traditions, or as an unprecedented image that offers a new approach to and thus a novel way of understanding the theme of witchcraft.

3 Non-textual will be used synonymously with the terms independent and autonomous.
The artworks considered in this study were created in the major centers of artistic production during the height of the witchcraft debate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Selecting images on the basis of their thematic contribution to the genre allows for the broadest possible perspectives on the three aspects of witchcraft under discussion. It is important to remember that treatises and ideas concerning witchcraft were circulating widely during this era both through the exchange of texts and travel. Artistic discourse and the dissemination of images between Italy and northern Europe necessitate a consideration of the wider geographic context for the reception of artworks. This interaction can help to explain unusual or seemingly inexplicable features of some images; for example, Salvator Rosa’s witchcraft imagery is heavily influenced by the work of Jacques de Gheyn II and Jacob van Swanenburgh. Consideration of witchcraft imagery from the Italian city-states, the German provinces, and the Low Countries reveals cross-cultural exchanges in ideas and artistic practices. It is only when these three foremost producers of witchcraft imagery are considered together that common trends as well as regional differences reveal themselves. It is only recently that Italian and northern European witchcraft imagery has begun to be treated as a single entity. This dissertation will help to reveal thematic similarities and shared concerns.

The anonymous Italian Scene of Witchcraft and the Scene of Witchcraft by an unknown artist from the circle of Cornelis Saftleven are in need of explanation as they have not yet been discussed in the literature, despite the fact that they offer novel contributions to the genre in terms of both their compositional types and subject matter. Similarly, Savery’s Cowshed with Witches has not received the attention it deserves. These unexamined and overlooked images force a revision of the established boundaries of witchcraft content in visual representations to include a more extensive range of material. Furthermore, the new additions demonstrate the incomplete nature of the corpus. Other images have been the subject of considerable study although their dominant themes remain in need of full exploration and explanation. Analysis of the un- or under-addressed aspects of these well-known artworks results in a shift in how these pictures are understood; showing how these images participate in a specific thematic discourse reveals how artists used their works as forums in which to question witchcraft and closely associated behaviours and practices. This agency casts the genre in a new light. In addition to being significant works of art in and of themselves, the case studies participate in a larger
thematic discourse which necessitates a reconsideration of the current understanding of depictions of witchcraft produced during the early modern era.

This dissertation is divided into three thematic chapters: Autonomy and Exclusion, Bestial Passions, and The Demonic and the Dead. Each theme will be represented by a small group of case studies that demonstrate the consistencies and range of variety that are present in the modes of representation, choice of medium, and content. While the artworks often touch upon several themes, they have been placed in their respective thematic chapters because they offer creative responses to the themes which have not yet been explored. The interpretations of these works of art have been informed by demonological and witchcraft treatises, in addition to ancient literature, contemporary fiction, and medical treatises. I have drawn freely from recent scholarship in literary, religious, and social history, as well as psychology, medicine, economics, and gender studies. Since artists utilized particular compositional strategies, artistic references, and visual associations to communicate their material, visual comparisons are essential to this study. To assist the reader in understanding the extent of the corpus of independent witchcraft imagery, an Appendix of Illustrations has been included. Organizing the material in this way will enable the reader to see how a central theme in witchcraft imagery was approached from very different perspectives. The reader will become aware that the group of images form a discourse on the topic that takes a different path from historical and literary documents.

Chapter one, “Autonomy and Exclusion”, will examine how witchcraft imagery produced in the Low Countries during the seventeenth century was concerned with the impact of witchcraft on the social structure. More specifically, the artists depict witches working against the survival and continuity of society through violent transgressions of communal order and trust. Witches are shown breaking common prohibitions, disregarding societal roles, and acting violently towards their fellow citizens. In Frans Francken II’s Witches’ Assembly, the artist departs from existing images of witchcraft by showing witches shedding their markers of social identity and executing innocent people. The Scene of Witchcraft by an artist working in the circle of Cornelis Saftleven treats a mother-figure bleeding a young boy in blatant disregard for her role as nurturer and his as representative of the continuity of the patriarchal line. Roelandt Savery’s Cowshed with Witches addresses the relationship between neighbours and the tensions that arise from communal dependency. This set of images reveals an aspect of witchcraft
imagery that has not previously been considered as a theme on its own; however, the importance of this theme and its ability to contribute a new dimension to the interpretation of witchcraft imagery is shown through the examples from the seventeenth century Low Countries treated here.

As a subversive entity hidden within the social body, the idea of the witch strained relationships as witches were believed to be working at corrupting, harming, and even killing their neighbours and their livestock. Analysis of the motivations behind the vicious behaviours of the witch reveals anxieties relating to actual practices undertaken in the early modern era, thereby linking the behaviour of witches to other members of the community. This is an important aspect of witchcraft imagery that is given general treatment as it often appears subsumed within discussions of the violent witch; however, the issue reveals great complexity and ambiguity when considered on its own.

Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* represents a new compositional type, that of the bird’s eye view of a witches’ gathering. By departing from existing modes of representation, Francken is able to offer audiences a view of an extensive collection of activities undertaken by witches. The multitude of bodily types, social stations, and behaviours in addition to the sheer number of participants suggests the staggering population of witches that could exist within a community. Francken thereby plays into concerns about the hidden nature of witchcraft and the threat of violent attacks upon the community. The artist painted several heavily populated scenes conveying the grotesqueness and violence of witchcraft; however, this painting is his most inclusive and contains several important new elements, such as the decapitation of innocents. The *Witches’ Assembly* is significant for its unusually overt attention to the consequences of engaging in witchcraft. In addition, the compositional format and concern for materiality make this the best example through which to explore the place of witchcraft imagery in cabinets of curiosities.

The *Scene of Witchcraft* painted by an anonymous artist from the circle of Cornelis Saftleven stands in opposition to Francken’s, although both are concerned with secretive violent acts with social implications. In this painting, the violence is undertaken in an ambiguous interior space instead of the wilderness of the *Witches’ Assembly*. Whereas Jacques de Gheyn II’s drawings and Francken’s paintings often depict groups of witches indoors, the *Scene of*
Witchcraft is unusual in that it shows only a single witch and her victim. Moreover, the choice of subject is remarkable: the witch bleeds a living child. The collection of blood ties the witch’s activity to contemporary medical practices. The Scene of Witchcraft represents the theme of the inverted mother-child relationship and thereby focuses on the threat witches posed to the most vulnerable members of society. The anonymous painting is an important inclusion in this study for its representation of the perverted domestic sphere as well as the victimization of children in this context. The Scene of Witchcraft is incorporated into the discourse on witchcraft imagery for the first time in this dissertation.

Savery’s Cowshed with Witches treats the theme of peasants and witches. Taking a unique approach to the subject, Savery uses a framing device to separate the demons and witches from his peasants going about their chores in a barn. Consequently, the relationship between the two groups and the ability of witches to victimize peasants and their animals is called into question in a novel fashion. Seemingly inexplicable food yield and illnesses or death among livestock were often attributed to witchcraft. The Cowshed with Witches asks whether misfortunes or windfalls in life can be attributed to the work of witches. While Savery’s painting has been addressed in monographs on the artist, it has not been fully integrated with the complex range of witchcraft imagery of its time. As a highly exceptional work, its presence in the corpus of witchcraft imagery demands an explanation.

Together these images explore the ways in which witches were thought to interfere with the lives of their neighbours, causing harm to and even the deaths of adults, children, and livestock. Francken’s Witches’ Assembly focuses on the witches’ efforts to dismantle the social hierarchy by disregarding rules, laws, and behavioural conventions, from disrobing to committing murder. The anonymous Scene of Witchcraft shows a witch attacking the most vulnerable member of society, a child. The witch’s choice of a male victim disrupts the continuity of a family line and on a larger scale, the patriarchal system. The implications this image has for contemporary medical practices further demonstrate the uneasy reliance of individuals on other members of the community. Savery’s Cowshed with Witches questions the relationship between the (mis)fortunes of peasant life and the activities of witches.

In disregarding the rules of the social hierarchy and transgressing the most deeply held taboos, the witch provided a means to address the consequences that the threat of revolt or attack
from within could have upon the community. Instead of acting in the best interest of the common good, witches opt for autonomy. The interpersonal bonds that hold society together are broken by violent or suggestively violent acts in the three paintings. Together these three images suggest different ways in which the violent behaviours of witches could be manifested, ranging from solitary to mass activities. Furthermore, the paintings show how artists in the Low Countries adapted established image types to incorporate the subject of witchcraft. Their images are permutations and perversions of scenes of domestic life, peasant chores, and allegorical landscapes.

The second chapter, “Bestial Passions” analyses the human-animal connection as represented in early modern witchcraft imagery. This is an under-studied aspect of a theme that has been given a great deal of attention in recent scholarship, the sexuality of witches. The four case studies in this chapter include both subtle and explicit representations of the witch’s sexuality as it is tied to fears concerning the animalistic qualities inherent in humanity as well as humanity’s sexual interactions with non-humans. Non-humans include both animals and demons in the guise of animals. The four works under consideration include the *Scene of Witchcraft* by an anonymous Italian artist, Dosso Dossi’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*, Hans Baldung Grien’s *Witch and Dragon*, as well as Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom*.

The artworks reveal a fascination with the animalistic qualities of witches and their victims, their inappropriate interactions with beasts, and allude to the potential consequences for all involved. Examination of the anxieties surrounding the distinctions that were drawn between humans and animals in this image set can further the discourse on both the sexuality of witches and early modern sexuality as a whole. It is only through the juxtaposition of this group of images that the full scope of the animalistic qualities of the witch can be understood. Each picture addresses bestial bodies and instincts in a different manner; while the Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* emphasizes the physical effects of witchcraft and transformation of the female body, Dosso’s painting examines the metamorphosis of the male body. Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon* treats the physical breakdown of the animal/human barrier in the form of sexual contact on one hand, and on the other his *Bewitched Groom* deals with submission to animalistic passions that are normally governed by the mind. As a set, the artworks share an interest in the potential effects of witchcraft and depictions of witches on the viewer.
The images necessarily address the four stereotypes of the witch: the old woman, the young woman, the literary/mythological witch, and the male witch. The inconstant nature of the female witch and her sexual proclivities will be addressed first followed by a consideration of the various ways that men could relate to witchcraft, including by becoming witches themselves. The witch’s excessive and abnormal sexuality offers a forum for the expression of anxieties regarding the construction of gender, the transformation of the body, and the ever-present threat of uncontrolled passions.

The *Scene of Witchcraft* by an unknown Italian artist focuses on the relationship between the young, beautiful witch and the old hag. While many artists include these two figures in their images, the anonymous artist chose an unusual half-length format painted on a relatively large canvas which enabled him to juxtapose the color and form of the two bodies in rich detail. The active old witch stands in contrast to her passive young companion. Thus, the image best embodies the interest in bodily type as well as the student-mentor relationship that was thought to exist between different generations. Bodies of dead children often appear in depictions of witchcraft, but this image is remarkable for its allusion to anthropomancy as well as prophecy in general. As with the aforementioned *Scene of Witchcraft*, this anonymous work is entering the witchcraft discourse through this dissertation for the first time.

Dosso Dossi’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* represents the category of images depicting witches drawn from literature and mythology. In addition to being the least discussed of the artist’s two witchcraft paintings, this image is a very early example of the use of the medium to depict the subject in Italy. As the first of Dosso’s witches, *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* represents a new type of witchcraft imagery in both material and content. Dosso invites consideration of multiple identities for his witch without offering any resolution as to her identity. The presence of animals in the scene calls the viewer’s attention to the theme of transformation. In this image, however, the allusions to several literary and mythological characters invite contemplation of the witch as able to transform both her victims and herself into animals. The theme of the temptress as transformer connects the witch in this painting to other hybrid and changeable female creatures. The extreme openness of the temptress’ identity and Dosso’s interest in the body as a site for transformation make this work a logical and necessary inclusion for a chapter examining the bodily passions of the witch and her victims.
Representing the sexually transgressive behaviour of the witch in its most extreme form is Hans Baldung Grien’s *Witch and Dragon*. Baldung’s drawings of female witches in explicit and sometimes homosexual poses are the most daring of their kind. The *Witch and Dragon* is singular in its depiction of a nude female witch engaged in a sexually suggestive act with a dragon. This drawing thus represents both a category of witchcraft imagery for which this artist was renowned and the general interest artists had in the sexualized witch and the lure of the female body. It also invites discourse on bestiality and the possibility of progeny, topics that were a source of concern as they were brought into the public spotlight through accusations, confessions, and deformed births. This connects the *Witch and Dragon* to yet another category of imagery, that of unusual creatures.

The last image is another by Baldung, his well-known *Bewitched Groom*. Although this print has been the subject of much discussion, the meaning of the design of the composition in conjunction with the theme of witchcraft has not been fully explored. The problem of bestial inclinations and behaviours connects the figures in the picture to one another, serving as a framework through which to examine the male relationship to witchcraft. It is the emphasis on the male in the context of witchcraft that makes the *Bewitched Groom* exceptional. While artists like Salvator Rosa include male witches in their work and others offer depictions of male victims, Baldung questions the full range of potential identities his figure could have. Possibly victim, accidental visitor to the sabbath, or witch, the man’s identity remains uncertain. In this way, Baldung’s audience is able to experience the repulsion and desire associated with witchcraft as described by authors, victims, and witches. The entertainment value of the image is tied to the manner in which the protagonist is positioned; the print shows how the artist was concerned with the presentation of the male body. The uniqueness of this print and its authorship necessitate inclusion in this study.

The anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* depicts the transformation of the female body under the influences of age and witchcraft, both of which were associated with the relinquishing of the faculty of reason in favour of bestial instincts and passions. Likewise, Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom* invites consideration of the sexuality of witches through the juxtaposition of a man, woman, and horse. The ambiguous identity of the man suggests multiple possibilities which each highlight the conflict between masculine desire and self-control. Dosso’s painting
treats the theme of human transformation into animals and examines the features or abilities which allow one group to be delineated from the other. This issue is further complicated in Baldung’s drawing, which confronts audiences with a highly suggestive and, for this genre at the time, an unusually explicit image of a sexual encounter between a witch and her demonic and bestial companion.

As a group, these images form a cohesive picture of the ways in which the body and its (un)natural instincts was a critical site for the exploration and negotiation of witchcraft themes. Behaviour was closely connected to the gender and thereby the anatomy and bodily nature of an individual. The case studies in chapter two call attention to the establishment of and effort to maintain boundaries concerning the identity and deportment of individuals in society. Artists used witchcraft imagery as an opportunity to consider how behaviours associated with witchcraft related to other transgressive acts as well as larger problems existing within the social structure. While warning of the dangers involved with indulging one’s passions on one hand, on the other these images show the gratification that can be found in submitting to animal instinct. Included within this chapter is a discussion of the pleasure gleaned from viewing images and the problem of the gaze. In addition to addressing the animal nature of humanity as expressed by witches, the works of art in this image set represent departures from tradition, whether in terms of new iconography, compositional type, or a surpassing of previous boundaries, making the images problematic and thus in need of further clarification.

In the final case study chapter, “The Demonic and the Dead”, the focus will shift to the witch’s communication with beings from other realms. The case studies invite audiences to explore the materiality of witchcraft and to consider how witches and demons might operate in the world. While Jacques de Gheyn II’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath is concerned with the mists, vapours, and steam that embody the power and means demons and witches use for magic like transvection, Salvator Rosa’s Witches at their Incantations examines blood and tissue as sources of magical power and relates these ideas to contemporary medical practices. Rosa’s painting addresses the possibility of the dead being recalled from the afterlife to provide information to the living. Similarly, Agostino Veneziano’s Lo stregozzo considers magic as not just a rejuvenating but a life-giving force through the theme of reanimation. Agostino, however, focuses on animals and composite monsters. These images demonstrate an interest in
questioning and exploring the basic tenets of witchcraft theory as it pertains to the capabilities of witches and demons. Each of the works highlights a different aspect of the problem of the manipulation of the physical world by demons and witches. By refusing to simply accept this content as an illustration of witchcraft theory or as content inherent in the subject matter, criticisms and doubts concerning the nature of witchcraft quickly emerge. As a result, the corpus of witchcraft imagery needs to be considered with none of the elements of witchcraft being taken for granted as being intrinsic to pictures of witches lest vital components of the pictures go unnoticed.

De Gheyn’s *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* provides a forum for discussing the powers that witches were thought to possess by virtue of their alliance with demons. This is the only witchcraft drawing by the artist that was intended for wider circulation as a print. It is the largest and most comprehensively detailed of de Gheyn’s witchcraft images and includes unusual elements requiring explanation, such as the remarkable motif of Cupid mounted on a lizard-like monster, which alludes to the confusion of the natural order. The physical environment which de Gheyn crafts calls attention to natural processes and materials and how these were used to the witches’ and demons’ advantage. The clear and compelling manner in which de Gheyn presents his subject leads his audience to contemplate the basic principles on which witchcraft was thought to operate. In this way, de Gheyn suggests what would happen if witches and demons possessed the powers that were sometimes ascribed to them. The consequences are examined on a global scale, making this image distinctive for its focus on the effects of witchcraft on the terrestrial world.

The witchcraft imagery produced by Rosa represents another significant contribution to the corpus. Rosa was the most prolific painter of this subject matter in Italy during the early modern period. The painting selected for study represents Rosa’s most comprehensive treatment of both witchcraft and the sub-theme of otherworldly interactions. The artist is concerned with the role of the human body in witchcraft. The center of his *Witches at their Incantations* is occupied by a hanged corpse. Rosa addresses the mining of dead bodies, particularly those of executed criminals, for supposedly potent materials. Here witchcraft, medicinal, and popular practices are connected in a dramatic and unprecedented manner. The image provides audiences with the opportunity to consider whether or not witches were able to raise and communicate with
the dead. It departs from the tradition of representing Saul and the Witch of Endor by asserting the corporeality of the deceased while questioning the word of the dead as an accurate source for obtaining hidden knowledge.

Examination of the print entitled *Lo stregozzo* by Agostino Veneziano shifts the investigation from the human corpse to the misuse of dead animals. Agostino treats the theme of the witches’ purported ability to not only reconstruct but reanimate deceased creatures. This facet of witchcraft is not often adopted by artists and therefore affords rare insight into this supposed practice. In addressing the theme of unnatural life, the artist also explores the problem of hybrid monsters and methods of abnormal creation. Agostino thereby questions the power of the witch through her purported connections to the realms of both the demonic and the dead. The print is also atypical of witchcraft scenes in that the artist has presented his subject as a demonic procession on the verge of collapse.

Together these images deal with the limitations of human power and the boundaries of human creation. The artists show the horrors and dangers that can result from illicit interactions with demons and the dead. Emphasizing the physical nature of demons, humans, and hybrids, through their mode of representation, artistic style, and content, these works call attention to the process of artistic creation and the power of imagery. The chronological and geographical distribution of these images demonstrate that this interest in materiality, rather than being limited to a specific artist or historical moment, is instead an enduring current of witchcraft imagery that was attractive to early modern artists and their clients. This concern for the substance of life, the composition of bodies, and the manipulation of matter reveals an engagement with understanding the way demons, witches, and magic were supposed to work.

Analysis of these three understudied aspects of witchcraft reveals a great deal about the role of witchcraft imagery in early modern art. This study offers new insights into the ways in which artists crafted their pictures to engage with a remarkable subject matter. These pictures utilize a novel combination of modes of representation, witchcraft discourse, and closely related content pertinent to the experiences of their audiences to explore their themes from different perspectives. In addition to demonstrating that there are underlying themes which connect the seemingly dissimilar group of images, this dissertation explains how problematic images, such as Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches*, fit into the visual tradition. Paintings that were previously not
included within the canon are acknowledged, analyzed, and incorporated into the corpus. Insufficiently studied and unexamined features of canonical images are addressed and by virtue of their concern for specific themes, are re-situated within the witchcraft genre. Collectively the images demonstrate how, when witchcraft is examined in light of other licit and illicit practices in the community, the distinction between the witch and non-witch becomes extremely difficult to define.

Historiography

Historical studies of witchcraft focus on uncovering the facts concerning the persecution of witches in the early modern era. Documents including court records, signed confessions, letters, and treatises provide the foundation for historical study. These investigations seek to uncover the reality of witchcraft, asking questions about the individuals who were accused of and tried for witchcraft and analyzing the conditions and motivations that brought about or encouraged the persecutions. Modern historians and early modern authors of witchcraft treatises both share an interest in the connection between witchcraft and violence against the community, sexuality and gender, and dead bodies and disease. Despite the fact that witchcraft imagery offers an artistic and interpretive contribution to these discourses, the works of art discussed in this study are not often considered in the historical investigations. When they are included, they are often cited as evidence of early modern interest in a particular topic. The treatment of the image is general and further investigation into the details and significance of the object is not pursued.  

A notable exception is Lyndal Roper’s *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany.* Roper uses early modern representations of witchcraft to support her argument concerning the importance of fertility to the concept of the witch. She argues that the concern over the control and protection of the body was part of authorities’ efforts to maintain the

4 For example, in Brian P. Levack’s *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe,* 2nd edition (New York: Longman, 1995), Baldung’s drawing *New Year’s Wish with Three Witches* from 1514 is labelled: “Hans Baldung Grien’s engraving of witches, young and old, playing leapfrog”. Levack uses the drawing as evidence for the argument that young female witches are much more populous than their older counterparts in the witchcraft imagery produced by Baldung, Dürer, and Fra Filippo Lippi.

population without exceeding available resources. Roper’s treatment of images is limited to this scope. This dissertation seeks to better integrate the art historical and historical research through in-depth analysis of a select group of artworks. In so doing, this study will demonstrate how the content of the case studies addresses issues that are fundamental to the historical study of witchcraft.

Art historical investigation into witchcraft imagery became the subject of specific scholarly study in the 1980s. Prior to this, the discussion of this corpus usually took place in artists’ monographs. Charmian A. Mesenzeva and Gioconda Albricci published articles focusing on Baldung’s Bewitched Groom and Agostino Veneziano’s Lo stregozzo respectively. These analyses elicited scholarly responses and marked the beginning of a trend of similar investigations. Recent art historical scholarship owes much to Sigrid Schade whose 1983 study of the female body and gender in witchcraft imagery functioned as a catalyst for further research. Schade’s book also offers an early corpus of witchcraft imagery. Jane P. Davidson’s survey of northern European representations of witchcraft, The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470-1750, followed in 1987. In this text the author notes a number of treatises which could have influenced artists at the time and demonstrates the need for analysis of how artists responded to the ideas contained within the literary discourse in their work. This dissertation will argue that artists engaged with this material, acknowledging it and commenting upon it, while at the same time offering a much more open and expanded interpretation of witchcraft.

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6 Carlo Ginzburg notes that the acceptance of witchcraft as a subject for scholarly investigation by historians coincided with a growing interest in the study of non-dominant groups {Carlo Ginzburg, Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath, translated by Raymond Rosenthal [New York: Pantheon Books, 1991 (Italian 1989)], 2}.


8 Sigrid Schade, Schadenzauber und die Magie des Körpers: Hexenbilder der frühen Neuzeit (Worms: Werner’sche, 1983).

Exhibition catalogues recently published in Germany favour a broad perspective on
witchcraft, in which representations of witchcraft form only a part of the exhibition.10 These
publications offer readers a comprehensive understanding of what witchcraft was and meant to
European society during the height of the persecutions. Organizers include a multitude of
objects, ranging from torture implements to amulets to ward off witches to broadsheets recording
contemporary events. Negotiating such a large number of objects, documents, and texts often
means that works of art are treated in a general fashion. While demonstrating that witchcraft
imagery is part of a much larger phenomenon, the contribution of the images as an autonomous
body is not considered. Nor do these catalogues allow for the focused analyses of specific
themes undertaken here.

While witchcraft imagery has been addressed in the context of artists’ monographs in a
number of languages, the effort to establish a canon, to trace the history of specific motifs, and to
explain the origin and purpose of the imagery has become largely an English language debate.
The interest in witchcraft coincides with contemporary scholarly investigation into the themes of
the fantastic and wondrous in the early modern world. It also reflects analyses of the positive
and negative potentials of creativity undertaken in English scholarship. Art historical interest in
witchcraft imagery has risen concurrently with the revaluation of the history of witchcraft, which
has been greatly informed by close statistical analysis and the study of primary documents.

Witchcraft touches on a considerable number of themes that are of contemporary
scholarly interest – gender, identity, and vision, among others – and presents these themes from a
distinct vantage point. It explores issues from the perspective of what one should not be and how
one should not act. Witchcraft is a fascinating and exciting topic that allows access to what
were, until recently, less discussed aspects of early modern culture, like the erotic and the occult.
The material is also engaging because of the controversy of opinion surrounding witchcraft and

10 “Hexen – Mythos und Wirklichkeit”, the 2009-2010 witchcraft exhibition held in the
Historisches Museum der Pfalz in Speyer displayed a significant number of sixteenth and seventeenth century texts
and works of art. In the catalogue, these images are accompanied by a greater number of works from later periods.
Sigrid Schade contributed a short article on the motif of the witch flying on a broomstick. See Rita Voltmer, et al.,
Similarly, the exhibition catalogue Hexen und Hexenverfolgung im Deutschen Südwesten, 2 vols., edited by
Sonke Lorenz and Jurgen M. Schmidt (Karlsruhe: Badisches Landesmuseum; Ostfildern bei Stuttgart: Cantz, 1994)
is concerned with the breadth of material evidence concerning witchcraft in a specific geographic locale.
demonology. Given the wide-reaching scope of witchcraft, it is not surprising that scholars have recognized the potential of this subject to inform much more than one narrow aspect of early modern culture. Moreover, many of the themes and issues that witchcraft raises continue to be pertinent to society today.

Bodo Brinkmann’s authoritative interpretation of Baldung’s *Weather Witches, Witches’ Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien* was published in a bilingual English and German edition.11 Situating the *Weather Witches* within the context of the artist’s other representations of witchcraft and vanitas imagery allows Brinkmann to tease out the connections to alchemical symbolism, prostitution, and the Romanesque and Gothic traditions of depicting lewd figures. These are incorporated into larger discourses on female nudity, morality, and the Fall of Man as represented in works of art.

The iconographic emphasis of this thesis follows in the tradition of the impressive body of work produced by one of the foremost historians of witchcraft imagery, Charles Zika. Zika has published a series of articles examining topics and motifs such as cannibalism, flight, and the cauldron. In *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Zika explores the wide assortment of extant depictions of witches, ranging from paintings to news briefs, in an effort to establish image types and motif traditions, and, in so doing, stresses the importance of medium for the dissemination of messages.12 His interest in the accessibility of imagery is especially evident in his discussion of the impact that the development of the print had on pictures of witchcraft, and he argues that without the print, the diffusion of the idea of the witch would not have been so widespread.13 Yet Zika’s effort to provide his readers with a sense of the breadth of printed, drawn, and even painted representations of witchcraft in northern Europe allows for only a short investigation of

individual works. In this study, I examine a select body of work in greater depth in order to tease out the variety of possible meanings such images could elicit.

Another seminal text in the art historical field has been Linda C. Hults’ *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe.* Hults does away with geographical boundaries, selecting prominent artists from a large chronological timeframe who made significant contributions to the visualization of the witch. In concerning herself with witchcraft as a vehicle for self-expression and social reflection, Hults allows the life of the artist to take precedence over close scrutiny of the content of the artworks. This is particularly striking in the case of her chapter on Salvator Rosa in which the artist’s personal behaviour and cultural milieu are carefully investigated in order to explain how the motif of witchcraft fit into Rosa’s drive for recognition and status as an independent artist. The artist’s use of witchcraft as a subject is treated as a whole in a general fashion. Consequently, far more detailed treatment of the content of the individual images is necessary.

Hults has also written multiple articles on Baldung that are concerned with the genesis of artistic ideas, audience response, and the visual dialogue that takes place between works of art. An especially vital contribution is Hults’ articulation of witchcraft imagery as a dangerous subject matter for the artist and patron alike. Hults’ images, however, reveal a more comprehensive set of concerns relating to witchcraft that need to be examined; this study will consider the three most prominent themes requiring attention.

Claudia Swan shares with Hults an interest in the generation of artistic ideas, confining her study to the work of Jacques de Gheyn II. Swan is interested in how de Gheyn uses a different stylistic approach when composing images of the fantastic; through this investigative avenue she is able to explore how different types of knowledge, including information drawn from the natural world, the occult, and the imagination, relate to one another. Swan convincingly argues that de Gheyn’s witchcraft imagery protests against the credence given to

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witchcraft. De Gheyn’s conscious choice of a particular mode of representation for this purpose demonstrates that the artist shares with contemporary demonological theorists a concern for how the human mind and the visual process function. Swan’s text is focused exclusively on de Gheyn; the author does not suggest that her arguments can be applied to other representations of witchcraft produced by other artists. The present study examines how one of de Gheyn’s drawings participates in a shared visual discourse on the otherworldly interactions of witches, thereby situating the artist and his work within the broader genre of witchcraft imagery.

The Italian material was given initial examination in Guy Tal’s dissertation of 2006, “Witches on Top: Magic, Power, and Imagination in the Art of Early Modern Italy”. Tal establishes a corpus of witchcraft images to articulate the nature of the Italian tradition and thereby lays a foundation for the discussion of Italian witchcraft imagery. Tal provides a comprehensive study of Rosa’s tondi in the Cleveland Museum of Art, for instance, and suggests the significant amount of work remaining to be done in this area. His case studies invite comparisons between artistic genres, thereby helping to clarify the general position of witchcraft imagery in the visual tradition. The present study will demonstrate how extensively artists drew and innovated upon existing artistic conventions and visual strategies to communicate ideas about witchcraft in novel ways.

This dissertation is timely. The significant amount of research conducted by art historical, historical, and literary scholars on witchcraft in recent years now allows for the focused thematic investigation with broad implications that has been undertaken here. Scholarship on witchcraft grew out of artists’ monographs concentrating on gender and identity as it pertained to the female witch and the male victim. Efforts to establish a basic corpus for northern European witchcraft imagery and find a cohesive way to understand witchcraft imagery as a genre began in the 1980s. It is only recently, since 2004, that scholarly investigation into witchcraft imagery has dramatically reshaped our understanding of early modern depictions of the subject. In a few short years, an extensive canon of witchcraft imagery has been established for both northern Europe and Italy and the origins and development of several central motifs

have been traced, such as the witch riding backwards and the oven fork. This research has established a framework for comprehending and interpreting representations of witches.

With the need for foundational research, the geographically-oriented surveys of images and analyses focusing on a specific work of art or witchcraft motif have not allowed for the exploration of the important themes under consideration here. In this way, while making valuable contributions to the scholarship, these analyses neglect significant representations of witchcraft from both Italy and northern Europe. This is true of the three paintings treated in this dissertation. Nor do the surveys allow for the exploration of the variety of ways in which the images connect to other genres and issues outside of witchcraft, as this study does. In exploring the multitude of associations artists of witchcraft imagery incorporated into their works there is a strong sense of how witchcraft pervaded and could be used as a means to address a great number of social and artistic concerns.

**Issues of Interpretation: Notions and Images of Witchcraft**

Witchcraft was a complicated matter, one made even more problematic by the language used to describe it. In this study, no distinction will be made between the witch and the sorcerer or sorceress; the subtle linguistic distinctions and terminologies that shift from text to text are not particularly relevant to the readings offered here. The term witch will be used to describe individuals who actively seek to engage in magical practices, forbidden or not, and interfere with the free will of others, often for harmful ends.17 Included among the magical rites examined in this text are both examples of what can be considered learned magic, like the employment of elaborate texts, and popular magic, such as the use of wax effigies.

17 This definition recognizes the concern over the shifting nature of the terms used by early modern authors to describe witches and their activities. This issue is aptly summarized by Diane Purkiss: “All this implies that terms like ‘witch’ and ‘witchcraft’ were not single or fixed, but highly unstable terms, sites of conflict and contestation between diverse groups.” [Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 93].

The term magic is employed in a wide variety of ways. Stuart Clark notes that the word is often used to describe irreligious acts or the activities of those who are of a different religion [Stuart Clark, “Witchcraft and Magic in Early Modern Culture,” in: *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State Press, 2002), 105].
It is important to note that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the idea of the witch and witchcraft was not constant. Terminologies and attitudes differed widely, even within a single area. Witchcraft could include anything from using white magic to heal to deliberately invoking evil demons for violent ends. Nor were all witchcraft activities associated with the devil. Within the theological discourse, the work of Jean Gerson has been singled out as having exerted considerable influence on the idea of the witch developing at this time. Gerson was instrumental in drafting the propositions that asserted magicians were guilty of idolatry – the worship of a false god and interaction with the demonic – and he then linked idolatry to the magical practices of old women and to apostasy – meaning the rejection of Christ and adoration of the Devil. In unifying these concepts, Gerson characterized the population of witches as a frightening antithesis to the Christian church. It is this general attitude that gained in popularity and elicited dramatic response to witchcraft in the form of accusations, trials, and executions.

Gerson’s ideas were expounded to a receptive audience. During the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries there arose an interest in the nature of the spirit world and, more specifically, questions about who the various entities were and how they functioned. This trend continued into Gerson’s era. The Great Schism that divided Christians in Western Europe between 1378 and 1417 fuelled fears that the Devil and his minions were increasing their presence on earth. Three significant attitudes associated with this situation have been identified by Matteo Duni: first, anxieties about demonic presences added support to the call for religious reform; second, demands for magic to be suppressed were made, lest more demons be summoned to cause harm;

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18 Levack, 1995, 10-11; Clark, 2002, 114; and Purkiss, 1996, 93.
19 Zia, 2007, 39. See Jean Gerson, De erroribus circa artem magicam (On Errors Concerning the Art of Magic) from 1402.
and third, and closely related to the second, was the idea that those who worshipped the Devil were congregating together and plotting the downfall of Christianity.22

These conditions gave rise to the early modern witch hunts. Contemporary scholars have dramatically scaled back the statistics for the number of people estimated to have been executed as witches. The economic and political motivations for many accusations, which were often recognized as self-serving at the time, frequently led to large numbers of accusations and few burnings. This is in part due to the nature of the early modern Inquisition, which must be distinguished from that of the medieval era. John Tedeschi has demonstrated that the Inquisition, rather than being a bloodthirsty entity, was often moderate and fair in its proceedings in contrast to the secular courts that frequently enacted their own judgments without regard for papal representatives.23 It is also important to note that in their study of witchcraft trials and gender, Lara Apps and Andrew Gow have challenged the notion that witches were overwhelmingly female by providing examples of men who were charged as witches and by pointing out the large number of men who were executed for the crime.24

Witchcraft was a highly controversial subject. Debates raged over the very existence of the witch and extended to the subtle variations of what people believed the witch was capable of. The first phase of witchcraft treatises were concerned with interpreting the canon *Episcopi* from the ninth century. This document, addressed further below in the context of the night ride, stated that the nightly gathering of witches and their wild rides under the guidance of the goddess Diana were merely illusions. Theologians and intellectuals pondered whether the witches they encountered were not the same as those described in the earlier text? Through this line of reasoning, those advocating the existence of witchcraft argued that the claim of the canon *Episcopi* simply did not apply to contemporary conditions, a move which allowed the document

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22 Matteo Duni, *Under the Devil’s Spell: Witches, Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in Renaissance Italy* (Florence: Syracuse University in Florence, 2007), 16.
to keep its authoritative stature while permitting witch persecutions. Whether or not the
was applicable was a great source of controversy.

Recently, attention has been called to the fact that the theological texts that began to
circulate at the end of the fourteenth and at the beginning of the fifteenth century were not
originally intended for a lay audience but rather a cloistered one. Consequently it has been
proposed that the anxieties the monks felt towards the outside world where they perceived
demons to be running rampant were not received by wider readership until the texts were
circulated in a non-monastic context. The increasing exchange of written material regarding
demonology and witchcraft often occurred at church councils. The Council of Basel (1431-
1449) was a critical occasion for the mixing of ideas. It appears that the general population
was not concerned with the concept of demonic influence in magic until the church drew
attention to it through sermons and the inquisitorial court.

When examining the witch, folklore and popular traditions must be considered in
addition to the hunts, trials, and the theological discourse. Ideas and influences concerning
witchcraft circulated widely throughout early modern Europe, meaning that artists would have
had access to a wide range of witchcraft materials. While the works of art addressed in this
study are intended for wealthy and educated audiences, they are not just about elite culture: they
provide a commentary on notions of witchcraft circulating in all segments of society.

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26 Edward Peters, “The Medieval Church and State on Superstition, Magic and Witchcraft: From
Augustine to the Sixteenth Century,” in: Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages, edited by Bengt
Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: Athlone, 2002), 232. When considering the texts, it is vital to heed Clark’s
warning that the literature on the occult, including witchcraft, composed a small fraction of the religious and judicial
writings of the time, and its relative importance should therefore be kept in mind (Clark, 2002, 134-135).
29 Sullivan has, in fact, suggested that works by Baldung, such as his Witches’ Sabbath, may have
provided the inspiration for material on fantasy and dreams for reformist preachers like Johannes Geiler von
Kaisersberg (1445-1510) (Sullivan, 2000, 376).
Given the considerable number of demonological and witchcraft treaties, sermons, theological debates, plays, and literary studies being published in the early modern era, it is necessary to recall that images have their own traditions and provide a different type of experience for the audience. Artists offer a synthesis of various features and aspects of the witch in a single image. Through the visual experience, the viewer can be emotionally affected in a manner not possible through a purely textual description. The experience of the picture may change with distance, lighting, comparison to other works or events, and duration of view. It is the artist who gives the witch a physical identity, thereby demonstrating the nature of the witch’s attitude and activities. Additionally, literary descriptions cannot offer the community guidance in identifying the witch in the same manner as images are capable of doing. Images have the capacity to convey the uncertainties surrounding the witch’s existence just as much as they are capable of demonstrating the fear inspired by the witch’s presence. This imagery offers a visual equivalent to the contemporary dialogue between demonological texts. The visual tradition may be viewed either separately or in conjunction with the literary discourse.

The question of artistic intention has long concerned scholars treating witchcraft imagery: the artist’s personal opinion is frequently read in works depicting witchcraft. As Andrew Hadfield points out when discussing Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield’s article, the narrative exceeds the author’s or artist’s intention, which results in a series of interpretations that compete for control of the discourse. In witchcraft imagery there are often multiple solutions or facets for exploration. Many of the works discussed in this study encourage contemplation of several possible solutions, present a network of associations, and remain radically open.

There is also the problem of defining what constitutes an image of witchcraft. Art historians are confronted with the challenge of determining whether or not a figure is intended to represent or evoke associations with the witch in what are often ambiguous scenes. Images of witches may be closely related to pictures of nude women who are prostitutes, workers in bathhouses, and allegorical representations, to name but a few. Equivocation in regard to

identity is inherent in many of these artworks. Due to the thematic focus of this dissertation, the case study images embody relatively overt representations of witchcraft.

The layering of identity means that the witch may participate in one or more social categories. There is also ambiguity within the category of the witch itself, particularly with regard to the witch’s intentions and liminal status as a figure who could both help and harm. Using the different social perspectives that unite together to construct identity, as is outlined by Nancy Caciola in *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (2003), I will demonstrate the pivotal role played by the witch. I will consider among other issues the position the witch occupies in the collective mind of society, the social roles that witches construct for themselves, the impact that interactions with witches have on both the community and the individual, and, the role of the witch’s body as a physical site where these different perspectives meet. The image of the witch should be considered in light of these multiple and highly interactive fronts.

Witchcraft imagery forms a corpus with its own visual tradition. Aside from *The Love Spell* (fig. 1) painted by the Master of the Bonn Diptych in the late fifteenth century, it is difficult to find the witch as the central motif in an independent image until the last decade of the fifteenth century. A temptress figure that may be equated with the witch frequently appears in depictions of the Temptation of St. Anthony; however, this figure may also be interpreted to be a demon in

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31 Early modern authors of witchcraft treatises accused those who were purported to be able to cure the bewitched of being witches themselves, since in order to practice their art they needed to understand how witchcraft worked and thereby possessed the ability to bewitch. Also, authors interpreted many healing practices to be heretical and demonic in nature. Clark acknowledges the debate concerning how many counter-witches were tried and executed as witches and suggests that there is sufficient data to argue that those who treated the bewitched ran a high risk of being implicated in witchcraft themselves (Clark, 2002, 112-113). This perspective has been challenged by Willem de Blécourt, who argues that one must tread carefully in asserting that those who helped were also suspected of causing harm. His studies reveal that most helpers are not considered witches even though they were able to counteract witchcraft [Willem de Blécourt, “Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests: On Cunning Folk in European Historiography and Tradition,” *Social History* 19, no. 3 (October, 1994): 285-303]. De Blécourt observes a shift in how cunning folk are perceived at the end of the sixteenth century when, as the church tried to negate the distinction between good and evil magic in favour of only one category, magic, that was entirely evil, those who were identified as cunning folk came to be more closely associated with witchcraft in intellectual circles but not in the minds of the general populace (De Blécourt, 1994, 294).

32 Caciola, 2003, 83.
the guise of a beautiful woman. Davidson attributes the proliferation of easily circulated print media such as broadsheets to the growing fear and interest in witches. Following this assertion, Zika argues that the advent of the woodcut and engraving, combined with the increasing number of witch trials, led to the growth of witchcraft imagery from the late fifteenth century onward. It is at this time that Dürer produced two prints, *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 2) and *Four Witches* (fig. 3), which certainly inspired his student, Baldung, to treat the subject in his *Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 4) from 1510.

The *Witches’ Sabbath* is a critical work in the development of witchcraft imagery as it established a new compositional type and marks the first time that autonomous witchcraft imagery becomes a significant component of an artist’s oeuvre. It is a subject matter for which the artist was celebrated; his influence can be found in the works of many masters, including Rosa and de Gheyn. The witches depicted by Baldung were part of a recent departure from a visual tradition of representing witches that had been predominantly confined to illustrations accompanying texts and showing the news.

Baldung’s small gathering of witches was subsequently expanded to include masses of figures and objects in the works of artists like Francken. While some images showed a veritable catalogue of witches’ activities, such as Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations*, others, including

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33 Several such women are depicted in Joachim Patinir and Quentin Massys’ rendition of the subject from circa 1515 in the Museo del Prado, Madrid.
35 Zika, 2007, 4-5. He observes that the number of depictions of both the crimes and punishments of accused witches rise beginning in the 1560s in conjunction with an increase in witch-hunt activity. Dorinda Neave argues that images of witches appear first in Germany (around 1500) because the position of inquisitor was developed here, because of the large number of authors on the subject who resided in this country, and finally, because Germany seemed to have had a very large number of witches [Dorinda Neave, “The Witch in Early Sixteenth-Century German Art,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1988): 4]. This explanation is too simplistic and does not withstand closer scrutiny.
36 For the purposes of avoiding confusion, customary titles will be used. Readers are asked to bear in mind that titles are often bestowed upon images long after their creation. Baldung departs from Dürer’s precedent by producing his witchcraft images on a much larger scale. Dürer’s *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* measures 11.4 by 7.1 cm, while his so-called *Four Witches* measures 19.0 by 13.1 cm. Both are markedly smaller than the *Witches’ Sabbath*.
37 Baldung’s woodcut provided a highly influential compositional type that served as a source of inspiration for a number of northern European as well as Italian artists treating the subject of witchcraft.
the Dutch *Scene of Witchcraft*, focused on a single act. Often artists used ambiguity in the identity of their witches, objects, and animals to convey meaning and question assertions about witchcraft. While sixteenth and seventeen century representations of witchcraft are visually, chronologically, and geographically diverse, examination of the images and issues addressed by this study reveals they share common concerns about significant issues such as treatment of the dead and excessive sexuality. Investigation into these themes also exposes regional anxieties. This dissertation will begin with an example of this from the Low Countries, examining seventeenth century representations of witches’ efforts to undermine the integrity of society.
Chapter 1
Autonomy and Exclusion

Pervading depictions of witches produced in the Low Countries during the early modern era is a concern over the societal impact of witchcraft, meaning witchcraft as an act perpetrated against the community. In the witch’s role as the antithesis of the good neighbour, the witch helps to define the accepted boundaries of social behaviour. By casting off the strictures that an individual would normally adhere to in order to maintain interpersonal bonds, witches divide themselves from the community. Usually this division is established through violence. And, as a rogue individual no longer obedient to the social hierarchy and Christian faith, the witch not only threatens to disrupt the order of things, but through the rejection of Christ, puts the salvation of the entire community at risk. In other words, the witch provides a welcoming point of entry through which the devil can infiltrate a group and work towards damning souls. To demonstrate how the dangerous potential of witches was explored by Dutch and Flemish artists, three case studies have been selected that each highlight a different aspect of the witch’s transgression and the danger it posed to the communal body. Collectively these images reveal an active engagement with and complex response to this aspect of witchcraft.

The three paintings studied in this chapter, Frans Francken II’s *Witches’ Assembly*, the *Scene of Witchcraft* painted by an unknown artist working in the circle of Cornelis Saftleven, and Roelandt Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches*, approach the problem of the anti-social witch in diverse ways. These range from a densely populated scene illustrating an encyclopaedic compendium of witchcraft activities in the wilderness, to the private horrors performed by a witch behind the closed doors of an interior space, to the harassment of peasants as they go about their daily chores. Despite their compositional differences, these paintings all target specific aspects of a larger issue: that of the violent crimes perpetrated on members of the public by subversive witches. They represent the most intensive treatments of this theme, and this,

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38 In this context, the Devil refers to the ruler of Hell and the leader in the rebellion against God. The devil, on the other hand, may refer to the Devil or a demon. Luther Link provides valuable insights into the different ways in which the Devil and demons were conceived of in his book *The Devil: The Archfiend in Art from the Sixth to the Sixteenth Century* [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996 (London: Reaktion, 1995)].
combined with their innovative approaches to the material, identifies the group the ideal image set for exploring this topic.

These paintings were produced in the Low Countries during the seventeenth century and together they display the variety of responses to this aspect of witchcraft that were possible within a single geographic region over the course of a limited timeframe. The case studies reveal shared concerns demonstrating cohesiveness in the group, despite the diversity of approaches to the topic. While forming a specific sub-set of witchcraft painting due to their shared geography, chronology, and theme, the three paintings engage with concerns that are typical of other autonomous images of witchcraft from the early modern period.

Francken’s Witches’ Assembly (fig. 5) explores the implications of the notion that an anti-society, composed of witches and demons, existed and in so doing emphasizes the heretics’ vigorous efforts to corrupt the social structure, to reject Christian values, and to destroy the innocent. Even in terms of the artist’s own oeuvre, the care taken to articulate this issue is remarkable. The painting also provides an unprecedented examination of the consequences of the witches’ actions, emphasizing the demonic and divine, rather than the judicial, punishment that witches received. The Witches’ Assembly is striking for the comprehensive approach that the artist takes towards witchcraft; the image offers a compendium of the types of people who may participate in witchcraft and the wide range of activities that witches engage in. In a single image, Francken provides a synopsis of witchcraft practices that emphasize witchcraft in terms of its communal effect; it is a compositional type introduced by the artist. The dramatic visual impact of the extent of witchcraft and the violence involved strongly influenced subsequent depictions of the subject matter, making this image notable for its place in the development of an artistic tradition.

Focusing on the witch as an individual, the Dutch Scene of Witchcraft (fig. 30) affords a glimpse into the private realm of the witch and addresses the dangers unsupervised women were thought to pose. The artist depicts a subject that is otherwise unknown in the corpus of witchcraft imagery and is in fact being included in the scholarly discourse on representations of witchcraft for the first time. The content is provocative and focuses directly on the societal impact of witchcraft, necessitating its inclusion in this discussion.
Isolated acts of witchcraft were much more difficult to detect and persecute than large gatherings and the painting provides its audience with an understanding of what this practice might look like. The artist prompts viewers to explore the suspicions, damage, and social tensions resulting from the perceived presence of hidden, solitary acts of witchcraft. In addition to providing insight into the private life of the witch through the objects and symbolically laden creatures in her environment, the broader effects of the concealed witch are communicated through the choice of victim. By selecting a young boy, the artist encourages the audience to consider the witch in terms of the mother and examine the larger social consequences of interference by witchcraft. The emphasis on blood calls attention to medicinal practices and the benefits witches as well as other members of the community derived from the use of children’s bodies. Integral to this painting are the themes of privacy, motherhood, healing procedures, and sacrifice for the communal good.

Lastly, Savery’s Cowshed with Witches (fig. 33) invites audiences to ponder whether witches interfered with the health of livestock and the production of household goods. Painted at a time when farm animals and the materials they provided were the primary resources upon which a rural family’s survival depended, the Cowshed with Witches examines how people deal with, seek to explain, and attempt to protect themselves against witchcraft and other negative occurrences in life. Savery literally frames a scene of a milkmaid and shepherd going about their daily routines with witches, inviting the viewer to ponder the possible relationships between the figures. The witches’ involvement has the potential either to cause injury to the peasants, which would result in their need for communal support to endure, or to aid the farm’s production and give the owners unfair advantage in the marketplace. The economic impact of witchcraft, although often subtle, is a recurring theme in representations of witches because it underscores fears about the vulnerability of a system central to the persistence of a society. In no other image in the corpus is the problem of witchcraft and its effects on the community posed so directly to the viewer.

Images of witchcraft provide the witch with a face, one that the audience could recognize as a potential member of their community; the witch is no longer an abstract concept that exists or had existed in another time and place. Instead, the witch is shown actively at work in a location that would be familiar to the viewer: the wilderness beyond the town borders, the inside
of a barn, or a private room. Participating within the public space of the community or working in the safety of an interior environment, the witch is depicted as a lone individual or as part of a group of evil-doers whose gestures, bodies, and clothing are rendered within a completely plausible physical context. Together these paintings craft an image of the witch as a real person, insofar as he or she occupies a recognizable social role, and whose insidious behaviour, including acts of cannibalism, infanticide, murder, and poisoning, threatens the integrity of the community. It is the potential for witchcraft to be occurring in the familiar environment of the early modern viewer that draws the audience into the scenes, prompting them to engage with and reflect upon contemporary witchcraft theory.

**Frans Francken II’s Witches’ Assembly**

Earlier scholarship has acknowledged the importance of Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5) from 1607 as an encyclopaedic compendium of witchcraft activities. The manner in which the artist approached his subject matter is, however, deserving of greater attention. In examining how the motif of the witch is presented, the inventiveness of the artist and the function of the image are clarified. As Francken consciously deviated from the traditional compositional format of witchcraft imagery to include a considerably wider variety of figures, actions, and objects, this painting is best served by an iconographic investigation. It is through detail that Francken invites his attentive viewer to ponder the numerous facets of witchcraft.

Frans Francken painted scenes of witches’ gatherings which are often set indoors and include views through large windows, enabling the artist to incorporate exterior events as well. The artworks demonstrate a profound engagement with the subject of witchcraft through their extensive use of carefully arranged motifs. The high degree of similarity between many of the

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39 It has been suggested that Hieronymus II copied his brother’s witchcraft imagery [Gabriele Groschner, Thomas Habersatter, and Erika Mayr-Oehring, *Meisterwerke: Residenzgalerie Salzburg* (Salzburg: Residenzgalerie Salzburg, 2001), 48]. Extent paintings of witches are, however, attributed to Frans Francken II by authorities on witchcraft imagery, such as Linda C. Hults. In the recent literature on witchcraft there is no suggestion that any other member of the Francken family depicted witches.

40 It has been suggested that Francken chose witchcraft as a subject matter in an effort to show his intellectual capabilities, to demonstrate to the authorities that he shared in their interests, and to situate himself among the artists of the Low Countries through the established tradition of representing the demonic [Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 133].
paintings within his extensive oeuvre of witchcraft images reveals that that the artist found a successful formula for treating witchcraft imagery. The *Witches’ Assembly* is the artist’s most detailed investigation into the nature of witchcraft. In it, Francken incorporates motifs that are not found in the other images but which are highly consequential for the interpretation of the work.

Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* comments on the problem of witches as a social group determined to destroy civility and the communal structure with the ultimate goal of casting humanity into a chaotic state under demonic reign. Catering to an educated audience, the painting draws extensively on contemporary artistic practices to deride, in a skilful and humorous manner, those that insisted upon the veracity of witchcraft and the notion that it posed a real danger to society. The anti-Christian stance of the witches and their active persecution of their enemies are combined with a fresh interpretation of the consequences of witchcraft. Divine and demonic judgment is emphasized in place of legal sentencing.  

Of moderate size, the painting can only accommodate a viewership of a small group of people. For the willing viewer who wishes to study the multitude of details Francken provides, one must have the leisure to peruse the minutiae and the authorization or physical access to study the painting closely. The figures are arranged across the breadth of the image lying, sitting, standing, and crouching at tables and around magic circles. Demons are interspersed with witches and engage in a number of pursuits, including the transport of victims through the air. Above the mass of people and demons, a witch with a human body, a raccoon-like tail, and the legs of a satyr is about to alight from a wooden scaffolding. To the right of the scaffolding

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42 While there are a multitude of demons present in Francken’s scene, there is no single figure that can be identified as the Devil. This corresponds to the idea of the devil as multiplicity, division, and confusion, characteristics that are passed on to the witch. The witches in Francken’s image are large in number and seek to deconstruct the Christian community through deception and chaos.

43 Francken’s figure alludes to both visual and literary traditions. Satyrs were depicted as lustful creatures in works such as Dürer’s *Hercules at the Crossroad*, an engraving from 1498, in which a satyr and his nude female companion represent the path away from virtue. Citing Plutarch’s description of the Lupercalia festivals wherein a boy would be dressed as a faun, Pierre de Lancre’s report reveals the same longstanding association: “And the
there is a terraced platform supporting a giant, bubbling cauldron attended by witches and, next to this, another witch executes people with a sword. The entire face of this stone structure is covered with mysterious inscriptions.

To encompass the large number of figures and their attributes, Francken chose to employ a horizontal compositional format that allows for a broad, perspectival view. This novel format stands in marked contrast to the compositional type pioneered by Baldung, in which a small group of witches are depicted encircling a magical pot within a limited landscape dominated vertically by a tree. Baldung’s configuration allows for an intimate glimpse into a private gathering, whereas Francken’s format evokes a communal event that, although hidden, is shocking in its scope. Witches are shown flying, transforming, working their magic in circles, writing spells, and reading magical texts. The overall impression of this design is that of a collection composed of individual elements whose relationships to one another may be uncovered and compared in an almost infinite number of arrangements. In this way, Francken follows the precedent of Netherlandish artists like Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who, in works such as his *Netherlandish Proverbs* (fig. 6) from 1559, assembles a comprehensive set of materials in loosely related groups that encourage the audience to explore all possible associations within and between the clusters. Francken introduces a new subject matter into an established artistic

ancients would put him on the ground and would make him half billy-goat, from the navel down, in order to describe him as being dirty, lascivious, and lewd as a billy-goat.”[Pierre de Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*: Pierre de Lancre’s ‘Tableau de l’inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Dемоnѕ’, 1612, translated by Harriet Stone and Gerhild Scholz Williams (Turnhout: ACMRS & Brepols, 2006), 299]. Furthermore, witnesses returning home from an event in 1590 reported seeing figures with hooves like oxen and goats among a group of witches dancing outdoors in the middle of the night [Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 1608, edited by Montague Summers, translated by E. Allen Ashwin (London: John Rodker, 1929), 45].

While Sigrid Schade first noted that Francken was responsible for developing this multifaceted witchcraft compositional type, it has since been observed that Jan Ziarnko was simultaneously and similarly crafting innovative compositions [Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), 17].

In Baldung’s *Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 4) the artist introduced a compositional type which proved to be highly influential in the production of witchcraft imagery.

This painting is housed in the Gemäldegalerie in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

The collection of witchcraft activities, their presentation as an inventory of illicit behaviours, and the amplification of those acts through their physical proximities associate this painting with the tendency towards enumeration and aggregation observed by Mark Meadow in Bruegel’s paintings [Mark A. Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s ‘Netherlandish Proverbs’ and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2002)]. Meadow examines
convention. Not only does this lend his work authority, it allows him to situate himself in relation to venerable masters. Certainly the extensiveness of Francken’s investigation into witches’ practices would call attention to the artist’s erudition as well as that of the viewers as they recognized and manipulated the material presented to them. The *Witches’ Assembly* provides its audience with an interesting subject matter that could satisfy the thirst for both intellectual stimulation and entertainment.

Francken’s painting is unusual in that it depicts an individual in the process of becoming a visible witch (fig. 7). Unlike earlier illustrators who had chosen to show witches in their natural forms, meaning that they were often nude and already engaged in occult practices, Francken chose to depict a woman shedding the markers of her social role and status to become a witch. The woman in the bright blue skirt is in the process of undressing: she is removing her red cloak and she has already unlaced her bodice. Her elite identity is communicated through the elaborate gold embroidery on her skirt and the gold necklace with a large precious stone and the drop pearl that she wears around her neck. Her open bodice, jewels, and ornate dress identify this woman as a temptress, familiar from the story of the demonic queen tempting St. Anthony, a popular subject for representation. A breeze has caught the woman’s hair so that two tendrils

the availability of rhetorical theory in the Low Countries and the manner in which it structured the reception of images. The assertion that “early-modern collections such as the curiosity cabinet, the commonplace book and Bruegel’s *Netherlandish Proverbs* were pre-structured in order to enable their visitors, readers, and viewers to make efficient use of them” could just as easily be applied to Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (Meadow, 24). Both *Netherlandish Proverbs* and the *Witches’ Assembly* afford their audiences the opportunity to shape their interpretations of the paintings according to their own knowledge and interests. This connects Francken’s painting to an established tradition of artistic creation and reception.

Francken did not limit this approach to his witchcraft imagery. The same tendency towards multiplicity and openness is displayed in his cabinet pictures, including *The Triumph of Love*. This aspect of Francken’s work is discussed by Edith Wyss in her essay “A ‘Triumph of Love’ by Frans Francken the Younger: From Allegory to Narrative,” *Arthibus et Historiae* 19, no. 38 (1998): 43-60.

46 Witches were sometimes re-baptized in honour of the Devil and received a second name; taking another name carried a punishment as it was perceived to be an act of concealment [Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 1580, translated by Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 113; and de Lancre, 545-548]. The deception perpetrated by witches concerning their true identities was not only an essential feature of witchcraft that necessitated the witch-hunts, but was also part of a larger social concern about the problem of dishonesty. This theme is addressed in a volume of essays edited by Toon van Houdt, et al., *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2002).
rise up and are cast in a golden light, creating the impression of horns, which serve to underscore the evil nature that is concealed within the woman’s beautiful body. Francken has captured the woman just before she becomes indistinguishable from the naked women in the scene or even the animalistic witch about to take flight.

By illustrating the witch’s inconstancy, Francken demonstrates one of the ways that witches were working to confound the social structure. The figures that populate the painting are drawn from all ranks of society and include both genders. Those present at the gathering have neglected to uphold the rigorous distinctions of the social hierarchy, and in an act that would have horrified members of the aristocratic class, mingle together at will. The disregard for rank and breeding depicted in the painting may be read as a commentary on the tensions that were building between classes in Antwerp in the early seventeenth century. Concerns regarding those who sought to advance their social rank despite their lack of the requisite wealth and lineage grew and encouraged fears of social upheaval arising from within the community itself. Like the witch, the individuals accused of overstepping their boundaries were frequently framed as others in an effort to diminish their status. In an attempt to control the situation, those seeking to maintain the established social divisions, as well as those with other motives, voiced concerns that women of the lower classes were infecting those in the upper classes with witchcraft and heresy. Witchcraft was discussed in terms of its being like a disease that was

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47 This theme is addressed further in chapter two in the discussion of Dosso’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape.*

48 The *Witches’ Assembly* may have been painted while the artist was living in Antwerp or during his six-month sojourn to the northern Netherlands.

49 Improper social movement could be achieved through the act of passing wherein an individual assumed a role proper to another gender or class and, in so doing, threatened to ruin the current social structure and anyone who was invested in it [Linda Woodbridge, “Renaissance Bogeymen: The Necessary Monsters of the Age,” in: *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, edited by Guido Ruggiero (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 446-447].

50 Woodbridge, 446-447.

51 “Before, [witchcraft] was to be found only here and there, but now, as a result of heresy, it has infected even the noble, the well-educated, and the rich.” [Martín Del Río, *Martín del Río: Investigations into Magic*, 1595, edited and translated by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 28].
slowly creeping up through the ranks of society, polluting as it went. Francken depicts this development taking place by opting for an inclusive rather than exclusive vision of the witches at work.

**Materiality and Display**

Amongst the witches there is an unusual demon whose very presence prompts the viewer to consider the materiality of the hybrid creature. In following the artistic tradition, popularized especially by Hieronymus Bosch, of depicting a mixed-body demon in the Low Countries, Francken combines an established artistic practice with a growing interest in the properties of substances. Not only does this detail reveal much about the purpose of the *Witches’ Assembly*, but the emphasis on the physical allows the artist to draw attention to his painting as a work of art. Francken approaches the physical body of the evil being in a manner that literary descriptions did or could not; the painter has the advantage of being able to layer meaning by manipulating both the appearance of things and their symbolisms.

Red coral horns grow from the head of the demon assisting the witch writing at the table in the foreground (fig. 8). Projecting like a deer’s antlers, the horns are worthy of mention not only as evidence of the artist’s creative mind, but also because of the symbolic significance of red coral. Coral was used as an apotropaic amulet, said to be effective at guarding against the evil eye and warding off disease. For this reason, it was frequently put on babies and young

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52 To solve this problem, those in positions of power encouraged greater scrutiny of the actions of the individual. Authorities judged when and where members of different classes, as well as ages and genders, were allowed to interact in order to establish and maintain the desired decorum [Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 134].

53 The problem of hybridity will be discussed in chapter three.

54 This demon reappears in Francken’s *Witches’ Kitchen*, from circa 1610, which is housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 118). Several other figures, including the procuress with the pointed headdress, can also be found in this work. Francken’s painting is alternatively titled *Witches’ Preparation for the Journey to the Blocksberg*.

55 Two early seventeenth century drinking cups fashioned by Eberhard Lindeman into human forms have the figures reaching up to the crowns on their heads into which sprigs of coral have been set, see Patrick Mauries, *Cabinets of Curiosities* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 91. The woman’s crown is set with two branches of coral, creating the impression of antlers.

56 According to Pliny the Elder, coral could be worn as an amulet to protect infants from harm or it could be ground up, mixed with water, and consumed so that the body could absorb coral’s medicinal qualities {Pliny the
children and this practice is reflected in works of art, such as Andrea Mantegna’s 1497 painting entitled *The Trivulzio Madonna* (fig. 9) wherein the Christ Child wears a piece of coral around his neck. Red coral was especially sought because its colour connected it to the blood of Christ and to his redemption of humanity. It was also related to witches through its magical properties and the myth that coral first appeared when the blood of Medusa’s severed head touched water

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Elder, *Pliny: Natural History*, 10 vols., translated by H. Rackham [Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1944-1989], 8:479. Del Rio explains that the function of the amulet was tied to its materiality: “First point: The type of amulet which is hung around the neck carries no natural power because it bears words, characters, a single image, or a cluster of images. On the other hand, it may contain a natural power of antipathy or sympathy because of the material of which it happens to be made.” (Del Rio, 58). Coral possessed the potential to treat both demonic and natural ailments.

Protective powers are also ascribed to the hexagram, which appears repeatedly throughout the *Witches’ Assembly*. The Shield or Star of David was a potent magical sign that served an apotropaic function in Jewish, Christian, and even Islamic imagery: the hexagram could channel protective power through its connection to the divine to ward off evil spirits [Joaneath Spicer, “The Star of David and Jewish Culture in Prague around 1600, Reflected in Drawings of Roelandt Savery and Paulus van Vianen,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 54 (1996): 210]. At least as far back as the seventeenth century, parents were hanging amulet prints above the beds of their children in order to protect them from Lilith, Adam’s first wife, who, according to the Jewish tradition, was punished by God with the death of one hundred of her demonic children each day for failing to return to her husband. In retribution, Lilith attacked the children of others unless they were guarded by an appropriate amulet inscribed with the Star of David. See Waldemar Deluga, “Jewish Printed Amulets,” *Print Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (December, 2003): 369 & fig. 171 for the reproduction of an anonymous woodcut entitled *Amulet with Signs of the Zodiac*. During the early modern period, King Solomon was highly revered as a man of magic and wisdom. *The Key of Solomon*, a text concerned with the use and understanding of pentacles, insists that stars frighten spirits into obeying those who wear or carry them (*The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)*), translated by S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1909 (1888)], 63. In this context, the symbol is used to protect against sorcery, illness, and poison.

This type of popular magic was often condemned by theologians as being heretical, but persisted nonetheless. Early modern authors complained that instead of placing their faith in God and reason, people were engaging in magical practices in a futile attempt to protect themselves against magic, a problem addressed further in this study in the context of the anonymous *Scene of Witchcraft* produced in the circle of Cornelis Saftleven.

As a recognized symbol of Jewishness in the early seventeenth century, the hexagram evokes the magical and violent characteristics ascribed to Jewish culture in the early modern era (Spicer, 1996, 206-209). Likely with this in mind, Francken employed a visual sign of occult power that alluded to other unwelcome groups in addition to witches. Through their association with the Jews, a significant other, the identity of the witch was given further grounding and was associated with ideas and hostilities that were already imbedded in the culture. This is especially interesting given that most of the Jewish population had been expelled from the Netherlands by the middle of the sixteenth century. In Francken’s image the hexagram represents a powerful symbol embodying magical powers cast in a distinctively negative light.

*The Trivulzio Madonna* can be found in the Civiche Raccolte d’Arte in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan. In the *Madonna della Vittoria* (1495-1496), also a painting by Mantegna, a huge pendant of red coral hangs down in the apsidal arbour above the Virgin, Child, saints, and donors.
and solidified. The significance of the material, however, is called into question when it appears as part of a demonic body.

In each of his details, Francken challenged the viewer to question the existence of witchcraft and the power with which it was imbued by those who advocated for its reality. Francken may have been mocking the superstitious fears of the general populace by placing a material with supposedly magical properties on the head of a demon. The contemptuous tone that this reading gives the *Witches’ Assembly* is further encouraged by the artistic precedent to which it refers. Francken is not the first artist to focus on the nature of a material and to play with the simultaneous layers of interpretation that a substance or object might afford. In 1566, Giuseppe Arcimboldo painted *Water* (fig. 10) for Emperor Maximilian II as part of a series depicting the four elements.

*Water* is a composition that exists simultaneously as a collection of creatures and objects found in the water and a portrait, depending on the perspective that one chooses at a given moment. The figure in *Water* has short sprigs of red coral that function as hair. Like Francken’s demon, the sitter Arcimboldo depicts is a monstrous hybrid whose very materiality and existence is subject to question: the sitter is present in the portrait, but fails to exist outside of it except in its constituent parts. In viewing Arcimboldo’s composite figure and still life, the audience is forced to become conscious of the visual process and the artist’s ability to manipulate it at will. Arcimboldo’s patrons delighted in the instability of the image achieved through deliberate artifice, in the inventive connections drawn between seemingly unrelated objects, and in the ease

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58 This legend is depicted by Giorgio Vasari in his *Perseus and Andromeda* from circa 1571 in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. Medusa’s severed head sits at Andromeda’s feet. Her blood runs down the rocks and bright red sprigs of coral sprout up at the water’s edge. Already the coral is being collected and admired by nymphs. The oil painting is executed on a slate support and is reproduced in Valentina Conticelli, et al., *Medusa: Il mito, l’antico e i Medici* (Florence: Polistampa, 2008), fig. 19.

According to Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, coral was formed from the blood of Medusa’s head when it touched plants, much to the delight of the ocean nymphs [Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Anthony S. Kline, in the University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Ovhome.htm> (accessed November 20, 2009), Bk IV:706-752].

59 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann has compared the *Water* painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, with another version in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Brussels, and suggests that the latter image is more probably by Arcimboldo [Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 165-166]. The Viennese painting may be by Arcimboldo or his workshop.
with which perception could be exploited. Material transformation achieved through the process of sight also refers to the living status of coral before it is cut and its subsequent conversion into stone once this occurs.\textsuperscript{60} Consciousness of materiality on the part of Francken’s audience draws attention to the theme of erroneous or variable perception and encourages the deconstruction of the hybrid creature and ultimately witchcraft, in the audiences’ minds.

The inclusion of red coral in the image may pertain to the work’s function: the \textit{Witches’ Assembly} is a highly detailed painting that requires sustained and close viewing and the exotic subject matter combined with the comprehensive examination it makes of witchcraft suggests that it belongs to the cabinet picture type. The painting provides a compendium of motifs and activities attributed to witches and so it fits well within the visual tradition of thematic representations of the senses, elements, and so on. In this regard it is akin to Jan Bruegel the Elder’s \textit{Allegory of Fire} (fig. 11) from 1608, which is part of a series depicting the four elements.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{Allegory of Fire}, which incidentally includes witches and demons, was sent to Archbishop Federico Borromeo and is comparable with the \textit{Witches’ Assembly} in terms of both its intellectual content and estimated level of patronage.\textsuperscript{62}

Based on the high level of execution and the scale of the work, the \textit{Witches’ Assembly} was likely intended for the private collection of a very wealthy patron. Further to this point, Hults has suggested that the painting may have been created for the Habsburgs, a family that avidly promoted the persecution of witches, and she therefore asserts that the work functioned as part of a program justifying the state position on witchcraft.\textsuperscript{63} Hults argues that Francken’s art was shaped by his being in the Southern Netherlands under Habsburg rule, where he would have been influenced by the stances the family took on witchcraft, the notion of the state, Counter-Reformation piety, and Jesuit ideas, in addition to his being affected by the artistic environment

\begin{footnotes}
\item[60] De Lancre, 288.
\item[61] The painting currently hangs in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan.
\item[63] Hults, 2005, 117-121.
\end{footnotes}
that was unique to Antwerp. Several decrees had been issued by Philip II prior to Albert and Isabella’s 1606 Edict that would have given Francken a firm understanding of the Hapsburg stance on witchcraft. The content of the painting, including the comical grotesque faces, suggests a client who was sceptical of the reality of witchcraft. Regardless of the owner’s identity, this painting would still have successfully functioned as a commentary on the issue of witchcraft while simultaneously providing a means for both the artist and patron to craft their identities.

Cabinet pieces were, as their name suggests, intended to be displayed in the studies of gentlemen amongst their rare objects. Collectors were interested in how these items could be categorized, whether they were natural, artificial, or a combination thereof, and how they related to one another. The collections functioned as a microcosmic sampling of the wonders of the world and in the case of the emperor, as a representative cross-section of his knowledge and empire. As such, the items in cabinets of curiosities were objects of study as well as investments. Coral was a costly purchase and was found in the richest of collections. If the owner of the Witches’ Assembly did not possess coral, the image may have helped to provide a substitute. If coral were part of the collection, then the viewer would be encouraged to consider the real and depicted coral together. In addition to contemplating the paragone between painting and sculpture and art and nature encouraged by this juxtaposition, audiences would be invited to reflect upon the properties of the material and in this case, the medicinal, magical, and ownership value of the object. Coral was an expensive investment that could bestow prestige upon the owner and one that, in times of need, could also serve practical ends, either as a liquefied asset or a curative device, if one believed in the popular lore.

Through the Witches’ Assembly, Francken speaks to the material desires of elite, educated, and wealthy clients, and those who aspire to such a status. At the same time he uses

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64 Hults, 2005, 13.
65 De Vries also notes the interest in artworks that were at once items to collect and displays of collections (de Vries, 2010, 87). Furthermore, she discusses the ability of art to transform physical material, to show the artistic qualities of nature, and to depict natural processes and things that cannot otherwise be seen.
66 Pliny the Elder records that red, branchy coral had the highest value and was extremely rare (Pliny 8:479).
his work to situate himself amongst the foremost artists born within the Low Countries, including Jan Bruegel the Elder and Bosch, and foreign artists enjoying highly successful careers at the imperial court, such as Arcimboldo. Francken demonstrates an understanding of the intellectual discourses concerning art and collecting practices as well as the subject of witchcraft through both the clever device of his coral-horned demon and his composition as a whole.

The Witches’ Sabbath

As it depicts a gathering of witches, the current title of Francken’s painting, the *Witches’ Assembly*, aptly describes the scene; however, the painting is sometimes also referred to as the *Witches’ Sabbath*, an appellation that must be used cautiously because the feasting and dancing that are often associated with the sabbath are not present. In addition, the enthroning of the Devil that is commonly described in contemporary theological treatises is absent in Francken’s image as well as the other works of art encompassed by the parameters of this study. On the other hand, there is clearly an interaction with the demonic world and allusions to sexual congress in the nude figures lying together. The concept of the sabbath as a gathering of witches arose in the 1430s as a conflation of different popular and literary traditions. Witches would fly to the sabbath on household tools, especially brooms, activated by magical unguents or on demons that frequently assumed the form of animals. There, they would dance, banquet, engage in sexual intercourse, and pay homage to the devil through sacrifices and obscene rituals.

At the time Francken painted his *Witches’ Assembly*, concerns over the existence of the sabbath were quite real. Given that the twin-peaked headdress of the witch in the center of the

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67 Guazzo, 35-38. Absent too are the feasting, dancing, the Eucharistic emphasis, and sabbath king and queen that are often described in witchcraft treatises, although allusions to the perverted Black Mass are present (de Lancre, 399ff). Guazzo uses the terms Sabbath, Synagogue, and Assembly interchangeably (Guazzo, 41). Radbruch opines that artists avoid depicting the sabbath proper because attempts to show the impressive scope of the Devil and his assembly end up looking foolish {Gustav Radbruch, “Hans Baldungs Hexenbilder,” in: *Elegantiae Juris Criminalis: Vierzehn Studien zur Geschichte des Strafrechts* [Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft, 1950 (1938)], 45}. Francken’s efforts to convey an extraordinary assembly are, however, quite successful.

68 Bailey provides extensive information on the rise of the sabbath [Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 43ff]. Norman Cohen, an authority on the history of witchcraft, argued that the sabbath was the product of the union of three separate traditions including the screeching strix, female creatures of folklore who harassed people in the night, and finally, the cannibalistic heretics who attacked children and worshipped the devil [Dale Hoak, “Art, Culture, and Mentality in Renaissance Society: The Meaning of Hans Baldung Grien’s ‘Bewitched Groom’,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 490]. The strix will be addressed further below.
scene (fig. 12) is evocative of the Spanish Inquisition, that the Netherlands was under Spanish control, and that the painting was done in close temporal proximity to an important edict, the painting has been read as a response to the specific conditions of Francken’s environment. Albert and Isabella of Spain issued the Edict of 1606 in response to suspicions that witches were assembling together in their domain. While the *Witches’ Assembly* elicits questions about the relationship between witchcraft paintings and the events taking place in the artist’s environment, no causal link between the edict and the painting can be established. Although the *Witches’ Assembly* was painted only a year later, it is not likely that this work is a direct reaction to the proclamation.

Francken had a number of artistic precedents at hand when he designed the *Witches’ Assembly* and he should be understood as an innovator working within an existing visual tradition. Baldung had already introduced the idea of a collective of witches in his *Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 4) from 1510 and although his group is not as numerous as Francken’s, the witches are still gathering covertly in the night to perform magical rites in the accompaniment of demonic beasts. Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen’s painting entitled *The Witch of Endor* (fig. 13) from 1526 precedes Francken’s work by eighty-one years and shows a wide variety of witches’ activities performed by a group, ranging from goat riding to the resurrection of the dead, and the sense of a larger population is conveyed through the witches and demons that fly into the scene from the right. In the realm of print, particularly popular broadsheets, there is an abundance of images depicting witches gathering together that may have served as inspiration for Francken in his *Witches’ Assembly*, as they convey the impression of a multitude of witches and the various deeds that they undertake. Frontispieces, such as *A Diabolical Assembly* (fig. 14) by Jost Amman adorning Sigmund Feyerabend’s *Theatrum Diabolorum*... from 1575, showed armed demons and witches meeting together in a landscape. This title page offers the collective,

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69 The headdress is addressed further in the next section “The Question of Witchcraft and its Consequences.”
70 Dürer’s *Four Witches* (fig. 3) from 1497 may be considered as showing a gathering of witches as well, although debate about the identity of these women continues.
71 This picture is not as densely populated as Francken’s and it did not inspire subsequent compositions like the later work. Additionally, this is the only representation of witchcraft by van Oostsanen that is known, whereas Francken produced multiple variations of the witches’ assembly theme.
the violence, and the demonic interaction present in the Witches’ Assembly. Textual illustrations may also have provided a source for Francken’s innovative composition.

A correlation has been found between growing fears of an internal communal uprising and the active search for witches within a population fed by the concern that the devil was launching an attack on Christians. Throughout the early modern era, fears persisted that witches were holding secret meetings and conspiring together for the express purpose of bringing about the downfall of Christian society. Nicholas Rémy records that some witches, having arrived at the sabbath, pitied the community when they observed the sheer number of its adversaries. The sabbath, the assembly, or any preparatory gathering of witches were used by artists like Francken to articulate anxieties about the danger of rebellion from within the community. Francken takes the threat of internal corruption further by suggesting that the witches were increasing their numbers.

In the foreground, a well-dressed little girl clutches an old woman’s back (fig. 15), demonstrating that participation in witchcraft is not limited to any age. The child’s presence anticipates her eventual replacement of the older witch within the circle and encourages the notion that witches were expanding their ranks. This is clearly a case of the young learning the ways of the old, a twist on the popular genre scene illustrating the proverb “as the old sing, the

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73 Rémy’s comments are reproduced in Brian P. Levack’s *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 84-86, from E. Allen Ashwin’s translation of the *Demonolatry* (London, 1930). One witch testified that there were approximately five hundred witches at the sabbath while another stated there were six thousand (Guazzo, 37 & 41). De Lancre cautions that it only takes one witch to start the spread of witchcraft throughout a community (de Lancre, 549). In Germany, witches were understood to be very well organized. On May 1, Walpurgis Night, all witches would gather at the Blocksberg or Brocken mountain to celebrate a giant sabbath [Lyndal Roper, “Witchcraft and the Western Imagination,” *Transactions of the RHS* 16 (2006): 138].

74 Levack, 2004, 154-155. Levack provides a translation of part of the *Tractatus de Hereticis et Sortilegiis* (Treatise on Heretics and Witches). The text was written by Paulus Grillandus, a papal judge who heard trials near Rome, and was published in 1524. It was a widely read treatise that was fundamental in shaping the idea of the sabbath in the sixteenth century (Levack, 2004, 56). The *Tractatus de Hereticis et Sortilegiis* was often appended to the *Malleus Maleficarum* [Edward Peters, “The Medieval Church and State on Superstition, Magic and Witchcraft: From Augustine to the Sixteenth Century,” in: *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: Athlone, 2002), 241].
The strong influence of the mother on her daughter is characterized by Institoris and Sprenger, the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, an extensive treatise on identifying and persecuting witches: “Experience shows that the daughters of sorceresses always have a bad reputation in similar regards, being imitators of their mothers’ crimes, and that in fact virtually the entire progeny is tainted.”

Again, witchcraft is perceived as a contaminant that pollutes the families and communities it touches. Witches passed knowledge down through the family lines, in the same way that trades were taught. They also took advantage of marital ties. With each generation the sect would grow and become a greater threat to society. The Jesuit scholar, Martín del Rio, demanded that the rising population be stopped before witches and their supporters usurped all authority from the proper hands. For theologians like Institoris and Sprenger, this was a sign that the apocalypse was fast approaching.

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75 Examples illustrating this proverb include Jan Steen’s *Baptism*, also known by its proverbial name *So de oude songen, so pypen de jongen* (As the old sing, the young pipe), in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and Jacob Jordaen’s *As the Old Have Sung, so Pipe the Young* from 1638 in the Antwerp Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.


While Mackay maintains that the *Malleus* was authored by both Institoris and Sprenger, other scholars such as Rolf Schulte assert that the text is by Institoris alone, and that he added Sprenger’s name to lend authority to his work [Institoris and Sprenger, 103; and Rolf Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, translated by Linda Froome-Döring (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 98].

77 Witches formed the bonds among themselves that they refused to establish with the larger community; those who were in charge of children at the sabbath would make arrangements for other witches to assume their role should they be captured by authorities or die unexpectedly (de Lancre, 59).

78 Del Rio, 27. Del Rio’s treatise is entitled *Disquisitionum magicalarum libri sex* (Six Books of Investigations into Magic) and was first published in 1595 in Mainz. A number of reprints quickly ensued. Francken (1581-1642) possessed a large library, suggesting that he was well read and thus quite capable of taking a position on the witchcraft discourse (Hults, 2005, 114). Scholars are still seeking evidence to determine whether or not the artist was a member of the Rhetorician’s (Rederijkers) Chamber.

79 Institoris and Sprenger wrote of the Devil: “Nonetheless, he attacks through these heresies at that time in particular, when the evening of the world declines towards its setting and the evil of men swells up, since he knows in great anger, as John bears witness in the Book of Apocalypse [12:12], that he has little time remaining.” (Institoris and Sprenger, 29). They go on to assert that the end of the world was drawing near (Institoris and Sprenger, 170). In the early modern era the *Malleus* was only available to those who were able to read Latin and therefore severely limited the audience for the book, despite its many editions [Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2002), 33].
After the witches, the most abundant creatures in the composition are toads and demons. Living toads supervise the witches’ activities while the dead are close at hand as ready materials for spells (fig. 16). Of course, according to Exodus, frogs – which went undistinguished from toads at this time – were the second plague God set upon Egypt, establishing the corrupting and harmful nature of the creatures. The amphibian populace is a direct commentary on the nature of the witches as a collective; Francken provides a visual comparison between the two plagues. Witchcraft theory held that witches possessed the power to transform into toads, meaning that the population of witches in Francken’s scene may be far greater than the viewer first realizes.

The Question of Witchcraft and its Consequences

Evidence of the occult forces at work, those hidden virtues that connect seemingly unconnected things, are here visualized in the form of shooting sparks, mystical symbols, inscriptions, and rays that form intricate designs across the surface of the painting. These represent the mysterious forces that witches were thought to be able to control or draw upon with the help of demons. A cyclone of energy spirals upward from the cauldron while beside it a network of red lines signifies the architecture of a magic spell. The profusion of these signs signals the immense power witches have at hand, the magnitude of their efforts, and the energy with which they work. Rich oranges and bright reds denoting sparks, flames, and magical energies are set off against the dark night sky, giving the scene a hellish character. Streaks of red

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80 According to de Lancre, a large population of toads attended the sabbath (de Lancre, 151).
81 A parade of toads climbs up the ladder in the center of Francken’s scene. As in Dürrer’s Melancholia I, the ladder can be read as a symbol representing a futile quest for truth; just as Melancholy searches for an understanding of the universe, and ultimately the divine, through scientific investigation, the witch undertakes a similarly hopeless attempt to know and control the world through the black arts and demonic power [Philip L. Sohm, “Dürer’s ‘Melancholia I’: The Limits of Knowledge,” Studies in the History of Art 9 (1980): 30-31]. The artists suggest that because of their dependence on material knowledge, both Melancholy and the witch will be unable to undertake the spiritual journey necessary to attain insight into the nature of God’s universe. According to early modern theology, the path to truth could only be discovered through complete faith in God and necessarily required the rejection or transcendence of the physical world. Appropriately, Francken’s ladder leads nowhere and stands as a symbol for the witches’ vain hopes and beliefs.
83 Dirk Bax, Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture-Writing Deciphered, translated by M. A. Bax-Botha (Rotterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1979). 39. The toad will be addressed further in this case study under “Salvation”.

paint stress violence against the body; witches executing their victims are encircled by a perverted halo of red beams. The lines of colour shooting across the panel can be likened to cuts across the surface, reflecting the extent of the damage caused by witches.

The vibrant colours that sweep broadly across the painting demonstrate Francken’s use of macchia, a term which can be used to describe patches of colour or light.\(^8^4\) The technique of using brushstrokes to suggest form, the absence of clear contours, and the presence of areas of contrasting light and darkness enable the artist to allow forms to coalesce and dissolve before the viewer’s eyes. Thus, this technique has the capacity to both astound and perturb.\(^8^5\) As a result of the constant play between materialization and dematerialization, the artist is able to convey the idea of transformation that is present in both art and magic. Witches and demons are shown transforming matter – their bodies, victims, ingredients, and environment – into something else, just as the artist does with paint and panel. An astute observation that in Titian’s painting, “[t]he energy of colouring is a metaphor for life, its quickening and extinctions[,]” applies equally to Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* as well as other witchcraft imagery discussed in this study.\(^8^6\) The witches accelerate and pervert natural processes while also undertaking unnatural ones.

Francken’s is a scene of volatility. The unpredictability and violence of witchcraft is united with the capacity of art to flux; together art and witchcraft call attention to the growing awareness of the instability of matter.\(^8^7\) Combined with the acknowledgement of the limitations of the human senses, particularly sight, and of the susceptibility to delusion through both witchcraft and artistic techniques, such as macchia, artists employ witchcraft imagery to observe and comment upon the uncertainty inherent in the world.

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\(^8^5\) Hans Sedlmayr, “Bruegel’s ‘Macchia’,” in: *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, edited by Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 326. In Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s works, the visual qualities of macchia are combined with figures who exist on the margins of society in order to draw attention to “[t]he liminal states of humanity in which and through which the nature of man is cast into doubt.” (Sedlmayr, 336). Similarly, Francken questions the natures of humanity and witchcraft.


\(^8^7\) Hills, 224.
There are no clues to help the viewer determine the location of the ominous gathering of witches in the *Witches’ Assembly*, implying that this meeting could be happening anywhere. The blue sky and multitude of clouds suggest an outdoor setting; however, a dark swath of cloud on the left side of the panel arcs upward, taking on an architectural form that evokes interiority. This fictive arch creates the illusion of rich ornamental carvings and is quickly lost in the masses of black cloud swirling above the witches, signifying its magical nature. Francken toys with the idea of interior and exterior space further by placing seven demons playing cards inside of the mouth of a huge monster in a perverse reinterpretation of the biblical story of Jonah and the whale (fig. 17). In this case, the saint has been replaced by a demonic horde that will condemn instead of save. This motif also refers to earlier representation of hell scenes and to the hell mouth in particular, which gorges itself on numerous bodies at once. In the biblical tradition, the jaws of hell were linked with the monstrous Leviathan whose mouth functioned as the entrance to the torturous realm. Nearby, a witch stares at the card players and the open book in her hands gives the impression that she has used the knowledge contained in the text to open a gate to hell, allowing its denizens into the community.

Francken’s witches are literate in occult matters, at least in the use of magical symbols, as their open books and parchments demonstrate. The texts signal the orderly transmission of knowledge which serves to heighten the sense of the witches’ organization and the diffusion of their practices. Books were thought to be able to literally contain demons, not just dangerous knowledge, demonstrating how objects could possess or be imbued with negative magical powers and thus become objects of fear.

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89 This is depicted in Lucas van Leyden’s *Last Judgment* from 1527 in the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden, for example.

90 Job 41:20 and 41:31.

The Netherlandish proverb “big fish eat little fish” is also pertinent to the interpretation of the card players based on the visual similarity of the monsters to an earlier motif.92 A comparison with Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *The Big Fish Eating the Little Ones* (fig. 18), a pen drawing from 1556 portrays the disturbing consumption of the smaller fish by larger ones.93 The motif speaks to the inescapable nature of the world and is quoted and re-applied to the demonic realm in Francken’s image in order to communicate the presence of an underlying structure in the netherworld. This detail speaks to the existence of a demonic hierarchy and to the foolishness of the witches who mistakenly believed themselves to be in control of their magic and the demons they summoned. Throughout his image, Francken alludes to the subordination of the witches to their demonic masters. The association with the recognizable hell motif, the corruption of a biblical story, and the reference to the inescapable order of the world together warn the viewer of the witches’ peril and the threat they posed to the viewer’s soul.

Witchcraft rituals were understood and presented visually as perversions of Catholic rites. In the circle of witches in the central foreground (fig. 19) faith is placed in occult wisdom, magic, and astrology, instead of the word of God. Within the assembly, a witch wearing a stole around her shoulders invites comparison with a priest. Instead of holy signs or inscriptions, the stole is marked with magical symbols, many denoting heavenly bodies, which identify the increase in their devotion to him (de Lancre, 99). Furthermore, Del Rio instructs judges to investigate what books an accused witch owned as a means to help determine his or her guilt (Del Rio, 240). For different attitudes towards magical books see Del Rio, 71; and Guazzo, 47.

Magical books are not essential to the practice of witchcraft, although they do figure prominently in witchcraft imagery. That books were in fact being used is made clear by Del Rio as he explains that good souls can ask favours of the living with the permission of God but bad souls cannot: “It is therefore perfectly clear that the claims made by necromancers about summoning up souls with the help of a *grimoire* are fraudulent.” (Del Rio, 71). The use of grimoires, books containing magical instructions for conjurations and spells, is discussed by Owen Davies in his text *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford, et al.: Oxford University Press, 2009). Davies notes the difficulty with identifying grimoires; the *Key of Solomon* was the most prevalent of grimoires despite the fact that there was no founding text and the manuscripts vary widely in their content (Davies, 2009, 55).


The drawing was engraved and published under the direction of Hieronymus Cock in the next year, allowing for wide dissemination.
woman as the antithesis of God’s sanctioned ecclesiastical representative.\footnote{In Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s \textit{St. James the Elder and the Magician Hermogenes} (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 132), engraved by Pieter van der Heyden in 1565, the priest’s stole is also misused: a figure in a magic circle in the lower right corner has the stole, complete with a little cross, slung across his or her back. Priests were not immune to witchcraft accusations. Performing magical services was a lucrative trade for the clergy, helping to supplement their incomes (Davies, 2009, 63). De Lancre summarized the extent of the witchcraft problem in the Labourd region of France: “And one cannot object if the judges do not return the accused to their pastors, since it is all too evident that the pastors are infected with the same disease.” (de Lancre, 1). He accused priests of performing Black Masses in their churches and stated that witches who celebrated Mass during the day would make sure to honour the Devil in the same manner at the sabbath that night (de Lancre, 59).}

A fountain of blood erupts in the circle between the woman’s hands to emphasize her diabolical nature.\footnote{Associations with necromancy are present in the inscribed circle with its fountain of blood and in the presence of the demonic horde. The author of \textit{The Key of Solomon} asserts that one can only converse with spirits having made a circle (\textit{The Key of Solomon}, 14). Concentric circles, like the kind that appear in the \textit{Witches’ Assembly}, were used in necromantic rites and in the divinatory practice of gyromancy [Kieckhefer, 1997, 171-176; and Giancarlo Fiorenza, \textit{Dosso Dossi: Paintings of Myth, Magic, and the Antique} (Park State: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 120-121]. Necromancers would cast magic circles for protection when evoking demonic spirits; however, the witches’ activities expand beyond this protective boundary in Francken’s image, conveying the idea that their magic has no limits and is spreading outward into the world.}

The priestly garment is not the only Christian reference in this circle. The witch with the glasses, a symbol of delusion, wears a rosary which terminates in a large white bead that appears to take

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\footnote{Bodin explained necromancy “And in the shadow of such sacrifices people began to invoke the souls of the dead, which is Necromancy, and is perhaps among the first and most ancient kinds of witchcraft.” [Jean Bodin, \textit{On the Demon-Mania of Witches}. 1580, translated by Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 104]. Elaborating, Ciruelo declares that necromancers can summon a devil by tracing circles and characters on the ground, although a special vial of water or a mirror of quicksilver will also suit the purpose [Pedro Ciruelo, \textit{Pedro Ciruelo’s A Treatise Reproving all Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft: Very Necessary and Useful for all Good Christians Zealous for their Salvation}, circa 1530, translated by Eugene A. Maio and D’Orsay W. Pearson (London, et al.: Associated University Presses, 1977), 116]. Weyer asserted that necromancy does not work as demons appear in the guise of the dead [Johann Weyer, \textit{Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, ‘De praestigiis daemonum’}, Basel 1583 (6\textsuperscript{th} edition), translated by John Shea, edited by George Mora [Binghamton (NY): Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1991], 133]. Necromancy is performed by both men and women in early modern art. In \textit{The Enchantress} (fig. 56), Dosso depicts a sorceress with a wand surrounded by magical characters and circles inscribed in the ground. This is akin to the witches in the \textit{Witches’ Assembly}. In Rosa’s \textit{Scenes of Witchcraft – Night} (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 165) from the 1640s, a male sorcerer employs a text and wand to summon the demonic.}

Due to their use of texts and the literary and conceptual understanding that was needed for their magic to be successful, necromancers were perceived as being learned and intellectual. Hults and Tal agree that Rosa’s \textit{Night} is part of a series juxtaposing high and low magic [Guy Tal, “Witches on Top: Magic, Power, and Imagination in the Art of Early Modern Italy” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University at Bloomington, 2006), 56]. The divisions between high, meaning learned, and low, meaning popular, magic are not often drawn in works of art. Rather, different types of magic are shown together in images like the \textit{Witches’ Assembly}. In Francken’s painting, the witches are shown to be capable of more than just the simple spells attributed to the uneducated practitioner of low magic, and therefore pose greater danger to the community.

In writing about Dutch erotic magic, Kieckhefer notes that trial histories and extant handbooks treating necromancy demonstrate that the black art was actually being practiced [Richard Kieckhefer, “Erotic Magic in Medieval Europe,” in: \textit{Sex in the Middle Ages}, edited by Joyce E. Salisbury (New York & London: Garland, 1991), 40].
the form of a skull. Francken alludes to the profanation of Catholic practice through the priestly garb and rosary in order to stress the blasphemy and antithetical attitude of the witches.

The perversion of Catholic practice highlights the connections established between heretical religious sects, non-Christian religions, and witches. Images of witches provided an opportunity to criticize the Catholic Church as well as its opponents. While Protestants criticized the rituals and objects of the Catholics, Catholics interpreted divergent Christian sects as participating in perverse and heretical worship. Francken’s image has the capacity to function for either group. It can serve as a condemnation of Catholic ritual for Reformers through the addition of the rosary and stole. These same items also draw attention to the hidden nature of witchcraft and witches’ lip-service to established religion, supporting the Catholic censure of witchcraft and heresy. In this way, deviancy from the practice of the dominant religion connects this image to heresy in general. The practices attributed to witches were often the same as those levelled against other heretical groups.

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96 De Lancre explains why the Devil would encourage the witch to use holy objects “In this same way, he makes the witches add sacrilege to magical superstition, which means that God, being most grievously offended, allows Satan to visit many more things upon miserable mortals than he could do otherwise.” (de Lancre, 141). According to early modern authorities witches’ rosaries are inherently defective and there are visual cues that will alert the attentive viewer to this fact, for example, they generally have no cross and if there is one it will be found to be imperfect [de Lancre, 460; and Henry Boguet, An Examen of Witches, 1602, edited by Montague Summers, translated by E. Allen Ashwin (Great Britain: John Rodker, 1929, reprinted in New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 119].

Whether the round container resting on the table to the right of this witches’ circle contains a Eucharist or not, as has been speculated, remains a mystery, but would be a potent symbol of the witches’ heresy. The question of the Eucharist’s presence is discussed in Hults, 2005, 123.

97 Gary K. Waite, Eradicating the Devil’s Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe [Toronto, London, & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2009 (2007)]. Waite examines the connections between the persecutions of witches, Jews, and non-Catholic Christian sects, such as the Anabaptists, noting the central role affiliation with the Devil plays in this regard. He observes concern over the secret, particularly nocturnal, meetings of these groups and fears of insurrection.

The interest in the demonic was being fed by both the Catholics and their adversaries. Reformers, including Luther and Calvin, raised awareness of the devil’s evil influence at the same time that Catholic preachers were drawing attention to the devil in their efforts to combat heretical sects (Waite, 2009, 11; and Levack, 1995, 105-106).

Heresy was a significant problem in Antwerp, the city in which Francken worked. Authorities there were avid prosecutors of heresy; however, despite their efforts, Antwerp became a locus for reformist groups in the later part of the sixteenth century.\(^9\) William of Orange and Spanish forces fought for control of the city and Antwerp alternated between Calvinist and Catholic rule. Antwerp was under Spanish rule when Francken painted the *Witches’ Assembly*.

Heresy is further underscored in Francken’s image by the presence of two idols that are perched upon poles that frame the altar where the executions are taking place in the upper right corner of the image (fig. 20).\(^1\) Visually, the depiction of the golden idol on a pedestal recalls an enduring tradition that includes works such as *St. Augustine Sacrificing to a Manichaean Idol* (fig. 21) by an unknown Flemish master from circa 1480.\(^2\) Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the praying victims and idols evokes the pictorial tradition of representing early Christian martyrdoms. Palma Giovane’s *The Martyrdom of St. Giustina* (fig. 22) portrays the saint kneeling between a towering, unsympathetic idol and her executioner as divine light streaks down toward her from above. The presence of the idols serves to underscore the falseness of the pagan religion and the ultimate triumph of Christianity; they mark the absence of the divine. Like Palma Giovane’s work, *The Witches’ Assembly* alludes to martyrdoms and idols as part of a commentary on the witches’ misplaced faith.

The idea of Christian persecution is depicted literally in the group of figures that occupy the uppermost part of the terrace. The unusual structure with its brick foundation and wooden framework evokes execution sites and this is indeed one of the functions it serves. Pillories, sites where criminals were punished, could take on different forms, including that of a large stone structure that was visible from afar, and were often adorned with sculptures of either unclean animals or the executioner.\(^3\) In Francken’s image of justice perverted, the statuary has been

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\(^1\) A parchment with one red and one white seal hangs off of the post supporting the golden idol reads “SINESA DIO”.

\(^2\) This painting can be found in the Mauritshuis in The Hague.

replaced with grotesque idols and the sanctioned executioner with a witch. Standing on the dais, a witch is about to swing her sword and decapitate a prisoner who clasps her hands together in prayer as a black demon grins behind her. Meanwhile, the two remaining captive women are also depicted on their knees praying. It is clear that the fears over the infiltration of society have been extended to include the slaughter of good Christians.

While artists like Baldung and de Gheyn depict the demonic nature of the witches and hint at bodily destruction, their victims are often young innocents or are unidentified. In the Witches’ Assembly, Francken removes any uncertainty about the character or faith of his victims by showing them worshipping to the bitter end. One individual has already lost their head: the body hangs over the edge of the wooden base as blood pours forth from what remains of the neck. A stream of blood rains down on this figure from where a knife pierces the side of the altar above it and there is a fountain of blood that spurts up into the air from the top of the altar. Another such fountain is to be found in the circle of witches in the foreground beside the severed cat’s head. Blood pours from the knife sticking into the wooden post located in the middle of the composition (fig. 23). The centrality of blood to the rites taking place cannot be mistaken.

In paintings from the Low Countries, such as Jan van Eyck’s Adoration of the Lamb (fig. 24) from the Ghent Altarpiece, the blood flowing from the Lamb on the altar is used to illustrate the base topped by a higher platform complete with wooden scaffolding that echoes the architectural form in Francken’s painting. Similarly, two brick and stone execution sites appear in Lucas Mayer’s The Execution of Franz Seubold, murderer, in Gräfenberg, a broadsheet from 1589 housed in a private collection. Each of these structures is put to a different use: the first supports a populated gallows and the second, a criminal about to be tied to a wheel. Mayer’s work is reproduced in Lionello Puppi, Torment in Art: Pain, Violence and Martyrdom (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), fig. 32.

Execution by sword is not ascribed to witches in contemporary witchcraft treatises. Nor do the images show the use of poisonous powders, which are a main feature of witchcraft in demonological texts, such as is described by Remy [Nicolas Remy, Demonolatry, 1595, translated by E. Allen Ashwin, edited by Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1930), 115]. For examples of some of the more creative murder plots, see Remy, 105.

The brain of a cat was known to be poisonous and yet was a common ingredient in love potions (Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584, introduction by Montague Summers [New York: Dover, 1972 (Great Britain: John Rodker, 1930), 71; and Boguet, 107].

Blood flows from the post into a bucket with a plant in it; apparently the mixing of materials effects a magical operation as an arch of yellow light escapes from the concoction into the air.
theology of grace.106 The interest in flowing blood and the veneration of the Precious Blood here finds its antithesis in the fountains of blood from unknown sources in Francken’s painting. The profusion of blood, potent with the essence of life, implies that the witches command great power and require a steady supply of victims in order to continue their work. This, combined with the number of activities taking place, the large number of participants, and the fact that several people are being beheaded indicate that witchcraft is occurring on a grand scale.

The reality of the situation for all involved in the gathering is demonstrated by the fact that the Christians are not the only human victims visibly present in this scene. To the right of the circle of witches in the foreground there is a group of men and women who appear at first to be lounging in bed together (fig. 25). Closer inspection finds most of these figures to be lifeless; only a single man and woman remain conscious and they reveal the fate of their companions. The woman is attended to by a demon that has a cat poised at its side. The fiend is drawing a light, representing the woman’s vital essence and soul, out of her mouth. A second demon, standing beside the first, holds a cat in its arms that is actively sucking the breath of life out of the man.107 Having already lost their souls, the rest of the figures are just heaps of motionless flesh, their status, aside from being damned, is uncertain.

To communicate this normally undepicted aspect of witchcraft, Francken draws upon a visual tradition in religious imagery associating the mouth with the gateway through which the soul exits the body.108 The mouth was viewed as an easy point of entry for demonic inhabitants, as images of exorcism demonstrate.109 This visual motif has been adapted by Francken into a glowing light representing the life force, or more specifically, the soul. It is very probable that

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106 The work, painted circa 1425-1429, is in the Cathedral of Saint Bavo in Ghent. The altarpiece was painted by Jan and his brother Hubert.
107 The significance of cats and their role as an instrument of death is addressed in the following section treating the Dutch Scene of Witchcraft.
108 Examples of this include Sassetta’s Arte della Lana Altarpiece, 1430-1432, housed in the Bowes Museum in Bernard Castle, Durham. In the Miracle of the Sacrament panel, a demon removes a man’s soul through his mouth as the individual collapses during communion. In The Soul of the Miser of Citerna, from the Borgo Sansepolcro Altarpiece, by the same artist, a soul is being carried off by a black demon. This altarpiece is dated to 1437-1444 and is housed in the Musée du Louvre.
109 See, for example, Sandro Botticelli’s Three Miracles of St. Zenobius, from circa 1500-1505 in the National Gallery, London, wherein little demons fly from the open mouths of the victims.
the demons are in the process of collecting the human souls that are due to them: the foremost
demon grins with a mouth full of light, revealing the large number of souls he has consumed, and
looks directly out at the audience, a device Francken uses to prompt self-examination on the part
of the viewer to see whether they might be next.  

While many of the elements in the *Witches’ Assembly* play to popular concerns about
witches and the belief that they were working to undo society, there are several details that
undermine this argument and characterize witchcraft as a mere delusion. Notable among the
female witches for her distinctive garb is the woman wearing a white hood decorated with
astronomical symbols that terminates in two points resembling horns (fig. 12). While the horned
headdress may have been intended as a reference to the Spanish Inquisition, as mentioned above,
it is also a general sign identifying the woman as a procuress. It is a motif that appears in the
work of Bosch and recurs throughout Francken’s scenes of witchcraft. With its devilish style
horns, the headdress alludes to the degenerate desires and lifestyle of the witch that lead her to
corrupt not only her own soul, but also those of the lovers she joins together. Read from left to
right the symbols on the garment represent the Moon, Venus, and the Sun. The sign for Venus is

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110 Hults interprets the demons to be administering hallucinogens to the witches (Hults, 2005, 123).

Two demons carry nude women awkwardly through the air in a manner that invites the perception that they
have been subdued or that they are arriving in an altered state of consciousness. One of the women is presented
frontally with her left arm outstretched and head drooping forward while her companion is in the less dignified
position of being carried over a demon’s back with her buttocks and legs exposed to the viewer. The indecorous
nature of their poses combined with their nudity and apparent senselessness suggests they will be joining the lifeless
group to the right.

Another victim is present in the form of an effigy encircled by the arm of the witch wearing the mock-
priestly garment and serves to demonstrate how the witches interfere with the lives and bodies of others. The effigy
stares out at the audience as gashes in its body and its mouth opened in an ‘o’ shape serve to communicate its status
as victim. The roughly hewn wax figure acts as a physical substitute for the man who is the subject of the spell.
Witches and others used wax portraits as conduits through which to send disease or call demons into the represented
[Milford House: New York: 1968 (London, 1634)], 989}. Wax figures are a common tool used in necromantic rites
and will be discussed further in the investigation of Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* in chapter three.

The skulls and bones that are strewn liberally about the scene suggest further victims.

111 The procurress figure also appears in Francken’s *Witches’ Kitchen* from 1606 in the Victoria and Albert
Museum, London, and the *Witches’ Kitchen* from circa 1610 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Appendix
of Illustrations, figs. 117 & 118). A list of examples of this figure appearing in Bosch’s oeuvre can be found in Bax,
122-125.

The London *Witches’ Kitchen* is one of Francken’s earliest dated works and was first attributed to Pieter
Bruegel the Younger. Copies of this painting were sold in the 17 November 1910 Lepke sale in Berlin, lot 66, and
in the Grosskopf Sale, Bangel, Frankfurt, 5-6 May 1925 [C. M. Kauffmann, *Catalogue of Foreign Paintings: Before
central and is larger than the flanking symbols, indicating that the planet of love and lust rules the witch’s interest. In her hands, the procuress balances a dish holding two decorated eggs. The egg was understood to be a potent aphrodisiac and was for this reason closely associated with carnival. Furthermore, in the tradition of German folklore witches were thought to use eggs to transmit their spells to their victims.

Like witchcraft, the art of astrology was subject to scrutiny and debate. Of particular concern was divinatory astrology. Pedro Ciruelo, author of a religious treatise against divination and magic, warns his readers that some diviners claim to learn the future through astrology, when in fact their information comes directly from the devil. While the devil could not know the future in the same way as God, it was believed that he could make predictions based on his knowledge of history, scripture, prophecies, and even by revealing the things that he himself planned to do. By combining the clothing the Inquisition used to degrade witches

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112 The procuress also holds a set of keys in her hand. In sixteenth century Italy, the motif of dangling keys served as a reference to sex and may, either through visual or linguistic contacts, have reached the north [Bette Talvacchia, Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 43]. In The Lovers by Giulio Romano an old woman who functions as both a voyeur and procuress wears a set of dangling keys and peaks through the doorway at the couple making love. This painting dates to circa 1525, is housed in The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, and is reproduced in Talvacchia, 1999, pl. 4. The keys in Francken’s image likely represent the alleged power that witches had to incite and control the sexual desires and activities of others.

113 The motif of the egg, bearing sexual symbolism, appears in Bosch’s Garden of Earthly Delights, in Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s Luxuria, and in Jan Steen’s Feast of the Epiphany (Bax, 57 & 191-194). As a food that could be enjoyed during periods of approved license, over indulgence could be a potential source of pollution when the regular strictures of life were re-imposed. Pleasurable indulgences are here connected to malefic pursuits and help caution the viewer against participating in either type of activity.

114 Del Rio, 268. Records from witchcraft trials demonstrate the danger associated with the egg: Agnes Langjahr, for example, was accused of being a witch and of having placed three eggs – evidently magically potent eggs – in the lap of a woman who had just given birth, causing her to become fatally ill (Bever, 2008, 22-23 & 49). Witches were also thought to use eggshells as a means of transport: they could use them to navigate in or under turbulent water (Scot, 6).

115 Bodin warns his readers about divinatory astrology:
But Astrologers must not get involved with making judgments on souls, spirits, vices, virtues, honours, punishments, and much less on religion, as many Astrologers do who after having described the humour and natural disposition of the body according to its horoscope, pass beyond to things which do not concern the body at all, such as, marriages, honours, voyages, riches, and other such matters, where the stars have neither force nor power. (Bodin,80).

116 Ciruelo, 132.

117 Weyer, 26.
with planetary references alluding to a questionable science and the symbolically laden egg, Francken divests his figure of the power she purports to command.\(^{118}\)

Terror and shock are written on the face of the woman in white who reaches out toward her companion in the blue dress as she watches a stream of golden energy flow to the repoussoir figure in front of her (fig. 26).\(^{119}\) Her reaction can be explained by her being new to the group or not present of her own volition. While she is a lovely young woman, her gaping expression is unbecoming and thereby allows her to fit into the crowd as the expressions and facial features of the witches, with a few exceptions, are coarse and comical in their grotesqueness. One need only consider the face of the woman with the large underbite next to the woman in white or the cross-eyed witch beside the cauldron (fig. 27). The humorous quality of the exaggerated expressions provides the viewer with a clue as to the entertainment value the artist found in this subject; the unflattering rendering of the majority of the witches speaks to their sordid characters while the humour of the snout-like noses and other overstated attributes negates the horror they might otherwise inspire and renders them comical. These grotesque faces draw on two traditions. The first is the experimentation with the proportions of facial features undertaken by Leonardo da Vinci and the second is a tendency inherited from medieval art of representing evil characters as ugly. The man holding the rope binding Christ’s hands in Quentin Massys’ Ecce Homo (fig. 28) from 1526, has elongated features and an exaggerated grin that communicate his malicious

\(^{118}\) Jane P. Davidson, *The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470-1750* (Ferren: Luca, 1987), 44. In his examination of astrological symbols, Kieckhefer reports that according to the *Picatrix* (Aim of the Sage/Goal of the Wise) and Thabit ibn Qurra’s *De imaginibus* (On Images), texts that had been translated into Latin from Arabic: “The magician is in every case expected to use images, not so much as aids to sympathetic magic, but as channels of astrological power; the astrological conditions for the use of these images are thus of paramount importance.” (Kieckhefer, 1997, 70).

\(^{119}\) Hults suggests that the aproned figure that the viewer sees from behind is a worker or artisan who is merely an awed spectator of the magical scene and views this figure as mediating between the male viewers and the female witches and the demons (Hults, 2005, 116-122). While her latter assessment is well founded, the repoussoir figure appears to be engaged in a magical event and has a number of materials, including the red knot, key, and the mandrake doll, close at hand. The dissipation of the thick yellow beam before it reaches the figure’s hand indicates that the individual is reaching out towards the strange light rather than generating it.

Horst Gerson and E. H. Ter Kuile observe that the use of repoussoir figures allows Francken to ground his work in artistic tradition while at the same time engaging in the new mode of representation introduced by Pieter Paul Rubens. In addition to distinguishing his work from Rubens’, Francken would be appealing to patrons not yet comfortable with the new style [Horst Gerson and E. H. Ter Kuile, *Art and Architecture in Belgium 1600 to 1800*, translated by Olive Renier (Harmondsworth, Baltimore, & Mitcham: Penguin Books, 1960), 62].
intentions towards his prisoner while at the same time his particular combination of features enables the viewer to laugh at him. Laughter has the effect of robbing figures of their power.

Blending into the landscape at the feet of the woman in the blue dress, there is a small male figure labelled by a piece of white parchment beside him that reads “mandragora” (fig. 29). Mandrake roots were twisted into dolls, like the one depicted here, for magical purposes. Since it was theorized to be a flesh and blood body, the mandrake supposedly let out a horrific scream that could cause madness or death when it was pulled from the ground. For this reason, dogs were often used to uproot the plant; however, none are present in Francken’s image encouraging the audience to wonder about the stability of the witches’ minds. Lucidity is further questioned by the properties of the plant: mandrake could produce hallucinations, induce sleep, or even cause death. If the Witches’ Assembly is read with the foreground figure of the mandrake informing the content of the image, then the entire picture can be read as an illusion or drug induced fantasy. It is up to the viewer to determine how the image relates to reality.

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120 The painting is part of the Palazzo Ducale collection in Venice.

121 The human form was inspired by the fact that the root naturally divided into two, so that it was perceived to take on the appearance of a human torso with its two legs and even came adorned with finer roots that were compared with human hair. The mandrake supposedly grew where the urine of a dying innocent man fell at the gallows and for this reason took on a male form (Weyer, 430-431). Although Weyer disputes the reality of this claim, he includes the mandrake doll when describing how people go about fashioning effigies out of plants.

The plant was also considered to be an aphrodisiac because it was generated from the male organ and was consequently used in the manufacture of love potions [Raymond J. Clark, “A Note on Medea’s Plant and the Mandrake,” Folklore 79, no. 3 (Autumn, 1968): 230]. Love spells were dangerous in that they sought to control the feelings and actions of the person to whom they were directed and thereby interfered with that person’s volition, an issue that will recur throughout this study. In his medical treatise, Dioscorides records that mandrake is used in love potions, resulting in its subsequent use as an aphrodisiac in the early modern era [Laurinda S. Dixon, “Bosch’s ‘St. Antony Triptych’ – An Apothecary’s Apotheosis,” Art Journal 44, no. 2 (Summer, 1984): 123]. The mandrake’s role in facilitating pregnancy and its dangerous qualities are central to Machiavelli’s play, The Mandrake which was written in 1518 and printed in 1524 [Niccoló Machiavelli, The Mandrake, translated by Wallace Shaw (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1978)].

Behind the mandrake man in the Witches’ Assembly there is a shrunken, desiccated head that could be another doll, although it is difficult to read. Like the wax effigy, the mouth of this second head is open in a desperate cry. The presence of two mandrake dolls may be interpreted as reflecting love magic.

122 Weyer, 430-431.

123 The same question applies to David Teniers the Younger’s Witches’ Scene in Karlsruhe from circa 1675-1680 (fig. 108).

124 Pliny 7:243.
Salvation

Toads and witches were understood to have similar natures in that they both harmed people through poison: the witch through her brew and the toad through its toxic blood. Like the witch, the toad was also understood to possess magical qualities and its body was therefore a valuable resource for witchcraft. The amphibians inhabited dark places and because of their base natures, occupied low positions in the animal hierarchy as witches did within the human social structure. It was held that toads were born from the vilest of substances including mud, the bodies of other toads, and roting blood. Their growth from decay and willing interaction with what were conceptualized as polluting substances parallels the witch and her manipulation of bodies and blood – not to mention toads – and her enthusiastic dealings with demons in Franckens’s painting (fig. 16).

The toad was used to stress the horrific nature of death and the consequences of sin in works of art with the hopes of prompting people to confess their sins before it was too late. In fact, the toads in Franckens’s painting remind the audience that no matter how great their sins, they are still able to find salvation if they so choose. Even witches could repent and save their souls, if not their lives. Toads then, represented those who did not endeavour to find salvation; one had only to open the Book of Revelation to find an example of unclean spirits taking on the bodies of toads. As well, toads acted as the agents of punishment for the damned: in the early

125 Toads were thought to spread poison through their bite as well as through their urine, spit, and vomit, which they expelled onto plants eaten by people. Paré even warns his readers of the danger posed by falling asleep in a field or in any other place a toad might live because they risked breathing in poisonous vapours (Paré, 1968, 796). Furthermore, toads were a critical component in witches’ poison (de Lancre, 149). The motif of the unexpected discovery of or poisoning by a toad is reminiscent of the witch’s uncertain identity, as anyone could be a witch and likewise attack the unsuspecting. The witch also shared in the toad’s persistent pursuit of its victim.

126 In his Natural History, Pliny the Elder recorded that the toad’s bones possessed magical qualities, including the ability to silence a crowd, repel dog attacks, incite love, and function as an aphrodisiac (Pliny 8:495).

127 De Lancre, 287-8; and Boguet, 64.


129 Revelation 16:13-14, The King James Version, reads: “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Similarly, in Bavaria and its surrounding regions, the
modern era, they were often depicted consuming the bodies of the dead or of those being tortured in purgatory or hell. They were thus intimately connected to the physical punishments that those who engaged in illicit activities, like witchcraft, would suffer in the afterlife. The toads in the Witches’ Assembly are symbols alluding to the true nature of the witch, to witches in disguise, and to the damned souls representing the destiny of every unrepentant witch.

The themes of death and the afterlife are reinforced by the coral-horned demon’s other attributes (fig. 8). In one hand the creature carries a candle with magical inscriptions and in the other holds up a skull while looking solemnly out at the viewer. A skull and candle can also be found on the altar (fig. 20). Together with the vase of blooming flowers below the altar, these motifs allude to the transience of life and remind the viewer that life, like the candle, may be snuffed out at any moment. To emphasize this point, Francken placed these objects next to a decapitated body. These motifs connect the painting to the vanitas category of images, underscoring further the need to care for one’s soul.

The Witches’ Assembly is full of inscriptions and symbols that, combined with the rays of light streaming through the composition, give the impression that magic is actually occurring and that the witches constitute a real threat until one examines the details of the painting more closely.

130 The tombs of Peter Niderwirt in the Pfarrkirche in Egggenfelden and Bernhard Beham in Pfarrkirche in Halle-in-Tyrol from the sixteenth century each show a toad consuming the body of the deceased (Robbins, 30 & 37-38). Hoards of toads obscure the face and genitals of the effigy atop the Tomb of Francis the 1st from circa 1360-1370 in La Sarraz, Switzerland. The tomb is reproduced in Peter Jezler, Himmel Hölle Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1994), cat. 7.

131 Another allusion to the penalties incurred for witchcraft has been read in the scale said to be formed by a series of red lines extending above the man next to the cauldron on the raised platform (Davidson, 1987, 42). While a comparison to the city of Oudewater’s practice of weighing witches to determine their guilt and to St. Michael’s weighing of souls at the Last Judgment is enticing, the lines do not suggest a scale so much as a magical, architectural framework that is being constructed around the man by the witches.

132 Both the Witches’ Assembly and Harmen Steenwijck’s Vanitas employ the same vocabulary of the candle, skull, and sword. The later work shows a nearly bare vine in place of the flowers depicted in the first. Dated to circa 1640, Vanitas belongs to the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden.
closely. The blood, bones, and the active collection and execution of victims demonstrate the destructive nature of the group while simultaneously alluding to the eternal sufferings that the witches will experience because of their ghastly behaviour. Grotesque faces, composite demonic bodies, hallucinogenic materials, allusions to questionable sciences, and even the magical forces operating through the air altogether serve to signal the illusionistic quality of the image.

Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* asserts that witchcraft is a contradiction that can only operate successfully through confusion. If one were able to recognize the disjunction and conflict of realities that composed the scene, then one could see the problems inherent in the artistic, social, and literary discourses on witchcraft. In an engaging and highly refined manner, Francken’s painting mocks those who theorized that witches posed a real and present danger to the social group.

**Scene of Witchcraft from the Circle of Cornelis Saftleven**

The *Scene of Witchcraft* (fig. 30), painted by an unknown artist working in the circle of Cornelis Saftleven, depicts the witch as a solitary figure committing atrocities within her private realm, unlike Francken’s *Witches Assembly* and Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches* which portray witches as a collective entity. The *Scene of Witchcraft* is critical to understanding the artistic treatment of the witch, since it is the only painted representation extant from this period that portrays a lone witch attacking a child indoors. This woman embodies the threat of the hidden.

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133 Cornelis Saftleven was a Dutch Baroque painter from Rotterdam who lived from 1607 to 1681. The attribution of the *Scene of Witchcraft* to an artist working in Saftleven’s circle can be found in Lucia Fornari Schianchi, ed., *Galleria Nazionale di Parma: Catalogo delle opere. Il Seicento*, vol. 2 (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1999), cat. 298 & p. 147. The painting is currently housed in the Galleria Nazionale, Parma.

134 In his *Witchcraft Scene with a Vampire* in the National Gallery, Washington, de Gheyn drew an interior image of an adult attacking a child (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 107). In the following decades Angelo Caroselli painted *The Sorceress* with a nude figure holding a child in the background of a composition arranged around a witch frightened while reading. This painting is from the first half of the seventeenth century and can be found in the Pinacoteca Communale, Ancona (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 58).

Although outside of the chronological period addressed in this study, it is important to note that Alessandro Magnasco painted *The Witch*, held in a private collection, in which a witch leans over a cradle with a young child inside. Two cats circle the cradle; one is by the child’s neck and the other puts its paws on the edge of the crib. It is not possible to tell in the reproduction whether the child shows traces of physical injury. Fausta Franchini Guelfi dates the work to after circa 1731 in her article “La pittura di Alessandro Magnasco delle fonti figurative e culturali alle tenebre della realtà,” in: *Alessandro Magnasco 1667-1749*, exhibition catalogue (Milan: Electa, 1996), 17-50 & fig. 27. Another Magnasco painting with the same title is illustrated in D. R. C., “Four Paintings by Alessandro Magnasco,” *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* 23, no. 4 (April 1929): 48. Lent by Charles H. Worcester, the
witch that society is conscious of, but has as of yet been unable to identify and destroy. She has
been given a familiar face, one that would appear indistinguishable from the rest of the
community to adequately conceal her true nature. In her perverted domestic setting, this
single practitioner of witchcraft victimizes a child, and in so doing, draws attention to the witch
as an inverted mother figure who kills and pollutes the vital necessities of life: food, drink, and
blood. It is through the witch and her actions that the artist is able to allude to anxieties that
might arise from accepted medical practices.

This small painting presents a series of objects, people, and animals laden with demonic
meaning that are distributed across a shallow foreground plane. Instead of the chaotic jumble of
figures and items that crowd Francken’s image, the anonymous artist has carefully laid out each
symbolically rich item for the audience to peruse at its leisure. The focal point, the witch
holding a male child in her lap, is located in the centre of the composition. The woman grips a
fistful of the boy’s golden curls with her left hand as she pierces the back of his neck with a
lancet in her right. The child’s mouth is open in an agonized and fearful scream as he reaches
out for help and kicks his legs in a futile gesture. Blood drains from the child into a bowl resting
on the table below him. The witch remains unmoved by the child’s plight and diligently
continues her task.

The witch wears typical dress for her time; the artist has provided the woman with an
inconspicuous outfit that allows her to blend imperceptibly into the community. It is the ability
to hide in plain sight that made the witch such a threatening figure. By situating this activity in
an ambiguous location the artist compounds the uncertainty as to who might be a witch and
where such a person could be found. An indistinct mottling of brown, red, and yellow tones give

painting shows a solitary witch working indoors with her pots and brews. This painting dates to between 1740 and
1749 and is housed in the Pinacoteca Capitolina in Rome.

135 In the work of art, the witch is given an identity that is otherwise only revealed to the public in
instances where a witch was caught committing an act of witchcraft or when he or she provided a confession.

136 When considering this painting it is important to remember that bloodletting was a common medical
practice at this time and could be more harmful than the affliction it was intended to treat as it sometimes resulted in
death.
the impression of an unidentifiable interior space. The small scale and interior setting place the work within the Dutch tradition of genre painting. The *Scene of Witchcraft* offers a twisted interpretation of the domestic content of images such as Gabriel Metsu’s *The Sick Child* (fig. 31) from circa 1660. The *Scene of Witchcraft* belongs to the convention of depicting ignoble human behaviours which was a popular trend in Dutch art.

The column acts as a vertical framing device that is visually balanced by a tall fire stand supporting a lidded black cauldron. The cauldron functions as a familial symbol, one that referred to the household as the feminine domain, particularly since it was from the cauldron that the family was nourished. As a representation of the female body, the uncovered cauldron predominantly suggested openness and fecundity; in the *Scene of Witchcraft* it has been closed to...

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137 The tools on the table, like the books, serve to remind the viewer that the witch can be an educated woman and evoke the theme of the melancholy witch. The bat, orb, compass, and other details also appear in Dürer’s *Melancholia I* from 1514. As in the anonymous *Scene of Witchcraft*, the items in Dürer’s print allude to the futile pursuit of an understanding of the universe by a woman whose worldly knowledge is actually preventing her from finding the spiritual wisdom that would help her to understand her existence and the nature of God’s creation.

These objects have an earthly significance as well: the conspicuously luxurious nature of the vessels, large books, golden tools, and architectural elements provide a range of possibilities that could help to explain the content of the image, although they point to no single solution. The artist presents three possibilities that viewers are left to resolve on their own: first, the witch may be at home, surrounded by the physical evidence that she is well paid by the devil or, more likely, by her clients for her efforts; second, she may be a widow with some degree of financial independence who is therefore able to operate unsupervised; and third, she may be playing upon fears of a witch secretly infiltrating an upper middle class or aristocratic household, particularly in the role of the lying-in-maid.

138 Metsu’s painting is housed in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. The canvas measures 32.2 x 27.2 cm, making it comparable in size to the anonymous *Scene of Witchcraft*.

139 The corpus includes works such as Jan Steen’s *Argument over a Card Game* in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin which was painted during the second half of the seventeenth century.

140 The tongs beneath the fire stand may allude to the punishment witches suffered at the hands of justice but their appearance in conjunction with the bells is also symbolic of the witch’s industrious nature, limited, of course, to her black arts. The bells are depicted as an instrument used to spread evil ideas and discord in Dürer’s *Dream of the Doctor* from 1498 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 110) and in Melchior Küsell’s *Discord*, a seventeenth century etching reproduced in Museo del Sannio, *Streghe Diavoli e Morte: Incisioni e libri dei Secoli XV-XX*, exhibition catalogue (Benevento: Rocca dei Rettori Pontifici, 1988), cat. 22. The notion of the witch, working hard to corrupt and destroy society, is here united with the idea of diffusion. While in Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly*, the artist chose to use magical beams and symbols streaming through the air to convey the spread of witchcraft, the artist of the *Scene of Witchcraft* uses the bells and flying creatures for this purpose. Both artists are concerned with the infection of the environment through witchcraft and emphasized the role of air in this process, despite the different modes they chose to communicate this interest.

In the Veneto, the hearth was thought to be the home of an evil spirit or demon that was appeased by offerings of salt cast into the fire [Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 110].
suggest that the witch’s body is now infertile. The positive symbolic potential of the cauldron was negated when it appeared in the domain of the witch. It is here that the witch cooked the bodies of children necessary to manufacture magical brews and unguents.

Cooking vessels served as symbols representing gluttony; in the context of witchcraft, it is difficult to find a greater example of the extreme appetite of witches than their eagerness to consume the remains of children. Not only is the cauldron suggestive of the witch’s cannibalistic practices in the Scene of Witchcraft, but the very fuel the witch uses consists of human parts (fig. 32). Amongst the large bones that feed the fire there is a set of four skeletal fingers. Recognizing that the witch has disposed of a human body, and is now using it in place of firewood, the viewer begins to search the scene for the rest of the corpse and is led to wonder if the glassware strewn about might hold any number of bodily substances.

The act of eating renders the consumer vulnerable as the body opens to external influences in the process. In the home, food was, of course, used to support the health and growth of the family and in a larger social context it functioned as a means to establish good will among members of the community. In this sense, it came to represent communal bonds, especially during periods of scarcity when there was an intensified focus on the exchange of goods and reciprocity. Witches were frequently accused of contaminating, poisoning, or restricting the food and beverage supply. In this way, witches participate in a larger societal

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142 In one account, a mother searching for her infant goes to her neighbour’s house, only to find her baby’s limbs sticking out of a cooking pot (Guazzo, 91). The witches confessed that they had intended to use the body to cause a frost that would destroy the unharvested fruit crop.
143 Intact skeletons feed the fire in The Witches’ Dance Floor, an unattributed work engraved in 1594 and produced in Trier. The image is reproduced in Rita Voltmer, et al., Hexen: Mythos und Wirklichkeit, exhibition catalogue (Munich: Minerva, 2009), 160.
144 Paracelsus highlights the importance of food exchange: “If a person offers something to eat to another, whether man or woman, unbreakable, eternal love is the result; for this reason some servants give food to their masters so as to flatter them and to make love spring up in them, with the result that servants are above the masters, as we shall mention in De Republica.” [Paracelsus, Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim called Paracelsus, translated by Gregory Zilboorg, et al., edited by Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 156].
145 Guazzo, 90. Witches were accused of offering men cheese that would cause them to be transformed into horses or pack mules in which form they would act as beasts of burden until the witches were finished with their
suspicion that those who claimed good intentions were masking malicious ones. Furthermore, in the ritual of the sabbath witches had their own antithesis to the normal social exchange of food.\textsuperscript{146} Instead of participating in a meal composed of the food and drink resulting from the labour of the community and intended to promote its health, witches dined on materials that were not deemed acceptable as food, human flesh being the primary example.\textsuperscript{147} Excessive feasting and drinking were interpreted to be a reflection of the unnatural sexual appetite of the witches and their demonic partners.

**Infanticide**

The earliest burnings for heresy had taken place in Orléans in 1022 and foreshadowed the later claims made against witches. The accused were charged with slaughtering children and burning their bodies in order to create a mixture from the ashes that was then consumed.\textsuperscript{148} Beginning in Switzerland in 1428, people accused witches of killing children and bringing their bodies to the sabbath in order to eat them.\textsuperscript{149} In his \textit{Formicarius} (Anthill), Johannes Nider draws on the experiences of the inquisitor Peter of Bern to provide a detailed account of the manner in which witches held their sabbath services and allowed them to reassume their human bodies (de Lancre, 253, citing the authority of St. Augustine). In addition to noting witches’ predilection for poisoning people and animals, de Lancre cites the origins for the practice: “To which Titus Livius adds that the first use of poison and sorcery and the practice of all sorts of superstitions came from women.” (de Lancre, 82).

The food at the sabbath could either be conjured or real, but in both cases authors of witchcraft treatises asserted that it did not have an appealing taste unless God willed it (Guazzo, 22-23).\textsuperscript{146}

While witches would see a beautiful banquet laid out before them, when they attempted to pick up the food it would disappear in their hands; however, the food that was readily available for consumption included the bodies of children and deceased witches, both male and female (de Lancre, 154 & 402).\textsuperscript{147}

Bailey, 2003, 46. The Euchites and Gnostics were accused of engaging in incest and of murdering the resulting offspring. Boguet describes how the children were bled, their blood collected, and their bodies burned: “Then they mixed the blood with the ashes and made a sauce, with which they seasoned their food and drink.” (Boguet, 57).\textsuperscript{148}

The anonymous \textit{Errores Gazariorum} (The Errors of the Cathars) states that the witch belonging to the synagogue must follow seven obligations; the fourth demands that the witch will kill as many children as possible to bring to the sabbath. The Latin text is found in \textit{L’imaginaire du sabbat} (The Imaginary Sabbath), 278-287, and is attributed to a clerical author writing circa 1435 [Richard Kieckhefer, “Avenging the Blood of the Children: Anxiety over Child Victims and the Origins of the European Witch Trials,” in: \textit{The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell}, edited by Alberto Ferreiro (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 102].
which witches murdered children, exhumed their corpses, and cooked them. Witches made a transformative agent out of the solid material and with the liquid created a powerful drink used to bind new witches to the group. Nider explains that witches would often sneak into a house and kill infants before departing empty handed so that families were often unaware that their children had died from witchcraft, and thinking the death natural or accidental, they did not anticipate the theft of the infant’s body from its grave. As knowledge of witches’ misuse of children’s bodies had become commonplace by the seventeenth century, the audience of the *Scene of Witchcraft* would have had a good idea as to what was brewing in the witch’s cauldron, its importance for the witch’s attendance at the sabbath, and its role in helping to expand her group’s numbers.

Recent scholarship has sought to identify those in the community who were likely to be accused of witchcraft and has increasingly focused on the relationships between a family and those who came into a household but who were not a part of it. There appears to have been great anxiety about the possibility that those who were supposed to be helping a family might actually be causing harm instead. Those who were most likely to be suspected of witchcraft included the lying-in-maid, who attended the mother and child after birth, the female friends who visited the housebound mother, and those who blessed the family. Blessings were often interpreted to be

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150 Levack, 2004, 54, providing a selection from the *Formicarius* translated from the Latin edition published in the *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, edited by Joseph Hansen (Bonn, 1901), 91–94. This account is also reported by Institoris and Sprenger in the *Malleus* and, in addition, they cited their conversations with the Inquisitor of Como who reported that witches in that region often eat children (Institoris and Sprenger, 163 & 237). Guazzo affirms that the same practice occurred in Lausanne (Guazzo, 91).

151 Roper argues that in Augsburg, witchcraft accusations usually involved the lying-in-maid rather than the midwife who was previously thought to be the principal target of such allegations [Lyndal Roper, “Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany,” in: *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, edited by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 208-210].

The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* focus on the midwife as the perpetrator of witchcraft. They accused the midwife of taking children from their mothers under the pretence of some good intention when in reality the babies were offered to the devil (Institoris and Sprenger, 163-164 & 321-322). Institoris and Sprenger also note that mothers and their children may suffer at the hands of an angry midwife who did not get the job for a particular birthing (Institoris and Sprenger, 319).

Further anxieties existed in cases where children were given to the care of wet-nurses. By feeding a child, it was thought that a woman was giving part of herself over to the baby and that this had the potential to alter the child’s identity. According to Condovi’s biography of Michelangelo, the artist pondered, seriously or in jest, whether his desire to carve was imparted to him through the milk of his wet-nurse, the daughter and wife of stone masons {Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michel-angelo*, Rome 1553, translated by Alice Sedgwick Wohl, edited by}
disguised curses spurred by envy, malice, or vengeance, and could be as mundane as a comment on the beauty or health of a child. Of this group of potential suspects, the lying-in-maid was especially vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft because being elderly and usually widowed she was perceived to be deeply envious of the fertile mother and her household. The advanced age of the woman in the Scene of Witchcraft and her desire to harm the child suggest that she may be associated with this social role.

The witch was frequently accused of the heinous crime of killing her own children or those of her neighbours, and therefore functioned as an antithesis of the good mother. In the Scene of Witchcraft, the witch is shown transgressing the most fundamental of moral, social, and religious laws by preying upon the most vulnerable member of society and, if this is an instance where a witch is murdering her own child, she is depicted breaking a sacred bond. The infanticidal and cannibalistic inclinations of the witch were drawn from ancient literature, including sources such as Euripides’ Medea. Interestingly, depictions of Medea murdering her children are rare, like the bleeding scene depicted here.

Hellmut Wohl [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999 (1976)], 6-7]. Thus, a wet-nurse who was a witch could cause the baby to become one too.

Guazzo, 126. In Guazzo’s account, a witch who has cursed another with disease is forced to rescind the illness she has caused, and, since the Devil must have his satisfaction, the witch is forced to bear the sickness herself.

The theme of envy will be addressed further in the context of de Gheyn’s cave-dwelling witch in his Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath.

Roper, 1996, 225-230. While the most prevalent charges seem to have stemmed from attacks on a mother and her baby by an outsider determined to usurp the mother’s role in a household, there are also instances where husbands and children made witchcraft accusations against their wives and mothers as a means to deal with familial tensions (Levack, 1995, 148).

A classical model for the infanticidal mother, Medea is a powerful sorceress who exacts revenge upon her husband through the deaths of her children. Medea is described as having “dipped her hands” in her children’s blood while Jason looked on in horror (de Lancre, 22).

Horace tells the story of Canidia and a group of her companions who kidnap a noble boy in order to use his liver and bone marrow for a love potion that will bend the will of Varus and cause him to fall in love with Canidia again. In order to prepare the boy’s body, the witches slowly starve him to death, inciting his desire for food by placing delicious goods beyond his reach in order to make the body more powerful (Levack, 2004, 22-24, citing Horace, Epode V, “Canidia’s Incantation”, from Horace, the Odes and Epodes, translated by C. E. Bennett [Cambridge (MA), 1914], 375-381).
In the sixteenth century, the comparatively lax attitude of late medieval judicial authorities towards infanticide shifted and prosecutions for the crime began to grow from the middle of the century onward, although penalties often remained quite lenient. Another change occurred in the seventeenth century, during which time the crime received greater attention, so much so if fact that infanticide replaced witchcraft as the number one capital offence for which women were indicted. Over the course of these two centuries, the German Provinces and other European territories placed increasing importance on marriage and its centrality to the maintenance of social order and as a consequence, the pregnancies of unmarried women and the frequent disposal of unwanted children were no longer met with a blind eye.

Not only was the murderer preying upon a completely defenceless victim, but the extreme youth of the infant usually meant that the baby had died before receiving baptism and thus received injury to both its body and soul. Due to the spiritual consequences, the crime was deemed more serious than murder, which merely harmed the body. Authorities on witchcraft debated whether witches preferred to steal and murder children who were baptized or unbaptized as part of their struggle to understand why God would allow the death of an innocent baby.

Both of these women serve to illustrate the cruelty that witches were believed to be capable of and the general associations that had long existed between witchcraft and infanticide that would be brought to bear by those viewing the *Scene of Witchcraft*.

Rublack, 164-165; and Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45. Evans states that a growing number of women were convicted of infanticide but also provides examples of men being punished for this crime (Evans, 27-28).

Evans, 45. Indictments for infanticide varied over time and with geographic location; in the second half of the seventeenth century the number of cases of infanticide more than doubled in Württemberg to one hundred and twenty seven whereas there were only four cases tried over the entire century in Memmingen (Rublack, 191-192).

Executions for infanticide, like witchcraft, were frequently carried out by a number of different means: women found guilty of the crime were to be buried alive, impaled, drowned, or beheaded (Rublack, 164-165). “And he wants the ointments to be composed of the flesh of unbaptized children, so that, deprived of life by these cruel witches, these innocent little souls remain deprived of the glory of paradise.” (de Lancre, 134-5).

Stephens, 2002, 243. The innocence of the child depicted in the *Scene of Witchcraft* as well as the very young babies in other works like *Lo stregozzo* (fig. 118) and the anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* (fig. 42) deal with the vulnerability of children. Not all child victims were murdered in the early days of their lives; in addition to
Vital Fluids

Cats were closely associated with witches and their attacks on children. They were thought to be the preferred animal into which witches would transform themselves as well as the favoured form in which demons would appear as familiars.\textsuperscript{160} Both cats and their witch masters were theorized to murder children by sucking the breath out of them, a detail previously discussed in the context of Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5). The French surgeon Ambroise Paré reported that cats killed children by lying on top of them and by exhaling poisonous vapours.\textsuperscript{161} The recurring theme of poison was used to assert the murderous nature of the witch, characterized as an innate impulse he or she acted on with or without the prompting of demonic cohorts. Witches were believed to poison, smother, or bleed babies to kill them. Bartolomeo Spina declared that cats that sucked the blood of children only did so because they were actually witches in disguise.\textsuperscript{162} Already in the 1420s, Bernardino of Siena was preaching that witches used the bodies of babies to make an ointment that enabled them to transform into cats.\textsuperscript{163} There were also more general associations made between women and cats, as felines became metaphors for the sexual nature of women, particularly those who found themselves unwilling or unable to abide by established social rules.\textsuperscript{164} Due to the close association between their younger counterparts, older children were often killed during times of famine or in instances of domestic violence that frequently involved blended families (Hsia, 1988, 154).

\textsuperscript{160} Witches found the form of a cat useful when sneaking into houses to steal children (de Lancre, 256). The Cathars, a group whom the Catholic Church deemed to be a heretical sect, were accused of worshipping the Devil who appeared in the guise of a huge black cat (Stephens, 2002, 281).

\textsuperscript{161} Paré, 1968, 804. There were incidents of children being suffocated when cats decided to sleep on top of them [Owen Davies, “The Nightmare Experience, Sleep Paralysis, and Witchcraft Accusations,” *Folklore* 114, no. 2 (August, 2003): 195-196]. Alternatively, the children were thought to be suffocated by witches (de Lancre, 539-40).


\textsuperscript{163} Matteo Duni, *Under the Devil’s Spell: Witches, Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in Renaissance Italy* (Florence: Syracuse University in Florence, 2007), 17-18.

\textsuperscript{164} Aristotle commented on the lecherous nature of the cat, having remarked that it is the female of the species that draws the male into the sexual act in what he reads as a perversion of the proper order of the world [Laurinda S. Dixon, *Perilous Chastity: Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 71]. There are visual precedents for the use of the cat as a symbol of feminine passion. In his *Allegorical Figure (Music)* from 1529, Baldung depicted a female nude reading a book and holding a stringed musical
the cat and the witch, it is not surprising to learn that many cats were sent to the stake to burn with their owners as accomplices to witchcraft.\textsuperscript{165}

One of the means by which the unobserved witch would kill a baby so as not to raise the family’s suspicions was by sucking out its blood.\textsuperscript{166} As the witch in the \textit{Scene of Witchcraft} is engaged in draining the child’s blood, it is necessary to delve deeper into the idea of the bloodsucking witch. The vampirish witch of ancient Greece and Rome had her origins in the Sumerian deity Lilitu.\textsuperscript{167} During the night Lilitu would fly about, seeking male victims that she would seduce before drinking their blood. Later, in classical myth, the motif arose again in the story of Zeus becoming enamoured with Lamia, who, as an unfortunate victim of the god’s affections, suffered the murder of her children by jealous Hera. The devastated mother reacted by hiding herself in a cave from which she emerged, driven by jealousy and revenge, in order to

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\textsuperscript{166} De Lancre provides an account of witches at the sabbath drinking the blood of children through holes in their heads, navels, and penises (de Lancre, 402).

kill and eat the children of other women. In his Fasti, Ovid writes about striges – screech owls that may be old women transformed – that violently attach children to gorge themselves with their blood. In the Scene of Witchcraft, an owl sits perched on the edge of the table, watching the witch work.

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168 Lamia was connected to Lilith, the demonic first wife of Adam. St. Jerome had used the name Lamia in place of Lilith in his translation of Isaiah 34:14 for the Vulgate Bible [Virginia Tuttle, “Lilith in Bosch’s ‘Garden of Earthly Delights’,” Simiolus 15, no. 2 (1985): 126]. According to Isaiah 13:22, Lamia haunts the ruins of Babylon with other evil creatures. The classical authors Apollonius, Diodorus, and Aristophanes noted that lamias ripped unborn children from the womb and ate them (Remy, 103).

The theme of the agonized woman in a cave will reappear in the context of de Gheyn’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath in chapter three.

169 Ovid gives a graphic description of the assailants of King Proca’s son in his Fasti (Book VI: June 1: Kalends):

They fly by night, attacking children with absent nurses,
And defiling their bodies, snatched from the cradle.
They're said to rend the flesh of infants with their beaks,
And their throats are full of the blood they drink.
They're called screech-owls, and the reason for the name
Is the horrible screeching they usually make at night.
Whether they’re born as birds, or whether they’re made so
By spells, old women transformed to birds by Marsian magic,
They still entered Proca’s bedroom.

Having arrived in the bedroom, the creatures suck the blood from the infant’s chest until his screams bring his nurse. With the help of Cranæ, who offers the beasts an alternative source of flesh, the child is saved. See Ovid, Fasti: “On the Roman Calendar”, translated by Anthony S. Kline, Poetry in Translation, 2004, <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Fastihome.htm> (accessed November 25, 2009).

As an ignoble bird, the owl had a very poor reputation in terms of its symbolic meaning and was often associated with evil, lust, and sin. In the visual arts, the owl was also used to signal the unpleasant reality of a situation to an audience. One need only think of Bosch’s The Conjuror, wherein the magician carries a small owl in a basket around his waist. While the magician performs his act, his companion is busily stealing from the audience’s purses. Peter Glum notes that Bosch chose to employ different breeds of owls to emphasize particular qualities of evil in his work in his article “Divine Judgment in Bosch’s ‘Garden of Earthly Delights’,,” The Art Bulletin 58, no. 1 (March, 1976): 53. The owl shunned light and was therefore associated with witches and Jews who turned away from the true faith and the light of Christ {T. H. White, The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts [New York: Perigee Printing, 1980 (1954)], 134}.

During the course of her research on David Teniers the Younger, Jane P. Davidson has collected several proverbs relating to the owl. Since Teniers was working during the same time period as this unknown artist and since both opted to include the same symbol in their witchcraft imagery, the proverbs may be considered in relation to the Italian work as well, if only for the general associations that a viewer might make. “As stupid as an owl”, “this is a real nest of owls”, referring to an unpleasant and unwelcoming place, and “as drunk as an owl” all invoke negative connotations concerning the intelligence and cleanliness of the owl, which in the context of the Scene of Witchcraft denotes the polluted mind and body of the witch as well as the foolishness of her beliefs {Jane P. Davidson, David Teniers the Younger, [Boulder (CO): Westview Press, 1979], 41}. Owls were also employed by fowlers as a lure to attract birds to their traps, encouraging the association with witches and demons through their use of misdirection and the setting of traps [Keith P. F. Moxey, “Master E. S. and the Folly of Love,” Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art 11, no. 3-4 (1980): 135]. Isaiah 34:11-15 provides further reference to evil birds with an emphasis on owls. Like witches, owls were believed to sit among the tombs amidst the smell of rotting corpses {Mariko Mijazaki, “Misericord Owls and Medieval Anti-Semitism,” in: The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life & Literature, edited by Debra Hassig (New York & London: Garland, 1999), 36}.
Children were, however, not the only victims of blood sucking: Meroeo drains the blood of Socrates after he spurns her advances and in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, the Furies seek vengeance against Orestes, expressing their desire to suck the blood from his body to atone for the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra, in an act of retribution echoing that of Lamia. The theme reappears in the context of witch trials in the early modern era. Recounting the testimony of two girls in court, de Lancre reports that: “They said that at some point prior to this, a certain sabbath witch pierced the thigh of the Sieur d’Amou and sucked his blood while he was lying in bed.” While based in ancient stories, the blood-sucking witch had a modern counterpart that was perceived to be a real threat.

Murder by exsanguination serves to connect fears about witchcraft with anxieties concerning Jewish culture, as stories abounded of Jews slowly torturing Christian children before allowing them to bleed to death in order to collect the blood necessary for a whole host of rituals and magical rites. Like the witch, Jews were accused of performing ritual murders. Accusations against the Jewish population peaked in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and began to be criticized at the same time that people were starting to read accounts of real murders

In the *Dialogue of Creatures*, published in Gouda in 1480, the anonymous author describes how the owl is located at the bottom of the hierarchy of birds, envying the eagle that is the king of birds and wishing to take the eagle’s place (Davidson, 1979, 41). Envy and also sheer necessity were reasons why people were theorized to be drawn into witchcraft. In both instances, individuals were lured into witchcraft with the hopes of improving their social standing and the living conditions of their family.

Shigehisa Kuriyama, “Interpreting the History of Bloodletting,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50, no. 1 (January, 2005): 17; and Aeschylus, *The ‘Eumenides’ of Aeschylus*, translated by A. W. Verrall (London: Macmillan, 1908). Declaring that only blood will satisfy her rage, one of the Erinyes in the *Eumenides* remarks on how the pursuit by her and her sisters has worn Orestes’ body: “Nay, thou must give me for quittance to drink from thy living body the red, rich liquid of thy veins, - though food from thee will be draught not easy to draw!” (Aeschylus, 51).


of children for amusement. R. Po-chia Hsia argues that these developments coincide with a growing interest in the welfare of children.

The collection of blood by the witch has close ties with contemporary medical practices. According to Marsilio Ficino in his De Vita (On Life), those who are exhausted from their long lives should consume the blood of the young in order to rejuvenate their bodies. He notes that witches drink infant blood for this very reason and advises that it is a good idea if a weary and elderly individual seeks out a healthy, willing young boy for this purpose. Blood was intimately tied to notions of health: a text written by O. Scarlatini in 1684 provides insight into the various ways different authors described the use of human blood as medicine, noting too that contemporary pharmaceutical laboratories manufacture medicinal oil from human blood. Children’s body parts also served specific medicinal functions: for example, their hair was thought to cure gout while their teeth could be tied to an ailing body to aid the wearer in her recovery from a uterine illness. With the medicinal and sacrificial use of children and their bodies in the early modern era, their presence in representations of witchcraft provided a means to investigate and deal with the tensions that could arise with these practices. In this way, the witch is related to those who collected and employed children’s bodies and their exuviae for both socially acceptable and questionable purposes, functioning as the site where the boundaries between the two are negotiated and delineated. The taboos of infanticide and cannibalism are here associated with licit but uncomfortable social practices.

While witches were unable to sustain human children due to their unwillingness or inability to produce milk, they could support their animal familiars by feeding them blood

173 Hsia, 151-152.
174 Marsilio Ficino, Marsilio Ficino: The Book of Life, 1480-1489, translated by Charles Boer [Irving (TX): Spring Publications, 1980], 57-58. Ficino also advises the elderly who need to restore their bodily fluids approach a clean young girl for her milk (Ficino, 56).
Boguet reports that when Emperor Constantine found himself afflicted with leprosy, his Greek advisors suggested he bathe in the blood of freshly slaughtered children but he declined (Boguet, 104).
176 Camporesi, 1988, 12; and Pliny 8:31.
through their witch’s mark. The mark was often found on the body at a point lower than the breasts, which helped to associate the activity with animals feeding their young, rather than human breast-feeding. Curiously, the theme of the witch’s mark is prominent in the literature, in treatises such as de Lancre’s, but not in the images. Instead, artists like the author of the *Scene of Witchcraft* seem to have preferred depicting the demonic familiars communicating with the witch or simply remaining nearby.

The blood being drained from the child in the *Scene of Witchcraft* could very easily be going to support any of the creatures inhabiting the scene or even the witch herself. Witches would often assume the form of toads, cats, and owls, whereas geese, dragonflies, bats, and snakes were more frequently associated with disguised demons. The witch in the *Scene of

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177 In feeding her familiar(s) as an animal would, the witch associates herself with the bestial world, a topic that will be explored further in the following chapter. De Lancre explains what the witches gain in return: “He [the Devil] made them [priests] into wet-nurses, who, instead of milk, fed the demons with human blood, imbuing them with a taciturn nature and a silence so strong that all the tortures in the world would extract nothing from them.” (de Lancre, 495-6).


179 Roper cites one historical account of maternal inversion wherein a woman was accused of sucking a child dry of all liquid through its breasts (Roper, 1996, 219). Recall Ficino’s advice on sucking milk from a girl.

180 A giant goose flies in from the left and appears to be whispering into the witch’s ear, reinforcing the idea that demons brought information to and instructed witches in their activities. This bird was closely associated with the witch as they were both perceived to be stupid and lewd creatures. In ancient times, it was theorized that the goose necessarily lived in a watery place and consumed lots of grass because it needed a massive quantity of liquid to quench its fiery sexual passion (Dekkers, 15). Further encouraging the correlation of geese with lust was the observation that male geese, like swans, possessed large sexual organs and had long necks that invited phallic associations.

When considering whether or not a witch had had sex with the Devil who had appeared to her in the form of a bird, the Burgundian judge Henry Boguet wrote in his *An Examen of Witches*, that the accused must have been mistaken in her description of the Devil. Boguet stated: “I am of the opinion that she meant to say a gander instead of a fowl, for that is a form which Satan often takes, and therefore we have the proverb that Satan has feet like a goose.” (Boguet, 34). *An Examen of Witches* was published in 1590 under the title *Discours des Sorciers* (A Discourse on Witches). The goose was understood to keep constant watch in the same way that the Devil was ever vigilant for potential sinners (Pliny 3:325).

The goose is compositionally balanced by a dragonfly, another demonic symbol. Together these two creatures emphasize the network of information that witches had at their disposal and illustrate the demonic influences that encouraged the witch’s violent behaviour.

On the table stands a tall taper that illuminates the three bats circling around it. One bat urinates on the flame of the candle, causing it to sputter. Like the witch, the bat is a creature that had an ambiguous status, oscillating from weak to formidable since it too was perceived as a nocturnal creature prone to suffering from pride, stupidity, ill morals, and mental instabilities, but it could also be in league with the devil and attain power thereby (Sohm, 16 & 31). In his images of witchcraft, David Teniers the Younger often illustrated a bat hovering with outstretched wings above his primary figures, as in his *Incantation Scene* from the early 1650s that is in the
Witchcraft has a large litter to care for, whether ultimately human or demonic, that would in turn help her in her black arts.\(^{181}\)

By placing his witch in an interior setting, instead of in the woods or a liminal space, the artist has chosen to characterize his witch in domestic terms. She is a counter-productive member of society who is out to harm the offspring of healthy households and to create, through her familiars, her own interpretation of what a household should be. Left unsupervised by a socially approved male, the witch can indulge her jealous feelings and take out her anger on the world around her. While she is calm and determined in the moment captured by the artist, the child, creatures, tools, and human remains around her all speak to the maleficent purpose of her actions. The witch in the Scene of Witchcraft is the solitary practitioner who perpetrates her crimes from within the supposed safety of the community and who thereby undermines the trust between neighbours that is vital to maintaining the social fabric.

**Roelandt Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches***

Roelandt Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches* (fig. 33) from 1615 is singular in the known corpus of witchcraft imagery.\(^{182}\) In choosing a novel compositional format for his depiction of witchcraft, Savery questions whether or not, and how, witchcraft might be operating in the world. More specifically, he challenges the idea that witches could violently impact the lives of peasants. While the content of the *Cowshed with Witches* is new, the mode of communication is a synthesis of established artistic traditions. Savery combines the theme of witchcraft with interior genre scenes, the Dutch cattle piece, marginalia, and the motif of the milkmaid and

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\(^{181}\) It was with the help of familiars that witches were able to transform into small animals, like cats and mice, which would enable them to enter people’s homes (Guazzo, 83-84).

\(^{182}\) This painting is alternatively titled *Stable Interior (with Witches)*. The appellation bestowed by the Rijksmuseum will be used in this study. I would like to extend my gratitude to David de Haan and Gerbrand Korevaar who went out of their way to assist me and make my visit to see the painting possible.

Savery lived from 1576 to 1639.
shepherd. In so doing, he both suggests and questions the violence of the witch in a considerably more subtle manner than Francken and the anonymous artist from Saftleven’s circle.

The Cowshed with Witches is a highly detailed painting done in a small-scale format, suggesting that it was designed for prolonged and close viewing by an audience of a few people at most. In the artist’s oeuvre, the Cowshed with Witches is unique. It is the only painting by Savery depicting witches. In all other respects it accords with the qualities for which the artist was renowned: the painting is highly detailed and depicts a number of animals. Savery includes many cattle in his works, although he would become famous for his depictions of the exotic creatures that were kept at the imperial court in Prague. The scale and animal inhabitants, in conjunction with the unusual subject matter and unconventional design in representations of witchcraft, argue against the work being created as a speculative piece. Together, these observations support the idea of the painting being fashioned as the latest addition to the private collection of an individual who had an interest in witches or the occult and who could appreciate the novelty of the picture and its place within contemporary artistic practice.\footnote{Savery’s painting provides an original format for the depiction of witchcraft, one that through its very structure questions the means by which witches operate and magic is affected. The artist offers a framing device in lieu of the marvellous airy streaks and symbols found in works of contemporary artists like Francken. The square panel is inscribed with a circle that extends just beyond the boundaries of the square frame on each side, creating an outer framework in the four corners. To encourage the perception of a frame-within-a-frame, the artist}

The patron of the Cowshed with Witches remains unknown as does the context in which the painting was produced. Emperor Rudolf II, a supporter of the arts who favoured occult subjects, died in 1612, three years before Savery (circa 1576-1639) began this painting. It was during the reign of his successor, Emperor Matthias, that the painting was executed. Matthias, while he did not share his predecessor’s penchant for the unusual or mysterious, patronized the artist; Savery appears as a landscape painter on a list of those serving the imperial court compiled on March 29, 1615 \cite{Muellenmeister:1988}. For Matthias’ court Savery painted the Garden of Eden (1618) and Orpheus with Beasts and Birds (1622) using the variety of zoological and horticultural resources available within the imperial collection \cite{Marshall:2006}, 73. He is listed as a member of the imperial court in 1615, but it is uncertain whether or not he returned to either Prague or Vienna after departing for Amsterdam in 1613, because there is evidence to suggest he was in the Netherlands between 1614 and 1619 \cite{Kaufmann:2006}, 164. Savery finally settled in Utrecht where he spent the last two decades of his life.
has painted an illusionistic inner lip, thereby creating a marked division between the inner and outer spaces of the panel. The tondo portion of the image provides an intimate look into a peasant barn and a view through to a quaint house beyond, while the corners of the frame are occupied by witches and demons flying across a black field.

The *Cowshed with Witches* is not the only example of an illusionistic frame created by Savery, but it is the lone depiction of witches in this artist’s oeuvre and the only witchcraft image in the corpus employing this visual strategy. This was a compositional type that the artist adopted elsewhere for allegorical purposes. The arrangement that Savery has chosen, of a center informed by material located in the corners and separated by either a physical division or a change in the mode of representation, resonates with other compositional types with a long artistic heritage. It was a format that even Bosch had used in his *Seven Deadly Sins* (fig. 34); the four corners comment on the central scene. This painting follows an enduring custom of representing sins and other series of things, such as the zodiac, in the form of a wheel; some of these images employed additional material within the frame as commentary on the central scene that remains independent of it. In the *Cowshed with Witches*, Savery combines conventions of structuring a composition through internal divisions with the tondo format.

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184 Another of Savery’s panels titled *Stable Interior* gives the impression of a tondo inscribed within a trompe l’oeil frame that provides a perspective through a barn interior to the outdoors where a couple can be seen walking off in the distance. In place of the witches in the *Cowshed with Witches* there is a square wooden frame. Savery’s *Stable Interior* is reproduced in Müllenmeister, cat. 141. While the earlier sources affirm that this painting is held by a private collector in Holland, Müllenmeister simply states that the current whereabouts of the image are unknown. The *Stable Interior* is dated to the same period as the *Cowshed with Witches*.

185 Dated to around 1625, *Paradise Landscape with the Four Elements* in the Waterman Collection in Amsterdam shows a large tondo inscribed within a square panel with four smaller tondi appearing in the corners, where the witches are located in the *Cowshed with Witches*. The central circle depicts a harmonious landscape inhabited by a variety of animals while the corner images provide little vignettes representing the elements. As in the *Cowshed with Witches*, the artist has used the corners to inform the central scene. While this second painting helps to underscore the careful consideration and deliberate intention that went into designing the *Cowshed with Witches*, it is still a later work in the artist’s oeuvre and the question as to the source(s) of inspiration for this compositional type remains. The *Paradise Landscape with the Four Elements* is reproduced in Müllenmeister, cat. & fig. 237.

186 This painting dates to circa 1490 and is currently displayed in the Museo del Prado, Madrid. For a discussion of the relationship of the tondo form to both sacred and secular imagery, see Roberta J. M. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

187 For example, *The Four Christian Ages* woodcut produced by an anonymous artist circa 1490-1500 (Gelfand, fig. 4). In the medium of painting, *Mary Crowned by the Trinity* by the French Master I.M. from 1457 illustrates a tondo with several partitioned rings around it to convey the heavenly hierarchy; the symbols of the four
In each corner of his composition Savery placed a middle-age peasant woman riding a broomstick, goat, or monster (figs. 35-38). Due to their small scale and positioning at the edges of the work, the witches in the *Cowshed with Witches* evoke the convention of using grotesque and secular imagery in marginal illustration. The witches depicted in a copy of Martin le Franc’s *Le Champion des Dames* (The Champion of Ladies) (fig. 39) from circa 1451 share many similarities with Savery’s women: they are clothed in contemporary dress and ride broomsticks through the margins of the page.\(^{188}\)

Each of the four witches bears attributes of her role and some are shown interacting with demons. The witch in the upper left corner has been previously identified as carrying a fork supporting a chamber pot filled with urine, a tool that the witch could use to affect weather magic.\(^{189}\) Since there is no visibly bad weather in the image, largely an interior scene with views to a blue sky with puffy white clouds beyond, this solution does not seem likely. Nor would one expect to find the urine ablaze. Instead, this dish more closely resembles the burning urn in Baldung’s *Witches Sabbath* (fig. 4), both in terms of its shape and its association with the witches’ flight. Seen in this light, the burning pot may be read instead as a representation of the intensity of the witches’ passions, whether lust, envy, or revenge, that drives them to interfere with the lives of others. Furthermore, the pot refers to the magical brews that witches concocted to affect their magic, which in this case would enable the witches’ flights and their efforts to disrupt the production of milk.

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The unusual mounts combined with the observation that many of the animals and women release bursts of fire from various bodily orifices in addition to the burning pot signal to the viewer that these women are witches and are engaged in demonic activities as they encircle the occupants of the cowshed. The attending creatures exhale fire to produce large clouds of smoke. The abundance of smoke around the witches calls attention to their clouded judgment and their inability to recognize their misplaced faith. The consequence of their participation in demonic practices will be damnation. Occlusion of vision, as a theme, prompts the viewer to consider the nature of spiritual sight, achieved through inner faith, versus corporeal sight, a sense that is easily deluded and deceived, particularly when tempted with material desires. The theme of sight does not help to resolve but rather complicates the interpretation of the image, as the viewer must determine whether the witches are real or simply an illusion and reconcile this decision with their religious beliefs. In an effort to find a solution, the author invites the audience to search through the details of the painting for clues.

By surrounding the barn with witches, Savery highlights the constant threat that witches were thought to pose: they circle about, ready to interfere with those who labour earnestly. Had Savery painted the barn door closed, the witches would have surrounded a group of trapped victims, but with the door wide open and a cow peering outside, the viewer is alerted to the fact that the situation is not dire and is left to ponder how the witches relate to the stable scene.

Witches were constantly accused of injuring, diseasing, or killing livestock and their neighbours. Poisonous powders, infected food, and the evil eye were popular means by which witches were accused of afflicting their victims. Despite the potential threat, it is noteworthy that while some of the witches may be behaving rudely, not one of them makes a threatening gesture towards the cows nor even looks at the stable interior. The livestock, on the other hand, watch the witches curiously, complicating the notion that Savery may have relegated the witches to the realm of

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190 The potential for demons to interfere with the process of sight is a significant concern in early modern witchcraft and demonological treatises. Weyer’s treatise *De praestigiis daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis*, (On the Illusions of Demons and on Spells and Poisons) discusses the bodies of demons and their physical capabilities on earth at length. The author addresses the various ways in which witches and demons were believed to interfere with the human mind and body and concludes that the belief that one is a witch is the product of a diseased mind.

191 As the witch in the lower left corner moves forward, her skirts billow outward to reveal her bare bottom to the viewer. Davidson suggests that this witch is also farting at the viewer (Davidson, 1987, 47).
mere idea. The cream-colored cow looks directly at a witch, thereby demonstrating a direct relationship between the witches and the stable interior. The hobbled and urinating cows both exhibit calm stances; urination in cattle is not a fear response. Another cow stands in the doorway of the barn, staring outwards. If this animal had been startled by the witches, it would have fled, along with the others in the barn. Also, the farm dog takes no notice of the riders and remains fast asleep.  

The artist deliberately employs ambiguous and conflicting evidence to provoke contemplation by the viewer.

The face of the milkmaid, who is dressed in peasant’s clothing as she goes about the daily milking, is hidden by the cow’s belly, rendering her identity as both any woman and no one. In this way, the milkmaid is united with the animals as part of the cultural myth of the peasants connected to the land. The honest labour and its bountiful results can be read in the two buckets that the milkmaid has with her. Nearby, a man leans against the barn doorframe playing a flute. His face is also concealed, this time with a feathered hat pulled down low over his brow. The phallic shape and vertical positioning of the flute carries sexual connotations that are further encouraged by the presence of lusty barnyard animals: the goat and the ram. The sexual tension between the milkmaid and shepherd was artistically exploited by Lucas van

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192 The dog reappears in Savery’s *A Peasant at Rest*, from circa 1615, in the Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe. The little dog at the man’s feet looks directly out at the viewer and has the same pose and colour scheme as the dog in the *Cowshed with Witches* but is the size of a lapdog rather than a farm dog as in the Karlsruhe panel. This image is reproduced in *Roelant Savery in seiner Zeit (1576-1639)*, exhibition catalogue (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz Museum; Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1985-1986), cat. 16.

193 The same anonymity and peasant-land connection is illustrated in Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *Haymaking (July)* from 1565. The painting is housed in the National Gallery, Prague. The theme of anonymity and peasants is discussed by Ethan Matt Kavaler in his text *Peter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 233-249.

194 Running vertically down the front of the first pail are three “x” markings that evoke the three Andreas Crosses that were adopted as the symbol of the Netherlands. Amsterdam’s seal was changed in 1419 from a simple ship design to one bearing the city’s coat of arms, an emblem that included the three equal arm crosses turned on a ninety degree angle [Richter Roegholt, *A Short History of Amsterdam* (Amersfoort: Bekking & Blitz, 2006), 151]. This detail suggests that the painting may have been produced in or in association with someone from this region. The second bucket bears an inscription “R. Savery” with the date 1615 below. For a summary of Savery’s signing practices consult Müllenmeister, 27-29.

195 The man may be a herdsman. During this period the herdsmen had a very low status and was frequently associated with healing magic (Schulte, 202). Davies offers an explanation: “Sheep and cattle herdsmen had a particular reputation for medical skills and magical powers due in part to their solitary, peripatetic lifestyle, and close relationship to the natural and therefore the occult world.” (Davies, 2009, 65).
Leyden in his *Milkmaid* (fig. 40) engraving from 1510. In this image, the peasant has placed his hand upon a stump with a broken branch that is suggestive of an erection. Lucas carefully shades the milkmaid’s torso to draw attention to her feminine curves and provides her with an ample bosom that is echoed in the cow’s full teats. The sexually laden scene provided a trope that was employed not only by Savery, but also by a number of contemporary and subsequent artists.

Cattle are not a common element in witchcraft imagery and reflect the individual interests of the artist. Savery was instrumental in the development of the Dutch cattle piece in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Interpretations of this subject matter ranged from idealized pastoral imagery to close observation of husbandry practices. A field of cattle proved to be a popular motif in the Low Countries and was later adopted by prominent artists such as Aelbert Cuyp and Pieter Paul Rubens.

There are, however, precedents for depictions of witches afflicting milk production in print culture, although no other contemporaneous paintings of the subject are known. An anonymous woodcut illustration titled *Milk Magic* (fig. 41) adorning Hans Vintler’s *Pluemen der* 196

The erotic and humorous aspects of this print have been explored by Leo Wuyt [Ellen S. Jacobowitz, and Stephanie Loeb Stepanek, *The Prints of Lucas van Leyden & his Contemporaries* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1983), 88 -89]. The audience must decide whether the goat and ram in the scene are simply lascivious farm animals or if they should be interpreted as symbols of witchcraft, particularly since the witch in the upper left corner is astride a goat as well. The devil is often described as appearing as a large goat or ram at the sabbath (Boguet, 18-19). With a barn full of animals carrying potentially demonic significance, the audience is reminded of the devil’s perpetual effort to corrupt souls and thereby prevent their salvation, and thus to be suspicious of every aspect of the material world.

De Gheyn’s engraving, *The Farm*, from 1603 illustrates a well dressed woman speaking to a peasant, having deliberately placed herself between him and his milkmaid companion. Leaning against a tree, the peasant’s sexual potency is humorously conveyed through a long, carefully placed fencepost. *The Farm* is illustrated in Guido Jansen, et al., *Meesterlijk vee Nederlandse veeschilders 1600-1900*, exhibition catalogue (Zwolle, et al.: Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, 1988), fig. 65.

Included among Savery’s cattle compositions is his 1616 painting *Cows in a Meadow*, a work which maintains the same calm atmosphere as the *Cowshed with Witches*. The present location of this painting is unknown. This work is reproduced in Joaneath Spicer, “‘De Koe voor d’aerde statt’: The Origins of the Dutch Cattle Piece,” in: *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1983), fig. 5.

The development of the Dutch cattle piece as a genre was highly influenced by Savery, along with Jan van de Velde and Abraham Bloemaert (Spicer, 1983, 255). In her 1983 article on the Dutch cattle piece, Spicer traces the origins of the motif to the allegorical interpretation of cattle as symbols of fecundity and abundance. Here the interest in cattle is tied to their critical importance for the economy.
Tugent (The Flowers of Virtue) shows a milkmaid attending a cow within a little structure as she is approached by a woman with a pail in hand riding a hexagram through the air. Writing about the activities of witches in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Institoris and Sprenger complained that even in the tiniest of villages, women continually attacked and killed each other’s cows. Witches were thought to be able to magically transfer milk from the udder of one cow to another. Whereas the earlier artist chose to explicitly show the black magic occurring, the only concrete indications of magic in the *Cowshed with Witches* are communicated through the witches’ transvection and by the presence of their demonic companions.

The demons in the lower right corner have caught a surprised witch on her return from having committed a theft; in her right hand she holds a dagger and the severed strings of a purse that dangles below (fig. 38). The purse has the potential to connote human genitalia. In the context of the milkmaid and shepherd, the theft of the purse reminds viewers of intrusions made by witches, most often with maleficent intentions, into the relationships and fertility of others. The purse also represents the unjust acquisitions witches make at the expense of their neighbours and refers to the eternal punishment that witches suffer for their actions. For peasants like

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200 Vintler’s text was published in Augsburg in 1486.
201 Institoris and Sprenger, 328. Walpurga Hausmännin, a mid-wife, was burned as a witch in Dillingen in 1587 after having been found guilty of murdering a number of people and animals, including at least nine cows (Stephens, 1). In the fifteenth century the papal bull *Summa desiderantes affectibus* (Desiring with Supreme Ardor) was issued by Pope Innocent VIII. In this document witches – both male and female – are asserted to have killed calves as well as babies still in the womb [Arno Karlen, “The Homosexual Heresy,” *The Chaucer Review* 6, no. 1 (Summer, 1971): 60]. Discussing how witches go about attacking one another, Boguet reports how witches threaten to prevent their opponent’s cow from producing milk while their own would supply copiously (Boguet, 16).
202 Boguet, 95.
203 Kettering calls attention to the sexual significance of the purse in her examination of Rembrandt’s *The Flute Player* from 1642, as the purse is conspicuously placed next to the raised skirt of a shepherdess [Alison McNeil Kettering, “Rembrandt’s ‘Flute Player’: A Unique Treatment of Pastoral,” *Simiolus* 9, no. 1 (1977): 37]. She discusses the use of the purse as a reference to female genitalia.
204 This issue is addressed further in the context of Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom*.
205 Purses were often depicted around the necks of those who had been condemned for the sin of avarice. In Hans Fries’ *Resurrection of Souls and Fall of the Damned*, possibly from 1501, one of the damned men wears a red purse tied around his neck. As a demon hoists him into the air, coins spill from the purse. The painting is housed in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and is reproduced in Jezler, fig. 93.
those portrayed in Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches*, such interference could easily lead to economic hardship and starvation.  

Roelandt Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches* deals directly with the idea that witches posed a danger to economic stability: in his image, the artist considers the notion that witches were able to affect and afflict livestock, particularly cows, and their owners by magical means. The manner in which Savery depicts the evildoers is both humorous and inventive. In presenting his work in a deliberately open fashion, the artist challenges the viewer to ponder whether such an image is merely a source of entertainment or if it should be taken as a representation of a real threat.

Savery’s painting is a particularly explicit examination of the difficulty posed by the existence of unequal fortunes among members of the community and the means by which people seek to explain misfortune in particular. In forcing the issue through the novel yet highly ambiguous compositional type, Savery approaches the problem in a manner unlike any other artist of witchcraft imagery, making the *Cowshed with Witches* a critical addition to the study of the societal impact of witchcraft in the art of the Low Countries as well as to the corpus of witchcraft imagery as a whole.

**Conclusion**

Together, Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly*, the Dutch *Scene of Witchcraft*, and Savery’s *Cowshed with Witches* represent a variety of approaches taken by artists working in the Low Countries treating the same problem: witches attacking and polluting a community. The witches’ actions strike at the very existence of the populace by targeting the physical body, understood in this context as being a part of the communal body, and the materials that that body requires in order to survive. The impression of a secretive gathering – whether the witch is solitary or part of a group – specifically convened with the aim of subverting the established social rules and bonds pervades all three of these images. At issue here is trust: the concealed nature of the witch causes neighbours, families, and friends to become suspicious of one another.

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206 “Huberte of Bussière had been unfairly treated by one of the townsman, and it seemed to her that she would be amply revenged if she killed by poison the five cows by which he supported himself and his family.” (Guazzo, 101).
and as a result, the very symbols signalling family and social bonding are fraught with dangerous potential. In presenting witches in terms of their violent tendencies, the three artists question the actions, motivations, and thereby the existence of witchcraft. In its own way, each work of art asks whether witchcraft is a serious problem or mere folly.

The problem of the subversive element hidden within society and the means by which it can be detected and dealt with continues to plague modern nations. Especially pertinent is the question as to what gives rise to deviancy and the role deviants like witches play in the shaping of social behaviour. What the images reveal is the vulnerability and dependency of the individual on the community and vice versa, as the community can only function in its ideal form if everyone lives up to their responsibilities. The necessity of deviancy within a community for the construction of the boundaries of civilized society and the uncertainties concerning what it means to be human, rather than an animal, will be addressed through a closer examination of the witch as an individual in chapter two.
Chapter 2
Bestial Passions

The previous chapter examined images of witches as a powerful force operating within and often against the community. In this chapter, the focus will shift from violence to sexuality, with a consideration of the motivations and experiences of the witch as an individual interacting with other members of a community. The case studies in this chapter are concerned with the animalistic passions and behaviours of the witch. Central to this investigation is the witch’s deviation from what was perceived to be the behavioural norm; obedience to the urges of instinct and emotion was accompanied by an often wilful neglect of the faculty of reason. At this time, the capacity for reason was critical to distinguishing humanity as a species. The subject’s, meaning both witches’ and their victims’ or partners’, inability or unwillingness to control their inner impulses provided a means for early modern society to explore the bestial passions innate in every person and the implications they have on the understanding of what distinguishes the human from the animal.

In non-textual images of witchcraft from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the witch’s body is the locus for concerns about sexuality, gender, and identity. Together, the four pictures discussed in this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which depictions of witchcraft were able to expand their exploration of the animalistic witch beyond the limitations faced by their textual counterparts, with the considerable assistance of contemporary artistic techniques, motifs, and discourses. The case studies cover four very different and distinct perspectives on the witch’s body as it relates to the construction of identity and collectively they demonstrate the critical role the bestial plays in representations of witchcraft. Each work of art has been selected for its exceptionally individualistic approach to the problem of the animal in the formation of gender and sexual identities.

The anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* (fig. 42) is remarkable for its unique compositional type in the corpus of witchcraft imagery. The artist reinterprets the contemporary double portrait format in terms of a sacrificial, prophetic, and instructional image of two witches. By moving the figures directly into the foreground and depicting them from the waist up, the artist offers a new mode of communicating the established types of portraiture and scenes of witchcraft. By virtue of its medium, compositional format, and its juxtaposition of the two dominant visual types of the witch, this painting calls attention to the body and its passions in an unequalled fashion. The *Scene of Witchcraft* portrays the two visual extremes that the female witch’s form could take and invites consideration of the danger inherent in each. This painting treats the instability of the female body and in so doing, prompts questions about the internal volatility of the witch. Vital to this discussion is the identification of the witch as belonging to the category of other, as deviant from what is expected of the person’s age and gender. The question of the witch’s role as deviant in early modern culture is integrally tied to the status of women. Efforts by authorities to transform conceptual ideals of what a woman should be into a reality, despite the social and personal costs involved, are closely linked with the ways in which the witch is physically characterized.

The discussion of Dosso Dossi’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* (fig. 55) addresses further concerns about the witch as temptress. Dosso novelly presents his witch in terms of the Venetian nude and suggests the dangers lurking behind the idealized form. Male fears of subordination and the loss of self at the hands of a female lover are expressed through mythological tales from antiquity and contemporary literary references to witchcraft. Dosso’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* is the most radically open image of the mythological/literary type, as the identity of the figures and animals can support the widest range of possible identifications. This allows viewers access to the positive and negative motivations of the witch in an unprecedented manner. The animals that attend the witch allude to the theme of transformation and thereby underscore the threat that the witch posed or the salvation she offered to the construction and maintenance of male identity. The belief that witches could transform a human into an animal raised concerns about the power of magic and the susceptibility of the mind and body to it. Essential to this debate was the nature of the human soul and whether it could occupy an animal body. The male mind in an animal body is conceptually opposed with the animalistic soul contained within a beautiful female body.
Hans Baldung Grien’s *Witch and Dragon* (fig. 67), forces the viewer to confront the very worst – or for some perhaps the most exciting – aspect of the witch’s body: her sexual indulgences. While theologians, jurists, and physicians argued over whether or not witches received pleasure from their intercourse with demons, all three groups endeavoured to keep their descriptions of these alleged activities short, lest they incite their reader’s sexual desires or experimental proclivities. The *Witch and Dragon* is the most extreme depiction of the sexualized witch in the corpus. It suggests the most taboo of subjects: demonic bestiality. Baldung presents a seductive, explicit, and pornographic image that concentrates on the gratification some witches claimed they received from their interaction with demons.\(^{208}\) In depicting his witch with a non-human partner, Baldung touches upon the issues of demonic and bestial intercourse and the potential these illicit activities had to produce monstrous offspring. At stake is the witch’s willingness to elide the distinctions between human and animal or human and demonic. The witch’s behaviours and the physical sources within the body that motivated them provided early modern theologians, doctors, and artists with material for their arguments over whether witches and women were (full) members of the human race.

The final image, Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom* (fig. 73) refocuses the study on the male body. In presenting his male figure openly, so that his identity and role in witchcraft remains unresolved, Baldung encourages consideration of the man and his motives from multiple perspectives, a feature which makes this work exceptional both within Baldung’s oeuvre and the corpus of witchcraft imagery. Through the uncertain identity of his figure, the artist invites contemplation of the man as witch, victim, and viewer. Baldung situated his woodcut within the visual discourse on perspective, wherein religious and mythological figures were being presented in dramatically foreshortened poses. The conscious use of artistic techniques relates the *Bewitched Groom* to other works of art that contribute to the possible and even contradictory interpretations of this print. This emphasis on the process of viewing alerted the audience to the power of sight and its role in the spread of witchcraft, as well as to the voyeuristic qualities of the picture. The *Bewitched Groom* problematizes identity and the male interest in witchcraft.

\(^{208}\) Baldung indulges the male fantasy when suggesting what these encounters might be like. The enjoyment of the witch in the drawing stands in contrast to what most accused witches claimed during interrogation: that intercourse with the devil was unpleasant.
Anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft*

The anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* (fig. 42) in the Galleria Nazionale, Parma, depicts the interaction between two witches, who, through their physical differences invite an investigation into the conception of the witch as woman.\textsuperscript{209} The painting offers a juxtaposition of the two types of witches that dominated early modern visual representations: the beautiful youthful witch and her grotesque and aged counterpart. By including both of these figures in a scene in which the old woman is the principal actor, the artist casts her young companion in the role of an avid pupil.\textsuperscript{210} This painting is valuable for its scrutiny of their ideological relationship. The composition invites contemplation of the role of the witch and how it is affected by the changing female body. By understanding the social role fulfilled by the witch in terms of her interactions, especially as they pertain to the family construct, the *Scene of Witchcraft* is able to draw attention to the disjunctions between the witch, the ideal notion of a woman, and a real woman.

The figures in the *Scene of Witchcraft* are arranged in a circular composition wherein the actors are connected through gesture, gaze, and physical contact. The center of the scene is occupied by a dead child. The victim’s body lies on a large rock that functions as an altar around which two female witches, a goat, and several monsters focus their attention. The old witch throws her head backward and stretches her arms up to the sky; she dominates the composition through the large swath of space she occupies.\textsuperscript{211} By virtue of her being armed, the woman

\textsuperscript{209} The *Scene of Witchcraft* was painted circa 1680 by an unidentified Italian artist [Lucia Fornari Schianchi, ed., *Galleria Nazionale di Parma: Catalogo delle opere. Il Seicento*, vol. 3 (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1999), cat. 604].

\textsuperscript{210} In their catalogue entries, Corrado Ricci and A. O. Quintavalle both describe the young woman as an incredulous visitor seeking to regain the love of a man who had abandoned her [Corrado Ricci, *La R. Galleria di Parma* (Parma: Luigi Battei, 1896), 79; and A. O. Quintavalle, *La Regia Galleria di Parma* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1939), entry 375]. According to demonological treatises, the young woman should be considered a witch for willingly engaging the assistance of a known witch. Moreover, the nudity of the woman suggests that she is a participant in the magic, rather than simply an observing client. See the case study of Frans Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5) for further commentary on generational corruption.

\textsuperscript{211} The raised arms gesture also appears in Rosa’s *Scene of Witchcraft* in the Galleria Corsini, Florence, dated to the mid-1640s or the 1660s and in his *Witchcraft Scene* that was sold in London to a private collector (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 166 & 172).
commands attention: in her right hand she holds a blood-stained knife, while in the other she holds the small piece of muscle she has just cut out of the child.

This painting is remarkable not only for its deliberate opposition of the two witch types, but also for its allusion to divination through human evisceration. The high degree of detail is notable, as other scenes of torture and dead bodies that incorporate disembowelling are not nearly as graphic in terms of the degree of verisimilitude present in the faces of the infant (fig. 43) and those conducting the divinatory practice.

**Anthropomancy**

Anthropomancy is the practice of divining the future by reading the entrails of people who have been murdered.\(^{212}\) Even looking at entrails was considered sinful in ancient times and the practice was condemned in the early modern era as well.\(^{213}\) According to Bodin, there was a longstanding tradition of killing the first born male child for prophetic purposes.\(^{214}\) Since the witches in the *Scene of Witchcraft* have selected a male victim, the painting could depict this

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The reading of animal entrails was another popular form of divination. *The Promises Made by all Kinds of Divination*, a woodcut by the Petrarca-Meister in the German edition of Francesco Petrarca’s *Von der Arzney bayder Glück des güten und wider wertigen* (Remedies Against Fortune, Fair and Foul) from 1532, illustrated in Zika, 2007, fig. 2.18, depicts a man eviscerating an animal in a manner highly reminiscent of the *Scene of Witchcraft*.


\(^{214}\) Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 1580, translated by Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 106. The fourth century author Ammianus Marcellinus wrote about Numerius, who cut the foetus out of a woman in order to raise the dead and thereby learn the future [Martha Rampton, “Up from the Dead: Magic and Miracle,” in: *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, edited by Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York, et al.: Peter Lang, 1999), 277]. Adult bodies were also employed; according to one jurist, the nuns in Cymbri would slit a prisoner’s throat over a cauldron and foretell the future by interpreting how the blood dripped and by the appearance of the entrails [Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 1602, edited by Montague Summers, translated by E. Allen Ashwin (Great Britain: John Rodker, 1929, reprinted in New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 105].
established ritual. It is, however, a practice that does not receive much more than brief mention in the demonological literature. Authors preferred instead to emphasize the murder and dismemberment of the young for magical unguents and feasts. In addition to anthropomancy, the Scene of Witchcraft evokes the themes of child sacrifices to the Devil and the collection of bodily materials for magical rites.

Divination by entrails was not a popular subject for depiction, even within witchcraft imagery, making this work of special interest. De Gheyn had provided a precedent for an elaborately and gruesomely eviscerated body in his Witches in a Cellar from 1604 (fig. 44). Cornelis Saftleven’s painting, Witchcraft, depicts a demon pulling the internal organs out of a hanged criminal as a witch collects the falling material in a large pot. With the exemption of some anatomical treatises and memento mori imagery, in general, entrails appear infrequently in early modern works of art. They are, however, an integral part of the martyrdom of St. Erasmus and the punishments of Prometheus, but even here the gruesome nature of the event is minimized through detachment or the anticipation of violence. A representation of a

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215 Both the Italian and Dutch Scenes of Witchcraft depict attacks on male children, emphasizing the primacy of boys as heirs to familial and social power.

216 The use of the human body parts in witchcraft is explored in the discussion of Rosa’s Witches at their Incantations in chapter three.

217 Three witches have gathered around a corpse in a stone archway. The victim has been laid on his back, his body angled toward the viewer, so as to present a full view of the open torso cavity. The body has been slit open from the throat down to the hip and along the right arm, enabling the viewer to appreciate the totality of the witch’s interference. The exposed ribcage reveals its partially emptied interior and a mess of intestines below. The Witches in a Cellar was executed with pen and brush using grey and brown ink applied to a grey paper support. It is housed in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin. This motif did not prove to be popular with other artists depicting witchcraft.

De Gheyn’s depictions of disembowelling and other violent acts of witchcraft against the body have been connected to contemporary acts of cruelty by the French, Spanish, and Amerindians which rightfully stress the desire to mutilate over the interest in anatomy [Charles Zika, Exorcising our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2002), 407].

218 Witchcraft is housed in the Museo Civico in Padua (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 186).


220 In Nicolas Poussin’s The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus from 1628, St. Erasmus’ intestines are being slowly drawn out of a slit in his abdomen and wound around a windlass. Poussin’s painting hangs in the Pinacoteca of the Vatican Museums. This image is reproduced in Lionello Puppi, Torment in Art: Pain, Violence and
divinatory scene is similarly open in its display of innards as the *Scene of Witchcraft*, although it is in another medium. In *Dido Reading the Future* (fig. 45), an etching by the Master of Virgil of Grüninger from 1502, Dido stands in a temple and uses her staff to direct the spectator’s attention to a table laden with organs. The monochromatic nature of the print and the full figured format serve to distance the viewer from the event. Consequently, the scene lacks the immediacy and inescapability of the *Scene of Witchcraft*. In addition to its dramatic colouring and half-length format, the impact of the picture is aided by its considerably larger scale when compared to *Witches in a Cellar* and *Dido Reading the Future*. These works of art also feature adult victims rather than children.

Deceased children are a popular feature of witchcraft imagery, but their bodies are usually presented intact. Dismantling is suggested by the motif of the flying unguent and depictions of children being roasted or boiled for consumption. Even in contemporary

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*Martyrdom* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), pl. 46. Even more indifference is evident in Dirk Bouts’ *Martyrdom of St. Erasmus with St. Jerome and St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, a triptych from circa 1458, housed in the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Louvain. The same topic was treated by Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1500 and Giovan Battista Beinaschi circa 1665. Illustrations of these works appear in Puppi as pl. 12, fig. 53, and pl. 48, respectively. Further eviscerations can be found in figs. 24, 27, and 48.

Similarly, Rubens’ *Prometheus Bound* from circa 1610-1611 and Titian’s slightly more brutal *Prometheus* from circa 1547-48 show an eagle beginning to extract Prometheus’ entrails. The former is housed in the Museum of Art in Philadelphia while the latter can be found in the Museo del Prado in Madrid. The processes of evisceration depicted in these images are neat and orderly in comparison to the Italian *Scene of Witchcraft*.

Representations of Judas hanged may also depict the spilling of organs, such as Giovanni Canavesio’s *The Hanging of Judas*, a fresco from 1492 in the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines in La Brigue. For this image see Robert Muchembled, *Damned: An Illustrated History of the Devil*, translated by Noël Schiller [San Francisco: Éditions du Seuil, 2004 (French 2002)], 30.

A gruesome scene of black magic by Ottaviano Dandini depicts a witch pulling the heart out of a bound corpse through the open abdomen. The painting dates to the early eighteenth century and is reproduced in Sandro Bellesi, *Diavolerie, magie e incantesimi: nella pittura barocca fiorentina* (Florence: Giovanni Pratesi Antiquario, 1997), cat. 6.

Musei Civici di Como, *Streghe Diavoli Sibille: Incisioni Disegni e libri dal XV al XX sec*, exhibition catalogue (Como: Musei Civici, 2001), 33, 40, & fig. 3.

Similarly, the depiction of a Brazilian native woman pulling the intestines out of a decapitated male body is simplified for its woodcut format. This image is perhaps attributable to Jean Cousin and was printed in André Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique* (The Singularities of Antarctic France) (Paris: Maurice de la Porte, 1558), fol. 77r. It is reproduced in Zika, *Exorcising our Demons*, fig. 74.

See, for example, *Witches Roasting a Child*, a woodcut by an anonymous artist illustrating Francesco Maria Guazzo’s *Compendium Maleficarum* (A Handbook of Witchcraft) from the 1626 edition. The woodcut is reproduced in Charles Zika, “Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images,”
representations of the intensely violent Massacre of the Innocents, such as the one depicted by Matteo di Giovanni (fig. 46), the bodies of children are shown being or having already been stabbed, their wounds piercings or bleeding slits in otherwise intact bodies. This imagery is extremely violent in nature and is akin to witchcraft imagery in this regard. The open torso, however, marks the Scene of Witchcraft as a work that is particularly disturbing and remarkable for its treatment of the child’s body.

The small bowel is visibly exposed and is grey in colour. This detail, in conjunction with the absence of blood and any sign of stress from the child indicates that the boy was not murdered moments ago. Instead, these elements suggest that the child was slain, that the true cause of death went undetected, and that the witches have now reclaimed their prize. The boy’s life has been sacrificed for witchcraft, as his position on the altar indicates.

In alluding to child sacrifice, the Scene of Witchcraft calls to mind the biblical account of the sacrifice of Isaac. In location, pose, and physical type, the old witch resembles depictions, like Cigoli’s (fig. 47), of Abraham; both figures are represented with a knife in hand, willing to sacrifice a child at the request of their master. While Abraham trusts his faith in God, the witch relies on the Devil. Whereas Isaac is Abraham’s son, the infant in the Scene of Witchcraft may be the young witch’s child or a baby stolen from another household. By engaging with an existing compositional type and a recognizable story, the artist problematizes the idea of sacrifice, encouraging the viewer to consider the differences that make one action licit and the other an abomination. It also encourages an evaluation of these figures as leaders and sources of

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*History Workshop Journal* 44 (1997): fig. 2. Zika’s article provides other illustrations of children being murdered and consumed, but again, there is nothing like the eviscerated child found in the Scene of Witchcraft.

224 Both Fra Angelico’s *Massacre of the Innocents* from circa 1450 and Matteo di Giovanni’s 1482 *Massacre of the Innocents* emphasize the brutality of the attack, illustrating daggers and swords piercing the babies’ bodies and drawing blood. In the earlier painting, a mother mourns an infant whose throat has been slit. The former is located in the Museo di San Marco in Florence and the latter in Sant' Agostino in Siena.

225 I would like to thank Dr. Leo Sin for walking me through the process of dissecting the abdomen and for his astute observations pertaining to the Scene of Witchcraft.

226 The methods witches purportedly used are addressed in “Vital Fluids” in chapter one.

227 Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi’s bronze panels cast for the competition to design and execute the doors of the Florentine baptistery are excellent examples of this subject.
wisdom. There are no comparisons between the witches’ and Abraham’s sacrifices in witchcraft treatises to this author’s knowledge. In the Scene of Witchcraft, the artist draws upon the power of suggestion and association based upon assumptions about his audience’s past visual experiences in order to expand the thematic content and thereby the interest in his work.

The theme of death at another’s hands continues into the background, where a human figure dangles from a gallows. The juxtaposition of the child sacrifice and executed criminal prompts consideration of the contexts for sanctioned murder. Infanticide was a capital offense and posed a continual problem for early modern European society. In this way, the picture relates to the Dutch Scene of Witchcraft (fig. 30). The inclusion of fantastic demonic creatures in the Italian work urges audiences to ponder the likelihood of anthropomancy and the use of children’s corpses in witchcraft, as well as the punishments being doled out to those found guilty of the crime.

Age and Youth

In highlighting the distinctions between the old and young witch, the author of the Scene of Witchcraft followed in the tradition of artists such as Francken. What makes this painting particularly interesting is its compositional frame. Previous images tended to represent the body of the witch in its entirety, whereas this painting depicts half-length figures. In the Scene of Witchcraft, the artist has narrowed the field of view, bringing the spectator into closer proximity with the witches. The more intimate perspective that results from the artist’s compositional choice encourages the viewer to join the witches at their altar.

Important in achieving the visual effect is the painting’s scale. Although not quite life-sized, the painting is much larger than a work like the anonymous Scene of Witchcraft from the circle of Cornelis Saftleven. As a result, the painting does not require the same close and prolonged reading that enables the viewer to appreciate the full meaning of the iconography. Instead, the artist employs a different tactic to engage his audience: the circular format of the figures, the projecting stone altar, the large scale, and the goat’s direct outward gaze insinuate the

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228 One of the few exceptions includes Agnolo Caroselli’s The Sorceress (circa 1620-25), which illustrates a well-dressed witch from the waist upwards (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 58).
spectator’s presence in the scene. Rather than simply allowing his audience to catch a glimpse of the witches’ mysterious rites, the artist incorporates the viewer into the scene. Furthermore, by virtue of the fact that it is the older witch who receives her companion’s complete attention, the viewer is accorded a similarly lower status.

The use of two half-length figures relates the painting to double portraits. Images like Francesco Beccaruzzi’s *A Ballplayer and his Page* or Anthony van Dyck’s *Thomas Killigrew and William, Lord Croft* depict two individuals going about their business, although they are aware of the audience’s presence and are suitably posed. While the *Scene of Witchcraft* is not a double portrait per say, it captures the intimacy of the relationship expressed in the aforementioned paintings and employs the same compositional approach as the earlier works. The *Scene of Witchcraft* shares in the late sixteenth century French taste for half-length female nudes depicted in portraits such as François Clouet’s *Diane de Poitiers* (fig. 48) from 1571 and the Master of the Fontainebleau School’s *Gabrielle d’Estrées and One of Her Sisters* (fig. 49) from circa 1595. The young witch in the *Scene of Witchcraft* reflects a different physical ideal, but still represents the appeal of the pale, youthful female body. Like the anonymous Italian work, the French paintings exhibit a preference for placing figures in the immediate foreground.

The contrast of the young and older woman also connects the painting to the early modern convention of portraying the different stages of life in a single image. Works of art such as Baldung’s *The Seven Ages of Woman* (fig. 50) offer similar, although more elaborately drawn out, juxtapositions of age as the *Scene of Witchcraft*. These images are demonstrations of

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229 Audience participation will be discussed further in the context of Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom* (fig. 73). Despite the difference in size, the painting’s daring subject matter and unusual composition suggest that its origins may be similar to that of Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* (fig. 103).

230 Beccaruzzi’s sixteenth century painting is located in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, while van Dyck’s 1638 picture is in the Royal Collection, Windsor. The identification of the second man as William is not certain.


232 This painting is housed in the Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig.
artistic skill, showing how their artists are able to articulate different bodily types. Both paintings participate in the larger themes of bodily transformation and physical decay that pervade the art of this period. In *Scene of Witchcraft*, the visualization of the witch as an old hag shares close similarities with early modern depictions of the female personification of death. Niklaus Manuel Deutsch’s *Death and the Canon* (fig. 51), a drawing executed between 1516 and 1519, shows a withered female death with long sagging breasts that closely resembles not only the artist’s *Witch* (fig. 52), but also the old witch type found in works such as the anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft*. That Death resembles the witch, and vice versa, reminds the viewer of the brevity of life as well as the danger posed by the female sex.

**Inconstancy and the Status of Women**

Together the two witches speak to concerns about the mutability of the female body: although she is young and beautiful now, the younger woman will eventually transform into her older counterpart. It is the comparison of the two bodies that calls attention to their specific form, as both types were fixtures in visual representations of witchcraft. The young witch (fig. 53) has soft features that communicate her tender youth and they stand in marked contrast to the muscular yet withered body of the old woman next to her (fig. 54). Veins are visible on the old witch’s sinewy limbs and her breasts sag atop a large ribcage. As opposed to the delicate pale skin tone that women are often depicted with in early modern art, the old witch’s skin resembles darkened leather. The aged witch’s body evokes artistic renderings of male rather than female figures.

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233 The author of the Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* displays his mastery of the ugly old woman and the young beauty in the same way Italian writers produced poems in both the Stilnovistic tradition, praising youthful beauty, and comic-realistic tradition, inveighing against the hideous old hag, in order to show their ability to master the two contrary poetic types [Patrizia Bettella, *The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Aesthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque* (Toronto, Buffalo, & London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 19-20].

234 Davidson cautions her readers that an artist may not have intended his witch to be ugly, arguing instead that he may have intended his figure to reflect ordinary people who are just not beautiful [Jane P. Davidson, *The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470-1750* (Freren: Luca, 1987), 104]. Bodin, on the other hand, reminds his readers of the adage “ugly as a witch” and states that “[t]hus one can conclude that women, who naturally have a sweet breath very much more than men, by intimacy with Satan become hideous, doleful, ugly and stinking to an unnatural degree.” (Bodin, 155).

235 Vulcan in Tintoretto’s *Venus, Mars, and Vulcan* is an example of this. Tintoretto’s canvas was painted circa 1551 and is housed in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. In her state of infertility, the witch can no longer fulfill the generative purpose of her gender. Despite this, the older woman retains her sexual appetite. Describing the
The masculine aspects of the old woman’s body allow her to be conceived of as a hybrid of genders or as a person able to shift between genders. Authors of witchcraft treatises acknowledged that it was possible for a woman to take on several male characteristics or in some cases, actually become a man. The artist of the *Scene of Witchcraft* suggests this possibility by presenting the old witch in masculine visual terms. Female witches encouraged the dissolution of the masculine and feminine boundary by refusing to adhere to the gender roles society had constructed for them. Moreover, with the onset of menopause, women were believed to be influenced by the menstrual blood that remained in their system inciting evil behaviours. The old witch in the *Scene of Witchcraft* is threatening because she exists in a liminal space, on the boundary of gender and sex.

While she appears as an innocent bystander beside the knife-wielding woman, the young witch is just as hazardous to the community. Nubile, attractive young women who did not yet have a husband were a source of concern, as they might be tempted to engage in sexual congress for their own pleasure or benefit, as a prostitute was understood to do. Loss of virginity and

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Thessalian witches and their inappropriate lust, Lucan writes: “By their spells love steals into insensible hearts against the decree of destiny, and austere old age burns with forbidden passion.” [Lucan, *The Civil War*, translated by J. D. Duff (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 337]. The challenges of managing women who were sexually active yet not bound by conventional familial roles will be addressed below.


Pliny noted that females sometimes transform into males (Pliny, 2:531). De Lancre discusses this occurrence and asserts that men are perfect and since nature is inclined to perfection: “Thus Nature would be false to her own nature if she changed a male into a female but not if she changed a female into a male.” (de Lancre, 265-6). With female genitalia interpreted to be the inversion of its male counterpart, a potential for reversal was thought to exist [Christopher Pye, *The Vanishing: Shakespeare, the Subject, and Early Modern Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 49]. Dyan Elliott discusses fears about men slipping into femaleness in her book *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, & Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 27-28.


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236 Pliny noted that females sometimes transform into males (Pliny, 2:531). De Lancre discusses this occurrence and asserts that men are perfect and since nature is inclined to perfection: “Thus Nature would be false to her own nature if she changed a male into a female but not if she changed a female into a male.” (de Lancre, 265-6). With female genitalia interpreted to be the inversion of its male counterpart, a potential for reversal was thought to exist [Christopher Pye, *The Vanishing: Shakespeare, the Subject, and Early Modern Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 49]. Dyan Elliott discusses fears about men slipping into femaleness in her book *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, & Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 27-28.


238 Bettella, 14, citing chapter 10 of *De secretis mulierum* (On the Secrets of Women).

239 Female witches usurping male roles will be discussed further in this chapter in the context of Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon*. 
unwanted pregnancies could bring shame to and have financial repercussions for the woman’s family. Uncontrolled young women might stray from their marriage beds or cause other women’s husbands to stray from theirs. The *Malleus Maleficarum* lists three types of women who were likely to become witches: these were poor married women who were afraid of becoming utterly destitute, young girls who feared that they would never find a husband, and young women who were promised marriage before being abandoned by their intended grooms.  

Writing in the late fifteenth century, the authors of the *Malleus* could not have foreseen that by the seventeenth century, the number of widows would soar, becoming problematic as a large population that was not firmly under the control of the patriarchal system. In many places, the high ratio of women to men presented a challenge to total male control of the economy and social hierarchy. These anxieties illustrate how female sexuality

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241 The populace of widows increased to constitute approximately twenty percent of society and this coincided with a rise in the population of young unmarried women that had grown due to the climb in the average age of marriage (Levack, 1995, 147).


While acknowledging a wide variety of variations and contexts, Rublack states that the average age for marriage in this period was twenty-five, unless the bride- and groom-to-be had to come up with the money on their own to start their life together, in which case they might have to wait several years more [Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 135]. In Protestant communities, marriage became the ideal state of female existence as nunneries were shut down after accusations of lust and luxury provoked outrage. The exaltation of marriage and condemnation of convents can be found in the writings of Erasmus, Agrippa of Nettesheim, and the Spaniard Juan Luis Vives [Petty Bange, Grietje Dresen, and Jeanne Marie Noël, “‘Who can find a Virtuous Woman?’ Married and Unmarried Women at the Beginning of Modern Time,” in: *Saints and She-devils: Images of Women in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, edited by Lène Dresen-Coenders (London: Rubicon Press, 1987), 21]. Additionally, Martin Luther asserted that marriage was the only acceptable life choice since God created it in the Garden of Eden before the Expulsion and because in its corrupted state, humanity could no longer achieve perfect chastity (Bange, Dresen, and Noël, 26). The revaluation of the human body and its sexuality resulted in the Protestant approval of clerical marriage with acceptance of the idea that people were inherently and unavoidably sexual [Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 173-174].

The religious debates in northern Europe, particularly in Germany, had a significant impact on the way that ordinary people lived their lives. Newfound attention to Christian morality resulted in a corresponding increase in charges levelled for sexually oriented crimes, infanticide, and witchcraft during the sixteenth century [Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 40]. For an explanation of how the rise of concerns about legitimacy, sexual behaviours, and infanticide related to guild regulations and the population growth in Germany see Maria R. Boes, “‘Dishonourable’ Youth, Guilds, and the Changed World View of Sex, Illegitimacy, and Women in Late-Sixteenth-Century Germany,” *Continuity and Change* 18, no. 3 (2003): 345-372.
could become a communal problem, as female desire had the potential to seriously disrupt the social hierarchy.

The young and old witches represent the transition of the body from fertility to non-fertility. In the *Scene of Witchcraft*, the artist shows that the witch’s body was not a single entity, having the potential to appear in a multitude of forms, each with their own set of dangers. Witches represented the most frightening forms that the female body could take, once outside of the restrictions established and imposed by society. For a male viewer, the two types of witches present different ends of the spectrum in terms of the kinds and degrees of risk witches represent. For a female viewer, the imaging of the old witch with the young one would provide a platform for contrast and comparison. The spectator could consider her individual experiences against the general notions of the female experience and the specific identity of the witch.

As the sixteenth century European community sought to re-establish what constituted acceptable behaviours and lifestyles for women, the apparatus of witchcraft provided a means through which various types of behaviour could be identified, articulated, and condemned in a array of media. The *Scene of Witchcraft* depicts the witch in her two most threatening guises: first, as the old member of the community who is no longer useful in society’s eyes and who functions as a corrupting influence, and second, as the young woman who has not yet been accorded a proper social role and who is therefore dangerous in her potential. Setting age aside, the women in the *Scene of Witchcraft* are united in their identity as witches, as well as in their

The mounting concern over marriage as an institution was accompanied by new rules governing sexuality and morality as the public judicial bodies took greater interest in the behaviour of people in both the public and private spheres as a means of controlling the populace. To help ensure that the rules were being followed venues where transgression might occur were banned with little actual effect; these included places such as such as brothels and events like spinning bees and dances (Rublack, 134-135). The interest in governing the private sphere of people’s lives had already begun in the latter half of the fifteenth century in places like Basel [Keith P. F. Moxey, “Master E. S. and the Folly of Love,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 11, no. 3-4 (1980): 146].

With the implementation of moral laws and redefinition of social boundaries, women faced an increasingly smaller range of options. Career opportunities for women dwindled over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries due to a growing number of regulations aimed at limiting their activities in guilds (Bange, Dresen, and Noël, 28). For investigations into how witchcraft was related to property, inheritance, and marriage, see Bange, Dresen, and Noël, 28-29; Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 2002), 265; and Levack, 1995, 148-149.
rejection of Christ in favour of the Devil, of the code of behaviour that society abides by, and of the laws of nature. Witches were believed to be a polluting force whose contaminating influence is intimately tied to their physical bodies, their sexuality, and their gender.\footnote{243}

The emphasis on the female community in the \textit{Scene of Witchcraft} draws attention to the issue of gender in the early modern era. The status of women was problematic and many of the concerns stemmed from ancient texts and biblical sources. In Genesis, there are two accounts of the creation of Eve that generated controversy concerning the relationship of women to men.\footnote{244} The first passage explains that Adam and Eve were created at the same time as equals, while the second describes how Eve was formed from Adam’s rib. The latter citation was used to undermine the humanness of women and thereby to deny them the same rights as men.\footnote{245}

Compounding the problem was Eve’s role in the Fall of Man. Artistic representations toyed with the idea of responsibility in their interpretation of the event: Eve is, however, often depicted accepting the forbidden fruit from the serpent or is shown in possession of the fruit.\footnote{246} Unsurprisingly, the authors of the \textit{Malleus Maleficarum} fully supported Eve bearing the blame for the Fall and they even go so far as to say that it was Eve, not the Devil, who was responsible

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\item\footnote{243} The concept of pollution is analyzed comprehensively by Mary Douglas in her book \textit{Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo} (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).
\item\footnote{244} Genesis 1:27 and 2:18-25.
\item\footnote{245} Susanne Hehenberger, “Dehumanised Sinners and their Instruments of Sin: Men and Animals in Early Modern Bestiality Cases, Austria, 1500-1800,” in: \textit{Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts}, vol. 2, edited by Karl A. E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), 385. In his \textit{Timaeus}, Plato asserted that men who lived wicked lives would be reborn as women, and, should their evilness continue, subsequently as animals until they once again submitted to reason and could be born again as men [Plato, \textit{Timaeus}, translated and edited by John Warrington (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1965), 42B-D \& 90E-92C]. Erasmus, on the basis of a misreading of Plato’s \textit{Timaeus} 91A, asserted in his \textit{The Praise of Folly} that the classical author had expressed reservations as to whether women should be classed as human or animal \{Margaret Miles, “Carnal Abominations: The Female Body as Grotesque,” in: \textit{The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflections}, edited by James Luther Adams and Wilson Yates [Grand Rapids (MI) \& Cambridge (GB): William B. Eerdmans, 1997], 105\}. After a serious debate, the Council of Trent decided in favour of the idea that women possessed souls, thereby placing them firmly within the human species and distinguishing them from brute beasts (Miles, 105).
\item\footnote{246} Examples include Baldung’s 1531 painting, \textit{Adam and Eve}, in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid where Adam stands behind his partner with his hands suggestively placed on her body. Eve grips the fruit in her left hand. Eve receives the fruit in Dürer’s engraving of \textit{Adam and Eve} from 1504. The iconographic differences between various representations of the Fall of Man are examined in J. B. Trapp, “The Iconography of the Fall of Man,” in: \textit{Approaches to ‘Paradise Lost’}, edited by C. A. Patrides (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), 223-265.
\end{itemize}
for tempting Adam. Women were theorized to be more susceptible to demonic interference due to the excessive desire for pleasure and wonder attributed to them. This is well demonstrated by the expression of the young witch in the Scene of Witchcraft. In accordance with this perspective, the artist of the Scene of Witchcraft presents the occult art as a distinctly feminine activity. In the painting, the transmission of knowledge and a distinct sense of continuity are suggested through the combination of the young and old bodies.

The painting offers a rare visualization of anthropomancy in conjunction with witchcraft and infanticide. It is through the brutalized body of the infant that the artist communicates the extent of the witches’ devotion to the Devil. The demon hovering above the old witch shows that it is the Devil, not God, who is the object of worship. The outward gaze of the goat, combined with the circular compositional format, implicate the audience in the sacrifice as well. The gruesome nature of the scene enables the audience to delight in the horror and danger of witchcraft. Through the inclusion of the divinatory practice, the work has the potential to either support or cast doubt upon the reality of the activities undertaken by witches and the credibility of other prognosticating arts.

The Scene of Witchcraft offers its audience a cautionary tale about the consequences of engagement in witchcraft through the visual contrast between the old hag and her beautiful

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247 Institoris and Sprenger, 121. In the Pauline tradition it was Adam who was responsible for mankind’s becoming mortal because it was to Adam, not Eve, that God decreed this punishment [Karl S. Guthke, The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40]. Perhaps it was this influence that led Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa to proclaim in his Declaratio de nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus (Declaration on the Nobility and Pre-eminence of the Female Sex) that Adam, as the first to be created, was an imperfect creature from whose flawed body the perfect Eve was fashioned [Bodo Brinkmann, ed., Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans Baldung Grien. Witches’ Lust and the Fall of Man: The Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien (Petersburg & Frankfurt: Michael Imhof, 2007), 179-180]. Agrippa’s relatively extreme pro-female stance was opposed, on the other hand, by others such as the anonymous author of a German treatise published in 1595 under the title A New Disputation Against Women, in which it is Proved that they are not Human Beings, a text which proved to be a catalyst for the debate over the status of women (Miles, 104-105).

The matter became less of an issue in the sixteenth century with the dissemination of the idea that the serpent, rather than the first parents, was responsible for the temptation, as stated in the Book of Wisdom (of Solomon) 2:24 which reads: “Through envy of the devil came death into the world.” (Guthke, 123).

248 De Lancre, 81. De Lancre cites this inability to check one’s desires as the reason that some philosophers, when seeking to categorize the world, chose to situate women between men and animals. It was due to the idea that women were more susceptible to demonic influence that they sometimes garnered more understanding and sometimes even mercy from demonologists.
companion. By placing the figures in the immediate foreground on a scale that is close to life-sized, the artist draws the viewer into the scene. Thus the spectator is not able to merely peak into the scene but becomes a participant. The use of the double-portrait type encourages a sense of familiarity at the same time the content may be horrifying the viewer. Placed among witches, the viewer is provided with a behavioural model in the form of the young witch. The marvelling gaze of the younger woman at the conviction of her elder serves to underscore the physical as well as the mental metamorphoses that accompany the transformation of an individual into a witch. The instability of the witch’s body, here represented in the much maligned female form, is a visual reflection of her inconstant nature.

Dosso Dossi’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*

Circe was a central figure in the development of witchcraft imagery in early modern Italy. Her frequent appearance in artistic representations of the Odyssean theme has led to some debate in the art historical scholarship as to whether or not Circean imagery should be included within the discourse on witchcraft in art. The controversy has focused on the argument that many depictions of Circe are simply narrative illustrations and lack the requisite iconography, such as the oven fork or burning cauldron, which would identify Circe with contemporary witchcraft. While it is important to take these concerns into consideration, there are representations of the sorceress that refuse to be bound by the limitations of literary narratives. The present study will demonstrate how the classically inspired witch provided a vehicle through which Italian artists could address themes and contemporary concerns raised by witchcraft.

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249 Guy Tal has advocated for Circe’s inclusion and has met with mild resistance from Charles Zika who is cautious about drawing distinctions between narrative illustrations of Circe and her use as a symbolic representative of early modern witchcraft [Guy Tal, “Disbelieving in Witchcraft: Allori’s Melancholic Circe in the Palazzo Salviati,” *Athanor* 22 (2004): 57-58; and Charles Zika, “Images of Circe and Discourse of Witchcraft, 1480-1580,” *Zeitenblicke* 1, no. 1 (2002): 33-34, <http://www.zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2002/01/zika/zika.html> (accessed September 17, 2007). Zika’s article was intended to rectify the absence of Circe in witchcraft scholarship, a lacuna the author laments given that Circe provided a model for the sixteenth century conception of the witch (Zika, “Images of Circe,” 4). He asserts that witchcraft imagery had little impact on depictions of Circe, other than the addition of the wand, although he concedes that the themes of female dominance, loss of masculine authority, and submission to animalistic instincts establishes the connections between Circe and witches.

Circean images concentrate on the relationship between the sorceress and those she encounters in her realm. The often ambiguous identity of the creatures – be they men or animals – appearing in the imagery have provided artists with the opportunity to explore a rich array of material pertaining to human desire and magic’s potential to transform the body.

Dosso Dossi’s early sixteenth century painting, *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* (fig. 55), presents a deliberately open depiction of the sorceress that invites a complexly interrelated series of possible identities for the female witch. In crafting his image, Dosso wove together elements from Circean literature and established visual motifs, including the Venetian nude in a landscape, the classical nymph, the ancient witch, and the deceitful temptress. The resulting representation is a newly classicized take on the solitary witch situated in a landscape; in this regard, the painting is unusual for its time. Contemporaneous representations of witches tended to show them in groups or as a solitary human involved with demonic or mythological beings, while representations of Circe included Odysseus, his men, or both. Dosso’s painting offers a different perspective of the witch, one seen through the filter of

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250 The dating of *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* remains problematic, although there is now general scholarly consensus that this painting was produced during the early stages of Dosso’s career. Technological analysis has revealed that Dosso originally painted Circe with a much thinner body; her present form is due to later modifications, perhaps made in the 1520s [Peter Humfrey, “Two Moments in Dosso’s Career as a Landscape Painter,” in: *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven F. Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 204]. This has led Peter Humfrey to argue that the painting was executed before 1513. Burton Fredericksen suggests that *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* may be the painting of a witch described in the inventory of Charles I’s collection at Hampton Court that was recorded as coming from Mantua and may in fact be the painting described in a Mantuan inventory as “a landscape with a sorceress making figures on the ground” [Burton Fredericksen, “Collecting Dosso: The Trail of Dosso’s Paintings from the Late Sixteenth Century Onward,” in: *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven F. Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 386-387]. Since Dosso began his early career in Mantua, Fredericksen acknowledges that if the circumstantial provenance of the painting proves to be accurate, then this could help situate the painting within Dosso’s early career.

251 Baldung depicted witches in groups in his prints and drawings and was in the process of establishing a strong convention for representing witches at this time. Dosso may have been influenced by earlier imagery depicting a single witch in the company of demonic or mythological characters, such as Dürer’s *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 2). Alternatively, Dosso may have looked to the simple woodcut illustrations in witchcraft and demonological treatises for some of the possible identities of his sorceress. Later examples of the Circean motif are discussed in Bertina Suida Manning’s article, “The Transformation of Circe: The Significance of the Sorceress as Subject in 17th Century Genoese Painting,” in: *Scritti di storia dell’arte in onore di Federico Zeri*, vol. 2 (Milan: Electa, 1984), 689-708.
classical and popular fiction yet still heavily concerned with the discourse on witchcraft’s magical potential.

Both Dosso’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* and his slightly later *Enchantress* (fig. 56) are distinct from other witchcraft images, as they are so openly suggestive and ambiguous with regard to the identity of the sorceress, affecting how the images are interpreted. These are the only depictions of witches by the artist that are known. If *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* is indeed a very early work in the artist’s career, it would serve to demonstrate Dosso’s inclination towards using multiple literary sources as inspiration for a composition. Other works in the artist’s oeuvre are similarly complex; his *Mythological Allegory* in the Galleria Borghese in Rome, for instance. Dosso draws heavily and consistently on mythology as well as ancient and contemporary literature for his pictures. While *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* fits into the artist’s corpus in terms of its conceptual approach, figural style, and literary allusions, it stands out as a novelty within the genre of witchcraft imagery as a whole.

*Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* depicts a nude woman seated with a large stone tablet before a body of water at the edge of a clearing. The sorceress is surrounded by a series of birds and animals that she ignores. These include a spoonbill, falcon, and an owl, as well as two dogs and a pair of deer. A book lays open at the sorceress’ feet (fig. 57); the occult symbols

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252 The *Enchantress* is sometimes alternatively titled *Melissa* and *Melissa/Circe*. This painting is dated to circa 1515-1516.

253 This would mean that Dosso’s approach may not necessarily reflect the influence of the court of Ferrara, an environment brimming with creative minds undertaking artistic and intellectual pursuits.

254 In selecting the spoonbill, Dosso alerts his audience to the didactic content of his painting. Hieronymus Bosch had employed this waterfowl numerous times in his works to allude to sinful behaviour and its consequences. See Peter Glum, “Divine Judgment in Bosch’s ‘Garden of Earthly Delights’,” *The Art Bulletin* 58, no. 1 (March, 1976): 50-51.

The owl is associated with filth and the demonic world. The daytime blindness of the owl is here juxtaposed with the sharp vision of the falcon, a bird which turns away from Circe, suggesting both a desire and inability to flee the scene. In the hierarchy of birds, the falcon was cast as a supporter of the eagle, the ruler of all the fowl, and thus functioned as symbol for those who upheld proper authority. The falcon’s association with the eagle is emphasized in the *Parliament of Birds* [Malcolm Andrew, ed., *Two Early Renaissance Bird Poems: The Harmony of Birds, The Parliament of Birds* (London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1984), 26 & 59].

Two dogs inhabit the scene: a brown greyhound-like dog stands next to its small white companion. This second canine looks both young and concerned, an emotion that is communicated through the animal’s alert gaze and the fact that its tail emerges from underneath the creature’s hind leg; the tucking of the tail between the legs is
in the book and the illegible writings on the tablet (fig. 58) indicate that the woman is engaged in magical pursuits and can therefore be identified as a witch.  

Dosso’s sorceress holds the large flat tablet in her arms. Her left hand rests upon the text with fingers splayed, as if to suggest they mark her place while reading; however, as in Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5), the deliberately unintelligible inscription prevents the audience from taking part in the magic. Barred from the knowledge of the mysterious tablet, the viewer is unable to determine the true nature of the witch’s magic and therefore can only imagine its potential. The witch’s book is ornamented with an astrological chart, suggesting that she is learned in this art and has waited until the opportune moment to cast her spell. Without typically a sign of fear. The phallic allusions of the tail may also serve as a commentary on sexual desire and self-control, reflecting the encounters between Circe and Odysseus’ men as well as Circe and Odysseus. For discussion of the artistic models for these canines, see Stefania Macioce, “Figure della Magia,” in: *L’incantesimo di Circe: Temi di magia nella pittura da Dosso Dossi a Salvator Rosa*, edited by Stefania Macioce (Rome: Logart Press, 2004), 29; and Andrea Bayer, “Dosso Dossi and the Role of Prints in Northern Italy,” in: *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven F. Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 234.

While dogs could connote loyalty and faithfulness, they could also represent lechery and sexual transgression, qualities that were frequently attributed to the witch. In addition, the dog was perceived as being susceptible to depression and insanity, a predisposition which connected the animal to both the melancholic and the witch [Philip L. Sohm, “Dürer’s ‘Melancholia I’: The Limits of Knowledge,” *Studies in the History of Art* 9 (1980): 16].

The stag has small horns which suggest that this animal is either a young male, or that the artist has chosen to depict the beginning of a new season when the stag’s antlers have not yet had a chance to grow. This allusion to loss and re-growth play into the principal theme of transformation. Deer were closely associated with sexuality, fertility, and lascivious behaviour and it was for this reason that a multitude of aphrodisiacs were made from their body parts (Bax, 1979, 32; and Pliny 3:81). Like the witch, the deer was characterized as exhibiting a lack of restraint.

255 The inscription on the tablet is largely lost [Felton Gibbons, *Dosso and Battista Dossi: Court Painters at Ferrara* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 215]. Gibbons observed that the painting has sustained considerable damage along its left edge and in the upper left corner.

256 The artist painted a circular design containing concentric rings with regular divisions between them that identify this as an astrological chart, rather than a pentacle as has been previously suggested. For the identification of the image in the book as a pentacle, see Peter Humfrey, “Dosso Dossi: His Life and Works,” in: *Dosso’s Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven F. Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 89.

The interest in astrology declined at the court of Ferrara after Domenico Maria Novara died in 1504 but at least two other astrologers continued working at the Este court, including Pietro Bono dell’Avogaro and Luca Gannrico (Gibbons, 7). Astrology that extended beyond learning about one’s inner nature was frequently condemned (Bodin, 80). While diviners claimed to learn from astrology, their opponents asserted that they were being informed by the devil (Ciruelo, 132). See also the discussion of Francken’s *Witches Assembly* (fig. 5).
concrete points of reference, the audience can posit only possible identities and intentions for the sorceress. The nature of the magical operation is uncertain, but the conjunction of the witch and the creatures gathered around her suggests the controversial theme of bodily transformation.

**Transformation**

The idea of bodily transformation effected through magical operations was subject to heated debate in the early modern era. Belief in the power of witches to change their own forms or those of others varied widely and is closely related to accusations against suspected werewolves. In addition to the profusion of bodily metamorphoses described in classical mythology and sixteenth century literature, there were historical and judicial records which supported the idea. Over time, the theories of transformation involving werewolves and witches were subject to increasing scrutiny and criticism. Demonic interference with human sensory perception was the primary explanation authorities gave to answer why people appeared to transform or believed themselves to have transformed into animals. In spite of scepticism, the possibility of bodily metamorphosis remained a source of fascination. The uncertainties surrounding transformation positioned the topic as a theme ripe for artistic exploitation.

Existing interpretations of the Circean myth show Circe in the company of Odysseus and his men. *Circe and her Magical Arts Confronting Ulysses and his Transformed Companions* (fig. 59), a woodcut that appeared in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* in 1493, is typical of this tradition and demonstrates that this subject had currency in the north as well. In *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*, the presence of the animals and the magical texts suggest that a metamorphosis has taken place, but, unlike the other contemporary representations of the theme, neither the

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The combination of the magical book, tablet, and animals may be a reference to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa’s *De occult philosophia* (Of Occult Philosophy), as the author goes into great detail as to how magical influences affect a variety of animals (Macioce, 30-31). Agrippa’s treatise was written in 1510 and published in 1531.

257 Already in the tenth century, Father Peter Damian had reported to Pope Leo VII that two German witches were changing their visitors into animals (de Lancre, 255).

258 The illustration was produced in Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff’s workshop, perhaps by Albrecht Dürer.
transformation of human victims into animals nor the drinking from the sorceress’ cup is shown.\textsuperscript{259} Instead, the audience, led on by the mystical markings on the tablet and in the book, is left to contemplate what relationships between the witch and animals might indeed be possible.

While the identity of the sorceress is ambiguous, there are several textual sources that aid in the understanding of Dosso’s figure. For a viewer who approaches the work with an open mind, the painting allows for a consideration of several identities simultaneously; this means of comparison within a single figure is a feature of the visual medium and was unavailable to contemporary authors. The sorceress has been identified as Circe or Alcina, transformers of men into animals, and Melissa, a witch who reverses Alcina’s magic and kindly returns men to their human forms.\textsuperscript{260} The beautiful woman amongst animals also calls to mind the myth of Canens.\textsuperscript{261}

\textsuperscript{259} In Parmigianino’s drawing of Circella from circa 1527, the witch is depicted feeding Odysseus’ men from her poisoned chalice (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 151). Tibaldi’s \textit{Ulysses and the Sorceress Circe}, from circa 1555, depicts Ulysses’ men writhing on the ground as they metamorphose into animals (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 212). Ulysses remains unchanged, and is in the process of drawing his sword as he confronts the witch. Unlike Dosso’s painting, which exists as an individual work of art, Tibaldi’s painting is a fresco that is part of a series decorating a room in the Palazzo Poggi in Bologna.

\textsuperscript{260} The witch’s position amongst the wildlife has led to the suggestion that Matteo Maria Boiardo’s unfinished \textit{Orlando Innamorato} (Orlando in Love) from 1494 may have one source of inspiration for Dosso’s painting. One passage in this narrative describes how the hero Orlando sees a wall painting of Circe which depicts the witch situated among a group of birds and animals that is evocative of \textit{Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape}, while another passage recounts the sorceress’ transformation into a white deer (Humfrey, “Dosso Dossi: His Life and Works,” 90). Although Dosso’s doe is clearly brown, the viewer may have made the general association between the female deer and sorceress. Alcina and Melissa are characters drawn from Ariosto’s \textit{Orlando Furioso} (Orlando Furious). While \textit{Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape} may predate Ariosto’s text, which was circulating in the Ferrarese court already in 1512, it is possible that Dosso was influenced by the much lauded narrative.

\textsuperscript{261} Canens was a nymph whose singing calmed wild beasts. According to the classical tradition, Circe fell in love with Picus who spurned her advances and pursued Canens instead. The poor nymph consequently became a victim of the sorceress’ wrath: her beloved was transformed into a bird and she died of grief. While Canens’ beauty inspires Picus’ love and thereby his animal instinct to procreate, his rejection of Circe incited the sorceress’ envy, rage, and her desire for revenge. Both Picus and Circe reject reason and thereby give in to their bestial passions. The story is written by Ovid in his \textit{Metamorphoses}, translated by Anthony S. Kline, in the University of Virginia Library, Bk XIV: 320-434, \texttt{http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Ovhome.htm} (accessed November 20, 2009).

When confronted by Picus’ men, Circe presents a host of unnatural images, including hovering ghosts and blood stained grass, to inspire fear before she turned the company into animals. In another example of transformation as a means of revenge caused by a spurned desire, Circe changes Scylla into a monster (Ovid, \textit{Metamorphoses}, Bk XIV:1-74).

Similarly, Pamphile would become enamoured with young men and if they spurned her advances, she would either transform them into rocks or animals or kill them with her magic [Francesco Maria Guazzo,
Canens and Circe share the ability to control animals, a trait that also aligns them with the protectress of animals in Arcadia, again evoking the Venetian landscape tradition. The taming of wild animals was often viewed as a sign of power and the presence of such animals in Dosso’s image should be read as an indicator of the witch’s dominance in her realm. The nature of the relationship between the woman and the animals remains unclear. Consequently, viewers are left uncertain as to the witch’s identity and her intentions.

It has been argued that Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape depicts Circe teaching her occult knowledge to the animals, which are interpreted to be Odysseus’ men who, although physically transformed, retain at least a part of their human minds. Visually, this reading is problematic. While the creatures are arranged around the witch and many face her, most are not actually focused upon her. Nor does the woman seem to be the least bit concerned with her animal audience. Instead, she appears to be absorbed in the performance of her own magic. Whether or not her magic is effective remains to be seen, because, as was noted above, no transformation or any other magical act is visibly taking place.

There are, however, further clues that can enhance the understanding of Dosso’s painting. In Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape natural growth is subtly compared with magical or unnatural change. The verdant landscape, the new growth of the stag’s horns, and the white puppy are suggestive of the generative and transformative seasons of spring and summer. The


262 Macioce, 30.

264 The possible identification of the sorceress with Melissa allows Dosso to challenge his audience with the notion of the helpful witch. In the Italian tradition there were witches and those who fought against witches that came to be identified as witches themselves {Carlo Ginzburg, The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteen & Seventeenth Centuries, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi [Markham, et al.: Penguin, 1985 (English 1983; Italian 1966)]}.

265 Yarnall, 115-116. Circe is the figure Cesare Ripa uses to represent the passion of love in his emblem book. He explains that the sorceress effects the transformation since her victims have cast aside reason and allowed themselves to become slaves to pleasure. See Cesare Ripa, “Passione d’Amore,” 397-398, cited by Manning, 700.


cyclical and progressive development of the natural world is here juxtaposed with the magical potential of the witch. Witches were theorized to generate transformations, by means of occult magic and demonic assistance, that ran contrary to the laws of nature. Transformative magic replaces positive development, in which healthy babies are born or improvements are made upon living men, with a disruptive, even backward, process. The witch engaged with transformative magic hinders this natural progression when she causes a human to revert to what the early modern mindset considered a more primitive form.

The possibility of transformation presented problems for how the human mind and soul were understood. In some versions of the classical tale of Odysseus’ voyage the hero’s men were content to live as animals, an account which problematized the interpretation of the myth and consequently the readings of this painting. Viewers could contemplate the possible advantages of living a simple, bestial existence and ponder the benefits of being born a human, which included possessing a soul. Many contemporary authors, however, argued vehemently against the possibility of a human mind occupying an animal body. Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* is often cited for its tale of a man accidentally transformed into a donkey and suffering an

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266 The Florentine Giovanni Battista Gelli wrote a text titled *Circe* that consisted of dialogues between Ulysses, Circe, and animals that used to be men (Yarnall, 110-111). It was first published in 1549 and went through five further editions before the end of the century. In Gelli’s dialogue Ulysses is surprised to learn that, after Circe allows them the power to speak, the animals are not interested in returning to their human forms.

267 Bodin states that Circe was unable to transform the bodies of Odysseus’ men but instead manipulated their minds and senses so that they “were like pigs”; however, he asserts that authors agree that in lycanthropy, the body does in fact change, although the mind remains intact (Bodin, 128). Contemporary authors did not always share Bodin’s opinions, contending that bodily transformation is merely an illusion caused by demonic manipulation of the senses and the mind of the supposedly transformed individual (Remy, 108-109). De Lancre argues against the idea that Odysseus’ men retained their reason when they were changed into animals and questions how, after the excruciating experience of being in the body of an animal that is not capable of reason, a man could possibly regain his ability to reason (de Lancre, 261-263). In addition to the injury caused to the victim, de Lancre notes that the change would be offensive to God. He reports, on the basis of testimony by a witch, that when they assumed the form of an animal, witches did not speak (de Lancre, 150). De Lancre’s stance is typical:

It is clear that the human soul cannot assume the form of an animal, any more than the soul of a lion can produce the body of a horse. This is because, in order to give life to any animal whatsoever, the substance that contains the very nature of an animal seeks and desires an appropriate and particular arrangement of its body, a division and harmony of parts, without which the body could not assume its proper form (de Lancre, 258).

Further complicating the issue of animal transformation was Guazzo’s assertion that this type of metamorphosis was bestowed upon witches by demons as a reward for their devoted and sustained service (Guazzo, 83-84). Witches’ transformative abilities were perceived as being essential to the accomplishment of their usual tasks, such as entering and exiting households without being seen. Much debate over transformation continued throughout the early modern period.
abusive animal existence. In this text, the protagonist struggles to reconcile his reasoning human mind and bestial form. On a fundamental level, victims of transformation would suffer a loss of identity, control over their bodies, and even their minds. Given the continued effort to maintain distinctions between the human and the animal, and, given the superiority accorded to the male mind over the female at this time, Dosso presented the early modern male viewer with an image that was entertaining as well as frightening.

In *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*, Dosso hints at transformation through his inclusion of the magical tablet and text. The incorporation of animals into the composition allows the artist to simultaneously suggest the transformation of the witch and her victims. Allusions to and depictions of transformation served to remind the viewer of the inconstancy of witches and the awesome potential of magic. Witches were accused of resisting identification through the use of clothing, as discussed in Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5), and even more dramatically, through the physical alteration of their bodies. Dosso chose to explore an aspect of witchcraft that was fraught with great uncertainty. Due to her transformative potential, the witch was characterized as occupying an unstable position between the human and animal worlds.

**Temptress**

The warm tones of the sorceress’ skin stand out against the cool greens and blues of the landscape surrounding her. Seated on a dark gray rock, the witch twists her body and casts her unfocused gaze down towards the pool of water before her, her lips parted in concentration. A green cloth covers the woman’s left leg and hides her modesty, while at the same time drawing...

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269 Giovanni Battista della Porta would write on this theme later in the century. He challenged the existence of a boundary between the human and animal when he traced the generation of humanity back to its bestial origins, thereby implying that the animal body was an earlier state to which humanity would revert should people submit to their bestial passions [Jean Céard, “The Devil and Lovesickness: Views of Sixteenth Century Physicians and Demonologists,” in: *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Traditions of Love in the Renaissance*, edited by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Ottawa: Doverhouse, 1992), 34].

Witches had the ability to make men behave like animals as well: “For [the devil] makes us meet women who charm us so much, poisoning and altering our senses, that we are not just admires or lovers, like normal men, but rather wild animals lusting after prey.” (de Lancre, 241).
attention to the soft s-curve of her female form. The beautiful nude situated in a wooded area is intended to position the artist and his work within the Venetian tradition of representing Venus begun by Giorgione and subsequently reinterpreted by Titian.\(^{270}\) Giorgione’s *Sleeping Venus* (fig. 60) from circa 1510 situates the goddess within and shows her in harmony with the landscape, aligning the beauty and fertility of both the woman and her setting. Just as Titian will later awaken Venus and fuse her with a mortal woman in his *Venus of Urbino* (fig. 61) from 1538, so too does Dosso rouse Venus and expand her identity through references to earlier imagery and the addition of iconographic detail. Dosso draws attention to the similarities between Circe and Venus, the goddess of love, who was often associated with witchcraft because of her lustful nature.

By inserting his witch into an established and renowned visual tradition, Dosso was able to make a statement about his place in the genealogy of great artists. He underscored this point while drawing attention to his and the viewer’s erudition through his references to earlier works of art. The pose Dosso selects for his protagonist is a quotation of both the young man leaning against rocks in Giulio Campagnola’s engraving, *Young Shepherd* (fig. 62) and the beautiful young woman in Leonardo’s lost *Standing Leda* (fig. 63), now known through a copy that was formerly in the Spiridon Collection in Rome.\(^{271}\)

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\(^{270}\) Dosso would have been familiar with the works of the Venetian masters as he travelled to Venice prior to accepting the position at the ducal court in Ferrara in 1512 or 1513. Dosso likely received formal training during his Venetian sojourn (Gibbons, 26).


\(^{271}\) Humfrey, “Dosso Dossi: His Life and Works,” 90. Both works date to the first decade of the sixteenth century. Tancred Borenius drew the comparison between Dosso’s Circe and the *Young Shepherd* in 1914.

That Dosso was vying with the greatest achievements of his contemporaries in the visual arts is also evident in the little pebbles that lie at the water’s edge and the silhouetted tree trunks that are drawn from Giovanni Bellini’s *Feast of the Gods*, a painting that Dosso could have seen in Bellini’s workshop during his time in Venice (Humfrey, “Dosso Dossi: His Life and Works,” 91). The convincing rendering of objects seen through water suggest that Dosso was influenced, either directly or indirectly through the Venetians, by northern artists seeking to depict their observations of nature as accurately as possible. For the motif of stones visible through clear water, Bellini and Dosso may have been aware of and seeking to surpass the skill of northern painters, such as Konrad Witz and his *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, painted in 1444. The German painter went so far as to show the optical distortion caused by refraction where the saint and rocks break the water’s surface.
The left side of the image opens into a landscape with multistoried structures in the distance (fig. 64). These symbols of civilized society are intended to stand in contrast to the natural environment of the sorceress and serve to identify her as existing outside of the community’s boundaries in the same fashion as the witches of Francken and Baldung. The idealistic scene with its lush green vegetation, harmonious existence of animals, the bodily perfection of the young woman, and the lack of any other civilizing forms is suggestive of Arcadia or at least a paradisiacal world. The utopian nature of this setting evokes a time and place beyond the reaches of humanity, perhaps a golden age, yet one fraught with the dangers of magic. The idealism of this scene leads the viewer to think of the enchantress as equally removed; the consequence of this division is that the sorceress and her abilities are separated from the contemporary world, meaning that Dosso has found yet another means to question the reality of witchcraft and suggest its disconnect to the viewer.

The cluster of trees and figures on the right side of the image is only partially balanced by the open vista and buildings within the landscape, and this absence of a strong compositional feature, in conjunction with the sorceress’ turned head, provides an entryway for the viewer or for an unseen visitor or object into the image. Even the light shines from the left, as revealed by the dark shadow of the doe. A sense of hopeful expectation and longing for the success of the magical incantation is conveyed through the sorceress’ facial features, although her attention remains focused, and it is up to the viewer to imagine what has elicited this expression.

In the legends of Circe, the witch preys on the eagerness of men to indulge their appetites and it is through the exploitation of this weakness that she is able to invert the gender roles characteristic of the patriarchal social structure. Dosso’s woman is a witch whose undesirable inner nature is hidden behind the beautiful face that she uses to deceive her victims. In Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape, the subject matter, that is the magical activities of a witch,


273 Homer has Hermes warn Odysseus that if he gives in to Circe’s desires on her terms, instead of his own, she will have unmanned him and made him subject to her (Roberts, 199).

274 The Devil presented witches, like Dosso does the viewer, with temptations of the flesh in an effort to win souls through desire (de Lancre, 240).
informs the viewer that the lovely form is in fact dangerous.\footnote{While Dosso’s Enchantress (fig. 56) and Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape do not show either woman in song, the alluring voice of the sorceress was another tool that helped her ensnare men. It was Circe’s singing that first alerted Odysseus’ men to the sorceress’ presence (Yarnall, 11). The lamia is mentioned in chapter one within a larger discussion of blood-sucking witches.} Agnolo Bronzino communicates the same message in his Allegory of Lust (fig. 65), in the National Gallery, London, from circa 1545. Just as the animals and mysterious texts around Dosso’s witch caution the audience of the possibility that they too could be transformed, the stinger in the hand of Bronzino’s pretty young maid and her serpentine lower body warn of impending injury.\footnote{The figure does not have “falsely reversed, left-to-right human hands” as has been previously suggested [John F. Moffitt, “An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid: Vasari’s ‘Fraud’ with Reference to Bronzino’s ‘Sphinx’,” \textit{Renaissance Quarterly} 49, no. 2 (Summer, 1996): 303]. Rather, Bronzino simply gives the impression that this is so, requiring the viewer to study his figure thoroughly to determine her real nature.} The figure in the London painting is a composite of the human and animal: an elegantly dressed young woman to the waist, and a scaly monster with leonine legs and a snake-like tail below.\footnote{The girl’s face is conspicuously adorned with rouge. For the theme of cosmetics as a transformative agent intended to conceal, see Bettella, 28ff.} Bronzino has conveyed the twisted nature of this creature through her pose, which is in fact an extreme distortion of the contrapposto pose of the Medici ruler in Bronzino’s Cosimo I as Orpheus (fig. 66).\footnote{De Lancre uses the terms strix, lamia, and witch interchangeably in his treatise. Del Rio suggests that judges ignore what terms are used to identify the witch since the various names all mean the same thing (Del Rio, 224-5). Roman strix or Salic striges ate human flesh (de Lancre, 317). The strix was so named for its similarity to the screech owl and to Homer’s anthropophages, the Lestrigoniubs (de Lancre, 317). “Striges, named after an ill-omened night-bird, are believed to bring death to children.” (Del Rio, 35).} The lamia fits into Bronzino’s allegory as

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The unusual figure that Bronzino presents is a lamia, a creature from ancient literature that was known to fly and have a thirst for human blood, two qualities that led to the lamia’s association with the witch in the early modern era.\footnote{The lamia appears in Philostratus’ Life of Apollonius wherein the protagonist Menippus comes very close to marrying a lamia or vampire but is warned of the delusion cast over him by Apollonius of Tyana [Philostratus, \textit{The Life of Apollonius of Tyana: Books I-IV}, vol. 1, edited and translated by Christopher P. Jones [London & Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2005], 371-377]. Lamia uses the transformative powers bestowed upon her by Zeus to seduce young men and to kill children [Beryl Rowland, \textit{Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 115].} The lamia is a composite of the human and animal: an elegantly dressed young woman to the waist, and a scaly monster with leonine legs and a snake-like tail below.\footnote{The girl’s face is conspicuously adorned with rouge. For the theme of cosmetics as a transformative agent intended to conceal, see Bettella, 28ff.} Bronzino has conveyed the twisted nature of this creature through her pose, which is in fact an extreme distortion of the contrapposto pose of the Medici ruler in Bronzino’s Cosimo I as Orpheus (fig. 66).\footnote{De Lancre uses the terms strix, lamia, and witch interchangeably in his treatise. Del Rio suggests that judges ignore what terms are used to identify the witch since the various names all mean the same thing (Del Rio, 224-5). Roman strix or Salic striges ate human flesh (de Lancre, 317). The strix was so named for its similarity to the screech owl and to Homer’s anthropophages, the Lestrigoniubs (de Lancre, 317). “Striges, named after an ill-omened night-bird, are believed to bring death to children.” (Del Rio, 35).} The lamia fits into Bronzino’s allegory as
part of a visual compendium on the apparent benefits offered by lust, which in reality cause pain. Even the joyous figure of the young boy with flowers is about to end as he steps on a branch of thorns. All pleasant aspects of lust are simply illusions, just as the promises and powers of the sorceress are mere delusions. In both pictures, the image of the temptress is one of luxurious surfaces that are only just capable of concealing the menace within.

Writing on the nature of women, Institoris and Sprenger refer to Valerius’ letter To Rufinus, in which Valerius compares women to the chimera. The authors of the Malleus follow this description with their own commentary on female character: “For she is lying in speech just as she is in nature. She is stinging and yet pleasing, and as a result of this the voice of women is compared to the song of the Sirens, who attract those who sail past with sweet melody and eventually kill them.” While Bronzino’s human/animal hybrid is clearly armed, the only indication that Dosso gives that something might be amiss are the book and magical tablet, leaving it up to the individual viewer to consider the risks involved in interacting with this woman. The witch may suddenly slip from a woman into an animal or monstrous form. This not only poses a physical danger to others but allows the witch to move through the community undetected. In this way, the sorceress is a figure with powerful potential. Considerations when approaching the witch include the possibility of being transformed into an animal, which could

The lamia is closely related to several hybrid creatures possessing the face of a beautiful young woman and the lower body of a hideous monster. The ancients believed in the existence of wild creatures with the head and breasts of attractive women but with the lower bodies of serpents (de Lancre, 325). These creatures lured men with their appearance in order to eat them. In Peter Comestor’s Historia Scholastica from the twelfth century, the author describes the serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden as a snake with the face of a virgin; a creature that came to be known as the dracontopede or the virgin-faced dragon [Nona C. Flores, “‘Effigies amicitiae…veritas inimicitiae’: Antifeminism in the Iconography of the Woman-Headed Serpent in Medieval and Renaissance Art and Literature,” in: Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays, edited by Nona C. Flores (New York & London: Garland, 1996), 167-168]. While the mythological figure of the lamia draws upon a different tradition, by the early modern era there were associations made between the Christian serpent and the monsters of ancient legend. Among these are the female scorpion, the siren, and the viper.

Quoting Valerius, Institoris writes that the rose is an attribute of Venus because while it may have a beautiful colour, its thorns pose a danger (Institoris and Sprenger, 121).

The chimera in this account possesses a leonine face, a goat’s midsection, and the tail of a poisonous snake. Institoris and Sprenger, 121.
ultimately mean the loss of one’s capacity to reason, one’s identity, and, more critically, one’s soul.

By isolating his sorceress from any one particular narrative, Dosso opens his image up to multiple interpretations. In this way, his painting is more closely related to contemporary scenes of witchcraft, wherein artists were exploring the possibilities inherent in magic and witchcraft, than to depictions of Circe. Within the corpus of witchcraft imagery, the treatment of witchcraft through the layering of the Venetian nude and the guises of sorceresses from contemporary and classical literature is singular. Dosso highlights the uncertainty surrounding the witch’s intentions and in so doing, cautions men of the dangerous potential of physical attraction. The rejection of reason was especially central to fears concerning the loss of the self and is embodied by the idea of animal transformation. *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* and Dosso’s later *Enchantress* (fig. 56) helped to prepare the way for representations of the witch as a beautiful melancholic lost within her own thoughts in a ruinous landscape, which became a popular motif in early modern Italian art.

**Hans Baldung Grien’s *Witch and Dragon***

The *Witch and Dragon* (fig. 67) by Baldung is a sexually explicit image that invites the viewer into the private world of the witch’s forbidden pleasure.\(^{283}\) The drawing is extremely unusual in the corpus of witchcraft imagery because it shows sexual activity taking place between a human and an animal, in this case, a witch and a demon in the guise of a dragon.\(^{284}\) Baldung’s drawing speaks to the full potentiality of the idealized nude female body in art. Using the language of the classical nude as interpreted in the north, Baldung confronts his audience with the beauty and satisfaction that an erotically charged image can afford. In choosing to depict the sexual sins of a witch, the artist draws attention to contemporary concerns about the

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\(^{283}\) I would like to thank Dr. Dorit Schäfer, Dr. Ariane Mensger, and Dr. Astrid Reuter for all the assistance they provided during my research on this drawing.

Erwin Pokorny has suggested that Baldung’s figure should be interpreted in light of medieval drollery and the Renaissance interest in erotically charged images of nude women [Erwin Pokorny, “Eine Hexe, die keine ist? Zu Hans Baldung Griens Hexen-Zeichnung in Karlsruhe,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 71, no. 4 (2008): 559-566]. Although certain attributes of witchcraft such as the pot and oven fork are absent, the presence of the dragon in conjunction with the themes of bestiality and inversion identify the woman as a witch.

\(^{284}\) It has been alternatively suggested that the dragon is a lindworm (Brinkmann, 2007, 61).
immoral behaviour of witches and thereby the boundaries of acceptable female sexuality. At this time, the growing interest in gynaecological research being conducted by the medical community was closely tied to explanations of female behaviour and should therefore be taken into consideration when examining this drawing. Left uncontrolled, the Witch and Dragon illustrates the extent to which the female gender can degenerate: engagement in demonic sex and bestiality. The potential for progeny to result from such unions is addressed through the two young children in the scene.

While demonologists, inquisitors, and court reporters sought to document the sexual interaction between witches and the Devil, the descriptions of these encounters often focus on the size and temperature of the demon’s member, the physical form assumed, and the unpleasantness experienced by the witch. Accounts of the devil appearing as an animal are noted but not explored. The descriptions that are offered by demonologists are limited in nature due to the concern that audiences would be inspired to pursue prohibited activities they would otherwise not have thought of on their own. Baldung seized the opportunity to represent a taboo topic, fully visualizing what jurists and theologians loathed to publish.

A standing witch with a snake-like dragon twisting on the ground around her occupies the center of the scene. Two infants support the dragon’s body as it is penetrated by a vegetal staff held by the witch. At the same time, the witch releases an ambiguous material into the dragon’s waiting mouth. The long, curving lines of the witch’s body highlight her physical appeal and her engaged response to her partner. Similarly, the coiling body of the serpent and small details, such as the fin wrapped around the witch’s leg, suggest an intimate and enjoyable encounter, rather than the disagreeable intercourse described in the literature. Baldung envisions how such an interaction might or could take place, and delights in calling attention to the myriad ways in which the witch and dragon transgress the acceptable sexual norms.

Through the Witch and Dragon, Baldung is able to examine conflicting attitudes toward sexual identity. His choice to emphasize the attractive qualities of illicit practices takes advantage of an avenue that was only hinted at or else remained unexplored by other artists. In so doing, Baldung’s work contravenes the decorum advocated by many of the authors of early modern witchcraft treatises. Due to the voyeuristic nature of the composition Baldung’s drawing
demands a consideration of the viewer: who would look at this type of image and what message(s) would they take from it?

Baldung’s Audience

The *Witch and Dragon* was designed for an audience who could afford and appreciate the artist’s clever pornography. Whether or not his viewers had the intellect to grasp the full potential of Baldung’s drawing, they certainly would have delighted in its explicitness. Given Baldung’s connections to elite and educated members of society, it is likely that both the artist and his audience would have been familiar with the current discourse on witchcraft and would have had exposure to contemporary reports of accusations, trials, and executions.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ When conducting an analysis of any of Baldung’s witchcraft images, the subtle details and layering of meaning make it quickly apparent that the artist had more than a passing knowledge of the subject. Between his family and patrons, Baldung had numerous opportunities to learn about witchcraft.

Baldung came from an educated family and seems to have deviated from the academic course chosen by several close relatives. He may have produced works of art for his brother Caspar, who was dean at the University of Freiburg in the faculty of law and later a practicing lawyer in Strasbourg, and an assessor for the Imperial Supreme Court [Brinkmann, 2007, 19-21 & 145; and Linda C. Hults, “Baldung and the Witches of Freiburg: The Evidence of Images,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (Autumn, 1987): 263-264]. In Strasbourg he became a lay assessor of his guild and later earned the position of town councillor. Baldung’s connections at the University of Freiburg would have allowed him access to current academic discussions. Baldung was also related to Master Hans Baldung who worked at Strasbourg’s Episcopal Court. Additionally, Baldung’s uncle, Hieronymus, held the honorary position of personal physician to Emperor Maximilian I.

With the social status accorded to him by birth, Baldung furthered his lot, entering into successful business ventures in both Strasbourg and Freiburg where he produced art for elite, intellectual, and religious patrons. The Margrave of Baden, Christoph I, purchased the so-called *Margraves’ Panel* by Baldung around 1510. In the ecclesiastical realm, Baldung’s artistic patrons included Archbishop Ernst von Welten, Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg, and Bishop Wilhelm von Hohenstein [Sigrid Schade, *Schadenzauber und die Magie des Körpers: Hexenbilder der frühen Neuzeit* (Worms: Werner’sche, 1983), 50].

Johannes Geiler von Kaisersberg, a Doctor of Theology in Freiburg and the Cathedral Preacher of Strasbourg, was an avid advocate for witch persecutions and although he died in 1510, his work continued to be highly influential throughout the next decade. Baldung provided illustrations for treatises by Geiler as well as two other influential witchcraft authors, Johannes Gerson and Ulrich Molitor (Davidson, 1987, 21). Gerson was chancellor at the University of Paris at the end of the fourteenth century. He was instrumental in uniting popular magical practices with idolatry and apostasy and he laid out this connection in his treatise *De erroribus circa artem magicam* (On Errors Concerning the Art of Magic) in 1402 (Zika, 2007, 39). Ulrich Molitor worked at Constance as a professor of law and procurator of the Episcopal curia there. In 1489 he published a dialogue on witchcraft [Stuart Clark, *Vanity of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 126]. He wrote *Tractatus de Pythonicis Mulieribus* (Treatise Concerning Women Who Prophesy), also titled *De Laniis et Phitonicis Mulieribus* (On Female Witches and Seers), at the request of Archduke Sigismund of Austria in 1489. The illustrations in Molitor’s text were instrumental in shaping the visual iconography associated with witchcraft (Zika, 2007, 26-27). It is possible that Baldung also heard Thomas Murner preach against witches in Strasbourg although there is no concrete evidence for this.
By the date of this drawing, Baldung had already produced his chiaroscuro woodcut, the *Witches’ Sabbath*. This print, from 1510, has been interpreted as an emphatically diametrical response to Dürer’s *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 2) and perhaps the *Four Witches* (fig. 3) as well. It is a work that survives in a large number of copies, despite the fact that it is a print on paper, suggesting that printing was undertaken on a considerable scale considering the medium, that the images were highly prized, or a combination thereof. In the year that the *Witch and Dragon* was made, Baldung produced several drawings with witchcraft as the subject. The compositions include nude female witches, some in sexually suggestive poses, engaged in magical pursuits. Of these, the *Witch and Dragon* is the only one known to include bestial elements. In this regard, the drawing is singular in both the artist’s corpus and the body of autonomous witchcraft imagery from the early modern period.

The *Witch and Dragon* is a pen and ink drawing with white heightening dating to 1515. The drawing, being a unique work on tinted paper, inherently suggests limited circulation and easy concealment. The latter would be a particularly valuable quality for an image that delighted in, rather than condemned, a socially prohibited activity. A drawing such as the *Witch and Dragon* would have been intended for a solitary or perhaps a small private audience. Erotic imagery was hung in bedrooms as well as public areas such as taverns and

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286 The year, 1515, is inscribed in the upper left corner of the drawing. Baldung’s monogram is situated just beneath and between the witch’s feet. The drawing has been trimmed, particularly at the corners. Parts of the dragon’s fin and the witch’s staff have been cut off. Baldung’s work has suffered a little moisture damage but is otherwise in excellent condition.

287 The choice of a dark, reddish-brown, surface may have been intended to reflect the darkness and secretiveness of the depicted activity. Baldung’s drawing could be easily concealed in a book or drawer.


289 The high degree of detail and finish in the *Witch and Dragon* as well as a number of Baldung’s other drawings, many including witches, have led to a consensus that they were intended for public reception, as opposed to being illustrations for the artist’s own use. The presence of the monograms on drawings such as the *Witch and Dragon* signify the artist’s intention that they be sold or presented as a gift rather than being artistic experiments or workshop drawings (Brinkmann, 2007, 51). The drawings done by Baldung, including the *Witch and Dragon*, were individual pieces that entered the public realm when they were reproduced by other artists or in later publications (Zika, 2007, 17). Both Brinkmann and Hinz employ Urs Graf’s copy of one of these drawings from 1514 as evidence that Baldung’s drawings were subject to some degree of circulation [Brinkmann, 2007, 52; and Berthold
hotels. Considering the procreative benefit of this genre, Giulio Mancini recommended that these types of pictures be covered and situated in private rooms. This way, access to the sexually exciting imagery would be strictly controlled. This imagery had to be powerful enough to incite responses that would bring both partners to orgasm, thus ensuring conception. Consequently, erotically charged imagery could have considerable impact upon its viewers.


Hults argues that the Witch and Dragon is crafted to embody everything that a male academic sought to reject in his personal and professional development; bestial passions and feminine qualities were to be cast aside and replaced with a notion of masculinity tightly bound to the employment of reason [Linda C. Hults, The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 94-96]. The Witch and Dragon, along with the other witchcraft drawings that Baldung produced in Freiburg, were, according to Hults, either specifically designed for the (male) students attending the University of Freiburg or for the (male) jurists for whom the witches represented the purpose behind the creation and implementation of new law. While an academic or lawyer might have owned the drawing, the themes that Baldung presents could have attracted any number of clients, ranging from physicians to disbelievers in witchcraft to someone simply seeking an erotic image.

The audience for witchcraft imagery could potentially include female viewers. The process of viewing was constructed as a male activity, with women as the object of the male gaze. For a woman to take the place of the viewer, she would necessarily take on the male role and may thereby take control of her sexuality [Susan L. Smith, “The Gothic Mirror and the Female Gaze,” in: Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, edited by Jane L. Carroll and Alison G. Stewart (Burlington (VT) & Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 83]. A work like the Witch and Dragon could provide an opportunity for a woman to see and reject the negative aspects of the witch that she found within herself or to see and find strength in the self-assertion and sexuality of the witch.

Married couples would decorate their bedrooms with erotic imagery with the intent of encouraging procreation while courtesans would do so to encourage intercourse [Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, “Satyrs and Sausages: Erotic Strategies and the Print Market in Cinquecento Italy,” in: Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy, edited by Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Farnham & Burlington (VT): Ashgate, 2010), 20]. Erotic depictions appeared in public spaces as well, as complaints against artworks in taverns, bathhouses, brothels, and hotels demonstrate (Matthews-Grieco, 2010, 20).


Musacchio, 1997, 52.
By choosing this medium Baldung was able to maintain artistic decorum by restricting the accessibility of this piece to an exclusive audience. Such a risqué work in another format may have landed the artist in trouble; his prints and paintings, such as the *Weather Witches* (fig. 68), are much more restrained in their sexual explicitness. One need only recall the scandal surrounding *I modi*, a series of engravings detailing various positions for intercourse accompanied by lewd verses that led to the ardent persecution of those involved in its publication; it has been argued that the ease of mass-production transgressed the boundaries of decorum for erotic content. Baldung’s drawing was aimed at an educated and wealthy audience. Members of the upper echelons of society were perceived as being mentally and physically capable of viewing erotic imagery because they were credited with being able to maintain control of their responses thereby demonstrating a level of restraint that the lower classes were understood to lack. Depictions of witchcraft could be dangerous without being sexually explicit, meaning that the *Witch and Dragon* could have been condemned on several fronts had it fallen into the wrong hands.

The sixteenth century witnessed the rise of an erotic art market serving the interests of male viewers with scenes depicting the sexual practices of women. In Germany, sexualized nude images of Adam and Eve painted by artists such as Dürer and Cranach were intended for non-religious purposes, often appearing within private collections, and served as predecessors for

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294 Matthews-Grieco, 22. Matthews-Grieco notes that erotic imagery was displayed in rural as opposed to urban palaces. She also draws attention to the fact that there was a great deal of erotic imagery available to the general public despite what the discourse on decorum suggested.

295 Jacob van Swanenburgh, a teacher of Rembrandt, was arrested in 1608 in Naples by the Roman Inquisition for displaying a scene of a witches’ sabbath on the property of the church of Santa Maria della Caritá [Guy Tal, “Witches on Top: Magic, Power, and Imagination in the Art of Early Modern Italy” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University at Bloomington, 2006), 83]. A Venetian document, however, records a late sixteenth century soldier’s boast of his collection of erotic prints, some of which were on display and could be purchased in the Piazza San Marco (Talvacchia, 1999, 10).

296 Zika, 2007, 81. In addressing print censorship in the sixteenth century, Freedberg observes that while depictions of female nudes were subject to suppression, greater emphasis was placed on restricting images that showed or suggested sexual acts (Freedberg, 355).

Talvacchia argues that the production of erotic art was facilitated by the growing interest in “complete privacy” (Talvacchia, 1999, 74).
the nudes in Baldung’s images.\textsuperscript{297} That Baldung produced a number of highly refined and suggestive depictions of witches points to an interested viewership.\textsuperscript{298} Influence would also come from Italy in the form of antique inspired nudes. Depictions of the amorous adventures of the gods provided a precedent and acceptable cover for illustrating sexual acts.\textsuperscript{299} The witches’ base and animalistic nature made them acceptable subjects for sexual representation.\textsuperscript{300}

While some images of witches were intended to evoke fear and disgust, it is clear that the *Witch and Dragon* was designed to provoke curiosity, enjoyment, and even arousal. Art’s capacity to elicit a response from the viewer was one of the ways in which art was judged to be successful.\textsuperscript{301} As an erotically charged image of witchcraft, the work posed a dangerous challenge to the artist and audience who risked falling victim to the enchantment of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{302} St. Augustine described curiosity as the lust of the eyes; Baldung’s drawing is both a curiosity in that it shows the viewer what cannot otherwise be seen, an illicit sexual act being performed by none other than an uninhibited witch and the devil, and a beautiful nude

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{297} Hinz, 2007, 212.
\item \textsuperscript{298} Multiples and close permutations of a composition are indicative of market demand. The popularity of Baldung’s drawings and prints depicting witchcraft can be seen in the subsequent copies made by Urs Graf and Lucantonio degli Uberti, among others (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 127 & 215). The same observations can be made in the oeuvres of other artists who treated witchcraft repeatedly, such as Rosa, Francken, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, and David Teniers the Younger. The demand for erotic imagery in the marketplace is discussed in Matthews-Grieco, 2010.
\item \textsuperscript{299} Jacopo Caraglio would transform the illustrations in *I modi* into decorous images by reinterpreting the figures in terms of the classical pantheon.
\item \textsuperscript{300} The association between members of the lower classes and animalistic passions and instincts warranted their depiction in sexual imagery designed for the upper classes in the mid-sixteenth century (Matthews-Grieco, 43).
\item \textsuperscript{301} Leonardo, exalting painting, writes that “Others have painted libidinous scenes with such wanton acts that they incited viewers of these works to [join] the same feast, something that poetry cannot do.” [Jonathan K. Nelson, “The Battle of the Female Nudes: Michelangelo vs. Leonardo (and Titian),” in: *L’arte erotica del Rinascimento: atti del colloquio international, Tokyo 2008*, edited by Michiaki Koshikawa (Tokyo: The National Museum of Western Art & The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2009), 21, citing chapter 25 of Leonardo’s *Treatise on Painting*]. Nelson argues that Leonardo’s *Leda* is intended to be erotic but that its content is rendered acceptable through the artist’s belief that lust leads to generation (Nelson, 23).
\item \textsuperscript{302} In her book *Witch as Muse*, Hults convincingly argues that the motif of the witch offered artists the opportunity to show their command of a hazardous subject matter, thereby demonstrating their artistic strength as well as their creativity. Even so, artists had to be careful where and how they displayed this subject.
\end{itemize}
young woman in a provocative situation. Appreciation for the beautiful put viewers in peril. Since eyes were understood to be the least corporeal part of the human body, authors like Agrippa von Nettexheim argued that they were most vulnerable to the invisible threads of the fine, spiritual substance that emanates from objects. Accordingly, the body is strongly influenced by what it sees. Automatic physical responses increased the eye’s vulnerability; a beautiful image causes a person to lift their eyebrows in appreciation, providing a welcoming entry point for evil spirits. By succumbing to the visual temptation of the witch, the viewer or artist would give in to carnal desire and lustful thoughts, thereby putting his soul at risk. The Devil frequently used sexual desire to corrupt the souls of both witches and their victims.

Sexuality and the Female Body

The composition of the Witch and Dragon is dominated by the nude body of the female witch. The witch stands with her feet slightly apart and twists her body to present her rear end to the head of the serpentine creature writhing on the floor around her. The dragon is an embodiment of evil, either the Devil or one of his minions who has lured the witch into sexual

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304 Thijs Weststeijn, “Seeing and the Transfer of Spirits in Early Modern Art Theory,” in: Renaissance Theories of Vision, edited by John Shannon Hendrix and Charles H. Carman [Farnham & Burlington (VT): Ashgate, 2010], 151. Weststeijn notes how the idea that the qualities of objects are born on visual rays connecting the eye and the object it perceives is central to the artistic notion of the power of images to provoke responses in audiences.
305 Weststeijn, 2010, 151.
306 The woman’s unbound curls fly outward behind her head, inexplicably. The mass of curls trail off into calligraphic lines that are reminiscent of the Danube School, particularly the foliage of Albrecht Altdorfer. The sexual connotations of flowing hair include availability and freedom. Hair was understood to be a source of power; according to Philostratus this claim led the Emperor Domitian to shave Apollonius of Tyana who was accused of performing magic (Remy, 168). Hair removal was necessary when dealing with accused witches to prevent demons from hiding there or in a body part unnoticed (Remy, 168). Authorities theorized that witches hid a drug, known as the Spell of Silence, in their hair, which would protect them from feeling pain or confessing their crimes during trials and interrogations (Boguet, 125). The shearing of hair from the witch’s body also aided in the search for the witch’s mark, normally expected to be lower on the body, in regions where the mark was conceived as being integral to the witch’s identity. Institoris and Sprenger quoted “William [Bees 2.3.25]” as stating that incubi chase after women with beautiful hair for three reasons. First, because these women pay much more attention to preening themselves in order to inflame the passion of the men; second, to act as a deterrent for others, and third, out of personal pride (Institoris and Sprenger, 370). Boguet asserts that some people believe the Devil loves witches because of their hair, but he thinks that the witches give their hair to the Devil as an assurance of their contract to him (Boguet, 65).
Early modern society perceived the witch as being vulnerable to temptation and recognized that certain individuals actively sought out the devil as a means to satisfy their lust.

The dragon opens its mouth with its tongue protruding in order to catch the vaginal material being expelled by the witch. By depicting his witch opening her body to release material, Baldung engaged in a longstanding discourse on the inconstant nature of the female body. Medical theories characterized women’s bodies as being moist and easily permeable, meaning that they were easily susceptible to demonic interference and other maladies. The unwillingness to reason and the predisposition towards wickedness were qualities attributed to witches as well as sufferers of furor uterinus. Furor uterinus is the term used to describe afflictions of the womb that could lead to any number of a multitude of symptoms associated with the condition of hysteria. Baldung would have had access to contemporary medical theory through his uncle Hieronymus, who was the personal physician to Emperor Maximilian I, and through his associations with the universities. Additionally, the artist had illustrated the medical treatise written by Walter Hermann Ryff and could have drawn ideas from this work.

307 The material is wider where it reaches the dragon’s mouth, suggesting that it is emanating from the witch. While some have suggested that it is the dragon’s tongue that extends upward to penetrate the witch’s body this argument is contradicted by the presence of the dragon’s actual tongue, which is the site where the stream of liquid or vapour terminates. Possible interpretations of the stream in the Witch and Dragon have included blood, urine, and ejaculated liquids.

308 Plato conceived of the womb as a living creature that would wander the body and press upon organs when its desire to bear children was not attended to [Plato, “The Sexes Differentiated,” Timaeus, translated and edited by John Warrington (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1965), 91C]. Similarly, Galen opines that widows usually suffer from hysteria since their wombs would become dry due to a lack of sex. Unlike his predecessors, Galen did not subscribe to the theory of the wandering womb. Instead, he argued that the accumulation of blood or (female) sperm in the uterus led to its corruption and subsequently an irritation of the nerves that resulted in fits [Stanley W. Jackson, “Galen – On Mental Disorders,” Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences 5, no. 4 (1969): 379].


310 Koerner, 340.
The idea that furor uterinum was caused by toxic vapours produced by spoiled menstrual blood may well have inspired the vapour emanating from the witch in Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon.*\(^{311}\) The harmful effects of menstrual blood were perceived to be tangible and were associated with other types of contagious behaviours.\(^{312}\) In Paracelsus’ *Diseases that Deprive Man of his Reason*, the affliction of the womb is treated with other disorders that affect the mind, including St. Vitus’ dance.\(^{313}\) Both of these diseases involve inflammation due to blood pollution and are closely linked to indulgent and sensuous pleasures. Outbursts of impropriety were thus closely tied to medical theory and misogynistic philosophies of gender and the sexes.

Institoris and Sprenger asserted, citing the authority of Proverbs 30:15, that the womb had an insatiable lust that inclined women to heresy.\(^{314}\) The connection between fire, lust, and vaginal materials has led scholars to relate the *Witch and Dragon* to the story of Virgil and the king’s daughter. Virgil, in retribution for the princess’ having left him stranded in a basket for the entire city to see after promising him her affections, cursed the king’s daughter by having all fires in Rome extinguished save for that of her sexual lust, so that the populace had to light their torches from the flames from her genitals.\(^{315}\) Baldung’s *Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 69), a drawing

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\(^{311}\) Paracelsus, “The Diseases that Deprive Man of his Reason,” in: *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim called Paracelsus*, translated by Gregory Zilboorg, et al., edited by Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941). Describing afflictions of the womb, Paracelsus asserts that the material in the organ could spoil, causing it to contract and thereby deprive a woman of her capacity to reason (Paracelsus, 163). The contractions would spread throughout the body and eventually result in the release of vapour and smoke from the womb into other organs until it finally reached the heart, where it caused epileptic-like seizures.

\(^{312}\) Menstrual blood was a dangerous substance (Pliny, 2:549 & 8:55-58). It could also serve an apotropaic function; Ludovicus Banairolus writes in his *Enneades Muliebres* (Poems about Women) that applying the material to door handles could prevent demonic infiltration (Del Rio, 252-255).

\(^{313}\) St. Vitus’ dance involved jumping, dancing, howling, and other inappropriate behaviours. Paracelsus connects the dancing fits to an inflammation of the blood in the laughing veins, although he attributes the primary cause of the affliction to reprehensible living (Paracelsus, 160-161). In her discussion of the malady, Dixon makes a more explicit connection between furor uterinum and St. Vitus’ dance than perhaps Paracelsus intended; both are, however, unequivocally tied to corrupted blood (Dixon, 1995, 40).

\(^{314}\) Institoris and Sprenger, 122. Witches were renowned for their sexual desires: “All female workers of harmful magic are slaves to Venus and there is not a virgin among them, just as there are none among Calvinists and other heretic haters of celibacy. Hence it appears that there is a close link between magic, heresy, and lust.” (Del Rio, 135).

\(^{315}\) The episode is illustrated on Urs Graf’s title-page woodcut, *Virgil and the King’s Daughter*, from 1521 (Koerner, fig. 161).
from circa 1514, shows a witch igniting a torch a similar fashion.\textsuperscript{316} The expulsion of bodily fire is a recurring motif in depictions of the witches, demons, and their familiars.\textsuperscript{317} While this humorous motif is avidly employed by artists, it is not a concern for contemporary authors of witchcraft treatises.

The idea of the womb as a source of female lust and internal fire allows for the symbolic association with another familial symbol that is a consistent feature of witchcraft imagery: the flaming pot.\textsuperscript{318} Filled with burning material, the heated pot is perceived to be akin to the impassioned womb.\textsuperscript{319} Whereas the closed container signals the chastity of Mary, the open, visible pot reflects the immense lust and the corrupted body of the witch.\textsuperscript{320} In the \textit{Witch and Dragon}, Baldung connects sexual deviancy with a disruption or imbalance of the female system and susceptibility to demonic influence.

Baldung’s witch has found multiple ways to contravene accepted sexual practice. The first of these is transgressing the ideal female role during intercourse. In the \textit{Witch and Dragon}, the witch drives a vegetal stalk into the large round orifice that terminates the dragon’s body.\textsuperscript{321} To balance the forward extension of her arms, she has to thrust her buttocks backwards.

\textsuperscript{316} Baldung’s drawing is housed in the Albertina in Vienna.

\textsuperscript{317} The entire group are depicted releasing flame in Savery’s \textit{Cowshed with Witches} (fig. 33). De Gheyn similarly illustrated a witch being propelled up a chimney on her broomstick by either gas or vapour in his \textit{Witches Kitchen} from circa 1604 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 105).

\textsuperscript{318} The flaming pot is a recurring element in Baldung’s images, such as his \textit{Witches’ Sabbath} (fig. 4) from 1510, as well as Agostino’s \textit{Lo stregozzo} (fig. 118), Rosa’s \textit{Witches at their Incantations} (fig. 103), and Savery’s \textit{Cowshed with Witches} (fig. 33) to name just a few works addressed in this study.

\textsuperscript{319} Associations between the female body and pots as precious vessels are evident in images where the Virgin is presented as an unopened vessel symbolically represented by a closed container, as in Rogier van der Weyden’s \textit{Annunciation} from circa 1435 in the Musée du Louvre. Similarly, female bodies in Parmigianino’s works are inspired by and selected based upon their associations with different styles of vases and columns. Elizabeth Cropper provides an insightful discussion of these likenesses in her article “On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo and the Vernacular Style,” \textit{Art Bulletin} 58 (1976): 374-94.

\textsuperscript{320} The sexual connotations of the pot are a recurring theme in later Netherlandish paintings. Dixon draws attention to the suggestive gesture of the young woman sticking her fingers into the pot in her lap in Pieter Aertsen’s \textit{Christ and the Adulteress} from 1559 in the Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt. The pot is similarly used in Jan Steen’s \textit{Drunken Couple} (Dixon, 1995, 106-108). Olaus Magnus declared that the pot is “the special instrument of wickedness” (de Lancre, 314).

\textsuperscript{321} According to some Cathar authorities, the race of Cain originated from Eve’s seduction by the serpent and her violation by its tail (Elliott, 143).
communicating the rigorousness of her movement to the viewer. This illicit act may be the source of the witch’s pleasure. By using a phallic object to penetrate the demonic form, the witch has usurped the male role and its conventional power. In the early modern period, women were executed for assuming the male role during intercourse. Further reducing the masculinity and authority of the demon is the play on double-penetration. Some witches asserted that the devil had a bifurcated member; however, here it is the demon who is receiving through two orifices. And, now that the dragon is facing the witch’s behind, the composition can be read as an inversion of the demonic kiss.

The masculine behaviour allows the witch to take command of her own sexuality while expanding it beyond what was deemed acceptable for the gender. The achievement of female pleasure without male, particularly human male, participation was a source of concern for early modern authorities. Sexual activities that were not undertaken for the purposes of procreation and which did not accord with the approved missionary position were considered sinful. Moreover, by negating the central sexual and thereby social role of men, the witch posed a threat to the continual (re)construction of male identity. Witches, like those depicted by Baldung, existed on the margins of society, outside of the usual parameters of male control.

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322 Weigert, 35; and Frederick Moulton, “The Illicit Worlds of the Renaissance,” in: A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance, edited by Guido Ruggiero (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 499. That the dragon assumes a snake-like form is important in this regard; classical sources reported that during the mating process, a male snake would put his head in the female’s mouth and she would decapitate him, enacting a castration nightmare (Pliny 3:399-401).

323 Witches kissed the devil’s rear as a sign of their devotion. This act was illustrated by an anonymous Flemish artist on the frontispiece of a fifteenth century French edition of Johannes Tinctor’s Treatise Against the Vaudois. The title page is reproduced in Muchembled, 2004, 68.

324 For scholars who perceive the early modern patriarchal hierarchy to be controlling female desire for its own purposes, the achievement of pleasure without male participation constituted a real danger in their eyes as women attained a form of power of their own [Marion D. Hollings, “Fountains and Strange Women in the Bower of Bliss: Eastern Contexts for Acrasia and her Community,” in: Consuming Narratives: Gender and Monstrous Appetite in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, edited by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Teresa Walters (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 150].

325 Women living outside of the city centre were beyond the rule of the town council and those without a husband, or at least one who could match their will, were problematic in their autonomy. Widows who owned land had some wealth and thereby economic power at their disposal were perceived as a threat to the patriarchal hierarchy since they were occupying traditionally male roles [Weigert, 39-40, citing E. William Monter, Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 133-134]. An accusation of witchcraft in the search for the restoration of social order could quickly lead to the seizure of the witch’s property, to her exclusion from the community, and even to her death.
Historians have characterized the sixteenth century as a period of particular sexual repression. Authorities were increasingly concerned with how people behaved both in the public and private realms. Norbert Elias, in his study of manners in The Civilizing Process, observes an increasing self-consciousness focusing on self-control and rendering oneself inoffensive to others.\textsuperscript{326} The flagrant sexuality depicted in Baldung’s drawing became a rising concern and motive for social reform.\textsuperscript{327} Whereas the image of the ideal woman during this time was that of Mary enclosed, the witch was her antithesis, literally open to everyone and everything in Baldung’s image.\textsuperscript{328}

**Demonic Sex and Bestiality**

The witch turns as if to look over her shoulder at the dragon, but her eyes are closed. By shutting the witch’s eyes, Baldung communicates to his audience that they are privy to a very private event. The expression of contentment on the witch’s face combined with the sense of inward focus causes the viewer to ponder whether she is waking or dreaming, an important point

\textsuperscript{326} Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: State Formation and Civilization, vol. 1, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 80. In his study of the development of the social apparatus in the early modern era, Elias discerns an increasing need for internal restraint on the part of the individual. He writes: As more and more people attune their conduct to that of others, the web of actions must be organized more and more strictly and accurately, if each individual action is to fulfill its social function. The individual is compelled to regulate his conduct in an increasingly differentiated, more even and more stable manner. (Elias, vol. 2, 252)


\textsuperscript{327} Only a few years after Baldung drew the *Witch and Dragon*, those in favour of the Reformation argued that the ideal and only situation for women was marriage. Convents were being closed after accusations that the nuns were promiscuous women living lives of luxury (Weigert, 39). Concurrently, treatises were published that offered readers guidance on how to raise girls, emphasizing the cultivation of obedience, as this was essential to a good marriage (Bange, Dresen, and Noël, 25). French schools opened in the Low Countries in order to educate women on basic commercial skills and virtuous traits with the goal of providing men with excellent wives; these institutions thrived from the mid-sixteenth century onward (Bange, Dresen, and Noël, 25).

Given the cultural concern about female sexuality, it is not surprising that women accused of witchcraft had their morality judged based upon their sexual conduct (Weigert, 40). The ideas contained in these texts and institutions did not appear overnight, and it is thus appropriate to view the *Witch and Dragon* in the context of social anxieties about sexuality and the desire for both reform and freedom.

\textsuperscript{328} In England this metaphor was used in representations of Queen Elizabeth (Stallybrass, 129). This topic is addressed by Roy Strong in his Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).
as there was continual uncertainty about the nature of the witch’s experiences. It is up to the audience to gather together the visual clues provided by Baldung if they wish to determine if the scene is a delusion, a dream, a fantasy, or reality.

The witch and her lover are situated in an unspecified location; they exist in a liminal space. The lack of an identifiable setting signals that this affair could happen or be happening anywhere. This ambiguity is appropriate for another reason: there were those who expressed uncertainty as to whether sexual intercourse between demons and witches could even occur. In situating this work within the fantastic imaginative or physical realm, the viewer had to decide upon the bodily reality of demons and weigh the claims made by and against witches.

While the existence of demons was a generally accepted fact in the early sixteenth century, their ability to interact with the human world was a source of conjecture and constant debate. The *Witch and Dragon* raises the problem as to whether a human and a demon could have carnal relations. The possible answers to this question would each have had very serious implications for how evil and the demonic were conceived. This assessment would prove critical to the manner in which witches were treated by society and particularly judicial authorities. For those who believed that the devil could engage in sexual relationships, the witch was an invaluable albeit detested source for otherworldly knowledge.

In taking over the male role, Baldung’s witch also provides a comedic element as the devil is depicted in a submissive position. Looking at Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon* and seeing the dragon relegated to the female role, viewers might have hit upon the idea that even the devil’s efforts were not enough in the face of the witch’s overwhelming passion. This image must also be considered in light of the Devil’s continued effort to be as blasphemous as possible;

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329 Similarly problematic are the purported claims that certain saints engaged in sexual behaviour with the divine or animals symbolically representing divine entities. G. Rattray Taylor’s *Sex in History* is often cited as the source for several erotic encounters between saints and the divine. Given the extremely religious and spiritual context of the texts involved, as well as the tradition of envisioning Christ as the groom and lover, one must be very cautious when interpreting the material.

330 The notion that the witch, through her physical interaction with the devil, was viewed as the only person who could actually describe the demonic body and help to explain the way in which it operated is central to Walter Stephens’ *Demon Lovers.*
here, the devil not only has sex with a woman but he does so with the utmost perversion by appearing in the form of an animal and by allowing her to take on the established male role.

The Devil frequently appears in the form of a dragon in Christian art, in representations of St. George and the dragon or St. Michael and the dragon, among others. These pictures often depict the saints dispatching their respective dragons with long lances in penetrative gestures that echo the witch’s in Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon*. As saints are frequently shown in combat with the demonic dragon, Baldung’s witch and dragon offer an inverted interpretation of this typical battle scene. The fight has become collusion and has taken on a distinctly sexual tone, creating a picture of extreme perversion. Instead of an image of the holy triumphing, Baldung presents the Devil triumphant in his corruption and damnation of a human soul.

The dragon’s body is distinctive due to its unusual tail, perceived to be the source of the animal’s power. According to the medieval bestiary traditions, the dragon curled its tail around its enemy, the elephant, and used the appendage to beat and suffocate its foe. As a large gaping orifice, the dragon’s tail has been rendered ineffective as a pounding instrument, but it has not lost its potency as a weapon. The dragon’s tail is the instrument, the focus of the illicit sexual act, through which the witch is damned.

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331 Brinkmann compares the witch’s downward thrust to the gesture of St. Michael fighting the devil in the form of a dragon as described in Revelation 12:7-9 (Brinkmann, 2007, 66-68). According to de Lancre, the inconstancy of the dragon is akin to the witches: “Of the dragon it is said that it never rests, thus it is constantly unstable and in perpetual motion.” (de Lancre, 39).

332 See, for example, Hans Memling’s depiction of St. George from the exterior right wing of the *Triptych of the Family Moreel* from 1484 in the Groeninge Museum, Bruges, or Raphael’s *St. Michael and the Devil* from 1518 in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.


334 Like the witch who often suffocated and drank the blood of her victim, the dragon would ambush an elephant and drink its blood [Ambroise Paré, *The Collected Works of Ambroise Paré*, 1579.1 translated by Thomas Johnson [Milford House: New York: 1968 (London, 1634)], 68]. Pliny the Elder describes this in his *Natural History* 3:27-29 and emphasizes that both animals die in the struggle: the elephant is drained of its blood while the snake is crushed.
In addition to demonic sex, Baldung presents an image of bestiality. By invoking this theme, the artist engages with the darker side of a longstanding visual tradition. While some contemporary rape scenes, such as Titian’s *Rape of Europa* (fig. 70) or Michelangelo’s *Leda and the Swan* (fig. 71), merely allude to the bestial act or convey it through a warm embrace, other artists, such as Giovanni Battista Palumba, focused on the animalistic and sexual nature of the encounter (fig. 72). Baldung participates in the latter group, departing from the romanticized scenes of a god as an idealized animal preying upon a beautiful mortal to present an explicit and inescapable image of bestiality. While one can discuss the skill of artistic execution, any further commentary cannot avoid addressing the sexual transgression that is taking place. Baldung’s approach enables him to force discussion of an aspect of human behaviour that society sought to hide and repress. The *Witch and Dragon* presents a facet of witchcraft which was uncommon in the general body of witchcraft imagery. The addition of witchcraft content allowed for a new interpretation of a conventional approach to the loves of the gods. By combining the witch and the devil-dragon, two creatures with contested abilities and existences, Baldung is also able to comment upon the idea that women used the gods to cover for their incestuous practices and adulterous liaisons.

Sixteenth century Germany witnessed a condemnation and criminalization of precisely what the *Witch and Dragon* illustrates: sexuality outside marriage and human-animal sexual

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335 Brinkmann argues perceptively that the bestial interaction occurring between the witch and the dragon has a long visual tradition in manuscript illumination and Romanesque ornament (Brinkmann, 2007, 60-66). There was a revival of grotesque imagery circa 1500 and Baldung employed this imagery in his art, adding a modern twist. The artist combines the medieval motif of sexually intertwining figures with the early modern tradition of representing mythological rape scenes to arrive at a novel interpretation of an established practice. Furthermore, the artist’s depiction of a woman and snake-like dragon accords with classical myth. According to a story told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* and repeated by de Lancre, Jupiter surprised and raped Mnemosyne while in the form of a snake (De Lancre, 20-21, citing Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.103-114).

336 The woodcut illustrations to Ulrich Molitor’s *De lamis et phitonicis mulieribus* (On Female Witches and Seers) from 1489 included an image of a woman and the devil embracing; both figures are clothed. This image is reproduced in Muchembled, 85. More graphically, a witch is depicted on top of the devil, although she remains clothed, in Hans Schäufelein’s *Magical and Sorcery Practices as Crimes of Diabolical Witchcraft*, a woodcut from 1511 adorning Ulrich Tengler’s *Der neü Layenspiegel* (Zika, 2007, fig. 2.1).

337 Boguet gives the example of Olympias, who claimed to be impregnated by Jupiter while the god had assumed the form of a swan (Boguet, 39). He asserts that classical beings like fauns and satyrs are simply demons acting on their sexual impulses (Boguet, 33).
interaction.\textsuperscript{338} Even imagining bestiality was perceived as being as terrible as the act itself.\textsuperscript{339} Boguet describes the enduring nature of this problem: “For it was not only yesterday that such things were practiced: the law of God long since punished with death the man and the beast who had sinned together.”\textsuperscript{340} Early modern judicial texts encouraged the idea that if horrific crimes went unpunished then God’s wrath would be exacted on the people in the form of a disaster, following the precedent of Sodom and Gomorrah.\textsuperscript{341} In this specific way, the \textit{Witch and Dragon} is an encouragement towards the persecution of witches. That documents describing bestiality were destroyed also illustrates the risk that Baldung was taking in producing a work that was designed to elicit sexual excitement in the viewer by means of this forbidden practice.

Since devils appeared to people in animal form, deliberately concealing themselves, those in the judicial sphere had the challenge of trying to determine whether an individual was guilty of having sex with a devil or with an animal.\textsuperscript{342} The bond established between humans and animals was a serious matter; too close a relationship problematized and had the potential to dissolve the boundaries distinguishing the two categories.\textsuperscript{343} By collapsing these delineations, the nature of humanity was no longer secure. The witch existed on the margins, threatening to

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\item \textsuperscript{338} Weigert, 35. Despite the fact that many documents are no longer extant, Midas Dekkers, in his oft-cited study of bestiality titled \textit{Dearest Pet}, has observed a rapid growth in the number of bestiality trials over the course of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries [Midas Dekkers, \textit{Dearest Pet: On Bestiality}, translated by Paul Vincent [London & New York: Verso, 1994 (1992)], 119]. In many cases, the documents recording the accusation and trial were burnt, judged too horrific to exist and too dangerous as they might inspire others to act in a similar fashion. The eradication of any memory of bestiality was advocated by the Dutch scholar Jost Damhouder (1507-1581) and the legal scholar Benedict Carpzov (1595-1666), among others (Hehenberger, 389-393). R. E. L. Masters argues that during this period bestiality became an act of defiance against society [R. E. L. Masters, \textit{Forbidden Sexual Behavior and Morality} (New York: Matrix House, 1966), 17]. Tamar Herzig provides a synopsis of the changes in the perception of unnatural sexual acts during the early modern era in his article “The Demons’ Reaction to Sodomy: Witchcraft and Homosexuality in Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola’s ‘Strix’,” \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal} 34, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 53-72.


\item \textsuperscript{340} Boguet, 37-38 & 208. He states that two women in different cities were burnt for their sexual congress with a dog and he relates these cases explicitly to classical legends, such as the story of Pasiphaë.

\item \textsuperscript{341} Hehenberger, 414. See Genesis 19:37.

\item \textsuperscript{342} Boguet reports that the Devil usually had intercourse with women in the form of an animal (Boguet, 207). In his treatise, Bodin argues that a group of nuns from Cologne were not being abused by a demon in the form of a dog as they claimed but rather by a regular canine. He advises that a woman in Toulouse made the same assertion and later admitted to her lies (Bodin, 167).

\item \textsuperscript{343} This issue is addressed by Hehenberger, 413-414.
\end{itemize}
corrupt or destroy the categories of identity society depended upon in order to function and thereby provided an impetus justifying those boundaries.

The Potential for Progeny

The presence of the two children in Baldung’s drawing is problematic; they do not exhibit the traits of classical figures, such as Eros or putti, and they are actively assisting in the sexual act. Dürer had set a precedent when he included putti in his *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (fig. 2). Baldung adopts the motif and transforms it, allowing the putti to be read as children. It has been suggested that these figures represent female children who will one day become witches and who in their current form are intended to represent the irrational, child-like disposition of women. While it is difficult to read these children as representations of the illogical nature of women, their presence does allow the artist to incorporate the theme of generational corruption.

The problem of the older generation teaching the younger their wicked ways recurs throughout the witchcraft imagery of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as previously discussed in the context of Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5) and the anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* (fig. 42). Children were theorized to adopt the beliefs and attitudes of their parents, according to Guazzo: “The infection of witchcraft is often spread through a sort of

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344 Dürer was drawing upon the visual traditions of representing Venus and Eros, the vices, and the procession of criminals.
345 It is unlikely that these two infants are changelings, even though demons would appear in the form of young children in Germany (Bodin, 132). Changelings were usually marked by their ill-health and physical abnormalities. They do not figure prominently in witchcraft or demonological literary discourses and are not commonly represented in works of art. Fra Filippo Lippi depicted the devil exchanging a healthy child for a changeling in the fresco cycle he executed in the Prato Duomo, entitled *St Stephen is Born and Replaced by Another Child*. The fresco cycle was completed between 1452 and 1465. While the idea of the changeling adds another layer of meaning to the *Witch and Dragon*, there were more pressing problems with witches and their children, as discussed in chapter one.

Children appear consistently in the company of witches within Baldung’s oeuvre. Other illustrations include the *Weather Witches*, a painting from 1523 in Frankfurt, and the *Witches’ Sabbath*, a drawing in the Musée du Louvre (figs. 68 & 69).

contagion to children by their fallen parents, when these study to find favour with their Cacodemons [evil demons] by so doing.\(^{347}\)

A sense of progressive involvement in demonic activities is provided through the juxtaposition of the two children. The youngest and smallest infant looks on in awe at the witch as it holds the dragon’s tail. This little one is literally taking on a supportive role.\(^{348}\) The older child has become an active participant in the sexual encounter: seated on the back of the dragon the child is riding the devil.\(^{349}\) Riding is a male activity and carries strong sexual connotations.\(^{350}\) The child inserts its fingers into the animal’s nose, in emulation of the penetrative activity of the witch.\(^{351}\) Already the child’s behaviour echoes the witch’s efforts to invert traditional hierarchies.

Concerns were raised that if a witch was able to have intercourse with the devil there was also the possibility of pregnancy, a prospect encouraged by the inclusion of the two children in the *Witch and Dragon*.\(^{352}\) The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* presented what came to be the popular stance on the subject in demonological discourse. They argued that a demon could

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\(^{347}\) Guazzo, 96. Parents could also be led to the sabbath by their children (de Lancre, 474). One reason why witches encouraged other members of their family to become witches was to protect themselves from being exposed as such to the community and authorities (de Lancre, 548).

\(^{348}\) In his *Madonna and Child with Angels in a Landscape* from circa 1511 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Baldung depicted an angel holding a lute that is akin to the infant supporting the dragon’s tail in the *Witch and Dragon*. In this print there is also a putto looking at the viewer through his legs in the same manner as one of the witches in a possible copy after Baldung’s *New Year’s Wish with Three Witches* drawing from 1514 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 36). The *Madonna and Child with Angels in a Landscape* appears in both a black and white as well as a chiaroscuro woodcut.

\(^{349}\) In Baldung’s *Witches’ Sabbath* drawing in Paris a child climbs onto an oven fork behind a witch, while in both the *Weather Witches* and the *Witches’ Sabbath* drawing in Vienna (1514) the fork is replaced by a goat (figs. 68 & 69; and Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 33).

\(^{350}\) Both the witch and the child dominate the dragon. The motif of riding, whether on broomsticks or creatures, reflects the inappropriate and masculine behaviour of the witch at the expense of male control. This is perhaps most evident in the anonymous etching after a drawing by Parmigianino entitled *A Witch Riding on a Phallus*. This work was completed during the 1530s and shows an old witch astride a giant phallus accompanied by all manner of demonic company. Bernard Picart transformed the composition in the eighteenth century to disguise the phallus as a monstrous creature (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 153 & 154). For an analysis of mocking imagery of the witch’s supposed ride, see Zika, 2007, 70ff.

\(^{351}\) The child also drives its heel into the dragon’s side. The beast directs its gaze to the child, rather than the witch.

\(^{352}\) The idea of demons or animals impregnating women raises the issue of the offspring’s humanity and potential for salvation (Elliott, 56-57).
collect semen from a man as a succubus and then transform into an incubus in order to impregnate a woman, therefore producing a human child. Institoris and Sprenger were opposed by those who asserted that demons could sire offspring with humans, producing a physically monstrous child. In cases where a child was suspected of being sired by a demon, both the baby and its mother could be subject to harsh punishments, including death. If demons did not have bodies and therefore physical sensations like humans, the question was according to the gender of their intended victim, enabling them to corrupt individuals both spiritually and physically (Institoris and Sprenger, 79-80). Since the succubus collected male semen and then changed sexes, the result of the unholy union between an incubus and a woman would always be a human child, making the demon merely a carrier of the seminal fluid (Institoris and Sprenger, 84). In adopting this stance, Institoris and Sprenger were drawing on Augustine’s *The Trinity*, Book 38 and Strabus’ gloss on Exodus 7:11 (Institoris and Sprenger, 75). Furthermore, they argued that demons preferred to collect the semen of criminals because their offspring would be more inclined to heresy (Institoris and Sprenger, 262). For a summary of the various ways in which demons can interfere with the human process of procreation, see Institoris and Sprenger, 140. While a human child would result from demonic intercourse, Remy affirms that the child would be incomplete due to either an imperfection in the process or because God would mark the child to signal its deficient nature (Remy, 15).

Bodin notes that the question of demonic intercourse was debated before Emperor Sigismund. Acknowledging the dissenting voices, Bodin reports that the final verdict: copulation and procreation with the Devil was possible and that the offspring from such a union were of a different nature than progeny born ‘naturally’ (Bodin, 131).

Still, theologians such as Remy argued that the physical bodies of demons and humans were too disparate to be able to produce any young (Remy, 11). Likewise, Johann Weyer denied that demons could have intercourse with women since they lack a corporeal body (Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, ‘De praestigiis daemonum’,* Basel 1583 (6th edition), translated by John Shea, edited by George Mora [Binghamton (NY): Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1991], 238-251).

In addition, it was theorized that unfortunate children could be born of the unnatural passions of their parents, which did not necessarily result from demonic or bestial intercourse. Copious amounts of sex between human partners could, according to the *De secretis mulierum* (On the Secrets of Women), result in irregular births [Ottavia Niccoli, “Menstruum Quasi Monstruum”: Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo in the Sixteenth Century,” in: *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, edited by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, translated by Margaret A. Gallucci (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 7]. The *De secretis mulierum* was erroneously attributed to Albertus Magnus.

Reproductive materials were laden with generative potential. Semen on its own was believed to be able to produce monstrous results if not disposed of properly. Boguet specifically dismisses the idea that semen from dead men can generate mermen (Boguet, 38). Monstrous births are discussed further in chapter three.

Martin Weinrich instructed that inhuman infants should forego baptism and be exterminated immediately (Niccoli, “Menstruum Quasi Monstruum”, 4). One account of a Scottish girl having intercourse with a demon relates that the girl gave birth to a monster which was promptly suffocated by the midwives (de Lancre, 238). During the latter part of the sixteenth century this illicit activity was rectified by burning the mother and child alive (Niccoli, “Menstruum Quasi Monstruum,” 4-5). Apparently Martin Luther survived this fate; according to some authors he was born to a mortal mother and the Devil (Boguet, 34). Similarly, Merlin was purported to be the child of an incubus and a nun (de Lancre, 245).

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posed as to why they would engage in such disgraceful activities. The theory behind demonic intercourse was that this sexually sinful behaviour would anger God, prompting him to grant the Devil ever more power to tempt human souls.

Furthermore, according to some early modern authors, humans and animals could mate and produce offspring. Many of the children born of such unions were, however, abnormal in appearance. Such births were considered to be portents and the idea that these unusual children were signs of the evil in the world continued in the early modern era. Aside from their participation in a demonic activity, the two infants in the *Witch and Dragon* are otherwise indistinguishable from typical children. The presence of the children encourages contemplation of the possibility of both demonic and bestial offspring. These were two additional means by which the community of witches could expand. This ties Baldung’s drawing to the fear of witches as a threat to society as discussed in chapter one.

Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon* is more than just a salacious picture. Drawing upon gynaecological medicine, demonological theory, popular belief, and judicial practices, the artist crafted an image that challenges its audience to explore the complex relationships between demons, animals, witches, women, and children. The image focuses attention on the underlying theories that led to the association of women with witches. Through the beautiful witch and elegant forms, Baldung encourages his viewer to contemplate the very interactions that demonological and witchcraft treatises cautioned against. It is the curiosity and thrill aroused by

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356 Paré reserved a section of his medical text to the breeding of humans and animals wherein he cited the monstrosity born when a woman was impregnated by a dog in 1493. This was not an isolated incident. Additional examples include a man whose illicit love for a goat produced a baby that bore characteristics of both parents and a woman who gave birth to a creature that appeared to be part dog and part bird. See Paré, 1968, 982-984.

357 Pliny the Elder states: “Duris says that some Indians have union with wild animals and the offspring is of mixed race and half animal;...” (Pliny 2:525-7). He discusses portentous births as well, including the accounts of Alcippe and a maidservant who purportedly gave birth to an elephant and a snake respectively (Pliny 2:529). While some feared that the offspring of bestial acts represented a threat to the world order, others held that these creatures would be infertile. Even Pliny struggled with this problem: “It has been noticed that the offspring of two different races of animals belong to a third kind and resemble neither parent; and that such hybrids are not themselves fertile: this is the case with all kinds of animals, and this is the reason why mules are barren.” (Pliny 3:121). Immediately after this statement he provides examples of mules reproducing.

358 This is suggestive of another one of the devil’s deceptions: Del Rio explains how a demon is capable of making an animal appear to give birth to a child that was in actuality an infant born to a human couple (Del Rio, 88). He states that the newborn was stolen from its mother and that the child’s behaviour was subsequently influenced by his belief that his mother was a cow.
the forbidden that Baldung seeks to excite; not only does the work include sexually explicit and occult material, it engages with the most prohibited aspects of these categories. As a sexually graphic image that afforded opportunities for intellectual debate over the nature of demonology and witchcraft, the *Witch and Dragon* would have been an appealing purchase for a member of Baldung’s educated and privileged audience.

Hans Baldung Grien’s *Bewitched Groom*

Baldung’s 1544 woodcut, entitled the *Bewitched Groom* (fig. 73) warrants inclusion in this discussion because of its unusual and complicated content, which may have limited the prospective audience.\(^\text{359}\) The woodcut stands out in the corpus of witchcraft imagery for its atypical composition and figural grouping.\(^\text{360}\) Only three figures occupy the print: a man, an old hag, and a horse. The *Bewitched Groom* is distinctive in the corpus of witchcraft imagery not only because men are rarely the central focus in scenes of witchcraft at the time this print was made, but also because of the uncertainty surrounding the man’s relationship to the dark arts. In fact, the print is highly unusual in the artist’s oeuvre as the only witchcraft image to incorporate an adult male figure. By leaving the identity and thereby the role of this figure open to interpretation, Baldung invites his audience to consider how men relate to the problem of witchcraft. In choosing a visual format, the artist was able to conflate several possible identities in a single figure: the so-called groom may be a witness, a victim, or a witch. In this way, the image is distinct from its textual counterparts which assign men clearly defined roles. Through the compositional arrangement, the exchange of gazes, and the poses of his figures, Baldung

\(^\text{359}\) Unlike the other works discussed in this dissertation, due to its medium and size, there is greater uncertainty about the accessibility of the print, as it may have been available to a much larger audience than some of the other images. In her article supporting the study of prints as sites for creative exploration that allowed greater freedom of expression than painting or sculpture due to their more private nature, Patricia Emison writes: One of the reasons to surmise that most engravings were not intended for general distribution but instead for some refined elite, more numerous, less wealthy perhaps, but still educated and upscale, is their irregularity with regard to matters of decorum and idealization. It was a mark of social and intellectual privilege to be exempt from the rigidity of absolute moral clarity. [Patricia Emison, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Italian Renaissance Prints,” *Word & Image* 11, no. 1 (January-March, 1995): 11-12]. As a result of the intellectual content in the *Bewitched Groom* it is safe to assume neither that the work was accessible to everyone nor that it was as limited in accessibility as the *Witch and Dragon*.

\(^\text{360}\) It is prudent to note that the title is a later appellation [Dale Hoak, “Art, Culture, and Mentality in Renaissance Society: The Meaning of Hans Baldung Grien’s ‘Bewitched Groom’,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 492]. There is a preparatory drawing in black chalk for the *Bewitched Groom*, also from 1544, in the Kupferstichkabinett of the Kunstmuseum in Basel (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 34).
implicates the viewer in the event. Whereas demonological treatises seek to distance their readers from witchcraft as much as possible, Baldung draws his audience into it. In order to explain their presence, spectators are asked to examine the issues raised by witchcraft theory, the viewing of witchcraft imagery, and the visual demands an artist makes of his audience.

By employing particular perspectival tools, Baldung is able to call attention to the visual process, a principal theme in his work. The conspicuous choice of artistic technique relates the *Bewitched Groom* to a specific visual tradition which asks the viewer to recognize, understand, and accept a contrived means of representing bodies in space. In making the viewing process a conscious one and by combining it with the subject of witchcraft, Baldung questions the reliability of sight and its limitations as a means for gathering information about the world. As a result, Baldung’s image participates in longstanding visual, theological, and philosophical discourses on the senses.

The *Bewitched Groom* is dominated by the reclining body of a man who clutches a fork in his left hand while a curry comb falls out of his right. Unable to see the man’s face in its entirety, the audience is conscious only of the slack jaw and slightly open mouth, indicating that this person is either sleeping, unconscious, or dead. Directly above the groom’s head stands a horse, presumably in its stall given the presence of the hayrack. Volutes and a pilaster partially decorate the entrance to the stall. To the right of the man there is an open window

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361 Hults notes that it appears as if the horse has sprung out of the groom’s head and she interprets this as a sign of the threat posed to the man’s mind when self-discipline gives way to sensual desire [Linda C. Hults, “Baldung’s ‘Bewitched Groom’ Revisited: Artistic Temperament, Fantasy and the ‘Dream of Reason’,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 1984): 273]. She reads the facial hair on the groom as referring to Baldung’s own, which, in conjunction with the coat of arms and the fork pointing to the artist’s monogram, she interprets as self-reflections of the artist (Hults, 2005, 99). Observing that the body of the groom and the artist’s monogram share the same angling, Koerner asserts that the positioning signals a conceptual connection between the two figures which was intended to raise questions about the manner in which the artist depicts himself in an image (Koerner, 439-440). The existence of similarities between the groom and Baldung has been the subject of much debate.

The *Bewitched Groom* has also been considered as an allegory of sleep and, more specifically, as a response to Dürer’s *Dream of the Doctor* [Linda Hults (Boudreau), *Hans Baldung Grien and Albrecht Dürer: A Problem in Northern Mannerism* (Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1978), 138; and Bodo Brinkmann, “Zwiesprache mit Dürer. Hans Baldungs Malerei und Graphik als imaginäres Künstlergespräch am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit,” in: Zwischen Himmel und Hölle: Kunst des Mittelalters von der Gotik bis Baldung Grien, edited by Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp, exhibition catalogue (Munich: Hirmer, 2009), 41].
through which an old woman with an exposed, drooping breast leans. She carries a burning torch which helps to draw attention to the heraldic shield bearing a unicorn on the wall.

The ‘Groom’

The man in the Bewitched Groom is often referred to as the groom because of his currycomb and fork. His dress, however, indicates that he belongs in the prosperous rather than servile class of society.

Furthermore, this appellation has been contested on the basis that the figure holds an oven fork, rather than a stable fork. The oven fork was an established motif of the witch, often used as a means of demonic transport or a tool to hold a burning pot, such as is depicted in Baldung’s Witches’ Sabbath (fig. 4) from 1510. That the gentleman is presented with the fork suggests that he has become a participant in witchcraft, willingly or not.

There are three possible and competing interpretations of the man’s situation. First, authors of demonological and witchcraft treatises cited instances where men were accidently transported to the sabbath, usually after witnessing an unusual and inexplicable disappearance of a female acquaintance. Having experienced the witches’ practices firsthand, the men or their

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362 The ornate decoration of the stall may seem out of place unless this is the stable of a wealthy gentleman interested in horses. Examples of such men include Federico Gonzaga who had Giulio Romano erect the impressive and highly decorated set of stables at the Palazzo Té, on the outskirts of Mantua. Federico was an avid horseman and was extremely proud of his equine collection; Romano frescoed Federico’s prize horses on the walls of The Room of the Horses in the villa.

363 Radbruch asserted, incorrectly, that these two types of fork were identical {Gustav Radbruch, “Hans Baldungs Hexenbilder,” in: Elegantiae Juris Criminalis: Vierzehn Studien zur Geschichte des Strafrechts [Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft, 1950 (1938)], 39}.

364 Although it comes a bit more than a decade after the Bewitched Groom, it is worth noting that A Shaman in a Trance Procuring Information about a Distant Acquaintance from Olaus Magnus’ 1555 Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus also depicts a man lying prone on the floor. A female figure protects the shaman while his spirit is absent from his body; in one hand she carries a knife and in the other a torch. While this in itself is an unusual iconography, it does suggest that Baldung’s print could have influenced or at least accorded with notions of out of body experiences (Zika, 2007, 225 & fig. 8.8).

365 A servant from Oostbrouck emulated the actions of his landlady by grasping the horses’ hay trough and found himself transported into a cave full of people working magic (Del Rio, 95; and Guazzo, 46). Similarly, another tale employs a pitchfork instead of a trough, but to the same end. This story, “Die zauberkundige Witwe und ihr Hausknecht” (The Sorcery Educated Widow and her Servant), is reported in Johannes Praetorius’ Blockes-Berges Verrichtung (Activities at Blocks-berg) [Lyndal Roper, “Witchcraft and the Western Imagination,” Transactions of the RHS 16 (2006): 136].

In two woodcut illustrations adorning witchcraft treatises, a man in a tree watches the magical rites of witches below. The men are either almost or completely nude and exhibit different reactions to what they witness. One reaches out as if to touch the magical vapour issuing from a pot and the other looks on in dismay and fear.
dead bodies are then able to testify to the truth of the sabbath and the reality of witchcraft as a threat to the community. This unintended attendance at the sabbath provided those who were not witches with an opportunity to witness the clandestine events. These examples also served as cautionary tales about the potential consequences of inquisitiveness. Second, the presentation of the gentleman in Baldung’s woodcut suggests that his own lust or the rejection of the witch’s advances might have led him to his present predicament. The witch’s torch is a symbol of the gentleman and the hag’s respective desires; although it was commonly used to represent lust, particularly in the visual tradition, the torch can also be read as a sign of insanity. And third, contrary to a bias that has persisted until recently in scholarship on witchcraft, men were accused of witchcraft in their own right. The man may be a witch, in which case the hag’s presence signals that his destination, whether in reality or in his own mind, is the sabbath. Together, these equally plausible scenarios invite viewers to explore the question of witchcraft’s existence.

third woodcut participates in the visual lineage but the man’s face is concealed and his gesture removed. The illustrations are discussed and reproduced in Zika, 2007, 70ff & figs. 3.1-3.3.

366 Boguet argues that men who were transported to the sabbath but are not witches provided evidence that transvection did in fact occur (Boguet, 43).

367 Del Rio explained that a good person seeking to use a witch’s unguent to act against the Devil, thereby promoting the true faith would not be transported to the sabbath, while a person acting out of curiosity would be transported as a punishment from God for their inquisitiveness (Del Rio, 94-95).

368 “Bringing fire to a stable” was used as evidence of insanity during a witchcraft trial in 1590 (Hoak, 503-504). Also related is a quotation from Plato’s Phaedra: “He who cannot control the sense will ride a wild stallion”. Hults observed the applicability of this statement and noted it is reproduced with an image of a horse tied to a column in an emblem book by Joachim Camerarius II dating to the late sixteenth century [Hults (Boudreau), 122].

369 Lara Apps and Andrew Gow have recently addressed this neglected aspect of witchcraft research in their book, Male Witches in Early Modern Europe (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2003). Often the existence of the male witch has been explained away through the re-identification of the man as a heretic or by dismissing his agency and attributing the accusation to charges brought against a close female family member (Apps & Gow, 32-33). The authors argue that it is not the feminine that concerned witch hunters and their victims in the early modern era but rather the salvation of the soul (Apps & Gow, 89). See also Rolf Schulte, Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe, translated by Linda Froome-Düring (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Men were accused of witchcraft independently from women and were charged with flying on goats, attending the sabbath, making pacts with the devil, desecrating the Eucharist, murdering children, and having sex with the devil (Apps and Gow 52-59). The authors present examples such as the cases of John Samond and Chonrad Stoeckhlin in their chapter “Males Witches on Trial”. De Lancre is particularly concerned with male priests participating in witchcraft (de Lancre, 423-4).
Contemporaneous portrayals of men in representations of witchcraft depict them in clearly defined roles, causing Baldung’s print to stand out as an anomaly. Men are presented as witches, as engaging the witch’s services, as witnesses to witchcraft, as persecutors of witches, or as the witch’s victim. The same is true of popular images illustrating witchcraft and demonological treatises. There is, however, a precedent for the well-dressed visitor to the witch’s realm. In Lucas Cranach the Elder’s Colmar Melancholy (fig. 74) from 1532, an elaborately dressed man is depicted riding a goat. A very similar situation is presented in the artist’s Copenhagen Melancholy (fig. 75) from the same year. It has been suggested that the men in these paintings have been abducted by witches. This aspect of Cranach’s imagery can be related to the Bewitched Groom through the themes of the accidental visitor to the sabbath, the attacks witches launch on men, and the question of bodily transport. While Cranach’s fashionable male is being prodded forward by a witch with an oven fork, there is nothing to indicate whether Baldung’s gentleman is a dedicated, accidental, or bewitched traveller.

370 Lo stregzuzo (fig. 118) shows four men supporting a carcass mounted by a female witch and heralded by a male youth. These men are active participants and can therefore be identified as male witches. In representations of Saul and the Witch of Endor, such as the painting by Jacob Cornelisz van Oostenan from 1526 (fig. 13), men appear beseeching the witch for her help and male fauns or satyrs are present. Male putti accompany and assist Dürer’s Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat (fig. 2). Men appear as both participants in witchcraft and as persecutors of witchcraft in Hans Schäufelein’s Magical and Sorcery Practices as Crimes of Diabolical Witchcraft, a woodcut from 1511 adorning Ulrich Tengler’s Der neü Layenspiegel (The New Layman’s Guide). The center of the image is occupied by a male sorcerer standing within a magic circle and accompanied by a demon. Men are also represented as the victims of witches, as in the example of A Female Witch Lames a Man with an Arrow, a woodcut in Ulrich Molitor’s De lamiis et phithonicis mulieribus (On Female Witches and Seers) from circa 1494 (Zika, 2007, fig. 1.5).

The same is true of subsequent imagery. Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s pendants, St James and the Magician Hermogenes and The Fall of the Magician (Appendix of Illustrations figs. 132 & 133), juxtapose the power of male practitioner of magic with that of a saint. The two works were engraved by Pieter van der Heyden after Bruegel’s design and were published by Hieronymus Cock in 1565. Francken incorporated male participants into his crowd of witches, including his Witches’ Assembly (fig. 5). Rosa’s painting, Night (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 165), depicts a male sorcerer at work and men also appear as participants in the dark arts in works like his Witches at their Incantations (fig. 103).

371 While it was previously thought that this man might be the devil or the leader of the horde, the captive theory now prevails (Zika, 2007, 102).
The Gaze

The groom lies on the floor of an oddly crafted interior space that slants upward in line with his body, his feet facing the viewer. Baldung employs dramatic foreshortening to achieve his visual effect. Perspective was a tool at the artist’s disposal; Baldung suggests perspective but ultimately rejects the system in his *Bewitched Groom*. In so doing, the artist was able to show more of the man’s body then he would have been able to had he followed the angle at which the horse is viewed. The odd construction of space lends itself to the uncertainty about what is happening, underscoring the problems with sight and reality associated with witchcraft.

In order for either foreshortening or perspective to function, the audience has to recognize that the technique has been employed and be willing to accept and engage with its use in order for the system to work. This necessitates a certain level of visual awareness and artistic knowledge on the part of both the artist and viewer. Such artistic techniques were employed not to maintain a continual visual deception, but to surprise and delight audiences with the pleasure of the unexpected. By selecting a mode of seeing that requires the audience’s willing participation, the artist draws attention to the active process of understanding the artifice of perspective and signals meaning to the viewer in his rejection of a single point perspectival system. The visual manipulation achieved by the artist can compared with that of witches and demons.

Consciousness of the viewing process highlights the problem of sight as it relates to demonic interference and consequently witchcraft. Human sight was fallible and open to demonic manipulation; how this intervention occurred had important consequences for

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372 In the bottom right hand corner of the print, the floor is interrupted by what can be described as a very large step. On this rests a tablet with two little bolts of lightning on either side of the artist’s initials, HB.

373 The role of the artist and audience in the success of illusionistic artistic techniques is addressed in the exhibition catalogue edited by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe L’Oeil Painting* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002).


375 There is a tradition of equating deception with artistic prowess, dating at least as far back as ancient Greece. A famous example is the competition between Parrhasius and Zeuxis.
In the discourse on witchcraft, the power of demons is also described in artistic terms:

Air, when light is present, receives colors and shapes and conveys them to those things which are naturally able to receive them (as is clear in the case of mirrors and mirror-like objects); in the same way, demons’ bodies, from the image-making essence which is within them, assume figures, colors, and whatever shapes they wish, and convey them to our vital spirit as well, affording us much trouble by suggesting choices and giving advice, sketching forms in outline, stirring memories of sensual pleasure, and frequently arising images of passion, both when we are awake and when we are asleep.377

Weyer’s description of the Devil as a master of the art of illusion could apply equally to the visual artist:

Moreover, [the Devil] knows how to display various forms, fashion empty idols with wondrous skill, confound the organ of sight, blind the eyes, substitute false things for true with remarkable dexterity (lest they be detected), cover over things which really exist, so that they are not apparent, and show forth things which in reality do not exist, in such a way that they seem to do so.378

Thus, the positive illusionistic skill of the artist is contrasted with the negative illusions perpetrated by demons and accepted by witches. In the case of Baldung’s print, the illusions in question include travel to the sabbath and the human ability to bewitch.

Although the Bewitched Groom is unique in terms of its presentation of the male subject in images of witchcraft at this time, the positioning of the male figure fits within a larger artistic tradition. Baldung’s groom was likely influenced by Dürer’s Dead Christ (fig. 76), a drawing

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376 Weyer lists the various ways that demons could affect human perception (Weyer, 34-36). First, demons were believed to possess the ability to corrupt the bodily humours, causing imbalances and diseases that led an individual to perceive that which did not exist. Second, demonologists theorized that devils could affect the human mind, whether waking or sleeping, by manipulating mental images. And finally, demonic beings fashioned false bodies and created disturbances that were perceptible, but did not actually exist. This ability to deceive is closely tied to bodily transformation as discussed in the context of Dosso’s Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape.

377 Weyer, 42, through the intermediary Michael Psellus, quoting a man named Marcus who worshipped a demon.

378 Weyer, 34.
from 1505 that depicts Christ facing the viewer feet first and on a slight angle. Comparing the two works, Dürer and Baldung’s figures share the same barely visible face, barrel chest, and the positioning of the right arm. Baldung has straightened the bent legs of Dürer’s Christ and presents the groom fully frontal. The result is the complete eradication of the decorum that the earlier artist had given the holy figure.

The theme of sacrifice connects Baldung’s groom and earlier depictions of Christ but does not serve to confirm that the man has been the victim of witchcraft. Similar uses of foreshortening can be found in standard religious images. In relating the presentation of the groom to that of the sleeping soldiers at Christ’s tomb, the artist communicates the unconscious state of the body as well as the inability to recognize the holy. The conspicuous use of foreshortening can simultaneously call attention to male sacrifice and misplaced faith.

Baldung must deal with the prominence of the male crotch resulting in from the perspective he has chosen. The foreshortened pose of the groom in conjunction with the

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379 Dürer’s Dead Christ is housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Joseph Leo Koerner compares the Bewitched Groom and the construction of perspective to works by Erhard Schön, Peter Flötner, and Dürer as well as other works by Baldung (Koerner, 441).

380 Jörg Ratgeb also employed Dürer’s figural positioning of his Christ for one of the sleeping soldiers in his Resurrection, but swivelled the figure to present him head, rather than feet, first. The Resurrection panel, created circa 1519, belongs to the Herrenberg Altar and is housed in the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. In the Last Supper from the same altarpiece, a view through a window shows the three sleeping apostles, including one that is dramatically foreshortened. Mantegna employed the same device in his Agony in the Garden from circa 1459, housed in the National Gallery, London.

Baldung similarly foreshortened Pyramus in his Pyramus and Thisbe from circa 1530. While the man’s face is much more visible than that of the later groom, the viewer is still confronted with the lower body. Pyramus and Thisbe hangs in the Staatsliche Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. For discussion of this figure, see Alan Shestack, “An Introduction to Hans Baldung Grien,” in: Hans Baldung Grien: Prints & Drawings, edited by James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1981), 17.

381 The presentation of a male figure with his feet towards the viewer was later adopted by de Gheyn for his 1604 Witches in a Cellar (fig. 44). The angle of presentation in the Bewitched Groom in conjunction with the instruments of witchcraft and demon by the man suggest his willing participation.

382 In seeking to understand the connection between perspective and the erotic, Hedrick argues that when faced with a technique like foreshortening, the viewer’s experience of the work is personalized since he or she must participate in both the recognition and understanding of the artistic tool and the final product in order for particular visual effects to work [Donald Keith Hedrick, “The Ideology of Ornament: Alberti and the Erotics of Renaissance Urban Design,” Word & Image 3, no. 1 (January-March, 1987): 119].

Scholars examining anatomical imagery, such as Andreas Vesalius’ images, have observed an interest in the presentation of the body as it relates to the viewing process. Christopher Pye writes: “As Thomas Laqueur points out, the earliest Renaissance anatomical texts that turned away from a reliance on classical authorities were in
theme of the lusty old witch, raises questions about his sexual virility. Recall that as witches grew older, their sexual appetites were believed to increase. Witches were often accused of causing impotence and some theorized that witches collected male genitalia. Baldung’s selection of pose invites consideration of the power witches were thought to wield over the male body; could they hinder, cure, or were they able to do neither?

The presentation of the codpiece could have functioned as a source of entertainment for the viewer who could laugh at the man’s misfortune and the potential loss or gain of his member. In explaining the differences between the sexes, Plato discussed the lust of the female womb as well as the male member: “Hence it is that in men the genital organ is disobedient and self-willed, like a creature deaf to reason and determined, because of frenzy appetite, to carry all

fact more invested in the theatricalised gesture of displaying than in any naturalistic representation of the body displayed.” (Pye, 50).


As the viewer’s eye moves up the groom’s body it cannot escape the prominence of the man’s codpiece. Obvious codpieces can also be found in Ratgeb’s aforementioned Resurrection and Last Supper, where Judas is shown with an erection [Ruth Mellinkoff, Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages, 2 vols. (Berkeley, et al.: University of California Press, 1993), 205-206]. These works contravene Leon Battista Alberti’s instructions to painters in his treatise, On Painting, that they should cover sexual organs and physical deformities in their works (Hedrick, 13). Baldung presents the phallic image directly and inescapably to his audience. Whereas for Alberti, beauty is achieved through a unified composition, Baldung employs visual disjunctions and ambiguities in his Bewitched Groom to convey the inconstancy of witchcraft.

Despite the focus the codpiece in Baldung’s print has received, the connection between it and the theme of virility is problematic. Since boys began to wear this clothing item at the age of seven, Grace Q. Vicary argues that the codpiece should be read as a gender sign rather than as a reference to fertility and on the basis of an investigation into the purpose of the codpiece she asserts: “[T]he current belief that its [the codpiece’s] prime function was phallic connotations of aggressive virility display is untenable in view of the public hysteria, conflicting treatments for a dreadful, stigmatized, sexually transmitted disease which at that time overwhelmed Europe.” [Grace Q. Vicary, “Visual Art as Social Data: The Renaissance Codpiece,” Cultural Anthropology 4, no. 1 (February, 1989): 18-19]. Vicary suggests that, aside from acting as a gender sign, the codpiece fulfilled a practical protective and medical purpose in addition to possibly functioning as an apotropaic device to ward off illness or convey chastity (Vicary, 14-15).

In the Malleus, Institoris and Sprenger responded to the popular belief that witches collected penises and kept them in birds’ nests, boxes, or cabinets, asserting that those who believe they have seen or experienced this are victims of demonic delusions (Institoris and Sprenger, 147 & 280). Witches and demons were credited with the ability to remove feeling from the male organ to produce impotence and to make a man believe that he has been emasculated, even though in reality no damage had been done to the body (Weyer, 35 & 332).
Furthermore, in his 1555 treatise *Hosenteufel* (Trouser Devil), Andreas Musculus condemns the codpiece as a form of nudity since it showed the male genitals that could only incite lust in the viewer.\(^{386}\) As Lyndal Roper points out, this statement is problematic because the male becomes the subject of the female gaze, which is the reverse of what was normally acceptable at this time, or is rendered in a feminine role in relation to the spectator.\(^{387}\) Viewed from this perspective, the erotic connotations of Baldung’s print become clear. In an amusing fashion, the artist presents an image that evokes the dual role of the witch as a source for male sexual fantasies and anxieties.

The rearing unicorn on the heraldic plaque also carries sexual connotations by virtue of its horn. In addition to its general symbolism, the unicorn had personal meaning for the artist as it adorned the Baldung family coat of arms and was a symbol for Baldung’s hometown of Swäbisch Gmünd.\(^{388}\) For this print, the unicorn was turned around so that its phallic horn points towards the horse’s rear.\(^{389}\) Although this noble creature often suggested purity and chastity, it

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\(^{386}\) Tight fitting clothes can also been read as a sign of indecency, as is shown in the *Crowing with Thorns* by an artist from Cranach’s school, in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, wherein the man kneeling before Christ has a tight codpiece (Mellinkoff, 1993, 205).


\(^{388}\) Concern over male dress is also expressed in Joachim Westphal’s *Hoffartsteufel in Teufelbücher* (The Devil’s Arrogance in the Devil Books) (Roper, 1994, ft. 42). Studies on Baldung have demonstrated that his works were in the collections of educated men, suggesting that it was a male rather than female gaze receiving this image; see the analysis of Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon*.

\(^{389}\) Hoak, 492. Zika argues that the unicorn on the shield does not accurately reflect the Baldung family’s coat of arms, opening the print to a number of interpretations (Zika, 2007, 34). See Brinkmann, 2007, fig. 127, for Hans Baldung Grien’s woodcut entitled *Coat of Arms of the Baldung Family*, dated to circa 1530, in the British Museum, London. The composition includes a rearing unicorn and a unicorn escutcheon with a child. Baldung also executed a brush drawing heightened with white on pale blue-gray tinted paper, *Study Sheet with Unicorn*, in 1544 that is also housed in the British Museum.

\(^{389}\) Brinkmann, 2007, 192.
had darker associations. In some cases the unicorn was linked with death and the underworld. Examples of this rare iconography include Death riding a brown unicorn in Jean Colombe’s *Hours of Chantilly* from 1485 and Pluto mounted on a unicorn in Dürer’s *Rape of Persephone* from 1516 (fig. 77). Having worked in Dürer’s shop, Baldung was no doubt aware of the master’s print and therefore the unusual use of the unicorn. The opposing symbolic interpretations of the unicorn fit into the environment of uncertainty surrounding the rest of the imagery in the *Bewitched Groom*.

The female horse in the *Bewitched Groom* continues the sexual theme. As she swings her tail, the horse reveals her genitals, a behaviour typical of mares in heat. The excessive passions of the horse can be equated with those of the witch. From his prints of sexually excited and frustrated horses, it is clear that Baldung had an interest in the subject and was aware

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390 Francesco di Giorgio Martini employed unicorns as symbols of purity in his *Triumph of Chastity* wherein the animals draw Chastity’s carriage. The *Triumph of Chastity*, a Sienese tempera painting from circa 1463-1468, is housed in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

391 Death and his mount appear in their own vignette in the upper left corner of folio 86v as part of the decorative framework surrounding *The Funeral of Raymond Diocrès*.

392 Pia F. Cuneo argues for a growing concern over the sexual identity of the horse brought about by the increasing interest that the elite were placing on the ownership, care, and selective breeding of horses [Pia F. Cuneo, “Mad Mares and Wilful Women: Ways of Knowing Nature – and Gender – in Early Modern Hippological Texts,” in: *Ways of Knowing: Ten Interdisciplinary Essays*, edited by Mary Lindemann (Boston & Leiden: Brill, 2004), 5]. While some scholars have proposed that the horse has just kicked or killed the so-called groom, the first of these suggestions seems very unlikely because of the man’s position (Hults, 2005, 99). Had this been the artist’s intention, the groom would be lying with his feet towards the horse, having been kicked over. There is no evidence of physical harm on the man’s body either, pointing to another cause for his current situation. The emphasis on the codpiece and the exposure of the horse’s rear has also provoked consideration as to whether the man may have attempted to have intercourse with the horse.

393 That the tail moves in contrast to the plume of the burning torch can be read as evidence of a deliberate action. Associations have also been made between Baldung’s horse and representations of the Devil presenting his rear end for his followers to kiss (Koerner, 444). Presenting the horse in a foreshortened manner was not a novel device; Paolo Uccello included such a horse in *Bernardino della Ciarda Thrown off of his Horse* in the 1450s. The painting is in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.

Lusitanian mares could purportedly be impregnated by the west wind, stressing the extreme fertility attributed to female horses (Pliny 3:115-117). Pliny asserts that, in contrast to the mare, the stallion is one of the most infertile of creatures (see also Cuneo, 10). Early modern authors like Boguet were compelled to dispute Pliny’s assertion in their treatises (Boguet, 39). William of Auvergne, in his *De Universo* II, 25, 1071, compares the impregnation of women by incubi who breathe into wombs to the Lusitanian mares (Roberts, 134).

394 Mares with long manes were characterized as being proud and spirited, a quality that they share with witches (Pliny 3:407).

Writing in the fourth century, the veterinarian Theomnestos reported that mares were particularly inclined to a type of Narcissistic madness when they caught a glimpse of their reflection: the animal would either stop eating and perish because of this obsession or go insane from lust while searching for a mate (Cuneo, 12-13).
of the associations that existed between witches and horses. Witches and demons were both understood to be able to assume the bodies of horses. Several stories involving witches, horses, and men exist in the popular legends of northern Europe, and although many can contribute meaning to the interpretation of the *Bewitched Groom*, none are able to fully explain Baldung’s composition. While the association between witches and horses remained strong in contemporary literature and oral exchanges, living, enfleshed horses do not figure prominently in the corpus of witchcraft imagery in the manner of their skulls or goats.

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395 Baldung produced a series of woodcut illustrations depicting horses in a forest which are discussed at length in Koerner’s *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*.

396 In the Life of St. Peter Martyr (St. Peter of Verona), the devil, spurred by his envy of following that the saint has amassed transforms himself into a black horse and attempts to disrupt a religious service [M. Oldfield Howey, *The Horse in Magic and Myth* (New York: Castle Books, 1968), 35]. Witches were also theorized to ride demons in the guise of horses (Institoris and Sprenger, 247). In the life of St. Macharius, the saint was credited with being able to see through the illusion and identify the horse as a witch (Remy, 111). The saint used holy water to transform a poor old woman afflicted by witchcraft from a horse back into her human form (Howey, 173). In his *Sadducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions*, Joseph Glanvill discusses the town of Blocula in Sweden where in 1669 witches were turning people into horses. A witch would put a magical halter on a man’s head when he was sleeping and transform him into a horse unless he could react quickly enough and put the halter on the witch instead, thus causing her to become a horse that he could then ride (Howey, 173).

397 The German artist Anton Woensam produced a woodcut around 1525 titled *The Wise Woman*, in which a woman’s body is fashioned to symbolically reflect her desirable qualities and attributes. She has horse’s hooves instead of back feet representing her steadfast chastity. This image provides a positive counterpart to the witch and horse association [Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Manchester & New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 43-44 & pl. 18].

398 Baldung’s print has been linked to the story of Squire Rechenberger, a man who is abducted by the devil for a night ride on a black horse; this account and its permutations are discussed at length by Charmian A. Mesenzeva, “‘Der Behexte Stallknecht’ des Hans Baldung Grien,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 44, no. 1 (1981): 58ff, and are commented on by Brinkmann, 2007, 195-196. For the potential influence of fragments from Varro’s *Eumenides* see Margaret A. Sullivan, “The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 381 ff.

399 The association between witches and horses was so strong that Bodin proclaimed that if a witch is seen outside of a house or stable she is to be held accountable if anyone or anything dies, even if her behaviour appears innocuous (Bodin, 199-200).

A bridled and shod horse carries the devil and his victim in the frequently illustrated story of the Witch of Berkley. For example, see *The Devil Abducts the Witch of Berkeley*, a woodcut illustrating the 1493 *Liber Chronicarum* produced in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. This image is reproduced in Zika, 2007, fig. 2.20. Related to this is *The Relationship between a Genevan Wagon-driver and his Devil Moreth*, in 1570 (Zika, 2007, fig. 7.22). Horses also appear in depictions of the Furious Horde by Hermann Vischer the Younger and Urs Graf the Elder; in Cranach’s *Allegory of Melancholy* from 1528 in Edinburgh, a demon is mounted on a horse (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 237, 128, & 92). As with the gentleman, the role of the horse in the *Bewitched Groom* is not defined as in the examples listed here, wherein the horse serves as a mode of transportation for the devil and his company.
Gaze plays an extremely important role in the *Bewitched Groom*. The horse sneers at the viewer while the witch looks intently at the groom. The horse’s gaze acknowledges the spectator’s presence, anchoring him to the event. The viewer looks into the scene and completes the triangulation of figures surrounding the prone body of the groom; this figural arrangement enables Baldung to question whether the audience is or can be innocent in the viewing process. Viewing implies an active role on the part of the spectator, a process underscored by the manipulation and use of perspectival tools. To look at witchcraft imagery was to expose oneself to the allure of an intriguing yet treacherous subject matter. The viewer is, after all, cast into the company of at least one witch. By implicating the audience in the scene, Baldung suggests complicity and leaves viewers to reconcile their own relationship to either the witch or groom.

The horse, the witch, and perhaps even the audience could be responsible for injuring the prone gentleman with the evil eye. The evil eye was theorized to be a real and potent weapon that could be employed by witches as well as other members of the community. Belief in the evil eye was based on the theory that there was a physical component to sight, which allowed for the transmission of harm simply through eye contact. Whether or not this corporeal connection was possible was a source of contention among authors of witchcraft treatises.

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399 Eyes are “the features that are most capable of eliciting emotion in us,” Freedberg writes, “[t]his is why the images that trouble us most are those in which the gaze of the represented most actively engages our attention.” (Freedberg, 220). The audience’s gaze turned back on itself is treated in Pye, see especially chapter 4 “Dumb Hamlet”.


401 The power of sight is addressed in “Baldung’s Audience” in chapter two.

402 According to Agrippa, the power of the evil eye came from the vapour carried by the corrupted blood of the witch out through her eyes and into the bewitched person’s heart (Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy written by Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim*, translated by James Freake, edited by Donald Tyson [St. Paul (MN): Llewellyn, 1995], 148). Institoris and Sprenger argued that the air could be infected with an evil quality, which, when combined with the power of the imagination of the victim, could produce the effect of the evil eye, and avowed that this process could only occur with demonic assistance (Institoris and Sprenger, 65-67). Demons could deceive individuals into thinking they are responsible for sending the evil eye when in reality, they had no such power. Nonetheless, authors remarked that old women are particularly poisonous in terms of their gaze and that young children were most vulnerable to their effects. Not only humans but animals could be affected.
Even so, people employed amulets to protect themselves against the injurious gaze. Amulets functioned as a distraction: they were intended to embarrass or confuse the sender of an evil eye, causing the person to lose their focus and thereby save the recipient from harm. Phallic imagery was deemed especially helpful in this regard. In order to confront the attacker, amulets had to be highly visible and were usually worn around the wrist or neck. In its inescapability and its prominent position in the print, Baldung’s codpiece can be interpreted to serve the same function. This device prompts the question as to whom the print is protecting, calling attention to the audience’s possible participation in witchcraft.

The Bewitched Groom makes the artistically educated viewer conscious of the viewing process and calls attention to Baldung’s masterful use of foreshortening in both the gentleman and the horse. Through the odd construction and inconsistent recession of space, the artist alerts his audience to the fact that something is amiss. In addressing the theme of sight Baldung invites a comparison between the visual effects achieved by the artist and the witch. It is then up to the viewer to decide how to approach the deceptions presented by both. In its ability to arouse curiosity and its implication of the spectator’s participation through the directed gaze of the horse, the print challenges the viewer to consider his or her own role, whether as an innocent bystander, the next victim, or a willing participant in witchcraft.

Conclusion

The bestial passions and interactions attributed to witches are intimately related to the acts of violence described in chapter one. These behaviours undermine the social hierarchy through the construction of illicit relationships and thereby disrupt the smooth functioning of the community. In their rejection of reason, witches transgress the boundaries of proper human conduct and tread into animalistic territory. Engagement with this issue enables witchcraft

Similarly, P. Manutius writes of Eriphyle, an old witch who enchanted animals with the poisonous venom of her gaze (de Lancre, 79).

Remy, on the other hand, argues that bewitchment cannot occur since poison cannot cross the distance between people. He challenges that if this were the case, witches would be unable to control who they killed as their poison would infect whoever they looked at (Remy, 127).

imagery to participate in the larger discourse on the nature and purpose of humanity. The case studies in this chapter each take differing but interrelated approaches to the ways in which the distinctions between the human and animal can be eroded. All four works force consideration of both the psychological and physical implications of the breakdown of the categorical distinction. On their own, these images each mark an innovative artistic moment wherein visual traditions and witchcraft theory are united in a new way, while together they demonstrate an interest in the bestial nature of witches.

The four case studies use the magically or demonically affected body as a site for exploring the ways in which gender and sexuality relate to identity. The anonymous Italian *Scene of Witchcraft* considers the naturally changing female body and uses witches as a means to examine the undesirable qualities perceived to be inherent in or characteristic of women. This painting also introduces the theme of whether and how a body might or might not be reflective of an individual’s inner nature, a considerable source of apprehension in the early modern period. Dosso’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* treats the themes of concealed identity and bodily transformation through both his beautiful witch and her animal companions. In denying the viewer certainty as to the character and purpose of his female protagonist, Dosso highlights fears over the seductress and her control over the male body. Baldung’s witch, on the other hand, is self-empowered and without need of her masculine human counterpart. The overt sexuality of the *Witch and Dragon* suggests the inner desires of the audience as well as the participants. Bestiality is here on full display. The last work, Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom*, introduces a male protagonist through whom issues of male identity, feminine influence, and spectatorship are examined. The excessive witch offered a platform for the exploration of sexual anxieties and secret desires.

Authors of witchcraft treatises argued over whether witches had the ability to transform themselves and others into animals, and considered the implications this possibility has for how the body and soul are understood. Early modern artists seized upon these uncertainties and constructed their representations of witchcraft in terms of the bestial to examine human instinct, the distinction between human and animal minds and bodies, and the problem of self-control. Visual representations call attention to the pleasure that submitting to one’s bestial passions could have for witches, their victims, and their audiences. Life without human concerns and the
physical pleasure that can be gained from animal-human interactions are presented as enticing options that are only sometimes balanced by their negative consequences. In this way the case studies raise concerns about viewership; while authors shied away from descriptions of witches’ behaviours to prevent others from engaging in them, artists challenged viewers to understand, control, or give in to the temptations presented to them. The conscious consideration of compositional design in the case studies examined in this chapter argues for the contribution witchcraft can make to the understanding of the visual strategies employed by artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
Witches were credited with possessing the ability to access other realms that were believed to exist beyond the boundaries of the mundane world, including those of the demonic and the dead. Their capacity to communicate with and perhaps even control the otherworldly denizens lay outside of the experiences and the limitations imposed upon the majority of humanity by nature. Depending upon the particular audience, witches were respected for their occult knowledge, mocked for their false claims, or feared for their ability to interact with the demonic or dead. The otherworldly beings could cause injury and reveal secret knowledge to the witch. Witches provided the rest of society with a means to learn about these other realms. Their claims and explanations, usually recorded within a judicial context, served as a fundamental resource for contemporary authors writing on witchcraft. These complex demonological, theological, and scientific studies and the responses to them informed the intellectual and elite discourses that would have been accessible to those patrons who were able to purchase the type of images included within this investigation. Artists incorporated these themes and issues into their representations of witchcraft, but in so doing transformed, expanded, and complicated the material, taking advantage of the possibilities afforded by the visual format alone.

Although the title of this chapter refers to the demonic and the dead, familiarity with demonological literature would likely strike a contemporary educated viewer as referring to one category and its subcategory. In the sixteenth century, many authors treating witchcraft argued that demons were the hidden cause behind a body’s refusal to remain dead. Apparent resuscitations of the dead by witches were thought to be the work of demons. Even though, like many aspects of witchcraft, this theory was subject to controversy, discussions of the realms of the dead and the demonic were closely linked. In the example of the living dead, the two were taken to be mutually exclusive. Authors, in stark contrast to the public, generally denied witches any abnormal or superhuman powers and instead attributed the strange or magical effects they claimed to produce to demons. At stake then, were the means by which the witch was able to bridge the gap between the mundane and otherworld(s). In this way, the nature of the material world becomes a significant theme, as both artists and authors struggled to articulate how demons and the dead could operate in the physical world and how their bodies were imbued with the powers attributed to them. The uncertainties surrounding the possible interactions between
witches, demons, and the dead and the implications of these relationships offered a rich source of material for authors and artists alike.

Together, the case studies encompass three very different but equally significant aspects of the theme of the witch’s otherworldly interactions: the first examines how demons operate in the physical world and the consequences this has on witchcraft, the second focuses on how the living can interact with and benefit from the human dead, and the last is concerned with the witch’s power to revivify dead or conjure demonic creatures. In considering the innovative nature of each of these works the importance of the artist’s unique choice of compositional model should not be understated. Through the realms of the demonic and the dead the artists cast witchcraft as a wonder that is either fantastic or else frighteningly reflective of actual practices that may not sit comfortably with an entire community. The power of these images to captivate lies in their ability to compellingly present potential: the potential for hidden worlds and forces to operate within our own.

De Gheyn’s *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 78) is the best image through which to examine anxieties concerning the potential for the demonic body to interact with the human world due to the artist’s attention to the materiality of the physical environment. The properties of air, smoke, and vapour invite an investigation into their role in the creation of demonic forms and in the transvectio, meaning the demonic transport, of witches. Borrowing motifs from apocalyptic imagery, the artist calls attention to what is at stake if what he depicts are real bodies and abilities. The need to explain the physicality of the demonic and the occult forces that witches were thought to manipulate demonstrates how early modern thinkers were attempting to negotiate the boundaries between science, religion, and popular belief. That there was concrete evidence for demonic interference in the human world and the witch’s flight in the minds of many theologians and jurists necessitates awareness on the part of the modern viewer that the early modern scientific process was subject to different rigors than today. This cognisance may prompt concern over the passive acceptance of knowledge or science in the contemporary world and the consequences that may befall a society when the operation of that information and its implications are not fully understood by the populace. De Gheyn complicates the scientific explanation of witchcraft by incorporating the classical figure of Cupid, forcing the viewer to consider the roles popular belief, cultural mythology, and
investigations into the natural world play in explanations of mysterious phenomena. In addition to asking whether or not witchcraft exists, de Gheyn’s drawing prompts closer examination of how society attempts to understand the world. De Gheyn draws attention to material and content through his careful choice of form and detail which subtly leads viewers towards scepticism of witchcraft.

The *Witches at their Incantations* (fig. 103) by Salvator Rosa is concerned with bodily integrity. His work is fundamental to this discussion because it presents several different examples of the ways in which witches utilized the dead.\(^{404}\) This makes Rosa’s work exceptional. By focusing on the witches’ interactions with dead bodies Rosa is able to quietly draw parallels to other social practices, prompting the audience to ask whether or not there is a distinction between the activities of witches and regular people. Such practices included attempts to revive corpses for divinatory purposes, the expunging of blood pollution, the occult use of blood sacrifice, and the use or consumption of bodies for medicinal purposes. The artist emphasized the importance of the dead by placing a hanging corpse in the center of his canvas. Together with the witches and their victims, Rosa’s hanged man speaks to concerns about human mortality and the implications for both the body and soul when one dies a good or bad death. The fate of the body after death and its role in the Resurrection was a significant theme in the art and literature of the early modern period. The unease around the treatment of the body in Rosa’s image continues to have currency today, not only in the ethical dilemma of harvesting organs from the deceased and the problem of reburial and the disposal of older remains, but also in the struggle to protect victims, such as albinos, in cultures where their body parts continue to be viewed as protective amulets against witchcraft. Less critically, the use of corpses for their educational as well as entertainment value remains a consistent theme in both early modern and contemporary societies. By setting a hanged man amongst a variety of witchcraft activities, Rosa challenges the justifications for widely accepted but deeply disturbing practices.

Finally, *Lo stregozzo* (fig. 118) is unprecedented in its use of a witches’ procession. Agostino Veneziano was not alone in his use of monstrous creatures, but the manner in which he

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\(^{404}\) While Rosa’s image is comparable to Cornelis Saftleven’s *Witchcraft* in many ways, Rosa places greater emphasis on the body and its parts, causing it to be the ideal image for this study (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 186).
calls attention to their materiality is unparalleled. This attention to the physical constitution of the creatures is underscored through the treatment of the vegetation and vapour in the print. This, in conjunction with Agostino’s figural arrangement, calls attention to unnatural generation and human intervention in nature. These characteristics do not dominate any other image in the corpus as they do here.

The print emphasizes the witch’s relationship to the underworld, challenging the viewer to explore the possibility that witches are able to resurrect the deceased, to reassemble and revive consumed bodies, and to generate monstrous forms with remains from other bodies. The artist uses monstrous forms in his print to examine the human desire to generate life by unnatural means. The animation of the monsters in Lo stregozzo is achieved through demonic magic: the hybrid beasts are composed of skins and bones with little muscle or tissue. They fly in the face of anatomical research and in so doing haunt the viewer with the unknown potential of the body and magic. At the same time, the skeletal forms alert the audience to the artist’s complicity in dissection, an uncomfortable practice that relates to concerns about bodily integrity.\footnote{Jonathan Sawday, \textit{The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture} (London & New York: Routledge, 1995); and Katharine Park, “The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy,” \textit{Renaissance Quarterly} 47, no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 1-33. Park’s article argues for a changing attitude towards the practices of autopsy and dissection, which, by the middle of the fifteenth century, led to a negative public perception of the growing practice. She contends that the need for huge numbers of corpses remained unsatisfied by conventional sources, execution sites and hospitals, resulting in the theft of bodies from houses and graves, which transgressed the funerary rites and familial honour due to the deceased and their family.}

The artist entrenches himself within the contemporary interest in generating fantastic forms and taking liberties with artistic licence as a means to demonstrate creative genius. The unnatural splicing of species and bodily parts connects the engraving to the convention of representing the demonic body as an impossible compilation of disparate pieces, often with multiple eyes and mouths. The artist demonstrates how demonic and hybrid bodies are alike and employs the language of the possessed body to illustrate the aberrant nature of both. The notion of segregation between different species, that is the upholding of categorical distinctions, which the print challenges, makes \textit{Lo stregozzo} pertinent to modern scientific practices and dilemmas.

\footnote{The problem of bodily dissection is discussed in Stefania Macioce and Tania De Nile’s essay, “Influssi nordici nelle Stregonerie di Salvator Rosa,” in: \textit{Salvator Rosa e il suo tempo 1615-1673}, edited by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, Helen Langdon, and Caterina Volpi (Rome: Campisano Editore, 2010), 139-158. The authors also address the influence of northern witchcraft imagery, including works by de Gheyn, on Rosa’s art.}
In an age of xenotransplantation, anxieties range far beyond the moral and ethical implications, touching upon the same fears that monstrosities might overwhelm the world. Concerns about genetic manipulation gone awry are already present in the products of popular culture and reveal that the early modern era shares with contemporary culture an anxiety about a populace, or at least a potential populace, of unnaturally generated creatures upsetting the natural order. *Lo stregozzo* confronts its audience with the object of its fears and attempts to diffuse the apprehension through the contemplation of the underlying claims of witchcraft. The artist shows the dangerous potential of witchcraft and experimentation with the dead at the same time he draws the viewer into the scene with the seduction of idealized nude bodies, mesmerizing textures, and wondrous creatures. Agostino Veneziano uses the human interest in possibility – what could be created or what could exist – to excite and captivate his audience.

**Jacques de Gheyn II’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath**

De Gheyn’s *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 78), a drawing from circa 1610, was subsequently followed by a large-scale engraving, *The Departure for the Sabbath* (fig. 79). The print was likely engraved by Andries Stock and was published by Nicolaes de Clerck of Delft. Stock engraved a number of compositions after de Gheyn’s drawings in the second decade of the seventeenth century. De Gheyn signed his drawing, indicating that it was intended as a finished product, even though it was likely intended to have been engraved

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406 The artist (1565-1629) created his image with a pen and brush, articulating forms through line and a series of brown and grey washes on buff coloured paper. Surprisingly large in size, the drawing measures 45 by 68.2 cm and is composed of two sheets of paper. The join can be seen running through the face of the old dressed woman wearing a cap and down the back of the seated witch. The drawing has been folded lengthwise and width wise into quarters, resulting in creasing. Damage has been sustained along the bottom of the two sheets and for purposes of preservation the work has been mounted. Especially dark ink indicates areas where the original material is no longer extent. The high level of detail and careful execution indicate that the work is intended as a lavish production.

The translation from drawing to engraving meant that the composition had the potential to reach a wider audience. While the print is a faithful reproduction of the drawing, the drawing is the subject of study here because it is executed by de Gheyn himself. As the physical qualities of the work are so critical to the discussion of the subject matter, it is important to understand as much as possible about the designer’s conception of the work.

The Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath was not the artist’s first foray into the subject of witchcraft. In the early years of the seventeenth century the artist produced a number of drawings depicting witches. Representations of witches at work in kitchens, underground rooms, or outside beside architectural structures compose a large percentage of this corpus. Drawings with studies of witches, sometimes including demons, also exist. Of the artist’s witchcraft images, the Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath is the only one that was designed to be and was subsequently engraved. The drawing is remarkable in de Gheyn’s oeuvre for the artist’s use of a panoramic landscape inhabited by witches, for the intense interest he shows in materiality as it relates to the subject of witchcraft, and for the inclusion of new motifs to his repertoire of witchcraft imagery. Concurrent with his witchcraft drawings, de Gheyn was making highly detailed pictorial studies and finished paintings of the natural world. Foremost among these are accurate representations of plants and insects. De Gheyn partook of the growing market for depictions of the natural world, producing images that participated in the nascent genre of still life, at the same time he investigated one of nature’s secrets: witchcraft.

De Gheyn had access to contemporary intellectual discourses through several sources that may have prompted or helped to prompt his interest in depicting witches. The artist’s marriage to Eva Stalpaert van der Wiele made him independently wealthy and brought him into the circle

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408 The inscription on The Departure to the Sabbath cites de Gheyn as its inventor.
409 The artist (1565–1629) created his image with a pen and brush, articulating forms through line and a series of brown and grey washes on buff coloured paper. Surprisingly large in size, the drawing measures 45 by 68.2 cm and is composed of two sheets of paper. The join can be seen running through the face of the old dressed woman wearing a cap and down the back of the seated witch. The drawing has been folded lengthwise and width wise into quarters, resulting in creasing. Damage has been sustained along the bottom of the two sheets and for purposes of preservation the work has been mounted. Especially dark ink indicates areas where the original material is no longer extent. The high level of detail and careful execution indicate that the work is intended as a lavish production.
of the South Holland aristocracy.\textsuperscript{410} Eva’s brother, Govert, and her father, Thomas, published Reginald Scot’s \textit{Discoverie of Witchcraft} in Dutch between 1602 and 1609 in an abridged version of the English edition.\textsuperscript{411} It has been argued that the engraving after de Gheyn’s \textit{Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath} was timed so as to coincide with the publication of Scot’s text in order to reap the benefit of the public interest in witches.\textsuperscript{412}

The artist also possessed a large personal library and participated in an elite, educated circle in Leiden that dealt with Latin texts. De Gheyn composed the Latin inscription accompanying one of his prints himself.\textsuperscript{413} Other legends for his images were written for him by the philosopher and legal theorist Hugo Grotius.\textsuperscript{414} De Gheyn’s academic acquaintances included Pieter Pauw, a professor of botany and anatomy, Ludolf van Collen, a professor of engineering, and Carolus Clusius, the director of the university’s botanical garden.\textsuperscript{415} Among the influential and privileged individuals that de Gheyn depicted are Jan van Hout, the secretary of Leiden University, Jan Janszn Orlers, the author of a history of Leiden, the poet and linguist Daniel Heinsius, and the collector Bartolomeo Ferreris.\textsuperscript{416} De Gheyn was also a member of the intellectual circle of Prince Maurits, working for the ruler when he lived in Leiden, and functioned as an artistic advisor to Prince Frederik Hendrick in the royal court at The Hague.\textsuperscript{417}

Turbulence characterizes de Gheyn’s \textit{Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath}. The sky swirls with clouds and shadows falls across a land inhabited by reptilian creatures and grotesque women. It is a forbidding image complete with a dramatic atmosphere that serves as a setting for the unnatural manipulation of the air by witches and demons. Gusts of wind, smoke, and vapour

\textsuperscript{410} Van Regteren Altena, 40.
\textsuperscript{411} Swan, 2005, 157.
\textsuperscript{412} Hults, 2005, 164.
\textsuperscript{413} Van Regteren Altena, 42-46; and Hults, 2005, 155
\textsuperscript{414} Swan, 2005, 31.
\textsuperscript{415} Jane P. Davidson, \textit{The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470-1750} (Freren: Luca, 1987), 58; van Regteren Altena, vol. 1, 86; and Swan, 2005, 12 & 54-60.
\textsuperscript{416} Swan, 2005, 62.
churn together and dissolve into one another, creating a visionary quality. Through the element of air, de Gheyn examines a number of disputed ideas concerning witchcraft, including the beliefs that witchcraft heralded the impending apocalypse, that witches could be bodily transvested by demons, and that demons could create false bodies and other deceits by condensing the air. 

Continuing the theme of bodily formation, de Gheyn draws upon the notion that unattractiveness or physical irregularities are reflective of the soul’s deformity. He adds to this the idea that witchcraft was the product of an uninhibited Cupid. The presence of the amorous god with his attributes is otherwise unprecedented in the known works of witchcraft imagery, making *The Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* a unique case requiring explanation. De Gheyn presents an image that prompts his viewers to consider how demons and witches might be capable of manipulating the physical world and examines their motivations.

A trio of women dominate the center foreground in the *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* and their formation is echoed by the mountain of rock behind them. To the left of the mountain there is a witch-inhabited cave and on the right, a view of a peaceful landscape in the distance. Interspersed among the large tree, the cave, and the clouds above, are a series of witches and demons that fly about and engage in their dark arts. Lizards and other creatures that are closely associated with witchcraft wind their way through the landscape amongst the body parts that the witches have left strewn about.

A sense of totality is conveyed through the curving lines of the clouds that are reflected in the landscape: the rocks, caves and hills repeat the churning patterns. This gives the scene a distinct sense of infiltration and inversion, which is particularly appropriate for a group that

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418 Michael Cole’s article “The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium,” *The Art Bulletin* 84 (December, 2002): 621-640, is a seminal work exploring the relationships between demonic manipulation of the world, particularly air, and artistic creation. In addition to demonic deceits, Cole addresses the themes of the dissected body and the use of ligatures.

419 The viewer is drawn into the image through an outcropping of land that extends into the picture from beyond the frame on the left side, through the blood and tendons of the severed head on the left, and through the s-curve of the body of the lizard that crawls into the scene on the right. The earth underneath the grass on the ledge has eroded away in arcs, leaving mounds that echo the shapes of the clouds above.

De Gheyn’s lizard reappears in Hans Bollongier’s *Still Life with Flowers* from 1639 in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, where it has been taken out of the chaotic landscape and set on a table beside a vase of blooming flowers. The beast retains its vicious character, hissing and brandishing its tail in a threatening manner. As in de Gheyn’s image, the lizard functions as a symbol of death and the evil that continually haunts humanity.
seeks demonic rather than heavenly aid. De Gheyn presents a landscape that has been disrupted and cast into chaos, becoming a site for terrifying demonically inspired activities, paralleling several of the case studies discussed thus far. Standing in stark contrast to this mayhem is the distant vista with a pleasant landscape inhabited by peasants going about their daily business (fig. 80).

A series of calligraphic lines communicate the tumultuous nature of the scene. A strong wind carries swathes of cloud across the sky from left to right, creating a vortex-like effect as the clouds threaten to swirl back upon themselves. It is a hellish environment; in fact, the treatment of the sky in de Gheyn’s *Orpheus in the Underworld* (fig. 81) bears the same characteristics as his *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath*. Flames flicker throughout the sky and the top of the mountain explodes in a rain of fire and rock. It appears that this blast is one possible cause of the dripping clouds; the viscous nature of the flow does not suggest rain, but is instead reminiscent of a slow trickle of blood. Witches employed clouds as a tool for devastation as recorded in the trial of one early modern witch:

Barbeline Rayel added that, with the help of the Demon, witches drive and roll great jars through the clouds until they reach that place which they have marked out for destruction; and then they burst into stones and flames which fall rushing down and beat flat everything they strike. The unusual behaviour of the clouds and the apparently unnecessary explosion serve to connect the activities of the witches to otherwise inexplicable weather patterns and strange environmental phenomena.

The thick layering of clouds and their circular pattern resonates with contemporary otherworldly and apocalyptic imagery. Hendrik Goltzius’ *The Wedding of Cupid and Psyche* (fig. 82), an engraving from 1587 after a design by Bartholomeus Spranger, and Wendel

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420 This pen and ink drawing is in the Duke Anton Ulrich-Museum in Brunswick. The design of the clouds for the *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* was also influenced by De Gheyn’s *The Adoration of the Trinity* from 1589, which followed a design by Karl van Mander. Regteren Altena points out that this inspiration can be seen in several of the artist’s landscapes (van Regteren Altena, 22-23). *The Adoration of the Trinity* is reproduced in van Regteren Altena, fig.17

Dietterlin’s *Last Judgment* (fig. 83) from 1590 employ a similar arrangement of clouds which, like de Gheyn’s drawing, provide an internal structure that organizes the vast expanse of the sky. While the *Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath* lacks the organic quality of the *Last Judgment*, both artists rely on twisting forms to incite concern in their viewers. Apocalyptic vocabulary is also borrowed from Dürer’s *The Beast with Two Horns like a Lamb* (fig. 84) belonging to his woodcut series *The Revelation of St. John* published in 1498. In this print, a glutinous rain falls from the clouds like a curtain (fig. 85), framing the horned beast in the same manner that de Gheyn’s clouds drip over the mountain (fig. 86). The fiery shower from the explosion and the barrenness of the landscape evoke the harsh conditions of hell. If the apocalypse is being foreshadowed or is in the process of arriving in de Gheyn’s drawing, then the judgment of the witches is communicated through the physical qualities of their environment, which is ironically one that they themselves have chosen for their activities.

De Gheyn’s indebtedness to Baldung’s *Witches’ Sabbath* (fig. 4) is evident not only in the use of the nearly barren tree as a framing device, but also in the emphasis on vapours, clouds, and fire. The witch attending to the cauldron opens the lid to release a plume of steam carrying bones and other materials into the air, echoing Baldung’s seated witch with an urn in the *Witches’ Sabbath*. This material rises and curls above the mountain, and may be responsible for the dripping clouds; the corrupt and poisonous nature of the witches’ brew may be tearing at the fabric of the sky.

Currents of air sweep the witches on broomsticks, goats, and monstrous reptilian demons forward. Their locomotive capabilities surpass those of the rest of humanity. De Gheyn

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422 Dietterlin’s drawing is housed in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. The Goltzius print is discussed further below.
423 In this woodcut Dürer depicts Revelation 13:1-13 and 14:14-17. According to the biblical text, fire rained down around the beast with the lamb’s horns. At the end of chapter 14, St. John describes how the Son of man reaps the earth, how angels gather the grapes from the earth, and how blood rises to the height of horse’s bridles; the unusual rain in Dürer’s likely alludes to the flood of blood that is shortly to follow.
424 Included are three individual bones and three bones that are joined together, like a finger.
425 In his drawing, de Gheyn has illustrated a truly wild scene, as the inhabitants of the sky are not the normal host of birds one might expect, but women and monstrous creatures that fight, fling lightening, and, in one instance, prepared to have demonic intercourse in the clouds. The reptiles that usually slither and creep across the ground here take flight, signalling an inversion of normal order. The winged demons and the manner in which they
addresses the question of transvection primarily through demonic beasts; however, the witch on
the broomstick above the pot presses the issue of the means by which flight might transpire (fig.
87). She is swept upward by the unusually powerful vapour pouring out of the cauldron. In the
contemporary demonological literature, the various modes of magical transportation that the
witch might take were all attributed to demonic intervention, if they were believed to occur at
all.427

De Gheyn provides his audience with a vivid summary of the different modes of demonic
transportation, including the riding of demons in animal form and the broom. In the
Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath, the vaporous pots are indicative of the witches’ magical
unguent which many witches insisted was necessary for their flights. Artists like de Gheyn opted
not to show demons conveying the witches in every instance, although early modern authors
asserted that this was in fact the case.428 Instead, de Gheyn shows the possibilities afforded by

426 Save for the unfortunate souls who are unwillingly or unexpectedly transported to the sabbath.
427 Any actions the witch took, including the anointing of a broom with unguent, were assumed by
theorists to function as signals to demons rather than having any magical efficacy themselves.
Institoris and Sprenger declare that witches can be transported bodily by demons and that while they appeared to be riding upon
animals they were in fact mounted upon demons that had assumed animal forms [Henricus Institoris and Jacob
Sprenger, Malleus Maleficarum, edited and translated by Christopher S. Mackay, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2006), 246-251]. Boguet cites examples of those who are not witches being transvecteted to the
sabbath as evidence that the transportation did in fact occur [Henry Boguet, An Examen of Witches, 1602, edited by
Montague Summers, translated by E. Allen Ashwin (Great Britain: John Rodker, 1929, reprinted in New York:
Barnes & Noble, 1971), 43]. Alfonso Tostato, a Spanish biblical scholar of the fifteenth century, also asserted that
flight was possible both in one’s mind by means of dreams and in reality [Lorenzo Lorenzi, Witches: Exploring the
Iconography of the Sorceress and Enchantress, translated by Ursula Creagh (Florence: Centro Di, 2005), 56, citing
Tostato’s Commentaria, in the Quaestio XLVII by means of M. R. Lazzati, “Alfonso Tostato,” in S. Abbiati, et al.,
La stregoneria, 49-50].

The transvection of witches was staunchly defended by authors such as Guazzo and Bodin against those
who asserted that witches never travelled to the sabbath but remained at home in a deluded mental state [Francesco
Maria Guazzo, Compendium Maleficarum, 1608, edited by Montague Summers, translated by E. Allen Ashwin
(London: John Rodker, 1929), 34; and Jean Bodin, On the Demon-Mania of Witches, 1580, translated by Randy A.
Scott (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 40-41]. Those in favour of transvection
argued that the devil created a false body to replace the witch when he or she was transported, in both body and soul,
to a demonic meeting, thus explaining why the witch never appeared to go anywhere to some witnesses. Faced with
this argumentation, spouses often found it difficult to defend their partners.
428 Dürrer shows Simon Magus supported by demons in St. Peter and Simon Magus, from 1512 (Appendix
of Illustrations, fig. 111).
demons, animals, and magically treated objects, as well as the natural environment. At least one witch is supported by the clouds alone (fig. 88), another means for transvection. Remy reports that witches manipulated clouds, often by stirring water with a wand in order to produce vapours and smoke: “This vapour they form into a thick cloud in which they and the Demons are enveloped, and they guide and steer them whither they wish and at last shake them down upon the earth as hail.” He reports that the clouds are full of lightning, just like the ones de Gheyn has depicted.

The early modern era experienced the development of a notion of witchcraft that had not previously existed. Witches had posed a longstanding problem for Christians and for the ancients before them; the availability of literary examples of witchcraft, however, far surpassed the accessibility of artistic models. Dürer’s Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat (fig. 2) from circa 1500 was instrumental in establishing a precedent for the visualization of the witch’s flight in autonomous images of witchcraft and was inspired in part by German legends of the Wild Ride. Lucas Cranach the Elder included the Wild Ride in his depictions of melancholy,

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429 De Gheyn, like Savery, chose to add a humorous element that diffused the seriousness of the subject matter. One demon grasps the witch on a broom by the hair. Comically, the witch’s mouth hangs open and her hand extends outward in a futile attempt at protest or balance in the moment before she loses her mount. Meanwhile, her aggressor looks directly out at the viewer with an expression that seems to promise that he or she will be the next victim.

430 Guazzo recounts the story of a soldier who fires an arrow into a black cloud, only to see a fat, drunken, middle age witch fall from within (Guazzo, 48).

431 Remy, 74-75.

432 Refer to “Issues of Interpretation” in the introduction.

433 The Wild Ride was a group of mounted women who flew through the night led by a goddess, variously identified as Diana and Venus among others. Belief in this practice, which often included feasting and the destruction of property continued into the sixteenth century in Germany [Charles Zika, “Fears of Flying: Representations of Witchcraft and Sexuality in Early Sixteenth-Century Germany,” Australian Journal of Art 8 (1989-1990): 34 & 39]. Similarly, in southern Germany, the Wild Ride or Wild Hunt to Heuberg Mountain was led by Wotan [Edward Bever, The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 96]. This band was closely connected to the Wild Horde which was composed of the spirits of those who had died before their time. Those who had died young, in battle, or who had been murdered or hanged rode during the Ember Days, and left a path of devastation (Zika, 1989-1990, 39). It was also during the Ember Days that the benandanti would fight against witches in Italy [John Martin, “Journeys to the World of the Dead: The Work of Carlo Ginzburg,” Journal of Social History 25, no. 3 (Spring, 1992): 614].

For further discussion of the evolution of flight imagery in depictions of witchcraft, see Zika, 1989-1990, 19-47.
wherein men and women on demonic animals are born into a scene within a giant cloud. This cloud served to alert the viewer to the potentially visionary, internal, or magical quality of the riders. Given the popularity of Cranach’s imagery, the similar use of the clouds to invoke an otherworldly but contested presence, and the common danger posed by the riders and witches, de Gheyn’s audience is alerted to the possibly illusory nature of the Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath.

Adding to the interpretation of this drawing as an image of the fantastic is the visionary and dream-like quality that de Gheyn crafts through the swirling clouds. It also presents an ideal environment for demonic interference, as demons were theorized to thicken the air in order to manifest their illusions. Institoris and Sprenger explain how false bodies could be formed: “Demons and disembodied souls can bring about this thickening by gathering them together and making them into an effigy by means of dense vapours raised up from the earth by moving them in location.” Through the unusual atmosphere, de Gheyn comments upon the inability of his fellow citizens to distinguish reality from the imaginary, a central issue in the discussion of demonology and witchcraft. Authors of witchcraft treatises argued that the devil could affect both the mind and body in such a way as to present false illusions to the eye from outside of the body and to inspire delusions from within so that the afflicted individual mistakenly accepts them as real. In his Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath, de Gheyn takes advantage of the...

434 Cranach produced several works depicting Melancholy. His Allegory of Melancholy, 1528, is on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh from a Private Collection (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 92). One painting, Melancholy, from 1532 is housed at the Musée d’Unterlinden, Colmar and another of the same name and date is in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen (figs. 74 & 75). Melancholia dates to 1533 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 93).

435 Institoris and Sprenger, 255.


While the existence and nature of witches was contested, the reality of demons was subject to less scepticism. There were, however, authors who questioned this generally accepted notion. In the sixteenth century, Pietro Pomponazzi even went so far as to attribute all magical operations to natural phenomena [Daniel P. Walker, Spiritual & Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella [Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000 (1958)], 110-111].
uncertainties surrounding sight and imaginative power to create an environment that would lead the viewer to question his senses or at least the plausibility of coming upon such a scene.  

Concerns about the nature of the demonic body also led to inquiries into why demons were so interested in human activities. By emphasizing the airy abode of demons and their adjacency to humanity, de Gheyn calls attention to demon’s origins. Cast from heaven by God, the rebellious angels were forced to occupy the airy realm over the earth, trapped in close proximity to the species that was favoured by God and therefore the source of their great envy.  Although they found themselves on a plane much closer to humanity, the fallen angels were understood to have retained most, if not all, of their angelic form and power. Drawing upon the authority of Augustine, Weyer asserted that the Devil was just like the other angels in terms of his bodily composition until he disobeyed God, at which time his divine essence dimmed, thereby bringing him closer to a material existence. Their spiritual beauty lost, the former angels took on a repulsive countenance reflecting their inner deformity, a quality also attributed to the hag-witch type. Demons and the Devil, then, are fallen angels, demonic spirits that haunt humanity, intent on corrupting souls so that those souls are also barred from knowing God. Witchcraft is one aspect of demonic intervention, along with possession and idolatry, in which the central issue is the salvation of the human soul.

As with the fall of the rebel angels, the themes of envy and vengeance are essential to the interpretation of two components of de Gheyn’s drawing: the three women in the foreground (fig. 89) and the witch in the cave (fig. 90). Of the brewing trio, the first witch is seated on the ground, stirring the contents of a pot with a bone. A second witch stands behind the first, pointing to an open book with a branch and gesturing with her free hand toward the town in the

438 This assertion accords with Swan’s view that de Gheyn was sceptical of the witchcraft tradition, a position that was quite fashionable in the Low Countries at this time, and that his drawing shows what a damaged mind thinks it sees (Swan, 2005, 123). Recall that both Scot and Weyer argued for a medical explanation for witchcraft.

439 Bodin characterizes the effect of this envy on humanity: “As Solomon says, God created man in His image to be immortal, but by the envy of Satan death came into the world, and this is repeated many times in Scripture.” (Bodin, 45-46).

440 Weyer, 4-5.

441 The witch holds the bone in her right hand to stir the smoking brew in the pot or pail between her legs.
distance, linking the magical rite with the quiet village. The third woman is dressed but barefoot, and her folded hands in conjunction with her apparent deference to the second witch lend support to the argument that she is a visitor who has come to seek the witches’ assistance. Her features are extremely gaunt and weathered, playing into the notion of the impoverished old woman whose envy of another’s fertile household impels her to engage in witchcraft.

De Gheyn establishes a visual connection between this group of women and their companion in the cave through the inclusion of a footpath. Standing in the cave, the witch holds her hands up to her head and she has snakes in lieu of hair. A serpentine monster encircles the woman’s left leg while another monster with a gapping mouth looks out from between her legs. The position of the monster suggests the sexual danger posed by the witch. Twisting around her body is a long swath of fabric, which despite its size fails to cover the witch’s genitals. In this respect, it is reminiscent of the white, shroud-like sheet encircling the witches in Baldung’s 

Weather Witches from 1523 (fig. 68). The witches in the two images are both covered and exposed; they pretend modesty while they present themselves to the audience. They play with the voyeuristic quality of the work and the pleasure that forbidden viewership can bring. Unlike Baldung’s witches who stare out at the viewer or gaze at a companion, de Gheyn’s witch appears to be captivated by her inner thoughts. The viewer is left to wonder whether the vision de Gheyn presents is representative of reality or the product of the witch’s unbalanced mind.

Visual associations between the drawing and earlier works of art relate de Gheyn’s cave-dweller to representations of envy and the trail and proximity to the aforementioned group of women supports the reading of these figures, as well as witchcraft in general, as being informed by jealousy, rage, and vindictiveness. De Gheyn’s witch recalls a visual tradition of intense emotional responses modelled after Andrea Mantegna’s portrayal of Envy in the Battle of the Sea

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442 This idea is further encouraged by the woman’s pose; she places her weight on her left foot and raises her right heel, as if walking into the group.

443 Benedetto Varchi, responding to a sonnet on envy with one of his own, describes jealousy as a poison: “Since venim thine, to poysone mee the more, Through every veyne dispersed is in mee.” [Benedetto Varchi, The blazon of jealousie..., 1545, translated by Robert Toftie (London 1615), copy from the University of Illinois, Early English Books Online, <http://ebo.chadwyck.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/search/fulltext?SOURCE=config.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=D0000099854233000&HIGHLIGHT.KEYWORD=varchi> (accessed November 30, 2009)]. The idea that envy is like a poison dovetails with the notion of the witch’s polluted body.
Gods (fig. 91). The artist adopts the same withered body of an old woman employed by Mantegna to convey a body ravaged by an obsessive and neglectful mind. Like Mantegna, both Rosso Fiorentino’s Fury (fig. 92), engraved by Gian Giacomo Caraglio, and Bronzino’s Allegory of Lust (fig. 65) depict severely desiccated figures howling in response to the inner torment being inflicted upon them by their minds and emotions. De Gheyn’s witch is evocative of this type, but the artist has transformed his figure into something else. The slightly upturned corners of the witch’s mouth are suggestive of a smile, replacing the open mouthed scream of the other figures. While her hands grip the serpentine tangle of her hair, the gesture lacks the violence of Bronzino’s depiction of Envy/Syphilis. Even as he calls attention to the madness, obsession, and dark thoughts of the witch, de Gheyn substitutes the anguish of the earlier images with an impression of the disturbing pleasure witches were thought to take in practicing witchcraft.

There are multiple poetic and visual sources for the placement of de Gheyn’s witch in a cave. In Il Filocolo from circa 1338, Boccaccio situated Jealousy in a dark grotto in the highest peak of the Apennine Mountains. Given that Boccaccio’s works were renowned and well circulated throughout the early modern era and that de Gheyn was engaged with the intellectual discourse of his day, it is possible that the artist was familiar with the poet’s interpretation of Jealousy and combined her with the Mantegna model. There were also classical literary precedents. Lucan described the Thessalian witch, Erictho, as living in a cave and “loop[ing] up her bristling locks with festoons of vipers.” Similarly, Virgil described the Fury Allecto as having “serpents lodged in her sea-dark hair.” Like Erictho, Melusina inhabited a cave, but

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444 De Gheyn’s own figure of envy from a series representing the seven deadly sins has snakes in her hair, sagging breasts, and holds a twining snake in her left hand. Envy is reproduced in A. W. F. M Meij, ed., Jacques de Gheyn II als tekenaar 1565-1629, exhibition catalogue (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuninge, 1985), cat. 9.
445 Bronzino’s figure of Envy (or Syphilis) shares both its body type and posture with de Gheyn’s figure.
446 Giovanni Boccaccio, Il Filocolo, translated by Donald Cheney (New York & London: Garland, 1985), Bk III, ch. 24, 173-174. According to Boccaccio, Jealousy is surrounded only by the owl and cuckoo, which nest over her damp and moldy cave. Unlike Boccaccio’s Jealousy, de Gheyn’s figure does not possess little wings.
447 Lucan, The Civil War, translated by J. D. Duff (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 353. In his Marriage of Cyrus and Aspasia, Jacob Cats wrote about a shepherd named Damon visiting the cave in Gogh Magog where the witch Lodippe lives (Swan, 2005, 130-131). This provides yet another possible association with de Gheyn’s figure. Lodippe’s story appears in Cat’s Collected Works from 1655.
her association with serpents was even more dramatic: every seventh day she transformed into a serpent. De Gheyn may be alluding to this metamorphosis through his inclusion of the serpentine monster at the witch’s feet.449 Through this single witch, de Gheyn invites associations with multiple characters from ancient as well as more recent literary sources that would have served to demonstrate the artist’s knowledge while at the same time providing his audience with a means to call attention to their own erudition.

Serpentine hair is an unmistakable characteristic of Medusa.450 Once a beautiful young maiden, Medusa became the object of Neptune’s affection and was raped in Minerva’s temple. As punishment for this unspeakable transgression, the goddess transformed Medusa’s most lauded feature into a curse.451 The hideousness of Medusa’s new visage allowed her to turn humans into stone in the narrative tradition and to function as an apotropaic image or as a source of grotesque fascination in works of art. De Gheyn’s representation permits these facets of Medusa to slip into his articulation of the cave witch so as to emphasize her inner condition. The expression of de Gheyn’s witch is akin to that of Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s marble Head of Medusa (fig. 93) carved between 1644 and 1648; both have slanted brows that create shadowed eyes and an expression that differs from the popular lifeless or shrieking types.452 The result is an impression of personal suffering in Bernini’s image and gratification or amusement in de Gheyn’s. The inward focus and pleasure of this witch help to highlight her perverse and unbalanced nature. Medusa also shares with the witches and demons a negative attitude toward

449 According to Paracelsus, Melusine was a nymph who enlisted the assistance of the devil in order to seek retribution against her husband. Every Saturday she would turn into a serpent as part of the pact until she left the human world in order to be with her fellow bewitched creatures in her serpent form. Paracelsus warns that Melusina’s is a cautionary tale about how the devil is able to mislead people, although it also shows the awe-inspiring character of God’s creatures [Paracelsus, Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim called Paracelsus, translated by Gregory Zilboorg, et al., edited by Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 245-246].

450 It is also a feature of the sorceress Marsa as described by Pomponius [Pierre de Lancre, ‘On the Inconstancy of Witches’: Pierre de Lancre’s ‘Tableau de l’inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons’, 1612, translated by Harriet Stone and Gerhild Scholz Williams (Turnhout: ACMRS & Brepols, 2006), 74].


452 The marble bust is housed in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.
the human race; according to Aeschylus, the Gorgons despise humanity.\textsuperscript{453} Whereas Medusa is commonly represented as simply a severed head, de Gheyn’s novel pose connects his figure with traditional illustrations of consuming passions, including envy, which were closely associated with witchcraft. These references are combined with allusions to literary witches and allegorical figures that allow for general associations that highlight the innate, undesirable aspects of the witch’s character.

Divine retribution is also underscored through the conceptual similarities between de Gheyn’s figure and those in the Laocoön statue (fig. 94). Laocoön is a figure of warning: he defied the laws of his god, like the witches, and he and his sons were killed by snakes. In the context of de Gheyn’s drawing, the witch and snake serve both to caution the viewer about the dangers of witchcraft and to illustrate the condition of those who failed to heed such warnings.

As an ancient and artistically lauded sculpture, the Laocoön provided a visual model for early modern artists.\textsuperscript{454} The snake twisting around the female body is not a common feature of witchcraft imagery, but can be found in a few such images and closely related representations. Jacob de Weert’s Witch with a Serpent and Torch (fig. 95), from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, depicts a woman carrying a torch in her left arm, which is also encircled by a snake.\textsuperscript{455} The Fury Tisiphone (fig. 96) from 1502 by the Master of Virgil of Grüninger shows the guardian of the gates of Tartarus in a long flowing robe with wild hair and a serpent

\textsuperscript{453} Aeschylus, “Prometheus Bound,” in: Greek Tragedies, edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, vol. 1, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1992), 95.


\textsuperscript{455} Musei Civici di Como, Streghe Diavoli Sibille: Incisioni Disegni e libri dal XV al XX sec., exhibition catalogue (Como: Musei Civici, 2001), 57 & fig. 52. Snakes are wrapped around the arms of a demon descending from the sky and a chicken-legged demon in the crowd in Hostanes Invoking Spirits by Ritual Magic, a pen and ink drawing from The Florentine Picture Chronicle illustrated by Baccio Baldini and his workshop in the 1470s. The drawing is reproduced in Charles Zika, The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe (London: Routledge, 2007), fig. 2.16.

A serpent is similarly wound around the sorceress’ arm in Cecco Bravo’s The Conjurations of Armida from circa 1650 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 52).
encircling her waist like a belt.\textsuperscript{456} The Furies were creatures charged with avenging the dead, and their communication with the underworld and penchant for violence is closely paralleled in the activities of witches.\textsuperscript{457} By adopting a popular pose and incorporating a rare switch of gender, de Gheyn is at once able to invite his audience to investigate both the broad general and very specific visual references evoked in his drawing.

Misshapen bodies abound, vividly illustrating that the witches and their demonic companions are literally crooked in body and soul. The deeply wrinkled, almost skeletal faces of the old women with their jutting chins and their hanging breasts are balanced by the heavy corporeality of the seated witch, the toad, and the cat. As with the old witches, the flesh has been pulled tautly over the skeletons of the reptiles in the scene.\textsuperscript{458} The body of the mounted creature on the far right is articulated through a tight series of curves as its head is drawn back towards its spine. Close by, the reptilian creature climbing the rock has a v-shaped spine that juts outward to form an unsightly hump that gives its body a broken and tormented appearance (fig. 97). Its wings are made of a thin membrane like a bat’s, tipped with sharp little claws that match the long nails on its feet, and together these features contribute to the impression of a barbed body. These unsightly and violent qualities reflect the nature of the witches and their affect on the world.

In the lower right corner, a young boy sits upon a reptilian monster that is being forced to obey his will (fig. 98). The creature has a ring through its nose that is strung with reins held by the child; the youth pulls sharply, causing the beast to sit back on its tail and to angle its neck backward dramatically. The pendulous breasts that hang down from the monster’s chest indicate that it is female.\textsuperscript{459} The identity of the rider has been subject to debate; however, given that the

\textsuperscript{456} Musei Civici di Como, 33, 36, & fig. 10.
\textsuperscript{457} In the Petrarch Master’s woodcut \textit{On Madness}, adorning Petrarch’s \textit{Of Two Kinds of Fortune}, the artist illustrates a man being attacked by two clothed women with snakes wound around their bodies (Zika, 2007, fig. 65). One seizes a snake and stuffs it into the man’s shirt.
\textsuperscript{458} De Gheyn’s anatomical knowledge is clearly manifest in his human figures as well as in the monstrous creatures he invents. The artist drew upon his careful studies of rodents and frogs when inventing his grotesque monsters. In 1615 de Gheyn depicted an anatomical demonstration performed by Professor Pieter Pauw at Leyden that was subsequently engraved by Andries Stock (van Regteren Altena, 115).
\textsuperscript{459} Two such monsters are represented in de Gheyn’s \textit{Two Witches Performing an Incantation in an Abandoned Building} from 1605 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 103). This image is the subject of and is reproduced
boy has curly hair, angelic wings, a wreath upon his head, and a bow and quiver, the combination of attributes identify this figure as Cupid.\textsuperscript{460}

The effectiveness of the god may be questioned, especially once the careful observer notes the apparently slack line articulating the bowstring. Cupid bears a rather drunken expression in this image, replacing the angelic or mischievous appearance that the young god is usually given. This uncommonly represented aspect of Cupid was explored earlier in the \textit{Bacchanal} (fig. 99) engraved by Giulio Sanuto after a drawing attributed to Domenico Campagnola.\textsuperscript{461} Cupid, bearing his bow and quiver, is presented as a participant in the Bacchic revelries.\textsuperscript{462}

Cupid has been quite active, even reckless perhaps, and this idea is encouraged by a number of arrows that project out of the bodies of nearby creatures.\textsuperscript{463} The god has an arrow in

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\textsuperscript{460} De Gheyn’s mounted Cupid reappears in Joseph Heintz the Younger’s \textit{Alchemy} and \textit{The Elixir of Youth} (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 129 & 130). The first painting is in a private collection in Venice and the second housed in the Scarpa Collection. The works are treated in two articles by Sebastiano Scarpa: “Gli ‘Strigossi di Gioseffo Enzo’,” \textit{Arte documento} 7 (1993): 77-81, and “Nuovi strigossi dell’Heintz,” in: \textit{Per l’Arte: Da Venezia all’Europa: Studie in onore di Giuseppe Maria Pilo}, edited by Mario Piantoni and Laura De Rossi (Venice: Edizioni della Laguna, 2001), 411-414.

\textsuperscript{461} Michael Bury, \textit{Giulio Sanuto: A Venetian Engraver of the Sixteenth Century}, exhibition catalogue (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1990), pl. 3 & fig. 1. The drawing is housed in the Uffizi. The authorship remains in question due to the unfortunate condition of the work (Bury, 7). For further discussion of both pieces, see Bury, 42.

\textsuperscript{462} Both the drawing and engraving are highly sexualized. The connection to Bacchus’ retinue is also made by Charmian A. Mesenzeva in her article “Zum Problem: Dürer und die Antike,” \textit{Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte} 46, no. 2 (1983): 187-202.

\textsuperscript{463} A demonic monster has been rendered helpless in the very right corner of the scene: it lies on its back with its feet dangling in the air and an arrow protruding out of its torso. The end of an arrow sticks out of the chest of the reptile walking along to Cupid’s left.

Arrows were also associated with magic; male magicians aimed their arrows at sacred imagery (Institoris and Sprenger, 339). In the medieval period, archers were associated with disobedience and attacks on the innocent because they were not part of what were considered to be a reputable armed force and for this reason arrows were read as a symbol of disorder [Michael Camille, \textit{Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 107].
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hand, which he is stabbing downward into the body of his mount. He is behaving recklessly, and de Gheyn shows the abomination that results. In fact, the outcome of the uncontrolled love or lust incited by Cupid is implied in the reptilian creature climbing the rock in front of the young god. It is a mother: the beast nurses one member of its brood while another trails closely behind her. This is a highly unusual and apparently singular detail, save for the engraving after the drawing, which encourages the viewer to contemplate the natural and social imposition of boundaries and the awe-inspiring or terrifying consequences that result when these are trespassed.

The objects directly surrounding Cupid may also help to inform his character. Aside from the host of reptilian targets, there is a pile of coins beside and a growth of tall mushrooms behind him. Toadstools can also be found growing the foreground in another of de Gheyn’s works, a print entitled Devil Sowing Tares (fig. 100) which was produced between 1600 and 1610, just before the Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath. Like the later drawing, the Devil Sowing Tares depicts witches flying on monstrous beasts through a sky filled with tumultuous clouds.

Clifford S. Ackley interprets Cupid as a positive figure battling against a perverse, demonic, or vicious love that is represented by the witches [Clifford S. Ackley, Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt, exhibition catalogue (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1981), 43]. Van Regteren Altena, however, suggested that Cupid is riding Leviathan and that by capturing the young god in the process of drawing an arrow, the artist intended to convey him as the prime mover of the scene (van Regteren Altena, 88). The rider’s pose is very much akin to an emblem designed by de Gheyn depicting Cupid mounted on a lion, entitled Amor vincit omnia, from circa 1607. The engraving is reproduced in Machteld Löwensteyn, “Helse hebzucht en werelde welllust: Een iconografische interpretative van enkele heksenvoorstellingen van Jacques de Gheyn II,” Kwade Mensen: Toverij in Nederland, special issue of Volkskundig Bulletin 12, no. 1 (1986): fig. 7.

The reckless nature of Cupid is not new. The unrestrained behaviour of the god is described by Apuleius: “He severs the marriage tie on all sides; and unchastised he perpetrates endless mischief; and he does everything save what he ought to do....This lad, prone enough to harm on his own lewd initiative...” [Apuleius, The Golden Ass, translated by Jack Lindsay (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1967), 106].

Reptilian monsters and their offspring are not discussed in the contemporary witchcraft literature. Progeny is discussed in the context of the Witch and Dragon (fig. 67) and Lo stregozzo (fig. 118). The coins are a reference to both the use of magic to find treasure and the Devil’s promise of riches to prospective witches. They are also a part of the iconography of avarice which Machteld Löwensteyn identifies as an important component to the print, as part of an emphasis on the greed and lust associated with witchcraft (Löwensteyn, 1986, 255).

Swan argues that The Devil Sowing Tares is a commentary on the fertile imagination of the unconscious mind and that de Gheyn equates the mind with the landscape in order to argue that the Devil plants the idea of witches and demons in people’s heads (Swan, 2005, 188-189).
Mushrooms speak to the themes of unnatural growth, poison, and difficulty in determining identity. Unnatural grafting, aberrant implantation, and seemingly spontaneous generation are characteristic of mushrooms as well as witches, as is evidenced by their predilection for generating unnatural forms through illicit sexual liaisons and the black arts.\textsuperscript{469} Like witches, mushrooms were perceived to be deceptive in appearance as they were notoriously difficult to identify and harmless varieties could be nearly indistinguishable from their poisonous counterparts. Thus, in both their physical nature and tendency to poison, mushrooms and witches were understood to be akin to one another. This connection is made in a painting by David Teniers the Younger and an unknown artist from Hamburg in the *Sorcerer Surrounded by Plants* (fig. 101), a work that inverts a type of Madonna and Child composition wherein the holy figures are surrounded by flowers. In this painting, the holy pair is replaced with a witch surrounded by medical and magical plants like mushrooms.\textsuperscript{470} Mushrooms could produce altered mental states, further underscoring the uncertain nature of the scene.

The lack of restraint and judgment on Cupid’s part accords with the medieval characterization of the god as blind and therefore associated with the undesirable qualities of ignorance and darkness.\textsuperscript{471} This relates to the issue of sight and transformation addressed in the discussion of Dosso’s *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape* (fig. 55). Cupid, however, is not a figure that appeared within the literary discourse on witchcraft and demonology. This is an aspect that existed within the artistic tradition alone. Dürer depicted putti in his *Witch Riding*  

\textsuperscript{469} Ground mushrooms were believed to grow over the course of a single night or within a few hours with enough rain. For the symbolism of the mushroom, see John Gerard, “Chap. 167. ‘Of Mushrumes, or Toadstooles,’” *The Herbal or General History of Plants*, London 1633, revised by Thomas Johnson (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), 1580 & 1584.


\textsuperscript{471} For a discussion of the blind Cupid motif, see Panofsky’s essay “Blind Cupid,” in: *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* [New York: Harper & Row, 1965 (1939)]. Panofsky observed the existence of opposing types for Cupid, one angelic and the other demonic. While he does not depict Cupid with talons to illustrate the god’s viciousness, de Ghéyn may have been influenced by this tradition particularly if he was familiar with Giotto’s *Amor* in the church of San Francesco in Assisi (Panofsky, 121-123 & fig. 88). Blind Amor has clawed feet and a string of hearts in his possession. Furthermore, the theme of Cupid’s destructive blows are evident in images of Death switching his deadly lead arrows with Cupid’s love inspiring golden arrows while the latter sleeps, as in the engraving after Matthäus Bril’s lost *Death Stealing the Weapons of Cupid* (Panofsky, 124-125 & fig. 104).
Backwards on a Goat (fig. 2). Dürer chose to use the little winged youths to suggest aspects of witchcraft either through the attributes they carry, such as an orb, or through their movements, such as the putto who looks at the viewer from upside down to show his confused perspective of the world. In Baldung’s imagery, the identification of the young children is open to greater uncertainty; while they follow in the putto tradition established by Dürer in their supportive role, they lack wings and are thus more akin to human children. De Gheyn, however, provides his viewer with recognizable attributes, but presents Cupid in an entirely new context. The god is cast in a causal role. His presence prompts the audience to consider the witches in relation to Venus, an association that had a longstanding place in witchcraft literature.

The inclusion of Cupid invites a search for Venus, with whom the young god usually appears. Lacking an idealized woman who may be explicitly identified as Venus, the viewer may instead contemplate the darker aspect of her presence in the unbridled lust displayed by the witches. In the upper left corner, a witch lays upon a cloud, her head thrown backwards in ecstasy and a smile clearly visible on her lips (fig. 87). While the immediate source of her pleasure is not apparent, its demonic origin is conveyed through an owlish demon flying just above and directly toward her. Below and to the left of this witch, another rides a goat towards the viewer with her legs spread wide open and her hand thrown back behind her head in a moment of pleasure (fig. 102). De Gheyn explores the theme of the destruction that can be wrought by Cupid, in order to emphasize the depraved love of the witches.

The large scale of the drawing and the subsequent engraving (fig. 79), which measures 43.5 cm x 65.8 cm, and their unusual subject matter have led scholars to suggest it may have been intended to rival Goltzius’ The Wedding of Cupid and Psyche (fig. 82) engraving from

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472 While Fortune and Nemesis are often shown balancing upon an orb to illustrate their mutable character, Niklaus Manuel Deutsch chose to depict a witch seated on an orb as she flies through the air in his pen and ink drawing, Witch with the Skull of an Artist, from circa 1513 (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 109). Likewise, in a work in distemper attributed to Urs Graf the Elder from circa 1515, entitled The Furious Horde, Mars and Venus ride a smoking or vaporous orb (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 128). Similarly, Cranach includes orbs as well as infants in his depictions of melancholy.

473 The goat is turning to avoid the explosion and in so doing, presents the witch’s body directly to the viewer.
Whereas Goltzius depicts a noble scene filled with idealized deities and cavorting putti, de Gheyn presents their demonic counterparts. That the classical figure of Cupid is present in the witchcraft scene has further implications. De Gheyn may be inviting a comparison between the magic, lust, and folly of the witches with those of the ancient gods. One need only recall the early modern conception of the witch was heavily influenced by ancient texts. Perhaps de Gheyn is suggesting that the witches are as real as the gods, and is thereby subtly casting the supposed witches of his time into the realm of mythology. The celebration of a marriage is here replaced with or is re-envisioned in terms of depravity.

De Gheyn creates a visual argument, illustrating that if everything that people claimed witches and demons were capable of truly came to pass, then the fabric of the world would collapse: the skies would bleed and burn, mountains would crumble, and monsters would proliferate and take over the earth. Yet the world continues on, unperturbed, in the distance, communicating to the viewer that this is just a fantasy or the product of a drugged, deluded, or diseased mind. As the sun rises, rays stream out and reflect upon the clouds and this is where the golden tone of the buff paper stands out against the darkness of the grey washes, giving the scene a greater sense of dimensionality while also creating a tunnel of light. The rocky landscape shields the witches from the sun, but soon the light, which in de Gheyn’s drawing may also stand for reason, will spread across the entire landscape.

De Gheyn’s drawing touches upon early modern theological and scientific theories involving human health, optics, materiality, and causality. His image engages human curiosity about the nature of the demonic world and the possibilities for demonic interaction with people. It is also closely tied to the anxiety concerning and the interest in the end of time. Through his figures, especially Cupid and the witch in the cave, de Gheyn criticizes the basic tenets of witchcraft and demonology. At the same time, the drawing is intended to entertain with its

474 Hults, 2005, 163.
475 Margaret Sullivan has been instrumental in calling attention to the connections between witchcraft beliefs and classical literature, see Margaret A. Sullivan, “The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien,” Renaissance Quarterly 53, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 333-401.
476 The tunnel of light was used very literally in Bosch’s Paradise: Ascent of the Blessed (1500-1504), a panel painting in the Palazzo Ducale, Venice.
mysterious subject matter, allusions to other works of art, grotesque figures, and comical situations.

**Salvator Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations***

Salvator Rosa produced a large number of paintings depicting witchcraft during the 1640s. Of these, the *Witches at their Incantations* (fig. 103) from circa 1646 is the most diverse in terms of the activities shown and types of individuals involved in witchcraft. It is a subject for which the artist became well-known and the high degree of similarity between several of his works testifies to their popularity. The artist’s oeuvre is full of pictures with dark tonalities and subject matters, into which the witchcraft images fit comfortably. He produced paintings showing religious figures tempted by demons, portraits in which the sitters contemplate their mortality, and romantic, sublime landscapes. Rosa is renowned for his refusal to submit to an artist-patron relationship wherein the patron would dictate what the artist produced. Instead, Rosa exalted the artist’s creative genius and made works on his own terms for his patrons and eager buyers. This artistic gift extended beyond art to include the pursuit of

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477 Rosa lived from 1615 until 1673. The artist painted a number of scenes incorporating witches and demons. With its relatively large population of witches and diversity of witchcraft activities, Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* is akin to Francken’s *Witches Assembly* (fig. 5). Both artists include male participants, although the men are involved in the magical acts to a greater degree in Rosa’s work. The prominence of male witches in the *Witches at their Incantations* may be due in part to the influence of popular or mass produced imagery, as men appeared as witches in the illustrations that accompanied demonological and witchcraft texts. The result of the particular conditions of the artist’s home environment is also a factor. Until his early twenties, Rosa lived in Naples, a city where two-thirds of the witchcraft accusations were directed against men, a fact which suggests that for Rosa, men would naturally belong in a group of witches [Guy Tal, “Witches on Top: Magic, Power, and Imagination in the Art of Early Modern Italy” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University at Bloomington, 2006), 19]. In Naples, Giovanni Battista della Porta founded the Accademia Secretorum Naturae (Academy of the Occult), a group whose work could have influenced Rosa’s conception of the witch (Davidson, 1987, 70).

The Florentine environment had a significant influence on Rosa’s witchcraft imagery; other artists in the city were working with similarly dark subject matters, including Jacopo Ligozzi (1547-1632), Alessandro Rosi (1627-1696) (his *Scene of Witchcraft* was previously attributed to Rosa), Jacques Callot (1592-1635), Filippo Napoletano (circa 1587-1629), and David Ryckaert the Younger (1586-1642) [Alessandra Campoli, “Le ‘Stregonerie’ di Salvator Rosa,” in: *L’incantesimo di Circe: Temi di magia nella pittura da Dosso Dossi a Salvator Rosa*, edited by Stefania Macioce (Rome: Logart Press, 2004), 159].

478 See, for example, the two *Scenes of Witchcraft* housed in the Palazzo Corsini, Florence, and in a private collection, Naples (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 166 & 167).


480 Rosa’s interest in the intellectual discourse of his day is reflected in his founding of his own academy, the Accademia dei Percossi (Academy of the Smitten) as well as in his circle of friends, which included elite patrons such as Giancarlo de’ Medici and Giovanni Battista Ricciardi. For Giancarlo de’ Medici, Rosa painted the
music and the theatre. Rosa’s interest in witchcraft is evident in his poetry as well as his paintings; he wrote a poem on the subject that shares the same attitude towards witchcraft as his contemporary visual works.  

In the darkness of night, witches violate the boundaries dividing the living and the dead: they resurrect the dead for prophetic purposes and desecrate corpses in order to make magical supplies. The witches in Rosa’s Witches at their Incantations are depicted working on a variety of activities concerning the dead and are organized under the swaying body of a hanged corpse. Rosa’s treatment of the witches’ interaction with the dead incorporates allusions to contemporary judicial practices and the subsequent use of executed criminal bodies, the revivification of corpses for consultation and prophecy, and the sympathetic relationship theorized to exist between a body and its image. In portraying the use of the dead in witchcraft, Rosa is able to explore several different aspects of bodily theory, focusing on its dismantling and possible resurrection. Concerns about the consumption of human flesh, secret manipulations of a body, the fate of the body after death, and communications with the dead are all addressed through the figure of the witch. Witches exist on the periphery of what is and is not acceptable or possible and Rosa excites his audience with the prospective existence of a group possessing extraordinary human capabilities.

In the Witches at their Incantations, Rosa provides his witches with a dark environment in which the sun is just setting. The composition is dominated by the verticality and centrality of

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Temptation of St. Anthony that is housed in the Pinacoteca Rambaldi in San Remo. Ricciardi assisted Rosa in his search for novel content for his paintings [Jonathan Scott, Salvator Rosa: His Life and Times (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995), 43 & 67-68; and Campoli, 162].

Campoli argues that Rosa would have had access to demonological and magical treatises through the Academy, which was the central focus of intellectual endeavours of this time, and that some of these texts were circulated by Rosa’s friend Ricciardi, a professor of philosophy at the University of Pisa who sent the artist a letter containing bibliographical advice (Campoli, 160-162). Hults suggests that Rosa did not have a comprehensive understanding of the witchcraft discourse and identifies Ricciardi as the source from which the artist gained much of the intellectual material that appears in his works (Hults, 2005, 201).

At approximately the same time that Rosa was painting his Witches at their Incantations, 1646, the artist composed a poem entitled La strega (The Witch). It is uncertain which art form may have inspired the creation of the other. Rosa’s poem is discussed in Tal, 2006, 29-30.
a dead and broken tree that has naturally decayed to take on the appearance of a gallows.\textsuperscript{482} Immediately the viewer’s eye is drawn to the horrific contortion of the hanged criminal’s broken neck: with the weight of the body the noose has been pulled so taut that the man’s neck bends at a ninety-degree angle (fig. 104). The long white shirt and blue coat the deceased is dressed in calls attention to the pallor of his skin, while the contrast with the warm tonality of the tan vest highlights the complete lack of life. When combined with the blunt features and crude facial expression, the corpse is a source of revulsion and horror.

The manner in which Rosa’s painting was displayed raises questions about the nature of the painting’s content. According to a letter written by Rosa to Ricciardi in 1666, Carlo de’Rossi, the owner of Witches at their Incantations, concealed this painting behind a taffeta cloth and situated the work at the end of the tour of his collection, so that it functioned as a culminating piece for those who were fortunate enough to see it.\textsuperscript{483} The veiling of the work in conjunction with its location suggests that the content was not appropriate for all audiences. Given that Rome was not nearly as tolerant as Florence in regard to risqué subjects, the curtain may have been a necessity for controlling access to the work.\textsuperscript{484} Veiling protected paintings from light, dust, and other environmental hazards in addition to having great potential as a dramatic prop: the sudden revelation of this large, dark painting with its striking highlights might have shocked and fascinated its audience. Veiling was most often reserved for pieces that were either highly esteemed or had erotic content, suggesting that Rosa valued the Witches at their Incantations for its status as a work of art.

Although the painting is not erotic in nature, its diabolical content, particularly the mutilation of the corpse, may have contributed to the discretionary viewing and the desire for a

\textsuperscript{482} In order that the groupings of figures can be properly understood in relation to one another, Hults asserts that the image requires a left to right reading (Hults, 2005, 199). Campoli viewed the tree as a device dividing the image into two; her assertion that the left side represents necromantic activities and the right astral rites to Saturn in untenable (Campoli, 173). Elements of necromancy pervade the entire scene from the resurrection of the dead to the summoning of a demonic horde. The flickering of highlights may draw the viewer’s attention to any one of the little groupings of figures and the interaction between them will lead the eye through the image.

\textsuperscript{483} Hults, 2005, 197. De’Rossi, a cloth merchant and banker, purchased Witches at their Incantations from Rosa in Florence for thirty scudi circa 1646 and had it sent to Rome (Scott, 52).

\textsuperscript{484} Scott, 54. Malvasia reports that de’Rossi owned a number of Rosa’s works, including landscapes, images of witchcraft, and other ‘fantasies’ (Scott, 111).
dramatic exposure. This is supported by the fact that Rubens’ *Head of Medusa* (fig. 105), painted circa 1617, was placed behind a curtain because of its ability to horrify the spectator. Works of art had the power to stupefy their viewers, as did witchcraft. Lucius, the protagonist of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, watches the witch Pamphile transform herself into an owl using a magical unguent and he tells the reader “So beguiled out of my own mind was I, so full of delirious wonder, that I stood dreaming with open eyes.” Similar comments were made with regard to Benvenuto Cellini’s *Perseus* (fig. 106), which transfixed viewers to the spot until they were able to recover themselves.

**Dead Bodies and Medicinal Corpses**

The execution of a criminal served a number of purposes for the early modern community. Institoris and Sprenger assert the importance of this practice: “A violent death, on the other hand, whether someone deserved it or not, always makes amends [for the Original Sin] if it is endured with tolerance and in Grace.” The spilling of blood could function as a means of retribution and purification, restoring the damaged part of a community injured by the condemned’s violent actions. Criminals and witches would frequently confess and repent their sins as part of the restitutive process and thus be fortunate enough to die a good death. Dying in a violent manner before one’s time, meaning before a natural death could occur, left one’s body imbued with an excess of life-force, a power which could be transferred to objects used in

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486 Apuleius, 82.


488 Institoris and Sprenger, 191.

489 Those who died a bad death, having either refused confession or been denied the opportunity by the unexpectedness of death, might return to harass the living. Angry souls were particularly dangerous and likely to remain on earth. The corpses of these individuals were often dug up or caught as they ventured about, mutilated, decapitated or burned, and sometimes reburied. For methods of dealing with the undead, see Bruce A. McClelland, *Slayers and their Vampires: A Cultural History of Killing the Dead* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).
the execution or those who consumed part of that body. This concept is critical to the *Witches at their Incantations*. 

Rosa offers his audience an assortment of witchcraft activities that involve the body, arranging them around the central figure of the hanged man. The choice of a hanged man is significant since the Devil was theorized to frequently take command of a hanged corpse when he desired a physical body. Witches were also thought to prefer the bodies of those who had been executed or hanged, due to the power residing within the deceased body. Rosa was not the only artist to associate witches with hanged corpses. Francken’s *Witches’ Preparation for the Journey to the Blocksberg* (fig. 107) depicts a witch balancing on the crossbeam of the gallows while cutting down a skeletal corpse. Witches work under the gallows in David Teniers the Younger’s *Witches’ Scene* (fig. 108).

Rosa incorporates bloody organs in his image, although he does not explicitly show the consumption of blood. The theory underlying blood’s importance is vital to understanding

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490 Those who passed away from natural causes were of little use since the potency of the spirit has slowly drained out of the body over time [Camillo Brunoi, *Il medico poeta ovvero la medicina esposta in versi e prose italiane* (Fabriano: Gregorio Mariotti, 1726) as cited by Camporesi, 1989, 46].

491 Thieves were usually executed by hanging while murders and rapists were condemned to be broken on the wheel [Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 104].

492 De Lancre explains the nature of the demonically inhabited corpse: “The body that the Devil assumes is sometimes that of a dead carcass that he goes to look for in the tombs or gallows. He cannot bring this carrion flesh to life, but he gives it a certain movement.” (de Lancre, 302). Boguet asserts that the witches’ association with the Devil as a corpse explains why they were often ugly and stinking (Boguet, 21).

493 Witches and the starving were not the only ones responsible for the theft of corpses. In his biography of Aert Mijtens, van Mander describes how the Brussels painter stole a corpse from the gallows in order to learn about human anatomy [Karel Van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, 1603-1604, translated by Hessel Miedema (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994), 311].

494 Francken’s painting is housed in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. The image dates to circa 1610.

495 It has been suggested that this painting, hanging in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, is actually an eighteenth century copy after Teniers [Charles Zika, “The Corsini ‘Witchcraft Scene’ by Salvator Rosa: Magic, Violence and Death,” *Melbourne Art Journal* 7, no. 7 (2004): ft. 30].

496 Organs figure prominently in Rosa’s *Day* tondo from his *Scenes of Witchcraft* series (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 162) and in his *The Genius of Salvator Rosa* etching from circa 1662 (Hults, 2005, fig. 6.1). In the print, the artist offers his heart to a personification of sincerity (Wallace, 1965, 476). Rosa’s tondi are the subject of the first chapter of Guy Tal’s dissertation, “Witches on Top: Magic, Power, and Imagination in the Art of Early Modern Italy”.
Perceived to be the carrier for the vital forces that animated the body, blood was believed to be imbued with particular curative efficacy. Even those who were disgusted by the practices concerning the dead felt compelled to admit that “There may be some natural, indirect power in human blood.” The potential potency of blood was immense: it was sought by the dead who wanted to live again and by the Devil who desired to possess the living spirit. Blood had the capacity to heal as well as to harm, and this rendered it a taboo material; however, it seems to be a prohibition that was avidly broken. Those who could afford to would purchase blood directly from the executioner and those who did not want to pay or did not have the means to could wait and collect it from the dead body after the crowd had disbursed.

Specific healing powers were attributed to different parts of the corpse. Since the witch in Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* is shown collecting a toe (fig. 109) in the same

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497 This had an ancient precedent: Pliny the Elder wrote that those who had epilepsy would drink the blood that flowed from the open wounds of gladiators in an effort to cure themselves (Pliny, 8:5). Pliny notes that leg marrow and the brains of infants provided alternative treatments for the disease. These ideas continued to circulate in demonological treatises: Boguet cited Democritus for the notion that drinking the blood from a man whose throat had been slit could cure dropsy (Boguet, 103). For references to this practice in Protestant areas, see Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 94-96.


500 Evans, 90-93. Materials could be harvested after the bodies were left to the birds and the elements.

501 A finger, for instance, could be used to cure warts and protect against witchcraft (Evans, 94-95). The hand of a person who died before their time had healing powers [Pliny the Elder, *Pliny: Natural History*, translated by H. Rackham, [Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1944-1989], 8:35]. Pieces of skin were used as apotropaic objects and were either worn or carried by the living. In Germany, people admitted to stealing body parts from corpses in order to fashion magical amulets [Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 186-189]. Roper asserts that these incidents were not a significant concern since demons were not thought to be involved.

One body part that appears frequently in images of witchcraft is the Hand of Glory, a severed hand from an executed corpse, visible in both Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* and Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly*. The Hand of Glory has been characterized as a Netherlandish feature of witchcraft imagery since the motif appears in the work of de Gheyn, Francken, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and David Teniers the Younger (Davidson, 1987, 42). Witches
fashion as any contemporary might, the viewer is left to ponder the difference between the witch and non-witch. With no evidence of demonic assistance or magical signs like those appearing in Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5), the only immediately discernable disparity between the practice of collecting body parts for witchcraft and medicinal purposes is one witch’s fumigation of the corpse. The viewer is invited to consider whether the popular practice is in fact

would hang parts of corpses around a building that they wished to target, causing the inhabitants to remain asleep for as long as the body parts burned, but despite the flame, the fingers of the hand were not consumed and could be used repeatedly (Guazzo, 84-90). Citing Caesarius of Heisterbach, Guazzo relates the story of a maid who witnessed two thieves using a Hand of Glory, causing the people at an inn to remain fast asleep until the maid extinguished the light and the thieves were discovered. Due to the magic involved, the theft was upgraded to the crime of witchcraft. Remy proposes that the flame on the Hand of Glory is actually a demon assuming a fiery form (Remy, 102).


Human flesh was part of the normal medical regime and was known as mummy. Mummy regularly features in merchant records, appearing in lists of pricing and inventory consistently throughout the early modern era [Richard Sugg, “‘Good Physic but Bad Food’: Early Modern Attitudes to Medicinal Cannibalism and its Suppliers,” *Social History of Medicine* 19, no. 2 (2006): 234]. Despite the critical examinations and retranslations of the texts that supposedly supported the consumption of human flesh in the form of mumia in the sixteenth century, and the reappraisals of the medicinal value of the substance, the administering of mummy continued into the twentieth century [Karl H. Dannenfeldt, “Egyptian Mumia: The Sixteenth Century Experience and Debate,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1985): 163 & 179]. The use of mummy actually increased over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [P. Kenneth Himmelman, “The Medicinal Body: An Analysis of Medicinal Cannibalism in Europe, 1300-1700,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 22 (1997): 196]. Tensions existed between the body as an object for medical treatment and the body as a source for medicinal products to treat other bodies; in identifying the materials (humours) of which the human body is composed, science was simultaneously turning it into a resource for use on other bodies (Himmelman, 185 & 190).

Scarlatini writes that human fat is a good pain-killer and that it helps to prevent the hardening of nerves and gumma and he records how a man who was suffering from these afflictions positioned himself under the body of a hanged corpse on the gallows and was healed by the grease that fell from it onto his ailing parts [Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, translated by Tania Croft-Murray [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 (Italian 1983)], 19 citing O. Scarlatini, *L’uomo e sue parti figurato, e simbolico, anatomico, rationale, morale, mistico, politico e legale, raccolto e spiegato…*, Bologna, 1684, part I, 177].

Ambroise Paré draws attention to the direct connection between mummy and cannibalism in his *Discours de la mumie* (Of Mumia) from 1575 when he states that while the Egyptians kept mummy for resurrection purposes, they would never have considered using it as a medicine as his contemporaries were doing [Ambroise Paré, “On Mumia,” *The Apologie and Treatise of Ambroise Paré*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Falcon, 1951), 144].

Berengario da Carpi, a physician at the University of Bologna, wrote about the medicinal importance of mumified heads in his 1518 text, *De fractura calvae sive cranii* (Treatise on Skull Fractures). He states:

Note that I have always seen and heard it observed by my ancestors that the mumia which goes into this wax plaster ought to be part of the human head and that the mumia of which I speak is dry human flesh. I have seen at Venice almost complete bodies of such mumia and always my forebears as I learned from my father and saw with my own eyes had in their house several heads of such mumia from which they took what they needed to make the wax plaster [Berengario da Carpi, “Berengario da Carpi: On Fracture of the
witchcraft, or if activities attributed to witches are harmless. Additionally, the audience is free to compare the healing practices of doctors, community healers, and those identified as witches. Witches were, however, believed to use parts of corpses to kill rather than to heal. 503

Despite the social taboo, the defiling and pilfering of dead bodies happened frequently and was to some degree an accepted social practice – or at least one that people turned a blind eye to or reinterpreted so as to render it less horrific. Like the use of children’s blood discussed in the first chapter in the context of an anonymous Scene of Witchcraft from the circle of Cornelis Saftleven (fig. 30), anxieties concerning the medical community and its practices could be addressed through the figure of the witch. Similarly, popular healing traditions and superstitious beliefs could also come under social scrutiny without causing direct offense and potential social upheaval. By taking on the role of the other within the community, the witch both participated in and deviated from that which was deemed acceptable. The witch was thereby able to mediate the tensions over select practices or help to define or negotiate uncertain boundaries.

Using human bodies for medicinal purposes inescapably implies cannibalism. Witches further reinforced this association through the use of bones as stirring implements in witchcraft imagery. 504 Because of the close association between executed corpses and human consumption, and Rosa’s emphasis on the body in pieces, it is prudent to discuss the matter here. Depictions of cannibalism may not have been as dramatic to early modern viewers as

In this manuscript mummy is recommended several times as one of the principle ingredients for creating a plaster to cure wounds and when made into a potion it is strongly advocated for healing fractures (Berengario da Carpi, 58, 64, 140 & 159).

In addition to performing a curative function, the heads of corpses were useful in predicting the future. Bodin testifies to this and explains: “This is why those who keep dead people’s heads, unless they are doctors or surgeons, are engaged in the practice of necromancers. Joachim Camerarius said that not long ago he saw someone who got the Devil to speak through a deceased head.” (Bodin, 107).

503 The flesh of hanged men could be used along with toads, snakes, and the bones of unbaptized babies to poison people (de Lancre, 546). Guazzo provides an account of two witches, Anna Ruffa and Lolla, who dug up and burned bodies in order to create a deadly potion with the ashes (Guazzo, 89).

504 This is perhaps most explicitly illustrated by the bone sitting in the tankard, a drinking vessel, in de Gheyn’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath (fig. 78).
contemporary audiences might expect, given that there were a considerable number of medicinal formulas requiring human blood and body parts, particularly from corpses, as well as situations where inescapable and severe conditions necessitated the practice to ensure survival. In the seventeenth century extreme famines left the starving no other choice than to resort to the consumption of human flesh; bodies were stolen from execution sites for this purpose.\(^{505}\) While this activity was characterized in art and literature as representing the barbarity of newly discovered cultures, it was in reality a relatively constant feature of the western world as well.\(^{506}\)

Anthropophagy concerns the misuse of the mouth, the primary tool for human communication, and the transgression of internal and external boundaries, so that objects which should remain separate, in this case human bodies, are instead incorporated into a single body.\(^{507}\) As the individual is absorbed into the body of the consumer, cannibalism is also an act of incorporation that destroys the identity of the victim. From a larger social perspective, cannibalism can be viewed as a form of incest and thereby threatens the loss of civilization.\(^{508}\) Cannibalism demonstrates the potential for the collapse of the distinction between those who belong to the community and the other, thereby drawing attention to the uncomfortable


There were also well-known accounts of cannibalism drawn from history, such as the story of Maria or Mary of Jerusalem, a woman accused of killing and eating her baby during the siege of Jerusalem. The variations of this narrative and its significance as motif during the early modern era are discussed by Merrall Llewelyn Price in *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003) in a chapter entitled “The Maternal Monstrous: Cannibalism at the Siege of Jerusalem”, see especially pages 73-75. Boguet also comments “Fulgosus also mention a villager who was burned alive because she had killed several children and salted them to keep as food for herself.” (Boguet, 152-153).

\(^{506}\) Travel literature abounded with embellished accounts of cannibalism [Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 154].

The fifteenth century Bolognese doctor and astrologer, Girolamo Manfredi, wrote that there is nothing that tastes as good and is as nourishing as human flesh [Camporesi 1989, 23, quoting Girolamo Manfredi, *Libro intitulato Il Perche, tradotto di latino in italiano, de l’eccell. Medico et astrologo, M. Hieronimo di Manfredi...* (Venice: Ventura di Salvador, 1588), 15].

\(^{507}\) Price, 22.

\(^{508}\) Price, 23-24.
similarities between the two groups rather than asserting their differences. By alluding to cannibalism rather than depicting it outright, Rosa allows the witches to maintain their social bonds so that they function as an other that is still tied to the community, as opposed to being completely other. The allusion to popular and witchcraft practices in the figures of both the hanged man and the infant in the Witches at their Incantations speak to the question as to what actions define a person as or exclude a person from being human.

The theme of cannibalism is intimately connected to infanticide and to the use of blood and milk as described in the discussion of the Dutch Scene of Witchcraft (fig. 30). Carving up the body is a recurring theme that also appears in Francken’s Witches Assembly (fig. 5), the Italian Scene of Witchcraft (fig. 42), and de Gheyn’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath (fig. 78). It is a topic that allows for an exploration of the distinctions drawn between the self and the other. Rosa pursues the disassembled body further in his presentation of organs and through the molestation of the body when he alludes to love magic.

Black Magic and Love Spells

Rosa’s witches employ more than one corpse in their rites, and the second is much more problematic than the first. Dressed in a suit of contemporary armour, a soldier bends over a magic circle, intent on his spell, while his companions use a sword, presumably the soldier’s, to skewer a heart (fig. 110). It is unclear where the bright red heart has come from since the

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510 This idea comes from the juxtaposition of Achilles and Polyphemus in Buchan’s discussion of cannibalism in the Odyssey. Buchan differentiates Achilles’ desire to consume the body of his enemy, Hector, with the Cyclopes Polyphemus who decides to act on this impulse and in so doing compares the effect that their behaviour has on the cultivation and maintenance of social bonds [Mark Buchan, “Food for Thought: Achilles and the Cyclopes,” in: Eating their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity, edited by Kristen Guest (New York: State University of New York, 2001), 11-13].

511 Like the shrouded figure, the man in the center of the trio, composed of two men and the knight, wears a leafy crown on his head. To his right, the third man wears a long gray garment with brown stripes and has a wrinkled, weather worn face, dark hair and a large beard. This figure has been identified as being dressed as a Jewish man, suggesting that Rosa was evoking the idea of Jewish ritual murder (Campoli, 174). One author complains of the impiety of soldiers who turn to witches for magical spells that will make their armour invulnerable in battle (Guazzo, 55). This idea may stem from the myth of Medea, who applied a mysterious
hanged corpse is just beginning to be harvested for materials and there are no other bodies in the appropriate state present. The heart was understood to be the site where the vital spirit was produced and distributed through the bloodstream; whoever controlled the heart controlled its owner and it could therefore be a powerful tool for love magic. Although Rosa does not reveal whether the solider is trying to win or destroy love, his activities display a willingness to manipulate others through magic, thereby identifying him as a participant in witchcraft.

The heart was also a symbol of love as it is today. The motif of the heart impaled upon a sword appears in love imagery where the organ is struck by love or tortured by a lover. In a woodcut entitled *Frau Minne* (fig. 111) from 1479, Lady Love is shown amidst a field of lover’s hearts. She spears one heart with a lance and stabs another with a sword as she tramples yet a third. The heart is also the focal point of a magical rite to control the lover’s heart in the Master of the Bonn Diptych’s *The Love Spell* (fig. 1) from the fifteenth century. In this painting, the heart, kept within a precious casket, is both incited to lust or love and tempered by the young maiden who possesses it through fire and water. While the spell caster in *The Love Spell* is represented as a beautiful young woman performing her arts on an idealized heart amidst symbols of love and lust, in *The Witches at their Incantations* the man with the sword has a deeply creased, weatherworn face and the heart is a lump of mutilated flesh that leaves a thick trail of blood on the sword. The witches suggest the poetic ideal of love disfigured or the harsh concoction to Jason’s shield, spear, and armour which protected him from iron and fire for a single day [ApolloDorUs, *The Library*, translated by James George Frazer (London: Heinemann, 1921), 111].

The organ may have been brought to the assembly wrapped in the bloody material the soldier burns and could possibly have come from an animal as a substitute for the heart of the beloved. Witches were known to consume the hearts of children as well as the hearts of hanged criminals (de Lancre, 547).

Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London: Calmann and King, 1998), 112. It was for this reason that the heart was necessarily believed to be the first part of the body to be resurrected at the Last Judgment [Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 9].

*Frau Minne* is the work of Master Caspar of Regensburg. This print is housed in the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin.

reality of love’s manipulation. The trio of men with the heart are related to the witch seated in front of the soldier who stares downward into a bronze cylindrical pot as she squeezes blood from what is likely an organ.\textsuperscript{516} It is clear through the treatment of the organs that Rosa intended to inspire both curiosity and revulsion in the viewer.

The themes of love, death, and bodily manipulation are also combined in the figure of the wax effigy that is held by the naked witch with the mirror beneath the hanged corpse (fig. 112). Witches were understood to use wax dolls, also called mommets, in their rites; the one in Rosa’s image has several nails or pins sticking out of it.\textsuperscript{517} The nails do not necessarily indicate the infliction of pain but could equally signify love magic.\textsuperscript{518} The use of a mommet accords with

\textsuperscript{516} She will presumably stir the mixture with the long bone she holds in her other hand. The witch with the sword turns toward his seated companion, ready to participate in the next stage of the magical process. Both of these witches employ magical papers which may represent a carta di voler bene, a prayer written with signs and spells which was used in love magic. These spells could range from a few words to several pages in length [Guido Ruggiero, \textit{Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance} (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 99]. Owen Davies observes the hierarchy of love spells: “Written copies accrued more potency than those held in oral memory, while those recorded in books were more efficacious than charms written on loose sheets.” [Owen Davies, \textit{Grimoires: A History of Magic Books} (Oxford, et al.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81]. Remy asserts that witches’ parchment is made from the skin of aborted foetuses (Remy, 99).

\textsuperscript{517} Price, 60. There is at least one in the right thigh, one in the left side of the ribcage, and another protrudes from the figure’s foot.

\textsuperscript{518} The piercing of wax images could be used to cause injury to the individual represented. Ovid describes this practice in his account of Medea: “The waxen likeness of her absent foes, she pierced and injured with a hundred blows...Images of wax with magic art, She made, and killed them, piercing to the heart.” (Boguet, 86). Bodin and Boguet confirm that the practice continues in their day with people employing wax images to commit murder with demonic assistance (Bodin, 42 & 140; and Boguet, 86).

Magic involving wax effigies was perceived to be a real danger. Jewish magicians were accused of committing murder by forming and then destroying wax effigies of their victims (Hsia, 6). Boguet reports that Charles IX of France perished through the melting of a wax effigy made in his image and that King Duffus of Scotland was saved by the discovery of the witches slowly melting his effigy (Boguet, 86).

Paracelsus, on the other hand, prescribes the destruction of wax figures for different purposes. In ancient times, piercing an effigy could provide a means to try to restrain the represented individual rather than to cause harm or could alternatively allow the lover to penetrate the body of the beloved [Daniel Ogden, “Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman World,” in: \textit{Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome}, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 66]. Erotic magic could straddle the boundary between the amorous and the hostile, as spells to win another’s heart could involve piercing or even burning something that represents the beloved [Richard Kieckhefer, \textit{Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century} (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 79]. Not all reports involve a female eliciting the love of a male; Boguet reports that images are often made in order to make a woman fall in love with a man (Boguet, 87).
the magical practice of the witch Canidia who employed a wax doll to accomplish her magic. In the case of Rosa’s painting, the wax manikin is held up to the mirror so that by looking over her shoulder, the witch can determine the identity of her lover or that of her companion. Further adding to the suspicion of love magic is the youth and suggested beauty of the seated witch in Rosa’s painting. Distinguished from the other witches by her smooth, light-toned skin and elaborate hairstyle, the woman looks like she is doing her best to attract a suitor.

The wax manikin is located beneath the hanging corpse. This invites a comparison of the different bodies present and raises questions about how the physical body relates to the soul and the breath that animates it. The life force, soul, and the physical body are shown united in two different ways in other areas of the image: in the skeleton the soul, or something more demonic, has been called back into the earthly remains while in the corpse, the power of a life cut short is still trapped in the very materiality of a body now void of a soul. These contrast with the effigy which is a false body that is connected to a living body through magic. The witch’s magic is founded on the idea that a sympathetic connection, established through magical writing, physical resemblance, or the use of a person’s exuviae, exists between the manikin and the person that it is intended to represent. These three bodies have been or are being subject to manipulation; the deceased has been hanged by the judicial authorities, while the effigy (and supposedly the person it represents) and skeleton are subject to the arbitrary justice or control of the witches. All of these bodies are treated as tools, as useful materials to be reshaped according to the witch’s twisted desires.

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519 This story appears in Horace’s Satires I, 73-74. Canidia uses a larger woollen effigy to exert control over a small wax doll.
520 Scott, 53-54. In Rosa’s image the mirror is used as an instrument of witchcraft; on its own, it had ambivalent symbolism that could range from a representation of faithful love to vanity. Commenting on the nature of vanity, a woodcut from Der Ritter von Turn (The Knight of Turn), from 1498, shows a young woman combining her hair in a convex mirror as a devil stands behind her brandishing his buttocks. Instead of her reflection, the audience sees the devil’s rear end. The Devil and a ‘eitle’ Woman is reproduced in Franz Rueb, Hexenflug und Teufelsritt: Hexen-Bilder aus vier Jahrhunderten (Zurich: Innaron Verlag, 1997), 63. Faye Tudor discusses technological developments and mirror usage in her essay “All in Him Selfe as in a Glass He Sees’: Mirrors and Vision in the Renaissance,” in: Renaissance Theories of Vision, edited by John Shannon Hendrix and Charles H. Carman [Farnham & Burlington (VT): Ashgate, 2010], 171-186.
In its roughly hewn form, the wax effigy is evocative of the mandrake doll, like the one that appears in Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5).\(^{521}\) Here, however, the manikin is shaped by human hands. The fabrication of the effigy associates the witch with the artist and demonstrates the negative potential of the arts. This is further underscored by the three-dimensionality of the mommet. Demons were thought to be able to inhabit statuary, which by virtue of its enclosed form, was understood to provide a perfect abode for demons. Again, the use of these figures evokes the power of images. Rosa’s witch thereby shows the dangerous side of artistic production.

**Classical Models**

The notion that witches utilized human bodies for their magical practices had its roots in classical literature. Witches might abduct children or adults to prepare their bodies for use in occult rites. Ancient witches were known to remove the eyes of the dead, to chew the fingernails off of corpses, to bite the noses off of hanged men, and to collect body parts in general.\(^{522}\)

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\(^{521}\) The latter would be particularly appropriate for the context of this scene; recall that mandrakes were believed to grow beneath the gallows. This association is illustrated in David Teniers the Younger’s aforementioned *Witches’ Scene* (fig. 108) wherein an older witch with an apron full of vegetation holds a torch for her companion who digs beneath a corpse. A mandrake doll stands beside the lantern, suggesting that the witches are collecting the plant in order to fashion effigies. Since this plant grows in Italy, and Naples experienced problems with witches while Rosa lived there, the artist was likely familiar with this association.

\(^{522}\) Lorenzi, 29-30.

In Lucan’s *The Civil War*, the protagonist, Thelyphron, is in Larissa when he learns that witches, referred to here as harpies, nibble bits of the faces off bodies so that they can use them in their magical mixtures. He is also warned that witches can transform into any shape. Due to the witches’ abilities, individuals entrusted to watch over a corpse must not look away from the body; if any bits of the deceased are missing, whoever stood guard will have those parts removed from their body to complete the corpse. When hired to protect a dead man, Thelyphron is cast into a deep sleep after making in eye contact with a weasel but awakens to find the corpse intact. The uncle of the deceased accuses the widow of murder by poison and summons a necromancer, Zatchlas the Egyptian, to call up the dead soul. An argument ensues about the truth of the deceased’s testimony wherein it is revealed that Thelyphron had been mutilated as he slept instead of the corpse which shares his name. See Lucan, 6:438-830. This story establishes how corpses could be revived to reveal hidden knowledge and provides an example of witches desecrating the dead.

Furthermore, in his *Satire* 1.8, Horace has his narrator Priapus tells a story about Canidia and her fellow witches. It is a tale that mocks the fear and faith in magic that witches inspire [Horace, *Horace: Satires I*, translated by P. Michael Brown (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1993), 73-74]. The group came to the Esquiline Hill in Rome to search for corpses and to call upon the dead using the blood of a lamb they tore apart with their teeth. Their courage is shattered when Priapus farts and as they run in terror it is the witches who lose body parts, including false hair and teeth, instead of their victims. The witches are characterized as not only requiring the deconstruction of the human body, but are themselves shown to be composed of a variety of parts. In this example, the idea that witches are unnatural beings is literalized.
behaviours encourage associations with cannibalism and the systematic dismantling of the human body.

Witches were also thought to resurrect the dead for prophetic purposes. In his Pharsalia, Lucan describes Erictho as being entirely inappropriate in using her power, contravening the outcomes that nature had intended: “She buries in the grave the living whose souls still direct their bodies: while years are still due to them from destiny, death comes upon them unwillingly; or she brings back the funeral from the tomb with procession reversed, and the dead escape from death.” This is apparently the situation of the inhabitant of the exhumed coffin in Rosa’s painting (fig. 113). The skeleton’s skull, however, hangs lifelessly. Given the support offered by the woman and the eagerness with which the man desires to see what has been written it appears the reanimation is a ruse. While alluding to the potential power of the witch, Rosa questions the means by which such an operation could be achieved and whether the witch possessed the capability to affect it. Both the futility and the hope inherent in contacting the dead are suggested by the limp body of Rosa’s skeleton.

523 Lucan, 343. Erictho revives a corpse in order to learn the outcome of an impending battle between Pompey and Julius Cesar at Pharsalus and reanimates soldiers who had fallen during battle, whether they wished to return to the realm of the living or not.

524 Rosa was not the first to allude to the practice of exhumation. In Francesco Maria Guazzo’s Compendium Maleficarum (Milan, 1608), the woodcut Male and Female Witches Exhuming a Dead Body illustrates male and female witches digging up a corpse, dissecting a baby, and cutting down a hanged falcon [Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, Male Witches in Early Modern Europe (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), fig. 1].

525 Dead spirits were often consulted about treasure because it was thought that the spirit would be tied to the treasure until it was recovered by the living and put to some use that would help to atone for whatever injury the spirit had inflicted (Bever, 2008, 171). Institoris and Sprenger asserted that a demon is the real force behind apparent resurrections of the dead and described the means by which a demon operates: “In the first instance, when he attempts to do this, he will either enter the body of the dead man or he will remove it and in place of it show himself in an assumed body made out of air.” (Institoris and Sprenger, 290).

In addition, the ability to call upon the dead connects the witches to other heretical groups, inviting the audience of Rosa’s work to identify the activities taking place in his painting with real abilities and events or at least events that people were claiming they had attended. Cathars believed that each person had a double, existing in spirit form, that was able to fly. Specific individuals within the sect were responsible for maintaining communications between the living and the dead (Bever, 2008, 95). Similarly, in Italy, female benandanti were able to communicate with the dead (Bever, 2008, 122). There benandanti, individuals born with the caul, were called by spirits to fight against evil witches and thereby ensure the survival of the crops for the harvest.

526 In contrast to Rosa’s painting, Alessandro Rosi’s Scene of Witchcraft in a private Florentine collection depicts an extremely active corpse. The animated skeleton struggles beneath the arm of a male sorcerer, twisting with arms outstretched and mouth open in a scream. Particularly striking are the figure’s wild eyes (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 178).
Unlike Lucan and other classical authors, Rosa segregates the witches’ activities by grouping his figures in small numbers so that prophecy is considered in terms of the skeleton while the harvesting of bodily materials is associated with the still enfleshed corpse. This arrangement and division of labour encourages the audience to consider the various facets of witchcraft independently through the individual witches or their small groups and the subject or concept as a whole through the collective assembly. Rosa’s visual strategy enables the viewer to consider both the overall picture and the small details of witchcraft at once.

While contemporary authors of demonological and witchcraft treatises were concerned with condemning the consultation of witches for prophetic purposes and admitted the occasional instance of the dead returning to reveal information to the living, they do not demonstrate any concern about skeletons that write. Shades, meaning apparitions, and enfleshed bodies are the primary subjects of interest in the treatment of revenants in these texts. It appears that Rosa developed this motif from a northern Italian tradition of skeletal imagery. Rosso Fiorentino designed his Allegory of Death and Fame (fig. 114) in 1518 which is focused around the winged, skeletal figure of Death pointing to an open book held over top of the bony remains of a corpse.

An execution site was understood to be a locus of dangerous power and therefore an excellent location for resurrecting the dead or performing divinations. The witch consulting the corpse in Rosa’s Witches at their Incantations recalls the biblical prototype of the Witch of Endor who called upon the dead Samuel to foretell the future for King Saul. This narrative

527 Skeletons were not the usual revenants; the importance of flesh to the concept of the animate dead is discussed by both Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture,” Past & Present 152 (August, 1996): 3-45; and McClelland, 2006.
528 Rosso’s drawing for the engraving is housed in the Uffizi, Florence.
Rosa’s figure is tied to illustrations of skeletons and skulls accompanied by inscriptions warning the living about the transitory nature of life and unexpected appearance of death in vanitas and memento mori imagery.
529 For the account of the woman of Endor see 1 Samuel 28. Other biblical references to witches include 1 Chronicles 10: 13-14 and Ecclesiasticus 46:23.
Rosa also depicts the story in his Saul and the Witch of Endor from 1668 which is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 161). This image later influences Johann Heinrich Schönefeld’s Saul and the Pythoness painted during the 1670s as well as representations of the subject by Jan van Boeckhorst, Dominicus van Wijnen, and John Michael Rysbrack [Stuart Clark, Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 245 & ft. 44].
was central to the debate over whom or what witches were able to revive, call-up, or conjure with or without demonic aid. The various prospects are presented by Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen in his 1526 painting, *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (fig. 13), which offers its audiences the same deliberately unresolved possibilities as Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations*. Whereas the account of the Witch of Endor relates to the revelation of specific material, Rosa’s image is open to a much wider range of possibilities. Whether the dead could be consulted to learn the future, to reveal the cause of their death and often the identity of their murderer, or to disclose the location of hidden wealth, the artist leaves the matter open to the viewer to interpret. As with other works discussed in this study, the audience must rely on their education, faith, and imagination.

530 It was possible that the Witch of Endor had called Samuel back from the dead in both body and spirit, alternatively, she could have summoned his soul or spirit, or, she might have conjured his likeness with the aid of a demon. Institoris and Sprenger give their reader a synopsis of the various possibilities involved in the apparent summoning of Samuel, writing:

Someone who possessed this sort of art [nigromancy] was the famous magician and pythoness mentioned in I Samuel 28[:7], who raised Samuel from the dead at the insistence of Saul. Let no one think that such things are lawful on the grounds that Scripture records that when the soul of the righteous prophet was summed from the dead, it revealed to Saul the outcome of a future was, through a female pythoness at that. As Augustine says (*To Simplicianus* [2.3]), it is not absurd to believe that by some dispensation it had been permitted that, without the force of the magical art or power but through a hidden dispensation unknown to the pythoness and Saul, the spirit of the righteous man showed itself to the vision of the king in order to strike him with the sentence of God, or perhaps the spirit of Samuel was not only truly raised from its repose, and instead some fantastical picture and delusion of the imagination at the hands of demons was made through the contrivances of the Devil, and this is what the Scripture calls Samuel, just as images are customarily named after the things they portray. (Institoris and Sprenger, 195-196).

The account of the Witch of Endor and Exodus 22:8 together prompted debate as to whether witches in the early modern era were the same as those described in ancient accounts of witchcraft [Brian P. Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 7]. Closely related to this issue was the capacity of demons to generate or reanimate life. According to Del Rio, demons could revive the low creatures which were born from putrefying matter but could not create or resurrect higher beings, especially humans (Del Rio, 113).

531 The Dutch artist Cornelisz van Oostsanen, also known as Jacob van Amsterdam, depicted what is considered a revolutionary image for its novel combination of witchcraft and female necromantic rites. The artist thereby expands what is traditionally a scene involving a single magician into a group activity (Zika, 2007, 156). In van Oostsanen’s painting, an archway functions as a gateway for Samuel who climbs out of his tomb. Van Oostsanen included legible text in his image. The low banderol in the scene contains a Latin inscription that tells how Saul went to Endor in disguise with two other men to consult a seer about a war with the Philistines, Samuel was called forth and told Saul about his impending death and that his three sons would die too. The upper banderol is in vernacular Dutch and states that Saul gave himself to witchcraft and by calling upon the dead, brought about his own death (Zika, 2007, 158).

One of the earliest anamorphic designs depicting Saul and the Witch of Endor is by an anonymous southern Netherlandish artist and illustrates a sabbath and a windy landscape with an anamorphic view of Saul falling on his sword (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 27). In 1976 the panel was in a private collection in Germany [Fred Leeman, *Hidden Images: Games of Perception, Anamorphic Art, Illusion from the Renaissance to the Present*, translated by Ellyn Childs Allison and Margaret L. Kaplan (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1976), pl. 44]. Clark also draws attention to this work in *Vanities*, 219.
fantasies, and personal experiences to draw any conclusions about whether or not Rosa’s scene could possibly be happening.

Rosa further tantalizes the viewer with a mysterious figure draped in a shroud (fig. 115). The totality of bodily coverage is unusual and evokes images such as Wendel Dietterlin’s *The Resurrection of Lazarus* (fig. 116) in which Lazarus emerges from his grave completely encased in his winding-sheet. Overtop the shroud the person wears a leafy crown and a wreath decorated with small flowers, a common symbol for the transience of life, hangs

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532 Piero Valeriano writes that the use of a veil and white clothing are used to symbolize shame in his *Ieroglifici* (Hieroglyphics) [Werner Gundersheimer, “‘The Green-Eyed Monster’: Renaissance Conceptions of Jealousy,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, no. 3 (September, 1993): 329]. The presence of wreaths, which typically denote honour and sacrifice argue against this interpretation for Rosa’s work.

Rosa used the draped figure again in his *Witchcraft Scene*, another painting from the artist’s Florentine period (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 172). In this work, the figure’s hands are visible supporting a candleholder.

In François Deserps’ *A Collection of The Various Styles of Clothing which are Presently Worn in Countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Savage Islands, All Realistically Depicted 1562*, edited and translated by Sara Shannon (Minneapolis: James Ford Bell Library, 2001) the illustration of The Mourner of Flanders depicts a woman covered in a large swath of white fabric, beneath which only the hem and trim of her dress is visible (Deserps, 81). The caption informs the viewer that this is the typical dress of a female mourner in Flanders. There is perhaps a headdress underneath the outer cloth that gives a circular structure to the garment. Aside from this feature, the white sheet with long hanging folds and no place for the arms or face to be revealed is reminiscent of the figure with the wreath in Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations*.

Similarly, in Jeanine Guérin Dalle Mese’s *L’occhio di Cesare Vecellio: Abiti e costumi esotici nel ’500* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1998), the *Zitella spagnola* illustrates a woman whose dress and shod feet emerge from beneath the long sheet that covers her, including her face and hands (Dalle Mese, fig. 54). Both garments are trimmed with a lacy ornament, unlike the sheet covering Rosa’s figure. The accompanying text explains that women of the upper class would not subject themselves to public viewing and thus they would leave the house with covered faces (Dalle Mese, fig. 105). The same approach is evident in the depiction of the *Matrona Persiana* and the text reiterates that Spanish, Italian, and French women also opted to present themselves in public this way at times (Dalle Mese, 189 & fig. 129). This type of mourning dress reinforces the association of Rosa’s mysterious figure with death.

According to Del Rio, witches usually appeared at the sabbath masked or wearing a linen cloth or veil that covered their face (Del Rio, 93). While the witches in Rosa’s painting are uncovered for all to see, it would be interesting to learn the source for Del Rio’s assertion.

This unique combination of attributes eludes attempts at determining this figure’s status.

The infant that is carried into the scene by a witch riding a fantastic beast (fig. 117) is related to the shrouded figure and hanged man through the theme of sacrifice. The appearance of cannibalistic motifs in witchcraft imagery has been linked to anxieties concerning the loss of Christian identity in early modern society. In this interpretation, the victim takes the form of an innocent child, a reference to the Christ Child, and thereby functions as a perversion of the

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534 Rosa’s *Witches at their Incantations* was painted at a time when the interest in still-life paintings had already established itself in the north. In Ingvar Bergström’s article on disguised symbolism in northern art, several images of a skull wreathed in ivy, laurel, corn, or a combination thereof are reproduced, including Christian Thum’s *Vanitas* in Mrs. M. Heigard’s collection in Djursholm, Sweden, as well as Jan Davidsz. De Heem’s *Vanitas* and Alexander Coosemans’ *Vanitas*, both of which are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

Whether this crown is made of laurel or ivy, either plant can function as symbols for eternal life and thereby encourage the notion that this is a resurrected figure. Bergström identifies ivy and laurel as symbols of eternal life and in the case of the latter plant, a reference to fame [Bergström, Ingvar. “Disguised Symbolism in ‘Madonna’ Pictures and Still Life: II,” The Burlington Magazine 97, no. 632 (November, 1955): 345]. If interpreting this crown as fame, it is curious that Rosa chose to place a crown of honour on a faceless figure, perhaps suggesting that the accomplishments that the individual has achieved are only successes in that person’s mind; in the case of witches what their twisted minds read as successes are in reality not so and their actions will not be recorded or lauded in posterity. Or Rosa may be asserting that the accomplishments are no match for death. More likely, the symbolism of eternal life is suggestive of a resurrected figure, an eternal spirit, who has been called to the gathering. Campoli reads the veil on the figure in white as referring to the occult nature of the truth and the crown as symbolizing both triumph and sacrifice, together identifying the figure as a sacrificial victim of black magic (Campoli, 173). The crown can also be interpreted as a symbol of innocence and virginity, underscoring the sacrificial significance of the figure. Kettering discusses the use of the flower garland and notes that the motif appears sixteenth century imagery depicting Mary and virgins with unicorns [Alison McNeil Kettering, *The Dutch Arcadia: Pastoral Art and its Audience in the Golden Age* [Totowa & Montclair (NJ): Allanheld & Schram, 1983], 56-58].

535 In opposition to the illicit sacrifices and resurrections performed by witches are those sanctioned by the church. Unbaptized stillborn children were brought to a holy site, a sanctuaires à répit, where, with the help of saintly intercession, the deceased could be revived for a few moments, enough time for a priest to baptize the child so its soul could ascend to Heaven [W. Th. M. Frijhoff, “Official and Popular Religion in Christianity: The Late Middle-Ages and Early Modern Times (13th – 18th Centuries),” in: Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies, edited by Pieter Hendrik Vrijhof and Jacques Waardenburg (The Hague, Paris & New York: Mouton, 1979), 88].

To create his monsters, Rosa drew upon Filippo Napoletano’s scientific prints in his collection, *Diversi Scheletri di Animali* (Skeletons of Animals), for inspiration as well as the art of David Teniers the Younger (Scott, 47; and Campoli, 162 & 166). Scott argues that it is likely that Rosa was familiar with the Italian version of Baldung’s *Witches Sabbath* and that he would have come into contact with the print in Florence (Scott, 49).


Karen Gordon-Grube calls attention to the conflation of Eucharistic practices and cannibalism in the medicinal use of human bodies [Karen Gordon-Grube, “Anthropophagy in Post-Renaissance Europe: The Tradition of Medicinal Cannibalism,” American Anthropologist, New Series, 90, no. 2 (June, 1988): 408]. In her essay, the author discusses how the healing capacity of the parts taken from cadavers are compared with the Cult of the Saints in the Catholic Church wherein the physical remains of saints are credited with healing and miraculous power.
consumption of the Eucharist. There is, however, ambiguity as to whether the infant is being presented as a victim or as a participant, a quality shared with the mysterious figure dressed in white. Contemporary literature repeatedly described witches bringing babies to the sabbath as food and as new inductees into witchcraft. Rosa delights his audience with the uncertainty as to who is living and who is dead, challenging his viewers to determine which is which and encouraging them to contemplate the nature of the boundaries delineating the two.

In calling upon the dead to obtain secret knowledge, witches forcibly permeate the barrier between the land of the living and the underworld. Although Rosa presents a weak argument for the plausibility of revivification, he tantalizes his audience with the mere hint of possibility. While authors of witchcraft treatises were concerned with arguing for one side or the other, Rosa recognized the interest that the possibilities and uncertainties in interpretation could generate. Moreover, his choice to depict the resurrected person as a skeleton departed from contemporary mental and artistic images of the revenant as an enfleshed, newly deceased corpse, thereby challenging general notions of what could be done with the dead. The skeletal nature of the supposedly resurrected body provokes the viewer to ask how such an event would be possible, seeing as the revenant lacks tendons, muscles, etc. The support the figure receives suggests that this is not a real prospect. Rosa’s writing skeleton should be appreciated as a novel contribution to representations of the dead in early modern art. It is through consideration of the physical nature of bodies that Rosa presses the question of and casts doubt upon witchcraft.

Witches broke taboos prohibiting exhumation of the dead and the desecration of corpses. Rosa depicts his witches treating bodies as sources of raw materials for their magical rites. He examines the treatment of the dead and their parts through the act of dismantling the hanged corpse, his inclusion of the heart on the sword, the pierced manikin, the squeezed organ in the witch’s hands, and the presence of sacrificial figures. These behaviours, for which witches were actively condemned, were closely tied to popular practices, which included the consumption of human flesh as a powerful medicine. By virtue of the similarities between the practices of witches and other members of the community, observers would have to reflect upon where the distinctions between the activities of the two really lie. The emphasis on the body also served to convey the gruesome, visceral nature of witchcraft. Depending upon the individual, the painting might be met with disgust and horror or laughter at the purported abilities of witches to connect
with the dead. For Rosa, the *Witches at their Incantations* provided an opportunity to thrill his audience with a dark and mysterious theme.

**Lo stregozzo**

Considerable debate has surrounded the authorship of the print, *Lo stregozzo* (fig. 118).  It is very likely that Agostino Veneziano is the designer and engraver of this print. By the time this print was made, circa 1523, the artist had already worked on several images with dark, skeletal content. These include his engraving of *Two Men Near a Cemetery*, Rosso’s *Allegory of Death and Fame* (1518), and a version of *Bandinelli’s Studio*. Both *Bandinelli’s Studio*

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537 Agostino lived from circa 1490 to about 1540. The print exists in three states: in the first, the tablet has a monogram, in the second, the monogram has been erased, and in the third, the initials “AV” appear on the horn being blown by the youth on the goat [Gioconda Albricci, “Lo stregozzo” di Agostino Veneziano,” *Arte Veneta* 36 (1982): 59]. *Lo stregozzo* measures 30.3 cm high by 63.9 cm wide and has a distinctly horizontal emphasis that compliments the idea of a procession. The observations in this study are drawn from the three pulls of this posthumously titled print in the British Museum. The print with registration number 1926.0805.1 is reproduced here. It is distinguished by a ‘25’ written in brown ink on the ground near the foot of the young man in the rear of the procession and the absence of an inscription on the tablet and horn. Each impression of this print varies in quality from the others, and while the general character of the composition remains the same, the expression of the man riding the hybrid beast is most affected.

The debate over the authorship of this work is extensive. Both Agostino and Raimondi used blank tablets as a signature device subsequent to the death of Raphael [Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 132]. Arguing that the print was probably designed by Marcantonio Raimondi, Tal supports his contention by comparing the work with Agostino’s *Massacre of the Innocents* and by drawing upon the attributions provided by Lomazzo and Malvasia (Tal, 2006, 162-163). Hults suggests that Raimondi began the illustration and Agostino completed it (Hults, 2005, 44-45). She contends that the print would have been designed to make the shop money after Raphael’s death and that it was intended to reference contemporary events while simultaneously demonstrating both Marcantonio and Agostino’s skill and Giulio Romano’s inventiveness. Zika, on the other hand, states that while it may be by Agostino or Raimondi, *Lo stregozzo*, or The Carcass as he prefers to call it, could also be the work of Raphael or Battista Dossi (Zika, 2007, 125). Patricia Emison agrees with Bartsch’s assessment that *Lo stregozzo* was engraved by Agostino although she argues that it was designed by Dosso Dossi in 1531 [Patricia Emison, “Truth and ‘Bizzarria’ in an Engraving of ‘Lo stregozzo’,” *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 4 (December, 1999): 626 & 631]. In her opinion, the absence of a device identifying the artist served to underscore the print’s status as a record of fact, rather than a work of art, before a shift in the attitude toward witchcraft led to its interpretation as a product of fantasy. In a recent exhibition catalogue, the composition was attributed to either Girolamo Genga or Giulio Romano, with Agostino relegated to the role of engraver [Sophie Harent, et al., *Beautés monstres: Curiosités, prodiges et phénomènes*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Somogy éditions d’art; Nancy: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy, 2009), cat. 16]. While its authors support an attribution to Raimondi or a collaborative effort, a summary of attributions can be found in Konrad Oberhuber, ed., *Roma e lo stile classico di Raffaello 1515-1527* (Milan: Electa, 1999), cat. 128.

Studio and Lo stregozzo treat the theme of secretive arts, showing specific social groups undertaking private activities in shadowy environments at night. The prints all display dead or crafted bodies that have been or are in the process of being manipulated for a variety of ends. These unusual subjects suggest that Veneziano was capable of designing Lo stregozzo himself.\textsuperscript{539}

*Lo stregozzo*, engraved in the Veneto, is a print fascinating for its ambiguous treatment of human interaction with the realms of the dead and the monstrous. Instead of using the engraving simply as a moral lesson against witchcraft and scientific experimentation, the artist exploited the curiosity, wonder, and allure elicited by this dangerous topic. By combining the witch with hybrid monsters and a giant carcass, Agostino was able to address the problem of bestially and demonically sired offspring, forms of unnatural generation, and the human potential to revive dead animals.\textsuperscript{540} The artist presents several different concepts of monstrosity, which invites the audience to compare the skeletal creatures with the human beings inhabiting the print. The bestial nature of humanity is treated through the themes of sodomy and infanticide, two crimes that were integral to witchcraft accusations in the early modern era. By emphasizing a wide range of socially unacceptable activities, Agostino is able to exploit the sexual excitement, the intellectual appeal, and the attraction of the forbidden that witchcraft affords. *Lo stregozzo* allows the viewer to experience the appeal of witchcraft firsthand.

The composition depicts a demonic procession moving triumphantly up a hillock through a swampy landscape. Ducks fly up from the reeds as a youth mounted on a goat blows his horn

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\textit{Venus}, The British Museum, inv. no. AN53373001, \<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=1444436&partid=1&searchText=agostino+veneziano+and+bandinelli&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&currentPage=1\> \textsuperscript{539} While this explains the place of *Lo stregozzo* in Agostino’s body of work, it should be noted that the artists engraved a large number of subjects and that *Lo stregozzo* is the only image of witchcraft that the artist is known to have made.\textsuperscript{540} Bestiality is addressed more fully in the examination of Baldung’s *Witch and Dragon.*
to herald the procession. He is followed by a large skeletal form, often referred to as the carcass, being propelled forward by four nude men. A witch sits perched upon the carcass with a group of infants lying before her. She grips a child with one hand while holding a smoking pot in the other. Beneath her, encircled by the bones of the carcass and the men, are another goat, two monstrous hybrids, and another man.

**Monstrous Hybrids**

The giant skeleton of an unidentifiable monster functions as a structural device ordering the composition. Due to the inverted nature of the carcass, the witch sits in the upturned pelvis, implying that she is the monstrous birth. The curvature created by the skeleton’s spine directs attention to and serves to connect the witch and the hybrids beneath her. It has been suggested

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541 Flying birds could be read as an augury (Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584, introduction by Montague Summers [New York: Dover, 1972 (Great Britain: John Rodker, 1930), 108]. The herald is garbed in an animal hide which serves to underscore the connection between the rider and his mount (Zika, *Exorcising our Demons*, 385-387).

542 The witch has been identified as a depiction of Erictho from Lucan’s *De bello civili* [Stephen J. Campbell, “‘Fare una Cosa Morta Parer Viva’: Michelangelo, Rosso, and the (Un)divinity of Art,” *The Art Bulletin* 84 (December, 2002), 603]. Erictho is an insidious character who, like the woman in the print, enslaves handsome young men and murders infants. Furthermore, by their very nature, all old women, not just witches, were thought to be dominated by their sexual passions which led them to pursue young men, as was described in chapter two. There is, however, nothing in Lucan’s account that would explain the hybrid monstrosities or the witch’s unusual mount. Efforts to connect the witch in *Lo stregozzo* to a specific literary or mythological account will prove futile, as the image is an exercise in visualizing the allure and danger of witchcraft.

543 This creature’s body has been turned upside-down, yet its neck twists through the vertebrae so that its skull, resembling that of a horse despite the absence of the bottom jaw, is curled towards its spine. The hind legs of the carcass being carried by the men do not accurately reflect the skeletal structure of the horse, despite the hooves. The creature is clearly an invention of the artist; however, the allusions to the horse elicit particular sexual associations. Similar skeletons appear in the anonymous German woodcut *Hort an new schrecklich abenthewr Von den vnholden vngehewr* (A Hidden, Dreadful Adventure of the Demonic Monster) produced circa 1600. This broadsheet is available online at The Trustees of the British Museum, *Hort an new schrecklich abenthewr Von den vnholden vngehewr*, The British Museum, inv. no. AN248300001, <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx> (accessed January 28, 2010).

A horse-like carcass is employed as a support mechanism for a cauldron with bones and a pot in Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *St. James and the Magician Hermogene* (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 132). A horse skeleton also appears among the fallen, beneath the sword-bearing angel dressed in white, in Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *Fall of the Rebel Angels* dated to 1562. By placing the skeleton among hybrids and reptiles, Bruegel draws upon the same negative associations that the author of *Lo stregozzo* (fig. 118) did. For the symbolism of the horse, see the analysis of Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom* (fig. 73).

A partially enfleshed horse and its human skeletal rider appear in Rosa’s *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 161) in Paris. The frontal and menacing nature of the horse and rider are suggestive of illustrations of Death.
that the body of the carcass forms a womb-like enclosure containing the goat and hybrids.\footnote{Mitchell Merback made this suggestion to Tal (Tal, 2006, 186 & ft. 59).}

While hybrids were understood to be monstrous because of their unnaturally occurring composite forms, the goat belongs among the retinue because of its deviant, lascivious behaviour and strong associations with the devil.\footnote{The goat’s form was appropriate for the devil because of its deformed body, enjoyment of venereal excess, and the pleasure it takes in attacking people (Remy, 72). Remy, citing Varro’s \textit{De re rustica} (On Agriculture), further associates the goat and witch through the goat’s poisonous saliva and plaguing of crops.}

There is a vertical relationship between the witch and one of the hybrids, as it is positioned directly beneath the witch’s rear. In light of the associations drawn between this space and the womb, a discussion of the theme of unnatural births is appropriate. In the early modern era monstrous births were often interpreted as portents signalling God’s anger with the sins of the world and were read as a sign of evil times.\footnote{The physical abnormalities of such offspring were a source of curiosity for others; in some cases this interest surpassed the welfare of the child and resulted in its death. Accounts of monstrous births and the significance they were imbued with is addressed by Ottavia Niccoli in her book \textit{Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy}, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).}

Unusual births also provided artists with a popular subject matter that could show what could otherwise only be imagined for those unable to visit the progeny in question. Even Dürer took advantage of this market when he produced an engraving entitled \textit{The Deformed Landser Sow} (fig. 119), circa 1496.\footnote{The deformed pig is situated outside of a castle in a landscape and this is the focus of the print. Dürer highlights the extraneous parts of the creature by placing a mountainous form behind each additional limb and these in turn echo each of the two bodies attached to a single head. The engraving can be found at the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.}

Unusual births could be the result of looking at images. In discussing how to maintain decorum when decorating architectural spaces, Leon Battista Alberti asserted that only dignified portraits of handsome men should be displayed in the bedroom as images had the capacity to influence both the chances of conception and the child’s appearance.\footnote{Leon Battista Alberti, \textit{On the Art of Building in Ten Books}, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor [Cambridge (MA) & London (GB): The MIT Press, 1999 (1988)], 299. This recommendation appears in Book 9, section 4. The power attributed to imagery to influence the fertility of a couple and the gender and health of their children is addressed by Jacqueline Marie Musacchi in her article “Imaginative Conceptions in Renaissance Italy,” in: \textit{Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy}, edited by Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Matthews-Grieo [Cambridge (GB) & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 42-60. For further examples of erotic imagery inspiring intercourse and shaping the appearance of children, see {David Freedberg, \textit{The...}]}
babies could be attributed to the mother viewing images of St. John the Baptist wrapped in furs during gestation.\textsuperscript{549} This suggests that the act of looking involved an internalization of the image that could physically impact the viewer. Another aspect of this process involves behaviour. Looking at images of witchcraft could cause ideas to generate which could lead the viewer down a dangerous path; seeing could lead to trying, as many authors of demonological and witchcraft treatises warn.

Furthermore, monstrous children could be connected to the artistic process. In the case of a monstrous birth, the child in the womb was conceived of as a raw material shaped by the mother’s imagination. Here, the proper influence of the father is denied, thus causing aberrance. According to this theory, the hybrid in Agostino’s print would be the product of the witch’s deranged mind. In this way, art dominated nature in an unnatural manner. As a result, the progeny was a perversion of the natural order. The visual qualities of such children were signs of their parents’ inappropriate thoughts and misdeeds. Likewise, the grotesque nature of the hybrid is indicative of the witch’s deviance. In pictures like Agostino’s it is the artist who shapes aberrant forms. The image is evidence of the artist’s engagement with illicit material, which carried with it awareness of the potential for the artist’s participation in witchcraft.

Monstrous births could be generated by witches through intercourse with animals, the Devil, or demons in the guise of animals. Bestiality and witchcraft were closely associated in demonological literature and it is unsurprising that Agostino chose to allude to this particularly scandalous accusation in his consciously salacious print. To participate in or even contemplate bestial intercourse was to willingly transgress the boundary between the human and animal.\textsuperscript{550} It


\textsuperscript{550} Del Rio wrote: “Evil spirits can also produce strange monsters, unless one is going to argue that these are born from the wicked congress of humans and animals – undoubtedly the origin of most monsters.” (Del Rio, 86). He shared with Paré the belief that unnatural hybrid births could be attributed to acts of bestiality [Ambroise Paré, \textit{The Collected Works of Ambroise Paré}, 1579, translated by Thomas Johnson [Milford House: New York, 1968 (London, 1634)], 982].
was a defiance of the laws of nature and the law of God. Serving to further underscore the illicit sexual liaisons of the witches and their transgressive nature is the man mounted on the hybrid (fig. 120). Sodomy is insinuated by the figure riding on his hands and knees, brandishing his buttocks toward the viewer. Bestiality was strongly associated with sodomy because both were seen to degrade the individuals involved to the level of animals.\textsuperscript{551}

Debate raged as to whether or not witches and demons could produce offspring.\textsuperscript{552} The threat of an increasing populace of immortals seeking the downfall of humanity was a pressing concern for some demonologists and a complete impossibility for others. Through pictorial placement and suggestion, Agostino incites wonder in his audience through the possibility but then checks it with anatomical and compositional problems, creating a puzzle which he refuses to resolve. Visual inspection of the hybrids reveals the how the artist played with the articulation of these strange beings to communicate their dark natures and uncertain physical statuses.

Directly beneath the witch there is a hybrid with ram’s horns. The eye is a pool of black ink; since eyes are understood to be a window, the implication is that this being is a soulless monster.\textsuperscript{553} The frond-like covering that extends around the animal’s neck and down its back gives way to goat-like fur below. While authors could only describe the conflation of species forming a hybrid in their texts, Agostino shows the confusing disregard for boundaries between species in such a creature. As opposed to illustrating the cohesive body of a hybrid birth in an animal like a mule, the artist chose to stress the disjunction of form. He took this confusion a step further by challenging his viewers to understand the nature of the hybrid creature. With its mask-like face and layered coats, the beast is suggestive of a costume rather than an actual animal. There is the sense of masks and skins being layered upon a being so that it appears to be something that it is not, prompting the viewer to consider the themes of ambiguous surfaces and

\textsuperscript{551}It has been suggested that the fear of sodomy originated in the potential for the personal relationships of men to cut across the conventional divisions of the social hierarchy to generate a new organizational system that could be detrimental to the existing structure (Ruggiero, 176).

\textsuperscript{552}The implications of a human-animal or inter-species hybrid are discussed in the context of Baldung’s \textit{Witch and Dragon} (fig. 67) in chapter two.

\textsuperscript{553}The opposite occurs in David Teniers the Younger’s \textit{Incantation Scene} from the early 1650s wherein a horse’s skull rests upright on the ground and possesses an eye, despite the lack of any further tissue or body (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 201).

The expectation of eye’s presence makes its absence disturbing to viewers (Freedberg, 220).
deceptive bodies. In *Lo stregozzo*, the hybrid is suggestive of both the imaginative capacity of the witch’s deluded mind and demons cloaking themselves or others in familiar forms in order to deceive.

This emphasis on materiality is further evident at the point where smoke from the witch’s pot curls and merges with her hair (fig. 121). Agostino plays with surfaces, allowing them to morph and shift into one another. The result is an ambiguity of materiality that denies attempts at precise delineation. Similarly, the reeds of the swamp sweep back and become flames as the demonic retinue rides past (fig. 122). Uncertain as to what they are seeing, the audience is encouraged to question their reliance on sight while at the same time being persuaded to take delight in the visual encounter. By constructing his image in this way, Agostino provides his viewers with an opportunity to experience wonder, a much sought after sensation in the early modern era.

Sockets are the focus of the second hybrid body. These devices serve to emphasize the individual parts of the body and, in conjunction with the creature’s composite nature, draw attention to the idea of cobbling pieces of different bodies together. The hybrid body also reflects the early modern artistic practice of building up a figure, providing it with a structure over which muscles, flesh, and clothing could be layered. The hybrids in *Lo stregozzo* are only partially finished in the anatomical sense, recalling figures that are partially dissected, or

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554 Masks could represent the concealment of intention, as in Bronzino’s London *Allegory*, or they could be associated with illusion and dreams. The use of the skull-as-mask to inspire fear is a feature of Mantegna’s *Battle of the Sea Gods* (fig. 91), wherein one fighter brandishes a heavy skull supported by his fist in the face of his foe.

555 De Lancre explains: “This is why the ancients called their gods *versipelles*, meaning ‘shape-changers’. And furthermore, the Lombards call their witches ‘masks.’” (de Lancre, 284). According to Remy, witches do not venture outwards without having masked themselves to conceal their true identities (Remy, 62).


557 The bones of the hip and foreleg are in clearly articulated sockets and the black void of the empty eye socket catches the viewer’s eye.

558 Tal compares the potion composed of different animal parts that was brewed by Medea with hybrids fashioned by artists (Tal, 2006, 183-185).

559 Campbell, 2002, 602.
perhaps more appropriately, vivisected. In their incomplete state of being, they reveal themselves to be fictions, generated by both the artist and purportedly the witch.

Curiously, the hybrid monster has all four feet planted on the ground; the position of this creature signals a full stop, conflicting with the rest of the retinue. This observation is critical given that the beast supports the man on all fours. He is precariously positioned with his legs partially balanced on each of the two hybrids. In fact, his right knee rests on the raised forelegs of the first hybrid. Imminent collapse is inevitable. As has been observed with other images discussed thus far, such as Francken’s *Witches’ Assembly* (fig. 5) and Baldung’s *Bewitched Groom* (fig. 73), artists used visual disjunctions as a tool to prompt their audiences to question the nature and reality of the content in their images. In *Lo stregozzo*, the imminent failure of the procession refers to the futility of engaging in witchcraft.

The bird’s head in the hybrid’s chest has an eye that looks ahead menacingly. Depictions of demons often illustrate two or more faces or heads on their bodies, a quality found in the artistic but not in the literary tradition. There is confusion as to what is animating the creature, given that it lacks organs, muscles, and blood. One explanation the artist alludes to is possession. Demonic beings were thought to occupy the lower body when they took possession of a person or animal. The artist has emphasized this association through the distinction between the eyeless skull and the animated bird’s head in the animal’s chest. *Lo stregozzo* draws parallels between representations of demons and the hybrid to comment upon the creature’s inner nature. Like demons, hybrids do not possess proper bodies, but are depicted acting as if they do. They are only deceitful and unsuccessful attempts at reproducing divine creation.

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560 If the hybrid is proceeding along with the other animals, then it is moving in a different fashion since its legs are not positioned in a logical fashion for a forward traveling quadruped.
561 Dual heads may be indicative of a monstrous birth or a demon.
562 See, for example, *The Fall of the Rebellious Angels* by Frans Floris from 1554 in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. The demon with the boar’s head has an eagle’s head in place of genitalia.  
563 Campbell, 2002, 610.
The hybrid exists as several different creatures as once, while at the same time it is a synthesis of those individual beings which results in something new and inherently unstable. Not only does the hybrid negate the boundaries that normally divide species, in case of the monstrosity directly underneath the witch in *Lo stregozzo*, the hybrid’s skeletal form indicates that it is also a compilation of the living and the dead. As a creature conjured, assembled, or birthed by the witch, the hybrid is demonic, prompting inquiry into the role of demons in this process.

Incomplete bodies have a long tradition of being used to represent demonic hordes. When Bosch populated his hell scenes with monstrous creatures missing torsos and limbs or possessing parts of distinctly different species, he stressed and further popularized the longstanding connection drawn between physical abnormality and deviancy of character. Like the hybrids in *Lo stregozzo*, Bosch’s demons could frighten, fascinate, and amuse their audience. Agostino’s hybrids participate in a visual discourse concerned with the nature of demonic bodies as well as those fashioned or birthed by human parents.

**Staying Dead**

The carcass has not been reanimated, but requires the effort of four strong men to move it forward. It has been argued that the carcass is in the process of being constructed as it is drawn along. While this would accord with the theme of unnatural growth or generation communicated through the hybrid monsters, the artist simultaneously emphasizes disassembly, suggesting that the carcass may also be in the process of being dismantled. The image is dominated by the theme of deconstruction: the marshland is destroyed by fire as the retinue passes by, the infants are killed and dismembered for magical purposes, and there are several figures that may stumble or fall at any moment, disrupting the whole group. The image conveys uncertainty and ambiguity.

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565 Adding to both the sense of forward movement and to the challenge of manoeuvring the carcass is the layered nature of the terrain that the group must ascend.
566 Campbell, 2002, 603.
With the animation of the hybrid composed out of skeletal parts, the image raises concerns about how the dead should remain dead and undisturbed. In the early modern era, witches were understood to be actively resurrecting the dead. The lady or goddess in charge of the witches was theorized to be able to magically reconstruct and reanimate the bodies of animals that had been consumed at the witch’s banquet.\textsuperscript{567} Their practices were a perversion of the true healing miracles attributed by Christians to Christ and the saints. The fully intact bodies of the resurrected, as portrayed in works such as Domenico Ghirlandaio’s \textit{Resurrection of the Boy} (fig. 123) from 1482-1485 are deliberately contrasted with the incomplete hybrid bodies in \textit{Lo stregozzo}.\textsuperscript{568} The interest in the potential for resurrection and how the process might occur can be found in representations of the Last Judgment. Luca Signorelli’s \textit{Resurrection of the Flesh} (fig. 124) presents the human body in two states: the completely enfleshed and purely skeletal.\textsuperscript{569} While Signorelli’s depiction is more suggestive of the transformation of the body than Ghirlandaio’s, the artist does not attempt to treat semi-formed bodies like Agostino.

\textit{Lo stregozzo} appeared slightly before or was contemporaneous with Rosso’s \textit{Fury}.\textsuperscript{570} Rosso’s frightened figure has been described as flayed and desiccated, descriptions which

\textsuperscript{567} Reginald Scot describes how witches were believed to eat and then resurrect a bull at the Feast of Diana (Scot, 24). The bones of the creature were wrapped in its hide and then tapped with a golden rod. While the creature was restored to life, its renewed existence was only temporary as the creature would slowly starve to death. Scot dismisses this as nonsense.

In 1390, two witches were sentenced to death by a Milanese Court after they admitted to attending a gathering led by Diana or Madonna Oriente who taught the women magic and how to resurrect the animals that had been consumed at the event [Matteo Duni, \textit{Under the Devil’s Spell: Witches, Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in Renaissance Italy} (Florence: Syracuse University in Florence, 2007), 28].

Artists could find a violent precedent for the witch’s deconstruction of a body and the promise of resurrection in the story of Medea. Seeking to take revenge on King Pelias at Jason’s request, Medea convinces the king’s daughters to stab and boil their father, having promised them that she will then restore his youth. Medea provides evidence of her powers by slaughtering a ram and resurrecting it as a lamb. After Pelias is dead, Medea fails to keep her word (Apollodorus, 121). Dominicus van Wijnen painted vivid representations of this subject (Appendix of Illustrations, figs. 244 & 245).

\textsuperscript{568} Ghirlandaio’s fresco is in Santa Trinità, Florence.

\textsuperscript{569} Signorelli’s painting is part of a fresco cycle adorning the Chapel of San Brizio, in Orvieto’s Duomo. The series was completed between 1499 and 1502. The animate skeletons reinforce the possibility of revivification embodied by the writing skeleton in Rosa’s \textit{Witches at their Incantations} (fig. 103).

\textsuperscript{570} Dating for the drawing and engraving vary between the 1520s and the 1530s. For an excellent discussion of Rosso’s design, see Campbell, 2002, 600ff.
capture the uncertainty surrounding his physical condition. The ambiguous status of the active yet physically incomplete figure relates him, as well as Agostino’s hybrids, to the contemporary interest in anatomical illustration. Anxieties concerning the use of cadavers for artistic investigation were tied to beliefs that the entire body was needed for the final resurrection. Bones were vital to the processes of resurrection and regeneration and it is unsurprising that they are so prominently displayed in Signorelli’s fresco and Agostino’s print. The emphasis on bones in the articulation of the hybrids stresses their role as individual parts whose connective tissue has decomposed or been removed. This has the advantage of evoking in the viewer’s mind the witches’ plundering of graves in order to gather the materials they needed.

**Murderess**

By the time *Lo stregozzo* appeared, Dürer and Baldung had already established an iconography for representing witchcraft in images being produced for their visual interest and authorship. Witches were depicted naked, riding on goats, and brewing strange vaporous concoctions in the wilderness. Illustrated witches can often be divided into two types: the beautiful young maiden and the old hag. In selecting the latter, Agostino emphasized the fierceness and grotesqueness of the witch’s physical body as well as her mental condition. The gaunt figure Mantegna used to represent Envy in his *Battle of the Sea Gods* (fig. 91) is the same type Agostino employs for his witch. While Mantegna’s figure is consumed by envy, Agostino’s is obsessed with witchcraft. Both figures commit grievous sins due to their inability

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571 The man may be living but on the verge of death, already among the dead, or, he may be trapped in a nightmare focused on the fear of the passage between life and death.

572 At the time *Lo stregozzo* was produced, dissection was still perceived to be a secretive and invasive activity. For an examination of the artistic characterization of anatomic figures in the Renaissance see Sawday’s *The Body Embazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*.

573 Despite his efforts to distance himself from such practices, Vesalius cannot help but comment upon the actions of three courtesans who removed a foot bone (and heart) out of a living child with the understanding that this was the bone from which the entire body would be regenerated from at the Last Judgment [Campbell, 2002, 600, citing Andrea Vesalius’ *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the Fabric of the Human Body) from 1543, as translated by William Frank Richardson and John Burd Carma, *On the Fabric of the Body* (1998), 299]. Witches were also accused of inserting bones, frequently from animals, into the bodies of others (Remy, 105).

574 In Mantegna’s *Battle of the Sea Gods* (fig. 91) the plaque held by the withered old woman who resembles the hags in witchcraft images that reads ‘INVID’, a short form for invidia which means envy.
or unwillingness to resist their sensual passions. Rejecting reason, witches were perceived to allow themselves to fall into impassioned conditions that rendered them animalistic.

The witch’s open mouth and protruding tongue make her appear to be ingesting the vapour that is pouring out of the pot that she carries. It was accepted as fact that witches employed body parts, often those of children, in their magical brews and unguents and this raises an association with cannibalism. This connection is doubly encouraged by that fact that the witch is coldly grasping a baby by the head, as if to bring the child to her lips. Some of the babies that are piled before the witch are alive, some may be unconscious, and others are dead; they are caught within the ribcage of the carcass and thus appear to be caged. The number of bodies indicates the excessiveness of the witch and her thirst for young lives. Another child is carried by one of the youths supporting the forelegs of the carcass; it hangs limply over the man’s arm like a piece of fabric, an object rather than a precious life. Two more infants are carried in the skin worn by the leader heralding the procession.

The murder of children was integral to witchcraft; witches had to ensure they obtained the bodies of children who died violent deaths to practice their magic. Theologians like Johannes Nider, a respected fifteenth century authority on witchcraft, provided detailed accounts of the manner in which witches would slaughter children, obtain their bodies, and cook their corpses in order to manufacture their magical unguents and brews. Theologians and jurists writing on witchcraft, disgusted by the witches’ attacks on children, categorized them as being

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575 In addition to the burning pot, the witch holds a cup or a bent object in her hand into which she sticks her thumb.
576 Roper recounts the case of a witch who admitted to having ‘pressed’ the baby; this term was used to denote infanticide through the crushing of the child’s skull [Lyndal Roper, “Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany,” in: Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief, edited by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 222].
577 While recognizing some of the children are dead, Albricci suggests that they may have been turned to stone (Albricci, 56-57). Although this is an interesting idea that accords with the Medusa-like character of the witch, there is no visual indication that the babies are anything but flesh. As was discussed extensively in chapter two, it is the very flesh and blood of the infant that was so central to witchcraft.
578 They, along with the bearded man bringing up the rear, are the figures that look out at the view, thereby providing the audience with a point of entry into the scene.
579 De Lancre, 135. Infanticide is discussed at length in chapter one in the context of the Dutch Scene of Witchcraft (fig. 30).
neither human nor animal in their cruelty. De Lancre addressed this issue in his treatise on witchcraft: “To eat a member of one’s own species horrifies not only humans, but also animals. However ferocious they may be, animals spare their own, including wolves.” While cannibalism may have been touted as being repugnant and taboo, it nonetheless persisted in Western society. Witches took this abomination a step further when they consumed their own children.

Infanticide was perceived to be unnatural because it contradicted the rule of nature established by God that a mother would put her child before herself. Even the punishment for infanticide stressed the inhuman nature of the transgression. Executions for infanticide were frequently carried out by a number of different means; those who were convicted and executed for infanticide were not buried – at least permanently – but were instead left exposed in an effort to humiliate the murderer by likening him or her to an animal.

Corrupt and Beautiful

The artist has denied the viewer access to the faces of the men who propel the carcass along. Only one of the bearded man’s eyes is visible and is articulated by a splotch of ink, symbolizing the narrow or impaired vision that is impeding his ability to reason. The inclusion of the bearded and therefore more mature man among the idealized youths shows the viewer that a man of any age can be drawn in by the allure of witchcraft. While the men are naked, they are still anonymous since the viewer is able to glimpse only a partial view of the older man’s face and even less of the rest of the youths. It is, however, the repetitive form of their bodies that lends a strong sense of forward motion to the group.

580 De Lancre, 318.
582 Emison contends that the artist hid the faces of these beautiful youths, who she identifies as fallen angels, to avoid the challenge of trying to show evil contained within an alluring form (Emison, 1999, 629). In their present anonymity, the men can be anyone, thus demonstrating the susceptibility of all men to the witch’s power. The men’s presence at and participation in the demonic procession reveals their evil nature. Had the artist, who evidently took great care in designing this composition, desired to he could have included traditional demonic symbols and attributes such as horns that would have identified his figures as evil, despite their beauty.
The men who support the skeleton that acts as a carriage for the witch signify witchcraft’s ability to corrupt patriarchal society. Instead of riding living horses, the men carry a dead one, and the animation, in this case meaning the movement of the skeleton, is aberrant since bodies should move on their own accord. Furthermore, the men convey a woman who has usurped the role of the male rider, an act which carries strong sexual connotations. The old hag with the young men evokes the motif popularized by artists such as Quentin Massys of the unequal lovers (fig. 125) wherein discrepancies in age, wealth, and beauty are mockingly criticized by means of exaggerated difference. The taut muscles and ideal forms of the male youths are contrasted by the gaunt features, sagging breast, and overly muscled body of the witch.

It has been argued that the ideal bodies of the nudes represent the attractiveness of the devil to the witch; however, it more clearly demonstrates the appeal of the witch to the youths while showing the witch’s lust for young men and hinting at her potential interaction with the animals as well. The witch has completely taken over, demonstrating the social upheaval caused when one fails to operate within their socially prescribed position. Caught in the lure of the witch’s power and unable to see that they are subject to her control, the men have been co-opted for her use. The young men that support the rear of the carcass appear to have petit

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583 The motif of riding is addressed in the case study of de Gheyn’s Preparations for the Witches’ Sabbath (fig. 78).

584 Massys’ Ill-Matched Lovers, a painting from the 1520s, is housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

585 Emison, 631. Hults has interpreted this print to be a commentary on the power of lust. In accordance with her interpretation of witchcraft imagery as affording an opportunity for the artist to demonstrate his mastery of a dangerous subject as well as his artistic creativity, she reads the subordinate male youths as representing the abjection of the artist (Hults, 2005, 42-46).

586 Albricci identifies the youths as heroes or members of the Wild Horde, which was composed of dead souls that cannot rest since they died before their time, who accompany the goddess Hecate (Albricci, 58). This interpretation is certainly plausible and adds another layer of understanding for the viewer. The implications for the identification of the men as the deceased encourage the reading given here, as they would offer yet another example of the unnatural and transgressive condition of the body and soul affected by witchcraft.
genitals, a possible reference to the emasculation of virile men by witches through magic or excessive intercourse. Rendered unproductive by the witch, the virile youths and their older companion signify the loss of major contributors to the economy and social hierarchy which depended upon the labour and generative capacities of young men in order to survive.\textsuperscript{587} \textit{Lo stregozzo} demonstrates male participation, willing or not, in the practice of witchcraft.

The idealized men are intended to connect the print with the classically inspired visual tradition of the sixteenth century. The men contribute to the witchcraft commentary yet their idealized bodies are also intended to attract the viewer’s attention and appreciation. While the female witch is not physically seductive, her male companions are, and they may help to draw the audience into the dark art through their beauty. In contrast, the witch’s appeal lies in her possession of forbidden knowledge and her sexual prowess rather than her physical form. Young men were thought to risk pollution and subjugation by sleeping with older women in order to experience their wealth of sexual knowledge. In \textit{Lo stregozzo}, the witch also provides a means to learn the secrets of resurrection and unnatural creation.

\textit{Lo stregozzo} is tantalizing in its visual qualities as a work of art.\textsuperscript{588} The rich tonality of the print combined with the artist’s careful attention to the articulation of texture results in a technically stunning engraving. This is especially apparent in the transitions between materials, where the audience is left uncertain as to what they are seeing, such as when the witch’s hair

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Emison argues that while German artists used witchcraft imagery to explore the sexuality of women and the fantasies of men in a misogynistic fashion, the Italians instead connected beauty to courtly love and Neo-Platonism and for this reason were more interested in depicting desirable men (Emison, 626). The beautiful males provided Italian viewers with a familiar avenue through which to explore the relationship between witchcraft and sexuality. The attractiveness of the men is also a means by which the viewer can be drawn into witchcraft.\textsuperscript{587} Scholars have connected these young males with several different artists. Lomazzo attributed them to Michelangelo, while more contemporary authors such as Bartsch, Delaborde, and Chastel have attributed them to Raphael, Giulio Romano, and Rosso Fiorentino, respectively (Lorenzi, 92). Tal sees in these figures the combined influence of Michelangelo, Raphael, and ancient relief sculpture (Tal, 2006, 200).\textsuperscript{588} \textit{Lo stregozzo} served as the model for Joseph Heintz the Younger’s \textit{Elixir of Youth}, currently in a private collection in Venice (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 130). Agostino’s print is more closely reproduced by Rosa in a painting previously attributed to Jusepe di Ribera. Titled \textit{The Carcass} or \textit{Hecate}, the painting dates to the 1640s and is housed in the Wellington Museum, London (Appendix of Illustrations, fig. 176). See Tal, 2006, fig. 112, for the Ribera attribution and Silvia Cassani, ed, \textit{Salvator Rosa: tra mito e magia}, exhibition catalogue (Naples: Electa, 2008), 266, for the Rosa attribution.
unites with the plume of vapour and then the flames consuming the reeds. The artistic skill demonstrated in the print serves to emphasize the attractiveness of witchcraft and urges the viewer to watch the illicit activities. Agostino has situated his procession in a marshland, a barren location which suggests that the spectator has stumbled upon the witches unexpectedly and is watching unnoticed. The voyeuristic quality heightens the excitement, as the audience is privileged to see an event normally closed to observers.

Ambiguity and uncertainty about the reality of the scene is conveyed through the implausible creatures, the physical impossibility of the processing carcass, and the instability of the figures, especially the indecorous rider on the hybrid. *Lo stregozzo* can thus be read as a depiction of what happens when a witch is allowed to rule: life becomes confused, from the distinction of species to the position of figures in the composition, and the world is figuratively turned upside down. Under the witches, hybridity and pollution are allowed to spread, leaving destruction in their wake. Despite the danger the witches pose, the viewer is encouraged to explore their attraction to the scene. The elegant curving lines, use of contrasting tones, and idealized male bodies render the print attractive on a purely visual level. Agostino combines his artistic skill with a dramatic subject matter that is accessible through the work of art but highly perilous if not impossible to witness firsthand. *Lo stregozzo* offers its audience the pleasure of indulging in possibility.

The animated skeletons that parade through the print call attention to the witch’s reputed ability to reanimate the dead, to give body and life back to even those creatures that have been slaughtered and digested. The creatures in *Lo stregozzo* refuse to stay dead, suggesting the possible implications of a permeable boundary existing between the living and the deceased. Implicit in both this print and witchcraft in general is the possibility of the living entering or at least accessing the realm of the dead.

**Conclusion**

The theme of the demonic and the dead is integral to autonomous images of witchcraft produced in the early modern period. The problems raised by the case studies in this chapter are applicable to the entire group of devils and monsters present in representations of witchcraft at this time. Each of the three works is, however, worthy of special interest because of the
exceptional manner in which the artist chose to approach and present his subject matter. All three artists used materiality as a means to access larger theoretical concepts involving witches. De Gheyn’s emphasis on the movement and manipulation of air, clouds, and vapour enabled him to draw attention to the nature of demonic bodies and the means by which witches were purportedly transported. He focuses on the physical properties of the environment and how they might be used for occult purposes. Rosa approached witchcraft through the substance of the deceased body and thereby questioned what happens when a corpse is treated as matter rather than as a person. Both Rosa and Agostino investigate the prospect of the reanimated body, in humans and animals respectively. Concerns about the treatment of the human dead are closely tied to the desire for resurrection at the Second Coming. Like de Gheyn, Agostino chose to use the visual properties of his work to explore materiality; in this case, he used a range of figures from idealized nudes to fantastic skeletal monsters. All three artists treat fundamental aspects of witchcraft theory and suggest the insubstantial nature of its supposed reality.

In addition to presenting their audiences with visually remarkable monstrosities, the three artists invite the viewer to consider how behavioural choices can render a person monstrous. The realms of demonic and the dead were conceived of as being proximal and sometimes accessible to human beings. As a figure who was supposedly able to interact with beings from both realms, the witch provided artists with an opportunity to explore how the dead, demonic, and living relate to one another. Taken together, these themes represent the extreme boundaries of human existence and help the audience to navigate those parameters while at the same time they problematize the idea of what it means to be human. The images demonstrate that human was not a stable construct as acts like infanticide could render a person an animal in the eyes of others. The witch provided an opportune means for artists to explore sites of social tension and the relationship between licit and illicit practices, such as the witches’ and public’s use of corpses.
Conclusion

This study offers a new perspective on the genre of witchcraft imagery through the analysis of three under-studied aspects of the corpus. The witches’ efforts to undermine the social structure through violence, their bestial desires and acts, and their unnatural contact with the otherworldly and the dead are addressed through a series of case study images. These particular pictures were selected because they offer the most useful, successful, and expressive responses to the issues. Study of these representations demonstrates how deeply artists engaged with witchcraft and how integral the subject was to other contemporary concerns. The works of art speak to themes that have consequences for the study of witchcraft imagery as well as other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, such as history and sociology. They are significant because they have such broad implications, even as they respond to specific problems relating to witchcraft. The images have proven to be much more open than preceding studies suggest.

Rather than focusing on the place of a work in an artist’s oeuvre or on its relation to demonological treatises, this inquiry emphasizes the content of particular representations. As a result, I investigate unusual details, novel modes artists employed for communicating ideas about witchcraft, and previously unaddressed works of art. This dissertation draws attention to two paintings which were unmentioned in the discourse on witchcraft imagery, the anonymous Scenes of Witchcraft in Parma (figs. 30 & 42). The artists of these detailed and carefully crafted works remain unknown. The pictures represent two subjects that were previously not included within the corpus: first, the solitary witch bleeding a child in an interior environment; and second, the witch as an infanticide represented through the vocabulary of ancient sacrifice and divination. The Italianate work contributes to our understanding of the physicality of the female witch while the Dutch painting helps to illuminate a visual trend in the Low Countries and provides insight into the private activities of the lone witch. A search for anonymous works depicting witches could add considerably to the scholarship, as the two works discussed in this dissertation demonstrate. The hunt for witches in the margins or backgrounds of other images, particularly autonomous ones, could also expand the understanding of this genre.

When representations of witchcraft are considered in light of their artistic heritage and their novel contributions to existing visual traditions, they allow for new insights into how artists used specific compositional tools and techniques to communicate meaning to their audiences.
Consequently, witchcraft imagery could be better integrated into discussions of artistic methods. Art possessed the advantage of being capable of presenting the witch in a single image, but this apparently cohesive form often falls apart upon closer scrutiny. The visual format enabled artists to present conflicting interpretations of the witch simultaneously for the spectator’s perusal. The unresolved relationships between compositional elements challenge attempts to find a resolution and lead viewers into complex theological, judicial, and scientific considerations. Artists coming from dissimilar educational and cultural backgrounds found in witchcraft the opportunity to engage with particular aspects of the discourse as well as closely related material which thus enabled them to approach the topic in a broad fashion. The shared recognition of the utility of witchcraft as a subject matter and common interest in exploring its theory, beliefs, and practices reveal the importance of considering northern European and Italian representations of witchcraft together. Regional interests are, however, still in need of examination, as the case studies in chapter one demonstrate.

While participating in the contemporary interest in how the mind and body work, witchcraft imagery reflects a fascination with being awed. Representations of witchcraft illustrate the power of magic and provoke the viewer with the potential for monsters, demons, and the dead to not only exist, but to be actively engaged with humanity. The images suggest the limitations of human knowledge and play upon an innate desire to exceed established boundaries. In this respect, witchcraft imagery would have made an exciting addition to cabinets of curiosities. Further exploration is needed into the problem of how artists treated the theme of materiality through witchcraft imagery.

Visualizations of the witch provided artists and their audiences with opportunities to consider the ways in which humans relate to other beings in their environment. Due to their supposed ability to communicate with the dead, witches could act as a site for understanding the fate of the soul and the question as to whether people and their bodies could return after death. The witches’ desecration of bodies also served to address anxieties about bodily integrity and the physical nature of the human experience. The fate of the corpse, as a resource filled with powerful or base materials, is questioned through the rituals of witchcraft. Witches’ interactions with the dead raised the problem as to whether witches had any control over dead souls and thereby access to a wealth of secret knowledge. This aspect of witchcraft is closely tied to the
demonic and the devil’s efforts to manipulate human will and damn souls. In this way, images of witchcraft participate in the larger culture of death imagery.

Demonic manipulation of the human senses highlights the fallibility of human perception. This theme participates in a growing discourse on the ways in which people could deceive one another and methods to detect deception. Moreover, the theme of sight underscores the importance accorded to inner faith and the means by which people could protect themselves against witches and the devil. Witchcraft imagery calls attention to demonic illusion as well as artistic illusion, presenting interesting and informative commentaries on the issue of human creation.

Depictions of witchcraft also offer their audiences a source of entertainment. Beautiful and grotesque bodies engage in forbidden and mysterious activities. Voyeuristic appetites are satisfied by glimpses of the secret, and often, the seemingly impossible. Artists open the door of possibility, asking audiences to determine the nature of the scene themselves: is what they are shown real or merely fantasy? Concerns about inappropriate bestial and demonic relations encouraged audiences to wonder at the marvels of the world while reinforcing the necessity of new rules governing individual sexual behaviour. While artists such as Baldung use the alluring bodies of beautiful witches to produce erotic imagery, one should not underestimate the appeal of the witch’s knowledge. Grotesque bodies, on the other hand, provide a humorous element that can diffuse the severity of a scene or underscore the horror and power of witchcraft. Viewers are invited to enjoy the pleasure of magic’s potential, whether they are sexually aroused, amused, or frightened by the composition.

The prevailing theme in early modern witchcraft imagery is human identity. Witches’ bodies served as sites where issues concerning sex, gender, and character could be treated. These images were used to probe the boundaries of what distinguished a regular individual from a witch. Artists address concerns about private activities and concealed intentions, suggesting the grave impact deviant behaviour has on the social body as the witch’s malicious intentions towards society and violent behaviour led to distrust within the community. In addressing this theme, artists were able to explore fears of a massive counterculture working against the community in secret. The witch is used as a platform to explore anxieties related to the bonds of trust and dependence developed between relatives and neighbours. Witches provided a negative
foil through which the community could define itself, while at the same time offering a site for the negotiation of unresolved issues concerning behaviour and practice. Due to the witch’s complicated status as an extreme other, the visualized witch needs to be reconsidered and reintegrated into the larger theme of early modern identity construction.

While visual representations of witchcraft contribute much to the understanding of the early modern mindset, these images also have a modern presence as reproductions in contemporary texts and as works of art in galleries, museums, and libraries. They continue to speak to the human desire for wonder and mystery in a world dominated by science and technology. These images also connect past and present societies through the theme of the other; the problem of how identity is constructed and projected onto others grows ever more important as societies seek to understand their position within the global village. The figure of the witch is critical to our comprehension of how early modern society dealt with the challenge of developing and maintaining a communal identity through the construct of the deviant other. As an internal threat, until identified and ousted from the community, the figure of the witch provided a means to deal with internal tensions and the anxiety over the frailty of social bonds. Anthropologists, historians, and art historians alike are still grappling with the question of how the image intersects and interacts with events and ideas participating in the discourse of the other. Today, in an increasingly global community facing ethnic wars, religious confrontations, and economic protectionism, understanding how the other functioned in the past, particularly one often violently hunted and prosecuted, may help to diffuse this tendency.
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Illustrations

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30. Cesare Baglioni, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, oil on canvas, 92 x 197 cm. Location unknown.
Baldung Grien, Hans


33. Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches’ Sabbath*, 1514, pen and ink, heightened with white on red-brown tinted paper, 28.7 x 20.6 cm. Albertina, Vienna.

   Kupferstichkabinett der Öffentliche Kunstsammlungen, Basel.


36. Hans Baldung Grien (copy?), *New Year’s Wish with Three Witches*, 1514, pen drawing heightened with white on red-brown tinted paper, 30.9 x 20.9 cm. Albertina, Vienna.

Barbieri, Giovanni Francesco

37. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, *Circe*, circa 1625-1650, oil on canvas, 124 x 97 cm.
   Musée du Louvre, Paris.

38. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, seventeenth century, pen and brown ink with brown wash. 9 x 18.9 cm.
   Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Bellotti, Pietro


Binck, Jacob

**Bloemen, Pieter van**

41. Pieter van Bloemen (attributed to), *Circe and the Companions of Ulysses*, circa 1673-1720, oil on canvas, 36 x 45 cm. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

**Bol, Ferdinand**

42. Ferdinand Bol, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, circa 1640, pen and ink and bistre wash on off-white paper. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis.

**Bor, Paulus**

43. Paulus Bor, *The Enchantress or The Disillusioned Medea*, circa 1640, oil on canvas, 155.6 x 112.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

**Bosch, Hieronymus**

44. Hieronymus Bosch, *Beehive and Witches*, undated, pen and bistre, 192 x 270 mm. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

45. Hieronymus Bosch, *St. James and the Magician Hermogenes*, second half of the fifteenth century, oil on panel, 62 x 41.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes.

46. Hieronymus Bosch, *Two Witches*, undated, pen and bistre, 125 x 85 mm. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.


**Bramer, Leonaert**


50. Leonaert Bramer, *The Fall of Simon Magus*, 1623, oil on copper, 30 x 41 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.
51. Leonaert Bramer, *The Rejuvenation of Aeson*, pen and ink drawing with white heightening, 29.7 x 39.6 cm. Location unknown.

**Bravo, Cecco**


Private collection, Florence.

**Bray, Salomon de**

53. Salomon de Bray, *Odysseus and Circe*, circa 1650-55, oil on canvas, 11 x 92 cm.

Private collection.

**Bruegel the Elder, Pieter**

54. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Dulle Griet*, circa 1562, oil on panel, 117.4 x 162 cm.

Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.

**Callot, Jacques**


**Carlone, Giovanni Battista**

56. Giovanni Battista Carlone, *The Fall of Simon Magus*, oil on canvas, 148 x 123.2 cm.

Galleria Nazionale della Liguria, Genoa.

**Caroselli, Angelo**


58. Angelo Caroselli, *The Sorceress*, circa 1620-1625, oil on canvas, 44 x 35 cm.

Pinacoteca Civica Podesti, Ancona.


60. Angelo Caroselli (?), *The Sorceress*, oil on canvas. Museo Civico, Arezzo.


**Carpi, Girolamo da**

63. Girolamo da Carpi (?), *Landscape with Magicians*, circa 1527, oil on canvas, 110 x 159 cm. Borghese Gallery, Rome.

**Carracci, Ludovico**


67. Ludovico Carracci, *Ulysses and Circe*, 1595-1596, black chalk, heightened with white on grey-blue paper, 37.5 x 52.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

68. Ludovico Carracci, *Ulysses and Circe*, 1595-1596, black chalk, heightened with white on light brown paper, 38.5 x 56.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.


**Castello, Bernardo**

70. Bernardo Castello, *Sorcerer (?)*, pen and ink, watercolour, white heightening, and black chalk, 24.7 x 17.3 cm. Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.

**Castiglione, Giovanni Benedetto**


73. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, 1653, oil on canvas, 97 x 146 cm. Collezione del Sovrano Ordine Militare di Malta, Italy.


75. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, circa 1650, pen and wash with red, maroon, and azure with white highlights, 27.8 x 40.8 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.


79. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, circa 1650s, oil on canvas, 62 x 79 cm. Private collection.

80. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, oil on canvas, 100 x 136 cm. Algranti Collection, Milan.


**Castiglione, Giovanni Benedetto and Filippo Gagliardi**

86. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione and Filippo Gagliardi, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, oil on canvas, 125 x 174.5 cm. Galleria Pallavicini, Rome.

**Castiglione Workshop, Giovanni Benedetto**


**Cittadini, Pier Francesco**


**Claesz, Allaert**


**Congnet, Gillis**


**Cortona, Pietro da**

91. Pietro da Cortona, *Jason Carrying off the Golden Fleece*, circa 1630s, pen and brown ink with wash and white heightening, 39.8 x 53.4 cm. British Museum, London.

**Cranach the Elder, Lucas**


**Dandini, Pier**


95. Pier Dandini, *The Pythoness of Endor Evokes the Spirit of Samuel in the Presence of Saul*, oil on canvas, 82 x 125.5 cm. Giovanni Pratesi Collection, Florence.

**de Bisschop, Jan**


**de Gheyn II, Jacques**


100. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Study of Hermit Crab and Witchcraft*, 1602-1603, pen, ink, and watercolour, 18.5 x 24.5 cm. Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt.


104. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Two Witches with a Cat*, circa 1600-1610, pen and brush and brown wash, 24.4 x 15.3 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.


de Gheyn III, Jacques


Deutsch, Niklaus Manuel


Dürer, Albrecht


Ehinger, Gabriel

112. Gabriel Ehinger, after Johann Heinrich Schönfeld, *Saul Speaks with the Ghost of Samuel Invoked by Witch of Endor*, circa 1670, engraving, 42.5 x 31.6 cm.

Elsheimer, Adam


Fiammingo, Paolo

114. Paolo Fiammingo, *Landscape with a Scene of Enchantment*, (ca. 1590), oil on canvas, 27.8 x 81.3 in. (185 x 206.5 cm.) National Gallery, London.

Frans Francken


121. Frans Francken II (?), *Witches’ Sabbath*, undated, 25.8 x 38.9 cm, pen and brown ink with brown wash and pierre noire. Département des Arts graphiques, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Furini, Francesco


124. Francesco Furini, *The Consecration of the Magic Sword*, oil on canvas, 128.7 x 100.6 cm. Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce.

Giordano, Luca

125. Luca Giordano, *Ulysses and Calypso*, circa 1680, oil on canvas, 116.5 x 158.5 cm. Pinacoteca dell'Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo.

Graf, Urs

126. Urs Graf, *Witch as Fortuna*, circa 1521, pen and ink, 17.7 x 15.2 cm. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.


Heinz the Younger, Joseph


130. Joseph Heinz the Younger, *The Elixir of Youth*, oil on canvas, 158 x 91 cm. Private collection, Venice.

Heiss, Giovanni

Heyden, Pieter van der


Hopfer, Daniel


Isaac, Jaspar


Jordaens, Jacob


Kauperz, Johann Veit


Laer, Pieter van

Lawrence, Andrew

140. Andrew Lawrence (A. Laurentius) after Salvator Rosa, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, circa 1730-1754, engraving, 47.1 x 29.8 cm. British Museum, London.

Lelli, Giovanni Antonio

141. Giovanni Antonio Lelli, *Allegorical Scene with a Magician and a Woman Carrying a Caduceus*, seventeenth century, pen and brown ink, black chalk and white heightening on beige washed paper, 27.1 x 42 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Ligozzi, Giacomo

142. Giacomo Ligozzi (attributed to), *Allegorical Scene of Bewitchment*, pen and black and brown ink with white highlights, 26 x 31 cm. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton.

Macchietti, Girolamo


Marescalchi, Pietro


Master of the V&A Diabelaries

145. Master of the V&A Diabelaries, *Sabbath or Bacchanal*, sixteenth century, pen and brown ink over black chalk on grey-brown prepared paper, 25.8 x 36.6 cm. British Museum, London.

Monogrammist HF

Muttoni, Pietro

Napoleanno, Filippo

Nebbia, Cesare

Parmigianino
151. Parmigianino, *Circella*, circa 1527, pen and brown wash over black chalk, with white heightening on white paper, 23 x 28 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
152. Parmigianino, *Circella*, circa 1527, pen and brown wash over black chalk, with white heightening on white paper, 22 x 22 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Picart, Bernard

Pignoni, Simone
155. Simone Pignoni, *Amphinome and Evadne (Daughters of Pelias)*, oil on canvas, 156 x 210 cm. Private collection.
Quagliata, Giovan Battista


Rosa, Salvator

158. Salvator Rosa, *A Witch*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 41.5 x 31 cm. Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome.


162. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Day*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

163. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Evening*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

164. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Morning*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

165. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Night*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

166. Salvator Rosa, *Scene of Witchcraft*, circa mid-1640s or 1660s, oil on canvas, 76 x 65 cm. Palazzo Corsini, Florence.


170. Salvator Rosa, *Two Witches: Study for a Witches' Sabbath*, pen and brown ink and brown wash, 12 x 5.4 cm with irregular edges. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton.

171. Salvator Rosa, *Witchcraft Scene*, oil on copper, 30 x 34 cm. Private collection, Rome.

172. Salvator Rosa, *Witchcraft Scene*, oil on slate, 43.8 x 58.8 cm. Matthiesen Fine Art, London.


176. Salvator Rosa (attributed to), after Agostino Veneziano, *Hecate*, 1640s, oil on copper, 33 x 63 cm. Wellington Museum, London.

**Rosa, Salvator, Circle of**

177. Circle of Salvator Rosa, *The Witch*, oil on canvas, 95 x 135 cm. Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce.

**Rosi, Alessandro**


**Rosso Fiorentino**


**Ryckaeart III, David**

180. David Ryckaeart III, *A Witch Driving Devils from a Cave*, circa 1650s, oil on panel, 45.5 x 60 cm. Location unknown.

182. David Ryckaert III, *Dulle Griet*, 1650, oil on panel, 47.5 x 63 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

183. David Ryckaert III, *Witchcraft Scene*, 1651, oil on panel, 48 x 62.8 cm. Musées d’Art, Clermont-Ferrand.

**Saftleven, Cornelis**


185. Cornelis Saftleven, *Tymon the Sorcerer*, 1660, oil on panel, 39 x 49.5 cm. Statens Museum fur Kunst, Copenhagen.


187. Cornelis Saftleven, *Witches’ Sabbath*, circa 1650, oil on panel, 54.3 x 78.2 cm. The Art Institute, Chicago.

**Salviati, Francesco**


**Schönfeld, Johann Heinrich**

189. Johann Heinrich Schönfeld, *Treasure Hunter before an Ancient Grave*, oil on canvas, 86.8 x 57.8 cm. Kunstsammlung des Stiftes, Kremsmünster.

Scorza, Sinibaldo
191. Sinibaldo Scorza, *Circe and Ulysses with Animals*, circa late 1620s, oil on canvas, 69 x 143 cm. Galleria di Palazzo Bianco, Genoa.

Solimena, Francesco

Spranger, Bartholomeus

Stom, Matthias

Stradano, Giovanni
197. Giovanni Stradano, *Ulysses and Circe*, 1570, pen and ink with wash and white heightening over black chalk on paper washed yellow, 29.9 x 22 cm. The Royal Collection, England.

Tassi, Agostino
199. Agostino Tassi (or Filippo Napoletano?), *Landscape with a Scene of Witchcraft*, circa 1620s, oil on canvas, 63.2 x 74.5 cm. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.
Teniers the Younger, David

200. David Teniers the Younger, *Dulle Griet*, 1640s, oil on oak panel, 48 x 69 cm. Private collection.


204. David Teniers the Younger, *Witches’ Initiation*, circa 1647-1649, oil on panel, 48 x 70 cm. Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna.

205. David Teniers the Younger, *Witches’ Kitchen*, circa 1645-1650, oil on panel, 28.8 x 27 cm. Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.


Teniers the Younger Workshop, David

210. Workshop of David Teniers the Younger, *Departure for the Sabbath*, circa 1650-1675, oil on panel, 51 x 72 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.

Tibaldi, Pellegrino


**Tisi, Benvenuto**

**Trevisani, Francesco**

**Uberti, Lucantonio degli**

**Umbach, Jonas**

**Van Bijlert, Jan**

**Van de Velde II, Jan**

**Van Ehrenberg, Wilhelm and Carl Ruthart**
Van Helmon, Mattheus

220. Mattheus van Helmont (attributed to), *Scene of Witchcraft in a Rustic Interior*, seventeenth century, oil on paper, 20.5 x 30.2 cm. Musée du Louvre.

Van Meckenem, Israhel


Van Rijn, Rembrandt


Vanni, Raffaello

223. Raffaello Vanni, *Circe, Ulysses and the Moly Herb*, circa 1640-1650, black pencil, pen and brown ink, brown wash and white heightening on white paper, 21.1 x 35.5 cm. Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena.


Van Veen, Otto

225. Otto van Veen, *Rodomont and Isabella*, late sixteenth-early seventeenth century, pen and brown ink, grey wash, and white heightening, 22.3 x 37.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Vasari, Giorgio


Vassallo, Antonio Maria

227. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 48 x 71 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
228. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 53 x 69.5 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

229. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 55 x 73 cm. Private collection, Genoa.

230. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 68 x 95 cm. A. Costa Collection, Genoa.


234. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 72.5 cm. Falanga Collection, Milan.


236. Antonio Maria Vassallo, after Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, oil on canvas. Location unknown.

**Vischer, Hermann the Younger**


**Wijnen, Dominicus van**


240. Dominicus van Wijnen, *Circe*, oil on canvas, 42 x 34.2 cm. Christie’s May 29, 1981.


**Zuccaro, Federico**

246. Federico Zuccaro, *Fall of Simon Magus*, pen and brown ink, brown wash, and black chalk, 32.4 x 24.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.


5. Anonymous, after Filippino Lippi, *Two Witches Tending a Fire in a Tripod*, pen and brown ink and brown and gray wash, heightened with white gouache, 25.6 x 15.5 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.


17. Anonymous, circle of Friedrich Brental, *A Witches’ Sabbat at the Full Moon*, body colour with gold framing lines on vellum affixed to panel, 10.5 x 15.1 cm. Christie’s 4 November 2010, London.


26. Anonymous Italian Artist, *Interior of a Witches Cave with Devils and other Monsters*, pen and brown ink with brown wash, off-white paper, 42.8 x 59.5 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

28. Anonymous Venetian Artist, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses*, sixteenth century, panel painting, 27.6 x 89.3 cm. Durazzo Pallavicini Collection, Genoa.
29. Gioacchino Assereto, *Circe Mulling Wine*, oil on canvas, 74 x 88.9 cm. Dayton Art Institute, Dayton.

30. Cesare Baglioni, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, oil on canvas, 92 x 197 cm. Location unknown.

33. Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches' Sabbath*, 1514, pen and ink, heightened with white on red-brown tinted paper, 28.7 x 20.6 cm. Albertina, Vienna.


36. Hans Baldung Grien (copy?), *New Year’s Wish with Three Witches*, 1514, pen drawing heightened with white on red-brown tinted paper, 30.9 x 20.9 cm. Albertina, Vienna.

38. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, seventeenth century, pen and brown ink with brown wash, 9 x 18.9 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

41. Pieter van Bloemen (attributed to), *Circe and the Companions of Ulysses*, circa 1673-1720, oil on canvas, 36 x 45 cm. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

42. Ferdinand Bol, *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, circa 1640, pen and ink and bistre wash on off-white paper. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis.
43. Paulus Bor, *The Enchantress or The Disillusioned Medea*, circa 1640, oil on canvas, 155.6 x 112.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

44. Hieronymus Bosch, *Beehive and Witches*, undated, pen and bistre, 192 x 270 mm. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.
45. Hieronymus Bosch, *St. James and the Magician Hermogenes*, second half of the fifteenth century, oil on panel, 62 x 41.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes.

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68. Ludovico Carracci, *Ulysses and Circe*, 1595-1596, black chalk, heightened with white on light brown paper, 38.5 x 56.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

70. Bernardo Castello, *Sorcerer (?)*, pen and ink, watercolour, white heightening, and black chalk, 24.7 x 17.3 cm. Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London.

73. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, 1653, oil on canvas, 97 x 146 cm. Collezione del Sovrano Ordine Militare di Malta, Italy.


76. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, circa 1650s, oil on canvas, 109.5 x 161 cm. Private collection, New York.
77. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, circa 1650s, oil on canvas, 62 x 79 cm. Private collection.

78. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, circa 1650, pen and wash with red, maroon, and azure with white highlights, 27.8 x 40.8 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

81. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, oil on canvas, 100 x 136 cm. Algranti Collection, Milan.

82. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, oil on canvas, 50 x 67 cm. Museo Civico Amedeo Lia, La Spezia.


86. Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione and Filippo Gagliardi, *Circe Transforming the Companions of Ulysses into Animals*, oil on canvas, 125 x 174.5 cm. Galleria Pallavicini, Rome.


91. Pietro da Cortona, *Jason Carrying off the Golden Fleece*, circa 1630s, pen and brown ink with wash and white heightening, 39.8 x 53.4 cm. British Museum, London.


95. Pier Dandini, *The Pythoness of Endor Evokes the Spirit of Samuel in the Presence of Saul*, oil on canvas, 82 x 125.5 cm. Giovanni Pratesi Collection, Florence.


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114. Paolo Fiammingo, *Landscape with a Scene of Enchantment*, (ca. 1590), oil on canvas, 27.8 x 81.3 in. (185 x 206.5 cm.) National Gallery, London.

116. Frans Francken II, *Witches’ Kitchen*, 1606, oil on panel. 54.5 x 66.5 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.


121. Frans Francken II (?), *Witches' Sabbath*, undated, 25.8 x 38.9 cm, pen and brown ink with brown wash and pierre noire. Département des Arts graphiques, Musée du Louvre, Paris.


124. Francesco Furini, *The Consecration of the Magic Sword*, oil on canvas, 128.7 x 100.6 cm. Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce.
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126. Urs Graf, *Witch as Fortuna*, circa 1521, pen and ink, 17.7 x 15.2 cm. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.


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142. Giacomo Ligozzi (attributed to), *Allegorical Scene of Bewitchment*, pen and black and brown ink with white highlights, 26 x 31 cm. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton.

145. Master of the V&A Diabelaries, *Sabbath or Bacchanal*, sixteenth century, pen and brown ink over black chalk on grey-brown prepared paper, 25.8 x 36.6 cm. British Museum, London.


150. Cesare Nebbia, *The Fall of Simon Magus in a Public Place*, circa 1580-1582, pen and brown ink, brown wash and black chalk on beige paper, 39.6 x 56 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris
151. Parmigianino, *Circella*, circa 1527, pen and brown wash over black chalk, with white heightening on white paper, 23 x 28 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

152. Parmigianino, *Circella*, circa 1527, pen and brown wash over black chalk, with white heightening on white paper, 22 x 22 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

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162. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Day*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.
163. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Evening*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

164. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Morning*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.
165. Salvator Rosa, *Scenes of Witchcraft – Night*, 1640s, oil on canvas, diameter 54.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

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182. David Ryckaert III, *Dulle Griet*, circa 1650s, oil on panel, 47.5 x 63 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
183. David Ryckaert III, *Witchcraft Scene*, 1651, oil on panel, 48 x 62.8 cm. Musées d’Art, Clermont-Ferrand.

185. Cornelis Saftleven, *Tymon the Sorcerer*, 1660, oil on panel, 39 x 49.5 cm. Statens Museum für Kunst, Copenhagen.

187. Cornelis Saftleven, *Witches’ Sabbath*, circa 1650, oil on panel, 54.3 x 78.2 cm. The Art Institute, Chicago.

189. Johann Heinrich Schönfeld, *Treasure Hunter before an Ancient Grave*, oil on canvas, 86.8 x 57.8 cm. Kunstsammlung des Stiftes, Kremsmünster.

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197. Giovanni Stradano, *Ulysses and Circe*, 1570, pen and ink with wash and white heightening over black chalk on paper washed yellow, 29.9 x 22 cm. The Royal Collection, England.

199. Agostino Tassi (or Filippo Napoletano?), *Landscape with a Scene of Witchcraft*, circa 1620s, oil on canvas, 63.2 x 74.5 cm. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

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205. David Teniers the Younger, *Witches’ Kitchen*, circa 1645-1650, oil on panel, 28.8 x 27 cm. Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.


210. Workshop of David Teniers the Younger, *Departure for the Sabbath*, circa 1650-1675, oil on panel 51 x 72 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.

213. Benvenuto Tisi, Circe Transforms Pico into a Woodpecker, circa 1530 to 1540, oil on canvas, 129 x 175 cm. Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini, Rome.


220. Mattheus van Helmont (attributed to), *Scene of Witchcraft in a Rustic Interior*, seventeenth century, oil on paper, 20.5 x 30.2 cm. Musée du Louvre.

223. Raffaello Vanni, *Circe, Ulysses and the Moly Herb*, circa 1640-1650, black pencil, pen and brown ink, brown wash and white heightening on white paper, 21.1 x 35.5 cm. Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena.

225. Otto van Veen, *Rodomont and Isabella*, late sixteenth-early seventeenth century, pen and brown ink, grey wash, and white heightening, 22.3 x 37.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

227. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 48 x 71 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

228. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 53 x 69.5 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
229. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 55 x 73 cm. Private collection, Genoa.

230. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Circe*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 68 x 95 cm. A. Costa Collection, Genoa.


234. Antonio Maria Vassallo, *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, circa 1640s, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 72.5 cm. Falanga Collection, Milan.

236. Antonio Maria Vassallo, after Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Circe*, oil on canvas. Location unknown.


240. Dominicus van Wijnen, *Circe*, oil on canvas, 42 x 34.2 cm. Christie’s May 29, 1981.


246. Federico Zuccaro, *Fall of Simon Magus*, pen and brown ink, brown wash, and black chalk, 32.4 x 24.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.