UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

AS THE CRONE FLIES: THE IMAGERY OF WOMEN AS FLYING WITCHES IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

LISA DAWN ST. CLARE
Norman, Oklahoma
2016

AS THE CRONE FLIES: THE IMAGERY OF WOMEN AS FLYING WITCHES IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
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BY

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Dr. Allison Palmer, Chair

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Dr. Jane Wickersham

_____
Dr. Susan Caldwell

_____
Dr. Martha Skeeters

_____
Dr. Kathleen Crowther

_____
Ms. Susan Shaughnessy

DEDICATED TO MY HUSBAND, RAEYN

Acknowledgements

None of this would have been possible without the amazing love and support of my husband Raeyn. He has been and always will be my inspiration. Researching and writing this dissertation has been a tremendous task, and it is only because of Raeyn's devotion to me – and to us – that I have been able to achieve this accomplishment. His talents and creativity enrich our lives and have been invaluable to me in taking on this challenge. He is the most wonderful person I have ever known and I am so lucky to have him as my partner in this life.

Six esteemed women, each one respected in their fields of study, provided guidance, support, wisdom, and valuable critical analysis as I researched and wrote this dissertation. I am forever indebted to their work and support as they served on my committee: Dr. Allison Palmer, Committee Chair, Dr. Jane Wickersham, Dr. Susan Caldwell, Dr. Martha Skeeters, Dr. Kathleen Crowther, and Professor Susan Shaughnessy.

My parents, who have always believed in whatever my endeavors; to them I am always grateful.

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Abstract

Early modern European images of women as flying witches present fantastical scenes that were initially associated with the Waldensian heresy. Originally these subjects featured both men and women but they came increasingly to depict only women, who were represented in grotesque and horrific scenes associated with the Devil and his demons. Women frequently became the main subject matter of these witch images because they were consistent with ideas about women's wicked and weak nature as taught by classical philosophers such as Aristotle and Church Fathers such as Jerome.

Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, women were identified by the Church as being particularly susceptible to the sin of lust and were often found guilty of drawing others into their lives of sin, and only within the confines of a convent or the patriarchal home were women considered safe from these impulses. Without these Christian boundaries women were thought to be dangerous, which made them perfectly suited to falling under the spell of the Devil and becoming the witches that terrorized their neighbors. These women were increasingly depicted in prints and paintings beginning in the fifteenth century.

One of the most well-known images of flying witches from the early modern period is a small chiaroscuro woodcut entitled *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* by Hans Baldung Grien from 1510 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). This print is often found in introductory art history books, where it has always seemed strikingly out of place among the other works of the era that

include restrained portraits, idealized altarpieces, and beautiful landscapes. It is this image that sparked my interest in this study of flying witches.

Introduction

As Peter Nilson states in his article about the medieval concept of humans flying – this was not in God's plan. The only way in which a human could fly was in the guise of wizards and witches "who had learned to fly from the devil."[1]

Therefore, not surprisingly, Lyndal Roper asserts that: "flight is the attribute most closely associated with witches."[2] Not only is this true from a historical standpoint, it also seems to be true in popular witch imagery today. While medieval ideas on witchcraft included both men and women, soon the image of a witch came to be bound to the concept of a flying woman traversing the night sky on a broom. The image of the female witch has endured through centuries in folklore, heroic tales, Church pronouncements, theological debate, and most ominously, in Inquisitorial manuals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although today this night-flying woman is the stuff of fairy tales, historically she was the victim of all-too real persecutions and death. She is perhaps one of the most powerful misogynistic figures in western culture, and it is the genesis of image of the flying witch and the development of its iconography in both text and visual art that will be examined in this study.

This argument begins with the medieval Church of the tenth century, when theologians found it necessary to address the belief that some women flew about at night to join Diana (the ancient goddess of the hunt) and her demons to do mischief. The first Church document that attempted to squelch such beliefs, the

[1] Peter Nilson and Steven Hartman, "Winged Man and Flying Ships: Of Medieval Flying Journeys and Eternal Dreams of Flight," *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 269.

[2] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 104.

Canon episcopi, (906 CE) (see Appendix A), served instead to breathe life into the idea of night-flying women associated with witchcraft.[3] What had been primarily found in the realm of pagan tales and folklore was now a part of Church policy, and the night-flying witch was given a type of legitimacy among clergy and Inquisitors, if only at this point in the form of the acknowledgment of its existence.

Over the next two hundred years the idea of the flying witch began to be associated with various religious groups, the first one being the Waldensians. In the twelfth century, the Waldensians were established as a wandering group of preachers who had been excommunicated and were therefore considered heretics, and soon after they were accused of flying at night to attend blasphemous rituals honoring the Devil. It is a particular sect of the Waldensians that was officially linked to witchcraft by Pope Eugenius in 1440.[4] It is with this connection to the Waldensians that we find the first known image of women flying in the margins of a manuscript, where we see one woman straddling a stick and the other a broom.[5]

The Church played an important role in establishing the iconography of the witch by appropriating stories of witches from antiquity and medieval folklore to serve its purpose of introducing to the clergy a particular type of heretic that

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[3] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, pp. 76-77.

[4] Wolfgang Behringer, "Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches," Barry Coward and Julian Swann, eds., *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution*, 2004, pp. 15-17

[5] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, Revised by Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe: 110-1700: A Documentary History*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, p. 145.

could incite the furor of theologians and Inquisitors. This resulted in the famous witch-hunts of the next few centuries that targeted primarily women.[6] Women as flying witches not only served to alarm "good" Christians, but they also served to explain crop failures, storms and disease. Ultimately, these flying women, in their most benign form, provided provocative subject matter for artists who perhaps found her existence perhaps more intriguing than dangerous. Thus, we have images of women as flying witches portrayed in every century since the fifteenth century, and it is the goal of this study to identify the genesis of the image of women as flying witches and to trace the visual changes that took place as this image developed over the next one hundred years.

There have been numerous books and even more articles written by scholars from various disciplines, particularly in the last forty years, and they discuss the many aspects of witchcraft in the western world.[7] Since the 1990s there has been no shortage of research regarding witch beliefs, witch practices and witch trials, mainly regarding the early modern period when witch-hunts in Europe were prevalent and devastating to communities.[8] There has also been an

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[6] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 107.

[7] In the 1970s we began to see historians such as Jeffrey Burton Russell write works that were dedicated to providing substantiated scholarship to the history of witchcraft as it developed in the Middle Ages. Likewise, we had scholars such as Garrett Clarke who began to study seriously the historical/anthropological link between women and witches. Slowly other scholars, as historian Joseph Klaits, directed their research toward further analysis of the practice of witchcraft in history, particularly as it related to the witch hunts that plagued Europe in the early modern period and claimed the lives of some men and many more women.[7]

[8] Some of these include the following: Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts,* New York: Pandora, 1994; Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger and Fear," Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002;

increase in scholarship about witch imagery, particularly in the last fifteen years, and the two scholars most often cited in this regard are Linda Hults and Charles Zika.[9] This research tends to focus on the symbols that most often accompany witch imagery. However, there are no books or articles that are devoted exclusively to the image of women as flying witches and to the importance this particular image was to the development of the witch stereotype. My research therefore focuses on prints and drawings by Northern European artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Hans Baldung Grien and Albrecht Altdorfer, as well as on the many anonymous illuminators and printmakers whose identities have been lost to history but not to the development of the imagery of the flying witch. These images appeared in the era that preceded the worst periods of European witch hunts so perhaps images such as these could have led to the perceptions of panic,

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Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Robin Briggs, "'By the Strength of the Fancie': Witchcraft and the Early Modern Imagination," *Folklore*, Vol. 115, No. 3 (December 2004); Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 1997; Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies: The Deciphering of the Witches' Sabbath,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1991; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[9] There are two books in particular that specifically address the imagery of witches and were integral to the research necessary for this study: Linda Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender and Power in Early Modern Europe,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011 and Charles Zika's *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, New York: Routledge, 2007. Hults' book provides a general overview of witch imagery from the fifteenth through to the nineteenth century. Her work provided a helpful compilation of witch imagery from an art historical viewpoint that served as a basis and beginning point for my investigation of women as flying witches. Zika' book provides excellent contextual information that allowed me to delve deeper into the historical aspects of witch imagery, as well as highlighting certain iconographical explanations. A thorough explanation of the portrayal of both "good" and "bad" women in art is found in Christa Grössinger's book, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1997. This was most helpful in providing visual imagery that illustrated the vast contrast of the depiction of the witch vs. a proper Christian wife and mother.

or at the very least stoked a prurient interest in arresting women and some men for the debauched practices of witchcraft.[10]

This study begins with a discussion of the Church and its history regarding heresies and witchcraft in the late Middle Ages before these images appeared. Malcolm Lambert makes a distinction between "real" heresies which necessitated a "major distortion of orthodox belief and practice," and "artificial" heresies that occurred in situations in which unpopular groups or individuals were smeared with slanderous charges by authority or local figures that linked them to witchcraft."[11] A "real" heretical group, such as the Waldensians, became a main source of annoyance to the Church leaders, including those in the papacy. It is interesting to consider that imagery of women as flying witches makes its first appearance in conjunction with a heresy located in Northern Europe and the imagery continues to be associated with documents and artists of Northern Europe as well. Witch hunts and trials never were wide-spread in Italy and although the Spanish Inquisition became very active in witch-hunting, this didn't occur in Spain until the seventeenth century.

Because the first image of women as flying witches is entitled "Vaudoises," which is Waldensianism, my study will begin by focusing on how the Waldensians became identified as witches as well as heretics. Here I will analyze the first image of women as flying witches from a French illumination of

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[10] Joseph Klaits, *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 48. The number of witch trials in Western Europe increased dramatically around 1550 and continued in waves of panic through the seventeenth century.

[11] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, Second Edition, Blackwell: Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, 1992, pp. xi-xii.

the manuscript of the book, *Le Champion des dames*, by Martin Le Franc, created in c. 1451. In the marginalia of a page from this fifteenth-century dialogue are two flying women, one on a broom and the other on a stick. These two women are both labeled as Waldensian heretics – Vaudoises - and are depicted as flying. Less than twenty years later, we find a second flying with image in the frontispiece of a French translation of Johannes Tinctor's *Invectives Against the Sect of Waldensianism*, 1468.

The development of this iconography is informed by textual sources as well as popular stories, and two books important to this development, both of which were written in the fifteenth century, are Johannes Nider's *Formicarius* (1437-38) and the *Malleus maleficarum*, now believed to be written solely by Heinrich Kramer in 1486.[12] Both of these treatises were written by Dominicans, then, who were actively involved in current witch trials. Nider's work functioned as a guide to writing sermons relating to witches, and it features many observations by a judge that had presided over witch trials in Switzerland. Kramer's *Malleus* was written as a manual for the identifying and prosecuting witches. Kramer had also presided over witch trials, but his book, which was widely disseminated, came to be far more successful than he was in identifying witches. It is important to be familiar with the accusations and descriptions of witches and their activities as outlined in these two books in order to recognize

[12] P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, edited, selected, translated and annotated utilizing an edition from Frankfurt, 1588, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, Manchester & NY: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 30.

the associated iconography in the images we will be discussing from the later years of the fifteenth century into the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

Indeed, the image of *Metamorphosed Witches,* found in the *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus*, which was written in 1489 by Ulrich Molitor, was clearly influenced by such texts. Molitor was commissioned to write this book by the Archduke Sigismund of Tyrol in response to Kramer's *Malleus*. It was the hope of the Archduke that Molitor's book would dispel some of the disturbing claims that Kramer had made in the *Malleus,* and thus provide a more rational response to the people in his domain suspected of witchcraft. This image is particularly important because it is one of six woodcut images that for the first time were used to illustrate a book on witches.[13]

Next we will discuss *The Witch* by Albrecht Dürer, c. 1500, where we see an engraving of a classically-inspired scene of a goat-riding weather witch who presents an antithesis to the beauty and proportion celebrated by admirers of the Renaissance.[14] Then, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* by Albrecht Altdorfer (1506) and *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* by Hans Baldung

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[13] Unknown Artist, "Metamorphosed Witches," *De lamiis et pythonicis* Mulierbus, 1489. Woodcut. Quarto Sp. Coll. Ferguson An-y. 34. University of Glasgow, Scotland. The research of Natalie Kwan as expressed in her article, "Woodcuts and Witches: Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus*, 1489-1669," published in 2012 in the *German History* journal, was most important to this examination's research because Kwan provides very recent discussions about these images and substantiated how many editions were printed which helped to make the point that this imagery, particularly that of flying witches, was, at this point, reaching a wide audience.

[14] Dorinda Neave in her article "The Witch in Early Sixteenth-Century German Art," *Women's Art Journal,* Vol. 9, No. 1, (Spring-Summer, 1988), provides an interesting interpretation of Dürer's engraving *The Witch*. Her work allowed me to consider what could have been the inspiration for *The Witch*. Although I disagree with her thesis, this prompted me to look for other explanations for Dürer's engraving which led me to investigate a classically-informed interpretation of *The Witch.* Margaret Sullivan substantiated this classically-informed interpretation with her discussion of both Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien in her 2000 article for the *Renaissance Quarterly* entitled "The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien."

Grien (1510), are two of the best-known images of witches, and an examination of the history of the flying witch lends a fuller meaning to these works.[15] These images both reference the nocturnal assembly that was so often part of a witch's confession – the Sabbath. Altdorfer and Baldung Grien composed these images to introduce the viewer to how and in what manner these wild women fly to the Sabbath, and to also show aspects of their magic that further identified them as handmaidens of Satan.[16] At this point in time, the image of a woman as a flying witch had become established. It was also in the early years of the sixteenth century that witchcraft became a social concern beyond heresy and was categorized as thoroughly diabolical without the trappings of mere unorthodoxy and self-righteous, recalcitrant heretics.

Thus, we find the genesis of the image of women as flying witches to be begin with the Waldensian heresy that began in the twelfth century, and develop further in the writings of Nider and Kramer, both of whom claimed to include actual confessions of witches, particularly of women. Molitor's treatise then solidified this imagery by including woodcut prints that accompanied his opinions regarding witches. As a result, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, we find the subject of women as flying witches to increase in popularity among artists, and it was featured in the paintings and prints made by numerous well-

[15] Albrecht Altdorfer, *Witches Preparing for Sabbath Flight*, 1506. Chiaroscuro pen drawing on paper. Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight*, 1501. Chiaroscuro woodcut. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[16] Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, discusses Baldung Grien's print in great detail and provides an excellent description and explanation of the process of creating a chiaroscuro print which speaks directly to the point I make about the theatricality of the print.

known artists. These images only grew in popularity through the subsequent centuries.

Chapter One:

The Church, Heresy, and the Question of Flying Witches

As we begin our study of women as flying witches, it is important that we fully explore why heresy and witchcraft became, at times, so intertwined. It is important to note that the first heretic – as identified by early Church Fathers – was Simon the Magician or Simon Magus.[17] Simon's heretical downfall takes place, according to the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, in the city of Samaria, during the first century, where the apostle Philip was preaching and "proclaiming the Messiah."[18]

While Philip was evangelizing in Samaria there was a man named Simon who was also performing great wonders in the same city. The writer of *Acts* explains that this man's amazing feats were not to be equated with Philip's miraculous signs because in Simon's case he was well known for his magical practices.[19] The character of Simon Magus supplied later theologians with a handy template with which to accuse chosen heretics of magic. After all, if the father of all heresies was also a magician, why would there not be other heretical groups or individuals who also practiced magic?

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[17] Acts 8: 4-25; Walter Nigg, *The Heretics*, edited and translated by Richard and Clara Winston, New York: Dorset Press, 1962, p. 16. Irenaeus, a second-century theologian wrote in the preface of his book, *Against Heresies* that Simon Magus, written about by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, is the "father of all heretics."

[18] *The Catholic Bible, Personal Study Edition, New American Version*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[19] Acts 8: 9-11. Susan Greenwood, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Witchcraft*, London: Hermes House, 2005, p. 17. "The word 'magic' comes from the Greek 'mageia,' which derives from 'magoi.' The 'magoi' were a Persian caste of priests who studied astrology and divination. During the Hellenistic period the new words 'mageuein' and 'magikos' took on a negative meaning. This negative view of magic was adopted by the Romans."
Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 1992, p. 12. "To the Romans, sorcery and religious deviation alike were political offences: both damaged the order and welfare of the State."

As opposed to practicing magic, Philip was performing signs; this terminology is important because according to the Church a "sign" is something that leads the beholder to truth beyond the sign itself. Hence, Philip performed these feats as "signs" to ultimately lead people to his preaching and therefore to Christ. Conversely, it is to be understood by the interpretation of this scripture, that Simon was merely self-aggrandizing and performing magic to call attention only to himself, thus leading people astray.

According to this Biblical account, Simon was well-known in the city for performing magic. He is described as "astounding the people of Samaria" and "claiming to be someone great."[20] The text states that the people of Samaria referred to him as "having the Power of God." Simon had been "astounding" the Samarians "for a long time."[21] However, Samaria is host to another man claiming to have the power of God but with a distinct difference from Simon. This man, Philip, is using divine power to lead people to Jesus and salvation. Philip's unique message caused many Samarians to be baptized and become Christians, including Simon.[22]

After an unspecified amount of time, Peter and John were sent to Samaria to pray for these new Christians and assist them in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The apostles would pass on to the new converts this supernatural gift through the laying on of hands.[23] As one of the new Christians of Samaria,

[20] Ibid.

[21] Acts 8: 11.

[22] Acts 8: 12-13.

[23] Acts 8: 14-17.

Simon receives this gift of the Holy Spirit and it is with this gift he is, not surprisingly, intrigued. Simon asks for this power of the apostles to confer the Holy Spirit to others and he is willing to pay for the privilege.[24] Herein Simon receives one of the harshest rebukes in the New Testament:

> May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money. You have no share or lot in this matter, for your heart is not upright before God. Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your intention may be forgiven. For I see that you are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of iniquity.[25]

To this day the word "simony" means "the buying or selling of ecclesiastical privileges."[26]

Simon is so rebuked because he apparently disregards the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as the authority by which this gift is conveyed. It is key that Peter states that Simon "has no share or lot in this matter." Simon is not an apostle, divinely appointed to preach the Gospel and impart the Holy Spirit. Rather Simon is a new convert whose business had been to confound and delight crowds with his magic which was not salvific in the least. Simon was not chosen by God to possess the ability to bestow the Holy Spirit and so it was of the highest disrespect that Simon should make such a request to Peter. According to Peter's rebuke, Simon was not interested in providing a way to the salvation of Christ, but rather he wished to inspire admiration for himself and his abilities quite apart

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[24] Acts 8: 19.

[25] Acts: 20-23.

[26] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History*, New York: Penguin Books, 2003, p. 405. Simony is the buying of clerical positions.

from the apostles' mission. The apostles were leading people to Christ and salvation, while Simon would lead people to Simon and his powers.

The early Church Fathers, beginning with Irenaeus, labeled Simon the first heretic with the further declaration that "[Simon Magus] should be detested by all right-thinking Christians."[27] Anyone that would lead people away from their salvation would be obviously so maligned by the Church and used as an example of heresy at its awful root.

Irenaeus (130-202), bishop of Lyon, is considered the first theologian to tie together the ideas of heresy and magic in order to marginalize his Christian opponents and their followers, including Simon, Menander, Carpocrates and Basilides.[28] He was upset that these other Christians were able to attract followers and that their magic apparently caused these other groups to flourish.

In his writings Irenaeus describes how Simon "had learned all the magical arts in his efforts to rival the apostles, and how he and his disciples used incantations and exorcisms in an effort to win a following."[29] It is in the first non-Biblical recounting of Simon Magus, found within *The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr*. c. 156 CE, addressing the Roman emperor Titus Aelius Hadrainus

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[27] Walter Nigg, *The Heretics*, 1962, p. 16.

[28] Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 17. Janowitz notes that Irenaeus sounds very similar to the author of the book of Acts "who attributed the success of Simon, a competing Christian proselytizer, to magic." According to Acts eight, verse nine, Simon was able to gain followers only because he used sorcery and bewitched them.

[29] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 197.

Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar, where we find descriptions of Simon's life and work that are reflected in Irenaeus' later writing.[30]

Irenaeus's interpretation was furthered by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* of the fourth century, in which he discusses the events in Samaria "with the result that Simon was ever afterward considered by the Early Church as the 'first author of all heresy."[31]

Simon's powers were described in more depth by another Church Father, St. Ambrose, in his book the *Exameron*, written in the fourth century. He writes that "Peter, however, when he saw Simon rising to celestial heights on the pinions of magic, hurled him down and laid him low by depriving his magical spells of all power."[32] The father of heresy, indeed the first heretic that the Church Fathers tell us ever existed, leading people away from salvation and into unorthodox beliefs and practices, was a well-known magician who claimed his powers were from God and flew either figuratively or literally.

According to the Church, only Christ and his apostles had performed miracles of healing and transference of the Holy Spirit and other charisms and only chosen Old Testament figures such as Moses and the Prophets had been granted the heavenly-sanctioned ability to perform miracles or divine the future. With the death of the last apostle only Church-recognized saints carried on the miraculous ability of various holy virtues.

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[30] C. Wilfred Griggs, ed., Virginia K. Peterson, "Simon Magus: History Versus Tradition," *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-Day Saints*, Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986, pp. 241-53. Retrieved from rsc.byu.edu.

[31] Walter Nigg, *The Heretics*, 1962, p. 16.

[32] Ibid, p. 23.

Humans could only achieve the miraculous with numinous assistance and in the Western world that has meant acting in concert with God. However, magic and its accompanying illusions were believed to be achieved without God's assistance and hence they were extrapolated to be bestowed by Satan. So, if we look back at Simon Magus it is possible to see how his magic was construed as evil by the author(s) of his story: since Simon was not sanctioned by the only God-appointed miracle-workers of the day (the apostles), and humans are not able to perform seemingly magical feats or miracles on their own, then Simon must have been tapping into the power of the Devil. Therefore, from a small story in the Acts of the Apostles in the Christian New Testament, we have the seeds of Church teaching and tradition regarding the tangled history of heresy and witchcraft.

Based on this trajectory there should have been the uninterrupted practice of arresting men who performed magic for the crime of heresy and devil-worship, the latter being the ultimate in blasphemy and seemingly far outweighing any other possible accusation. However, between the fifth and tenth centuries Satan's followers underwent a more gender-specific transformation. Heretical magicians become defined as predominantly delusional women. This shift was codified in a document known as the *Canon episcopi*.

The *Canon episcopi* (*Ut episcopi de parochiis suis sortilegos et maleficos expellent, "So that the bishops shall expel witches and enchanters from their parishes")* is believed to be a compilation of regulations that were established at earlier Church synods and written in penitentials and capitularies that were

designed "so that bishops shall expel witches and enchanters from their parishes."[33] The canon was transcribed by Regino, the Abbot of Prüm for the Archbishop Radford of Trier where it appears in 906. (Today there is a copy at the University of Cologne which can be viewed online.) All throughout the Middle Ages this treatise was believed to contain documents from the Council of Ancyra, which took place in 314; but, today it is believed to be a Carolingian capitularly from the turn of the fifth century.[34]

The *Canon* was next incorporated into the tenth-century penitential called the *Corrector,* in which women's statements about their fantastical wicked adventures are outlined in some detail. There it is recorded that some women claimed that "on certain nights they were forced to accompany a swarm of demons transformed into women which the foolish populace calls *holda*."[35] Some women told stories of leaving their husband's beds and traveling through doors during the night, along with other women where they "killed, cooked and devoured baptized men to whom they restored an appearance of life by stuffing them with straw or wood."[36] And still other women related that they also passed through closed doors, flying together with followers of the devil, "fighting

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[33] Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies: The Deciphering of the Witches' Sabbath*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1991, p. 90.

[34] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* 1972, pp. 75-76. See Appendix A.

[35] Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, 1991, p. 90. Jonathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, eds., *The Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, Second Edition, The Scarecrow Press, Ltd.: Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth UK, 2012, p. 62. "Holda or Berta was believed to be a female spirit that was the leader of the Wild Hunt which consisted of a band of ghosts or spirits who would haunt the countryside at night, destroying and killing as they went."

[36] Ibid.

amongst the clouds, sustaining and inflicting injury."[37] We see these same statements repeated again and the *Canon* referenced again as well in the *Decretion* of Buchard of Worms written in 1008-1012. The *Canon* makes yet another appearance in the *Decretum* (*Concordia discordantium canonum*- Harmony of Discordant Canons) compiled by a Bolognese monk named Gratian, c. 1140.[38]

The essence of the *Canon's* message is that people could be tricked into believing wicked delusions of the Devil and that these delusions were disrupting Christendom. According to Regino's short version, it was the bishop's first obligation to seek out "certain crimes" in their dioceses.[39] Interestingly, or perhaps tragically, the text specifically inquires about the women of the diocese:[40]

> First, they were to inquire whether there were any women who through incantations provoked love, hatred, or harm to person or property. Then they [the bishops] must determine whether there was any woman claiming to ride [fly] out at night on a beast accompanied by a throng of demons transformed into women asserting that one had become part of their band.[41]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p. 60.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 1972, p. 78.

The obligation of the bishop was initially to deal with "simple sorcery," however the text also hints at the idea that the Church was beginning to attach sorcery to more serious charges of witchcraft and heresy.[42]

The second part of the bishop's obligation was to inquire about shape shifting and nocturnal flight.[43] The Church apparently borrowed from several pre-Christian and medieval folktales and traditions in order to create a frighteningly recognizable threat to communities, even if it was only realized in the imagination. Thus, in the guise of defining delusions, the Church lends them just enough credence to punish those who believe in them or believe themselves to have been a part of them. This convenient adoption by the Church of people's traditional beliefs, albeit superstitions, was integral to materializing this new powerful foe – the witch – as a real and present danger.

It is significant to my argument that this heretical woman practicing harmful magic accomplished some of her evil deeds by flying around her community. Thus, the image of women as flying witches was beginning to coalesce under the auspices of Church directives. These malevolent flying witches would come to encompass four ancient folk lore traditions, as is outlined by Jeffrey Burton Russell:

> The *strigae*, night vampires who flew out to drink human blood; the Valkyries, who gave rise to the Eddic notion of witches "playing their game in the air;" the fear of ghosts walking about at night; . . . the wild ride or *wilde Jagd.*[44]

[42] Ibid, p. 79.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

As Russell notes, at this point in history and in regards to the *Canon*, it was only the wild ride that was specifically referenced. However, he states that this is not regarding flight as part of the nocturnal ride but rather "evidently is terrestrial rather than aerial."[45] I would argue that the statement in the *Canon* does not exclude flight as a possibility particularly in reference to the way in which old folk tales and traditions described Diana and her women "travers[ing] great spaces of earth" on their night rides. Indeed, referencing back to the *Canon's* inclusion in the tenth-century penitential, the *Corrector*, night flight is specifically referenced by women and would indicate that flight is the way in which these women believed themselves to have been transported.

It is in Regino's longer version of the *Canon* (906) that the wild ride is described and explained in more detail. Regino described how this wild ride was led by the Roman goddess Diana, who was associated with fertility and the hunt. The worship of Diana and other goddesses of fertility was tenacious in its hold on the minds and hearts of people and was a lingering pagan belief despite Christianity's increasing popularity.

It was in the early Middle Ages that the worship of Diana apparently reemerged in the popular imagination as the leader of deluded women and demons on "nocturnal journeys through the night sky."[46] Because Diana was recognized by the Church as a pagan goddess and therefore not of God, she was considered a corollary to Satan, and so anyone who believed they rode with her

[45] Ibid.

[46] Jonathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, eds., *The Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2012, p.62.

was thus worshipping Satan himself.[47] Since Diana was not believed to lead men out into the night, this line of inquiry regarding nocturnal flight instituted by the *Canon* would firmly establish these devilish activities as those exclusive to women.

Underlying this entire discussion is the idea that these beliefs were delusional. Even though it was not forbidden that you might believe that others (primarily women) believed that they flew out and worked with the Devil, it was expressly forbidden that you yourself should believe that either you did these things or that others, in reality, did these things.[48]

As the Church referred to this wild ride of Diana in the *Canon,* it is the ominous result that, as Ginzberg points out, they are not targeting individuals so much as a coordinated imaginary society.[49] These followers of Diana were described as discussing their nighttime activities with others and coercing other women to join them. The Church, in order to protect their members from devilish delusions that they or others, primarily women, believed were realities, the Church authorities needed to emphasize that these witches were more dangerous than a few addle-brained women given to charms and curses. The medieval Church did not need to provide evidence of this secret society, but merely to reach back in history and pluck known superstitions from antiquity and reformulate them, along with women's self-incriminating testimony, as they codified the belief in these imaginary societies and their danger to the populace. It was not

[47]Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 1972, p. 79.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, 1991, p. 90.

difficult to associate an actual secret society like the heretical groups of the Cathars and the Waldensians, for example, with another artificial heretical secret society that included the worship of Diana and nocturnal rides and rituals.[50] The *Canon* planted the seed that necessitated the recognition of the belief, at least among the deluded women of the tenth century, that there was a dangerous heretical society of night-flying witches that sought the destruction of an ordered Christian society.

[50] Maeve Brigid Callan, *The Templars, The Witch, and The Wild Irish: Vengeance and Heresy in Medieval Ireland*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. "Modern scholars of heresy differentiate between 'real,' doctrinal heresies and 'artificial' heresies 'in which unpopular groups or individuals were smeared with slanderous charges by authority at various levels or by local opinion.'" This idea was initially proposed by Malcolm Lambert.

Chapter Two:

Waldensian Heresies and Night-Riding Women

The earliest images of women as flying witches illustrate the activities of a heretical group of people in France known as the Waldensians, and we will be looking at two images of flying witches that are representative of this campaign against the Waldensians. The first is an illumination from *Le Champion des dames* by Martin le Franc, c. 1451 at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Figure 1), and the second is the frontispiece to a French translation of Johannes Tinctor's *Invectives Against the Sect of Waldensianism*, 1468 at the University of Cologne (Figure 2).

The flying women in *Le Champion des dames* is the earliest illustration we have of women as flying witches.[51] Here we see the Waldensian group identified as a witch sect with the appellation of Waudenses, or Vaudois, and it is here that the flying woman witch makes her first known graphic appearance. There are only nine extant manuscripts of this particular text, and this image is found in only one of the nine, where it is in the margins of a richly illustrated manuscript that contains sixty-six miniatures by Jean Boignare.[52] While scholars such as Zika discuss this image in some detail, my analysis of this earliest known graphic image of women as flying witches focuses on its placement in the fuller

[51] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, Revised by Edward Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe: 1100-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p, 145. "[The Waldensian flying women of *Le Champion des Dames* is] the first known illustration of women flying on broomsticks." (One woman is on a broom and the other is on a hay or cooking fork).

[52] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 63.

chronology of this flying iconography, and therefore I seek to present its importance to the evolution of the image of the female flying witch. It is through this anonymous illustrator's image of heretical women flying that the genesis of flying witch imagery is realized. Furthermore, it is in the guise of a recognized heresy that the graphic portrayal of women as flying witches is made apparent, and thus prompts a question about who the Waldensians were.

The Waldensians drew the attention of the Church authorities because they were travelling about the mountainous regions of France as wandering preachers without proper ecclesiastical authority.[53] The Waldensians were only one of several declared heresies that became identified as such due to Church reforms that occurred in the eleventh century. Grado Merlo asserts that a healthy economy and more vibrant urban centers produced a laity that were more literate and successful in greater numbers which afforded them the opportunity to seek out more individualistic religious expression and belief.[54] Faced with these individual spiritual ideas the Church became less and less tolerant of any person or group moving beyond or apart from the realm of Church orthodoxy.[55] As a result, some groups were reconciled while others were persecuted and often excommunicated which could lead to penance, death, or both.[56]

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[53] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* 1992, p. 63.

[54] Grado G. Merlo, "Heresy and Dissent," Daniel E. Bornstein, ed., *A People's History of Christianity, Vol. 4, Medieval Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009, p. 230.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

It was Pope Innocent III, in the twelfth century, who for the first time declared that heresy was the primary focus of a pontificate.[57] The most powerful heresy rose up in spite of Innocent III's efforts; that heresy was known as Catharism.[58] In only about twenty years time Catharism had spread from "the Rhine to the Pyrenees, and into the Italian peninsula."[59] In fact it overshadowed other heresies of the day, such as Waldensianism, so much so that the Waldensians "felt the need to check" the influence of the Cathars.[60]

Like Waldensianism, Catharism provided women with the opportunity to preach and lead others in spiritual practice.[61] However, with this spiritual equality granted women through the arduous attainment of becoming perfect, it was also a teaching of Catharism that all things of the earth were of the devil, including pregnancy. Thus, a woman was unique in her ability to live the perfect's life of celibacy and fasting, but through her body she was also the vessel through which the devil further populated his earthly realm.[62] However, it is curiously the Waldensians who prompted the association of women and the devil to such a

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[57] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 1992, p. 92.

[58] Ibid, p. 58. "[Catharism] has been taken most widely by modern writers as a term for the new heresy of the twelfth century, formed by the coalescence of Western evangelical heresy and Bogomil influences from the East."

[59] Ibid, p. 61.

[60] Ibid, p. 102.

[61] Ibid, p. 114. "No position in Catholicism, not even that of abbess, offered the status which accrued to a woman who received the *consolamtum* (spiritual baptism). The woman perfect, no less than the man, possessed the Spirit. If she was debarred by her sex from holding office and could never be deacon or bishop, she took precedence in any gathering over all supporters who were not perfect, whether man or woman. If no man perfect was present, she would lead the prayers. She was entitled to the *melioramentum* (acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the perfect by kneeling) from all. It would seem that members of the nobility tended to avoid giving it to a woman, but no doubt those lower in the social scale did not."

[62] Ibid.

degree that the first known image of women as flying witches is given the title of "Vaudoises."

The story of the Waldensians began in 1173 when a Lyons merchant, Peter Valdes, became inspired to give away all of his property and worldly possessions to the poor and follow the apostolic call to bring the message of the Gospel to all people.[63] Valdes came to this calling after consulting a master of theology.[64] According to Stephen of Bourbon, Valdes, after hearing the Gospels, wanted to learn more so he contacted some priests and had them translate and write down the Gospels in the vernacular.[65] Valdes also had these priests translate and transcribe many other books from the Bible as well as passages from the Church Fathers.[66] Based on his understanding of all that he read, he gave up his wealth after making sure his wife was left with adequate provision and made arrangements for his daughters to enter Fontevrault.[67] It was his desire to dedicate

[63]Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, UK and NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 23. Gabriel Audisio, "How to Detect a Clandestine Minority: The Example of the Waldenses," states: "*The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1990), pp. 206. "Traditionally this person is called Peter Valdo, but G. Gonnet demonstrated that *Valdesius*, the only word found in manuscripts of the time of our merchant, is a Latin adjective. Since the language commonly used in Lyon in the twelfth century was the Franco-Provençal, we have to call this founder *Vaudes*. Concerning the first name, Peter, it cannot be found in manuscripts before the fourteenth century. Actually, we do not know the first name of Vaudes; however, it is quite significant that the disciples called their founder by the same name as the Apostle, founder of the Church. Vaudes had several books of the New Testament translated into the Franco-Provençal language that was then used in the area."

[64] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* 1992, p. 62.

[65] Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, eds., "Stephen of Bourbon on the Early Waldenses," *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 209.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* 1992, p. 63.

himself to a life of poverty and preaching in the tradition of the apostles.[68] He saw no need to be formally trained for this calling and believed that all laymen could be self-taught, as he himself had done. This was an unorthodox manner in which to spread the orthodox teachings of the Church and therefore was precariously close to heresy.

Valdes went to Rome during the time of the Lateran Council of 1179 to be examined and to seek the blessing of Pope Alexander III. At this time the Pope approved of Valdes' practices as long as he and his followers submitted to the local "episcopal authority regarding their preaching."[69] The Church, in its eleventh-century reformist hierarchy, had no provision that would or could allow anyone other than a priest to preach to the laity.[70] Therefore, to stop the ideas of Valdes from sliding into heresy, the papal legate Henri de Marcy presided over a diocesan council at Lyons in 1180 where Peter Valdes agreed to profess the orthodox faith.[71]

However, the twelfth-century Cistercian monk, Alan of Lille, wrote with alarm regarding the followers of Valdes, identifying them as a sect displaying various distinct aspects of heresy. Valdes was not preaching with the authority granted by the Church and was apparently functioning under his own sense of

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[68] Ibid.

[69] See Monsignor Léon Cristiani, Translation by Roderick Bright, *Heresies and Heretics*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959, Nihil obstat and Imprimatur, p. 60.

[70] Grado G. Merlo, "Heresy and Dissent," 2009, p. 240.

[71] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 1992, p. 64.

Christian duty. He was committing error and was refusing, despite his profession in 1180, to correct his behavior.

> They take the name Waldensians from the founder of the sect, Valdes, who, guided by his own spirit and not sent by God, founded a new sect, in order to presume the right to preach without due authorization, without divine inspiration, without knowledge, without literary education. [He is] a philosopher without reason, a prophet without vision, an apostle without a mission, a teacher without training.[72]

In righteous indignation of their condemnation of the clergy's worldliness and therefore disrespect of the clergy's status as God's representatives, Valdes and his group continued to preach without the approval of the episcopal authority. Bishop Bellesmains tried in vain to stop their unauthorized preaching. On November 4th, 1184, at the Council of Verona, Lucius III issued a bull, *Ad abolendam*, which condemned Valdes and his followers.[73] Indeed, not only Waldensians were condemned (who Lucius III referred to as the "Poor Men of Lyons"), but included in this list of those religious groups put under "perpetual anathema" were the Cathars, Patarines, . . . Passagines, Josephines, and Arnaldists."[74] This was the first papal decree against heretics for all of Europe.[75] (See Appendix B for full text). Lucius III calls on all authorities from all parts of the empire to "arise to the present general sanction of the decree, and every

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[72] Alexander Patschovsky, "The Literacy of Waldensianism," Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, eds., *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, Cambridge and New York: University of Cambridge, 1994, p. 127.

[73] Monsignor Léon Cristiani, *Heresies and Heretics*, 1959, p. 60.

[74] Grado G. Merlo, "Heresy and Dissent," 2009, p. 240.

[75] Edward Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980, p. 165.

heresy, by whatever name they are accused, the series of this issue by means of their apostolic authority, we condemn."[76]

However, instead of discouraging the Waldensians and their practices, this decree seemed to ignite them to further organize themselves as an apostolic group separate from the Church. Their beliefs became further removed from the orthodoxy of the Church to the point where they began to confer the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Peter Valdes himself declared that he not only possessed all of the divine powers of a priest, but also those of a bishop as well.[77] Valdes and his followers saw themselves as a reflection of what the true church should be and were highly critical of the extravagances and abuses of the "authorized" clergy. They believed that they were more purely following the teachings of Christ and his apostles. Not surprisingly, local bishops did not agree with their ideas and what had begun as a lay ministry ultimately became an organized heresy.

The Waldensian practice of allowing women to preach, coupled with the belief that women were by their very nature seductive and deceptive, conveniently places Waldensian women within the Church-defying, sinful nature of witchcraft. This brings us to an initial explanation as to why our first images of women as flying witches are found in manuscripts describing this heresy. Alan of Lille "expressed his horror

[76] Appendix B, *Ad abolendum.* Retrieved from http://www.documentacatholicaonmia.eu/.

[77] Monsignor Léon Cristiani, *Heresies and Heretics*, 1959, p. 60.

> [that] they [the Waldensians] were allowing women to preach, asserting that Valdes' disciples were 'really deceivers who seduce the simple folk in various regions of the world, divert them from rather than convert them to the truth.' The explanation of his particular outrage at the 'Valdes disciples' is that 'It is a dangerous thing for wise and holy *men* to preach, it is *most dangerous for the uneducated who do not know what should be preached: to whom, how, when and where there should be preaching.* These persons resist the Apostle Paul in that they have *women* with them and *have them preach* in the gatherings of the faithful, although the Apostle says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: 'Let women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but to be subject as also the law saith. But, if they would hear anything let them ask their husbands at home.' (Emphasis mine).[78]

Allowing women to preach, thus providing women with a degree of authority, was not completely unheard of; for example, Hildegard of Bingen was known for her visions, writings and preaching.[79] However, St. Hildegard was always connected to the Church in her obedience to its doctrinal authority and she ministered within its hierarchical structure. She herself gave sermons, but always with the blessing of the local bishops. These Waldensian women, however, were preaching without such a blessing, and that was the fundamental distinction.

If we look back to Simon Magus, we remember that he was revealed to St. Peter as having attempted to preach and to confer divine gifts outside of the apostolic blessing, and hence he earned the recognition of being the first heretic. He was also identified as a magician who derived his powers from Satan.

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[78] Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 2003, p. 23.

[79] Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, The Netherlands: Brill NV, 1998, p. 163. Among her writings and sermons are those directed against the heresy of the Cathars: There are "four extant texts – two letters, one treatise, and one homily targeted against the Cathars" beginning in 1163.

Therefore, the Waldensians' allowance of women, believed to be easily tempted by Satan into sin, to preach without the authority of the Church was a serious heretical threat tantamount to giving Satan sanctuary within the apostolic tradition of Christianity.

Coupled with this disturbing blend of heresy and women carrying on apostolic duties, their secret meetings (which were necessitated by the fact that they were declared heretical and therefore their meetings had to be clandestine to avoid arrest) were described as being nocturnal gatherings of men and women in order to honor the devil and participate in blasphemous rituals-not unlike the charges attributed to the early Christians of Rome. This idea came primarily from Alpine inquisitors, since accused Waldensians confessed that they often took refuge in caves.[80] Thus, many inquisitors presiding over trials during the last quarter of the fourteenth century declared that Waldensians were being instructed in magic by the Devil and participated in orgies and drank magical potions provided by the "Mistress of Ceremonies."[81] Behringer has argued for the apparent correlation of these Alpine Waldensian "accusations/confessions" to those of the earliest known witch trials and how inquisitors seem to have co-opted the "popular belief in nocturnal assemblies" to fit the nascent description of witch gatherings or "synagogues."[82]

Therefore, by the fifteenth century, Waldensianism had become effectively conflated with witchcraft with the help of these Alpine inquisitors and

[80] Ibid, p. 243-44.

[81] Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 2003, pp. 35-36.

[82] Ibid, p. 36.

the Waldensian's own heretical beliefs and practices. Three hundred years prior *Ad abolendam* had not only codified the Church's dedication in pursuing heresy but it went further in requesting "secular authorities to support the Catholic Church in its pursuit and punishment of heretics."[83] This set the stage for the widespread persecution for what happened to various groups such as the Waldensians.

The reluctance of Waldensians to undertake an oath, based on their literal interpretation of a passage from the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew only served to bring them under further suspicion.[84] In *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis (The conduct of inquiry concerning heretical depravity)* written by Bernard Gui in the early fourteenth century he discussed a "recent decree against this error. If any of them (referring to Waldensians) through damnable superstition reject the sanctity of an oath and refuse to swear, let them therefore be considered heretics."[85]

Behringer makes a further point that there may also have been some actual aspects of Waldensian practices, quite apart from the imaginations of some Alpine inquisitors and their unwillingness to take oaths or support capital punishment that would have made it easy for the group to be associated with witchcraft. That

[83] Jane Wickersham, *Rituals of Prosecution*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2012, p. 59.

[84] Gabriel Audisio, "How to Detect a Clandestine Minority", 1990, p. 207.

[85] Bernard Gui, translated and edited by Janet Shirley, *The Inquisitor's Guide*, ca. 1323, UK: Ravenhall Books, 2006, p. 52.

is the fact that Waldensian clergy were believed to be extraordinary diviners.[86] It was also believed that Waldensian clergy could contact the "Otherworld."[87] Behringer's suggestion is that the ability of the Waldensian clergy to visit places in other worlds that were identified as paradise would be an easy link to begin identifying Waldensians with witchcraft. Trial records from the Baltic region to southern France reveal that the common people, to whom the Waldensians primarily ministered, believed that their clergy had been granted supernatural powers from God and his angels.[88]

Another characteristic that caused the Waldensians to be recognized as doctrinal heretics was their understanding of the afterlife. This was considered threatening to important dogma, religious authority, and the monetary prosperity of the Church. The Waldensians rejected the doctrine of Purgatory, and not only did this deny the authority of the Church in doctrinal matters, it also denied money to the church coffers. Without the income from fees/offerings for requiem masses for the dead and perpetual prayer for their souls, the local clergy were not

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[86] Wolfgang Behringer, "Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches," 2004, p. 15.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid, pp. 15-17. "Evangelically trained Waldensian theologians may have rejected the idea of ecstasies, like many of their Catholic counterparts, but spiritual contacts to the other world, to the paradise, to prophets, to angels, or God himself, at least in some areas were thought to be a specifically Waldensian affair by contemporaries." . . . "The Swiss historian of Waldensianism, Kathrin Utz-Tremp, . . . explores in her important essay 'Waldensians and revenants' the example of Arnauld Gélis who claimed to have contacted the deceased around 1312, with *revenants*, and could finally see the dead not only in his dreams, but while he was awake. As his Inquisitor Jacques Fournier, later pope Benedict XII (1285-1342, r. 1334-1342), reported, Gélis served as a courier for the deceased, and he also received orders from the living before he went to the realm of the dead. This Waldensian brother worked as a communicator between the living and the dead, and he was well-known for his abilities in the region, serving as a medium to clients who wanted to get into contact with the other world. Gélis was not the only Waldensian with this ability, he was not even the only one within his family. Rather he was continuing the custom of his cousin, and thus we can conclude that this ability was considered to be hereditary within his lineage."

surprisingly irritated and their churches a bit poorer because of the Waldensian lack of belief in the need to protect and rescue souls from Purgatory.[89]

The Waldensians therefore provided a somewhat perfect storm that attracted the attention of both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Nonetheless, the followers of Valdes grew in their activities and numbers and spread across the French, Swiss and Italian Alps, and brought with them a reputation of civil disobedience, clandestine activities, conversing with the dead, and heresy. Therefore, it was not a leap for these beliefs to be given credence by authorities of the Church and written about by theologians and other authorities, complete with illustrations that were to serve as a warning to members of the congregation.

As the numbers of Waldensians spread, so too did the number of names by which they were known. They were known also as the Poor of Lyons and "Sandallers because early in their history the Waldensian 'perfects' wore a special emblem on the upper part of their shoes, something like a shield, to distinguish them from their supporters and believers."[90] In 1440 Pope Eugenius officially recognized the term "Waudenses" (Vaudois) as referring to a sect of Waldensians that was dedicated to witchcraft.[91]

In 1233, the stage had already been set for at least a sect of Waldensians to be officially identified as witches, when Pope Gregory IX issued the decretal letter *Vox in rama* which was addressed to the archbishop of Mainz, the bishop of

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Bernard Gui, translated and edited by Janet Shirley, *The Inquisitor's Guide*, ca. 1323, 2006, p. 51.

[91] Wolfgang Behringer, "Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches," 2004, p. 15-17.

Hildesheim, and to Conrad of Marburg (See Appendix C).[92] It is thought that this letter was directed at a group of peasants known as the Stedinger in Northern Germany, however now scholars believe that this letter referenced Rhineland heretics as characterized by Conrad of Marburg – Conrad having been a priest who the archbishop of Mainz had directed to find heretics in his large archdiocese. It is because of this general characterization that scholars such as William Monter posited that this letter contributed to the idea that any religious dissenters, of which the Waldensians were included, were actually "devil worshippers who engaged in nocturnal orgies."[93] However, I argue that Monter's statement that these religious dissenters were generally Waldensians seems to be problematic, as there is no particular characteristic described in Pope Gregory's letter that specifically identifies these Rhineland heretics as Waldensians. However, it could be asserted that these descriptions of sacrilegious rites could have remained active in the imagination of inquisitors and came to be conflated with the later beliefs about Sabbath-attending witches that were unrelated to Waldensianism or any other particular recognized heresy.[94]

Thus, it increasingly became the case that witches became inextricably linked with heretical and blasphemous activities.[95] Pope Gregory IX (r. 1127-1241) was the first pope to order that witches were to be indicted along with

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[92] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p. 115.

[93] Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 2003, p. 26.

[94] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p. 115.

[95] Walter Nigg, *The Heretics*, 1962, p. 275-76, 281.

heretics. The first witch trial under these orders took place in the vicinity of Trier between 1230 and 1240.[96] By the fifteenth century, the Church had further consolidated its beliefs about witchcraft practices by combining heresy, Satanic activity, folklore and local superstitions into the ideas about witchcraft.[97] And so in about 1451 we have a book that debates the veracity of witchcraft as it distinctly applies to women and heresy.

It is in Book IV of this particular French translation of *Les Champion des dames* that we find the image we are considering in Figure 1. While the Champion never identifies these women as Vaudoises, the illuminator does so in his title that accompanies the text – and therein the connection is made.

Whereas in the early medieval era, illuminated manuscripts had been created by monks in monastic scriptoria, when the Middle Ages began its transition into the early modern period during the fifteenth century, illuminated manuscripts were increasingly created in secular city workshops.[98] It was the *chef d'atelier* who used notations or sketches, often made in the margins of the manuscript, to indicate to the illuminator what was to be painted in the space.[99] Most often the illuminator would refer to model books for the way in which to draw/paint the figures – their characteristics, style and composition.[100] This makes

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[96] Ibid.

[97] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 42.

[98] Henry Luttikuizen and Dorothy Verkerk, *Snyder's Medieval Art,* 2nd Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006, p. 367.

[99] Ibid. p. 371.

[100] Ibid.

for a compelling theory regarding the Vaudoises in *Les Champion des dames* that the illuminator utilized an existing image of flying women that has yet to be discovered.

In this illumination from *Le Champion des dames* we see two women flying at the upper left margin of the text; one on a broom and another on a stick. Above the illustration is written the word "Vaudoises."[101] Both women are in long dresses, with either high stockings and shoes or high boots. They both have their hair covered in the manner common for married women of the fifteenth century. They are both sitting astride their "flying" instrument.

Both of these "instruments" are discussed in Le Franc's dialogue between Free Will and Slow Wit. The anonymous artist who has created these images has positioned these flying women to the left side of the text, close to the top of the page. They are both positioned at an angle, which further references flight, since there is no ground line or background scene that would assist the observer in recognizing their flight location.

The woman of the top image is sitting astride her broom and the skirt of her dress is drawn up so that one catches a glimpse of her right leg. This tiny revelation of her bare leg is provocative and further reinforces the fact that she is astride the broom and therefore her genital area would be in contact with the

[101] Wolfgang Behringer, "Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches," 2004, p. 20. " . . . my investigations have led me directly to the very region where the concept of the witches' Sabbat had emerged, the Swiss Cantons of Wallis/Valais and of Waadtland/*Vaud* – and this name may well have reinforced the use of the term *Vauderie* – and the former duchy of Savoy. At present it seems impossible to assess exactly how far confessions of ecstatic experiences during the persecutions of the Waldensians have contributed to the paradigm shift, the fusion of witchcraft and Waldensianism. If so, it must have occurred on the Italian French side of the linguistic border, German theologians never used the term 'Waldensians' for witches. In the Francophone parts of Switzerland, however, the term *Vaudoises* was used in courts from about 1430, and it persisted around Fribourg until the present."

broom. The sexual context of this posture is obvious and intended. The woman in the bottom image has her legs fully covered by her dress; however, with the position of the stick would indicate that she is also astride it. And while this also has sexual connotations, it is not quite as explicit as the top image. Yet, with her dress drawn up in the back in a dramatic fashion the observer would not miss the suggestion of an erotic association. Putting female genitalia directly against something, as in the case of riding a horse for example, was considered highly suggestive and indecent and a way in which her virginity could be lost. We have historical evidence that it was considered disreputable and even dangerous for a woman to sit astride a horse from as early as 1382 when Princess Anne of Bohemia "rode side-saddle across Europe on her way to marry King Richard III. Riding side-saddle was seen as a way to protect her virginity. Soon it was considered vulgar for any woman to ride astride."[102]

Other than the placement of their dresses, these women look nothing out of the ordinary. The implication being that while at one minute they are tending to their families and doing household chores the next minute they are hiking up their skirts and flying off to meet with the Devil to do his bidding. This disturbing idea would have been met with satisfaction from the Church because part of the insidious and therefore real danger was that these heretical women, who were also witches, could not be easily identified – they looked like anyone; your neighbor, your friend, or even your wife. Because of Satan and his deceptions and the

[102] Ben Johnson, "Riding Side-Saddle," *Historic UK*. Retrieved from http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Riding-SideSaddle/

inherent weakness of women, your neighbor had become your enemy, not only to you, but to all of Christendom.

This first image is painted in the margin of a book that is not exclusive to the Waldensian heresy but rather takes advantage of its widely recognized association with witches. The book, *Les Champion des dames*, was written by Martin Le Franc.[103] This book is an allegorical poem written in defense of womankind. It is theorized that it was first dedicated to Le Franc's patron, Felix V, before it was then rededicated to Philip, Duke of Burgundy. This work was then followed by a sixty-octave poem, *Complainte du Livre du Champion des dames a Maistre Martin Le Franc, son actuer*, which was written in defense of *Les Champion des dames.*[104]

Martin's book was the latest in a group of works that discussed the status of women and their role in society. This debate became known as the "querelle des femmes," or "debate over women."[105] This focus on women began with a work known as *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1280), which was begun by Guillaume de Lorris in the 1230s. He died leaving the work unfinished. Forty years later, it was taken up and completed by Jean de Meun, a thirteenth-century cleric whose nickname was "Clopinel" because he was lame.[106] The original theme of the work

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[103] Martin Le Franc, *The Trial of Womankind: A Rhyming Translation of Book IV of the Fifteenth-Century 'Le Champion des Dames,'* Edited and translated by Steven Millen Taylor, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, ca. 1440s, 2005, p. 2.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid, p. 4.

[106] The British Library, Collection Items, "Roman de la Rose," manuscript. Available from http://bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/remarkmanu/roman/.

was that of a courtly nature having to do with chivalry and courtly love.[107] However, Meun's completion changed the tone to become "hostile in its characterizations of women" in that it depicted women as "duplicitous and exploitative individuals who seek their own pleasure at men's expense."[108]

Nearly one hundred years later another work, translated by Jean le Fèvre, was the Latin *Liber Lamentationum Matheoluli* or *The Lamentations of Matheolus*. This book had originally been written in Latin at the end of the thirteenth century by a man "who called himself Mahieu le Bigame (Matthew the Bigamist."[109] It was translated into French by Jean le Fèvre around 1390. This work continued in the same tradition of Meun's work – a hostile and misogynistic characterization of women. Within the *Lamentations* there were depictions of marriage that denigrated women.[110]

We know that Meun's *Roman de la Rose* remained "a topic of scholarly discussion throughout the fifteenth century, as some responded to it with praise (including the royal secretaries Jean de Montreuil, Pierre Col, and Gontier Col), and others with rebuttals (including Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson)."[111] *Le*

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[107] Martin Le Franc, *The Trial of Womankind: A Rhyming Translation of Book IV of the Fifteenth-Century 'Le Champion Des Dames,'* Edited and translated by Steven Millen Taylor, ca. 1440s, 2005, p. 4.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman, Vol. II The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002, p. 201.

[110] Martin Le Franc, *The Trial of Womankind: A Rhyming Translation of Book IV of the Fifteenth-Century 'Le Champion Des Dames,'* Edited and translated by Steven Millen Taylor, ca. 1440s, 2005, p. 4.

[111] Ibid.

Champions des dames by Martin Le Franc is a direct response to the *Roman de la Rose* and *The Lamentations of Matheolus*. In Book II Le Franc names both Jean de Meun and Matheolus as "defamers of women" and refutes their claims through the arguments of the Champion. Le Franc also incorporates a character from the *Roman de la Rose*, Malebouche or Bad Mouth, to symbolize misogyny.[112]

Le Franc refers to The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) and the struggles going on within the Church while engaging in this discussion about women's character.[113] So, while this work is a definite response to Meun and Le Fèvre, it also provides an interesting contextual framework for Le Franc's defense of women.

Martin Le Franc studied at the University of Paris and earned a degree of Master of Arts and subsequently took holy orders and joined the clergy. The Antipope Felix V (1439-1449) appointed Le Franc as his secretary and as the apostolic prothonotary.[114] Thus, Le Franc utilized classical, early medieval, and contemporary sources in *Le Champion des dames*.[115] His references are

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[112] Ibid, p. 5. "In his original context, Badmouth (Malebouche) personified slander as it affected courtly lovers, but Le Franc may use Badmouth – the Champion's chief enemy – to represent Meun himself as the embodiment of misogyny."

[113] Ibid. 'The state of France is in the air/As is the Church, in great disorder' (292.2333-2334). At the Council of Basle (1431-1449), Cardinal Louis Aleman led a faction that maintained the supremacy of general councils over the pope. He attempted to depose Pope Eugenius IV by anointing Amadeus VIII, duke of Savoy, as Antipope Felix V. Le Franc, who attended the Council of Basel and worked for both Felix V and for Nicholas V, the next legitimate pope, had firsthand knowledge of the workings of the papal court. In *Les Champions Des Dames*, he frequently criticizes the corruption and competition that he may have witnessed among members of the clergy."

[114] Ibid, p. 1. "In the Roman Catholic Church, a prothonotary maintains records of consistories and canonizations and signs papal bulls."

[115] Ibid, p. 3.

numerous: the Old and the New Testaments, Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, Virgil, Cicero, Pliny the Elder, and Justinus. He also frequently references Church Fathers such as Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory.[116] Equally compelling is that Le Franc mines the works of Giovanni Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan in writing his defense of women. He adduces the stories of famous women from both Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris* and de Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité.*[117] Thus, Le Franc is lauding the good qualities of women as well as discussing them in their frightening guise of witches.

Le Champion des dames is divided into five books. In each of the books Free Will or *Franc Vouloir* – the Champion - debates one of Badmouth's or *Malebouche's* allegorical associates: Hasty Judgment or *Brief Conseil* (Book I); Evil Thinking or *Vilain Penseur* (Book II); Much Presuming or *Trop Cuidier* (Book III); Slow Wit or *Lourt Entendement* (Book IV); and False Seeming or *Faux Semblant* (Book V). In Books I – III the discussions revolve around the effects of love, the dignity of marriage and true love and its demands, while Book IV involves a lively debate defending women from the imaginings of witchcraft,

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid, pp. 3-4. "In medieval thinking, a scholar drew upon the ideas of authorities, known 'auctores,' to supplement his own thinking. Frequent references to respected material granted an author 'auctoritas,' or authority. It demonstrated that he had mastered the ideas of others and could produce something of his own to build upon, and perhaps supplement, the earlier material. Thus, extensive use of others' writings was more highly respected in the Middle Ages than the creation of a completely original work." Le Franc selects some of the women from Boccaccio's list of 104 "renowned women." They include "the artist Marcia, the patient wife Griselda, and the notorious Pope Joan." "In addition to using Christine de Pizan herself as an example of a female intellectual, Le Franc may derive his versions of the stories of Leontium and Novella from Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité*. Book IV of *Le Champion des Dames* also appears to follow the same general outline as Pizan's text; both begin with female leaders and warriors and conclude with female saints."

and Book V ends the collection with a theological discussion and defense of the Virgin Mary.[118]

The overall narrative is based on the Champion or Free Will, as he endeavors to defend women from the accusations of wickedness and witchcraft. He discusses women that he maintains exemplify outstanding characteristics, even though many of his women fall into the realm of myth. He begins by discussing "the civilizers of primitive humankind; Ceres, Isis, and Ops."[119] Slow Wit rejects these examples because they are pagan and mythical.[120] At this point they begin to argue whether their "contemporary society is, as Slow Wit maintains, corrupt and doomed, or as Free Will asserts, wholesome and flourishing."[121] Free Will begins enumerating the many achievements of their contemporary society by mentioning poets as well as admirable women. Among his list of noteworthy women are Semiramis, Artemisia, and Judith. Slow Wit finds them merely "prideful and aberrant."[122] Free Will proposes "Joan [of Arc] as a model for fifteenth-century male French nobility."[123] He also praises "two contemporary women: the Countess of Montfort and Jeanne de Bavière."[124] But in the midst of recognizing all of these laudable women Slow Wit insists that witches be discussed. Why?

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[118] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

[119] Ibid, p. 6.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

Because "the roots of feminine knowledge are dangerous and demonic."[125] To this damning explanation, which effectively negates any woman as being a model for society, Free Will, as the true champion he is, "questions the very existence of witches, arguing that even if women were to succumb to the black arts, it would be as a result of man's negative influences; he proceeds to condemn corrupt clergymen for abusing those whom they should shepherd, especially women."[126]

Le Franc then devotes more than one hundred octaves (320-423) to a debate regarding witchcraft and therein describes common medieval conceptions of witches and their modes of worship, their powers, and their relationship with Satan. "[Free Will and Slow Wit] also debate the nature of the devil and his ability to manipulate human bodies through transportation and transformation."[127] As Free Will finishes providing examples of women's artistic nature and states that "Woman gives her mind completely/To any task she may undertake;/Were she to gloss the Psaltery,/The richest and greatest she would make." (2549-2552).[128] And then like a splash of cold water Le Franc writes: "The Adversary [Slow Wit] calls into play witches and sorceresses against the aforementioned women." So states Slow Wit:

> Alas, you've left out witches' masks;/I beg that we speak of their sins,/The Foe said, and their evil tasks:/Whether werewolves they are or goblins,/If they use sticks or just

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid. Also, p. 7. "Unlike Giovanni Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan, Le Franc presents his refutation of attacks on women throughout history in the form of an allegorical debate."

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid, p. 90.

> their pins,/Whether they ply the air like birds,/Whether they eat of babykins-/Put this, young lover, into words
>
> I mean those cackling crones so old/And those sorceresses worthy/Who cross by methods manifold/Streams, ponds, fields, and woods aplenty/And work with such great subtlety/That without a door they enter./Tell us of these witches good/And their foul work do not shelter. (2553-2568)[129]

Le Franc causes his champion of Free Will to counter this argument by reminding Slow Wit that it was a man who was the first magician. Rather than citing Simon Magus, Free Will surprisingly cites Zoroaster as the first magician quite apart from any heretical underpinnings.[130]

Slow Wit later replies:

> Alas, don't you great pity feel?/The nursing child from crib they steal/Which will be roasted on a spit./Then all to their shared friendship seal/Will watch it gobbled, every bit. (2604-2608)[131]

Free Will responds:

> I find this sermon somewhat thick,/Said Free Will, So I will not cheer./People talk glibly about the broomstick./But the matter's not so clear,/And I'd be willing to bet my ear/That no crone's flown through the air, that's sure;/A beast or bird she would appear/You'd have to call back to the lure. (2609-2616)[132]

While it is in verse 2558 Slow Wit is the first to make mention of witches using "sticks" to fly, it is not until one of Free Will's following responses that we have further reference to sticks, albeit he does so in an attitude of skepticism about how

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[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid, p. 91.

[131] Ibid, p. 92.

[132] Ibid.

"People talk glibly about the broomstick." (2612). There are considerable more descriptions by Slow Wit about how frightening "the hags" are and how they "fly in legions," particularly on Walpurgis nights.[133] Slow Wit then goes on to mention for the second time that the trips of these witches take place on brooms; "On a broom she'd make procession/To see the stinking synagogue's sights." (2439-40). He goes on to describe "ten thousand hags" gathering at this unholy meeting where they kiss the Devil, pay him honor and listen to him preach.[134] At the end of this meeting, where besides obedience was proffered, there had been dancing, feasting and sex. Slow Wit describes their return from the synagogue. They fly back on the broomstick that brought them to this gathering of Devil, demons and hags.

> Then they all back from thence would race,/On their broomsticks like the wind-/Such power they received as grace/From that foul thief, for whom they sinned. (2777-2680)[135]

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[133] Ibid. "I tell you that I've seen in jail/A crone who made a full confession; After on paper they wrote the tale,/When she was (in her own impression)/Around sixteen, in succession/On several dark Walpurgis nights," (2633-2638)
The Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1388545/Walpurgis-Night. "Walpurgis Night, is a traditional holiday celebrated on April 20 in northern Europe and Scandinavia. In Germany, the holiday is celebrated by dressing in costumes, playing pranks on people, and creating loud noises meant to keep evil at bay. Many people also hang blessed sprigs of foliage from houses and barns to ward off evil spirits, or they leave pieces of bread spread with butter and honey, called *ankenschnitt*, as offerings for phantom hounds. The origins of the holiday date back to pagan celebrations of fertility rights and the coming of spring. After the Norse were Christianized, the pagan celebration became combined with the legend of St. Walpurga an English-born nun who lived at Heidenheim monastery in Germany and later became the abbess there. Walpurga was believed to have cured the illnesses of many local residents. After her death she was canonized as a saint on May 1. Although it is likely that the date of her canonization is purely coincidental to the date of the pagan celebrations of spring, people were able to celebrate both events under church law without fear of reprisal."

[134] Ibid, p. 93.

[135] Ibid, p. 94.

These verses are important in understanding the manuscript illustration and why it appears in the marginalia of *Les Champions des dames*. The concept of women as flying witches was apparently so firmly planted into society that Le Franc could include this lengthy argument between Free Will and Slow Wit. This would only have occurred if the audience for this luxury manuscript, as well as the anonymous illustrator, had been aware of these tales of flying witches, and would be either amused or alarmed by this fictional debate.

This "description" of the wild doings of the legions of hags on Walpurgis night is all courtesy of a crone that Slow Wit says he saw in jail as well as seeing her full, written confession. (2633-2635). It is here that Slow Wit makes his case before Free Will of the vile and factual nature and actions of women as witches. The historian Christina Larner spoke to the "shift in authority [that took place] with these accusations: The power of the local witch was [now] heavily reinforced by the convictions of the authorities that her power was real and to be feared."[136]

Free Will counters Slow Wit by stating that his story is all the result of a "scatterbrain[ed]" old woman who was coerced into that confession and that "There is no stick of any kind/On which anyone can fly,/But when the Devil fogs their mind/They think that on their way they hie." (2729-2732).[137] Thus, in this "defense of women" we have an example of the contemporary arguments of whether or not it was to be believed that women as witches did, in fact, fly.

[136] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, p. 43

[137] Ibid, p. 95.

Free Will's defense of women comes, in this instance, with his inclusion of men. And while Slow Wit may be called "Slow," he is remarkably agile in his arguments for he immediately detects this subtle reference and reminds Free Will of the man that began our discussion of heresy – Simon Magus. So the warnings and teachings of the early Church Fathers had not been buried in the libraries of monasteries, but rather remained pertinent enough that Le Franc felt he should include the story of Simon the Magician as an arguable defense. Slow Wit declares that just as Simon Magus flew, so can anyone else who "wills it, Satan does blow/Were he as big as a buffalo."[138]

Slow Wit goes on at some length to make his point that the Devil can carry people through the air reinforcing that the idea of demonic flight was not a passing idea, but rather one that had endured through the centuries.

> On him [Satan] many a one has gone/From Orient to Occident,/Faster than rain that passes on/With wind which is not permanent./When the creature's will is bent/On submitting to Leviathan,/And when permits God Provident,/Its wish is worked by wicked Satan. (2745-2752)[139]

Therefore, according to Slow Wit's argument it seems that for a human to fly, he or she must submit to the Devil/Leviathan/Satan. Thus the actual act of flying, in and of itself, is tantamount to making some kind of deal with the Devil. Notwithstanding the ritualistic orgies of Walpurgis nights, the mere act of flying was enough to prove some kind of congress with Satan. It is no wonder that this motif would be prominent and repeated as women are portrayed as witches.

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[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid, pp. 95-96.

Despite Slow Wit's best efforts and arguments Free Will, our Champion, states in line 2809 that:

> As long as I live, the belief I won't share/That woman can corporeally/Like blackbird or thrush fly through the air,/The Champion [Free Will] answered him most promptly./Saint Augustine maintains plainly/That it's a phantasm, illusory,/And others believe no differently-/Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory[140]

Yet Slow Wit unequivocally states that he believes in "mad creatures" and their "false pranks," and refers to St. Augustine.

> If Saint Augustine the great clerk/Had heard these crones in confession/And seen the ointment box at work/Which they use for conjuration,/Perhaps he'd have another conception/On the other hand, it may be/That exhaustive information/He lacked about this devilry. (2945-2952)[141]

So, in case Free Will is considering referring to Augustine again in the defense of flight being a delusion of these women, Slow Wit is suggesting that had Augustine ever encountered any of these women as Slow Wit had, he would have had a different opinion and shared Slow Wit's belief in these witches and their Sabbath flights.

One of the things that Slow Wit refers to here is the "ointment box." The idea of witches using a magical ointment that enables them to fly is a repeated theme in the engravings and drawings of Dürer, Baldung Grien, Altdorfer. There has quite a bit of research done regarding this ointment that is referenced many times in Medieval and Renaissance treatises and records from witch trials. It is thought that there was a connection between the "psychoactive tropane alkaloids

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid, p. 101.

contained in henbane (Hyoscyamus niger), thorn apple (Datura stramonium), belladonna (Atropa belladonna)" that could have been used by "witches" that would have caused hallucinations that they were flying, attending Sabbaths, etc.[142] These alkaloids, also found in nightshade and mandrake contain, in addition to atropine, scopolamine, and hyoscyamine "that mimic the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, . . . which disrupt[s] the flow of information in both the central and peripheral nervous systems."[143] It is thought that men and women practicing witchcraft avoided the real possibility of death that could occur through the oral ingestion of these herbs by still using these hallucinogenic plant compounds by mixing them with oils or fats and applying them to their skin where they could be safely absorbed into the blood stream.[144] Once in the bloodstream it would go to the brain causing "generalized neurological disruptions resulting in disorientation and delusions."[145] A witch's ointment was sampled and analyzed in the sixteenth century by the physician to Pope Julius III, and this physician, Andreas de Laguna "reported that the ointment was green in color and contained hemlock, solanum, mandragora, and henbane."[146] However,

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[142] United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, "The Powerful Solanaceae: Witchcraft in the Middle Ages." Available from http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/Mind and Spirit/witchcraft.shtml.

[143] Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life,* UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 11.

[144] United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, "The Powerful Solanaceae: Witchcraft in the Middle Ages." Available from http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/Mind and Spirit/witchcraft.shtml.

[145] Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe,* 2008, p. 11.

[146] Ibid.

we also know that many witches confessed that the ointment they used that enabled them to fly was made from the boiled bones and fat of babies. Perhaps it was true that when no evidence of an actual ointment was found the confessing witch was encouraged to relay that the magical unguent or ointment consisted of human ingredients that would have been impossible, at that time, to prove. Nevertheless, Free Will launches into a very long reply with the caveat that "there's no need to argue long."[147]

> But whoever thinks that by broom or ointment/He can fly through the air without walking/On the ground, or good sense is deficient./Human bodies the earth must be touching,/Nor like the birds through the air be flitting,/For they are weighted down by nature/And there's no balm, great riches costing,/Which can ever their weight denature.
>
> The one who stick or broom bestrides/Thinks that he soars over mount and plain,/And it seems to him that he upward glides,/Nor touching the roadway or the lane./Now, know that this flight tramontane/Only in soul he undertakes-/A soul that the Foe does with terror enchain/So that consciousness it forsakes. (2961-2984)[148]

Free Will is having none of the argument that people can fly and he makes this emphatically clear that "no matter what's said about it" he will never believe that anyone can fly and in fact "Surely the faith of Christian man/Should not be so un-devout." (3029-3030).[149]

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[147] Ibid, p. 102.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid, p. 103. "No matter what's said about it, for me-/Whether from Rome to Metz they fly/Or from Brittany to Lombardy,/Whether near or far their course they ply-/I'll never believe or testify./Jean de Meun says it's but a dream./Saint Augustine, as I certify,/That it's a lie does also deem. Does he not say that worse than Satan/Is one who holds that Dame Joanne/Either day or night does hasten/Off to visit the goddess Diane?/Surely, the faith of Christian man/Should not be so un-devout/That Julian's rebellion can/Turn it completely inside out." (3018-3032).

But Slow Wit is not to be deterred and makes this conclusion:

> So I conclude it's possible/That these false women fly away/On their stick in body sensible,/To see the Devil and there essay/The deeds for which folk by fire them slay,/For worse has been done in days of old,/If chroniclers haven't in some way/Deceptively written lies untold. (3169-3176)[150]

> And especially when not only a score,/But full ten thousand in concert state/That thus it's befallen them before,/And how it happened they explicate./Does this proof not end debate/And make one believe that this heresy/They in fact do perpetrate,/Not in their dreams or in a frenzy? (3177-3184)[151]

In these two verses Slow Wit makes an acknowledgement that there could be a chance that these testimonies were "deceptively written." But a mention is all he does; there is no follow-up discussion of the likelihood of any of these testimonies being false.

Free Will and Slow Wit end their discussion of Devil-deceived flying women with Free Will stating "That Satan is able to fascinate/Lords much more than he can dames." (3367-3368) with Slow Wit replying "Yet expertly you do explain/And their foul devilry excuse." (3375-3376).[152] Within these statements we find that neither of the players, the Champion or the Adversary of women, have changed their beliefs or convinced the other of the worthiness of their arguments. And so without any resolution Free Will continues to praise women, which at this point begins with a dialogue about the Nine Muses.[153]

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid, p. 108.

[152] Ibid, p. 113.

[153] Ibid, p. 115. (3409-3416).

With the debate regarding women as flying witches ending in a stalemate and forever associated with Waldensians because of this singular illustration by an anonymous fifteenth-century illuminator, it could have been that the connection between women flying through the night sky as witches and Waldensianism might have ended. But the entangled ideas of flying witches and Waldensianism continued with another image made a few years later.

The second image of women as flying witches that we will be discussing appears in the fifteenth-century frontispiece of Tinctor's *Invectives Against the Sect of Waldensianism* published in 1468. According to Johannes Tinctor, the "maleficium of the Vaudois will result in these signs":

> Friends and neighbors will become evil, children will rise up against the old and the wise, and villains will engage against the nobles.
> ------*Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*.[154]

The idea that Satan was increasing his pressure on the Church and his presence in the world was not forgotten and the heresies, in particular Waldensianism, became enmeshed with devil worship. Thus, the heretical Waldensians are further understood to be the agents of Satan and part of his war with Christendom.

Some unfortunate citizens of Arras and some from Tournai were accused, and in some cases executed, because they had made a "compact with the devil" by means of their association or identification with the Waldensians because Tinctor made no differentiation between the heresy of Waldensianism and the crime of

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[154] Stuart Clark, "Inversion, Misrule And The Meaning of Witchcraft," Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 155.

sorcery – they were one and the same. Tinctor describes this as the "sin of vauderie."[155]

> How the sin of vauderie is worse than the idolatry of the pagans. It is certain that this crime is entirely new nor was it ever heard of, And just as in apostasy from God there are varying degrees and different ways by which it can happen this detestable sect of witches attains the first and highest degree, for, just as all Christians have promised and solemnly sworn in Holy Baptism to believe, serve, and worship one God and our Savior Jesus Christ, these unchristian and damnable witches have, with unbelievable temerity and audacious unbelief forgotten it, despise it, condemn and abandon it, and moreover with intolerable presumption, they defame, desecrate and, as much as they are able, soil, stain and pollute the most venerable and soul-saving sacraments of Our Holy Mother Church, and they even abuse, in their most abominable superstitions and most infamous and vile sacrifices, the most holy and divine sacrament – fol. 8r.[156]

These apostates, which Tinctor does not refer to as heretics, are so beyond the reach of God and so sacrilegious that there is never any discussion of trying to redeem them from this wicked way of life.

These Waldensians are being used by Satan, then, to commit the "new crime" of witchcraft with all kinds of blasphemies and abominations. According to Tinctor, these Waldensian witches were hard at work attempting to dismantle the Church, and it was therefore imperative to understand that these witches have admitted to these machinations and transgressions by their own confession. These people had abandoned God and his Church and so they could not, by the very fact that they were now "making the depraved angel their god," be treated as good

[155] Paula Simons, "The Witch-Burner's Mein Kampf: Excerpts of Evil," *Edmonton Journal*, October 26, 2012.

[156] Ibid. Quote from Tinctor's *Invectives Against Waldensianism* c. 1460.

Christians. According to Tinctor, even pagans and other nonbelievers were due better treatment because, however misguided they might be, they were not looking to do evil. But these witches – this *vauderie* – was a most hideous crime with no means of redemption, so eradication was the only resolution.

Tinctor's condemnation of these witches/Waldensians is both poetic; "so caked in the mud of vile thoughts" and graphic; "they do not even shrink from having carnal intercourse with the devil transformed into the guise of an animal," that even the most secular of readers could not have resisted being both fascinated and horrified by such descriptions.[157]

In this richly hand-illustrated image from the frontispiece from a French copy of Tinctor's treatise, dated to the 1460s and now housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, we see a very vivid scene of Waldensian witches, both flying to their secret nocturnal meeting and participating in a Sabbath (Figure 2). This main illustration occupies most of the page, and is therefore in a more prominent location than the margin illustration from *Le Champion des dames*. There are also two smaller illustrated medallions in a sepia-hued grisailles that illustrates worshipers kissing an animal under its tail, which is the "obscene kiss" or "sub cauda."[158] In this illuminated frontispiece we see in the foreground of the largest image a group of men and at least one woman, some young and some old, dressed in clothing of the working classes, kneeling in the presence of a large goat. The goat is turned away from them so that its tail and hindquarters are facing them.

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[157] Paula Simons, "The Witch-Burner's Mein Kampf: Excerpts of Evil," *Edmonton Journal*, October 26, 2012.

[158] Richard Kieckhefer, "Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2006, p. 84.

Each person has their hands in a prayerful position with the four people nearest the foreground holding a lit taper candle. There is an older man who's clothing somewhat suggests clerical robes, who is holding up the tail of the goat exposing the goat's anus and genitalia. Everyone is clothed and the apparent worshipping of the goat is orderly and reverent.

It is in this illumination that we see a coalescing of what witchcraft came to increasingly demonstrate in society. The depiction of a goat receiving the obscene kiss in the illumination of Tinctor's *Invectives* is significantly different from the animals described by Gregory IX's decretal letter who are receiving the obscene kiss (See *Vox in rama* in Appendix C). The historical iconography of the goat is associated with sin and therefore the use of a goat in this blasphemous scene is consistent with this animal's association with magical workings, sin, or the devil.

In the middle ground is a green landscape peppered with trees in full summer leaf, while farther in the distance is a river with the towers of a town. This image of a town places this goat-worshipping activity outside the boundaries of "proper" society and in the wild, both literally and symbolically. In the background the deep blue of the night sky with dark shapes of stars is interrupted by the occasional gold-hued figures of demons and witches riding about on animals and broomsticks. A large golden demon is in the center of the background. He is astride a woman with his arms around her waist. The woman is wearing a long dress with her legs apparently bent at the knee and tucked up along the demon's thighs.

The four golden figures just below the above described largest demon and lady are slightly smaller in size. To the left there is a demon, identical in detail as the large demon described previously. This demon is also holding a person, however, this time it is a man and the demon is holding him about the waist, not sitting astride him. This is interesting because it suggests that the largest demon sitting astride the woman could be engaging in sexual activity, while the demon with the man is holding the man at arm's length away from his body, therefore, no sexual activity is suggested. This is important as because the idea that women were sexually active with the devil and his demons is one of the reasons why women were so often accused of being witches. Here there are two individual women, each on a broom, each rendered in the same golden color as the two demons and their human companions. Both women, clothed in long dresses, veiled, their shoulders covered in a shawl, are astride the brooms with their knees sharply bent so that their legs are tucked behind them and their feet are resting on the broomstick.

The bottom medallion features a demon with horns and bony wings (although only the right wing is visible). His right arm is gesturing out to his side, as if he is presenting the animal that is standing before him. The animal standing in front of the demon is very odd; it has a feline body and the head of very monkey. Kneeling down at eye level to the animal's exposed buttocks is an older man, lips pursed and eyes closed as he prepares to kiss the animal's hindquarters with the obscene kiss which appears to be the theme of this page of illuminations. The second medallion, to the right of the large illumination, also features a demon

presenting an animal to be kissed by a kneeling man who is surrounded by other people. There are five people in this scene; all of them are men.

This illumination from the frontispiece of Tinctor's *Invectives* provided Duke Philip of Burgundy and his court with all of the visual clues needed to recognize these witches; the magic of flight, the meeting with demons in the countryside, and the clandestine meeting paying homage to the devil with an obscene kiss, all of which was derived most certainly from teachings about heretical activities and the writings of theologians.[159] What is significant about the iconography of this illustration is that we see a visual conflation of how witchcraft was gradually becoming more fully defined as a blasphemous religious ceremony, of which the obscene kiss carried a special meaning that would not be lost on a fifteenth-century reader from Philip the Good's court.

The featured animals in this illumination include goats, which were often associated with evil during the Middle Ages. This symbolism was likely appropriated from the stories of "the worship of certain horned deities with goat-like features, such as the Greek Pan and the Celtic Cernunnos."[160] However, it is also possible that goats were so commonly associated with witchcraft because of their being the "wicked counterpart to the good sheep of the Bible and also being associated with lust" by the medieval Church.[161]

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[159] Matthew J. Punyi, "A New Crusade: Johannes Tinctor's Sect of Witches," ejournals.library.ualberta.ca, Introduction.

[160] Johnathan Durant and Michael D. Bailey, eds., *The Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2nd Edition, Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012, p. 87.

[161] Ibid.

Of particular focus in this meticulously rendered scene is the depiction of flying people and demons. The night sky filled with people and demons flying about not only illustrates two of the important concepts of witchcraft – those being people flying of their own accord on brooms and people being lifted in the air by demons – but also this scene in the night sky provides dynamic movement to a composition that is otherwise quite static, and it is this part of the image that deserves special attention.

It would seem that the flying figures are not necessarily a part of the scene on the ground. It could be that the scene in the sky is the medieval device of showing the sequence of events to the overall scene with the artist showing the viewer how the people, who are now on the ground surrounding the goat, arrived at the site. In other words, the sequence of events – flying to the meeting and then what happened once they arrived – are all in the same illumination. Flight is the way in which people arrived and left these secret meetings held at night, in the countryside, away from good Christians, dutifully and rightly asleep in their beds. These visual images, the first ones that show Church-defiant characteristics of the witch in the forms of demonic-aided flight and devil worship, are further fleshed out in two texts that illustrate the way in which the belief in flying witches greatly occupied men of the Church and their Inquisitors. The two primary texts that are cogent to this study are the *Formicarius* (1437-38) by Johannes Nider and the *Malleus maleficarum* (1486) by Heinrich Kramer. It is the famous *Malleus* that is thought to have instigated the writing and creation of *De lamiis et pythonicis*

mulierbus by Ulrich Molitor, where we find the first example of an illustrated witch treatise.

Chapter Three:

Nider's *Formicarius* (1437-8) and Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus maleficarum* (1486)

Neither the *Formicarius* nor the *Malleus Maleficarum* contained any visual imagery of witches. However, their detailed and well-crafted written descriptions formed much of the iconography that was adapted for use by visual artists, as we will see in the next chapter. These two books are part of a larger context of print material on witchcraft.

One of the first major inquisitorial manuals was completed in 1324 by a Dominican friar and papal inquisitor who worked in the French region of Languedoc. His name was Bernard Gui (1261-1331) and his manual was entitled *Practica inquisitions haereticae pravitatis* (Practice of inquisition into heretical depravity). In this work Gui discusses sorcery, divination, and necromancy. Although he did not specifically discuss "diabolic witchcraft," it is certain that this manual was very influential as inquisitors were forming their opinions regarding witches' activities and characteristics.[162]

Jean Gerson (1363-1429), a late medieval theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris wrote many treatises and tracts that condemned "sorcery and superstition, including *De probatione spirituum* (On testing spirits) and *De erroribus circa artem magicam* (On Errors in the Magic Art)."[163] Unlike many other theologians of his day, he was greatly concerned with these issues, and even

[162] Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, Lanham, Maryland, and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003, p. 58.

[163] Ibid, p. 55.

though, like Gui, he did not write about diabolic witchcraft, it is likely that his ideas likewise influenced the later development of the diabolic witch.[164]

The most important work of the fourteenth century regarding the sorcery and demonic invocation was that Nicolau Eymeric (1320-1399). In 1376 he wrote *Directorium inquisitorum* (Directory of inquisitors), which in addition to being a general handbook for inquisitorial procedures, Eymeric also "established the basic argument that demonic invocation necessarily entailed the worship of demons."[165] And thus, this influential manual codified that "all demonic magic was de facto heretical and subject to the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts and papal inquisitors."[166] The reason he believed that demonic magic was heresy is that, just as a Christian prays to God for help, those practicing demonic magic are turning to a demon and in so doing are offering a demon the "adoration" that should be offered to God alone.[167] Therefore, in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, demonic magic and heresy had been combined and will be associated with each other even further into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Throughout the fifteenth century there was a study increase in the production of "theoretical tracts on sorcery, witchcraft, and demonological activity, written by both lay judges, clerical inquisitors and demonologists."[168]

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[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid, p. 47.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid, p. 48.

[168] Edward Peters, *The Literature of Demonology and Witchcraft*, 1998, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Witchcraft Collection, Cornell University Library. Available at http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/w/witch/resources.html.

One of the earliest extant accounts of "full-fledged witchcraft in European history" comes from a civic chronicler of Lucerne, Hans Fründ (c.1400-1468). In his records, which describe events that occurred in the Alpine region of Valais in 1428, he describes a "sect of witches and something like a witches' Sabbath, including cannibalism, sexual orgies, and the worship of demons."[169]

The anonymous *Errores Gazariorum* was published in 1440 which is among the first writings to describe in detail the clandestine meetings of witches revolving around their obedience to the devil, which will come to be identified as a Sabbath.[170] There are only two extant manuscript copies of the *Errores*; one is shorter version of and one is a slightly later expanded version.[171] In the longer version the anonymous author describes "witches flying on staves," which is significant to our discussion because it is considered one of the "earliest sources to accept as a reality what was to become the stereotypical image of the night flight of witches."[172]

It was only in the late 1970s that an important witchcraft treatise was rediscovered; *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores manifesti ignorantibus fiant* (That the errors of magicians and witches may be made clear to the ignorant), by the chief magistrate of Briançonnais, Claude Tholosan (? – c. 1450). This work, that he wrote around 1436, was based on his own experience of presiding over

[169] Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2003, p. 51.

[170] Ibid, p. 44.

[171] Ibid, p. 45.

[172] Ibid.

witch trials in the Alpine region of Dauphiné.[173] It was in this region of northern Europe that some of the earliest witch trials in European history were conducted.[174] This treatise is of particular importance because it is the only work of the early fifteenth century that is written by one who had "first-hand experience" in trying accused witches."[175]

Jean Vineti (? – c. 1475) wrote a treatise, *Contra daemonum invocatores* (Against invokers of demons) around 1450. Vineti was a Dominican friar who was a professor of theology at the University of Paris and then became an inquisitor, first in Paris and then at Carcassonne in the south of France.[176] His work is particularly cogent to our discussion of women as flying witches as they apply to Northern Europe because he was one of the "first authorities . . . to present an extended argument against the tradition of the *Canon episcopi* that the night flight of witches to a Sabbath was only an illusion – he maintained that both night flight and the Sabbath itself were entirely real."[177]

Around 1456, Johann Hartlieb (c. 1410-1468), court physician to Duke Albrecht II of Bavaria published *Buch aller verbotenen Kunst* (Book of all forbidden Art), which was one of the first books written about witches in the vernacular.[178] Similar to Vineti, he believed and wrote about "the full reality of

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[173] Ibid, p. 132.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid, p. 136.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid, p. 61.

night flight and the witches' Sabbath, opposing the tradition derived from the *Canon episcopi* that these were demonically inspired illusions".[179]

Nicholas Jacquier (? – 1472) was a Dominican friar who was active at the Council of Basel. He went on to be an inquisitor in France where he presided over some witch trials.[180] In 1456 he wrote *Flagellum haereticorum fascinariorum* (Scourge of heretical witches). In this treatise he stated that witches constituted a new heresy, worse than any previous heresy. He maintained that the "*Canon episcopi's* dismissal of night flight as an illusion, for example, did not apply to this new form of heresy."[181] Thus we have three authorities – Vineti, Hartlieb and Jacquier – all arguing for the "reality of night flight and the witches' Sabbath."[182] Among these writings are the more well-known works of Nider and Kramer who expanded on the characteristics of these witches.

Nider's *Formicarius* and Kramer's *Malleus maleficarum* are particularly important to our discussion because they both devote substantial sections of their books to such descriptions, which were based on accused witches' confessions about witches in flight. These texts are among the most frequently cited references by historians of witchcraft and witch trials of the early modern period, but their specific descriptions of witches have not been as well examined, but are particularly relevant to the developing imagery of women as flying witches.

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid, p. 75.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid.

There were two participants at the Council of Basel (1431 – 1449) that are responsible for the first text to be discussed: Johannes Nider and Peter von Greyers. The Dominican friar, Johannes Nider, wrote a book about the activity of witches and sin called the *Formicarius* (*The Ant-hill or Ant-heap*) (1437-8). Nider was a theologian who was the head of the Dominican priory in Basel in 1431 and was also a lecturer at the University of Vienna in 1434.[183] Nider was also a prominent member of the ecumenical Council of Basel and was appointed by this synod to negotiate with the followers of the Bohemian heretic Jan Hus.[184]

Nider's discussion with a judge from Bern, Peter von Greyers, proved instrumental in the creation of his *Formicarius*. In this book Nider describes some of the conversations he had with von Greyers, who had presided over some witch trials in the upper Simme Valley between 1397 and 1406. Von Greyers described to Nider his prosecution of a sect of "Devil-worshipping sorcerers who devoured infants and performed *maleficia*, in the Simme Valley."[185] According to Judge von Greyers these events had taken place in Bern and the surrounding territories about sixty years previously.[186]

Nider's book is organized as a dialogue, in which a lazy student poses questions, and a theologian, most certainly Nider, replies, all the while discussing the virtues and vices of men and the custom of ants, thus the title "Ant Hill or Ant

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[183] Johannes Nider, "An Early Description of the Witches' Sabbath," 1435, Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 52.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid, p. 35.

[186] Ibid, Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2004, p. 71.

Heap."[187] It is in Book V of the *Formicarius* that Nider discusses the "new sect of heretics" known as *malefici,* or witches.[188] This new heretical sect combined rituals that included harmful magic (*maleficium*), with a rejection of their Christian faith, coupled with horrifying acts of blasphemy and sacrilege.[189]

There are also two other sources that Nider referenced in this dialogue, a Benedictine monk of noble blood who "admitted to an earlier career as a necromancer"(a person who summons spirits of the dead), and an Inquisitor from the diocese of Autun."[190] Nider specifically quotes von Greyers regarding the confession of one Swiss witch who tells him how witches eat babies and then use parts of the babies for their nefarious purposes.

> When Peter had questioned one of the captured witches [as to] how they ate their babies, she said: "This is how. With unbaptized babies, even baptized ones if they are not protected by the sign of the cross and prayers, we kill them in our ceremonies, either in their cradles or by the sides of their parents, who are thought to have suffocated or to have died in some other way. We then quietly steal them from their graves and cook them in a cauldron until their bones can be separated from the boiled meat and the broth. From the more solid material we make an unguent suitable for our purposes and rites and transmutations. From the more liquid fluid, we fill up a flask or bottle made out of skins, and he who drinks from this, with the additions of a few ceremonies, immediately becomes an accomplice and a master of our sect.[191]

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[187] Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies*, 1991, p. 69. Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 52.

[188] Brian P. Levack, ed., *Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2004, p. 52.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid. Johnathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, *The Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, pp. 141-142. Necromancy is "a form of divination that involves summoning the spirits of the dead. In the late-medieval and early-modern periods, necromancy came to mean demonic magic, and specifically a complex, learned form of ritual demonic invocation."

[191] Ibid, pp. 53-54. (See Appendix D for more complete passage).

Through reports, such as these included in the *Formicarius,* we find accounts of witches and their activities from a judge, a monk, and an inquisitor. The witch was becoming more of a distinct person to be believed in and feared, and thus we have an inquisitor writing a witch-identifying manual that further solidified such theories about the activities and motives of witches. These theories came about with the publication of the *Malleus maleficarum,* written by the German Inquisitor Heinrich Kramer (also known as Institoris) in 1486.[192]

Although the *Malleus* is well-known today, in its early editions it apparently did not encourage any witch-hunting activity outside of areas where there had not been witch trials. This was in spite of the fact that it presented such an organized and authoritative manual for detecting and trying suspected witches.[193]

The *Malleus maleficarum* was written in Latin, the language of the Church and the educated. The *Malleus* was written specifically for fellow inquisitors or any civic authority to be involved formally in a witch trial. After its initial

[192] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 2007: "A sense of extreme danger, a simmering resentment of clerical corruption, a fearfulness, a notion that something should be done to purify the Church, identify her enemies and root out the culpable agents of degeneration – some such inchoate feelings were swirling about during the very decades in which Institorus [Kramer] and his fellow-inquisitors were working in the German states, and constituted some of the general psychological and intellectual conditions under which the *Malleus* came to be written. To present an orthodox front in opposition to such forces, and to eradicate at least some of the causes which were giving rise to these feelings, the Dominicans busied themselves partly by writing treatises to influence the learned to adopt their ideas for reform and renovation, partly (in their office as inquisitors) by rooting out heresy wherever and in whatever guise it raised its head." (p. 5)

[193] Ibid, p. 35.

printing in 1486, there were twelve subsequent editions published by 1532.[194] "By 1510 seven editions of the *Malleus maleficarum* had been published, primarily in Speyer, Nuremberg and Cologne.[195]

Signifying the importance of this treatise is the fact that it begins with an Apostolic Bull issued by Pope Innocent VIII. This bull is a personal directive from Pope Innocent VII that authorizes Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger to establish and advise the best ways to rein in these witches and bring them to justice for the benefit of all Christians everywhere. This bull was issued on December 5, 1484 and is known, as: *Summis desiderantes* which translates as "Desiring with supreme ardor."[196] (See Appendix E for entire bull). This bull grants "Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger as "inquisitors of heretical pravity, the former in aforesaid parts of upper Germany, including the provinces, cities, territories, dioceses, and other places as above [Mainz, Kolb, Trier, Salzburg, and Bremen], and the latter throughout certain parts of the course of the Rhine."[197]

Immediately after receiving the Bull from Innocent VIII and prior to the writing of the *Malleus,* Henry Kramer sought to begin his apostolically-sanctioned hunt for "heretical depravity" in the form of witches in Innsbruck but was met with resistance by the Bishop of Brixen. However, as was common, the

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[194] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 13.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Fordham University. Medieval Sourcebook: Witchcraft Documents (15th century). Available at http://Legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/witches1.html.

[197] Ibid.

bishop had decided to send a representative in his place, Cristan Turner, licentiate in the decretals, when Helena Scheurberin was interrogated. Helena and thirteen others had been charged with suspicion of practicing witchcraft.[198] This trial is very important in the life of Kramer because had it gone as he had planned it is likely that he would have been too busy conducting witch trials and therefore, might never have written the *Malleus maleficarum*. But things did not go well for Kramer and his suspicions; he suffered public humiliation when the presence of Johann Merwais, a licentiate in the decretals and a doctor of medicine as well as a lawyer, questioned the validity of the trial and accused Kramer of asking leading questions as well as making other procedural errors. This resulted in the dismissal of the case and the suspects were immediately released.[199] Kramer left Innsbruck and went to Cologne where he wrote, to his mind, the definitive guide to the explanation and identification and trying of witches – the *Malleus maleficarum*, written in 1486 and published in 1487.[200]

Kramer's work is one of his own experience; thus it is heavily informed as being both Dominican and German.[201] Broedel suggests that, particularly in light of his Dominican training, Kramer was "predisposed to accept almost any consistent body of testimony at face value."[202] This inquisitorial procedure of

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[198] Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of witchcraft*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 1.

[199] Ibid, p. 2.

[200] Ibid, p. 3.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid, p. 5

Dominicans meant that they would "repeatedly report as fact anything authenticated by the testimony of 'reliable witnesses.'"[203] Thus we see a preponderance of writings about witches (based on confessions) from Dominicans such as Nider and Kramer.

Kramer and his "authority" had been rejected quite out of hand in Innsbruck and the *Malleus* is his rather pointed response to those who would question his inquisitorial abilities to flesh out and prosecute witches – real witches that posed a real threat to everyone. Henry Kramer (c. 1430 – 1505) probably became a Dominican in his mid-teens. There is not much known about his early years, however, we do know that he was appointed to a papal commission in 1467 to deal with the Hussites, in both Bohemia and central Germany. Kramer's primary role in this commission was "to preach against heresy and to collect money to assist the campaign."[204] In October of that year Rudolf, bishop of Wratislava and papal legate, wrote to Kramer to encourage him in his work of the commission and to inform him that he had "the power to remit sins and the authority to grant plenary indulgences."[205] After apparent success with his work on the commission he was appointed as an inquisitor in 1474 with all of the privileges due a preacher general of the Order.[206] But his appointment was not typical in that he was not assigned to a specific archdiocese or region. Rather, he could choose where he lived and where he practiced his office, and in the case

[203] Ibid.

[204] Ibid, p. 12.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid, p. 13.

that the area already had a assigned inquisitor, he need only acquire "[that Inquisitor's] permission and pleasure."[207] In this role of roving Inquisitor he flourished and was additionally recognized and promoted for "successful prosecution of heretics and witches."[208]

In 1458 he was the confessor to a Waldensian heretic named Friedrich Reiser. Reiser was awaiting execution in Strasbourg.[209] By 1474 Kramer had earned a Master of Arts and was a theology lecturer at the Priory of Schlettstadt. In June of that year he was spared from prison for having preached a sermon where he made inflammatory remarks about Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor.[210] It was only because of the intervention of the master-general of the Order that Kramer did not have to serve any time in prison for having made remarks that "detract[ed] from the majesty of the emperor."[211] His sentence was permanently suspended in 1479.[212]

In 1482 Kramer was under suspicion of having embezzled from funds that he was collecting on behalf of the Pope's promotion of war against the Turks. In March he was summoned to Rome, amidst threats, to answer these suspicions.[213] He was arrested on the orders of Pope Sixtus IV for thievery and lost his office

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[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

[209] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 2007, p. 24.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of witchcraft*, 2003, pp. 13-14.

[212] Ibid, p. 14.

[213] Ibid.

and property.[214] However, there was an apparent resolution; the charges against him were dropped and he was reinstated and appointed Vicar of his home priory.[215] According to Kramer's writings in the *Malleus*, he was traveling about as an inquisitor from February of 1483 to August 1485.[216] It was in October of 1485 that he experienced the failure of the witch trial in Innsbruck which no doubt instigated his writing of the *Malleus*.

It is now generally accepted by scholars that Jakob Sprenger (c. 1436 – c. 1495) was not the co-author of the *Malleus.*[217] Similar to what is believed to be true for Kramer, Sprenger entered the Dominican order in his mid-teens. He was an academic/reformer who was most interested in a return to the simplicity of St. Dominic's founding principles. In 1476, two years after Kramer's first brush with the law for slandering the Holy Roman Emperor, Sprenger was elected Provincial for the Dominican province of Teutonia and appointed Inquisitor General for Germany by Sixtus IV.[218] While Sprenger was enthusiastic for reform and therefore at times made enemies, he was apparently not particularly interested in hunting witches.[219] It was Innocent VIII who brought these two Dominicans together when he re-appointed Sprenger as General Inquisitor for Germany, and

[214] P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 2007, p. 25.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid, p. 30.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Ibid.

especially for the dioceses of Cologne and Mainz; Kramer was appointed as his socius (companion).[220]

The original title for the treatise was *Treatise about Workers of Harmful Magic* or *Treatise against Witches*. At Easter, 1487 a preface was added: "Author's defense of the Malleus maleficarum," and it is the last phrase that endured.[221] Using the word "hammer"- *malleus* – was utilized hundreds of years earlier by St. Bernard of Clairvaux when he described St Augustine as "a very powerful hammer of heretics" and preceding that by the phrase, "hammer of Truth" when describing Catholic orthodoxy.[222]

The *Malleus* is divided into three parts and each part is divided between numbered questions and corresponding answers. Part One discusses the three elements that must occur concurrently to achieve harmful magic or *maleficum*; an evil spirt (*daemon*), a worker of harmful magic (*maleficus*), and God's permission.[223] Part Two outlines and explains the way that magical injuries (*maleficia*) are wrought and how they may be removed or cured.[224] The third and final part discusses the judicial processes that are needed in both "an ecclesiastical and civil court" when prosecuting workers of harmful magic which conveniently also applies to all heretics as well.[225]

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[220] Ibid. To date I have no evidence any studies that Kramer and Sprenger ever conducted a trial together.

[221] Ibid, p. 27.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid, p. 41.

[224] Ibid, p. 116.

[225] Ibid, p. 203.

Perhaps part of the reason that the *Malleus* has so endured over time, particularly during the majority of the witch trials in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is because it was so thorough and organized. "The *Malleus Maleficarum* [is] still the most infamous work of demonology and the first to bring beliefs about witchcraft into a lengthy, compelling synthesis . . ."[226] It is in Book II, Chapter Three where the question is stated: "How They Are Actually Transported From One Place To Another."[227] This is important to our discussion because it demonstrates that the concept of witches' flight was an accepted aspect of the activities of a witch. Kramer notes specific occasions that "one of us" – implying he or Sprenger – had come across actual accounts of such transport and he writes about them (for the complete text see Appendix F). Kramer describes how these magicians are transported via the air and it is noteworthy that he specifically relates the gender of these magic workers as women:

> The way they go about being transported is as follows. It has been made clear from what I have said before. Under instruction from an evil spirit, they make an ointment from the body-parts of children, particularly those they have killed before they have been baptized. They smear it on a chair or a piece of wood, and when they have done this, they are carried at once into the air, day or night, in full sight of everyone or (if this is what they want) invisibly. This happens because an evil spirit can prevent one body from being seen by another in the path [of someone's sight], as made clear. Part I of this treatise when I discussed the way the operations of evil spirits create false illusions. Now, although the evil spirit contrives this for the most part by means of this kind of ointment, with the aim of depriving small children of the grace of baptism and salvation, still, on many occasions he has appeared to manage without: as when [evil

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[226] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze, 2006*, pp. 9-10.

[227] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 2007, pp. 134.

> spirits] have transported the women via animals which were not real animals but evil spirits in that shape. But sometimes [the women] are transported without any external support, merely by the power of an evil spirit, [a power] which operates in visible form.[228]

The inference is not difficult to make that if there were not humans, women in particular, willing to work with him, Satan's work would be greatly hampered or at least somewhat reduced in scale. But now, according to Church authorities, that which began in earnest in the Middle Ages, has grown to an alarming degree; witches are working with Satan to destroy the world, albeit with God's permission. And women, turned witches, are the agents of this destructive evil.

An illustration of transvection by brooms, sticks and apparent animals is exactly what we have seen in the illuminations for *Le Champion des dames* (c. 1451) and the *Invectives Against the Waldensians* (1468). The *Malleus* provides us with a codified explanation of how these flights are able to occur. Believing that witches could fly was then, thanks to the *Malleus* and Kramer's interpretation of how best to protect the Faithful, considered to be a terrifying reality. However, Kramer knew that the Church's stance on flying witches had been met with some resistance, in light of the *Canon episcopi*. Therefore in the reply to Part I, Question One he points out that it is important to look at "the reasonable meaning of the *Canon*."[229] He presents an ecclesiastical logic to the misinterpretation:

> The words of the *Canon* have to be examined in close detail (although I will do this more plainly in Question 2.) Now, divine law in a good many places recommends not only that witches should be avoided, but also that they be wiped out, and *it would*

[228] Ibid, p. 137.

[229] Ibid, p. 45.

> *not impose such penalties if [witches] did not actually make a combined effort with evil spirits to produce real outcomes and cause real injuries.* For death is not inflicted on the body unless the body has committed a grave sin. But it is other-wise with the death of the soul, which can stem from an illusion in the mind, and also from temptation. (Emphasis mine).[230]

Kramer asserts that the *Canon* is only referring to one type of superstition accompanying transvection. However, he also noted that it is "reprehensible" for people to acknowledge that the cause and effect are real (i.e., sickness) but that the "mediating instrument (the witch)" is only in the witch's imagination.

But not everyone was so inclined to take Kramer at his word. Indeed, Archduke Sigismund of the Tyrol had grave doubts about the veracity of Kramer and his *Malleus,* and he therefore appointed Ulrich Molitor to investigate these claims and publish a treatise outlining his findings. In 1489 Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus* was published.

It is in Molitor's treatise that specific woodcuts are included with the text that, for the first time, provided accompanying illustrations of the various activities of witches in a witchcraft treatise.

[230] Ibid.

Chapter Four:

Flight and Metamorphosis; Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus*

In 1489 Ulrich Molitor published a treatise on witchcraft called *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus (Concerning Witches and Fortunetellers)* that includes six woodcut images of witches. Not only did he discuss flying witches and their wicked practices, but his was the first book that presents to the reader visual images of the specific descriptions of witches found in his text. The image pertinent to this discussion is representative of the type of flying witches that have shape-shifted or metamorphosed (Figure 3).

Most early editions, of which there were thirty-nine editions printed from 1489-1669, and of those twenty-one were illustrated,[231] include six basic images: a woman shooting an arrow; three transformed (metamorphosed) witches flying on a hayfork; a male witch riding a wolf; the devil seducing a woman; two witches beside a cauldron; and three women feasting outdoors.[232] The image of *Flying Shape Shifting Witches,* is the earliest known woodcut image of witches in flight.[233] Zika notes that the woodcuts in *De lamiis* accompanied chapters corresponding to the images, and so the image of the metamorphosed witches is

[231] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches: Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulieribus,* 1489-1669," *German History*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2012, p. 495.

[232] Ibid, p. 496.

[233] The University of Glasgow. Virtual Exhibitions. "Witchcraft and Demonology in: Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries." Available at http://gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/virtualexhibitions/damnedart/germanyswitzerlandandthelowcountries/

placed within the chapter entitled: "' Whether they themselves can be transformed into another shape or whether they can transform others.'"[234]

Once the subject was introduced to the printmaking medium from the original manuscript illustration, its reproduction became more prevalent. The images that accompanied the earliest editions of *De lamiis* were done by anonymous wood-carvers and would have been inserted into the book after the text plates were printed.[235] One can assume this because the image of the three metamorphosed witches does not appear on the exact page or opposite page of Molitor's discussion of metamorphosis and flying, where he uses the examples of the classical Circe and the Biblical Simon Magus, but the image is located near the discussion.[236] Furthermore, the scene is a generic image of three witches – two women and a man, who have shape-shifted and are flying with a hailstorm accompanying their travels. This choice of figures within a hailstorm is more likely a reflection of the local folklore that would be familiar to the people of the Tyrol.

People in this part of Europe had, for centuries, acknowledged a belief that there were people such as "ritual magicians, village sorceresses and other indigenous witches, such as the Alpine witch that encompassed the roles of storm caller, wolf rider, milk stealer, and child killer."[237] Stokes states that this local

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[234] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 24.

[235] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches," 2012, p. 496.

[236] Ibid, p. 497.

[237] Laura Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430-1530,* UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 18.

folk lore was easily appropriated, and was early on linked to ideas on diabolic witchcraft because it was simply "the addition of a new character to an old narrative."[238] It was the Alpine witch, particularly associated with the German Alps as well as the valley of the Upper Rhine and Lake Constance, "who dominated the fears of the ordinary people . . . throughout the region from which most fifteenth-century demonologists were drawing their material."[239]

Among the other fifteenth-century witch treatises and manuals, Molitor's book was preferred by many church and secular officials because they appreciated that Molitor reaffirmed the explicit directive of the medieval *Canon episcopi* – that flight was not real – despite Kramer's exposition of the "real" meaning of the *Canon.* However, even though Molitor believed that the reality of witches controlling weather or having the ability to fly were "mere illusions of demons which could not suspend the course of nature," he did advocate that those "female sorcerers who worshipped the Devil" receive harsh treatment, "not for supposed *maleficia* but because of their apostasy."[240]

Molitor attended the universities of Basel and Pavia and earned a degree in canon law. Before he began his service with Archduke Sigismund of the Tyrol, he was an official in the episcopal court in Constance. After the trouble that Kramer had caused in his failed attempt to have thirteen people from Innsbruck condemned as witches in 1485, Archduke Sigismund appointed Molitor to

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[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid, p. 22. Stokes uses the "term 'Alpine Witch' as a shorthand for the concept shared in this part of the Rhine-Alpine region."

[240] Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 2003, p. 45.

investigate witchcraft and the claims that Kramer had stirred up in this town of the Tyrol.[241] As did many of his contemporaries, the archduke had a number of serious doubts about the details Kramer had expounded upon in the *Malleus*, and Archduke Sigismund hoped that Molitor's treatise would clear his mind and cast aside any doubts."[242]

In the dedicatory letter to the text, Molitor explained that the Archduke sought his counsel after a number of "suspected witches and sorcerers" had been caught on the Archduke's lands, causing much confusion among his advisors as to how to handle these people, particularly in light of the claims and instructions of Kramer in the *Malleus.*[243] Therefore, Molitor was asked by the Archduke to investigate, the result of which was his book *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus*. The book was written as a dialogue between himself, the Archduke and Conrad Schatz, the chief magistrate of Constance.[244]

Molitor assigned specific characteristics to each of the three involved in the dialogue in order to present three different opinions.[245] Archduke Sigismund is portrayed in the role of skeptic and Schatz comes down on the side of credulity, often based on his participation in witch trials. Molitor takes the role of the intellectual and teacher who endeavors to draw Schatz and the Archduke into a

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[241] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches," 2012, p. 493.

[242] Edward Peters, "The Medieval Church and State on Superstition, Magic and Witchcraft, Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, editors, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p. 241.

[243] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches," 2012, pp. 493-494.

[244] Ibid, p. 494.

[245] Ibid.

more moderate opinion.[246] Molitor arranged the dialogue in such a way that it is Sigismund who raises questions and Molitor and Schatz who answer.[247] Although there had been illustrations of witchcraft in Le Franc's *Champion des dames* and in Tinctoris' *Invectives*, it is from Molitor's treatise onwards that the witch became "virtually a genre subject."[248] Regardless of Molitor's intentions, *De lamiis* and its woodcut illustrations became a major contributor to the developing visual iconography of the witch.[249]

So, who are these "lamiis" in the title of Molitor's treatise? De lamiis is the singular Latin noun of the plural "lamiae" which means "witch."[250] In classical mythology, Lamia is the queen of Libya and a lover of Zeus. Zeus' wife Hera became insanely jealous and had Lamia's children killed, and this tragedy caused Lamia to become a raging monster that "roamed the night seeking to kill the children of others."[251] As time progressed, her story broadened into a tale of an entire class of monsters or demons that were female, known as lamiae, and who killed children. These *lamiae* were believed to be cannibalistic, with a vampire characteristic of sucking the blood of their victims. These unnatural women/demons were even believed to sometimes play the role of seductress in

[246] Ibid, pp. 494-495.

[247] Ibid, pp. 241-242.

[248] Ibid, p. 242.

[249] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches," 2012, p. 495.

[250] WordSense.eu Dictionary. Available at http://wordsense.eu/lamiae/#Latin.

[251] Johnathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2012, p. 119.

order to seduce young men and then devour them.[252] This idea is believed to have originated from the work of Isidore of Seville who "mistakenly derived the word 'lamia' from the Latin 'laniare' (to tear, savage, mutilate), that later, for authors such as Molitor, 'lamia' became a common term for witches in many areas of Europe."[253] It is significant that "lamia" is a female who is a seductress, a kidnapper and a cannibal as well as being a term used in the *Canon episcopi* where the night-riding witches are referred to as "lamiis."[254]

The image of shape-shifting witches alters the representation we have seen thus far of flying witches – these witches have metamorphosed into half animal/half human in appearance. The belief that witches could be turned into animals, or at least partially so, was often a part of witchcraft narratives and confessions.[255] Even though most contemporaries did not accept the phenomenon as real, it persisted in the lore and confessions of witches for many years.[256] In fact, in Part One of the *Malleus*, Kramer provided a quite detailed discussion of the ability of the Devil and his demons to work tricks of the imagination to make metamorphosis appear. Kramer explained that, once again, those that claim that the *Canon episcopi* would deny metamorphosis outright were mistaken. The *illusion* of metamorphosis was quite possible though conjuring:

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[252] Ibid.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Ibid, p. 145.

[255] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* 1997, p. 191.

[256] Ibid.

> As for the first, it is clear that that text [the *Canon*] is often cited and poorly understood. In terms of what it says about the changing of a form into another variety or appearance, an explanation has been given for how this can happen through the art of conjuring, but as for its saying that some creature cannot be made by power of a demon, if "be made" is understood as "be created," it is obvious that it cannot. If, on the other hand, "be made" is understood as "be made through a natural act of bringing forth," it is certain that they can make certain imperfect creatures in this way. St. Thomas [*First* I.114.4.Ra2] explains how this happens (citation above). He says that all changes of bodily objects that can be made through certain natural powers, including the seeds that are found in the elements of this world (in the way that, for example, snakes and frogs and other such creatures leave their seeds in the earth or in the water), can occur through the workings of demons with the use of such seeds. . .[257] (For full text see Appendix G)

Unlike the two previous hand-painted images that were made in illuminated manuscripts destined for an aristocratic audience, this image is a woodcut. Because woodcuts were less expensive than hand illustrations and could be reproduced more easily, they were often intended for a broader audience. It was in the latter part of the fifteenth century that woodcut illustrations began to accompany printed books, particularly in Germany and the Rhineland.[258] Early woodcuts such as this one were not always associated with their beauty, rather it was the "emblematic features of the early woodcut that were important, not the sophistication of style, since the prints had a popular and utilitarian role in their initial stages."[259] Thus, these woodcuts from *De lamiis* are an excellent example

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[257] Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 201-209. (See Appendix H for complete Question Ten text).

[258] James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 2nd Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 2005, p. 270.

[259] Ibid, p. 14.

of how images were created to further emphasize the nefarious nature of witches for the broader public.

In the woodcut of the three metamorphosed witches we see that these figures are human except for their heads (Figure 3). Two of the figures are astride a cooking or hay fork while one figure is flying by holding on to the clothing of the middle figure. The witch at the upper left has the head of a donkey, the middle witch has the head of a rooster and the witch at the lower right has the head of a dog. The middle witch appears to be wearing men's stockings and a tunic, while the other two witches appear in long dresses or robes. The witches appear to be flying over a somewhat hilly landscape with perhaps a river in the right middle ground and a stand of trees in the upper right background.

At the top of the image there are diagonal lines interspersed with small oval shapes to represent a hail storm. This representation of a hail storm is found in at least one other woodcut in the *De lamiis* and is a common pictorial device used in other images of witches and their conjuring of hail storms. In fact, Wolfgang Behringer makes the observation that:

> Although the belief [weather magic] was long considered theologically suspect, the *Malleus Maleficarum* unquestionably imputed to witches the ability to effect weather-magic, even as jurists and other theologians argued against the possibility. In his [Molitor] consideration of the *Malleus* in 1489, Ulrich Molitor placed the question of weather-magicbefore all others.[260]

[260] Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger and Fear," 2002, p.69.

Weather magic was not an early modern invention – it had been a part of pagan belief and had persisted into the Middle Ages through popular culture.[261] In fact it is to be found among nearly all the Germanic law codes that belief in weather magic was accepted, even to the point of detailing forms of prosecution.[262] And yet, early in Christian history, at the Council of Brega in 563, the Church not only denied the possibility of weather magic, but also set forth its prohibition against such a belief.[263] But with increasing fear and pressure from communities and the writings of theologians regarding demonological studies, the possibility of weather magic was given renewed credence.

In c. 820 Bishop Agobard of Lyon was compelled to write against the belief that sorcerers could "arouse hail and thunderstorms."[264] The Bishop insisted that only God could control the weather and he despaired that "Christians believed things which in better days even pagans would reject."[265] But these were not "better days," and accusing a neighbor of being a witch and creating storms to destroy crops and harm farm animals was a common occurrence, particularly in the Frankish Empire in the area of modern-day Switzerland.[266] Well into the

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[261] Ibid.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 46.

[265] Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger, and Fear," 2002, p. 71.

[266] Ibid, p. 81.

seventeenth century, church bells were rung during thunderstorms in order to protect crops, animals, and members of a community, from weather conjurings.[267]

The largest witchcraft persecution in German-speaking regions during the sixteenth century took place because of the accusation of weather magic. It occurred in Trier, and ultimately cost 300 lives.[268] The trials included committees that "acted on behalf of village communities, following the interests of the peasant population alone."[269] There is a quote from a contemporary chronicler from Trier on the causes of the persecution: "Because everyone generally believed that crop failures over many years had been brought on by witches and malefactors out of devilish hatred, the whole land rose up to exterminate them.'"[270]

Hail storms were discussed in numerous texts, including the anonymous *Errores Gazariorum* (Errors of the Cathars, although Cathars, originally dualist heretics, here means witches), was written by an Inquisitor, probably in Savoy, in 1437.[271] This anonymous Inquisitor wrote in detail about the conjuring of hail storms:

> Further, some convicted members of the sect who have already been burned confessed that storms and bad weather have been commanded by many devils together on the top of a mountain to break up ice . . . They say that some of them and not all do this, because not all have the power or audacity to do this, carrying the

[267] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 55.

[268] Ibid, p. 71.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, Editors, *Witchcraft in Europe: 400-1700*, 2001, p. 159.

> ice during a period of stormy weather through the air with the help of the devil, using their staffs to destroy crops of their enemies or of certain neighbors.[272]

Behringer suggests that it was "the common people's fear of hail storms [that] was regularly attributed to the activity of witches [because it was] derived primarily from the threat to subsistence agriculture rather than from religious reasons."[273] Whether couched in economic or religious explanations or a combination of both, the weather magic of witches was perceived as a very real and dangerous threat.

Perhaps another reason why witches were so often associated with hail storms, particularly the Alpine witch, was because the valleys around the great Alpine lakes were particularly susceptible to such extreme weather patterns with driving rain and high winds. The people of early modern Europe did not know that this area was prone to devastating hail storms because of its geography. All of the differences in elevation in a mountainous region make that region subject to strong updrafts that set up the ideal conditions for hailstorms. This geographical type further enhances the chance for strong thunderstorms (including lightning and strong winds) with large damaging hail because of the differences in temperature between the upper and lower atmosphere.[274]

It is interesting to note that the type of storms a witch could conjure depended upon the unique geography of the area. For instance, farther north in the

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[272] Ibid, p. 161.

[273] Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger and Fear," 2002, p.72.

[274] Laura Stokes, *Demons of Urban Reform,* 2011, pp. 28-29.

Alpine region witches were accused of creating avalanches in addition to hail storms. In England and Scotland witches were accused of causing storms at sea.[275]

This image of three metamorphosed witches from *De lamiis* riding through the sky as a hail storm breaks above them reflects this feared aspect of witch activities regarding the weather. The fork on which these three witches ride is depicted in a fashion representing ascension diagonally across the scene, the middle figure with the head of a rooster is sitting astride the fork in what could be described as knee britches with stockings. He is wearing some kind of tunic over his torso because the witch behind him is holding onto the hem of his tunic. This male witch has shape-shifted into an amalgam of human and rooster. If one follows the arc of this male witch's body and gaze one can observe the witch below him. Here we have a dog-headed witch wearing a robe or dress.[276] She is not sitting astride the fork, but rather flying along with the fork and the other two witches with only her hand grasping the fork and her other hand holding on to the tunic of the male witch.

Her dog's head appears to include a dog collar around her canine neck. Perhaps this detail was added to further differentiate her appearance from what could be a sheep or lamb because of the lack of typically canine details of a dog such as fur, paws or a tail. While the other two animals represented in this scene, where the head alone is readily recognizable as a specific animal, it is not the case with the dog. In fact, in some later editions of the *De lamiis* when this scene is recreated, this particular head sometimes looks like the head of monkey. This

[275] Ibid, p. 29.

[276] Natalie Kwan, "Woodcuts and Witches," 2012, p. 497.

dog-headed witch, while not seated with the other witches, is shown in the same diagonal pose, only more so because her entire body is shown as its own diagonal mirroring the fork, thus adding a dynamism to the composition.

Finally, we have the witch riding the fork at the apex of this diagonal composition. She is wearing a collarless dress with a scooped neckline, long sleeves and full skirt. There is one dainty foot sticking out from under her skirts. This witch has the head of a donkey – very recognizable with the long profile and the long, oval shaped ears. This image specifically accompanies the section of *De lamiis* that discusses metamorphosis.[277] According to Stuart Clark, "the idea that witches could change themselves and others into animals is another instance of an inversion with moral and political overtones." He quotes Rodney Needham in stating that ". . . inconstancy of form [is] one of a number of modes in which certain [mythical] narratives represent the evasion of constraints."[278] This idea of "evasion of constraints" is an appropriate representation of one of the dangers of witches, particularly as it applies to women. As she shape-shifts, the witch defies convention and is literally flying in the face of social order.

A further interesting question is why these three particular animals are represented. It could be a reference to the fact that witches could exist in any community, and these animals are the kinds that were found in many households, thus emphasizing the domestic nature of witchcraft. It is also compelling to consider the classical associations of these animals, which would have

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[277] Ibid.

[278] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* 1997, p. 97. Rodney Needham was a social anthropologist who died in 2006. This quote is from his book *Primordial Characters* written in 1978.

complemented the ancient examples of metamorphosis that Molitor describes in the text – that of Circe and Simon Magus.

The writers of Greek antiquity had specific symbolic associations for these animals. The ass symbolized foolishness. In Greek mythology Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded the gates to the realm of the dead and was believed to be a guide for spirits in the underworld.[279] Roosters' blood was believed to be a way to increase the fertility of the soil, so roosters were sometimes sacrificed for that purpose.[280] The antique symbolism of these three animals represents the magical connotation that would explain their inclusion in this image of metamorphosed witches. With roosters being used in fertility blood rituals, dogs being the guardians of the realm of the dead, and donkeys being representative of foolishness: these choices by the artist are certainly complementary to the depiction of wicked women, and men, shape-shifting into these animals.

However, because we do not know who the woodcut carvers were nor their inspiration, it is also possible these particular animal heads were randomly chosen or they were perhaps based on the late-medieval tradition of wearing animal masks during carnival season. Zika notes that wearing masks at carnival that represented particular animals had special meaning that could be associated with these metamorphosed witches, such as the ass who represented folly, or the

[279] Miranda Bruce-Mitford, *The Illustrated Book of Signs and Symbols,* New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004, p.60.

[280] Ibid, p. 64.

rooster who was associated with "exhibitionism, transgression and sexual order."[281]

Ultimately, however, the inspiration for this image that accompanies Molitor's text regarding metamorphosis seems to be more a response to the *Malleus* than the reflection of a specific instance of metamorphosis, which was actually rarely a concern in early witch trials.[282] In the *Malleus* metamorphosis was discussed at length, which underlines the idea that Molitor had indeed created his book as a response to Kramer and his *Malleus*. *De lamiis* expounds upon many ideas set up in the *Malleus,* and does so with the addition of printed images. With this image of witches flying over the countryside, we are therefore introduced to the first mass-produced image of flying witches. This simple woodcut precedes our next image by only about eleven years. The next image, *The Witch*, by Albrecht Dürer, expands upon the visual depiction of the flying witch to include classical references as well as those associated with Alpine folklore in an elegant single-sheet engraving that must be understood as a work of art made outside the confines of a text.

[281] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 24.

[282] Ibid.

Chapter Five:

Durer's *Witch* and Its Significance to Witch Iconography

The German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer introduced an image of a woman as a flying witch in what is a more refined and artistic visual vocabulary with his engraved print entitled *The Witch*, c. 1500. This engraving codified the iconography of the female witch for centuries to come (Figure 4). This small single sheet that measures 4" tall by 2" wide, was printed using a copper engraving and can be found at the British Museum in London.

In this image, the primary figure is a naked woman riding backward on a goat. The woman and the goat form an arch supported by two putti. Directly beneath them is open sky and a view of the horizon which could represent a shore line and a body of water. In the lower third of the engraving are two putti (a type of winged baby or cherub) on the ground beneath the riding witch.[283] The putto on the left appears to be in the act of tumbling into a kind of somersault while holding a stick. The putto on the right is reclining on the ground and reaching for the stick that the putto on the left is holding upright just beyond the reach of the putto to his right.

Providing a visual compositional link between the riding witch and the putti cavorting on the ground below are two standing putti; the one on the left is partially obscuring the hindquarters of the goat and is lifting a small topiary above his head to rest on his shoulder. The putto standing to the right is holding a stick

[283] Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art,* Sixth Edition, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006, p. 698. "Putto (pl. putti) is a figure of a male baby, often winged, that is used in Renaissance painting, sculpture, ad architectural decoration. Sometimes these figures personify love and are called cupids or amoretti; sometimes they are intended to represent angels and are called angeletti. Often they are purely decorative."

and a ball or a sphere. In the figures of the woman, goat and four putti there is a circular composition that is tightly contained providing a visual swirl of woman, goat and putti. Besides the figural grouping and the horizon line beneath the riding woman, the only other compositional feature is to be found in the groups of diagonal lines and small abstract shapes in the upper left corner of the engraving.

It is at the time of this image by Dürer, made at the turn of the sixteenth century, that images of witches begin to appear in various guises, particularly in Germany.[284] While the scholar Dorinda Neave states that Dürer was "one of the first artists to assimilate the teachings of the demonologists and present a visual counterpart for the ideology," it is debatable whether or not Dürer was inspired by demonological treatises or Inquisitors' manuals as posited by Neave.[285] Neave analyzed Dürer's *The Witch* from her theory that he was directly inspired in particular by the *Malleus maleficarum*, but there is no historical or anecdotal evidence that Dürer read the *Malleus,* particularly in light of the fact that the *Malleus* was primarily written for Inquisitors of the Church and secular officials dealing with witch accusations and trials.

Margaret Sullivan instead noted that the influence of ancient mythological stories of figures such as Circe and Hekate found in Greek and Latin literature at this time fueled viewer's interests in the history of witchcraft.[286] This influence on Dürer seems much more likely, given the classical interests of his humanist

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[284] Dorinda Neave, "The Witch in Early Sixteenth-Century German Art," 1998, p. 4.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Margaret Sullivan, "The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien," *Renaissance Quarterly,* Vol. 53, No. 2, (Summer, 2000), p. 343.

friends in Germany, and his own studies of classicism while traveling in Italy. Dürer's friend Willibald Pirckheimer was a well-known humanist, and men like Pirckheimer were not only interested in their souls' destinations but also in their human experiences and in the many guises these human experiences took, for good or for ill, through history. These ideas reflected Neo-Platonic thoughts that were emanating from Italy at this time. It is because of this humanist context that Dürer likely created this specific image of a witch not as a religious admonition so much as a contemporary homage to the mythologies of antiquity blended with current ideas on witchcraft that he likely developed as an admirer of Martin Luther.[287]

The only other extant image of a witch that Dürer created was an engraving done approximately three years previous to *The Witch* and is known as *The Four Witches,* a print from 1497 that is located in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., but this image was not thought to be an image of four witches until the seventeenth-century artist Joachim von Sandrart labeled it in this way.[288] These two works are still not completely understood within Dürer's career given that he only made two witch images, if the identifications are correct, and they were both created relatively early in his career and also early in the history of the witch panics.

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[287] Stefano Zuffi, *Dürer*, Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2012, p. 148. "The artist's comments and letters of this time [1520s] reveal his deep emotional participation in the events surrounding Luther and the progress of the Reformation, which was introduced in Nuremberg between 1521 and 1524 without appreciable unrest. Obvious signs of Dürer's sympathy and his concern with safeguarding the Word of God can be seen in the paintings of the Four Apostles from 1526, which he donated to his home town, adorned with appropriate inscriptions."

[288] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 301, n. 68.

I suggest that his two images portraying witches are primarily classically inspired and reflective of his interest in the tales of witches and the "diabolical" magic of antiquity rather than a kind of manifesto of his own beliefs regarding witches and their possible existence. These images are perhaps his experiment in representing the evil, subversive, untamed nature of humanity in the guise of women, who were, according to the ancient philosopher Aristotle among others, so susceptible to wickedness. Could these images, particularly the engraving of *The Witch*, be Dürer's classical assertion of the evil nature of women as witches? Because we have yet to discover any of Dürer's own thoughts regarding this work, we are left with many questions. One of the acknowledged experts in Dürer scholarship, Erwin Panofsky states merely that *The Witch* illustrates a perverted world, and he provides no additional analysis.[289] Without an established or explained iconographical meaning evident for *The Witch*, scholars, both well- and lesser-known, have been reluctant to assign any detailed analysis to this engraving.

Art historian Linda Hults posits that Dürer's *The Witch* "exempli[fies] the Renaissance interest in the study of age."[290] This is an intriguing idea and certainly possible. On more than one occasion Dürer left his home and traveled to Italy to study the great works of Roman antiquity – an excursion that artists of the period were expected to take. In the autumn of 1494 he traveled to Venice and

[289] Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005 (orig. 1943), p. 83. Erwin Panofsky in *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* states simply that *The Witch* depicts "the weird witch – riding backward on a goat to illustrate the idea of a topsy-turvey, or perverted world."

[290] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, p. 73.

visited some other towns as well, such as Padua, and he returned to his home in early 1495. He then returned to Italy in the middle of 1505 where he stayed until somewhere near the end of 1506.[291] In between his trips to Italy, he engraved, *The Witch*.[292]

The focal point of the composition is the woman – the witch – who is seated backward on a goat looking in the direction from which she has come rather than facing forward. She is a large, old woman with an almost masculine body and musculature save for her small sagging breasts. Her face and neck are finely detailed and present an aging profile of sagging jowls and wrinkles around her mouth and eyes. It is here with Dürer's *The Witch* that a distinctly old woman is representative of female witches.

There are ample examples of malevolent, old women as witches in the tales from the Classical world, perhaps none so terrifying than that of Erictho created by the writer Lucan (3-65 CE). In this terrifying figure we have many of the characteristics that we find associated with witches of the Renaissance. Here is the disturbing description of Erictho by Lucan:

> Haggard and loathly with age is the face of the witch, her awful countenance, overcast with a hellish pallor and weighed down by uncombed locks, is never seen by the clear sky; but if storm and

[291] Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, (orig. 1943), pp. 8-9.

[292] Arthur M. Hind, *A History of Engraving and Etching: From the 15th Century to the Year 1914*, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1963, p. 71. According to Arthur Hind, the author of the classic text, *A History of Engraving and Etching: From the 15th Century to the Year 1914*, "Albrecht Dürer can be pronounced almost without qualifications as the greatest of all line-engravers – a man who had found in this phase of art a means of expression perfectly at one with his genius."
James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art, 2nd Edition,* 2005, p. 248. In many instances artists who took up engraving were initially trained by goldsmiths or jewelry makers, as was Dürer, and as a result, engravings were seen as a more elevated type of print than woodcuts, and quickly were considered a work of art that went beyond its didactic function to show a more aesthetic intention.

> black clouds take away the stars, then she issues forth from rifled tombs and tries to catch the nocturnal lightenings. . . . She creates zombies for her service, feasts on the bodies of children, and snatches corpses from sepulchers for her enjoyment. . . the witch eagerly vents her rage on all the limbs, thrusting her fingers into the eyes, scooping out gleefully the stiffened eyeballs, and gnawing the yellow nails on the withered hand.[293]

She needs the "fresh blood that gushes forth when a throat is slit" and unborn fetuses "in order to offer them on a burning altar."[294] This idea of blood lust, the sacrifice of the unborn, and feasting on bodies of both children and adults in a graphically hideous fashion all are repeated as the figure of the witch reemerges in the early modern period.

As we reflect on this image of a savage hag it is interesting to note that there was an uneasy kind of cultural respect due to the elders (including old women) within the early modern community. But this respect was often countered with caustic satire as young people made much fun of older people and their physical characteristics and personality traits.[295] There is recorded a typical early modern commentary that naturally gives rise to the very characteristics that women as witches were accused of exhibiting:

> . . . in our old age . . . we may see . . . sin and lusts . . . which we saw not before. . . [they] are covetous . . . fearful . . . touchy, peevish, angry and forward . . . unteachable . . . hard to please . . . full of complaints. . suspicious . . . and apt to surmise, suspect and fear the worst.[296]

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[293] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 31.

[294] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, p. 121.

[295] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 171.

[296] Ibid.

These troublesome characteristics were believed to be physically linked to the imbalance of the humors, particularly melancholy which was often linked to old age and a kind of insanity. This would make the old particularly vulnerable to the devil who was believed to move by mediation of the humors.[297] In specific regard to old women there was also the aspect of hormonal consequences of menopause and the cessation of the ability to give birth. Matalene suggests that old women had simply lived beyond their usefulness.[298] With the average age of many accused witches being fifty and older, it could be interpreted that these women would be suspect just because they had lived so long.[299] Roper points out that there was a real cultural "hatred" of older women in early modern Europe. In addition, portraying the physical breakdown of a woman's body proved to be of some fascination for artists and poets alike.[300]

It was believed that while women were physically more moist and cold, as they became older their bodies became drier and this change in their physicality made them more lustful because they craved moisture.[301] Also, because they had ceased menstruating it was believed they had lost the ability to rid their bodies of impurities.[302] Young men were to be particularly careful when they were sought out by these older women due to what was believed to be the nearly blasphemous

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[297] Ibid.

[298] Carolyn Matalene, "Women and Witches," Brian P. Levack, ed., *Witchcraft, Women and Society,* Vol. 10*,* 1992, p. 585.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 177.

[301] Ibid, p. 164.

[302] Ibid.

appetites of old women because "her dry body hungers after his male seed."[303] Her sexuality was evil in that she could no longer conceive children, her sexuality was not needed because it did not lead to fertility and procreation. In the guise of an old female witch, we are therefore presented with a sexually aggressive woman who is revolting in appearance due to her sagging and misshaped body.[304] It was not just her physical appearance that went against "proper" images of women, however, but it was also her body gestures.

In *The Witch* her mouth is open as if she is speaking, but by the way in which her brow is furrowed, it can be assumed that she is not saying something pleasant or blessing those around her, but rather, she is probably speaking a curse. For many accused witches this is how they were identified – by a curse they had allegedly spoken to their neighbors. A curse was a kind of inverted blessing or malevolent wish, and often it would call upon events of history or religious tradition.[305]

Many of the women who were accused of being witches were not only old but were also widows or other such women with family support who were economically dependent on their community, and as such they were often seen as a nuisance. Keith Thomas, in his book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, found that in England many of those accused of witchcraft had asked for charity, and when it was refused, something negative happened to those who refused them.

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[303] Ibid.

[304] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, p. 141.

[305] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p.82.

This type of story is recorded over and over again throughout early modern Europe:

> In the Jura region along the French-Swiss frontier, most witch trials originated in charges against an impoverished and quarrelsome neighbor who had repeatedly cursed the accuser. More than half the witchcraft cases in the Finnish province of Ostrobothnia stemmed from disputes about begging or other village quarrels. In Scotland too, most suspects were accused by their neighbors of cursing their victims after being refused some favor.[306]

An even more lascivious symbolism of the open mouth of this witch is that there had been a tradition that the wide-open mouth symbolized a woman with a wide-open vagina.[307] This theory is consistent with the idea of the sexually ravenous old woman.

Looking back at the print, we see that her long hair is also flying behind her. The hair of women accused of witchcraft was believed to embody a malevolent power, and this was not solely the hair on their heads, but also hair under their arms and pubic hair as well. In fact, the idea of a witch's hair being a link to their power is found among stories from antiquity. Horace (65-8 BCE) describes the witch "Sagana as one who 'bristles with streaming hair'" and speaks also of Canidia, whose "locks and disheveled head are entwined with short vipers."[308] Perhaps the most famous magical hair in pre-Christian antiquity is that

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[306] Ibid, p. 88.

[307] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 176.

[308] Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witch Sourcebook*, Horace, "Canidia as a Witch Figure," 2004, p.22. "In Horace's *Fifth Epode* from his *Odes and Epodes* he describes "how Canidia, identified as a witch, has led a group of witches, which includes Sagana, Veia, and Folia, to kidnap a Roman boy of noble birth and bury him up to his chin. Their purpose was to obtain his liver so that they could make a love potion from it and regain the affection of Varus, Canidia's former lover. . . In

of Medusa's twisting locks, which are entwined with writhing serpents. Here, a woman's hair has become terrifyingly powerful.[309] In addition, the way in which the hair of Dürer's *Witch* is depicted is a direct reference to the perversion of nature in that she is seated in a backward position and therefore her hair should be flying toward her face rather than away from it. Stuart Clark makes the observation that all sorts of perversions and inversions were commonly referred to in scholarly demonology and this curious behavior of this witch's hair is an additional artistic reference to the perversion of nature represented in the witch.[310]

Following her gaze next, it appears that this witch is looking at the lines and small shapes coming from the left upper corner of the engraving. Scholars agree that these lines and shapes represent a hail storm, and we have seen this visual template already, in the woodcut for Molitor's *De lamiis.*

The witch is also naked, except for a cloak that is draped over her right shoulder. In her right hand she holds a distaff, one of the tools women used when spinning thread.[311] Spinning thread was a respectable and expected part of a

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depicting Canidia, Horace contributes to the creation of the classical witch-figure, which Ovid and Seneca had already helped to form. That image was enduring, and it influenced early modern depictions of the witch, especially during the period of the Renaissance, when works of classical authors had great authority and influences. Horace's depiction of Canidia was not intended to instill fear of magic and witchcraft in his audience. His grotesque image of the witch, in this episode and in *Satire* 1.8, where he shows Canidia digging for human bones in the cemetery at night, is intended to mock and debunk witchcraft, not to give it credibility. He was skeptical of the powers of magic, and he opposed the payment of witches for their services. He apparently also supported legislation by the Roman Emperor Augustus to suppress the actual practice of magic."

[309] Susannah Marriott, *Witches, Sirens and Soothsayers*, UK: Octopus Books, 2008, p.343.

[310] Stuart Clark, "Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft," Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader*, 2002, p. 151.

[311]Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, Manchester and NY: Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 17. " . . . the universal tool of women in the Middle Ages, the distaff, could symbolize either good or evil, depending on whose hand it was in." If the distaff was in the hands of a saint, such as St. Elizabeth of Hungary in a 1517 woodcut then it was

woman's duties in the home. Because this task was uniquely a woman's responsibility, it is not surprising that witches, increasingly believed to be most often female, would many times be depicted with this distinctly female occupational tool. And yet, this reference may be more literary than literal. The tools associated with weaving could be a Classical allusion to the idea of the Fate, Clotho, weaving the thread of life. In antiquity it was believed that there were three "Fates," or goddesses, who were responsible for determining the course of each human life.

> They were described as daughters of Night to indicate the darkness and obscurity of human destiny - or [they were described as daughters] of Zeus and Themis, that is 'daughters of the just heavens.' They were Clotho, who spun the thread of life; Lachesis, who held it up and fixed its length; and Atropos, who cut it.[312]

Perhaps Dürer's inclusion of the distaff represented both the contemporary symbolism of wifely duties and the classical allusion to ancient mythologies of Zeus' daughters and their power over the fate of individual people. Many people would have argued that attempting to determine the fate of various community members was exactly what a witch was endeavoring to do.

The provocative way in which this woman is holding the distaff quickly sets her apart from the image of the obedient caretaker of the home, however. This flying witch is holding the distaff by situating it between her thighs causing

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meant to "illustrate the 'spiritual spinner.'" However, in the hands of "the ordinary housewife [she] is depicted using her distaff as a weapon with which to beat a man, as in prints by Israhel van Meckenem or on misericords."

[312] Thomas Bulfinch (1796-1867), *Bullfinch's Mythology Illustrated*, New York: Avenel Books, 1978, p. 904.

the fingers of her right hand to point to her pubic area thus likening the distaff to a phallus and therefore heightening the allusion to what was believed to be the unnatural and lascivious nature of female witches.[313] The unbridled and insatiable sexuality of these women was considered one of the primary reasons for their susceptibility to their physical lusts. Here it was believed that women and their orgies with demons were merely an extension and likewise a perversion of their natural lust.[314] Associating women with lustful witches was not only highlighting their sinful nature, but also identifying the very characteristic that led to the first woman being seduced by the Devil, thus providing the catalyst for the downfall of mankind. Eve had lusted for knowledge and created the initial fall of man and now women/witches lusted for sex and power and were continuing the work that Satan had begun in the Garden; to destroy the human race.

With her left hand twisted behind her she clutches one of the goat's horns.[315] Her hand and arm are rendered in such a way that reveals great physical strength by the musculature and substantial proportions of her shoulder, arm, wrist, and fingers – thus a further perversion of the ideal feminine form of delicate and graceful beauty that was glorified through contemporary images such as

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[313] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 154.

[314] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, p. 137.

[315] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, "The horn of the he-goat refers to practices similar to the backward ride in the culture of pre-modern European societies. A cuckolded husband was made to wear the phallic horns of the goat, marking him as a fool who had failed to maintain his male virility and honor. The horn sign was consequently associated with fools in the popular broadsheets of the sixteenth century, a visual variant of allusions to cuckoldry and gender inversion in contemporary proverbs. The cuckold, who allowed his wife to commit adultery and escape control, also allowed the proper gender and moral order to be reversed. He had acted like a goat, in so far as he had abrogated his masculine authority and allowed another male access to his mate. His action brought about his sexual and social emasculation, and consequent exposure to public ridicule." (p. 29).

Botticelli's *Venus* and the many Madonnas by Raphael. The goat on which she rides is covered in a shiny coat of long hair. Dürer has depicted him in an arching pose as if he is leaping across the sky. There is a fresco in Ferrara Italy that features a woman (albeit fully clothed) riding a goat across a night-time sky and it is quite possible that Dürer, during his first trip to Italy was inspired by this scene as he considered the composition for *The Witch*. The fresco, *Mese de Marzo,* c. 1464, was created by Francesco del Cossa for the Palazzo Schifanoia. However, Dürer's goat differs from the goat by del Cossa in that Dürer's goat is realistically rendered apart from his hindquarters that provide no indication of hind legs. While it is true that there are two putti partially obscuring both the goat's front and hindquarters, Dürer does provide us with a glimpse of the goat's front legs but not the back legs. Rather than accepting that this is a kind of oversight, particularly in view of all the careful attention to detail that Dürer provides in the rest of the engraving, scholars generally agree that this is the goat of Capricorn.

The figural symbol of the astrological sign of Capricorn is the goat; however, rather than a goat's natural hindquarters, a Capricornian goat has the tale of a fish or serpent. As Charles Zika points out, "There is the allusion to the god Saturn through the depiction of the Capricornian goat with the tail of a fish or a serpent . . . thus Dürer's riding witch becomes a 'child of Saturn,' who unmans through sexual violence and appropriates power in the manner of her 'father.'[316]

[316] Charles Zika, "Dürer's Witch, Riding Women and Moral Order," 1998, p. 29. Saturn was one of the twelve Titans. Saturn castrates his Father, Uranus, so that he can rule in his place and then marries his sister Rhea. Saturn swallows his children as they are born should one of them repeat his own action and one of them try to usurp him. One of his sons, Jupiter is hidden by Rhea and then after growing up Jupiter forces Saturn to vomit up all of his siblings and thus the Olympian gods and goddesses are born, so to speak.

This inauspicious character of Saturn is also transferred to the goat in Christian belief through the association of goats with that of lustful behavior. As ideas became codified in the early years of Church organization the concept of the "Seven Deadly Sins" or the "Seven Vices" were recognized and one of them was that of lust.[317] The most common way in which an artist represented the vices, or the seven deadly sins, in the fifteenth century was to depict them allegorically as women riding animals, and the woman riding a goat was the figure of lust."[318] The representation of this witch riding a goat with a clear reference to the Capricornian goat representing Saturn is a great amalgam of Classical and Christian symbolism sure to be understood by its audience.

The Classical reference of the four putti, earthbound and chubby, are appropriate to Renaissance representations of these figures that are often in the company of gods and goddesses of Greek and Roman antiquity. Putti many times are depicted accompanying Aphrodite/Venus, the goddess of love. Zika suggests that these playful putti are a visual indicator that just as there is a lustful side to Aphrodite/Venus, so too is lust present in the witch of Dürer's making.[319]

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[317] The Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/536446/seven-deadly-sins. "In Roman Catholic theology, [these are] the seven gravest sins. They are classified as 'deadly' not merely because they constitute serious moral offenses but also because they spur other sins and further immoral behavior. First enumerated by Pope Gregory I (the Great) and elaborated in the 13th century by Thomas Aquinas, they are (1) vainglory, or pride, (2) greed, or covetousness, (3) lust, or inordinate or illicit sexual desire, (4) envy, (5) gluttony, which is usually understood to include drunkenness, (6) wrath, or anger, and (7) sloth."

[318] Charles Zika, "Dürer's Witch, Riding Women and Moral Order," 1998, p. 29.

[319] Ibid. ". . . there is the reference to Aphrodite Pandemos, the earthly Venus, goddess of lust and of the night, on whom, as Charmian Mesenzeva has argued, Dürer modeled his figure of a witch. The winged putti similar to those associated with Priapus of Dionysius cults in the fifteenth century Italian representations, become her attendants, they are acolytes of a goddess of lust who through their somersaults define that lust as inversion."

However, there is something decidedly anti-classical about this scene that suggests that Dürer, while incorporating the symbolism of antiquity, was also utilizing Christian symbolism as well. In Greek and Roman mythology, the gods and goddesses rarely rode animals, rather they rode on chariots pulled by various animals.[320] In Christian symbolism of the Seven Deadly Sins, however, women were often depicted astride animals, which perhaps indicates a more symbiotic relationship with human and animalistic vices while animals in the service of classical gods and goddesses indicates a more traditional and subservient role of the animal to the deity.

Finally, there is the puzzling presence of a small topiary tree or hedge in a pot being held by the putti to the left. Dorinda Neave takes an interpretive leap when she suggests that it could be a tree that is referred to in a story of a confession of a suspected witch in the *Malleus maleficarum*.[321] The only other reference to this tree is contained within an article written by Walter Strauss. He interprets the tree to represent a potted thorn apple plant.[322] The thorn apple plant was found among the ingredients for a recipe for flying ointments as written by Giovanni Battista Porta in *Magiae naturalis sive de miraculis rerum naturalium* (Cologne: 1562).[323] This is not a positive identification by Strauss and his other

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[320] Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies,* 1991, p. 104.

[321] Dorinda Neave, "The Witch in Early Sixteenth-Century German Art,"1988, p. 5.

[322] Walter Strauss, "The Wherewithal of Witches," *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 1983, p. 20.

[323] Ibid.

interpretations of the engraving are problematic; he states that the putto standing to the right is holding an ointment jar which most scholars believe is rather a toy ball that accompanies the sticks that he and the other putti are holding. Strauss also states that the putto somersaulting to the left is breaking wind. This seems highly unlikely because there are other artistic representations of animals and people who are doing this and they are always depicted with lines coming out from their center of their buttocks which clearly represented the passing of gas.[324] Therefore, Strauss' observations are in need of further substantiation and consensus. In regard to the troublesome topiary there is apparently no consensus as to its meaning and most scholars simply choose to leave it unexplained. Aside from the reference of thorn apple as used for flying ointments (as stated above), the actual thorn apple fruit looks very similar to the prickly-appearing form of the topiary in Dürer's engraving, and thus I think it is this plant that is depicted here, since it is most symbolic of the plant-based workings of witches and their magic.

As has already been mentioned when discussing Strauss' thoughts about the symbolism of this engraving, the putto standing to the right is likewise holding items that have stymied historians as to their exact meaning. The stick and ball does have precedence as a visual reference to child's play in Renaissance art, however, there is not a clear consensus regarding the meaning of this ball-playing putto. It has been suggested that perhaps this putto with his ball and stick could represent the playful "nature of instinctive desire."[325] It has also been interpreted

[324] Ibid.

[325] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p.74.

that the sphere or ball-shaped object is a jar that could be used in conjunction with spell work.[326] This seems much less likely because of the stick that accompanies this jar and the precedent for putti to be depicted with balls and sticks as comparable to children playing with toys. The putti accompanying this goat-riding weather witch are very classically portrayed in all of their chubby and winged glory.

With the image of the witch, Dürer abandons the beautiful proportions of Greek and Roman art for that of an aging woman who exhibits a sagging physique and facial contortions more worthy of a Greek gorgon than that of a woman. This woman is old, naked and provocative. She is the antithesis of classical beauty as well as the polar opposite of a respectable woman of her day. Dürer represents her as both profane and socially depraved. Riding backward on a goat, as well as the reversal of Dürer's own monogram in the lower right of the engraving, symbolizes inversion for which a witch was accused as she joined up with the devil and his demons to subvert the order of both nature and humanity in early modern Europe.

Stuart Clark makes the case that Renaissance descriptions of the nature of Satan, the character of hell and, above all, the ritual activities of witches shared a vocabulary of misrule, that they were in effect part of a language conventionally employed to establish and condemn the properties of a disorderly world. As Clark explains:

> For demonic inversion was inseparable, in the first instance, from notions of archetypal rebellion and pseudo-monarchy. The Devil's

[326] Dorinda Neave, "The Witch in Early Sixteenth-Century German Art," 1998, p. 5.

> original presumption prefigured every subsequent act of resistance, while the style of his rule in hell was, as Erasmus explained, a model for all those whose political and moral intentions were most unlike God's. Although some sort of order could be discerned there, it was therefore fitting that it should comprise opposite of perfect princely and pater familial government.[327]

It is particularly applicable to note that there was sometimes a public parody referred to as a "charivari" in which couples in unequal or violent marriages were ridiculed publicly by being forced to ride backward on an animal which symbolized how dangerous social and moral inversions were when familial disorder threatened patriarchal rule.[328]

This threat to patriarchal rule and her primary role of caring for all things domestic, from children to farm animals, made women feared, not only by other family members, but also by her neighbors at-large. There are scores of accusations and confessions of women who poisoned the food they prepared, poisoned community wells, killed children and rendered men impotent. All of these aspects of daily life, should they be hampered with in any way, would cause trouble and invert the role of wife as a nurturing and dutiful partner, mother, and member of her village or town.

Marianne Hester makes the point that "societies that are male dominated rely on constructions of 'the female' which present women as both different and inferior to men; sexualization, or eroticization, of 'the female' in a variety of ways over time, is particularly important in constructing, and thereby maintaining the

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[327] Stuart Clark, "Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft," Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader*, 2002, pp. 153-154.

[328] Ibid, p. 151.

difference."[329] It was during the period of the organized hunts for witches that we see female witches and their characteristics drawing sharp distinctions from the patriarchal ideal for women.[330]

> [This "ideal"] for women was that they should be quiet (not scolds) and subservient to their husbands (not cuckolding them). Marriage as the site of a heterosexual, procreative sexuality under the control of men, was – as expressed in many sermons, pamphlets and other literature at the time – deemed the only appropriate place for any sexual activity to take place.[331]

In a schematic woodcut, c. 1525, Anton Woensam depicts the various aspects of *The Wise Woman* in German society (Figure 5) and illustrates in detail the ideas that Hester has outlined above. She is everything Dürer's *Witch* is not. She is shown, from head to toe, with clothing and objects that symbolize a good German wife. There are text boxes surrounding her explaining all of these attributes. Christa Grössinger, in her book *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* describes these symbols and their meaning.

> . . . eyes like those of a falcon in order to keep clear of shameful behavior; a key in her ear, referring to her willingness to listen to the Word of God; the lock in her mouth, preventing her from using bad language and talking unnecessarily; the mirror to ward off pride; the turtle-dove on her breast illustrating that she will let no other man but her husband near her; the serpent around her waist, demonstrating that she will speak to no one except her husband; the jug she carries representing charity towards the poor; and the horses' hooves symbolizing her unshakeable chastity, because with them she stands steadfast and will not be moved.. . . [this woodcut] also shows that the woman stands motionless, for well-behaved

[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

> women were to act only in moderation, without any show of agitation or abrupt gestures. . .[332]

Dürer's *The Witch* inverts many of these "good wife" attributes; she is naked, she is portrayed in suggestive abandon with hair flying and mouth open, and with a gaze directed at what appears to be her mischief – the hailstorm. She is without shame or temperance.

In her ground-breaking article, *Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?* Christina Larner state that there was enough evidence to suggest that the witch-hunts were thinly disguised women-hunts.[333] She concludes that that the witch-hunts were sex-related but not sex-specific primarily because about twenty percent of accused witches were male. However, she points out in the beginning of her article that "the stereotype witch is an independent adult woman who does not conform to the male idea of proper female behavior."[334] Lyndal Roper is even more succinct in her explanation for the high percentage of women that were found guilty of witchcraft when she states that the "answer lies in what witches were believed to do: attack fertility."[335] It is important, with these representations of women as witches, as we see here in *The Witch* by Dürer, to consider the idea that these images were designed as a "negative standard for women."[336]

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[332] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1997, pp. 43-45.

[333] Christina Larner, "Was Witch-Hunting Women-Hunting?" Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader,* (1981), 2002, p. 275.

[334] Ibid.

[335] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 32.

[336] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1997, pp. 43-45.

Grössinger makes an excellent and extremely provocative observation that in the West it appears that from the beginning of history the only images we have of women are those created by men.[337] From the Middle Ages, the signed works we have of images of women are those created by men, as well as stories that were written by men whether they were secular or theological in nature. There are ample examples of good vs. evil women in literary and artistic works of antiquity; however, Grössinger points out that the idea of women being the ultimate temptation and thus associated with evil came into a more cohesive expression during the fourth and fifth centuries.[338]

Eve was blamed as the instigator of compliance with temptation and compromised all women forever afterward for her weakness of spirit; however, it was the Early Church Fathers who emphasized and codified the woman as temptress and a weak-willed sinner. These ascetics, many of whom lived their lives hidden in desert caves, propagated the concept that women were spiritually weak and yet profanely strong in working their magic by tempting men at every turn. The Virgin Mary, a young maid chosen by God to be the mother of Christ, may have proven that women can be temperate and spiritually worthy, but womankind as a species was not to be trusted and was more likely to exhibit the characteristics of her flawed ancestor Eve.

The active expression of women as inherently wicked and fatally flawed is brought about in specious fashion by St. Athanasius and St. Jerome in the story of

[337] Ibid, p. 1

[338] Ibid.

St. Anthony (251-356).[339] St. Anthony is considered the Founder of Christian monasticism, and he lived much of his life as an ascetic and was greatly troubled by demons. It was St. Jerome (c.342-420) who wrote about St. Anthony and so greatly influenced early Christian thought regarding St. Anthony's temptations as a hermit. Jerome advocated asceticism so that holy men might escape from the world and the temptations plied in their most lethal form as women. He wrote that "even to touch a woman was bad, and the very presence of a wife would distract a husband from his prayers, for women's love was insatiable and deprived men of their vigor."[340] So, we find images of beautiful, sometimes dancing, women attempting to lure St. Anthony into the realm of Satan as we see St. Anthony's story depicted in Renaissance art (i.e. *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Lucas van Leyden).[341] Dürer's *Witch* could perhaps be seen as the wickedness that resides within all women, stripped away of superficial beauty and shown in all her profane exuberance. She is not a typical temptress because of the way Dürer has depicted her; she is the antithesis of the alluring female temptress that harassed our good St. Anthony.

While this idea of the wiles of women was expounded upon by Jerome, the codification of the characteristics of "good" women and "bad" women gained a great amount of traction from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.[342]

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[339] Ibid.

[340] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1997, pp. 1-2.

[341] Ibid. pp. 1 & 3.

[342] Ibid, p. 5.

This concept of representing good vs. evil is particularly cogent to our observation of women as flying witches because, with time, these images became more and more graphic and sexually provocative. This idea is shown to be unique to the successful development of Christianity during the Early Modern period, and is discussed as "a contrariis."[343] This type of contrast was of utmost importance in moralizing teachings because to firmly establish the good or "right" from the bad or "wrong," and it was necessary to present evil in order to truly understand good, since "the application of good consisted in the recognition and exploration of its privative opposite."[344] Thus, Dürer has presented us with an "a contrariis," featuring an evil woman in the guise of a flying witch that served to highlight the way the viewer could recognize a "good" woman. However, it is the work of two other German artists that Dürer's concept of the lone evil woman multiplied into a group of witches, who were on their way to the Sabbath, which further alienated them from God and aligned them with the devil.

[343] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* 1997, p. 135.

[344] Ibid, p. 136.

Chapter Six:

Altdorfer's and Hans Baldung Grien's *Flying to the Witches' Sabbath*

> Now you ask me, what do you say, preacher, about those women who travel through the night and meet at assemblies? You ask me if there's something to all this. When they travel with Lady Venusberg, or the witches, when they go thus hither and yon, do they really travel, or do they remain? Or are they there in spirit? And what should I think about them?[345]

The above quote is from one of a series of sermons presented by Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg at the cathedral in Strasbourg during Lent 1508. This series was transcribed and printed in 1516 as *Die Emeis* (The Ants).[346] These sermons, especially those that relate to witchcraft (of which there are twenty-six) are particularly important because they are the first discussions of witchcraft in the German language since Johannes Hartlieb's work, *Buch aller verbotenen Kunst* in 1456.[347]

It is this subject, the flight of groups of women as witches, that we see depicted in great detail in *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* by Albrecht Altdorfer (Figure 6) and *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* by Hans Baldung Grien (Figure 8). The discussion of women as flying witches had now

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[345] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, editors, *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p. 236.

[346] Ibid, p. 236.

[347] Ibid.
"Fifteenth Century Manuscript of 'Book of all forbidden arts' available for download." Available at http://www.occultcenter.com/2009/06/download_15_century_manuscript_of_book_of_all_forbidden_arts/. Johannes Hartlieb was a court physician to various aristocratic families, and met Margrave Johann von Brandenburg-Kulmbach, who commissioned him to write *The book of all forbidden arts, heresy and sorcery*…, which contains the oldest known recipe for a flying potion.

progressed from papal bulls to sermons directed at the populace. These sermons are noteworthy to our discussion because in the 1516 edition some woodcut illustrations were included, of which several were attributed to Hans Baldung Grien or from his workshop.[348] One such image is entitled *Witches* from the 1516 edition of *Die Emeis*, and although it's attribution is unknown, it is perhaps by the shop of Hans Baldung Grien. This copy is owned by Cornell University (Figure 7).[349]

This sermon of Geiler's begins with the question of whether or not women travel at night to attend meetings, and this is the subject of our next two images, the chiaroscuro drawing, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight,* by Albrecht Altdorfer, 1506 and this chiaroscuro woodcut print, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight*, by Hans Baldung Grien, 1510. These images by Altdorfer and Hans Baldung may suggest that the idea of flight was increasingly believed by the very women who were accused as witches, not just among the Inquisitors. Regarding this flight, Geiler states that:

> . . . I say that they do travel hither and yon, but that they also remain where they are, because they dream that they travel, since the devil can create an impression in the human mind, and thus a fantasy, that they dream with others that they travel, and when they go with each other and see other women and dance, feast, and eat, and he can do all that to them (by an interior or exterior pact.)[350]

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[348] Ibid, pp. 236-237.

[349] Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 171.

[350] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, editors, *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700: A Documentary History*, 2001, p. 237.

Then Geiler references an example taken from Nider's *Formicarius* regarding a preacher and a woman in the village who told him that she indeed did fly at night:

> The preacher came to her and asked about this, saying that if she believed, she was deceived. She said, "If you won't believe it, then I will show you." And the preacher answered that he would indeed like to see it. When it was night, and she wished to go, she called him and then lay down on a bench of the kind they have in village houses. Then she sat down and anointed herself with oil and spoke a word that she was used to speaking, and she fell asleep sitting up. Then she began waving her hands and feet around so wildly that she fell off the bench and lay under it and bumped herself badly on her head.[351]

What is of particular interest to our discussion of witches as flying women is that flight to the Sabbath did not appear in Nider's book nor in the accounts he was transcribing.[352] However, it can be argued that in the late Middle Ages, the rituals of other heretics planted the seed of what would become the witches' Sabbath, as was written in about 1022 by Paul of Chartres in his "Narrative of Heretics." These rites are strikingly similar to later descriptions of the witches' Sabbath. As Paul describes:

> They gathered, indeed, on certain nights in a designated house, everyone carrying a light in his hands, and like merry-makers they chanted the names of demons until suddenly they saw descend among them a demon in the likeness of some sort of little beast. As soon as the apparition was visible to everyone, all the lights were forthwith extinguished and each with the least possible delay seized the woman who first came to hand, to abuse her, without sin. Whether it were mother, sister, or nun whom they embraced, they deemed it an act of sanctity and piety to lie with her. When a child was born of this most filthy union, on the eighth day thereafter a great fire was lighted and the child was purified by fire

[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid.

> in the manner of the old pagans, and so it was cremated. Its ashes were collected and preserved with great veneration as Christian reverence is wont to guard the body of Christ, being given to the sick as a viaticum at the moment of their departing this world.[353]

Witches were now, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, clearly identified as a sect whose members traveled under cover of darkness to participate in orgies of both food and flesh to worship Satan and blaspheme the Christian mass.[354] Although the Sabbath was not featured in the *Malleus*, it was often a feature of witches' confessions and "one of the most widely disseminated visual representations of the witchcraft heresy."[355]

One version of the Sabbath from the *Errores Gazariorum* describes the initiation of a new member as a person who would be seduced to join the assembly where he/she was brought as an initiate to meet the Devil. Then initiate was questioned by the Devil and had to promise that they would obey the Devil and the other members of the sect. They also were to swear that they would seduce others.[356] They would never reveal the secrets of the assembly, and instead would kill as many children as they could in order to bring their bodies to the assembly. Also, they would promise to inflict impotence upon as many men as possible in order to disrupt procreation and upset marriages. These new witches would also promise to avenge any other members of the sect.[357]

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[353] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, pp. 108-109.

[354] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p.195.

[355] Jonathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2012, p. 169.

[356] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p.195.

[357] Ibid.

Following these oaths of allegiance and *maleficia*, the initiate would be instructed to kiss the Devil's buttocks as a sign of fealty. It is after this last bit of ritual that the feast would begin which prominently featured the eating of the flesh of children.[358] And then, according to the anonymous author of the *Errores,* there would be all forms of dancing, orgies and "a parody of the Eucharist:"[359] The realm of the Devil revolved around this assembly, the Sabbath.[360] In fact, the "Sabbath is all at once, the theatrical and ritual synthesis of the antisocial, antireligious, indeed antihuman components of the imaginary structure that is the witches' conspiracy."[361] And it is just such a spectacle that both Altdorfer and Baldung Grien allude to in their images of witches preparing for the Sabbath.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, the identification of witches attending these assemblies called Sabbaths became nearly always the location they were headed when flying through the night sky, and these ideas are present in both images by Altdorfer and Baldung Grien. The Sabbath experience is described as entailing:

> Male and female witches (who) met at night, in solitary places, in Fields or on mountains. Sometimes, having anointed their bodies, they flew, arriving astride poles or broom sticks; sometimes they arrived on the backs of animals, or transformed into animals themselves. Those who came for the first time had to renounce the Christian faith, desecrate the sacrament and offer homage to the devil, who was present in human or (most often) animal or semi-animal form. There would follow banquets, dancing, sexual orgies.

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[358] Ibid.

[359] Ibid.

[360] Ibid, p. 87.

[361] Ibid, p. 127.

> Before returning home the female and male witches received evil ointments made from children's fat and other ingredients.[362]

While there could be regional differences to these descriptions of the Sabbath meetings, most that were transcribed from confessions of accused witches or other participants, were "extraordinary [in their] uniformity."[363] These descriptions, strikingly similar from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the seventeenth, were particularly ominous because now people believed there were groups of witches organized into sects rather than isolated figures practicing witchcraft, a situation that was seen as a much lesser threat.[364] According to Ginzberg, it was "the uniformity of the confessions [that] was considered proof that the followers of this sect were ubiquitous, and everywhere practiced the same horrific rituals."[365] This stereotype of the witches' Sabbath, horrendous in description whether from confessions, demonologists' treatises, Sunday sermons, or in images like the two we will be discussing, fueled the imagination and the fears of the authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical. Certainly these visual images, which were more accessible than textual sources to a broader population, can be credited with fueling this uniformity of thought.

The idea of "a contrariis," expounded upon by Stuart Clark, seems evident in the observations made by Ginzberg, and has shaped scholarship on the Sabbath and also our understanding of these images. He states that:

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[362] Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies,* 1991, p. 1.

[363] Ibid.

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid.

> via the symbolism of the Sabbath it formulated its own values in the negative. The darkness enveloping the gatherings of male and female witches expressed an exaltation of light; the explosion of female sexuality and the diabolical orgies, an exhortation to chastity; the animal metamorphosis, a sharply defined border between the feral and the human.[366]

The Catholic Church was extremely invested and influential in the proliferation, if not the total creation, of the witches' assembly that became known as the Sabbath. There is no question that this gathering of witches provided a stark and terrifying polemic to the gathering of Christians and the immediacy of eradicating these witches and their Sabbaths for the good of all humankind. All things that are most frightening to the ordering of a good Christian society took place at the witches' Sabbath – proper behavior inverted to evil behavior, the sacrilege of the liturgy, and the participation and preparation of abominable crimes against humans as well as God.[367]

The scholar Martine Ostorero has outlined how the Sabbath, as presented in the *Errores,* provides a progression from abominable to the inhuman to the sacrilegious.[368] She looks at each of the aspects of the depiction of the Sabbath as it was written about in the *Errores* and notes that each element carries one further into irredeemability which was so central to successfully adjudicating the condemnation of witches and their practices:

> The murder (of infants) is replaced by diverse crimes as perceived as "contrary to nature" (cannibalism of infants, orgy, incest, sodomy, homosexuality); then, after the sacrilege of the

[366] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

[367] David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 2006, p. 88.

[368] Ibid.

> profanation of the Eucharist, the ceremony culminates in the supreme crime, that of high treason (apostasy). There is thus constructed an inhuman and unnatural picture of the witch, defined as child-killer, cannibal, beast, and apostate.[369]

David Frankfurter then describes the aspects of the witches' Sabbath as a series of disparate couplings, for example, the fantastic with the familiar. He points out that as the concept of the Sabbath progressed, aspects of it that came from the intellectuals of society such as sacraments, pledges of devotion, and Satanic hierarchy.[370] At the same time, the lore of the common populace contributed the concepts of infanticide, weather-sorcery, and flight.[371] He maintains that the concept of the witches' Sabbath provided a source of fear from which sprang much of the identity of the witch stereotype that has remained recognizable in the twenty-first century. Frankfurter goes on to outline four aspects of this centralization of fears that the witches' Sabbath provided. First, the Sabbath functioned as a kind of "counter church" with Satan as its Lord and Master; second, the desecration of the Holy Eucharist illustrated Satan's power even over the body of Christ; third, the inversion of rituals of the Church to make these assemblies seem as powerful as the Church, only on behalf of evil and fourth, the unguents, powders and spells that were blessed at these Sabbaths were an evil substance believed to be as efficacious as holy water or prayers.[372] As communities continued to experience droughts and blight and disease people were

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[369] Ibid.

[370] Ibid.

[371] Ibid.

[372] Ibid, pp. 110-111.

rightfully dismayed and they apparently came to consider that perhaps the Devil was at work, or worse yet, some group of people in their community was assisting the Devil in wreaking such havoc.

It is Albrecht Altdorfer who presented us with perhaps the earliest artistic image of witches flying to the Sabbath. Here we see witches are flying on animals, facing front and following one another in a kind of cloud that is effective in visually separating the flying witches from those still preparing and observing this flight from what appears to be a clearing in the forest. This pen drawing utilizes both a black ink and a white ink that serves to provide the image with contrasting highlights throughout the scene. The ground is a golden beige paper that lends an earthy theatricality to these witches and their activities. It is small, only 7" x 5," and has a drawn ink border around the scene. It can be found in the Cabinet des Dessins in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480-1538) was a German printmaker, draftsman, painter, and architect.[373] Altdorfer is considered the first modern landscape painter and was the leading figure of the Danube School that introduced landscape as a theme of its own in art.[374] He created both large and small works that included

[373] The J. Paul Getty Museum, "Albrecht Altdorfer." Available at http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artMakerDetails?maker=574. It is believed that he was trained to be a manuscript illuminator. However, he became the city architect for his home, Regensburg, where he built a slaughterhouse, a wine storage building, and fortifications for the city walls. He was very successful and eventually acquired three homes and several vineyards, while acquiring such famous patrons as the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I and William, the Duke of Bavaria. Altdorfer was so popular and well-known in Regensburg that he was offered the mayorship of the town in 1528 but declined because he was currently working on a large commission for the Duke of Bavaria and that work was a priority.

[374] Ibid.

prints and paintings, colored-ground chiaroscuro drawings, while also designing stained-glass windows.[375]

Rather than producing portraits, he created works that were original and unique. Altdorfer often focused on forest scenes and used them as a setting for both secular and religious subjects. He would sometimes compose emotional figures set in landscapes.[376] And it is just such an emotional scene with wildly gesticulating witches set in a forest, portrayed in a dramatic fashion using the technique of chiaroscuro on colored paper that Altdorfer presents to the viewer in *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight.* Altdorfer effectively utilizes the chiaroscuro technique (the emphasizing of shadow and light) to highlight the theater of witchcraft.[377]

Altdorfer created work through his landscapes exhibiting an aspect of patriotism inspired by Tacitus' *Germania*, which was discovered in the 1420s:

> The forest was a miraculous and dangerous liminal space for both the mystical experiences and tribulations of saints; according to Tacitus, the ancient Germans worshipped in "woods and grooves" (*Germania, 9*). Finally, it was also the abode of lusty, primitive wild people and satyrs – all beings grounded in Christian tradition, folklore, and ancient mythology but given contemporary resonance by their association with primitive Germans.[378]

By depicting his scene of witches as they prepare for and fly off to their Sabbath, Altdorfer deviated from the typical description of the Sabbath taking

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[375] Ibid.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 78

[378] Ibid.

place in a meadow or on top of a mountain.[379] Rather, he spun an aspect of the witch stereotype in a decidedly German way, that was then replicated by Hans Baldung Grien, by depicting the preparations as taking place not in a field or mountain top, but in a thick forest full of tall trees and lush undergrowth. This forested world was evocative of the satyrs and wild people of German folklore.[380] The evolution of the image of women as flying witches now included a forest setting, along with the prevailing thought that a primitive, uncultivated land was separate from the orderly pastures and farmland communities of God-fearing citizens.

In the upper half of this drawing four witches, riding animals, past a large tree on the right and then progressing upwards at an angle to the left, are surrounded by a cloud or fog that partially obscures the sky and forest. These witches are following, one after the other, except for the uppermost two witches, who are riding their animals side-by-side. These two witches are seen primarily from behind and the only details provided are the naked backs and buttocks of the women and the back legs and tails of the animals. The exaggerated curve of the hips and shoulders would suggest that these two figures are women. It is difficult to tell if the women are riding astride the animals or sitting with both of their legs to one side. The other two flying witches are doing both – the one in the middle is sitting astride and the witch at the right is sitting with her legs to the side of what is clearly a goat. The identity of the other three flying animals is not obvious.

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[379] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 326, n. 10.

[380] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 80.

The flying witch in the upper middle of the scene is naked, sitting astride the animal with apparently both hands around its neck. There is nothing to specifically indicate that this is a woman; no especially rounded hips or shoulders or long hair. There are no breasts depicted because there is some type of sash that has the curious resemblance to wings that appears to be around the chest, appearing under the arms and flying out behind the figure in a dramatic fashion. Altdorfer has utilized the chiaroscuro effect of highlighting this feature with white ink to emphasize its movement in the sky. The figure is also holding a stick of some kind with two flat prongs extended out at right angles to the shaft. This could be seen as coming from the shoulder area of the figure as if they are propping it on or over their shoulder as they fly. It is rendered exclusively with white ink devoid of any contouring. It could be a reference to a hay or cooking fork, but it lacks a clear reference.

The animal on which this figure is riding has features of a shaggy coat with a small tail and a small oval head that would suggest a goat. This identification can be further reinforced by the animal on which the witch at the right is riding as it is clearly a goat, complete with long fur and somewhat exaggerated horns. This flying witch at the right of the scene is sitting with both of her legs to one side of the goat in full view, over what would be on the goat's left side. She is naked with a sash partially covering her torso that drapes over her right shoulder, across both breasts and then falling underneath her left arm and over her left hip. She is facing us frontally however, her head is turned slightly to

right, apparently looking straight ahead with her right hand holding unto the left horn of the goat.

Her long hair is flowing out over her left shoulder and her left hand is down to her side holding a distaff; raw fibers can be seen just above where her hand is holding the distaff. There is a footed base to the distaff that is clearly drawn just slightly in front of the goat's right hind hoof. The figure's rounded features (shoulders and face) and the way in which the sash is specifically covering the chest, coupled with the long flowing hair, would positively identify this figure as a female.

In the left middle ground of the scene we see a diagonal ground line rising slightly up to the left. On this ground line there are a group of shapes that suggest buildings and trees. This could be representative of a town from which these witches have traveled to participate in their bizarre and profane rituals – again symbolizing that they are at work outside the bounds of proper society as we saw in the illumination from Tinctor's *Invectives*. Just above this town and directly below the dense cloud accompanying the flying witches we see a small glimpse of sky given a bit of contouring with the use of white ink forming a bank of clouds.

In the lower half of the image are four witches, three standing and one sitting on the ground. They are all at least partially naked except for sashes tied or draped over and around their bodies. The two figures at the left are facing away from the viewer while the one in the center and the one on the right are bodily facing the viewer although their gaze is elsewhere. The witch on the far left, standing on the edge of the picture plane, is a woman, naked except for some type

of purse tied around her waist, a long skirt and soft cap with a slight bill partially covering her long, unkempt hair. It is possible to see a bit of her lower right leg as it peeks through a slit in her skirt and to also observe what looks to be a shoe on her right foot.[381]

The witch to her right faces completely away from the viewer. This figure, aside from the long, unruly hair, lacks any clear identification that this is a woman. In fact, this figure has the defined calves and thighs more common to the male physique. This figure has a broad sash tied around their waist with a knot in the back that is rendered in careful detail. This figure is standing with their feet wide apart with their arms also splayed out at angles to their torso apparently gesturing toward the flight of the four witches above. The upper back is partially obscured by the long tendrils of hair flowing down over the figure's shoulders.

The third witch standing on the ground while gesturing upward with her left hand toward the flying witches is frontally facing the viewer. She is naked except for a thin belt around her waist which appears to be holding a dagger and another type of tool, perhaps a rattle, with long ribbons or fringe coming from it that partially obscures what could be her pudenda. The breasts of this witch seem more like pectoral muscles of a man than the breasts of a woman because of their width and lack of more pronounced curvature. However, what has been considered her pudenda and the appearance of a necklace around her neck could confirm her female identity. And yet, I believe that what could be considered an obscured pudendum could be a kind of loin cloth, which would account for the

[381] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 80. Hults describes this figure as a woman dressed in peasant clothing.

belt and possible fringe located just above the genital area. Since the torso and breasts are distinctly male, particularly when one compares this torso to that of the most definitely female witch sitting to the far right, I suggest that this central standing figure is a male witch.

Now we shall consider the naked, obviously female witch sitting at the lower right of the scene. Her body is facing the viewer while her head is turned to the right, looking up at the witch we have just discussed. Her knees are together and slightly tilted to her left – a fairly modest, feminine pose. This pose is quite unlike the open legged poses of the two middle witches. Her left hand is resting on a large, round platter or shallow bowl. Linda Hults points to markings on the pan as part of "transgressive female magic, invoking demons."[382] On close inspection of this pan, I am not able to identify any markings, only what looks to be black contour lines and some white highlight lines around the pan and coming out diagonally from the hand of the witch. I would posit that perhaps this is a shallow bowl of water and the white lines coming out from her hand is a representation of the ripples of the surface of the water. This water could be representing a way of scrying – this is a practice of divination in order to see future events or spiritual messages. The more well-known type of scrying tool is the crystal ball, but other things, like water, were also commonly used. This nod to divination would be a logical item to be represented in this scene of magic flight and other witch activities.

[382] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p.80.

On the ground between the standing witches' feet and just to the left of the seated witch's feet is an animal skull which is lying on its left side. There are some additional lines and shapes on the ground but they do not convey any distinct recognizable shapes, except that of the covered jar, sitting on the ground between the two middle standing witches – the one facing away from the viewer and the one whose body is facing the viewer. On some reproductions of this drawing it is fairly easy to see that there are four very small white lines radiating up from the center of the lid. Hults states that this is an urn that contains the unguent that enables the witches to fly.[383] This is possible because the focus of this scene is one of witches preparing to attend the Sabbath and the most important aspect of that is preparing to fly. Although this is logical, the urn could also be filled with anything that one would associate with witches, from poisonous powders to toads. Just as the witch sitting at the right is doing something with the shallow bowl that is not related to flying, so might the urn be unrelated to flying.

Hans Baldung Grien (c.1484-1545) created his own, highly-detailed rendering of witches preparing for the Sabbath flight in 1510, rendered in a chiaroscuro woodcut that further solidified the witch stereotype and inextricably linked it with women. Because this is a print, the viewership would have been naturally larger than that of the drawing by Altdorfer. Zika suggests, that at the turn of the century, the subject of witchcraft was gaining the attention and interest of many people in the urban centers of southern Germany, including Strasbourg,

[383] Ibid, p. 78.

where Baldung Grien had established residence.[384] And because it is a single-sheet print the likelihood that it was seen by many people throughout southern Germany is likely. Perhaps because it would have been readily available as a print and because, in Zika's opinion this print of Baldung Grien's "was the finest single-leaf woodcut of Baldung's early work and technically cutting edge and fashionable. . . , at the forefront of of contemporary artistic experimentation [utilizing the chiaroscuro effect with woodblocks]" the viewership of this print would have been wide-spread.[385] In this image the individual elements are clear and the images relate specifically to witchcraft treatises, Church bulls, and witch trial accusations and confessions. In Baldung Grien's chiaroscuro woodcut, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* (1510) (Figure 8) all the witchcraft iconography is there, along with six naked, malevolent women as witches. I would agree with Zika that Hans Baldung, "more than any other artist" contributed to "the creation of the new visual subject of witchcraft."[386]

It was sometime around the year 1503 that Hans Baldung Grien became a pupil of Albrecht Dürer in Nuremberg.[387] It is surmised by Hults that were it not for Baldung's association with Dürer, he might have attended university and

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[384] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 11.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid.

[387] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 75.

pursued a public career."[388] Instead Baldung Grien became an artist best known for his depictions of witches.[389]

Baldung Grien was a citizen of Strasbourg at the time he created his witch images (he had been a citizen there since 1509) and there were not any witch trials in Strasbourg until the seventeenth century, so it was not an intriguing subject matter for him based on any first-hand knowledge of witch trials, but likely from sermons about them that was becoming more prevalent at the time.[390] Scholars such as Grössinger, believe that it is most likely that Baldung Grien was familiar with the Lenten sermons of Johannes Geiler that took place in Strasbourg in 1508 which discussed in detail the activities of witches.[391] Grössinger also notes that a witch's ability to fly was one of the much debated topics of the time.[392]

This work by Hans Baldung Grien is likely the first mass-produced single-leaf woodcut featuring witches.[393] *Preparing for the Witches' Sabbath* (sometimes it is referred to simply as *The Witches' Sabbath)* was created using the chiaroscuro method that was also used by Altdorfer in his drawing of witches preparing for the Sabbath, but in Baldung Grien's work, he carved separate

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[388] Ibid.

[389] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1997, p. 132.

[390] Ibid, p. 134.

[391] Ibid.

[392] Ibid.

[393] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze,* 2006, p. 151.

woodblocks for the highlighting) and then applied ink in such a way to create this chiaroscuro effect.[394]

In Baldung Grien's image of four witches preparing for the Sabbath rituals and two witches flying to the Sabbath, we have a print that is dense with figures as it portrays witches and goats in their wild splendor. There are two witches seated on the ground in the foreground, two standing witches in the middle ground, and finally two witches flying in the background. However, all of these levels of the composition – fore, middle and back – are very near the picture plane. There is not much depth of field, providing the viewer with an almost stage-like setting of the scene. This print was applied to various colors of paper; the one I have chosen to feature is on tan paper. The lights and darks provided through the chiaroscuro effect are in sharp contrast and lend an atmosphere of high drama to the scene.

The only witch that is almost completely obscured by smoke or steam is the flying witch at the upper left of the print. The only part of the figure that is identifiable is her lower left leg and foot and right foot to the right of the clouds of steam and her neck and head to the left of the steam. Although it is impossible to verify that this is a woman, based on the fact that all of the other figures are women, it would seem that she is also a woman. The other witches who are cooking, conjuring and flying are in a remote setting with trees that can be seen in the middle ground with a large, dead tree standing sentinel to the right of the scene, which provides a compositional frame that complements the billows of

[394] For these prints, see Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 1993, p. 324, and H. P. R. "Chiaroscuro Prints," *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 130 (April 1924), p. 15.

steam that form a more organic frame to the left. The dead tree is left with few branches from which hangs some strands of moss. The top of the tree has been violently cut off with jagged edges pointing upwards – it is possible that Baldung Grien was alluding to the tree being hit by lightning, which would add to the significance of the setting by referencing storms, which witches were so often credited as creating. Therefore, the tree stands as a silent witness to the destructive *maleficia* of witches and the havoc they wreaked on society and nature. As if joining in this declaration, a placard with Hans Baldung Grien's initials hangs on the lowest visible dead branch.

Directly turned away from the viewer is a cat, sitting at the base of the tree. Baldung Grien has provided us with a three-quarter view so that this small animal can be readily identified as a cat with its long tail curving beside it. Cats have had nefarious associations with witches for hundreds of years, and in witch trials and confessions cats often played the role of familiars. Furthermore, it was believed as early as the late Middle Ages that various lesser demons attended to witches by assuming the forms of animals.[395] These familiars could take on the shape of any animal – the more common animals were toads, owls, rats, mice, and dogs, but cats were typically associated with familiar spirits.[396] In the form of a familiar the demon would assist the witch in her magic and could even perform the needed magic themselves on behalf of the witch. In one of the earliest known witch trials, Dame Alice Kyteler was accused of witchcraft in Ireland in 1324 and

[395] Jonathan Durrant and Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 2012, p. 75.

[396] Ibid.

of consorting with a familiar who "would appear[s] to her as a cat, a shaggy dog, or an Ethiopian.[397]

As was true with many animals, the physical aspects of the cat were also believed to assist in creating occult potions. The medieval recipe for creating a salve that could be placed in your eyes, thus enabling you to see hidden things, called for "mixing the bile of a male cat with the fat of an entirely white hen."[398] In 1323 at the ecclesiastical court of Château-Landon, a group of monks, canons, and laymen were accused of plotting to "invoke the demon Berich from inside a circle made from strips of cat skin."[399] Thus the appearance of a cat in Baldung Grien's print is full of foreboding meaning.

Seemingly pressed up against the hindquarters of the cat is a witch sitting directly on the ground, within the area of three cooking or hay forks that lay on the ground overlapping in the shape of a triangle. She is naked with long unbound hair, one thick tendril falling down to her breasts. Her legs are straddling a large urn and with her right hand she is wedging a spoon under the lid thus releasing a miasma of steam. Her face is drawn and wrinkled while her body is plump and firm, providing the viewer with both young and old features of a woman, perhaps a woman who is transitioning between youth and old age. This could be a natural representation of aging, or it could also be symbolic of the deforming effects of giving oneself over to the work of the devil. It was German artists that apparently

[397] Ibid, p. 75.

[398] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 141.

[399] Ibid, p. 191.

developed the idea of contrasting the bodies of women of different ages, and linking this to witchcraft.[400]

This witch, and the other seated witch who is facing away from the viewer, are both seated with their bare buttocks in direct contact with the ground. This suggests their intimate connection with nature and what could be described as their primeval association with the wild countryside – a rather debased Eve in touch with the raw earth and whatever power these women were able to extract from it. The triangular area formed by the forks, within which the forward facing witch is sitting, could also suggest a special area of the ground that she and the urn inhabit – not apart from the earth beneath them but perhaps a more energetically-charged space that is needed for the creation of the substance within the urn. There is no fire beneath the urn that could cause the escaping of smoke or steam – perhaps this magical area that she and the urn occupy is somehow providing the heat or friction needed to cook the ingredients within the urn. The witch sitting with her back to the viewer is reaching up at a slight diagonal to her body and is clutching a goblet or chalice. Her mouth is slightly open and her face is fairly smooth with no obvious wrinkles, however, because of the way her head is turned, there is a definite delineation of her jaw line and her neck, which forms the impression of a sagging jowl.

Kneeling between the two sitting witches and behind the urn is a most fearsome woman. Her lower body is obstructed by the steam escaping the urn. Above the plume of steam, we see her upper body, and her arms stretched over her head. Her breasts sag and her face is very wrinkled with obvious lines in her

[400] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 151.

forehead and around her eyes and mouth. Her mouth is open and her gaze is directed downward to the urn. All of her muscles appear to strain as she holds up a platter with her right hand. To the left and behind this kneeling witch is another witch who appears to be standing due to the fact that her head is above that of the kneeling witch. Both of this witch's arms are depicted in such a way that she is perhaps holding a pole connected to a bowl emitting flames that is seen directly below the flying goat's hindquarters, inferring that the flames are being fed from gas escaping from the goat. The goat, seen above this witch, is flying with a naked witch positioned backward on the goat's back. The flying goat is presented in profile with his back and front legs both reaching beyond his body as if he is galloping in the air. This naked witch is sitting astride his back and is holding the very long handle of a cooking fork with both hands. At the left end of the fork is a pot with some objects floating in liquid. This witch is younger, as is evidenced by her plump flesh, her full, taut breasts and her smooth face, free from wrinkles or sagging jowls. Her hair is long and flows out behind her in long, curling tresses, rather than the long, straight hair of the other older witches.

Some scholars refer to this print as simply *The Witches' Sabbath*, however I have chosen to use the title that other scholars use for this print, *Witches' Preparing for the Sabbath Flight* because this is a more accurate title for the work.[401] This is not a scene of the feasting, orgies and worshipping that are described as important features of the Sabbath meetings. Instead, this scene emphasizes the flight to the Sabbath and, in the case of this print, the creation of

[401] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 13.

something in the urn that is the focal point of the composition. The center position of the urn and the swirling, diagonal steam coming from the urn therefore serves to encourage the viewer to look initially at the seated witch with the urn between her legs, apparently releasing this vapor into the air. The urn or pot itself has drawn the particular attention of scholars because of the shapes or symbols that form a register near the top of the urn. Some refer to it as simply a "magical inscription."[402] Koerner describes it as "'Hebrew' lettering."[403] Hults refers to it as "Hebraic [in] appearance."[404] She goes on to cite the anti-Semitism that at times had revolved around Eucharist Host desecrations and the ritual murder of Christian children, usually young boys, for their blood.[405] Zika takes a similar view by referring to it as "pseudo-Hebraic script,"[406] as does Jane Schuyler in her article on the *Malleus* and Baldung Grien's *Witches' Preparing for the Sabbath Flight*.[407] The idea that this could be a type of Hebraic-appearing lettering might refer to the Renaissance interest in the Kabbalah, a Jewish mystical practice, rather than being an anti-Semitic reference.

Renaissance humanists such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) were very interested in magic and ancient practices and is perhaps best known for his cultivation of occult knowledge. He was convinced that there were

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[402] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art,* 1997, p. 132.

[403] Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment in Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 1993, p. 326.

[404] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 82.

[405] Ibid.

[406] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft*, 2007, p. 12.

[407] Jane Schuyler, "The 'Malleus Maleficarum' and Baldung's 'Witches' Sabbath," *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1987), p. 24.

types of magic that were valuable, but which had unfortunately been set aside, so he went to Rome in 1486 and submitted "nine hundred theses for public debate."[408] He believed that there was great value in the practice of natural magic, however, "he claimed also to have a found a source of magical power far higher than those in nature. . . Pico had become intensely interested in the Hebrew tradition of magic and mysticism known as the Kabbalah."[409]

In line with the concept of Kabbalah, Pico believed that words were in themselves magical. This was not a foreign idea because the Church taught that it was through the words of the priest that transubstantiation took place.[410] However, in the Jewish tradition of the Kabbalah, "only words in Hebrew, which were taught to Adam and Eve by God himself [were efficacious], and which derive their power from having been spoken by God's own voice."[411] The Kabbalah is believed to be a secret "doctrine that was handed on to initiates and concerns the 'mysteries' that were not explained in Genesis."[412] This mastery of Hebrew in the practices of Kabbalah would provide one with "unimagined magical skill, though a dabbler who uses the Kabbalah carelessly can be destroyed by demons."[413] The purpose of the practice was to "reunite human

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[408] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 148.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 1997, p. 291.

[411] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 148.

[412] See Susan Greenwood, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Witchcraft*, London: Hermes House, Ltd., 2005, p. 27, for the Kabbalah.

[413] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 148.

beings with divinity."[414] Pico did believe "at his most enthusiastic . . . that magic grounded in the Kabbalah [was] the only effective magic."[415] Later in his life his enthusiasm for the Kabbalah waned.

Jacque Lefèvre d'Étaples and Johann Reuchlin were also interested in this Jewish mysticism. Reuchlin wrote at length about the magic of words in his treatise *On the Wonder-Working Word*, published in 1494:

> Reuchlin reminds the reader of the magic that sorceresses in classical literature worked by the power of their words, but then argues that the most potent magic is not to be found in Greek or Egyptian words but rather in Hebrew.[416]

Therefore, the Renaissance study of the Kabbalah and the power of Hebrew words is perhaps the most likely explanation for the strange script on the urn. It also suggests the idea that should one not use Hebrew words in a proper way, demonic powers would result, which is surely the type of magic portrayed in Baldung Grien's scene of witches.

The urn can be said to present, then, as part of its design, a magical purpose. However, this is not what immediately confronts the viewer – it is the plumes of steam escaping the urn that provide compositional focus to the scene that leave no doubt as to their importance to the narrative of the print. With careful observation of the steam, right at the point where it is escaping the urn and directly above the spoon being used by the witch to pry off the lid, one will notice objects within the steam. Most of them are unrecognizable as anything other than

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[414] Susan Greenwood, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Witchcraft*, 2005, p.27.

[415] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 148.

[416] Ibid, p. 149.

rather oblong shapes; however, one shape directly above the thumb of the witch grasping the spoon and another about three-quarters of the way up the plume have an outline that resembles that of a leaping frog or toad. The association of toads with witchcraft is old indeed – you may remember that they were mentioned earlier in discussing Pope Gregory IX and his bull *Vox in rama* as one of the ways in which they Devil appears to his followers; likewise, in the thirteenth century, d'Auvergne, the bishop of Paris wrote that the devil can appear in the form of a toad where the worshippers can adore him by kissing the toad on its mouth.[417]

In this print by Hans Baldung it is most often assumed that the steaming contents of the urn are indicative of flying unguent being cooked. Because there is a brush on the ground between the feet of the witch tending the urn it is thought by many to allude to the brushing on of the unguent that enabled a witch to fly. The other shapes in the steam could be bones or even roots that were believed to have magical properties. Yet, when a flying unguent is discussed it is most often described as a liquid that is made from the boiled bodies of babies. Toads and their fluids were generally the ingredients for poisons; to cause human illness or crop failures.[418] However, Tinctoris does provide a recipe for a flying unguent that includes babies and toads and other nauseating ingredients:

> . . . to take toads to whom consecrated hosts have been fed, and kill them. Combine their flesh with the blood of murdered children, the bones of exhumed corpses, and menstrual blood, and mix well.[419]

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[417] Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 2003, p. 25.

[418] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1995, p. 160.

[419] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, 1972, p. 240.

It makes logical sense that the contents of the urn would be something that would be needed by the witches as they prepared to attend the Sabbath. But rather than be the flying unguent, it could instead be a poisonous mixture that they will take with them to be blessed by the devil before it could be effective. It would help to explain why the young witch on the goat is flying, apparently to the Sabbath, with a pot of something of which only some curious drumstick-like objects can be seen. Perhaps she is taking some of the mixture, which has been prepared below, with her as she flies to the Sabbath.

Hults describes the objects in the pot carried by the flying witch as "infantile bones."[420] Even though it is quite dependent upon the imagination of the viewer to see these shapes as the legs of a human baby, it is necessary that one do so to connect this image with the witch narrative that was becoming more and more accepted or at least debated by villagers and townspeople alike. Likewise, if one looks closely at the platter being held up by the oldest witch who is kneeling above the sitting witches, one can make out the body and long necks and beaks of birds, albeit rather scary, reptilian-looking birds, but birds indeed. And with that observation, why couldn't the two objects floating about in the pot of the flying witch be those of a similar bird, particularly since the drumstick shape is readily recognizable? Identifying them as human baby legs is problematic at best given there are no identifiable human characteristics in the platter. It is when we consider this that we are reminded of just how powerful the witch narrative became over time. I suggest that it is because of these witch narratives, now so familiar to many twenty-first century scholars, that these two aspects of the scene

[420] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 83.

are still identified as human baby body parts when there is nothing visually to agree with this interpretation.

Indeed, the urn and its contents are a large part of the scene, but that this scene is primarily one of witches preparing flying unguent is not convincing. Yes, there is a brush on the ground that could be interpreted to indicate the witches had used it to apply the unguent to the witches already flying, however there appears to be a large slug near this brush, so could the witches be using the slime from the slug as part of their poison or food preparation as well?

There is a description from the *Errores Gazariorum* that delineates unguents made for flying versus poisonous unguents:

> After the person pays homage to the presiding devil, he is given a jar full of ointment and a staff and certain other things with which the seduced man must go to the synagogue, and the demon teaches him how and in what ways to anoint the staff. That unguent is made by a mystery of diabolic malignancy out of the fat of small children who have been cooked, and with other things, as will be seen. Further, when the unguent made of the said fat of children has been combined with the most poisonous of animals such as serpents, toads, lizards, and spiders, which are all mixed mysteriously as said above, and if a person is touched once with this unguent he immediately dies by an evil death, sometimes for a time in persisting illness, sometimes by dying quickly. Further, they make powders for killing human beings. These powders are made from the internal parts of the children mixed with parts of poisonous animals, and all of this is scattered through the air by a member of that society on a cloudy day. Those touched by that powder either die or suffer serious and lingering illness. And this is the reason why in some villages of a region there is great mortality, and in other areas there is much bad weather.[421]

There is nothing in the iconography of this print that would support the idea that the witches are creating, or have created a flying unguent for one major

[421] Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peter, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700*, 2001, p. 161.

reason - there are no bodies of babies anywhere to be found, not even a skeleton. There are parts of an adult human skeleton right behind the left hip of the sitting witch who is facing away from the viewer. The skull looks disturbingly as if some the flesh remains around the nose, mouth, and jaw. There is also a vertebra and what is perhaps the bone of the upper arm and shoulder directly above, but not attached to any other bones. This arm bone appears to have been damaged in some way (all along the left side); it looks to have been gnawed on because of a small set of ridges that has been highlighted to call attention to this ominous detail. Is this macabre collection of human remains meant to reinforce the cannibalistic beliefs about witches? This reference to human sacrifice, whether for spell work or feasting, is apparently meant to refer to the total depravity of witches and their general abhorrence for God's ultimate creation - humans. There is a horrifying description of how an adult male was reported to have been used by witches to create a most powerful elixir that would have necessitated his death involving his torture and the use of his "drippings."[422] In the right foreground, on the ground, directly behind the seated witch who has her back to the viewer another skull appears, however this is not human but appears to that of a horse due to its very long muzzle and prominent front teeth.

There are other items on the ground as well, such as the convex mirror in the right foreground, which many scholars recognize as a divination tool – a

[422] Ibid. ". . . when they are able, they capture a red-haired man, not a member of the sect, but a good Catholic, and expose him naked, bound with cords, so that he can move neither hand nor foot. To the bound man they bring poisonous animals which bite him, by the actions of these most merciless and cruel members of the sect, so that the poor man, tortured by these torments expires and placing a glass or earthen container of some sort beneath his mouth so as to catch the distilled poisons that have killed him. And mixing these drippings from the dead man on the gallows with the inner parts of dead children and those of poisonous animals, they make another ointment with the help of the devil, of which the touch alone can kill people . . . '

scrying device. This assists in setting the atmosphere of this sinister scene, but it has no allusion to flying. Likewise, rather than roasting dismembered human babies, it appears that these witches are preparing food, recognizable food in the form of fowls, basted or cooked in what could be a horrible toad marinade with perhaps a touch of slug slime for an extra gruesome measure. This all fits with the narrative of witches preparing for attending the Sabbath festivities.

It is really only in the later works of the seventeenth century by artists like Frans Francken II that we find more detailed attention to preparing for the Sabbath flight and the applying of unguent, particularly in the case of his oil painting, *Witches' Gathering* of 1607 (Figure 9). In this scene there is a young witch in the right foreground with her skirts hiked up to reveal her exposed right leg, apparently ready to apply the unguent that has been prepared by some of the large group of witches in the scene. Likewise, a witch is actually shown rubbing what can be assumed is the unguent on her exposed left leg in an undated pen and ink drawing entitled *Preparations for the Witches' Sabbath* by Jacques de Gheyn II who was active in the early seventeenth century as well (Figure 10). It is interesting that while the cannibalistic narrative, particularly in regard to children, was already prevalent in the sixteenth century, it appears that Hans Baldung chose not to depict dismembered children in his print. That the natural nurturing aspect of womanhood could be so perverted that a woman could participate in killing a child and/or feast on the flesh of a child was horrifying and fit perfectly into the devilish stereotype that was taking shape in early modern Europe. In 1478, in the town of Nördlingen, there is the first reported case of the witchcraft allegation of

cannibalism when Else Schwab was accused of being a witch and was said to have cooked and eaten exhumed children:

> In Nördlingen, the eating of children, grave desecration, murderous attacks on children, even one's own, and local town hall politics formed a compelling whole. It made sense of all that was known about witches. The meal provided occasion for witches to meet (and so the list of those present formed the lists of suspects), the leftover flesh was used to make the witches' salve [flying ointment], the bones were ground to form the witches' powder and the broth became the water witches stirred to raise storms.[423]

Baldung Grien's flying witches allude to this gruesome practice because they are flying, first of all, and specifically they are flying to the Sabbath where children's flesh is often described as being part of the Satanic celebration.

There is but one area of the print that we have left to discuss – that is the left middle ground where there appears to be a cooking fork placed at a slight diagonal to complement the diagonal lines of the thigh and arm of the seated witch at the left foreground. Over this cooking fork are placed three sausages and one basket handle. According to Hults these sausages reference "the witches' lust and the penis-theft through illusion or 'glamour,' . . . recounted in the *Malleus;*" she sees the basket as actually a wine canteen.[424] Grössinger also states that "sausages hang over a pitchfork, in reference to male organs that have been bewitched away, thus causing impotence. (The association between male organs and sausages was common in the language of that time.)."[425] Koerner notes that "the sausage-shaped objects draped over the handle of a pitchfork at the left could

[423] Lyndal Roper, *Witchcraze*, 2006, p. 73.

[424] Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse*, 2005, p. 85.

[425] Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1997, p. 132.

be food for the feast or instruments of imitative magic. Or they could be the effort of a witch's spell: the fantasy of castration that witches were believed to induce in their male victims' minds."[426] The implication of the visual imagery as penises, in the guise of sausages, seen draped limply over the cooking fork of these female witches, is perhaps symbolic of not only the impotence or helplessness of men but also the strong and sturdy phallic symbolism of the cooking fork of the female who has become exceptionally powerful at the expense of God-given masculinity and dominance. The biological locus of male procreation is therefore quite literally marginalized in Baldung Grien's print.[427] Regarding the other object hooked around the cooking fork along with the sausages, the basket or wine canteen; I would agree that this vessel is probably some kind of receptacle for liquid because of its bulbous body shape and its much narrower neck and opening. There were, in some accounts, wine that was served at Sabbaths, so it could be referencing that idea or it could also reference a receptacle that could contain some kind of heinous soup or stew which could be taken to the Sabbath feast. Walter Strauss in his article "The Wherewithal of Witches" talks about bowls and the ways in which witches used them, particularly in connection with witches' flying ointment.[428] This idea would fit with Baldung Grien's print as the witches fly or prepare to fly to the Sabbath. This vessel, hanging on the cooking fork,

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[426] Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art,* 1993, pp. 326-327.

[427] For a more in-depth discussion of this "magical castration" see Moira Smith, "The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the 'Malleus Maleficarum,'" *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 39 (Jan.-Apr., 2002), pp. 85-117.

[428] Walter Strauss, "The Wherewithal of Witches," 1983, p. 17.

could be a container for the flying unguent. Incense was also believed to enable magical events to occur.[429] Rather than billowing plumes of steam emitting from the urn, this could instead be incense smoke. However, it is important to note that in the following excerpt no mention is made of toads in creating this incense:

> Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, born at Cologne in 1486 . . . reports that "So they say that fumes made with linseed, flea-bane seed, roots of violets, and parsley, doth make one foresee things to come . . . that by certain vapors, exhaling from proper suffumigations, airy spirits are presently raised, as also thunderings and lightenings, and such like things . . . so, they say, that if coriander, smallage, henbane, and hemlock be made to fume, that spirits will presently come together; hence they are spirits' herbs. Also that a fume made of the root of the reedy herb sagapen with the juice of hemlock and henbane, and the herb *tapsus barbatus*, red sanders, and black poppy makes spirits and strange shapes appear, but if smallage is added the fume chaseth away spirits from any place and destroys their visions.[430]

The canteen and the urn may be interpreted as representing receptacles for poisons, unguents, incense or foodstuffs, but a definitive identification is unclear, or perhaps unnecessary at this time when we have a fuller language for recognizing witches, so the viewer could speculate about various meanings that would provide opportunities for discussion of this complex subject of witchcraft.

So, it is with this print, Hans Baldung Grien's *Witches' Preparing for the Sabbath Flight*, that we conclude our analysis of the visual vocabulary of women as flying witches. This image provides the richest symbolic language for the visual images of witches in the sixteenth century, as is confirmed by Zika when he declares that Hans Baldung, "more than any other artist" contributed to "the

[429] Ibid.

[430] Ibid, pp. 20-21.

creation of the new visual subject of witchcraft."[431] And thus the way was prepared for the many witch images of the following centuries.

[431] Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft,* 2007, p. 11.

Conclusion

Women as flying witches are images that have yet to go out of fashion. What began as a conflation of a twelfth-century heresy to a focus on women and the worshipping of Satan has resulted in an exclusively female stereotype that is still alive today. Stories of women flying about in the company of the goddess Diana and her demons is an ancient tale, but it was not until the Renaissance in Europe that we find images of women flying about the night sky, intent on meeting others to pay homage to the Devil. The first textual source of flying women came in 906, when the Church felt compelled to allay people's fear that women were flying about at the Devil's behest to work mischief, and thus published the document *Canon Episcopi (Ut episcopi de parochiis suis sortilegos et maleficus expellent)*. The idea of women as flying witches was thought at the time to be a wicked delusion, and parishioners were warned against believing such nonsense.

In the late Middle Ages, however, the Church theologians and Inquisitors began to claim that there was some truth to this delusion, and clerics used this idea to accuse particular groups, such as the Waldensians, with a diabolical heresy, by stating that they were witches that flew at night to secret meetings of blasphemous rituals that threatened all of Christendom. This was not heresy of the usual unorthodox variety but rather a unique crime that involved sacrilege rather than only a refusal to conform to the dogma of the Church.

As time went on, these suspicions grew and accusations multiplied, fueled by the sermons, treatises, and visual images of witches that were increasingly introduced throughout various communities, mainly in Northern Europe. The

practice of witchcraft was written about by various ecclesiastical authors, some of who were Dominican Inquisitors, and this literature grew steadily through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most of the time these stories involved women who were accused of conjuring a hail storm or bewitching a neighbor, but with these accusations, there were often horrific confessions described by judges and Inquisitors and written about in manuals and presented in sermons. These fantastical events were recorded and published throughout the Renaissance period, and during this time images were also introduced that codified the visual iconography of the specific nefarious practices of witches. The first witch manual published with accompanying images was Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis et pythonicis mulierbus* in 1489, and from that time onward, women as flying witches became a standard convention of witchcraft imagery.

This study presents the genesis of these images of women as flying witches and provides explanations and suggestions as to how this imagery progressed through the mid-sixteenth century, when the first major witch-hunting panics were beginning to take place across Europe. During the Renaissance, the image of women as flying witches developed further and complemented the Church's teaching regarding the innate sinful, lustful nature of women, combined with the classical understanding of women's weaker constitution. These weaknesses were what made women the prime target of Satan's plan to disrupt society.

Thus, the images of women as flying witches in this study illustrate the claims of the Church during the Renaissance, that was informed by classical

authors and Early Church fathers such as Jerome, that as women, who were the daughters of Eve, were uniquely suited to be the victims of delusions and deceptions of Satan because of their weak physical constitutions that compromised their ability to think clearly and resist temptations. Women as flying witches was therefore an idea that developed into a full visual iconography by artists such as Dürer, Altdorfer, and Hans Baldung Grien, all of whom appropriated from pagan stories of antiquity, medieval folktales, and Church doctrine to create an enduring image of witchcraft that continues to fuel popular imagination today.

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Appendix A

Passages from the *Canon episcopi*

Bishops and their officials must labor with all their strength to uproot thoroughly from their perishes the pernicious art of sorcery and malefice invented by the devil, and if they find a man or woman follower of this wickedness to eject them foully disgraced from their parishes . . . It is also not to be omitted that some wicked women perverted by the devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves, in the hours of night to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of the pagans, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of their mistress, and to be summoned to her service on certain nights. But I wish it were they alone who perished in their faithlessness and did not draw many with them into the destruction of infidelity. For an innumerable multitude, deceived by this false opinion, believe this to be true and, so believing, wander from the right faith and are involved in the error of the pagans when they think that there is anything of divinity or power except the one God. Wherefore the priests throughout their churches should preach with all insistence to the people that they may know this to be in every way false and that such phantasms are imposed upon the minds of infidels and not by the divine but by the malignant spirit. Thus Satan himself, who transfigures himself into an angel of light, when he has captured the mind of a miserable woman and has subjugated her to himself by infidelity and incredulity, immediately transforms himself into the species and similitudes of different personages and, deluding the mind which he holds captive and exhibiting things, joyous or mournful, and persons, known or unknown, leads it through devious ways, and while the spirit alone endures this, the faithless mind thinks these things happen not in the spirit but in the body. Who is there that is not led out of himself in dreams and nocturnal visions, and sees much when sleeping which he had never seen waking? . . . Whoever therefore believes that anything can be made, or that any creature can be changed to better or to worse or be transformed into another species or similitude, except by the creator himself who made everything and through whom all things were made, is beyond doubt an infidel.

Transcription from Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972, pp. 76-77.

Appendix B

Ad abolendam (to be abolished by the different heretical depravity)

Pope Julius III

November 4, 1184

To be abolished by the different according to the perverseness of heresies, which in many parts of the world in modern times, began to spring up, the vigor of the church ought to be excited, and indeed the strength of the vote of the imperial power, and perversity of heretics, the falsity of the efforts made on them, dashed, and the simplicity of the truth in the church of the saints of the Catholic, shining gloriously, he demonstrates that it is everywhere from all curses of false dogmas expiate. And for this reason dear friends, we are the children of our Lord Frederick, and the vigor of the illustrious emperor of the Romans always together, sustained by the presence of Augustus, by the common counsel of our brother, and that of the other patriarchs, archbishops, and of many of the princes, who were gathered together from all parts of the empire, against the heretics themselves, which they gave to the profession of the different chapters of the different of false ideas, we arise to the present general sanction of the decree, and every heresy, by whatever name they are accused, the series of this issue by means of their apostolic authority, we condemn.

And especially to the Pure Patarinus and those that have afflicted the poor or the false name Ludgunum counterfeit Passaginos, Guiseppina, Amaldists decree permanently ban subject. And since some people, under the appearance of piety, of the virtues of him, according to the saying of the apostle, he brings in, claim for themselves the authority to preach, whereas the same Apostle says: “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” all those who are or were forbidden to have, or not to have been sent, in addition to the authority granted by the Apostolic See or by the bishop of the place, shall presume to preach in public or in private, and all of them, he who was of the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, or out of the baptism, that is, of the confession of sins, or for the rest of the sacraments of marriage, or to teach, they are not afraid to feel any other way, than the holy Roman church preaches and waiteth, and , in general, for all those whom the Roman church of the same, with the advice of the clergy or to individual bishops in the their dioceses by means of, or with the advice of the clerics are the see is vacant, if the occasion arises, of the neighbors heretical Bishop deem an anathema perpetual prohibition. Receivers, and their defenders, and all together, to foster in them the aforesaid heretics and who surpassed in some or the favor of the defense of the heresy of the imagination, if we are comforted, and believed in, i.e. the perfect, or in whatever way the superstitious, named after him, decree that a similar decree by the sentence of excommunication.

Since, however, it sometimes happened that the compulsion of sin, so that the severity of the discipline of the Church by those who do not understand the power of the one, be set at naught, the present, nevertheless, the ordering of the sanction, in order, as many as they have been clearly detected in the heresy, if a cleric, or of any religion is the overshadowing of the insincere, the prerogative of the whole ecclesiastical order the vain fellows shamelessly, robbed, and so of all the ecclesiastical office and benefice together, be left for the discretion of the secular power, to be punished after due consideration, unless they have recourse to their own accord, immediately after the detection of error and the unity of the Catholic faith, the bishops of the region at the discretion of the public authority, and have consented to abjure his error, and to present appropriate satisfactionem. Led by whom any of the previously notorious pests or that the fault is sprinkled, except insofar as it has been, and the satisfaction of the exhibited ab iurata heresy immediately fled to the orthodox faith, secular reiquantur decision of the judge, who will receive the due abdolendam.

He found only the suspicion notable except the bishops, according to the decision to consider the quality of the person on suspicion innocence appropriate cleansing will have shown, will be subject to the same sentence. Those men, who, after the abjuration of error, or after it, as we have said, a proper examination of the prelate to expiate their behavior on bent abjured heresy, secular judgment without thoroughly determine daring escape, damned good clerics, which served as the legitimate application of sanctions.

Of course, the above-mentioned sentence of excommunication, to which must be subject to all the heretics, we command you, by all the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops on great feast, and as often as they have had, or any of the solemnities of the occasion, to the glory of God, and for the censure of heresy, shall we declare to be renewed, by apostolic authority and when they had set, so that, if a man be of the order of was found in these negligent or lazy bishops, by the space of three years, is to be considered by the episcopal dignity and the management were very attentive.

To this the advice of counsel, and the suggestion of the roof of the imperial and episcopal see of his princes, we have added, so that each of the archbishop or a bishop, by himself, or as archdeacons, his [sic], or by the other persons of high standing idoneasque, twice or once a year, to his own parish, in which the report has been heretics to live, his stroll, and the men of honest report, ibitres or more, or even, if they seem to be expedient, it addresses the whole neighborhood, to swear, saying that, if any man knew heretics or others holding secret assemblies in the same place, that is, form the common way of the faithful life and morals, they, or eosepiscopo known to the archdeacon. A bishop or archdeacon shall then call together to the presence of the accused, who, in his country, according to the custom of the decision except that he is from the object to the guilt of their

respective orders, or, if they have been relapsed into their former treachery, and that after the clearance, the judgment of bishops is to be punished. If any of them by swearing of oaths, by damnable superstition, of they will not, perhaps, to swear, be judged from the fact of the heretics, and the pains, which are praenominatae, inflicted on.

We decree, moreover, that counts, barons, civil magistrates and rulers of the other places, according to the warning to the archbishops and bishops, and has been furnished corpolariter promise with an oath, that they are in any of the foregoing, faithfully, and effectively, they shall be required from them, from then on, and should endeavor to help the church against the heretics and their accomplices in good faith, according to their office and at the same time to be able to his ecclesiastical and imperial statutes in regard to what we have said, the execution must register. If you want to observe, however, that office, whom you obtain, by no means to be deprived of, and to the others are taken, it still remains an excommunication bound to a person, and the prohibition of the Church lands after their own setting. Now the city, which takes his decretals institutions resist, or neglected to punish bishops warning against resisting the lack of other attacks and dealing episcopal dignity deprived him know.

All also favor heretics condemned as perpetual infamy, and testimony from advocacy and other public offices repellandos decree. If any of those have been, who are exempt from the law of Discesanae iurisdicionis, only to be placed under the authority of the apostolic see, however, that in those things which are contrary to the above, the institution of the heretics, the archbishop or bishop to avoid the judgment, and to those in this respect, as are delegated by the Apostolic See, in spite of their liberty, His privileges attendant.

Transcription from Documentacatholicaomnia.eu (online version lacks indication of pagination).

Appendix C

Vox in Rama (Voice in Rama)

1233

Pope Gregory IX

The following rites of this pestilence are carried out: when any novice is to be received among them and enters the sect of the damned for the first time, the shape of a certain frog appears to him, which some are accustomed to call a toad. Some kiss this creature on the hind-quarters and some on the mouth; they receive the tongue and saliva of the beast inside their mouths. Sometimes it appears unduly large, and sometimes equivalent to a goose or a duck, and sometimes it even assumes the size of an oven. At length, when the novice has come forward, he is met by a man of marvelous pallor, who has very black eyes and is so emaciated and thin that, since his flesh has been wasted, seems to have remaining only skin drawn over the bone. The novice kisses him and feels cold, like ice, and after the kiss the memory of the catholic faith totally disappears from his heart. Afterwards they sit down to a meal and when they have arisen from it, from a certain statue, which is usual in a sect of this kind, a black cat about the size of an average dog, descends backwards, with its tail erect. First the novice, next the master, then each of one of the order, who are worthy and perfect, kiss the cat on its hindquarters; the imperfect, who do not estimate themselves worthy, receive grace from the master. Then each returns to his place and, speaking certain responses, they incline their heads toward the cat. "Forgive us," says the master, and the one next to him repeats this, a third responding and saying, "We know master"; a fourth says, "And we must obey."

When this has been done, they put out the candles, and turn to the practice of the most disgusting lechery, making no distinction between those who are strangers and those who are kin. Moreover, if by chance those of the male sex exceed the number of women, surrendering to their ignominious passions, burning mutually in their desires, men engage in depravity with men. Similarly, women change their natural function, which is against nature, making this itself worthy of blame among themselves. When these most abominable sins have been completed, and the candles have been lit again and each has resumed his place, from a dark corner of the assembly, which is not lacking in the most damned of men, a certain man emerges, from the loins upward gleaming more brightly than the sun, so they say, whose lower part if shaggy like a cat and whose light illuminates the whole place. Then the master, picking out something from the clothing of the novice, says to the shining figure, "This which has been given to me, I give to you," and the shining figure replies, "You have served me well and will serve more and better. I commit what you have given into your custody," and having said that at once disappears. They even receive the body of the Lord every

year at Easter from the hand of a priest, and carrying it in their mouths to their homes, they throw it into the latrine in contempt of the savior. Furthermore, these most unhappy of wretches, blaspheming the Lord in Heaven with polluted lips, assert in their madness that the Lord violently and deceitfully against justice threw Lucifer down into the lower world. These wretches also believe in him and affirm that he is the creator of heaven, and will return there in his glory when the Lord has fallen, through which with him and not before him they hope that they will have eternal happiness. They acknowledge all acts which are not pleasing to the Lord, and instead do what he hates.

Transcription from Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History, 2nd Edition*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, p. 115-16.

Appendix D

Passages from the *Formicarius* (1435)

By Johannes Nider

Theologian: I will relate to you some examples, which I have gained in part from the teachers of our faculty, in part from the experience of a certain upright secular judge, worthy of all faith, who from the torturer and confession of witches and from his experience in public and private has learned many things of this sort – a man with whom I have often discussed this subject broadly and deeply – to wit, Peter, a citizen of Bern, in the diocese of Lausanne, who had burned many witches of both sexes, and has driven others out of the territory of the Bernese. I have moreover conferred with one Benedict, a monk of the Benedictine [sic] order, who, although now a very devout cleric in a reformed monastery at Vienna, was a decade ago, while still in the world, a necromancer, juggler, buffoon, and strolling player, well known as an expert among the secular nobility. I have likewise heard certain of the following things from the Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity at Autun, who was a devoted reformer of our order in the convent at Lyons, and has convicted many of witchcraft in the diocese of Autun.

And so there are now, or very recently have been, as the same inquisitor and master Peter have told me and rumour has it, some witches of both sexes in the area of Berne. These, against the tendency of human nature – indeed, against the manners of all species of animals with the exception of wolves – devour the babies of their own species and habitually consume them. In the town of Boltigen in the diocese of Lausanne, a certain chief witch named Stedelen was captured by the same Peter the judge. Stedelen confessed that in his practice over a period of time he had killed seven babies in the womb of the woman in the house where the woman and man lived, such that he aborted fetuses in the woman for many years. In the same house, he did the same to all the pregnant cows, none of which gave birth to any living thing for the same number of years, as the conclusion to this series of events proved. So when this vile person was questioned whether and how he was involved in all this, he revealed his crime by saying that he had placed a lizard under the front entrance to the house, which, if removed, would restore fertility to every animal living there. But when they searched for the lizard under the door and could not fine it – perhaps because it had turned into dust – they carried away the dust as well as the dirt underneath it; and fertility returned to the woman and the animals that same year. Stedelen moreover, was forced to confess under torture, and the aforesaid judge finally consigned him to the flames.

Then the aforesaid inquisitor told me that in the duchy of Lausanne he had seen some witches cooking and eating their own children. The way that they would find out about this practice was, as he said, that the witches would come to a fixed meeting place, and would see the demon in the assumed likeness of a man.

Their disciples had to promise to abjure Christianity, never to reverence the Eucharist and to stamp on the cross if they could do so without notice.

It was moreover widely known, the said judge Peter told me that in the territory of Bern witches had devoured thirteen babies within a short period of time, with the result that public justice finally flared up sufficiently harshly against such murderers. When Peter had questioned one of the captured witches how they ate the babies, she said: "This is how. With unbaptized babies, even baptized ones if they are not protected by the sign of the cross and prayers, we kill them in our ceremonies, either in their cradles or by the sides of their parents, who afterwards are thought to have suffocated or to have died in some other way. We then quietly steal them from their graves and cook them in a cauldron until their bones can be separated from the boiled meat and the broth. From the more solid material we make an unguent suitable for our purposes and rites and transmutations. From the more liquid fluid, we fill up a flask or a bottle made of skins, and he who drinks from this, with the addition of a few ceremonies, immediately becomes an accomplice and a master of our sect."

The same procedure was more clearly described by another young man, arrested and burned as a witch, although as I believe, truly penitent, who had earlier, together with his wife, a witch invincible to persuasion, escaped the clutches of the aforesaid judge Peter. The aforesaid youth, being again indicted at Bern with his wife, and placed in a different prison from hers, declared, "If I can obtain absolution for my sins, I will freely lay bare all I know about witchcraft, for I see that I have death to expect." And when he had been assured by the scholars that, if he should truly repent, he would certainly be able to gain absolution for his sins, then he gladly offered himself to death, and disclosed the methods of his youthful infection.

"The ceremony in which I was seduced," he said, "was as follows: First, on the Lord's day, before the holy water is consecrated, the future disciple must go with his masters into church, and there in their presence must renounce Christ and his faith, baptism, and the Church universal. Then he must do homage to the magisterulus, that is, to the little master (for so, and not otherwise, they call the Devil). Afterward he drinks from the aforesaid flask, and this done, he forthwith feels himself to conceive and hold within himself an image of our art and the chief rites of this sect. After this fashion was I seduced; and my wife also, whom I believe of so great pertinacity that she will endure the flames rather than confess the least bit of the truth; but, alas, we are both guilty." What the young man had said was found in all respects to be the truth. For after confession, the young man was seen to die in great contrition. His wife, however, though convicted by the testimony of witnesses, would not confess the truth even under the torture or in death: but when the fire was prepared for her by the executioner, uttered in most evil words a curse upon him, and so was burned.

Transcription from Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2004, pp. 53-54.

Appendix E

Papal Bull

Summis Desiderantes (Desiring with extreme ardor)

Innocent VIII

December 5, 1484

Desiring with supreme ardor, as pastoral solicitude requires, that the catholic faith in our days everywhere grow and flourish as much as possible, and that all heretical depravity be put far from the territories of the faithful, we freely declare and anew decree this by which our pious desire may be fulfilled, and, all errors being rooted out be our toil as with the hoe of a wise laborer, zeal and devotion to this faith may take deeper hold on the hearts of the faithful themselves.

It has recently come to our ears, not without great pain to us, that in some parts of upper Germany, as well as in the provinces, cities, territories, regions, and dioceses of Mainz, Koln, Trier, Salzburg, and Bremen, many persons of both sexes, heedless of their own salvation and forsaking the catholic faith, give themselves over to the devils male and female, and by their incantations, charms, and conjurings, and by other abominable superstitions and sortileges, offences, cries and misdeeds, ruin and cause to perish the offspring of women, the foal of animals, the products of the earth, the grapes of vines, and the fruits of trees, as well as men and women, cattle and flocks and herds and animals of every kind, vineyards also and orchards, meadows, pastures, harvests, grains and other fruits of the earth; that they afflict and torture with dire pains and anguish, both internal and external, these men, women, cattle, flocks, herds, and animals, and hinder men from begetting and women from conceiving, and prevent all consummation of marriage; that moreover, they deny with sacrilegious lips the faith they received in holy baptism; and that, at the instigation of the enemy of mankind, they do not fear to commit and perpetrate many other abominable offences and crimes, at the risk of their own souls, to the insult of the divine majesty and to the pernicious example and scandal of multitudes. And, although our beloved sons Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger, of the order of Friars Preachers, professors of theology, have been and still are deputed by our apostolic letters as inquisitors of heretical pravity, the former in the aforesaid parts of upper Germany, including the provinces, cities, territories, dioceses, and other places as above, and the latter throughout certain parts of the course of the Rhine; nevertheless certain of the clergy and of the laity of those parts, seeking to be wise above what is fitting, because in the said letter of deputation the aforesaid provinces, cities, dioceses, territories, and other places, and the persons and offences in question were not individually and specifically names, do not blush obstinately to assert that these are not to be permitted to proceed to the punishment, imprisonment, and correction of the aforesaid persons for the

offences and crimes above named. Wherefore in the provinces, cities, dioceses territories, and places aforesaid such offences and crimes, not without evident damage to their souls and risk of eternal salvation, go unpunished.

We therefore, desiring, as is our duty, to remove all impediments by which in any way the said inquisitors are hindered in the exercise of their office, and to prevent the taint of heretical depravity and or other like evils from spreading their infection to the ruin of others who are innocent, the zeal of religion especially impelling us, in order that the provinces, cities, dioceses, territories, and places aforesaid in the said parts of upper Germany may not be deprived of the office of inquisition which is their due, do hereby decree, by virtue of our apostolic authority, that it shall be permitted to the said inquisitors in these regions to exercise their office of inquisition and to proceed to the correction, imprisonment, and punishment of the aforesaid persons for their said offences and crimes in all respects and altogether precisely as if the provinces, cities, territories, places, persons, and offences aforesaid were expressly named in the said letter. And, for the greater sureness, extending the son Johannes Gremper, cleric of the diocese of Constance, master of arts, their present notary, or any other notary public who by them or by either of them shall have been temporarily delegated in the provinces, cities, dioceses, territories, and places aforesaid, may exercise against all persons, of whatsoever condition and rank, the said office of inquisition, correcting, imprisoning, punishing and chastising, according to their deserts, those persons whom they shall find guilty as aforesaid.

And they shall also have full and entire liberty to propound and preach to the faithful word of God, as often as it shall seem to them fitting and proper, in each and all of the parosh [sic] churches in the said provinces, and to do all things necessary and suitable under the aforesaid circumstances, and likewise freely and fully to carry the out.

Transcription from Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History,* 2nd Edition, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Appendix F

The *Malleus maleficarum*

Part II Chapter Three

"How They Are Actually Transported From One Place To Another"

There are various ways in which I can show that [witches] can be transported physically. First of all, there are [examples from] the other activities of people who work magic [*magorum*]. If they could not be transported, it would be either because God did not allow it or because the Devil could not do it, since it would not be the kind of thing a created being is able to do. The first [of these reasons] will not do, because things of greater or lesser note can happen when God gives His permission, and things of greater importance very often do happen in the case of children as well as adults, as is clear in the case of the righteous who are in [a state of] grace.

When people ask whether substituting a changeling for a human child can be done by the operation of evil spirits, and whether an evil spirit can physically transport anyone from one place to another, even if he or she is unwilling, they are answered, "Yes" to the first. In the last part of his *De universe* Guillaume d'Auvergne says, 'Substituting changelings for human children can happen, with God's permission. An evil spirit can switch a child and also remove him from one place to another.' Such children are always unhappy and never stop shrieking; and although four or five mothers would scarcely be enough to feed them with milk, they never put on weight – and yet they are more than usually heavy. But women should not have this either affirmed or denied, because they could become excessively frightened. One should direct them to ask for the opinions of educated men. God allows [these substitutions to happen] on account of the parents' sins, because sometimes husbands abuse their pregnant wives by saying, 'I hope you're carrying the Devil!' and things such as that; and likewise, women do not put up with the situation and often say something similar. One finds very many examples involving other people, too, sometimes [people who are] righteous.

Finally, what about those magicians [magi] whom we usually call "necromancers" [nigromantici], who are often carried for a long time through the air by evil spirits to faraway places? These magicians sometimes persuade others to do the same, and carry them along on a horse (which is not really a horse, but an evil spirit in that shape), and, according to what they say, urge them not to protect themselves with the sign of the cross.

Although there are two of us writing this treatise, one of us has been and come across such men very frequently. Someone who used to be a student, and is now, I believe, a priest in the diocese of Freising, was in the habit of saying that

on one occasion he had been physically transported through the air by an evil spirit, and taken to places far away.

There is another priest in Oberdorf, a town near Landshut, who was a close friend of his at the time, and with his own eyes saw him being transported and the way he was borne up into the sky with his arms outstretched, shouting but not shrieking. The reason [this happened], as he recounted it, was as follows. A large number of students were meeting one day to spend their money on ale, and they had all come to an agreement that the one who etched the ale would not be obliged to pay anything. So one of them was prepared to go off and fetch the ale. He opened the door and saw a thick cloud in front of it. This frightened him, and he came back in, and let [the others] know why he was unwilling to fetch the drink. At that point, the man who was carried away became angry and said, 'Even if the Devil were here, I should fetch the drink!' So he went outside and, in the sight of everyone who was there at the time, he was carried upwards through the air.

Actually, I have to say that such things can happen to people not only while they are awake, but while they are asleep as well – that is, they may be transported physically from one place to another through the air while they are asleep.

This is clear in the case of certain people who walk over the roof-tiles of houses and over very tall buildings, while they are asleep, and nothing can get in the way of their passage, whether it is high up or low down; and if other people who are standing around call out their names to them, they tumble to the ground at once, as if they had been struck down.

Many people think – and not without good reason – that these things happen by the operation of evil spirits. Evil spirits are of many different kinds. Some belong to the lower choir of angels. They are tortured with trivial punishments (in addition to the punishment of damnation which they will suffer for eternity) for what one might call "little" offences. They cannot hurt anyone – at least, not seriously – but for the most art simply play jokes [on humans]. Others are incubi and succubi, and punish people during the night, or pollute them with the sin of lust, and it is not surprising if they press ahead with tricks as well.

The way they go about being transported is as follows. It has been made clear from what I have said before. Under instruction from an evil spirit, they make an ointment from the body-parts of children, particularly those they have killed before they have been baptized. They smear it on a chair or a piece of wood, and when they have done this, they are carried at once into the air, day or night, in full sight of everyone or (if this is what they want) invisibly. This happens because an evil spirit can prevent one body from being seen by another in the path [of someone's sigh], as I made clear in Part I of this treatise when I

discussed the way the operations of evil spirits create false illusions. Now, although the evil spirit contrives this for the most part by means of this kind of ointment, with aim of depriving small children of the grace of baptism and salvation, still, on many occasions he has appeared to manage without: as when [evil spirits] have transported the women via animals which were not real animals but evil spirits in that shape. But sometimes [the women] are transported without any external support, merely by the power of an evil spirit, [a power] which operates in visible form.

Here is a factual account [*res gesta*] about a transvection which took place in daylight, and which people were able to see. In the town of Waldshut on the Rhine, in the diocese of Konstanz, one witch was absolutely hated by the townspeople and was not invited to the celebration of a wedding, although almost every single inhabitant of the town was taking part in it. She took offence [at this] and reckoned she would take her revenge. Therefore she invoked an evil spirit and explained the reason for her ill humour, with a view to making him willing to raise a hailstorm; and she asked him to send everyone running in different directions from their dancing. He nodded his approval, lifted her up from the ground, and carried her through the air to a mountain near the town, in full sight of some shepherds. Now, according to her later confession, she had no water to pour into a pit – this is the method they use when they raise hailstorms, as I shall explain later – so she made a small hole in the ground, filled it with urine in place of water, and then stirred it with her finger in the usual way, while the evil spirit was standing by. Suddenly, the evil spirit raised the fluid upwards and sent a violent hailstorm in the form of stones [which fell] only upon the dancers and the townspeople. After they had scattered and were talking to each other about the reason for that [storm], the witch came into the town and in consequence suspicion began to make matters much worse. But when the shepherds gave an account of what they had seen, [people's] strong suspicion developed into aggression. So she was arrested, and confessed she had contrived this kind of thing (presumably because she had not been invited [to the wedding]); and because of many other acts of harmful magic she had also contrived, she was burned.

Because common gossip about this kind of transvection is constantly winging its way round the lower orders, I do not need to add anything further about it at this point by way of proof. I only hope that what I have said already is enough to refute those who either deny such physical transvection altogether, or try to maintain that such things happen only in the imagination and in fantasy. Actually, it would matter little if they were left in their error, were it not that their error tended to incline satisfied with that error, they are not afraid to implant it in others and make it known how much the number of witches is growing, and how the Faith is diminishing. They maintain that every act of harmful magic (which is deservedly, accurately, and legitimately attributed to [witches] as instruments of

evil spirits), should be ascribed to them as though they happened only in the imagination and fantasy, and as though [the witches] were blameless – and transvection they cite as an example of this fantasy. Consequently, on many occasions they remain unpunished, with the result that the Creator is greatly insulted and there is a most worrying increase in their own numbers.

Transcription from P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, edited, selected, translated and annotated, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 2007, pp. 134-138.

Appendix G

The *Malleus maleficarum*

Part I Question Ten

"Whether Sorceresses Work On Humans By Turning Them Into the Shapes of Beasts Through the Art of Conjuring"

Fourth, the truth of their turning humans into beasts is explained.

As for how this happens, it is argued on the basis of Chapter "*Episcopi*" from the Council of Acquira that it is not possible for this to happen: "Whoever believes that a creature can be created or changed for the better or worse or turned into a different variety or appearance except by the Creator Himself Who made everything and through Whom everything was made is without a doubt an infidel and worse than a pagan." Let us use the arguments of St. Thomas in the *Commentary on Pronouncements*, Bk. 3, Dist. 8). "Whether demons can make an impression on the bodily senses by deceiving them through acts of conjuring." [*Sent.* 2.8.5.Ag4]), where he first argues that they do not. For the form of the animal that is seen ought to exist somewhere, but it cannot exist merely in the sense of perception because a sense holds no image except what it has received from objects. There cannot exist a real beast there on the cited authority of the Canon, nor again can it exist in the object that is seen, for instance when a woman is seen as a beast, because two essential forms cannot exist in the same place at one and the same time. Therefore, since that animal shape that is seen cannot exist anywhere, it cannot be the case that an illusion of conjuring is being made in the eye of the viewer, since vision must necessarily be determined by some shape.

[AG 2] Also, if it is said that the shape in question is in the surrounding air, this cannot be so, because the air is not receptive of some form (image), because the air around that person cannot always remain one and the same on account of its fluid nature, especially when it moves, and also because in that case the transformation would be seen by everyone, which does not happen because it seems to be the case that the demons do not deceive the eyes of holy men, at any rate.

[AG3] Also, the sense (or faculty) of vision is a passive faculty, but everything passive is moved by an active agent proportionate to it, and the active agent proportionate to the sense of perception is twofold. One is the thing that, as it were, originates the act, namely its object. The other is like an intermediary that, as it were, delivers it. yet, the shape that is seen cannot be the object of the sense of perception or the intermediary that, as it were, delivers it.

Regarding the first argument (that it cannot be the object), the reason is that it cannot be received from anything, as was discussed in the preceding question, since it is not in the sense of perception from the thing received, nor is it

in the thing itself or even in the air as if in the intermediary of delivery, as was previously discussed in the third argument.

[AG 4] Also, if a demon sets the internal power of recognition in motion, he does this either by showing himself to the virtue of recognition or by changing it. He does not do so by showing himself because it would be necessary either to assume a body, in which case he would not be able to enter into the organ or imagination, since two bodies cannot exist at the same time in the same place, or by assuming a fantastical image, which likewise cannot be the case because a fantastical image cannot exist without mass and a demon lacks any mass. Similarly, he also cannot do this by causing a change, because he would make the change either by causing an alteration, which it seems he cannot do because every alteration takes place through active characteristics that demons lack, or by bringing about a change in form or a movement in location, which seems to be unacceptable for two reasons. First, a change in form of the corgan cannot take place with a sense of pain, and second, by this reasoning the demon would be showing the person only things already known, while Augustine [*Spirit and Soul* 28] says that the demon shows a person forms both known and unknown. Therefore, it seems that demons can in no way deceive a human's power of imagination or sensing.

[SC 1] But to the contrary, Augustine says (*City of God*, Bk. 18 [18.18]), that changes of humans into the shape of dumb animals that are said to have been performed through the art of demons did not take place in reality but only in appearance. This would not happen if the demons were incapable of changing the human senses of perception.

[SC 2] Also, the authority of Augustine in the *Book of Eighty-Three Questions* [12], which was cited before also indicates this: "This evil of the demon creeps in through all the entrances of the senses . . . "

[CO] Response. If the reader wishes to make an examination of the method of making a change, he will find the various methods in Chapter Six of the Second Part of the work. For the moment, let us merely proceed in the scholastic manner and mention pronouncements of three Doctors that agree about the Devil's ability to deceive a man's fantasy so that a real person is seen as an animal. Among these pronouncements, the last is more subtle than the others and is that of St. Thomas.

This first is that of Lord Antoninus in the Pt. I of the *Summa*, Title 5 [actually, 2], Ch. six, Five, where he explains that the Devil sometimes works on a man's fantasy to cause a deception, especially in terms of imposing an illusion upon the senses. He bases his explanation on natural reasoning, the authority of the Canon and many varieties of proof through experience. The first is as follows. "Bodies are naturally subordinate to and obey the nature of angels in terms of

movement in location. Bad angels, even if they have lost Grace, have nonetheless not lost their natural virtue, as was discussed several times above. Since the faculty of fantasy (imagination) is a bodily one, that is, one attached to an organ of the body, it is also naturally subordinate to the evil angels, so that they can change it in form by creating various fantasies through causing the humors and spirits to descend to the origin of perception." He adds, "this is also clear from the Canon (26, Q. 5, "*Episcopi*"): 'It should not be overlooked that certain criminal women, converting back to Satan and being led astray by the demons' illusions and fantastical images, believe and proclaim that during the hours of the night they ride on certain beasts with Diana, goddess of the pagans, or with Herodias and with a countless multitude of women and pass over great stretches of the earth during the silence of the dead of night.' And below: "Therefore, priests should preach to the congregation of God so that they know that these things are altogether false and that such images are inflicted on the minds of the faithful not by the divine spirit but by the divine spirit but by an evil-minded spirit. For it is Satan himself who transforms himself into the appearances and resemblances of different persons, and by deluding in dreams the minds that he holds captive the takes them on journeys through all sorts of places off the beaten path."'

To be sure, the understanding of this Canon was discussed in Question one in terms of the four things that should be preached, but to say that they cannot be carried off when they affect this and are not impeded by the divine virtue would not be the proper understanding, because very often men who are not sorcerers are bodily transported over great stretches of the earth against their will. That it can happen in either way follows in the aforementioned *Summa*. and in Chapter "*Nec Mirum*" (same question) Augustine narrates that in the books of the pagans one can read about a certain female magician called Circe, who changed the companions of Ulysses into beasts. This was feigned with acts of illusion through conjuring rather than being brought to pass in reality, when she altered the fantasies of the men.

This is made clear through further illustrations. One reads in the *Lives of the Fathers*, that because a certain young woman did not wish to comply with a young man who was importuning her fro a base act, the young man was agitated as a result of this and had a certain Jew cast a spell of sorcery against her, and when this was done, the woman changed into a filly. This change existed not in terms of reality but in terms of the trickery of a demon who changed the fantasy and the sense of perception of the woman herself and of those who looked at her, so that while really a woman herself, she was seen as a filly. Then, when she was brought to St. Macharius, the Devil could not work in such a way as to impose an illusion upon his senses as he had upon the others' because of Macharius' holiness. For he saw her as a real woman and not as a filly, and eventually she was freed from that illusion through his prayers. She said that this had happened

to her because she had not devoted herself to Divine Service or attended the Sacraments regularly, as she kept saying. For this reason, the Devil had held power over her, although she was otherwise respectable. Therefore, the Devil can, by stirring up the internal spirits and humors, work to change the operation and power of nourishment, perceiving and desiring, and of any other bodily faculty that makes use of an organ, according to St. Thomas (*First Part,* Q. III). One can believe that the same thing happened to Simon the Magician in connection with the incantations that are related about him.

But the Devil can do none of these things except by the permission of God. Who, together with His good angels, often suppresses his evil when he seeks to deceive and harm us. Hence Augustine says in speaking of sorcerers, "It is they who with God's permission stir up the elements, through into confusion the minds of people who have less Faith in God" (26, W. 5 "*Nec mirum*").

It is also by their working that it sometimes happens through the art of a sorceress that a husband cannot see his wife and vice versa. (This takes place by means of changing the fantasy by portraying the person to it as something hateful and horrible.) The devil himself also shows to the fantasy of those awake and of those asleep representations of base things in order to deceive them and lead them to an evil deed. But because sin resides not in the imagination but in the will, a human cannot sin as a result of fantasies like this that are offered by the Devil and of various alterations, unless he agrees to the sin by his own will.

The second pronouncement to this effect is that of modern Doctors who explain first what conjuring is and how many ways there are in which the Devil can produce illusions like this. At this point, note that Antoninus cites the matters that were discussed earlier in Question Nine, and hence it is not necessary to repeat them.

The third pronouncement is that of St. Thomas [*Sent.* 2.8.1.5.Ra4], and it is a response to the argument in which the question is raised as to whether the form of the beast that is seen is in the sense of perception or in the thing itself or in the surrounding air. This opinion is as follows. The form of the beast that is seen exists only in the primary internal sense of perception, and through the strength of the imagination it overflows in some way into the external sense of perception. Its presence there can take place through the working of a demon in two ways. One way is that the pictures, let us say of animals, that are preserved in the treasury of the imagination flow, through the working of the demon, to the organs of the internal senses of perception (this is also what happens in dreams according to the explanation above), and accordingly when those pictures arrive, the organs of the outer senses of perception, for example vision, seem as if the objects were present outside and were actually being perceived. The other way can result from a change of the internal organs. When these are changed, the judgment of the perception is fooled. This is made clear in connection with the

person who has had his sense of taste ruined and to whom everything sweet seems bitter. This way hardly differs from the first. Even people can do this through the virtue of certain natural things. For instance, in the fumes of a certain kind of smoke the planks of house are seen as snakes. Many proofs of this are found in experience, as was discussed above.

As for the Arguments.

[RA 1] As for the first, it is clear that that text is often cited and poorly understood. In terms of what it says about the changing of a form into another variety or appearance, an explanation has been given for how this can happen through the art of conjuring, but as for its saying that some creature cannot be made by power of a demon, if "be made" is understood as "be created," it is obvious that it cannot. If, on the other hand, "be made" is understood as "be made through a natural act of bringing forth," it is certain that they can make certain imperfect creatures in this way. St. Thomas [*First* I.114.4.Ra2] explains how this happens (citation above). He says that all changes of bodily objects that can be made through certain natural powers, including the seeds that are found in the elements of this world (in the way that, for example, snakes and frogs and other such creatures leave their seeds in the earth or in the water), can occur through the workings of demons with the use of such seeds, when, for example, something is changed into snakes or frogs, which can be begotten through rotting. On the other hand, the changes of bodily things that cannot be made by the virtue of nature can in no way be carried out in reality through the working of demons, for instance, a human body being changed into the body of a beast or the body of a dead man coming back to life. If this seems to happen, it is an appearance caused by conjuring or the Devil performing in front of people in an assumed body.

These statements can be corroborated. In *Animals*, where he asks whether demons or even, let us say, sorcerers are able to make true animals, Albert answered that they can with God's permission. This is so in the case of imperfect animals, but they cannot do so in an instant the way that God can, but with a certain motion, though it is sudden. this is clear in the case of sorcerers. On the passage in Exodus 8 [actually, 7:11], "Pharaoh summoned the wise men," he says, "Demons scatter over the world and gather various seeds and through the use of them various varieties burst forth." The gloss on the same passage says, "When sorcerers attempt to bring about some result through invoking demons by incantation, they scatter over the world and suddenly bring sees of the things that are the purpose of this activity, and in this way they bring forth new appearances of things from these seeds with God's permission." These matters were also discussed above.

If some difficulty arises as to whether such deeds of demons should be called miraculous works, the answer has become clear from the foregoing, namely that even demons can perform some true miracles, to which the virtue of their

specific nature extends. Although these are true miracles, they are not done by him to bring about the recognition of the truth, and according to this sense the works of the Antichrist can be called lying signs, since they are made for the purpose of leading humans astray.

[RA 2] The solution to the second argument is also clear. Let us speak of the subject of the form. The form of the beast that is seen is not in the air or in the thing itself, as was made clear, but in the sense of perception, according to the explanation based on the pronouncement of St. Thomas (cited above [*Sent*. 2.8.1.5.Ra4]).

[RA 3]As for the argument that every passive thing is moved by some active agent proportionate to it, this is granted, and when it is inferred that the shape that is seen cannot be the object that originates or elicits the action on the grounds that it is derived from no thing, it is said that it is in fact derived from something, because it is derived from a perceptible picture kept in the imagination that the demon can bring out and expose to the imagination or the faculty of perception, as was stated above.

[RA 4] As for the last argument, one should say that a demon does not change the power of perception or imagination by showing him self to it, as has been demonstrated, but by altering it, to be sure altering it only in terms of movement in location because he cannot make an impression of new pictures by himself, as has been said. He makes the change by alteration, that is, by moving it in location, and he achieves this not by splitting the substance of the organ, which would result in a perception of pain, but by setting the spirits and humors in motion.

As for the further objection that it would follow according to this conception that a demon would not be able to show to a person something new in terms of the imagination's vision, one should say that "something new" can be understood in two ways. In one way something is completely new in terms both of itself and its origins, and in this respect a demon cannot show a human something new in terms of the imagination's vision. For he cannot bring it about that someone born blind imagines colors or that someone born deaf imagines sounds. In the other way, the term "something new" is meant in terms of the appearance of the whole. For instance, if we call it a new thing in the imagination when someone imagines golden mountains that he has never seen, nonetheless, because he has seen both gold and a mountain, he can imagine by natural motion fantastical pictures of a golden mountain. In this way, a demon can offer something new to the imagination.

Transcription from Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 201-209.

Appendix H

Illustrations

Figure 1. Unknown Artist, *Champion des dames*, c. 1451. Illumination. Ms fr. 12476, fol. 105, Rothschild 466. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Paris.

Figure 2. Unknown Artist of Flemish School, *Invectives Against the Sect of Waldensians*, Frontispiece of the *Invectives*, 1468. Illumination. MS Fr 96 f. 1. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 3. Unknown Artist, “Metamorphosed Witches”, *De lamiis et pythonicis Mulierbus*, 1489. Woodcut. Quarto Sp. Coll. Ferguson An-y. 34. University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Figure 4. Albrecht Dürer, *The Witch,* 1500. Engraving. The British Museum, London.

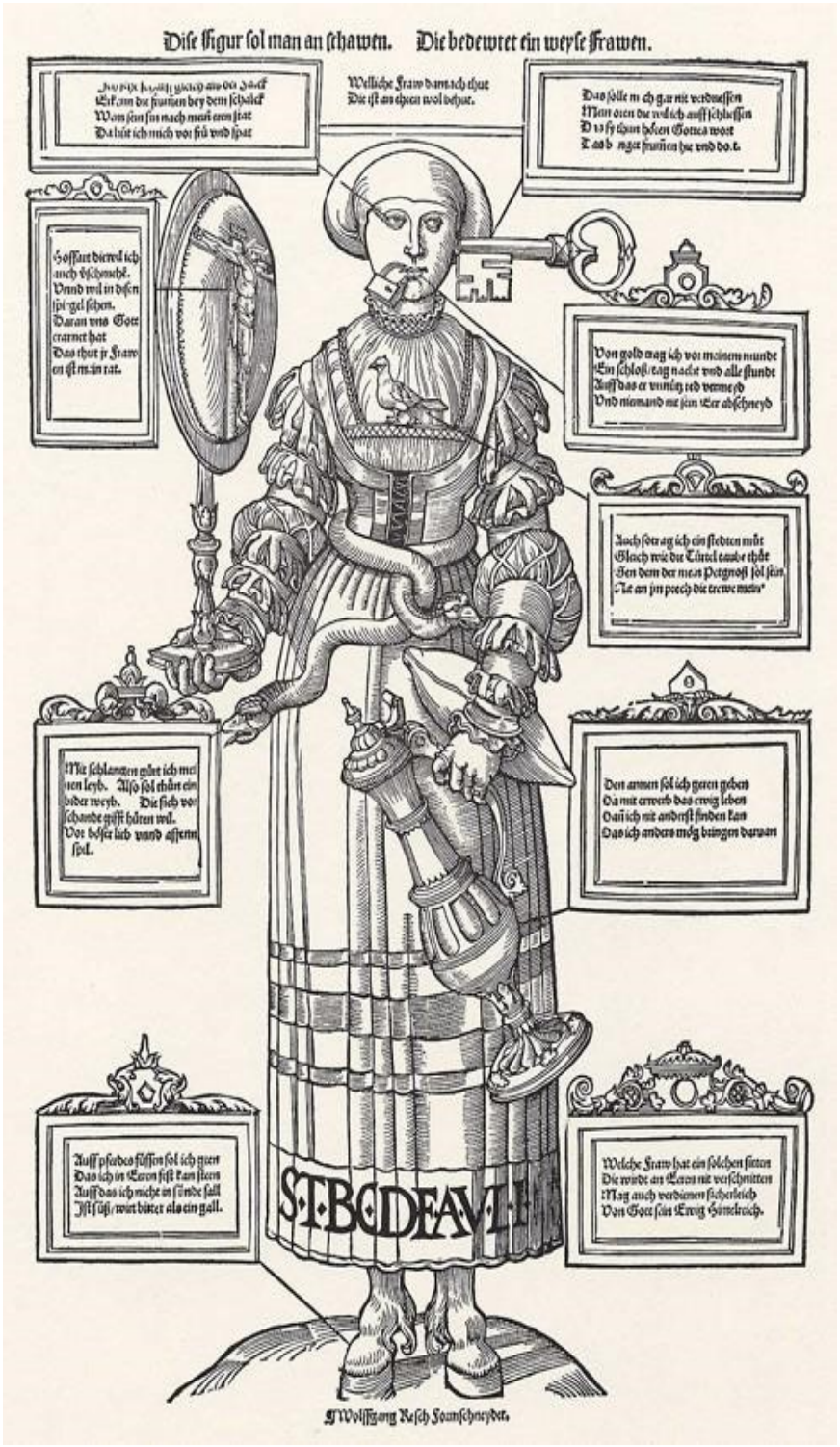

Figure 5. Anton Woensam, *The Wise Woman*, c. 1525. Schematic Woodcut. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

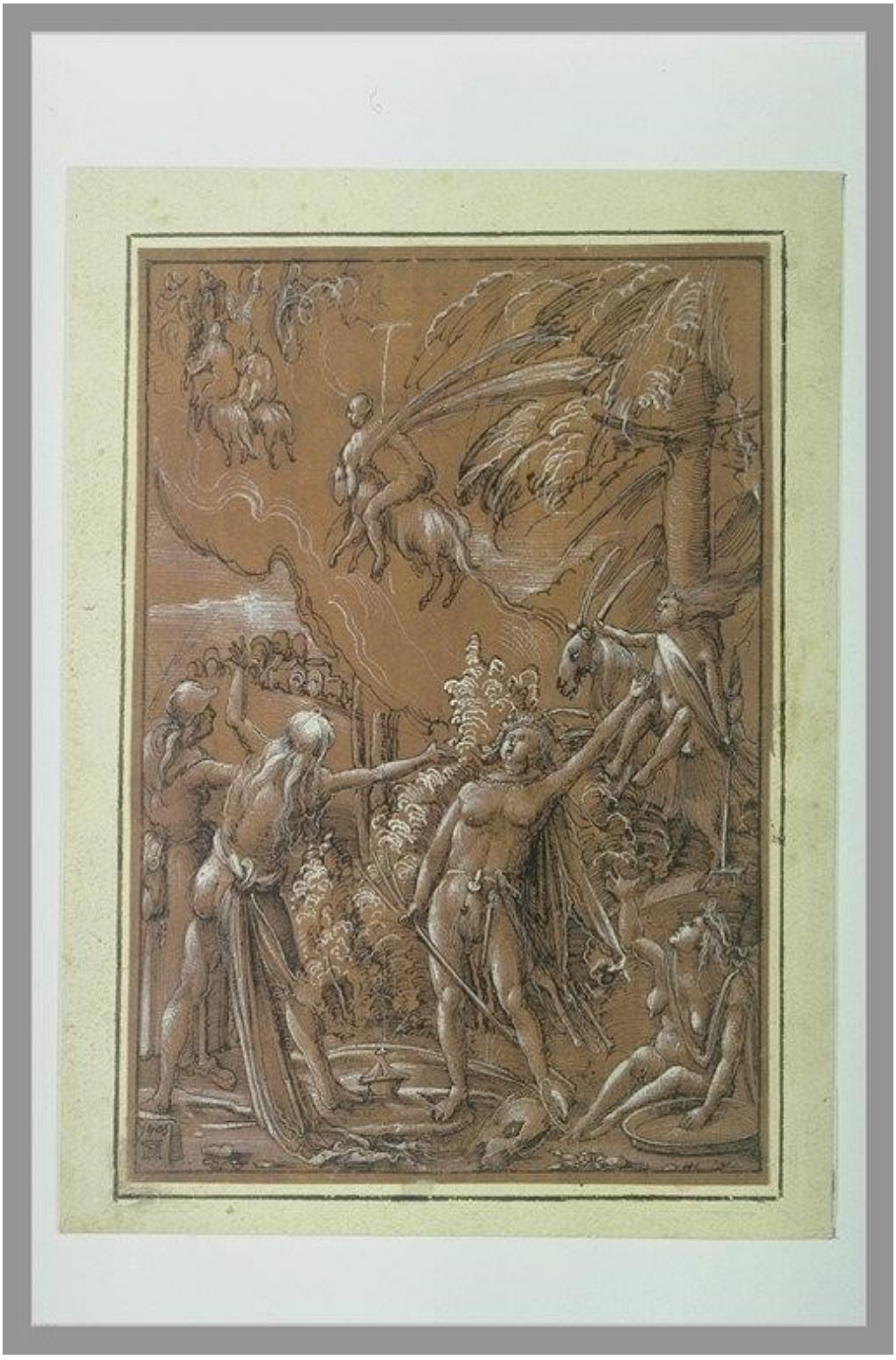

Figure 6. Albrecht Altdorfer, *Witches Preparing for Sabbath Flight*, 1506. Chiaroscuro pen drawing on paper. Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 7. Hans Baldung Grien (?), "Witches" from *Die Emeis*, 1517. Woodcut. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, 2B Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University.

Figure 8. Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches Preparing for the Sabbath Flight*, 1510. Chiaroscuro woodcut. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 9. Frans Francken II, *Witches' Gathering*, 1607. Oil on panel. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Figure 10. Jacques de Gheyn, *Preparations for Witches' Sabbath*, N.D. Pen and brown… kink, brown wash. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.