



Hans Baldung Grien - *Hexen* (Witches; woodcut, 1508)

WITCHCRAFT :
creation of the "evil
other"

A presentation for
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by

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Issues to consider in discussing Witchcraft and the “alien other”

- The millenia-old tradition of demonizing and denigrating women and the underlying causes for this practice; how it manifests in contemporary society
- The extent to which the caricatures of witches endure into the present (single, usually older women, midwives and/or healers, impoverished or dependent who were viewed as a social and cultural problem)
- The lack of awareness of the persecution and execution of hundreds of thousands of women and others as “witches” from 1485 through the seventeenth century
- The lack of any discussion of the psychology and motivation of those who demonized, persecuted and executed those women and others described as “heretics”: economic, expression of power, status, and a desire to create scapegoats to explain misfortune
- The use of savage--often sexualized--brutal torture to extract confessions and the widespread popularity of witch burning, drowning, and torture
- The appropriation of all the property of the accused by the village, the state, or the ruling power at a time of economic shift from land-based, often matrifocal barter system of shared resources to a patriarchal, currency-based economy
- The lack of discussion of the role of the Islamic treat from the time of the Crusades on and how this fear of the infidel “other” led to a generalized fear of the unseen, of things unfamiliar which were often characterized as “magic”
- The characterization of “evil” as the alien “other” and how to address it in the 21st century



Figurine of pregnant woman from Willendorf, Austria, c. 30,000 BCE

Figurine of seated woman giving birth flanked by two Lions. Clay. From Catal Hüyük, Turkey c. 5,800 - 5,500 BCE

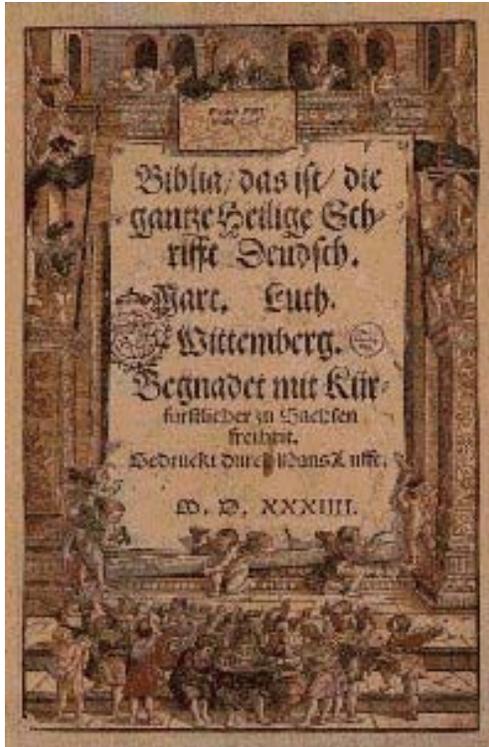


Figurine of Snake Goddess from Knossos, Crete. c. 2,000 - 1,600 BCE. Faience



Childbirth: Woodcut from Der Swangern Frawen und he bammen rosgarten, by Eucharius Rösslin, 1513.

circa 560 B.C.
The Bible condemns witches

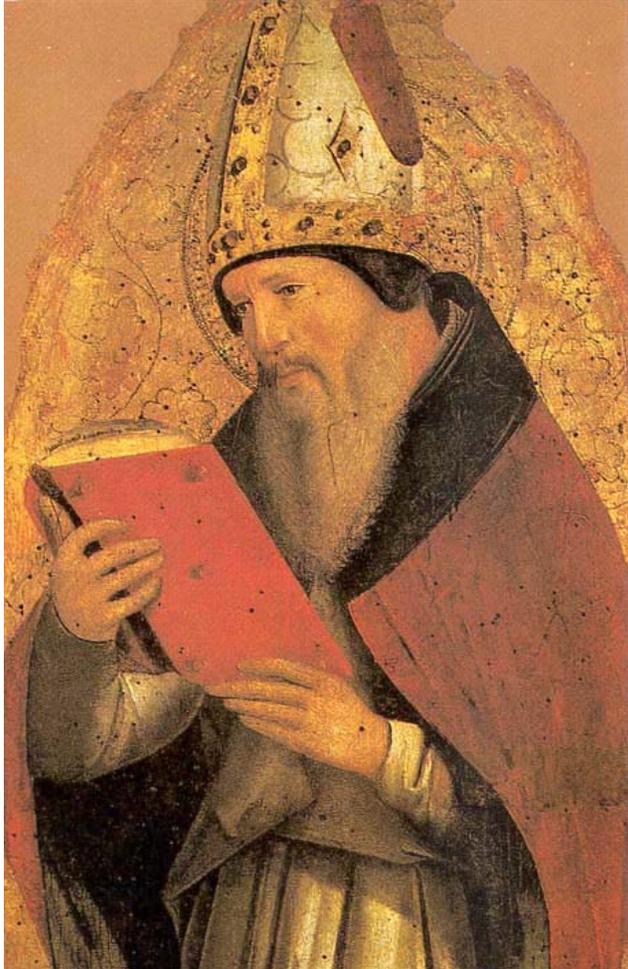


The fight of the City of Satan (Babylon) against the City of God (Syon). From Aurelius Augustinaus' *De Trinitate. De Civitate Dei*, printed by Johann Amerbach, Basle, 1489.

- Exodus 22:18** Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. (KJV)**Leviticus 20:27** A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them. (KJV)Exodus and Leviticus, two Old Testament books that make up part of the "Law of Moses" and the primary history of the Jewish people, were written in the sixth century B. C by a Jewish writer whose name we do not know. The books, which include the passages quoted above that assume the existence of witches and urge that they be killed, were most likely written in what is present-day Iraq during the reign of Evil Merodach, a dark time of Jewish exile, around 560 B.C. The author was most likely a priest, and might have been assisted in his work by other priests and scribes. The word "witch" in Exodus is a translation of the Hebrew word "*kashaph*," which comes from the root meaning "to whisper." The word as used in Exodus probably thus meant "one who whispers a spell." In context, the Exodus passage probably was intended to urge Jews to adhere to their own religious practices and not those of surrounding tribes.

circa 420

St. Augustine argues witchcraft is an impossibility



Saint Augustine of Hippo, an influential theologian in the early Christian Church, argued in the early 400s that God alone could suspend the normal laws of the universe. In his view, neither Satan nor witches had supernatural powers or were capable of effectively invoking magic of any sort. It was the "error of the pagans" to believe in "some other divine power than the one God." Of course, if witches are indeed powerless, the Church need not overly concern itself with their spells or other attempts at mischief. The late medieval Church accepted St. Augustine's view, and hence felt little need to bother itself with tracking down witches or investigating allegations of witchcraft.

1208

**Satan becomes sinister following Pope Innocent III's attack on Cathar
“heretics”**

In 1208, Pope Innocent III opened an attack on Cathar heretics who believed in a world in which God and Satan, both having supernatural powers, were at war. The Church attempted to discredit the Cathar belief by spreading stories that the heretics actually worshiped their evil deity in person. Propagandists for the Church depicted Cathars kissing the anus of Satan in a ceremonial show of loyalty to him. As a result of the Church's sustained attacks, the public's understanding of Satan moved from that of a mischievous spoiler to a deeply sinister force.



**Witch giving the ritual kiss
to Satan. From R. P.
Gaucius' *Compendium
Maleficarum*, Milan, 1626**

1273

Thomas Aquinas argues that demons exist that try to lead people into temptation.



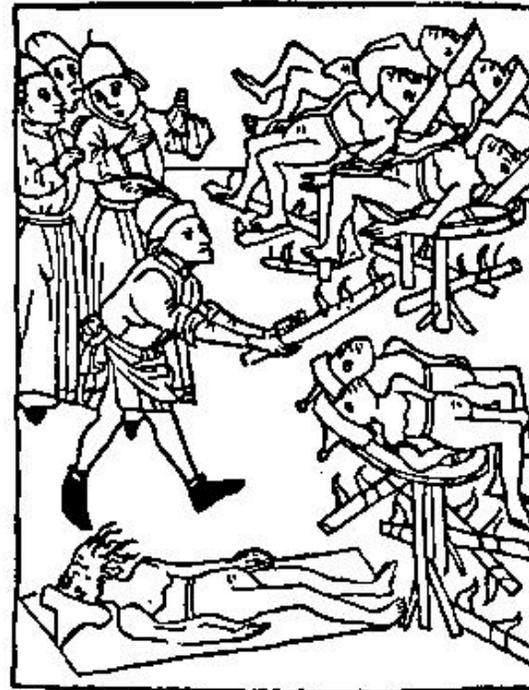
In his *Summa Theologiae*, a Dominican monk named Thomas Aquinas argued for the existence of God. In his work, much of which became adopted as the orthodoxy of the Church, Aquinas wrote that the world was full of evil and dangerous demons. Among other things, Aquinas argued, these demons had the habit of reaping the sperm of men and spreading it among women. In Aquinas's mind, sex and witchcraft begin what will become a long association. Demons thus are seen as not merely seeking their own pleasure, but intent also on leading men into temptation.



The Devil inspiring a young woman with vanity. She preens before a mirror, dressing for her encounter. 15th century woodcut illustration.

Mid-1400s Witchcraft trials erupt in Europe

In addition to women, Jews and certain non-traditional Christian adherents were targeted as heretics, such as the adherents of Catharism, fleeing a papal inquisition launched against their alleged heresies, migrated into Germany and the Savoy. Torture inflicted on heretics suspected of magical pacts or demon-driven sexual misconduct led to alarming confessions. Defendants admitted to flying on poles and animals to attend assemblies presided over by Satan appearing in the form of a goat or other animal. Some defendants told investigators that they repeatedly kissed Satan's anus as a display of their loyalty. Others admitted to casting spells on neighbors, having sex with animals, or causing storms. The distinctive crime of witchcraft began to take shape.

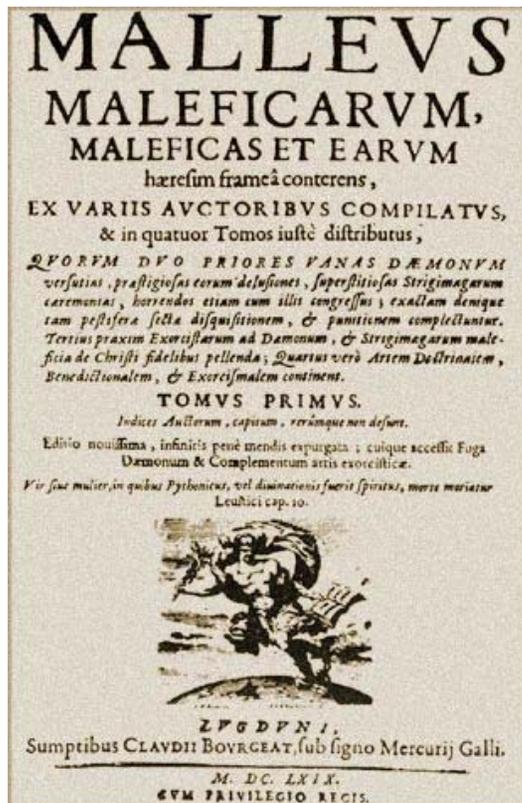


Torturing of Jews accused by the Inquisition as heretics and perpetrators of black magic. 1475.



1484 Pope Innocent VIII and Malleus Maleficarum

Pope Innocent announced that satanists in Germany were meeting with demons, casting spells that destroyed crops, and aborting infants. The pope asked two friars, Heinrich Kramer (a papal inquisitor of sorcerers from Innsbruck) and Jacob Sprenger, to publish a full report on the suspected witchcraft. Two years later, the friars published *Malleus maleficarum* ("Hammer of Witches") which put to rest the old orthodoxy that witches were powerless in the face of God to a new orthodoxy that held Christians had an obligation to hunt down and kill them. The *Malleus* told frightening tales of women who would have sex with any convenient demon, kill babies, and even steal penises. (The friars asked, "What is to be thought of those witches who collect...as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in a bird's nest or shut them up in a box, where they move themselves like living members and eat oats and corn?") Over the next forty years, the *Malleus* would be reprinted thirteen times and come to help define the crime of witchcraft. Much of the book offered hints to judges and prosecutors, such as the authors' suggestion to strip each suspect completely and inspect the body to see whether a mole was present that might be a telltale sign of consort with demons, and to have the defendants brought into court backwards to minimize their opportunities to cast dangerous spells on officials.

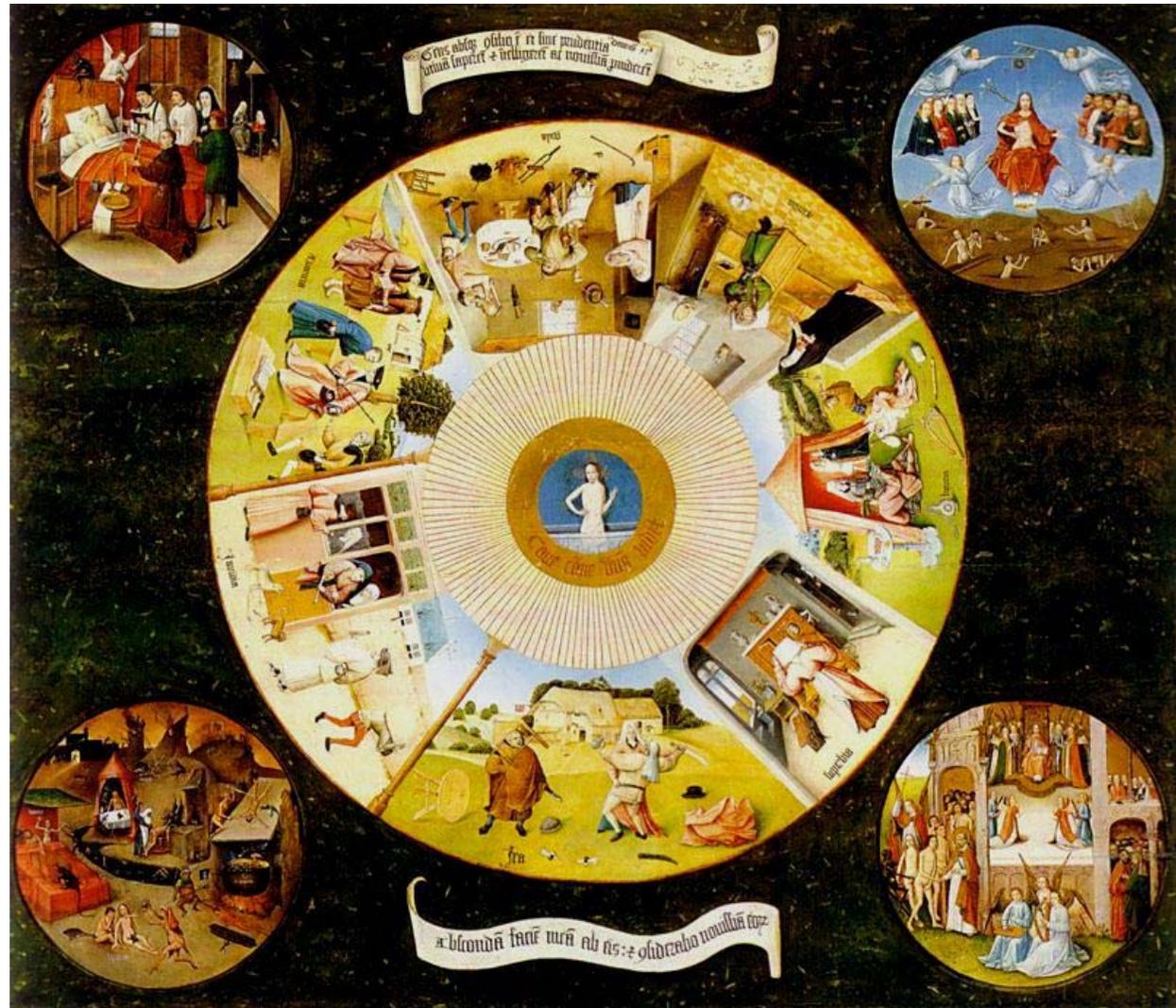


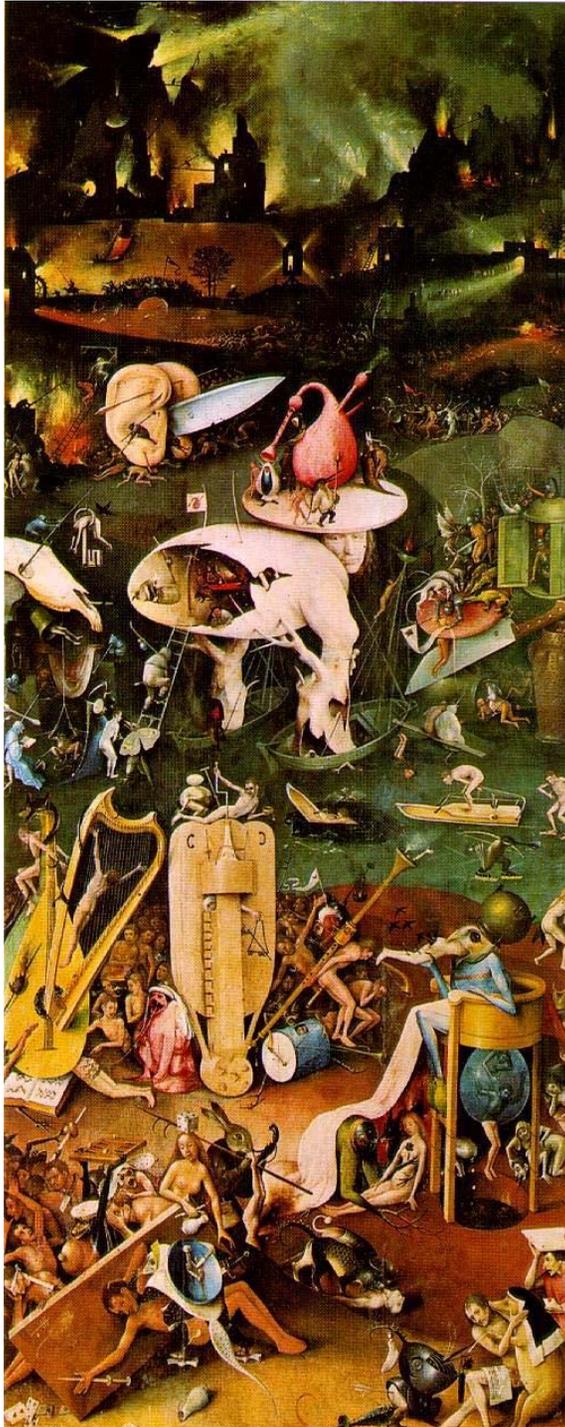


Painting on the outer wall of Rila Monastery church, Bulgaria, first half of the 19th century; Rila monastery, Bulgaria
 Inscription: Magicians and healers are servants of the devil. That's why the devil rejoices greatly, jumps around, and dances in front of people who come to them. And what they [the healers] give them to drink and eat is devils' filth. Those who abandon God, the laws, and the church, and go to the healers, are servants not of God, but of the devil.

Hieronymus Bosch,
Seven Deadly Sins,
c. 1500

Museo del Prado,
Madrid, Spain





Hieronymous Bosch,

Hell from the Garden of Earthly Delights,
1503 -1504

Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain



Papist crowning the Devil's pig. From Cicero's Officien, by Hans Weiditz, printed by Heinrich Steiner, Augsburg, 1531

Protestants and Jews accused by the Inquisition of heresy and witchcraft. From a contemporary woodcut, Nuremberg, 1493





The Papist Devil, "Ego sum Papa" (I am the Pope). From a Reformation handbill against Pope Alexander VI, Paris, late 15th century



The Papal hierarchy as mash in the Devil's vineyard. From a German anti-Papist broadside, late sixteenth century

Hanging of a farm woman declared by the Inquisition to be possessed by demons. From *Rappresentatione della Passione*, Florence, 1520



**Early to mid-1500s
The Reformation sends execution
rates up**



- Outbreaks of witchcraft hysteria, with subsequent mass executions, began to appear in the early 1500s. Authorities in Geneva, Switzerland burned 500 accused witches at the stake in 1515. Nine years later in Como, Italy, a spreading spiral of witchcraft charges led to as many as 1000 executions. The Reformation divided Europe between Protestant regions and those loyal to the Pope, but Protestants took the crime of witchcraft no less seriously--and arguably even more so--than Catholics. Germany, rife with sectarian strife, saw Europe's greatest execution rates of witches--higher than those in the rest of the Continent combined. Witch hysteria swept France in 1571 after Trois-Echelles, a defendant accused of witchcraft from the court of Charles IX, announced to the court that he had over 100,000 fellow witches roaming the country. Judges responding to the ensuing panic by eliminating for those accused of witchcraft most of the protections that other defendants enjoyed. Jean Bodin in his 1580 book, [*On the Demon-Mania of Sorcerers*](#), opened the door to use of testimony by children against parents, entrapment, and instruments of torture. Over the 160 years from 1500 to 1660, Europe saw between 50,000 and 80,000 suspected witches executed. About 80% of those killed were women. Execution rates varied greatly by country, from a high of about 26,000 in Germany to about 10,000 in France, 1,000 in England, and only four in Ireland. The lower death tolls in England and Ireland owe in part to better procedural safeguards in those countries for defendants.



King James by Daniel Mytens, 1621

1591

King James authorizes the torture of suspected witches in Scotland

Scotland's witch-hunting had its origins in the marriage of King James to Princess Anne of Denmark. Anne's voyage to Scotland for the wedding met with a bad storm, and she ended up taking refuge in Norway. James traveled to Scandinavia and the wedding took place in at Kronborg Castle in Denmark. After a long honeymoon in Denmark, the royal newlyweds encountered terrible seas on the return voyage, which the ship's captain blamed on witches. When six Danish women confessed to having caused the storms that bedeviled King James, he began to take witchcraft seriously. Back in Scotland, the paranoid James authorized torture of suspected witches. James became obsessed with the threat posed by witches and, inspired by his personal involvement, in 1597 wrote *the Daemonologie* which opposed the practice of witchcraft and which provided background material for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Dozens of condemned witches in the North Berwick area were burned at the stake in what would be the largest witch-hunt in British history. James personally supervised the torture of women accused of being witches. By 1597, James began to address some of the worst prosecutorial abuses, and witch-hunting abated somewhat. He is also known for authorizing the translation of the scriptures into English and for including in them his personal and political views of women.

1606

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* performed

- As an indication of the attention witch-hunting had begun to attract in England during the executions in the era of King James, Shakespeare wrote a play, *Macbeth*, in which strange, bearded, hag-like witches play prominent roles.
- *A dark Cave. In the middle, a Cauldron boiling. Thunder. Enter the three witches.* □
- 1 WITCH. Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd. □
- 2 WITCH. Thrice and once, the hedge-pig whin'd. □
- 3 WITCH. Harpier cries: 'tis time! 'tis time! □
- 1 WITCH. Round about the cauldron go; □ In the poison'd entrails throw
□ Days and nights has thirty-one; □ Swelter'd venom sleeping got, □ B
- ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.



Witches' brew. From Abraham Saur's *Ein Kurtze Treue Warning* (A Short, True Warning), printed at Frankfurt, 1582

Banquo and Macbeth greeted by the three witches.



1640s

Witch-hunting, after a major outbreak in France, begins to decrease.



- In 1643-1645, the largest witch-hunt in French history occurred. During those two years there were at least 650 arrests in Languedoc alone. The same time was one of intense witch-hunting in England, as the English civil war created an atmosphere of unrest that fueled the hunting, especially under Matthew Hopkins. The Thirty Years War, a conflict that raged in several European states from 1618-1648 following an attempted rebellion by Protestants in Bohemia from the Roman Catholic Hapsburg rulers, produced slaughter and suffering that sparked additional witch hunts. The number of trials began to drop sharply, however, in the late 1640s. Holland, for example, was by 1648 a tolerant

society that had done away with punishments for witchcraft.

Broadside newsletter about the public burning of three witches at Derneburg (Harz), October 1555





Lord Chief Justice Sir Francis North



1682

England executes its last witch

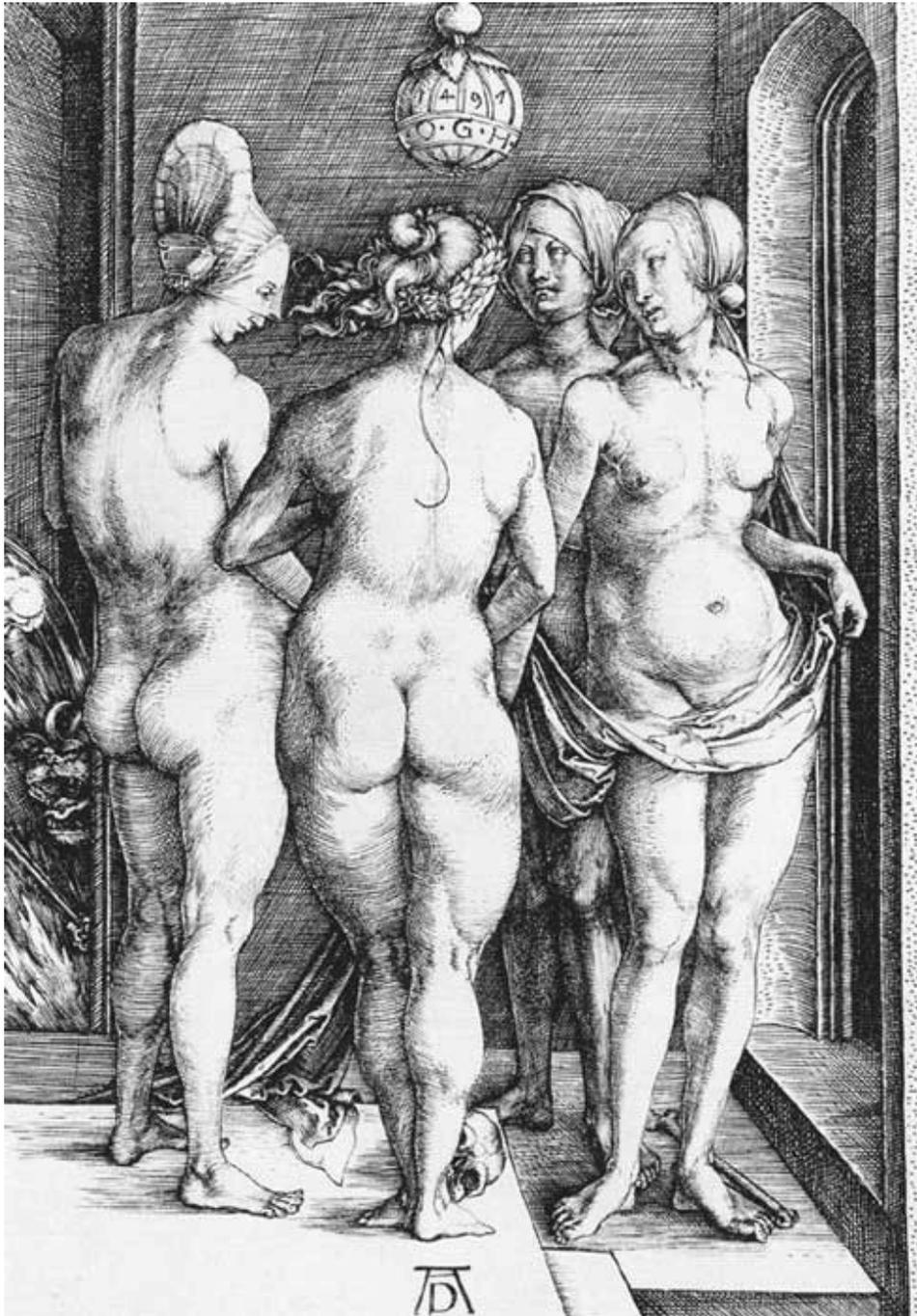
- In 1682, Temperance Lloyd, a senile woman from Bideford, became the last witch ever executed in England. Lord Chief Justice Sir Francis North, a passionate critic of witchcraft trials, investigated the Lloyd case and denounced the prosecution as deeply flawed. Sir Francis North wrote, "The evidence against them was very full and fanciful, but their own confessions exceeded it. They appeared not only weary of their own lives but to have a great deal of skill to convict themselves." North's criticism of the Lloyd case helped discourage additional prosecutions and witch-hunting shifted from one side of the Atlantic to the other, with the outbreak of hysteria in Salem in 1692. The Enlightenment, beginning in the late 1680s, contributed to the end of witch-hunts throughout Europe. The Enlightenment brought empirical reason, skepticism, and humanitarianism, each of which helped defeat the superstitions of the earlier age. The Enlightenment suggested that there was no empirical evidence that alleged witches caused real harm, and taught that the use of torture to force confessions was inhumane.



The Devil seducing a witch, from Ulrich Molitor's "Von den Unholden und Hexen" (1489)



Witch brewing up a storm. From Olaus Magnus' Historia de gentibus Septentrionalibus, Rome, 1555



Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Witches/Four Naked Women* (Three Graces, plus his wife, Agnes Frey), wood engraving, 1497



Albrecht Dürer, *Witch Riding Backwards on Goat with assistants*
Copperplate engraving, c. 1500

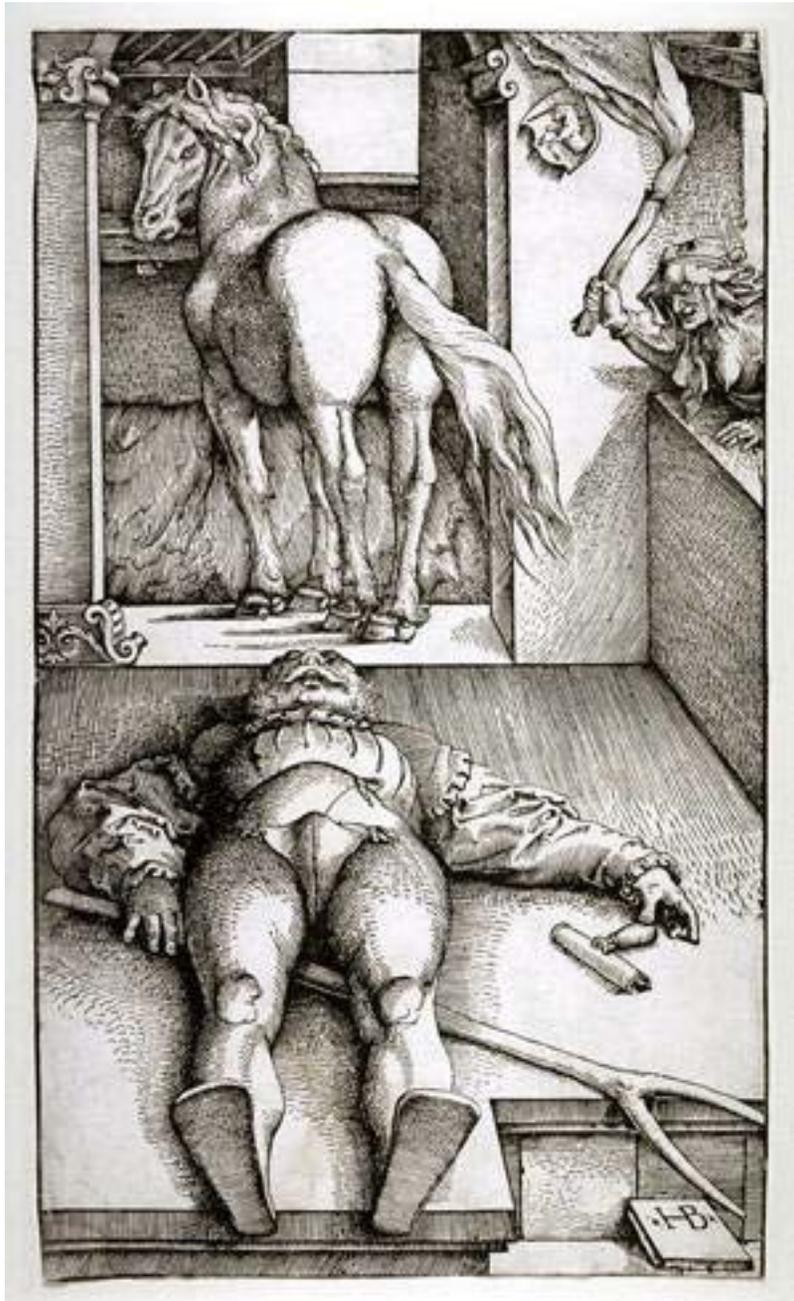
*“...women which be commonly old, lame,
bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wringles...
usually very poore, sullen...outspoken...”*

Reginald Scot, *Witchhunter*



Matthew Hopkins, (1620-1647)
English Witch hunter.

Frontispiece from Matthew Hopkins' *The Discovery of Witches* (1647), each of whom identify their "familiars."
Book used in New England and cited by Governor John Winthrop who used it to condemn and execute the first witch in the New World, Margaret Jones. It was the source for identifying and executing women and men in the Salem Witch Trials of Massachusetts.



Hans Baldung Grien

(German, 1484/85-1545)
Bewitched Groom
(*Sleeping Groom and a*
Witch), 1544

Woodcut

Goya, *Los Caprichos: Linda maestra!*

("The Spoils: Beautiful Teacher!")
witches heading to a sabbath,

*one of 80 aquatint prints done by
Goya in 1799*



Linda maestra!

Suspected Protestants being tortured as heretics during the Spanish Inquisition





Ulrich Molitor. *De Lamiis et
Phitonicis Mulieribus*,
woodcut broadside, 1493:

Witches creating bad
weather



Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches and their activities*.
Engraving from the cover
of Bishop Peter Binsfeld's book (1591).

*Witch burning in Schiltach,
Germany (1533)*



Woodcut broadside.
Burning witches
claimed by the Devil at
the time of their death.
(16th century)



Examination of a Witch by T. H. Matteson, inspired by the Salem Witch Trials, c. 1841 - 1850.



Trial by water of the 16th and 17th centuries: an accused who sank (and usually drowned) was considered innocent, while floating indicated witchcraft.

A Modest Enquiry
Into the Nature of
Witchcraft,

A N D

How Persons Guilty of that Crime
may be *Convicted*: And the means
used for their Discovery Discussed,
both *Negatively* and *Affirmatively*,
according to *SCRIPTURE* and
EXPERIENCE.

By **John Hale,**

Pastor of the Church of Christ in *Beverly*,
Anno Domini 1697.

*When they say unto you, seek unto them that have
Familiar Spirits and unto Wizards, that see, &c.
To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak
not according to this word, it is because there is no
light in them, Isaiah VIII. 19, 20.
That which I see not teach thou me, Job 34. 32.*

B O S T O N in N. E.

Printed by *B. Green*, and *J. Allen*, for
Benjamin Eliot under the Town House: 1702

Cover of John Hale's book of
Witchcraft, 1697, published in Boston

The Wonders of the Invisible World:

Being an Account of the

T R Y A L S

O F

Several Witches,

Lately Executed in

NEW-ENGLAND:

And of several remarkable *Curiosities* therein Occurring.

Together with,

- I. Observations upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils.
- II. A short Narrative of a late outrage committed by a knot of Witches in *Swede-Land*, very much resembling, and so far explaining, that under which *New-England* has laboured.
- III. Some Councils directing a due Improvement of the Terrible things lately done by the unusual and amazing Range of *Evil-Spirits* in *New-England*.
- IV. A brief Discourse upon those *Temperatures* which are the more ordinary Devices of *Satan*.

By **COTTON MATHER.**

Published by the Special Command of his EXCELLENCY the Governour of
the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New-England*.

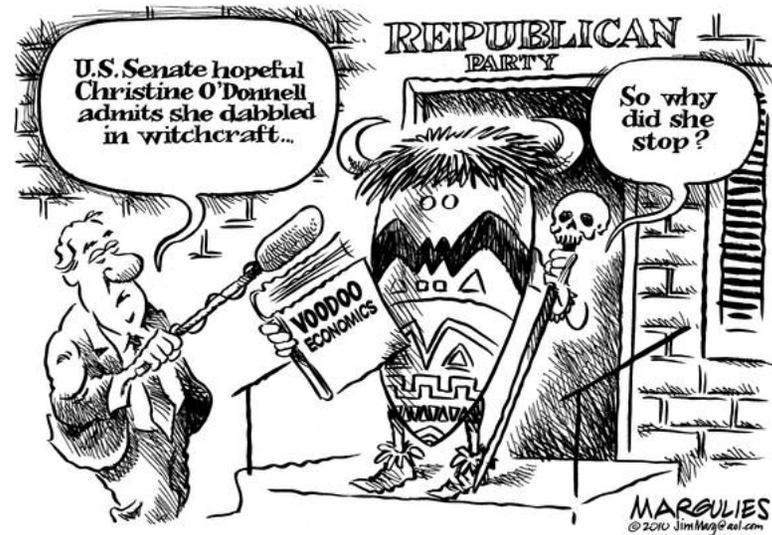
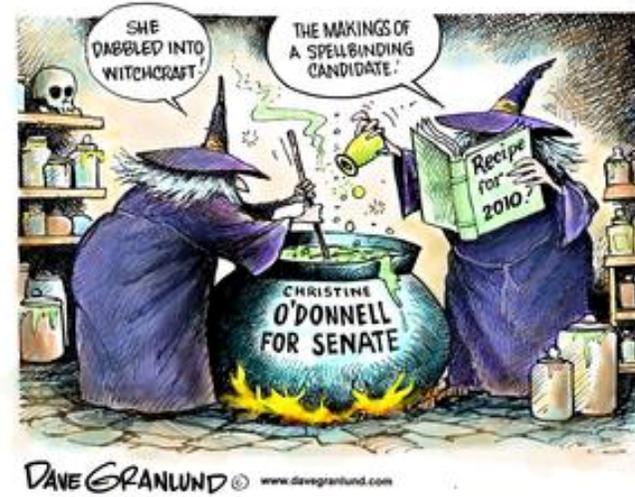
Printed first, at *Boston* in *New-England*; and Reprinted at *London*,
for *John Denton*, at the *Raven* in the *Fleet*. 1693.

Title Page of Cotton Mather's
*The Wonders of the Invisible
World*

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www.CartoonStock.com



"Just enough so he climbs the corporate ladder without making him think he can run things at home."



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