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The Figure of Lilith and the Feminine Demonic in Early Modern Literature

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To mark its 250th anniversary in 2002, the British Museum decided to make one of the earliest existent depictions of Lilith, or Astarte, its chief acquisition. Called The Burney Relief — after Sidney Burney, who had purchased it in 1935 — it was purchased in June 2003 from a Mr Sakamoto at the price of £1,500,000. To celebrate its entrance into the museum’s collections, it was renamed the “Queen of the Night” by the British Museum (Collon 2005 5-11). It has been connected to feminine divine and demonic figures, such as Ishtar, Lilith, Astarte, and has been called “Queen of the Underworld” (Collon 2007 50).

My thesis looks at these figures of the feminine demonic and the evolution of occult philosophy, and particularly demonology, within Early Modern England, and how demonological studies influenced and were influenced by current socio-political climates. Within much occult writing, non-Christian sources (including pre-Christian philosophy and Hebraic Cabala) were incorporated into the Christian world view, and affected Christian systems of angelic hierarchies and man’s place within these hierarchies. English occult thought was influenced by continental writers and philosophers such as Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Leon Modena. One figure, in particular, featured strongly in many of the demonological writings which were making their way into English occultism: Lilith. When dealing with issues of political and sexual power, Lilith often appears as a focal point for philosophers as they attempt to discover links between gender, demons, and evil. This thesis examines the feminine demonic and the figure of Lilith in the art and
literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, looking both at the occult practitioners John Dee, Simon Forman, and Edward Kelley, and at the literary traditions that came out of that occult philosophy. It explores how Lilith manifests in literature which tries to address anxieties surrounding the feminine demonic and sexuality, and the implications of a demonic, political inversion. Lilith and the feminine demonic are seen to be relevant to the works of Ben Jonson, James VI and I, Thomas Dekker, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and John Selden, with a final chapter examining the evidence of Lilith in Milton's poetry, and in particular, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Twentieth century scholarly interest in the occult as a valid subject of intellectual and academic study grew after the publication of Frances Yates's *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), which revived interest in magic and mysticism. After Yates, academic writing focused on aspects of the occult in order to understand the Renaissance. In 1973, Wayne Shumaker's *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* was published by UC Berkeley, and in 1974 Robert Kinsman edited a collection of essays for the UCLA Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies called *The Darker View of the Renaissance: Beyond the Field of Reason*. In 1982 an international conference on Hermeticism and the Renaissance was held at the Folger Shakespeare Library's Institute for Renaissance and Eighteenth-Century Studies specifically to address contemporary debate surrounding Yates's work, with the conference proceedings published in 1988. The next year saw the publication of Marsilio Ficino's *Three Books on Life* by the Renaissance Society of America. The idea that Hermeticism and occultism permeated Renaissance culture entered more fully into literary criticism, notably, with Leonard Mendelsohn's essay “Milton and the Rabbis: A Later Inquiry” published in *Studies in English*

Throughout the '80s and '90s, academic studies focusing on the occult continued, with edited collections, such as Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff's Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times (1998) which looks at trends in theological occultism from antiquity through to medieval Christian sects and onwards into New Age philosophies, placing Renaissance Hermeticism into a wider context of occult movements. In 1992, John S. Mebane's Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson and Shakespeare was published, and continued some of the literary criticism within occult studies that was pioneered by Frances Yates, Gerald H. Cox, and Denis Saurat. Stuart Clark closed the decade with his major work, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (1999), which dealt with issues of kingship, magic, politics, and the various kinds of demonic and natural magic.

“Paracelsus, Scrying, and the Lingua Adamica: Contexts for John Dee’s Angel Magic” (2006), and his monographs Gli angeli di John Dee (2004), John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs (2005). The last decade also saw the creation of at least two academic journals dedicated to the study of esotericism and the occult: Aries, edited by Peter Forshaw (University of Amsterdam), and Esoterica, an online journal of Michigan State University. And the international conference, Daimonic Imagination: Uncanny Intelligence, held earlier this year (2011) at the University of Kent saw significant interest in many of the Renaissance occult figures that are often thought to have been dragged out of obscurity by Frances Yates, with papers on Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and John Dee.

The introduction of feminist theory into occult studies has been slow, and Diane Purkiss's seminal The Witch in History (1996) still remains one of the best works to incorporate this type of literary criticism into the study of witchcraft, engaging with the corporeal feminism of Elizabeth Grosz [Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (1994)]. A corporeal theory is taken up later in Matthew Biberman's Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern Literature (2004) to draw links between Jewishness and feminine sexuality, connecting both of these to witchcraft using gender and feminist theory. Judith Yarnall's Transformations of Circe: the history of an enchantress (1994) uses a central figure to deal with issues of dangerous feminine sexuality through some recurring archetypal occult characters, such as Hecate and the Lamia, though unfortunately, Lilith does not make it into her examination of the dangerous feminine. However, Siegmund Hurzitz—part of the innermost circle of C.G. Jung's Zurich School—wrote a book length study on the figure of Lilith, with the full title Lilith, The First Eve: Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Dark Feminine with the first German
publication appearing in 1980, and the English translation in 1992. While this is an interesting look at some of the psychological implications of Lilith's continued manifestations in Judeo-Christian culture, it fails to be scholarly in its research and citation methods, often making excessive claims without any evidence to substantiate them. He focuses his research on Babylonian and early Greek representations of Lilith, and then moves onwards to investigate how the modern man can embrace his 'inner Lilith'; sadly, his inclusion of any early modern instances of her appearance are brief and vague, with the only mentions of the Renaissance being a list of writers—including Milton—who were influenced by the legend of Lilith (though without any examples or citations), and a mention of Lilith as part of a Renaissance “Saturnian Melancholia”, from which Lilith offers freedom (14).

However, the use of the archetype by the Jungian works of Yarnall and Hurwitz engages with both the need and the importance of feminist interpretations of demonic figures and reactions to them in occult traditions, a gap which this current work attempts to fill. When the elements of feminine sexuality are injected into occult philosophy notable shifts in rhetoric illustrate the importance of these sexual differences, and this difference between the non-gendered and the feminine marks a difference in the neutral and the sexualized. Beyond just feminist interpretations of witch hunts and demonic possession, the presence of the gendering of demons themselves necessitates an in depth study of how that gendering affects their interactions within occult rituals and communities. Especially within scholarly examinations of occultism in literature there is a need for feminist readings of these textual manifestations of the feminine demonic, and understanding these poetic signifiers of the moon as a variation on that feminine demonic allows the reader to interpret the literature through a new lens and opening the possibility
of occulted readings. When the moon becomes more than its self-evident existence and can be valued in accordance with deeper and more encompassing definitions of femininity, the demonic, witchcraft, and power, there is a greater potentiality for the understanding of a text. This understanding is developed with reference to continued scholarship in Renaissance occultism and in feminist and corporeal theory.

In order to incorporate this feminism into discussions of Renaissance occultism, I employ semiotic theory to understand how one signifier can often connect to an entire network of shifting meanings. Ferdinand de Saussure explains that a “particular word is like the center of a constellation; it is the point of convergence of an indefinite number of co-ordinated terms” (Saussure 866). The connection between this semiotic theory and early modern occultism is made by Umberto Eco in the concept of “Hermetic drift”, also sometimes called “unlimited semiosis” (Eco 1990 6):

I shall call Hermetic drift the interpretive habit which dominated Renaissance Hermeticism and which is based on the principles of universal analogy and sympathy, according to which every item of furniture of the world is linked to every other element (or to many) of this sublunar world and to every element (or to many) of the superior world by means of similitudes and resemblances. It is through similitudes that the otherwise occult parenthood between things is manifested and every sublunar body bears the traces of that parenthood impressed on it as a signature. (Eco 1990 24)

This system of sympathies, which connects a subject to all other similar and corresponding subjects, allows for sliding points of departure and meaning. Saussure
points out that these shifting connections are phonetic as well as symbolic:

Outside discourse, on the other hand, words acquire relations of a different kind. Those that have something in common are associated in the memory, resulting in groups marked by diverse relations. For instance, the French word *enseignement* 'teaching' will unconsciously call to mind a host of other words (*enseigner* 'teach', *renseigner* 'acquaint', etc.; or, *armement* 'armament', *changement* 'amendment', etc.). All those words are related in some way. (Saussure 864)

These pathways to varied meanings, which derive from phonetic correspondences, are perhaps pioneered in John Selden's seventeenth century semiotic text *De Dis Syris* (1617), allowing for a retrospective semiotic study within early modern systems of rhetoric and naming to see how the various manifestations of the feminine demonic—Lilith, Hecate, Diana, Cynthia, Lamia, &c.—textually emerge (See Chapters 3 and 4).

On moving between a more conservative or a more liberal interpretive method, Eco writes in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*:

We can conceive of a range with two extremes $x$ and $y$. […]

Let us say that at the extreme $x$ stand those that assume that every text (be it a conversational utterance or a poem) can be interpreted in one, and only one, way, according to the intention of its author. At the extreme $y$ stand those who assume that a text supports every interpretation—albeit I suppose that nobody would literally endorse such a claim, except perhaps a visionary devotee of the Kabalistic *temura* [a
However, he then goes on to write that he does not believe that there should be a privileged position at either of these extremes, and that this spectrum of semiosis “provides a theoretical tool for identifying, according to different semiotic processes, a continuum of intermediate positions” (3). By working within the constraints of connections that are already present within early modern literature, my approach operates within this “intermediate position”, in that it is removed from the position of extreme x through an understanding that there are intentional or unintentional connections between what is said and what is suggested, and that it is not at the other far extreme y, as my argument only builds on correspondences that were already recognized and analyzed within the early modern texts themselves.

I have tried to take the majority of my source material from contemporary—sixteenth and seventeenth century—texts, and then tried to draw links between these texts by looking at marginalia, private library catalogs and those who used them, evidence of written correspondence between writers, and direct quotation, reference, and translation of one writer's work into another writer's work. In understanding how these various literatures are interpreted in modern academia, I have used much of the work outlined in the secondary literature review, most of it being scholarly and accountable, in that they cite their sources. However, in my research, I have made use of some less scholarly esoteric material from twentieth and twenty-first century occult writers and folklorists, such as Robert Graves, Kenneth Grant, and Thomas Karlsson, in order to have a working knowledge of how modern day occultists interpret Renaissance Hermetic and Cabalistic magic into recent theologies and theories. In these examinations into modern occult literature, I have been aware of the possibility of problematic non-scholarly portrayals of
Renaissance occultism and have treated these texts with due caution.

This project does not attempt to create a new theory of semiosis using the example of the metaphor of the feminine demonic, nor does it attempt to claim that the figure of Lilith and her attendant variations are household names in the early modern period. Though this work does often invoke the figure of the witch, it makes no pretense at being an overview of the history of witchcraft, or of magic and demonology, and all references to the development of Cabala, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism are to give the reader a rudimentary understanding of the concepts and their interconnectivity. It is not an exhaustive account of the general use of the occult, witchcraft, or magic in literature, but an attempt to demonstrate the use of Lilith as a central theme when early modern writers deal with the convergent issues of sexuality, political power, and demonology. This thesis is structured chronologically, creating an approach to the study of the occult that emphasizes influences, connections, and developments within the literature, and how they build on previous ideas and are a part of the larger intellectual tradition.

Chapter One briefly outlines key occult movements, in order to place these movements into a historical time line and also to place the movements in context with each other. It focuses on three traditions—Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Cabalism—and gives evidence of their origins, and how they later came to connect with other occult movements. Starting with Neoplatonism, showing its beginnings in Plotinus and how it then reappears in the works of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Dionysius), it then moves to Cabalism, glancing at debates between Moshe Idel and Joseph L. Blau over whether Cabala was an internal evolution, or whether or not it had been influenced by other occult movements. I then look to Hermeticism and explain its mythic origins and its cosmology, outlining the theory of correspondences and
daemones, and how these three traditions have similar cosmologies and how there was overlap in their literature and belief systems of spiritual ascension, inner contemplation, and elemental sympathies. The chapter then moves to the deliberate combinations of these systems by the Italian Humanist scholars Marsilio Ficinio and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and how these scholars, along with the Platonic Academy, revived interest in Hermeticism and Neoplatonism within a Christian context. This section also looks at contemporary anxieties surrounding the more demonological aspects of these theories, and how the Italian Humanist scholars working with this material then moved to separate the “profane”, or the demonic magic, from natural magic. The new Christian occult philosophers further attempted to separate out demons from their “natural magic” by claiming that talismans and hymns were not addressed to demonic and satanic forces, but to the natural world, which, created by God, was worthy of praise. I then look at various ideas of the materialism or the immaterialism of demons and their origins as either fallen angels or Neoplatonic star spirits, and then move on to look at the rise of Necromancy and the practice of demonic invocation circulating in fourteenth and fifteenth century handbooks, which borrowed from Hermetic traditions, incorporated muddled Hebrew, and openly called for the use of demonic magic, while the public reacted against Necromancy through the medium of stricter laws, censorship, and the Inquisition. The final section of the first chapter looks at visual representations of the witch and of the magician to draw a correlation between the use of text, literacy, and permissible magic. Where witches represent the illiterate magical practitioner, they also appear in a demonic pact and operating a sorcery that is explicitly linked to Satanism, necromancy, and demon summoning.

Chapter Two looks at the migration of these ideas into England, and how
magicians variously interpreted strands of continental occult philosophy. Sixteenth century English Protestant Humanism emphasized the importance of returning to the source of religious teachings, which led many scholars into the study of Hebrew and Hebraic commentaries on the Torah from rabbinical and Cabalistic sources. In the first half of the sixteenth century, English translations of the previous century's works of continental occult philosophy began to appear from London printers, with translations of the works of the German occultist, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, appearing after his visit to London in 1510. Just as Agrippa's services were employed by Emperor Maximilian I, other rulers around Europe were developing an interest in the skills of occultists. In England, both Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I solicited the services of the occult philosopher John Dee as astrologer. This chapter then goes on to look at representations of the elite magician and the feminine demonic in literature with an analysis of these elements within Robert Green's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589), *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus* (1590), Shakespeare's *Henry VI, pt. 2* (c. 1592), *Henry IV, pt. 1* (c. 1598), and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1594). Within these texts, I examine the use of recurring motifs, such as the moon and the witch, to investigate contemporary anxieties of feminine power. I then take those motifs and transfer use them to look at occult practitioners at the end of the sixteenth century—namely, John Dee, Edward Kelley, and Simon Forman—to look at their methods of magic and their engagement with the issues surrounding the feminine demonic in their own practices. I look at how they explicitly use continental occult ideas to formulate their own notions of the appropriateness of the element of the feminine within their magic, the recurring anxieties surrounding the frequent intrusion of sexuality into these magical practices, and the implications this feminine demonic sexuality has on their philosophical hierarchies and on their
continentally derived cosmologies. I then look at how these occultists tried to cloak their practices in Christian theology, in order to protect themselves from an increasing hostile public which followed the latest gossip and allegations of black magic and its connection to treason and political disorder.

In Chapter Three I look at how perspectives on demonology and magic shifted from the reign of Elizabeth I to that of James VI and I, as the permissiveness of Elizabeth changed under the direction of James to a policy directed largely by the belief that all magic and all witchcraft involved some form of satanic pact and were therefore illicit. This chapter undertakes a close analysis of James's *Daemonologie*, demonstrating that his understanding of magic was necessarily influenced by his understanding of gender. These representations of the feminine as more susceptible to demonic influence make the explicit link between femininity and the demonic, which he claimed was a threat to the contemporary power structures enforced by “divine right”. The chapter then moves on to discuss how other academics variously supported his arguments, or rejected them, and how these scholars drew on continental occult sources to justify their claims. I then move to investigate the writing of John Selden, especially *De Dis Syris*, looking closely at how he uses both a symbolic Hermetic drift and a linguistic semiosis in order to make what Saussure called a “constellation” of meanings focused on a single term, “Astarte”. Selden outlines the connection between these meanings, gender imbalance and political disorder, and after these connections are explored, I go on to give examples of how these links manifest in Jacobean literature, in the masques and dramas of Ben Jonson—in his *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), *The Masque of Queens* (1619), and *The Alchemist* (1610)—and in the works of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610) and *Macbeth* (c1603). I draw out implicit references to Lilith and the feminine demonic within these works,
looking at various representations of the magician, the witch, and the demonic in the figures of Sycorax, Lady Macbeth, Hecate, Valasca, the Three Witches, Prospero and his relation to Marlowe's character, Faustus. The chapter then finishes with a look at *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) by Thomas Dekker and William Rowley in order to demonstrate how theatre and literature could serve as a medium through which political and ideological dissent could be expressed, and how this dissent related particularly to the figure of the witch.

Chapter Four moves on from Jacobean drama and looks specifically at John Selden's influence on mid-century and late-century occultism, demonology, and literature, and at the proliferation of mentions of Lilith in many of these texts. I start by looking at scholarly investigations into the demonic in the translated works of Samuel Marochitanus, Leona Modena, Jacques Gafferel, and Sebastian Münster, to see how Lilith makes explicit appearances in an increasing number of texts. Each of these continental works mentions Lilith directly, and many were translated by Edmund Chilead, before their research began to appear in the English writing of Walter Charleton, Edward Stillingfleth, John Sadler, John Owen, Edward Topsell, and Henry More. These different variants on the legend of Lilith describe her as demon, night witch, pre-Eve consort of Adam, murderer of children, and monster. In this section, I explain how these writers use the connections explored by Selden to expand on the correlation between Lilith, Lamia, the serpent, and the moon, but also how these writers demonstrate their awareness of Hermetic and Neoplatonic occult philosophies. The chapter then moves on to a discussion of Lilith in the literature after Selden's *De Dis Syris* was published, to show how mid-century literature incorporated the figure of Lilith into its poetry through the use of metaphor and symbolism connected to Lilith in Selden's work. This section
looks at Ben Jonson's poem for Michael Drayton, in which the benign moon-goddess, Cynthia, becomes the monstrous Lamia, and in Thomas Heywood's *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells* (1634), Heywood renders a new translation of Ovid in order to draw out the connections between Hecate and the moon. I continue on the theme of poetic renditions of Lilith as the moon and as Hecate, by looking at the literature of Robert Herrick, William Bosworth's *The Chast and Lost Lovers* (1651), Nicholas Hookes's *Amanda* (1653), and an English translation of *The Aeneid* by John Boys (1660), which includes an extended footnote on the subject, allowing me to operate within the intermediate semiotic theory between the extremes x and y, tracing the connections, and connectivity, of early modern texts and their symbols.

Chapter Five looks at the presence of Lilith and the feminine demonic in the poetry of John Milton. With the first four chapters demonstrating how images and ideas surrounding Lilith and the feminine demonic were printed and reprinted in the early and mid-seventeenth century, this chapter then serves as a test case to investigate how Lilith and the occult then becomes “re-occulted” in Milton's poetry. The chapter begins with a glance at modern criticism which focuses on whether Milton had a working knowledge of Hebrew and whether this is necessary for an understanding of Cabala, and if it can be demonstrated that Milton had a knowledge of the Cabala, whether this means that his poetry shows evidence of that Cabalistic influence. I then look at instances of Hecate and the “horned-moon” in Milton's early Latin poetry to illustrate his possible use of Selden's work on Astarte and Lilith, and his references to Hermeticism and Neoplatonic occultism, as he directly cites Hermes Trismegistus in his *De Idea Platonica* (1628) and would continue to use Hermetic ideas throughout his poetic development. The next section of this chapter is a reading of *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629) as
directly referencing and incorporating the various gods and demons in Selden's *De Dis Syris*. A common understanding of this poem by Milton is that it is the representation of the birth of a new religion, but I argue that the poem represents a religion which has grown out of something preexisting, and that the Christianity presented here is a form of paganism, changed through a gradual semiotic shifting. I finish this chapter with a reading of the occult, the feminine demonic, and Lilith in *Paradise Lost*, arguing that Lilith is present in the poem's implicit references to her in the demonic figures in Hell, and in the darker side of Eve.

At the end of this present work, I include an appendix with a translation of excerpts from Selden's chapter on Astarte, Lilith, and the moon from his *De Dis Syris*. There has only been one translation of this work, by W. A. Hauser in 1880, which is very scarce, there—as far as I understand it—being no copy available in a public library or institution in Scotland. His translation, while useful, is not accurate to the original, having many additions not present in Selden's own work, and many of Selden's own references omitted. My translation is to allow the reader to have an opportunity to see how this semiosis operates the naming and symbolism of Selden's demonology.

The aims of this project are to create a cohesive image of the connections between sexual anxiety, political power, and demonology, and to illustrate these connections in the figure of Lilith, as the center of a constellation of words and symbols. The resulting implications point to the need to try to understand these occulted literary figures, their origins, and their influence, because, though Lilith is less obvious than, perhaps, Venus, her traces still exist in literature and theology, and in order to fully understand these texts, their sources and traditions must also be understood. Tracing her appearances throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century leaves the possibility of her continuing recurrence
within the following centuries, and the brief exploration of the variations of her use in English texts and in Latin texts leads to unanswered questions of how other occult texts were translated, and the political anxieties surrounding these translations, especially their attendant sexual elements.
Fig. A

Fig. B


Introduction

John G. Burke, in his essay on Hermeticism, wrote that until the twentieth century historians of the Renaissance tended to believe that Hermeticism and occultism existed merely as a “vestigial remnant of the medieval tradition of magic and sorcery” (Burke 95), and that this judgement “now requires, if not complete revision, at least considerable modification” (96). This new view of esoteric thought in the Renaissance derives mainly from Frances A. Yates’s scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s, and since then interest in the subject has surged and can be seen in the works of Umberto Eco in his exploration of semiotics, while some of the Renaissance’s key demonological/occult philosophers found their way as “central figures” of Renaissance philosophy into Josten Gaarder’s bestselling novel, Sophie’s World (Gaarder 166).

Though it is not an overestimation to say that Frances Yates played a central role in the resurrection of esotericism as an acceptable subject of academic study, some researchers entering into the field after her have claimed there was an overestimation in her account of the impact and reach of Hermeticism during the Renaissance. Wayne Shumaker complains about critics’ claims that Hermeticism and occult philosophy provided a fundamental background for all literary work, and though he does recognize that esoteric thought did influence various philosophies of the time, he remarks that scholarship “has passed the stage at which it was necessary to find Hermeticism everywhere in order to justify the study of it” (Shumaker 1988 293-295). By the time the
study of esotericism enters into the 1990s, scholars of Hermeticism are careful not to overemphasize the role of any particular occult philosophy and tend to analyse esoteric movements in a narrower context. Although Antoine Faivre places Hermeticism into a wider perspective as the “general attitude of mind underlying a variety of traditions”, he is careful to place these traditions within an esoteric framework involving philosophies and practices of alchemy, Cabala, and other occult modes of thought (Faivre 110).

This chapter attempts to document the development of these different demonological philosophies in Renaissance Europe while also touching on criticism within the past several decades to display diverging theories within modern scholarship of Renaissance demonology. The first section aims to explain the three philosophies mentioned above (Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, and Christian Cabala) and outline briefly how these philosophies developed and were perceived during the middle ages and the Renaissance; the perception of demonic aspects within these philosophies during the middle ages (and late antiquity) helps to explain the extreme anxiety expressed by their adherents. The second section deals with these philosophers who were engaged in demonological philosophy—mainly, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim—and how they incorporated, and responded to, previous theories regarding the existence of demons and the practical uses of demonic magic. This section also relates the often extreme anxieties these philosophers felt regarding the moral and legal implications of their demonic/spiritual magic. The final section of this chapter discusses the influence of demonic magic and demonological philosophy in a wider European context; it compares demonological philosophy to fears of perceived witchcraft and the similarities between the two practices, the phenomenon of necromancy and demon worship among university students during the Renaissance,
and finally, the effect of demonological philosophy on European literature and art.

1. Neoplatonism, Cabala, and Hermeticism

1.1 Neoplatonism

The term “Neoplatonism” often refers to the last attempt of pagan antiquity, spanning from about 250-550 CE, to create a comprehensive system of philosophy which could satisfy all the spiritual ambitions of man by presenting a logically consistent and articulate image of the universe and man’s place in it, and which dealt with man’s desire to achieve salvation, i.e. “be restored to his original condition” (“Neoplatonism”). Neoplatonists were successful in combining earlier philosophical thought—including the philosophy of Aristotle, Pythagoreans and the Stoics—with Platonism, and also incorporated various religious beliefs, rites, mythologies, and cults of Greek and Oriental polytheism, assimilating practices of magic and alchemy into their system. These eastern rites were often based on affinities between metals and planets, and early Neoplatonists sought to manipulate the sympathies which they imagined existed naturally between all physical objects in the universe (Smith 77).

They held a belief in one supreme deity which was the source from which everything flowed without being separated from it and without ever existing independently; the supreme deity, or highest principle, is immanent in everything: “the timeless process of effulgence is best described as a gradual ‘dispersion’ of the original unity, by which it passes into ever-increasing multiplicity” (“Neoplatonism” 219). The first stage begins with the supra-sensible reality existing only in mind, thought and spirit, which then becomes the sensible reality in time and space. The final step would be annihilation, “as light, emanating from its source, gradually fills progressively larger
parts of space, becoming progressively dimmer, until it fades into complete darkness” (219). Annihilation was seen as the final end and outcome of all matter, as the principal supra-sensible reality and the source of being was ‘goodness’, so matter was ‘evil’ or ‘not-goodness’. Neoplatonism derived all sensible reality from this supra-sensible source; the sensible reality of time and space was less real than the supra-sensible One, which existed outside the human sphere of reason.

The foundations of Neoplatonism are thought to have come from the teachings of Plotinus (c. 204-270 CE), from whom two figures descend: Porphyry (234-c. 305), and Iamblichus (died c. 330) (Smith 90-95). In a series of treatises—Exhortation of Philosophy, Life of Pythagoras, General Mathematics, etc—Iamblichus expanded on what he considered to be Pythagorean doctrines. However, he also wrote Egyptian Mysteries which was a philosophical and mythological interpretation of Egypt’s religious doctrines and mystic rites, and it was probably he “himself [who] instituted something like neoplatonic mysteries, a blend of Greek and Oriental mystery religions” (“Neoplatonism” 220). Iamblichus differed from his teacher Porphyry in the role that magic, or theurgy, should play in the achievement of salvation. While Porphyry believed that contemplation alone could restore man to his original state, Iamblichus argued that the divine was above the sphere of rational thought, existing in the supra-sensible realm. This was a departure from Pythagoras's belief in the possibility of the soul's ascension. In his “Golden Verses”, Pythagoras writes that contemplation and the subscription to virtue is necessary “So that, ascending into radiant Ether,/ Midst the Immortals, thou shalt be thyself a God” (qtd. D'Olivet 121). Fabre d'Olivet explains this “ascending into radiant Ether”:

It is necessary that this soul be raised to the knowledge of universal
truths, and that it should have found, as far as it is possible for it, the Principle and the end of all things. Then having attained to this high degree of perfection, being drawn into this immutable region whose ethereal element is no more subjected to the descending movement of generation, it can be united by its knowledge to the Universal All, and reflect in all its being the ineffable light with which the Being of beings, God Himself, fills unceasingly the Immensity. (277-278)

Iamblichus’s *Egyptian Mysteries* was his answer to the theurgy versus contemplation debate, and explained that man can reach the divine essence by communicating through ritual sympathies. A theory based on sympathies, or a “like-with-like” system, corresponded with the notion that what happened below affected what happened above and what happened above influenced the lower worlds. This theory allowed the magician to begin with the divine correspondences, and then he could eventually reach the supra-sensible One, the level where the soul unites with the divine. The school of Pergamum was founded by Aidesios, a disciple of Iamblichus, and was particularly focused on these practices of magic and how the magician could influence the planetary spheres, often thought to be intermediary spirits, by the manipulation of corresponding metals and herbs. György Szönyi writes:

> the most important philosophical innovation of that period had consisted of the redefinition of man's place in the universe. The basic framework—the 'great chain of being'—remained more or less the same until the late seventeenth century, however, man's place was not seen as fixed any more, he was imagined to be able to move along the chain of being, either
ennobling and elevating himself to the level of God, or degrading and associating with brute beasts. (Szönyi 2006b 75)

An illustration of this idea appears in Charles de Bouelles's 1510 Liber de sapiente (Fig. 6), showing the scales of creation from stones (which merely exist), to plants (which exist, but also 'live'), to animals (which also 'feel'), and finally to man (who is capable of reason). And using this reason, he can scale the steps leading to virtue, similar to Raymon Lull's stairway in his De ascensu & descensu intellectus of 1304 (Fig. 7). S. K. Heninger writes that “the ascention of this scale leads to successive states that bring man ever closer to godliness; conversely, however, a descent leads to successive states that are increasingly dehumanized” (162), as evident in the Bouelles illustration. This fear of 'descent' often manifested in debates and anxieties surrounding the role of the demonic in Neoplatonic magic.

These ideas of the demonic manifest in Neoplatonism under the heading of 'daemones’, or the intermediary subordinate powers/spirits which would bridge the vast gap between the material world and the remoteness of the One. These daemons, or semi-divine spirits, might be either good or evil. Porphyry, in his letter to the Egyptian priest, Anebo, poses questions regarding the corporality and divinity of daemons, but does not answer them, and many Neoplatonists regarded the theurgy, or the use of rituals to influence these demi-gods/daemones by sympathies, as dangerous (Wallis 11, 71, 109, 131).

It was this matter of theurgy which caused the most anxiety for later Christian Neoplatonists. Though Dionysius the Areopagite—whose Divine Names combined the theurgy of Proclus and “transposed the ideas first adumbrated by Iamblichus into
Christian ritual context” (Smith 125)—was originally believed for centuries to be St. Paul’s disciple, and therefore of great authority, he is now thought to have lived centuries later (Smith 125; “Neoplatonism” 221).¹ The author of these texts may have used this pseudonym as a cover to avoid condemnation of heresy, as his texts on angelology had close affiliation with pagan Neoplatonic thought. R. T. Wallis writes that

The problem posed by the Dionysian corpus, despite its supposed Apostolic authority, was that its Neoplatonism was that of the more avowedly pagan Athenian School; in particular Dionysius’ angelology seemed too reminiscent of the Athenian School’s orders of Gods. Hence his God tended to become merely the supreme term in the metaphysical hierarchy, and as such to be conceived as operating on the material world through intermediaries. (161)

Under this theology, the magician or practitioner does not address himself directly to God, but to these intermediaries, and it is easy to see how ritual developed in an attempt to influence the hierarchical layers, or Jacob’s Ladder, to heaven.

Study of Neoplatonism continued through later Antiquity and into the Middle Ages and was the dominant trend of philosophy in Europe for a millennium (c. 250-1250 C.E.). The Byzantine philosopher Michael Psellus (1018-1079) revived the study of Neoplatonism in the eleventh century through the study of the figures of the Neoplatonists themselves. Later, in the fifteenth century, a Platonic school was established at Mistra in the Peloponnesus by George Gemistus Pletho (c. 1360-1450). Immediately there were apprehensions raised concerning the establishment and “not

¹ The actual identity of the pseudo-Dionysius is hotly debated, but he is believed to have lived during the 5th Century C.E. (Lovejoy 67)
unjustly if his enemies’ reports of his doctrine are accurate” (Wallis 163); his works included pamphlets describing how the empire could be restructured according to Plato’s Republic, and his Nómoi, or “Book of Laws” (which was discovered after his death), explains his esoteric beliefs, including discussions on astrology, daemones, and spiritual transmigration.

Regardless of these anxieties surrounding Gemistus Pletho, he was sent as a delegate to the Council of Florence in 1438 to negotiate the reunion of the eastern and western churches, and there inspired Cosimo d’ Medici to establish his own Platonic academy. And Gemistus Pletho’s pupil, Bessarion, converted from the Greek to the Latin Church, where he became a cardinal; “the result of all these factors was the transmission to the West of the basic writings of Plato and the pagan Neoplatonists, most of them, for the first time” (Wallis 162-163). Pletho's work went on to influence the Neoplatonism of Marsilio Ficino's Platonic Academy, and Pletho's commentary on Plato’s Symposium (1469) would become “a major source” of Renaissance ideas on love (Wallis 171).

1.2 Cabala

Towards the end of the resurgence of Neoplatonism in the south of Europe, it was being mixed with another tradition which gained prominence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Cabala. The texts, and the study surrounding these texts, which deal with the mystical thought and esoteric aspects of Judaism, are often identified as Cabala, or Kabbalah; these religious texts were mainly created and used as commentary on the Torah and on rabbinic literature, such as the Talmud and the Mishnah. Scholars of the Cabala conventionally believed that there were two laws, one written and one oral, which were revealed to Moses. While the written law was given to the people, the oral law was
passed down for generations until it reached the hands of Rabbi Jehudah ha-Nasi, who first wrote them down into the six books that became the Mishnah. These ‘laws’ transcribed by Rabbi ha-Nasi were combined with the pre-Moses *Sefer Yetzirah*, supposedly written by Abraham (Blau 26).

The origins of Jewish Cabala are still hotly debated. Though Gershom Scholem and Joseph L. Blau would argue that the evolution of Cabala was influenced largely by outside forces—like Neoplatonism or Gnosticism—Moshe Idel sees Cabala as an internal developmental process whose roots and sources are to be found within Judaism itself, and further claimed that the reversal of influence was true; Cabala had an influence on Gnosticism and not vice versa (Odenheimer; Blau 36). The question of influence is an important one, as so much of Gnosticism, Cabala, Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, carry similar esoteric and mystical thought. However, when dealing with these controversies, the arguments become complicated because the dating of the texts themselves is often disputed.

The Zohar, a book of medieval Jewish mysticism, recorded the discourse between the second-century Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai and his contemporary Jewish mystical exegetes, and was thought to be a text of great antiquity and, therefore, of great authority. However, most scholars now believe that the Zohar was written by a thirteenth-century Cabalistic writer, Moses de Leon, of Granada; this follows the search for the *prisca philosophia*, which suggested that the older the text was, the closer it was connected to original truth. The combination of the Zohar’s apparent antiquity and its collection of books dealing with the mysteries of creation, the link between spirit and matter, angelology, and the divine names, made it a popular text among contemporary mystics.

According to Frances Yates, Cabala was “basically a method of religious
contemplation, which could, rather easily, pass into a kind of religious magic”, which held that the world was divided into three-spheres (the elemental/terrestrial world, the celestial world, and the super celestial world), similar to those of Neoplatonism (Yates 1979 2, 121). This ‘religious magic’, or ‘practical cabala’, invoked the spiritual powers of angels, archangels, and the Ten Sephiroth (the powers attributed to God) through Hebraic language (Yates 1964 84-86). The Cabalistic magician recognizes that there are two worlds: the ‘olam hata’ (the world to come), and the ‘olam haze’ (this world). This practical cabalist, according to Blau, distinguishes himself from the Talmudist, through this use of the Gnostic spheres; the ‘olam hata’ is the intellectual world into which the Cabalist seeks to rise and ‘olam haze’ is the sensible world, “the lower world on which the Talmudist remains” (Blau 27). The theory of this Cabalist-Talmudist divide, though supported by Gershom Scholem, is also disputed by Moshe Idel, who claims that because Cabala rose out of the tradition of Judaism, there is no significant division between Cabala and Talmud, and that most contemporary rabbis were convinced that Cabala was a true interpretation of Judaism (Odenheimer).

Practical, or magical, cabala was a different matter, and many mystics advised against enlisting the help of ‘star-demons’, which could not be guaranteed to be either good or evil (Yates 1964 100). This magical cabala, along with the *gemetria* (or alphabetical/numerical permutation), appears the *Clavis Salomis*, or “The Key of Solomon”, another pseudo-graphic text of magic, which was originally attributed to King Solomon. This fourteenth-century text used the names of angels, the names of God and various “invocations in bastard Hebrew and curious magical arrangements of letters and diagrams”; the magicians who followed the *Clavis Salomis* claimed that it came from Solomon, or possibly Moses, and was the means “by which demons were conjured” by
the magicians (Yates 1979 107).

Like the movement of Neoplatonists from Byzantine regions westward, some scholars believe that the migration of Jews effected and re-directed the development of the Cabala. In 1492, with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, it is believed that the progress of cabalistic study, such as the Zohar and the various Sephiroth, was disrupted while rabbis and scholars travelled to places like Italy, France and Germany. In 1516, the *Portae lucis* was published in Augsberg, written by Paulus Ricius—a Jewish scholar who converted to Christianity—and introduced many Cabalistic ideas into Christian consciousness. The title page for this work (Fig. 5) shows an old Jewish man holding the sefirot tree, a tree of life and structure that holds together the ten sefirot, or the levels of understanding of the cabala (Heninger 87). Around the same time, Johann Reuchin's *De Verbo Mirifico* (1494) and *De Arte Cabailistica* (1517), presented Cabala a tool through which to reconnect science and faith. Jewish Cabala, according to Antoine Faivre, remained virtually unknown outside of scholarly Jewish milieus until this expulsion, which “resulted in a great diaspora that triggered a sudden and widespread interest in Jewish speculative traditions, and in the Kabbalistic tradition particularly” (Faivre 112); with the exiled scholars “went the cabala in forms intensified by suffering and exile” (Yates 1979 2). This distress, Yates and Scholem explain, led to the increase in messianic tendencies within various cabalistic texts; however, Moshe Idel claims that these messianic longings can be found in pre-expulsion cabala. These arguments create a problem when attempting to outline of the progression of cabalistic literature, as it is difficult to confirm whether or not the Inquisition pushed Jewish mystics into conversion (Odenheimer 29). It could have been these conversions which sparked interest in cabala among the Christian community in northern Italy, as several figures—such as Flavius
Mithridates and Elia del Medigo—encouraged the use of cabala for Christian interpretation. However, the Humanist movement, already under way in northern Italy, could be another contender as the catalyst which created Christian interest in Cabala, and the “influence of cabala on Christian thought was both intense and pervasive” (Heninger 88). The Humanist notion of *ad fontes*, or returning to the source of things, meant that many Christian scholars sought out original, and untranslated texts of the Old Testament, which could have eventually led them to the texts of Midrashic-Talmudic Judaism, independent from the expulsion and the Inquisition.

Each stage in cultural progress has a “janus-face”, and Renaissance philosophy and the reaction of the Inquisition emerge as parallel phenomenon in the Renaissance. Just as the interest in pagan philosophy, like Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, became popular amongst Renaissance scholars, so did the backlash against such studies develop; similarly, the establishment of the anti-Semitic Inquisition in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century occurred simultaneously with the rise of philosemitic tendencies in Italian Christian theology, as Christians interpreted cabala as a “unique tool to uncover the essential unity of humanity and all religions” (Waite 15) and Hebrew became an essential addition to the Renaissance religious education, as the attempt to harmonize Christian symbolic ideology with Jewish cabalistic tradition resulted in Christian cabala (Faivre 112).

1.3 Hermeticism

Another figure whose tremendous popularity benefited from misdating was Hermes Trismegistus, as truth “was more a matter of antiquity and origin than of coherence and evidence, a principle that has characterized Hermetic traditions down to
their contemporary, post-modern manifestations” (Assmann ix). The affinity for the *prisca theologia*, which strengthened support in both pseudo-Dionysius and the Zohar, encouraged interest in the philosophies of the alleged Hermes Trismegistus. And the occult nature of both Cabala and Hermeticism made them ideal systems for magical philosophies which worked on the principles of hidden systems and obscured, or elite, sympathies.

The development of the belief that Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian sage, and a near contemporary to Moses, arose probably from the combinations of the Egyptian god Thoth (from the Old Kingdom, 3700-3150 BCE) with the Greek Hermes: the Egyptian Thoth was originally thought to be the God that brought philosophy, letters and laws to the Egyptians, as well as possibly contributing to the actual creation of the world; this description relates well with the Greek view of Hermes as the messenger God—able to cross borders between man and divinity—who led men to the underworld, but who led Persephone in the opposite direction. With the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, the mythology and culture of Greek Hellenism and Egypt began to merge (Ebeling 2-6).

Man’s role in the Hermetic cosmos was more direct: he was a ‘brother’ of the creating demi-urge, who can manipulate nature through the use of language.

Words, then, according to this magical theory of language, are not just verbal symbols attached to things by conventional usage; they have a very real connection with things; there is a direct correspondence between a word and the divine idea it expresses. Properly applied by the Magus, words could produce extraordinary effects. (Burke 102)
The antiquity of the writings of Hermes Trismegistus (namely, the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*) was widely accepted until late in the Renaissance, when Isaac Casaubon’s dating placed them in the second or third century CE. This established that they

were certainly not written in remotest antiquity by an all wise Egyptian priest, as the Renaissance believed, but by various unknown authors, all probably Greeks, and they contain popular Greek philosophy of the period, a mixture of Platonism and Stoicism, combined with some Jewish and probably some Persian influences. (Yates 1979 2-3)

Hermeticism greatly contributes to demonology and demonological thinking, and appears to incorporate the *daemones* of Neoplatonism into an Egyptianized occult philosophy. The theurgy of Hermes was allegedly used to draw down the spirits, or *daemones* into the statues of Egyptian temples and to create earthly gods—a legend which fascinated Ficino (Mebane 24-25). The Hermetic concept of *daemones* seemed to have multiple definitions, and may be either ascribed to the Judaic model—the spirits of either faithful or fallen angels—or the Neoplatonic model—the cosmic energies that control the spheres (Mebane 31-34).

Another role that the Hermetic *daemones* assumed was the role of the Egyptian decans, also sometimes called “The Thirty Six Horoscopes”. Each of these gods represents a division of ten degrees, which make up the three-hundred-sixty degree circle, and depending on the time of day, the magician would have to appeal to a different decan-demon (Yates 1964 6-18, 39-37). The magic of Hermes Trismegistus worked through the principle that “what is below is like above” and “what is above is so below”,
also called “The Idea of Correspondences”. The microcosm and the macrocosm are linked by these correspondences, or sympathies, as “the entire universe is, as it were, a theater of mirrors, and ensemble of hieroglyphs to be deciphered” (Faivre 119); correspondences, symbolic and real, seen and unseen, exist in all parts of the universe (Vickers 265). It was this idea of correspondences that allowed the Egyptian Magus to practice his hermetic magic. If the magician wanted to employ the services from the Venetian planet-daemon he would have to know which plants, talismans, and songs communicate with the spirit. Such correspondences “were held to capture the spirit of power of the star and to hold or store it for use” (Yates 1964 45).

Early Christian commentators had varying opinions on the Egyptian magus. In the early decades of the fourth century, Lactantius admired Hermeticism as a prelude to Christianity, citing corresponding beliefs between the pagan faith and the Christian one, like the fact that God lacks a name, created the world according to divine Providence, and created man in God’s own image (Ebeling 45). Lactantius praised Hermes Trismegistus as a near contemporary to Moses and a monotheist, giving the Egyptians their arts and letters, and founding a great city (Burke 97-98). This Christian writer gave further credence to the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus under the theory of prisca philosophia, by claiming that he pre-dated both Pythagoras and Plato.

The validity of hermetic philosophy was called into question a century later when Augustine of Hippo, an influential critic of Hermeticism, condemned the practice of drawing down the spirits of the spheres into statues, and connected the hermetic doctrines with Platonic demonology and pagan idolatry (Ebeling 42), and the philosopher who “invoked them had made either an explicit or implicit pact with Satan” (Mebane 31-32), but he also added considerable credibility to the antiquity of the texts,
perpetuating the false notion that Hermes Trismegistus was a historical figure, and a near contemporary to Moses (Burke 97).

The influence of the *Corpus Hermeticum* during the Middle Ages is still a subject of controversy, as Florian Ebeling claims that “until quite recently scholars scarcely acknowledged that Hermetic writings were remarkably well known during the Middle Ages”, and Moshe Idel points out that references to Hermes Trismegistus appear in both Jewish and Christian sources during the twelfth-century (Ebeling 37; Idel 64); Even though some scholars—like Angela Voss—claim that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was unknown in western Europe before 1460, Hermes Trismegistus was, however, a “legendary […] source of divine revelation and wisdom”, which suggests that Hermeticism existed prior to its resurgence in popularity during the fifteenth century (Goodrick-Clarke ix). Marie-Dominique Chenu also recognizes the presence of Hermeticism in the twelfth century though many hermetic texts were “yet tenuous, confused, [and] mixed with elements of Muslim astrology”, but by mid-century had become more pronounced (87).

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas condemned the demonic magic of Hermes on the same grounds as Augustine; however, he referred to Hermes Trismegistus as an ancient Egyptian sage, acquainted with the “secrets and powers of the world of nature” (Burke 98). After Aquinas, theology and the physical sciences began to separate, and the former—previously not restricted to the study of man's relationship with God—was gradually cast off from more physical sciences between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Theological study was becoming dedicated “mostly to metaphysics, whereas the sciences of nature increasingly came to be cultivated for their own sake and were considered as pertaining to profane or secular research” (Faivre 111). When theology and
the natural sciences separated, cosmology came to be poorly represented in theology, leaving gaps that would later be filled by the Italian Humanist scholars, who tried to recombine the theological studies and the physical sciences, using teachings that official theology had previously ignored (111). Thus, these Italian Humanist scholars would attempt to combine the theological with the physical to use systems of alchemy and astrology, alongside theological systems and texts of Neoplatonism and Cabala, to created a synthesis which the philosopher could use to understand the connection between these new scientific ideas of Naturalism, and older—though rediscovered and re-popularized—ideas of Platonism alongside Cabala.

2. Continental Renaissance Occult Philosophers

2.1 Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and the Platonic Academy

These Italian scholars incorporated these occult ideas into the mainstream of Renaissance philosophy. The most obvious meaning of the term Renaissance is rebirth; it was the revival of classical ideas and interest in pagan antiquity, “though many celebrated works of Renaissance architecture, sculpture, or literature are plainly inspired by classical models, they are not mere repetitions of classical prototypes, and in many fields […] Renaissance works are not imitated from ancient ones at all” (P Miller vii). Hermeticism in the fifteenth century was a “novel idea”, and stood relatively independent from earlier forms of hermetic thought, because it was “invested not with ancient Egyptian wisdom as the humanists supposed, but rather with the Gnostic and Neoplatonic ideas of the early Christian era” (Burke 111). Umberto Eco claims that Humanism in Italy was charged with “Platonism revisited under the influence of the Kabbalah and the Corpus Hermeticum” (Eco 1990 18).
This increased interest in Hermeticism and demonological magic was caused by a set of incomplete manuscripts of Hermes Trismegistus, brought by a monk of Macedonia in 1460 to Italy and to the hands of Cosimo de’ Medici the Elder. Cosimo ordered Marsilio Ficino, a patron of Cosimo, to interrupt his study of Plato to translate the new find immediately (Burke 99). According to Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, it was this translation, more than any other, which “was responsible for the revival of Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism in the European Renaissance” (ix). Ficino, at the height of his career, was in the center of an intellectual circle in Florence, known as the Platonic Academy, the same Platonic Academy which George Gemistus Pletho inspired Cosimo de’ Medici to establish after his visit to Florence in 1438 (Wallis 162-163).

The Platonic Academy recovered the study of lost theology and appropriated a variety of occult teachings that traditional theology had ignored—such as alchemy, Cabala, and Hermeticism—and Angela Voss writes that the “awakening, transmission and dissemination of esoteric knowledge in the West cannot be overestimated” (1):

Ficino played a major role in the ‘rebirth’ of classical learning we know as the Renaissance, through his commitment to the renewal of Platonic and Hermetic philosophies and his determination to integrate their metaphysics into Christianity, a marriage—however problematic, which revitalised religious and cultural life and placed a new emphasis on the capacity of the human soul to realise its innate divinity. (Voss 1)

Ficino and his pupil, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, sought to reconcile these occult traditions with Christianity; Christian tropes which were found in the “tree” of the Cabalistic Sephirot would become another symbol of the Trinity, and Judaic numerology
would be applied to Christian hermeneutics (Faivre 111-113).

There are, as D. P. Walker points out, several obvious connections between the Neoplatonists and Ficino’s magic, as he had worked closely with the texts of Proclus, Iamblichus, and Prophyry (36-37). The idea of the Neoplatonic spheres was reinforced in the newly arrived *Corpus Hermeticum* in which the all-encompassing Nous (or Mind/Intellect)

instructs his disciple Hermes in the secrets of the cosmos and

the spark of Mind that inheres in each human consciousness,

the nature of the soul, and its ascent through the planetary

spheres after death. (Goodrick-Ctarke ix).

The sphere of the earth and the elements leads up to the heavenly spheres of the Moon, Venus, Jupiter and the Sun, “which in turn lead up to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, and above that to the Divine Mind itself, which is the active intelligence of the One”; and through this hierarchical model, energies could travel up and down through the different levels of the spheres and back again, vitalizing all levels with varying divine rays (Voss 11). However, once he moves on to the *Corpus*, he cannot “quite pass over the fact that Hermes is talking about pagan idolatry and demons, and therefore goes on a worried and muddled defence of his own magic”. He recognizes that Egypt’s magic was illicit, because the demons in the statues were worshipped as gods, but he implies that the magical use of demons is acceptable if used as a means or a magical tool, and not worshipped as ends (Walker 39-42).

Ficino avoids mentioning demons too often in his *De Vita Coelitus Compranda*, but it seems as though singing and talismans are often directed towards star-spirits, or *daemones*; however, he goes on to suggest that legitimate magical works are non-
demonic, and “work by the influence of an impersonal planetary spirit on man’s spirit and body, but no higher”, without the influence of a demon (Walker 45). He tries to stress the natural aspect of his magic:

Nor do I affirm here a single word about profane magic which depends on the worship of daemons, but I mention natural magic, which, by natural means, seeks to obtain the services of celestials for the prosperous health of our bodies. This power, it seems, must be granted, and all the more so as that activity which joins heavenly things to earthly is more perfect. From this workshop, the Magi, the first of all, adored the new-born Christ. (Ficino 1989 397)

That he gives this confusing defence of his practical Neo-platonic/Hermetic teachings on the grounds that they are not demonic comes as no surprise; it was only a few years earlier, in 1440, that the trial of Gilles de Rais ended in a guilty charge and a hanging. Gilles de Rais was accused and convicted of kidnapping children and—among other things—sacrificing their bodies to demons and using them to invoke spirits (Maxwell-Stuart viii). The threat of prosecution for heresy and demon-worship was very real.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola came under the guidance and protection of Ficino and Lorenzo de’ Medici (the grandson of Cosimo de’ Medici) in 1484, and already had access to a considerable amount of Jewish theology and philosophy because of his knowledge of Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic (P Miller viii). Pico used the resources of his varied library collection to try and outline the truth that did not need to be discovered, as it has “existed from time immemorial” (Cassirer 124). He attempts to include all philosophies in his own survey, similar to Faivre’s idea of the “Praxis of Concordance”.

which desires to discover shared denominators of philosophies and to construct a syncretism of occult theology (Faivre 120). His framework seems to be based on the pseudo-Dionysian and Neoplatonic theology of forms and the relation of man to the spheres, and he aided Ficino in redefining the roles of the nine angelic hierarchies within these Neoplatonic spheres and further merged Cabala into Hermetic tradition (Cassirer 134; Burke 106).

Many of the Gnostic and Neoplatonic writings which Pico defends put a faith in the ability of the human soul to perfect itself, a faith which cannot fully separate itself from magic.

Not only does humankind’s spiritual and intellectual ascent culminate in the infusion of knowledge which may be applied in the transitive magical operations; the process of gaining knowledge itself often involves the invocation of benevolent spirits. (Mebane 43)

With clear approval and endorsement, Pico goes on to mention secret rites which would often involve interchange with daemons, and that “the ancient theologians point to humankind’s power to invoke these spirits as a sign of human greatness” (43-44). However, at the same time, he understood that orthodox Christianity had always condemned the practice of demonic invocation, and declared that the daemons worshipped in pagan rituals were the servants of Satan, he “therefore introduces magic into Christian philosophy cautiously, at times attempting, like Ficino, to speak of the daemons as if they were impersonal forces” (Mebane 44), and that all Orphic hymns and talismans are not addressed to satanic spirits, but to “natural powers”, which are “distributed throughout the world by God and which may properly be invoked by the
2.2 Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim

In his work on alchemists, Lewis Spence says that “few reputations have suffered so greatly from the perversions of tradition as that of Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim. In the popular imagination he shares with Faust the odium of Satanic intimacy” (Spence 77). Agrippa definitely had the reputation of being a black magician (Lehrich 1), and legends of his supernatural power led his contemporaries to regard “his learning as uncanny, his mystical gifts as the result of Satanic converse” (Spence 78).

Agrippa was born in 1486 and learned astrology from his father, who helped him develop his early interest in occult and esoteric learning. After his time at Cologne University, he travelled extensively and, in 1509, spent time with Johannes Trithemius, the Abbot of Sponheim, who was a distinguished humanist, theologian, and an expert on cryptology and magic. Agrippa, after spending time with Trithemius, wrote his De Occulta philosophia libri tres (Lehrich 25-26), which became the summa of his occult philosophical works and contained a wealth of classical quotations, making it “a prime example of the revival of ancient paganism” (Zambelli 71). He sent the manuscript to Trithemius who approved and encouraged him, but then advised:

Speak of things public to the public […] but of things lofty and secret only to the loftiest and most private of your friends. Hay to an ox and sugar to a parrot. Rightly interpret this, lest you, as others have been, be trampled down by oxen. (Letter from Trithemius to Agrippa 1510, qtd. Spence 85)

At the same time as he received this letter, he also received news of ferocious criticisms
from the “fierce Catilinet”—Jean Catilinet, the provincial superior of the Franciscans for Burgundy—in Dolé, calling him a “judaising heretic” (van der Poel 19); the friar’s condemnations had a tremendous effect on the literary society there, where Agrippa gave a lecture which “reconciled Cabalism with Platonism and its offshoots” (Spence 83).

He travelled to London in 1510, probably in the service of Emperor Maximilian I, and attended lectures delivered by the Christian Humanist, John Colet. Though he did not stay in England long, in the following decades his reputation as learned man grew:

The publication of his books increased his tremendous fame.

The imperial ambassador to the English court wrote to him that all the learned men in London were praising his De vanitate and his De occulta philosophia, and urged him to take up the defence of Queen Catherine of Aragon, repudiated as his wife by the King, Henry VIII. It is said that Queen Catherine herself had wanted to have Agrippa defend her. (Yates 1979 40)

That Queen Catherine of Aragon possibly desired the services of Agrippa (most likely because his knowledge of Hebraic law), and that his books on occult philosophy became popular among the educated in England, indicates that:

Hermetic religious and philosophical beliefs, along with the associated magic, astrology, and cabala, became not only respectable during the Renaissance, but dignified. Hermeticism was a worthy pursuit for the serious scholar intent on learning more about his world and his God. (Burke 111)
However, Agrippa’s magic was extremely controversial, as his *De occult philosophia* implied that demonic magic was not only legitimate, but possibly required for the most supreme forms of magic (Lehrich 147). This was simultaneous with the rejection of magical practice by Christian Reformers “because they believed any result must be the work of demons”, and therefore satanic (Burke 113).

Agrippa’s works of occult philosophy detailed discussions of cabala and ritual, which were deeply Christian and sceptical; however, it was not at odds with the hermetic-cabalistic tradition which had been passed down to him via the Italian humanists, and even incorporated the Orphic hymns of Ficino’s spiritual/demonic magic and the belief that Hebrew was the most sacred language (Spence 98; Shumaker 1973 135). He works on the model of the spheres and the desire for the soul’s ascension towards the divine, as through elevating the soul towards God:

> the magician gains power over the angels and ministering forces, and can manipulate them to produce worldly events.

> The higher the magician rises through the spheres and the divine world, the more powerful the angels which can be thus manipulated. […] The radical promise of ceremonial magic is fulfilled: demonic magic leads the soul to God. (Lehrich 147-148, 185)

Since the higher spheres dominate the lower ones, gaining control of the angels and the sphere in which they operate could give the magician control over the lower spheres, i.e. the physical earth (Mikolajczyk 40). This domination over the angels comes from knowing their names (Lehrich 186) which was a common tenet of cabala, and necessary to receive divine and celestial influences; these influences do not emanate directly from
Providence, but the seal of ideas contained in them “is allocated to governing intelligences or angels” (Spence 91-92). He even outlined the different levels of ecstatic frenzy in relation to the spheres, and compared them, without any condemnation, to demonic possession (Lehrich 194-195). Given these published instructions, it is not surprising that even during his own lifetime priests—not to mention Cologne’s Inquisitor Konrad Kollin of Lelm—were denouncing him as an evil *magus* and a satanic sorcerer, forcing him to defend himself from charges of heresy (van der Poel 2, 19; Lehrich 29). Though scholars sometimes have difficulty reconciling *De occulta* with his *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum*—which is a denunciation of all sciences, including occult sciences—Agrippa continued to be interested in esotericism and published a commentary on Raymon Lull, posthumously celebrated as a great alchemist, in 1533.

Shortly after Agrippa’s death in 1535, “stories of Agrippa’s traffic with demons circulated, leading to his incorporation into the Faust legend and his reputation for Black magic” (Lehrich 30). Paulus Jovius recorded that he had died in solitude and misery because of his continuous necromantic practices, and was even deserted by the devil, which had always stayed at his side in the shape of a black dog. So many bizarre stories circulated directly after his death, and it was only Johann Wier—Agrippa’s student—who gave a more accurate testimony for posterity (Spence 79-80). However, his blackened reputation went on to be the inspiration for numerous authors of fiction: notably, Christopher Marlowe and Mary Shelley (van der Poel 1-2).

The darker side of this new magical practice was necromancy, which seemed to incorporate various of the more demonological aspects of Cabala, Neoplatonism and Hermeticism. The use of demons to animate inanimate material, a idea popularized by legends of Egyptians using Hermetic magic to pull demons into statues, came into the
practice of necromancers. However, what really pulled necromancy into the realm of illicit magic, versus permissive magic, was its approach to the 'demon' not as an intermediary being between man and the upper spheres and God, but as a specific evil with a connection to devilish forces.

3. Illicit Magic

3.1 Necromancy and the Summoning of Demons

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the popularization of magic by the Italian Humanists and Agrippa, magic became:

well-nigh respectable. Many of the most noted men of the century dabbled in it; to some, as to Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, magic spelled power. The universities did not teach magic, but many of their students practiced it. Magic went far beyond formulas of incantations; its doctrines were of far greater import than its practices. Much of the most original thinking of the period is to be found in books of magic. (Blau 78)

John Barbour, among other medieval theologians, believed that demons were fallen angels (Maxwell-Stuart 42). The fallen situation of the demon and the devil, however, is not unique, as man has also fallen from God’s grace and descended down through the spheres of the celestial hierarchy; “no one is more similar to us than the devil, for no one but the devil shares our outcast condition” as fallen beings (Maggi 1).

With the coming of the Renaissance came the increasing availability of paper, which was cheaper than parchment, and reading—though still available only to the elite—became available to a much expanded elite. Richard Kieckhefer points out that
another by-product of cheaper printing materials was the emergence of silent reading habits, making it a much more private activity (Keickhefer 1-5). The ascent of private reading could create a culture of private, and secretive, texts; with the spread of secret books came the spread of necromancy, an explicitly demonic form of magic:

Secular as well as ecclesiastical courts took [necromancy] seriously and at times executed those charged with its practice; monarchs and popes as well as commoners lived in a fear of becoming its victims. This fear may have been in some case or to some degree feigned or pathological, but it was also grounded in a realistic awareness that necromancy was in fact being practised, and in an almost universally shared conviction that it could work. (10)

Keickhefer emphasizes the paranoia surrounding the practice of necromancy, but also necromancy’s emergence as a private, literary act. In this way, his theory regarding the study of necromancy can be compared to Armando Maggi’s suggestion that demonological treatises were “in fact grammar books, obsessive attempts to define the idiom exchanged between these two [devil and man] radical solitudes” (2), and that the internalized language of the mind is the language of the fallen angels (Maggi 2-5).

With the increase of demonic texts, legends gradually begin to circulate regarding writing and demonology. Michael Scot, a thirteenth century astrologer and reported sorcerer, believed that a book itself could be inhabited by spirits and would call out when the book was opened, inquiring into the sorcerer’s desires (“Michael Scot”). This could convey the eagerness of evil spirits to seize an opportunity for evil; though, “beyond this, it can express obsessive anxiety about the book itself as an object invested with a kind of
negative sacredness, something taboo, a source of spiritual and psychological contagion”. And like the corpses of those who had died during the plague, books of necromancy were burned to avoid the spread of their contamination (Kieckhefer 6). The physical object of the book is the subject of much suspicion because most occult conjurers were university students or clergy, and many necromantic conjurations were often written in Latin in an attempt to connect them to Christian liturgy (16).

There are varying traditions of demonology, and the notion of what a demon is has shifted form depending on the philosophy from which it comes. Orthodox tradition, according to Kieckhefer, maintains that demons are immaterial, ranked under a single chief and acting only through God’s permission. However, the ‘alternative’ tradition sometimes grants demons a degree of materiality and autonomy in their actions. The confusion surrounding the nature of demons is most evident in the tension between the Christian notion of demons as fallen angels and the Neoplatonic idea of daemons, the spirits linked with the spheres, as neither angel nor devilish demon in classical Christian terms (154-155). Erazmus Ciolek Witelo, in the thirteenth century, seems to combine the two schools by classifying them as fallen angels, but then incorporates that theology into a Neoplatonic structure of the spheres. In their prelapsarian state, demons existed within a certain level of the celestial hierarchy, but after they had fallen their position in the spheres was demoted so they currently reside in a sublunary sphere between man and angel (Mikolajczyk 44-46).

Although necromancy was practised within universities and monasteries, and Joseph Blau claims that the practice of magic became “well-nigh respectable” (78), threats from the Inquisition surrounded magicians and occult philosophers in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Pietro d’Abano, a thirteenth century physician and
philosopher, was twice brought before the Inquisition for his work regarding the invocation of spirits, the Tetragrammaton, and Hermetic decan magic; he was sentenced to death after the second trial in 1315. A century later, in 1440, courts condemned Gilles de Rais to death for the sacrifice of children to demons, and Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 for his involvement in Hermetic magic and for his theories of Christianity as merely a corrupted Egyptian Hermeticism (Maxwell-Stuart 90-98, 104-109; Burke 115).

The more unlawful types of necromancy copied many of the threads of the more philosophical occult theologies of Pico della Mirandola and Cornelius Agrippa: one of these being the Cabalistic notion of the Hebraic names for demons, and the idea that if the magician knows the name of the demon, he can better control it. For example, a fifteenth century German text of demonic magic—often called the “Munich Handbook of Necromancy”—calls upon the Judaic demoness, Lilith, in a mirror to become the servant of the conjurer and to bring him news from abroad (Kiekhefer 1, 106). Lilith, the Hebraic first wife of Adam, appears in numerous occult and demonological texts from antiquity into the Renaissance, in the Apocryphal literature and the Zohar, but she also might have an appearance in the Hermetic Picatrix under the guise of decan-demon Luna, who is covered in snakes, as described in Frances Yates's Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, Luna is

[t]he form of a woman with a beautiful face on a dragon, with horns on her head, with two snakes wound around her.... A snake is wound around each of her arms, and above her head is a dragon, and another dragon beneath her feet, each of these dragons having seven heads. (Yates 1964 53)
The incorporation of Hebraic systems of naming angels and demons—along with using Hebrew languages in ritual—with systems of the Neoplatonic spheres was a common practice in necromancy, and one book of practical demonic magic opens with a prayer: “Eloy, Eloyye, Sithothith, Eon, Sepmelamaton, Ezelphates, Tetragramaton […] and by all your secret names which are contained in this book…”, integrating cabala with necromancy (Kiekhefer 9).

Though guides for necromancy have sprung from various scholarly occult philosophical works many of them seem confused and disorganized, borrowing incantations and angelic/demonic names in a muddled Hebrew and using Hermetic notions of the Egyptian decans in an attempt to construct a practical necromancy. However, one of the main differences between the work of the “Munich Handbook of Necromancy” and the works of Ficino and Pico, is that while Ficino was worried about the public’s reaction and tried to make muddled defences of spiritual magic, the necromancers openly called out for demonic aid. Benvenuto Cellini, in 1530, tells in his autobiography about a necromancer's ritual performed in the Collosseum at Rome, invoking the demons in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and commanding them by the power of God (Kiekhefer 186). This account demonstrates how eclectic and, perhaps, how explicitly demonic, the magic of necromancy was.

3.2 Witchcraft, Magicians and Visual Representations

Edward Peters suggests that the high Neoplatonic magic of the Renaissance might have been condemned as the old demonological magic/necromancy in a new dress, but it had all the pretence and dress of learning—as well as influential patrons—and with the rise of learned philosophic magic coming out of the northern Italian Renaissance (165),
there was a contemporary “growth of belief in witchcraft”, which rose “precisely in the years of the Renaissance and Reformation” (Trevor-Roper 8-9). The fact that the occult philosophy of northern Italy became the subject of university lectures, however, did not guarantee the safety of its lecturers; and “[w]hether it pleased him or not, a magician like Agrippa von Nettesheim was closer to the victims of the witch-trials than he knew, or cared to acknowledge” (Peters xiv). Agrippa, while working as a legal advisor in Metz in 1518, took the defence of an accused witch, housing her, and achieving an acquittal. He demonstrated his familiarity with the subject of witchcraft and law, and “his victory over Inquisitor Nicolas Savin involved legal and theological arguments on witchcraft, sin, and the proper legal process for torture and interrogation of prisoners” (Lehrich 27). Agrippa’s involvement with the witchcraft trial serves as a starting point in discussions about the diverging principles in witchcraft and learned magic, and although both anthropologists and historians persist in separating the crimes of magic and witchcraft, medieval theologians and lawyers did not, and many of the elements of sixteenth-century witchcraft were first brought to light in charges against magicians. (Peters 164-165)

During the Inquisition, many distinct terms, which were once only used to describe learned magic—like ‘sortilegium’, ‘divinatio’, ‘maleficium’, ‘ars magia’—began to be applied to people and their practices not in the category of ‘learned’ magician; they found their new usage in the accusations against practitioners of ‘superstitious’ or ‘idolatrous’ acts: fortune telling, love magic, astrology, etc (165). The official denunciation of elite Neoplatonic magicians and philosophers became the general charge under which many others could be accused as well.
Heresy, idolatry, and superstition indiscriminately merged in the person of the heretic, and the heretic merged into the witch—a figure made formidable because of its ancestry in the invective against magic, on the one hand, and in the mentality of the Inquisition and the society it served, on the other.

(Peters 165)

Both the professional, learned, magician and the witch were the subject of great hostility; however, because the former where only few in number and were often under the protection of a rich and respectable patron, there are not so many recorded instances of them being brought to trial, though medieval clerics directed their polemics against wise men and astrologers, and not against witches (Estes 155).

There are several instances when witches and learned magicians appear together in visual representations of the occult, and sometimes perhaps highlighting the differences between the two arts and other works of art might perhaps serve to lump the two groups together indistinguishably. Some artists may have wanted to show that some occult practices were not of the same kind as witchcraft, and therefore permissible and even pious; other artists may have wanted to show that all magic and magical practices were illicit and blasphemous. In art, the witch was certainly a figure that generated extreme anxiety regarding power in the hands of women, and female sexuality was often perceived as a dangerous threat. The combination of witchcraft and overt sexuality is perhaps most poignantly demonstrated in Hans Baldung Grien’s panel painting, The Weather Witches (Fig. 1). As in many of Baldung Grien’s witch paintings, the female bodies dominate the canvas, and their power is intended as a source of natural disorder, as their hair flows in opposing directions, representing—as is common in Renaissance
art—unbridled lust. Here, sexuality and demonic power are combined to represent the source of these women’s power (Zika 84).

The literacy of, and the use of text by, the practitioner is the main focus in the comparison between the witch and the learned magician, regardless of gender, and this is a prominent feature in Jacob Cornelisz von Oostanen’s The Witch of Endor (Fig. 2), which in a

radical break from traditional medieval iconography, Cornelisz combined the image of a powerful female necromancer, seated in a magic circle and invoking spirits of the dead with a group of witches. (Zika 156)

Here the necromancer reads from a book, while the witches gather around a grill, cooking sausages. The learned sorceress looks remarkably masculine with her broad shoulders and wide waist; though the witches are more clothed than the sorceress, the sheer material which clings to them serves to sexualize them more than the half-nude necromancer.

Two images of Circe, completed within the same century, depict again how the placement of books and text in the artwork can change the subject from the position of witch to the position of learned magician. Virgil Solis’s woodcut (Fig. 3) portrays Circe more as a witch figure, concocting poisonous potions more in the vein of witch-like wise women, than learned sorceress. However, Dosso Dossi’s more ‘intellectual’ medium of paint on canvas (Fig. 4), shows Circe without the traditional facets of superstitious witchcraft, like the potion of Solis’s woodcut. She is placed in a pastoral setting, reading from a tablet; therefore, Circe's literacy places her out of the realm of wise-woman and into the position of learned practitioner: she “is the female variant of the learned
Spoto 54

magician, who operates not with poisons or sorcery but with the learned incantations of high magic” (Zika 139).

Why witchcraft paranoia peaked during these centuries is still the subject of hot debate; issues of socio-economic changes, religious reformation and a proto-feminist revolution have all been brought up as possible catalysts leading to a surge in witch persecutions. Diane Purkiss writes that shifts in religion away from the Catholic Church towards Protestantism created tensions and confusions within the realm of marriage, as beliefs moved from an authoritative and hierarchical religious system to a Protestant system which advocated a personal relation to God. No longer was there a central church leading a clear chain of command, and as there was no longer a Head of Church, hierarchy within household became tenuous. This was accentuated by the admission of divorce, and as Roderick Phillips notes, “the history of the divorce since the sixteenth century has been, for the most part, a progressive rejection of the Catholic position” (1), connecting the break up of marriage and the family to the rise of Protestantism.

Now motherhood and the feminine/maternal body became both an objects of desire and “source[s] of pollution” (Purkiss 2). The ideal woman in Renaissance Europe was ‘virtuously enclosed’ within the household, while “by contrast, women who were not virtuously enclosed were associated with sexual availability, economic profligacy, and political disorder”. Purkiss goes on to relate the female body to the walls of a home in that they both have physical boundaries, and it is the anxieties surrounding the breeching of these bodies that leads to corporeal confusion. She observes that Mary Douglas and others “have noted, the bodies of women are more ‘leaky’, permeable and problematic than the bodies of men” (Purkiss 99). Just as there were concerns about the breaching of household boundaries, there was also apprehension regarding the porosity of women's
bodies; ideas of the maternal body and the swelling of maternity were principal causes for concern. Elizabeth Grosz in *Volatile Bodies* questions the social construction of the female body:

Can it be that in the West [...] the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence, but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as a formless flow; as a viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply a phallus, but self-containment—not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens order? (qtd. Purkiss 120)

It is in this question that Grosz illuminates the intense fear behind images of the female body as changing; the permeable body “threatens” the “order” of masculine hierarchy and power, putting it beyond constancy and control.

The pictorial representations of Hans Baldung Grien (Fig. 1), and Jacob Cornelisz (Fig. 2) demonstrate these anxieties surrounding women not surrounded by enclosed spaces; Circe, as the powerful learned female magician, reads outside of the home in a clearing; Grien’s witches are exposed to the elements and their provocative stances reflect Purkiss’s theory that women exposed to the elements are also exposing themselves sexually. Only Solis’s Circe is within an enclosed building—though she places herself in the company of men and animals—and her dress and posture are still extremely suggestive. The flowing hair (Fig. 1), while possibly representing lust, could also represent the uncontrollable nature of witchcraft and powerful women.

The portrayal of highly sexualized women in possession of dangerous power was
common among Renaissance depictions of witches, and it seems that it is only the addition of books and writing that separates the learned magician from superstitious folkloric witchcraft. In this respect, it appears that the difference between learned magician and wise-men/women is a class difference; as it was only a small elite that was literate and who had access to texts of occult philosophy. Likewise, learned men often did not have access to magical practices passed through oral traditions, as much of it was not contained in books, and thought to be disseminated in secret, and sometimes through hereditary lines (e.g. a mother teaching her daughter herbal medicine). While elite demonology and occultism could be somewhat controlled through the publication or censorship of materials (though illicit texts often slipped through), folkloric witchcraft could spread wherever people could gather in secret. Perhaps this is why, as explained in the next chapter, rulers would often use the expertise of elite magicians and occult philosophers for political ends while simultaneously persecuting witchcraft.

While the gender of the practitioner played a large part in the labelling of whether they were practising elite forms of magic, which was sometimes permissible, or folkloric witchcraft, which was almost always illegal and marked as demonic, class and power feature prominently. Authorities would alternatively encourage or cast a blind eye when university students dabbled in the Neoplatonism of Pico della Mirandola or the Hermetic practises derived from Ficino's works; however, when any of these ideas turned up in what could otherwise be thought of as the harmless herbal remedies of the uneducated, it was branded satanic and evil.

**Conclusion**

Elite demonological magic and philosophy arose from several different sources—
namely, Egyptian Hermeticism, Neoplatonism and Cabala—to merge with the Italian Humanist movement in the work of Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino. Cornelius Agrippa published the various occult philosophies in his *De occulta philosophia*, and faced fierce condemnation from the Franciscans for heresy, which led to the spread of his reputation as a companion of Satan and a black magician.

These condemnations were common for occult philosophers from the middle ages onward, as each movement brings on a “janus-faced” reaction against it; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 happened contemporaneously with the resurgence of interest in Cabala with the Italian Humanist movement; and the rise of practical magic and curiosity of pagan ritual occurred in spite of the threat from the Inquisition.

Occult philosophers attempted to synthesise ideas regarding the nature of demons and combined Christian theology, which regarded demons as fallen angels, and Neoplatonic philosophy, which believed demons to be a natural part of the hierarchy of spheres. This divergence in beliefs created difficulty when attempting to assess the legality of demonic magic: if demons were, in fact, fallen angels, then no Christian magician could morally condone rituals directed towards them; however, if they were only a natural part of the celestial hierarchy, then it is easier—though tenuous—to construct a defence of spiritual magic as Ficino and Pico della Mirandola did. The difference between learned demonological magic and popular folkloric witchcraft seems to be literacy, as depictions of witches and necromancers differ only in their inclusion or exclusion of text. The persecution of learned magicians was often much more difficult because of their education, their higher standing in the community, and their influential patrons. However, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, erudite practitioners of occult magic—like Pietro d’Abano and Giordano Bruno—were tried and sentenced to
death; indeed, it seemed as though there was a fine line that magicians could not pass without extreme danger, and when Giordano Bruno claimed that Christianity was merely a corruption of Egyptian polytheistic philosophy, he had crossed it.

Other magicians would elicit the attention of influential patrons, placing their knowledge within the reach and the use of those in political power, and thus protected themselves from accusations of heresy. When the occult philosophies of the Italian Humanist tradition began to become more popular in English in the sixteenth century, many of the magicians attempted to work within a framework of established power and norms, essaying to remain within the realm of legality and political usefulness.
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3


Taken from Charles Zika, pg. 139.
Figure 4

Dosso, Dossi, *Circe and her Lovers in a Landscape*, c. 1525, painting on canvas.


Taken from Charles Zika, pg. 140.
Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Chapter Two
The Fear and the Use of the Demonic in Sixteenth Century England

Introduction

With the spread of the Renaissance into northern Europe in the sixteenth century, the new mode of occult philosophy moved into England. This chapter examines that migration by looking at some key figures in sixteenth century occultism and necromancy to see how they variously understood the previous century’s continental magic. The ‘angelic’ conversations of John Dee are analyzed alongside the dubious sorcery and necromancy of Edward Kelley, and their methods are compared with those of the astrologer-physician, Simon Forman, to see how they variously interpreted Neoplatonism and magic. The trends of the feminine demonic, which emerge throughout Renaissance occult studies, illustrate deep-rooted anxieties surrounding women and sexuality, and the encounters of John Dee with the female spirit, Madimi, exemplify how sexuality and demonology are inseparably linked—encounters that culminated in the sex-ritual of the Dee and Kelley household.

1. The migration of occult ideas into England

With the Reformation growing in the sixteenth century, a Humanist ideology of *ad fontes*, finding the source, grew in English intellectual circles as scholars returned to the original texts and languages to discover the true message of God: “the study of Hebrew, Cabala and rabbinical sources was on the rise” (Shapiro 14), and Cabala “was
common knowledge in the sixteenth century” (De León-Jones 143). The combination of this rebirth of “pagan letters” and a simultaneous interest in “pagan mystery-religions” (Trevor-Roper 11) allowed demonological studies to gain momentum in England. Walter Stephens, in his *Demon Lovers*, discusses the rising interest in demons and witchcraft as a reaction against the Humanist focus on the earthly, and the shift from orthodoxy to Humanism was the beginning of a social focus away from the divine and towards the natural, prompting a “janus-faced” movement in the study of witchcraft and demonology (117). Belief in black magic and the rise in demonology are inseparable from the Reformation, and also the Renaissance, when changing beliefs disrupted longstanding traditions and customs. However, English occult philosophy in the latter half of the sixteenth century was not merely a construction of any backlash against the mainstream Humanistic ideas, but a continuation of older continental practices, adapted within English modes of interpretation.

The sixteenth century brought with it new fields of study: a life and works of Pico was published in c. 1510 (reprinted in 1525) with a full title demonstrating the respect he held in certain English speaking circles.

*Here is co[n]teyed the lyfe of Johan Picus erle of Myra[n]dula a grete lord of Italy an excellent co[n]ning man in all scie[n]ces [And] vertuous of lyuing. with dyuerse epistles [and] other warkis of the seyd Johan Picus full of grete science vertew and wysedome. whos lyfe [and] warkys bene worthy [and] digne to be redd [and] oftyn to to be had in memorye.* (c. 1510, title page)

In 1561, Cambridge hired Richard Bruern as a professor of Hebrew (Shapiro 22), the occult texts of Pico della Mirandola became available with a translation of his work on
the Psalms in 1589, and Marsilio Ficino also became available with citations in the work of Thomas Elyot in 1539 (75n), John Foxe in 1583 (732), and Niccolo Machiavelli in 1595, who referred to Ficino as “a second father of the Philosophie of Plato” (174). And in 1601, Ficino is cited in John Deacon's treatise on devils and spirits, connecting Ficino's work in philosophy to his contribution to occultism (82n). Though these are small and isolated incident, they were the beginnings of a developing interest in continental philosophies, many of which touched on the occult.

In England, members of society’s elite hired educated astrologers as advisors (R Deacon 1-3). Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa himself traveled to London in 1510, in service of Emperor Maximilian I, where he shared his occult philosophy with English scholars (Lehrich 26), and was much translated in the following decades, especially by David Clapam, who produced translations of The commendation of matrimony in 1540 (reprinted 1545) and A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde in 1542 by royal printer and bookbinder to Henry VIII, Thomas Berthelet, who also printed Thomas Elyot's work mentioning Ficino, bringing Agrippa and Ficino to an English speaking audience. This opening the possibilities for translations of their more hermetic and occult works in later decades, when philosophers turned to European ideas of Hermeticism to explain humankind’s relationship to the divine, like Robert Fludd, whose ideas about the microcosm/macrocosp of the human body in relationship to the heavens drew on the Hermetic concept of ‘as above, so below’. The frontispiece from his Utriusque cosmetic of 1617 shows man in the center of a celestial hierarchy, surrounded by the circling astrological zodiac signs in distinct spheres (Fig. 8). In another of his diagrams, Robert Fludd draws a geocentric hermetic model of the celestial spheres, with the planets and caellum stellatum circumscribed within the outermost sphere which is
God (Fig. 9).

Just as rulers in Europe, such as Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor, and King Stephen of Poland, were developing an interest in occult studies and the employment of its practitioners, in England, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I both solicited the services of John Dee to cast horoscopes and make predictions (Harkness 1999 54-55; R Deacon 30). However, interest in the powers of the occult and the influences of the astrological spheres existed not only in the top tier of the ruling hierarchy, but throughout English society.

Astrological almanacs, as was as books of predictions, were common in [the sixteenth century], when conjurers-in-earnest, side by side with quack physics, attracted followings of workday citizens who sought what wisdom could be derived from occult practices. (Cerasano 145)

Astrology was not only used to make future predictions but also as a neoplatonic medicine, similar to Robert Fludd’s mapping of the human, microcosmic, body in relation to the heavens—the macrocosmic—and was “conventionally one of the tools of physicians” that would sometimes, as in the case of Simon Forman, “determine all medical diagnoses and therapies” (Kassell 345). As discussed in the previous chapter, literature which asserted an intimate connection between the physical, earthly body and its intellect and soul in both the larger, macrocosmic level in the layering of the spheres, and the smaller microcosmic level of the individual became popular:

Given the acceptance of the belief that sublunar affairs depended upon celestial causes, it ought not seem strange to us that astrological methods for the timing of treatment; for diagnosis,
prognosis and for cataloguing of *materia medica* were quickly adopted by the learned in Europe. (Zoller)

The astrologer-physician would often employ herbs or talismans which connected to the supralunar spheres and planet-*daemones* using the hermetic properties of sympathies, and Dee believed this magic was “in no way unchristian because it utilizes powers inherent in God's creation” (Shumaker 1973 208). In constructing their talismans, they would appropriate the sympathetic metals, colors, and stones in connection with a planet, or sphere, which was chosen because of its particular power over a certain part of human anatomy:

> The stars and celestial powers are like seals whose characters are imprinted differently by reason of differences in the elemental matter. In the same way, the engraved forms of our seals are imprinted more easily upon one material than upon another, more elegantly in one than in another, and to some almost permanently. You will therefore consider talismans rather attentively, and other still greater things. (Dee 1978 135)

In this way, the powers of the planets would manipulate earthly powers through the talisman, in favor of the learned astrologer-physician, and in favor of his paying client.

Though perhaps not commonly practiced, these ideas and philosophies were commonly and widely known, with aspects of astrology and magic present in many sixteenth century interactions. However, anxiety over the extent to which the magician held power, which could potentially threaten political power, caused tension in relations with perceived magicians and influenced ambiguous portrayals of the occult philosopher, mirroring the general public's mixed reactions to the presence of a political and
supernatural power operating independently of the monarchy, with its established head of state.

2. The Magician and the Demonic in Literature

In dramatic representations on the stage the magician is often depicted as a figure who inverts political power and threatens the monarchy. In Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589), the necromancer and magician Friar Bacon is hired to help Prince Edward—son of King Henry III—to seduce a woman, Margaret, who herself is described in terms of the moon and witchcraft [“Luna doth boast upon her louely cheekes” and “When as she swept like Venus through the house,/ And in her shape fast folded vp my thoughtes” (A3v, A4)], creating a feminine power which needs to be counterbalanced by the masculine book learning of the magician, Friar Bacon. Anxieties surrounding this gender hierarchy appear in Friar Bacon's first scene, when Miles suggests that the one thing that the scholars will want Friar Bacon to explain is about the worth and value of women in respect to men: “Marrie sir helle straight be on your pickpacke to knowe whether the feminine or the masculin gender be most worthie” (B2v). The first display of Friar Bacon's magic to the scholars is a spell upon a kitchen maid, putting her into the control of the magician, presenting an example of the masculine overpowering the feminine. In line with these attempts to take control over the gender hierarchy, Friar Bacon meddles in affairs of state, saying of himself:

...Bacon can by bookes,

Make storming Boreas thunder from his caue,

And dimme faire Luna to a darke Eclipse,
The great arch-ruler, potentate of hell,
Trembles, when Bacon bids him, or his fiends,
Bow to the force of his Pentageron.
What art can worke, the frolicke frier knowes,
And straine out Nigromancie to the deepe,
I haue contrived and framde a head of brasse,
[...]
And I will strengthen England by my skill.

(B2)

This positions Friar Bacon as the great model Necromancer and black magician who uses “Piromancie to diuine by flames./ To tell by Hadromaticke, ebbes and tides” and “Aeromancie, to discouer doubts” (B1v), and who can elicit the “helpe of Deuils and ghastly fiends” (B2) to aid in his magic.

In another of Greene's plays, The Comical Historie of Alphonsus, the moon is connected with Venus to show the connection between magic and love:

Thrise Hesperus with pompe and peerelesse pride
Hath heau'd his head forth of the Eastern seas:
Thrise Cynthia, with Phoebus borrow beames,
Hath shewe her bewtie throgh the darkishclowdes,
Since that I wretched Dulce haue tasted ought,
Or drunke a drop of any kinde of drinke. (1394-9)

Here, Hesperus is Venus—who acts as a chorus, introducing each act and frames the action with her descriptions and explanations—the morning star, and also the progeny of Eros and sibling of Lucifer. This is then followed by the inclusion of Cynthia, the
heavenly aspect of the triumvirate goddess, Cynthia-Diana-Hecate; this goddess threatens the prevailing social order as Fausta, along with Sorceress Medea and Fausta's daughter, Iphigina. These three women plot to join forces with the female warriors of the Amazon, and attack the armies of the Turks to take revenge upon Fausta's husband, Amurak:

And now you goe vnto Amazone,

To gather all your maydens in array,

To set upon the mightie Amuracke? (1147-50)

This invasion of the female army offers a potential for the inversion of power, and a distraction from the war between Alphonsus of Aragon and Amurak, the Great Turk. The inclusion of witchcraft and magic into this story is secondary and unnecessary to the plot, which would have gone unchanged without it. It seems to have been included in order to lend credibility to the threat of the woman army—which seems more natural within a world of magic—and also to perhaps give in to the expectations of the audience, who were used to, and perhaps expecting, magic within the drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century theatre (Szönyi 1995 110).

However, this demonstrates the extent to which the demonic aspect of the tripled moon figure was known in late sixteenth-century popular depictions of magic. Iphigina, as warrior woman in Greene's play, originally appeared as the daughter of the warring Agamemnon, who attempted to sacrifice her in order to send his ships swiftly to war. She was later rescued by the moon goddess, Artemis, and transformed into Hecate. In his Guide to Greece, Pausanias writes,

But they likewise report that they have the heroic monument of Iphigenia; for, they say, she died among the Megarenses. But I have heard a far different account of Iphigenia from the Arcadians;
and I know that Hesiod, in his *Catalogue of Women*,
relates, *the Iphigenia was not slain, but that through the will of Diana she became Hecate.* (1.43.1)

Editor of this volume of Pausanias, Thomas Taylor, notes,

Iphigenia after her death became united with Hecate, from whom she originally descended; and on this account might be said to be changed into Hecate, on account of wholly subsisting through union, according to the characteristic of that goddess. I only add that according to Orpheus, as we are informed by Proclus, [...] there is a great union between Diana, the mundane Hecate, and Proserpine; and that Orpheus calls Diana Hecate. (383n)

Latin and English translations of both Proclus, and the passages of the Pausanias, were available within the sixteenth-century literary world, with editions of Pausanias in 1516 (Venice), 1583 (Frankfurt), with numerous translations of Proclus's commentaries throughout the latter half of the century (an Italian version in Florence in 1573 and a Latin version printed in Frankfurt in 1593). With mentions of this particular text of Proclus's commentary of Plato's Cratylus appearing in English within the works of Heinrich Bullinger in 1577 (610), and Philippe de Mornay's work translated by Sir Philip Sidney in 1587 (346).

Just as witches and Hecate represent a threat to prevailing power structures, magic in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, pt. 2 (c. 1592) and *Henry IV* pt. 1 (c. 1598) represent the political aspects of the occult, and more specifically the political threat of magic. In *Henry VI*, pt. 2, the Duchess of Gloucester, Eleanor Cobham, has plans to place herself

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2 According to Thomas Taylor, editor and translator for this edition of Pausanias's *Guide to Greece*, this work of Hesiod has been lost (383n).
upon the throne using the magic of “Margery Jourdain, the witch of Eie,/ With Bolingbroke, the cunning conjurer” (I.i.75-76). And Roger Bolingbroke explains why magicians and necromancers practice their art at night.

Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,

The time of night when Troy was set on fire,

The time when screech-owls cry, and ban-dogs howl,

And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves;

That time best fits the work we have in hand. (I.iv.15-20)

The politics invoked by the image of burning Troy, with the treachery leading to the downfall of the city, mixes with the “screech-owls” which appear in texts of the occult and necromancy. In translations of the Hebrew bible into English variants, often words which were difficult to translate would appear as animals: the Hebrew נ"לית,3 Lilith of Isaiah 34.14 is translated in an early sixteenth century text as lamia, in classical mythology said to be a demon who devoured children (“Lamia”), and in contemporary English translations the Lilith/Lamia figure takes on a variety of attributes, from humanoid to animal. The Bishop's Bible of Matthew Parker (1568) and the Douay-Rheims Bible (1582) both preserve the lamia from the Vulgate text, but two later translations—the Geneva Bible (1587) and the King James Bible (1611)—both translate the Lilith to “shricheowle”. Here, the owl represents the feminine demonic as a threat to power structures, as depicted in the passage by the allusion to Troy.

Another contemporary definition of a screech-owl appears in a 1560 edition of The boke of secretes by Albertus Magnus:

a shricke owle, is a byrd well ynough knowen, whiche is called

3 Text from the Leningrad Codex
Magis of the Chaldeis, & Hysopus of the Greekes. There be meruaylous vertues of thyss fowle, for yf the hart and righte foote of it, be putte vpon a man sleapynge, he shall say anone to y whatsoeuer thou shalte aske of hym. And thyss hath ben proued a late tyme of our brethren. And yf any man put thyss vnder thyss arme hole, no dogge will barke at hym, but kepe silence. And yf these thinges aforesayde, ioyned together with a wynge of it, he hanged vp to a tree, byrdes wyl gather together to that tree. (E2v-E3)

Bolingbroke, with the witch Margery Jourdain, then proceeds to summon a spirit named Asnath in order to discover the future of the king, parrelling the use of the owl in the Albertus Magnus text as a way to discover the truth from someone, and also parrelling the recent dangerous act of John Dee in the drawing up of the horoscopes of Queen Mary for Princess Elizabeth before her coronation as queen in 1558. Just after this conjuration scene in Shakespeare, the Dukes of York and Buckingham—the first asserting later that he should be king, and the second loyal to King Henry—break into the room with their guards and arrest “these traitors and their trash” (40), the Duchess and the conjurer, further emphasizing the connection between magic and politics.

Similarly, in *Henry IV, pt. 1*, the Welsh rebel Owen Glendower is also a magician. In Raphael Holinshed's *The Third volume of Chronicles* of 1587, Glendower conueied himselfe out of the waie, into his knowen lurking places, and (as was thought) through art magike, he caused such foule weather of winds, tempest, raine, snow, and haile to be raised, for the annoiance of the kings arlmie, that the like had not beene heard
of; in such sort, that the king was constreined to returne home, hal
uing caused his people yet to spoile and burne first a great part of
the countrie. (520)

Here, Glendower is a magician who uses his magic against the crown, and Alex Gibbon argues that he is the same figure as the magician Jack of Kent (163), who appeared in the play of Anthony Munday, John A Kent and John A Cumber (c. 1590) around the same time that Shakespeare's Henry IV, pt. 2—featuring the same Welsh rebel Owen Glendower—was being performed (Szönyi 1995 122), showing that at the end of the sixteenth-century, ideas of magic and the magician were tied up with ideas of the feminine demonic and with anxieties surrounding rebellion and political inversion.

These anxieties of political inversion and the feminine demonic are perhaps most evident in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, which had its first performance in 1594. The play contains a full spectrum of political and sexual motives, and has a special focus on feminine spirits and demons and how they variously influence Faustus's relationship with Mephistophilis. The tragic hero overreaches the confines set around his human condition in an attempt to become “a mighty god” (i. 62), in a quest for knowledge and power that sounds reminiscent of Satan's attempt to place himself on God's throne: “Till, swollen with cunning, of self-conceit,/ His waxen wings did mount above his reach,/ And melting heaven conspired his overthrow” (Prologue 20-22). Here the metaphor of Icarus illustrates Faustus's failure to maintain his allotted place, as his plan to become like a god is frustrated by a heaven which 'conspire[s]'. However, the conspiracy and the attempt to overthrow encourages an allusion to Satan's plot to overthrow God's position and place himself in the position of supreme king:

O power, of honor, of omnipotence
Is promised to the studious artisan!

All things, that move between the quiet poles

Shall be at my command: emperors and kings

Are but obeyed in their several provinces,

Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds;

but his dominion that exceeds in this

Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man:

A sound magician is a mighty god. (i. 53-62)

Faustus's fantasy to become the king of all kings then extends to altering the physical landscape of the earth:

Had I as many souls as there by stars,

I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.

By him I'll be great emperor of the world,

And make a bridge through the moving air

To pass the ocean with a band of men;

I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore,

And make that land continent to Spain,

And both contributory to my crown.

The emperor shall not live but by my leave,

Nor any potentate of Germany. (v. 102-111)

The magician imagines that this dominion and influence will reach beyond even Europe, and his ambition towards upwards mobility is contrasted with his ancestry and family history. In the prologue, the Chorus explains that Faustus is “base of stock” (11). This attempt at an illegitimate ascension to power is magnified when Faustus meets Charles V,
who asks Faustus not for any extra power, but only for a glimpse of his family's heroic past, which the Emperor traces back to Alexander the Great (Greenblatt 1046n). For the sixteenth century audience, the political authority of Faustus would have been fraudulent when compared to that of Charles V.

However, Faustus's early claims of political ambition are never realized and are never actually attempted. Though, before he sells his soul for omnipotence, his speeches and conversations address a presumed desire for power, once he has gained this power, his wishes follow one goal: love and sex. Faustus's first request from Mephastophilis is companionship: “let me have a wife, the fairest maid in Germany, for I am wanton and lascivious, and cannot live without a wife” (v. 138-140). Mephastophilis returns and, instead of bringing a wife, brings a demon “dressed like a woman” (v. 145-146). This is a method that Mephastophilis employs throughout the play, using feminine demons or female spirits to distract Faustus from the possibility of his salvation: “If thou lovest me, think no more of it./ I'll cull thee out of the fairest courtesans/ and bring them every morning to thy bed” (v. 149-151). And at the end of the tragedy, when Faustus recognizes Mephastophilis's method of diverting Faustus's attention away from God, he chooses to perpetuate it:

One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
To glut the longing of my heart's desire:
That I might have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clean
These thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow:
And keep mine oath I made to Lucifer. (xii. 72-78)
Here, Faustus and Mephostophilis use the feminine demonic as a tool to maintain Faustus's place among the damned, and though Helen is described as “heavenly”, and her company may “extinguish clean” Faustus's thoughts, this is a false rhetoric and what appears to be beautiful and good actually helps to pull Faustus away from the heavenly and into hell.

This theme of the seemingly good and celestial as the way to evil appears throughout the tragedy. Faustus asks for a book “where I might see all characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know their motions and dispositions” (v. 167-169), but this only serves to illustrate how his quest for knowledge has pulled him away from the very thing that he seeks: the heavens. When Faustus sees the book and understands the spheres, Mephostophilis describes as “Nine: the seven planets, the firmament, and the empyreal heaven” (v. 234-235), Faustus laments the heaven he has given up. However, Lucifer appears and discourages Faustus's thoughts of his lost salvation, pushing him to “not think of God [but to] think of the devil,/ And his dam too” (v. 265-266). This addition to the end of Lucifer's request, for Faustus to think of the Devil's 'dam', or mother, was a common expression in sixteenth century England (1039n). It is also an instance of Lucifer and Mephostophilis using the feminine demonic to lull Faustus into complacency, as female spirits are continuously invoked to distract Faustus from the possibility of him controlling the situation and his own destiny. In one of the final scenes, Helen appears to Faustus as a succubus, or a female demon who has sexual contact with a man during the night (Clark 1999 190, 193, 197):

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,

> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:
Her lips sucks forth my soul, see where it flies!

Come Helen, come, give me my soul again. (Marlowe xii. 82-85)

The “sucks forth my soul” of exclamation transforms the succubus from the female demon that steals semen into a creature with a more spiritual motive: Faustus's soul. Here, the fall of Troy is the fall of Faustus. In the end, it is not knowledge but the feminine which led to his damnation.

While Helen is compared to a succubus, a witch-figure makes an appearance in the play with the inclusion of Alexander's paramour [probably his wife, Roxana (1046n)] in the court of the emperor. Though the emperor initially appeals to Faustus to resurrect his ancestor, Alexander the Great, with only an afterthought to his lover, the focus after the manifestation of the two spirits is solely on her. The emperor then concentrates on her physicality:

   EMPEROR  Master doctor, I heard this lady, while she lived, had a wart or mole in her neck: how shall I know whether it be so or no?

   FAUSTUS  Your highness may boldly go and see.

   [The EMPEROR examines the lady's neck.] (ix. 58-60)

The stage direction, along with the mention of the wart, makes this scene suggestive of the examination for the witches' mark. This inspection of her body happens concurrently with the play's only mention of Diana, the goddess of the moon, who is connected to Hecate, the goddess of the moon and witchcraft. A knight, present at Faustus's initial claim to powers of necromancy, is incredulous and exclaims: “I'faith, that's as true as Diana turned me to a stag” (ix. 52). However, Faustus response links Diana to promiscuity and adultery: “No sir: but when Acteon died, he left the horns for you!” (53), as a reference to the sign of the horns which were traditionally a symbol of the cuckolded
husband (Greenblatt 1047n). Here the feminine demonic is tied up in uncontrollable sexuality, adultery, and a kind of Circean power of using witchcraft to cause men to shapeshift. Acteon refused to avert his gaze when he caught sight of the naked goddess Diana bathing, and as a punishment he was transformed into a stag to be devoured by his own dogs.

The feminine demonic is always attended by the fear of political power and inversion. Acteon, the hunter, then becomes the hunted after failing to submit to the demands of the moon goddess, and Helen is twice mentioned as the cause of the ten-year Trojan War: “No marvel though the angry Greeks pursued/ With ten years' war the rape of such a queen/ Whose heavenly beauty passeth all compare” (xi. 18-20); “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships./ And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?” (xii. 82-83). While the first quotation, from the character of the Third Scholar, blames the warriors and sets up Helen as a victim, Faustus's version of events sees Helen as the mover—the subject of the verb—whose face “launches” the ships, placing her in the position of power, and Faustus in the position of powerlessness.

The occult and anxieties surrounding political power are tied up in themes of the feminine demonic, where the elite magician operates within the space of ambiguous legality: it is usually uncertain whether the magic that the occult philosopher is using is demonic or permissible, and the motives of the magician are often obscure or confused, as is the case with Doctor Faustus. This position of dubious legitimacy often becomes apparent in representations of the moon and the moon goddess within literature, as simultaneously an illusion to both the virgin and chaste Cynthia and to the demonic Hecate. Anxieties surrounding the potential demonic in the magic of these characters frequently manifests within the distinctly feminine additions to the literature, such as
Helen, Diane, Cynthia, and Hecate—each with their potential allusion to Lilith, the archetypal feminine demonic figure who inverts prevalent power structures and blurs the lines between human and demon (similar to Helen, who is both a human, in her role in the fall of Troy, and a succubus, in her role in Faustus's downfall). These hesitations and uncertainties appear within contemporary occult figures and inspired their literary representations. Indeed, in the Elizabethan world, wherever anxieties surrounding the legitimacy of magic arose, the fear of the feminine demonic was not far off, and when exploring aspects of the feminine demonic in literature, similar themes arise in investigations of the moon and magic in the occult philosophy of necromancers and magicians.

3. The Use of the ‘Angelic’ in Tudor England

3.1. Simon Forman’s occult education and conjuring

Lauren Kassell writes that “Simon Forman is infamous for his astrology, notorious for his magic and legendary for his sexual exploits” (345), indeed, his contemporary reputation grew so large that it even extended into theatrical and literary representations and his influence could be seen in the plays and poetry of Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (first performed c.1594) (Cerasano 147, 149; Feingold 547), and Richard Niccols's *Sir Thomas Ouerburies vision* (1616), in which he describes Forman:

There Forman was, that fiend in humane shape,

That by his art did act the deuills ape:

Oft there the blacke Inchanter, with sad lookes
State turning ouer his blasphemous bookes,

Making strange characters in blood-red lines:

And to effect his horrible designes,

Oft would he inuocate the fiends below,

In the sad house of endlesse paine and woe,

And threaten them, as if he could compell

Those damned spirits to confirme his spell. (34-35)

Forman set up a medical practice based on his vast and eclectic reading (Kassell 347); his library and citations contained references to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and other continental occult philosophers, and was rich in medical treatises which, due to financial strain, he had to hand-copy himself, along with works from Apollonius, Trithemius and the cabalist Raymund Lull (Forman 30; Traister 108-109, 127). From his studies of the cabala he concluded—similarly to Pico della Mirandola—that it had a fundamental connection to Neoplatonism and Hermeticism; he believed Abel preserved his philosophy and knowledge in books which were hidden inside a stone so they would survive the flood, and Hermes Trismegistus found the book, which gave rise to Hermetic philosophy (Traister 132). He writes in his *Groundes of Longitude*:

God in the beginning created all things in number, weight and measure, in order, place, and forme, and appointed man to haue dominion ouer his creatures, and to search and seeke out the secreet and hidden vertues in them conteyned, giuen vnto them by by God their creator, seuerally, by measure, &c. (B1)
These “secreet and hidden vertues” are the domain of the occult philosopher and practitioner, a group of select individuals of which Forman believes himself a part.

Forman’s heavy occult leanings influenced his medical practice, and he often mentions his medical practices and his astrological studies in the same sentence, for example he writes that in 1593 his “knowledg in phisique and in astronomy did encrease, […]and] this yere I stilled my strong water, for the which I gote moch mony” (Forman 1849 23). He turned to astrology in the diagnosis of illness, and would distill magical waters and make talismans “worn to ward off evil and illness and attract good fortune” (Traister 104, 99). He diagnosed what modern psychologists would call mental illness as demonic influence which would cause melancholy thoughts (69). His methods, which were slightly more astrologically based than the norm, drew the attention of the Company of Barber-Surgeons, who banned him from practicing medicine in 1594, and he would spend much of his life in and out of prison, sometimes being held multiple times in any one year (Forman 19). He continued to practice medicine, though this did nothing to ease a growing paranoia; he believed that doctors were spying on him, which made him “secretive and reclusive” (Traister 98-99).

In his more private studies, Forman involved himself deeply with occult philosophy and practice. In his mind, God had given him special abilities to interpret the universe using astrology, and he thought he had domination over the spirit world by use of magic, and he wanted “to explore this penumbra and to gain control over its phenomena” (Traister 103-104; Rowse 10). He wrote in his diary that in the year 1579 “I did profecie the truth of many thinges which afterwarde cam to passe, and the very spirites wer subjecte unto me; what I spake was done” (Forman 15). This belief that he had supernatural abilities and visions began at a young age. He wrote of his dreams of
mountains and rushing waters in his autobiography:

Thes visions God did shewe him in his youth, to signifie unto him
his troubles in his riper years; for the mightie mountains signifie
the great and might[y] potentates that he had controversy with
afterwards. And the waters mighte signifie the great councells that
were houlden againste hime, to overthowe him; yet God, the only
defendor of all that be His, wold never let him be overthowne. (3)

Forman's belief that people received visions while sleeping would continue throughout
his life, as he would even use them to make medical diagnoses, suggesting that he knows
a Mrs. Condwel to be pregnant because of a dream she shares with him (31).

In the 1580s, Forman dove headfirst into practicing necromancy and scrying, which is the practice of using a psychic medium to “see” the spirits in a crystal or glass
mirror, and formulated his magic based on “obvious correspondence, laws of sympathy
and continuity”, putting his Hermetic studies into use (Rowse 40). Though he became
increasingly anxious to “see” the spirits and wanted to command them, he was unable to
communicate with them on his own, outside his dreams, in which he believed he “saw”
(85; Traister 109-110), often recording those dreams in his diaries and connecting them to
current alchemical projects (Forman 1849 26). In 1587, Forman took a scryer, John
Goodridge, and they held a séance where Goodridge “saw” for Forman. Forman was
impressed, and though he did not record what he saw, he invited Goodridge to stay for a
month, during which time Forman “began to practise necromancy and to calle aungells
and spirits” before forcing Goodridge out of his home later that year (19).

In 1590 Forman records that he “wrote a bocke of Nigromanti” and “at Al-
hallontyd I entred the cirkell of nigromanticall spells” (21), in which “he describes how
he learned to call up the spirits, but stops short at saying he was successful. Five years later he was still having to ask John Goodridge to do it for him” (J Cook 46). Simon Forman, Traister says,  

felt blessed by God with occult talent and was certain that, if he could learn enough, he could attain the wonderful power that the authorities he trusted promised would be granted to the wise and devoted man. (110)  

Regardless of Forman’s devotion and eagerness, his magical experiments were probably unsuccessful in yielding the kinds of results he had hoped for and written about in his *Groundes of Longitude*:  

I speake now of the power of the Lord & of his wonders done in the old world: which also ceaseth not to shew wonders vnto this day, and to giue power to some to beare his name before the rest. Maruaile not therefore at me, that I should finde out the knowledge hereof, neither think it a thing impossible to be done, for it is not I, but the grace of God which is in me. (A3v)  

And despite what little patronage he had dangled before him by powerful men who were interested in Forman’s occult studies, Forman always struggled financially (Traister 159). Perhaps Forman’s continued alchemical experiments into the quest for the Philosopher’s Stone—the holder of which could gain immortality—is testament to his desperate need for more time, in order to come closer to that promised knowledge (Forman 1849 17). That Forman always believed it was possible, however, to attain the highest wisdom of the divine spheres places him in the position of aspiring Magus. He writes that God
gives
to one man the knowledge of one thing, and to another the
knowledge of another thing: to some the gifte of prophecie, to
some the gift of healing, to some of doing of wonders and miracle,
to some the interpretation of thinges, and finding of hidden
misteries, yet al is the administration of one spirit, and power of
the holy Ghost. (A3)
The occult magician—especially Forman's own self-fashioning as doctor-magician—has
all of these gifts, but must learn to interpret “and seeke out the secreet and hidden vertue”
contained in the world: a goal common to occult philosophers of the sixteenth-century.

3. 2. John Dee as Elizabethan Magus

John Dee, “Elizabethan England’s most highly regarded natural philosopher”
(Harkness 1999 1), is often compared to Simon Forman, as both engaged intensely in the
study of occult philosophy (Feingold 545-559). He “involved in the whole spectrum of
Renaissance scholarship” (Szönyi 2006a 207), and Peter French writes that Dee was
one of the most celebrated and remarkable men of the Elizabethan
age. Philosopher, mathematician, technologist, antiquarian, teacher
and friend of powerful people, Dee was at the centre of some of the
major developments of the English Renaissance. […] But Dee was
also a magician deeply immersed in the most extreme forms of
occultism: he was Elizabethan England’s great magus. (1)
John Dee’s wide ranging and deep erudition gained him favor with Queen Elizabeth I,
who appointed him her Royal Astrologer and counselor “on certain matters of state and scientific importance” (R Turner 13). He became Elizabeth’s “noble intelligencer”, “most faithful Dee”, and her “Ubiquitous eyes”, and there was “a note of awe and respect which was not always apparent in her dealings with Hatton, Raleigh or even the sagacious Burghley” (Deacon 3-4). And though Wayne Shumaker and Peter French reject this reading of Dee as secret agent to Queen Elizabeth, Elizabeth and Dee were in frequent correspondence during Dee’s travels abroad (Shumaker 1978 35n; French 16n).

Dee encouraged Elizabeth’s interest in astrology and clairvoyance, and when she asked for the horoscope for Mary, who was queen at the time, he drew it up for her, which in the Tudor period was “almost tantamount to treason”: he was accused by two informers of attempting “to take Queen Mary’s life by poison or black magic”. Fortunately for Dee, the prosecution focused on wild accusations that “could not possibly be substantiated” in court—especially that he had used magic in the animation of a beetle for a dramatic production of Aristophanes—and he was released (Deacon 32-33; Butler 162).

As court astrologer, he advised Elizabeth on the significance of a comet in 1577 and was given the task of reforming the Julian calendar in 1583 (Harkness 1999 134; French 7). In return, Elizabeth promised to keep Dee safe from anyone who would want to harm him because of his reputation:

This promise was especially important to Dee because he seemed odd and out of place in Reformation England. His Hermetic philosophy with its theological, magical and scientific ramifications ran counter to the officially sponsored humanist education provided at universities. (French 7)

Within the English Humanist movement Dee’s “Hermetic Platonism, with its magic and
mysticism, seemed subversive” (22). Though his occult philosophies challenged contemporary university teaching, he was still in high demand for his vast learning and was solicited by Louvain, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge (Butler 162). Though he was sought after by universities, “and already the author of learned books, what more could his heart desire? The answer has tragic implications. He desired universal knowledge. [...] The middle-aged scholar could not reconcile himself to human limitations, and was ever trying to transcend them” (Butler 162).

Louvain was his university of choice, and he traveled there in 1548 where he acquired a reputation of having “learning quite beyond his years” (Fell-Smith 9). Crucially, until twelve years before John Dee arrived, Louvain had been the home and refuge of the occult philosopher, Cornelius Agrippa, whose “views were already keenly studied at the university and Dee found himself greatly influenced by them” (Deacon 22).

Mathematics were presented alongside theology and mysticism, and “to this extent there was almost an invisible dividing line between the realms of mathematical science and the occult”; the continental trends of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism grew within Dee’s interests, which was “neither surprising, nor unconventional at this stage” (19-20). Dee began to look at mathematics as part of the universe’s theological structure, so that “what was mathematicall was divine and what was divine was mathematicall and the transfusion of both created the flame which is knowne as beauty” (Dee, quoted from Deacon 43).

Peter French sees Dee’s philosophy so saturated with Renaissance Hermeticism and occultism that it would be impossible to understand him, without first comprehending his sources, with which he had a remarkable familiarity (French 66; R Turner 100). Like his ideological predecessors, he adheres to the antiquity-theory of
Hermes Trismegistus as a contemporary of Moses, and was not only “entirely within the Hermetic movement so prevalent during the sixteenth century, but he was one of its most extreme adherents” (French 68, 125), and Julian Roberts and Andrew G. Watson—in cataloguing Dee's Library—write that “Dee's library shows his interest in the Italian revival of Neoplatonism by Pico della Mirandola and Ficino and in their discovery of the Hermetic corpus” (Roberts 28). Dee would often write out occult books by hand, as evidenced in a letter to Sir William Cecil, where Dee explains that “of this book [Steganographia by John Trithemius], the one half have I copied out, with continual labour over the most part of ten days” (Dee 1986 28). It is difficult to know with whom Dee made personal acquaintances; in the same letter to Cecil, Dee writes that “such men and such books have come to my knowledge concerning the aforementioned Great Sciences, as I'd never hoped to have in terms of assistance, either from one or the other” (28), and the editor stresses the mystery surrounding these men, by closing his introduction to the letter with simply, “Who were they?” (27). However, his library showed that he had read the works of Cornelius Agrippa, Iamblichus, Paracelsus, Plotinus, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Reuchlin, Wier, Roger Bacon, Ben Sira, Jean Bodin, Thomas Digges, Simon Forman, Hermes Trismegistus, Sebastian Munster and many other authors of occult texts (Dee 1990 Index I).

And like his continental antecedents and contemporaries—such as Giordano Bruno, who visited England between 1583 and 1585—Dee placed ultimate authority in the importance of hierarchy. Chains of command assert their weight in every aspect of Dee’s philosophy; at the top of this ladder is God, wisdom, knowing, and the magus must climb his way upwards towards understanding, but understanding the higher spheres:

By the joining of such natural things that exist separately in the
universe, in their differing fashions, and by the activating of other things placed somewhat higher, seminally, in nature, more wonderful things can be performed truly and naturally, without violence to faith in God or injury to the Christian religion, than any mortal might be able to believe. (Dee 1978 125-127)

He uses Agrippa’s model of three-layered magic: at the lowest level was natural magic which did not violate the laws of nature, but was a beginner’s level, in which the aspiring magus could learn to develop his magic (91). Here magic was “a natural philosophy providing for powers and correspondences that can be manipulated, and an ethos that sought to understand and capture and control the powers and processes of nature” (Clulee 29), as Dee writes that “Whatever acts upon something else is like it some respect” and these sympathies allow the magician to change nature and spirit: “wonderful things may be produced by us […] if we force nature artfully” (Dee 1978 123, 125). Only the most skilled and daring magicians operated through the highest level of magic, theological magic, because of the threat of coming in contact with chthonic, or non-angelic, spirits (French 109). However, this must be the final step of the philosopher as the occult correspondences of theological magic “were seen as paths to the divine and the spiritual ascent of the magus” (Clulee 29).

Just as the magus could climb upwards, so divine knowledge could be passed down through the spheres. In his *Preface to Euclid* he explains his astrology as Neoplatonic:

> Astrology, which reasonably demonstrates the operations and the effects of the natural beams of light, and secret influence of the planets and fixed starts in every element and Elemental Body, at
all times in any Horizon assigned. (Dee 37)

He goes on to describe in *Propaeumata Aphoristica* that the stars operate under the neoplatonic idea of the spheres, and the Hermetic influences of ‘so above, so below’. These superlunar spheres are heavenly bodies and “superior organisms through which God channeled his powers” (French 91). Directly from the first sphere, God, the angels drink in the divine light, which is also the ultimate and divine knowledge, then man can experience the divine light through “the intermediary symbol of the sun” (101), and Dee writes, “it is manifest that the sun and moon are, after God, the chief and truly physical causes of the procreation and preservation of all things that are born and live in the elemental universe” (Dee 1978 185). This helped to promote the idea of the helio-centric, or Copernican, universe; previously, the Hermetic philosopher imagined a geocentric universe, surrounded by spheres of the other elements, within the circular spheres of the moon, stars, sun, angels, and above and around them all, God (89). Now, however, students of John Dee, such as Thomas Digges—who would borrow books from John Dee’s library, and from whom John Dee would borrow money (Dee 1990 43; 1998 259)—promoted a heliocentric universe in his 1576 *A prognostication euerlastinge of right good effecte*, written by his father, Leonard Digges, and edited by himself to include diagrams of the cosmos (Fig. 17).

Dee, along with his European counterparts, embraced the Cabala, especially the Christian Cabala of Johannes Reuchlin and Agrippa (Clucas 2006a 15), and Dee’s library “contained more Hebraic materials than any other library in England during the period, and many of the works were annotated” (Dee 1990 25), showing his studious attention to the material (Harkness 1999 162). In his interpretations of the Cabala, he connected it “with Pythagorean doctrines, and this led him to transform the cabala in a mathematical
discipline that drew both on Pythagorean numerology and Euclidean geometry” (Clucas 2006a 15). But his interest in Cabala was on practical magic and his numerology seemed focused on the interest in angelic names, believing that saying them would give him command over the angels; his *Tabula Bonum Angelorum Invocationes* was concerned expressly with discovering the names and hierarchies of angels and spirits (R Turner 99; Harkness 1999 180; Dee 2004). He used talismans to attract angelic forces, and sought out the forty-two letter name of God in the Cabala (R Turner 100-101; Harkness 162). And though he concerns himself with demonology and the names of spirits, he connected cabalist demonic operations “with the celestial hierarchies of pseudo-Dionysus, thereby cloaking unorthodox demonic magic with the approval of a respectable Christian authority”, though he assigned planets to each of the angels, thereby furthering the fusion between angelic hierarchies and astrology (Reed 179; French 88; R Turner 102).

Probably the most bizarre aspect of John Dee’s career is his long and intense dedication to his angelic conversations, a series of what he calls ‘exercises’ or ‘actions’ (Clucas 2006b 239). Dee had begun to attempt contact with angels by 1581, and possibly as early as the later 1560s (Harkness 2006 276). He was already interested in angelic magic during his most ambitious scientific works of 1569 and 1570, and had begun scrying and crystal magic during the writing of his preface to Euclid, and this suggests that he “saw no fundamental division between natural philosophy and spiritualism” (Szönyi 2006a 210). Dee’s conversations conformed to a sixteenth century thought pattern that believed that God communicated, through his intermediary angels of the middle spheres, to select individuals (Harkness 1999 5), and he writes in his *Diaries*, “[I] have been desirous to have help in my philosophical studies through the company and information of the blessed angels of God” (Dee 1998 27).
Similar to Simon Forman, Dee’s preferred method of celestial contact is through scrying, though—also similarly to Forman—he was unable to do this on his own, and had to hire a scryer. Dee had tested many scryers, of varying degrees of ability, but it wasn’t until he met Edward Kelley in March of 1582 that his angelic experiments really yielded results (R Turner 20; Dee 1998 27-28). Edward Kelley—sometimes called Edward Talbot, and this change in name is often assumed to be the result of him hiding from his shady past—would gaze into a stone or mirror and act as the medium of communication between Dee and the spirits (20-21; Ellis 306). And although Dee probably knew of Kelley’s rather dubious background and history, “it seems to have little influence on his assessment of the seer’s clairvoyant abilities” (R Turner 23).

It is difficult to know whether or not Dee believed himself to possess supernatural powers, since he always relied on the aid of a scryer to communicate with the spirits, though he did on occasion record witnessing them first hand (Fell-Smith 88). On July 4th 1583, Dee wrote:

as [Edward Kelley] was looking earnestly on them, a spiritual creature did part the book on the outside of the parchment cover, divers times, and once would have taken it out of his hands. Divers times I heard the strokes myself (Dee 1998 99).

Dee’s desire to make direct contact with the spirits would have been important if understood from a hermetic perspective; the closer Dee moves towards the angels and their knowledge, the higher up the neoplatonic ladder he climbs as a result. While most contemporary scrying had a financial motivation—locating stolen goods or lost items—Dee used scrying as a means to mystical knowledge (Szönyi 2006a 215), just as the philosopher in an illustration in Raymond Lull’s De Nova Logica (1512) ascends the
ladder of knowledge to the divine, where the rung of the angels leads directly to God (Fig. 18). In 1582, an angel Hagonel promises Dee that he will have power over “all spirits inhabiting within the earth” (Dee 1986 41), and a year later Uriel speaks tantalizingly about a book:

   The book containeth three kinds of knowledge:

   The knowledge of God truly.

   The number and doings of his angels perfectly.

   The beginning and ending of Nature substantially. (32)

It’s easy to see how hints like these could be torturous for the would-be Grand Magus. The ultimate goal of John Dee’s science and magic was to understand God’s “creative genius” (Szönyi 2006a 209). He saw his angel conversations as part of the magical hierarchy laid out by Agrippa, just as his natural philosophy laid the foundations for his natural magic. But his ever increasing efforts with the conversations suggest that Dee “had entered into a period of intellectual crisis so profound that he began to doubt whether the information he could find in his books could really help him to achieve certain knowledge” (Harkness 2006 277). With the celestial spheres and the transmission of knowledge, it seems that the intellect and the soul can move up or down through the spheres. As God’s divine light filters downwards through the angels and stars, so the devout magician can climb upwards towards wisdom. Dee moved variously down both pathways, sometimes dedicating his energies to pious studies and others desperately trying to receive top-down divine revelation. A contemporary illustration in George Hartgill’s Generall calendars [(1594) Fig. 19] shows the ideal Christian philosopher studying both the words and the works of God—both books and nature—and Dee’s studies seem to have worked through both of these pathways. Peter French hints that,
“through intense inner contemplation leading to direct mystical contact with the divine 
mens, he may have learned the Gnostic secrets” (177).

But his increasing attention towards his angelic experiments suggests that he was 
dissatisfied with what these meditations were revealing to him. He began to obsess over 
the lost primordial language, or the lingua adamica, that was supposedly the language 
Adam used to name all the animals and created things (Szönyi 2006a 215). His long 
career in alchemy, in search for the philosopher’s stone, which would grant its possessor 
immortality, is even more revealing once he begins to call it “Adam’s stone” (Cavallaro 
162). It seems as though Dee desired to restore man to his previous prelapsarian state, 
when he could be in direct contact with the divine. His desire was so intense that “he not 
only abandoned his scientific experiments, but also neglected his humanist philological 
caution and overlooked the serious warnings against angel magic to be found even in the 
works of his favorite occult authors” (Szönyi 2006a 218).

4. The Fear of the ‘Demonic’

4. 1. The fear of demonic contact within occult practices

Although Dee’s supposed intentions focused on dealing with purely angelic 
spirits, he seems to have often been in contact with devils, mischievous spirits and 
dubious half-human beasts. Certainly, his magic bordered on the demonic; Jim Reeds 
points out that Dee’s Book of Soyga emphasizes the magical aspects of writing backwards 
of liturgical phrases—the ‘pater noster’ became ‘retap retson’, the Lord’s Prayer in 
reverse—which was a common theme throughout continental necromantic ritual (Reeds 
179); regarding the use of permissive or illicit sources, György Szönyi writes:
One can also easily come to the conclusion that the great Renaissance magi, a Trithemius, an Agrippa, or a John Dee did not model their magic practices only on the venerable philosophical sources of the Neoplatonists, or that of the ‘real’ Hermes Trismegistus, they also must have tried out the ‘illicit’ methods at their disposal. (2006b 81-82)

Translations of the black magic found in editions of the Key of Solomon, which circulated from the thirteenth to the sixteenth-century could have found their way into Dee's magic (Szönyi 2006b 80), and indeed a comparison between Dee's “Sigil of Ameth” and the Solomonic “Great Pentacle” from the seventeenth century Italian manuscript of Clavicolo di Salomone Re d'Israel figlio de David allows for the possibility that Dee had been influenced by earlier editions of this censored text (Fig. 15; Fig. 16).

The issue of the presence of the demonic within Dee's angelic experiments presents a problem for any Christian occult practitioner, and he never seemed willing to deal with the obvious existence of the demonic within his magic, except to remove blame from himself as the pure philosopher who was not the object of their magnetic attraction to the experiments. Certain stars could be considered evil because of their ‘heavy’ influence upon men, which can often propel men towards wickedness; however, the evil is already present within human nature and can only be amplified by the stars’ influences (French 96), and Dee writes in his Aphorism CXII that “certain of the constellations are sometimes so far called maleficent as they pour their energy upon corrupt nature of badly disposed matter […]. But the constellations themselves do no harm” (Dee 1978 189). Barnabas Saul, one of Dee’s early scryers, had a criminal record and elicited distrust from Dee, who recorded in his diary than there was an evil spirit that sought Saul’s death
because he “is accursed” (Deacon 120-121; Dee 1998 30-31).

In the angelic conversations, demons and evil seem to be a more frequent theme than divine knowledge. In November of 1583, a spirit named King Bnasper encouragingly says to Dee, “By me thou shalt cast out the power of wicked spirits. By me, thou shalt know the doings and practices of evil men. And more than may be spoken or uttered to man” (Dee 1986b 36). Even though this royal Bnasper promises power over demons and evil, Satan himself seems bent on corrupting Dee’s research. Uriel comes to warn Dee and his scryer that Satan has been using Edward Kelley, and the angel Raphael claims that Satan has been working against them (Dee 1998 144, 300). On 19 April 1590, Dee records a particularly trying day the week before when “the wicked Prince of Darkness did what he could to hinder our proceedings”, and their unfortunate, unsuspecting nurse, Ann, becomes possessed by a demon just a few months later (119, 249).

Dee seemed to find comfort in blaming demonic influence on his scryers, allowing himself to maintain the position of pure and pious (which he certainly was) magician. However, he probably had ample reason to be anxious over Edward Kelley, who began his career as an apothecary and quickly turned to crime and black magic. A later, and often reproduced, engraving by Ebenezer Sibly shows two men standing within a circle of magical symbols, which on closer examination, reveal themselves to be the names of angels invoked for the purpose of the necromantic ritual. The ritual has raised a corpse who appears to be speaking to the two magicians (Fig. 10; Fig. 11). Resulting in a constant physical reminder of Kelley's dubious past, Kelley's ears were chopped off after being convicted of a crime, possibly forgery, and while “possibly some of the allegations against him were untrue, […] there is enough evidence to show that he was at least a
dabbler in necromancy and those arts of magic which could be labeled ‘black’” (Deacon 123-4). If the person involved “undertakes summoning with an unclean mind, the wrong demons may be called; this can lead to any amount of chaos” (B Gordon 62). Another engraving—recreated by the engraver Robert Cross Smith—has mimicked the earlier portrayal of necromantic rituals in the graveyard, but specifically names the second magician standing with Edward Kelley as John Dee, and both men look less sure of themselves than in the earlier engraving (Fig. 12).

The descriptions of their demonic encounters and of their physical appearances seem to follow a theme. On 4 July, 1583, Dee writes that fourteen demons appear “of divers evil-favoured shapes: some like monkeys, some like dogs, some very hairy monstrous men, &c. They seemed to scratch each other in the face” (Dee 1998 99). And earlier that year, on March 23rd

there appeared in the stone one, in a fool’s coat, going about in a cloud, which appeared first in the stone. I charged him if he were an enemy of God to depart. He tore his clothes all, and appeared hairy under, and said: ‘You have pierced through the force of my iniquity’ (54).

And as the demon disappeared “he went away as it had been a bunch of feathers pulled in pieces” (54). The demons that come during the angelic summons appear to be half-humanoid, half-animal. While Dee was in London, Kelley had used the stone without his employer’s guidance, and saw an evil spirit in the disguise of an angel “that there appeared one very much like unto our good friend”, a good spirit or angel who had been guiding them through the lingua adamica, but when this spirit was forced to tell the truth “his outward beautiful apparel seemed to go off, and his body appeared hairy, and he
confessed that he was an illuder” (57), and had therefore been not a good spirit, or angel, but had been a demon disguised in “beautiful apparel”.

Another interesting non-angelic experience occurs in April, when Kelley is assaulted by demons which looked like “labouring men, having spades in their hands and hair hanging about their ears”, and who were attacking Dee and Kelley. It is interesting to imagine that, as Dee says, Kelley has to point to where they are flying and Dee swings an axe into the invisible air in the direction that Kelley is motioning towards. They only leave when Dee brandishes a cross (Dee 1998 67).

Simon Forman, who was also experimenting in scrying, openly practiced necromancy and was not as discriminating with the spirits he tried to contact (Forshaw; Cerasano 145, 147). And similarly to Dee, the demons with which Forman comes into contact manifest as animals, and at one point a dubious spirit named Salathiel appears in the form of a dog (J Cook 46-47). The conjuring of demons in the form of animals is easier to explain if we turn to a history of anthropomorphic legends and shapeshifting creatures, but the “labouring men” with spades are harder to explain, unless we imagine a great cosmic hierarchy in which every being on every level strives to move upwards towards the divine. Animals in the upper spheres, such as birds, were seen to inhabit a more pure environment than the animals in the lower spheres, like dogs and other creatures which tread on the ground. A 1569 translation of Pierre Boaistuau exemplifies this distinction between the spheres:

This is most certain, that Porphyrius, Psellus, Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblicus, and certain other of late dayes, assure, that the vppermoste region ofthe ayre swarmeth as full of spirites, whiche we call in Greke Daemones, as oure ayre is full of birdes, foundyng
their opinion, I thinke, in that the ayre and skies where by the Quindecines be as great, and the regions so delitefull and full of pleasure, as we sée the earth replenished with liuely substance, mettals, stones, & plants. The water hath hir fishes, and the weake ayre here below, bringeth forth creatures that breath and liue. Whereupon may be persuaded, that the greate masse of the superiour ayre is full of those spirites, whose excellencie farre exedeth the inferiour creatures, bicause their region is more cleare and pure. (93-93v)

In this sense, the lower animals and the labouring men are not so out of place with Dee's angelic conversations, as being lower on the celestial hierarchy than Dee, who sees himself as a great magician, welcome at the court of Queen Elizabeth. These demonic encounters weighed heavily on Dee’s mind, though he tried to explain them away by the negative influences of his less than admirable scryer. As he moved deeper into the occult studies of scrying and the angelic conversations, he began to be troubled by nightmares of screeching owls. Richard Deacon, in a psychological reading of Dee's dreams, explains that “the nocturnal noises” that he was reporting at the time “may have been magnified and distorted in his half awake mind as a result of hidden yearnings for a form of spiritual intercourse with the unseen” (113), for Dee himself had little direct connection with the spirits when compared to the claims of his scryer. These screeching owls could also relate to the archetypal figure of Lilith as a subconscious manifestation of Dee's anxieties surrounding the presence of the feminine in his angelic exercises, and fears centred around the possibility of the demonic in his magic which he stressed was permissible and legitimate.
Edward Kelley was not as enthusiastic about the angelic conversations as Dee was, and often claimed that they were a waste of time. Dee and Kelley had very different motivations, however, and where Dee was interested in knowledge, Kelley was interested in monetary reward and wanted to devote time to alchemy and the transmutation of matter into gold (Deacon 203-204). Kelley repeatedly tried to influence Dee away from the angelic experiments by pointing out that most of the spirits that they had contacted were evil, and that they should not be dabbling in demonic magic—an interesting concern, considering that Kelley was an infamous necromancer (Butler 164). Nevertheless, Kelley’s anxieties surrounding the demonic seemed not be centered on the animal or the laborer, but the feminine demon and demonic sexuality, which permeated the occult practices of both John Dee and Simon Forman.

4. 2. The Feminine Demonic in sixteenth century magic

During the angelic experiments, Dee and Kelley came into contact with many spirits and angels, but some of them had recurring appearances throughout Dee's diaries—a very notable one being Madimi. She was a spirit which often appeared during Dee’s scrying sessions, and would give information regarding important visiting diplomats and foreign affairs. When she first began to appear in May 1583 she is described as “a pretty girl of seven or nine years of age”, who is “child-like” and a “pretty maiden” (Dee 1998 86-87). By mediating between Madimi and Elizabeth, he was essentially placed between two feminine powers, and the extent to which Madimi—as the feminine—informed the political, which was normally the realm of the masculine, demonstrates the political inversion outlined by Stuart Clark (669) which normally accompanied magic and
incorporates the feminine power within this theory of inversion.

Dee reaffirms Madimi’s youth and innocence throughout the following months, and in June writes that Madimi “appeared as before like a young girl” (Dee 1998 94). However, as the years go on, and the angelic conversations continue, Madimi’s role as the innocent, benevolent spirit changes drastically. In 1587 Edward Kelley describes Madimi’s appearance in the stone, exposing herself “in a very filthy order”, while the other spirits continue to manifest “in that most disorderly and filthy manner” (213-214). On 18 April 1587, all the other spirits move away, and only Madimi remains, when she then “openeth all her appareal, and showeth herself all naked; and showeth her shame also” (215). Here, something remarkable has happened within the angelic conversations with the sudden exposure of Madimi’s sexuality. It is possible that she “aged” along with the years, starting at age nine in 1583 and she was about thirteen in 1587, and her transition from innocence to adolescence is marked by a change in the methods of the angelic experiments. Madimi orders them to share their wives, what Dee would refer to as marital cross-matching (216-217). And on 20 May 1587, shortly after the new marital doctrine is introduced, Kelley sees someone he called the Green Woman who commands of them:

The fourth hour after dinner, repair here again. And whatsoever you shall read out of this book, receive it kneeling upon your knees: and see that you suffer no creature female to enter within this place: neither shall the things that shall be opened unto you be revealed unto your wives, or unto any creature as yet: for I will lie with you a while, and you shall perceive that I am sweet and full of comfort. (226-227)
The spirits demand that in order for John Dee to continue in his occult pursuits of divine knowledge, he would, essentially, have to engage in sex magic.

These new commands on the part of the spirits, and Dee’s acceptance of them have often been regarded by serious scholars as an embarrassment, but it demonstrates just how far Dee was willing to go in his desperate pursuit of knowledge. In a contemporary rendering of the *Key of Solomon*, the magus achieves this absolute wisdom:

> And when I comprehended the speech which was made unto me, I understood that in me was the knowledge of all creatures, both things which are in the heavens and things which are beneath the heavens; and I saw that all the writings and wisdom of this present age were vain and futile, and that no man was perfect. (Solomon 12)

Both Dee and Kelley seem reluctant to submit to the new cross-marital doctrine, and Dee questions the spirits as to their exact meaning, hoping that perhaps they mean a more metaphorical sharing (Fenton 209). The command is issued so suddenly, and is so out of the norm from the previous expeditions into the *adamic lingua* and numerology, that it seems that it can only be explained by Kelley’s extreme hatred of the angelic experiments, and Dee notes that Kelley had repeatedly said that he thought they should not deal with the spirits any longer, and that he had long thought that they were evil (Dee 1998 216-217). However, when Kelley’s pleas based on the supposed wickedness of the spirits were ignored, he must have pushed the issue even further. Dee’s diaries “attest to his fidelity as well as the abstinence he practiced as a means to attain the spiritual purity necessary for those in search of higher mysteries” (Feingold 550-551), and an important
factor in remaining pure is abstaining “with great and thorough continence during the space of nine days from sensual pleasures” and “from all things unlawful, and from every kind of impiety, wickedness, or immodesty, as well of body as of soul” (Solomon 14, 79). Evidence from Dee's diaries—where he kept scrupulous records of dates and times of intercourse, and Jane Dee's menstruation—points to his awareness of these restrictions when practicing magic, as he does not appear at any point to engage in sexual activity within nine days of beginning a new angelic exercise (Dee 1998). Kelley, knowing Dee, could have invented the commands never expecting him to go through with it (Fenton 209). However, it is also noted by Richard Deacon that Kelley was known to give gifts to Jane Dee and often compared his own wife unfavorably to her (207). Very disappointed at the turn in Dee’s angelic events, E. M. Butler wrote that “[between] them, he and his ‘skryer’ had also initiated a new kind of necromancy, inbued with [a] peculiar blend of holiness, phoneyness and feeble-mindedness” (172).

Though it may seem strange that Dee accepted the new doctrine which sexualized their magic, he was well aware of the complications surrounding female demons and had hints of sexual magic in his symbol of the Monas, which Peter French claims is a sexual symbol of the sun and moon interlocking “to suggest their conjunction and generative faculty” (79; Fig. 14). At the top is “Luna Exalted”, and Dee writes in his Monas Hieroglyphica:

It is therefore clearly confirmed that the whole magistry depends upon the Sun and the Moon. Thrice Great Hermes has repeatedly told us in affirming that the Sun is its father and the Moon is its mother: and we know truly that the red earth (terra lemnia) is nourished by the rays of the Moon and the Sun which exercise a
singular influence upon it. (18)

And Kelley's own alchemical writings developed from theories which were heavy in sexual metaphor, where sexual union grew out of “the common and universal matter” which “is called Chaos”, and alchemy works on the wetness and dryness of opposing principles, and “all teaching that changes Mercury is false and vain, for this is the original sperm of metals, and its moisture must not be dried up” (8, 22). And though they seemed willing to include sexual symbolism in their alchemical and Hermetic philosophies, when it came to feminine spirits, Dee was more anxious. In 1583, when he comes in contact with Galvah, a female spirit, he writes that “Tritemius sayeth that never any good angel was read to have appeared in female form”. Galvah reassures him that angels are “neither man nor woman. Therefore may those that are the eternal ministers of God in his proportion of sanctification take unto them the bodies of them both” (1998 91). Richard Deacon shared this same discomfort around the feminine, and when remarking on the language of the spirits that Dee encounters he says:

The vagueness of the angelic pronouncements sometimes irritated

Dee; the angels seemed to have all the unpredictability of the
female species, whether they were of the male or female sex, and
they had the habit of orating at great length in often
incomprehensible language. (128)

The elite occultism of Dee’s time was meant to be a male-dominated endeavor with male
scryers, magicians and spirits, and deviation from this masculine ideal threatened chaos.4

Robert Burton wrote that devils and demons would propagate with witches and wicked

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4 Later, in New England the Puritans believed that angels brought down heavenly messages to earth but were suspicious and skeptical about angelic encounters reported by women, and it seems that they believed that the only angels that women were likely to communicate with were fallen angels (Reis 282).
women, thereby creating new generations of demons, and also that female demons would lure men into unholy unions, suggesting that women’s ravenous sexuality caused the continuation of evil spirits (150-153). In the Key of Solomon, the leader of “Guide of these Demons is Ashtaroth or Astarte, the impure Venus of the Syrians, whom they represent with the head of an ass or of a bull, and the breasts of a woman” (111), further connecting feminine sexuality, the bestial and the demonic.

While John Dee seemed an uneasy practitioner of sexual magic, Simon Forman recorded his usage of it openly in his diaries; he used talismans, engraved with phallic symbols, for virility throughout his entire career but especially at the end of 1596 when he was looking for a wife (Rowse 60). Indeed, Feingold writes that it is “impossible to evaluate Forman’s career without considering his incessant preying on women” (550). He would often sleep with several women in one day, probably medical patients, and meticulously recorded the outcomes for astrological purposes. He had a “fixation on power relations” between men and women (550), and this seems to manifest itself in his nightmares about witches.

Forman detested witchcraft, but certainly believed in its power and strongly criticized books that expressed doubt in its existence (Traister 118). He believed that the elite magician was superior to the witch because the magician operated with consent of the divine and with the intention to make use of magic to glory God (114-115). That he had nightmares about witchcraft illustrates his anxiety concerning feminine occult power, but also perhaps the proximity of his own magic to the illicit magic of witchcraft. In his dreams, three witches approach him to “feed” off the learned magician’s power (116), which portrays witches not as individuals, like the magician who works mostly in solitude, but portrays them *en masse*, therefore becoming a larger threat. The problems
that the existence of witchcraft proposes to the elite magician are numerous, not least the question of legitimacy. Elite occultists bypass this concern by placing witchcraft solely in the realm of the demonic, and it “is worth considering that, before the demonologists put a diabolic spin on familiars, they were popularly conceived to be the angelic guardians of cunning-folk and other healers” (Davis O 300). The “Witchfinder General”, Matthew Hopkins, would later proclaim that all animal familiars were either wicked or fallen angels (Davis 300).

Women were not allowed in the realm of the elite philosophical magician, just as animals and laborers were representations of demons. The occult magic of Dee, Forman and the continental philosophers engaged in a strict hierarchy which placed man above animal and woman, and the learned philosopher above the laborer; any attempt to corrupt this hierarchy threw the magicians world into disorder. These hierarchies are maintained by trying to move upwards, while simultaneously trying to keep those below from progressing skywards. When Dee begins publishing his research, he becomes worried that it will open the upper ladder to those unworthy of it: “Oh God! Pardon me if I have sinned against Thy Majesty in revealing such a great mystery in my writings which all may read, but I believe that only those who are truly worthy will understand” (Dee 1947 29).

In this sense, the animal demonic and the feminine demonic are bound up together and are perhaps inseparable when examining Dee’s conversations with angels. While it is tempting, given the anxiety about animals and humans in this context, to look at these transformations from a Deleuzian becoming-animal/becoming-woman perspective, I think there is something more going on here. As the animal and the woman both represent lower forms than the higher man, especially the educated magician-man,
perhaps these manifestations of women and animals are the demonic threat to Dee’s pious reaching towards the heavens, and towards a transcendence of his human self into the higher spheres of the divine. Anxiety surrounding the feminine and the animal in Dee’s rituals then exposes the vulnerability of the magician to influences which would weigh heavy on him, like the negative influence of the stars, hindering him from moving upwards.

Although magicians were employed secretly—or semi-secretly—by “powerful individuals”, “they were hardly admired as respectable philosophers and essentially remained social outcasts” (French 83); indeed, Simon Forman spent much of his life in and out of prison as a result of his occult influenced medical practices. While those who required their services and other natural or occult philosophers might partially understand the work of a magus like Dee, many of his contemporaries could not see how his work might have positive intentions. However, Dee and his ideas were extremely popular in Europe; when he gave a free lecture at the College of Rheims on Euclid, not only did he fill lecture hall, but students also scaled the university walls to listen in through the windows (Stoner 3; Simpkins 232; Heppel 40). But his reputation back in England was much different, and when he returned to Europe in 1583 an angry mob ransacked his home in Mortlake, destroying instruments and books, for “in the eyes of many, he had pursued knowledge too adamantly and too far” (French 8, 19).

Richard Deacon, perhaps following the sensationalist strain of late sixteenth century paranoia, claims that there was a secret society which used magic as a political weapon (270), and in Montegue Summers’s 1948 introduction to the Malleus Malificarum, he says,

One of the most serious and frightening events in the life of James
VI of Scotland (afterwards James I of England) was the conspiracy of 1590, organized by the Earl of Bothwell. James with good reason feared and hated Bothwell, who, events amply proved, was Grand Master of a company of more than one hundred witches, all adepts in poisoning, and all eager to do away with the King. In other words, Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, was the centre and head of a vast political plot. A widespread popular panic was the result of the discovery of this murderous conspiracy. (v-vi)

However strange these stories appear, secret societies weren’t unheard of in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another secret group, the School of the Night, described by Judith Cook as a “loose club or gathering of scientists, mathematicians, astrologers, astronomers, and writers, who met under the joint aegis of Sir Walter Ralegh and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, nicknamed ‘the Wizard Earl’,” who had many similar occult interests as Dee or Forman. The group also supposedly included the poet and playwright, Christopher Marlowe, and possibly Simon Forman (J Cook 64), and was included in Frances Yates’s A study of Love's labour's lost (1936) as important to the interpretation of Shakespeare's play.

Suspicion and allegations of black magic surrounded the School of the Night, and in May of 1593, Marlowe was arrested on charges of treason and blasphemy and was allowed out on bail so long as he reported daily to the Office of the Star Chamber. Ten days later he was dead, supposedly in a bar fight, and “rumours of what might lie behind Marlowe’s death added to the general climate of fear” that was arising towards the end of the century (J Cook 66). Furthermore, Robert Cecil, minister to both Elizabeth and then later to King James, announced he would set up an Inquisition to investigate the activities
of the School (66). Though these stories are most likely sensationalized, they demonstrate that the anxieties that surrounded the occult were often similar to the fears surrounding the political, and the link can be further made with the connection between the name “The School of Atheism”, another name for “The School of Night”, and the problems between the religious and the political. Problems which would be more explicitly outlined under the reign of James I.

**Conclusion**

These fears and paranoias are intrinsically linked to the feminine demonic in the popular imagination, where this figure represents political inversion and the manifestation of sexual anxieties and their connection to evil and the Fall. These fears are demonstrated in the work of Marlowe and Shakespeare, in which the feminine demonic appears always in relation to the moon and often alongside allusions to the sacking of Troy, and in which the magician expresses a desire to pervert the socio-political order. John Dee's apprehension towards the dealings with female spirits betrays a deeper anxiety in the existence of the feminine within his occult practices. This tension also appears in the diaries of Simon Forman, where he relates his fear of a certain kind of occult magic: that practiced by women (witches). This disgust for witchcraft and the presence of the feminine within their occultism exposes both their fear at the close proximity of their magic to witchcraft, and their fear of female sexuality—which was exhibited in the intrusion of Madimi's sexuality within Dee and Kelley's scrying sessions.

What ties together each of these different events and apprehensions is the figure of Lilith, and the subtle allusions which are made to her in literature and occult practices.
Appearing in the necromantic rituals, as pointed out by Richard Kieckhefer, motifs which connect John Dee and the literature of magic and witchcraft to Lilith expose contemporary awareness and interest. John Dee's dream of the terrifying screech owl mirrors Shakespeare's *Henry VI, pt. 2*, when the imagery of the owl surrounds the allusion to Troy and the Fall. These connections are never far from mentions of the moon, creating a relationship between the owl, the moon, and the Fall, all of which merge into the figure of Lilith as the biblical screech-owl, the demon and the moon, and attendant in the Garden of Eden.

Lilith then becomes an unspoken signifier when addressing aspects of sexual anxiety, political disorder, illicit occultism, and the power of the feminine demonic: when approaching these subjects within early modern literature, there exists a semiotic connection with Lilith through the middle symbol of the moon. In attempting to understand evil and darkness, the feminine and the infernal aspects of the moon (i.e. Hecate and Lilith) appear within early modern discourse, creating a unified and archetypal figure onto which the magician and his contemporaries can place their fears of the demonic. In the literature produced in the latter half of the sixteenth century, figures of Helen, Alexander's lover, Luna, Cynthia, Margery Jourdain, and the Amazons, construct a coherent image of the woman as moon, witch, powerful, and demonic. The literature and occult philosophy of this period under Elizabeth I hinted at a phenomenon which would become more defined in the next century, when dramatists and occultists both elaborate and define the previous century's philosophies and ideas.
Detail from the frontispiece of Robert Fludd’s *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica atque technica historia*, 1617.
Fig. 9. Fludd’s geocentric model of the spheres

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Detail from engraving from Ebenezer Sibley’s *Illustration of the Occult Sciences* showing magical symbols and angels.
A reworking of Edward Sibly's drawing (Fig. 11) by Robert Cross Smith (engraver), “John Dee and Edmund Kelley evoking a spirit”, *The Astrologer of the Nineteenth Century*, c. 1825.
John Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica*, showing the interaction between the sun, moon and the elements with fire. From the *Monas Hieroglyphica*, 1564.
Fig. 15

The Sigillum Dei Aemeth. A Pentacle.

Fig. 16.


<http://www.esotericarchives.com/solomon/ksol.htm>
Fig. 17

A Heliocentric vision of the universe by Thomas Digges

Fig. 18. The Lullian Staircase.

Fig. 19. The Christian Philosopher reading Nature and Scripture

Chapter Three
Demonology in Jacobean Scholarship and Drama

Introduction

Many things are done in this world by the force of demons which we in our ignorance attribute to natural causes. (Kyper 1645)

we have been ignorant of almost all the true causes of things, and therefore through blindness have usually attributed those things to the operation of Cacodemons that were truly wrought by nature. (Webster 1677)

When Stuart Clark opened his chapter titled “Demonic Magic” in his impressive work, *Thinking with Demons*, he chose to introduce the varying opinions (quoted above) of Albert Kyper and John Webster on the existence of demons and the supernatural (Clark 231). But these questions emerged not only in the latter half of the seventeenth century, but also in the late sixteenth century in the works of Reginald Scot and during the reign of James VI and I (hereafter James) and formed one of the central points of Jacobean politics, drama and scholarship, as the reality of witchcraft and demonic magic were called into question by sceptics and defended vehemently by James and his supporters. This chapter looks at the evolution of James’s demonological theology and its influence upon contemporary playwrights and thinkers, as the trend of Elizabethan utilization of
demonological magic was replaced by Jacobean magiaphobia, intensified witch-hunts and demonization of women.

1. Transition and the evolution of James's Demonology

1.1. John Dee and the Transition of Power to James I

Indeed, with the transition of power from Elizabeth to James the scholarly landscape changed as well, and “the new century saw the beginning of a reaction away from the enlightened, inquiring liberation of the neo-Platonist and Renaissance Magia and the mounting of a nation-wide drive against all suspected of witchcraft and magical practices” (Deacon 268). Then, John Dee’s status as natural philosopher fell into jeopardy:

For more than fifty years out of the eighty-one of his life, Dee was famous, even if suspected and looked askance at as being clever beyond human interpretation. Then his Queen died. With the narrowminded Scotsman who succeeded her came a change in the fashion of men’s minds. (Fell-Smith 1-2)

Regardless of Charlotte Fell-Smith’s claims, James was certainly not narrowminded, though she—and other recent admirers of John Dee—have often described him in these ways. Gerald Suster sets up a similar juxtaposition between Elizabeth and James.

In place of the regal Elizabeth, courted by soldiers and hymned by poets, there now stumbled a slobbering, bandy-legged, homosexual pedant [. . . who] amply justifies the verdict of his contemporary, King Henry IV of France: 'the wisest fool in Christendom'. (125)
He did have an intense anxiety about witchcraft and sorcery, and he believed that he was the victim of repeated attacks from magicians and witches, including a storm—rumored to have been summoned up by Dee himself—intended to disrupt the marriage between James and Anne of Denmark (Normand i). After he came to power in 1603, Dee attempted to clear his name from allegations of black magic by petitioning the new king to try him for conjuring, so that the matter could be out in the open and disputed, instead of amplified by rumors:

It, therefore, seemeth, (vpon diuers respects,) to be very needefull, due and speedy Order, to be taken herein: by your Maisties wisedom, and Supreme Authoritie: (by one, of the three foresaid meanes, or any other,) to haue your Highnesse said Suppliant, to be tryed, in the premisses: Who offereth himselfe willingly, to the punishment of Death: (yea, eyther to be stoned to death: or to be buried quicke: or to be burned vnmercifuly) If by any due, true, and iust meanes, the said name of Conturier, or Caller, or Invocator of Diuels, or damned Spirites, can be proued, to haue beeene, or to be, duely or iustly reported of him, or attributed vnto him. (Dee 1604 1)

The “crux of this plea, it should be noted, is the emphasis upon the evil nature of the demons with which John Dee was thought to be dealing. He believed that he was only invoking angels […] though his contemporaries, not unnaturally, were less certain” (French 10).

King James soon pushed forward the 1604 Act against Conjuration and
Witchcraft, which sentenced to death all those who “use, practice, or exercise any invocation, or conjuration of any evil and wicked spirit, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose” (The Salem Witchcraft Papers 885), although the focus on “wicked spirits” left open a “loop-hole” through which magicians could practice conjuring if they claimed they dealt only with angels (Davis O 312). The idea that conjuring could be used for good still persisted, and it was rumored that Dee foresaw the plot to blow up parliament in 1605, and that it was he who sent the anonymous letter “which informed the Government of the plot and led to the searching of the cellars of Parliament”, though it seems unlikely that Dee was still ‘in-the-loop’ this late in his life (Deacon 271). The end of Dee’s life is quiet. He was forced to leave his post at Manchester in 1605 and “he returned to Mortlake a broken man” where he died in 1608 (French 10-11). And a few years later, in 1611, Simon Forman died and a new century and a new mode of demonological study arrived.

1. 2. The development of James's ideas

    James’s ideas regarding the nature of witchcraft and demons developed years before he took the throne in England, as demonstrated by his pamphlet on the subject, published in 1597, in the form of a dialogue between two characters: Philomates and Epistemon. These ideas derived not solely from the Elizabethan occult philosophy of magi such as John Dee, but also from James’s own continental voyage in 1581 to Denmark, and “it seems likely that on this Danish visit James became familiar with ideas about witchcraft”, which he considered to be a “branch of theology” (Croft 26-27). He
illustrates his continental focus in the preface to his *Daemonologie* where he recommends continental demonologist, Jean Bodin, or “BODINVS”, as a source, and Cornelius Agrippa as an expert on the black arts, which James warns are “both unnecessarie and perilous” (xiv, xv) and in a letter of John Harrington he writes that James “advisede me not to consult some authors which would leade me to evile consultations” (qtd. in Nichols 789). Danish churchmen believed that the centre of witchcraft was a demonic pact between the witch and the devil (Croft 26), and James brought these ideas back to Scotland to give witchcraft and magic a particularly nefarious edge. No longer was witchcraft and magic merely questionable, as it once was when practiced by John Dee under Elizabeth I, but now perceived to be explicitly satanic in its very nature, and “Dee, together with the whole surviving Elizabethan elite […] became neglected or eliminated by the new regime” (Szöny 1995 114), which viewed them as superfluous at best, and threatening at worst.

When referring to witchcraft, James had two sources of evidence for its existence, which he linked in an attempt to prove its occurrence, in the past and present: “Alwaies for that part, that witchcraft and Witches haue bene, and are, the former part proved by the Scriptures, and the last by dailie experience and confessions” (James 2). Using scripture as evidence for witchcraft, James also tries to connect demonic magic with satanic magic by incorporating the European theory that demons arose out of the fallen angels into his own theology. He claims that when Lucifer fell from Heaven after his rebellion the spirits loyal to him fell with him: “at the fall of *Lucifer*, some Spirites fell in the aire, some in the fire, some in the water, some in the lande: in the Elements they remaine” (20). By featuring the elements in his theory regarding the origins of demons, James alludes to the history of Neoplatonic and Hermetic traditions firmly established in
Europe by Agrippa, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, and equates their magical use of the elemental spirits with the utilization of satanic demons, instead of only the more ambiguous elemental *daemons*, and distinguishing between good spirits and bad spirits becomes near impossible as “Sathan can trans-forme himselfe into an Angell of light” (4).

On the corporeality of spirits and demons, James clearly insisted that they lack substance, “And if they enter as the spirite onlie, anie place where aire may come in at, is large inough an entrie for them: For as I said before, a spirite can occupie no quantitie” (59). These ethereal spirits were taxonomically placed in four different classifications, in which we can see how our own notion of ghosts and demons originated: the first were the spirits which “troubles some houses or solitarie places”; the second are “spirites [which] followes vpon certain persones, and diuers houres troubles them”; Then there are the spirits that “enter within [the victim] and possess them”; and finally, the “kinde of spirites that are called vulgarie the Fayrie”. However, if spirits “appeared in the likenesse of anie defunct to some friends of his, they wer called *vmbrae mortuorum*” (57), and James does not explain if these should be classified as evil spirits or demons, though later gives them the different name of “Wraithes” (60). James uses the word “wraiths” in a way similar to Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, who was “aided in the search for ecclesiastical preferment by his intelligence, noble birth, and the favour of James IV” (Bawcutt). Douglas uses the word “wrathis” in his 1513 translation of *Aeneid*, and writes that the spirits which appear are their “wrayth, or Schado” of “goistis that are dede” (x.xi.127, 93), “shadow” being the term James would use in his *vmbrae mortuorum* of *Demonologie*. Douglas's “Scottis” translation of the Aeneid was influential, as it was the first translation of the *Aeneid* into an Anglic language (C Gordon 54).
In his taxonomies of spirits, though he tries to make clear distinctions between different types of ethereal beings, James seems to be blurring the lines between learned demonological scholarship and folkloric magic traditions, placing fairies and demonic possessors within the same system of classification. He has much to say on the subject of witchcraft and necromancy, explaining that the passions which led them to black arts are “curiositie”, “thirst for revenge”, and “greedie”, but “As for the first of these, Curiosity, it is onlie the inticement of Magicians, or Necromanciers”, witches—according to him—do not have this intellectual urge (8). Then in his discussion about necromancers and magicians, James seems to point his finger at those occult philosophers who seek knowledge and skills above their human station, namely, that of prophecy:

For divers men having attained to a great perfection in learning, & yet remaining overbare (alas) of the spirit of regeneration and the frutes thereof: finding all natural things common, aswell to the stupide pendants as vnto them, they assaie to vendicate vnto them a greater name, by not onlie knowing the course of things heavenlie, but likewise to clim to the knowledge of things to come thereby. […] and so mounting from degree to degree vpon the slipperie and vncertaine scale of curiositie [they move into the practice of dark arts]. (10).

Knowledge of future events through the workings of magic is dangerous and unlawful, and here James uses the example of astrology—which, he explains, tracks the influence of the stars—and cites Agrippa as a prime source for those wanting to learn more. However, he quickly adds that the practices of such arts are prohibited because they are part of the “deuils schole” (14).
Though he claims that the study of dark arts is dangerous and the practice unlawful, he demonstrates at least a surface knowledge in the rituals and observances connected with summoning spirits, and how magicians can mistake demonic magic for natural or celestial magic:

such divers formes of circles & conjurations rightlie joyned thereunto, will raise such divers formes of spirites, to resolue them, of their doubts: and the attributing of doings thereof, to the power inseperable tyed, or inherent in the circles: and manie words of God, confusedlie wrapped in. (10)

These allusions to circles and conjurations connect James’s treatise to the cited Cornelius Agrippa, but also to John Dee, who insisted throughout his career that his magical practices contained only conversations with good spirits and used only natural correspondences, but however who was also suspected of trying to sink James's ships using witchcraft. James condemns their studies and learning as base and false, because “their knowledge, for all that they presume thereof, is nothing increased, except in knowing evill, and the horrors of Hell for punishment thereof, as Adams was by the eating of the forbidden tree” (11). By connecting the “clim” of magicians towards celestial knowledge to the biblical Fall, James inverts their ascension to heaven, turning it into a intellectual and spiritual downward spiral, a descent into religious error and finally into hellish arts and Hell itself.

1. 3. James on Gender and the Black Arts

The way in which James separates different types of black magic is similar to the
way social historians classify it today. He says, “There are principallie two sorts, whereunto all the partes of that vnhappie arte redacted; whereof the one is called Magie, or Necromancie, the other Sorcerie or Witch-Craft” (7). The division between the “two sorts of folks, that may be entysed to this art” is mainly the separation between the “learned” and the “vnlearned” (9). However, this categorization according to education can be broken down according to gender, in which “the difference vulgare put betwixt them, is verrie merrie, and in a manner true; for they say, that the witches ar servantes onelie, and slaues to the Devil; but Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders” (9).

This allusion to servant and master refers back to the gender hierarchy embedded within society, any disruption of which was the cause of considerable anxiety during the early modern period, and possibly manifested in tensions between James and his wife, Queen Anne:

Social historians have suggested that the period between the mid-sixteenth century to the 1660s was particularly dangerous for women, as male society became obsessed by the fear of disorder. Women were increasingly seen as unruly and resentful of their proper subordination to men. This fear of females was closely linked to the steady deterioration in economic conditions suffered by the poor, from amongst whom most of the women victims emerged. (Croft 26)

The panic caused by the paranoia of witches inverting the patriarchal power dynamic manifests in a revealing turn of phrase in the preface to Daemonologie, in which James illustrates that a witch’s power is a sexual power. They are able to cast diseases and make men “unable for women” by “weakening the nature” of them (xiii). The fear that women
could reduce men to impotence demonstrates that many anxieties surrounding witchcraft were related to sexual power and sexual surrender. And that James adheres to the notion that a witch can be identified by a “mark vpon some secreit place of their bodie, which remaines soare vnhealed” (33), opens the possibility that women who were more sexually active or promiscuous were blamed for witchcraft, and it is possible that this power which makes men “unable for women” (xiii) was a sexually transmitted disease, and in this way promiscuity was viewed as a form of witchcraft in itself. These “secreit” places normally resided in the genital region, and very frequently the symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases were mistaken for these diabolical markings. The placement of the marks is very telling: witch-hunters could have suspected the marks to be on hands, which gathered herbs and make the “witch's brew” and held potentially poisonous materials. Or they could have been on the witch's mouth, which may have been believed physically disfigured by the diabolical prayers. The fact that these markings resided in the genitals underlines the anxieties around the witches'/women's sexuality. Magistrates, witch-hunters, and James feared a promiscuous witch far more than a witch who may have been actually intent on doing harm.

In cases of magic, women were relegated to the servants while men were elevated to the masters of sorcery and demonic arts. Recognizing the massive gender imbalance in those accused of witchcraft and those accused of necromancy, Philomanthes, in a dialogue with Epistemon, asks “What can be the cause that there are twentie women giuen to that craft [i.e., witchcraft], where ther is one man?”, and Epistemon answers:

The reason is easie, for as that sexe is frailer then man is, so it is easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Deuill, as was ouer well proued to be true, by the Serpents deceiuing of Eua at the
beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe sensine.

(43-44)

This connection between Eve, the Serpent and witchcraft is picked up by Stuart Clark who explains that some “even called Eve the first witch, an association that, more than any other, makes intelligible the gender link that they relied on” (Clark 1999 113), and this link between Eve and witchcraft would even later be picked up by John Milton in **Paradise Lost** (e.g. IX 522), and his depictions would also represent Eve as inverting the dominant gender structures.

The mixture of politics and the demonic is clear in James’s writings, which connect witchcraft to an inversion of the prevailing power structures as nothing “has been more familiar than this concept of witchcraft as an anti-religion” (Clark 669 86):

For demonic inversion was inseparable, in the first instance, from notions of archetypal rebellion and pseudo-monarchy. The devil’s original presumption prefigured every subsequent act of resistance; he was Belial, ‘which means’, wrote the authors of *Malleus maleficarum*, ‘Without Yoke or Master’. (86)

In the inverted world, “itself turned upside down”, the king’s subjects replace “for religion superstition, for true worshippe detestable idolatrie: and to be shorte, for God Sathan, for Christ Antichrist” (James 1936 307; Goodman 9-10). This exchange of the holy for the unholy occurs in both contemporary witchcraft and in accounts of pre-Christian mimicry of Jewish monotheistic worship, as Clark explains that “the ‘aping’ of religious service in modern witchcraft was the same in form as the ‘counterfeiting’ of God among the gentiles of the Old Testament” (Clark 1999 98; James 1591 36-7), juxtaposing two the false faiths (Old Testament pagans and early modern witchcraft) with
the two true faiths (Old Testament Judaism and early modern Christianity).

In his *Daemonologie* James links the climb of the Magus into celestial knowledge with the Fall of Man, inverting the rise into divine wisdom so that it becomes piety turned upside down; he also connects it with the Fall and Eve, and he links women and witchcraft, creating associations which link Adam and Eve with the Magus and the Witch and with the inversion of obedience to the divine ruler (11, 43-4). Witchcraft and magic then become disobedience to the earthly authority of James as king. James ruled by Divine Right, and claimed to be chasing witches “not because I am James Stuard [sic] and can commaunde so many thousands of men, but because God hath made me a King and judge to judge righteouse judgement” (1936 524). He clearly connected his witch-hunts with his powers as king, and since the church “repeatedly badgered the secular power to take action” against these deviant magicians and witches, seeing black arts as a “disease of the body politic comparable to […] adultery”—a belief which, in itself, identifies an association between the anxieties of witchcraft and fear of disobedience within the patriarchal marriage structure—James had no difficulty relating his divine absolutism to witchcraft and disobedience, which he believed were satanic forces intent on disrupting his benign, god-sanctioned reign (Croft 26), and which were connected in a biblical precedent as treason: “For rebellion is as the sinne of witchcraft”, a passage which explicitly illustrates the connections between power-inversion and witchcraft (I.Sam.15:23). As early as 1605, James was proclaiming that God had given him divinatory powers which allowed him to discover the Gunpowder Plot (Clark 1999 623), and during his accession he said “if the king was ‘Jacobum Dei, James by the Grace of God’; then God was ‘Deum Jacobi, the gratious God of King James’” (qtd. In Clark 621; Rawlinson 36).
2. Supporters and Skeptics of James’s *Daemonologie*

James justified his policy of zero tolerance towards witchcraft and tried to expel doubts regarding the existence of witchcraft using scripture:

As first in the law of God, it is plainely prohibited: But certaine it is, that the Law of God speakes nothing in vaine, neither doth it lay curses, or injoyne punishmentes vpon shaddowes, condemning that to be il, which is not in essence or being as we call it. (James 1597 5)

James, “in destroying the Devil’s ministers […] really thought that he was only carrying his plain duty towards God” (G B Harrison vi). In the dedicatory to his 1627 work, Richard Bernard would praise James’s unwavering condemnation of magic, saying that the practitioners of the black arts must be put to death because “Satan and the Witches couenant one with the other” and “Satan ratifie[s] his couenant with blood” (263), and that Reginald Scot—who condemns the practice of executing accused witches and who James attacks in his *Daemonologie*—held the “erroneous opinion that Witches were silly decieued Melancholikes” ([ii]).

Bernard claimed that all practitioners of magic should be killed, and not just those that work in more demonic magic, mentioning James’s and Bodin’s own writings in his Dedicatory epistle opening his *A Gvide to Grand-Ivry men*:

Bad Witches many prosecute with all eagernesse; but Magicians, Necromancers, (of whom his late Maiestie giueth a deadly censure in his *Daemonologie*) and the Curing Witch, commonly called,
The good Witch, all sorts can let alone: and yet bee these in many respects worse then the other. ([iv])

The title of his Chapter XXI reads “That euery Witch ought to die, the imagined good, as well as the bad”, creating a firm black and white system of judgment which holds a strict line of zero tolerance.

Furthermore, Bernard connects James’s power as earthly sovereign to God’s power as heavenly sovereign, since “Man is vnder the authority of his Maker, who seeth all his waies and his wandring by paths […] for he ruleth ouer all” (1). The existence of satanic minions who desire to overthrow the heavenly appointed King James gives reinforcement to James’s position within his theory of divine absolutism. John Weemse, in his A Treatise of the Fovre Degenerate Sonnes (1636), also connects the Church with the government, saying in his Dedicatory:

there is a great relation betwixt these two, the Church and Commonwealth, and they have not beene unfitly compared to Hippocrates twines, when one laughed so did the other, and when one wept so did the other; so when the Church of God prospereth so doth the Commonwealth.

According to him, the best form of government is a monarchy, “and a King here is put for a best magistrate; because the Lord was to bring in his kingly governement amongst them” and that there are magicians who “usurpes any of God’s privledges in […] acting of their fates” (236, 40).

John Weemse also takes up the link between witchcraft and the Fall that was popularized by James’s Daemonologie, claiming a link between Eve's temptation and the temptation of all magicians:
When Satan tempted *Eva*, first he began to tempt her, in her irascible facultie, which of all the faculties is the most easily stirred. [Then... ] hee corrupted her [ ...] in her sensitive facultie.

So Satan deludes the Magicians, and the Witches; sometimes in their irascible facultie, sometimes in their concupiscible, and sometimes in the sensitive faculty. (22)

And though Weemse carries on the idea that women are the weaker sex, “sorcerers, and magicians are more dangerous instruments of the devil then witches are” (139).

James wanted to dispute Scot, who says in his title of *The Discovery of Witchcraft* that the idea of magicians contracting with the Devil in order to “kill, torment and confume bodies of men” is “but imaginary Errorious conceptions and novelties”, as the pact between witches and Satan, the doctrine given weight by James after his visit to Denmark, is a belief “proved as vaine and false as the rest” (Scot 35). In fact, James condemned Scot’s treatise on witchcraft in the preface of his *Demonologie* and it is often claimed that James ordered all copies of the book to be confiscated and burned after his ascension to the English throne (Wootton). It would not be reprinted until 1651, during the Interregnum period. Of the period of Scot’s censorships, Thomas Ady wrote that “Mr. Scot published a Book, called his Discovery of Witchcraft, in the beginning of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth [...] but since that time England hath shamefully fallen from the Truth which they began to receive” (A3), referring to the Jacobean era. He blames James for misreading Scot, and calls Bodin, Hyperius and Hemingius—who were sources for *Daemonologie*—“Popish Bloud-suckers” who have “defiled their pens with these groundless Phantastical Doctrins” (Ady 139-140).

However, this dissent against a rigid ideology—which defined witchcraft as a
genuine threat that makes use of real and satanic demons—existed. Though James attempted to create a coherent and reliable taxonomy of spirits and demons—which would give weight to the authority of the monarch as the best protection against these evil forces—scholars began to look at the subject of demonology from a more anthropological perspective, making use of non-Christian sources in their understanding of current views of spirits and demons. Researchers and demonologists began to look into different occult traditions, and instead of relying on an orthodox explanation for contemporary explanations of spirits and demons, these scholars began to incorporate near-eastern mythologies and Cabalistic learning into their occult systems.

3. Selden, Demonological Study and Lilith

What was previously a virtually unified anti-Semitic sentiment in England withered among certain intellectuals who developed an academic interest in Judaism, and the “religious developments of the seventeenth century brought to their climax an unmistakable philo-semitic tendency in certain English circles” (Roth 149). The rise of Protestantism, coupled with the Humanistic notion of ad fontes (a return to the original sources), encouraged Christian-Hebraic scholarship. Cecil Roth explains that “Puritanism represented above all a return to the Bible, and this automatically fostered a more favourable frame of mind towards the people of the Old Testament” (149). This desire to read the Old Testament promoted the study of the Hebrew language, and “increasing numbers of ordinary men, women […], and even children […], could read and sometimes speak the language of the Jews” (Shapiro 41).

During this time of religious reform the “followers of the Puritan extremist, John
Traske, went so far on the path to literalism that they were imprisoned in 1618-20 on the charge of Judaizing” (Roth 149). Many Christians adopted Jewish customs such as circumcision, dietary changes, and the Saturday Sabbath; throughout the early part of the seventeenth century, “False Jews”—Christians in the “disguise of Jews”—reached unprecedented numbers (Shapiro 27).

This rise of scholarly Judaism saw a paralleled rise in the interest of Hebrew Mysticism and, in particular, the Cabala. With this newly found awareness of Hebrew texts, Lilith began to emerge as a subject of intense scrutiny for many writers of the early seventeenth century, and would become an archetypal figure representing anxieties surrounding both the female Witch-Figure and the Jew-Figure. One of the earlier references to Lilith in the Jacobean era is by Sébastien Michaelis in 1613:

Saint Ierome translateth and thinketh to be a Sorceresse. Ibi cubauit Lamia: whereby is meant such women as vse to goe in the night. Againe in the Lamentations of Ieremy he interpreteth this word Lilith to be a Sorceresse, saying, Sed & Lamiae. Lamia (saith Duris) was a woman, [...] and from her are such kinde of women by the Latines called Lamiae, whose custome was (as Ieremy hath it) to shew and offer their breasts vnto little children, thereby to still them, and to allure them to come vnto them, that so they might strangle them with greater secesie. (Michaelis 81)

Lilith here is the exemplary anti-maternal Witch-Figure, who—like the characters Lady Macbeth and Elizabeth Sawyer—turns her woman’s ability to nurture and feed children into an inverted representation of motherhood in infanticide. Like the violence attributed
to the blood which Tom sucks from Elizabeth’s ‘teat’, violence is apparent in Lilith’s threat to murder the children which approach her for motherly nourishment.

Lilith as the mythical first wife of Adam is not explicit in Jacobean scholarly accounts, though this role is implied in the work of John Selden and John Lightfoot, in which her role of anti-Mother and anti-Wife is still assured through her vicious treatment of children and her ability to give birth only to demons—similar to the witches in Jonson’s masque, who desire to have a magical ‘birth’. In *Titles of Honor*, Selden writes that Lilith is

mentioned in holy Writ, which the *Iews* say is a Spirit very Dangerous to yong Children or Women in Childbirth, whereupon their custom is (especially of the *German Iews*) at the Birth-times of their Women, to chalk out on euery of the walls of the Chamber in a Circle, this charm: [...]Adam, Heue, Hence (or out) Lilith.

(164-165)

Selden repeats this charm in his *De Dis Syris* as “*Adam, Chava, Chutz, Lilith, siue procul hinc esto Lilith*” [*Adam, Eve, Out, Lilith, or, in other words, be from this place Lilith*] (161), both versions of which carry heavy connotations of a divorce and a separate, more acceptable union between Adam and Eve, which Lilith perhaps interrupts, an assumption based on the “*Hence*” of the chant. The connection between Adam and Lilith is more explicit in John Lightfoot’s 1629 *Ervbhin*.

As some conceit that the fallen Angels, or Deuills here begat children of women; so the Iewes most wickedly fable, that *Adam* begat children of Deuills. *Those hundred and thirtie years say*
they that Adam was separated from Eve, Deuills came to him and
he engendred with them, and begat Deuills, and spirits, and fiends.

And againe: Foure women are the mothers of Shedhim or Deuills,

Lilith, Naamah, Ogereth and Mahlath. (14)

In his rendering of the myth, which is his translation and interpretation of the Talmudic
Erubin (“Erubin” 14b), Lilith was not Adam’s first wife, but came after Eve, and is
connected with the creation of “Deuills, and spirits, and fiends”. Desires to discover the
origins of demons would sometimes lead to conclusions involving Lilith, as Selden
claims that she influenced the star of Astarte, which fell from the heavens and became the
morning star, in reference to Lucifer (Selden 1617 155-6). Selden’s scholarship in De Dis
Syris also contributed to contemporary discussion surrounding gender, the gods and the
combination of the two into rhetoric imbued with references to royalty (Rosenblatt 7-8).

But he first begins with a long complicated explanation outlining how virtually all
goddesses—and many gods—can be connected to Lilith, starting with Astarte, who is
crribitur […] Aftoreth” [The goddess which is generally referred to as Astarte is written
as Astoreth (in 1 Kings xi.V)], who is really Juno, Venus and many others, as she has
many manifestations: “quaï plures fuerint Aftartæ, vti Iunones, Veneres, Mineruæ plures
& Baalim” [There are just as many Astartes, as Junos, Venuses, Minvervas and Baalims]
(142, 148).

Though she most often appears as female, the goddess Lilith has an often
indistinguishable gender, as the various figures associated with her are sometimes
attributed to the masculine and sometimes to the feminine. Selden explains that
practitioners of early religions rarely differentiated between the masculinity and the
femininity of their idols: “sexum Idolorum scriptura sacra, nec prisca mysteria gentium
distinguunt” [the first mysteries of people do not distinguish between the sex of their
idols in sacred scripture] (149). Selden—in one of his many connections between Lilith,
the moon, and the god(desse)s of antiquity—mentions Macrobius, who cites that the
people of Cyprus believed Venus to be both male and female, while the Egyptians have
the same opinion of the moon, which is called the Mother of the world, naturally contains
both masculine and feminine virtues, and is able to self-replicate: “Matrem Mundi
vocitabant, eámque à Sole grauidam factam fœcunda generationis principia enixam
demittere, vtriusque sexus naturam in se continentem” [(The Egyptians) called her
Mother of the World, and say that she—impregnated by the sun—sent down the fertile
principles of generation, and connects in herself the nature of both sexes.] (150). The
poet Calvus even refers to Venus as “Deum Venerum”, in the masculine, turning the
goddess that is perhaps most universally acknowledged as feminine into a male power
(Selden 149).

This confusion between masculine and feminine also appears in his descriptions
of the Lilith-Astarte-Ashtoreth figure in the hierarchy of the heavens; she is “Domina
Cøeli” and “Regina Cøeli” (156), and has just as much of a right to royal title as Queen as
the sun has to King, “Quod nomen Iunoni & Astarte proprie convenit nec Sol magis Rex
Cøeli, qvam Luna Regina” [Hence this name (Queen of Heaven) is fitting in a proper
sense to Juno and Astarte, since the Sun is not a greater King, than the Moon Queen.] (157).
This positioning of the queen moon as equal to the king sun—and blurring the
lines between the genders of each— might reflect and subvert James’s monarchical
theories about the absolute power of kings; his position as masculine authority over his
wife, Queen Anne, becomes challenged, especially once considering the rumors
surrounding his submissive relationships with male courtiers (McDermott 7). The depiction of the sun and the moon as having equal power and autonomy, implies that the king is not “greater” than the queen.

Selden is greatly interested in the migration and linguistic mutation of phonemes in the creation of various gods and goddesses, and claims that Alithya, Lilith, Luna, Lucina and various other goddess occupy the same function, it is only the sounds that have shifted based on geographical location:

“Hinc ipsa Lucina [Eilethya] & [Elutho] nominate. In horum n. alterutrum vocabulorum vt Lilith seu Alileth (quod idem Arabice denotet) transmigraret non ita est difficile. & vti Asianis Lilith, eta Europœis Ilethyia Dea erat, parturientibus […] inimical” [Therefore, Lucina herself was called Eilethya and Elutho. In time, it is not difficult for either designation to transmigrate into Lilith or Alieth (whom the Arabs designate precisely the same). And as Lilith was a Goddess to the Asians inimical to parents so was Ilethyia to the Europeans]. (Selden 1617 162)

All of these goddesses are the same, which is easy to guess by their similar names, claims Selden, and they all refer back to Lilith as the “enemy of parents”, a reference to her continued role as witch who kills children (162). Lilith is the moon and Diana, but also a night demon:

Latinorum hinc Lucina, id est, Ilethyia Græcorû traducenda, quà non alia est à Luna siue Diana Lilith etiam dictá Iudæis […] Lilith autem vel per Noctilucam vel nocturnum daemonem redditur [Thus the Lucina of the Latins—that is, Ilethyia of the Greeks—is to be
traced; she is no other than the Moon or Diana, and even yet is called Lilith by the Jews. Lilith, on the other hand, is returned either as Night Light, or nocturnal demon]. (161)

Selden set up his figure of Lilith-Diana-Lucina to operate in semiotic connection with any reference to the moon and with any reference to each other, so that each mention of Luna opened up not only a line of connection, but opened an entire plane of variant meanings for the poet and reader to draw upon.

4. Court masques and demonological drama

With Lilith as the central point of many Eurasian symbols, most prominently, according to Selden, the moon, it is important to turn back to poetry to see these sliding allusions in literary action. The poetry of Hugo Grotius, which would later go on to influence Milton’s own illustration of Eden, contains a seemingly misplaced reference to the moon, which could be, and I suggest is, a reference to Lilith:

...illius omnia

Parent habenis tota qua tellus patet

Unius ager est quaeque possideat sola

Nec ipse novit dominus; et quicquid vago,

Quae varia lucis non suae alternans vices

Refugit in orbem, Luna continuet ambitu,

Saevo Tyrannus unus imperio premit.

Trantique regni generis ut serie suus

Superesset haeres, uxor Adamo data est. (72-81)
[...All earth, however wide it spreads,
Is the sole territory of a single master
Who knows not his own realm; all that the roving moon
Who with her changing aspects of borrow’d light
Wheels in a circle, environs in her wandering,
Yields to the harsh authority of one stern lord.
In order that an heir to the imperial realms so vast
In sequence might succeed, a wife was given to Adam.]

This description of the roving and wandering moon, with her changing faces and borrowed light—perhaps similar to the changing representations of the moon within Selden’s demonological/mythological scholarship—ends suddenly with a full stop and the creation of Eve, putting an end to the power struggle which culminated in the “harsh authority” of a singular commander, the one “stern lord”—head of state, house, and heavens, being James, father, and God, respectively. The politicized language of this passage is evident in the use of words such as “realm”, “lord”, “imperial”, and “territory”, putting the allusion to Lilith and the moon within a specifically political dimension, in which the feminine must “yeild” to the masculine authority, and thereby contain an early, potentially “wandering”, and chaotic system within a system of order.

Though James positioned himself as the father of a family politically and religiously unified, the reality was very different. His “insistence on his own absolute authority was ill-suited to the traditional contentiousness of English politics”, and this self-appointed position of father, king and god of the state opposed the opinions of his people, who viewed him as too Scottish, too stubborn and too selfish “to claim to understand [them], let alone represent [them]” (McDermott 1). Against the moral
ambiguity of much of the Jacobean drama of playwrights like Shakespeare, court masques model the fantasies of the king or the patron because, as Stephen Orgel points out, they were sponsored by the monarch, or the court, and are therefore “the expressions of the monarch’s will, the mirrors of his mind” (45). Masques could even have functioned as “a kind of secular religious observance, or even a magical ritual designed to reify the power and purity of the court” (McDermott 3). Against these regal mirrors, the plays of Shakespeare and Thomas Dekker represent a moral ambiguity:

Telling the same stories in a different mode, one which privileges psychological depth and moral ambiguity over universal truths and strongly delineated categories, Shakespeare’s plays interrogate the authoritative version of events and the authority that produced them. (Kolb 338)

By placing court masques beside public performances of Shakespeare, Dekker and Jonson, patterns of deviance and political subversion emerge, which make use of the scholarship of James I, but often in a way which then presents a counter-argument and an alternative perspective.

4. 1. Ben Jonson

Ben Jonson eagerly attempted to gain patronage, and some critics say that his desire for patronage was “to the detriment of his poetic art” (McDermott 12). However, he had become a well-respected and renowned poet—even though he had modest origins—and was recognized as England’s unofficial poet laureate, was supported by the king, was awarded honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge. He developed close
friendships with Shakespeare, Donne, Francis Bacon and John Selden, and wrote court masques for James, Anne and their son Henry (Lewalski 1324-5; McDermott 3). His desire to stay in royal favor might have influenced him even to repeat James’s 1617 return to Scotland as Jonson made a similar journey in 1618, walking from London to Edinburgh “on the heels of the royal expedition” (Donaldson 21). His plays The Alchemist, the Masque of Queens and the Masque of Beauty all exhibit his extensive knowledge of demonology and occult philosophy, drawing on classical learning and popular folklore to create plots which would interest both James and Anne.

In the Masque of Beauty and the Masque of Queens Jonson brings Hecate—who amongst many roles assumed, was ‘queen’ of the witches and goddess of the moon—into the foreground, describing her in the Masque of Beauty:

_The Nights black charmes are flowne._

_For being made vnto their Goddesse knowne,_

_Bright Æthiopia, the Siluer Moone,_

_As she was Hecate._ (87-90)

This fashioning of the moon as feminine is prevalent throughout European personification of her, but would appear only a couple of years prior to Jonson’s work in a sharp explanation of the relationship between the moon, gender and sexual hierarchy. To illustrate these correspondences, Selden’s includes a citation of Spartanus:

_Sciendum [...] doctissimis quibusq id memoria traditum, atq it a nunc quoq à Carrenis precipuè haberi, ut qui Lunam òfeminèo nomine ac sexu putauerit nuncupandam, is addictus mulicribus semper inferuiat, at verò, qui marem Deum esse crediderit, is dominetur vxori, neq vllas patiatur mulierbres infidias _[It is
understood by the most learned, who remember the tradition, that is held now particularly among the Carrenians, that whoever believes the Moon to be called by a feminine name and sex will always be addicted to their wives and inferior to them, but truly, whoever believes the moon is a male God will always dominate his wife, and will not suffer any from women's treachery] (150).

Here, the moon is central to the dominant/subservient divide between the sexes within the household, with the feminine moon existing as a threat to masculine power. The dominance of feminine over masculine in reference to Hecate is repeated in Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* when the witches describe raising a storm:

> You that have seen me ride when Hecate
> Durst not take chariot, when the boisterous sea
> Without a breath of wind hath knocked the sky,
> And that hath thundered, Jove not knowing why. (222-225)

Many Jacobean plays refer back to this sea-storm conjured up by witches, which could allude to James’s voyage to Denmark for his wedding when witches supposedly attempted to disrupt his union with his bride-to-be (Kolb 338-9). Here the witches mention Hecate in the context of the sea-storm, which “hath thundered, Jove not knowing why”. Jove, being the king of heaven, represents James who had placed himself as divine-earthly sovereign. This inversion of power, from the masculine to the feminine, is typical within dramatic depictions of witches; the way power dynamics manifest within these court masques written for Anne were performed after James and Anne no longer cohabited (Curran 57). These performances potentially threatened the status of King and Queen as symbol of political unity, and indeed “[m]asquing provided Anna with a way to rehearse
publicly her autonomy as a political and cultural agent at the Jacobean court” (6), as she herself performed on the stage, styling herself as a public and publicly displayed figure.

The witches, emboldened beyond the daring of Hecate, in raising the storm and subverting the power of Jove, embody a threat to the unity of the state in the form of chaos. Kristen McDermott writes that

In a court headed by a king who prided himself on his proven powers of paternity and its attendant moral authority, but simultaneously indulged in submissive emotional and possibly sexual relationships with charismatic young men, and evocations of sexual identity or legitimacy were fraught with tension. The presence of an assertive queen struggling against her husband’s authoritarianism to express an ideal of virtuous feminine sensuality further complicated the first two examples. (7)

David M. Bergeron connects the homosexual, or homoerotic, desire of James with particularly “effeminate” men (68, 102), complicating the structures of gender binaries and their relationship to power distribution. By freeing the feminine from the female and the masculine from the male, hierarchies based on heterosexual paradigms become less stable.

In the masque, these subversive examples of feminine power in the witches are enacted in their promiscuity, as they unlace and untie their clothing, and in their bodies as reproductive agents; in their ritual they use “both milk and blood, the dew and the flood”—a reference to menstrual blood and breast milk—to raise demons, and mandrake root to have power over “male sexual potency” and achieve a “magic birth” (Jonson 249, 311; McDermott 113n, 118n). Anne M. Haselkorn notes that sexualized and uninhibited
characterizations of women on the Jacobean stage were perhaps seen as invading male
territory of power and agency (120), and writes that

In Jacobean dramatic portrayals of women, we are confronted with
a seeming paradox. On the one hand, we find many examples of
the woman who is a paragon of purity, passivity, and
submissiveness. [...] On the other hand, we find the independent
strumpet who is the essence of sexuality, willfulness, and ambition.

(119)

Haselkorn goes on to suggest a Freudian reading of the antithetical stage depictions of
femininity, where the virtuous and chaste women represent the male's 'super ego', while
the sexualized woman represents the 'id' (119). Hence, the witch as sexualized and
powerful woman, encroaching onto a “masculine complex”, does not move upwards on
the gender hierarchy, but presents a threat to the play's viewer, who is in danger of
moving down into the 'id', tempted by the powerful and animalian witch.

However, in Jonson's masque, the blurry boundaries of the female body
manifested in the witches, which are outlined in chapter one, are not met with convincing
counter-forces to bring stability to the gender inversion, and to place the masculine again
above the feminine. Although the witches knotted hair “folded with vipers” is met with
the antithesis of the hero Perseus (Jonson 1609 98, 357), his power is only in reflection
and castration, further de-masculating the power balance, as “to decapitate=to castrate”
(Freud 273). Jonson further shadows the supposed counter-forces of the effeminizing
witches into ambiguity when he includes Valasca of Bohemia amidst the House of Fame
(399). Valasca seems more closely in line with the morality of the witches than a courtly
system of female Fame, as she used magic to blind the men that she defeated in battle and
dispossess them of their thumbs (McDermott 125n), perhaps another blinding and
dismemberment symbolic of the reflection and castration of Medusa by Perseus. This
reading of the Freudian Medusa reinforces Haselkorn's theory of the id in Jacobean
drama. Furthermore, shortly before Jonson wrote his masques, John Harington's popular
1591 translation of Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso was the version best known in
eyear seventeenth-century England. In this introduction, Harington summarizes the moral
lesson of Medusa's tale:

Morally it signifieth thus much: Perseus, a wise man, sonne of
Jupiter, endewed with vertue from above, slayeth sinne and vice, a
thing base and earthly signified by Gorgon, and so mounteth up to
the skie of vertue. (67)

However, it would seem that the only way to defeat the sexual id is through complete
ciastration, leaving off the earthly pleasure for divine virtue—not a totally convincing
triumph of masculinity over the dangerous feminine.

Jonson then moves from the realm of witchcraft into that of occult philosophy
when he connects the Hecate of The Masque of Queens to Hermes Trismegistus by
calling Hecate “triple name[d]” (236), which is the “Thrice-Great” or “Thrice-Named”
Hermes. Though Hecate here refers to the triple-aspect of the moon goddess—Hecate,
Luna, Diana—the name connects to Hermes in its trinitarian implications. Jonson's
familiarity with occultism and black magic appears in The Alchemist, in which a “con-
man” plays the part of a “cunning man” (Jamieson 179). In this play, Jonson uses the
terminology of practical magic beside that of witchcraft. Subtle employes algebra,
minerals, “vegetals”, animals, conjuring, stills, glasses, necromancy, metoposcopy, the
names of angels in the mode of John Dee, and “those Mercurial Spirits” and the play
references John Dee, Paracelsus, Edward Kelley and the Cabalist Raymon Lull in numerous declarations of Jonson’s contemporary occult learning; while at the same time Dol Common mentions the uses of menses as a solvent, recalling the connection between witchcraft, the female body and the alchemist (I. i. 38-47, I. ii. 7-16, I. iii. 44, 64-69, II. iii. 25-35, 230, II. v. 8, iv. 20, IV. i. 90, I. ii. 5-10). The play simultaneously praises James as “a learned elder, one of Scotland” and mocks his practice of “indiscriminate and mercenary creation of knights” (III. i. 40, II. ii. 86-87; Jamieson 476). The dialogue seems to ridicule contemporary belief in Hermeticism and Cabalist notions of antiquity as equal to authority:

Mammon: Pertinax, my Surly,

Will you believe antiquity? records?

I’ll show you a book where Moses and his sister,

And Soloman have written the art.

Ay, and a treatise penned by Adam—

Surly: How!

Mammon: O’ the Philosopher’s Stone, and in High Dutch.

Surly: Did Adam write, sir, in High Dutch?

Mammon: He did;

Which proves it was the primitive tongue. (II. i. 79-88)

As Surly sees the humor in the “primitive tongue” being High Dutch, so their interaction shows the audience how occult mysteries are used to gain a profit by deluding the ignorant. This parody of the Renaissance magus and occult philosophy is, of course, intentional, as Jonson perhaps tries to align himself with contemporary policies regarding the fear and/or mocking attitude towards the occult practitioner, and indeed, Jonson
“ridiculed Dee, magic, and hermeticism, even the whole Elizabethan heritage” (Szönyi 1995 114). Edward Kelley, the dubious apprentice and scryer for John Dee, appears in the play as Mammon mentions his relationship with an ‘Emperor’ (IV. i. 90). Just as Edward Kelley fooled his patron, so Subtle and all alchemists deceive the credulous.

This occult material surfacing in both Jonson’s dramatic plays and court masques shows both the widespread interest in the subject of witchcraft and demonology, and the extent to which it was political and bound up in questions of gender and power in the early seventeenth century. As a metaphor for gender and political inversion, the witch figure and the demonic female operate differently within his different plays. In his court masques, Hecate and Valasca could represent an implied approval towards the lifestyle of Anne who by that time was living separately from James. However, in *The Alchemist*, Jonson portrays magic and those who practice it as markedly false. Whatever motives were behind these varying portrayals of contemporary occultism, their pervasive appearances within his works evidences the popular interest and current knowledge of the subjects. These were subjects through which anxieties surrounding issues of the powerful woman and her political implications could be expressed within the figure of the feminine demonic.

4. 2. William Shakespeare

Just as Jonson utilizes witchcraft, demonology and anxieties regarding feminine power to engage with the interests of the monarch, so Shakespeare employs the same themes in his Jacobean era plays, perhaps most notably in *Macbeth*, which contained subjects “chosen originally to gratify the King, since it combines two themes on which he
was an expert—witchcraft and his own ancestry” (Muir xxiii), and *The Tempest*, which is perhaps Shakespeare’s most sophisticated and well known portrayal of the elite magician and issues surrounding permissive natural magic and the illicit demonic arts; it may have been, in part, Shakespeare's response to the mocking parody that was Jonson's *The Alchemist* (Szönyi 1995 114).

*The Tempest,* like many of Jonson’s plays, contains a magically conjured storm—and in the case of *The Tempest,* this storm opens the action of the play, taking the entire duration of the first scene. David Lindley writes that the “storm tossed ship [can be read] as a metaphor of the vicissitude of human life”, and though he also explains that there “can, however, be little argument that magic and religion are central to the play”, he neglects to make the obvious connection between the storm summoned in *The Tempest* and the storm conjured by the Berwick Witches in an attempt to sabotage James’s sea voyage (Lindley 6). Shakespeare even connects the storm with the king in the exclamation of the Boatswain, “What care these roarers for the name of King” (I.i.15).

The scene of sailors trying desperately to keep the boat above the waves realistically portrays the chaos of a ship at sea in a storm, with orders shouted, and the anatomy of the boat’s body named during a storm which appears to be a natural occurrence. However, as later reflected in Albert Kyper’s 1645 quotation at the beginning this chapter, what is often attributed to natural phenomena is actually caused by magic and spirits. The “roarers”, which were attributed to nature's indifference towards political power, turn out to be caused by the spiritual magic of Prospero, as his daughter pleads to him: “If by your art, my dearest father, you have/ Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them” (I.i.1-2; emphasis mine). Here Miranda connects the “roarers” of scene one to the magic of her father in scene two, which is all then packaged as an allusion to the Berwick Witches in
its connection to the storms that blew the royal ships off course.

This connection between Prospero as magician and the Berwick Witches as wicked conjurers of demons and storms casts a dubious shadow on the dichotomy of Prospero as good magician and Sycorax as evil sorceress and witch, as Prospero doesn’t practice purely natural magic and often makes use of Ariel in ceremonial and angelic rituals which would liken him to the Elizabethan magus, John Dee; in the 1974 National Theatre production of The Tempest John Gielgud was dressed in a way that was intended to be reminiscent of him (Lindley 47). Prospero’s spiritually inclusive magic “veered dangerously towards the black arts of diabolic inspiration” (46), seeing that his “secret studies” could be interpreted as either venial studies conducted in seclusion or occult magical studies which would have the legality of Prospero’s education and actions ambiguous (I.ii.77), and Barbara A. Mowat notes that this “is the kind of language used by Agrippa and Trithemius in their correspondence about The Occult Philosophy” (284). Ariel, in repeating the sailor’s naval terminology and the vessel’s anatomy—like “beak”, “waist”, “bowsprit” and “topmast”—moves the storm from the realm of natural—as part of a non-magical natural phenomenon—to the realm of spiritual, or daemonic magic (196-200). The repetition of the parts of the boat connects the presumably mundane, and non-magical, event of the shipwreck to the super-natural in its retelling by the spirit which has caused the storm. This perhaps reflects Elizabethan anxieties, particularly those of John Dee, surrounding the legitimacy of occult philosophy; the protagonist, Prospero, employs spiritual/angelic magic for beneficial ends, and through the extensive mention of books, learning and education is able to separate himself from abhorred notions of witchcraft and witches, who were often viewed as uneducated and illiterate.

Prospero’s position as protagonist is compromised by the way in which
Shakespeare makes use of doubled plot devices, particularly in the example of Antonio, who has usurped Prospero’s Dukedom of Milan, being doubled in Prospero, who has become the usurper of the magical island from Sycorax and enslaver of its inhabitants (II.ii.332-344). Shakespeare appears to attempt to circumvent this issue by casting Sycorax and her son, Caliban, as subhuman animals, therefore not worthy of human freedom. Sycorax is called a “foul witch” and a “wicked dam”, likening her to a criminal and a breeding animal (I.ii.257-8, II.ii.320-1). Also, the way in which Prospero mirrors another dramatic magician—Doctor Faustus—raises issues in the legality of Prospero’s magic: Prospero’s promise, “I’ll drown my book” sounds noticeably similar to Faustus’s final promise to Mephistopheles, “I’ll burn my books” (Shakespeare V.i.57; Marlowe xiv.84). Faustus’s magic, which is demonic and created through a satanic pact similar to those James learned about on his Danish voyage, causes his downfall, whereas Prospero’s magic, though likened to Faustus’s black arts and though utilizing spiritual and ceremonial magic—Prospero draws ritual circles in the sand as part of his arts—does not become explicitly unlawful and wicked, and the ambiguity of his piety remains throughout the play. And though, as both Mowat and György Szönyi remark, there are many types of occult practitioner—from Magus to wizard to Juggler—and although “Prospero is a product of several magic traditions” (Mowat 302; Szönyi 1995 118), there is still a marked difference between the good and masculine force of magic, as practiced by Prospero, and the negative connotations of the witchcraft practiced by Sycorax and her animal offspring, Caliban. The issue can then become whether or not the magical practices move the practitioner higher or lower on the ladder of the ‘great chain of being’, and it would seem that Prospero is an example of the former, as he “neglect[s] worldly ends, all dedicated/ To closeness, and the bettering of [his] mind” (II.ii.89-90). This
demonstrates the difference between Sycorax, the Witch-Figure, and Prospero, the Magus: while Sycorax might be “damn'd”, Prospero moves upwards towards betterment, and upwards on the ladder to godliness.

Anxieties surrounding gender, magic and the inversion of the Jacobean monarchy by use of witchcraft are especially prevalent in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, in which the witches conjure up storms similar to those of Prospero, and those of the Berwick Witches (I.iii.11). Shakespeare wrote the play especially suited to the interests of James, as James believed himself to the descended from Banquo, Thane of Lochaber in the eleventh century, who appears in the play as a witness to Macbeth’s actions and perhaps as a voice of morality against Macbeth’s behavior (Braunmuller 2; Fig. 20), which would set up James’s ancestry as having more moral authority than any potential lineage which could have stemmed from Macbeth’s progeny. Other attempts to incorporate the interests of James include the porter scene of Act Two which has been connected to the Gunpowder Plot (II.ii.3-10; Braunmuller 5), the failure of which James used to justify his divine right to rule and to forward his claims of divinely justified powers (R Harrison 3).

Shakespeare possibly took some of his descriptions from James’s *Daemonologie* as Macbeth, before he even sees the witches for the first time, says “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (I.iii.38). The ‘fair’ could be a reference to his earlier victory in battle, and the ‘foul’ a reference to the weather, which could have been darkened by the presence of the witches. They can “thicken and obscure so the air, that is next about them [witches] by contracting it strait together, that the beams of any man’s eyes cannot pearce thorow the same, to see them” (qtd. Muir 15). By alluding to James’s learning,

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5 It is also interesting that the first recording of an early performance of *Macbeth* was by Simon Forman, the Elizabethan astrologer and magician (Muir xiii), showing how not only were playwrights writing on the topic of the occult informed by contemporary practitioners, but the occultists themselves participated through their attendance at the spectacles.
Shakespeare demonstrates that he has made use of James's demonological research and is, therefore, familiar and informed with contemporary occult philosophy and ideas.

Gender and magic play an important role in *Macbeth*, and issues of control surround the prophecies of the three witches; if the witches foretell the future it is possible that they control the future actions of the protagonist, or by persuasion influence Macbeth to carry out their mysterious wills. Different productions of the play have given the witches varying levels of control, and one of the most notorious examples is Tyrone Guthrie’s Old Vic production in 1934, in which he had begun the play with the three witches—removing the first two scenes—by claiming that they were not written by Shakespeare. Braunmuller quotes a James Agate review of the performance which appeared in the *Sunday Times*:

> by making the Weird Sisters open the play, one cannot avoid the implication that they are a governing influence of the tragedy…

> Surely the grandeur of the tragedy lies in the fact that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are ruined by precisely those qualities that make them great…All this is undermined by any suggestion that the Weird Sisters are in control of events. (qtd. Braunmuller 32)

Perhaps when Agate wrote ‘governing’ in reference to the witches, he was not too far off; the witches are involving themselves in affairs of state in suggesting the Macbeth will become the king. Furthermore, Shakespeare reconnects the murder of the king to James in a rambling aside by Lady Macbeth, as she says “Had he not resembled my father as he slept” (II.i.13), and since James stressed the relationship between King and Father, the king’s murder breaches many of James’s laws and violates several of the principles in his writings.
The father as head of household and king as head of state becomes inverted with power being seized by the witches and their prophecies. And with the influence of the female figures in the play—Lady Macbeth and the Weird Sisters—rising, so their gender becomes more difficult to distinguish as they cast aside traditional roles and acquire new unfeminine and anti-maternal positions and appearances. When Banquo first sees the witches, he is unsure of their gender: “You should be women/And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ that you are so” (I.iii.45-7). And Lady Macbeth, just before or simultaneous to her demonic possession, conjures spirits:

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here […]

Come to my woman’s breasts;

And take my milk for gall. (I.iv.40-8)

Here Lady Macbeth demands to become un-gendered, un-feminized, and de-maternalized. Her milk, a traditional symbol of motherhood and fertility, becomes the food of demons, forsaking the possibility of human offspring and reproduction as she has become ‘unsexed’ and her breasts become promised to the possessing spirits.6

The witch occupies the wicked opposite of the ideal mother/housewife, therefore operating as a figure of the “antihousewife”, who has “usurped household authority”7 (Purkiss 97, 104). And the image of the breastfeeding mother, which caused apprehension because “the line between the maternal body and that of the suckling child becomes impossible to draw” (99), is inverted into a Maternal Witch whose breasts give only sour or rancid blood, or in the case of Lady Macbeth, inconsumable gall (Purkiss 100; Shakespeare I.iv.40-8). This corporeal inconstancy leads the imagination to conjure

6 For more on breast milk and the connection to witchcraft, see chapter one.
7 See comparison between Lilith and the Witch as usurpers of the home, S. Hurwitz, Lilith, 87.
up the supposition that what is nurturing and wholesome can be potentially and unexpectedly shifted into something dreadful and foul.

The feminine demonic in Shakespeare's later plays appears more threatening than in the earlier appearances in his Elizabethan dramas: Sycorax is "so strong / That [she] could control the Moon" (V.i.314-315). And while Prospero uses his magic to re-balance power as the rightful Duke of Milan, while Sycorax's son, Caliban, attempts to take power of the island from Prospero, and Lady Macbeth and the three witches of Macbeth possess powers over the fate of the tragedy's characters. While the magic of Subtle, in Ben Jonson's The Alchemist, is fraudulent and trickery, Prospero's high magic influences the natural and supernatural world around him: he has control over storms and the elements, and over spirits and angels, such as Ariel. Prospero's occult practices make him the elite and literate magician, but Sycorax, Lady Macbeth, and the Weird Sisters exist in a liminal and unquantifiable space in the hierarchy, as their humanity and gender are questionable. Themes of the feminine witch and the feminine demonic are often attended by imagery of the animal and the anti-maternal, and these—existent in Shakespeare—are widespread across dramatic works which deal with witchcraft, demonology, and power.

4. 3. Thomas Dekker and William Rowley

The theme of the woman’s body transformed into the anti-maternal witch repeats later in the play of Thomas Dekker and William Rowley, The Witch of Edmonton, where Elizabeth Saywer, in becoming a witch, must make a pact with the devil in the form of a black dog—reminiscent of the black dog which attended on Cornelius Agrippa, some
said as his demonic familiar—who demands that their pact be “Seal’t with thy blood” (Dekker I.i.147). Here, the letting of the blood in the satanic pact, similar to the pact which Faustus signs in his own blood, becomes the demonstration of the leaky nature of the woman’s body, paralleling the suckling of the witch’s ‘teat’ later in the play:

My dear Tom-boy, welcome!

I am torn in pieces by a pack of curs

Clapped all upon me, and for want of thee.

Comfort me; though shalt have the teat anon. (IV.i.150-3)

And when the dog responds that he desires the ‘teat’ immediately, Elizabeth says that she’s all “dried up/ With cursing and madness, and have yet/ No blood to moisten these sweet lips of thine” (154-6). The tenderness expressed in her addresses to the dog, who she calls Tom or Tommy, contrasts with the language exchanged between herself and her neighbors. Her social position is exemplified in her monologue which places her, if not as complete victim, at least in a situation with which the audience may sympathize:

And why on me? Why should the envious world

Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?

‘Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,

And like a bow buckled and bent together

By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,

[...] Some call me witch,

And, being ignorant of myself, they go

About to teach me how to be one. (II.i.1-10)

She is “buckled and bent” because she has been beaten by those “more strong” than herself, and this sad fact becomes more apparent as Old Banks appears, threatens her and
then beats her for collecting sticks on his land in order to heat her home, so “[if] society does not exactly make witches it predisposes them to feel and behave in ways which expose them to the devil’s temptations […] and it is significant that she agrees to the pact only after the devil threatens to tear her to a thousand pieces” (II.i.20-30; Corbin 24-5).

*The Witch of Edmonton* places the figure of Elizabeth Saywer not in the position of wicked sorcerer, evil and obviously deserving of execution, but as a social victim of violence perpetrated by her community and threatened by the devil, and the playwrights “draw our attention to the circumstances of social alienation or even abuse towards suspects that often laid the foundation for suspicions of criminal conduct” (Garrett 327-8). The strict approach advocated by James becomes a dubious solution when the audience is faced with the ambiguous situation of Elizabeth, who threw curses at her neighbors and pledged herself to the devil through a blood oath, but who was driven to these ends by social exclusion, old age, and isolation. The play allows the audience “to hear what this communal crisis may have looked like from her stand point” (339). She is without friends or relatives and the audience can see that the promise of companionship and affection by Tom becomes irresistible, and it is all the more distressing when he abandons her to her execution.

The play, in offering this unconventional perspective on witchcraft and its origins, subverted the work of James and his attempts in *Daemonologie* to dispute the work of Reginald Scot:

in offering an alternative social logic for a witch’s stigmatized status, in proposing that the underlying factors here are poverty and illiteracy, the play actually echoes Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, widely recognized as the era’s most subversive
skeptical treatise about witchcraft. (Garrett 346)

Through dramatic creativity, the ideas of Reginald Scot—heavily censored and criticized by the regime of James—become manifest to a wider audience, and not to just the intellectual elite. James had taken many beliefs of witchcraft from common ‘superstitions’ and incorporated them into his demonology and own branch of theology which centered on witchcraft; now, however, the enlightened ideas of Scot, and his sociological theories regarding the foundations and stems of witchcraft and belief in demonic familiars return full circle to the Jacobean stage, to be viewed by all classes of the audience—educated or illiterate. In this way, ideas thought to be too subversive for printing in a treatise, began to appear within the popular medium of publicly performed drama.

**Conclusion**

What Gerald MacLean recognizes as “surreptitiously political” elements in Restoration masques (53) are also apparent in the earlier Stuart traditions of drama, where dramatic representations of witchcraft and the feminine demonic serve either to support Jacobean anti-witchcraft hegemonic political discourse, or to covertly undermine it. John Selden's groundbreaking work in the semiotic representations of gods and demons had a profound influence on the way demonologists, theologians and especially poets interpreted symbols such as the moon. This new theory of moon, as evolved/evolving goddess, challenged dominant assumptions regarding the origin of demons and the role of demonophobic-reliant and misogynist power models, as they appear in James's political and demonological treatise.
Playwrights and poets then reacted to both *Daemonologie* and Selden's *De Dis Syris*, as they connected ideas of the moon, femininity and power with witchcraft as represented by James, and with Lilith-Hecate-Luna as represented by Selden. Jonson, Dekker and Shakespeare incorporated these contemporary ideas into their dramas—possibly suggesting covert political messages which connected issues surrounding witchcraft and demonology to issues of power and the monarchy—which were tailored to their audience, be it public or political.
Figure 20

From John Leslie, *De Origine moribus & rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem*, pg 248, showing James at the 'crown' of the tree, with Banquo as his ancestor, at the base.
Chapter Four

Post-Selden Demonology and Examples of Lilith and her Variations in Mid-Seventeenth Century Scholarship and Poetry

Introduction

After the connection between gender, demonology, and power was outlined within the occult scholarship of James I and John Selden, writers of the mid-seventeenth century had a foundation upon which to build these semiotic relationships in later representations of Lilith and the feminine demonic in occult scholarship and poetry. This chapter outlines contemporary interest in Lilith and Judaic scholarship, especially as it relates to aspects of gender ambiguity and the feminine demonic. This section then goes on to examine those aspects and the influence of John Selden in the works of John Lightfoot, and mid-seventeenth century translations of the works of Samuel Marochitanus, Leona Modena, Jacques Gaffarel, and Sebastian Münster, which each incorporate various legends of Lilith into their texts. It then looks at these English translations and similarities in the rhetoric to make an argument for a chain of connection, starting from these continental works, translated by scholars such as Edmund Chilead, and working their way into the English scholarship of Walter Charleton, Edward Stillingfleet, and Henry More, whose style and rhetoric when writing about Lilith points to the direct influence of these contemporary English translations.

The chapter then moves to look at the consequence of this scholarship on the poetry of the middle century, especially examining the figure of Hecate, Diana, and
representations of the moon in the verse of Ben Jonson, Thomas Heywood, Robert Herrick, William Bosworth, and Nicholas Hookes, making a case for the presence Lilith in their works. Often, the imagery surrounding depictions of the moon and Hecate in their writing matches the imagery surrounding descriptions of Lilith in the work earlier English writers like John Selden and Edward Topsell. This evidences that Lilith was a more pervasive and persuasive figure in this period's scholarship and literature than was perhaps previously imagined, and her existence within seventeenth century elite demonology affected the way scholars interpreted the presence of feminine power and the feminine demonic within the symbols of the moon, the witch, and the dark.

1. John Selden's Influence

The “most learned person in England in the seventeenth century” was John Selden, claims Jason P. Rosenblatt in his monograph covering Selden's lesser studied works, mainly his rabbinical scholarship (3). This title is not without precedent in Selden's own time. John Lightfoot, in an epistle to the reader of his Works 1684, wrote that

> It is well known to the Studious how much light hath been held out by some Learned Men towards the explication of abundance of difficulties in Scripture, by the discovery of Jewish Customs and Antiquities, to which the New Testament speaketh and alludeth exceedingly copiously and frequently: I need not go far for examples of Learned Men that have been choicely happy in such illustrations: A matchless pair in our own Nation, second to
none in any Nation whatsoever, Mr. Hugh Broughton in the last Generation, and Mr. Selden in this, may be instances sufficient?

(2)

His influence upon antiquarianism and scholarship at the time was enormous, while his circle of correspondence included Ben Jonson, Leone Modena, John Lightfoot, and John Milton (Rosenblatt 7-8). He is included among the list of the great English intellectuals, as Edward Phillips would write in 1658:

[T]here will be occasion to peruse the Works of our ancient Poets, as Geffry Chaucer the greatest in his time, for the honour of our Nation: as also some of our more Modern Poets, as Spenser, Sidny, Draiton, Daniel, with our Reformers of the Scene, Johnson, Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher, and among the renowned Antiquaries, Cambden, Lambard, Spelman, Selden, and divers others.

The title page of Phillips's work displays an image of Selden featured as one of the bordering portraits around a globe, bearing the inscription “Novus orbis verborum”, or a new world of words (Fig. 22). Above and around the globe and description of the book is an illustration of both Oxford and Cambridge, as well as portraits of Chaucer, Spenser and scholars, demonstrating Selden's place amongst them. As the seventeenth century progresses, the study of hermeticism, neoplatonism, and especially Cabala still feature heavily in contemporary scholarship. The translations of occult texts from Latin and European language into English open up esoteric philosophy and wisdom to anglophone readership, while John Selden similarly translated the evolution of demons and gods into a semiotic progression, connecting vastly diverse pagan theologies into a singular,
universal anthropological text which could in turn could be, and certainly was, compared to Christianity.

Concepts of demonological semiosis found a perfect home within the philosophy of hermeticism, with its spheres of endless connections, influences and sympathies. The moon was no longer only Luna, Diana or Artemis, but also Venus, Mylitta, Persephone, Lilith, Eve, etc., opening up an extended chain of permutations and semiotic links. All of this has a profound influence on Milton's cosmology, which manifests itself in his early poetry. 1629 saw both the publication of Milton's “On the Morning of Christ's Nativity” and the republication of Selden's “treatise on comparative religion”, De Dis Syris, and Milton certainly drew on the scholarship of that “augmented second edition” (Carey 99; Rosenblatt 77). In piecing together information on Milton’s library, J. C. Boswell includes John Selden and other sources of Talmudic-Midrashic literature; in fact, Matthew Biberman notes that De Dis Syris was a “compendium of Hebraic and ‘Oriental’ lore” and “is the most likely source for Milton’s knowledge of the pagan deities and the acts associated with their worship” (94). Patrick Hume, the first editor of Milton's Paradise Lost, suggests readers curious about Astoreth and the crescent-horned Venus “to consult the learned Selden” in 1695 (Hume 27), as Selden was probably “Milton's principal source of Hebrew learning”, especially his De Dis Syris (Rosenblatt 72). The conclusion that Milton relied heavily upon Selden was made early in Milton studies and remains sound.

Just as contemporary scholars connected Astoreth, Lilith, Mylitta, Luna, etc, to Selden this chapter continues to draw on those relationships and influences to examine how the scholarship of De Dis Syris and the connections made within it can serve as a point through which to discuss the figure of Lilith. Selden's scholarship pervades and
spreads throughout England during the middle decades of the seventeenth century, as Lilith and her variations often seem to become figures of mystery and power on which his readers fixated.

**Interest in Lilith in the years following *De Dis Syris***

In 1629, John Lightfoot (1602-1675), a churchman and Hebraic scholar, published his *Ervin, Miscellanies, Christian and Judaicall, and others*, which speaks of Lilith as a sexual partner of Adam during the time of Adam's postlapsarian separation from Eve:

> So the Iewes most wickedly fable, that Adam begat children of Deuills. *Those hundred and thirtie years say they that Adam was separated from Eue, Deuills came to him and he ingendred with them, and begat Deuills, and spirits and fiends. And againe: Foure women are the mothers of Shedhim or Deuills, Lilith, Naamah, Ogereth and Mahlath.* (14)

Lightfoot adapts this partly from his rabbinical studies, as there is a similar passage in Talmudic literature, particularly from Erubin 1bb, relating of the time in which Adam was first expelled from Eden and separated from Eve.

> In all those years during which Adam was under the ban he begot ghosts and male demons and female demons, for it is said in scripture, And Adam lived a hundred a thirty years and begot a son in his own likeness, after his own image, from which it follows that until that time he did not beget in his own image (“Erubin” 18b).
The *Zohar*, a thirteenth century cabalist text which influenced the works of Pico della Mirandola, began to appear in the scholarship of early seventeenth century English writers such as Robert Fludd and then Henry More (Saurat 1922 136), and was used and cited as a direct source by scholars such as Hugh Broughton in his 1605 *An explication of the article katelthen eis haidou* (25, 39), his 1610 *A revocation of the holy Apocalyps* (35, 66, 83, &c.), and the 1611 *A require of agreement* (13, 35, 50, &c.). Citations to the Zohar continue throughout the early to mid-seventeenth century, with references to it appearing in the middle Welsh of William Morgan's translation of the bible, a London publication of 1620 (33, 34, 44). Citations of the Zohar also appear in John Trapp's influential five-volume commentaries on the old and new testaments (15), and Edward Leigh used it as a source for his *Annotations upon all the New Testament* (52n). In the Zohar and in the above passage, Naamah appears, and is another possible source for seventeenth century Adam's relationships with other women outside of his marriage with Eve; however, in Zoharic literature, Naamah becomes one of the offsprings of Adam and female demons, and is so beautiful that she succeeds in seducing both the angels Uzza and Azael (*Zohar* 1.19b).

Leone Modena, friend and correspondent to both John Milton and John Selden, earned a reputation as a learned rabbinical scholar who recognized the growing fascination with Lilith among Christian intellectuals. He published his *Historia de' riti Hebraici* in 1637, which Edmund Chilmead—having seen its value to English Christian-Hebraic interest—translated in 1650, in which Modena writes that the Zohar is the “treasury” of the learned ([xviii]). Though suggestions that Lilith existed before Adam are apparent in cabalistic literature, and in some contemporary poetry—like Hugo Grotius's *Adamus Exul* 1601, which places the moon as a pre-Eve figure engaged in a
power battle with Adam—it seems that Chilmead's translation of Modena is the first English text to state explicitly that Lilith is "Adam's First, though Dis-obedient Wife" ([xii]). His book continues the tradition of Lilith as a feared witch who murders newborn children before they are seven days old:

> When a Male Child is born to any one, his friends come to him, and make merry with him, wishing him much joy in it. Some of them use to set up certain Scrols, or Billets, in the four quarters of the Chamber, where the woman lies in, with these Four Words written in Hebrew: [...] Adam, Chavah: Chutz Lilith: that is to say: Adam, Eve: Out Lilith. And they also write the Names of Three Angels: conceiving this to be a means of defending the Child from the Strix, or Night-Witch. (201-202)

This description follows the development of Lilith from spirit, to wife, to Witch, to murderer of children. Much of Modena's interpretation is probably cited from Selden's De Dis Syris and Titles of Honor, including the incantation and description of the talisman with the Hebraic lettering (Selden 1614 164-165; 1617, 161). This night, which is called the "Watching Night", is the night before circumcision, after which the infant will be safe from the Night Demon, Lilith (Modena 202-203). In 1648, this description is repeated again almost exactly by Samuel Marochitanus:

> It is a custome (saith he) much taken up by us Jewes in Germany, that we make a circle round about in walls of the chamber where a woman lies in Childbed with Chalk or a coale; and write on every wall, Adam, Heva, Chutz Lilith: and he relates, how on the inner chamber door they write the names
of three Angels, as *Lilith* taught them. (21)

The difference between Samuel Marochitanus’s account and Leone Modena’s account is the idea that Lilith herself instructed the women: “as *Lilith* taught them”, putting Lilith in a position of more authority and creating an ambiguous relationship between Lilith and these earlier practitioners of cabalistic magic. She vacillates between the helping guide in angelic magic and the menace which needs to be expelled: “Chutz Lilith”.

Circumcision, and Hebraic tradition and custom, became an issue for debate during the middle of the seventeenth century, with Christian scholars taking increasing interest in the Humanistic concept of *ad fontes*. During this time of religious reform many Christians converted to Judaism, and formally joined Synagogues (Roth 149). Many Christians adopted Jewish customs such as circumcision, dietary changes, and the Saturday Sabbath; and in the 1650s these Jewish converts reached unprecedented numbers (Shapiro 27).

The semiotic connection between childbirth and circumcision, made in the passages cited by Leone Modena, John Selden, et al., relates to the widespread belief that Jewish men menstruated, as Cecco d’Ascoli wrote in the fourteenth century: “after the death of Christ all Jewish men, like women, suffer menstruation” (d’Ascoli, qtd. Resnick 244). As the bleeding of the menses pushes Jews beyond the realm of the normal human body their circumcision acts in the same way. It is not merely religion that separates the Jewish man from the Christian man, but there is a physical difference in Jewish circumcision. If women are at the far extreme in their lacking of a phallus, circumcised Jewish men are at least partially at risk of this feminization which potentially threatens order. In a collection of poems and wit, compiled in 1611 (attributed to Thomas Coryate), the connection between Jewishness and circumcision implies a threat to the Christian
masculinity through circumcision: “fly from the Jews, lest they circumcise thee” (qtd. Shapiro 115).

The connection between circumcision and menstruation implies a likeness between the circumcised man and the menstruating woman, emasculating the Jewish man. The blood caused by circumcision may also account for the myths of the menstruating Jews. However much anxiety circumcision caused among non-Jewish men, it was also probably comforting that differences in religious opinion manifested themselves in the body: a Christian was found to be a Christian if he were uncircumcised.

The idea that religious conviction may be found in the genitalia supports Matthew Biberman’s theory of the “Theo-sexual Matrix”—the direct connection between sexuality/gender and faith. Furthermore, identifying the “other” by their genitalia manifests itself in the witches’ mark, an anomaly on the body of supposed witches normally “found in very secret places” (Gaskill). Consequently, witches and Jews both could be recognized for their social/religious dissent in a way that blatantly connects them with anxieties surrounding sex and sexuality.

Both the demonized woman and the demonized Jew can find a reference point in the figure of Lilith. As a female figure who refused to take the submissive position to her husband, she represents the demonic power inversion outlined by an anxious James I. As a character in Jewish cabalistic mythology, she becomes representative of the dangers of the feminisation of circumcision. And as one of the many demons and witches of ancient legend metamorphosed to fit contemporary seventeenth century anxieties, Lilith stands as a scapegoat to receive blame for all the undesirable aspects of society. John Selden specifically mentions the vulnerability of a woman to demonic influence during childbirth, elucidating concurrent fears of maternity and the changing female body (1614.
165); these fears also exist within the rhetoric and tradition of anti-Semitism and the fear of witchcraft, both as symbols of inconsistency.

Imagery of secrecy and clandestinity surrounds whispered rumours against both witches and Jews, and “stories describing how Jews secretly threatened Christian society from within continued to flourish” (Shapiro 96). Witches and Jews, acting separately, performed the same task: the overthrow of Christianity. Trevor-Roper writes that just as anti-Semites build up, out of disconnected tidbits of scandal, their systematic mythology of ritual murder, poisoned wells and the world-wide conspiracy of the Elders of Zion, so the Hammers of Witches built up their systematic mythology of Satan’s kingdom and Satan’s accomplices out of the mental rubbish of peasant credulity and feminine hysteria. (41)

These armies working within the Witches’ Sabbath—which would become an “objective fact” by the early seventeenth century (14)—and the “Elders of Zion” create fear because they threaten the status quo. Trevor-Roper explains that these anxieties rose amidst a “feminine hysteria”, but that intense dread of the feminine was really the intense dread of change. Stanley Fish interprets the relationship between women and transformation: “The fear is not of one woman, or even women in general, but of the condition that women seem to embody, the condition of being open to interpretation, and therefore to change” (229).

Lilith as infanticidal witch illustrates contemporary anxieties about motherhood, maternity and the relationship between women and their own children, which led to stories about mothers abandoning, devouring or strangling their own offspring. And at the same time stories emerge surrounding the “Jew-Devil” figure, who murdered
misbehaving children. In a woodcut in Boaistuau Pierre's *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*, a Jew conjures up from a cauldron of blood a humanlike demon with the tail of a serpent entwining around itself (26; Fig. 23). Stuck in the ground, leaning over the cauldron, is a crucified boy whose blood has presumably been used for the ritual, while another figure shows two Jewish men attending on a sexually ambiguous devil (Fig. 24). These stories mirror tales of Lilith, painting a sharp dichotomy between different aspects of the feminine: Lilith as both mother and lover, but also as the anti-mother, the succubus, strangler, and androgynous devourer of children. Leone Modena's description of Lilith as outside, and potentially interrupting, the marriage of Adam and Eve, sets her apart from Eve, the good mother to all of mankind, and places her in opposition to her.

Though Marochitanus was probably familiar with the Selden and Modena, he claims to look to Sebastian Münster (Marochitanus 10), whose *The Messias of the Christians and Jewes* was written in 1539 in Hebrew, but translated for later readers into English by Paul Isaiah in 1655 not long after Samuel Marochitanus's citation. Münster's dissemination of the legend of Lilith takes the form of a conversation between a Christian and Jew, the Christian being extremely interested in the figure of Lilith. The Christian, having entered the Jew's home, asks

> Goe and I will follow you; for I have many things in my heart to speak to you, and now for a long time I have not entred the house of any Iew. What doth that white circle signifie, which I see written on the wals, round about the chamber, having this inscription? Tarry without thou *Lilith*. (9)

The Jew answers that the circle is to drive away the “Devill, lest he enter and hurt the infant newly borne”, and that the demonic danger comes from Lilith who is “a certaine
ghost, having the shape of an abortive, born of an impure birth, saving that he hath wings” (10). Here, Münster connects Lilith with Satan, and the flexibility in gender is reflected in Selden’s De Dis Syris, where the sexes of the gods are often indeterminable or changing. Similar to other stories, Adam “begat devils, spirits, and ghosts” when “came Lilith to Adam, hee not knowing, for he [Lilith/Satan] had not a body by which hee might bee knowne, and did preserve his [Adam's] seed from him”, for “he appeareth sometimes in the shape of a woman, & is also called Lilith, that is a night-ghost” (10-12; 20). In Münster’s version, there is an ambivalence surrounding the gender and actual physicality of Lilith, and it seems that this corporeal confusion allowed Lilith to gain an advantage over Adam. Paul Isaiah’s clear translation of the dubiety and obscurity surrounding Lilith’s body illustrates the contemporaries’ anxieties associated with gender, non-constant corporality, and the shift in hierarchy.

The same year that Edmund Chilmead translated Leone Modena’s Historia de’Riti Hebraici into English, Chilmead also began the translation of another continental cabalistic/occult text, Jacques Gaffarel’s Curiositez inouyes sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans (1629), for English audiences as Unheard of Curiosities Concerning the Talismanical Sculpture of the Persians (1650). Gaffarel places Lilith and the moon side by side as two figures of inconstant malevolence. Of the moon he writes that

They thought so diversely of It, as that when it was Full, they accounted it Fortunate, but when it was Horned, they thought it to be so Malignant, as that, if a Child were borne under some certaine of its Aspects, it died not long after. [...] Which moved the Wise Women among the Hebrewes, to write, or cause to be written up the Walls of their Bed-chamber, at the time of their
Falling in Travell these words, [...] *Adim, Chavah, Chouts Lilith*:

that is to say; *Let not Lilith enter here*. Now this *Lilith*, is no

other then the *Moon*; being a name derived from *Lailah*, which

signifies, *the Night*. (316-7)

Here Gaffarel connects the horned moon to Lilith, and makes a further connection to the
crescent moon symbol of Hecate, the queen of Witchcraft and the Moon. He explains

that this “*Demon, called Lilith*” has “some certaine Influences of the Moon”, and is
called *Lucina* among the Greeks and the “*Latines*”, and “they had heard say, that the
Moone being at the Full, was a very Favourable Planet to Women with Child” (317).

According to Gaffarel, the women who adhere to this traditional Hebraic belief

acknowledge their Good, or *Ill Fortune*, to have been [sic]

caused by this Starre [...] and that either by Its being in the Full,
or in the Wane: seeing that they called it by two names; by a

*Masculine*, *Fareach*, which signified, *Good Fortune*; and by a

*Feminine*, *Levanah*, which denoted *Ill Fortune*. (318)

The moon becomes a “Starre” which influences the fate of pregnant women in the mode

of traditional neoplatonism, where the stars as spheres and heavenly bodies directly affect
the fate of objects and people in the earthly sphere. Similar to Selden’s research which
claimed that the moon had two genders, and the characteristics of people could be
determined by which gender they attributed to it, in Jacques Gaffarel’s version, the
crescent, or incomplete, moon is the feminine, and the full or perfectly spherical moon is
the masculine. In this passage, the Fullness of the moon represents unchanging
perfection, masculinity and good fortune; however, when the moon is waning, or
changing, it becomes feminized and demonized as the bringer of ill fortune.
Walter Charleton took much of his information on Lilith from Jacques Gaffarel, though Charleton writes that Lilith is a figure “erroneously conceived” by him (201). Charleton argues that fate and death may only be dealt by the divine will of God, “upon the Decrees or resolves of his Providence”, and not by “any Third or Neutral Principle” like the “Jews Angelus mortiis [and] their terrible Devil Zilith [...] erroneously conceived by Gassarel (Vnheard of Curiosities, pag. 317) to be the same with Lucina of the Romans” (201). He even copies the wording of the Edmund Chilmead translation of Jacques Gaffarel and writes that “the Hebrew Wives, so soon as they fell in travel, caused this proscription to be written on the doore of their bed-chamber, Adim, Chavah, chouts Lilith; Adam, Eve, keep out Lilith” copying the Latinized spelling of the Hebrew from Gaffarel, and copying the translations from the margins of the 1650 translation (Charleton 201; Gaffarel 317).

Lilith falls under the category of neutral principles that do not influence the death and fate of man. Also, astrology has no effect on fate,

or the Numbers, Ideas, or grand Revolution of Plato; or the Malus Deus of the Manachees; or Helena, aliás Selene, of Simon Magus; or Hesiods Pandora; or the great Beldam Mylitta, aliás Alytta, of the Ethnicks; or the Turks Nassub, aliás Ctusura, vvhich signifies the Goddess Fortune; or Paracelsus his Anima mundi Platonica, or rather the Macrocosmical Harmony of the Universe, and the Microcosmical Concordance with the invisible signatures of the Ascendent; or that Hermetico-magical Lamp of life and death. (201)

Moving from the rhetoric and scholarship of Gaffarel, Charleton draws on the semiotic
nomenclature of Lilith from Selden’s *De Dis Syris* by involving her in a circle that includes Mylitta and Alytta, and in the same passage he connects Lilith to the spheres of “the Microcosmical Concordance” and the traditions of Hermeticism and the occultist and alchemist Paracelsus. These related connections are also notably feminine; he mentions Lilith alongside the infamous Helen of Troy (from Marlowe's *Faustus*), Pandora (whose curiosity brought evil into the world) and Fortune personified as an unpredictable goddess. Here, the connection between the inconsequential feminine forces is countered with the masculine force of the supreme deity, which is unmoved and unaltered by the affects of Pandora, Helen or Lilith. Though he does not utterly deny their existence, Charleton moves these female figures down the hierarchy to elevate the position of the singular male god, the father of the household and the state, essentially “neutral[izing]” feminine authority.

Not only do the female figures of Walter Charleton’s passage have their power neutralized, but the male magicians are feminized as they are associated with these legendary females. With their experimentation in cabalistic magic, in the eyes of Charleton, Paracelsus and Hermes Trismegistus are far too Judaized to withstand criticism of the emasculation that comes with presumed circumcision. By relating the notorious occultists, with all their alleged power and authority, to the demoted feminine figures of Pandora, Helen and Lilith, Charleton constructs a ladder which holds only purely masculine Christianity on the top, and feminized and more Hebraic versions of religion along the lower rungs.

In Edward Stillingfleet’s 1666 edition of *Origines Sacrae*, the author moves Hermes Trismegistus even further down the hierarchy by disputing his existence completely:
For *Hermes* himself, the story concerning him is so various and uncertain, that some have from henceforth questioned whether were such a person or no, because of the strangely different account that is given of him. (34)

Then he goes on to give a summary of Hermes Trismegistus’s work by saying that 

...he was not the *first* of his *kind*, who in the early days of the *Christian world*, obtruded upon the world that *cento* or confused mixture of the *Christian, Platonick, and the Ægyptian doctrine*, which is extant still under the name of *Hermes Tresmegistus*; whose vanity and falsehood hath been sufficiently detected by learned men. (35)

Stillingfleet gets his information from Selden and continuously cites both him and John Lightfoot (1662 165, 224, 279). In his *Irenicum*, “just after citing *De Diis*, he offers a sympathetic view of idolatry as the expression of a natural instinct to worship the divine” (Rosenblatt 268), and it is probable that the “learned men” to which he refers in his *Origines Sacrae* include John Selden.

**2. Lilith, Lamia, and the Moon**

In the above passage, Stillingfleet recognizes the connection between Christian, Platonic and ‘Egyptian’ philosophies within the teachings of Hermes. Henry More also noticed the resemblances between Christianity and older faiths in his *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (More 88), and he

betrays his own anxiety over the similarities between paganism
and Christianity in his parallel lives of Apollonius and Christ
as well as in his ‘onely-begotten son’ in an account taken from
Selden [...] out of Porphyrius. (Rosenblatt 274)

In his letter to Joseph Glanvill, More attacks *A Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* of 1677 by John Webster who takes a sceptical approach to the existence of witches. More adheres to a belief in the existence of magic and witchcraft, as he and Glanvill consider it vital evidence in support of spirits and the supernatural. In his preface to *A Blow to Modern Sadducism* of 1668, Glanvill writes

> though philosophical Discoures to justifie the common belief about witches, are nothing at all to them, or those of their measure: yet they are too seasonable, and necessary for our Age, in which Atheism is begun in Sadducism. And those that dare not bluntly say, *There is NO GOD*, content themselves, (for a fair step and Introduction) to deny there are SPIRITS, or WITCHES.

To Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, the denial of witchcraft is a gateway philosophy which would eventually lead to the denial of God. In rebuttal to John Webster’s scepticism, More claims that *A Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* is full of “marvellous weakness and gullerie” and that Webster himself is an “affected Caviller against almost all stories of Witchcraft and Apparitions” (1681 1-2).

More makes the connection between Lilith and witchcraft in his *Conjectura Cabbalistica* of 1653:

> The last strange creature in these direful solitudes, is לילית, which Interpreters ordinarily translate *Lamia*, a Witch. [...] But
the Jewes understand by הַדְּם a she devil, an enemy to women in childe-bed; whence it is, that they write on the walls of the room where they woman lies [...] Adam, Eve, out of doors

Lilith. (174)

Henry More connects Lamia, witch, devil and Lilith together through the Hebrew הַדְּם, essentially equating the various names and functions into one figure. He repeats the familiar incantation “Adam, Eve, out Lilith” in one of its different forms, placing him well within the tradition of Lilith research, and he cites John Selden (and often De Dis Syris) with respect in his Conjectura Cabbalistica, Explanation, and Tetractys anti-astrologica (185-186; 61, 81, 88-89; 13). His rhetoric even matches that of Selden when he describes the goddess Venus in his An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness:

This Venus which was worshipped so in several places, is conceived by some to be the Moon, as by Philochorus, who affirms her to be sacrificed to, if by men, in womens apparel, if by women, in mens apparel: Which Planet is rightly called the Queen of Heaven, and under the name of Hecate is also Maleficastum Venus, as Selden notes. Astarte also is the same Numen, served by her impure Priests, men of filthy and effeminate manners. (81-82)

Venus is the moon, the queen of heaven, Hecate and Astarte. These goddesses are also surrounded by confusion in gender and cross-dressing in his description of the sacrifice “if by women, in mens apparel”, which mirrors the flexibility of the moon’s gender in Selden’s De Dis Syris (149-150). However, this becomes a blurring of gender which
Henry More finds disturbing, “filthy and effeminate”. In his various works, Henry More also references Hugo Grotius often (1653 174-5), whose poem *Adamus Exul* connects the moon with a disobedient Lilith, whose refusal of the sexual hierarchy cast her in an arguably gender-ambiguous role which More found disturbing.

A couple of years after Henry More’s treatment of Lilith and Lamia in *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, Edward Topsell’s *History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents* (orig. London 1608) was re-published in 1658 where he explains the relationship between Lilith and Lamia:

To leave therefore these fables, and come to the true description of the Lamia, we have in hand. In the four and thirty chapter of Esay [Isaiah], we do finde this beast called *Lilith* in the *Hebrew*, and translated by the Ancients *Lamia*;

which is there threatened to possess *Babel*. (354)

Similar to Henry More and John Selden, Topsell notes the likeness between Judeo-Christian legend and ancient pagan myth. Topsell says that what appears in Isaiah 34.11 as Lilith is “translated by the Ancients” as Lamia, which in itself is a word that “hath many significations” (352). The poets of antiquity have signifiers and symbols surrounding Lilith/Lamia that correlate to those of the Babylonian and Hebraic tradition researched by John Selden; when Topsell writes that “When *Apollonius* and his companions travelled in a bright Moon-shine-night, they saw a certain apparition of *Phairies*, in *Latine* called *Lamia*” (352) he continues the convention of attaching Lilith with Lamia and connotations of the moon, and therefore Hecate and Venus.

Topsell’s story, originally in his 1607 publication, perhaps influenced Robert Burton's version, which appears in his lengthy work *Anatomy of Melancholy*, first
published in 1621. In Burton’s version “one *Menippus Lycius* a young man of 25 yeares of age, that going betwixt *Cenchreas* and *Corinth* met such a phantasine in the habit of a faire Gentlewoman” and was “able to moderate his passious, though not this of loue” and they agreed to marry (533). At the wedding

amongst other guests came *Apollonius*, who by some probable coniectures found her out to be a Serpent, a *Lamia*, and that all her furniture, was but as *Tantalus* gold described by *Homer*, no substance but meere illusions. When she sawe her selfe descried, she wept, and desired *Apollonius* to say nothing; but he would not be moued, and therevpon she, Plate, House, and all that was in it vanished in an instant. (533)

The possibility of marriage to a Lamia apparently caused great anxiety, and the fact that she was a beautiful woman who could entice Menippus Lycius with her charm illustrates the continual discomfort surrounding feminine charm, and possibly female sexuality. Her body is a serpent and all her possessions are illusions, connecting her to Satan as the great deceiver.

Robert Burton and Edward Topsell both write adaptations of Apollonius’s encounter with the Lamia, but Edward Topsell goes into much greater detail and offers various adaptations and versions of the legend. According to the poets, he says,

* Lamia was a beautiful woman, the daughter of Bellus and Lybia, which Jupiter loves, bringing Lybia into Italy, where he begot upon her many sons, but [...] jealous of her husband, destroyed them as soon as they were born, punishing Lamia also with a restless estate, that she should never be able to
sleep, but live night and day in continual mourning, for which occasion she also stealeth away and killeth the children of others. (352)

Here there are strong influences of the Lilith myth with the reference to Lamia as sleepless infant murderer, which could have influenced any of the later antiquarians of the Selden tradition as Sebastian Münster (9-10), Leona Modena (201-2), Edward Phillips, Henry More (1653 174), et al. incorporate this aspect of Lilith into their descriptions.

The Lamiae of Mormolyciae were “wonderful desirous of copulation with men, and loving their flesh above measure” they would devour them “without love or pity” and caused “the gold and silver plate and household stuffe, Cooks and Servants, to vanish all away”, descriptions which led Topsell to a perceptive conclusion that “the Lamiae are but Poetical allegories of beautiful Harlots, who after they have had their lust by men” take their pay which could eventually leave the paying client without gold, silver, servants or cooks (354). Edward Topsell’s connection between the Lamia and the courtesan is continued throughout the seventeenth century; in Francis Bacon wrote in 1627 that “Lamia the Curtisan had all power with Demetrius King of Macedon: And by her instigation he did many vniust & cruell Acts” (216), and in 1658 Edward Phillips would write a definition of Lamiae: “(lat.) certain Female spirits, or apparitions by some called fairies, there was also one Lamia, a Concubine of Demetrius, to whom the Thebans built a Temple, under the name of Lamia Venus” (Y3). Lamia—through her sexual power—was able to influence the king of Macedonia, creating an inversion of the gender and class hierarchy in which a courtesan assumes political authority in a way which would inevitably lead to “vniust” rule. All of these tales, the one by Edward Topsell and the later by Francis Bacon and Edward Phillips, demonstrate the dangers of female sexual
authority, and Venus as a symbol of this authority. Topsell describes the physical body of the Lamia (Fig. 23):

...it shall appear that it must needs be this Lamia, because of her great breasts, which are not competible, either to the Dragon or Sea-calves [...] having a womans face, and very beautiful, also very large and comely shapes on their breasts, such as cannot be counterfeited by the art of any Painter. [...] They are the swiftest of foot of all earthly Beasts, and by their fraud they overthrow men. For when as they see a man, they lay open their breasts, and by the beauty thereof, entice them to come near to conference, and so having them within their compass, they devour and kill them. (354)

The “overthrow” of this passage emphasizes the implied usurpation of power and reversal of roles involved in relationships with Lamia or the promiscuous “harlot”. Here they represent again the archetypal image of the Anti-housewife. Exposing their breasts and making themselves sexually available, these Lamiae “devour and kill” men perhaps after satisfying their harlot’s “lust”, a story which fuels a fear of the beautiful, alluring and promiscuous woman with the power to “entice” men into surrendering their power.

John Owen, in his 1668 Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews, connects the two myths surrounding Lilith: that she is the first wife of Adam before the creation of Eve, and that she appeared during Adam's 150 year separation from Eve to create demons. Owen calls these myths “vain speculations” regarding the angels which were passed “from the Jews unto the Christians”. He elaborates that

...from them also cameforth much of that curiosity and
superstition about Angels, which afterwards infected the minds of many in the Christian Church. [...] For to omit their monstrous figments about the Original of Devils, most of whom they affirm to have been begotten by Adam on Lilith before God formed Eve, and many to have issued from Adam and Eve, severally whilst they lived separate an 150 years after the death of Abel, as later follies... (143)

Interestingly, this passage seems not to place Lilith and Eve on opposing ends of the Mother-Witch spectrum, but relates that both women are responsible for the birth of demons, or perhaps that Adam himself was responsible. Here, it is not only Lilith who is the impurity who brings evil in the world, Eve—perhaps in a Pandoran sense—is responsible, as she has also been tainted by evil before she began to reproduce and therefore is just as capable as creating demons as Lilith.

However, the phrase “to have been begotten by Adam on Lilith before God formed Eve”, removes all agency from the feminine and places it onto the masculine Adam and God, creating a prepositional hierarchy in which Adam is above Lilith, or upon her. This physical and prepositional placement possibility alludes to the return to the missionary position, which was the legendary cause of Lilith and Adam's quarrel. This placement of action into the hands of Adam, while removing it from Lilith, differs from John Lightfoot's earlier Ervbhin of 1629 which claims that “Deuills came to him and he engendred with them” (14), placing just as much agency within the feminine which “came to him” as the masculine which “ingendred with them” [emphasis mine], whereby reproduction represents an equal balance between masculine and feminine; though he writes that “Four women are the mothers of Shedhim or Devils, Lilith, Naamah, Ogereth
Spoto 191

and Mahlath” (1684 995), Adam creates these demons with them, providing an illustration of equal agency between Adam and the four wicked women. Owen's three temporal stages were the backdrop for the creation of demons (one stage existing before the Fall), and each have common factors: man and woman, their union being perhaps the source of demons and sin. Here, even though Owen does not display Lilith as a wicked usurper bent on overthrowing the divine hierarchy, sex and sexuality are still among the prime anxieties.

These sexual anxieties appear in an earlier work of John Sadler, Olbia. The New Iland Lately Discovered of 1660, which takes influence from Sebastian Münster “and others” (368), in which an explanation may be offered to answer the problem posed by Owen of demons issuing from Eve. After the fall

Adam lost the Image of God, and became as a Beast, […] in, or with, his wife; hearkening to her; after the Serpent (who was Head, of all the Beasts;) had possessed her; or as it were, filled her with His Spawn; which she got, by hearing, and believing, That Beast; whence from Isha, she becometh Chavah, the Beast; yea, the Mother to all Animals, and Beasts.

(336)

According to Sadler, Eve is “possessed” by the Serpent and “filled” with his “spawn”, leaving Adam out of the procreative process. Here an inversion of the divine hierarchy becomes possible not through some outward treacherous act, but through merely “hearing, and believing” Adam loses his place in the hierarchy, as he loses the “Image of God” and becomes an animal. This transmutation from man to beast opens a new set of political order in which the serpent is the new leader who can impregnate Eve with evil
ideas.

Sadler paraphrases the words of the prophet Zechariah to give an example of the transformation that follows dissent: “First Isha, (So, the Woman was before she fell:) and then Eve (or Lilith, as before;) or a woman in an Epha, or Eva’ (336), and with this it seems as though he is saying that Lilith is a version of a prelapsarian Eve. And this woman is carried by two female stork-creatures “between Earth (which Here is set before) Heaven: into the Land of Shinaar; whence it first came. And there, it becometh, Mother of all Fornication” and then an Angel remarks that “This is their Ein, or likeness, or Image (or Type of that Image of the Woman Beast,) which must be, in all the Earth also. For, All the world Worship the Beast” in the end (336-7). Lilith/Eve becomes both the Mother of Animals and the Mother of Fornication and as her transformation pushes her down the hierarchy she loses her status as human and her potential to become the Mother of Mankind.

Sadler gives a jumbled list of hierarchies and potential transformations in the description of a spectrum which starts with “the Dragon; Then, the Beast; and the Image of the Beast; and the False Prophet also: directly opposite to God, and Man (who was made to Rule the Beast) with the Image of God, in Man or God-Man” (240). Later, when Adam loses the “Image of God” he also loses his authority to rule the beasts, as he has become one of them. So where the potential transformations could have led him up the great chain of being from Man to “Image of God, in Man” and finally to “God-Man”, he moves downward and becomes a beast with a new leader: the serpent.

In an earlier chapter, Sadler describes Lilith as an embodiment of darkness and a representation of the moon, taking his information from Hebraic legend:
In the *Earth Below*, Even in Paradise: The *Serpent*, the most
*subtile Beast*, and Head of all *Beasts*. Turning *Isha*, into *Eva*
[...]. Before whom, *Adam* only conversed with *Lilith*, the
*Nights Darkness*, and *Dreams*: which the Jewes call the
Mother of Hobgoblins; and make a white Circle with *Churtz
Lilith: Out Night*. (240)

Sadler takes the commonly retold story of Jewish women writing on the walls “Adam, Chavah: Chutz Lilith: that is to say: Adam, Eve: Out Lilith” (Modena, 201), and translates “Churtz Lilith” as “Out Night” equating Lilith completely with the night, a comparison that he says, “I have yet much more to speak when I come to *Lilith*, or *Eeve*, [as English call the *Night*, as *Even* to the Day:]” (Sadler, 244). Lilith is the night—as he translates it—but also darkness and dreams, which connects Lilith to sleep and the creation of demons while asleep, a connection which puts Lilith into the role of another nocturnal sexual predator: the succubus.

Lilith’s transformation into the succubus allows her to prey on the sleeping Adam and to become the “Mother of Hobgoblins”, or the “Mother to all Animals, and Beasts” (336). And her role as the personification of Night and Dreams, allows her to become the moon, a relationship amplified as John Salder explains that the Jews would “make a white Circle” and inscribe within it “Out Night” (240). The white circle of their anti-Lilith talisman reflects the white circle of the full moon, the state of the moon which inspires the most fear and primeval anxiety, but also perhaps the moon in its truest form, all waxing and waning being merely a variation on that original shape. Regarding the influence of the changing moon, especially on aspects of fertility, Thomas Heywood,
friend of Selden (Christianson), wrote in 1635:

For in her encrease all breeding things sprout and shoot out;

but in her decrease and waine are extenuated and weakened.

Moreover, in her growing, euery Humor and Spirit is augmented; the Ocean riseth and swelleth; and the earth is as it were animated with a generative heat, &c. (Heywood 184)

The shifting and changing of Lilith into animal and into the mother of demons and animals mirrors legends told about witches, another group of feared women, who engage in satanic orgiastic Sabbaths during the full moon and mutate into animals. Ulrich Molitor's late 15th century woodcut exemplifies the sexuality of this transformation from woman into animal (Fig. 26). Astride a wooden broom, women with the heads of animals fly through the air towards the witches Sabbath with their still-human legs uncovered and exposed. Another image, from Abraham Saur's late 16th century *Ein Kurtze Treue Warning* (Fig. 27), shows four naked witches at the Sabbath intertwined with goats and serpents in such a way that suggests human-animal copulation.

John Sadler says that before Eve “Adam only conversed with Lilith”, suggesting that Lilith and Eve are not variations on the same changing woman, but separate people, with Lilith preceeding Eve as Adam's first wife, an idea accessible before the printing of Sadler's work through the 1650 translation of the aforementioned *The History of the Rites* by Leone Modena. Though these various representations of Lilith influence one another, and the authors read and borrow from each other's works, Lilith appears slightly differently in each. There are motifs which develop as constants in the Lilith variations
—Lilith as moon; Lilith as first consort of Adam; Lilith as witch and demon; Lilith as whore—but overall, based on the widely diverging accounts of her attributes it is safe only to say that she was a strong presence in seventeenth century antiquarian scholarship, not just as an influence or an undercurrent driving anxieties surrounding the feminine, but as a figure who demanded research in her own right and who held the curiosities of some of the most influential religious scholars of early modern England.

3. The influence on poetry and literature

In Michael Drayton's The Battaile of Agincovrt of 1631, Ben Jonson composed a poem in which he continues to display an interest in the occult and in moon-lore when he mentions Lamia and other moon manifestations in prose. Interestingly, Jonson admits that though he is called a friend to Drayton, they have never actually written to each other. However, they have a connection in their influences:

It hath been question'd MICHAEL, if I be
A Friend at all; or, if at all, to thee:
Because, who make the question, have not seene
Those ambling visits, passe in verse, betweene
Thy Muse and mine, as they expect. 'Tis true:
You have not writ to me, nor I to you. (A3)

The “ambling visits” are not between the two scholars but between their two muses, and in verse. Jonson calls Drayton a friend because they are interested in and read the same
material. It is out of these connections that a web of research loosely forms, in which scholars make use of each other's work and through this are able to continue the occult and occult-interested connections that have supported occult philosophy and research throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

Though they often made use of the same sources, academic approaches to research in Lilith and Lamia often vary slightly in their perspective and in their agendas. Similarly, poetry emphasizes differing aspects of the goddess-made-demon. In Jonson's short poem for Drayton, the inconstant moon takes on many personalities.

I looke on Cynthia, and Syrenas sport,
As on two flowry Carpets, that did rise,
And with their grassy green restor'd mine eyes.
Yet give mee leave, to wonder at the birth
Of thy strange Moon-Calfe, both thy straine of
And Gossip-got acquaintance, as to vs, (mirth)
Thou hadst brought Lapland or old Cobalus,
Empusa, Lamia, or some Monster more

Then Affricke knew, or the full Grecian store!

The transformation of the moon from benign goddess, Cynthia, to “Lamia, or some Monster more” demonstrates the flexibility of the legend surrounding the moon. This flexibility and impermanence—fitting for the moon, which is always changing form—featured prominently in Selden's own writings, and Ben Jonson lifts the terminology for
this poetic passage almost directly from John Selden's 1618 *History of Tithes*. In the Preface, Selden writes

> And doubtlesse, the Priest had not a litle work to perswade them that what they should there meet with, was not an vnluckie *Empusa*, not a formidable *Mormo*, not a wanton *Cobalus*, not a mischieuous *Furie*, not indeed any thing that their idle brains, being such meer strangers to the abstrusest parts of Truth, had fashioned out.

Here we have instances of “Empusa” and “Cobalus” in a proximity to suggest strongly a connection between Jon Selden's and Ben Jonson's research. Jonson demonstrates his respect for Selden's *Titles of Honor* in a poem, “An Epistle to Master John Selden”, in which he writes: “What fables have you vexed, what truth redeemed./ Antiquities searched, opinions disesteemed” (39-40), and in which he writes of his friendship with Selden:

> Oh how I do count Among my comings in, and see it mount, The gain of two such friendships! Hayward and Selden! Two Names that so much understand! (78-81)

The term *empusa* appears fairly regularly in the seventeenth century. In Philemon Holland's 1603 translation of Plutarch's *Philosophie*, *empusa* is defined as “A certeine vaine and fantasticall illusion, sent by the divell, or as the Painims say, by *Hecate*”. Edward Topsell would include the Empusa in his description of Lamia (352), and
Thomas Bromhall wrote that the empusa is “an evil ghost, sent by Hecate to them that are in distresse, because she can transform her self into divers shapes” that “For now ’tis an Oxe, now a Mule, another while a very handsome woman. Where is it? I'le go near to it. But now ’tis no woman, ’tis now a dog; then ’tis Empusa” (21), and many others besides. However, “Cobalus” was a term that was much more difficult to reference. There do not seem to be many instances of the word except in Jonson's poem for Drayton and in the previously cited Selden, perhaps reinforcing the suggestion that Jonson drew directly from Selden for his moon mythology.

The poetic representation of the moon in the name Cynthia becomes a more sinister presence in the empusa, Lamia and “some Monster more” in Jonson's poem. Lilith, apart from the suggestion within Lamia, appears perhaps in the inclusion of the “Moon-Calfe”. Though the Oxford English Dictionary cites Jonson and Drayton's use of mooncalfe as falling under the definition of “a simpleton”, Shakespeare used this word in the Tempest to refer to a deformed monster (II.ii.135) and Jonson's use of the word could refer to European folk traditions that the moon could have an evil influence on unborn and infant children, bringing in an element of Lilith as child murderer and witch into his description of the moon.

One of the other rare instances of cobalus occurs in Heywood's The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells, a long poem containing individual books dedicated to each of the orders of the angels. In this poem, which draws on folklore and occult sources, he writes that the “Greeks and Germans call them Cobali,/ Others (because not full three hand-fulls hye)/ Nickname them Mountain-Dwarves;” (568). For his source on the cobali he cites Olaus Magnus, whose work features woodcuts of powerful witches casting spells on
men and being carried off into hell by Satan (Heywood 568). Heywood also cites occultists in the traditional line of Renaissance Neoplatonic and Hermetic philosophy, like Johannes Trithemius, Sebastian Münster, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Apollonius of Tyana—whose Neopythagorean thought influenced early modern occultism—and many others (568, 569, 573). To illustrate the similarities between Hecate and the moon, Heywood turns to Ovid, and offers his own translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, *lib. 7.:

Thou three-shap'd Hecate with me take part,

Who guilty of my vndertakings art,

Teaching what spels we Witches ought to vse,

And what rare Herbs out of the earth to chuse:

[...] And thee ὁ Moone, my Incantations can

Draw this or that way, make thee pale and wan.

(Heywood 260-1)

Hecate is the goddess of witchcraft here, who instructs witches on the appropriate herbs and spells in order to control nature; however, the “three-shaped” is similar to the “Thrice Formed” of Hermes Trismegistus, the greatest occult philosopher of antiquity. Heywood further connects to two figures, one male and one female: “if either wee adiusedly consider the velocitie of Spirits, or the admirable celerity of the Spheres” that has allowed the “Magitians [to] haue such speedy intelligence [...] of things done in the farthest and remotest places of the world” (261). The spirits that Hecate controls influence the cycle of the moon, and can therefore influence the earthly levels in the cosmic hierarchy, as magicians attempt to manipulate the spheres under the neoplatonic
and hermetic principle of “as above, so below”.

Heywood also shows the influence of the Psuedo-Dionysius the Areopagite in that he similarly fashions his divine hierarchy into nine 'orders', and because 'the below' is simply a mirror of 'the above', “Of the Rebellious there be Orders nine./ As corresponding with the Spirits Divine” (436). The fifth scale “attend the deform’d Witch, and damn’d Magition:/ And of these Satan’s chief”, and in the eighth order of the diabolic hierarchy emerges Astaroth: “The eighth includes Explorers that accuse:/ Those Astaroth doth as his Vassals vse” (436). In this way, Heywood succeeds in incorporating the mythology of witchcraft, Astaroth/Asarte/Lilith, and Satan with the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy of angels and the spheres. Though, the witch transforms herself and shapeshifts, she is incapable of elevating herself within the fixed set of diabolic levels; likewise, the philosophical magician, who looks to ancient ritual and the combination of mathematics and pagan religion, fails to raise himself to the divine spheres he aspires to.

A Lilith/Lamia-like creature appears later, the description of which is likely influenced by Topsell's 1607 History of Four-footed Beasts. Heywood writes:

A Virgin of surpassing beauty plac’t,

(Incomparable vpward from the wast)

[… ] But all below the girdle seem’d to twine

About the chaire, and was meere serpentine. (571)

Who says to her male visitor that she is

Thus transform'd, my fortunes overthrowne,
And I despoyl'd both of my state and Crowne.

But were I by a yong man three times kist

[...] He should recieue this masse, now in my power. (572)

The “overthrowne” of Heywood offers a warning to the reader familiar with Topsell, who remembers that these scaly women “overthrow men” using their beautiful breasts, as by the beauty thereof, entice them to come near to conference, and so having them within their compass, they devour and kill them. (Topsell 534)

This fate nearly falls upon the almost-victim of Heywood's passage, as he attempts to fulfil the snake-woman's request:

Twice (as he said) he stroue her lips to touch;

But in th'attempt her gesture appear'd such,

Her face so alter'd, her aspect so grim,

Her chattering teeth so gnashing, as if him

She would have instantly deuour'd it seem'd. (572)

The connection between power, sexuality and Lamia is more apparent in Heywood's passage than in Topsell's. In Topsell, the men are drawn to her only because of her beautiful breasts, but in Heywood's description the quest for power leads to a sexual encounter and the potentiality of being 'overthrowne' and devoured. Luckily for the “yong man” in Heywood's story, he saw that “so terrible his offer was,/ that for the worlds wealth added to that masse,/ he durst not on the like exploit be sent” and abandoned the mission, saving himself from becoming a meal (572).

In 1649 Richard Brome—formerly a manservant to Ben Jonson, and “probably his
amanuensis and perhaps his literary protégé” (Kastan vii)—collected a series of elegies to commemorate the death of Henry Hastings, who died on the eve of his wedding in 1649 (McWilliams 273). In this anthology, one of the contributors, Robert Herrick, continues the theme of Lilith/Lamia/Hecate as part of the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchical model of Hell, where men who have succumbed to worldly temptations, and have “drown'd in this wilde Sea”, must be sent:

For those is kept the Gulf of Hecate;
Where, with their own contagion they are fed;
And there do punish, and are punished.
This known, the rest of thy sad story tell,
When on the Flood that nine times circles Hell. (39)
Herrick creates a geography in which hell is divided into layers which are separated by nine circling floods, and in part of these waters, or perhaps in the land area around the water is the “Gulf of Hecate” tied into the idea of infernal waters. Here the souls of wanton materialism feast on their own contagion and disease, in a cannibalistic demonstration similar to Edmund Spenser's earlier depiction of Errour, a half-human and half-snake woman who lures Redcrosse into her cave and is devoured by her own offspring, much in the same way that the serpent-like woman of Heywood lured men through “that charmed dore” in attempt to consume them (Spenser 6-10; Heywood 572). Heywood's and Herrick's depictions allow Spenser's allegory for error and dangerous “wandering” (6) to be fashioned as connected with the themes of Hecate and Lilith. They have taken a figure preceding the publication of Topsell's and Selden's work, and incorporated these new demonological and witchcraft elements into the legend,

8 The 1596 edition has page 10 incorrectly labelled as page 18.
furthering the availability of semiotic connections between these various figures.

Another writer, William Bosworth—publishing his *The Chast and Lost Lovers* in 1651, reprinted in 1653—creates a connection between Hecate, Diana and other moon figures in verse. A woman who is desperate for the knowledge of her future lover

Would weep forth prayers, with which the air abounds.

Thence would she unto *Venus* Altar hast,

Where when the myrrhe and odors she had plac't,

And mixing plaints with the perfuming flame,

Grant me great Queen of Love to know his name.

Thence would she unto *Dian's* Altar hie.

And do the like, and thence to *Cupid* flie,

But still return'd inrag'd, amaz'd, unblest,

Till fairest *Hecate* heard her request. (17)

Venus, Diana and Hecate—Love, Moon, and Magic—are three separate goddesses, but are joined for comparison and connection through their juxtaposition in Bosworth's poem. After her pleas to both Venus and Diana have failed, Hecate steps in to aid the curious and love-sick girl. Perhaps her attempts at gaining the attention of Venus and Diana have failed, where her pleas to Hecate succeed, because she uses the traps and methods of Hecate, magic, as her form of worship and sacrifice; she mixes “myrrhe and odors” with herbs and perfumes to encourage the sympathetic connections between herself and the goddess of magic and witchcraft, succeeding: “*Hecate* heard her request”.

In Bosworth's version, Hecate stands in a precarious position between helpful and harmful; though she is “fairest”—a word which suggests goodness—she also arrives ambiguously directly after the description of the girl as “unblest” and “inrag'd”, inferring
that Hecate's appearance follows these conditions. Hecate and the girl are both “unblest”, unholy and un-Christian, and “inrag'd” the flames of sin, and hell. Though writers often connect Hecate and Lilith with Diana, Cynthia, Venus and other figures of Love and the Moon, it becomes clear that Hecate and Lilith are the darker side of these manifestations, more closely related to witchcraft and demonology than the innocent pagan worship of the virgin moon.

These connections between Hecate, Lilith, witchcraft and Eve continue throughout the seventeenth century. Nicholas Hookes's 1653 *Amanda, A Sacrifice to an Unknown Goddess*, mostly containing verses to a nonexisting lover, is also printed with other various poems and exercises by Hooke. One poem, “Epistola Rosamundae ad HENRICUM secndum [sic] Latinus versibus reddita”, by a M. D. Esquire, has both translations side by side, one in English—presumably translated by Hookes—and one in Latin, that deal with themes and rhetoric so similar that it would seem that the English is a direct translation from the Latin (Fig. 28). However, they are very different and warrant separate translations. The English of Nicholas Hookes's poem reads:

O no, that wicked woman wrought by thee,
My tempter was to that forbidden tree:
That subtile serpent, that seducing devil,
Which bade me taste the fruit of good and evil;
That Circe by whose magick I was charm'd,
And to this monstrous shape am thus transform'd;
That viprous Hag, that foe to her own kinde. (168)

He has supplied the Latin text, which reads:

Compulit meas in *glucupicra* manus,
Candida illa, ferox Medea, venefica Circe,
Quae magico succo pocula mista dedit;
Quae monstri faciem dedit hanc monstrosior ipsa;
Ipsa Hecate, generi trux inimica suo. (169).

However, an English translation (rendered unpoetically) from the Latin has noticeable differences from his own English version:

She pushed the sweet thing into my hands,
That sorceress Candidia, fierce Medea, witch Circe,
Which she gave with magical juice and mixed potion,
Which she herself gave, I would consider the latter an evil omen more monstrous,
Than Hecate herself, savage enemy to her own kind. (169)

The wide variances between Hookes's English translation and the Latin allow for the English to be taken as his interpretation of the Latin, instead of a direct translation of the text. The names of sorceresses and witches like Hecate, Medea and Candida, which occur in the Latin, are excluded from the English translation and only Circe appears. Hecate appears as “Hag” with the capitalized “H” creating a link between the two words; Hecate then becomes the old crone, or woman, the ugly witch instead of the goddess and patron of magic and the moon. The “generi trux inimica suo” could relate to Lilith and the Lamia, who both inspire fear in pregnant woman and new mothers, fearing for the lives of their infant children and casting talismans (“Out Lilith”) to hang around the newborn's bed.

Hookes succeeds in connecting these pagan sorceresses, witches and goddesses to the Biblical Fall of Man, aligning “the wicked woman” with all the wicked women, hags
and witches from legend, allowing the blatant link between Eve, her relationship with the serpent and witchcraft inspired by the moon (Hecate). The “viprous Hag” is the “devillish spirit to damne the weaker minde/ Our frailities plague our sexes only curse” (168), reminiscent of other seventeenth century writers who have blamed the fall on the “weaker minde” of Eve, such as Weemse (22) and James in his Daemonologie (43-44). Of course, there are many examples of Hecate being named and translated from Latin and English. In 1660 John Boys made an English translation of the sixth book of Virgil's Æneas, in which he writes that Hecate “In Heav'n and Hell [is] a pow'rfull Deitie” (10), and includes an extended endnote on the subject where he explains that

> Hecate is a generickall word, applicable to many particulars; for by it sometimes we are to understand Luna, sometimes Diana, and sometimes Proserpina: In fine, when it is applied to Heaven, it is taken for Luna, when to Earth for Diana, when to Hell for Proserpine. […] At the increase she is said to be in heaven, […] and in the wane to decline into darknesse, and as it were to the infernal Masions. (72)

Hecate, less of an individual figure, is more of a theme which embodies the various representations of the moon, as both benign (Luna and Diana) and evil (Proserpine and Lilith). The moon's inconstancy creates the possibility for these diverging representations, which Boys personifies in various pagan deities, but which Hookes seems to want to eject from English translations.

Hookes's avoidance of naming the sorceresses in the English, while including them in the Latin, could be a statement about what is acceptable in an Anglicised literature, and what must remain in the Latin, and therefore in the antiquated past. The
English translation possesses heavier Biblical connotations, with the reference to the serpent, the Devil, and the “fruit of good and evil”, which the Latin version lacks, though it itself is heavier in classical and pagan references like cacodemons, Styx and Medea (168-169); when the mind shift from the English on the first page to the Latin on the second page, it is not merely a shift in language but also in a linguistic philosophy which forces antiquated mythologies into older languages, allowing the reader to become distanced from its unpopular legends which are out of synch with modern seventeenth century life.

**Conclusion**

Lilith and the Lamia are frequent occurrences in seventeenth century literature and poetry, especially surrounding the themes of gender and social hierarchy and the possible inversion of that hierarchy. Selden had a profound impact on antiquarian scholarship dealing with demonic subjects in the decades that followed his *De Dis Syris* of 1617, and would continue to influence poetry until the end of the century. Though different writers variously personalize the subject of Lilith and female demonic power, most instances of Lilith and Lamia can be traced back to Selden's anthropological text and the individual changes recognized from that starting point, as he, more than any other writer, made Lilith accessible to the general population of English scholars and researchers, writing from his prison room in the Tower of London, imprisoned because of his own political dissent (Christianson).

He set up a theme of the Lilith figure which allowed its appearance to have the function of an archetype, studied alongside its semiotic signifiers of Venus, Diana, the
witch, and the moon. Selden's *De Dis Syris* and Leona Modena's *Historia de’ riti Hebraici* show how these methods of semiosis and thought existed within early seventeenth century England, and the wide influence of their work evidences the pervasion of Lilith within occult study and occult inspired representations of the moon which greatly prevailed within demonology and poetry in the following decades, and would continue to have an effect on the poetry of the late seventeenth century.
Fig. 23

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

Witches becoming animals riding to the Sabbath

From Ulrich Molitor's Von den Unholden und Hexen- Constance 1489.
Fig. 27

Woodcut showing witches at the Sabbath with animals

Abraham Saur's *Ein Kurtze Treue Warning*, Frankfurt 1582
addressed to the senses, it is said, that the senses are the

English and Latin translation side by side for comparison in Nicholas Hooke's *Amanda*,

Chapter Five

Occulting the occult: Milton, Lilith, and elite demonology

Introduction

Long before Milton put his thoughts towards an epic poem based on the Fall in Genesis—with all its attendant spirits and devils—he was already occasionally composing within the tradition of occult inspired poetry. His interest in Hebraic traditions and literature have been well debated and documented in the twentieth century, with varying levels of determination to prove his education either in the Hebrew language or in Hebraic occultism. In the 1920s, Denis Saurat claimed that the Zohar and other cabalistic literature were central in forming Milton's conception of cosmology and God, and that he was well read in occult philosophy (1922 136-151; 1925). In the following years Milton scholars took up the challenge of confirming or refuting his assertion. In 1955, within a published series of essays and responses between Saurat and W. A. Sewell, Sewell admits that though he believes that Milton's poetry is less 'obscure' than Saurat claims it to be, Saurat “may well be right in supposing that Milton had read the Zohar and used it for his own purposes” (76). Writing in 1955 and influenced by earlier debates in Milton's occult scholarship, R. T. Zwi Werblowsky explains that Milton was interested in Pico della Mirandola, Robert Fludd and Johannes Reuchlin (111), and that

The influence of Kabbalism on the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century is beyond any doubt. […] When applied to Milton, this means that he too, like other seventeenth-century
authors, accepted important doctrines from kabbalism as he did from Neoplatonism. (97)

Since these early conversations, scholars such as John Arthos, Judith Yarnall, Jean Graham, Philip Beitchman and many others have all used occult traditions and legends to read and interpret Milton's poetry.

However, some readers of Milton, like Samuel Stollman and Leonard Mendelsohn, claim that Milton had little knowledge or interest in Hebrew, perhaps in an attempt, as Michael Biberman would suggest, to keep Milton orthodox and Christian.

Through the workings of this critical discourse, the perceived Jewish element in Milton is first contained and then largely erased, a process that appears to be an effort to keep Milton Christian. [...] As discussion of Milton’s Semitic sources disappears into increasingly specialized scholarly channels, its absence contributes to the erosion of Milton’s cultural capital within the large academic community. (132)

Joseph Anthony Wittreich also notices that “almost immediately there are efforts to thwart, block, and hide a certain consciousness in Milton’s poetry” (28). From the commencement of Milton criticism a theme emerges to subdue or negate any current of dissidence, “voiding what is controversial in it” (29). Wittreich goes on to say that in the case of Paradise Lost anything that erodes patriarchal values and culture would be “controversial”: anything discomfiting in its theology; anything that veers towards politics; anything that suggests male inadequacy or female independence, equality, and virtue;
anything supportive of a feminist outlook. (29)

Both Biberman and Wittreich believe that the major problem with Milton criticism is that it forces an interpretation in unwavering support of the Masculine Christian, representing only one quadrant of what Biberman calls the Theo-Sexual Matrix, masculine and feminine along one axis, and Christian and Judaic along another.

Though there is discordance in the field on Milton and Judaic knowledge, critics and chroniclers alike have noted that Christian-Hebraic scholars and occultists were vital influences on Milton’s theology and writing. In piecing together information on Milton’s library, J. C. Boswell includes John Selden and other bits of Talmudic-Midrashic and occult literature, such as the writing of Robert Fludd, Cornelius Agrippa, Jacob Cats, Marsilio Ficino, (3, 24, 35, 44, 83, 100 104, 174, 176, 190, 220) and many others which incorporate occult ideas and which specifically address Lilith, such as John Selden, Sebastian Münster, Henry More and Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew and student (Baldwin 462). Biberman notes that Selden’s De Dis Syris (1617) “is the most likely source for Milton’s knowledge of the pagan deities and the acts associated with their worship” (94). This chapter continues in this twentieth and twenty-first century tradition, looking at how Milton displays an interest in occultism in his earlier works—from his translation of Psalm 136 and his poem “In Obitum Procancellari Medici” to Comus and “At a Solemn Music”— and ends with an investigation of the feminine demonic and an examination of the possibility of a Lilith-Eve figure in Paradise Lost.

Though there often seem to be attempts to pull Milton studies away from the question of Milton’s Hebrew sources, many prominent Milton scholars still read the Cabala into Milton’s texts. James Grantham Turner argues that all “the most marginal and perverse legends of paganism, Gnosticism, and Rabbinical exegesis […] can be
found openly in *Paradise Lost*” (172), and Dennis Saurat similarly claims that “the whole of Milton’s philosophy is found in the Kabbalah” (1925 280), and

that Milton could not be ignorant of the existence of the Kabbalah. Unanimous tradition and even the statement of the poet himself⁹ leave us no doubt that he was able to read the Aramaean text of the *Zohar*; and we know Milton sufficiently well to be sure that, if once he became interested in the Kabbalah, he would go straight to the main text with his usual contempt for commentators, since the text was accessible. In such circumstances [it is] proof that Milton knew the *Zohar.* (281-2)

Whether or not Milton was able to read Cabalistic literature in its original form—though from the evidence of his own claims, I would say that he could—Early Modern Literature was teeming with Hebraic ideas and curiosities on which Milton could draw. Biberman echoes Saurat’s claim and writes that “Milton’s interest in Hebrew, for instance, is to be understood not as a behaviour indicative of an individual flirting with Jewish beliefs, but foremost as a sign of general Renaissance erudition” (130). Therefore, it was not uncommon for scholars to study Hebrew, and with a cornucopia of Judaic texts to draw upon, access to information on Hebriac demonology and Lilith among English speakers (and certainly among Hebrew speakers) became much easier.

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⁹ Saurat here refers to “‘Apology for Smectymnuus’ (Prose Works, iii. 131), where Milton quotes the targumists; ‘Of Education’ (Prose Works, iii. 473), where he recommends the study of Aramaean; and Phillips’s statement (quoted in Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, Oxford, 1905, i. 145).”
1. Translation of the Psalms and Milton's literature written while at Cambridge

Early in his literary life, Milton showed an interest in Hebrew and occult-leaning literature. In 1618, his tutor, Thomas Young, gave him a Hebrew bible (Flannagan), which perhaps began his Hebraic learning, though the debate around the quality of Milton's Hebrew has been surviving and continuing for at least 150 years (L. Miller 41), and though Edward C. Baldwin would claim that he “undoubtedly knew more about Hebrew than Pope did about Greek” (462). In Milton's 1648 translation of Psalm 80 is full of embellishments that display his predilection towards the poetic over the literal (perhaps a precursor to Milton's notorious embellishments of Genesis in Paradise Lost), as he elaborates on much of the literal translation to create what to him must have appeared to be a fuller picture. For example, though Milton translates a section of the text as “That sitt'st between the Cherubs bright/ Between their wings outspread” (ll. 5-6), the original Hebrew has merely “dwelling in the cherubim”, the rest is Milton's addition (Baldwin 459). In his earlier Psalm 136, from 1624, Milton similarly embellishes the original, adding his own poetic flair to almost every passage, and in particular to the passage about the moon. Where Milton writes

The horned moon to shine by night,

Amongst her spangled sisters bright.

For, &c. (33-35).

The literal translation of Psalm 136:9 looks more like “The moon and stars to rule by night, For to the age [is] His kindness” (Book of Psalms 136:9), showing that the “horned moon” was Milton's own addition and that he was heavily influenced by traditions which depicted the moon as “horned”.
In John Carey's edition of Milton's poems, he writes that the reference to the horned moon is from Spenser's *Faerie Queen* IV vi 43 (8n); however, this 'horned moon' appears at a moment of sadness and separation in the *Faerie Queen*—when Argetall leaves Britomart and sets out on his quest—and not a moment of Godly unity as is suggested by the content of Psalm 136. Also, Milton has changed 'rule' to 'shine', removing the feminine power that is more explicit in the original Hebrew, with the Latin being subverted to merely shining. These two observations make possible a different approach towards the reading of 'horned moon' in Milton, a reading which is following the tradition of earlier poets who had also experimented with occult-inspired imagery, and suggests that he was perhaps even desirous to place himself within that convention developed by Edmund Spenser, Robert Anton—also at Cambridge—(24), and George Chapman (D2), all of whom used the motif of the “horned moon” in poetry with occult content, and all written in the decades just preceding Milton's “Psalm 136”.

A few years later, while still studying at Cambridge, Milton wrote *In Obitum Procancellarii Medici [On the Death of the Vice-Chancellor, a Doctor]*, at the age of 18, which contains references to Hecate as a possible power that could cheat death.

Si triste fatum verba Hecatēia

Fugare possint, Telegoni parens

Vixisset infamis, potentique

Aegiali soror usa virga. (17-20)

[If the words of Hecate could cause sad fate to flee,

The disreputable parent would have lived

and the sister of Aegialis used her powerful wand.]

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10 Though in the 1645 and 1673 publications the poem is headed with *Anno aetatis 16*, this is an error, as Milton was nearly 18 when Dr John Gostlin, the Vice-Chancellor, died (Carey 30).
Here Milton makes use of Hecate, Circe (Telegonus's mother), and Medea (Aegialis's sister and Circe's niece); however, though many translators\footnote{The Riverside Press 1899 edition of Milton's poetry included Medea and Circe by name, but translated “verba Hecatēia” as “words of witchcraft” (346), while John Carey translated the same passage similarly as “spells of witchcraft” (33); John T. Shawcross's translation favors the more literal “incantations of Hecate”, while Lawrence Revard keeps with “Hecate's words” (207).} of this poem neglect to translate “Hecatēia” as the literal “of Hecate”—and instead opt for the less specific “of witchcraft”—Milton's decision to name Hecate is important as it displays his early interest in occult and folkloric traditions. By naming her directly, Milton shows his precocious knowledge of occult nomenclature early on, a knowledge that he would develop and continue to appear occasionally in his poetry throughout his literary career.

Interestingly, neither the charms and spells of Circe or Medea are sufficient enough to keep hold of their male lovers, Odysseus and Jason, and a 1566 translation of Seneca's play Medea could have offered Milton some of the material for his poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{O threfolde shapen } & \text{Hecate} \\
\text{that sendest furthe thy lyght,} \\
\text{Unto thy sylent Sacryfyse} \\
\text{that offered is by nyght. (1)} \\
[& \ldots] \\
\text{Request the ayde of } & \text{Hecate} \\
\text{is redynes prepare} \\
\text{The lamentable sacryfyce,} \\
\text{vpon the blaodye Aare. (28v)}
\end{align*}
\]

Here Medea invokes thrice-formed Hecate, a name which is very reminiscent of thrice-great Hermes but also of an unholy trinity, and connects her to the night-time ritual of witchcraft. Later on the “lamentable sacryfyce” attaches Hecate and Medea's ritual to
human sacrifice and child murder, as Medea takes revenge on Jason by murdering him and their children together. Circe is more commonly known for her use of the wand, not Medea (Revard 206n), and Milton's inclusion of the wand when writing about Medea is confusing, but could be explained as an attempt to equate the two forms of magic—poison and wands—as both equally nefarious, as they were both used against their lovers. As Circe is seen as traditionally a more benign witch, while Medea a more malicious one, Milton might be juxtaposing both magics to prove them both ineffectual (though, in the end Medea did succeed in killing Jason, but not in keeping his love).

In Obitum contains another reference to the dangers of using magic for love by the reference to Hercules's death earlier in the poem.

Si destinatam pellere dextra

Mortem valeret, non ferus Hercules

Nessi venenatus cruore

Aemathia iacuisset Oeta. (9-12)

[If the right hand arm was strong enough

To beat a destined death, the wild Hercules

would not have been thrown down on Emathian Oeta,

poisoned by the blood of Nessus.]

This passage alludes to another example of a woman using magic in an attempt to gain or keep the love of a man, which goes disastrously wrong; Hercules's wife sent him a shirt poisoned with the blood of the centaur Nessus, thinking that the blood would work as a love charm (Revard 204n). In this relatively short poem, Milton repeats the theme of unsuccessful witchcraft, which initially attempts to secure the love of a man, but eventually leads to his death.
Revard explains Hecate as “the infernal aspect of the triple goddess (Luna, Diana, Hecate)” (206n), and Milton continues with his use of the various aspects of this goddess in his 1628 poem *De Idea Platonica quemadmodum Aristoteles intellexit* [On the Platonic Idea as understood by Aristotle], as one of the goddesses he invokes in the first line could be Diana. MacKellar writes

> The reason for calling on Diana and her nymphs to explain the problem of the idea, or archetype, of man is that, as Lucina, she presided over childbirth, and might possibly know the being which served as a pattern for the human race, whose members one by one she ushered into the world. (303n)

In these two poems, *In Obitum* and *De Idea Platonica*, the dual aspects of the Diana-Luna-Hecate deity are exhibited to show both the nurturing and destructive properties of the moon goddess. In this poem, she represents the life-giving features of this triple goddess, so that Milton can begin the poem with birth, a reproduction of an original form, in order to discuss Aristotle's view on Plato's Ideal Form. Milton mentions the geocentric model of the ten spheres in order to joke that perhaps God inhabits the moon, or sleeps near the river Lethe (16-20). He continues

> Non hunc sacerdos novit Assyrius, licet
> Longos vetusti commemoret atavos Nini,
> Priscumque Belon, inclytumque Osiridem.
> Non ille trino gloriosus nomine
> Ter magnus Hermes (ut sit arcani scient)
> Talem reliquit Isidis cultoribus. (29-34)

[ Assyrian priest did not know of him, although
he remembered the long ancestry of the aged Ninus
and ancient Belus, and the illustrious Osiris.
Not even that one glorious for his triple name,
The thrice-great Hermes (with his arcane knowledge),
relinquished the like to the worshippers of Isis.]

This passage shows Milton's growing interest in the occult. Here, platonic philosophy becomes connected slightly with neoplatonic philosophy with the mention of the Assyrian priest, who Carey claims is Hierombalus, whose writings were preserved in a fragment from the neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, and then in Eusebius, having written, among other things, a treatise against Hierocles, the Roman governor and neoplatonic philosopher (Carey 70n).

Here Hermes Trismegistus makes his first appearance by name in Milton's poetry, and this evidences Milton's interest in occultism and connects him with the tradition of Hermetic philosophy as he experiments in his early poetry. Though some editors have merely provided a note of “god of dreams” to explain to the reader the significance of this allusion (Shawcross 67n), the full importance of this addition is that it suggests that Milton is versed not only in classical mythology, but also the various shifts and transformations that have taken place as it had assimilated Near Eastern mysticism and folklore into its traditions. His knowledge of Hermes could have come from Selden in his Titles of Honor, where Selden quotes Isis explaining the spheres and levels of the universe and the beings that inhabit them.

_Hermes_ (whom some dare affirm ancientoer then _Moses_; and the Egyptians accounted as a God) _Isis_ is personated thus instructing _Horus:_ *Whereas, my sonne, there are foure places*
in the Vniuerse subiect to an immutable law and command; that is, the supreme Heauen, the Orbes, the Aire, and the whole Earth. Above, my sonne, in the supreme heauens the Gods (vnderstand Angels and ministring spirits) haue their habitation; who, as all things els, are ruled by the Maker of all things. In the Orbes, the Starres are; gouerned by their great enlightner the Sunne. In the Aire are soules, ouer whom the Moone hath command. In the Earth are Men and other living creatures. (3)

In this same volume, printed in 1614, Selden mentions Baal, and in fact, the first part of the book contains: “Nimrod (not Ninus or Ashur) built Nineneh. Why he is called Belus. How sacred statues came first to be worshipt, and the true beginning of Idolatrie. Bel or Baal” (1). Milton's use of Belus shows his reading of either Selden's De Dis Syris or his Titles of Honor, as Selden had included an entire chapter on Baal/Bel—as a variant also on Astarot/Astarte (“Asherah”)—in both books that extensively detail gods and goddesses in their various incarnations, as well as dealing with occult semiosis and the permutations of archetypes, which could have influenced Milton's philosophy. It is most likely from this volume that Milton took the content for his De Idea Platonica, committing to paper his interest in gods, demons and occultism that would continue in his later poetry.

2. On the Mo(u)rning of Christ's Nativity

The first instance of the word 'wizard' appears shortly after De Idea Platonica in his 1629 On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, which Shawcross describes as a poem on
the theme of “the celebration of Christ's harmonizing of all life by becoming mortal man” (40n). Christina Fawcett notes that currents of harmony and discord—especially in terms of music—pervade the work, a “supposedly Christian hymn that would be strangely out of tune with his Latin elegies about spring, the old gods [...] and] is also mourning the loss of the old gods and the old ways” as well as dedicating the song to the newborn Christ (105). The narrator and the singer of the ode who calls upon the muses can be compared to Orpheus, whose end can be compared with Christ, “as if, by Christianizing the pagan singer, he hoped to change the end of the story, to save the life of the singer, at least, if not spare the Babe the eventual ‘bitter cross' (line 152)” (106). Fawcett's reading of the Christianization of the Orphic singer can be extended, however, to include Milton's growing awareness of the evolution of the pagan gods into Christian demons, as the birth of Christ did not signal the death of Moloch, Baalim, Ashtaroth and others, but that those 'gods of Nile' were transformed into the dark spirits and fallen angels of Christian mythology.

Milton includes pre-Christian astrologers in the invocation of the 'heavenly Muse':

> See how from far upon the eastern road
> The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet,
> O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
> And lay it lowly at his blessed feet. (22-25)

Stephen Buhler claims that “preventing” the wizards is the most problematic part of the poem, their knowledge of astrology and the occult putting them into the European tradition of the occult Magi, that used the star-led influences of the spheres to make “use of the powers of the daemonic (or demonic, for Milton and many others) presences associated with the stars and planets” (43-44). Though both John Carey and John T.
Shawcross understand “prevent” as “anticipate”, probably following Milton's own use of Latin roots in English, Buhler takes the main tension of the poem to be the urgency of prevention. A common theological theory was that the Magi set out on their journey towards the new star because of the interruption of their successful use of the daemonic powers, which were eclipsed by the birth of Christ. Origen, whose works were published often during the seventeenth-century, wrote:

> It seems to me, therefore, to be highly probable, that when our Saviour was born [...] the *Daemons* were shock'd, and all their Hellish Measures most strangely disconcerted, not only by good Angels, who came down from Heaven, to celebrate the Nativity of our Blessed Saviour, but also by the Humane Soul of the Holy and Spotless Jesus. [...] The Wise Men, therefore, being desirous, to perform their usual Operations, and failing in what they endeavour'd to effect, we may naturally suppose, enquir'd into the Reason of their bad Succes, and were sensible, that something extraordinary must occur, to defeat their rais'd expectations, and exceed the Power of the *Daemons*, and when they saw a Sign in the Heavens, they had a natural Curiousity, to know its Meaning, and having perhaps consulted the Prophecies of Balaam, [...] and having a just Notion, that he [Jesus] was far Superiour to all their *Daemons*, they came to pay him, the just Tribute of Divine Adoration.

(187-188)

Here the pagan priests come to shift their position, from the occult magical Magus to the
humble worshippers and adorers of the infant Jesus, becoming essentially Christianized—they do not die to become reborn, but evolve and change.

Here Milton could be representing Christianity not as an entirely new religion, but as something that has grown out of something old, taking inspiration from Selden's anthropological study of religion. Selden shows the pagan gods from the east changing, through semiotic connections, into the Christian demons; in a similar way, Milton's starred wizards move geographically from east to west, as the etymology of the word 'wizard' can then be interpreted as 'wise man' [an interpretation favored by Shawcross (41n), though Revard notes them specifically as 'the Magi' (17n)]. However, Jonathan Post argues that the fact that Milton uses “wizards” instead of “wise-men” should cast “a shadow of doubt on the nature of their wisdom” (28). Their wisdom comes from astrology, and John Carey notices the similarities between this passage of Milton's and a potential reference to Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queen: “Aegyptian wisards old,/ Which star-read were wont to haue best insight” (V. Prologue 8, pg. 185). Here the paganism of astrology is mixed with Egyptian magic, and a probable allusion to the Egyptian Thoth—Hermes Trismegistus—to construct a bridge between pre-Christian occult philosophy and Christian theology. That bridge is the Nativity.

In this poem, Milton displays the fruits of his demonological research by listing various demons and poetically incorporating a few of their attributes, while they similarly move from the geographical space of the pagan god to the realm of 'Christianization'. After the birth of the Jesus, “Apollo from his shrine/ Can no more divine” and “No nightly trance, or breathed spell./ Inspire's the pale-ey'd Priest from the Prophetic cell” (176-177, 179-180). The 'Priest' of the pagan occult is rendered visionless as Apollo can no longer invoke inspiration into his pale-eyed and learned followers. Similarly, gods of
eastern antiquity move from their divine status into obscurity and damnation.

    Peor, and Baalim,
    Forsake their Temples dim,
    With that twice battered god of Palestine,
    And mooned Ashtaroth,
    Heaven's queen and mother both,
    Now sits not girt with tapers holy shrine,
    The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn,
    In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn. (197-204)

Selden includes an entire chapter in his work *De Dis Syris* on Baal—a god included also in Origen's explanation on the weakening of pagan powers—and Carey notes that Milton uses the plural form Baalim to include all the various interpretations and manifestations of the god (113n). And Peor, the Phoenician sun god (Shawcross 47n) must abandon his temple that no longer is emanating with divine light, as now all divine light belongs only to the newborn Christ. Dagon, the “twice battered god of Palestine”, fell twice on the evening when the Hebrew ark was placed in his temple. Milton was perhaps referring to a deity, originally a god of the Canaanite inhabitants around Gaza, preceding the Philistine invasion though incorporated into Philistine theology, and then into Pheonician (Cheyne 984). This god is identified as the Babylonian Dagan, becomes the West Semitic god of fertility, and the male-counterpart to Ashtoreth (“Dagon”), mentioned in the poem's following few lines as “Heav'ns Queen and Mother both”.

This description of Ashtoreth shows Milton's engagement with Selden's work on Ashtoreth, Astarte and all of her various manifestations, including Venus and Lilith. Selden calls Ashtoreth and Lilith the queen of the heavens, and Milton's very use of the
plural form, “Ashtaroth”—noted by John Carey (113n)—evidences that he is interested in Ashtoreth not as a singular form, but as a multitude of changing Ashtaroth, constantly in a state of becoming, consistent in its inconsistency.

Where questionles is the very name (differing in termination only) of the Goddesse Astarte or Ashtaroth, whom they called Belihsamaim, that is, the Lady of Heauen, the Moon. The same is confirmed also out of diuers inscriptions conceiued DEAE SYRIAE, & DIS SYRIS both in Italy and this Island ancienly found. (Selden 1614 11)

Though Selden's English text calls Astarte “Lady of Heauen”, the Latin of De Dis Syris, only a few years later, is more bold, calling her “Domina Cœli” and “Regina Cœli”, the master and queen of heaven (156).

This shifting of location and identity continues in the following stanzas of On the Morning of Christs Nativity, as the gods of the pre-Christian world are de-throned and dis-located. The “sullen Moloch” does not die, but has “fled./ Hath left in shadows dred” (205-6), and can no longer be summoned by the pagan priests who “call the grisly king” in vain (207-8). The gods and goddesses of this once powerful world must now move from glory and brilliant temples into “shadows dred” (206) with “Naught but profoundest Hell” as their “shroud” (218). The infant Christ has so much more power than the priests or their gods, that he can “in his swaddling bands control the damned crew” (228). The great masters of the previous religions have been “damned” to “profoundest Hell” where they have taken on new roles as Christian demons and fallen angels in “the infernal jail” (233) as their relocation is completed; with this poem, Milton demonstrates his familiarity with Selden’s demonological works and his appropriation of Selden's ideas
making use of semiotics, geographical migration, and demonological evolution.

3. Melancholy and the Spheres

In 1631, Milton wrote “Il Penseroso” as an ode to Melancholy, personified and wholly feminized as a “sage and holy” goddess (11), and holds a “conception of harmony [which] derives from a sophisticated and self-conscious hermetic tradition” (Cox 45). Written around the same time as his college exercise “On the Harmony of the Spheres”, “Il Penseroso” outlines a hermetic and neo-platonic cosmology which points to his reading of occult texts, like Dionysius the Areopagite, and a demonology which shows his continuing involvement with the nature of spirits, and especially with the many manifestations of the moon. The poem is composed of contradictions, a common theme being the connection between light and darkness:

But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,

Hail divinest Melancholy,

Whose saintly visage is too bright

To hit the sense of human sight. (11-14)

Human senses are incapable of perceiving the divine machinations of the heavens. Milton, in “On the Harmony of the Spheres” writes that since the disobedience of Prometheus, mankind has been severed from the heavenly sounds emitted by the stars and planets as they move in their orbits:

The fact that we are unable to hear this harmony seems certainly to be due to the presumption of that thief Prometheus, which brought so many evils upon men, and robbed us of that
happiness which we may never again enjoy so long as we remain buried in sin and degraded by brutish desires; for how can we become sensitive to this heavenly sound while our souls are, as Persius says, bowed to the ground and lacking in every heavenly element? But if our souls were pure, chaste, and white as snow, as was Pythagoras' of old, then indeed our ears would rings and be filled with that exquisite music of the stars in their orbits; then would all things turn back to the Age of Gold, and we ourselves, free from every grief, would pass our lives in a blessed peace which even the gods might envy. (238-9)

Humans live in the mundane sphere, disconnected from the Golden Age where man and the gods lived in a harmony made audible by the music of the celestial spheres, and it was only man's pride—evidenced in Prometheus—which broke the bond between earth and heaven. The connection is not completely broken, though, since souls that are pure and good can help to bring the two spheres back into contact, and therefore bring about another Golden Age, which “even the gods might envy”. It was Satan's envy of man's paradise in Eden which led him to tempt man into the Fall, and with this mention of envy Milton suggests the presence of a Christian reading to this pagan myth. After the Fall, mankind became unable to hear the voice of God, just as man has no longer been able to hear the musical harmonies descending to earth from the higher spheres after the waning of the Golden Age. In his 1633 “At a Solemn Music” Milton reiterates his intention to connect the sounds of these heavenly spheres with man's prelapsarian state, when the “Sphere-borne harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse” (2) could be heard by men “whilst they stood/ In first obedience, and their state of good” (23-24).
Melancholy is a product of this Golden Age, as Milton writes:

Yet thou art higher far descended,
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such a mixture was not held a stain). (22-26)

Melancholy is born of Saturn, the name-sake of the planet later believed to influence melancholy, and Vesta, in the time of Saturn's reign—the Golden Age. In these few lines, Milton has succeeded in connecting melancholy, the Golden Age, and the harmony of the spheres. It appears that Milton gets much of his cosmological model from Dionysius the Areopagite, and Carey notes that the “cherub contemplation” (54) of Milton's poem is a direct translation from Dionysius's De Caelisti Hierarchia (Carey 147n), which J. C. Boswell lists in the inventory of Milton's library (83). A 1566 edition of Dionysius's work, published in Paris, includes De caelisti Hierarchia.12

Cherubim autem nomen, uim & scietæ & côtemplatonis diuinæ, quæ in eis inest, dandæq; summæ lucis receptaculum, atque diuinæ pulchritudinis uim, quæ primũ locum obtineat, aspectum, & quod plenum est munerum quæ sapientiam efficiant, eáque largè copiosēque cômunicat natura cum secundis sapientiæ quæ concessa est, effusione. (6)

[The name cherub denotes their power of knowing and beholding God, their receptivity to the highest Gift of Light,

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12 Boswell includes this translation of the Greek text into Latin spelled De Caelisti Hierarchia, while the Latin translation used has translated it as De caelisti Hierarchia. I have decided to keep the original spellings as printed.
their contemplation of the Beauty of the Godhead in Its First Manifestation, and that they are filled by participation in Divine Wisdom, and bounteously outpour to those below them from their own fount of wisdom.]

The Cherubs act as a filter, through which God's beauty and wisdom must pass before it can be transmitted to the lower spheres, and it is this cherubic contemplation that the narrator of “Il Penseroso” advocates while singing the virtues of melancholy: “Sweet Bird that shunn'st the noise of folly./ Most musical, most melancholy!” (61-2).

Milton directs the reader to read further into the poem, “where more is meant than meets the ear” (120), and as a result, he “is playing seriously with a hermetic system of harmonious correspondences” and to “realize this sacred a arcane mystery, Il Penseroso progresses from night to day, from enlightened darkness to darkened illumination” (Cox 47, 56). The narrator pleads “me goddess bring/ To arched walks of twilight groves/ […] Hide me from day's garish eye” (132-141), reiterating the importance of darkness and “dimm religious light” (160) in divine contemplation. In another of Dionysius's more obscure texts—though found in publication along with De cælisti Hierarchia—is his De Mystica Theologica Lib. [Book of Mystical Theology], which was an influence on Marsilio Ficino's philosophy and which deals with the necessity of darkness and occultism when seeking higher truths. In an edition printed with De cælisti Hierarchia in 1566, Dionysius places darkness higher upon the hierarchy than light.

In hac clarissima caligine esse optamus, atque aspectus priuacione & ignorancee cernere ac cognoscere eum qui omnem aspectum atque scientiam uincit, hoc ipso, quòd minimè uideamus & sciamus. Hoc enim est reuerà uidere &
cognoscere: eúmque, qui essentia superior ac præstantior est, diuino more laudare, omnium quæ sunt negatione. (63)

[We pray that we may comes unto this Darkness which is beyond light, and, without seeing and without knowing, to see and to know that which is above vision and knowledge through the realization that by not-seeing and by unknowing we attain to true vision and knowledge; and thus praise, superessentially, Him Who is superessential, by the abstraction of the essence of all things.]

In Joannes Eckius's interpretations of this text—on which Marsilio Ficino made extensive commentary—Eckius subtitles it Theologia Negativa and not merely De Mystica Theologica. Ficino's and Eckius's interpretations gives importance not merely to the absence of light or clarity, but to absence, nothingness and opposition in general. Similarly, Milton concentrates not only on darkness but on this opposition and negatives. Words such as “unseen” [which occurs twice in the poem (65, 154)], “unfold” (88) and “unsphere” (89) create an image of deconstruction, where things are not only hidden, but undone. This desire to return to original perfection, and the purity of Pythagoras, re-emerges in “At a Solemn Music” when Milton again uses negatives and words of undoing. When man returns to this pre-Fallen (or perhaps de-lapsarian) standing, the spheres will again make music “That we one earth with undiscording voice/ May right answer the melodious noise” (17-18). The voice of man is not harmonious; it is no longer innately simple and melodious. It is ‘undiscording’. It is discordant sound undone.

These de-creations in “Il Penseroso” frame Milton's second use of Hermes Trismegistus, “Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,/ With thrice great Hermes, or
unsphere/ The spirit of Plato to unfold” (87-89), labelling this poem not only as Neoplatonic, but also hermetic:

And of those Dæmons that are found

In fire, air, flood, or under ground,

Whose power hath a true consent

With Planet or with Element. (93-96)

The narrator stands with the philosopher, Hermes, or opens up what are perhaps the divisions between the spheres of platonism, while hermetic correspondences introduce the explicitly demonic into the poem with the sympathies between elements and demons. This demonic presence becomes pulled back into association with the moon and the feminine demonic with mention of Hecate/Luna/Diana “in her sweetest, saddest plight,/ Smoothing the rugged brow of night,/ While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke” (57-59). This is reminiscent of one of Milton's earlier poems, *In Obitum Praesulis Eliensis [On the Death of the Bishop of Ely]*:

Longeque sub pedibus deam

Vidi triformem, dum coercebat suos

Fraenis dracones aureis. (56-58)

[And far beneath my feet

I saw the triformed goddess, while she was restraining

the dragons with golden reins.]

In a footnote, John Shawcross claims that this mention of the goddess and the dragon makes it a reference specifically to the infernal Hecate, as “the dragons of the moon were associated with Hecate because they descended to Medea when she invoked the goddess' help to flee from Jason's wrath” (24n). Davis P. Harding wrote that “Hecate was also a
moon-goddess. Hence, by transference, Luna (Cynthia) is sometimes represented as driving a yoke of dragons” (50). This places the Cynthia of “Il Penseroso” in a potentially diabolical position, since she is not merely one aspect of the triple-formed moon goddess, but her own and also a reminder of the darker and infernal form, through a semiotic connection to Hecate, Medea, and Lilith.

Contemporary woodcuts and illustrations show the extent of the connection between Luna and the serpent dragon, while also connecting her to Medea and hell. Virgil Solis, whose illustrations to Ovid were particularly influential, created two relevant engravings which show Luna in control of a chariot led by dragons. In the first, “Luna” (Fig. 29), a stately goddess holding a crescent moon reclines on a chariot pulled by two dragons. The chariot flies over a river, into which a naked gondolier pushes his pole, while nearby a wind—perhaps an effect of Luna's chariot—lifts the skirt of a woman leaving her temporarily naked from the waist down. Another of Solis's engravings, “Medea Hecaten vocat” 1581 (Fig. 30), shows Medea praying to Hecate and kneeling before an empty chariot led by two similarly styled dragons. In the upper right-hand corner of the image the crescent moon shines brightly, emphasizing the connection between Luna, Hecate, and other manifestations of this goddess. Another woodcut engraving by Filippo Ferroverde (Fig. 31), completed a few decades before Milton's “Il Penseroso”, shows Hecate with the body of a woman and three animal heads (which appear to be a boar, a dog and a bull) with the upper corners of the woodcut featuring three women in one body. The inscription beneath the image reads, “Imagine di Hecate dea triforme detta anco Proserpina molie di Plutone reina dell'Inferno significante li tre aspetti della Luna, & la potenza lunare nella cose elemntari” [“An image of the triple-formed goddess Hecate, also known as Proserpine, wife of Pluto and queen of Hell,
expressing the three aspects of Luna, and the lunar power in elemental things”). In these three images what Harding calls “transference” is explicitly visible (Harding 50): Virgil Solis depicts the goddess Luna rides in her chariot, which then appears in exact replica in his representation of Hecate’s chariot, and Ferroverde’s Hecate includes a description of her connection to her other aspects. Luna’s chariot becomes Hecate’s chariot, and Hecate’s dragons are Cynthia’s dragons, completing the circle which binds Cynthia to Hecate.

4. Comus as Circe

Milton continues this connection between solitude and Hecate in his Comus of 1634, as two brothers searching for their sister lost in the woods remark that

Wisdom’s self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
Where with her best nurse Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired. (375-380)

Here there is a direct echo of the “contemplation” in his previous “Il Penseroso” and in Dionysius’s work on the celestial hierarchies, perhaps even further referencing those cherubs from his previous neoplatonic works in his mentioning of “feathers” and “wings” which calls to mind angels [for example, his translation of Psalm 80 includes “That sitt’st between the Cherubs bright/ Between their wings outspread” (5-6)] and not merely Wisdom, or The Lady currently being sought in the masque.
This play builds on previous incarnations of Hecate and Circe, being the offspring of Circe and Bacchus, who is “Much like his father, but his mother more” (57. emphasis mine) placing Comus as “probably the only male Circe figure in Western literature” (Yarnall 146). This solitary position as sole male Circe makes him one of the most “significant literary Circe[s]” (Graham 33). The stage directions indicating that “Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other” (pg 185) suggests a figure in between boundaries of sexual identity, possessing both the phallic and the vaginal of both the charming-rod and the glass. Judith Yarnall notes that in the seventeenth century, power is often taken away from Circe; in both William Brown's Inner Temple Masque and Aurelian Townsend's Tempe Restored, Circe relinquishes her wand voluntarily, and “who could be less threatening […] than a Circe who freely gives her magic away?” (147). Reacting according to contemporary tradition, Milton similarly removes potency from the conventional image of Circe which was the image “of the seductive, dangerous, controlling woman” (99). Perhaps the most effective way to deal with this disturbing archetype of feminine power is to de-feminize her, thereby taking her out of the realm of uncomfortable sexuality, and into a world more manageable. He turns her into Comus, the dark and libidinous magician.

“Of Bacchus, and Circe born, great Comus,/ Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries” (521-522) is a “sorcerer” (520). Not only is Comus the product of his mother and the witchcraft which she passed on to him, but Comus also “shows himself […] to be capable of delicacy and even aware of that most hallowed Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic concepts, the music of the spheres” and John Arthos calls the philosophy surrounding the masque as “elaborately Platonic” (Yarnall 150; Arthos 261). Also, in the neoplatonism of Comus, there are traces of the Hermetic doctrine of “as above, so below”: 
We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds, and seas with their finny drove
Now to the moon in wavering morris move. (111-116)

Comus claims that the elemental fire within themselves is an imitation of that which is above, in the “starry quire”. The spheres, which the good Attendant Spirit perceives in heaven are “Of bright aerial spirits” which “live ensphered/ In regions mild of calm and serene air” (3-4), are seemingly contradictory in tone to those swift rounds, finny droves and wavering Moorish dances of Comus's imaginings. Interestingly, Comus perhaps transforms these heavenly images to suit his worldly ends, making a divine cosmology darker and more occulted: “The express resemblance of the gods, is changed/ Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear” (69-70), and though Carey attributes this list to the contemporary view of the lustfulness of these particular animals (184n)—a notion reinforced by the fact that while Circe transforms their entire bodies into animals, Comus merely transforms their heads, leaving a animal's unyielding sexual amorality upon a human body—the transformation of the heavens into animals themselves can be seen in the joining of the stars into constellations, and especially into animal constellations, where suddenly a random grouping of stars can now represent the great bear, or, known by another name, Hermes as in his previous incarnation in Milton's *Il Penseroso* (87-88). This betrays Milton's uneasiness regarding the nature of hermetic and even neoplatonic magic, where the magician speaks of divine things using dark methods and with perhaps nefarious motives.
The infernal manifestation of the Diana-Luna-Hecate triad—being Hecate, and by association Lilith—appears frequently in this masque alongside other female love deities like Venus, who comes as a result of Night's “better sweets to prove” (123-124), and like Cotytto, who is the “goddess of nocturnal sport” and “Dark-veiled” (128-129),

to whom the secret flame

Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame

That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womb

Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,

And makes one blot of all the air,

Stay in thy cloudy ebon chair,

Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend

Us thy vowed priests. (129-136)

That Milton inclues Cotytto in the same sentence in which he mentions Hecate riding—presumably through the air on the dragon-drawn chariot—suggests the way he intends to draw connections between them, and perhaps to set up Hecate as an implicitly sexual threat. Cotytto was a Thracian goddess worshipped in Athens and around Greece where her secretive and “grossly immoral” cult spread, practised with “orgiastic rites” . Her followers were often called bapta, or dippers, probably from some ritual involving liquid submersion, and caused scandal probably from the fact that “men wore women's clothing during the ceremonies” (“Cotytto” 188). There are tales that the cross-dressing priests even took their roles in the ceremony so enthusiastically that Cotytto herself was disgusted enough to abandon them. In a 1634 translation of Juvenal's first two Satyrs, it is explained that

Such orgies did those Priests Effeminate,
Earst with Night-burning Tapers celebrate,
Wont with their Antique Rounds (obscenely merry)
Cecropian Cotytto even to weary. (Sat. II. 171-174)

The “Night-burning Tapers” of Juvenal mirror the “midnight torches” of Milton, while Comus calls out for Cotytto to “befriend” the priests. The erudite reader (or audience to the masque) might understand that these orgiastic rituals are a misunderstanding of a divine proclamation, so much so that the goddess is made “even to weary”. Here Comus desires Cynthia's dragons to pull the chariot of Hecate towards a union with Cotytto, to aid in that magician's “wild dancing and loud music”, a diabolic inversion of the divinely melodious sounds of the musical spheres and the Orphic hymns, the inversion which the good Attendant Spirit describes as “abhorred rites to Hecate” (535). This image of Cotytto would be very influential in the following years, and Robert Baron would take Milton's words and further stress the relationship between Hecate and Cotytto: “Dark vail'd Cotytto stay thy ebon chaire/ Wherein thou triumphest with Hecate” (95), more boldly showing their connection.

5. Cabala and the feminine demonic in the Hell of Paradise Lost

As Milton elaborated upon the Psalms, so too did he embellish upon the Biblical story of Genesis in *Paradise Lost*, though many of these embellishments can find their precedent in the content of the Zohar and other books of occult philosophy. Scholars, such as Dennis Saurat and Judith Yarnall, have focused on *Paradise Lost* to demonstrate the influence of neoplatonic philosophy and demonological scholarship upon the cosmology and poetry of Milton. And indeed, Milton did draw on cabbalistic and
hermetic literature making his epic complex in its origins of influence.

Beginning in the first book, with its vivid descriptions of Hell, Milton draws upon imagery within Zoharic explanations of chaos to illustrate the surroundings in which Satan finds himself. Satan awakes and looks around to see

The dismal situation waste and wild,
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As once great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades. (60-65)

This description of a fire which emits “No light, but rather darkness visible”, is one of the most perplexing of the scene, creating a difficulty when one attempts to conceptualize this darkening-only light. Though it is perhaps an allusion to his own blindness, it has been aided by a similar description of Chaos, or Tohu, in the Zohar. The translation by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon equates this dark fire with chaos.

“Darkness” is a black fire, strong in colour. There is a red fire, strong in visibility; a yellow fire, strong in shape; and a white fire, the colour which includes all. “ Darkness” is the strongest of all fires, but this it was which took hold of Tohu.

“Darkness” is fire, but fire is not darkness, save when it takes hold of Tohu. (Vol I, 67)

Gershom Scholem's version, however, translates this as a transition of becoming formed:

“within the most hidden recess a dark flame issues from the mystery of eyn sof, the Infinite, like a fog forming in the unformed” (27). According to one version, the
translation by Sperling and Simon, the fire that takes hold of chaos is darkness, the strongest of all fires; however, according to Scholem's translation, the dark flames create a kind of nebulous order, creating form where there is only things unformed though not necessarily formless, which implies a more permanent state of being without form, whereas 'unformed' perhaps suggests a pre-form, or even a de-form. It is this de-formed state in which the fallen angels find themselves, as Beelzebub notices Satan's new appearance as “fall'n” and “chang'd” (I 84), and Uriel later finds Satan “disfigur'd” (IV 127). Ithuriel explains this deformation to Satan, who is shocked that Ithuriel does not recognize him, “Think not, revoluted Spirit, thy shape the same,/ Or undiminisht brightness, to be known/ As when thou stoodst in Heav'n upright and pure” (IV 835-887). Though Satan's fiery, and inflamed rage permeates many of his descriptions, this is a fire that is devoid of “brightness”. Satan's fire illuminates only darkness, as he continues through the narrative, bent on destruction and chaos, tohu.

The first books of Paradise Lost contain a whole compendium of fallen angels and demonological theology, demonstrating and outlining his research into spirits and demons. Demons such as Moloch, Osiris, Isis, Orus, Astaroth, Dagon, Baalim, and Thamuz all featured in Milton's earlier Nativity Ode (204, 213, 212, 200, 199, 197, 204) and then reappear in Paradise Lost as the fallen angels under the command of Satan (I 392, 478, 422, 462, 422, 446). However, in Paradise Lost, Milton makes a distinction between Astarte and Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth appears in Paradise Lost alongside Baalim:

Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,

These Feminine. For Spirits when they please

Can either sex assume, or both; so soft

And uncompounded is thir Essence pure,
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joyst or limb,

Not founded on the brittle strength of bones,

Like cumbrous flesh; but what shape they choose

Dilated or condens't, bright or obscure,

Can execute thir aerie purposes,

And works of love or enmity fulfill (I 422-431).

Here Ashtaroth is associated with the same phenomenon of bisexuality and cross-dressing as was Comus in Milton's earlier masque. Holding the wand and the glass, Comus was both masculine and feminine, likewise, Baalim and Ashtaroth “can either sex assume, or both”, mirroring the case of Cotytto with the priests who were both male and female with their male physiology and assumed feminine identity. However, separate from Ashtaroth is Astoreth, “whom the Phænicians call'd/ Astarte, Queen of Heav'n, with crescent Horns;/ To whose bright Image nightly by the Moon” (I 427-442). As earlier mentioned, the conclusion that Milton relied heavily upon Selden was made as early as 1695 (Hume 27). Here Astoreth is a moon deity, similar to those Hecate manifestations in earlier works. She is, in Paradise Lost, the “Queen of Heav'n”, just as in the Nativity Ode Ashtaroth was “Heav'n's Queen and Mother both” (201). Taking this reference to Astoreth/Ashtaroth as a moon goddess with “crescent Horns” who can be seen “nightly by the Moon”, we can move away from Selden—though Selden certainly contributed to this image of Ashtaroth as Moon—and towards the Zohar. After the creation of Light

God saw the light that it was good. [...] From that complete

Light, the Central Pillar, extended the foundation, the Life of worlds, which is day from the side of the Right. And the
Darkness he called Night. He summoned to issue from the side of Darkness a kind of female moon which rules over the night and is called night. (*The Zohar* 1931 70)

Here the moon is the ruler of the night, just as Ashtaroth is horned with a crescent moon and heaven's queen, and the night is the feminine quality, and the day would take on the masculine quality.

Meanwhile the Left flamed forth with its full power, producing at all points a kind of reflection, and from this fiery flame came forth the female moonlike essence. This flaming was dark because it was from Darkness. These two sides produced these two grades, one male and one female. (71)

Astarte and Ashtaroth emerge among connotations of feminine power and the fall of masculine authority in Milton's epic, and Alastair Fowler notes that her title of “Assyrian queen” in *Comus* is “not accidentally” also a “title applied to the Virgin Mary” (Milton 1002; Fowler 88n). In this way, Milton fashions Astarte as the anti-Mary and the inversion of the chaste mother; she is the mother of foul demons and perhaps the deity which inspires the sexual rituals attributed to Cotyttio in *Comus*. Her temple was constructed “By that uxorious king, whose heart though large/ Beguiled by fair idolatress, fell/ To idols foul” (*PL* I 444-446). She has the ability to corrupt even the strongest men to fall, foreshadowing Eve's role as temptress in relation to Adam's fall. Within Eve there are aspects of both the Lilith/Astarte/Hecate figure and the figure of the Virgin Mary, as even though she will tempt the father of mankind (Adam) she will also give birth to mankind and eventually the woman who will be the mother of redemption and salvation.

Along with Mary and Eve, other female figures in the poem have traces of a
Lilithic influence, notably the figure of Sin, who is a beautiful woman with the lower body of a serpent. Ravenous dogs, which are her offspring, gnaw at her insides and live in her womb (II 650-660). This half-woman, half-serpent image pulls the reader into the convention of the serpent with the woman’s head, traditionally being the seducer/seductress of Eve (Bonnell), placing Sin, though still in Hell, into Eden and into relation with Eve. The comparison with Lilith begins immediately after, as Sin “about her middle round/A cry of hell hounds […] would creep […] into her womb./and kennel there” (PL II 653-8). Sebastian Münster, who described Lilith as the consort of Adam, also wrote that Lilith was a “certain Ghost, having the shape of an abortive, born of impure birth” (10). The reference to the abortive figure of Lilith parallels the “hell hounds” which are ripped prematurely from Sin’s womb in perpetual abortion, and Sin’s birth from Satan’s head is the primary impure birth within the entirety of God’s creations (PL II 650-765).

Milton's connection between the three women (Eve, Lilith, and Sin) becomes more apparent when cannibalistic infanticide and witchcraft are mentioned in reference to Sin.

Far less abhorred than those [hell hounds]

Vexed Scylla bathing in the sea that parts […]

Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when called

In Secret, riding through the air she comes

Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance

With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon

Eclipses at their charms. (II 559-566)

Shortly before Milton composed these lines, Edward Phillips's dictionary was reprinted
in 1658, in which Phillips writes that Lilith is “the name of a certain she devil which the Jews imagined to be a destroyer of children” (Z4). The connection between Lilith, Scylla, and Lamia is introduced in this passage with the “infant blood” as a dangerous infanticidal and vampiric hunger. The vampire imagery is drawn out with the mention of Scylla, daughter of Lamia. Lamia’s body reflects that of Sin—the “snaky sorceress” (II 274)— whose appetite echos the “night-hag”, and the erotic carnality for men casts a semiotic reflection of Lilith. Just as Sin uses her sexuality and with her “attractive graces [wins]” over many of the angels in heaven (II 762), so Lilith and the Lamia use their beautiful figures to lure men to their destructions.

Milton's description of Sin also corresponds to Sébastien Michaelis's 1613 treatment of Lilith and Lamia, where she is a “Sorceresse”, who exposes her breasts to children, in order to lure them into strangulation (81). Michaelis additionally writes that Lilith is “deriued from another Hebrew word signifying the night”, because she “vse to goe secretly and in the night” (80). This “secretly” corresponds to Milton’s “in secret, riding through the air” (II 663), contributing to the anxiety surrounding the nocturnal witch, able to seduce unwilling men and murder unbaptised children. The potential threat surrounding the lure of Michaelis's Lamia and Milton's Sin also resides in their ability to “allure” children, perhaps originally taken from John Selden's account: “Lilith […] mentioned in holy Writ, which the Iews say is a Spirit very Dangerous to yong Children” (Selden 1614 164). Milton simply continues on with the long standing tradition of connecting Lilith with Lamia and the moon “eclipsing”, or no longer reflecting any of the original masculine light from the sun.

Once the readers approach Eve’s dream several books later, as she “forthwith up to
the coulds [...] flew” (V 86-7), they remember the flying of the “night-hag” and may begin to associate Eve with Sin and this witchcraft. Also, Eve’s dream-seduction has the semblance of being a creation of lamia, or succubus, which is defined as a “demon in female form supposed to have carnal intercourse with men in their sleep” (OED). Similarly, Lilith was thought to have seduced Adam in his sleep to beget to him Lilim, during his separation from Eve after the fall (Graves 65).

5. Lilith in the Garden of Eden

This is not the first time evidence of Lilith in Milton's epic has been discerned. In 1992 Siegmund Hurwitz claimed that Lilith appears in Milton's poetry (20)—though without citing any examples—and two years later Patrick Cook published a small article in American Notes and Queries, noticing an oft overlooked incident in Paradise Lost: the first instance of intimacy between Adam and Eve. In this first narrated encounter of the poem, Eve “leaned/ On our first father” (IV 494-495). Much of Satan's description of Eve uses phrases like “implied subjection”, “yeilded” and “meek” (307-308; 309; 494), but Eve's surrender to Adam is a “coy submission” with “modest pride” (310). When it comes to the sexual positions of the first couple, it would seem that Eve is on top, as the “subjection” is merely implied and Eve “leaned” on Adam during prelapsarian sex. Cook responds to this by claiming that

Behind Eve's dominant-submissive lovemaking stands the specter of Lilith, in Jewish tradition Adam's first wife, who refused to lie with Adam in the missionary position. Milton's
Eve, who combines traditional submissiveness with Lilith's assertiveness, can have it both ways. (P Cook 135)

Cook is suggesting that within Eve there are in fact two women, and one of them is Lilith. This account of there being two women does not originate with Milton, and in this particular instance, he is perhaps being faithful to the King James version of the Bible, without resorting to many outside sources. In the creation myth contained within the KJV, woman is actually created twice and in two different ways. The two creation myths within Genesis I and Genesis II, “designated by common consent as P and J respectively”, both emerge within the text of Milton’s epic (Evans 11). P, or the Priestly account of creation, claims that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis I.27), implying that the creation of man and woman happened simultaneously, and from the same material. God created man together, and then perhaps separated them into two genders: male and female. One does not appear to have precedence over the other. In Paradise Lost, when Adam speaks to Eve, praising the happiness in which they live, he explains that God “raised us from dust and placed us here”, reaffirming it in the next book, when speaking to Raphael about the “the utmost measure of [...] bliss” in which they live, that God “formed us from dust” (IV 416; V 516). In the J, or Jahwist document, however, God creates Adam first: “And the rib which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, & brought her unto the man” (Genesis II.22). In the same conversation between Raphael and Adam in Book V, Adam’s story of creation transforms from one of synchronisation to one of sequence, where Adam was created first and Eve was made from “the rib [God] formed and fashioned with his hands” (VIII 469).
Milton takes the disjointed tradition between the two books of *Genesis* and weaves them together into the narrative. Martin Evans writes about the difference of treatment between the two accounts in the Old Testament that

this stylistic contract reflects in turn the divergent standpoints from which the two narratives are written: in P we seem to be looking down from some remote position in space [...] whereas in J we are firmly rooted to the earth, observing the beginnings of things from a creaturely level. (11)

In *Paradise Lost*, Adam relates the different creation accounts within different topics of conversation. He speaks of Adam and Eve being created from dust while he and Raphael are in “conference to know/ Of things above this world, and of their being/Who dwell in Heav’n” (V 454-6). Conversely, Adam relates Eve’s creation to his rib when “man to tell how human life began” (VIII 250). Adam experiences the creation of Eve as though in a dream, “Mine eyes he closed, but left open the cell/ Of fancy my internal sight” (VIII 460-461). This internal sight is Adam's personal vision of Eve's creation, “though sleeping” when it occurred. The first mirrors the theology implicit in P, which is “correspondingly elevated” (Evans 11), and when the conversation turns from heavenly matters to those more earthly, vivid and pictorial, the theology switches from the Priestly account to the Jahwist.

Robert Graves writes that “divergences between the Creation myths of *Genesis I* and *Genesis II* […] allow Lilith to be presumed as Adam’s first wife” (67), “[for] in the beginning, BEFORE EVE, he had another union, WITH LILITH” (*The Zohar: Pekudei* 122) wherein she “also was made from dust” alongside Adam; it was only after their
separation that God created Eve from the rib (Evans 65). Milton reproduces this distinction between the two creations of woman, hence leaving the possibility of an earlier marriage before the creation of Eve, and the possibility of Lilith in Paradise Lost. The origin of woman and the “leaned/ On our first father” (IV 494-495) connect to Lilith in her main description within the Alphabet of Ben-Sira, a medieval manuscript with editions from Salonica (1514), Constantinople (1519), and Venice (1544). In this version of the creation story, God creates the first woman, Lilith, at the same time as Adam and their main quarrel starts over sexual positions and superiority.

She said, 'I will not lie below,' and he said, 'I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am the superior one.' Lilith responded, 'But we are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth'. (Ben-Sira 40)

Louis Ginzberg, in his definitive multi-volume set The Legends of the Jews, says that Lilith remained with Adam “only for a short time, because she insisted upon enjoying full equality with her husband. She derived her rights from their identical origin” (I 65). Just as Adam is unsure about Eve's origins, whether she was created simultaneously to or after Adam, he is also uncertain regarding Eve's position in the hierarchy. In comparison to Eve, Adam worries that “all enjoyments else/ Superior and unmoved, here only weak/ Against charm of beauty's powerful glance” and that “All higher knowledge in her presence falls/ Degraded” (VIII 531-533; 551-552). Milton's Eve then can be interpreted as both women—Lilith and Eve—and it is these aspects of Eve's other which cause

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13 Louis Ginzberg cites The Alphabet of Ben Sira 23a-23b and 33a-33b (V, 87-88).
distress in Adam, and make him question the hierarchy of God – Man – Woman. Natalie Zemon Davis writes that the subjection of the wife to the husband is a guarantee that they will both be submissive to the Lord (151), and Stuart Clark explains that “the exchange of sex roles involved in the image of the ‘woman on top’ or in transvestism was symbolic of the triumph of folly over wisdom” (1980 101).

Both Sin and Lilith are called sorceress, and, correspondingly, Eve is related to a sorceress through the allusion to Circe. When Satan tries to gain her attention, Eve is described as having Circe-like powers: “from every beast, more duteous at her call, Than at Circean call the Herd disguis’d” (IX 521-2). The relationship between Eve and the serpent, as Adam calls her “serpent” (X 867), has “been noted as early as the ancient rabbinic commentators that the name Eve is related to old Semitic words, that is, in Phoenician and Aramaic, for ‘serpent’” (Orgel 913). This serpentine allusion connects Eve to Lilith through Sin and witchcraft, since Sin appears as a horrid combination of beautiful woman and “a serpent armed/ With mortal sting” (II 652-652). Just as Satan brings mortality to Eden in the guise of a serpent, Eve brings mortality to man through the temptation of Adam, husband of Eve and Lilith.

The sequence of Adam’s two wives appears within the text of Paradise Lost, once before Eve tastes the forbidden fruit and twice in postlapsarian Eden. The first emerges immediately before Eve relates her satanic dream, when Adam names her “My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,/Heav’n’s last best gift, my ever new delight” (V 18-19, italics mine). Each of Adam’s compliments here are comparative—fairest, latest, last, best, new—creating in the mind of the reader an image of something to which Adam juxtaposes

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Eve; this attempt almost assuredly leaves a void where the object is lacking, creating a black hole alongside of her. Eve is more fair than whom? Before Eve, Adam found whom? Before Eve, Adam was given whom? Though the argument could be formed that Adam compares Eve to the animals, the ordering of creation would make Adam a gift to the animals if Eve is a gift to Adam (since the animals preceded man). Adam seemingly compares her to a creation after or simultaneous to his own, though preceding the moment when God “stopping opened [his] left side, and took/From thence a rib” (V 465-6). The reader versed in the same hebraic lore would be able to fill the void left by these superlatives with a previously created woman, with whom Adam compares Eve.

Eve's postlapsarian monologue (IX 795-833), together with the argument of Adam immediately before he falls, helps to fill the void created in Book V by Adam’s comparative compliments. In her anxiety of being separated from Adam by Death, Eve tortures herself with thoughts that Adam would be “wedded to another Eve” (IX 828). This “wedded” corresponds to “espoused” (V 18), formulating the possibility that Adam had multiple wives. To give this theory of “another Eve” more magnitude, Milton repeats the same phrase through the words of Adam as he ponders, “Should God create another Eve, and I another rib afford” (IX 911-2). Adam’s assumption that God would only use another one of his own ribs to create a new wife for him, leaves the reader to think about other possibilities of creation. It is not necessary for Adam to sacrifice another part of his body, since surely it is in God's power to create women from other means. Furthermore, his “another rib” mirrors “another Eve”, opening the potentiality that Adam had “afforded another rib” during a previous time. Ginzberg explains that the legend follows that “Indeed, God had created a wife for Adam before Eve [and after Lilith], but he would
not have her, because she had been made in his presence. Knowing full well all the
details of her formation, he was repelled by her” (I 68). The *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*,
which Ginzberg cites as a reference for this second wife of Adam, appeared in a 1654
Latin translation: the *Tractatus de Patribus Rabbi Nathan Auctore, in Linguam Latinam
Translatus*, published by Franz Taylor in London reintroduces some of these ancient
hebraic myths into the English intellectual circles. However, even before this translation
in England, scholars such as John Lightfoot would cite Rabbi Nathan indicating that these
ideas were already circulating—as it also appears in the widely circulated Talmud
(Sanhedrin 39a). It was only after this failure with the “First Eve” (post-Lilith) that God
decided to put Adam to sleep for the creation of “Heav’n’s last best gift”, creating the Eve
who eventually ate of the Forbidden Fruit.

However, though there are instances which make for a comparison between Eve and
Lilith as two separate figures, there is at least one instance which amalgamates the two
women into one; namely, that of Eve’s temporary abode by the lake and the bargaining
for children. In Book IV, as Eve relates her own creation to Adam, she remembers “that
day oft […] when from sleep/I first awaked […] to look into the clear/smooth lake”
which she describes as “pure as th’expanse of heav’n” (IV 449-59). Despite the fact that
the passage says “pure as” and not “large as”, size is still made an issue with the
proportioning of heaven in comparison to this “lake” with the word “expanse”. This last
addition enlarges the lake, in the mind of the reader, to the size of the heavens, making it
appear more like a sea. Similarly, after Lilith flees from Adam the angels find her “in the
Red Sea” and “beside the Red Sea” (Ginzberg I 65; Graves 65). In this way, Lilith is
beside the sea, and within it at the same time; correspondingly, Eve lays beside the lake,
but also sees her reflection within the lake. Whether or not Milton was aware of both these versions of Lilith’s positioning in relation to the water, Eve’s discovery of a woman’s figure within the lake opens the opportunity of a reading of two women in the garden, though many critics have interpreted this episode as purely Narcissistic.\textsuperscript{15}

Both Eve and Lilith are challenged with the future children of mankind. In \textit{Paradise Lost} a nondescript voice tempts Eve with the promise of children if she returns to Adam. The “voice” tells Eve that she

to [Adam] shalt bear

Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called

Mother of human race. (IV 473-475)

In the same way, when Lilith flees to the sea, God sends three angels “to capture her” (Ginzberg I 65), and after they threaten to drown her if she does not return to Adam, Lilith exclaims, “How can I die […] when God has ordered me to take charge of all newborn children[?]” (Graves, 65-6). Lilith “takes revenge in injuring babes” (Ginzberg I 65), eventually leading to the myth that Lilith is a demon who harms newborn infants. This “voice” and the promise of children has no parallel in the myth of Narcissus or in the Genesis of the King James Bible, and just as Milton in his early writings took scripture and embellished on it, so he took the creation myth of Genesis and extended it past the traditional Christian canon to include the legend of Lilith.

Connections between the moon, Lilith and Eve continue in the temptation scene of

Book IX, in which Satan addresses Eve as “Queen of this universe” (684). Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Eve is called 'queen', but the title given to her by Satan is directly reminiscent of the “queen of Heaven, with crescent horns” earlier in the poem, which refers to Astarte (along with Ashtaroth and Astoreth) (439). Eve is often compared to the moon and the queen; in Book IV, the moon is set up as a queen:

Hesperus that led

The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon

Rising in clouded majesty, at length

Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,

And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw. (IV 605-609)

Here the moon is not only feminine, but distinctly sexual (if nudity can be inferred as sexuality) in that she becomes “unveiled” and undressed of her thrown off “mantle”. The difference between the sun's light and the moon's light becomes apparent when Raphael introduces the possibility that there are other suns “with their attendant moons thou wilt descry/ Communicating male and female light,/ Which two great sexes animate the world” (VIII 148-151). Just previous to this description of the masculine and feminine sunlight and moonlight, Eve is portrayed “as queen” (60), allowing the reader to connect the moon, Astarte, and Eve. Milton unites his ideas surrounding Eve and the moon, and his earlier poetry on melancholy later in *Paradise Lost* when Michael delivers a prophecy of mankind's future as full of “Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy/ And moon-struck madness” (XI 485-6). Here, he conveniently puts demons, melancholy and the moon in a
single poetic line, allowing inferences of the semiotic connections of these themes to be solidified in text.

Conclusion

Milton put to paper an entire catalogue of female goddesses and demons in his attempts to illustrate Eve, the moon, and the Fall of mankind; however, in all of those lists, he never directly mentions Lilith by name. Heavily reliant on Selden's demonological research, he quotes almost exact translations of Selden's work on Astarte, and her variations, which appear in the same chapter about Lilith. What is interesting about Lilith in Milton's poetry is not her appearance, but her apparent absence, as if a void were intentionally left in the picture to make the reader question what had been omitted, or removed. As religious texts were picked and chosen from the vast amounts of sacred scripture circulating, Lilith was removed from virtually all Christian canonical texts. There is a whole list of flowers that grow in Eden, but no lilies—whose name could perhaps have been interpreted as a variation of Lilith (under Selden's own method of shifting sounds), and there is a whole list of moon goddesses in Milton's poetry, but no Lilith. And given that one of Milton's influences, Leona Modena, wrote

And yet I do protest seriously, that I could wish, you had not past by
with so quiet a Silence, that so infinite a Number of things, which do
not a little puzzle, and perplex the most learned of us Christians: as
namely, that of your Lilith. (14)

it is difficult to image why Milton excluded explicit reference to her from his poetry.
Perhaps including such a controversial figure such as Lilith in his Genesis poem would have been too dangerous, so he can only allude to her existence through her tenuous absence. Or perhaps Milton himself was so uncomfortable with the prospect of Lilith's existence in literature that he intentionally excluded her. However, though she is not named unambiguously or clearly, her implicit attendance within mentions of female sexuality, power, and anxieties surrounding evil indicate the use of Lilith as a tool to understand the darker aspects of the feminine, in line with the mode which previous poets drew inferences to her in their own explorations of female sexuality and the feminine demonic. In Milton's poetry, just as in the poetry of previous decades, Lilith manifests in the various aspects of the moon, and its attendant goddesses. In attempting to explain and explore the possibility of inherent evil within a prelasparian Eden, setting up a duality in which her dark aspects are represented in a separate woman could help to ease anxiety surrounding the possibility of implicit evil in the “first mother”, and onto this duality can be placed fears regarding the danger of feminine power and sexuality.
Fig. 29

Virgil Solis

“Luna”

16th century
Fig. 30

Virgil Solis

“Medea Hecaten Vocat”

1561
Fig. 31

Filippo Ferroverde

“Imagine di Hecate dea triforme”

1615
APPENDIX

John Selden's *De Dis Syris* (1617)

Excerpt of his chapter on Astarte, translated to English

Covella however is interpreted as Coelstis, Heaven, or as Uranus. The ancients called Coelum as Covum, as written by Sextus Pomponius. And Uranus, who was received from the Carthaginians, was venerated by King Massanissa, of the Numidians, as he followed her with so much honor that he made a temple for Juno on the island of Melita, to which Cicero refers in his act. Iv against Verres. However, this Coelstus, or Venus, or Luna (the moon), the Assyrians call “Mylitta”, the Arabs “Alilat”, the Persians “Mitra”, as it is written by Herodutus in *Thalia*. Mylitta, as Scalinger notes, is a mere Chaldee word, [meaning mother], which is one of the more noted epitaphs of Venus. Hesychius says of these words, that “Alilat” comes from the most learned Arabs “Halilath”, and all, who would ask, would signify Luna and the rising, or horned, moon, and also Noctiluca, or night-shiner. Hence, Lucina of the Latins is to be translated, that is, Ilethya of the Greeks, who is none other than Luna or Diana and is called Lilith among the Jews; who flows from the same Halilath of the Arabs, the source of Lailah, namely that is the Night, and therefore Lilith. Lilith, however, is rendered as Noctiluca, or *night demon*. Much more nonsense is the Greek speaking who says that it is Ilethyiam, ridiculously seeking of this kind in their native languages. But of Lilith, we see in Isaiah xxxiv, 14. And the Jews of today believe Lilith to be an enemy to women in childbirth and their children,

16 Julius Caesar Scalinger, Italian scholar (1484-1558 CE).
17 Hauser, p. 94.
18 Hesychius of Alexandria? (c. 5th century BCE).
19 Hauser, p. 94.
and, according to ancient rites, they superstitiously write charms on waxen tablets, with these words: *Adam, Chaua, Chutz Lilith*, or *Lilith* be far from here. They drove away the Goddess of the Gentiles, being a demon. The ancient Greeks, tossed in the storms of the sea, it was the custom for them to exclaim in the same way. It was necessary for the pretending pious Jew to hold the these Gods as demons. This is seen from many things from Ben-Sira and Elias in Thisbi, and in Ben-Maimon's21 More Neb. 1, vi.,22 in addition to the praised Rabbis from the place of Isaiah, and the Archangelum in the Teaching of Pico in the Cabala.23 Hence she is named Lucina. It is not difficult to translate this to one or other of words Lilith or Alileth (which is the same as the Arabs call her). And she is Lilith to the Asians, so she was the Goddess Ilethia to the Europeans, and was enemy to women in labour, who dreaded her. Therefore she was placated with supplications, as she is called in the hymns falsely attributed to Orpheus. If she was present, favourably inclined and conciliated, she served the parent and the small newly born child, but if the opposite remained, she afflicted both with grave misfortune. And so in the works of Theocritus, *Idyls* (xxviii), she is a girl. She is called by Homer, *Mogostokos*. Michael Psellus in his *de Operat. Daemonum* writes And I have heard from many she prepares a female demon for all infants in a feminine form. If I do not misunderstand the ancients, Gelius says that she is Empusa, and I am permitted to consult these things before others Hesychius and Aristophanes with the Scholastics in *The Frogs*. Of Lucina, it is true, and Lilith, and Ilethia, is also understood to be the same, as that which we call the Fayes, or the fairies: they are the same kind. These words are called *Ilethyiae* by Didymus,24

20 Original Latin has *abigunt*, which also has the definition of divorce ("abigunt"), suggesting the separation of Adam and Lilith, before the creation of Eve.
21 Moses Ben-Maimon, Maimonides, medieval Jewish philosopher (1135-1204 CE).
22 The Moreh Nebukim, Maimonides's chief philosophical work (Wolfson 306).
23 These references to Hebrew texts do not appear in the Hauser translation.
24 Didymus Chalcenterus, Hellenistic Greek grammarian (ca. 63-10 BCE).
Homer and the Scholastics, and by Sophocles in *Electra*. Of Ilethyia much is written in the works of Plutarch where he considers women; Homer does not, but he does endure pains and write of Lucina in the *Iliad*, where Eustathius notes of the writings of the ancients that she is Ilethyia, and so from the bow she sends pain and bitterness with a sharp spear. In order to avoid child-bearing pains, it is a custom to implore the aid of Juno, Lucina, or of Ilethyia, just as it is seen on the Comedies, but none other than the God of the Palamos, in the *Eumendes*, or make supplications to the angry Gods. It can be added with accuracy, it is clear that not only with the similarity of the names, but also supposed by the duties which they perform, that Ilithyia or Eleutho, and Lilith, were not at all different deities. Or so with the fetus of the parent in Ilethyian guardianship, which was the dangerous and divine Goddess, being taught to appease unfavorable omens, against which prayers are usually taken, but of this in passing not far or unseasonably. None does not see that all of these belong to Luna. The same Lucina, Ilethyia, Diana, we learn of such distant names, that only those who are childish do not know, as in Cicero, the second book of *De Natura Deorum*, and in Catullus's epigrams (xxviii). Let us return to the truth of the Arabic name: the same letters *Alileth*, or night, is able to denote the Night-shiner, it is written the same by the Arabs. And yet Urania is not called these names by the Arabs, according to Herodotus, but Alilat (who is the same itself as Myllitta to the Assyrians). The same Goddess is binominal to the Arabs, as the divinity of the other of those people. Certainly, Alitta could be sought in the same place from where Mylitta is a theme, and signifies giving birth.

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25 Eustathius of Thessalonica, commentator on Homer (c. 1115-1195 CE).
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