The Birth of American Horror Film
-Gary D. Rhodes

CHAPTER 6

Witches

Reviewing *The New Wizard of Oz* in 1915, *Moving Picture World* described one of its characters as "her Satanic highness, the witch."[1] Here the critic drew an immediate connection between Satan and witchcraft, even in the fanciful world of novelist L. Frank Baum, who had produced the film himself. Such a link is unsurprising, given accounts of witchcraft in the Judeo-Christian tradition (as in the Witch of Endor), in medieval folklore and beliefs (as famously chronicled in Heinrich Kramer's 1487 book *Malleus Maleficarum*), and in superstitions that continued into the era of early cinema. For many persons, witches were real, and they consorted with His Satanic Majesty, who gave them their powers. As Shakespeare wrote in *Macbeth* (1611), "For a charm of powerful trouble, like a hell-broth boil and bubble."

In America, of course, the witch's cauldron boiled over in Salem. As Gretchen A. Adams has observed:

> The specter of Salem witchcraft haunts the American imagination. Few historical events have provided such a wide range of scholars, dramatists, fiction writers, poets, and amateur sleuths with a subject that so stubbornly resists a final resolution.[2]

Grappling with the legacy of Salem provoked a variety of responses, including dark comedy. In 1796, for example, a Vermont newspaper published the following anecdote: "A witch, being at the stake to be burnt, saw her son there, and desired him to give her some drink: No mother, said he, it will do you wrong, for the drier you are the better you'll burn."[3]

Discussion of witchcraft in the eighteenth century shifted blame from the accused to the accuser. In 1731, the *American Weekly Mercury* told of a young girl in Somerset, England who began having inexplicable "fits." The locals believed she was bewitched and planned to execute her. The "Water Ordeal was resolved to be reviv'd," the account reported. But when the suspect did not drown, she was taken to a stable, where she died. The story ended differently than it had in Salem: "The Coroner did his utmost to discover the ringleaders, but in vain. However, the Coroner's Inquest has charged three with murder . . ."[4]

Adams has discussed how Salem moved "from the periphery to the center of cultural memory" in America during the nineteenth century, an era in which the witch trials served a variety of metaphorical purposes, ranging from those who demarcated the line between the "dark colonial past and the bright promise of the national future," to those who used Salem to decry particular regions and/or religions within the United States. It was in this period that the myth of accused witches being burned at the stake

arose; however horrible their fate, none of the accused in America had been consigned to the flames.[5] Adams continues, "In its role as a *negative* symbol, Salem witchcraft was as useful as any heroic action, by articulating the inevitable consequences of an ill-advised action."[6]

Owen Davies has augmented this discussion of the nineteenth century by describing the sheer volume of immigrants into America who would have known little or nothing of Salem, but who retained their own cultural beliefs in the supernatural, including in witchcraft.[7] Accusations of witchcraft erupted repeatedly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including in some Native American communities. Accordingly, he suggests "it would not seem out of place for witchcraft to be central to a late nineteenth-century drama set amongst hillbillies in the Appalachians and Ozarks, or amongst the Pennsylvania Dutch."[8]

"Are there witches among us?" the *Chicago Tribune* pointedly asked in 1877. The newspaper answered its own question by stating that only persons "steeped in a density of ignorance" could "accept witchcraft, or any other exploded humbug of past centuries."[9] Other journalists referred to believers in witchcraft as "foolish people."[10] In these cases, learned writers attempted to school the populace by reminding them that Salem had culminated in a "New England Reign of Terror."[11]

However, such education may well have had little impact. Davies quotes a minister who declared in 1892 that a "majority" of Americans believed in witchcraft.[12] Whatever the exact percentage, press accounts indicate that superstitions continued, including in Wisconsin in 1888, where an "evil eye" had allegedly cast a spell on a family, and in New Jersey in 1893, where a man accused a neighbor of being "possessed of evil charms."[13] In Albany, New York in 1897, a German witch supposedly jinxed a young man.[14] Similarly, the "curse of Salem" was felt in Chicago in 1901, when an Irish woman claimed a Jewish witch had hexed her.[15]

To explain the prevalence of these beliefs, some journalists used geography and ethnicity as excuses, by which they could increase their own sense of superiority. For example, one account suggested in 1885 that these superstitions were relegated to the "farming population in those isolated localities," those who lived some distance from enlightened urbanites.[16] And to be sure, many tales of witchcraft did emerge from rural communities. For example, there was the trial of a Choctaw "witch-killer" who murdered "several innocent persons" in Texas in 1901.[17] Then, in 1907, a Nebraska farmer demanded the arrest of a "witch" who had cast spells on innocent locals.[18]

As for those who disavowed belief in witchcraft, the subject could still provide a degree of fascination and even spectacle. In 1871, for example, a journalist reported on the James Williams family of Fitts Hill, Illinois. Many townspeople believed that witchcraft tormented Williams's two daughters, aged sixteen and eighteen. The elder of the two described how an old woman had unsuccessfully tempted her to become a witch. Refusal meant the old woman caused them to go into spasms and commit bizarre acts. "Hundreds go every night to see the sight," the journalist claimed, adding:

> as their beautiful voices rolled out from the house-top on the still twilight, plaintive, mournful, sweet, their arms waving, bodies turned in this way and that, looking in their light dresses more like fairies, ghosts, or any unearthly apparition than human beings, wave after wave of chill came up my back, and I felt light almost as air. While I did not believe in witches, it seemed the only suitable place I had ever seen for them; and if such things could be, they surely would be there, and *then, right then.*

> . . . Now came the most distressing sight I ever witnessed. Two young ladies, rendered wholly unconscious of what they were doing by some unknown cause, running about hunting pins and flies to eat. . . . There is no mistake about this. I actually saw them with wonderful expertness catch flies off the wall and eat them in spite of the watchfulness of their friends, and then vomit them up. It was horrible to look at, yet there were fiends there laughing at it. During these spells, they would go to a French harp which they own, and are very fond of, and play and sing catches of wild music.[19]

The journalist implored James Williams to seek medical attention for his daughters, as well as to disperse the nightly audience that gathered. But Williams "firmly believed [his daughters] were bewitched and wanted the people to witness it."

The desire to "see" witches could be fulfilled in other respects, including nonfiction texts like Charles Upham's two-volume opus *Salem Witchcraft; with an Account of Salem Village, and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Spirits* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1867), which included such engravings as *Witch Hill*. Then, in 1892, Henrietta D. Kimball's *Witchcraft Illustrated* examined the subject through text and images that "glance[d] at old and new Salem and its historical resources."[20]

Perceived interest in witchcraft also prompted at least a few writers to invent "authentic" stories. In 1881, for example, *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* published an article about accused witch Juliana Cox, who had been executed in Connecticut in 1753. A few years earlier, the same tale appeared in numerous American newspapers.[21] However, as Cynthia Wolfe Boynton has shown, there is no evidence that Juliana Cox ever existed, let alone as a witch.[22] Another spurious tale was that of Colonel Jonathan Buck's monument in Bucksport, Maine. The imprint of a witch's foot allegedly appeared on it, the fulfillment of her curse on the man who condemned her to the stake. At least that is what *New England Magazine* claimed in 1902, with enough credibility that the story resurfaced in newspapers in 1909.[23] While Buck served in the military during the American Revolution, there is absolutely no record of him condemning any witches. In fact, there are no records of any accused witch being executed in Maine. Fiction had simply masqueraded as nonfiction.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, American literature also drew upon popular notions of witches, as well as the history of Salem. For example, there was Jonathan M. Scott's poem *The Sorceress: or Salem Delivered* (1817) and the unattributed *Salem Witchcraft; or the Adventures of Parson Handy from Punkapog Pond* (published in magazine form in 1820 and then as a book in 1827).[24] Both stories feature what Lisa M. Vetere has described as the "persistent genre figure of the withered hag."[25] According to Diane Purkiss, the witch's ugliness represents a sign of supernatural power, as well as the refusal to be "controlled or managed as a soft or yielding object of desire."[26]

A large number of novels followed, arriving at roughly the same time as the growing demand for "genuine American" literature.[27] These include the anonymously authored *The Witch of New England: A Romance* (1824), *Delusion; or the Witch of New England* (1840), Mary Lyford's *The Salem Belle: A Tale of Love and Witchcraft in 1692* (1842), John W. De Forest's *Witching Times* (1857), Caroline Derby's *Salem* (1874), Pauline B. Mackie's *Ye Lyttle Salem Maide: Story of Witchcraft* (1898), Marvin Dana's *A Puritan Witch* (1903), L. F. Madison's *Maid of Salem Towne* (1906), and Henry Peterson's *Dulcible: A Tale of Old Salem* (1907).[28] Of these, John Neal's *Rachel Dyer* (1828) remains one of the most notable, its pages marked by narrative fiction intermingled with quotations from nonfiction primary sources.

Speaking of these stories and novels, particularly those published prior to the American Civil War, G. Harrison Orians observes:

> Almost all the longer tales were cast in the mould [sic] of the historical romance. . . . But this romantic glow was not easily attained. To anyone not familiar with the wearisome repetition of charges with which the afflicted assailed the accused, it might appear the simplest thing to construct out of the episodes of that time a romance neither harsh nor revolting to refined taste. But the motives of the actors and the sources of enmity were so thoroughly obscured, and the interrelation of accusations so befogged, that it was difficult indeed to weave them into a narrative. Thus beset with confusion, the novelist had to resort to fairly simple patterns of malice or jealousy, patterns which sooner or later suggested other tales, even when the authors were innocent of indebtedness. It was this inherent plot weakness that accounts for the constant recurrence of fair Puritans charged with witchcraft.[29]

Orians also notes the tendency such novelists had to make their "preferred heroines young and beautiful," which "scarcely . . . imparted a correct historical view," but which provided more romance, and—in the years that followed—a template for early cinema.[30]

Gabriele Schwab has calculated that there were "roughly forty works which are direct literary renditions of the Salem events" that "exceed the even more narrow scope of gothic literature." In her reading, this literature reveals the "persistence of the seductive power of the witch as much as the desire for 'displaced' witch-hunts."[31] In other words, the similarity of these novels to melodrama and the Gothic novel "allows one to surmise that they are, in fact, whetting a different reading appetite, which thrives less on the historical interest than on the witch as a feared but seductive object of desire."[32]

The most notable appearance of witches in nineteenth-century American literature came in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne.[33] Famously, *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* (1850) presents the minor but important character of Mistress Hibbins, a "witch-lady" based on the historic figure of Ann Hibbins, who was executed in Boston for witchcraft in 1656. As Karl P. Wentersdorf notes, "The element of witchcraft in *The Scarlet Letter* merges subtly with the other elements of literary allegory to constitute an unobtrusive but unmistakable satire on the Puritan aesthetic."[34] Hawthorne returned to the subject briefly in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), with character Matthew Maule being named as a martyr in the terrible tragedy of 1692.

Of equal importance in this context are two of Hawthorne's short stories that directly address the issue of Salem witchcraft, one being *Young Goodman Brown* (1835, as discussed in Chapter 1).[35] That same year, in *Alice Doane's Appeal* (1835), the narrator speaks of the "witchcraft delusion," but despite dismissing the supernatural, he still hopes his feet might "sink into the hollow of a witch's grave." In this fragmentary tale, the pilgrimage to Gallows Hill is suggestive of the kind of allure that Salem has had as a tourist destination since the nineteenth century.

In 1891, the *Chicago Tribune* published extended descriptions of surviving buildings and "time-stained" artifacts of note in Salem:

> At the side of the room we leaned upon the roughly-worn pine desk used by Hathorne at the Custom-House, and tried to summon up in imagination the men and women who, on a bleak November Sunday two centuries and a half ago, through the narrow, 'lonely lanes and the unpicturesque prolixity of its main street,' drifted high and deep with snows, bravely and piously plowed their way to the little church of the Salem heretic.[36]

Figure 6.1 The original British poster for Kalem's *The Mountain Witch* (1913), which features the same artwork that appeared on the American poster. (*Courtesy of the EYE Film Institute*)

Subsequent newspapers provided details of other locations, including the homes that belonged to Jonathan Corwin, one of the judges in the Salem witch trials, and of Rebecca Nurse, who had been sentenced to death as a witch in 1692.[37]

But perhaps more common than the spectacle of tourism was the spectacle of drama, the theatricality of witchcraft onstage. The first major American play on witchcraft was James Nelson Barker's *Superstition; or, The Fanatic Father* (1824), as described in Chapter 2. Then, in 1847, the blank verse tragedy *Witchcraft; or, The Martyrs of Salem* appeared in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. In it, a "melancholy" but innocent woman is executed for being a witch.[38] The *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote that it exposed how "dangerous" superstition could be, even with "civilized people."[39] The New York *Evening Mirror* called it a "play of the highest order—grand, simple, and tragic."[40]

In 1868, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published the dramatic poem *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* in his collection *The New-England Tragedies*.[41] Its title character was a dramatization of the victim pressed to death in Salem. The *New York Times* praised Longfellow's ability to evoke "terror and pity."[42] By contrast, in April 1893, Mary E. Wilkins's play *Giles Corey, Yeoman* (aka *Giles Corey-Yeoman*) opened to poor reviews at New York's Theatre of Arts and Letters.[43]

Far more successful was Marie Hubert Frohman's production of Philip Hamilton's play *The Witch* in 1890. As the *New York Times* wrote:

> It is announced that Marie Hubert Frohman intends to produce in this city a play called *The Witch*, the scene of which is laid at Salem in early colonial days. One of the incidents is the burning of a witch at a stake. Persons convicted of witchcraft were never burned in the New-England colonies. That absurd falsehood has not been heard of for a long term of years. It is hoped Mrs. Frohman will change the stake to the gallows before she produces her play, even at the expense of a vivid pictorial effect.[44]

Contemporaneous reviews indicate that Frohman followed the advice, with the execution method altered to the gallows.[45]

While Marie Madison adapted the play into novel form for publication, *The Witch* toured throughout New England and then throughout much of the rest of the United States.[46] As of August 1892, the Portland *Oregonian* announced the "grim" play was nearing its five hundredth performance.[47] A review in the *Springfield Republican* claimed *The Witch* "animates the most dramatic and weird picture to be found in early colonial history."[48] When it appeared at the Garrick in 1895, the *New York Times* believed that, while it lacked the "poetic instinct" of Wilkins's *Giles Corey*, it was "theatrically" the "more effective piece."[49]

Then, in 1910, a four-act drama entitled *The Witch* opened at the New Theatre in New York.[50] Bertha Kalich starred in this adaptation of H. Wiers-Jenssen's Norwegian play *Anne Pedersdotter*, an "oppressive tragedy of fanaticism, love, and violence."[51] The *New York Times* dubbed it "grim," with its mise-en-scène largely set:

> in shadow, candle-lighted interiors, with groups of figures half in light [and] half in gloom, as befitted the more or less benighted set of people of the story. Picturesqueness the play allows, and so much was attained in the individual and the general performance.[52]

The play's final act—in which a character's dead body appeared in "full view throughout"—was "repelling" enough that it drove "the exclusive audience out."[53]

Where did they go? "About a block away from the New Theatre there is a moving picture establishment that is doing good business on those evenings that [*The Witch* is performed]," one article claimed, adding, "It is a curious sight, the aristocracy of the intellect and wealth rushing away from one of their own productions to mix with [the] hoi polloi of the vaudeville and motion pictures in order to be cheered up."[54]

As was the case with devils, imps, skeletons, and ghosts, Georges Méliès was the first to incorporate witches into moving pictures. Here again we must start with his landmark 1896 moving picture *The Devil's Castle/Le manoir du diable* (aka *The Haunted Castle*) and its depiction of six spectral witches, all ghosts in white sheets carrying large broomsticks.[55] Hag-like witches then appeared in Méliès's *Bachelor's Paradise/Chez la sorcière* (1903) and *The Enchanted Well/Le puits fantastique* (1903).[56] In 1903, Star Films released Méliès's *Le Sorcier* in America under the title *The Witch's Revenge*.[57] In it, a king condemns a male sorcerer to death on the charge of witchcraft. After performing numerous tricks, the sorcerer turns the king's guards into demons and orders the king's execution.[58]

Three years later, Méliès's company released *The Witch/La fée carabosse ou le poignard fatal* (1906).[59] With a pointed hat and flowing gown, its witch rides a broomstick, first

through a decrepit cemetery and then through the night sky, all in pursuit of a knight. A "druid priest" (as a Star Films catalog calls him) arrives in time to save the knight and his fair maiden.[60] He uses the witch's own broom to push her off a cliff. Unlike some of Méliès's earlier films, *The Witch* brought to life a character that closely resembled depictions known to American audiences not only through the stage and literature, but also in early twentieth-century Halloween decorations and costumes.

Not surprisingly, given the company's penchant for producing films in the style of Méliès, Pathé Frères also produced a number of trick films about witchcraft. These included Segundo de Chomón's *The Witch's Cave/L'antre de la sorcière* (1906), a "story of love and adventure, showing many gorgeous scenes and startling transformations"; *The Witch Kiss/Le baiser de la sorcière* (1907), a "colored film allowing the power of a witch's kiss"; and *The Witch's Donkey/L'âne de la sorcière* (1909), in which a witch casts a spell on her stolen donkey.[61]

Of the Pathé Frères films directed by Chomón, perhaps the most fascinating was *The Witch's Secret/Le secret de la sorcière* (Pathé Frères, 1908, aka *Witch's Secret*).[62] An old witch leaves her laboratory and flies on a broomstick. In her absence, two thieves enter, their plans becoming upset by a "crowd of white capped figures [that] spring out of the ground, each bearing a bat." The thieves are knocked unconscious, and when they awaken a "gang of weird-looking ogres" gives them another beating. The witch returns to find one of them still in her abode, and "with the vigorous aid of her broom helps him out urgently."[63]

To this group, other film manufacturing companies added even more witch comedies. In 1909, Great Northern released *Cycle Rider and the Witch/Heksen og cyklisten* (aka *The Witch and the Cycle*), in which a witch transforms a bicycle into "all sorts of funny things in the way of wheeled vehicles."[64] The following year, Lux released *Witches' Spectacles* (1910, aka *The Witch's Spectacles*), in which a wealthy woman obtains a special pair of glasses from a witch that allow her to see into the future. A series of "amusing revelations" follows.[65] That same year, George Kleine distributed the Urban-Eclipse film *The Witch of Carabosse/Carabosse vaincue* (1910).[66] Based upon an old legend, a man falls into the clutches of a witch who turns him into a "beast with horns for his temerity."[67] After "many unpleasant experiences" meant to "amuse the audience," he is "released from the spell [to live as] a wiser man."[68]

Witches also appeared in a number of fairy-tale moving pictures, including Edison's 1908 release *The Leprechawn* [sic], in which a "witch-woman" places a curse on an Irish landlord.[69] *Moving Picture World* believed the story "caught the 'witchery of Ireland'"; the *New York Dramatic Mirror* named it "one of the prettiest picture-stories it has been the pleasure of the *Mirror* to review."[70] Other such fanciful films included *Hansel and Gretel* (Edison, 1909), *Moon for Your Love/La lune dans son tablier* (Gaumont, 1909), *The Sleeping Beauty* (Venus, 1913), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Selig Polyscope, 1910), in which Dorothy (Bebe Daniels) splashes water onto the wicked witch Momba, and the aforementioned *The New Wizard of Oz* (1915, which was itself a retitled version of the 1914 film *His Majesty, the Scarecrow of Oz*).[71]

And then there were dramatic depictions of witches that unfolded outside of fairy-tale narratives. The title character of *The Witch/La sorcière* (Le Lion, 1909) transfers a woman's soul into a female dummy so that her ugly son can have a companion. Once

challenged, she "summons all sorts of imps and phantoms to her aid," but the woman's sweetheart finally restores her soul.[72] Five years later, actress Mary Fuller portrayed the title character in *The Witch Girl* (Victor Film Co., 1914), a "strange, likable creature with a touch of the supernatural about her."[73] She "roams the woods without regard to propriety."[74] The male lead (played by Charles Ogle) falls in love with her, and, after the space of a year, she agrees to marry him. *Motography* praised its "pleasing" story.[75]

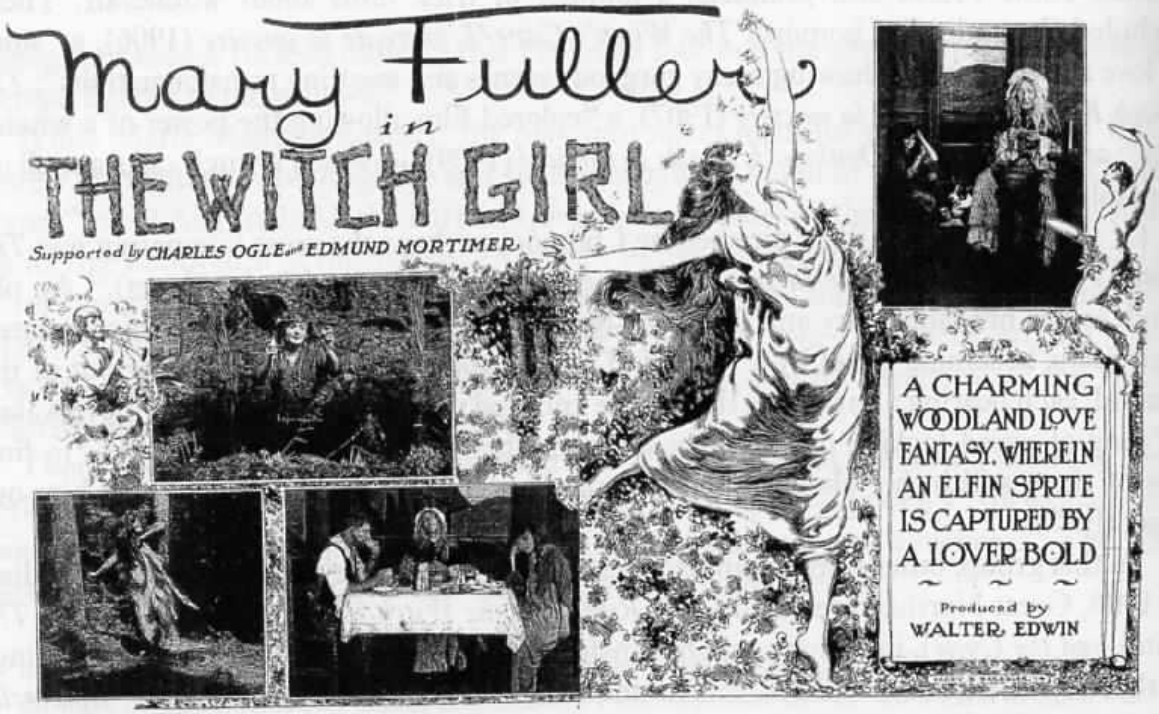

Figure 6.2 Advertisement for *The Witch Girl* (Victor Film Co., 1914), published in the *Universal Weekly* of October 17, 1914.

Another category of witch films came in the form of tales of the American West, a cinematic reminder of Owen Davies's remark about how unsurprising it would be to see witches depicted in dramas set in rural areas. *The Witch's Cavern* (Selig Polyscope, 1909) was likely the first of these films, telling the "weird" story of a party of campers who "run across a wild man, the half-witted son of a crazy old woman who lives in the mountains" of Yosemite Valley.[76] *Variety* called it a "corker," while the *New York Dramatic Mirror* praised its "poetic touch" of showing the old woman "performing a strange incantation to a magnificent waterfall."[77]

A number of similar moving pictures followed. *The Witch of the Range* (American, 1911) was a "western" in which an "old gypsy with witch-like characteristics" wanders through "picturesque mountain scenery, muttering incantations and casting dark spells over nature" until a group of cowboys unsuccessfully attempts to lynch her.[78] The same year, Kathlyn Williams portrayed the lead role in *The Witch of the Everglades* (Selig Polyscope, 1911).[79] Its title character was a beautiful but "demented" Native American woman with "witchlike characteristics."[80] And *The Wise Witch of Fairyland* (Solax, 1912) was a Native American "hag" who cast spells and mixed love potions.[81] (The subject of Native Americans and Otherness will be covered in Chapter 11.)

The Myth of Jamasha Pass (American, 1912) offered the "allegorical" story of a haunted pass in the "gloomy" Sierras, where "superstitious old men were wont to tell of the mystical maid . . . [who] oft appeared at sundown seeking the souls of men."[82] Two young miners ignore the warning of an elder and camp in the area. One of them awakens to see a "phantom." He reaches out for her, but to his "terror," she vanishes into thin air.[83] Soon the other is awakened as well. Both men end up pursuing "this elusive shadow" off a mountainside, thus falling to their deaths.[84] *Moving Picture World* noted:

> Perhaps she symbolizes the lure of the treasure [of the] mountains—'Death stands above me, whispering low,' she sings. At her first appearance in the picture, being but a mortal maid with whom we are well acquainted, the effect is not very uncanny, but, so well is the locality chosen, and so skilfully [sic] is the action woven to subdue us to the producer's ideas, and also so well is it acted, that soon she takes on not a little dreadfulness.[85]

In another article, *Moving Picture World* claimed the film was "doubtless founded on an Indian legend connected with Jamasha Pass."[86] That may well be true, as it was likely shot on location near the real Jamacha Pass (as it is more commonly spelled). However, the film's plot was not dissimilar to *The Witch's Ballad/La ballata della strega* (Ambrosio, 1910). An Italian-made film released in America, its witch induces a man to "jump into the sea."[87]

The most notable witch films in early cinema were those that visualized witch-hunts and/or trials, thus bringing at least a degree of historical accuracy to the screen, particularly insofar as women who are wrongly accused. In marked contrast to its trick films

Figure 6.3 *The Myth of Jamasha Pass* (American, 1912).

about witches, for example, Pathé Frères released *The Village Witch/La jeteuse de sorts* (1906), which presented a realist tale that exposed the superstitions of old.

The first of these films produced in America was Vitagraph's *The Witch* (1908), which presented the story of a woman charged with witchcraft in the fifteenth century, one that the *New York Dramatic Mirror* called "in some sense instructive."[88] Here was a history lesson and a morality tale on the screen, as well as—to extend Gabriele Schwab's thesis to early cinema—a story that perhaps tried to whet another appetite, meaning "the witch as a feared but seductive object of desire."[89]

In the Days of Witchcraft (Edison, 1909) seems to have become the first moving picture to address the history of witch trials in America, and by extension the first to invoke the erroneous myth that American judges ordered convicted women to be burned at the stake. In this case, however, the accused witch receives a reprieve at the last minute when her lover proves her innocence, thus appending a happy ending to a history that was devoid of the same.[90] The *New York Dramatic Mirror* presumed that the film was set in England, while *Moving Picture World* instead believed that it "faithfully" depicted New England, even to the extent that it had "historic value."[91]

Far more specific to American history was D. W. Griffith's *Rose O' Salem-Town* (Biograph, 1910), set in the year 1692 and reminiscent of Philip Hamilton's play *The Witch* (1892).[92] Here a young woman spurns the advances of a "hypocritical Puritan deacon." In retaliation, he accuses her and her mother of witchcraft. Biograph's publicity drew attention to the fact that "There are many relics of those days still in existence at Salem, and while conditions are such as to prevent our using the actual spots . . . many of the scenes of the picture are closely contiguous to them, our company of players making the trip there for that purpose."[93]

As Charlie Keil observes, *Rose O' Salem-Town* features "relatively 'advanced' storytelling techniques," including a "deft handling of space" and a form of "psychological editing" in which one-quarter of the film's shots unfold in only one-tenth of its running time.[94] Once again, the stake becomes the preferred method of execution, with Rose's mother burned to death. But Rose's sweetheart (along with a group of "friendly Indians") saves her at the last minute, thus resulting in another happy ending, one praised by *Variety*.[95] While *The Nickelodeon* believed the film effectively "revivifies history in commendable style," the trade registered "something of a protest" against the depiction of the Puritan deacon as a "libertine."[96]

Another film of this type appeared in 1912. Reliance's *The Trials of Faith* (aka *Trials of Faith*) was a "very pretty picture of early days in New England." The jealous Priscilla falsely accuses Faith of being a witch. As a trade synopsis noted, "The governor is only too glad to entertain the suspicion against her and she is tried and condemned for witchcraft."[97] She is bound to a tree, and the pyre is set aflame. But Native Americans "break through the crowd" and rescue her, creating what *Moving Picture World* called a "delightful ending to a fine picture."[98]

The following year, 1913, seven films appeared either directly or indirectly covering the topic of Salem witchcraft. In February, Kalem released *The Mountain Witch*, in which a "young minister" arrives in a village, only to protect an accused witch from his parishioners.[99] In May, Selig Polyscope offered *In the Days of Witchcraft*, with Cotton Mather himself sentencing an accused witch to the stake; assisted by her lover, she escapes jail and flees to England.[100] In August, Kay-Bee's *The House of Bondage* told a "drama of Puritan

Figure 6.4 *The Trials of Faith* (Reliance, 1912).

Figure 6.5 *The Witch of Salem* (Domino, 1914).

days" in which an accused witch escapes from prison, but returns to warn those who condemned her about an impending "Indian attack."[101] In September, Eclair American released *A Puritan Episode*, causing *Moving Picture World* to bemoan that an "otherwise excellent" film perverted history by depicting a colonial American being sentenced to the stake.[102] In November, Domino released *The Witch of Salem*, yet another drama about the "atrocious fanaticism" that plagued colonial America.[103] And in December, Domino released *The Curse*, in which a Native American tribe attacks a village shortly after a woman is accused of witchcraft.[104]

Of all the films distributed in 1913, Eclair American's *The Witch* received the most publicity, which extended to a multi-page illustrated synopsis in the August 1913 issue of *Photoplay*.[105] Released in June of that year, this version of *The Witch* reworked *Rose O' Salem-Town*, with character Mary Martin refusing Selectman Marsh's attention. In retaliation, he accuses her mother of witchcraft. Mary relents, marrying Marsh, but her mother's sentence proceeds as planned, at least until Governor Brent intercedes at the last minute. Mary suffers miserably as Marsh's wife until he at long last dies.[106] *Moving Picture World* praised *The Witch* for its historical "fidelity."[107] However, *The Witch* deviated from authentic cases in the same way that the other 1913 witch films did, appending happy endings to stories that in Salem had ended tragically.

As Owen Davies has remarked, "Witches were integral to the cultural fabric of America."[108] To an extent, the same can be said of early cinema in the United States, during which time all manner of witchcraft appeared on the screen. And yet the panoply of witches can be best understood by consideration of three major categories: (mostly

Figure 6.6 *The Witch* (Eclair American, 1913).

imported) trick films in which such characters possessed supernatural powers; American-made films depicting the Native American Other; and the American-made films in which witchcraft was simultaneously present and absent, visible and invisible, films in no witches appeared, but instead victims who were falsely accused of being in league with Satan, their innocence contrasted sharply with the ignorance and sinfulness of their accusers. The cauldron of witchcraft no longer boiled over: it simmered in film after film, the cinema slowly and repeatedly indicting and even attempting to rectify the colonial past.

Notes

1. Hanford C. Judson, "*The New Wizard of Oz*," *Moving Picture World*, March 20, 1915, 1781. L. Frank Baum's Oz Film Manufacturing Company produced and released *His Majesty, the Scarecrow of Oz* in 1914; the company then reissued it in 1915 under the title *The New Wizard of Oz*. Copies of the film are archived at the George Eastman Museum and the Library of Congress.
2. Gretchen A. Adams, *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1.
3. Untitled, *Rutland Herald* (Rutland, Vermont), March 28, 1796, 4.
4. "Extract of a Letter from Somersetshire," *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), June 3, 1731, 3.
5. Adams, 6, 39.
6. Ibid., 5.
7. Owen Davies, *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft after Salem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.
8. Ibid., 18.
9. "Are There Witches Among Us?", *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1877, 4.
10. The word "foolish" in this context appears in "The Modern Witch," *Colorado Springs Gazette* (Colorado Springs, Colorado), September 17, 1902, 4, as well as in "Jailed as a Witch," *Grand Rapids Press* (Grand Rapids, Michigan), September 15, 1911, 10.
11. "The Witchcraft of 1692; or, The England Reign of Terror," *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Salem, Oregon), May 25, 1849.
12. Davies, 11.
13. "The Wisconsin Witch," *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1888, 9; "Accused of Being a Witch," *New York Herald*, April 18, 1893, 12.
14. "Shriveled by a Witch," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 26, 1897, 10.
15. "Chicago Has a Witch," *Washington Bee* (Washington, D.C.), October 12, 1901, 6.
16. "Witches and Witchcraft," *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1885, 10.
17. "Witches Shot to Death," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1902, 35.
18. "Witchcraft in West," *Washington Post*, February 11, 1907, 6.
19. "The Witches," *Nashville Union and American* (Nashville, Tennessee), July 9, 1871.
20. Henrietta D. Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated* (Boston: George A. Kimball, 1892).
21. See, for example, "An Old Witch," *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville, Nebraska), November 29, 1877, 1.
22. Cynthia Wolfe Boynton, *Connecticut Witch Trials: The First Panic in the New World* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2014), 98–102.
23. "The Witch's Curse Story Is Revived," *Columbus Daily Enquirer* (Columbus, Ohio), January 24, 1909, 4.
24. When discussing "New England Witchcraft in Fiction," G. Harrison Orians also cataloged "Salem, An Eastern Tale," published in three installments in *The New York Literary Journal*

and Belles-Lettres Repository in the autumn of 1820. See G. Harrison Orians, "New England Witchcraft in Fiction," *American Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1930), 55.

25. Lisa M. Vetere, "The Malefic Unconscious: Gender, Genre, and History in Early Antebellum Witchcraft Narratives," *Journal of Narrative Theory*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Summer 2012), 119–48.
26. Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 127.
27. Gabriele Schwab, "Seduced by Witches: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in the Context of New England Witchcraft Fictions," in *Seduction and Theory: Readings of Gender, Representation, and Rhetoric*, edited by Dianne Hunter (University of Illinois Press, 1989), 175.
28. *The Witch of New England: A Romance* was subsequently attributed to author John Cadwalader M'Call, just as *Delusion; or the Witch of New England* has been attributed to Buckminster Lee.
29. Orians, 70, 71.
30. Ibid., 71.
31. Schwab, 174.
32. Ibid., 174.
33. Philip McFarland, *Hawthorne in Connecticut* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 18.
34. Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Element of Witchcraft in *The Scarlet Letter*," *Folklore*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Summer 1972), 153.
35. For more information on Nathaniel Hawthorne's relationship with Salem, see *Hawthorne in Salem*, a website created by North Shore Community College and three Salem museums with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: www.hawthorneinsalem.org. Accessed on September 1, 2015.
36. Rena A. Michaels, "The Old Witch Town," *Chicago Tribune*, December 27, 1891, 25.
37. "Salem's Quaint Old Witch House," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1896, 10; "The Days of Witch Hanging," *Kansas City Star*, January 15, 1907, 9.
38. James Fisher, *Historical Dictionary of American Theatre: Beginnings* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 474.
39. "Local Items," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 5, 1847.
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41. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The New-England Tragedies* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1868).
42. "New Publications," *New York Times*, October 28, 1868, 2.
43. "The Week at the Theatres," *New York Times*, April 23, 1893, 13; "Miss Wilkins's Witch Play," *New York Times*, April 18, 1893, 4.
44. "Notes of the Stage," *New York Times*, April 20, 1890, 12.
45. "*The Witch* at the Opera House," *Springfield Republican* (Springfield, Missouri), December 9, 1890, 7.
46. Marie Madison, *The Witch: A Novel* (New Haven, Connecticut: New Haven Publishing Company, 1891).
47. "Coming Attractions," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), August 3, 1892, 8.
48. "*The Witch* at the Opera House," 7.
49. "New Theatrical Bills," *New York Times*, December 10, 1895, 5.
50. "New Theatre Gets Mme. Bertha Kalich," *New York Times*, January 17, 1910, 7.
51. "New Plays in Gotham," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1910, S2.
52. "Witchcraft Days at New Theatre," *New York Times*, February 15, 1910, 9.
53. George Henry Payne, "Nickel Show Alone Welcomes New Theatre's Latest Play," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1910, B1.
54. Ibid., B1.
55. A copy of *The Devil's Castle* is available on the DVD *Georges Méliès Encore* (Los Angeles: Flicker Alley, 2010).

56. Copies of *Bachelor's Paradise* and *The Enchanted Well* are available in the DVD boxed set *Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema*.
57. Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, July 25, 1903, 500.
58. A copy of *The Witch's Revenge* is available in the DVD boxed set *Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema* (Los Angeles: Flicker Alley, 2008).
59. A copy of *The Witch* is available in the DVD boxed set *Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema*.
60. *Complete Catalogue of Genuine and Original "Star" Films* (New York: Star Films, June 1905), 116–17. It is important to note that this Star Film catalog bears a June 1905 date, but pages from 81 to 148 detail films from the July 1905 to June 1908 period. Either these later pages were appended to the catalog, or the catalog dates to June 1908, with the first eighty pages reprinted and the 1905 date not being revised.
61. Advertisement, *Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana), October 27, 1907, 27; Advertisement, *Austin Daily Herald* (Austin, Minnesota), March 20, 1908; "*The Witch's Donkey*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, July 17, 1909, 16. A copy of *The Witch's Cave* is available on the DVD *Segundo de Chomón, el cine de la fantasia* (Barcelona: Cameo Media S.L., 2010).
62. A copy of *The Witch Kiss* is archived at the British Film Institute.
63. "*Latest Films of All Makers*," *Views and Film Index*, January 11, 1908, 8. In addition to the Segundo de Chomón-directed films, Pathé also released *The Black Witch/La sorcière noire* (1907), in which the title character performs magic in a "barbarian" land. A copy of the film is available on the DVD *Fairy Tales: Early Colour Stencil Films from Pathé* (London: British Film Institute, 2012).
64. "*The Gray Dame*," *Moving Picture World*, September 11, 1909, 344. A copy of *Cycle Rider and the Witch* is archived at the Danish Film Institute.
65. "*The Witch's Spectacles*," *Moving Picture World*, July 2, 1910, 47.
66. "Urban-Eclipse," *Billboard*, August 6, 1910, 27.
67. "*The Witch of Carabosse*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, August 13, 1910, 27.
68. "*Witch of Carabosse*," *Moving Picture World*, August 6, 1910, 311; "*The Witch of Carabosse*," *Moving Picture World*, August 27, 1910, 462.
69. "*The Leprechawn*," *Views and Film Index*, September 26, 1908, 11.
70. "*The Leprechawn*," *Moving Picture World*, October 10, 1908, 279; "*The Leprechawn*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, October 3, 1908, 8.
71. "*Hansel and Gretel*," *Moving Picture World*, October 9, 1909, 499–500; "*Moon for Your Love*," *Moving Picture World*, November 20, 1909, 731; "Feature Films Reviewed," *Billboard*, August 9, 1913, 18. A copy of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is available in the DVD boxed set *More Treasures from the American Film Archives* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004).
72. "*The Witch*," *Moving Picture World*, November 6, 1909, 661.
73. "*The Witch Girl*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, October 14, 1914, 33.
74. "Mary Fuller in *The Witch Girl* (Victor)," *Moving Picture World*, October 24, 1914, 500.
75. "*The Witch Girl*," *Motography*, October 31, 1914, 610. It is also worth noting that *The Witch of the Ruins/La folle des ruines* (Pathé Frères, 1910) features a witch character who cares for a lost child. See "*The Witch of the Ruins*," *Moving Picture World*, May 7, 1910, 751.
76. "*The Witch's Cavern*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, November 13, 1909, 15.
77. "*Variety*'s Own Picture Reviews," *Variety*, November 6, 1909,13; "*The Witch's Cavern*," 15.
78. "*The Witch of the Range*," *Motography*, June 1911, 149.
79. A copy of *The Witch of the Everglades* is archived at the EYE Film Institute.
80. "*Witch of the Everglades*," *Motography*, May 1911, 99.
81. "*The Wise Witch of Fairyland*," *Moving Picture World*, February 10, 1912, 622.
82. "*The Myth of Jamasha Pass*," *Moving Picture News*, April 20, 1912, 31.

83. "*The Myth of Jamasha Pass*," *Moving Picture World*, May 11, 1912, 562.
84. Ibid., 562.
85. "*The Myth of Jamasha Pass*," *Moving Picture World*, May 18, 1912, 630.
86. James S. McQuade, "*The Mystical Maid of Jamasha Pass* (American)," *Moving Picture World*, April 27, 1912, 319. It is difficult to determine whether the title of this article (which apparently intended to convey the title of the film) was an error, or whether it reflects a pre-release or alternate title that was changed.
87. "*The Witch's Ballad*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, March 5, 1910.
88. "*The Witch*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, October 31, 1908, 8. A small amount of footage from *The Witch* is archived at the Library of Congress. (The German manufacturer Internationale Kinematographen- und Lichteffekt-Gesellschaft [I.K.L.G.] released *Ein Volksgericht im Mittelalter oder Die Zeit des Schreckens und des Grauens*—which would translate as *A People's Court in the Middle Ages, or The Time of Fear and Horror*—in January 1907. Its plot featured a witch-hunt and trial and certainly predates Vitagraph's *The Witch*. However, it was not imported into America.)
89. Schwab, 174.
90. "*In the Days of Witchcraft*," *Moving Picture World*, April 10, 1909, 449.
91. "*In the Days of Witchcraft*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, April 24, 1909, 14; "*In the Days of Witchcraft*," *Moving Picture World*, April 24, 1909, 517.
92. A copy of *Rose O' Salem-Town* is archived at the Library of Congress.
93. "*Rose O' Salem-Town*," *Moving Picture World*, October 1, 1910, 760.
94. Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 182–5.
95. "*Variety*'s Picture Reviews," *Variety*, October 1, 1910, 18.
96. "*Rose o' Salem Town* [sic]," *The Nickelodeon*, October 1, 1910, 201.
97. "*The Trials of Faith*," *Moving Picture World*, November 16, 1912, 665.
98. Ibid., 665.
99. "*The Mountain Witch*," *Moving Picture World*, February 15, 1913, 704.
100. "*In the Days of Witchcraft*," *Moving Picture World*, August 3, 1913, 505.
101. "*The House of Bondage*," *Moving Picture World*, August 2, 1913, 566.
102. "*A Puritan Episode*," *Moving Picture World*, September 20, 1913, 1285.
103. "Domino: *The Witch of Salem*," *Reel Life*, November 15, 1913, 9.
104. "*The Curse*," *Moving Picture World*, December 20, 1913, 1414.
105. F. Marion Brandon, "*The Witch*: A Sweet Story of Old Salem Days," *Photoplay* (August 1913), 29–33, 98.
106. "Salem Witch Craft [sic] Theme of Photoplay," *Universal Weekly*, June 28, 1913, 15, 25.
107. "*The Witch*," *Moving Picture World*, June 28, 1913, 1360.
108. Davies, 21.

Colonization and Christianization

Caliban and Witches in the New World

"...and so they say that we have come to this earth to destroy the world. They say that the winds ruin the houses, and cut the trees, and the fire burns them, but that we devour everything, we consume the earth, we redirect the rivers, we are never quiet, never at rest, but always run here and there, seekinggold and silver, never satisfied, and then we gamble with it, make war, kill each other, rob, swear, never say the truth, and have deprived them of their means of livelihood. And finally they curse the sea which has put on the earth such evil and harsh children." (Girolamo Benzoni, *Historia del Mondo Nuovo*, 1565).

"...overcome by torture and pain, [the women] were obliged to confess that they did adore huacas.... *They lamented, 'Now in this life we women...are Christian; perhaps then the priest is to blame if we women adore the mountains, if we flee to the hills and* puna, *since there is no justice for us here."* (Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva Chronica y Buen Gobierno*, 1615)

Introduction

The history of the body and the witch-hunt that I have presented is based on an assumption that is summed up by the reference to "Caliban and the Witch," the characters of *The Tempest* symbolizing the American Indians' resistance to colonization.[1] The assumption is the continuity between the subjugation of the populations of the New World and that of people in Europe, women in particular, in the transition to capitalism. In both cases we have the forcible removal of entire communities from their land, large-scale impoverishment, the launching of "Christianizing" campaigns destroying people's autonomy and communal relations. We also have a constant cross-fertilization whereby forms of repression that had been developed in the Old World were transported to the New and then re-imported into Europe.

The differences should not be underestimated. By the 18th century, due to the flow of gold, silver and other resources coming from the Americas into Europe, an international division of labor had taken shape that divided the new global proletariat by means of different class relations and systems of discipline, marking the beginning of often conflicting histories within the working class. But the similarities in the treatments to which the populations of Europe and the Americas were subjected are sufficient to demonstrate the existence of one single logic governing the development of capitalism and the structural character of the atrocities perpetrated in this process. An outstanding example is the extension of the witch-hunt to the American colonies.

The persecution of women and men through the charge of witchcraft is a phenomenon that, in the past, was largely considered by historians to be limited to Europe. The only exception admitted to this rule were the Salem witch trials, which remain the focus of the scholarship on witch-hunting in the New World. It is now recognized, however, that the charge of devil-worshipping played a key function also in the colonization of the American aboriginal population. On this subject, two texts, in particular, must be mentioned that form the basis for my discussion in this chapter. The first is Irene Silverblatt's *Moon, Sun, and Witches* (1987), a study of witch hunting and the redefinition of gender relations in Inca society and colonial Peru, which (to my knowledge) is the first in English to reconstruct the history of the Andean women persecuted as witches. The other is Luciano Parinetto's *Streghe e Potere* (1998), a series of essays that document the impact of witch-hunting in America on the witch trials in Europe, marred, however, by the author's insistence that the persecution of the witches was gender-neutral.

Both these works demonstrate that also in the New World witch-hunting was *a deliberate strategy used by the authorities to instill terror*, destroy collective resistance, silence entire communities, and turn their members against each other. *It was also a strategy of enclosure* which, depending on the context, could be enclosure of land, bodies or social relations. Above all, as in Europe, witch-hunting was a means of dehumanization and as such the paradigmatic form of repression, serving to justify enslavement and genocide.

Witch-hunting did not destroy the resistance of the colonized. Due primarily to the struggle of women, the connection of the American Indians with the land, the local religions and nature survived beyond the persecution providing, for more than five hundred years, a source of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance. This is extremely important for us, at a time when a renewed assault is being made on the resources and mode of existence of indigenous populations across the planet; for we need to rethink how the conquistadors strove to subdue those whom they colonized, and what enabled the latter to subvert this plan and, against the destruction of their social and physical universe, create a new historical reality.

The Birth of the Cannibals

When Columbus sailed to "Indies" the witch-hunt in Europe was not yet a mass phenomenon. Nevertheless, the use of devil-worship as a weapon to strike at political enemies and vilify entire populations (like Muslims and Jews) was already common among the elite. More than that, as Seymour Phillips writes, a "persecuting society" had devel-

oped within medieval Europe," fed by militarism and Christian intolerance, that looked at the "Other" as mainly an object of aggression (Phillips 1994). Thus, it is not surprising if "cannibal," "infidel," "barbarian," "monstrous races," and devil worshipper were the "ethnographic models" with which the Europeans "entered the new age of expansion" (*ibid.* 62), providing the filter through which missionaries and conquistadors interpreted the cultures, religions, and sexual customs of the peoples they encountered.[2] Other cultural marks contributed to the invention of the "Indians". Most stigmatizing and perhaps projecting the Spaniards' labor needs were "nakedness" and "sodomy," that qualified the Amerindians as beings living in an animal state (thus capable of being turned into beasts of burden), though some reports also stressed, as a sign of their bestiality, their propensity to share and "give everything they have in return for things of little value" (Hulme 1994: 198).

Defining the aboriginal American populations as cannibals, devil-worshippers, and sodomites supported the fiction that the Conquest was not an unabashed quest for gold and silver but was a converting mission, a claim that, in 1508, helped the Spanish Crown gain for it the blessing of the Pope and complete authority over the Church in the Americas. It also removed, in the eyes of the world and possibly of the colonizers themselves, any sanction against the atrocities which they would commit against the "Indians," thus functioning as a license to kill regardless of what the intended victims might do. And, indeed, "The whip, gibbet, and stock, imprisonment, torture, rape, and occasional killing became standard weapons for enforcing labor discipline" in the New World (Cockroft 1990:19).

In a first phase, however, the image of the colonized as devil-worshippers could coexist with a more positive, even idyllic one, picturing the "Indians" as innocent, and generous beings, living a life "free of toil and tyranny," recalling the mythical "Golden Age" or an earthly paradise (Brandon 1986: 6–8; Sale 1991: 100–101).

This characterization may have been a literary stereotype or, as Roberto Retamar, among others, has suggested, the rhetorical counterpart of the image of the "savage," expressing the Europeans' inability to see the people they met as real human beings.[3] But this optimistic view also corresponded to a period in the conquest (from 1520 to 1540s) in which the Spaniards still believed that the aboriginal populations would be easily converted and subjugated (Cervantes 1994). This was the time of mass baptisms, when much zeal was deployed in convincing the "Indians" to change their names and abandon their gods and sexual customs, especially polygamy and homosexuality. [B]are-breasted women were forced to cover themselves, men in loincloths had to put on trousers (Cockcroft: 1983: 21). But at this time, the struggle against the devil consisted mainly of bonfires of local "idols," even though many political and religious leaders from central Mexico were put on trial and burned at the stake by the Franciscan father Juan de Zumarraga, in the years between 1536 (when the Inquisition was introduced in South America) and 1543.

As the Conquest proceeded, however, no space was left for any accommodations. Imposing one's power over other people is not possible without denigrating them to the point where the possibility of identification is precluded. Thus, despite the earlier homilies about the gentle Tainos, an ideological machine was set in motion, complementing the military one, that portrayed the colonized as "filthy" and demonic beings practicing

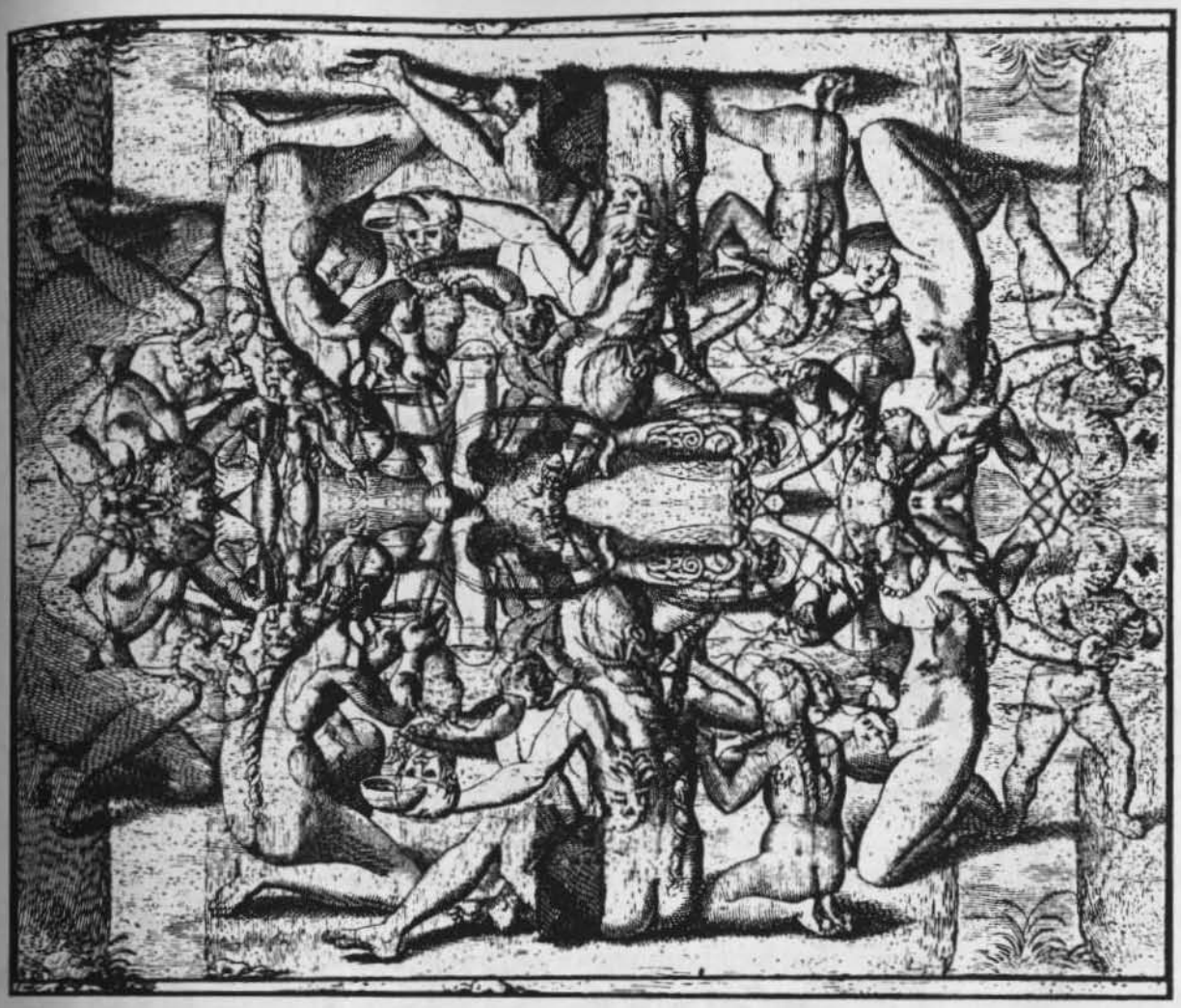
all kinds of abominations, while the same crimes that previously had been attributed to lack of religious education — sodomy, cannibalism, incest, cross dressing — were now treated as signs that the "Indians" were under the dominion of the devil and they could be justifiably deprived of their lands and their lives (Williams 1986: 136–137). In reference to this image-shift, Fernando Cervantes writes in *The Devil in The New World* (1994):

> before 1530 it would have been difficult to predict which one of these views would emerge as the dominant one. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, [a] negative demonic view of Amerindian cultures had triumphed, and its influence was seen to descend like a thick fog on every statement officially and unofficially made on the subject (1994: 8).

It could be surmised, on the basis of the contemporary histories of the "Indies" — such as De Gomara's (1556) and Acosta's (1590) — that this change of perspective was prompted by the Europeans' encounter with imperialistic states like the Aztec and Inca, whose repressive machinery included the practice of human sacrifices (Martinez et al 1976). In the *Historia NaturalY Moral de Las Indias*, published in Sevilla, in 1590, by the Jesuit Joseph de Acosta, there are descriptions that give us a vivid sense of the repulsion generated, among the Spaniards, by the mass sacrifices carried out, particularly by the Aztecs, which involved thousands of youths (war captives or purchased children and slaves).[4] Yet, when we read Bartolemé De Las Casas' account of the destruction of the Indies or any other account of the Conquest, we wonder why should the Spaniards have been shocked by this practice when they themselves had no qualms committing unspeakable atrocities for the sake of God and gold and, according to Cortez, in 1521, they had slaughtered 100,000 people, just to conquer Tenochtitlan (Cockroft 1983: 19).

Similarly, the cannibalistic rituals they discovered in America, which figure prominently in the records of the Conquest, must not have been too different from the medical practices that were popular in Europe at the time. In the 16th, 17th and even 18th centuries, the drinking of human blood (especially the blood of those who had died of a violent death) and mummy water, obtained by soaking human flesh in various spirits, was a common cure for epilepsy and other illnesses in many European countries. Furthermore, this type of cannibalism, "involving human flesh, blood, heart, skull, bone marrow, and other body parts was not limited to fringe groups of society but was practiced in the most respectable circles" (Gordon-Grube 1988: 406–407).[5] Thus, the new horror that the Spaniards felt for the aboriginal populations, after the 1550s, cannot be easily attributed to a cultural shock, but must be seen as a response inherent to the logic of colonization that inevitably must dehumanize and fear those it wants to enslave.

How successful was this strategy can be seen from the ease with which the Spaniards rationalized the high mortality rates caused by the epidemics that swept the region in the wake of the Conquest, which they interpreted as God's punishment for the Indians beastly conduct.[6] Also the debate that took place in 1550, at Valladolid, in Spain, between Bartolomé de Las Casas and the Spanish jurist Juan Gines de Sepulveda, on whether or not the "Indians" were to be considered as human beings, would have been unthinkable without an ideological campaign representing the latter as animals and demons.[7]



Travel logs illustrated with horrific images of cannibals stuffing themselves with human remains proliferated in Europe in the aftermath of the conquest. A cannibal banquet in Bahia (Brazil), according to the description of the German J. G. Aldenburg.

The spread of illustrations portraying life in the New World, that began to circulate in Europe after the 1550s, completed this work of degradation, with their multitudes of naked bodies and cannibalistic banquets, reminiscent of witches' Sabbats, featuring human heads and limbs as the main course. A late example of this genre of literature is *Le Livre des Antipodes* (1630), compiled by Johann Ludwig Gottfried, which displays a number of horrific images: women and children stuffing themselves with human entrails, or the cannibal community gathered around a grill, feasting on legs and arms while watching the roasting of human remains. Prior contributions to the cultural production of the Amerindians as bestial beings are the illustrations in *Les Singularitéz de la France Antarctique* (Paris 1557) by the French Franciscan André Thevet, already centered on the themes of the human quartering, cooking, and banquet; and Hans Staden's *Warhrharftige Historia* (Marburg 1557), in which the author describes his captivity among the cannibal indios of Brazil (Parinetto 1998: 428).

Cannibals in Bahia feasting on human remains. Illustrations displaying the Amerindian community roasting and feeding on human remains completed the degradation of the aboriginal American populations begun by the work of the missionaries.

A turning point, in the anti-Indian propaganda and anti-idolatry campaign that accompanied the colonization process, was the decision by the Spanish Crown, in the 1550s, to introduce in the American colonies a far more severe system of exploitation. The decision was motivated by the crisis of the "plunder economy" that had been introduced after the Conquest whereby the accumulation of wealth continued to depend on the expropriation of the "Indians'" surplus goods more than on the direct exploitation of their labor (Spalding 1984; Steve J. Stern 1982). Until the 1550s, despite the massacres and the exploitation associated with the system of the *encomienda*, the Spaniards had not completely disrupted the subsistence economies which they had found in the areas they colonized. Instead, they had relied, for the wealth they accumulated, on the tribute systems put into place by the Aztecs and Incas, whereby designated chiefs (*caciquez* in Mexico, *kuracas* in Peru) delivered them quotas of goods and labor supposedly compatible with the survival of the local economies. The tribute which the Spaniards exacted was much higher than that the Aztecs and Incas had ever demanded of those they conquered; but it was still not sufficient to satisfy their needs. By the 1550s, they were finding it difficult to obtain enough labor for the both the *obrajes* (manufacturing workshops where goods were produced for the international market) and the exploitation of the newly discovered silver and mercury mines, like the legendary one at Potosi.[8]

The need to squeeze more work from the aboriginal populations largely derived from the situation at home where the Spanish Crown was literally floating on the American bullion, which bought food and goods no longer produced in Spain. In addition, the plundered wealth financed the Crown's European territorial expansion. This was so dependent on the continuous arrival of masses of silver and gold from the New World that, by the 1550s, the Crown was ready to undermine the power of the *encomenderos* in order to appropriate the bulk of the Indians' labor for the extraction of silver to be shipped to Spain.[9] But resistance to colonization was mounting (Spalding 1984: 134–135; Stern 1982).[10] It was in response to this challenge that, both in Mexico and Peru, a war was declared on indigenous cultures paving the way to a draconian intensification of colonial rule.

In Mexico, this turn occurred in 1562 when, by the initiative of the Provincial Diego de Landa, an anti-idolatry campaign was launched in the Yucatan peninsula, in the course of which more than 4,500 people were rounded up and brutally tortured under the charge of practicing human sacrifices. They were then subjected to a well-orchestrated public punishment which finished destroying their bodies and their morale (Clendinnen 1987: 71–92). So cruel were the penalties inflicted (floggings so severe that they made the blood flow, years of enslavement in the mines) that many people died or remained unfit for work; others fled their homes or committed suicide, so that work came to an end and the regional economy was disrupted. However, the persecution that Landa mounted was the foundation of a new colonial economy, since it signaled to the local population that the Spaniards were there to stay and that the rule of the old gods was over (*ibid.*: 190).

In Peru, as well, the first large-scale attack on diabolism occurred in the 1560s, coinciding with the rise of the Taki Onqoy movement,[11] a native millenarian move-

ment that preached against collaboration with the Europeans and for a pan-Andean alliance of the local gods (*huacas*) putting an end to colonization. Attributing the defeat suffered and the rising mortality to the abandonment of the local gods, the Takionqos encouraged people to reject the Christian religion, and the names, food, clothing received from the Spaniards. They also urge them to refuse the tribute payments and labor drafts the Spaniards imposed on them, and to "stop wearing shirts, hats, sandals or any other clothes from Spain" (Stern 1982: 53). If this was done — they promised — the revived *huacas* would turn the world around and destroy the Spaniards by sending sickness and floods to their cities, the ocean rising to erase any memory of their existence (Stern 1982: 52–64).

The threat posed by the Taquionqos was a serious one since, by calling for a pan-Andean unification of the *huacas*, the movement marked the beginning of a new sense of identity capable of overcoming the divisions connected with the traditional organization of the *ayullus* (family unit). In Stern's words, it marked the first time that the people of the Andes began to think of themselves as one people, as "Indians" (Stern 1982: 59) and, in fact, the movement spread widely, reaching "as far north as Lima, as far east as Cuzco, and over the high puna of the South to La Paz in contemporary Bolivia (Spalding 1984: 246). The response came with the ecclesiastical Council held in Lima in 1567, which established that the priests should "extirpate the innumerable superstitions, ceremonies and diabolical rites of the Indians. They were also to stamp out drunkenness, arrest witch-doctors, and above all discover and destroy shrines and talismans" connected with the worship of the local gods (*huacas*). These recommendations were repeated at a synod in Quito, in 1570, where, again, it was denounced that "[t]here are famous witch doctors who... guard the *huacas* and converse with the devil" (Hemming 1970: 397).

The *huacas* were mountains, springs, stones, and animals embodying the spirits of the ancestor. As such, they were collectively cared for, fed, and worshipped for everyone recognized them as the main link with the land, and with the agricultural practices central to economic reproduction. Women talked to them, as they apparently still do, in some regions of South America, to ensure a healthy crop (Descola 1994: 191–214).[12] Destroying them or forbidding their worship was to attack the community, its historical roots, people's relation to the land, and their intensely spiritual relation to nature. This was understood by the Spaniards who, in the 1550s, embarked in a systematic destruction of anything resembling an object of worship. What Claude Baudez and Sydney Picasso write about the anti-idolatry drive conducted by the Franciscans against the Mayas in the Yucatan also applies to the rest of Mexico and Peru.

"Idols were destroyed, temples burned, and those who celebrated native rites and practiced sacrifices were punished by death; festivities such as banquets, songs, and dances, as well as artistic and intellectual activities (painting, sculpture, observation of stars, hieroglyphic writing) — suspected of being inspired by the devil — were forbidden and those who took part in them mercilessly hunted down" (Baudez and Picasso 1992: 21).

This process went hand in hand with the reform demanded by the Spanish Crown that increased the exploitation of indigenous labor to ensure a better flow of bullion into its coffers. Two measures were introduced for this purpose, both facilitated by the anti-idolatry campaign. First, the quota of labor that the local chiefs had to provide for the mines and the *obrajes* was vastly increased, and the enforcement of the new rule was placed under the super-

Andean woman forced to work in the obrajes, *manufacturing workshops producing for the international market. Scenes by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala.*

vision of a local representative of the Crown (*corregidore*) with the power to arrest and administer other forms of punishment in case of failure to comply. Further, a resettlement program (*reducciones*) was introduced removing much of the rural population into designated villages, so as to place it under a more direct control. The destruction of the *huacas* and the persecution of the ancestor religion associated with them was instrumental to both, since the *reducciones* gained strength from the demonization of the local worshipping sites.

It was soon clear, however, that, under the cover of Christianization, people continued to worship their gods, in the same way as they continued to return to their *milpas* (fields) after being removed from their homes. Thus, instead of diminishing, the attack on the local gods intensified with time, climaxing between 1619 and 1660 when the destruction of the idols was accompanied by true witch-hunts, this time targeting women in particular. Karen Spalding has described one of these witch-hunts conducted in the *repartimiento* of Huarochiri', in 1660, by the priest-inquisitor Don Juan Sarmiento. As she reports, the investigation was conducted according to the same pattern of the witch-hunts in Europe. It began with the reading of the edict against idolatry and the preaching of a sermon against this sin. This was followed by secret denunciations supplied by anonymous informants, then came the questioning of the suspects, the use of torture to extract confessions, and then the sentencing and punishment, in this case consisting of public whipping, exile, and various other forms of humiliation:

> *The people sentenced were brought into the public square.... They were placed upon mules and donkeys, with wooden crosses about six inches long around their necks. They were ordered to wear these marks of humiliation from that*

Scenes from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala representing the ordeal of Andean women and the followers of the ancestors' religion.

Scene 1: Public humiliation during an anti-idolatry campaign. Scene 2: Women "as spoils of conquest." Scene 3: The huacas, represented as the devil, speak through a dream. Scene 4: A member of the Taki Onqoy movement with a drunken Indian who is seized by a huaca represented as the devil. (From Steve J. Stern, 1982.)

day forward. On their heads, the religious authorities put a medieval coroza, a cone shaped hood made of pasteboard, that was the European Catholic mark of infamy and disgrace. Beneath these hoods the hair was cut off — an Andean mark of humiliation. Those who were condemned to receive lashes had their backs bared. Ropes were put around their necks. They were paraded slowly through the streets of the town with a crier ahead of them reading out their crimes... After this spectacle the people were brought back, some with their backs bleeding from the 20, 40 or 100 lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails wielded by the village executioner (Spalding 1984: 256).

Spalding concludes that :

The idolatry campaigns were exemplary rituals, didactic theatre pieces directed to the audience as much as to the participants, much like a public hanging in medieval Europe (ibid.: 265)

Their objective was to intimidate the population, to create a "space of death"[13] where potential rebels would be so paralyzed with fear that they would accept anything rather than having to face the same ordeal of those publicly beaten and humiliated. In this, the Spaniards were in part successful. Faced with torture, anonymous denunciations and public humiliations, many alliances and friendships broke down; people's faith in the effectiveness of their gods weakened, and worship turned into a secret individual practice rather than a collective one, as it had been in pre-conquest America.

How deeply the social fabric was affected by these terror campaigns can be deduced, according to Spalding, from the changes that over time took place in the nature of the charges. While in the 1550s people could openly acknowledge theirs and their community's attachment to the traditional religion, by the 1650s the crimes of which they were accused revolved around "witchcraft," a practice now presuming a secretive behavior, and they increasingly resembled the accusations made against witches in Europe. In the campaign launched in 1660, in the Huarochiri area, for instance, "the crimes uncovered by the authorities... dealt with curing, finding lost goods, and other forms of what might be generally called village 'witchcraft'." Yet, the same campaign revealed that despite the persecution, in the eyes of the communities, "the ancestors and waks (*huacas*) continued to be essential to their survival" (Spalding 1984: 261).

Women and Witches in America

It is not a coincidence that "[m]ost of the people convicted in the investigation of 1660 in Huarochiri' were women (28 out of 32)" (Spalding 1984 : 258), in the same way as women had been the main presence in the Taki Onqoy movement. It was women who most strongly defended the old mode of existence and opposed the new power structure, plausibly because they were also the ones who were most negatively affected by it.

Women had held a powerful position in pre-Columbian societies, as reflected by the existence of many important female deities in their religions. Reaching an island off

the coast of the Yucatan peninsula, in 1517, Hernandez de Cordoba named it Isla Mujeres "because the temples they visited there contained numerous female idols" (Baudez and Picasso 1992: 17). Pre-conquest American women had their organizations, their socially recognized spheres of activity and, while not equal to men,[14] they were considered complementary to them in their contribution to the family and society.

In addition to being farmers, house-workers and weavers, in charge of producing the colorful cloths worn in everyday life and during the ceremonies, they were potters, herbalists, healers (*curanderas*), and priestesses (*sacerdotisas*) at the service of household gods. In Southern Mexico, in the region of Oaxaca, they were connected with the production of pulque-maguey, a sacred substance believed to have been invented by the gods and associated with Mayahuel, an earth-mother goddess that was "the focal point of peasant religion" (Taylor 1970: 31–32).

But with the Spaniards' arrival everything changed, as they brought their baggage of misogynous beliefs and restructured the economy and political power in ways that favored men. Women suffered also at the hands of the traditional chiefs who, in order to maintain their power, began to take over the communal lands and expropriate the female members of the community from land use and water rights. Thus, within the colonial economy, women were reduced to the condition of servants working as maids (for the *encomenderos, the priests,* the *corregidores*) or as weavers in the *obrajes*. Women were also forced to follow their husband when they would have to do *mita* work in the mines — a fate that people recognized to be worse than death — for, in 1528, the authorities established that spouses could not be separated, so that women and children, from then on, could be compelled to do mine labor in addition to preparing food for the male workers.

Another source of degradation for women was the new Spanish legislation which declared polygamy illegal, so that, overnight, men had to either separate from their wives or reclassify them as maids (Mayer 1981), while the children issued from these unions were labeled according to five different types of illegitimacy (Nash 1980: 143). Ironically, while polygamous unions were dissolved, with the arrival of the Spaniards, no aboriginal woman was safe from rape or appropriation, so that many men, instead of marrying, began to turn to public prostitutes (Henuming 1970). In the European fantasy, America itself was a reclining naked woman seductively inviting the approaching white stranger. At times, it was the "Indian" men themselves who delivered their female kin to the priests or *encomenderos* in exchange for some economic reward or a public post.

For all these reasons, women became the main enemies of colonial rule, refusing to go to Mass, to baptize their children or to cooperate in any way with the colonial authorities and priests. In the Andes, some committed suicide and killed their male children, presumably to prevent them from going to the mines and also out of disgust, apparently, for the mistreatment inflicted upon them by their male relatives (Silverblatt 1987). Others organized their communities and, in front of the defection of many local chiefs who were co-opted by the colonial structure, became priests, leaders, and guardians of the *huacas*, taking on functions which they had never previously exercised. This explains why women were the backbone of the Taki Onqoy movement. In Peru, they also held confessions to prepare people for when they would meet with the catholic priests, advising them as to what it should be safe to tell them and what they should not reveal. And while

before the Conquest women had been in charge exclusively of the ceremonies dedicated to female deities, afterwards, they became assistants or principal officiants in cults dedicated to the male-ancestors-huacas — something that before the Conquest had been forbidden (Stern 1982). They also fought the colonial power by withdrawing to the higher planes (*punas*) where they could practice the old religion. As Irene Silverblatt writes:

> While indigenous men often fled the oppression of the *mita* and tribute by abandoning their communities and going to work as *yaconas* (quasi-serfs) in the merging haciendas, women fled to the *punas*, inaccessible and very distant from the *reducciones* of their native communities. Once in the *punas* women rejected the forces and symbols of their oppression, disobeying Spanish administrators, the clergy, as well as their own community officials. They also vigorously rejected the colonial ideology, which reinforced their oppression, refusing to go to Mass, participate in Catholic confessions, or learn catholic dogma. More important, women did not just reject Catholicism; they returned to their native religion and, to the best that they could, to the quality of social relations which their religion expressed (1987: 197).

By persecuting women as witches, then, the Spaniards targeted both the practitioners of the old religion and the instigators of anti-colonial revolt, while attempting to redefine "the spheres of activity in which indigenous women could participate" (Silverblatt 1987: 160). As Silverblatt points out, the concept of witchcraft was alien to Andean society. In Peru as well, as in every pre-industrial society, many women were "specialists in medical knowledge," being familiar with the properties of herbs and plants, and they were also diviners. But the Christian notion of the devil was unknown to them. Nevertheless, by the 17th century, under the impact of torture, intense persecution, and "forced acculturation" the Andean women arrested, mostly old and poor, were accusing themselves of the same crimes with which women were being charged in the European witch trials : pacts and copulation with the devil, prescribing herbal remedies, using ointments, flying through the air, making wax images (Silverblatt 1987: 174). They also confessed to worshipping stones, mountains, and springs, and feeding the *huacas*. Worst of all, they confessed to bewitching the authorities or other men of power and causing them to die (*ibid.* 187–88).

As it was in Europe, torture and terror were used to force the accused to deliver other names so that the circles of the persecution became wider and wider. But one of the objectives of the witch-hunt, the isolation of the witches from the rest of the community, was not achieved. The Andean witches were not turned into outcasts. On the contrary, "they were actively sought for as *comadres* and their presence was required in informal village reunions, for in the consciousness of the colonized, witchcraft, the maintenance of ancient traditions, and conscious political resistance became increasingly intertwined" (*ibid.*). Indeed, it was largely due to women's resistance that the old religion was preserved. Changes occurred in the meaning of the practices associated with it. Worship was driven underground at the expense of its collective nature in pre-conquest times. But the ties with the mountains and the other sites of the *huacas* were not destroyed.

We find a similar situation in Central and Southern Mexico where women, priestesses above all, played an important role in the defense of their communities and cultures. In this region, according to Antonio Garcia de Leon's *Resistencia y Utopia*, from the Conquest on, women "directed or counseled all the great anti-colonial revolts" (de Leon 1985, Vol. 1: 31). In Oaxaca, the presence of women in popular rebellions continued into the 18th century when, in one out of four cases, they led the attack against the authorities "and were visibly more aggressive, insulting, and rebellious" (Taylor 1979: 116). In Chiapas too, they were the key actors in the preservation of the old religion and the anti-colonization struggle. Thus, when, in 1524, the Spaniards launched a war campaign to subjugate the rebellious Chiapanecos, it was a priestess who led the troops against them. Women also participated in the underground networks of idol-worshippers and resisters that periodically were discovered by the clergy. In 1584, for instance, upon visiting Chiapas, the bishop Pedro de Feria was told that several among the local Indian chiefs were still practicing the old cults, and that they were being counseled by women, with whom they entertained filthy practices, such as (sabbat-like) ceremonies during which they mixed together and turned into gods and goddesses, the women being in charge of sending rain and giving wealth to those who asked for it" (de Leon 1985, Vol. 1: 76).

It is ironic, then, in view of this record, that Caliban and not his mother Sycorax, the witch, should be taken by Latin American revolutionaries as a symbol of the resistance to colonization. For Caliban could only fight his master by cursing him in the language he had learned from him, thus being dependent in his rebellion on his "master's tools." He could also be deceived into believing that his liberation could come through a rape and through the initiative of some opportunistic white proletarians transplanted in the New World whom he worshipped as gods. Sycorax, instead, a witch "so strong that she could control the moon, make flows and ebbs" (*The Tempest*, Act V, Scene 1) might have taught her son to appreciate the local powers — the land, the waters, the trees, "nature's treasuries" — and those communal ties that, over centuries of suffering, have continued to nourish the liberation struggle to this day, and that already haunted, as a promise, Caliban's imagination:

> Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> That if then had wak'd after long sleep.
> Will make me sleep again and then dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open, and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that when wak'd
> I cried to dream again (*The Tempest*, Act III).

The European Witches and the "Indios"

Did the witch-hunts in the New World have an impact on events in Europe? Or were the two persecutions simply drawing from the same pool of repressive strategies and tactics which the European ruling class had forged since the Middle Ages with the persecution of the heretics?

I ask these questions having in mind the thesis advanced by the Italian historian Luciano Parinetto, who argues that witch-hunting in the New World had a major impact on the elaboration of the witchcraft ideology in Europe, as well as the chronology of the European witch-hunt.

Briefly put, Parinetto's thesis is that it was under the impact of the American experience that the witch-hunt in Europe became a mass phenomenon in the second part of the 16th century. For in America, the authorities and the clergy found the confirmation for their views about devil-worship, coming to believe in the existence of entire populations of witches, a conviction which they then applied in their Christianization drive at home. Thus, another import from the New World, described by missionaries as "the land of the devil," was the adoption by the European state of *extermination as a political strategy* which, presumably, inspired the massacre of the Huguenots and the massification of the witch-hunt starting in the last decades of the 16th century (Parinetto 1998: 417–35).[15]

Evidence of a crucial connection between the two persecutions is, in Parinetto's view, the use made by the demonologists in Europe of the reports from the Indies. Parinetto focuses on Jean Bodin, but he also mentions Francesco Maria Guazzo and cites, as an example of the "boomerang effect" produced by the transplanting of the witch-hunt in America, the case of the inquisitor Pierre Lancre who, during a several months' persecution in the region of the Labourd (Basque Country), denounced its entire population as witches. Not last, Parinetto cites, as evidence of his thesis, a set of themes that, in the second half of the 16th century, became prominent in the repertoire of witchcraft in Europe: cannibalism, the offering of children to the devil, the reference to ointments and drugs, and the identification of homosexuality (sodomy) with diabolism — all of which, he argues, had their matrix in the New World.

What to make of this theory and where to draw the line between what is accountable and what is speculative? This is a question that future scholarship will have to settle. Here I limit myself to a few observations.

Parinetto's thesis is important since it helps us dispel the Eurocentrism that has characterized the study of the witch-hunt and can potentially answer some of the questions raised by the persecution of the European witches. But its main contribution is that it broadens our awareness of the global character of capitalist development and makes us realize that, by the 16th century, a ruling class had formed in Europe that was at all points involved — practically, politically, and ideologically — in the formation of a world proletariat, and therefore was continually operating with knowledge gathered on an international level in the elaboration of its models of domination.

As for its claims, we can observe that the history of Europe before the Conquest is sufficient proof that the Europeans did not have to cross the oceans to find the will to exterminate those standing in their way. It is also possible to account for the chronology of the witch-hunt in Europe without resorting to the New World impact hypothesis, since the decades between the 1560s and 1620s saw a widespread impoverishment and social dislocations throughout most of western Europe.

Top: Francesco Maria Guazzo, COMPENDIUM MALEFICARUM (Milan, 1608). Guazzo was one of the demonologists most influenced by the reports from the Americas. This portrait of witches surrounding the remains of bodies excavated from the ground or taken from the gallows is reminiscent of the cannibal banquet.

Bottom: Cannibals preparing their meal. Hans Staden's WAHRHAFTIGE HISTORIA (Marburg 1557).

Top: Preparation for the Sabbat. German engraving from the 16th century.

Bottom: Preparing a cannibal meal. Hans Staden's WAHRHAFTIGE HISTORIA *(Marburg 1557).*

More suggestive, in provoking a rethinking of the European witch-hunt from the viewpoint of witch-hunting in America, are the thematic and the iconographic correspondences between the two. The theme of self-ointing is one of the most revealing, as the descriptions of the behavior of the Aztec or Incan priests on the occasion of human sacrifices evoke those found in some demonologies describing the preparations of the witches for the Sabbat. Consider the following passage found in Acosta, which reads the American practice as a perversion of the Christian habit of consecrating priests by anointing them:

> The idol-priests in Mexico oint themselves in the following way. They greased themselves from the feet to the head, including the hair... the substance with which they stained themselves was ordinary tea, because from antiquity it was always an offering to their gods and for this much worshipped... this was their ordinary greasing...except when they went to sacrifice... or went to the caves where they kept their idols when they used a different greasing to give themselves courage....This grease was made of poisonous substances... frogs,salamanders, vipers... with this greasing they could turn into magicians (*brujos*) and speak with the devil (Acosta, pp. 262–63).

The same poisonous brew was presumably spread by the European witches on their bodies (according to their accusers) in order to gain the power to fly to the Sabbat. But it cannot be assumed that this theme was generated in the New World, as references to women making ointments from the blood of toads or children's bones are found already in the 15th-century trials and demonologies.[16] What is plausible, instead, is that the reports from America did revitalize these charges, adding new details and giving more authority to them.

The same consideration may serve to explain the iconographic correspondence between the pictures of the Sabbat and the various representations of the cannibal family and clan that began to appear in Europe in the later 16th century, and it can account for many other "coincidences," such as the fact that both in Europe and America witches were accused of sacrificing children to the devil (see figures pp. 234–5).

Witch-Hunting and Globalization

Witch-hunting in America continued in waves through the end of the 17th century, when the persistence of demographic decline and increased political and economic security on the side of the colonial power-structure combined to put an end to the persecution. Thus, in the same region that had witnessed the great anti-idolatry campaigns of the 16th and 17th centuries, by the 18th, the Inquisition had renounced any attempts to influence the moral and religious beliefs of the population, apparently estimating that they could no longer pose a danger to colonial rule. In the place of the persecution a paternalistic perspective emerged that looked at idolatry and magical practices as the foibles of ignorant people not worthy of being taken into consideration by "la gente de razon" (Behar 1987). From then on, the preoccupation with devil-worshipping would

migrate to the developing slave plantations of Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America where (starting with King Philip's Wars), the English settlers justified their massacres of the native American Indians by labeling them as servants of the devil (Williams and Williams Adelman 1978: 143).

The Salem trials were also explained by the local authorities on this ground, with the argument that the New Englanders had settled in the land of the devil. As Cotton Mather wrote, years later, recalling the events in Salem:

> I have met with some strange things... which have made me think that this inexplicable war [i.e., the war made by the spirits of the invisible world against the people of Salem] might have its origins among the Indians whose chief sagamores are well known unto some of our captive to have been horrid sorcerers and hellish conjurers and such as conversed with the demons (ibid. 145).

It is significant, in this context, that the Salem trials were sparked by the divinations of a West Indian slave — Tituba — who was among the first to be arrested, and that the last execution of a witch, in an English-speaking territory, was that of a black slave, Sarah Bassett, killed in Bermuda in 1730 (Daly 1978: 179). By the 18th century, in fact, the witch was becoming an African practitioner of *obeah,* a ritual that the planters feared and demonized as an incitement to rebellion.

Witch hunting did not disappear from the repertoire of the bourgeoisie with the abolition of slavery. On the contrary, the global expansion of capitalism through colonization and Christianization ensured that this persecution would be planted in the body of colonized societies, and, in time, would be carried out by the subjugated communities in their own names and against their own members.

In the 1840s, for instance, a wave of witch-burnings occurred in Western India. More women in this period were burned as witches than in the practice of *sati* (Skaria 1997: 110). These killings occurred in the context of the social crisis caused both by the colonial authorities' attack on the communities living in the forests (among whom women had a far higher degree of power than in the caste societies that dwelled in the plains) and the colonial devaluation of female power, resulting in the decline of the worship of female goddesses (*ibid.* 139–40).

Witch-hunting also took hold in Africa, where it survives today as a key instrument of division in many countries especially those once implicated in the slave trade, like Nigeria and Southern Africa. Here, too, witch-hunting has accompanied the decline in the status of women brought about by the rise of capitalism and the intensifying struggle for resources which, in recent years, has been aggravated by the imposition of the neo-liberal agenda. As a consequence of the life-and-death competition for vanishing resources, scores of women — generally old and poor — have been hunted down in the 1990s in Northern Transvaal, where seventy were burned just in the first four months of 1994 (*Diario de Mexico:* 1994). Witch-hunts have also been reported in Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon, in the 1980s and 1990s, concomitant with the imposition by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank of the policy of structural adjustment which has led to a new round of enclosures, and caused an unprecedented impoverishment among the population.[17]

The Africanization of the witch is reflected in this caricature of a "petroleuse." Note her unusual earrings, cap, and African features suggesting a kinship between the female communards and the "wild" African women who instilled in the slaves the courage to revolt, haunting the imagination of the French bourgeoisie as an example of political savagery.

In Nigeria, by the 1980s, innocent girls were confessing to having killed dozens of people, while in other African countries petitions were addressed to governments begging them to persecute more strongly the witches. Meanwhile, in South Africa and Brazil older women were murdered by neighbors and kin under the charge of witchcraft. At the same time, a new kind of witch-beliefs is presently developing, resembling that documented by Michael Taussig in Bolivia, whereby poor people suspect the *nouveau riches* of having gained their wealth through illicit, supernatural means, and accuse them of wanting to transform their victims into zombies in order to put them to work (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998: 73–74).

The witch hunts that are presently taking place in Africa or Latin America are rarely reported in Europe and the United States, in the same way as the witch-hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, for a long time, were of little interest to historians. Even when they are reported their significance is generally missed, so widespread is the belief that such phenomena belong to a far-gone era and have nothing to do with "us."

But if we apply to the present the lessons of the past, we realize that the reappearance of witch-hunting in so many parts of the world in the '80s and '90s is a clear sign of a process of "primitive accumulation," which means that the privatization of land and other communal resources, mass impoverislument, plunder, and the sowing of divisions in once-cohesive communities are again on the world agenda. "If things continue this way" — the elders in a Senegalese village commented to an American anthropologist, expressing their fears for the future — "our children will eat each other." And indeed this is what is accomplished by a witch-hunt, whether it is conducted from above, as a means to criminalize resistance to expropriation, or is conducted from below, as a means to appropriate diminishing resources, as seems to be the case in some parts of Africa today.

In some countries, this process still requires the mobilization of witches, spirits, and devils. But we should not delude ourselves that this is not our concern. As Arthur Miller already saw in his interpretation of the Salem trials, as soon as we strip the persecution of witches from its metaphysical trappings, we recognize in it phenomena that are very close to home.

Endnotes

1. Actually, Sycorax — the witch — has not entered the Latin American revolutionary imagination in the way Caliban has; she is still invisible, in the same way as the struggle of women against colonization has been for a long time. As for Caliban, what he has come to stand for has been well expressed in an influential essay by the Cuban writer Roberto Fernandez Retamar (1989: 5-21).

   "Our symbol is not Ariel... but rather Caliban. This is something that we, the mestizo inhabitants of these same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity. Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban and taught him the language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use the same language — today he has no other — to curse him...? From Tupac Amaru... Toussaint-Louverture, Simone Bolivar... Jose Marti... Fidel Castro... Che Guevara... Frantz Fanon — what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?" (p. 14).

On this topic see also Margaret Paul Joseph who, in *Caliban in Exile* (1992), writes: "Prospero and Caliban thereby provide us with a powerful metaphor for colonialism. An offshoot of this interpretation is the abstract condition of being Caliban, the victim of history, frustrated by the knowledge of utter powerlessness. In Latin America, the name has been adopted in a more positive manner, for Caliban seems to represent the masses who are striving to rise against the oppression of the elite" (1992: 2).

2. Reporting about the island of Hispanola, in his *Historia General de Las Indias* (1551), Francisco Lopez De Gomara could declare with utter certainty that "the main god which they have in this island is the devil," and that the devil lived among women (de Gomara: 49). Similarly, BookV of Acosta's *Historia* (1590), in which Acosta discusses the religion and customs of the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru, is dedicated to the many forms they have of devil-worshipping, including human sacrifices.
3. "The carib/cannibal image," Retamar writes, "contrasts with another one, of the American man present in the writing of Columbus: that of Aruaco of the Greater Antilles — our Taino primarily — whom he describes as peaceful, meek, and even timorous, and cowardly. Both visions of the American aborigene will circulate vertiginously through Europe.... The Taino will be transformed into the paradisiacal inhabitant of a utopic world.... The Carib, on the other hand, will become a cannibal — an anthropophagus, a bestial man situated at the margin of civilization who must be opposed to the very death. But there is less contradiction than might appear at first glance between the two visions." Each image corresponds to a colonial intervention — assuming its right to control the lives of the aborigene population of the Caribbean — which Retamar sees as continuing into the present. Proof of the kinship between these two images, Retamar points out, is the fact that both the gentle Tainos and the ferocious Caribs were exterminated (*ibid.* 6-7).
4. Human sacrifices occupy a large place in Acosta's account of the religious customs of the Incas and Aztecs. He describes how, during some festivities in Peru, even three of four hundred children, from two to four-years-old, were sacrificed — "duro e inhumano spectaculo," in his words. He also describes, among others, the sacrifice of seventy Spanish soldiers captured in battle in Mexico and, like de Gomara, he states, with utter certainty, that these killings were the work of the devil (p. 250ff.).
5. In New England, medical practitioners administered remedies "made from human corpses." Among the most popular, universally recommended as a panacea for every problem, was "Mummy," a remedy prepared with the remains of a corpse dried or embalmed. As for the consumption of human blood, Gordon-Gruber writes that "it was the prerogative of executioners to sell the blood of decapitated criminals. It was given still warm, to epileptics or other customers waiting in crowds at the spot of execution 'cup in hand'." (1988: 407).
6. Walter L. Williams writes:

> [T]he Spanish did not realize why the Indians were wasting away from disease but took it as an indication that it was part of God's plan to wipe out the infidels. Oviedo concluded, "It is not without cause that God permits them to be destroyed. And I have no doubts that for their sins God's going to do away with them very soon." He further reasoned, in a letter to the king condemning the Maya for accepting homosexual

behavior: "I wish to mention it in order to declare more strongly the guilt for which God punishes the Indian and the reason why they have not been granted his mercy" (Williams 1986: 138).

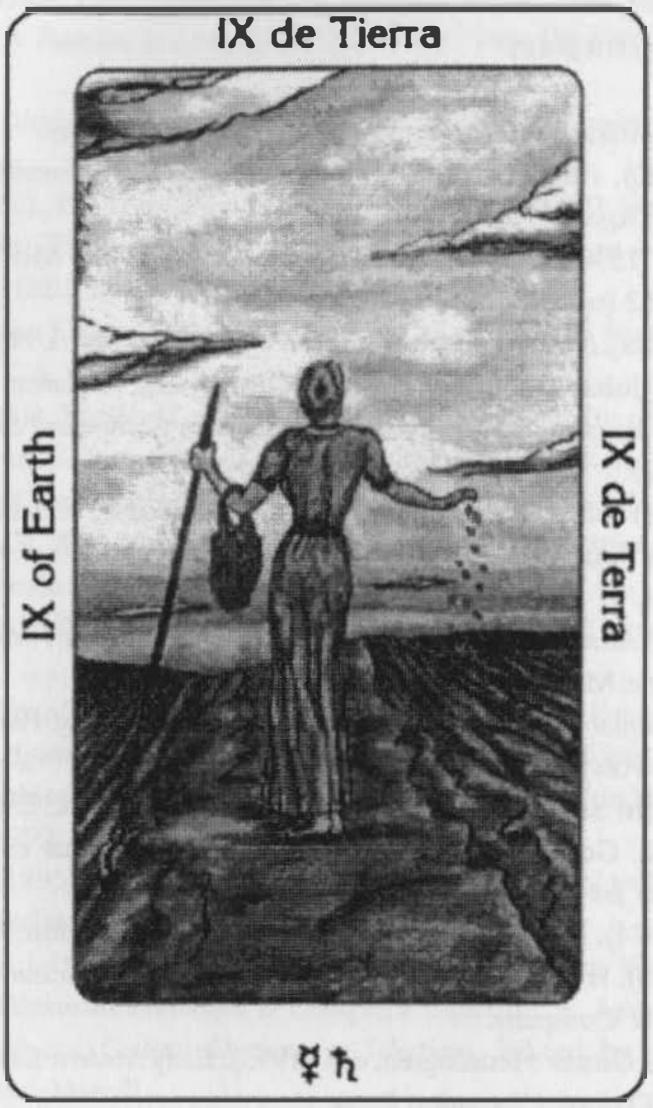
7. The theoretical foundation of Sepulveda's argument in favor of the enslavement of the Indians was Aristotle's doctrine of "natural slavery" (Hanke 1970: 16ff).
8. The mine was discovered in 1545, five years before the debate between Las Casas and Sepulveda took place.
9. By the 1550s, the Spanish Crown was so dependent on the American bullion for its survival — needing it to pay the mercenaries that fought its wars — that it was impounding the loads of bullion that arrived with private ships. These usually carried back the money that was set aside by those who had participated in the Conquest and now were preparing to retire in Spain. Thus, for a number of years, a conflict exploded between the expatriates and the Crown which resulted in new legislation limiting the formers' power to accumulate.
10. A powerful description of this resistance is contained in Enrique Mayer's *Tribute to the Household* (1982), which describes the famous *visitas* which the *encomenderos* used to pay to the villages to fix the tribute that each community owed to them and to the Crown. In the mountain villages of the Andes, hours before its arrival, the procession of horsemen was spotted, upon which many youths fled the village, children were rearranged in different homes, and resources were hidden.
11. The name Taki Onqoy decribes the dancing trance that possessed the participants in the movement.
12. Philippe Descola writes that among the Achuar, a population living in the upper part of Amazonia, "the necessary condition for effective gardening depends on direct, harmonious, and constant commerce with Nunkui, the tutelary spirit of gardens" (p. 192). This is what every woman does by singing secret songs "from the heart" and magical incantations to the plants and herbs in her garden, urging them to grow (*ibid.* 198). So intimate is the relation between a woman and the spirit protecting her garden that when she dies "her garden follows suit, for, with the exception of her unmarried daughter, no other woman would dare step into such relationship that she had not herself initiated." As for the men, they are "therefore totally incapable of replacing their wives should the need arise.... When a man no longer has any woman (mother, wife, sister or daughter) to cultivate his garden and prepare his food, he has no choice but to kill himself" (Descola 1994: 175).
13. This is the expression used by Michael Taussig in *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* (1991) to stress the function of terror in the establishment of colonial hegemony in the Americas:

"Whatever the conclusions we draw about how the hegemony was so speedily effected, we would be unwise to overlook the role of terror. And by this I mean us to think-through-terror, which as well as being a physiological state is also a social one whose special features allow it to serve as a mediator *par excellence* of colonial hegemony: the *space of death* where the Indian, African, and white gave birth to a New World" (p. 5) (italics mine).

Taussig adds, however, that the *space of death* is also a "space of transformation" since "through the experience of coming close to death there well may be a more

vivid sense of life; through fear there can come not only growth of self-consciousness but also fragmentatio n,and then loss of self conforming to authority" (*ibid.*: 7).

14. On the position of women in pre-conquest Mexico and Peru, see respectively June Nash (1978, 1980), Irene Silverblatt (1987), and Maria Rostworowski (2001). Nash discusses the decline of women's power under the Aztecs in correspondence to their transformation from a "kinship based society... to a class-structured empire." She points out that, by the 15th century, as the Aztecs had evolved into a war-driven empire, a rigid sexual division of labor emerged; at the same time, women (of defeated enemies) became "the booty to be shared by the victors" (Nash 1978: 356, 358). Simultaneously, female deities were displaced by male gods — especially the bloodthirsty Huitzilopochtli — although they continued to be worshipped by the common people. Still, "[w]omen in Aztec society had many specializations as independent craft producers of pottery and textiles, and as priestesses, doctors, and merchants. Spanish development policy [instead], as carried out by priest and crown administrators, diverted home production into male-operated craft shops and mills" (*ibid.*).
15. Parinetto writes that the connection between the extermination of the Amerindian "savages" and that of the Huguenots was very clear in the consciouness and literature of the French Protestants after the Night of San Bartholomé, indirectly influencing Montaigne's essays on the cannibals and, in a completely different way, Jean Bodin's association of the European witches with the cannibalistic and sodomitic indios. Quoting French sources, Parinetto argues that this association (between the savage and the Huguenot) climaxed in the last decades of the 16th centuries when the massacres perpetrated by the Spaniards in America (including the slaughter in Florida, in 1565, of thousands of French colonists accused of being Lutherans) became "a widely used political weapon" in the struggle against Spanish dominance (Parinetto 1998: 429–30).
16. I am referring in particular to the trials that were conducted by the Inquisition in the Dauphiné in the 1440s, during which a number of poor people (peasants or shepherds) were accused of cooking children to make magic powders with their bodies (Russell 1972: 217–18); and to the work of the Swabian Dominican Joseph Naider, *Formicarius* (1435), in which we read that witches "cook their children, boil them, eat their flesh and drink the soup that is left in the pot.... From the solid matter they make a magical salve or ointment, the procurement of which is the third reason for child murder" (*ibid.*:240). Russell points out that "this salve or ointment is one of the most important elements of witchcraft in the fifteenth century and later." (*ibid.*)
17. On "the renewed attention to witchcraft [in Africa,] conceptualized explicitly in relation to modern changes," see the December 1998 issue of the *African Studies Review* which is dedicated to this topic. In particular, see Diane Ciekawy and Peter Geschiere's "Containing Witchcraft: Conflicting Scenarios in Postcolonial Africa" (*ibid.*: 1–14). Also see Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005) and the video documentary "Witches in Exile" produced and directed by Allison Berg (California Newsreel, 2005).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