

THE WOMAN WHO DESTROYS LIFE – *LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI*

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Hungarian witch-trials offer a unique source of material for European cultural history. At the same time, important motifs in Hungarian witch belief cannot be understood without deciphering their European message. In spite of some significant attempts to bridge Hungarian witch-hunting studies and European social and cultural history, there are very many striking features in Hungarian witchcraft, which must be studied according to that principle. Because of the limits of my paper I chose only one (according to my knowledge, the most important) case to illustrate my assumption.

Among the more than a thousand published items on witch-trials in Hungary one can enumerate only a few cases in which we meet outstanding motifs which demonstrate the necessary philological accuracy. In 1742–1743 in Egervár (in the County of Sopron, in westernmost Hungary) a witch-trial against Mrs. *Jurinkovics*, née *Luttza Horváth* took place¹. Nine witnesses spoke about events in the village of Homok. This event had occurred during the years 1733–1740, *Luttza* (= *Lucia*) *Horváth*, together with her daughters *Dora* (= *Dorothea*) and *Rusinka* (= *Rosalia*, *Rosé* or ?), had participated in various dubious activities, and several persons stated that her mother and her grandmother were also witches. Thus the mother, who lived in the neighbouring village of (Fertő)széplak, had once been tried by ordeal (i.e. by the ducking-stool).

According to the first and chief witness, Mrs. *Divos* (= ? *Diós*), née *Juditha* (= *Judith*) *Sobor* on the 16th August 1735 (or some years later, but on the same day) she was suddenly struck by an intermittent cold fever, and a deep dream. It is written that “*Luttza Horváth*, together with her daughter *Dora*, went to the witness’ bed, crouching on the chest in front of her, both with crooked nails and snarling teeth, saying: there is a Devil in your heart, I will take away your heart”. The witness could not cry, and after a while both persons disappeared. She then went to her mother and told her of the event, how *Luttza Horváth* and her daughter had scolded her and snarled at her, and how they had wanted to take away her heart. (Fortunately, in the witness’s report, the important sentence has, in this way, been repeated.)

Other witches too made various love charms referring to the heart and they were also said to “eat” various persons, usually small children. In a trial protocol in 1631, in the county of Komárom, a witch, Mrs. H e v e s i, told a sick victim that she was ill because “your head’s brain has been taken away and its place filled with tow (or chaff). Your intestines have been taken away too and their place filled with tow (or chaff)”². However, this is an unusual motif in Hungarian witch lore and, moreover, beside the trial quoted above, we do not have any similar detailed data on “taking away a heart” in Hungarian witch tradition.

As Schrade admits, in his far-reaching summary on the heart as a motif in art and history³, one of the most important and beautiful depictions of the “stealing heart” scene is to be found in the famous medieval love allegory *Le Livre du cuer d’amours espris* by “king” R e n é I. d’Anjou, dit le Bon (1409–1480). A sovereign exceptionally talented and educated both in literature and arts, René wrote his poem before 1477, and the famous Vienna copy Cod. 2597 (of which on page 167 the thematically important illustration occurs) was made before 1477 too⁴. The picture (fig. 1) does not reflect the very beginning of the poem, lines (2r)1–6 written under the illustration, but in fact is a true picture about lines 41–42:

- (2r) Une nuyt, en ce mois passé,
 Travaillé, tourmenté, lassé,
 Forment pensifz ou lit me mis,
 Comme homme las qui a si mis
 5 Son cuer en la mercy d’Amours;
 Que ma vie en plains et en plours
 ...(2v) ... (3r) Ou que fust vision ou songe,
 40 Advis m’estoit, et sans mensonge,
 Qu’Amours hors du corps mon cuer mist
 Et que a Desir il le soumist,
 Lequel lui disoit enscement:
 “Si Doulce Mercy nullement
 45 Desires de pouoir avoir,
 Il fault que tu faces devoir
 Par force d’armes l’acquérir,
 Sicque tu puisses conquerir
 Discort, lequel garde le fort
 50 Contre touz amans, a grant tort,
 Ou doulce Mercy est liens
 Prise en deux paires de lyens,
 Que la tiennent Honte et Cremeur.
 Vien o moy si avras honneur”,
 55 Dist Desir “et plus ne demeure”.
 Lors mon Cuer part o luy en l’eure.

The otherwise very complicated allegorical poem⁵ speaks about the love of the poet (King R e n é). Because nouns occur as allegorical persons, it is difficult to tell the story in a simple and true way. The text uses first person singular for the King, and we can admit that there are some hints to his actual love. The whole construction is nevertheless of a scholarly, sophisticated and even mystic character (fig. 2).



1. René d'Anjou: Livre du Cœur d'Amours Espris. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Cod. 2597, fol. 2^r. The text can be read on page 166 of our paper. On the illustration the lines 1–6 of the poem are to be seen



2. Detail of figure 1. The “Nightly Scene”

We can summarize the beginning of the poem in the following way: Tired and sick of love I wanted to rest and lay down on the bed; my heart was about of my beloved, in that confused night, half in fantasy, half sleeping, half awoken, as in a vision or in a dream it happened to me, and it was not a lie (line 41:) that Amour took away my heart from my body (42:) and gave it to Desire (43 ff.:), who said: “If you want to gain a hearing from your mistress Douce Mercy, you ought to free her from Honte et Cremeur”.

From the prose text after verse line 56, and from other parts of the poem we learn that the lady (*Tres*) *douce Mercy* = (very) *sweet grace* is in the power of the grim *Reffuz* (*refuse*) and of *Dangier* (*danger*), guarded by *Honte* (*shame*) and *Crainte* or *Cremeur* (*fear*). A young lad, (*vif*) *Desir* (*vivid desire*) and the taken-away heart (“cuer” or “cueur” in the orthography of the text) wander together to various places. Finally they arrive at the *Manoir de Rebellion* (*manor of rebellion*), where *Cuer* enters *Douce Mercy*’s room and immediately is enchanted by her beauty. He expresses his love, and asks for a kiss. Immediately *Dangier* and his men appear and they fight with him. *Douce Mercy* is again taken into the custody of *Honte* and *Crainte*, and the heavily wounded *Cuer* asks to be taken to hospital, where he will stay for the rest of his life, because *Douce Mercy* was lost to him forever.

The end of the poem offers another surprise. *René* awakes from his dreamful sleep and complains to his servant that (during the night) *Amour* has drilled through his chest and taken away his heart. The servant examines his chest but there is no wound. In the morning *René* writes down his dream.

From the illustration, the “stealing heart” pattern is simple and clear. There is a sleeping person, sick or tired in bed. Two night visitors appear, one takes away the heart, giving it to the other. The heart is alive, undertakes adventures (and, in the case of the poem, is defeated). In the morning the sleeping person awakes, and feels the loss of his or her heart (although in case of this poem it is only a figment of the imagination).

In the Vienna manuscript (cod. 2597) there are 16 miniature illustrations, and empty places on the pages for 13 more illustrations.

On the intellectual background of the stealing of the heart scene we learn much from art history studies. According to Pächt the “René Master” was (besides Jean Fouquet) the most talented French painter of the 15th century⁶. He illustrated two other works by King René: *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* and *Livre de Tournoy* – and perhaps also *Les Amours de Renault et Jeanneton*. He illustrated at least two works of the intimate to King René, Louis de Beauvau (*Theseide, Troilus et Cresside*) and at least two books for personal use of King René (the so-called London and the Paris books of hours).

All the mentioned works belong to one strict thematic tradition of European love allegory and philosophy – more precisely to Anjou-Provence region. In this respect special attention should be paid to the other major work by King René; the famous *Mortifiement...*, which was created as a close counterpart to *Livre du cuer d’amours espris*. His *Traité de Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* (= Treatise on the Killing of Vain Pleasure) is an essay (with verse parts) on heavenly love (in contrast

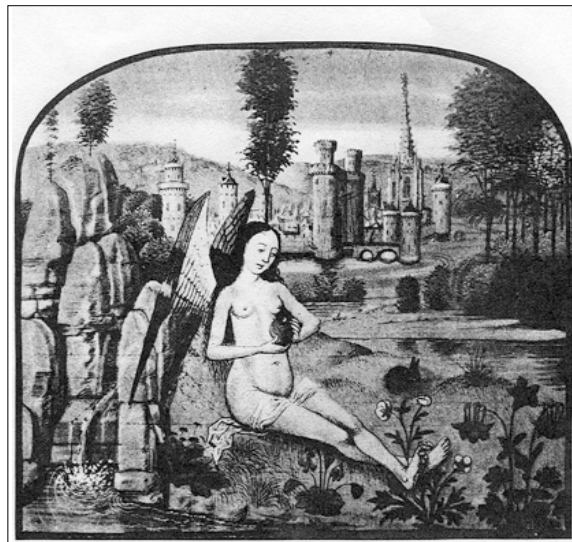
to *Livre du cuer...* which describes earthly love). As we have noticed, *Livre du cuer...* was ready in 1457, and the earliest data concerning *Mortifiement...* is the following: “S’ensuit une petit traittié d’entre l’Âme dévoté et le Cuer, lequel s’apelle le mortifiement de vaine plaisance, fait et composé par René roy de Sicile, duc d’Anjou. ...Lequel traittié fut fait en l’an mil CCCC cinquante et cinq...”⁷

In *Mortifiement...* in the introductory part the eternal soul laments about the affectionate heart, who drives him away from the right way towards earthly pleasures. After various debates, soul gives the heart into the hands of two women, Fear of God and Revenge, who take him up a mountain where, in a beautiful garden, four women stand at a crucifix: Faith, Hope, Love and Grace; with nails they fix the sinful heart to the crucifix, and every drop of his blood stands for a forgiven sin. After purification of the heart Fear of God and Revenge bring him back to the soul, who then says a thanksgiving prayer to God. The poem ends with an evocation to the Archbishop of Tours.

As for the iconographic patterns followed by the “René Master”, Trenkler⁸ 1946 has already suggested that the stealing of the heart scene shows striking similarities with a fresco by Pierro della Francesca *Dream of Emperor Constantine*, in the church of San Francesco in Arezzo (fig. 11). There are other iconographic parallels between King René’s illuminations and European painting which, however, fall out of the scope of our present essay.

Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance is known in 8 illuminated copies and 3 more copies without pictures.

As for the illustrations, Lyna in his book has reproduced the most striking pictures, which show the similarity and difference both in artistic and ideological traditions. One of the most popular ones is a picture about “Soul holding the heart at her chest” (fig. 3). This shows a naked winged woman (*Anima* = fem. in Latin) holds and emblematic-shaped, large heart under her left (naked) breast. Later,



3. René d’Anjou: Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Ms. 165. Soul is showing her heart

during her conversations, the Soul holds the heart (fig. 4) in the same manner in other illustrations, or even gives it to Contrition and Crainte de Dieu (= Fear of God, fig. 5). The heart is being hammered onto the Cross by the four virtues (fig. 6). (Contrition and Crainte de Dieu, and the four “virtues” are depicted as women, wearing the attire of a nun.) Finally, the cleaned heart (still nailed to a T-shape patibulum) is given back to Soul by Crainte de Dieu and Contrition (fig. 7). Thus, from the 9 miniatures of the Cambridge copy we see in five cases the heart in an unforgettable and impressive way.

The Paris copy miniatures (Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. fr. 19039) are painted in a different way, although the topic and iconographic patterns are still the same. Soul is dressed as a nun. However, her upper body is naked, showing her breasts, and in later scenes she also appears with a flagellant’s whip.

The same above naked, flagellant figure offers her heart to Contrition and Crainte de Dieu in the Metz copy (fig. 8), and the crucifixion motif (fig. 9), as well as the regaining of the purified heart, also follow the already fixed pictorial tradition.

The Pierpont Morgan Library copy paints the same episodes in a different way. There is still the holding of the heart, the flagellant and nun-like figures, and the crucifixion, soul regaining the heart, and the scenes are, in fact, the same ones.

The Berlin copy illustrates the surroundings of a peasant rather than those of a nobleman. The Chantilly copy is very elegant. The illuminations are of the above characterized tradition.

In one word the illustrations to the text reveal the following pictures: a female holding, offering, receiving a heart; a sometimes winged, in some cases bare breasted figure; and the heart tortured by 3 or 4 women (virtues or princess-like beauties who were commonplace in allegories about heavenly love).

In later European tradition love and heart (both in poetry and art) (fig. 10) continue as inseparable elements of positive (white) and negative (black) magic. However, as far as I know, the oldest written and depicted cases of the composition in Europe can be found around the circle of King René’s works.

Without a detailed analysis of the iconographic pattern, we can state that the “nightly scene” (in this case King René’s Dream) has directly influenced the famous painting by Piero della Francesca: *Dream of Emperor Constantine* (fig. 11). In general, a picture showing a few women approaching a sleeping person, sometimes with explicit allusions to taking out the soul, or to suck the victim’s blood, occurs in various illustrations on witchcraft or vampirism (see figs 16–18). “Heart-eating” figure can also be of allegorical character, usually attributed to *Invidia* – envy (fig. 12).

It was known in Medieval Europe, as accusation against women, that they eat the heart of men as early, as from the 8th Century A.D., e.g. in the last sentence of the so-called *Indiculus superstitionum...* (fig. 13).

Before we draw further conclusions, a bizarre motif in medieval European literature should also be mentioned: the topic of “eating one’s heart”. Usually called by the German name: *Herzmäre* (= Heart-story) (9), however the story might stem from Ancient India. In Europe the first mention of this was in the *Lai Guiron* (South France, 11th century) but the text has been lost, and thus we have to reconstruct it from Thomas de Bretagne’s *Tristan*. A Provençal troubadour, Guilhelm

4. *Ibidem* Fear of God holding the hand of Soul, who is showing her heart

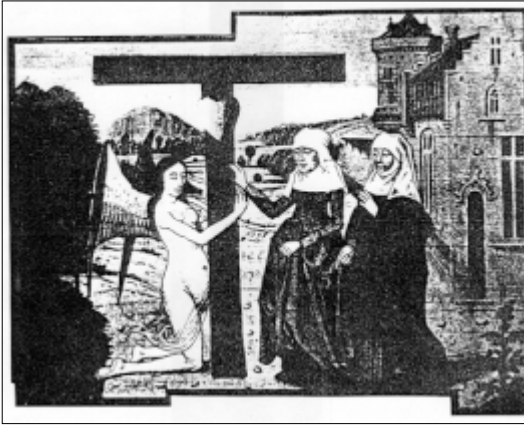


5. *Ibidem* Soul is giving her heart to Contrition and Fear of God



6. *Ibidem* Heart is nailed onto the Cross by the Four Virtues





7. *Ibidem* Fear of God and Contrition return to Soul her purified Heart. The Heart is still nailed onto a patibulum



8. A detached miniature from the Metz Library. Soul is Giving her Heart to Contrition and Fear of God. A sword above the head of Contrition is symbolizing the cruelty of power



9. *Ibidem* (Metz) Heart is nailed onto the Cross by the Four Virtues

10. Paris, Musée des Thermes et de l'Hôtel de Cluny. Tapisserie from Arras, beginning of 16th century. Illustration to "Courtly Love": offering the heart



11. Piero della Francesca: *La leggenda della Vera Croce*. Fresco in San Francesco, Arezzo, 1457–1458. The scene is the "Dream of Emperor Constantine"





12. Peter Flötner: Allegorical plate "Envy".
Tin cast (7,7 times 5,2 cm). A winged
old woman eats a heart. Nürnberg, Ger-
manisches Nationalmuseum, P.O. 836

de Cabestaing (active between 1180 and 1215 in Rousillon) gains the love of the wife of his lord, "Sermonde", and praises his luck in poems. The lord kills him, rips out his heart, grills the heart and gives it at a feast to his wife. After she has eaten the tasty food, the lord reveals the events. Sermonde replies that after such delicious food she will not eat anything more, and commits suicide by jumping from the balcony. (The story might also have influenced Boccaccio, who in *Decamerone* IV, 9 names the protagonist Guiglielmo Guardastagno). Petrarca, Hans Sachs and Stendhal used the same motif as well.

The two most widely accepted versions with the eaten heart motif in medieval European literature are from the same age. Its German version was made by Konrad von Würzburg (circa 1220–1287). He was a pupil of Gottfried von Strassburg, and he lived in Strassburg and Basle. In his *Herzmaere* (a story in verses, dating from about 1260) he adds further, unnecessarily complicated motifs concerning the basic topic. In his work the lover is a knight who, in order to calm the suspicious husband, leaves for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. However, he dies on the way, but before dying, he orders his servant to enbalm his heart and take it back in a casket to his mistress. The jealous husband discovers the servant, seizes the casket, and orders his cook to prepare the heart in an exquisite way. After the meal, the wife learns what was she eaten; her heart is then broken and she follows her previous lover with her own death.

Its French counterpart, another roman in verses (*Li roumans dou chastelain de Couci et de la dame de Fayel*, dating from about 1285) begins (fig. 14) with the

Delunus de peccatione quod dicunt, in Nephisa.
 De amporibus & coprib; & ceteris .
 De pulchris circa uillam
 De puzano curru quem quatuor nomines curruantur tunc
 De eo quod pbi; quatuor puzant quos libet mox
 De muliere de con spiciere puzant
 De muliere curru de puzant puzant
 De muliere quo quod pbi; campor puzant
 De lignis pedibus uel munib; puzano puzant
 De eo quod credunt quia femine lunam comēda quod possint corda
 hominum tollere iuxta puzant

Illi hominis speculacione in populo meo
 audient ergo & opem meam puzantem adnuntiabitur & me
 nate. Si me dicente ad impium impius morietur morietur. Non
 puzantur locutus ut se curruat impius anima sua ipse impius in
 iniquitate sua morietur. Sanguinem autem eius de manu
 meo puzant. Si autem adnuntiatus fuerit impius & ille non puzant
 erit conuersus ad impietatem suam & anima sua impius ipse
 quidem in iniquitate sua morietur. Tu autem anima tua
 liberus es sed & conuersus iustus iustus tuus fecit iniquitatem
 tunc ponit oppendiculum cor meum ipse morietur quia non adnuntia
 tuus in peccato suo morietur & non erunt in memoria iusti
 qui fecerunt sanguinem. uero qui demanuat puzant

13. Second page of the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*. Codex Palatinus Latinus No. 577 (Bibliotheca Vaticana, Rome, fol. 7b), sentence XXX. (It is the last two lines before the longer text, which belongs to another topic.) The sentence is (in a simplified form, deciphering the abbreviations): „De eo, quod credunt, quia femine lunam commendet, quod possint corda hominum tollere iuxta paganos“

description of the secret love between the warden of the castle of Coucy, and its Lady, the wife of Sir Fayel. The Lord tries to trap them. He suggests a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but then suddenly he changes the plans. The castellan travels alone, and on the way he dies from a wound. Then follows the motif of the embalmed heart in a casket; the husband finds it, makes the terrible food – Lady Fayel eats it and, recognizing the fact, dies at once (fig. 15). The story names the hero as *Chatelain de Coucy*, a troubadour.

In fact there was a French troubadour in Picardie by that name (who died around 1190). He disappeared during the third Crusade, and thus it is historically plausible that he was the “eaten-hearted” poet. Historical sources tell us about a certain *Guy de Thourrette*, castellan of Coucy castle between 1186 and 1203. Of course the



14. Opening page of *Roman du castelain de Couci*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 15098, fol. 1. The two-part miniature represents, on the left, the châtelain and the lady seated in a room, in conversation, with a closed box between them

identifications are later inventions, since the theme of the “eaten-hearted lover” was then already known. It is possible that there was a story which served as a close model both for Konrad of Würzburg and the French author of the *Romans de Châtelain de Coucy*. The name “Castellan de Coucy” could come from the history, and the motif of a poet dying on a pilgrim’s road, from the life of the troubadour.

This versified roman was very popular and we know about a prose variant from 1380, in Dutch and English translations. After 1581, the year of re-publication of the then 200 years old prose work, the topic became imitated world wide. Dozens of French, Italian and German poems and even operas chose it because it appealed to a large public.

Another German version shows also the popularity of the topic. A famous poet of the *Minnedienst*, Reinmar von Brennenberg, was killed in 1276. He used to say in his poems (according to the very principle of German courtly love) that his heart was not in his body, but only belonged to his mistress. Probably this was the

15. *Ibidem* (Paris) Closing miniature, fol. 157^v. The scene on the left represents the lady, her husband, and their servant at the moment when he reveals to her that she has eaten the heart of her lover



reason why quite soon afterwards, most likely by the end of the 13th century, the “Bremberger song” was written. Here the Princess of Austria eats the heart of the poet Bremberger, and after that she does not take any food, dying twelve days later. We possess various later variants of the song, which also entered into German folk ballad lore. We find another reshaping of the story in a German *Meistergesang*, in form of a song called *Ein hübsch lied von des Brembergers endt und todt, in des Brembergers Ton*.

Excellent philologists, such as Gaston Paris, John Meier, John E. Matzke, Kristoffer Nyrop, Wolfgang Stammer, V. M. Zhirmunsky, and others⁹ have written important studies on the origin, dissemination and changes of the topic. It is well known in European balladry (see *Deutsche Volkslieder – Balladen* Nr. 16, and even Nr. 17. *Graussiges Mahl*), and it has been listed in the international folk tale type index by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, as type 992 “*The Eaten Heart*”¹⁰. Adulteress is caused unwittingly to eat her lover’s heart”. It is simple to summarize the common European form: a poet praises his (successful)

love to a lady, then he is killed and the jealous husband eventually serves the poet's heart as a delicious dish to the lady, who eats it and dies. In some cases the husband (or his men) kill the poet, or literally tear away his heart.

Guilhelm de Cabestaing died in 1215, Boccaccio's *Decamerone* was written from 1348 on, *Herzmaere* by Konrad of Würzburg dates from about 1260, the French *Chastelain de Couci* was finished by about 1285, and the German *Minnesänger*, von Brennenberg died in 1276. The story, from Provence to Regensburg, was thus known by the end of the 13th century, and did not lose its popularity for many centuries.

More than a hundred years ago (1879), in a classical study of comparative literature, Gaston Paris suggested that all medieval European variants of the story arose from a single source: old Celtic oral traditions, first mentioned in the famous episode of Thomas de Bretagne's *Tristan* (about 1160). This is the part of the poem, where Isolde asks for the performance of the well known *Lai Guiron* (of which the original text is lost and thus is only available from this quotation). The husband gives the heart of the poet Guiron, as a meal, to his wife ("Et comment li cuns puis dona le coeur Guirun a sa moiller / Par enjin un jor a mangier..."). Four years later, referring to Gaston Paris' theory, in the newly founded English journal, *Folklore*, Reverend C. Swinnerton published an article¹¹: *Four Legends of King Rasalu of Sialkot*. One of the texts (most probably from the 10th century, i.e. older than any European versions) tells about the story of Raja Rasalu. He married the beautiful Kokilan, but as he got older his wife became unhappy. The neighbouring Raja, Hodi finds the way to the queen, and they became lovers. A true parrot tells the story to the king who, in a forest fight, kills Hodi, cuts off his head, rips out his heart and presents it at home as game food, the result of a hunt. The wife eats it, confesses her adultery, and praises the taste of the food, the best she has ever eaten. Rasalu tells the truth and the Queen jumps from the balcony and dies. (Because the story is known in more variants, there are slight differences in her way of suicide and the preparation of the food, etc.)

Returning to more general cultural history comparison, it is not necessary to list here all the demonic women who enchanted or destroyed human hearts (fig. 16–18). Demonic women as lovers have their ancestors already in the earliest times. Medieval stories about mermaids or the like very often accuse them of eating their own children¹². In most cases innocently persecuted heroines in medieval European literature were accused either of giving birth to monsters or eating their own child(ren). Sometimes they have been accused for both. The heroine and the calumniators are often named as witches. There is a long register of vampires, devils and alike who act (or disguise themselves) as women and hurt or kill the heroes. In Goethe's *Die Braut von Korinth* (1798) the ghost of the bride sucks the blood of the hero's heart, preparing his death. E. Th. A. Hoffmann, Baudelaire, Turgenev, Gogol and many other writers portrayed the *femme fatale* in this way. English romanticism was preoccupied by this topic. In Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) Lady Geraldine became more and more active and lively while destroying young Christabel. Perhaps the most famous poem of this sort is the ballad by John Keats, *La belle dame sans*



16. The Angel of Death taking the soul, in the form of a child, from a dying man. Reiter: *Mortilogus* (Augsburg, 1508)

COMPENDII MALEFICARVM

LIBER SECVNDVS.

In quo agitur de diuersis generibus Maleficiorum,
& de quibusdam alijs scitu dignis.



De Maleficio Somnifico. Cap. I.

Doctrina I

Consueuerit Sage, & Malefici, alios porione, malo car-
nune, & certis ritibus soporare, vt interez illis ve-
nenum infundant, vel infantulos rapiant, aut ne-
cent, vel furto quid subtrahant, vel stupro, adulte-
rioue contaminent, & hoc fieri potest naturalibus
venenis soporiferis, vt erit videre per exempla. Et
he non sunt fabulæ, quia si malea sunt, quæ naturaliter, vel infusa,
vel æmota, non somnium aut soporem tantum, sed etiam stupo-
rem

17. "The nightly bewitching" – three women bewitch a sleeping (naked) woman. Frontispiece of Francesco Maria Guazzo: *Compendii maleficarum liber secundus*. Milan, 1609

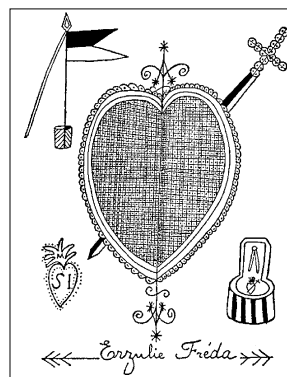


18. A popular engraving (late 19th century): a female vampire sucks blood of a sleeping male

merci (1820), in which the young knight is taken away to a grotto, where he sees pale kings and knights, and his demonic lover makes him extremely ill. It is not necessary to explain, only a vampire-woman could suck his blood, causing him quick decay. Mario Praz in his famous book *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (1930, and in later, more elaborated versions) devotes the entire 44th chapter to the topic “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, describing in 30 small parts the endless literary varieties of the vampire figure¹³. Destructive women often occur in the works as perfect witches, and in some cases it seems that the writer had studied eagerly the horrifying witchcraft literature in order to give a deeper impression. From the beginning of the trend we find the mystic and poetic results of this method. Matthew Gregory Lewis in his famous gothic novel *The Monk* (1795) depicts Matilda as a real witch. Chateaubriand, Mérimée, Sue, Gautier, Flaubert, and Baudelaire almost invariably repeat this motif. Satanism, sexuality, occultism and witchcraft are so closely interwoven, that we might understand and interpret them as a curious continuation of the horrid fantasies of witch-hunting in Europe, and not only as mere documents of poetic clichés or personal extravagancy.

Terms, scenes and illustrative patterns follow that long tradition which we might call “allegorical”. This label occurs here in the strict sense of the word, for Greek *allegory* was a “description of one thing under the image of another”. Witchcraft as love, love as witchcraft, poetry as theology, theological subtleties as topics for poetry: our texts shows clearly this “allegorical” tradition. The poet’s heart is cooked and eaten exactly as the two dove’s hearts are baked in the cakes and then eaten in a Hungarian witchcraft trial document: “ripe two dove’s heart, and put them into your

19. Woodoo drawing: symbolic emblem (*vèvè*) of the Dahomean goddess, *Ezzulie Fréda*. (After fig. 5 in Alfred Métraux: *Le vaudou haïtien*. Paris, 1958.)



mouth under your tongue, as long, as you feel there some oscillations of the hearts. Then dry the hearts, drill them into powder, and bake cakes with that powder”. The love-sick face of dreaming King René, ardent flames on *Vif Desir*’s clothes and winged hearts on the cloth on *Cuer*’s horse, the term *Dame Douce Mercy* and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*¹⁴, together with typical popular terms for witches, like Hungarian *szépasszony* ‘beautiful women’, Latin *mulier speciosa* (beautiful mistress = *belle dame in Sicily*), and torture scenes of the heart’s crucifixion at *Mortifiement* belong to the same allegorical complex of European cultural history.

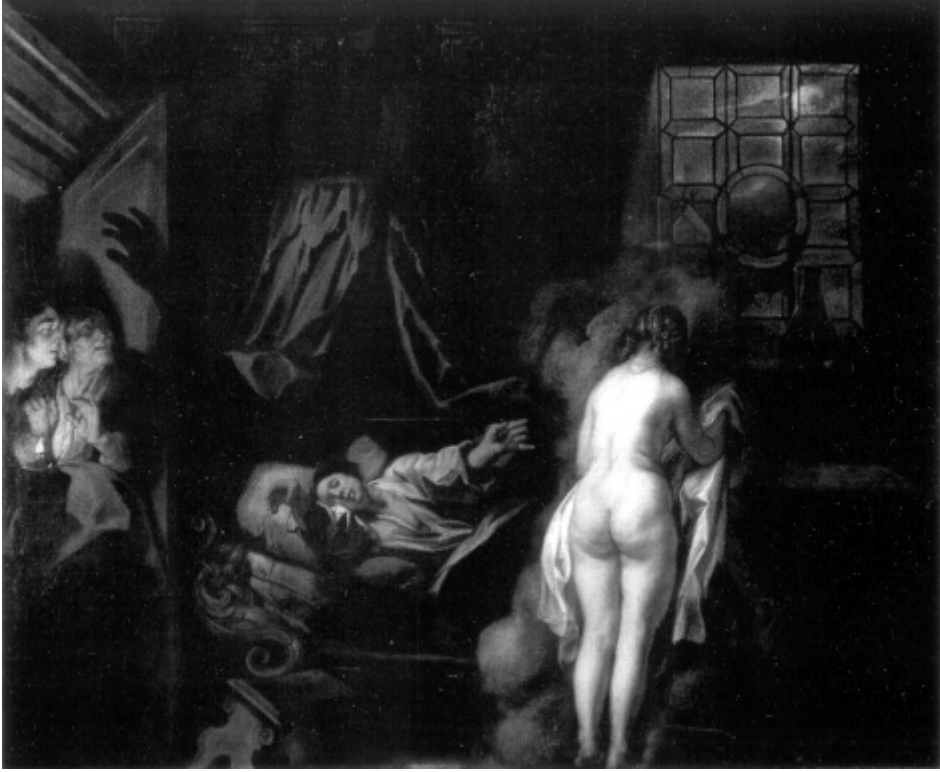
Heart magic exists, of course, beyond the boundaries of Europe, in fact it is a world wide phenomenon (see e.g. fig. 19). On the other hand its very strict iconological and topical patterns appear with a considerable stability. If we do not realize that background, we cannot decipher the message of the actual work of art. A wonderful painting by the Flamish baroque artist, Jacob Jordaens (fig. 20), at the first glance is depicting a wishful dream on a nude in Rubens’ taste. But if we look at the two female figures on the right side, the gesture of the sleeping man, or even the shape of the bed-curtain – we should not miss to discover here the iconographic tradition from King René’s or Emperor Constantine’s dream. And, of course, the naked person’s appearance is a nothing but of a dangerous witch.

The famous lines by Keats have the allegorical witchcraft imagery as their subtext:

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry’d – “La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall”.

The allusion is even stronger if we know that his poetic vision about “pale kings” comes from Dante, and the grotto of enchantment is that of the *Tannhäuser*.

Artificial and confused, as his life and poetry was, a curious French poet, self-styled reform Catholic and at the same time Rosicrucian and magus, Joseph Péladan, in his famous book, *Le vice suprême* (1884) quotes a poem (which is probably a free translation of an earlier Provençal one), where the demonic and sinful is praised, and everything, including Leonardo da Vinci’s *Gioconda* serve as adherents to it. It is impossible not to recognize the allegorical witchcraft scenery as its subtext, and the actual message is to praise the “Aesthetics of the Evil”.



20. Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678): *Nightly Apparition*. Staatliches Museum, Schwerin

Dans l'attente du Bien-Aimé, elle n'a point eu d'amants.
 Elle l'eût pressé, étouffé peut-être, sur sa poitrine plate.
 <...> sa lèvre se fût ouverte au baiser,
 Si Saint Michel eût pu être aussi Satan, si Satan eût été Saint Michel.

<...>

Fidèle à ton vice monstrueux, O Fille du Vinci, Muse
 Dépravante de l'esthétique du mal, ton sourire peut s'effacer sur la toile,
 Il est facsimilé dans mon coeur...

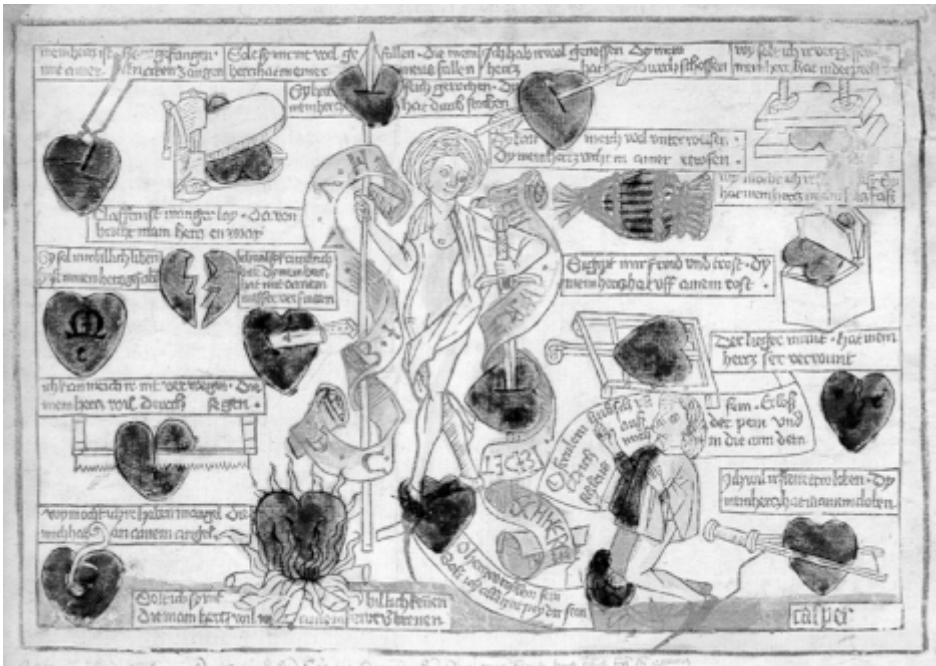
<...>

Chimère, tu vue m'altère de cette soif du Beau Mal,
 Que tu es morte sans savoir.
 O soeur de la Joconde, ô sphinx pervers, je t'aime!¹⁵

In Hungary we should finish the quotation by adding a name in the same tradition: the above image also depicts the imaginative world of our great modern poet, E n d r e A d y.

Both the iconography and the topic seem to be everlasting.

If we look at the unique German woodcut (fig. 21), as early as from about 1485, the theme of the drawings is the torture of the heart by a women, and we find here



21. “My heart suffers” – colored woodcut by a certain master Casper (signed below at the right corner), Regensburg, about 1485. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr. 467–1908

the striking iconographic transition between the medieval love allegories and the baroque image of martyrization of Jesus Christ. On the woodcut we see a band behind the left arm of the women, with the inscription *MEIN HERCZ LEIDET SCHMERCZ* (my heart suffers the pain). The cruel woman tramples on a heart, and pierces through with lance and sword two other hearts. There are 15 more hearts, tortured in various ways, with similar, explaining inscriptions. A young man is kneeling on a rose before the woman, with a verse inscription in three lines *O freulein hubsch un fein. Erloß Mich auß der pein und schleus mich in die arm dein*. (Oh, maiden nice and good, free me out of the pain, and embrace me into your arms). The various tools of torture refer in a drastic way not to the pains of love in general, but accuse directly the cruelty of women.

At the rich exhibition in the Art Museum of Antwerpen (2003) titled *Femmes fatales. 1860–1910*, the same motif in the late nineteenth-century art was represented. One would need another essay to describe the works of art of that period.

The famous contemporary Croatian writer, Slavenka Drakulić, in her novel *Božanska glad* (‘Divine Hunger’, 1995, also in various translations) describes another version of *amour fatal*, with direct allusions to cannibalism. The heroine does not only kill her lover but eats his heart too. The motif of the cruel man-eating woman is not ceasing its importance.

Women who destroy life continue to exist today.

¹ Trial documents were published in: Schram (1970: II. 138–144, 194–195), No. 278 (against Mrs. Jurinkovics) and No. 287 (against Miss Dóra Jurinkovics). Original documents are kept in the National Archive (Országos Levéltár), Budapest, sigla “Családi levéltárak, Széchenyi cs. P. 623, Acta Criminalia domini Egervár 190/N”. Schram’s publication is more or less correct, Nos 278 and 287 can be found at the same archive folder, but on different pages, and his transcription was not checked carefully.

² See Schram (1970: I. 431), nr. 163: “...kietek az feied veleiet es cöpiuel töltötek megh az helet. Az beledet is kietek es cöpiuel töltötek megh az helet”.

³ Schrade (1969).

⁴ The best description of the manuscript is: Pächt – Thoss (1974: 37–48; 1977: Farbtafel III and Abbildungen 57–73).

⁵ I followed here the text edition of the Vienna manuscript: Handschrift 2597: Smital and Winkler (1926), 3–4. The best available general edition of the text: Wharton (1980: I used it for correction of the punctuation, too).

⁶ Summarizing paper, with references to earlier studies: Pächt (1973: 85–126, and 1977: 7–106. Pächt (1977) gives a full list of existing copies of the works mentioned, namely of *Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* by King René; *La Theseide* by Louis (?) de Beauvau, a French translation of Boccaccio’s *La Traité de la forme et devis comme on fait le tournois* by King René (usually referred to as *Livre de tournois*); *Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris* by King René; a *Lettre d’Anoblissement, donnée a Jehannon Roy...* issued at Aix; and *Regnault et Jehanneton* the debated author of which might be King René (the only text of the work is a copy kept at the Leningrad Public Library). See Pächt (1977: 72–78).

⁷ I have used the following edition: Lyna (1926). The quoted text was first published in: Lecoy de la Marche (1875: II. 162 ff.).

⁸ Trenkler (1946: 6–7).

⁹ See some of the most important studies, mentioned above (in most cases with further references to other publications): Paris (1879), Paris (1885), Patzig (1891), Nyrop (1908), Lee (1909), Hibbard (1924), Meier (1934). *Le Roman du Castelain de Couci et de la dame Fayel par Jakemes*, ed. John E. Matzke and Maurice Delbonille. Paris, 1936. – Stammer (1963), Zhirmunsky (= Жирмунский) (1979: 375–396, 470–472).

¹⁰ In general on the motif see Type 992 “The Eaten Heart” in: Aarne and Thompson (1961: 346). An earlier, still more extensive list of variants and secondary literature: Thompson (1955–1958), Motif: Q478. 1. The Eaten Heart. See also *ibid.*, motif: Q478.1.1. “Man sends his daughter the heart of her lover”, with further literature. It is regrettable that comparative literary scholars did not use data published by folklorists and philologists during the last half century. Texts not only from Europe, but also from India, Hawaii, Greenland, Cap Verde Islands and by North American Indians show a very large dissemination of the story, which would need a further comparative interpretation.

¹¹ Swinnerton (1883) also in the form of a separate publication: Swinnerton (1884). There are some other variants, published later by him.

¹² Quoted after Bargheer (1931: Sp. 1811).

¹³ I have used the authorized German translation: Praz (1981).

¹⁴ Schram (1970: II. 689, nr. 442): “...két Galambnak szívét vegye ki és tarcsa az nyelve alatt mighlen valami érzékenséget azon két Galamb(b) szívben érezne, az után vegye azon két szívét szárogassa megh s törgye porra annak porával pedig pogácsát vagy perezet süssön”.

¹⁵ Praz (1981), pp. 221, 223, the text in original: p. 486.

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