

Broadsheet “See How the Satanic Witches Gather” (c. 1630)

Abstract

The early modern period experienced extensive witch hunts, a strange and brutal phenomenon fueled by the religious, political, and economic upheavals of the early modern period. The pamphlets that emerged out of the witch hunts, much like their predecessors during the Reformations, shaped, informed, and reflected public fears and social and religious perceptions about witches and a very real fear of the active Christian Devil in the world. This pamphlet dating from around 1630 reflects several tropes common in the genre and demonstrates the nature of popular beliefs about witches. The image, and many others like it, portrayed the witches at a diabolical sabbath as controllers of nature and animals who gathered naked for demonic and sexual purposes to do the Devil’s bidding. The image reveals common beliefs about witches’ activities, including flying, controlling the weather, cooking human children, and having sexual relations with the Devil and his minions.

Source



Source: Broadsheet, anonymous author, image based on an engraving by Nicolaes de Clerck, c. 1630. British Museum 1880,0710.574, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1880-0710-574

British Museum

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