SERPENTS AND DRAGONS IN EARLY MODERN GERMAN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the significance of serpents and dragons as cultural phenomena in the changing religious landscape of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany. Serpents and dragons are formidable symbols, shifting their form over the centuries to meet the fears and expectations of the societies who imagine them. The German-speaking lands are home to a culture particularly rich with the history of these creatures, and this thesis examines what shape the serpentine monsters of the early modern period took in this place and asks why people imagined them in this way. In this piece, I engage with a plethora of materials in which serpents and dragons can be found, from folklore and encyclopaedias to Bibles and witch trials, that reveal these monsters to have been shaped by the religious anxieties of the Reformation. The era of the Reformation saw these symbols reinterpreted in terrifying new ways that shaped how people perceived both the world at large and their own identities. Viewed through the lenses of monster studies, semiotics, folklore, and Reformation studies, this thesis shows that serpents and dragons became horrifying tools of the Reformers – manifestations of all their fears and objects of their abject hatred.

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0.0 THE INTRODUCTION – SERPENTS, DRAGONS, AND THE REFORMATION

'A dragon is no idle fancy. Whatever may be his origins, in fact or invention, the dragon in legend is a potent creation of men's imagination, richer in significance than his barrow is in gold. Even to-day (despite the critics) you may find men not ignorant of tragic legend and history, who have heard of heroes and indeed seen them, who yet have been caught by the fascination of the worm.'[1]

Speaking in 1936 in a now seminal paper concerning the poem *Beowulf*, J.R.R. Tolkien draws attention to the human obsession with the serpentine beasts that slither through the annals of human history. He posits that the significance of these monsters lies in what they represent and why we choose to imagine them, for serpents and dragons are usually regarded as universal symbols, appearing in both mundane and extraordinary guises around the world in varying, but recognisable, forms across time and space. They inhabit the darkest places of imagination and the very heights of mythology – an ever-present shadow in our shared cultural consciousness. Whether they are the Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl, Níðhǫggr whom the Viking Norsemen believed gnawed at the roots of the world-tree Yggdrasill, the Huanglong who patronised imperial power in China, Typhon who clashed with mighty Zeus for supremacy over the cosmos, the Rainbow Serpent that Aboriginal Australians believed created the world, the divine Nāga from south-east Asia, Tiamat the Babylonian mother of monsters, or Satan in his guises of the serpent of Eden and the Great Red Dragon of Hell, in these serpentine figures we can see expressions of the rawest of human emotions.

It is little wonder then, that these creatures that often straddle the realms of our experienced reality and pure fantasy yet appear consistently in so many different places and

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monster and The Critics' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-95.

eras, should invite such curiosity. While many have put forth theories as to a definitive origin of the mythic serpents and their universal appeal to the human imagination, the essayist Jorge Luis Borges proposed in 1957 that a true understanding is in fact impossible:

> 'We are ignorant of the meaning of the dragon in the same way we are ignorant of the meaning of the universe, but there is something in the dragon's image that fits man's imagination, and this accounts for the dragon's appearance in different places and periods.'[2]

Though Borges posited that the ultimate meaning of this seemingly universal symbol is beyond our means to understand, this fact has not stopped many from trying in the decades since. However, since his time it has become more apparent to scholars that we should not seek to explain a unifying theory behind the global phenomenon of the mythical serpent, but instead attempt to understand the myriad reasons why we imagine dragons – something that reveals more about us than it does the beast. Indeed, the means by which this symbol manifests can tell us a lot about the minds of those behind it, and this thesis seeks to explore what the significance of serpents and dragons, specifically as a cultural phenomenon in the changing religious landscape of sixteenth and seventeenth-century German-speaking lands, can tell us about the people of that time and place.

While creatures a western audience may categorise as 'serpents and dragons' manifest across the globe, some cultures hold a greater reverence for them than others. The German-speaking lands in particular have a great pedigree of serpentine and draconic beliefs rooted in both their traditional folklore and Christian religion. In Christianity serpents and dragons can be found throughout the Bible, often as the preferred forms of the Devil, and feature as

[2] J.L. Borges and M. Guerrero, *Manual de zoologia fantástica* trans. N.T. Di Giovanni (Harmondsworth, 1974), p.12.

monsters in the lives of various saints.[3] Germanic folklore meanwhile is rife with monstrous serpents that carry influences from Nordic mythology; most famously the gold-hoarding Fafnir, and the beast that proved to be Beowulf's bane. The legends of dragon-slayers who fight these creatures were well known throughout the medieval and early modern periods, and in time would become powerful nationalistic narratives for the successor states of the Holy Roman Empire. The slayer of the dragon Fafnir: Siegfried (alternatively Sigurd/Seyfrid) in particular would become romanticised in the nineteenth century as a unifying figure recognised in the folklore and culture of all Germanic people.[4] The oppositional narratives that dragon-slaying stories provide were not however solely used by German nationalists in the nineteenth century to forge new identities; in the early modern German-speaking lands serpents and dragons were used just as much to project messages to a religiously divided people. Indeed, the appropriation of serpent-based narratives like that of Siegfried and St George by religious reformers in early modern Germany reveals how they imagined their religious identity in relation to their confessional rivals.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked a period of significant religious upheaval with the advent of the Reformation in North Germany, the Counter-Reformation, and European Wars of Religion. The Protestant Reformation was a religious movement within Western Christianity that saw the authority and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church challenged, spawning a range of new confessions not beholden to Rome that came to influence much of Europe. The Reformation era in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire is commonly dated from 1517 with the publication of Martin Luther's *Ninety-*

[3] Saint George, Saint Theodore of Amasea, Saint Margaret of Antioch, and Saint Martha of Bethany are the most notable saints to interact with dragons, the former two being dragon-slaying saints. Saint Michael the Archangel is also often depicted defeating Satan in his dragon form.

[4] For more on Siegfried in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century nationalism see: J. Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied* (3rd edition) (Berlin, 2009), and C. Lee, 'Children of Darkness: Arminius/Siegfried in Germany' in S. O. Glosecki (ed.), *Myth in Early Northwest Europe* (Tempe, 2007), pp. 281-306.

Five Theses, and continued across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with such notable dates as 1555 - the Peace of Augsburg which legalised Lutheran Protestantism, and 1648 which saw the Peace of Westphalia that recognised Calvinism within the Empire. In this period, many different reinterpretations of the Christian faith clashed with both the established Roman Catholic Church and with one another; through means as varied as civil discourse, propaganda, and outright war. Amidst this maelstrom of ideas and violence many facets of German culture underwent close examination; with some being destroyed by reforming zeal, while others were given new life by the printing press. This thesis will take the serpent and the dragon, cultural icons that freely cross between the realms of folkloric fantasy and religious dogma, and analyse how they evolved in this turbulent period of would-be dragon-slayers and imagined monsters in the shape of men.

This thesis will examine serpentine monsters as both an expression of a society in turmoil and as creatures that were real to the people of that time - asking what these monsters can tell us about the past and those living in it. If such monsters serve to warn us about the evils of the world, then studying their manifestations will reveal much about what the people of the early modern Germen-speaking lands thought about themselves, what they did not tolerate, and what they aspired to be. This thesis will uncover identities and truths held by the people of this time and place that were shaped and contested in the crucible of religious reform, expressed as they were in serpentine shape, and offer some insight into the mentalities of fear that ran throughout early modern German religious culture.

Humans are in constant struggles, against themselves, against others, and against their environment. Serpents and dragons are a symbolic manifestation of these struggles; a monster that can represent our every fear. This thesis is a study of humanity's terrors in a time of religious turmoil – where hatreds old and new are given ghastly new forms in serpentine

beasts. Serpents and dragons were convenient cyphers for the fears of the German-speaking peoples – slithering their way through mediums as diverse as Lutheran propaganda, witch trials, and scientific treatise as expressions of hostility and terror. The 'fascination of the worm' is ultimately a fascination with fear, that most primordial of human emotions and one that ran rife in early modern German religious culture.[5]

[5] J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monster and The Critics' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-95.

Defining serpents and dragons

'No dragon exists – none ever did exist' wrote Ernest Ingersoll in 1928 at the beginning of a long monograph on dragons and their lore.[6] Yet despite not existing, fierce debate has raged over the past century as to the exact form of this monster, its origins, and its meaning – impossibly complicated by the infinite nuances of thousands of years of global history. To adequately define the serpentine beasts with which this thesis is concerned in their universal entirety is perhaps an impossible task, though we can certainly place some parameters upon what physical and narrative shapes serpents and dragons took within the temporal and spatial bounds of this study.

'Serpents' and 'dragons', were words often used quite interchangeably in the medieval and early modern periods, with precise terminology being used inconsistently, overlappingly, and varying in terms of geography, language, and time – even though the beast in question is unequivocally of the same monstrous breed. What we might now term a dragon would simply be another kind of snake to the people of the past, and a particular beast may be interchangeably called a serpent, a wyvern, a wyrm, lindwurm, or all of the above at once.[7] Any distinction between serpents and dragons can therefore be fluid when using contemporary taxonomy. For the purposes of this thesis, the terms 'serpent' and 'dragon' will be used to distinguish between snakes as biologically defined by modern science and the more fantastical creatures which are their imagined relatives respectively. This is not to say that all of the serpents in this study are bereft of mythical pedigree, indeed the snake in the Garden of Eden had abilities beyond those found in nature today, but the term 'serpent' will more

[6] E. Ingersoll, *Dragons and Dragon Lore* (New York, 1928), p.13. Paul and Julie Knoepfler do however suggest ways in which we might use modern science to create a dragon in a 2021 book that discusses bioengineering, stem cell research, and the ethics behind the creation of new life. See: P. Knoepfler and J. Knoepfler, *Drachenzucht für Einsteiger. Ein "gefährlicher" Zeitvertreib für Hobby-Genetiker* (New York, 2021).
[7] T. Rebschloe, *Der Drache in der mittelalterlichen Literatur Europas* (Heidelberg, 2014).

generally cover those whose form is the same as snakes today while that of 'dragons' may be more varied in their physicality e.g., having or not having wings, a certain number of legs, the ability to breath fire, etc. Any exceptions, variations, or vagaries presented by contemporary sources will be noted as such.

In addition, it is worth noting that this thesis only concerns itself with what we may think of as the 'western' dragon whose anthropological roots lie in proto-Indo-European mythologies, and specifically the Germanic manifestations of it. While a varied sub-set of dragons in its own right, with distinct influences from Greek, Slavic, and Scandinavian cultures amongst others, it is important not to transpose the analysis of these beasts onto so-called 'dragons' from elsewhere in the world. For while similar monsters appear globally and are often grouped under the umbrella of the term 'dragon', each must be taken within their own particular cultural circumstances so as to avoid colonial condescension. So many attempts to create a universal theory for the occurrence of monstrous serpents across the globe usually fall apart because of a specifically western construction of the category (as we shall soon see), for while the Chinese *Lung* may have some superficial resemblance to the drake of Europe with their serpentine shape and ability to fly– they have independent origins and distinct cultural symbolic nuances which make them difficult to comprehensively unite under a single ideological framework.[8] One could argue that to call non-western dragons 'dragons' at all is culturally insensitive at the very worst by forcing foreign mythologies into pre-defined narrow European categories, and an inaccurate shorthand at best. For this reason, this thesis does not seek to define what a dragon is on a global scale and only applies its

[8] Studies of the development of the Chinese dragon can be read here: J. Boardman, 'Three monsters at Tillya Tepe' in *Ancient Civilisations from Scythia to Siberia* 9 (2003), pp. 133-46; and J. Boardman, *The Greeks in Asia* (London, 2015), p. 116.

definitions to those creatures occurring in Europe in the late medieval and early modern periods.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the less fantastical but more real snakes of biological fact did exist in the early modern German-speaking lands and would be familiar to the people living there. The three most common varieties both then and today are: the *Ringelnatter* (Grass Snake), *Kreuzotter* (Common European Adder), and *Blindschleiche* (Slow Worm – biologically a legless lizard but for all intents and purposes appears like a snake). All of these creatures present the physical characteristics common to serpents, i.e., scales, lack of limbs, forked tongue, etc., and the *Kreuzotter* is even poisonous. Unsurprisingly, an expansive history of snakes in the German-speaking lands circa 1500-1700 has not yet been written. As an undomesticated species, they are more difficult for animal historians to write about beyond very small and specific contexts. For the purpose of this thesis, which deals with mostly mythical and imagined serpents, it is simply worth noting that snakes had been familiar to the peoples of the German-speaking lands for over a millennium and would inform the base imagery of their more difficult to categorise draconic cousins.

When studying how medieval and early modern Europeans interacted with representations of dragons, it is important to remember that these creatures were a part of their reality, existing on equal terms with the animals that more immediately surrounded them. Indeed, dragons and similar fantastical beasts were often stated in bestiaries as simply a sub or related species of snake.[9] Dragons were believed to be real and the possibility of meeting one was not out of the question, for many Europeans dragons were a distant phenomenon, whether spatially or temporally, but real nonetheless. Indeed, Adriaen Coenen (1514-1587) writes in

[9] See the discussion on the natural history of the dragon in chapter 3.2 of this these.

his 1578 *Visboek* that 'Dragons and Basilisks are fearful creatures, but, as far as I know, none have ever been seen in Holland'.[10] Others, however, felt dragons more closely and some eyewitness accounts survive to tell of close encounters with such monsters. The chronicle of Walkenried Abbey in Lower Saxony describes two such encounters with a draconic 'hazelwurm' which is described as being so large as to be mistaken for a fallen tree.[11] Dragons also appeared in the history of certain towns and peoples, lending their name to places like the Drachenfels near Bonn or their images to coats of arms as in Klagenfurt. A few even claimed to have encountered dragons, or at least their remains, with sightings forming the basis of providential literature and evidence for some witch trials as we shall see in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3.

While contemporaries may have believed in dragons, this did not make their appearance or abilities consistent, and a range of interpretations of the monster existed. Indeed, in the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch*, believed to have been compiled c.1545-1552, we have two startlingly different depictions of dragons within only a few folios of one another. One appears dark in hue and achieving flight on vast wings, while the other is vibrantly coloured and possesses no limbs at all yet streaks through the nights sky seemingly unaided (see Chapter 2.2).[12] Those who study history, anthropology, literature, and other disciplines have attempted to explain the definitive origin and taxonomy of dragons with varying levels of success. Literary scholars in the past hundred years have taken different approaches which can generally be seen as either 'exclusive' or 'inclusive'. The former offers a very strict approach to the taxonomy – creating categories of 'true' dragons and those which

[10] A. Coenen, *Visboek* (1578), p.29. *'draken en basiliskusen wist me uß gestrene dierne zeet vreest, Maer ene die hebbe ic niet geweten dat in ons hollant zy geweest'.*
[11] H. Ekstorm, *Chronicon Walkenredense, sive catalogus abbatum, qui ab anno Christi 1127 continua serie monasterio Walkenredae hucusque; praefuerunt in secula sex tributus* (Helmstadt, 1617), p.290.
[12] See: Anon, *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), fols. 127 and 129.

are seen as pretenders or half-formed imitators. J.R.R. Tolkien, who pioneered the study of monsters in literature in his scholarly work concerning *Beowulf,* called the dragon of that poem alongside Fafnir of the *Völsunga Saga* the only two true northern European dragons, though modern academics like Martin Arnold have criticised this as too narrow and prefer to include any beast of general draconic stylings in their work.[13]

Scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists meanwhile have attempted with varying levels of success to define dragons by their supposed origins in collective human thought. Indeed, the origin of the idea of the dragon is a recurrent theme in much of the scholarly work concerning them. The earliest example can be found in Charles Gould's 1886 *Mythological Monsters*, inspired by the recent work of Charles Darwin, Gould set out on one of the earliest cryptozoological endeavours where he proposed to strip monsters 'of those supernatural characters with which a mysteriously implanted love of the wonderful has invested them, and to examine them, as at the present day we are fortunately able to do, by the lights of the modern science of Geology, Evolution, and Philology'.[14] He argued that creatures of myth were likely once forms of animals which simply do not exist today, but whose memory has been preserved in perverted form in legend and in the earth as fossils. Of dragons he says that:

> 'in place of being a creature evolved out of the imagination of Aryan man by the contemplation of lightning flashing through the caverns which he tenanted, as is held by some mythologists, is an animal which once lived and dragged its ponderous coils, and perhaps flew; which devastated herds, and on occasions swallowed their shepherd; which, establishing its lair in some cavern overlooking the fertile plain, spread terror and destruction around, and, protected from assault by dread or superstitious feeling, may even have been subsidised by the terror-stricken peasantry, who, failing the

[13] See: J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monster and The Critics' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-95; and M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018).
[14] C. Gould, *Mythical Monsters* (London, 1886), p.2.

> power to destroy it, may have preferred tethering offerings of cattle adjacent to its cavern to having it come down to seek supplies from amongst their midst'.[15]

He writes at length about various dragon myths, legends, and stories from across time, and his approach of 'de-mythologising' the dragon - grounding it in reality and using science to explain its origins – has remained popular ever since.

Other early scholarship posited that all the draconic creatures found in mythologies around the globe were descended from a single dragon 'ur-myth' originating somewhere in the middle east which was then diffused across the planet by the movement of people out of the first cradle of civilisation. Grafton Elliot Smith, a proponent of what was later termed hyper-diffusionism (a theory that certain prehistoric ideas and technologies all originated from a single civilisation before being spread to other cultures, which has since been dismissed as pseudoarchaeology), suggested in 1919 that dragons first emerged in ancient Egypt before being exported alongside other facets of Egyptian civilisation to the rest of the world.[16] The diffusion theory is however not widely accepted today, especially given that Smith's Egypto-centric model of the development of global civilisation wholly fails to stand up to modern scrutiny, and the differences between the northern European fire drake and the imperial Chinese *Lung* ultimately suggesting other factors at play. Since his work, others have sought a variety of explanations for the seemingly independent development of different 'dragon' mythologies around the globe, some as we shall see shortly leaning (sometimes deliberately, often not) on similar methodologies to Gould, whereas others like the psychologist Carl Jung have taken more unusual approaches.

[15] Ibid., pp.2-3.
[16] G.E. Smith, *The Evolution of Dragons* (Manchester, 1919).

Jung referred to dragons in many of his papers, and while his usage of the symbol was greatly varied and much of his work is now disregarded by modern psychologists, some of his interpretive analysis is worth mentioning here for its influence on later writers.[17] Jung posited that dragons are what he refers to as an 'archetype' - an ancient symbol created by the 'collective unconsciousness' of humanity to express concepts and natural phenomenon that our ancestors were unable to rationalize.[18] Jung identifies the dragon as a symbol present in cultures around the world and draws a multitude of conclusions from this in relation to the human psyche, offering a range of explanations for the origin of the dragon as a collective imagining of the human race. For the purpose of this thesis, the most interesting idea that Jung puts forth is that the dragon is a symbol of ancient origin that humanity collectively imagined to explain the emergence of consciousness. For Jung, dragon-slaying stories in particular are representative of the awakening of consciousness, both in young children and for our earliest ancestors. He places the dragon archetype directly into the dragon/dragon-slayer dichotomy – the dragon being the arch-enemy of the 'Hero' archetype who must defeat the beast before fully realising itself.[19] For Jung, the dragon is identified with the unconscious, while the hero represents the conscious state. He writes:

> 'the threat to one's inmost self from dragons and serpents points to the danger of the newly acquired consciousness being swallowed up again by the instinctive psyche, the

[17] It is worth noting that Jung's usage of the dragon as a symbol varies massively from an image representing the unconsciousness, to a symbol of the Philosophers' Stone; and that while he identifies the dragon as existing across all cultures – his interpretations bear the hallmarks of a distinctly European, Christian tradition. Indeed, the dragon/dragon-slayer dichotomy that Jung speaks of is not present in all instances of the creature's cultural manifestations. One work that does draw upon Jung is P. Newman, *The Hill of the Dragon: An Inquiry into the Nature of Dragon Legends* (Lanham. 1980).

[18] C.G. Jung, 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious', Translated from "Über die Archetypen des kollectiven Unbewussten," *Von der Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zurich: Rascher, 1954).' In Sir H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, and W. McGuire (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 9, Part 1* (London, 1959), pp. 3-42.

[19] C.G. Jung, 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype', Translated from "Zur Psychologie des Kind-Archetypus", *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie* (with K. Kerényi), 4th revised edition (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1951).' in Sir H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, and W. McGuire (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 9, Part 1* (London, 1959), pp. 166-167.

> unconscious. The lower vertebrates have from earliest times been favourite symbols of the collective psychic substratum... The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of the consciousness over the unconscious.'[20]

Serpents and dragons here are creatures of darkness, of the unknown, and must be defeated to progress – traits readily associated with the European dragon rather than all such beasts across the globe, and ones that we shall see manifest in this study in the rhetoric of all those who use the symbol.

Dragons being a manifestation of some primeval phenomenon that collectively scarred the imagination of humanity is a notion that has continued long after Jung, though his metaphysical metaphor for the emergence of consciousness has been replaced by more anthropological and palaeontological theories. Indeed, the fear our ancestors had of actual creatures that have been made monstrous by the passage of time may be one origin of the dragon, posited most famously by the cosmologist Carl Sagan who speculated that dragons are reflections of early mammalian experiences of dinosaurs that have been passed down to us through genetic memory, ones made even more real by the existence of dinosaur bones discovered by our more recent ancestors.[21] Indeed, even Tolkien drew parallels between dragons and dinosaurs in a 1938 lecture and several paleontological explanations for mythical creatures have been put forward in the past few decades that are reminiscent of Gould's work.[22] The most notable of which is Adrienne Mayor's 2000 work *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* where she argues that the fossils of certain prehistoric creatures were the inspiration for monsters like the cyclops, giants, and griffins in

[20] Ibid.
[21] C. Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York, 1977).
[22] Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms. Tolk. A61., 'J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lecture on Dragons* (Oxford, 1938)', fol. 98-125.

the Mediterranean world.[23] While some of her theories, like pygmy elephant skulls being the origin of the cyclops due to the large cavity in their forehead, are generally accepted by anthropologists and her methodology has been applied with varying levels of success by palaeontologists to other mythical creatures, assertions by people like Sagan that dinosaur skeletons provide a universal basis for the collective imagining of dragons are less plausible due to the difficulty in accessing and identifying relatively complete dinosaur skeletons even in modern times. The likelihood of our ancestors being able to gain access to fossils and find sufficiently intact ones at that in several continents from which to create shared similar draconic imagery is rather low though not entirely impossible; after all a fourth-century Chinese historian named Chang Qu is credited with the first written description of dinosaur bones which he believed to be those of dragons.[24] While difficult to prove, the idea continues to provide scholars with material for debate.

Instead of looking to the ground for fossils of long dead dinosaurs, Robert Blust instead looks to the skies in a 2000 article and suggests that dragons are the result of our ancestors grappling with the causality of natural events as they observed weather phenomenon – namely rainbows.[25] Blust builds upon earlier twentieth-century scholarship, rejecting the diffusional model put forth by the likes of Smith and seeking a more concrete answer to the seemingly global parallel development of the dragon.[26] He argues that dragons are a result of prescientific speculation about weather events, linking dragons with rainbows due to their

[23] A. Mayer, *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* (Princeton, 2000).
[24] For more on Chang Qu and the dinosaur bones he recorded in Sichuan, see: Z. Dong, *Dinosaurian Faunas of China* (English edition) (New York, 1992).
[25] R. Blust, 'The Origins of Dragons' in *Anthropos* Bd. 95, H. 2. (2000), pp. 519-36.
[26] See: M. Barnard, 'A Dragon Hunt' in *American Scholar* 33 (1964), pp. 422-27; L.C. Kordercki, *Traditions and Developments of the Medieval English Dragon* [PhD. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1980]; J.D. Evans, 'The Dragon' in M. Smith (ed.), *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures. A Source Book and Research Guide* (New York, 1987), pp. 27-58; J. Allen and J. Griffiths, *The Book of the Dragon* (Secaucus, 1979); and F. Huxley, *The Dragon. Nature of Spirit, Spirit of Nature* (New York, 1979).

shared affiliation with things like water and treasure, and offering a range of examples of dragon characteristics drawn from mythologies around the world that align with his rainbow hypothesis. Blust opposes the biological model of dragon origins offered by the likes of Gould and Sagan, as well as the psychological models of Jung, believing his own rainbow model to be the most rational. However, since his paper there has been no mass universal adoption of his rainbow theory amongst dragon scholars of any discipline, with many authors preferring to consider the dragon as a psychological construct shared by humans across the globe.

Furthering this notion of dragons being an embedded part of humanity's collective unconsciousness formed by our ancestor's memories, anthropologist David E. Jones developed in 2002 his 'raptor/snake/cat primate-predator complex' theory which posits that dragons are the hybrid psychological realization of humanity's earliest predators.[27] While a tantalising theory offering an evolutionary origin of the dragon, Jones's work has been disputed by more recent scholars of dragons. Martin Arnold, in his 2018 work, points out that Jones's thesis does not take into account that not all dragons have the cat's hot breath which Jones claims as the origin of fire, nor do they all fly as the raptor. He does accept though that the serpentine aspect is formative in nearly all creatures we might term dragons.[28]

Though nominally a work on literature and culture, Arnold's 2018 book *The Dragon: Fear and Power* includes some comment on the psychological aspect of conjuring dragons. He returns to the metaphysical nature of the dragon by claiming that the dragon exists in a liminal space between reality and imagination – as one of humanity's greatest fears; variously

[27] D.E. Jones, *An Instinct for Dragons* (London, 2002), p. 36.
[28] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 8-9.

as an expression of nature's power, social ills, mortality, and the unknown.[29] This concept of the dragon as a serpentine manifestation of any and all anxieties a society may create, draws from modern literary traditions like monster studies (that shall be discussed later) to define the dragon as a creature that may be difficult to easily understand the exact shape of but is certainly always a beast of terror whose form and actions reveal a great deal about its conjurer. Similarly, Carol Rose and Karl Shuker have noted in their work that dragons change to fit cultural expectations, their specificities malleable, yet the fear they inspire remains the same.[30] A dragon may variously stand in for Satan, humanity's greed, or the environment amongst other things, but always it is something to be terrified of.

Not every anxiety-expressing beast is a dragon however, and so to study this often-nebulous concept some definitions must be put in place. For the purpose of this thesis, any creature that is explicitly named as a dragon (*Drache*) or an associated term (e.g. *Lindworm*) in the text or image that features them shall be counted as a dragon, and where no specific taxonomy is present both physical and narrative characteristics can be used as identifiers.[31] It is also important to note that this thesis only attempts to define and explore the European dragon as it is recognisable to an early modern German-speaking audience, and to a lesser extent the Proto-Indo-European mythology that it is derived from. As discussed previously, many attempts at a universal theory for dragons fall flat when trying to account for creatures in non-European mythologies that Europeans have perhaps wrongly ascribed the word 'dragon' and all its cultural attachments to. Many of the aforementioned authors have at times

[29] Ibid., pp. 275-9. For more on the idea of this liminal space see: M. May, M. Baumann, R. Baumgartner, and T. Eder (eds.), *Den Drachen denken: Liminale Geschöpfe als das Andere der Kultur* (2019).
[30] C. Rose, *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend, and Myth* (New York, 2001), and K. Shuker, *Dragons: A Natural History* (New York, 1995).
[31] German terms relating to dragons most notably include: *Drache, Drach, Trach, Trachen, Wurm, Lindworm, Kroneidechse* (sometimes used to refer more specifically to a Basilisk), and minor spelling variations thereof e.g., *Drake, Drakhe, Traken, Lindwurm*, etc.

fallen foul of trying to equate monsters as diverse as the Chinese *Lung* with the Norse Níðhǫggr, and while our fascination with the worm might invite comparison at times it is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt any global, universal definitions given the aforementioned difficult problematisation required for such a task.[32]

Physically, dragons are serpentine in general terms but possess extraordinary form or ability which sets them apart from regular snakes. Common extraordinary traits include but are not limited to: great size, fiery breath, flight (whether by wings or other supernatural means), poisoned blood, many limbs, speech, shape-shifting, feathers or fur in addition to scales, and chimeric qualities (such a multiple-heads, sometimes from different animals).[33] Many of Isidore of Seville's (c.560-636) determiners of monstrosity (hypertrophy of the body, atrophy of the body, excrescence of bodily parts, superfluity of bodily parts, deprivation of parts, mixture of human and animal parts, animal births by human women, mislocation of organs or parts in the body, disturbed growth, composite beings, hermaphrodites, monstrous races) which popularised the definition of medieval monsters, can be applied to one degree or another to a snake to produce a creature we might term a dragon.[34] Creatures that are associated with serpents and dragons, and share many of their physical characteristics like the rooster-headed Cockatrice , the crowned Basilisk (*der Basilisk*/*Kroneidechse*), or the Alpine

[32] See in particular: C. Gould, *Mythical Monsters* (London, 1886); G.E. Smith, *The Evolution of Dragons* (Manchester, 1919); and C.G. Jung, 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious', Translated from "Über die Archetypen des kollectiven Unbewussten," *Von der Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zurich: Rascher, 1954).' In Sir H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, and W. McGuire (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 9, Part 1* (London, 1959), pp. 3-42. More discussion on this thorny topic can be found in: T. Rebschloe, *Der Drache in der mittelalterlichen Literatur Europas* (Heidelberg, 2014).

[33] It is important to note that distinctions between different types of dragons based on their physical characteristics, e.g., 'true' dragons have four limbs and two additional wings while 'wyverns' have two limbs and two additional wings, are largely a modern invention and barring late-seventeenth-century English heraldry, does not exist prior to the latter half of the twentieth century. Historically terminology was vague, usually inconsistent, and highly contextual, it is therefore anachronistic to apply modern dragon standards found in books, games, and table-top RPGs to how they were understood prior to the advent of the modern fantasy genre.

[34] Isidore of Seville, *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville* trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof, and Muriel Hall (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 243-246

Tatzelwurm (*Stollenwurm*) shall also be considered in this thesis where appropriate, though it is worth noting that these beasts, while monstrous serpents, do not typically occupy the same narrative territory as most dragons.[35]

Narratively dragons usually function in quite specific ways, and while other kinds of monsters can fulfil the same niche, creatures of serpentine form are by far the most recurrent whether the stories they appear in use the specific term 'dragon' or not. In European folklore and mythology, dragons typically appear in oppositional narratives as creatures to be slain by a heroic figure who is rewarded for their deeds.[36] Indeed, nearly all Indo-European cultures have a dragon slaying myth whether it be Heracles and the Lernaean Hydra, Tarhunt and Illuyanka, or Thor and Jörmungandr which likely originated within the Proto-Indo-European culture (c. 5500-4500 BC) and represent the primordial struggle between order and chaos (a narrative motif dubbed *Chaoskampf* by nineteenth-century German academics).[37] In stories like that of Siegfried and St George which appear in medieval and early modern Germany, the *Chaoskampf* having evolved in northern Europe to include Christian aspects, a dragon is a force of chaos and discord whose death represents a return to normality/order and the righting of some wrong or injustice, often followed by a flowering of piety. The prize for killing the dragon however is not just the peace brought by its passing but is also represented by the dragon's stolen hoard or female captive – manifestations of the dragon's lustful greed and evil intent. These stories create a diametric relationship between dragon-slayer and dragon, and

[35] Sea Serpents, Whales, etc. can be seen as 'dragon adjacent monsters' and are less common in the German-speaking lands of central Europe than those nations more famous for their maritime exploits the Age of Discovery.
[36] Dragons in other cultures across the globe appear in other, often very different narrative roles which further raises questions of if they should be termed dragons at all. In the European tradition however, the location and period of this study, that of the dragon/dragon-slayer predominates.
[37] For Indo-European culture see: C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford, 1995). For *Chaoskampf* see: H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 und Ap. Jon 12* (Göttingen, 1895).

while the pagan origins of some of the folklore concerning dragons does not necessarily conform to the later Christian moral standard of a dichotomy between 'good versus evil', the dragon still represents a host of negative connotations such as chaos, avarice, and death which sees it become a powerful force of sin when these stories are Christianised. Always, however, they are a force to be feared, whether they exert that terror in their fiery breath, their villainous deeds, or their mere existence – dragons are an oppressive force that terrorise every narrative they can be found in.

Dragons, much like demons, are multifarious in their appearance but share common narrative trends and general features with no strict taxonomical definition, more a broad category of beings than a particular species. Whereas other mythological creatures might lose their identity if their physical characteristics change (e.g., a unicorn, centaur, or mermaid are very explicit in their appearance, becoming something else entirely should they change), a dragon may wear any number of physical features while still occupying the same role as embodiment of a fearful and terrible power in opposition to moral ideals. No matter their size or shape, dragons are known to audiences as something terrifying and, in a way, something important. As Daniel Ogden wrote in his 2021 work;

> 'In his story, the dragon is a figure of destruction; outside it, he is a figure of integration. The shared recognisability, enjoyability, and indeed comfort of his story expresses a fundamental bond between the peoples and cultures of Europe across time and space, from archaic Greece, through imperial Rome, early medieval France and late medieval Iceland, to the Britain of today.'[38]

Dragons always have something to say; holding the vast potential of centuries of stories; making their retellings, reinventions, and reinterpretations powerful tools that bring the

[38] D. Ogden, *The Dragon in the West, from Ancient Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford, 2021), p. 373.

combined weight of human cultural history to bear anywhere they raise their scaly heads. From pre-history to present day the ‘worm’ continues to fascinate us, and the turbulent times of the Reformation are no exception.

Studying monsters – approaches, methodology, and historiography

Serpents and dragons have attracted scholarly attention from a range of different fields, each of which has brought their own approaches and methodologies. For example, studies on serpents and dragons in the Islamic world have been undertaken by historians of the middle east like Abbas Daneshvari and Sara Kuehn who have explored theological and iconographical approaches in medieval Islamic the art and architecture, whereas authors like Daniel Ogden and James H. Charlesworth have explored classical and mythological sources from across ancient, late antique, and medieval Europe.[39] The early modern period, and specifically the history of the German Reformation, has been somewhat lacking in the historiography of these creatures however. Indeed, the medieval period and the field of literature is where we find many works on the serpentine monsters. Exceptions, like two articles by Johannes Dillinger (2015 and 2017) that examine the economic aspects of early modern belief in dragons; or *The Penguin Book of Dragons* which devotes two chapters to early modern dragons though with a focus on English literature and natural history respectively; or Wes William's 2011 work *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* that largely only concerns France, tend to be limited in their scope.[40] This thesis chooses instead to gather draconic lore from across varying disciplines to create a comprehensive historical picture of serpents and dragons in this oft neglected time and place of the early modern German-speaking lands.

[39] A. Daneshvari, *Of Serpents and Dragons in Islamic Art, An Iconographical Study* (Costa Mesa, 2011); S. Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art* (Leiden, 2011); D. Ogden, *The Dragon in the West, from Ancient Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 59-83; and J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* (Yale, 2010). See also: G. Curatola, 'Serpenti e 'draghi' anatolici: un'antica questione' in *Venice Quaderni* No. 6 (Venice, 1979), pp. 123-146.

[40] J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period,' in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015) pp. 453-59; J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in Lindeman M (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands*, (Berghahn, 2017) pp. pp. 10-25; S.G. Bruce (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Dragons* (New York, 2021); W. William, *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (Oxford, 2011).

The largest undertaking of dragon-studies has been conducted within the field of literature, where scholars since the mid-twentieth century have chronicled and analysed the occurrence of monstrous serpents in mythology, folklore, and literature. The father of this movement and pioneer of 'monster studies' was J.R.R. Tolkien, who drew attention in 1936 to the centrality of the monstrous figures in *Beowulf.* He argued that while they were fantastical, these beasts - particularly the dragon who kills Beowulf himself, should be studied in equal measure to the other aspects of the poem rather than being relegated to an embarrassing footnote on account of not existing in the reality occupied by the reader. In his now famous paper concerning the poem, quoted at the beginning of this thesis, Tolkien presented the fascination with dragons as not only normal but as something that poses questions about man's need to imagine such beasts. The dragon of *Beowulf*, he argues, is significant in what it represents as a symbol of struggle, mortality, and death - revelatory of a pre-Christian northern European worldview in which heroes, Gods, and monsters were all doomed to die. For Tolkien the presence of monsters, particularly the dragon, in this text means that the poem is not solely a historical source, as previous scholars had approached it, but a work of art bearing 'an ancient theme: that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die'.[41] Like many dragons, Beowulf's Bane is a manifestation of death and the fear of death in all its forms, significant for this theme and not just as a narrative device. Though Tolkien would largely only continue to experiment with the idea of the dragon in his fantasy works, conjuring the spiritual successor to Fafnir and *Beowulf*'s dragon in the form of Smaug in *The Hobbit* (1937), he did spawn the movement which came to be known near the end of the twentieth century as 'monster studies'.[42]

[41] J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monster and The Critics' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-95.
[42] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London, 1937).

Monster studies does not relegate these 'potent creations of men's imagination' to flights of fancy or the product of a superstitious worldview, but rather seeks to understand the culture and psychology behind the creation of these phenomenon. In a 1996 volume edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, the term 'Monster Studies' is coined to describe the examination of so-called 'monsters' as a mode of social discourse, and in the editor's own article he argues that one can read cultures from the monsters they engender.[43] For Cohen and his co-authors, monsters always signify something other than themselves, whether it is by functioning as a 'dialectic Other' or as a means by which the boundaries of the possible are policed, as we shall see in this thesis when the dragon becomes co-opted by religious reformers.[44] Cohen writes of monsters in general just as Tolkien did with the dragon decades previously:

> 'These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to re-evaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance towards its expression. They ask us why we have created them.'[45]

'Why serpents and dragons?', is the principal question of this thesis, asking why those who conjured such an image in religious discourse chose to do so and to what ends. Of the theses that monster studies put forth, this thesis shall largely dwell upon two: that monsters are an expression of anxiety, and that they play a role in identity formation.

Monsters can be read as an expression of anxieties held by a particular culture – both their physicality and narrative function manifesting to reflect the concerns of the society which creates them. Within a historical context, the principles of monster studies have been

[43] J.J. Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)' in J.J. Cohen (ed.), *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minnesota, 1996), pp. 3-25.
[44] Ibid.; and M. May, M. Baumann, R. Baumgartner, and T. Eder (eds.), *Den Drachen denken: Liminale Geschöpfe als das Andere der Kultur* (2019).
[45] Ibid.

applied in this fashion with regards 'monstrous births' - accounts of both real and fictional unusual births which caused consternation for contemporaries. Jennifer Spinks's work on these occurrences in sixteenth century Germany is one such study. She states that the discussion and analysis of monstrous births in contemporary literature is of particular use to historians as they 'tell us about the interests and concerns of early modern societies'.[46] Spinks argues in particular that the millenarian anxieties of Reformation Germany are reflected in the increasingly apocalyptic overtones ascribed to monstrous births in religious polemic – these 'monsters' reveal how concerned society was about the end of the world. In relation to this study, the occurrence of serpents and dragons in contemporary materials can be read as manifestations of particular anxieties relating to the connotations of those creatures such as greed, chaos, and the devil.

However, monsters do not only express anxieties passively as just observations of a society; they actively challenge boundaries and categories, playing a role in identity formation. This may entail a questioning of the human condition or forcing the audience to side with the party of the dragon or the dragon-slayer. Lydia Zeldenrust's studies of the Melusine (half-woman, half-dragon hybrids found in the medieval folklore of France, Luxembourg, the German-speaking lands, and the Low Countries) over the past decade combines animal and monster theory to examine how medieval stories of these 'Dragon Maidens' explored the nature of human identity.[47] For not only does the hybridity of the Melusine herself raise questions concerning the body, but the encounters between the Dragon Maidens and Knights also define the latter's identity by the way they react to the former. The

[46] J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (London, 2009), p. 3.
[47] L. Zeldenrust, *When a Knight meets a Dragon Maiden: Human Identity and the Monstrous Animal Other* (2011) http://www.medievalists net/2012/09/when-a-knight-meets-a-dragon-maiden-human-identity-and-the-monstrous-animal-other/ (Accessed: 1/8/2019). See also: L. Zeldenrust, 'Serpent or Half-Serpent? Bernhard Richel's *Melusine* and the Making of a Western European Icon' in *Neophilologus* 100:1 (2016), pp. 19-41.

relative humanity of both parties is challenged in these stories for while the Melusine may outwardly appear a monster, the knight may also be proven to be equally monstrous in his actions towards the Dragon Maiden. Both the monsters in these medieval stories and the characters who deal with them have certain boundaries challenged, and similarly this thesis shall examine how the serpents and dragons of early modern Germany challenged their audience, and how narratives were constructed to manipulate people into forming certain ideas about identity. For while the Melusine was largely benevolent and challenged knightly chivalry, the dragons of Reformation Germany were often malevolent, eschatological, and a moral challenge to the immortal soul.

This thesis contends that monster studies provide a useful lens through which to understand the manifestations of monsters, like fantastical serpents and dragons, that appear in the religious culture of early modern Germany. While usually the purview of scholars studying literature or historians working on the medieval period, the study of monsters can still be applied to the early modern period where belief in monsters was just as present in the contemporary worldview and should be applied more often within this time period. This thesis then, will add a new chapter to the history and study of monsters as it engages with a formidable symbol in a time and place deserving of greater attention rich in draconic lore, eschatological anxieties, and terrifying symbolism.

Beyond the values of monster studies, this thesis will routinely consider serpents and dragons in a symbolic sense due to these creatures often serving as cyphers for other ideas and holding thousands of years of cultural connotations. For this reason, it is important to discuss the application of the field of semiotics to this thesis. Semiotics (or semiology) is the study of ‘signs’ – traditionally loosely defined as something that stands for something else – which are analysed as being made up of two constituent parts: a ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’, for

example a crown (signifier) represents royalty (signified).[48] Systems of signs are referred to by semiologists as 'codes', and a knowledge of certain codes allows one to understand the meaning of signs in great numbers and combinations. This constitutes a 'language' of signs, that can be read and understood by those who have learnt it, either through study or day-to-day life. Using the earlier example, heraldry is often described as having a 'language' and possesses a particular system of signs of which the signifier of a crown is but one of many.[49]

Signs encompass everything from images to body language, though this thesis is largely concerned with textual and visual representations of serpents and dragons as signifiers of various ideas and concepts. What is signified by serpents and dragons is routinely used and abused by authors and artists in the Reformation period – the well-established place it held in the German cultural zeitgeist allowed people to utilise serpents and dragons as powerful rhetorical tools within the codes they were constructing.

Beyond serpents and dragons as motifs themselves, this thesis crosses into the historiography of a few different fields; principally those of Reformation iconography, witchcraft, and animal history – each a thriving academic area into which serpentine monsters often rear their scaly heads. Given the surfeit of images of dragons produced in the period that this thesis examines, it is worth turning first to the historiography and methodology of Reformation iconography. This thesis principally follows the methodologies of Robert Scribner whose 1981 monograph *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* stands as a cornerstone of the examination of the most widespread art of the Reformation. He notes the difficulty of assessing literacy rates and audience responses to

[48] For more on semiotics see: U. Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1976); U. Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington, 1984); P. Trifonas (ed.), *International Handbook of Semiotics* (Dordrecht, 2015); and D. Chandler, *Semiotics* (New York, 2017).
[49] M. Pastoureau, *Heraldry: its origins and meaning* (London, 1997); and R. Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (London, 1976).

material in this period, suggesting that the historian should evaluate the effectiveness of pieces of Protestant propaganda by their 'broad cultural traces' i.e., the recurrence of certain images and ideas in common usage.[50] This approach blends the related fields of iconography, iconology, and semiotics – simultaneously exploring the description and classification of images of serpents and dragons, examining the symbolism and allegory of images, and the reading of the 'signs'.[51]

In addition to Scribner's methodologies, this thesis will also draw on traditional art history methodology whose definition of iconology is sometimes taken as being more distinct from iconography than Scribner defines it. Pioneered by art historians like Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky, iconology seeks to engage with art on a deeper level than mere face value - uncovering the socio-historical contexts behind why an artist chose to create what they did in the way they did it.[52] Indeed, in this thesis serpents and dragons can be seen as a symptom of something else - some anxiety held by early modern society expressed in a potent symbolic form deserving of the art historian's attention. Iconology is not without its critics or shortcomings however; it has been identified as running the risk of focusing too much on symbology and neglecting the material form of art.[53] It does, however remain a useful tool

[50] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 9-10. Scribner suggests that the only reliable test of propaganda is to study its effect on behaviour. A task he admits to ultimately be beyond the scope of his book, and also beyond that of this thesis.
[51] Ibid., pp. 1-13.
[52] E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Theme In the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1939); E. Panofsky, 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art' in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (New York, 1955), pp. 26-54. See also: S. Ferratti, *Cassirer, Panofsky and Warburg: Symbol, Art and History* (London, 1989); T. Hensel, *Wie aus der Kunstgeschichte eine Bildwissenschaft wurde: Aby Warburgs Graphien* (Berlin, 2011); and M. Hatt, and C. Klonk, 'Iconography - iconology: Erwin Panofsky' in *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 96-119.
[53] For critical reflection on iconology, particualrly Panofsky's iteration, see: K. von Beyme, 'Why is there no Political Science of the Arts?' in U.J. Hebel and C. Wagner (eds.), *Pictoral Cultures and Political Iconographies: Approaches, Perspectives, Case Studies from Europe and America* (New York, 2011), pp. 13-32; E.H. Gombrich, 'Aims and Limits of Iconology' in *Symbolic Images* (Studies in the Art of the Renaissance 2) (London, 1972), pp. 1-25; and K. Moxey, 'Panofsky's Concept of "Iconology" and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art' in *New Literary History* Vol.17, No.2 (1986), pp. 265-274.

that this thesis shall use in conjunction with other methodologies and traditions to build as comprehensive an exploration of sources as possible.

This thesis will draw upon the approaches of art history and Reformation iconography, conducting a deep analytical reading of the images it concerns itself with to not only explain what the images meant, but also their intended impact on the observer and what the composition of these images reveals about early modern German religious culture more broadly. This thesis engages with a range of visual mediums, from woodcuts to altarpieces, and a combined approach of iconography, iconology, and semiotics will allow us to explore as many facets of these pieces as possible; both their intended symbolic meaning, and the ways in which they were experienced and received by their audiences.

Since Scribner, there have been several other notable contributions to the field that have continued his work or challenged it, far too many to make a thorough account of here. Of particular note though is that Scribner's focus on presenting images as 'for the sake of simple folk' does not focus as much on the interaction the literate had with them. Indeed, their message would be equally appreciated by the literate if not more so due to the latter being able to read the accompanying text which would enhance understanding of more complex visuals. For while many Reformation images were quite easy to understand, Andrew Pettegree points out in his 2005 work on the Reformation and persuasion that some required a greater level of image-literacy than others, which the use of additional text could circumnavigate.[54] Furthermore, Joseph Koerner argues that the image does not stand alone, it is surrounded by an entire apparatus – the 'machinery of actors, actions and instruments using the image' which place it within changing contexts; and it is the consideration of image-

[54] See: A. Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005).

literacy, textual engagement, and understanding of an image's 'apparatus' that has led to recent studies like Lyndal Roper and Jennifer Spink's 2017 work on 'Karlstadt's Wagen'.[55] These discussions about the impact of Reformation art have led to further discussions on the nature of Protestant identity like Bridget Heal's 2017 *A Magnificent Faith: Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* which explores the artwork of Lutheranism as a vehicle for articulating their own religious identity.[56] Indeed, it is worth noting that the visual sources used in this thesis are predominantly of either a Lutheran or uncertain Protestant denomination, owing partly to the rich visual culture of Lutheranism promulgated by artists like Lucas Cranach, partly to the geographic scope of this thesis, and partly simply due to the sources that have survived.

Like Heal, Alexandra Walsham has also used art to interrogate the construction of Protestant identities, though doing so through the medium of decorated and commemorative delftware in the British Isles where household consumer goods and confessional identity became intertwined.[57] Walsham in particular identifies repeated specific visual motifs, such as the candle that cannot be blown out, that were used to shape Protestant identity in much the same way that this thesis shall identify repeated motifs that feature serpents and dragons in German religious culture whose application served to foster a sense of what was and what was not Protestant. Walsham's use of material culture and focus on how these objects were received by people as a functional and not merely symbolic medium, is also something this thesis shall reflect on - asking how the symbols of serpents and dragons made their way into mediums beyond print that engendered different means of response and engagement from

[55] J.L. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago, 2004), p. 10; and see: L. Roper and J. Spinks, 'Karlstadt's Wagen: The First Visual Propaganda for the Reformation' in *Art History* April 2017, Vol. 40(2), pp. 256-285.
[56] B. Heal, *A Magnificent Faith, Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017).
[57] A. Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England' in *Renaissance Quarterly* 69 (2016), pp. 566-616.

their audience.[58] This thesis therefore shall add to the work started by Scribner; indeed, it will construct histories and explore analyses of motifs previously only identified in passing in his work and will contribute to our understanding of the fears and anxieties held by Reformation artists and authors as they began to establish new Protestant identities.

It is important to note that this study is in many ways one concerning intent, rather than reception, the methodologies described in this section allowing us a glimpse into the minds of those who created these sources and the kind of culture they both consumed and produced. There are few extant sources detailing contemporary reactions to the materials discussed in this thesis, the Catholic responses to the alignment of papacy and dragon discussed in Chapter 3.1 being a notable exception. Instead, through the application of iconography and iconology art methodology, we aim to read what artists and authors intended their audiences to understand from their work. The repetition of serpentine motifs over a long period of time, the 'broad cultural traces' as Scribner terms it, does however suggest that the sources of this study were received in the intended fashion reasonably successfully for artists and authors to keep returning to them.[59] Indeed, to aid in the application of semiotic, iconographic, and art history methodology this study broadly covers the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; a long view of history allowing us to observe patterns over time, and see how serpents and dragons changed as the fervour of movements within religious culture like the Reformation or the witch crazes waxed and waned. Where appropriate, medieval examples, particularly from the fifteenth century, and examples from the early eighteenth century will also be used in order to paint the most complete picture of the trends observed in

[58] See in particular the discussion of the sensory experience of dragons in Chapter 1.0, and the objects of material culture that the pope-dragon was added to in Chapter 2.1. In both cases the symbolic approaches of iconography, iconology, and semiotics are not enough to paint the full picture - the senses and place within familiar environments also affect how audiences respond to these sources.

[59] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 9-10.

this thesis. This allows us to recognise that the creators of the sources this thesis studies understood the efficacy of their chosen motifs, even if we do no't always have extant sources detailing contemporary reception of them.

As well as the symbology of the Reformation, serpentine monsters also find themselves embroiled in the great European witch crazes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which have long been a topic of study by various schools of historians. The first major works on the history of witchcraft were penned by academics in the nineteenth century, and over the course of the twentieth century were joined by works comprising such diverse fields as anthropology, feminism, economics, environmentalism, and folklore amongst others.[60] When dragons do appear in the records of witch trials they do so as representatives of greed and fear, prompting an assessment of them through lenses such as economic and psychoanalytical history. As mentioned earlier, it is to the work of Dillinger to which we can turn for the former – reading dragons as a cypher for socio-economic grievances.[61] Psychoanalytical history meanwhile, utilised within the study of witchcraft most notably by Lyndal Roper, is a particularly useful tool in understanding the mentalities behind witchcraft accusations.[62] Sources that deal with events as socially traumatic and divisive as

[60] Though now long outdated, important nineteenth century works on the witch-hunts include: W.G. Solan, *Geschichte der Hexenprozesse aus dem Quellen dargstellt* (Stuttgart, 1843); and J. Michelet, *La sorcière* (Paris, 1862). These works have since been overtaken by a surfeit of works including seminal treatise on gender like W. de Blecort, 'The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period' in *Gender and History* 12 (2000), pp. 287-309; and L. Apps and A. Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2003).

[61] J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period,' in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015) pp. 453-59; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in Lindeman M (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands*, (Berghahn, 2017) pp. 10-25.

[62] Roper utilises psychoanalytical techniques in several of her works, see in particular: L. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994); and L. Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (Yale, 2004). Other works concerning witchcraft that employ psychoanalytical approaches include: R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Contexts of European Witchcraft* (London, 1996); D. Willis, *Malevolent Nature: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York, 1995); and J. Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (Oxford, 1982).

the witch hunts are invariably ridden with a host of problems for the historian. The principal issue with accounts of and transcripts from witch-trial documents is the perspective from which they are written and the psychologies behind them. Though sometimes criticised, psychoanalytical history seeks to understand the mentalities of the witch trials and this thesis seeks to uncover and understand the reasoning behind the appearance of serpentine monsters in these tragic cases.[63]

Beyond treating serpents and dragons as monsters, we can also view them through the lens of animal history. While serpents were in fact real, for the people of early modern Europe dragons were also believed to exist. While they actually existed within a liminal space between reality and imagination, a space that became contested in the seventeenth century, as we shall see in the final chapter of this thesis, by and large they were an accepted part of the world that medieval and early modern people believed they lived in. Therefore, we must, to a degree, write about them as if they had been real animals. Indeed, the first book in the University of Wales's 'Medieval Animals' series is Thomas Honegger's *Introducing the Medieval Dragon* (2019) which treats them as such - an animal, albeit an often wonderous one, that to a Medieval audience was an intrinsic part of God's creation rather than a wholly imagined piece of fiction.[64] This thesis shall similarly seek to consider the monstrous serpentine creatures we will encounter in the ensuing chapters as a simple fact of the early modern world that contemporaries believed were an established family of related reptilian

[63] For more on the application of psychoanalysis and history, including its advantages and drawbacks see: S. Alexander and B. Taylor (eds.), *History and Psyche – Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past* (New York, 2012); L. Hunt, 'Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Historical Thought' in L. Cramer and S. Mazah (eds.), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 337-356; E. Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 2004); T. Kohut, 'Psychoanalysis as Psychohistory; or Why Psychotherapists Cannot Afford to Ignore Culture' in *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 31 (2003), pp. 225-236; and G. Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 2008).

[64] T. Honegger, *Introducing the Medieval Dragon* (Cardiff, 2019). Kathryn L. Smithies's work on the 'Medieval Ass' was released in 2020, Natalie Jayne Goodison's book on swans released in 2022, and Paul Wacker's monograph on foxes is due to release in 2023.

animal species. Like any other animal, how humans interact with the dragon is revelatory of the human condition, the non-human providing a counterpoint or mirror to the human experience.[65] This shall be especially true of the works of natural history we shall explore in Chapter 3.2 where dragons were catalogued alongside every other animal and where their very existence eventually became hotly contested.

This thesis, therefore, approaches serpents and dragons as creatures that were both very real to early modern people, and potent icons embodying a host of ideas, emotions, and mentalities born from centuries of development. Beyond using the approaches of the fields and methodologies described above, this thesis shall also engage with fields like that of the history of science and material culture where appropriate, uniting numerous disciplines to paint a picture of serpents and dragons in this particular time and place. It is perhaps testament to the powerful metamorphic qualities of these serpentine beasts that they should cross the boundaries between works of natural history, religious print propaganda, art, folklore, and more. This thesis, therefore, is a work of cultural history that synthesises these varied approaches and mediums to understand the values, fears, and hopes of German-speaking people across the social spectrum in this period. Serpents and dragons become a useful tool to examine cultural interpretations of historical experience, the manifestation of these monsters in a diverse source base ultimately revealing the ways in which artists and authors both shaped and experienced early modern German religious culture in the time of the Reformation.

[65] For more on the uses and application of animal history see: E. Fudge, *Perceiving Animals. Humans and Beasts in early modern English Culture* (New York, 1999); J.E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (London, 1994); P.F. Cuneo (ed.), *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (Abingdon, 2014); and N. Mennell, 'Animal Studies in the Early Modern Period' in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Literature* 31 (2021).

The structure of this thesis

The first section of the thesis (1.0) serves as an exploration of serpents and dragons as they appeared in late medieval and early modern German-religious culture. Using a varied source base that includes material such as heroic poetry, festival books, and alchemical manuscripts, this chapter builds a comprehensive picture of the conceptual shape that serpents and dragons took in the minds of the German-speaking people. This exploration considers more than just textual sources however, taking into account material culture such as firework devices in the shape of dragons, colour theory applied to coats of arms, and the very landscape of the German-speaking lands itself, this thesis also explores the sensory experiences early modern people would have had of these creatures. The image that it presents is one of a family of serpentine monsters whose positive traits are few, and who powerfully represent a host of feared and hated concepts. Where most studies of the dragon take Europe as a whole, this chapter will delve into the peculiarities of the German monstrous serpents who boasted cultural influences from many different spheres.

Split into three chapters, the second section of the thesis (2.0) analyses how and why serpents and dragons were incorporated into religious materials produced at the time of the Reformation with a strong focus on those created by Protestants. As demonstrated in the first section, serpents and dragons were more than just biblical symbols of evil; they embodied a host of other ideas due to their entrenchment in the German cultural psyche, making their employment by Reformers a multi-layered rhetorical device that appears in a variety of mediums. The first chapter in this section (2.1) examines serpents and dragons in Protestant iconography, drawing upon early Lutheran Bibles, pro-Reformation pamphlets, and Protestant material culture to demonstrate how the Reformers built upon the conceptual foundation of serpents and dragons to create monsters fit for their purposes. In particular, this chapter

explores the development of the 'pope-dragon' motif which has previously been identified by historians like Scribner but whose development over the sixteenth century has not been charted, nor the full depth of its iconographical meaning fully explored. The latter part of this chapter analyses the power that this icon, as well as the use of dragon-slaying narratives in Reformation imagery, had in defining Protestant identities – namely by defining what Protestantism was not.

The following chapter (2.2) concerns itself with the art of miracles, using the visually striking 'Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch*' as a case study to guide discussion on where and how serpents and dragons appeared in wonder literature. In a period of religious turmoil, and in the burgeoning age of the printing press, it is little surprise to see the publication of large amounts of material concerned with the discussion of a vast range of seemingly miraculous and providential signs, of which the appearance of monsters such as those discussed in the thesis was but one of many. The creatures we find here are instruments of terror, harbingers of the end of days, and dire messengers against sin that echo many of the same ideas and themes as the examples of the previous chapter – whether they simply fly ominously through the air or ravage the land like a plague devouring grain and erupting from corpses, they affirm the image and idea of the eschatological serpentine monster made powerful by the rhetoric of the Reformation.

The last chapter in this discussion of serpents, dragons, and the Reformation (2.3) looks at the role that gender played in depictions of dragons as well as the appearance of dragons in materials surrounding the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will start by looking at the gendered nature of serpents and dragons, and particularly their relationship with women, examining the gendering or sexualisation of serpents and dragons in textual mediums and iconography with a particular emphasis on images of St George and the

dragon. We will then move onto looking at the appearance of monstrous serpents in witch trials, particularly in the Protestant regions of Thuringia, Saxony, and parts of Northern Bavaria where records of witches and dragons consorting have survived, where the lines between demon and dragon become blurred, and women become either victims or willing accomplices to their sexual appetites. This chapter will ask why dragons were chosen by artists and accusers alike and examine what role gender played in the construction of dragon narratives (and indeed what role dragons played in gender narratives) that led to the death of innocent women. The dragons we find in trial records and artwork depicting witches are heavily influenced by the ideas seen in sources covered in the previous two chapters – particularly the use of the dragon as an apocalyptic symbol of fear and loathing.

The third and final section of the thesis (3.0) covers serpents and dragons beyond the Reformation and is divided into two chapters where these symbols are explored in contexts outside that of Protestantism. They question how Protestant and Catholic belief regarding serpents and dragons diverged, and how dialogue within the realms of natural history would transform the image of these creatures by the end of the seventeenth century. It is within these transnational dialogues that we see the beginning of a decline in belief of the dragon that would ultimately diminish the cultural power of the German mythical serpents and bring about a dramatic change in the monsters discussed in this thesis.

The first chapter in this section (3.1) looks at the Catholic response to serpents and dragons, both within the German-speaking lands and beyond in places like Italy, to give a sense of how specific and unique the permutation of the creatures we have seen in previous chapters are to the Protestant Reformation. Examining sources such as architecture, missionary reports, and the work of emblematists this thesis shows that creatures like dragons remained a terrifying force for Catholics, but not ones that held the same kind of apocalyptic

and ideologically antagonistic connotations as those imagined by Reformers. It will also briefly touch upon the dragons encountered by missionaries in non-European lands like China – exploring how Catholic observers fit these often radically physiologically and mythologically different dragons into their worldview.

The second chapter in this final section (3.2), and indeed the last chapter of the thesis, concerns itself with the natural history of the dragon – looking at the state of the dragon in texts that are not primarily religious in nature such as encyclopaedias, and academic dissertations. The creatures here are no less monstrous than their religiously charged counterparts, but they represent instead a mere animal rather than witch's accomplice or avatar of Antichrist. However, religion would eventually come to the aid of the dragon when challenges to its existence began to appear – its scriptural provenance providing a counterargument to the emergent sceptics convinced of the dragon's non-existence. People were reluctant to give up their dragons for a few sceptics, and historians of the dragon are often too quick to gloss over a continuity of belief in this period of transition, instead relying on grand narratives to neatly explain the 'death' of the dragon. This thesis, concerned as it is with religious culture, seeks to shine a light on the overlooked continued belief in the dragon which was often supported by the monster's scriptural provenance as an intrinsic part of God's creation. Dragons can be thought of as occupying a liminal space between reality and imagination throughout this thesis, and in this final chapter we explore sources where the boundaries of this space are challenged.

'Why serpents and dragons?', is the principal question of this thesis, asking why those who conjured such an image in religious discourse chose to do so and to what ends. Indeed, the very word 'monster' is derived from the Latin 'Moneo' which means to warn, advise, or remind; and this thesis seeks to uncover what exactly it is the people of the German-speaking

lands sought to warn against using the imagery of serpentine monsters. Serpents and dragons contain a host of different connotations – in different times and places, they take different shapes, emphasising some of these features while de-emphasising or even totally ignoring others. The Reformation created a very specific kind of dragon, solidifying a certain set of those connotations into a fearful shape that loomed large in the imaginations of people living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is through an exploration of the shape given to these monsters that we can uncover the anxieties of early modern German religious culture. Used as tools of hatred and fear, serpents and dragons became weapons wielded against both mighty pope and defenceless women, icons of all that the Reformation stood against that were in themselves a uniquely Protestant invention.

1.0 SERPENTS, DRAGONS, AND THE GERMAN PEOPLE

Adam Lonitzer (1528-1586), a botanist famed for his 1557 *Kreuterbuch* that covered all manner of natural phenomenon from plants and animals, to metals and precious stones, ordered all of the world's terrestrial creatures within a grand hierarchy of perceived importance.[1] Foremost of God's creatures was humanity who reigned over the animals of the earth, in the air, and in the water; followed by domesticated animals such as dogs, cats, beasts of burden, and livestock; then animals both real and mythical in order of their believed importance before finishing with the most detestable animals in the early modern world view: vermin, toads, scorpions, spiders, and the serpentine beasts - snakes, basilisks, and dragons.[2] Serpents and dragons generally held such unenviable positions not only in the early modern encyclopaedias like that of Lonitzer, but also in the minds of medieval people for many centuries and had been consistently associated with the most despicable of aspects imaginable to man.

Etymologically, the German word *drache* is based on the Latin *draco*, which is itself derived from the Greek *δράκων* meaning 'serpent' or 'dragon', that is traditionally related to the verb *δέρκομαι* meaning 'I see'.[3] Snakes do not have eyelids, possessing a layer of transparent skin called a brille instead, giving the impression that their eyes are always open – a likely inspiration behind the deadly gaze of the Basilisk and the dragon ceaselessly watching over its treasure hoard. Unsurprisingly therefore, serpents and dragons share many of the same connotations in the different European languages which derive some of their lexicon

[1] A. Lonitzer, *Kreuterbuch* (1577), p.580. Lonitzer's *Herbal* was a revision of Eucharius Rösslin's book of the same name. Lonitzer's version was very popular, being reprinted at least 11 times by the end of the 1500s and many times again in the subsequent two centuries.
[2] For more on Lonitzer's work see: K. Crowther-Heyck, 'Wonderful Secrets of Nature: Natural Knowledge and Religious Piety in Reformation Germany' in *Isis* 94, no. 2 (June 2003), pp. 253-73.
[3] B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces, A Guide to Animal Symbolism* (London, 1974), pp. 66-70.

from Latin. Both creatures generally represent evil, fear, and poison; and are commonly associated with a particular element - especially fire or water. Serpents do however also represent aspects of wisdom and treachery, while Dragons commonly represent chaos, greed, and the 'other'. These connotations have varied slightly over the centuries at certain times and places in different mythologies, yet the villainy of ancient monsters like Tiamat in the *Enûma Elish* are much the same as the enduring evil of the biblical Satan thousands of years later.

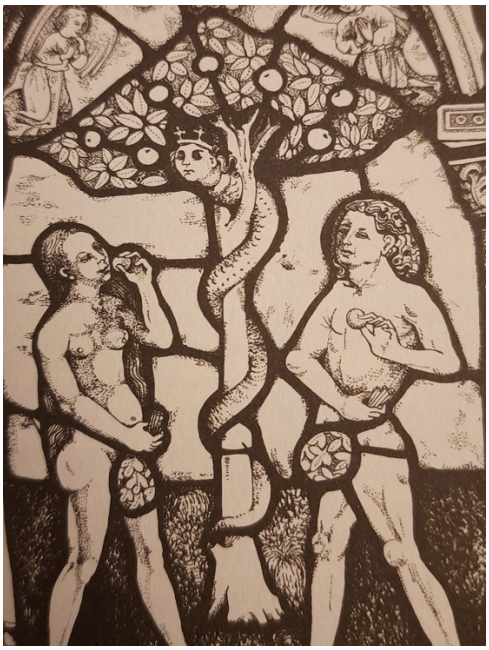
Serpents and dragons have existed in the symbolic language of Eurasian peoples since prehistoric times, having their origins in Proto-Indo-European cultures. Within the past two thousand years, nothing has affected these symbols quite as much as the emergence and development of Christianity in Europe that has solidified them as villainous creatures associated with the devil. Serpents, dragons, and dragon-like creatures (e.g., Tannin) appear multiple times in the Bible, with notable appearances in the Old Testament books of Genesis, Exodus, Isiah, Numbers, and Kings; and in the New Testament Gospels, Psalms, and the book of Revelation.[4] They are commonly depicted as creatures of evil and chaos, the most prominent in the Bible being Satan in the form of the serpent of Eden and the Great Red Dragon of the apocalypse, though a few, such as the snakes created from Moses and Aaron's staffs, are largely free from such connotations.

The most comprehensive text on the place of the serpent within the Bible is James H. Charlesworth's 2010 work: *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised*.[5] Charlesworth's book concerns itself with what he describes as the 'Christianisation' of the serpent, covering in depth the ancient Mediterranean semiotics of the

[4] The exact number of mentions varies somewhat by translation, though this does not diminish the fact that serpentine monsters in varying forms are commonly found or referenced throughout both the Old and New Testaments. See also: J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of the Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge, 1985).
[5] J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* (Yale, 2010).

serpent as a multi-layered symbol representing both good and evil to try and explain why Jesus himself is directly likened to a serpent in John 3:14-15.[6] Charlesworth draws upon a wide variety of biblical, historical, archaeological, and mythological sources to explain that snakes were just as much ancient symbols of wisdom as they were evil, hence why Jesus instructs the apostles to be 'as wise as serpents' in Matthew 10:16. Charlesworth does, however, only confine his study to the immediate biblical context of the ancient world and while he does cover that extensively, he only glosses over later developments in Christianity and does not dwell too long on the fell reputation of the serpent in later centuries.[7] Indeed, while reviewers are unsurprisingly kind with regards the breadth of material Charlesworth has accumulated, they consistently have many issues with his omissions or his own religious background, with one writing that: 'the author knows many things, but he does not always seem aware of his own blind spots or ideological distortions.'.[8] Charlesworth is useful with regards this thesis for he covers how the symbol of the serpent makes its way into the Christian cultural zeitgeist but he does not cover how in the following centuries the connotations of wisdom he describes fell away allowing the rise of more popular ideas of evil.

[6] Ibid., pp. 352-415.
[7] He does devote some space to John Calvin's (1509-1564) thoughts on Jesus: Ibid., pp. 23-24.
[8] N. Simms, 'J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* – A Review' in Journal of Religious History Vol. 36(2) (2012), pp. 309-11. See also: L.W. Davison, 'J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* – A Review' in Biblical Interpretation Vol. 21(2) (2013), pp. 136-8.



Detail of a stained-glass window depicting the Fall in Ulm Cathedral (c. 1420) (see appendix fig. 1).[9]

Indeed, the most popular recurring image of serpentine beasts in the Bible represented in Christian artwork is that of the serpent of Eden tempting Adam and Eve to original sin. In a way, this serpent also represents wisdom, after all it promises Eve the knowledge of good and evil, buts its role in the Fall of Man firmly places this serpent in the camp of evil as a deceiver and instigator of sin.[10] Besides the crucifixion, the Fall is one of the most represented Bible stories in Christian art. Indeed, for a medieval audience, the serpent of Eden was perhaps the most visible snake in their everyday lives as it adorned Church paintings and stained-glass windows and prefigures prominently in the creation myth of the Abrahamic faiths.[11] While less common, the Great Red Dragon of the apocalypse was also regularly depicted in Church artwork. In the Christian tradition Satan has the dubious honour of bookending the Bible, being present at both the early days of the earth and its last. Theologically, these serpentine

[9] Photo from: J. Hargreaves, *A Little History of Dragons* (Glastonbury, 2006), p. 27.
[10] N.M. Caciola, 'Serpents and Lies' in *Speculum* Vol. 93, No. 1 (2018), pp. 101-110.
[11] See for example a stained-glass window depicting Ulm Cathedral: *The Fall* (Ulm Cathedral, c. 1420) (see appendix fig. 1).

monsters were present at some of the most important moments of Christianity as figures of evil, their ancient connotations of wisdom falling aside in favour of darker concepts. In this thesis therefore, it is largely as monsters of sin and evil presented through the lens of Christianity that serpents and dragons shall appear – their nobler aspects shrouded by Christian theology.

Writing on the genesis of modern monsters, Tina Marie Boyer states that 'Monsters do not emerge out of a cultural void; they have a literary and cultural heritage'.[12] Indeed, the serpents and dragons of the Reformation period did not appear out of nowhere and have in this time and place a particularly strong presence that had developed over the centuries. It is the rich literary and cultural heritage that serpents and dragon enjoyed in the German-speaking lands that we shall now explore in depth in order to create an image of what they meant to the people who both created and consumed the sources this thesis shall concern itself with.

This chapter shall cover what these symbols meant to the people of the German-speaking lands in the late medieval and early modern period. First it will examine the dragon-slaying narrative, through the lens of St George and then through popular folklore – building a picture of the dragons that inhabited the collective unconscious of the German people. Serpents and dragons did however exist outside of oral and textual sources in the medieval and early modern world and in the second part of this chapter we shall see how they exerted a presence in the physical world that stimulated the senses and fired up the imaginations of those who personally experienced the dragon. Finally, this chapter will observe how serpents and dragons were used as symbols within natural philosophy – their conceptual connotations

[12] T.M. Boyer, 'The Anatomy of a Monster: The Case of Slender Man' in *Preternature Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural 2 (2) (2013), pp. 240-61.*

providing useful tools by which people could seek to understand the world they lived in. This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the place serpents and dragons held in early modern German religious culture, drawing on a range of different sources to offer a more wide-ranging view of these creatures in this time and place than has been presented before in the history of dragons.

How to slay a dragon – narratives in folklore and popular culture

The dragon-slaying narrative, and the dichotomy between the dragon and dragon-slayer, is the root of many stories concerning the beast. Indeed, it is rare to have a dragon appear without someone to vanquish it, for the traditional Indo-European narrative of the *Chaoskampf* requires that if we have the symbol of evil and chaos in the dragon, we must also have the dragon-slayer representing the forces of good and order.[13] Such stories traditionally follow the same structure: there is peace and order which is disrupted by the coming of the dragon, the chaos wrought by the dragon (which often involves the establishment of the dragon's prize – whether that be a princess or treasure) prompts the appearance of a dragon-slayer who then does battle with the monster and following the vanquishing of the creature, peace and order is resumed.[14] There were of course many dragon-slaying legends in the early modern German-speaking lands, some of these local stories will be discussed in the next part of this chapter and other pieces of folklore will be mentioned throughout the thesis, but for now we shall turn our attention to the most popular of these figures whose tales are broadly representative of the narrative form we see repeated again and again in this period. The two, great dragon-slayers familiar to the German-speaking people in this period were Sigurd (alternatively: Siegfried, or Seyfrid), and St George who can be seen as the classic archetypes of the dragon-slaying narrative.[15] The former will be discussed later in this chapter; for now we shall focus upon

[13] For more on the narrative of the *Chaoskampf* see: C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (London, 1995); J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European World* (Oxford, 2006); and M.L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007). See also: N.T. Burns, and C. Reagan (eds.), *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1976).

[14] Such stories would typically fall within the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index of folklore under ATU 300: 'The Dragon-Slayer'. While a flawed system, the ATU Index is a valuable starting point for many folklorists.

[15] When referring to this character, this thesis shall use whichever variant of the name as is appropriate to the version currently being discussed but shall otherwise default to Sigurd.

one of Europe's most celebrated patron saints who sets the dragon-slaying narrative within the Christian context of medieval and early modern society.

According to legend, St George was a roman soldier from Cappadocia, who joined the Praetorian Guard of Emperor Diocletian but was martyred in the year 303 for refusing to renounce his Christian faith. He is one of the most widely venerated saints in the history of the Christian faith, and as a saint of battle and protection he has been claimed by many people, organisations, and nation-states as a patron. His clash with the dragon of Silene codifies him as a martial saint – the dragon being the measure for his great heroics; and he is commonly depicted either in the act of slaying the beast or stood atop a dragon's remains.

The Golden Legend of St George and the dragon manifested in eleventh-century Georgia and became known to Europeans in the twelfth century.[16] According to the legend, the Libyan city of Silene was menaced by a dragon and, to keep it at bay, they sacrificed two sheep a day to the monster. This, however, proved insufficient, and they resorted to human sacrifice with the victim elected by the people. One day, the King's daughter was chosen to be given to the dragon, but George arrived to save her and slay the beast. The King offered George a great reward which the dragon-slayer refused for himself, instead giving it to the city's poor. The legend states that the people of Silene were so shocked by his feat of arms and his generosity that they converted to Christianity.

Beyond its taste for human flesh and general destructiveness, the dragon of Silene has no real characterisation – serving only to die upon George's lance Ascalon, which

[16] There is a surfeit of literature concerning St George and his legend, this thesis has drawn upon many of them, particularly the following: S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000); J.B. Aufhauser, *Des Drachenwunder des Heiligen Georg: nach der meist verbreiteten griechischen Rezension* (Leipzig, 1911); C. Walter, 'The Origins of the Cult of Saint George' in Revue des études Byzantines 53 (1995), pp. 295-326; P. Somville, 'Saint George et la Princesse' in *Cahiers Internationaux de Symbolisme* 86-87-88 (1997), pp. 89-96; P. Hogarth, 'St George: The Evolution of the Saint and his Dragon' in *History Today* Volume 30, Issue 4 (1980), pp. 17-22; and J. Fellows, 'St George as Romance Hero' in *Reading in Medieval Studies* 6 (1990), pp. 27-54.

subsequently prompts the citizens of Silene into conversion. Here, the dragon/dragon-slayer dichotomy goes beyond the triumph of good and order over that of evil and chaos. The Christian element of this dichotomy is shown in that the death of the dragon brings about a flourishing of faith, and George's triumph is attributed to his religiosity. Faith thus defeats fear, and while the dragon is not explicitly aligned with Satan in all versions of the legend, by positioning the monster in contrast with God's champion it does become a creature of unholy evil.[17]

The dragon-slayer narrative, as seen in the case of St George, is therefore one of opposition and contrast between the forces represented by the dragon and the dragon-slayer. Though typically demonstrating the battle between good and evil, other themes such as faith can be easily woven into the narrative, whether it is depicted in text or imagery. Similarly, the dragon can also stand in for more abstract concepts which need to be overcome, especially in Christian legends, typically representing a particular fear where the dragon-slayer conversely represents the courage or faith required to overcome the danger. Indeed, in another saintly example, St Margaret of Antioch uses the power of her faith to escape the stomach of Satan in the form of a dragon.[18] As patron of pregnant women – her escape from the body of the dragon is symbolic of a woman overcoming both the spiritual fears and physical rigours of childbirth through the power of their faith.[19]

[17] For more on the opposition between saints and Satan see: N. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, 1987).
[18] Other dragon-slaying saints include St Mercurialis, St Julian of Le Mans, St Veran, St Bienheuré, St Crescentinus, St Martha, St Quirinus of Malmedy, St Leonard of Noblac, St Phillip the Apostle, St Beatus of Lungern, St Theodore of Amasea (a soldier saint who fought a dragon several centuries before St George did), and St Michael the Archangel.
[19] For further reading on St Margaret of Antioch, who does not feature heavily in this thesis due to the themes of dragon-slaying in this period trending closer to the legend of St George, see the following articles: E. Robertson, 'The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in The Life of Saint Margaret' in R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and T. Szell (eds.), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1991), pp. 268-287; A.M. Fox, 'St Margaret, Boundaries of Sainthood: The Enclosed Female Body as Doctrine in *Seinte Margarete*' in *Medieval Perspectives*

Beyond the exploits of St George, there are several other great dragon-slayers who occupied prominent places in the German cultural zeitgeist. Foremost amongst these was Sigurd whose tale manifests in both Germanic and Nordic folklore in various differing forms over the centuries. Charting the story of Sigurd is no easy task, for both Germanic and Nordic oral traditions of the tale existed long before they were committed to writing and extant textual sources often differ depending on the version. The text most pertinent to this study is *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, but it is worth discussing some of its precursor and sister texts in order to understand where it differs and the subtle changes in the role of dragons in each. The many Nordic versions of the story generally conform to the following outline, though in varying levels of detail.[20]

The treasure hoard Sigurd wins originated from the accidental slaying of the dwarf Ótr by the trickster god Loki whilst he was travelling the realms with the gods Odin and Hœnir. Ótr's father Hreidmar demands payment from the gods as compensation for his son's death. He asks for an exorbitant amount of gold: that Ótr's body (transformed into the shape of otter, Loki having accidentally killed him for a pelt) be entirely stuffed with yellow gold and covered completely in red gold. Loki does this, yet one of Ótr's whiskers remains uncovered and Hreidmar demands it also be enveloped with gold. Loki complies but uses the cursed ring

8 (1993), pp. 133-142; and J. Price, 'The virgin and the Dragon: The Demonology of *Seinte Margarete*' in *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985), pp. 337-357.

[20] The account presented here is based upon the following iterations of the story: J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Völsungakviða en nýja' in C. Tolkien (ed.), *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrun* (London, 2009), pp. 57-180; J. Heinzle (ed.), *Das Nibelungenlied und die Klage. Nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen. Mittelhochdeutscher Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar.* (Berlin, 2013); W.T. Whobrey (ed. and trans.), *The Nibelungenlied: with The Klage* (Indianapolis, 2018); C. Edwards (ed. and trans.), *The Nibelungenlied: The Lay of the Nibelungs* (Oxford, 2010); J. Crawford (ed.), *The Saga of the Volsungs with the Saga of Ragnar Lothbrok* (Indianapolis, 2017); G.K. Anderson (ed.), *The Saga of the Volsungs – together with excerpts from the Nornagestsháttr and three chapters from the Prose Edda* (Newark, 1982); and E. Lienert, *Mittlehochdeutsche Heldenpik* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 30-71.

Andvaranaut to do so, and as a result Hreidmar is soon killed by one of his other sons: the greedy Fafnir who transforms into a dragon to protect his newfound wealth.

Hreidmar's third son Regin tells this story to his foster son Sigurd, son of King Sigmund, who resolves to kill Fafnir and take the hoard for himself. Sigurd hides in a pit and pierces Fafnir's underbelly with his sword Gram as the dragon leaves his cave.[21] Regin then resolves to kill Sigurd and claim the treasure for himself, but the young prince learns of the dwarf's plans when he tastes Fafnir's blood and understand the speech of birds who warn him of Regin's intent. Sigurd then kills Regin, ending Hreidmar's line, and claims the cursed treasure for himself.

Sigurd then wakes the Valkyrie Brunhild and promises to marry her, but reneges on his planned engagement when he arrives at the court of King Gjuki where he marries the princess Gudrun instead. Sigurd aids Gunnar, one of the king's sons, in tricking Brunhild into marrying the prince instead. Years later, in a dispute between Gudrun and Brunhild the latter discovers that she was tricked into marrying Gunnar and instigates a series of events leading to Gunnar's brother Guthorm killing Sigurd and Brunhild committing suicide. Gudrun swears revenge upon Gunnar for the death of Sigurd and some versions of the story has her marrying a foreign king before inviting her brothers to court where they are then killed.

The most complete and detailed version of this story comes from the *Völsunga saga*, a thirteenth century legendary Icelandic saga derived from the earlier Niflung cycle of poems from the Old Norse *Poetic Edda*.[22] Though it has long been surmised that the version of the

[21] Sigurd's sword Gram is also known as 'Balmung' in *The Nibelungenlied* and 'Nothung' in *Der Ring des Nibelungen.*

[22] For more on the evolution of the Nordic texts see: R.J. Glendinning, and H. Bessason (eds.), *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg, 1983); J.L. Byock (ed.), *Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer* (Berkeley, 1990); and C. Taranu, 'Who Was the Original Dragon-slayer of the Nibelung Cycle?' in *Viator* 46(2) (2015), pp. 23-40.

story found in the Norse tradition is the original, with the Germanic version being an offshoot, more recent scholarship has suggested that the addition of the Norse Gods and divine mythological aspect to the dragon and his treasure to the tale is a later, and solely Scandinavian, development.[23] So that rather than the Germanic version losing the divine aspect, it never had it in the first place. With this in mind, it becomes easier to understand the similar nature but vastly different narrative roles of the dragon in the versions of the text available today – instead of being direct evolutions of a particular character, they are different permutations of the same idea reflecting different cultural contexts.

The dragon of the sagas, the transformed Fafnir, takes a central part in the story as one of the central antagonists. His lust for gold sees him commit patricide, and he terrifies all those who live in the lands around his lair. He is the most human version of the template for the associations between dragons and greed that we see repeated throughout the centuries to modern times – being once mortal but twisted horribly by his greed. This metamorphic quality is found again in *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* but owing to its composition in sixteenth-century German, the dragon is a man cursed by the Christian devil rather than by the mythical treasures of the Norse Gods.[24]

The Germanic versions feature many such differences in execution but whilst in-keeping with the same themes and ideas as the Nordic one. Indeed, many of the same characters recur fulfilling the same roles but with different, more Germanic names (e.g., Gudrun becomes Kriemhild) and events, though not necessarily in the same order or given the same level of prominence, are very similar. Foremost of the Germanic versions of the story is the *Nibelungenlied*, an epic poem based on oral tradition that was composed around 1200 in

[23] E. Lienert, *Mittlehochdeutsche Heldenpik* (Berlin, 2015), p. 31.
[24] S. Holzbauer (ed.), *Das Lied Vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (Klagenfurt, 2001).

Middle High German, lost around 1500, and rediscovered in 1755 – after which it gained a prominent place in the German national consciousness.[25] Much of the *Nibelungenlied* is devoted to the relationship between the four principal characters of Siegfried, Gunther, Brünhilde, and Kriemhild; and the instance of the dragon and the hoard is of secondary importance rather than forming a substantial part of the narrative. Most notably for this study, while the dragon, or dragons, in the Germanic tradition are essentially Fafnir in all but name; they are not named as such due to the absence of the Norse deities Fafnir is associated with, and similarly the hoard is given different origins.

In fact, the dragon of the *Nibelungenlied* is somewhat incidental, and its slaying by Siegfried is simply a part of the hero's backstory rather than a huge event in the plot. The dragon here is merely a device by which Siegfried's invulnerability (an aspect that commonly appears in Germanic versions of the story, but not Nordic ones) is explained, rather than an active agent in the story.[26] This marginalisation of the dragon in favour of more inter-personal drama reframes Siegfried's struggle as one against mortal threats rather than that of the supernatural – and the embodiment of greed and treachery instead becomes Siegfried's killer Hagen, who murders the hero and steals his treasure. Despite the loss of the *Nibelungenlied* text circa. 1500, Siegfried's story lived on in the sixteenth century in oral tradition and surfaced in printed works that more heavily feature his draconic foe.

Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid was an Early New High German heroic ballad which, alongside its derivative and associated texts, was the principal form that the tale of Sigurd

[25] For more on the loss and rediscovery of the *Nibelungenlied* see: H. Bekker, *The Nibelungenlied: A Literary Analysis* (Toronto, 1971); V. Millet, *Germanische Heldendichtung im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 470-471; and E. Lienert, *Mittlehochdeutsche Heldenpik* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 30-71.
[26] T. Rebschloe, *Der Drache in der mittelalterlichen Literatur Europas* (Heidelberg, 2014). Later adaptations of the story, most famously Wagner's nineteenth century *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, place the dragon more firmly in the narrative by drawing upon the older Norse accounts.

took in early modern Germany in printed form.[27] Indeed, due to the fact that the *Nibelungenlied* was temporarily lost, historians like Victor Millet have suggested that *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* was the first permutation of the Sigurd story most early modern people would have experienced.[28] Elisabeth Lienart points out that though the verse is of relatively low quality, is riddled with inconstancies, and the simple narrative fails to cast a critical light on its protagonist, it was very popular, with prose versions printed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a theatrical version penned by Hans Sachs (1494-1576), and was translated into several other European languages.[29] The twelve extant printed editions, ranging from 1530-1642 though it is likely earlier editions once existed, feature rich illustrations and even allude to a sequel entitled 'Kriemhild's Wedding' where the princess takes her revenge on Seyfrid's killers.[30] Lienart attributes the success of the work to the uncomplicated nature of the adventure, accompanied by visually stimulating woodcuts, saying that: 'The colourful adventures without complicated value conflicts seem to have met the tastes of a wide audience. The brevity of the text and the catchy illustrations may also have contributed to this'.[31]

This text itself differs from the *Nibelungenlied* in more ways than simply being uncomplicated: it does not cover the events that lead to Seyfrid's death and omits the character of Brunhild, but it does preserve elements found in the Nordic versions that the *Nibelungenlied* discarded. Notably, it covers Seyfrid's upbringing before he becomes

[27] Other oral traditions that bear greater resemblance to the Nibelungenlied or the Völsunga saga may have circulated at this time, but they are far more difficult to track than their printed counterparts.
[28] V. Millet, *Germanische Heldendichtung im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 470-471.
[29] E. Lienert, *Mittlehochdeutsche Heldenpik* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 67-71. The story was translated into Czech in 1615, and also in Dutch in 1641.
[30] Ibid., pp. 67-71.
[31] Ibid. *'Die bunten Abenteuer ohne komplizierte Wertekonflikte scheinen den Geschmack eines breiten Publikums getroffen zu haben. Dazu beigetragen haben mögen auch die Kürze des Textes und die eingängigen Illustration'.*

involved with Kriemhild and focuses greatly upon his draconic foes.[32] Indeed, concerning dragons, *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* has many and all of them fall to our hero. The story begins as Seyfrid is sent into the forest by his foster father, a smith not too dissimilar to Regin. The smith means for Seyfrid to be killed by a dragon but instead he kills the beast and, wandering further into the forest, comes upon a clearing full of many more dragons which he traps and sets on fire, before smearing himself with their melted remains, thus making himself invulnerable.[33]

These dragons in the woods are far less of a threat to Seyfrid than Kriemhild's monstrous captor, whom we shall discuss shortly, and represent a terror of the natural world rather than a diabolic evil. Dragons were regarded as dangerous creatures that inhabited locales far from the civilised world, typically living in caves or forests and only venturing forth under miraculous circumstances or to terrorise those unfortunate enough to be in the creature's path. Though people believed them to be real animals one could encounter in the right places, this type of dragon also served as a cypher for the terrors and privations of the wild. Like the wilderness, animalistic dragons can be predatory and merciless, killing those who wander too far from the safety of their towns and villages without care for one's social status and only tameable by those strong in body and character. In this tale, our hero Seyfrid is such an individual who not only defeats these manifestations of nature's capricious terror but is rewarded in his domination of them receiving his invincible skin from the ruin of their bodies.

[32] *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* also includes some small details such as peculiarities of the main character's lineages that are different or absent in the *Nibelungenlied* but do appear the same or similar in the Sagas.
[33] Seyfrid was totally invulnerable to harm except for an area between his shoulder blades which he could not reach. Similarly, Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied* was not totally invulnerable due to a linden leaf falling on his back while he bathed in the dragon's blood, leaving one small area unprotected.

The main antagonist of the tale is also a dragon, albeit this one is a cursed man rather than a woodland beast. The dragon kidnaps the princess Kriemhild and takes her to his mountain lair of Trachenstein wherein lies the treasure of Nibelung where he reveals that he must spend five years with a woman by his side in order to become a man again but is thwarted when Seyfrid resolves to rescue Kriemhild.[34] Like Fafnir, this dragon is metamorphic and cursed – he represents the other, an emblem of fear that crosses the line between man and beast in a disturbing manner, particularly with regards his sexual advances on Kriemhild and the demonic nature of his curse.

Serpents and dragons are often connected to metamorphic qualities in folklore. The Scandinavian 'King Lindworm' story, the French fairy tale 'The Green Serpent' (itself a permutation of the story of Eros and Psyche), and 'The Enchanted Snake' story from Italy all involve men cursed to live in the shape of a monstrous serpent, though through the love of their brides or bride-to-be they shed their skin and become fully human.[35] The cursed dragon of *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* appears almost a gross revision of the tale, kidnapping his bride and though he does not mistreat her, he does promise to take her virginity when his curse is over and take her to hell. The dragon is not portrayed sympathetically here; his stealing away of Kriemhild, and draconic curse speaks more to the horrific serpentine transformations of thieves in the seventh bolgia of Dante's *Inferno*, or the monstrous change of the greedy king Thórir into a dragon in the *Saga of the Gold-Thórir* - his draconic form

[34] S. Holzbauer (ed.), *Das Lied Vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (Klagenfurt, 2001), pp. 111-163.
[35] This author consulted the following versions of the 'King Lindworm', 'The Green Serpent', and 'The Enchanted Snake' tales respectively: S. Grundtvig, *Gamle danske minder i folkemunde: folkeæventyr, folkviser* (Copenhagen, 1854), pp. 172-180; R. Sale, *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E.B. White* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 53-57; and E. Dulac, *Edmund Dulac's Fairy-Book: Fairy Tales of the Allied Nations* (New York, 1916), pp. 31-44. These stories fall within several categories on the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index such as ATU 425A (the search for a lost husband), and ATU 433B (maidens disenchanting serpentine husbands).

being a mirror to his nature.[36] As we shall see throughout this thesis, the metamorphic qualities of serpents and dragons are often used to create hybrid creatures whose monstrous nature is reflected in their monstrous form.

This story depicts two different kinds of dragons that hold related but distinct places in the German cultural imagination. We have both the dragons which appear as little more than beasts which Seyfrid kills *en masse* in the opening of the tale, and the more magical cursed man who serves as the main antagonist. Both dragons as regular, if foul, beasts, and dragons representing supernatural terror existed alongside one another in the early modern period, holding similar connotations of greed and evil yet the former tended to appear more readily in works on natural history, as we shall see in Chapter 3.2, while the latter appeared more in the apocalyptically charged works of Protestant artists explored in Chapter 2.1. Both, however, could be easily found in the wonder literature and witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as examined in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3 respectively, where the bestial dragon represents more a force of nature that simply is a part of God's creation, and more supernatural dragons are presented as agents of Satan.

As well as being evil, the dragons we find in various permutations of the Sigurd legend are notoriously avaricious. The dragons fought by different versions of Sigurd are usually inescapably tied to treasure that comes in the form of both material wealth and a maiden for a bride. Whilst in the possession of the dragon both gold and woman are considered in the narrative to be greedily horded, and this association between dragons and accumulated wealth of any kind was one of their key traits in the early modern world. Antisocial economic activity expressed in any way engendered association with a dragon not

[36] D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* trans. R. Kirkpatrick (London, 2012), Canto 24; and M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 108-10.

just the ability of someone to surround themselves with golden trinkets. The papal dragons of Chapter 2.1 being a straightforward equation between the treasure horde of Fafnirian dragons and the financial wealth of the Catholic Church, while the alleged witches of Chapter 2.3 found themselves accused of supernaturally procuring the services of dragons simply for their believed surplus of dairy goods or parsimonious nature.[37] Indeed, Melchior Goldast von Haiminsfeld (c.1576-1635) wrote in a posthumously published work that: 'The common man usually says that people who become rich swiftly and without any problems have a dragon... that helps them win honour and riches'.[38] Dragons were inextricably linked to wealth, and due to their evil nature this unsurprisingly was interpreted by the people of medieval and early modern Christendom as the sin of greed.

Minor elements of draconic lore can also be seen in other stories from Germanic folklore. Amongst the collection of traditional German folk tales collected by the brothers Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm in the early nineteenth century we see for example stories like 'The White Snake' where we find a serpent whose flesh grants the ability to understand birds when consumed that is not unlike when Sigurd drinks Fafnir's blood and learns of Regin's plot to kill him.[39] While this is not the most prominent feature of serpents and their monstrous cousins, it does demonstrate a level of shared common beliefs about the creatures across different stories and pieces of folklore which we can see in several more legends from the German-speaking lands we shall discuss throughout this thesis.

[37] See chapter 2.3 as well as: N. Hayes, 'Negativizing Nurture and Demonizing Domesticity: The Witch Construct in Early Modern Germany' in N.J. Miller and N. Yavneh (eds.), *Maternal Measures* (London, 2000), pp. 172-192; and L. Jackson, 'Witches, Wives and Mothers' in D. Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2nd Edition) (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 311-323.
[38] M. Goldast von Haiminsfeld, *Rechtliches Bedenken von Confiscation der Zauberer und HexenGüther* (Bremen, 1661), p. 70.
[39] J. Grimm and W. Grimm, *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* trans. M. Hunt (San Diego, 2011), pp. 63-66.

The dragons of *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* and its related tales perfectly encompass the dragons understood by the early modern German-speaking peoples. They were evil, greedy, prone to kidnapping women, often influenced by the devil, terrifying, and only capable of being defeated by a hero. Seyfrid, however, was not alone in the early modern period. German folklore on both local and national levels contained a host of dragon-slayers who may not have achieved Sigurd's great international renown for monster-slaying but were well known within their own cultural contexts. Some simply added dragon-slaying to their long list of other adventures and accolades, whereas others were the focus of tragic local legend.[40] Either way, they demonstrate a great proliferation of dragon-slaying narratives in the popular culture of the German-speaking people in the medieval and early modern periods that affirms the dragon's place as a widely recognised symbol of fear and evil.

Dietrich von Bern, a fictional legendary afterlife of King Theodoric the Great (454-526 AD), was a mighty hero of early modern German-speaking culture appearing in heroic poetry, *Heldenbücher*, ballads, and other pieces of popular folklore.[41] Larger than life and weathering criticism from contemporary scholars and the church, Dietrich strode through popular culture as a legend unparalleled in their feats.[42] The number of heroic deeds Dietrich is thought to have achieved across various mediums is vast, amongst them however is the slaying of dragons. Indeed, in *The Virginal*, often also referred to as *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt* or *Dietrich und seine Gesellen*, a young Dietrich embarks upon his first quest to save the dwarf queen Virginal.[43] Along the way he fights heathen armies, giants, and dragons which he defeats with the aid of his band of knights. These dragons are very much like the animalistic

[40] For local legends see later in this chapter, particularly with regards local dragon-slayers like the giant Haymon. M. Forcher, *Der Riese Haymon oder Die wahre Geschichte, wie ein frommer Adelsherr zum Drachentöter und Klostergründer und nach Jahrhunderten zum Namenspatron für einen Literaturverlag wird* (Innsbruck, 2007).
[41] J. Heinzle, *Einführung in die mittlehochdeutsche Dietrichepik* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 4-21.
[42] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[43] E. Lienert, E. Pontini, and K. Schumacher (eds.), *Virginal. Goldemar* (Berlin, 2017).

hordes of monsters fought by Seyfrid in the first part of *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* rather than being a singular supernatural threat. They are there simply to serve as suitably powerful and terrifying creatures for our hero to slay on his way to his goal, instead of being central antagonists. Dietrich does not have a special relationship with the dragon as a specific kind of monster, but the inclusion of some of these creatures amongst the corpus of his tales speaks to their popularity as vile beasts to be struck down by our protagonists. Indeed, the slaying of a dragon is practically a pre-requisite for being a hero in the stories of popular culture in the early modern German-speaking lands with even less popular tales like *Kudrun* featuring a dragon slaying incident early on in its narrative.[44] A hero must overcome a great obstacle in their adventures and the ferocious dragon serves as a well-recognised and simple cypher for evil to include in such tales.

As well as encountering dragons in his own legends, Dietrich also appears in some versions of the Sigurd story; making a brief cameo in *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* and appearing under the name 'Thiodrek' in the *Poetic Edda*.[45] Dietrich even fights a version of Sigurd in *Rosengarten zu Worms*, a thirteenth-century Middle High German text later reprinted in several sixteenth-century Heldenbuch, where no dragons are present but the Siegfried of this tale already possesses his dragon-blood hardened skin – the author assuming that the readers of *Rosengarten zu Worms* would already be familiar with some version of that legend, attesting to its popularity.[46] These stories featuring dragons and their slayers were not just individual legends, but part of a mutually reinforcing network of tales that promoted certain ideas and concepts within the medieval and early modern German-speaking cultural

[44] U. Störmer-Caysa (ed.), *Kudrun: Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch* (Stuttgart, 2010).
[45] V. Millet, *Germanische Heldendichtung im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 305. See *Guðrúnarkviða III* ('The Third Lay of Gudrun') in particular.
[46] *Rozengarten zu Worms* is understood by literary historians to be a meta-commentary on the German heroic tradition. See: M. Curschmann, 'Dichtung über Heldendichtung: Bemerkungen zur Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts' in *Akten des V. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 17-21.

zeitgeist. The concept of the dragon as a monstrous foe of heroes, a representative of evil found in the depths of nature, and if not always the ones responsible for kidnapping princesses, then at least being involved in the same narrative, is cemented in the tangle of tales that involve them.

The fact that these were well known stories, bridging social divides and being widespread across the German-speaking lands in this period, meant that the dragon was an instantly recognisable symbol. Indeed, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and other Reformation luminaries may have disparaged the tales of Dietrich von Bern as being nothing but a frivolous 'fable', but that did not stop him and others from using the legendary figure in their sermons to appeal to the masses.[47] As a result of the widespread popularity of these stories dragons became firmly entrenched in the German cultural imagination and, as we shall see throughout the rest of this thesis, Protestant authors and artists were more than happy to use them in a range of different ideological applications that required an easily recognisable figure of evil.

There are too many fantastical dragon-slaying stories circulating in early modern Germany to recount in full here, permutations of the Sigurd legend and the tales of Dietrich von Bern and his band of adventurers (who often have their own traditions like that of Hildebrand) were simply amongst the most popular.[48] Most of them do however follow the same kind of narrative and present the same manner of dragon that we shall see throughout this thesis. One notable exception worth mentioning however is the Middle High German heroic epic *Ortnit* which follows the eponymous protagonist on a quest that ultimately ends in

[47] J.L. Flood, 'Theologi et Gigantes' in *The Modern Language Review* Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 1967), pp. 654-660.
[48] For more on the relative popularity of different heroic tales at this time see: E. Lienert, *Mittlehochdeutsche Heldenpik* (Berlin, 2015).

a fatal confrontation with dragons rather than a triumphant one. Written c.1230 in the Medieval period and possessing uncertain origins, *Ortnit* was a popular heroic poem that continued to be rewritten and reworked in various formats into the early seventeenth century where it circulated alongside the tales of other dragon slayers like Sigurd and Dietrich von Bern.[49] The story follows Ortnit, the King of Lombardy, who greatly desires the daughter of a heathen king. He steals her away with the help of the dwarf Alberich and his uncle Ilyas, the King of Russia, before baptising and marrying her. Ortnit's new father-in-law rages at the loss of his daughter and sends two dragon eggs to the happy new couple as a false sign of reconciliation. The eggs hatch and the dragons born from them soon grow large, devastating Ortnit's kingdom and exacting heathen revenge on the King of Lombardy. After many knights fail to slay the beasts, Ortnit goes himself but is happened upon by them as he sleeps and is summarily eaten.[50] He would be avenged in another medieval heroic poem by its eponymous protagonist Wolfdietrich, but within his own story Ortnit ultimately fails and the scourge upon his land is not defeated.[51] This tale, while drawing upon classic elements of folklore like the 'bride-quest' and 'dragon-slayer' narratives, plays with them by having the dragons emerge as a heathen punishment for Ortnit's stealing of the princess, and while he does baptise her, Ortnit's virtue is not sufficient to overcome the monsters. In a way, the dragon-slaying narrative is inverted: the would-be dragon slayer is the one who steals a princess, it is a dragon who kills the man that has done the kidnapping, and Ortnit's tale ends not with a restoration of peace but rather a continuation of the dragon's devastation of the realm.

[49] Ibid., pp. 150-162.
[50] Multiple *Ortnit* manuscripts survive, each with variations and sometimes as part of the *Wolfendietrich* story, though Ortnit himself dies to the dragons in all extant versions. See: W. Kofler (ed.), *Ortnit und Wolfdietrich D. Krtitischer Text nach Ms. Carm. 2 der Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main* (Stuttgart, 2001); and W. Kofler (ed.), *Ortnit und Wolfendietrich A* (Stuttgart, 2009).
[51] W. Kofler (ed.), *Ortnit und Wolfendietrich A* (Stuttgart, 2009); and J.W. Thomas (trans. and ed.), *Ortnit and Wolfdietrich: Two Medieval Romances* (New York, 1986).

While this may seem the odd-story-out of those we have discussed in this chapter, it serves as a reminder that popular tales could just as easily play with the dragon-slaying narrative as they could play it straight. While uncommon for this period, tropes could be, and indeed were, flexed in various ways by certain authors to create atypical dynamics and unique stories. However, this only works if the audience has some experience and expectation with other stories, like that of Sigurd for example, where the dragon-slaying narrative conforms to expectations and the dragons do not eat the hero. While the narrative surrounding the dragons and their place in the story are changed somewhat in *Ortnit*, the dragons themselves otherwise remain monsters like those faced by other heroes – being large scaly abominations who ravage the land and necessitate slaying, even if the hero of this particular tale is not quite up for the challenge. Just because the dragons manage to triumph in this story, they are no less creatures of terror and evil. A dragon remains a dragon.

Werner Hoffman refers to *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* as effectively escapist fiction for the people of the early modern German-speaking lands, and to a degree the stories of dragon slaying that this thesis refers to were more than entertainment – they were a source of moral comfort.[52] Amidst the worldly and spiritual chaos of the early modern European Wars of Religion, it must have been comforting to read stories where evil is defeated, good triumphs, and usually nothing about that narrative is morally problematized. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Martin Arnold contends that dragons are a manifestation of social anxieties, and the monsters of these stories could certainly be read as expressions of the fears held by the German people of this time.[53] This was, after all, a period of history wracked with political instability, soteriological upheavals, year after year of warfare and rebellion, new

[52] W. Hoffmann, *Mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 98-100.
[53] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018).

plagues, and natural disasters. Monsters that devastate the landscape and torment the innocent in servitude to the forces of evil while hoarding wealth and kidnapping royalty wouldn't seem all too far from the day to day lived reality of many people in early modern Europe. It is rare to sympathise with a dragon who embodies these very real fears, but fortunately for the audience of these stories the body of the dragon exists only to be slain and, in their death, evil comes to an end. Dragons were terrifying creatures but the certainty of their demise, as fulfilled in the dragon-slaying narrative, is an affirmation of hope in times of fear.

Experiencing the monster – dragons and the senses

Though the creatures that this thesis primarily deals with are considered entirely fictional today, that is not to say that early modern people did not have sensory experiences of dragons that made their reinterpretations of them all the more vibrant. The alleged physical ephemera of dragons is one such source of these experiences; stone, scale, flesh, and bone all available to see and touch while the landscape itself bore the marks of these monsters passing through, and the artisans of the German-speaking lands bedecked their buildings with serpentine effigies for all to see. These relics however were not as powerful as instances in entertainment where dragons gained incredible physicality by looming large in carnival floats and setting the senses alight as firework devices that blazed ferociously with a potent cocktail of light, sound, and smell. At the end of this section, we shall see representations of monsters upon coats of arms that strutted proudly in their full panoply – riots of colour tied irrevocably to raw emotions and identity. It is in these instances that dragons extended a physical presence outside of the liminal space between imagination and reality they usually reside. This is how these monsters came to be truly experienced, and how they managed to entrench themselves so strongly into the German-speaking cultural psyche.

For a creature that does not exist, dragons still managed to possess examples of physical ephemera in the early modern German-speaking lands. Some of these were obvious frauds like the disfigured skates and rays which sailors attempted to pass off as small dragons called Jenny Haviners. These diminutive draconic deceptions were known to be false by many scholars of the day, as we shall see in Chapter 3.2, but that did not prevent many from

believing them to be genuine.[54] Larger specimens were also constructed by enterprising taxidermists, the most famous of which was the 'Hamburg Hydra' – a bizarre effigy of a draconic monster that utilised pieces of snake and weasel stitched together to form a many-headed creature.[55]

Faked specimens were not however the only physical traces of dragons that people could experience. Smaller pieces of dragon also circulated through the German-speaking lands such as the smoked tongue of the dragon killed by the giant Haymon that was reportedly sent from the antiquarian Johannes Fuchsmagen (1469-1510) to the relic collector Florian Waldauf von Waldenstein (1450-1510), and a part of a swordfish masquerading as the same dragon's tongue can still be seen today at the Tyrolean State Museum.[56] In addition, as we shall see in Chapter 3.2, items like dragon stones either formed from the monster's blood or retrieved from their head also existed.[57] These objects have uncertain origins, though Dorothy Wyckoff notes in her translation of Albertus Magnus's (c.1200-1280) *De Mineralibus* that Albertus's own piece of 'Draconite' is likely a fossil ammonite whose appearance would resemble that of a tightly coiled snake.[58] This association between ammonites and dragon stones would continue into the eighteenth century where farmers in the Harz mountains would use the stones to help cows produce plentiful milk if they had stopped doing so.[59] Such items would have been an unusual rarity in the early modern period, and their serpentine appearance

[54] C. Gessner, *Historia animalium* Vol. 4 (Zurich, 1558), p. 945. See also: E.W. Gudger, 'Jenny Hanivers, Dragons and Basilisks in the Old Natural History Books and in Modern Times' in *The Scientific Monthly* 38 (6) (1934), pp. 511-23.
[55] C. Linnaeus, *Systema naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per classes, ordines genera, & species* (Leiden, 1735), p. 11.
[56] S. Ruf, 'Dr. Johannes Fuchsmagen, 1469-1510' in *Zeitschrift des Ferdinandeums* 3rd ser. No. 21 (1877), pp. 108-118; and C.S. Wood, 'Maximillian I as Archaeologist' in *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005), pp. 1128-1174.
[57] An example of a stone formed from dragon's blood can be found in R. Cysat, *Collectanea Chronica und Denkwürdige Sachen Pro Chronica Lucernensi et Helvetiae* Vol. 2, ed. J. Schmid (Luzern, 1969), pp. 560-584.
[58] D. Wyckoff (ed. and trans.), *The Book of Minerals* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 86-87.
[59] G.H. Behrens, *Hercynia Curiosa oder Curiöser Hartz-Wald* (Nordhausen, 1703); A. Van der Geer, and M, Dermitzakis, 'Fossils in pharmacy: from 'snak eggs' to 'Saint's bones'; an overview.' in *Hellenic Journal of Geosciences* 45 (2008), pp. 323-332.

would have helped to form connections with wonderous creatures like the dragon. These could be touched and held by their owner, giving the dragon an unusual yet very real anchor in reality as those who possessed such stones believed themselves to be holding an actual piece of the monster.

These specimens and stones however were largely the purview of the academic or the aristocratic who could afford such curiosities. More public were the bones of dragons displayed in churches. Some of the most famous examples in Europe which can be seen today include the dragon bones hanging at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, the Church of Santa Maria e San Donato in Murano houses relics looted from the Byzantines including the bones of a dragon allegedly slain by St Donatus of Euroea, and the Cathedral of San Leucio in Atessa which has a rib bone allegedly belonging to a dragon. In the early modern German-speaking lands, whale bones were a not uncommon sight in churches with many of them thought to belong to giants or dragons, such as a rib bone found at St Nikolaikirche in Jüterbog which had been found underground and presumed to belong to a huge creature.[60] Comprehensive studies on these bones have been done by Klaus Barthelmess and Nicolas Redman who have reported approximately two hundred examples from across Europe, though many of those they cite no longer exist today – a number of them falling victim to the iconoclasms of the Reformation, others existing only mysteriously in second-hand accounts, and a few simply lost over the centuries.[61] Their display in churches, whether presented as whale bones or as the bones of fantastic beasts, was a very public platform in which people could witness for themselves the remains of wonderous megafauna that occupied the same world as they did.

[60] N. Redman, *Whales' Bones of Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Switzerland* (Teddington, 2009), p.23
[61] K. Barthelmess, *Die Walknochen der Nordseeinsel Borkum: Zur Kulturgeschichte der bedeutsamen Denkmäler aus der Blütezeit des europäischen Arktiswalfangs mit Überlegungen zu ihrer Konservierung* (Norderstedt, 2008); and N. Redman, *Whales' Bones of Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Switzerland* (Teddington, 2009).

These bones resonated on a very local level, usually being associated with the towns and cities they were situated in – making the dragon feel not only very real, but very close as well.



The crocodile skull in Karlštejn Castle (see appendix fig.2).[62]

More than merely ribs or fragments of bone, an entire dragon's skull could be found in Karlštejn Castle, Bohemia within the Chapel of the Holy Cross that had been constructed by Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378) and sported interior decoration particularly associated with the dragon slaying saints: St Michael, St Margaret, and St George.[63] This artefact has since been identified as a crocodile skull (specifically that of a Nile crocodile, see appendix fig.2), but for centuries this devotional object was believed to be perhaps the most impressive remains of a dragon – being the very head of a monster.[64] It was physical evidence not just of the dragon's existence, but also that such foul monsters, servants and proxies of the devil, could be defeated by the virtuous.

[62] Image from: A. Pluskowski, 'The Dragon's Skull: How Can Zooarchaelogists Contribute to Our Understanding of Otherness in the Middle Ages' in F. de Asís García García, M.A.W. Vadillo, M.V.C. Picaza (eds.), *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages, Perspectives across Disciplines* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 109-124 (see appendix fig.2).
[63] A. Pluskowski, 'The Dragon's Skull: How Can Zooarchaelogists Contribute to Our Understanding of Otherness in the Middle Ages' in F. de Asís García García, M.A.W. Vadillo, M.V.C. Picaza (eds.), *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages, Perspectives across Disciplines* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 109-124.
[64] Dragons and crocodiles have long been connected with one another in European natural philosophy and art. For more see: L. Lippincott, 'The Unnatural History of Dragons' in *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 77/334 (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 2-24.

For those who did see them, these public displays of draconic remains were impressive physical remnants of a monster – giving the observer a sense of their titanic size, a place for dragons within their own local history, and an affirmation of their religious beliefs that symbols of evil like the dragon could be defeated. Similarly, certain locations within the German-speaking lands gave people an environment associated with the dragon which they could experience for themselves. Most famous is the great mound known as Drachenfels in the Siebengebirge uplands (not to be confused with the ruined medieval hill castle also named Drachenfels in the Wasgau region) that is often claimed to be the site of Sigurd's struggle against Fafnir which continues to attract tourists to this day due to its alleged connections to the *Nibelungenlied*.[65] Lesser-known natural features include the Blitzkuhle canyon in Recklinghausen where a dragon was said to eat the locals and consume their very souls. One day the devil challenged the dragon for these souls and while the monster put up a fight Satan eventually threw a boulder at the dragon's head and the blood flowing from the wound became the river Marpe.[66] The localisation of well-known stories and the existence of unique, highly local stories concerning dragons helped to tie dragons into the day-to-day reality of people living there and gave the dragon much greater symbolic power within their shared cultural imagination.

Local legends that place dragons within the vicinity of certain towns, villages, or natural features abound in the German-speaking lands and a complete survey of which would form the basis of a whole monograph in itself. Many of them follow the standard tropes of the dragon slaying narrative with a chaos-bringing dragon being slain by a virtuous hero, though

[65] For more on the cultural history and legends surrounding Drachenfels see: D. Arens, *Kulturführer Drachenfels* (Rheinbach, 2015).
[66] For legends on the rivers of Germany see: D. Sondermann, *Emschersagen – Von der Mündung bis zur Quelle* (Bottrop, 2006).

the nature of these heroes is often somewhat more mundane than the scions of ancient royal houses or pious saints we have seen previously in this chapter. For instance, in the story of the 'Lindwurm of Worms', found in a collection of miraculous stories compiled by Juspa Schammes (1604-1678) titled *Maase Nissim* (written c.1670 and published posthumously in 1696), we see a serpentine monster demanding tribute from the eponymous city and the citizens creating a lottery system to pick who gets fed to the monster.[67] As in the Golden Legend of St George, a member of the local royalty was eventually chosen – in this case the queen. However, rather than a saint coming to her aid it was instead a local blacksmith who had fashioned a suit of bladed armour who offered to sacrifice himself in her place on the condition that should he slay the dragon he will marry her and become king. He is successful and apocryphally the key on the coat of arms of Worms is meant to represent the new king's former profession. Not only do the wilds beyond the city walls of Worms become the lands of roaming local dragons in this tale, but also our hero is someone more relatable to many people living in the city – giving the tale an extra layer of familiarity to the audience.

As well as dragon slaying legends that take inspiration from that of St George like the 'Lindwurm of Worms', there are many localised versions of the St George story such as the 'Lindwum von Mansfeld' and the 'Lindwurm von Immendorf', and both a gorge near Eisenach and an island on the river Iller purport to be the actual location of St George's slaying of the dragon, in the latter case the island itself being the dragon turned to stone by the saint.[68] In addition to appropriating St George, many towns and cities throughout the Holy

[67] J. Schammes, *Maase Nissim* (Amsterdam, 1696). See also: D.P. Bell, 'Worms and the Jews. Jews, Magic, and Community in Seventeenth-Century Worms' in K.A. Edwards (ed.), *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits. Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville, 2002), pp. 93-118.
[68] E. Sommer, *Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Sachsen und Thüringen* (Halle, 1846), pp. 80-81; F. Panzer, *Bayerische Sagen und Bräuche: Beitrag zur Deutschen Mythologie* Vol. 2 (1855), p. 77; R. Hohberg, *Von Drachen, Hexen und verwunschenen Seelen* (Munich, 2012), p. 100; and H. Uhlig, *Sankt Mang. Geschichte einer Allgäuer Geminde* (Kempten, 1955).

Roman Empire also attribute their founding to the slaying of dragons by lesser-known heroes in local legends. The city of Geldern was allegedly founded when local nobles Wichard and Lupold von Pont slew a dragon beneath a medlar tree in c.878, the Schöten district of Apolda is allegedly built upon a swamp where a squire named Veit killed a Lindworm, and as we shall discuss later, the city of Klagenfurt was founded when a dragon was slain in the swamps there.[69] The Westphalian Barons and Counts von Spiegel zum Desenberg (unrelated to the Saxon Spiegel noble house) allege to be descended from a dragon slayer, their coat of arms representing the three mirrored shield he used to trick and kill a dragon, thereafter, constructing the castle Desenberg where the monster was slain.[70] In each of these cases the very land beneath the feet of people living in these places is a draconic environment where these monsters once trod and the buildings around them are a direct result of a dragon's death.

The County of Tyrol provides us with two folkloric dragon slayers who are firmly rooted in specific locales, albeit in this instance they are not normal men but giants. These Tyrolian giants, Haymon and Grimm, both became heroes of their local communities for their feats against dragons. Haymon slew a dragon noted for its gold-hoarding that lived on the hill Bergisel and took its tongue as a trophy of the deed, shortly thereafter being petitioned by the local populace to become their ruler and protector.[71] The removal of the dragon's tongue is symbolic of the destruction of the dragon's power; indeed, many illustrations of St George depict the saint aiming for the dragon's head where its fiery maw is situated.[72] The giant

[69] J.G. Vos, 'De zilveren mispelbloemen in het wapen van Doetinchem' in *Jaarboak Achterhoek en Liemers Zutphen* 5 (1982), pp. 47-48.
[70] C. Kneppe, 'Bühne in alten Karten' in K. Hengst, et al. (eds.), *Piun-Bühne. Kulturgeschichte eines Dorfes in Ostwestfalen. Festschrist zur 1100-Jahrfeier des Ortes Bühne* (Paderborn, 1990), pp. 80-98; and W. Honselmann, 'Die Adelsfamilie von Spiegel zu Bühne' in K. Hengst, et al. (ed.), *Piun-Bühne. Kulturgeschichte eines Dorfes in Ostwestfalen. Festschrist zur 1100-Jahrfeier des Ortes Bühne* (Paderborn, 1990), pp. 191-232.
[71] M. Forcher, *Der Riese Haymon oder Die wahre Geschichte, wie ein frommer Adelsherr zum Drachentöter und Klostergründer und nach Jahrhunderten zum Namenspatron für einen Literaturverlag wird* (Innsbruck, 2007).
[72] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178.

Grimm fought his dragon at Pfatten, where the monster had been destroying all life with its pestilential breath, taking the dragon's corpse as payment of the deed from the locals.[73] What he did with the remains of his kill is unknown, but the legend could hint at the fact it was believed a dragon's body possessed medicinal and miraculous properties, as we have seen with Sigurd's gifts from the dragon's blood and we shall discuss further in Chapter 3.2.[74] Beyond Tyrol, we find another giant dragon-slayer in Liechtenstein, the giant of Guflina, who crushed a dragon that had been terrorising miners and farmers.[75] In all these examples a specific location is given for the giant slaying, in the case of Haymon we even get the name of the very hill of the battle, giving people direct ties between dragons and the landscapes they inhabited.

Other natural environments associated with dragons included caves that were often filled with dragon bones, though instead of whales these belonged to bears. Notable sites that still carry interest to modern palaeologists include the Drachenloch Cave in the canton of St Gallen, Switzerland; the Drachenhöhle Cave at Mixnitz in Styria, Austria; and Važecká jaskyna Cave near Važec, Slovakia.[76] Scholars who excavated these bear bones mistakenly identified them as belonging to dragons, as evidenced in sketches from Johannes Paterson Hain's (fl.1670) *De draconum Carpathicorum cavernis* (1672), and other works produced in the early eighteenth century like Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli's (1658-1730) *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus, observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in VI tomos, digestus, cum tabulis aeri incises* (1726), and Franz

[73] J.A. Heyl, *Volkssagen, Bräuche und Meinungen aus Tyrol* (Brixen, 1897), p. 485.
[74] One example is the dragon stone of Lucerne which allegedly has healing properties. See: R. Cysat, *Collectanea Chronica und Denkwürdige Sachen Pro Chronica Lucernensi et Helvetiae* Vol. 2, ed. J. Schmid (Luzern, 1969), pp. 560-584.
[75] O. Seger, *Sagen aus Liechtenstein* (Lichtenstein, 1966), No. 13.
[76] M. Sabol, 'A short history of cave bear research in Slovakia' in *Aragonit* 22/1 (2017), pp. 3-6.

Ernst Brückmann's (1697-1753) *Antra draconum Liptovensis* (1739).[77] It speaks to the strength of belief in dragons that even into the eighteenth century scholars would come to the conclusion that large bones found in their traditional lairs are most likely to be monsters rather than more common terrestrial fauna. While fewer people are likely to go exploring caves than passing by Bergisel or Guflina, they were still known locations associated not only with monsters but also with the claustrophobia of the underground – making them places of sensory dread with draconic connotations. That bones were retrieved from, or at least sketched from, these caves only served to add to the plethora of dragon artefacts one could experience while the cave itself was almost a portal to another world where one's senses were plunged into the dark confines of a dragon's lair.

As well as in the natural environment, reminders of dragons could be found within man-made environments – their serpentine visages leering from the sides of buildings and statues dominating public spaces. People living in or visiting these places would be treated to somewhat inanimate, but still physical representations of the dragon. For example, Klagenfurt's New Square is dominated by a draconic fountain, which we shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3.1, composed of a large Lindwurm made of slate that was erected there in 1590 and a statue of Hercules added the same year as the water features in 1624.[78] Huge and inescapable to the attention of anyone visiting the city, this monument not only serves as a visual reminder of the titanic beast the city's founders allegedly slew, but the fountain adds an additional animated facet to its visual appeal alongside the auditory effect of hearing the gushing of water from its maw. Notably, this dragon is one of the earliest

[77] J.P. Hain, *De draconum Carpathicorum cavernis* (1672); L.F. Marsigli, *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus, observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in VI tomos, digestus, cum tabulis aeri incises* (1726); F.E. Brückmann, *Antra draconum Liptovensis* (1739).
[78] B. Kienzl, and W. Deuer, *Renaissance in Kärnten* (Klagenfurt, 1996), p.56

instances of an extinct animal being paleontologically reconstructed – its head based on the skull of a woolly rhinoceros that had been found in 1335 and presumed to belong to a dragon.[79]

On a smaller scale than the Klagenfurt fountain, is a gargoyle in the form of a dragon that can be found in the collections of the City of Eisleben.[80] Wrought in copper in the sixteenth century and thought to originate from Seeburg Castle, this gargoyle represents another example of dragons adorning man-made spaces. The fact that this ornament also functioned as a drain for rainwater adds not only the sensory quality of rushing water, but also affirms the dragon's source of its power as being located in its mouth.

One of the so-called 'seven miracles of Jena' is a horrific effigy of a seven-headed dragon called the *Draco*. The seven miracles were conceived by members of the university at Jena, being a collection of seven items or places known only to graduates, the successful identification of which was considered proof of someone having actually spent time at the university.[81] While not as public as some of the other draconic artefacts in this section, the *Draco* was still a well-known object within certain circles in the city as well as amongst former students of Jena further afield. Channelling the apocalyptic seven-headed dragon of Revelation, this gruesome effigy made of animal bones, wire, and papier-mâché visually affirmed the terrifying aspect of the dragon as a true eschatologically charged monstrosity. While not a reminder of local legend, the *Draco* served as one of the seven secret emblems of

[79] The skull can still be found today on display in the State Museum of Carinthia in Klagenfurt.
[80] See: M. True, *"Von daher bin ich" – Martin Luther und Eisleben. Ein Rundgang durch die Ausstellung im Geburtshaus* (Wittenberg, 2007).
[81] *Draco* now lives in the city museum. L. Bechstein, *Deutsches Sagenbuch* (1853), p. 505; and P. Lehfeld, 'Jena' in *Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler Thüringens. Großherzogthum Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach. Amtsgerichtsbezirk Jena. Die Jenaer Stadtkirche* 1 (1888), pp. 84-153.

the city's university and reminded its students of dragons whenever they had to prove their alma mater.[82]

Worms, which held a remarkable fondness for the Sigurd legend, had their Mint festooned with frescoes of figures and monsters from this tale on its façade, and at one point the arcades of the Mint played host to a collection of large bones allegedly belonging to a dragon, or variously attributed to either a giant or Sigurd himself.[83] This public display of draconic art and ephemera is particularly conceptually resonant by being located at the Mint – underscoring the greedy nature of these creatures by placing them so close to the city's own wealth while also leveraging the dragon's associations with possessing hordes of treasure to give the impression of the city holding vast sums of gold.

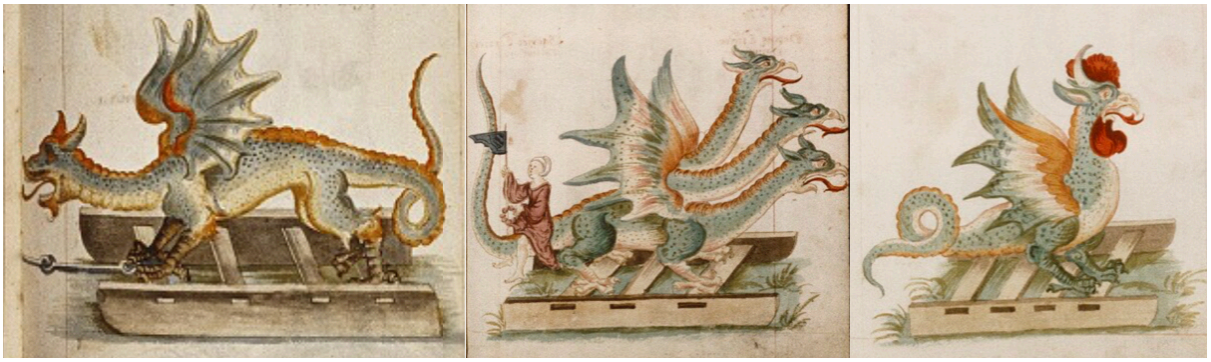
Both natural and man-made environments provided people with locations that allowed them to come close to the dragon – to experience the same places as these monsters and their slayers did. This grounded the dragon within a shared reality and opened people's senses up to accepting the dragon in whatever form they might encounter it. However, not only could people experience pieces of dragon ephemera and places of draconic significance, but they could also come face-to-face with a somewhat more animate manifestation of the beast when it appeared as centrepieces of raucous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century entertainment. It is here that the dragon steps almost fully out of the liminal space between reality and imagination to coalesce in the real world – assaulting the senses in a haze of smoke and fire as

[82] The seven miracles are: Ara (the passage under the altar of the city church), Caput (the Schnapphans figure at the town hall), Draco (the seven-headed dragon), Mons (the Jenzig mountain), Pons (the old Camsdorf Bridge), Vulpecula Turris (the Fox Tower), and Weigeliana Domus (the Weigel House).
[83] C.S. Wood, 'Maximillian I as Archaeologist' in *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005), pp. 1128-1174; and E. Kranzbühler, *Worms und die Heldensage* (Worms, 1930), pp. 164-191, pp. 93-94, pp. 105-106.

their physicality was brought to bear in sometimes explosive ways against an enraptured audience.

One way in which one could experience these dragons given physical form was in processions and carnivals held in major cities where dragon effigies formed part of the spectacle. These effigies brought the presence of the dragon into the realm of public display, allowing a great many people to experience the dragon in a sensory fashion. The Schembart Carnival held in Nuremberg in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (ending in 1539 before being revived in 1974) is perhaps one of the best recorded events of this nature – being a particularly extravagant celebration chronicled in a series of richly illustrated manuscripts that date between 1449 and 1530.[84] These books contain coloured drawings of the costumes worn by participants as well as pictures of various displays, floats, and events that happened during the carnival. One of the Schembart Carnival books held by the Bodleian Library has several examples of serpentine and draconic creatures being used as carnival floats (see appendix fig. 3).

[84] S. Sumberg, *The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival* (New York, 1941); S. Kinser, 'Presentation and Representation: Carnival at Nuremberg, 1450-1550' in *Representations* No. 13 (1986), pp. 1-41; S.H. Weisman, 'The Nuremberg *Schembartlauf* and the Art of Albrecht Dürer' in *Cerise Press* Vol. 1 Issue 3 (2010) http://www.cerisepress.com/01/03/the-nuremberg-schembartlauf-and-the-art-of-albrecht-durer (Accessed: 9 August 2022).



Carnival floats from a Schembart Carnival book. From left to right: fol. 207v, fol. 244r, and fol. 240r (see appendix fig. 3).[85]

Folio 207v for instance depicts a float in the shape of a large, winged dragon.[86] Its skin is a mottled grey/green with a pale underbelly, and it has orange-red accents along its wings as well as on the scales along its sinuous serpentine spine. Besides noticeably avian claws, it conforms to a morphology instantly recognisable to both contemporary and modern audiences. Similarly, folio 244r depicts a three-headed dragon coloured the same as the first and generally similar in form except for the three heads that are perched atop long necks, and a woman can be found waving a flag sat upon its tail.[87] Both of these dragons were large, particularly evidenced by their scale in comparison to the flag-waving woman, and their monstrous dimensions give the beasts a suitably threatening and awe-inspiring visual aura to impress upon the audience. Different more significantly from the other two, folio 240r has a float in the shape of a two-legged dragon whose rooster-like visage suggests it represents a basilisk or cockatrice.[88] Its colouration is similar to the others, though the float possesses more areas of red due to the addition of a rooster's comb and wattle. We can surmise that these colour choices in the book are accurate to how the floats appeared in real life given the

[85] Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Douce 346, '*Nuremberg Shrovetide Carnival (1449-1539). Schembartsbuch* (Nuremberg, c.1449-1539)', fol. 207v, fol. 244r, fol. 240r (see appendix fig.3)
[86] Ibid., fol. 207v.
[87] Ibid., fol. 244r.
[88] Ibid., fol. 240r.

large variance in colour and attention to detail exhibited in the costume illustrations elsewhere in the book – the relatively drab palette of these floats is not a particular flourish by the artist or a lazy re-use of an existing palette. While it could instead be indicative of the float makers having a limited selection of colours, it can perhaps be taken to suggest that these were the colours specifically associated with dragons and their monstrous kin. The sharp contrast between the drab skin and vibrant red accents serves to associate the creatures with fire and Satan (as we shall discuss in greater detail at the end of this section), as well as helping to draw the eye to the most terrifying of their monstrous features: their grotesque heads, vast wings, and serpentine body. For the citizens of Nuremberg, these floats likely gave them a decent reference for the dragons that they would hear about in folklore, or the monsters of scripture recited to them from the pulpit. Their dimensions and colours made them a fearful feast for the eyes, and their very location amidst a public event made it all the easier to imagine them existing within familiar locales.

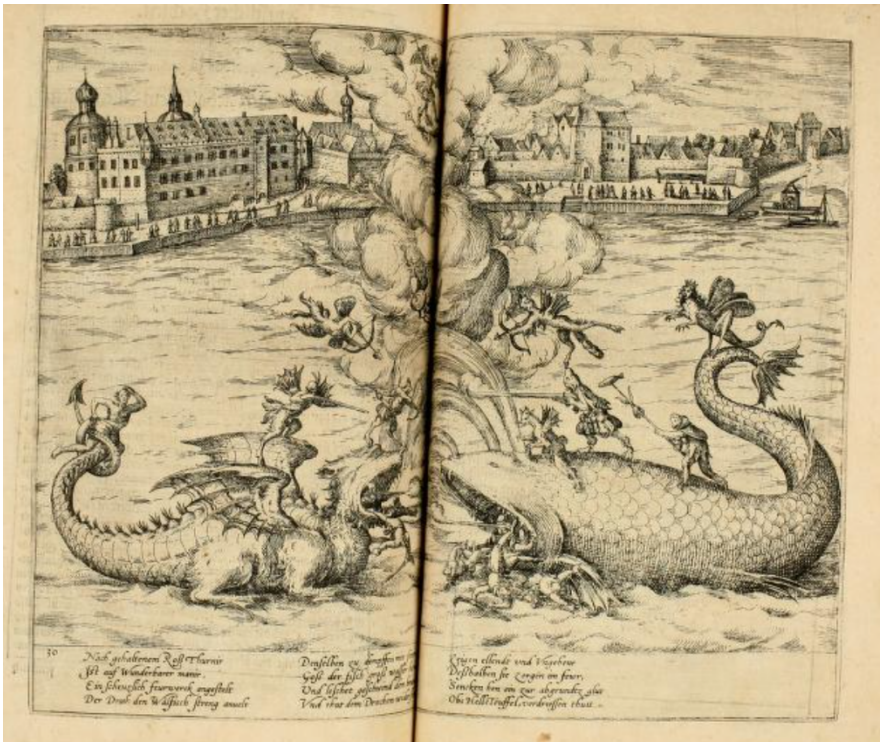
The visual senses are most engaged here with the size and colours of the floats creating a powerful sense of the dragon's physical nature, but while they were largely static - their only means of locomotion was being pulled through the streets, with these illustrations giving no indication of moving pieces - they could still be interacted with in other ways as well. It is hard to suggest what touching these floats might have been like without knowing precisely what materials they were made out of, though wood and canvas seem most likely, and unlike the firework devices we shall discuss shortly they did not emit the smell, sounds, and sights of gunpowder – but as part of a loud and bawdy carnival they would be associated with all the noise and frenzy of a chaotic bacchanal.[89] Amidst the frenetic energy of a carnival

[89] For more on carnivals see: P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2009); B. Scribner, 'Carnival and the World Turned Upside-Down' in *Social History* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1978), pp. 303-329; and J.C. Vaught, *Carnival and literature in early modern England* (Farnham, 2012).

the dragon would be associated with loud and maddening sounds and hearts beating quickly – the feelings of excitement and terror, a break from the everyday, and an assault on the senses.

Floats like these were particularly common in processions held by cities that were especially pious in their devotion to St George, or featured a dragon-slaying narrative in their mythical origin story.[90] One of the more famous is the procession of the 'Graoully' in Metz which celebrated Saint Clement of Metz (apocryphally the first bishop of the city) vanquishing a draconic beast known as the Graoully.[91] An effigy of the beast, which grew in size and complexity over the centuries, was paraded through the city on Rogation days throughout its time as both part of the Holy Roman Empire and, after 1552, as part of France - described by François Rabelais (c.1483/94-1553) as '…a monstrous, hideous effigy, terrifying for small children… with horrific, wide jaws and lots of teeth which were made to clash by the use of a cord, making terrible noises…'.[92] This dragon not only possessed the terrifying physical presence of the Schembart carnival floats, but it was also outfitted with moving parts through which it not only appeared more lifelike in its capacity to move, but also created a sound as its teeth came together. This monster, and others like it, were not just voiceless effigies surrounded by a sea of sound – they could make it too, adding another sensory dimension to their physical manifestation that was apparently very frightening for children.

[90] Many English cities in the Medieval period incorporated dragons into religious processions, often opposite a representation of St George. Norwich has a particularly rich history of processions involving dragons, and an example of a dragon device built around 1795, based on medieval designs, can be found today in Norwich Castle Museum. For more on medieval English 'performing dragons', see: P. Butterworth, 'Late Medieval Performing Dragons' in *The Yearbook of English Studies* Vol. 43, Early English Drama (2013), pp. 318-342.
[91] H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints* (Dublin, 1955), p. 37; and L. Roger, *Le Grawli. Étude étymologique.- Nos Traditions* 1 (1947), pp. 34-38.
[92] F. Rabelais, *Œuvres de François Rabelais* (Paris, 1854), p. 238. *'C'était une effigie monstrueuse, ridicule, hideuse et terrible aux petis enfants, ayant les yeux plus grands que le ventre, et la tête plus grosse que tout le reste du corps, avec amples, lerges et horrifiques mâchoires bien endentelées, tant au-dessus comme au-dessous, lesquelles, acev l-engin d'une petite corde cachée dedans le bâton doré, l'on faisait l'une contre l'autre terrifiquement cliqueter, comme à Metz l'on fait du dragon de saint Clement.'*



A dragon and a whale battle on the Rhine (see appendix fig.4).[93]

A similarly impressive spectacle was said to have taken place at the marriage between John William, heir to the Duchy of Jülich-Cleves-Berg (1562-1609) and Princess Jakobea of Baden (1558-1597) in 1585.[94] A printed festival book was created for the occasion, written by Dietrich Graminaeus (1530-1593), this lavish volume recounted a series of events held in Düsseldorf over the course of nine days to celebrate the wedding.[95] One of these events was the deployment of two large floats on the Rhine, one in the shape of a dragon and another in the shape of a whale who fought one another in the midst of a firework display and represented the conflict between different Protestant groups with both creatures ultimately

[93] D. Graminaeus, *Beschreibung derer Fürstlicher Güligscher etc. Hochzeit* (Düsseldorf, 1587), Illustration 30 (see appendix fig.4).
[94] The marriage was largely a political one fuelled by confessional tensions and was unhappy. John William suffered from severe mental illness, and after more than ten years of political chaos and no heir, Jakobea was found dead in her room in 1597. She was likely murdered so that her husband could marry again and produce an heir to his failing dynasty. Despite his marriage to Antonia of Lorraine (1568-1610), no such heir was produced and when John William died his duchy was plunged into the War of the Jülich Succession (1610-1614).
[95] D. Graminaeus, *Beschreibung derer Fürstlicher Güligscher etc. Hochzeit* (Düsseldorf, 1587).

perishing (see appendix fig. 4).[96] An illustration accompanying the text shows just how large these floats were, several men with firearms comfortably situated in each creature's mouth and clambering over their backs.[97] Not only would the size of these creatures on the Rhine impress upon people the monstrous size of whales and dragons, but the accompanying din of firework fuelled battle wreathing the combatants in smoke and light would have been a true assault on the senses.

[96] Ibid.,
[97] Ibid., Illustration 30.



A selection of dragon firework devices from Friedrich Mayer's 1594 *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch*. Pages 293, 295, and 305 respectively from top to bottom (see appendix fig. 5).[98]

Similarly animated as these effigies, were the firework dragons fashioned for entertainment. As we can see in works like Friedrich Mayer's 1594 *Büchsenmeister und*

[98] F. Mayer, *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch* (1594) pp. 293, 295, 305.

Feuerwerksbuch, dragons were a popular motif for firework ephemera with several illustrations depicting gunpowder devices bearing their likeness (see appendix fig. 5).[99] In this text we see two kinds of firework dragon: those which are free-standing, and those which hang from a rail by wheels and are propelled forwards or backwards by the fireworks coming out of them. One of the latter kind is even seemingly propelled forwards by fire which erupts from the dragon's anus while only a lesser flame is spouted from its mouth. Indeed, firework dragons often did not just contain their eruptions to the beast's maw, some like the device found in Joseph Futtenbach's 1627 *Beschreibung einer newen Buechsen-Meisterey* which also travelled upon a rail rather than remaining stationary, is depicted as emanating fireworks from its mouth, eyes, ears, and from under the creature's wings.[100] These dragons were dangerous from every angle and constituted an incredible visual spectacle as a result. Gunpowder dragons were an assault upon the senses. Visually they were as stunning as the carnival floats but with the added sparkle and smoke of the gunpowder, loud cracks and fizzles punctuated the air, and the metallic tang of the burnt powder would stain nostrils and tongues alike. These devices no doubt added a powerful sensory aspect to people's collective imagining of these creatures, making their fiery breath in spoken or written tales seem so much more lifelike.

Such devices were more than just a spectacle of the German-speaking lands however, similar firework devices on rails can also be found in the English work *Pyrotechnia* (1635), by mathematician and gunner John Babington (fl.1635) alongside a few other dragon-shaped pyrotechnics that were used in processions.[101] These devices were not easily manufactured, as attested by one John Bate (fl. 1634) who stated that 'The flying Dragon is somewhat

[99] Ibid. – This text is believed to be a compilation based on earlier works of a similar nature. For more on firework devices see: P. Steadman, *Renaissance Fun, the machines behind the scenes* (London, 2021).
[100] J. Futtenbach, *Beschreibung einer newen Buechsen-Meisterey* (1627), Illustrated Plate 18.
[101] J. Babington, *Pyrotechnia* (London, 1635), p. 38, 40. For more on these kinds of devices see: P. Steadman, *Renaissance Fun* (London, 2021), pp. 152-157.

troublesome to compose' and offered his readers a range of materials one might use to build one.[102] Once realised however, these devices gave Europeans a terrifying sensory way to experience the dragon as the monster leapt out of folklore and into a physical space. One ominous appearance of such a device occurred at the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520) where a dragon flew over the assembled hosts of England and France despite not being a scheduled piece of the celebrations, with one witness recounting that: 'a great artificial salamander or dragon, four fathoms long, and full of fire, appeared in the air, from Ardre. Many were frightened, thinking it a comet, or some monster, as they could see nothing to which it was attached.'[103] Beyond the time period of this study we can even see lethal results of terrifying dragon effigies in the 1888 '*Elefantenkatastrophe*' in Munich when eight Indian elephants were startled by steam bellowing from a street locomotive decorated as a dragon for a pageant went on a rampage, killing between two and four people and injuring a further forty two.[104] In a more intentional display of violence we can find in Roberto Valturio's (1405-1475) *De Re militari* (1475) a dragon-shaped war machine that even had a cannon in its mouth from which to spew death and sow terror on the battlefield.[105] These devices were not only sources of entertainment, but when dragons manifested as physical entities to assault the senses their very shape also made them into a sombre source of dread.

Less riotous on all the senses but more visually common to the people of early modern Germany, particularly amongst those living in cities and amongst the higher echelons of society, were coats of arms bearing the image of the dragon. The heraldry of cities and noble families within the German-speaking lands would be amongst one of the most common places

[102] J. Bate, *The Mysteryes of Natvre and Art* (London, 1634), pp. 72-80.
[103] J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Letter and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII* Vol. 3 (London, 1867), p. 312.
[104] W. Till, and R. Weidner, *Typisch München* 1 (Munich, 2008), pp. 150-151.
[105] R. Valturio, *De Re militari* (1475), fol. 168r.

people would see representations of dragons as they blazoned surcoats, sealed documents, and adorned public buildings and monuments. These were more than just trivial visual representations of the dragon; they were markers of identity, symbols of authority, and reminders of shared histories for the people and places who bore them. These dragons serve in the language of heraldry in the same way as they do elsewhere, bearing the connotations of the legendary beasts though trending towards a positive reading of established traits.[106] Sometimes these medieval and early modern heraldic dragons represent the keen eyes and watchfulness of their classical forebears (see the discussion on the etymology of the word 'dragon' at the start of this chapter), at others they project the natural physical attributes of the monster: terrifying strength and raw power. Instead of greed they tend to more generally represent wealth, showing how mutable a dragon's meaning can be when power dynamics shift (as we shall see in Chapter 2.3 where dragons changed their gender and sexuality to best fit particular means of persecution), and often they quite literally simply depict a dragon slain by the bearer or, in the case of towns and cities, they represent a dragon slain in local legend.

It is worth noting that serpents and dragons were relatively uncommon amongst the arms of kingdoms and amongst some of the most powerful individuals in the society of the Holy Roman Empire. Virgil Solis's (1514-1562) *Wappenbüchlein* of 1555 which displays the imperial coat of arms, the arms of Habsburg territories at the time of publication, the arms of twelve European Christian kingdoms, allegedly early coats of arms belonging to people like the three biblical magi, the arms of foreign kingdoms, and finally the arms of arms of the nobility of the empire and the Catholic clergy.[107] Of all these arms representing the kingdoms

[106] G. Scheibelreiter, 'Tiersymbolik und Wappen im Mittelalter: grundsätzliche Überlegungen' in *Das Mittelalter* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2007), pp. 9-23; M. Pastoureau, *Heraldry: its origins and meaning* (London, 1997); and R. Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (London, 1976).
[107] V. Solis, *Wappenbüchlein* (Nuremberg, 1555).

of the world and the heraldic might of the Holy Roman Empire, the only one to feature a serpent or dragon is that of Milan which displays the Visconti *biscione* – a viper swallowing a human.[108]



The coat of arms of Klagenfurt from the 1608 *Klagenfurt Schützenbuch* (see appendix fig. 6).[109]

However, it is on the more local levels we see dragons thrive. For example, the previously mentioned town of Klagenfurt whose founders allegedly slew a dragon has a coat of arms depicting the said dragon in front of the tower used to kill it (see appendix fig. 6), a motif also found in the arms of Żmigród (known in German as Trachenberg).[110] Similarly, the arms of Beatenberg show the monk and hermit St Beatus of Lungern and a dragon, reflecting the legend of the saint driving away such a monster from the cave in which he planned to become a hermit. Wurmannsquick possesses arms depicting a lindworm regardant, though this is an example of heraldic canting rather than a representation of any local legend. The arms of Murnau depict a similar lindworm, though its meaning is much more uncertain. A

[108] Ibid., p. 26.
[109] Anon, *Klagenfurt Schützenbuch* (Klagenfurt, 1608).
[110] Ibid.

possible interpretation is that Murnau as a market town wished to represent wealth on their coat of arms and chose the dragon as a symbol of riches.

While not a coat of arms itself, the insignia of the Order of the Dragon was sometimes added to personal heraldry. Founded by Emperor Sigismund (1368-1437) in 1408 the Order of the Dragon was a chivalric order primarily dedicated to opposing the enemies of Christendom (especially the expanding Ottoman Empire) and serving the monarch. For their patron the Order took St George and used a dragon in their insignia to represent him; its body bent around to form a circle (its tail wrapped around its neck, though sometimes it is instead shown as an ouroboros eating its own tail), and the dragon's back is opened with a red cross situated in its centre.[111] The dragon here is a proxy for St George rather than Satan, a cross upon its divided back representing the dragon's defeat and the Order's goal of defeating the enemies of Christendom. Showing the saint himself is unnecessary; the dragon is a powerful symbol and tied enough to the dragon-slaying narrative that it is obvious what it is meant to represent. While the Order of the Dragon was well into its decline in the sixteenth century, its symbol continued to be used in the coats of arms of noble families who belonged to it, such as the Báthory family whose arms are often depicted with the dragon encircling their shield, and the arms themselves depict the teeth of a dragon slain by the house's progenitor.[112]

Similarly, the city of Worms, which as we have seen has a particular fondness for the legend of Sigurd and the dragon, has often used either a single dragon or a pair of them as supporters for their coat of arms from around the thirteenth century. Not only does this represent the alleged locality of the legend of one of Germany's most famous dragon-slayers,

[111] For more on the insignia see: D'A.J.D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe 1325-1520* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 350.
[112] The legend of the Bathory arms places the family's origin in the year 900, though their arms were not granted until 1325. M. Farin, *Heroine des Grauens. Elisabeth Báthory* (Munich, 2003), pp. 354-362.

but the dragon also serves as a cypher for Sigurd in the same way as the Order of the Dragon's draconic symbol acts as a proxy for St George. Worms takes upon itself the strength and heroism of Sigurd by using the most recognisable symbol of his story. The burgraves of the castle that once stood upon the Drachenfels in the Siebengebirge also bore a dragon upon their arms which can be seen still today on the gravestone of the last burgrave Heinrich von Drachenfels (d. 1530), similarly linking their family to the site of Sigurd's battle with Fafnir as well as Sigurd's virtues as a dragon-slayer.[113]

Not all of the dragons in these pieces of heraldry had set colours during the early modern period, some only being formalised centuries later. Indeed, many dragons are not ascribed a particular colour in the tales they appear in (Fafnir and his derivatives are rarely given such a descriptor) or exist within uncoloured woodcuts or as unpainted statues. Where colour does arise, it is often indicative of a certain mood or motive behind the artist responsible. Natural historians, as we shall see in Chapter 3.2, ascribed a variety of colours to dragons though there does not seem to have been a consensus amongst them with black/green hues, reds, ash, yellow, and a mix of blue and gold all being mentioned, though artists do not always choose to mimic these.[114] Indeed, the dragons found within the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* which this thesis shall explore in Chapter 2.2 vary from drab grey-browns to rainbow hued.[115] As one of the most prominent visual spectacles of a dragon it is worth briefly mentioning what those colours mean when they do appear.

[113] The gravestone can be found today at the church of St Mariä Heimsuchung in Rhöndorf where it has been since 1903 after being moved from Heisterback monastery.
[114] C. Gessner, *Schlangenbuch* (1589). This thesis uses the translation from P. Senter, U. Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (Bloomington, 2016), pp. 67-124. See also: A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus, quo universae Denique naturae divitiae* (Rome, 1665), p. 92.
[115] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 127r, and fol. 129r.

Red dragons are amongst the most common to be found, in no small part because of the specific colour attribution of Satan as the Great Red Dragon in the Bible. Indeed, several of the dragons we will meet in the following chapter are of this colour, such as the dragon of Revelation as depicted in the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch.*[116] Holding connotations such as fire, blood, and devilry – it is little surprise that red should be amongst the most prolific of dragon colours and many uncoloured woodcuts are implicitly intended to be this colour due to their depiction of Satan in the form of a dragon. Where red is not the predominant colour it is often a secondary one, forming patterns such as spots or stripes on a dragon's back as we saw on the draconic effigies in the Schembart carnival books.[117] Besides red, the next most common colours for the images of dragons discussed in this thesis are various shades of green, some of which are brighter greens like Peter Gottland's *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552), while others like Lucas Cranach's *The holy saint George in battle with the dragon* (c. 1511-13) are more mottled in their hue, and some like those we saw in Friedrich Mayer's 1594 *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch* have blue-green shades.[118] These are perhaps largely inspired by the actual snakes and lizards that can be found in Europe whose scales typically of green and brown colouration, an indication that dragons belonged to this same family of reptilian creatures – a monstrous but very real animal.

The dragon was not easily dismissed by the people of the early modern German-speaking lands as creatures of fantasy; these monsters surrounded them in the places they lived. The land bore their names and legends, while draconic effigies lurked on the streets of

[116] Ibid., fol. 186r.
[117] Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Douce 346, '*Nuremberg Shrovetide Carnival (1449-1539). Schembartsbuch* (Nuremberg, c.1449-1539)', fol. 207v.
[118] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552); L. Cranach, *The holy saint George in battle with the dragon* (c. 1511-13); and F. Mayer. *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch* (1594), pp. 293, 295, 305.

cities. They could see the majesty of the dragon in all its size and colourful splendour and witness their remains on display. They could smell its smoke, feel the warmth of its fire on their skin, and hear its dreadful roar. Though no one ever met a living dragon, they experienced the monster all the same and allowed its presence to be forever etched upon their senses, their imagination, and their perception of reality.

Understanding the world – serpents and dragons as symbols in natural philosophy

As we have seen in this chapter, serpents and dragons carry a host of symbolic connotations which authors and artists have readily leapt upon in their work. Natural philosophers were no different, and we can see serpentine monsters in a range of illustrative and symbolic roles across different disciplines that explore the natural world. While the natural history of the dragon will be explored in a later chapter (3.2), it is worth briefly taking some time to consider the instances where serpents and dragons were used as metaphors to demonstrate scientific principles. In many of these instances the concepts expressed by serpentine monsters we have seen so far in this thesis are upheld, though in some instances we can observe some less-common connotations being expressed that hint towards rare but less negative readings of serpents and dragons as symbols. While not all the uses we shall discuss are necessarily the most intuitive, they were tools with which contemporary natural philosophers tried to explain and understand the world around them – serving as simple and effective means of communication for more complex ideas. Indeed, the symbolic power of serpentine monsters was of great use for natural philosophers across a range of disciplines from medicine to alchemy. Paracelsus (c.1493-1541) used the basilisk, monstrous king of serpents in folklore, as a point of reference to describe two distinct processes – linking contagious diseases to menstrual women's imaginations through the metaphor of the basilisk's deadly gaze and used the basilisk as the prime example of unnatural generation/monstrous births. William R. Newman, in an article covering basilisks and women in Paracelsus and pseudo-Paracelsus, argues that for Paracelsus the basilisk as a spawn of an unnatural pairing is the ultimate example of 'bad chemistry' - an abomination useful only for

describing the vilest of processes.[119] This section shall discuss two fields in which they appear most prominently in an allegorical fashion: alchemy and astronomy, where we see some of the oldest and most primal of the concepts held by serpents and dragons expressed.

Serpents and dragons of all kinds are recurrent symbols in the field of alchemy, a branch of natural philosophy that was considered by its practitioners to be a deeply spiritual pursuit which they veiled in a cloak of secrecy. Medieval and early modern alchemists heavily favoured the use of allegorical and metaphorical symbols in their work which would be instantly recognisable to the master alchemist, well versed as they were in matters of theology and esotericism but would be impenetrable to the untrained eye. Serpents and dragons appeared in the symbology of alchemy in several different ways, such as symbolic representations of elements like mercury and sulphur, as a cypher for fiery processes, or eating their own tail as an ouroboros – an ancient symbol that represents the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.[120]



Alchemical dragons in *Atlanta Fugiens* from left to right: p. 65, 109, and 209 (see appendix fig. 7).[121]

[119] W.R. Newman, 'Bad Chemistry: Basilisks and Women in Paracelsus and pseudo-Paracelsus' in *Ambix, The Journal of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry* Vol. 67, No. 1 (February 2020), pp. 30-46.
[120] It has also been argued that the story of St George and the dragon can be interpreted alchemically, see: E.A. Maré, 'There is no Hero Without a Dragon: A Revisionist Interpretation of The Myth of St. George and the Dragon' in *Religion and Theology* 13(2) (2006), pp. 195-203.
[121] M. Maier, *Atlanta Fugiens* (Oppenheim, 1618), pp. 65, 109, 209.

We can see these symbolic representations in a range of alchemical works written by German-speaking alchemists and emblematists. For example, Michael Maier (1568-1622), a physician and alchemist who serves as a councillor to Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612), makes use of dragons several times in his 1618 emblem book *Atlanta Fugiens* (see appendix fig. 7).[122] On page 65 we see a dragon forming an ouroboros, on page 109 we see a dragon (mercury) caught between representatives of gold and silver (male and female, the sun and the moon respectively), and in the final image on page 209 is a dragon (representing the elements of earth and fire) entwined in a grave with a woman (representing the elements of air and water).[123] Here we see the dragon embodying a range of characteristics, most prominently in the final image taking on an elemental role and in the second image representing mercury.

We can find many other examples of the dragon representing this most vital chemical in the alchemical process. The dragon appears as mercury in Heinrich Khunrath's (1560-1605) *Amphitheatrum sapientae aeternae* (1602) several times, including in the 'Citadel' or 'Fortress' image where the dragon sits at the centre of the alchemistic fortress with the power to marry and impregnate itself, give birth, and kill all living creatures.[124] Herbrandt Jamsthaler's (fl. 1620s) *Viatorum Spagyricum* also uses the dragon as mercury, notably on page 75 where a winged dragon stands in for quicksilver in a diagram depicting the 'philosophical egg'.[125] Alternatively we see the dragon, or more specifically its smoke, standing in for saltpetre in a few of the works of Maier's pupil Daniel Stolz von Stolzenberg

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] H. Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientae aeternae* (Hamburg, 1602). For more on this work see: P. Forshaw, ''Alchemy in the Amphitheatre', Some consideration of the alchemical content of the engravings in Heinrich Khunrath's *Amphitheatres of Eternal Wisdom* (1609)' in J. Wamberg (ed.), *Art and Alchemy* (Copenhagen, 2006), pp. 195-220.
[125] H. Jamsthaler, *Viatorum Spagyricum* (1625), p. 75.

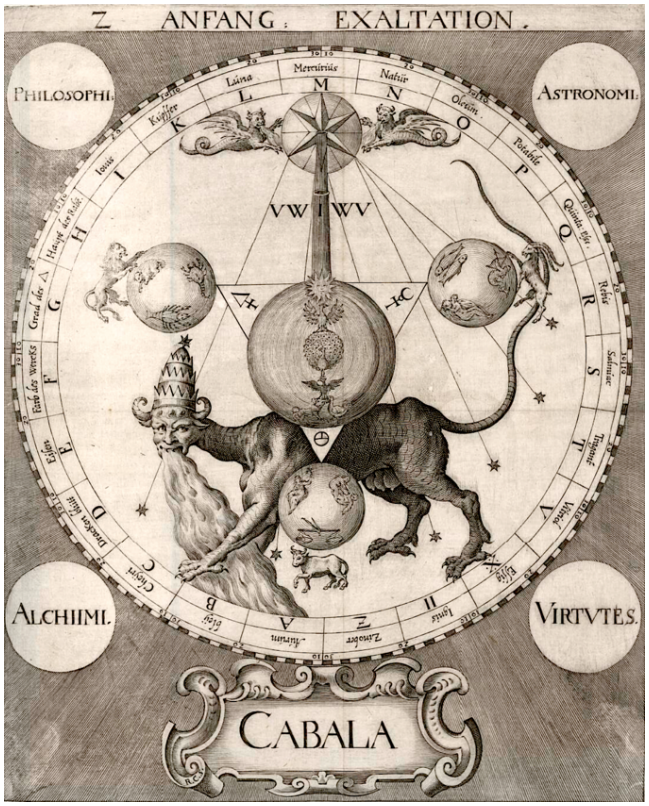
(1600-1660) – an image in his *Viridarium Chymicum* depicting a dragon as this volatile chemical that suits the creature's fiery reputation.[126]

The unknown author of an alchemical manuscript entitled *Uraltes Chymisches Werk von Abraham Eleazar* published in the eighteenth century provides us with examples of both serpents as fire/mercury, and as an ouroboros.[127] Indeed, of the 70 images in this work, 21 feature serpentine monsters of some form or another. When discounting all the diagrams of alchemical apparatus or images of glassware (36 images) and focusing on only the allegorical pieces, we see that serpents and dragons appear in more than half of the images depicting the secret processes and philosophies of the book, demonstrating that the use of these symbols continued to survive in German alchemical texts despite traditional alchemy having waned by this time.[128]

As well as symbols in alchemical texts, there is one example of dragons being a preferred form of the philosophers' stone. Anna Maria Zieglerin (c. 1550-75), who worked as an alchemist at the court of Duke Julius of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1528-1589), suggested that when creating the philosophers' stone one could 'Cast it into the shape of a lion, lindworm, dragon's head or whatever similar thing pleases you'.[129] The animals she chooses for the shape of the philosopher's stone are all very symbolic, the lion for royalty, and the lindworm/dragon's head is perhaps a nod to the traditional association between these

[126] D. Stolz von Stolzenberg, *Virium Chymicum* (Frankfurt, 1624).
[127] This book is alleged to be based on ancient works by Abraham Eleazar, a fourteenth-century Jewish alchemist sometimes associated with Nicholas Flamel (1330-1418) whose only biographical information comes from this work and who may not have actually existed.
[128] Anon, *Uraltes Chymisches Werk von Abraham Eleazar* (Leipzig, 1760).
[129] *'gißen in gestaltte eynß leven lyndtwurmer trachen kopffe oder waß dier gefelte ist eben gleyche'.* Translation from: T. Nummedal, *Anna Zieglerin and the Lion's Blood: Alchemy and End Times in Reformation Germany* (Philadelphia, 2019), p.84.

creatures and gold. The dragon's head may also be a reference to the dragon-stones found in the monster's head (for more on these stones see Chapter 3.2).[130]



'*Anfang. Exaltation*.' from Stefan Michelspacher's *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia* (1616) (see appendix fig. 8).[131]

It is important to note that alchemical symbology is far from a universal language, with individual authors in their specific contexts often putting unique spins on their work to make them all the more slippery and secretive in their interpretation.[132] While a complete semiotic study of the dragon in early modern Germanic alchemy is a monograph in and of

[130] Examples of such stones can be found in R. Cysat, *Collectanea Chronica und Denkwürdige Sachen Pro Chronica Lucernensi et Helvetiae* Vol. 2, ed. J. Schmid (Luzern, 1969), pp. 560-584; and D. Wyckoff (ed. and trans.), *The Book of Minerals* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 86-87.
[131] S. Michelspacher, *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur,* in *Alchymia* (Augsburg, 1616).
[132] Indeed, for some worms, serpents, and dragons were largely interchangeable whilst for others there was a distinct difference between winged and wingless dragons. See: L. Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge, 2001), p.59.

itself, and thus beyond the scope of this thesis, what is important for this present work is the fact that alchemists chose serpents and dragons for their symbolic value in much the same way the Reformers did – though often favouring the more ancient and elemental connotations of the creatures over satanic and millenarian ones. That is not to say some overlap could not occur, indeed Stefan Michelspacher (fl. 1610s) used a papal-faced draconic creature in his diagram '*Anfang. Exaltation*.' in his *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia* (1616).[133] While this monster either represents fire in the processes of distillation and sublimation or serves as a deckname for mercury, historians have also noted its likeness to the beasts of apocalypse and Lutheran depictions of the papal Antichrist which this thesis shall discuss in Chapter 2.1, perhaps unsurprising given Michelspacher's Protestantism – having left Tyrol during a period of Catholic renewal (see appendix fig. 8, fig. 23, fig. 29, and fig.36).[134] Interestingly, this monster has dugs, perhaps suggesting some familiarity with either the sources we shall discuss in Chapter 2.3, or with some other non-extant sources which similarly gender the papal-dragon as a bestial female monster.

In fact, in alchemy we see somewhat of an inverse to what we shall see in the symbolic language of the dragon throughout most of this thesis. Whereas the Reformers used the dragon as a useful cultural short-hand for ideas of greed and evil to better package them into a visual format for a wide audience, alchemists used the symbol of the dragon to obscure their work – hoping that only those primed by a master of alchemical knowledge who understood both the chemistry of their art and the intended cultural connotations of an image could discern the specific intended symbolism. This also stands in contrast to others in this

[133] S. Michelspacher, *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur,* in *Alchymia* (Augsburg, 1616).
[134] U. Szulaowska, 'The Apocalyptic Eucharist and Religious Dissidence in Stefan Michelspacher's *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia* (1616)' in *Aries* Vol.3, No.2 (2003), pp. 214-215; and S. Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1988), p. 58.

period who sought to understand the natural world and used dragons in their work to do so, underscoring the secrecy with which most alchemists conducted their studies into the great work.



The title page to Petrus Apian's *Astronomicum Caesareum* (1540) featuring a draconic volvelle (see appendix fig. 9).[135]

One of the most unusual sixteenth-century texts to make use of dragons as useful symbols is Petrus Apian's *Astronomicum Caesareum* (1540) which he wrote for Charles V and his brother Ferdinand.[136] While it is thought that only around 100 copies were made, it was spectacular enough in its presentation of cosmography for the emperor to make Apian a *Reichsritter* and provides a rare example of lunar dragons. Of note are two astronomical

[135] P. Apian, *Astronomicum Caesareum* (Ingolstadt, 1540).
[136] Ibid.; and A. van Ackooy, 'Stephan Michelspacher' in J. Bouman and C. van Heertum (eds.), *Divine Wisdom – Divine Nature. The Message of the Rosicrucian Manifestoes in the Visual Language of the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam, 2014), pp. 113-124.

instruments made from paper that can be found within the volume (see appendix fig. 9).[137] These instruments take the form of concentric discs in the shape of a dragon which can be moved, with the aid of threads, spinning the dragon's head around a wheel and allowing the user to make calculations. There are other, similar volvelles in *Astronomicum Caesareum* as well as in Apian's other works, but none are as elaborate as his dragon instruments. The first volvelle was used to calculate the position of ascending lunar nodes on a particular date and took the form of a stationary wheel of twenty-six small dragons (twenty-six equal sized, one odd sized – marking out the twenty-seven-point-three days of a lunar orbit) and one large dragon which can be moved. By moving this large dragon and placing it into alignment with a smaller dragon, one can read ascending and descending lunar nodes from its head to its tail respectively. This volvelle appears once on the title page, as well as later in the book, and a second similar diagram featuring a single dragon which similarly calculates lunar nodes can also be found amongst its pages. These volvelle were interactive - the dragons were tactile instruments the reader could enjoy in a sensory way and appreciate for both their scientific value and their aesthetic qualities. While not excessively mobile, these dragons could move on the page in a way that none of the other monsters we have seen in this thesis could – making them a memorable close experience of the draconic kind for the reader.

Dragons would seem to be an odd choice for lunar calculations, and in this instance the symbolism likely has little to do with the cultural connotations of the dragon we have discussed thus far, instead being astrological in nature. The constellation *Draco* plays host to the star Thuban which had been the north star between the 4th and 2nd millennium BC and therefore astronomically important to ancient stargazers. The head and tail of the constellation

[137] Monstrous serpents also appear in the book in more minor roles in a depiction of constellations in northern skies where Draco is illustrated in the night sky.

became known as 'ascending' and 'descending' nodes from which lunar orbits and eclipses could be calculated as the moon passed by them.[138] Observing this dragon amongst the stars was not just for astronomical calculations though. Within astrological medicine it was also consulted as we can see in the medical texts of Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576) who claimed that one of his wounded subjects was in a particularly unfortunate position due to Mars being with the dragon's head whilst the moon was with the dragon's tail.[139] Conrad Gessner (1516-1565) who will shall explore in more detail in Chapter 3.2, mentions this astronomical and astrological tradition in his 1589 *Schlangenbuch* where he states: 'The interpreters of the stars call the points where the moon takes its track across and over the sun's course a dragon. The upper part is called the dragon head, the bottom part the dragon tail'.[140] This is not a malevolent manifestation of the dragon (though other celestial objects in the night's sky may become so by their positions relative to it) but rather a surviving example of one of the non-Christianised aspects of the dragon – simply being an animal in the stars.

Not every scientific symbol of the dragon falls neatly into the themes of fear and greed that this thesis largely concerns itself with. This is a reminder that the dragon is an exceptionally ancient symbol and has more than one way of manifesting itself, even if one permutation is the most popular in a given time. Though the dragon often conjures disgust, it can also simply be a representation of elemental power, or just so happen to be the shape of a

[138] D. Olenici, 'The Rosette of Spiral Diagrams as produced by the Saros Series of Solar Eclipses' in *Romanian Astronomical Journal* Vol. 30, No.2 (Bucharest, 2020), pp. 121-133; and S. Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 131-144.
[139] G.A. Magini, *De astrologica ratione ac usu dierum criticorum seu decretoriorum* (Venice, 1607), pp. 82v-83r. For more on this case see: A. Grafton, and N. Siraisi, 'Between the Election and My Hopes: Girolamo Cardano and Medical Astrology' in W.R. Newman and A. Grafton (eds.), *Secrets of Nature, Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2006), pp. 69-131.
[140] Senter, Mattox, and Haddad state in their footnotes to their translation of Gesser's *Schlangenbuch* that they were unable to find Gessner's source for his statements on the lunar dragon, but it is likely Gessner drew from the same astrological traditions as Apian did. Indeed, Agrippa von Nettesheim comments on this ancient heritage in: A. von Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia* (1510). Translation from: P. Senter, U.Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' in Journal of Folklore Research, Vol. 53 No. 1 (Bloomington, 2016), pp. 67-124.

constellation. So deeply ingrained in the reality of early modern Europe was the dragon that it could exist both powerfully within mutually reassuring cultural imaginations as a grotesque monster, and as no more than a convenient and benevolent symbol used to help understand the world.

Conclusion – creatures of fear and greed

The serpent's and dragon's most enduring characteristics are their greed and their ability to inspire fear. They are typically evil by nature, inflicting innumerable woes upon the world wherever they pass, and embody the destructive energy of fire or poison. Serpents and dragons are repulsive harbingers of change, upsetting the status quo and spreading terror in their wake. Whether acting alone or as a proxy of the devil, these creatures inspired strong emotive reactions from those who experienced them – centuries of stories having built up a powerful conceptual force in the collective cultural consciousness of the German-speaking peoples.

Stories of these foul monsters were deeply ingrained in both the folkloric and religious cultures of the German-speaking lands, typically in the form of dragon-slaying narratives where dragons, when placed in the dragon/dragon-slayer dichotomy, represent socially abhorred concepts such as greed, a fear of the dangers of the natural world, and more abstract notions of evil. The dragons experienced by the German-speaking people on a sensory level were associated with great size, fire, noise, and the colours of evil. Dragons were not some made-up phenomena, their remains could be seen and touched while evidence of their passing, and of their defeat by the virtuous, were all around in both natural and man-made environments as effigies of the monsters paraded through city streets spewing smoke and fire gave them life in the imagination through the stimulation of the senses. Serpents and dragons also served as symbols in works attempting to understand the world. Though they often represented foulness and fire, they could also represent more abstract principles based on their ancient origins. Principally the serpentine monsters we have encountered in this chapter embodied fears – whether social fears over antisocial behaviours like greed, fears of the creatures of the natural world, or more abstract fears regarding the nature of evil itself. These

monsters are constructs possessing a profound ability to inspire awe and terror, the culmination of thousands of years of cultural heritage.

It is important to note however, that not all serpents and dragons are inherently evil, with some being depicted in positive lights from the beginnings of Christianity through to the early modern period. In some strands of early Christian Gnosticism, the serpent of Eden brought knowledge and wisdom to Adam and Eve and freed them from the malevolent Demiurge Yaldabaoth.[141] Simeon Stylites (c.390-459 AD) is reported to have peacefully cured a dragon of blindness in an early Christian text which formed part of the *Vitae Patrum*, and according to legend the draconic Tarasque of Provence was able to be tamed by St Martha and offered no resistance to the citizens which summarily killed it.[142] *Prudentia*, the ancient Greek personification of the idea of 'prudence' was often depicted as holding a mirror and a serpent and we see Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) painted with a serpent on her sleeve to denote this virtue as well as the virtue of wisdom.[143] The brazen serpent, which Moses used to heal the Israelites harmed by the 'fiery serpents' that God had sent amongst them as punishment for their impatience in the desert (seen in Numbers 21: 4-9), was a positive symbol for some Reformers. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 2.1, Luther's fellow reformer Phillip Melancthon (1497-1560) used it as his crest for he believed the incident to be demonstrative of the power of faith.[144]

[141] K.E. Kvam, L.S. Schearing, and V.H. Ziegler (eds.), *Evan and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Indiana, 1999), pp. 108-155; E. Aydeet Fischer-Mueller, 'Yaldabaoth: the Gnostic Female Principle in Its Fallenness' in *Novum Testamentum* 32(1) (1990), pp. 79-95; and M. David Litwa, *Desiring Divinity: Self-deification in Early Jewish and Christian Mythmaking* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 47-64.
[142] For Simeon Stylite see: J. Bolland, *Acta Sanctorum* Jan 1 (1643) p. 171. For a recounting of the thirteenth-century legend of the Tarasque see: J. di Voragine, *The Golden Legend* trans. C. Stace (London, 1998), pp. 183-184
[143] M. Gheeraerts the Younger, *The Rainbow Portrait* (c.1600-1602).
[144] D.L. Ehresmann, *The brazen serpent in the works of Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop: a study in Lutheran iconography* (New York, 1962).

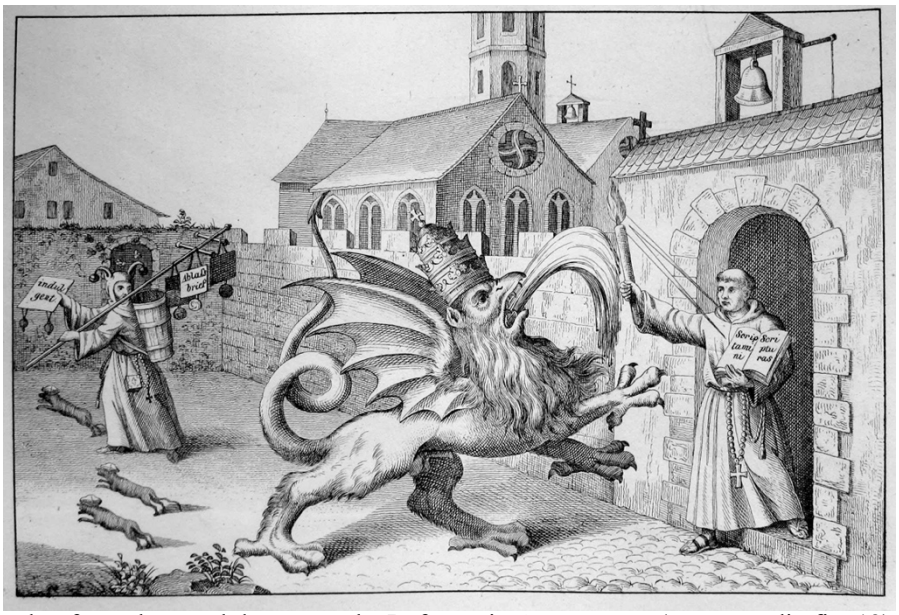
However, the bad is far more visible and less obscure than the good, and while the entire corpus of cultural and religious materials which would inform the connotations early modern German-speaking people might ascribe to serpents and dragons do not wholly characterise them as being evil, serpentine beasts usually manifest in a malevolent manner. Whether as the forms of Satan in the Bible, as terrifying monsters for saints and mythical heroes to slay, or as cultural icons across a range of arts and material objects – serpents and dragons are creatures of fear and greed occupying an unenviable place as amongst the most despicable of beasts. The fact that, for the reasons explored in this section, Lonitzer ranks these creatures so lowly is reason enough to make them attractive symbols for use by propagandists in the emerging world of print culture in the late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries. Such reviled symbols would transpire to be very useful to the Protestant Reformers who were raised within this rich German culture of serpents and dragons and the use of these creatures in religious rhetoric. As this thesis shall demonstrate, the peculiarities of German culture and the Protestant Reformation create a Christian understanding of serpents and dragons which saw an apogee of the association between these symbols and Satan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

2.0 THE REFORMATION

No discussion of European religious culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can possibly leave out the turbulence of the Protestant Reformation which shook every aspect of life as the Western Christian Church shattered. The moment Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the doors of Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517 signalled the beginning of a turmoil that would see the scaly head of monstrous serpents rise once again to embody the fears and anxieties of the German-speaking peoples. As the emergent Protestant strand of Christianity clashed with Roman Catholicism in civil discourse, religious propaganda, and bloody battle, serpents and dragons were picked up by artists and polemicists as one of the many cultural touchstones that would be used in this war of ideas. The next three chapters of this thesis shall take the serpent and the dragon, cultural icons that freely cross between the realms of folkloric fantasy and religious dogma and analyse how they evolved in this turbulent period of would-be dragon-slayers and imagined monsters in the shape of men.

In Chapter 2.1 we shall see how Reformation authors and artists used the dragon as a useful iconographical shorthand for ideas of apocalyptic evil as well as a means by which to incorporate the connotations of the monster which we discussed in the previous chapter into their work. This can be seen most clearly in the example of the pope-dragon motif which used the body of the dragon to bind a host of negative concepts to the papacy as well as create a vehicle for the development of Protestant identity through the definition of everything that the Reformation was opposed to. In Chapter 2.2 we will witness these ideas being further leveraged in the art of miracles, using the 'Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch*' as a case study to see how serpentine monsters became powerful symbols of terror that warned people against sin. Finally, in Chapter 2.3 this thesis shall examine how serpents and dragons could become

gendered, particularly in artworks surrounding St George's slaying of the dragon of Silene and in the witch trials of the early modern period, where women were routinely victimised by authors and artists depicting dragons either taking on female sexual characteristics to present female sexuality as monstrous, or by painting women as damning themselves as witches by entering into sexual contracts with diabolic dragons. This thesis argues that serpents and dragons therefore became powerful tools in the hands of those who wished to 'other' their enemies whether those unfortunates were powerful popes or innocent women accused of witchcraft – associating them with all the cultural and religious connotations of evil that serpentine monsters held, warning the elect against their sins, and creating a Protestant identity that stood in opposition to them.



Luther faces the papal dragon on the Reformation's centenary (see appendix fig. 12).[1]

The Reformers often employed not only the symbols of serpents and dragons in their work, but also the broader dragon-slaying narrative that they were associated with - adding a legendary, mythologising aspect to Reformation artwork. Indeed, Martin Luther himself took

[1] Anon, *Luther against the papacy* (Leipzig, 1617).

on the role of dragon-slaying St George in several Reformation woodcuts, the first of which was Lucas Cranach the Elder's (1472-1553) *Martin Luther as Junker Jörg* (1521-22) which was composed while Luther was hiding in Wartburg castle and distributed after he left – Luther returning from Worms having 'slain' the Roman dragon in the defence of his theses (see appendix fig. 10).[2] One of Cranach's students, Heinrich Göding the Elder (1531-1606), would similarly cast Luther in the noble figure of 'Knight George' years later in his *Martin Luther in Patmos* (1598) and though there are no dragons to be seen in either image; the implication is that the job is already done, and we are seeing Luther in all his pseudo-saintly triumph (see appendix fig. 10 and 11).[3] One hundred years after the birth of the Reformation, an anonymous woodcut of Luther literally facing down a dragon would be created in 1617, but in this case, Luther is not raising the sword that Göding imagines him as having, but rather he repels the papal-crowned dragon with a torch set alight by God's word and wears not armour but instead his simple monk's robe (see appendix fig. 12).[4] He repels this draconic Papal Antichrist from the entrance to the Church, and while no killing is involved and the parallels to St George are less strong, Luther is still very much cast in the mould of a dragon-slayer.

In later centuries Luther was even directly given such a title. In 1837, Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen (1780-1856) gave a light-hearted paper on Luther where he claimed that the reformer belonged more to the realm of myth than history – his life too full of

[2] L. Cranach, *Martin Luther as Junker Jörg* (1521-22). For more on the collaborations between Cranach and Luther, see: S. Ozment, *The Serpent and the Lamb: Cranach, Luther, and the Making of the Reformation* (Yale, 2013).
[3] H. Göding the Elder, *Martin Luther in Patmos* (1598).
[4] Anon, *Luther against the papacy* (Leipzig, 1617). For more on this artwork see: C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, 2003), p. 226; R. Kastner, *Geistlicher Rauffhandel: Form und Funktion der Illustrierten Flugblätter zum Reformationsjubiläum 1617 in Ihrem historischen und publizistischen Kontext* (Frankfurt, 1982), pp. 307-312; and W. Harms, M. Schilling, and A. Wang (eds.), *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16 und 17 Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlung der HerzogAugust-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel* Vol. 2 (Tübingen, 1980), pp. 224-225.

mythological tropes to treat him as a mere historical figure. Amongst the many examples he gives, Hagen likens Luther to Siegfried and calls him a dragon-slayer who fought off both Pope and Emperor at Worms.[5] The 'Luther Myth' draws upon many legends, and it is unsurprising to find the co-option of the dragon-slaying narrative amongst the story of his exploits from both the very beginning of the Reformation to hundreds of years after his death.[6]

In contrast, while Luther himself has been lauded as this near-mythological dragon-slayer – his own writings used the imagery of serpentine beasts as a means of denigration and the spreading of fear. In his most well-known anti-Semitic work, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), Luther compared Jewish people with the basilisk, the legendary monstrous king of serpents possessed of a deadly gaze, saying that: 'Wherever you see or hear a Jew teaching, do not think otherwise than that you are hearing a poisonous Basiliskus who with his face poisons and kills people'.[7] The ugly side of the Reformation's use of serpentine creatures sits starkly against the triumphs of Luther's 'Junker Jörg' persona, denigrating their perceived foes as monsters while they themselves take the heroic roles of dragon-slayer. Whether it was men of high office like the Pope, or persecuted minorities, the Reformation saw them tarred with all the vile characteristics of serpents and dragons we have explored in this thesis so far.

This section of the thesis is comprised of three chapters which examine serpents and dragons as they appear in the Reformation period as tools of derision and fear, as well as

[5] F.H. von der Hagen, 'Beweiß, daß Dr Martin Luther nie existiert hat,' in *Allgemeine Deutsche Lehrerzeitung,* 62 (Berlin, 1910), pp. 548-550. Originally published in the *Berliner Conversations-Blatt* 32 (Berlin, 1838). For recent discussion on this work, see: C. Scott Dixon, 'Martin Luther and the Reformation in Historical Thought, 1517-2017) in *An Irish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 106, No. 424, Reformation 500 (Winter 2017/18), pp. 404-416.
[6] The most recent and comprehensive works on Luther's life and legacy are by Lyndal Roper, see: L. Roper, *Martin Luther Renegade and Prophet* (London, 2016); and L. Roper, *Living I was your plague: Martin Luther's world and legacy* (Princeton, 2021).
[7] M. Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (Wittenberg, 1543), p. 64. *'Und wo du einen Jüden sihest oder hörest leren/ da dencke nicht anderst/ denn das du einen gifftigen Basilisken hörest/ der auch mit dem gesicht die Leute vergifftet und tödtet'.*

means of forming mythologised religious identities. These three chapters examine how the Reformers reinterpreted and utilised the serpents of folklore in religious rhetoric, building upon the knowledge we have gained from the first chapter of the place serpents and dragons had in German culture. These chapters investigate why serpents and dragons were effective rhetorical tools for teaching the German people, examining what made them useful cultural shorthand for notions of avarice and chaos, and how they were employed in Protestant polemic to suggest such ideas in apocalyptic dialogue.

The first chapter examines serpents and dragons in Protestant iconography, adding to our understanding of how Reformation artists and authors took advantage of folklore and popular culture to add extra layers of depth and meaning to their work. This chapter will build off the works of figures like Robert Scribner and Bridget Heal with investigations into Protestant art, identity, and belief – covering a symbol that has not received much attention but one that adds to our understanding of Protestant self-fashioning.[8] This section will demonstrate how serpents and dragons were more than just religious symbols of apocalypse; they also embodied a host of other concepts and allegories due to their entrenchment in the German cultural psyche, making their employment by Protestants a multi-layered rhetorical device rather than a simple allusion to the Antichrist. This is particularly evident in the example of the pope-dragon motif which this chapter explores in detail – demonstrating how Reformation artists made the most of their cultural heritage to make their religious arguments and helped to form a Protestant identity.

The second chapter focuses specifically upon serpents and dragons in the art of miracles, using the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* (*Book of Miracles*) as a case study to

[8] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981); and B. Heal, *A Magnificent Faith, Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017); and K. Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives. Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago, 1989).

examine how these creatures variously appeared as terrifying avatars of Satan or as ill omens sent by God to portend coming disaster. By examining the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* and the sources that inspired it, we can see that serpentine beasts were employed in much the same way as they were used in the confessionally-charged iconography of the previous chapter – they were a useful symbol that could communicate a range of ideas simply and effectively to their intended audience of the German-speaking people. Though, while in the first chapter of this section we will see that the dragon became tangled in anti-papal propaganda, the fear the symbol projects in a miraculous context is a much more general one. This chapter will also add to the growing scholarship surrounding the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* by critically examining one of the most repeated yet overlooked motifs found within its folios, one which draws heavily upon the Protestant conceptual landscape discussed in the previous chapter and speaks to the religious sensitivities of those who compiled the book of miracles.

The final chapter concerning the Protestant Reformation looks at the complex interplay between these serpentine monsters and gender, with a particular focus on witchcraft. The chapter starts with a look into the gendered nature of serpents and dragons, and particularly their relationship with women, examining the gendering or sexualisation of serpents and dragons in textual mediums and iconography. This part of the thesis adds to scholarship done by historians like Samantha Riches on the gendered dragon and St George as well as exploring the gendered power dynamics of the serpents and dragons we have met so far in this thesis.[9] This chapter then moves on to the appearance of monstrous serpents in the witch trials of early modern Germany. Some of the sources in the chapter that are drawn from the Coburg archive have been previously examined within an economic context by Johannes

[9] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178, and S. Riches, ‘‘Hyr wombe insaciate’: the iconography of the feminised monster’ in C. Meek, and C. Lawless (eds.), *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women Pawns or Players?* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 177-196.

Dillinger, but this chapter moves beyond his analysis by reframing these dragons of the witch trials within critical gender frameworks - examining what role gender played in the construction of dragon narratives as well as what role dragons played in gender narratives.[10]

We shall see how the symbol of the serpent and the dragon was used in the Reformation as a symbol of fear and hatred, uniting Protestants in a shared worldview that was radically anti-papal, eschatologically miraculous, and dangerously misogynistic. These chapters will demonstrate how the serpentine beasts of our previous chapter slithered into aspects of life as diverse as Bibles, coinage, newssheets, and witch trials; bringing ill will and terror wherever they went and embodying the monstrous anxieties of early modern German religious culture.

[10] J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015), pp. 453-459; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.

2.1 SERPENTS AND DRAGONS IN PROTESTANT ICONOGRAPHY

Protestant visual culture was a diverse iconographical language that ranged from crass scatological humour to sophisticated classical allegory, born from the varied philosophies of the many different artists, theologians, and printmakers who found themselves swept up in the fervour of the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, part of the success of the Reformation is often attributed to the popular engagement incited by the use of images in the work of Protestant materials, with the most important messages of Luther and his fellow Reformers being transmitted to a wide audience in this form. Employed alongside other forms of evangelising as diverse as sermons, music, theatre, and pamphleteering, Protestant iconography was one of several ways in which the message of the Reformation was spread, being particularly effective due to the visual medium being much better suited to conveying a mass message to a large, often illiterate, population.[11]

Lucas Cranach's 1521 *Passional Christi und Antichristi* is a particularly evocative example of the artist's excellent use of iconography to share the message of the early Reformation, and also elegantly displays the anti-papal strand of reformed art and identity we shall discuss throughout this chapter. *Passional Christi und Antichristi* is a pamphlet composed of twenty-six woodcuts that served to contrast the respective lives of Jesus and the Pope, though it is important to note that while the sitting pope at the time of its publication, Leo X (1475-1521), is certainly guilty of many of the specific crimes this pamphlet highlights, these woodcuts address the Papacy as an office more generally rather than him individually. Presented in a series of thirteen pairs; one image displays a scene from the life of Christ, whilst opposite it the Pope is shown engaging in some form of contrasting

[11] For an overview on the diverse forms of Protestant evangelising see: A. Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005).

contemporary activity that the Reformers despised the Papacy for participating in. This contrast and physical opposition on the pages served to lead the viewer in forming the opinion that Jesus and the Papacy were total binaries – Christ and Antichrist. In these sets of images Christ rejects a crown whilst opposite the Pope embraces rulership and use of an army, Jesus washes the feet of the poor and needy while the Pope has the princes of the world kiss his, and Jesus runs the money-lenders out of the temple while the Pope happily sells indulgences in the halls of the Vatican, amongst others.[12] The series comes to its conclusion, not with another disparagement of something the Pope had done, but by depicting contrasting scenes of the future: Christ ascending into heaven, while opposite the Pope falls downwards and is dragged into the pits of Hell by a horde of expectant demons.[13] Each image has a short section of accompanying text that serves to further expound the message of the woodcuts for the literate audience, but these few lines of exposition and explanation were far from entirely necessary due to the sheer strength of the images alone. The woodcuts' simple, comparative form relied only upon the viewer's prior knowledge of the life of Jesus. The images demanded understanding of only a few key scenes of Christ's life that would have been well known in popular religious culture of the time, thus making the contrast with the Papacy easy to understand and his connection to the Antichrist patently clear to literate and illiterate audiences alike.[14]

Protestant visual culture thrived on this kind of immediacy and simplicity to understand, hence why it is unsurprising that serpents and dragons, powerful cultural symbols

[12] L. Cranach, *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521).
[13] Ibid.
[14] For more on this work and its value as propaganda, see: B. Dykema, 'Reading Visual Rhetoric: Strategies of Piety and Propaganda in Lucas Cranach the Elder's Passional Christi und Antichristi', in J. Romaine, and L. Stratford (eds.), *ReVisioning: Critical Methods of Seeing Christianity in the History of Art* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 225-241; and G. Fleming, 'On the Origins of the Passional Christi und Antichristi and Lucas Cranach the Elder's Contribution to Reformation Polemics in the Iconography of the Passional', in *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1973), pp. 351-368.

as we have seen in the prior chapter, are sometimes chosen by artists for their work. Their message is simple to understand and like Christ's life, the connotations of serpents and dragons were well known from popular culture. It is important to note that this chapter will mostly focus on Protestant works during the Reformation largely, as we shall see shortly, due to the general failures of Catholic rebuttals to reformed propaganda (full discussion of the Catholic engagement with serpentine monsters can be found in chapter 3.1). Indeed, as we shall see later in this chapter, direct rebuttals to ideas like the Papal-Antichrist were often slow, indirect, and inaccessible theological works compared to the sheer immediacy of seeing one picture of Christ doing a good thing opposite a picture of the Pope doing a bad thing.[15]

Within this apocalyptic milieu of Reformation visual culture, serpents and dragons often featured as rhetorical tools. They commanded a particularly potent place in Protestant iconography due to the dual role they held for the German people, being symbols that were prominent in popular lay culture as we have seen in the previous chapter, as well as being biblically significant icons. Due to this dual familiarity that serpents and dragons had with the general population in early modern Germany, it could be exploited by Reformation propagandists on more than one level. While the signifier of any given image of serpents or dragons made by Protestants is that of apocalyptic or diabolic connection due to scriptural associations in Revelation, the further possible allusions to popular lay culture add an extra depth of meaning. The semiotics of such resonant cultural symbols have thus far been overlooked by historians, despite serpents and dragons being relevant from the very earliest pieces of Protestant iconography.

[15] For example, Francisco Ribera's *In Sacrum Beati Ioannis Apostoli, & Evangelistiae Apocalypsin Commentari* (1585) which sought to prove the pope could not be the Antichrist, was a lengthy Latin text that took years to compile.



Cranach's depiction of the Papal Ass (see appendix fig. 13).[16]

Serpentine and draconic imagery appear as iconographical devices in Protestant propaganda at the beginning of the 1520s, one notable instance being found in Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and Luther's joint pamphlet entitled: *The Papal Ass of Rome and the Monk Calf of Freyberg* (1523).[17] This pamphlet describes two monstrous births; the first a legendary one that was alleged to have been observed in Rome in 1496, and the latter a contemporary actual birth. These two tracts were written by Melanchthon and Luther respectively and illustrated by Lucas Cranach the Elder. In the former, Melanchthon describes the monstrous creature pulled from the Tiber as a chimeric being with each of its constituent parts holding a specific symbolic meaning (see appendix fig. 13). For example: the head is

[16] P. Melanchthon, and M. Luther, *The Papal Ass of Rome and the Monk Calf of Freyberg* (Wittenberg, 1523).
[17] Ibid.

that of an ass representing how the head of the church is inept; the female torso of the beast with its exposed breasts represents the un-ashamedness of a lewd clergy, and the face of an old man on the buttocks is indicative of the decrepit state of the Papal office and the nearing end of its power.[18] Also incorporated into the design is the head and neck of a dragon which Melanchthon describes as, though it is not depicted as doing so, spewing out fire that stands for the damaging bulls and literature produced by the Papacy. Cranach and Melanchthon's composite creature was reprinted many times (notably in 1535, 1545, and 1549) and was a successful piece of propaganda that used the medium of the allegorical monstrous birth to show God's displeasure at the Papacy.[19]

Protestant visual culture, like any new symbolic language, relied heavily upon the existing iconographical language of its audience which was far from uniform across social standing, education, and geography. Though the image of the Papal Ass is not wholly original, the first pictorial depiction coming from the Bohemian artist Wenzel von Olmütz (c. 1495-1500), it was chosen for reproduction and reinterpretation by Reformers because it had aspects which Melanchthon, Luther, and Cranach believed held cultural resonance with the intended audience of the German masses who would understand the meaning whether they were receptive to Reformation ideologies or not.[20] All the elements of the Papal Ass would be familiar to a popular audience from either their everyday lives or collective cultural imaginings. Indeed, it is important to point out that while the two mythological creatures of the griffin and dragon that were incorporated into the Papal Ass did not hold as immediate a physical presence in the world of an average German as an ass or old man did, these creatures

[18] Ibid.
[19] J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), pp. 77-79.
[20] For more on the history of this image see: L.P. Buck, *The Roman Monster: An Icon of the Papal Antichrist in Reformation Polemics* (Kirksville, 2014).

were still thought to be real in the world and occupied instead a mental presence via folklore and popular belief. It is through these associations with the already known, whether it be in everyday life or popular culture, that greater meaning than just initial monstrousness is gleaned.

The visual language of woodcuts gains great depth when understood in terms of iconographical intertextuality. The meaning of any given image that is used by Reformers is both bound in the prior knowledge and expectations of its audience, while at the same time also adding to the corpus of materials that make up the popular understanding of that image. Whether intentional or not, the evocation of a particular piece of iconography brings with it a web of cultural interconnectivity. For example, the dragon's head that makes up part of the Papal Ass is not just an image in isolation; it subconsciously draws upon all the pieces of related media its audience has experienced that involves dragons and attached those associated meanings to itself. Indeed, the image that Cranach created is not actually breathing fire, yet when Melanchthon tells us that it is, an audience accepts that this is in the realm of possibility due to the myriad depictions of fire-breathing dragons they have seen or heard about previously.[21]

Protestant propaganda often worked because of such an appeal to ideas in the popular consciousness; the audience's minds filling in the necessary gaps with insights gleaned from their pre-existing understandings.[22] This is doubly effective as it not only allows an easier transmission of information and gets across the point of a given image with great efficacy, but it also prompts the audience to engage with the imagery and draw their own conclusions.

[21] The firework spewing dragons we encountered in the previous chapter are a particularly memorable and sensorially evocative example of fire-breathing dragons with which people may have been familiar with.
[22] For more on this kind of semiotic study see: U. Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1976); U. Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington, 1984); P. Trifonas (ed.), *International Handbook of Semiotics* (Dordrecht, 2015); and D. Chandler, *Semiotics* (New York, 2017).

Even if they may be somewhat guided, conclusions reached by one's own self are much more powerful than didactic messages. For this end, common symbols like those of animals and creatures of popular folklore like dragons are especially effective due to their firm entrenchment in the German cultural imagination, thus making it easier for Cranach and Melanchthon's audience to make the connections they want them to. The Papal Ass is effective because not only is the combination itself monstrous, but its constituent parts are each recognisable and easily interpreted. It is for this reason that the familiar motifs of serpents and dragons are not only chosen regularly, but when done so also tend to be depicted very similarly by Protestant artists regardless of medium. Some images, like the three-headed pope-dragon we shall encounter later in this chapter, appear virtually identically across media as diverse as rhetorical pamphlets, song-sheets, and even beer mugs due to their sheer effectiveness at conveying the messages of the Reformation.[23]

The study of iconography like this has been a developing field in the past few decades, particularly since the pivotal 1981 work of Robert Scribner, though its semiotics have largely been considered in terms of theological meaning.[24] Supernatural serpents appearing in contemporary materials have been most commonly placed solely within an apocalyptic framework by historians, though this chapter will seek to both look more specifically at what those apocalyptic connotations entailed when using serpentine iconography as well as what other themes and ideas are conjured by specifically drawing upon symbols that, as we have seen, hold great cultural resonance to the German-speaking people of this period.

[23] See for example: Anon, *Satire on Interim* (1548); Anon, *Satire on Papacy* (1555); and A. Morrall, 'Protestant Pots: Morality and Social Ritual in the Early Modern Home' in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 263-273.
[24] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981).

First though, it is worth reiterating the methodology of Scribner that remains core to the approaches of reading the images of this period. He begins his celebrated 1981 volume *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* on the subject by describing how difficult it can be to assess the effectiveness of Reformation propaganda. He notes that it is hard for historians to assess literacy in this time which makes it hard to gauge how many people were able to engage with the material in the first place, and that while numbers of editions can give us an understanding of a given piece of material's popularity relative to others, it cannot reveal its overall impact on the general population.[25] We can however see some of the effectiveness of particular pieces of propaganda in 'broad cultural traces', i.e. images, phrases, or ideas recurring and becoming common use.[26] The subject of this thesis, serpents and dragons (particularly the pope-dragon we will see later), enjoyed decades of continuous use in Protestant propaganda suggesting that they held a good level of effectiveness at communicating the intended Reformed messages when compared to other more obscure motifs like the pope-as-wild man.

Scribner's approach at analysing each image is a blend of three related but distinct fields: iconography, iconology, and semiotics (or semiology). Scribner defines these fields in the following ways though, as we have seen in the introduction, they have been defined somewhat differently by others: iconography is the description and classification of images, while the related study of iconology is the specific study of the function of images in allegory and symbolism, and semiotics (as we have already covered in the introduction) is the study of 'signs'.[27] It is worth noting that the terminology of 'paradigms' refers to slightly different

[25] Ibid., pp. 1-13.
[26] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[27] Ibid., pp. 1-13. For more on iconology see: E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Theme In the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1939); E. Panofsky, 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art' in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (New York, 1955), pp. 26-54.

things between these fields; in semiotics it refers to a range of images that might have been chosen, whereas in iconography paradigms are conceptual models an artist may have drawn from.[28] The serpents and dragons found in the images examined in this chapter draw upon a range of different 'languages' of signs and paradigms (of both manners, though usage in this chapter shall largely be concerned with the terminology of iconography unless otherwise stated) which have been explored in the previous chapter.

This chapter shall take into consideration these approaches and seeks to place the iconography of the Reformation within a wider serpentine/draconic paradigm. For while scholars have examined the woodcuts of the Reformation before and explained how they were used as pieces of apocalyptic religious polemic, the focus of this chapter will instead be to understand why Reformers chose to use serpents and dragons in their imagery and explore what new avenues of interpretation that engenders. This section will analyse the depth of meaning that serpents and dragons had in Protestant iconography, offering an explanation for their use as a rhetorical device and examining how Reformers used these familiar symbols in their propaganda, particularly with regards to the evolving pope-dragon motif, to create more than just an apocalyptic narrative drawn from scripture.

[28] See: D. Chandler, *Semiotics* (New York, 2017).

Serpents and dragons as rhetorical tools

As we have seen with Melanchthon's Papal Ass, Protestants favoured the use of symbols that were familiar to their audience in order to make their messages as clear as possible to their audience.[29] In particular, the use of well-known icons from folklore and popular culture allowed the Reformers to bypass the problem of image-literacy as even people who were not well versed in symbolism could form the intended associations.[30] While the uneducated may struggle to understand complex tableaux that draw upon classical imagery like 'Karlstadt's Wagen' (1519), seeing a dragon wearing the Pope's hat instantly draws to mind the many tales of draconic greed and evil they would have learnt as a child like the legends of Seyfrid or St George.[31] In this way Reformers could take advantage of their cultural heritage to make their religious messages accessible to the widest possible audience whether this was within their sermons and pamphlets, or in this case: iconography.

Serpents and dragons in particular were effective tools due to their prominent position in the German cultural imagination, most apparent in the abandonment of Bible-accurate depictions of the Antichrist by Reformers in favour of more recognisable draconic imagery. This is discussed further in relation to the pope-dragon motif later in this chapter, but first we must understand how Reformers conceived the physical appearance of the beasts of apocalypse and the Antichrist. In scripture, we have the following descriptions, taken here from the 1534 Luther translation of the Bible:

[29] See R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981).
[30] For more, see: See: A. Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005); J.L. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago, 2004); B. Heal, *A Magnificent Faith, Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017); and K. Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives. Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago, 1989).
[31] L. Roper and J. Spinks, 'Karlstadt's Wagen: The First Visual Propaganda for the Reformation' in *Art History* April 2017, Vol. 40(2), pp. 256-285. See also: J.D. Evans, 'Semiotics and Traditional Lore: The Medieval Dragon Tradition' in *Journal of Folklore Research* 22 (1985), pp. 85-112.

- The Great Red Dragon (Satan) has seven heads, ten horns, seven crowns, and the appearance of a dragon: 'And another dragon appeared in heaven/ And behold/ a great red dragon/ that had seven heads/ and ten horns/ and on its horns seven crowns/ and ist tail also took a third part oft he stars/ and thre them onto the earth'.[32]
- The Beast from the sea (identified in Christian tradition as the Antichrist) has seven heads, ten horns, ten crowns, appears as a leopard with a bear's feet and a lion's mouth: 'And I stepped on the sand oft he seas/ and saw a beast rising out oft he sea/ that had seven heads and ten horns/ and on ist horns seven crowns/ and on each head a blasphemous name./ And the beast/ that I saw/ was like a leopard/ and ist feet as a bear's feet/ and ist mouth like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave him his strenght and his stature and great power. And I saw one of its heads/ as if it were mortally wounded/ and his mortal wound was healed.'[33]
- The Beast from the earth (The false prophet) is more simply described as having two horns like a lamb, and sounds like a dragon: 'And I see another one rising from the earth/ and had two horns/ like the Lamb/ and speaks like the dragon'.[34]
- The Scarlet Beast ridden by the Whore of Babylon is also worth mentioning due to the creature's similarity to the other beasts. It is rose-coloured (typically translated as scarlet in English), has ten horns, and is covered in blasphemous names: 'And I saw the woman sitting on a rosy-coloured animal/ that had the names of blasphemy/ and

[32] 'Die Offenbarung 12' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534). *'Und es erschein ein ander seichen im himel/ Und sihe/ ein grosser roter Drach/ der hatte sieben heubter/ und zehen hörner/ und auff seinen heubten sieben kronen/ und sein schwants soch den dritten teil der sternen/ und warff sie auff die erden'.*
[33] 'Die Offenbarung 13' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534). '*Und ich trat an den sand des meeres/ und sahe ein Thier aus dem meer steigen/ das hatte sieben heubter und zehen hörner/ und auff seinen hörnern sieben kronen/ und auf seinen heubten namen der lefterung. Und das Thier/ das ich sahe/ war gleich einem Pardel/ und seinen füsse als Beren füsse/ und sein mund eines Lewen mund. Und der Drach gab im seine krafft/ und seinen stuel/ und grosse macht. Und ich sahe seiner heubt eines/ als were es tödlich wund/ und seine tödlich wund ward heil'.*
[34] 'Die Offenbarung 13' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534). *'Und ich sehe ein ander their auffsteigen von der erden/ und hatte zwey hörner/ gleich wie das Lamb/ und redet wie der Drache'.*

had ten horns', and further on in the text it is also described as having seven heads 'and the beast/ that carries her/ has seven heads'.[35]



Cranach's Illustrations to Apocalypse 11, 13, and 16 (from left to right respectively) from Luther's 1522 *Septembertestament* (see appendix fig. 14).[36]

In Cranach's images for Luther's 1522 *Septembertestament,* the leopardine Antichrist described in scripture is never depicted, instead it appears solely in draconic form (see Illustrations to Apocalypse 11, 13, and 16 in appendix fig. 14).[37] In Luther's 1534 complete translation of the Bible, the artist (whose identity is unknown and could be an individual or group of artists working in Cranach's workshop) does change the beast in Illustration to Apocalypse 13 to include more mammalian rather than reptilian features, though does not do the same for the other two images and leaves them as dragons (see appendix fig. 16, fig. 17,

[35] 'Die Offenbarung 17' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534). *'Und ich sahe das weib sitzen auff einem rosinfarben thier/ das war vol namen der lesterung/ und hatte zehen hörner', 'und von dem Thier/ das sie tregt/ und hat sieben heubter'.*
[36] L. Cranach, 'Illustration to Apocalpyse 11', 'Illustration to Apocalpyse 13', and 'Illustration to Apocalpyse 16' in *Septembertestament* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1522).
[37] Ibid.

and fig. 18).[38] It was simply more effective to use draconic imagery for several reasons: it was more familiar to a German audience than the exotic features of leopards and lions, more familiar to and easier for artists to create, and dragons held culturally significant connotations that made it a multi-layered rhetorical image. Leopards certainly do not figure largely, if at all, in sixteenth-century German popular culture and did not hold the wealth of meaning as an icon as did the dragon.

The only spotted big cat that might have been familiar to an early modern person would be the mythical Panther which did appear in some coats-of-arms in the Germanic speaking lands, but it is a rare occurrence and examples are often lacking characteristic spots, the arms of Barenburg being a notable exception. It is important to note that this creature is not the same as the black panther, a melanistic colour variant of the leopard, but was a beast of folklore believed to possess sweet breath (portrayed as flames in heraldic depictions) that attracted all beasts except the dragon, who was its enemy. Instances of this 'Panther Incensed' appear in many medieval bestiaries such as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (c.600-25) and Bartolomeus Angelicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* (c.1240), and while it was familiar enough to the nobility of Europe that several of them adopted it as their badge, notably Henry VI of England (1421-1471), it does not appear to have been a feature of wider popular culture.[39] Reformation artists, if they were actually familiar with the sweet-breathed Panther of legend, may have chosen to not use the characteristics of the Leopard on their depictions of the Antichrist so as to avoid conflation with Panther-folklore, which does not hold the desired connotations that dragon folklore had. Indeed, it is telling that the artist who designed *Illustration to Apocalypse 13* in the 1534 Bible did not include the characteristic spots of a

[38] Anon, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 13' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534).
[39] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* (c.600-25); and Bartolomeus Angelicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* (c.1240).

leopard, instead approximating scales and retaining the wings of the earlier draconic Cranach woodcut (see appendix fig. 17).[40]



Anon, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 11' in *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1534) (see appendix fig. 16).[41]

Both the *Septembertestament* and 1534 Bible depict the beast (commonly associated with the Antichrist) in Revelation 11:7 as a dragon (see appendix fig. 14 and fig. 16).[42] This monster is not given a physical description in the Bible, yet despite its associations with the Antichrist the artists have chosen to depict it as a dragon instead – likely to convey a more generalised and accessible sense of apocalyptic evil. This artistic choice is repeated by subsequent artists such as Hans Sebald Beham (1500-1550) and the anonymous artist of the

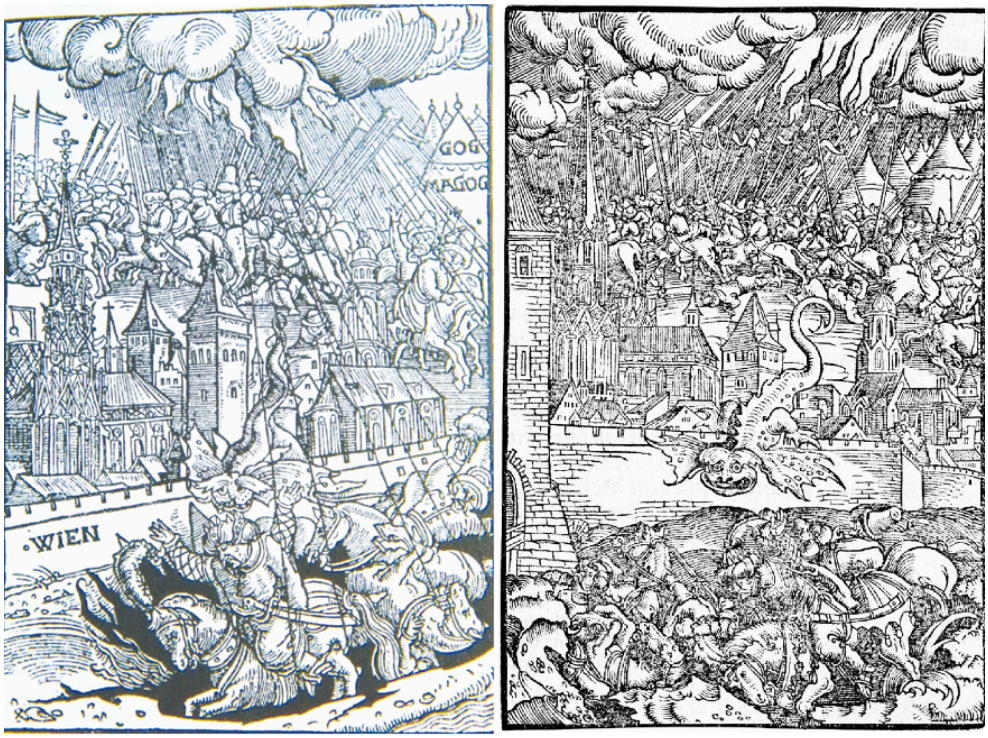
[40] While one may expect that the same blocks, or parts of the same blocks, may have been simply re-used this does not appear to be the case. Indeed, it appears that while the illustrator of the 1534 Bible was familiar with Cranach's earlier woodcuts, or at least imitations of them by the likes of Hans Holbein the Younger, they made new blocks entirely for their work. This is a theme amongst the images presented in this chapter, as while certain ideas and images borrow from one another, at no point does it appear that the same physical blocks were used to make different dragons.
[41] Anon, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 11' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534).
[42] L. Cranach, 'Illustration to Apocalpyse 11' in *Septembertestament* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1522); and Anon, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 11' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534).

Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* (see Chapter 2.2).[43] Indeed, Charles Zika in his discussion on pieces of wonder literature compiled by Johann Jakob Wick (1522-1588) notes that in a woodcut of Revelation 11 'a devouring dragon with its long serpentine tail… would have been immediately understood as visual cues that identified this scene with the dramas of the Apocalypse'.[44] The visual identifier of evil did not have to be a monster resembling the specific physical description of an apocalyptic beast to fully encapsulate eschatological doom, a dragon in its most recognisable guise was enough.

Furthermore, we see the image of the dragon completely overtake any distinction between the various beasts of apocalypse – with *Illustration to Apocalypse 16* depicting a single dragon rather than the three distinct entities of the Great Red Dragon and both the Beasts from the sea and land (see appendix fig. 14 and fig. 18).[45] Having a single monster take the place of three goes some way to simplifying the composition of the image and replaces three potentially complex and bizarre creatures with one, more simple to understand image of evil. This choice was repeated in the 1534 Bible (see appendix fig. 18), and in images based off it such as Folio. 189 of the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* (see Chapter 2.2, and appendix fig. 57).[46] Indeed, dragons and draconic characteristics were more accessible as a visual tool for symbolising evil, particularly apocalyptic evil due to the presence of the Great Red Dragon in Revelations, so Reformation artists were more than happy to utilise them liberally and ignore the specifics of physical descriptors that distinguished the apocalyptic beasts in the Bible in

[43] See: H.S. Beham, *Typi in apocalypse Ioannis depicti* (Frankfurt, 1539), and see chapter 2.2 for discussion on *Book of Miracles*, fol. 185r.
[44] C. Zika, 'Disaster, Apocalypse, Emotions and Time in Sixteenth-Century Pamphlets' in J. Spinks and C. Zika (eds.), *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400-1700* (London, 2018), pp. 69-90, 73. See: Zentralbibliothek Zurich, Zurich, Ms. F. 19, 'L.M., *Wunderzeichen/ Eines Erchrecklichen/ Seltzamen Erdbidems … Geschehen diss 1571. Jars/ im Hornung/ bey Homburd …* (Frankfurt, 1571)', fol. 251r.
[45] L. Cranach, 'Illustration to Apocalpyse 16' in *Septembertestament* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1522).
[46] Anon, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 16' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534); and see Chapter 2.2 for *Book of Miracles*, fol. 189r.

order to make more generalised comments on the Devil, the Antichrist, and the apocalypse in their work.[47]



Dragons and the 1529 Siege of Vienna. Anon's 1530 'Gog and Magog' (left) and Altdorfer's 1534 'The Destruction of Gog und Magog' (right) (see appendix fig. 19 and fig. 20).[48]

This use of dragons as a catch-all symbol of apocalyptic evil can be seen in various mediums of Protestant polemic, including other parts of early Lutheran Bibles beyond those discussed previously. In several woodcuts equating the Turks with the legendary figures of Gog and Magog in these Bibles, a dragon can be seen accompanying the Turkish armies during their siege of Vienna (1529) to signify their connection with Satan and/or the Antichrist.[49] The first by an anonymous artist in the 1530 edition of Luther's *Das Newe*

[47] While serpents and dragons appear elsewhere in the Bible (notably Genesis, Isiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms), the greater deal of Protestant engagement with them as symbols is within a millenarian context and thus most influenced by Revelation.
[48] Anon, 'Gog and Magog' in *Das Newe Testament* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1530); E. Altdorfer, 'The Destruction of Gog und Magog' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Lübeck, 1534).
[49] J. T. Moger, 'Gog at Vienna: Three Woodcut Images of the Turks as Apocalyptic Destroyers in Early Editions of the Luther Bible' in *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* Vol.3 No. 2 (2016), pp. 255-277.

Testament, shows a serpentine dragon following the Turkish cavalry into a fiery chasm – defeated they are being cast into the underworld (see appendix fig. 19).[50] A few years later Erhard Altdorfer (c.1480-1561) would reimagine the piece for the low-German version of Luther's complete Bible translation - giving the dragon some legs as well as a face more human (though one that is gurning cartoonishly) than that of the previous monster (see appendix fig. 20).[51] In both cases the dragon takes centre-stage, casting its malign influence directly over the depiction of the city of Vienna (identified in both images by a depiction of St Stephen's Cathedral, and the word: WIEN on the city walls in the first woodcut), though its face ,which appears melancholic in the first image and pained in the other, speaks to the defeat of its villainous designs for the Habsburg capital. In Luther's complete Bible translation of 1534, a scene depicting the Turks as Gog and Magog attacking Vienna appears again, though the aforementioned anonymous artist of this volume does not follow the composition laid out by either of the other two mentioned here (see appendix fig. 21).[52] Instead, a full battle scene is shown of Turks attacking the city walls and it is only the sultan who seems to be either rising out of or falling into a fiery pit in the bottom-right corner of the image. The dragon has been moved from the centre of the piece and can be found squashed into the corner, its head largely obscured under the sultan's horse. While the dragon is no longer the centre of attention, the artist perhaps choosing to move the creature to focus more upon the spectacle of warfare, it remains, as in the previous two pieces, a powerful symbol of eschatological evil whose precise physical form does not match the specifics of the biblical beasts of apocalypse – yet fully encapsulates the artist's intended messages in a manner easily recognised and understood by a large audience.

[50] Anon, 'Gog and Magog' in *Das Newe Testament* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1530).
[51] E. Altdorfer, 'The Destruction of Gog und Magog' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Lübeck, 1534).
[52] Anon, 'Gog and Magog' in *Biblia* trans. M. Luther (Wittenberg, 1534).

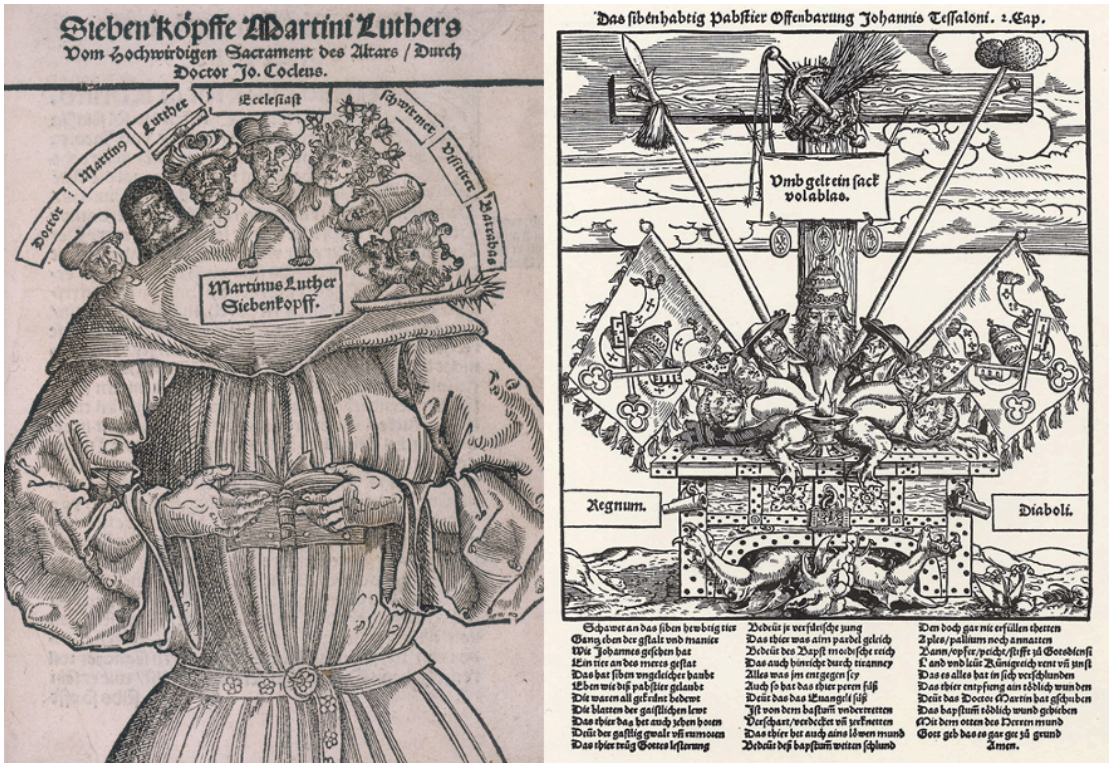
In another example of the dragon's use as a universal symbol of Christian evil, in a brief exchange of polemical woodcuts between Catholics and Protestants in 1529/30 we can see how Protestants much more effectively wielded the iconography of apocalypse and the Antichrist by using draconic imagery that was overall more suggestive of the Great Red Dragon than the Beast from the sea. The first woodcut is a Catholic attempt to label Luther as the Antichrist that would be somewhat vague and unclear in its message to the German audience who would already be more familiar with earlier, more direct Protestant iconography, and the second is the Protestant response which continues the established tradition of Reformation imagery and uses the much simpler and more effective pope-dragon motif as a vehicle for its message.

Hans Brosamer's (c.1490-1554) *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529) shows a multi-headed version of the titular reformer who is depicted reading an unspecified book, and is a rare example of Catholic Anti-Reformation visual propaganda which equates Luther with the Antichrist (see appendix fig. 22).[53] The seven heads given to Luther depict: a doctor, Martinus, Luther, a priest, a fanatic, a Church supervisor, and Barrabas; each being labelled in case the audience was unclear (though only really useful to a literate reader, showing the relative inadequacies of Catholic propaganda).[54] The implication is that Luther's opinions are

[53] H. Brosamer, *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529). The seven-headed Luther image would be reworked a few times, such as in Abraham Nagel's *The Heresy Tree* (1589) where a seven-headed Luther appears within the trunk of a tree depicting the many different branches of Protestantism. Many variations of *The Heresy Tree* existed, both Protestant and Catholic versions, which attacked the alleged roots of 'heresy'.

[54] For more on Catholic art and propaganda in this period see: J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), p. 74, J.L. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London, 2004), pp. 115-119; R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 232-233; S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1500-1600* (Yale, 1993); R. Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, 1999); P.M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley, 1993); K. Bostoen, 'Reformation, Counter-Reformation and Literary Propaganda in the Low Countries in the Sixteenth Century: The Case of Brother Cornelis', in N.S. Amos, A. Pettegree, and H. van Nierop (eds.), *The Education of a Christian Society. Humanism and the Reformation in Britain and the Netherlands* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 164-192.

as diverse as the many heads atop his body: confused, contradictory, and satanic if the number of heads is indeed an allusion to the beasts of apocalypse, though no one head is overly eschatological or beastly in nature. This woodcut was used as the cover to Johannes Cochlaeus's (1479-1552) work of the same name that attacked Luther's theology along similar lines.[55]



H. Brosamer's *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (left) and Anon's *The seven-headed papal beast* (right).[56]

Protestants responded a few years later with a much more effective pope-dragon image where the Catholic hierarchy is immediately and directly associated with a draconic, money-hoarding Satan in the anonymous woodcut: *The seven-headed papal beast* (1530) that does not require its audience to read tiny labels to understand its message, makes more explicit

[55] J. Cochlaeus, *Sieben Kopffe Martini Luthers* (1529).
[56] H. Brosamer, *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529); Anon, *The seven-headed papal beast* (1530).

appeals to monstrousness and apocalypse with the use of a draconic body, and makes significantly better use of the available space (see appendix fig. 23).[57] This image depicts a seven-headed beast (bearing heads of a pope, two cardinals, two bishops, and two monks) sat atop a money chest which serves as a perverted altar holding a Eucharistic chalice. This is then surrounded on either side by banners depicting the Papal emblems of the triple-tiara and crossed keys, and by a cross and various items of the Passion above. Directly above the central papal head in place of the traditional 'INRI' is a letter of indulgence reading 'Umb gelt ein sack vol ablas' promising a sack of indulgences in exchange for money from which hang three seals, the centre one bearing the Medici arms in reference to Pope Clement VII (1478-1534). At the bottom of the image, we have the message 'Regnum diaboli' and a reptilian demon leering from beneath the chest. The text below explains the image as the Pope and his court taking over and impersonating God's altar, usurping Jesus through appropriating the items of His Passion.[58] The central theme of the image is greed, with the trappings of Christ being used to facilitate the accumulation of wealth in a satanic perversion. The text below describes the biblical 'Beast from the sea' i.e., the Antichrist, but the image itself only matches the description in that both have seven heads, a common attribute amongst the beasts of the apocalypse. Indeed, the artist likely instead intends to evoke the Great Red Dragon or simply dragons as a whole in this image given the reptilian claws possessed by the papal beast (not the biblical Antichrist's bear's feet), the popular associations between dragons and greed, and the text reading 'Regnum Diaboli' is direct reference to the devil rather than to the Antichrist. The artist has ultimately chosen to ignore the particulars of the Antichrist's

[57] Anon, *The seven-headed papal beast* (1530).
[58] This contrast between Christ and the Pope continues the ideas we have already seen in L. Cranach, *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521), but the monstrous de-humanization of the Pope is taken even further.

description in the Bible and the text below in order to more effectively put across the themes of dragon-like greed and diabolic influence.

As modern historians like Spinks, Koerner, and Scribner have pointed out, the seven-headed Luther image simply is not as effective due to its weak message that Luther's work (implied by the book he is holding) is as confusing as the seven heads he has been given and it does not engage quite as robustly with the themes of monstrousness and the apocalypse as the Protestant example did.[59] For while Luther may possess seven-heads, a stronger visual link to Satan or the Antichrist is not present, and the theme of confusion is better presented elsewhere.[60] The seven-headed Martin Luther is not helped either by its very composition – the body of Luther (which adds nothing to the message of the piece) dominating the space and pushing the many heads which hold the image's allegory to the edge, while the seven-headed papal beast by contrast has its monster placed directly in the centre of the image, the eye being drawn towards the creature by the accoutrements of sin that surround and point towards it. Though Brosamer's work sits amongst the more successful examples of Catholic anti-Luther imagery, that corpus is particularly small, and as Scribner has pointed out, by the time of publication 'it was too little too late'.[61] The seven-headed papal beast however effectively attacks the Papacy as a diabolic institution and outlines some of the core issues Protestants had with Church hierarchy like the sale of indulgences. The use of the body of a dragon makes the image clearly about greed and Satan, much more so than Brosamer's use of Luther's own body as the base for his seven-headed beast.

[59] J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), p. 74; J.L. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London, 2004), pp. 115-119; and R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 232-233.
[60] See the other works of Johann Cochlaeus, particularly: J. Cochlaeus, *De Gratia Sacramentorum* (1522); J. Cochlaeus, *De Baptismo parvolorum* (1523), and his many pamphlets.
[61] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 232-233.

The effectiveness of dragons to communicate the Protestant messages of Papal greed and apocalyptic associations over the particulars of scriptural physical descriptions of the Antichrist shows how great a tool cultural familiarity on multiple levels could be. This was a great aid to Protestant Reformers who used the iconographical intertextuality of dragons as monsters of greed and apocalypse to best put their point across. This idea was most effectively employed in the development of the pope-dragon as a motif within the Protestant iconographical language, which serves as an example of the Reformation propaganda machine at its most sophisticated.

Pope-dragons as propaganda

One manner in which serpents and dragons manifest in Protestant iconography is in the form of dragons bearing Papal characteristics, designed to tar the Papacy with the apocalyptic, greedy, and mythological connotations of dragons. The first identification of the pope-dragon (or 'dragon-pope') as a trope in the visual culture of the Reformation was done by Scribner who points out several instances of its usage, particularly within illustrations accompanying Luther's 1522 *Septembertestament* (see appendix fig. 14).[62] However, his analysis is solely focused on the apocalyptic significance of the dragon, in particular its relation to the Antichrist. He does not elaborate upon the other messages that the use of such iconography engenders like the draconic connotations of greed or pope-as-beast, or its influences from popular culture like that of the stories of Seyfrid and St George, and no one has given this iconographical motif much consideration since.

Scribner also does not suggest why Cranach began using the pope-dragon, nor why Reformers continued to use the imagery in subsequent decades. It is likely artists chose to do so because of how difficult it is to misinterpret pope-dragon imagery, despite the possible depth of interpretation, due to the non-contradictory nature of the dragon as a symbol. While dragons may stand for such varying allegories as greed, chaos, or the apocalypse, these are always negative signifiers. Reformation artists may have drawn influence from scripture or popular culture, or both equally, but regardless of the source the dragon appears villainous.[63] In early modern Europe, it was hard to find positive interpretations of the dragon as we can see from the previous chapter and the difficulties that Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585)

[62] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 169-186.
[63] The serpent fares slightly better than the dragon, as we shall see in discussion of the Brazen Serpent later in this chapter, but it appears the few positive characteristics of the dragon we explored in the previous chapter are ignored.

endured due to his family arms bearing the beast. The Boncompagni family heraldry of the tail-less dragon was seen as an ill omen for the Catholic Church upon Gregory's election in 1572, and in the years that followed a series of sycophantic emblematists and naturalists would attempt to create a possible positive interpretation of the creature (for more on this, see Chapter 3.1).[64] Attempts to overwrite the negative symbolic power of the dragon established over the centuries since ancient times were however ultimately unsuccessful, demonstrating a deeply engrained cultural imagination that supported a wholly negative reading of the symbol.[65]

This section proposes that there were specific types of pope-dragons with their own allusions to non-biblical legends, that the image of the pope-dragon evolved alongside the maturation of Protestantism itself, and that there were additional goals to this type of iconography beyond simply associating the Papacy with the apocalypse and the Antichrist. These images also served to dehumanise and delegitimize the Papacy, and to mythologise the Protestant-papal conflict - forming part of a rich tapestry of foundational legends for the newly emergent Protestant religious identity.

The first form the pope-dragon took is that of a papal-crowned dragon; a dragon simply adorned with the papal tiara.[66] This is the earliest and most rudimentary of the pope-dragons, having none of the chimeric qualities that later forms held and bearing similarities to

[64] M. Ruffini, 'A Dragon for the Pope: Politics and Emblematics at the Court of Gregory XIII' in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* Vol. 54 (2009), pp. 83-105.
[65] Ibid.
[66] The papal tiara (also known as the triregnum, triple tiara, or triple crown) is one of the oldest symbols of the Papacy's spiritual and temporal power. A fairly comprehensive symbolic and heraldic account of the tiara can be found in B. Heim, *Heraldry in the Catholic Church: Its Origins, Customs and Laws* (Gerrard's Cross, 1978). For further information on its uses, see also: J. Noonan, *The Church Visible: The Ceremonial Life and Protocol of the Roman Catholic Church* (New York, 1996). Additionally, the Press Office of the Holy See offers a brief description and history of the papal tiara on their official website: https://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/documentazione/documents/sp_ss_scv/insigne/triregno_en.html (Accessed: 18 November 2021).

other, early images which simply placed the crowns of the papal tiara upon an animal, demon, or monster. The tradition is a very basic formula and was consistently used in different contexts throughout the first few decades of the Reformation: that the pope is in essence whatever creature the tiara is placed upon whether that be a barbaric wild man as in Melchior Lorch's (c.1526-1583) 1545 *The Pope as Wild Man*, or a ravenous wolf like on the frontispiece to Joachim Vadianus's (1484-1551) *Das Wolffgesang* (1522).[67] In the case of the papal-crowned dragon, the pope is being equated with greed, the diabolic, and the apocalypse. While being the most basic of pope-dragon images, the papal-crowned dragon is the trope-codifier from which later depictions draw their origins. The inclusion of this iconography in Luther's translation of the New Testament and its various editions helped to popularise the pope-as-monster motif but the draconic-apocalyptic associations would only reach maturity in the 1540s with subsequent iterations of the image.

The two main images of note in the 1522 *Septembertestament* translation of the New Testament into German by Luther, are Illustration to Apocalypse 11 and Illustration to Apocalypse 16 (see appendix fig. 14).[68] In the former is depicted a scene from the Bible where the two witnesses sent by God (Revelation 11:1-14) are attacked and slain by a beast, commonly believed in Medieval and early modern legend to be the Antichrist, and here shown as a papal-crowned dragon.[69] In the latter woodcut, we see the emptying of the Seven Bowls of Wrath (Revelation 16:1-21), an event which a papal-crowned dragon is present for and during which spews forth unclean spirits in the form of frogs. In scripture, the Great Red Dragon, Beast from the sea, and Beast from the land are all present in Revelation 16, but

[67] M. Lorch, *The Pope as Wild Man* (1545), and J. Vadianus, *Das Wolffgesang* (Augsburg, 1522).
[68] L. Cranach, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 11', and 'Illustration to Apocalypse 16' in M. Luther, *Septembertestament* (Wittenberg, 1522).
[69] B. McGinn, *Antichrist, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 2000), p. 106.

Cranach has chosen to depict a single papal-crowned dragon spewing frogs instead which can easily stand specifically for the Antichrist as the visually identical pope-dragon in Illustration to Apocalypse 11 does, or as a cypher for all three apocalyptic beasts.

Mark Edwards suggests that at least 86,000 copies of the *Septembertestament* were produced and sold in a forty-month period from September 1522 through to 1525.[70] It is worth noting that such iconography was not however without controversy in the early years of the Reformation, with some printers and publishers being wary about so directly equating the papacy with Antichrist. The Edict of Worms (1521) had already banned Luther's works as heretical and powerful men like Duke Georg of Saxony (1471-1539) objected to the illustrated crowns as being apostasy.[71] Facing such opposition near the uncertain outset of the Reformation, the papal tiaras Cranach used were small to begin with and in some cases, such as the December 1522 Wittenberg edition, were edited to a regular crown or removed entirely.[72] Basel editions published by Thomas Wolff in 1523 and 1524, and illustrated by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543) would include the tiaras (see appendix fig. 15), as would 1524 editions published by Amandus Farkal of Hagenau, and Johann Knobloch of Strasbourg's 1524 and 1525 editions which used Holbein's woodcuts, though ultimately Edwards estimates only a quarter of publications included the papal tiaras.[73] This would still mean that over 21,000 copies of Luther's New Testament published between 1522 and 1525 contained woodcuts either by Cranach or Holbein that explicitly linked the Papacy with the beasts of apocalypse using a papal-crowned dragon, and, once the Reformation had gained

[70] M.U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 123-127.
[71] Ibid.
[72] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 173.
[73] Ibid., pp. 123-7; and H. Holbein, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 11' in *Septembertestament* trans. M. Luther (Basel, 1523).

both momentum and further support across the German-speaking lands, the anonymous artist to the 1534 complete translation of the Bible felt confident enough to make the tiaras larger and harder to edit out in their version of the woodcuts.[74] Apocalyptic imagery was a favourite of Reformation artists; as noted by Scribner it was effective due to the fact that implicating the normative methods of reaching salvation with the Devil and the end times aroused deep anxieties in people about the nature of their own afterlife.[75] By including the papal-crowned dragon in the *Septembertestament* Luther was making it clear that the established means of salvation were tainted by the Antichrist.

While placing the papal-tiara upon the dragon-as-Antichrist tars the Papacy with apocalyptic connotations, it also tars the office with draconic connotations. The fact that a single head is represented, rather than the satanic seven, is indicative of purposeful associations with non-biblical sources, just as the Papal tiara upon the head of the Whore of Babylon in Illustration to Apocalypse 17 is suggestive of the 'Pope Joan' legend.[76] As we see in the other images found in Luther's translation of the New Testament, like illustrations to Apocalypse 13, 17, and 19; Cranach and his imitators did not shy away from the creation of the more complex multi-headed dragon iconography when the work called for it, and other depictions of these verses like those made later by Matthias Gerung (c.1500-1570) do include seven heads.[77] The single-headed dragon representing the Antichrist in these images not only

[74] Though the artist may be anonymous, historians have suggested they did work in Cranach's workshop, continuing his devices and themes. See: C.C. Christensen, 'Luther and the Woodcuts to the 1534 Bible' in *Lutheran Quarterly* 19 (Winter 2005), pp. 392-413.
[75] B. Scribner, 'Germany' in B. Scribner, R. Porter, and M. Teich (eds.), *The Reformation in National Context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 18-9.
[76] R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 171-173.
[77] See M. Gerung, *The Giving of the Seven Bowls of Wrath / The First Six Plagues* (c. 1531).

stands for greed more generally, but is a purposeful allusion - likely to folk-tales and mythology where the greedy are transformed into dragons.

Nordic sagas contain several instances of such metamorphosis, the *Saga of the Gold-Thórir* having examples in the form of the Viking Valr and his sons, as well as Thórir himself whose acquisition of wealth makes him greedy and malicious to the point where he eventually transforms into the beast most befitting his new personality.[78] *Beowulf* similarly has the lone survivor character, whom literary scholars have suggested becomes the dragon of the final act after burying the gold of his lost tribe.[79] The most well-known however, is the nemesis of Sigurd we met in Chapter 1.1: the monstrous Fafnir, once son of the dwarf king Hreidmar but transformed into a dragon by the curse of Andvari's ring and his patricidal lust for gold.[80] The legend of Sigurd (germanised into Seyfrid or Siegfried) enjoyed popularity in both Scandinavian and Germanic parts of Europe, and while it is difficult to trace the specificities of the oral transmission of this tale there are a few printed texts from the sixteenth century that demonstrate that the core elements of the story were alive in the cultural imagination of early modern Germany.[81] Indeed, the ballad *Das Lied von Hürnen Seyfrid* breaks with some of the traditions of the Sagas, suggestive of a distinct Germanic oral tradition in a period where manuscripts of the *Nibelungenlied* are not being produced, but still maintains the key concepts from its Nordic precursor texts. *Das Lied von Hürnen Seyfrid* does not feature the character Fafnir but does include several dragons, one of which serves as the main antagonist stand-in for Fafnir and is a man cursed to transform into a dragon who guards the hoarded wealth of the Nibelung.

[78] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 108-110.
[79] C. Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Suffolk, 2000).
[80] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 98-99.
[81] For more on the relationship of this text to the Nibelungenlied see: E. Lienert, *Mittelhochdeutsche Heldenepik* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 67–71.

The implied metamorphosis of the Pope from man to dragon in Protestant woodcuts that echoes those stories is not only a means by which the flaws of the Papacy can be highlighted, but also serves to dehumanise and delegitimise the office. This bestial, draconic imagery served to 'other' and dehumanize the pope: making him no longer a mortal man, but a monstrous Jungian archetype to be destroyed, a dragon awaiting a dragon slayer and no longer fit to rule. Though more direct parallels to dragon-slaying legends like that of Seyfrid or St George would be developed later, the idea of the 'pope as draconic beast' is firmly established in these images. The papal-crowned dragon therefore has three layers of attacks upon the Papacy: initial associations with apocalypse and the Antichrist from biblical context, followed by popular associations with greed due to the choice of draconic imagery, and then mythological associations with metamorphosis tales that dehumanises them.



Two versions of *Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* (Dahlem, c.1547-1554) (see appendix fig. 24).[82]

[82] *Anon, Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* (Dahlem, c.1547-1554). Both versions of this image that this author has found come from anonymous artists in the same period. The coloured version is

The impact of these early papal-crowned dragons in Lutheran Bibles can be seen not only in the later evolution of the motif into the next kinds of papal-dragon, but also in non-biblical woodcuts as well that appear across Protestant northern Europe. For example, we find a papal-crowned dragon in the German woodcut: *Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* which shows the virtuous Duke Christoph (1515-1568) invoking the protection of God against various beasts representing different parts of Catholic hierarchy (see appendix fig. 24).[83] The Pope himself is represented as a fierce papal-crowned dragon spewing fire, standing for strength, greed, and sin. This image would be reprinted at least once with minor edits, before later serving as the inspiration for a similar image produced by Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515-1586) that depicts the Elector of Saxony Johann Friedrich I (1503-1554) surrounded by coats of arms with the beasts rendered tiny and at his feet (see appendix fig. 25).[84] In addition to the papal-crowned dragon, a crowned serpent twists itself around the Elector's calf – likely representation of Catholicism's worldly representative the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) with whom Johann Friedrich was at war.

perhaps a later version, the pope-dragon in that image having its animalistic dugs removed, likely as a form of censorship to make the image less sexually charged.

[83] Ibid.

[84] L. Cranach the Younger, *Johann Friedrich der Großmütige, Kurfürst von Sachen* (1547).



Detail of the 'papal stone' from *Mansfeldici Comitatus typus chorographicus, olim manu prestantissima artificis D.M. Tilemanni Stelle S. diligenter omnia loca persustrantis in charta delineates* (1571) (see appendix fig. 26).[85]

Similarly attacking various levels of the Catholic institution, we see a few examples of serpents bearing the papal crown instead of a dragon. While the apocalyptic associations are perhaps somewhat lessened, the associations with the Devil and the Antichrist remain the same. Johannes Mellinger (1538-1603) and Tileman Stella's (1525-1589) map of Luther's birthplace of Mansfeld, produced to accompany Cyriacus Spangenberg's (1528-1604) *Mansfeld Chronicle* (1571), includes an image of the miraculous 'papal stone' surrounded by two serpents (one wearing a papal tiara and the other a cardinal's galero and whose tongues

[85] J. Mellinger and T. Stella, *Mansfeldici Comitatus typus chorographicus, olim manu prestantissima artificis D.M. Tilemanni Stelle S. diligenter omnia loca persustrantis in charta delineates* (1571).

are replaced by two more serpents - one wearing a bishop's mitre and the other a cappello romano) that Kat Hill states in a 2020 article to be a clear reference to Luther's declaration that the stone was a revelation of the Papal Antichrist (see appendix fig. 26).[86] The inclusion of the various hats also serves to demonise the entire Catholic hierarchy (not unlike the *The seven-headed papal beast* image we saw earlier) that as a motif finds its full realisation in a late sixteenth-century Dutch woodcut entitled *The Papal Pyramid* (1599) by Hendrick Hondius (1573-1650) which depicts a large pyramid composed of many serpents sporting galeros, mitres, and tonsures that is crowned with a large snake wearing a papal tiara labelled as 'Antichrist' (see appendix fig. 27).[87] While using a panoply of serpents rather than a dragon in these examples, the themes of the diabolic and dehumanisation remain the same as with earlier papal-crowned dragons – making the papal-crowned serpent a rare sub-genre of the pope-dragon motif.

It is also worth noting that the papal-crowned dragon appears further abroad in England, on the frontispiece to *The first Examinacyon of Anne Askew* (1546) in which the titular martyr is seen with a pope-dragon - not unlike traditional depictions of St Margaret (see appendix fig. 28).[88] The face of this dragon is notable for being a subtle blend of animalistic

[86] K. Hill, 'Mapping the Memory of Luther: Place and Confessional Identity in the Later Reformation' in *German History* Vol. 38 No. 2 (June 2020), pp. 187-210; and J. Mellinger and T. Stella, *Mansfeldici Comitatus typus chorographicus, olim manu prestantissima artificis D.M. Tilemanni Stelle S. diligenter omnia loca persustrantis in charta delineates* (1571).
[87] H. Hondius, *The Papal Pyramid* (1599). Another Dutch artist, Jodocus Hondius (1563-1612, no relation to Hendrick Hondius, had their map of France engraved by Conrad Goltzius (active c.1587-1597) and published by Peter Overadt (fl.1590-1652) in London in 1591 to include artwork of 'Truth' crushing a dragon with the heads of the pope, a cardinal, a bishop, and an abbot. This allegorical piece reflected English hopes at the time that France may break away from Catholic Europe, drawing upon the pope-dragon motif and possibly inspiring other Dutch artists like Hendrick Hondius and the anonymous artist behind *The Display and Examination of St. George of Cleeves* (c.1615) that we will discuss later, to create their images showing different levels of Catholic hierarchy bound in the body of serpents and many-headed dragons. For more on Jodocus Hondius's map (which had the anti-papal elements removed when reprinted some years later when it became clear France was to remain Catholic) see: P.H. Meurer, 'The Cologne Map Publisher Peter Overadt (fl. 1590-1652)' in *Imago Mundi* Vol. 53 (2001), pp. 28-45.
[88] See the frontispiece to: J. Bale (ed.), *The first Examinacyon of Anne Askew* (London, 1546).

and human features which further plays upon the themes of human-dragon transfiguration, borrowing from both the papal-crowned dragon iconography and the papal-faced dragon which was beginning to develop on the continent around that time.

Indeed, eventually the pope-dragon motif appears to develop in complexity from simply a dragon crowned with the papal tiara to more chimeric creatures that incorporate several elements atop the base draconic form.[89] These are dragons which have the head of the Pope, not just his crown, an image much more difficult to censor showing a growth in confidence of the intended message and reflective of the increasing entrenchment of Protestantism in Germany. These papal-faced dragons, and the associated three-headed papal dragons we will discuss shortly, are a much less subtle evolution of the motif but maintain the same base themes of their iconographic forbears; that of papal greed and apocalyptic influence, as well as developing new narratives binding multiple enemies of the Reformation under a single diabolic banner.

[89] Scribner acknowledges the appearance of the three-headed papal-dragon in the 1540s but does not associate it as an evolution of the earlier papal-crowned dragon. See: R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), p.175.



Papal-faced dragons in Andreas Osiander's *Wonderous Prophecy of the Papacy* (1527), fol. Cii r (left), and fol. Biii r (right) (see appendix fig. 29).[90]

Papal-faced dragons begin to appear sporadically in the late 1520s, with notable examples found in several folios of Andreas Osiander's (1498-1552) *Wonderous Prophecy of the Papacy* (1527) which depicts the pope as an apocalyptic figure.[91] In fol. Biii r Satan himself takes the form of a papal-faced dragon to instruct the Pope how best to misuse the keys of St Peter, and later in fol. Cii r the Pope has taken on the aspect of the Great Red Dragon (its tail sweeping away stars creating a specific reference to Satan rather than the Antichrist, though, as we have seen, such identification can be fluid), bleeding when struck with a sword representing the Word of God (see appendix fig. 29).[92] A few years later we see the papal-faced dragon begin to gain new heads in the previously-mentioned *The seven-*

[90] A. Osiander, *Eyn wunderliche Weyssagung von dem Bapstum* (Nuremberg, 1527), fol. Cii r, and fol. Biii r.
[91] Ibid. Other artworks would also play upon this idea of a dragon whispering in the pope's ear like D. Hopfer, *Illustration to Proverbs II: The Horders of Grain* (1534).
[92] Ibid. fol. Biii r, and fol. Cii r.

headed papal beast (1530) woodcut, which also includes the faces of other members of the Church hierarchy (see appendix fig. 23).[93] Later papal-faced dragons seem to have favoured a multi-headed route like this piece, a notable exception being an image on a *Hymn-sheet Parody on the Interim* (c. 1548) which bore the single head of a pope; likely due to the spatial constraints of the composition of the hymn-sheet itself (see appendix fig. 30).[94]

The most common form that the papal-faced dragon increasingly takes in the late 1540s and the 1550s is that of the three-headed papal dragon, which is significantly more complex an image than that of the earlier papal-crowned dragon and papal-faced dragon. For not only is the three-headed papal dragon papal-faced, but its other two heads bear the faces of an Ottoman Turk (whose inclusion was perhaps influenced by the Bible woodcuts featuring Turks and dragons at the siege of Vienna discussed earlier), and the winged visage of the cherubim Lucifer (see appendix fig. 31). The three-headed papal dragon variant serves as a visual statement of who the enemies of Protestantism were, a key development in a time when Luther himself could not lead the movement (he died in 1546) and during the Augsburg Interim (1548-1555) where the future of Protestantism was uncertain as Charles V attempted to bring peace to the Holy Roman Empire through religious compromise.[95] Following the defeat of the Lutheran Schmalkaldic League by the Catholic forces of the Emperor in 1547, Charles V attempted to implement a moderate version of Catholicism in Protestant states. This was done by reintroducing traditional rites of observance, called *adiaphora* (‘matters of

[93] Anon, *The seven-headed papal beast* (1530).
[94] Anon, *Hymn-sheet Parody on the Interim* (c. 1548).
[95] For more on the Augsburg Interim and opposition to it see: N.B. Rein, ‘Faith and Empire: Conflicting Visions of Religion in a Late Reformation Controversy – The Augsburg Interim and Its Opponents, 1548-50’ in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Volume 71, Issue 1 (March 2003), pp. 45-74; V. Soen, ‘From the Interim of Augsburg until the Treaty of Augsburg (1548-1555)’ in A. Melloni (ed.), *Martin Luther. A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)* Vol. 1 (Berlin, 2017), pp. 548-564; and K.M. Comerford, ‘The Council of Trent and the Augsburg Interim’ in R. Ward Holder (ed.), *John Calvin in Context – Part IV* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 190-197.

indifference'), which did not affect the path to salvation, so did not offend the core of Reformation theology but was a means by which elements of Catholicism could be re-established.[96] It was unpopular with both Protestant and Catholic princes and became extremely difficult to enforce, creating a period of religious uncertainty and debate that ultimately ended in the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.[97]

The powerful dehumanising and delegitimising of the pope-dragon iconography is reframed from its earlier iteration, for while the papal-crowned dragon represented a metamorphosis brought about by greed, the three-headed papal dragon allows the Papacy to be conflated with auxiliary 'others' in the Protestant worldview, especially those whom they believed to be responsible for the unpopular Interim. The visages of Pope, Turk, and Lucifer each served to 'other' one another and in combination they represented a combined front of opposition to the Reformation. The Pope here represents the priestly Antichrist who destroys Christianity from within, the Turk represents the infidel invader who is the Antichrist come to destroy Christendom from without, and Lucifer represents the ultimate threat of diabolic evil. These figures are unified in evil by the body of the dragon they share, and the Pope and the Turk are no longer actual humans but are transformed into monstrous caricatures of primordial, eschatological evil by their beastly association with Lucifer.

[96] E. Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Second Edition) (Oxford, 2012), pp. 356-358.
[97] Ibid.



A three-headed papal dragon from the pamphlet *Our Holy Lady St Interim* (Bern, 1552).[98] This version includes the three heads representing from left to right: the cherubic face of Lucifer, the pope with his triple-tiered tiara, and an Ottoman Turk wearing a turban. It also sports a 'hell mouth' and the stars around the monster's tail identifies it with the Great Red Dragon of Revelation 12:4 (see appendix fig. 31).

This denigration of the papacy through these animalistic, apocalyptic means is realised in a series of woodcuts during the Interim. *Our Holy Lady St Interim* (published in Bern, 1552 but enjoyed a wide circulation in Germanic lands) identifies the three heads as architects of the Interim, and therefore the enemies of the Reformation, as well as the three fathers of the Antichrist (see appendix fig. 31).[99] This was a popular image that helped to create a strong Protestant identity based around opposition; it very simply pointed out that which was not Protestant and which must be opposed by any godly person. The three-headed papal dragon design based on this image was so effective that it appears in a few different media, being a polemic that appears in other sensory parts of Protestant life. Musically, the iconography reoccurs in several versions of a piece of popular print entitled: *Satire on Interim* (1548),

[98] Anon, *Our Holy Lady St Interim* (Bern, 1552).
[99] Ibid.

which is similar to the *Hymn-sheet Parody on the Interim* (c. 1548), being a set of musical verse presided over by a pope-dragon; which in this case is the three-headed variant whereas the latter was only single-headed (see appendix fig. 32 and fig. 30 respectively).[100] This iconography has been observed not solely on printed items but also in material culture as well, Andrew Morrall highlighting a *Schnelle* tankard (c.1550-80) from Siegburg which includes the three-headed pope-dragon on one of its panels, incorporating protest against the Interim into the daily ritual of drinking (see appendix fig. 33).[101] The device also occurs on a *Taler* minted in Jever currently held at the National Museum in Berlin, whose obverse side depicts Jesus admonishing the three-headed pope-dragon with the inscription 'PACK DI SATAN DV INTRIM' (Satan should carry you off, Interim) – a clear piece of propaganda in the form of coinage (see appendix fig. 34).[102] Appearing in such varied extant sources suggests that the pope-dragon was a powerful piece of satire and a symbol of religious protest, capable of uniting religious Reformers in a heady mixture of hatred and fear.

[100] Anon, *Satire on Interim* (1548).
[101] A. Morrall, 'Protestant Pots: Morality and Social Ritual in the Early Modern Home' in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 263-73. Other examples of material culture helping to form confessional identity can be seen in Alexandra Walsham's article concerning delftware in the British Isles: A. Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England' in *Renaissance Quarterly* 69 (2016), pp. 566-616.
[102] https://ikmk.smb museum/object?id=18200295 (Accessed: 30 August 2021) http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=2353159&viewType=detailView (Accessed: 30 August 2021) See also: F. Freiherr von Schrötter, *Beschreibung der neuzeitlichen Münzen des Erzstifts und der Stadt Magdeburg 1400-1682* (1909), p. 945.



Two especially evocative examples of the three-headed papal dragon: *Satire on Papacy* (left), and *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (right) (see appendix fig. 35 and fig. 36).[103] Note the human-like arms and legs on both images which serve to compound the monstrous hybridity of this chimeric creature.

An anonymous woodcut entitled *Satire on Papacy* (1555) depicts the Pope as a three-headed dragon interacting with a soldier whose halberd is aflame (see appendix fig. 35).[104] The main fixture of the scene is money; a coin purse passing from pope-dragon to soldier is at the centre of the image, both figures are richly dressed, and draconic limbs peek out from beneath the papal robe suggesting greed. Besides the satanic associations of the three-heads, there is also the broach of the papal vestment which bears the image of the frog; an unclean spirit often used to represent blasphemy and as the mock-arms of the Devil.[105] When taken together, this image criticises the Papacy for its associations with militancy; implying that its actions are driven by a malicious animalistic nature rooted in greed and diabolism. It is worth noting that this is not the only image of the pope-dragon to be anonymous, while some of

[103] Anon, *Satire on Papacy* (1555); and Anon, *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (Magdeburg, c. 1550).
[104] Ibid.
[105] R. Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (New York, 1976), p. 112.

these artists' names may have simply been lost to time, others seem to have purposefully been published in this way. As we will see later with the decidedly confessionally neutral Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch*, there was incredible anxiety regarding the politics of religion in this volatile period and it may be that these anonymous artists did not wish to suffer personal consequences for creating such religiously and politically charged piece of art by having their real name attached to it. Some, like Lucas Cranach who were operating deep in the Lutheran heartlands with known powerful Protestant patronage, could afford to put their name to the papal dragons of Luther's *Septembertestament* while others simply did not enjoy the same luxuries.

The three-headed papal dragon also saw the introduction of Jesus into the motif as a dragon-slayer, purposefully mimicking the imagery of St George and the dragon. A particular instance of this is the Interim woodcut entitled: *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (c. 1550), depicting Christ standing atop a defeated pope-dragon, the papal head spewing forth a tide of blasphemous unclean spirits (as the beasts of apocalypse do in Revelation 16) (see appendix fig. 36).[106] This woodcut very effectively dehumanises the Papacy by the introduction of Jesus himself, previously absent in the same images as the pope-dragon, which radically alters the context. The introduction of the figure of Christ re-writes the traditional dragon-slaying narrative by removing the traditional proxies of good and evil, being the dragon-slayer and dragon respectively, and replaces them with the actual

[106] Anon, *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (Magdeburg, c. 1550). Sometimes also presented under the title: '*Christus als Sieger über den Drachen des* Interim'. This image also mimics the relatively uncommon motif of 'Christ stepping on the beasts' which saw its greatest use in Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian art, being derived from Psalm 91:13 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet'. For more on the origins of this motif see: M. Schapiro, *Selected Papers, Volume 3, Late Antique, Early Christian and Medieval Art* (London, 1980). The text usually seen accompanying this image was written by Protestant theologian Erasmus Alberus (c.1500-1553) and titled: *'Also spricht Gott: Dis ist mein Lieber Son an welchem ich wolgefallen hab Den Sollt Ihr Hören'.*

incarnations of those concepts in the Christian worldview: Christ and the Antichrist.[107] While traditional dragon-slaying stories are rooted in the physical world and offering moral commentary, this woodcut is instead depicting a more literal interpretation of the metaphysical battle between good and evil. In relation to the heads of the dragon, this elimination of the usual mortal elements of the narrative serves to abstract both Pope and Turk, placing them into the cosmological moral and spiritual struggle rather than an earthly one. By explicitly making them incarnations of a universal evil they are dehumanised in a different way than simply being bestial – they become representations of an abstract idea rather than actual people. While this is true for any pope-dragon image that utilises apocalyptic themes and labels the Pope as the Antichrist, the introduction of Jesus makes the metaphysical aspect of combat between these binary theological forces much more explicit, similar to what we saw earlier in Cranach's *Passional Christi und Antichristi.*[108]

The three-headed papal-dragons appearing in *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast*, *Satire on Interim*, and *Our Holy Lady St* Interim, as well as the tankard panel and the silver taler we mentioned earlier, include another detail that ties these depictions of the Antichrist more closely to Satan himself and a specific event within the Bible (see appendix fig. 31, fig. 32, fig. 36, fig. 33, and fig. 34 respectively). Each image features stars either within the curl of the beast's tail or nearby; representing the one third of the stars which the Great Red Dragon sweeps from the sky in Revelation 12:4. The adoption of these stars not only blurs further any visual differentiation between the various beasts of the apocalypse as discussed earlier, but also ties the Interim to a specific event of the end times - allowing it to

[107] This is not the only example of Christ taking on the role of dragon-slayer. He does so on the title page of a 1544 Lutheran bible published in Wittenberg by Hans Lufft (1495-1584) that may have served as inspiration for *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast*.
[108] L. Cranach. *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521).

be critiqued from an eschatological angle by millenarian Protestants. Like the papal-crowned dragon, there may also be a mythological reference to the three-heads of this pope-dragon.

While the initial pope-dragon may be a reference to stories of men becoming dragons, the three-headed dragon may also be reference to several other ideas in popular culture that have not been explored in prior scholarship.[109] Most likely, the three-heads represent a form of unholy trinity or anti-trinity that opposes Christendom. Given the effectiveness of binaries in early modern propaganda, as we have seen in the *Passional Christi und Antichristi*, and the eschatological obsession of Reformers, it would be unsurprising to find not just the Antichrist but an anti-trinity as well in these images and the forces of Pope, Turk, and Satan make the greatest logical sense as enemies of the Reformation. This idea is particularly evoked in *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* wherein the three aspects of the trinity are seen in the form of dragon-slaying Christ, God the Father watching from Heaven, and a dove between them representing the Holy Ghost: in direct contrast to the three-heads of the dragon (see appendix fig. 36).

[109] Alternative but unlikely references that bear mentioning also include alchemy, the hydra, and Zmey Gorynych. Three-headed dragons appear in alchemy representing unstable and combustible combinations of elements (as we shall see in chapter 3.2), but such a reference is unlikely to be well-known outside of alchemical circles. While the many heads may be a reference to the hydra, it is likely in form only, as none of the images of the three-headed pope-dragon further reference the herculean myth. *Our Holy Lady St Interim* does liken the three heads to Cerberus in its accompanying text but this is a lone reference, and its classical origins are not further expounded upon. As well as Nordic mythological influence, parts of Germany would also have been influenced by Slavic mythology from eastern Europe. Appearing in tales such as that of the bogatyr Dobrynya Nikitich, is the fearsome three-headed dragon Zmey Gorynych who fulfils the traditional role of a monster to be overcome by a virtuous hero, much like Fafnir in the legends of Seyfrid or the dragon of St George. However, this tale was not common within the German-speaking lands at this time, and it may simply be a case of parallel evolution of three-headed dragons. M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), p. 171.

Dragons and religious identity

As Bridget Heal noted in her 2017 book *A Magnificent Faith: Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany,* Protestant art was a vehicle by which the Protestant identity could be articulated across every layer of society.[110] The use of draconic iconography in Protestant woodcuts helped to create a Protestant religious identity in two ways: firstly upon surface appraisal, the appropriation of dragon-slaying narratives created a dichotomy which defined what is 'other', and secondly this same appropriation created a form of foundational mythology for the Reformation by aping existing mythological narratives. This appeal to the widely held cultural imagination was particularly effective due to using shared narratives of dragon-slaying to help build a unifying Protestant 'imagined community'.[111] Dragon-slaying stories are by their nature oppositional narratives, and the appropriation of the imagery of these narratives by Reformers helped to create a Protestant identity through the establishment of what is 'other' and the equation of Protestants with the agents of God. This is particularly true of the pope-dragon motif which at its base level defines Protestantism as anti-papal and aligns the Papacy with Satan alongside the inference that the Reformation is aligned with God. Furthermore, on a macro level it elevates the Protestant conflict with the Papacy to that of a legendary narrative, a foundational myth for their movement in the same way that the exploits of St George and Seyfrid serve as defining stories for national identities.[112]

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[110] B. Heal, *A Magnificent Faith, Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017).
[111] See: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983); B. Heal, *A Magnificent Faith, Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017); L. Racut, *Hatred in print: Catholic propaganda and Protestant identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Aldershot, 2002); M.C. McClendon, J.P. Ward, and M. MacDonald (eds.), *Protestant identities: religion, society, and self-fashioning in post-Reformation England* (Stanford, 1999); B. Gordon (ed.), *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Aldershot, 1996); and E. Shagan, *Catholics and the 'Protestant nation': religious politics and identity in early modern England* (Manchester, 2005).
[112] For more on Siegfried in nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalism see: J. Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied* (3rd edition) (Berlin, 2009); and C. Lee, 'Children of Darkness: Arminius/Siegfried in Germany' in S. O. Glosecki (ed.), *Myth in Early Northwest Europe* (Tempe, 2007), pp. 281-306.

The effectiveness of appropriating dragon-slaying stories is largely down to the narrative form they employ. As discussed in Chapter 1.1, the typical dragon-slaying narrative begins with a state of peace that is overturned by the appearance of the dragon. The arrival of the dragon-slayer and his subsequent defeat of the dragon ushers in a return to order and normality, and in the cases of saints like St George or St Theodore of Amasea piety is restored as well.[113] The allegory of dragon-slaying therefore fits exceptionally well with the foundational premise of Protestantism: that the Catholic Church and the Papacy (embodied by a dragon) had brought chaos and impiety to the land, while Reformers (the dragon-slayers) were returning Christianity to its prior, purer state.



P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552) (see appendix fig. 37).[114]

As discussed previously, *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* depicts Christ as a dragon-slayer standing triumphant atop a defeated pope-dragon (see appendix fig. 36).[115] While Christ takes the place of St George here, he does so on foot whereas later depictions echo more

[113]D. Ogden, *The Dragon in the West, from Ancient Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford, 2021).
[114] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552).
[115] Anon, *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (Magdeburg, c. 1550).

classical equestrian images of the saint. Indeed, Peter Gottland's (born Peter Rodelstedt, 1501-c.1572) woodcut is the least subtle of all the pope-dragon images as a direct allegory, as seen in the very title: *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552) (see appendix fig. 37).[116] This image shows a classic three-headed papal dragon emerging from its lair (labelled the collapsing papal church: 'collapsa ecclesia papa') and being struck down by a Christ-child on horseback. Like the *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* woodcut, Gottland's piece represents the Protestant-papal conflict as part of the cosmological, apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, and by drawing explicitly upon the imagery of St George it depicts violent struggle and can be seen as advocating a more active resistance to the heads of the dragon and the Interim as a whole - the enemies of Christ and of the Reformation. It also seemingly echoes Luther's own words from 1520: 'Farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The Wrath of God has come upon you, as you deserve. We have cared for Babylon, and she is not healed: let us then, leave her, that she may be the habitation of dragons, spectres, and witches'. [117] By presenting us with a crumbling church inhabited by the pope-dragon Luther's words rang prophetic and were fulfilled in Gottland's image.

What we have in this scene are a series of created dichotomies: Protestantism/Catholicism, dragon-slayer/dragon, good/evil, holy/unholy, virtue/avarice, Christ/the Antichrist, young/old, innocent/corrupted, and new/defunct. Even male/female given the obvious breasts on the dragon which likely derive from a late-fifteenth-century tradition of giving St George's nemesis female sexual characteristics as a means of further denigrating the beast and emphasising St George's

[116] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552).
[117] M. Luther, 'LECTORI PIO MAR. L. SALVTEM' in *D. Marti n Luther's Werke* Vol. VI (Weimar, 1888), p. 328-329. *'Nune vale, infoelix, perdita et blasphema Roma: pervenit ira dei super te, sicut meruisti in finem, nec tot orationibus, quae pro te fiunt, nisi indies peior fieri voluisti. Curavimus enim Babylonem, et non est sanata: relinquamus ergo eam, ut sit habitatio draconum, lemurum, larvarum, lamiarum'.*

masculinity (something we shall explore further in Chapter 2.3) - the adoption of this motif doing the same to the Pope.[118] Moreover, it also depicts Protestantism as a direct replacement for papal-led Catholicism – the Christ-child here represents youth and dynamism (i.e. Protestantism in its infancy – the '*New Faith*') slaying the aged and collapsing church of the elderly, bearded pope-dragon (the '*Old Faith*'). The child Jesus has been 'born again' in parallel to how Protestants saw their Reformation as the Christian faith being reborn. Just as when St George slew the dragon of Silene there is a dramatic uptake of faith, so too does Gottland imply that with the 'death' of the Papacy, faith (implicitly of the Reformed variety) shall flourish.



Maurice of Nassau takes on the role of St George as he fights Ambrosio Spinola mounted upon a pope-dragon in Anon, *The Display and Explanation of St. George of Cleves* (c. 1615) (see appendix fig. 38).[119]

Ultimately, the three-headed version of the pope-dragon seems to have fallen out of usage after the Peace of Augsburg, likely due to having become so interwoven into opposition to the Interim that after the Peace of Augsburg ended it this iteration of the monster simply received no further interest from artists. However, the pope-dragon would be reinterpreted in

[118] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178, and S. Riches, ''Hyr wombe insaciate': the iconography of the feminised monster' in C. Meek, and C. Lawless (eds.), *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women Pawns or Players?* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 177-196.
[119] Anon, *The Display and Explanation of St. George of Cleves* (c. 1615).

the seventeenth century with even stronger overtures of conflict between parties. In an anonymous Dutch engraving titled *The Display and Explanation of St. George of Cleves* (c. 1615), Protestant Maurice of Nassau (1567-1625) takes on the role of St George and faces off against the Genoa-born Catholic General of the Spanish armies Ambrosio Spinola (1569-1630) riding a seven-headed papal-crowned dragon (see appendix fig. 38).[120] This woodcut echoes the earlier German image, and embodies the same religious dichotomy whilst also identifying confession to the nation-states of the United Provinces and the Spanish Empire – making a moral, religious opposition equitable to that of states coming into conflict.[121]

The fact that such imagery was successfully exported to Protestant communities outside of the German-speaking lands is indicative of it being a powerful means of religious, and later national, identification - giving people an easy way of identifying their enemies, and then themselves by default. The dragon, and the struggle between the greedy, evil monster and the virtuous dragon-slayer would be all too recognisable to those looking at the image, who could easily find their own identities within it and thus with very little effort, the artist has made their religious argument well.

We see the pope-dragon battling a would-be dragon-slayer once more in Germany in 1617, in an anonymous commemorative woodcut celebrating 100 years since the birth of Luther's Reformation, and for the first time it is Luther himself who faces down a dragon (see appendix fig. 12).[122] Unlike the sometimes-muddled figures of Jesus and St George, Luther is not trampling the

[120] Ibid.
[121] For more on the development of an international Protestant identity see: K. Chovanec, *Pan-Protestant Heroism in Early Modern Europe* (Memphis, 2020).
[122] Anon, *Luther against the papacy* (Leipzig, 1617). See: C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, 2003), p. 226; R. Kastner, *Geistlicher Rauffhandel: Form und Funktion der Illustrierten Flugblätter zum Reformationsjubiläum 1617 in Ihrem historischen und publizistischen Kontext* (Frankfurt, 1982), pp. 307-312; and W. Harms, M. Schilling, and A. Wang (eds.), *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16 und 17 Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlung der HerzogAugust-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel* Vol. 2 (Tübingen, 1980), pp. 224-225.

monster underfoot or riding it down lance in hand, but rather he repels the beast with a torch set alight by God's word. He keeps this papally-crowned apparition of the Great Red Dragon at bay, repelling the draconic Papal Antichrist from the entrance to the Church and sending his minions (a monk in a fool's hat selling Indulgences and a swarm of rodents wearing clerical birettas) fleeing. While no killing is involved, Luther is still very much cast in the mould of dragon-slayer, representing all that is good and holy while casting out everything his followers felt to be evil, restoring the Church and overseeing a return to faith. On the centenary of the Reformation, the dragon-slaying narrative remained a useful trope for Protestant artists seeking to define what it meant to be a Protestant - the struggle between Luther and the Pope, and that of Protestants and Catholics immortalised in draconic form.

It is important to note however, that not all uses of serpentine symbols used in the creation of a Protestant religious identity were necessarily so negative in their appellation to emotion. Indeed, serpents, including the biblical Brazen Serpent, appear in several Lutheran works as well as in the personal crests of some of the Reformation's most notable luminaries with no clear links to the diabolic or villainous traits we have discussed in this chapter so far.[123] These are, however, exceptions to a more general rule - exceptions that have either very specific biblical roots used in only certain contexts or remain elusive in their true meaning as time has obfuscated their original intended symbolism. Lucas Cranach the Elder used the Brazen Serpent in a few of his pieces, the

[123] There are several Medieval examples of the Brazen Serpent being depicted with wings – appearing more as a dragon-like creature than a simple snake. Though proper discussion of this topic is outside the scope of this thesis, they serve as yet another interesting example of the pre-modern mutability of definition between snake and dragon. See: Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague, *MS KB 79 F 5*, '*Picture Bible* (Saint-Omer, c. 1190-1200)', fol.6v; Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague, *MS KB 78 D 38, dl1,* 'Bible Masters of the First Generation (Utrecht, c. 1430), fol. 103v; Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek, Munich, *MS Clm 835,* '*Golden Munich Psalter* (Oxford, c. 1200-1225)', fol. 20r; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *MS Latin 10525,* '*Psalter of Saint Louis* (Paris, c. 1270)', fol. 37v; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *MS Francais 1753,* '*Histoires bibliques* (Saint-Quentin, 1350)', fol. 48v; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *MS Francais 9, 'Bible historiale* (Paris, c.1400)', fol. 179v; and Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *MS Francais 14969,* 'G. Le Clerc, *Bestiaire divin* (England, c. 1350-1375)', fol. 9.

most comprehensive discussion of which can be found in Donald L. Ehresmann's 1962 work.[124] As the topic has been so thoroughly documented in Ehresmann's book, and examples of the Brazen Serpent are used less often in the type of propaganda we have covered in the chapter so far, this thesis shall only briefly cover the symbol as a counterpoint to the otherwise predominant iconography of fear that we have already seen.



Phillip Melanchthon's crest of the Brazen Serpent. Detail taken from the frontispiece of M. Luther and P. Melanchthon, *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (Wittenberg, 1538) (see appendix fig. 39).[125]

The Brazen Serpent appears in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 21:4-9) where, after God had sent deadly 'fiery serpents' amongst the Israelites for complaining about Moses's detour around the land of Edom, Moses erects it according to God's instruction as a cure for those who had been bitten

[124] D.L. Ehresmann, *The brazen serpent in the works of Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop: a study in Lutheran iconography* (New York, 1962). For more on Cranach and the Brazen Serpent, particularly in his piece: *Law and Gospel* (c. 1529) where the Brazen Serpent serves as an example of Old Testament 'law' can be found in: C. Weimer, 'Luther and Cranach on Justification in Word and Image' in T.J. Wengert (ed.), *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 292-309; and R. Dekoninck, and M. Somon, 'Christian Appropriations of the Brazen Serpent' in *Die Bibel in der Kunst/Bible in the Arts* Online-Zeitschrift 5 (2021) https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bibelkunst/BiKu_2021_01_Dekonink_Somon_Brazen Serpent.pdf (Accessed: 15 December 2021).

[125] M. Luther and P. Melanchthon, *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (Wittenberg, 1538).

by His earlier serpentine assault and had repented for their aggravation against God and Moses.[126] Luther's fellow Reformer Phillip Melanchthon used the Brazen Serpent as his crest from around 1519, a good example of which can be seen opposite Luther's own crest of the Luther Rose on the frontispiece of their joint 1538 work: *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (see appendix fig. 39).[127] Melanchthon likely used the Brazen Serpent in reference to when Jesus himself discussed the icon in the Gospel of John, comparing the raising up of the Son of Man to the serpent that was raised by Moses (John 3:14-15). Jesus likened Himself to the bronze symbol, stating that as he is lifted those who believe will have eternal life just as those who repented before the Brazen Serpent were healed.[128] For Melanchthon, this serpent is actually a symbol of hope and of Christ himself – many worlds away from the fear-inducing, satanic symbology of the serpentine monsters that we have encountered so far. It is a simple device, with theological overtones for those familiar with the Book of Numbers and the Gospel of John – a perfect allegory for the theologically-minded Melanchthon and a suitable symbol for the altarpieces Cranach sometimes placed them on.[129] The Brazen Serpent as a symbol did not however contain quite the wealth of connotations that the dragon did for a wide, often millenarian audience. It was not rooted deeply in popular imagination and folklore, nor could it be easily utilised in scenarios outside of its biblical origins whereas a dragon wearing the Pope's hat could be reinterpreted by successive artists with flexibility and ease. It is perhaps for this reason that images like the pope-dragon emerged in Bibles and popular print culture while the Brazen Serpent simply did

[126] The Brazen Serpent (sometimes written 'Brass Serpent') is also given the name '*Nehushtan*' in the Book of Kings where King Hezekiah commands it to be destroyed as the Israelites had begun to burn incense to it, treating it as an idol (2 Kings 18:4).
[127] M. Luther and P. Melanchthon, *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (Wittenberg, 1538).
[128] John 3:14-15.
[129] D.L. Ehresmann, *The brazen serpent in the works of Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop: a study in Lutheran iconography* (New York, 1962). See altarpieces such as: L. Cranach, *Law and Grace* (Gotha, 1529); L. Cranach, *Law and Grace* (Saxony, c.1550); and P. Dell, *Allegory to the Old and New Testament* (1530-1534) which draws upon Cranach's themes though Dell flips the sides of Old and New Testament in his relief.

not. The stoking of fear, hatred, and dissent was likely a greater concern in anti-papal and anti-Interim popular culture than dialogues of belief and repentance.



Lucas Cranach the Elder signed his works with a rendition of his crest: a crowned and winged black serpent carrying a ring. Detail from L. Cranach, *Catherine of Mecklenburg* (1514) (see appendix fig. 40).[130]

Similarly to Melanchthon, Lucas Cranach the Elder was granted a coat-of-arms in 1508 by Frederik the Wise (1463-1525) while serving as his court painter that depicts a black snake with two black bat wings, crowned, and carrying a ring in its mouth that he used to sign his work (for various examples see appendix fig. 40).[131] The contemporary reasoning as to why Cranach was granted this particular symbol and the meaning of these arms has unfortunately been lost or was never recorded, despite them appearing on numerous works by

[130] L. Cranach, *Catherine of Mecklenburg* (1514).
[131] *"Von Gottes Gnaden Wir Friedrich Herzog zu Sachsen (verleihen) … mit wohlbedachtem Mut und gutem Rat demselben Lucas von Cranach dieses machbenannte Kleinod und Wappen, mit Namen ein galen Schild, darinnen eine schwarze Schlange, habend in der Mitte zwei schwarze Fledermausflügel, auf dem Helm ein gelber Pausch, von Dornen gewunden, darauf aber eine Schlange is tzu gleichermaß in Schilde, wie den das inmitten dieses Briefes eigentlicher gamalt und mit Farben ausgestrichen ist, gnädiglich verliehen und gegeben, verleihen und geben ihm hiermit in kraft dieses Briefes also, daß er und seine ehelichen Leibeserben und derselben Erbenserben für und für in ewige Zeit dasselbe Kleinod und Wappen haben…"* The transcription of this quote of Cranach being given his arms comes from: J. Jahn, *Lucas Cranach d. Ä. 1472-1553. Das gesamte graphische Werk mit Exempeln aus dem graphischen Werk Lucas Cranachs d. J. und der Cranachwerkstatt.* (Berlin, 1972), p. 593.

Cranach and his son.[132] It has been suggested by scholars such as Werner Schade and Helmut Nickel that the symbol is alchemical or astrological in nature, or at least suggestive of some manner of hidden knowledge that Cranach may have had.[133] More likely however is Steven Ozment's suggestion that the winged serpent stands for eternal life and Chronos (the Greek god of time whose name Cranach sometimes applied to himself), and the ring and crown are folkloric associations with magical powers (as we see in the tales of Seyfrid) - taken together these symbols are perhaps a recognition of Cranach's near-supernatural speed and skill, and the fact that his works will live on in posterity for all time.[134] Here the serpent takes on much less sinister connotations, harkening back to classical themes and elements of Germanic folklore – appropriate themes for heraldry in the aristocratic circles Cranach was moving in and seemingly devoid of diabolic associations when it was conceived in 1508.

One cannot help but wonder if Cranach was inspired by his own arms for his work on the pope-dragon for Luther's *Septembertestament*. If so, it seems strange that Cranach would look to his own personal brand of iconography when devising a symbol of evil for the emergent Reformation, or perhaps in Cranach's eyes it was a simple thing to partition the classically inspired crowned and winged serpent of his own symbol from the biblically inspired crowned and winged serpent of the Papal-Antichrist with no sense of irony or a conflation between the two images. A semiotic analysis of Cranach's arms could easily render similar results as our discussion on the pope-dragon: the winged serpent a symbol of Satan,

[132] There are too many instances of Cranach's arms to list here, but three pieces which show the serpent in the varying levels of detail Cranach would sign it in are: L. Cranach, *Catherine of Mecklenburg* (1514); L. Cranach, *Cupid* (c.1530); and L. Cranach, *Venus Standing in a Landscape* (1529).
[133] W. Schade, *Die Malerfamilie Cranach* (Dresden, 1973); H. Nickel, '"The Judgement of Paris" by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and Alchemy' in *Metropolitan Museum Journal* Vol. 16 (1981), pp. 117-129.
[134] S. Ozment, *The Serpent and the Lamb: Cranach, Luther, and the Making of the Reformation* (Yale, 2013), pp. 70-71. Ozment also notes that the black and gold/yellow colouring of Cranach's arms are traditional colours of Saxony, marking Cranach out as a loyal member of the Saxon court.

and the crown and ring icons of greed as well as reminders of Fafnirian monsters from dragon-slaying narratives. Cranach is set up almost as much a dragon to be slain himself as he does the Pope, a curious coincidence or perhaps an air of millenarian reform many years after he was first awarded his arms began to sweep these symbols down more diabolic roots as soteriological fear began to descend over Europe. Whatever the case, it is strange to see one of the great architects of Protestant iconography identify himself with a symbol that was not too dissimilar to such a visceral condemnation of the Reformation's enemies and a tool with which Protestants could form their own identities in opposition.

Conclusion – 'Triumph of the New Faith over the Old'

The dragon was an effective piece of iconography for Reformers, having both scriptural and cultural provenance as a familiar symbol to the German people. All of the associated cultural signifiers of the dragon made it an extremely useful rhetorical tool and as an easily recognised negative symbol, the dragon was hard to misunderstand, enjoying a scriptural precedence for evil that made it particularly alluring as an iconographical motif to Protestants. Its familiarity to audience and artist alike made it easy to use in place of more exotic/esoteric Bible-accurate descriptions. Reformation artists tended to not care for the particulars of the physical differentiators between the various beasts of apocalypse, so the familiar form of the dragon became a useful medium to convey a general sense of eschatological evil.

This is particularly notable in the evolving pope-dragon of the sixteenth century where the Papacy could be easily linked to the Antichrist through the medium of the dragon, something that became more overt as the Reformation matured in its influence and theology. The cultural signifiers of the dragon also provided greater power to pope-dragon iconography by adding more interpretive value than just the apocalyptic overtones of surface appraisal. The dragon represented greed as well as diabolic or eschatological connections, and the implied metamorphosis in these images from man into beast - similar to the ones appearing in folk tales and popular culture, served to dehumanise the Papacy. For the Papacy was not only elevated to apocalyptic threat but was also lowered to the realm of beasts in this hybrid-iconographical tradition. Pope-dragon imagery went on to breed dragon slaying narratives that ultimately formed part of a myth-making process for Protestants. It defines what they were in opposition to and moulded their identity as a movement around it whilst equating themselves with righteousness. Ultimately, the image of the dragon created a form of foundational myth

for Protestantism – one of opposition to an institution that they deemed monstrous, greedy, and antithetical to their religion as harbinger of the apocalypse.

Though it is difficult to measure the ultimate success of these pieces on the behaviour of the individuals who saw them, the recurrent use of the pope-dragon motif in extant form that are diverse in medium (ranging from images in Bibles to pamphlets, and coins to drinking vessels), across time (the earliest discussed in this segment is from 1522 and the latest from 1617), and across geography (examples in this chapter, where the location of publication is known, cover the breadth of the Empire as well as Switzerland, the Dutch Republic, and England). Though many of the artists remain anonymous, or have lost their identity to history, it is clear that despite often being separated from one another by time or place the dragon, particularly the pope-dragon, clearly remained an effective symbol in their eyes.

2.2 THE ART OF MIRACLES AND THE AUGSBURG *WUNDERZEICHENBUCH*

Miraculous events and symbols of God's providence were common objects of fascination and rhetoric in early modern Europe, spawning a host of literature and images that shocked and entertained an avid audience of both educated and illiterate members of society. In a period of religious turmoil as turbulent as the German Reformation, and in the burgeoning age of the printing press, it is little surprise to see the publication of much discussion regarding events that were seen to be evidence of God's will in the world. Miraculous and providential signs could take a myriad of forms, of which the appearance of serpents and dragons are but one of many. Such portents included but were not limited to the birth or discovery of a monstrous creature, bizarre celestial phenomenon, supernatural weather conditions, and unusual deaths.[135] Their reporting was often accompanied by rich illustrations, religious rhetoric, and millenarian speculation which held a rapt audience in a mixture of fear and awe.

The art of miracles has been of great interest to historians of the Reformation, Julie Crawford labelling the dissemination of texts and images that dealt with the supernatural a key part of Protestant polemic.[136] As we have seen in prior chapters, Protestant authors and artists employed the supernatural to great effect, with monsters like dragons having their cultural symbolism turned to religious ends. Jennifer Spinks, whose work deals specifically with the imagery of monstrous births in sixteenth-century Germany, has highlighted that the Reformation's polemic use of the supernatural led to an explosion of this subject matter in

[135] For more on early modern wonder literature see: J. Siever, 'Literature of Wonder in Early Modern England and America' in *Literature Compass* 4(3) (2007), pp. 766-783; E. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: superstition, reason, and religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford, 2010); and A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).
[136] J. Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism, Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore, 2005), p. 28. See also: J. Spinks, 'Blood, Violence, Calvinism and the Devil: Lutheran Prodigy Culture by 1600 and Andreas Engel's Wonder Book' in *Past & Present* Vol. 234, Issue supplement 12 (2017), pp. 212-236.

German visual culture as most works published by Protestants at this time were accompanied by fantastical woodcuts.[137] Literacy rates were after all quite low and as the historian of early modern witchcraft Charles Zika argues, even if the majority of people could not read they could still have the concepts of Protestant supernatural culture brought to them through the medium of the image provided they could gain physical access to it.[138]

Scholarly work that specifically deals with serpents and dragons is exceedingly rare, and the studies that do concern dragons in wonder literature have appeared with regards the genre in England rather than Germany, where a single pamphlet has inspired a few studies on draconic folklore and providence. Published in 1614, it concerns a dragon that had been terrorising Sussex, whom the author decries as representing God's judgement against various sins he believes the people of England to have committed.[139] As with other examples of wonder literature, historians and folklorists have found this pamphlet revelatory of the anxieties of the time with the dragon serving as a cypher for greed and an impending apocalypse.[140]

However, a certain level of abstraction is present in this account, for the author of this pamphlet states that 'Our country does not naturally breed them' implying that dragons were considered to be foreign to England and this sighting was an aberration. Similarly, Dutchman Adriaen Coenen (1514-1587) wrote in his *Visboek (1578)* that 'Dragons and Basilisks are

[137] J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), pp. 1-12.
[138] C. Zika, 'Images of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe', in B.P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 141-158.
[139] Anon, *True and wonderfull A discourse relating to a strange and monstrous serpent (or dragon) lately discouered, and yet liuing, to the great annoyance and diuers slaughters both of men and cattell, by his strong and violent poyson, in Sussex two miles from Horsam, in a woode called S. Leonards Forrest, and thirtie miles from London, this present month of August. 1614. With the true generation of serpents.* (London, 1614).
[140] H. Dudley, *The history and antiquities of Horsham* (London, 1836) pp. 46-7, J. Simpson, *The Folklore of Sussex* (1973); and J. Stirm, 'Enter the Dragon: Desire and Meaning in a True and Wonderfull Encounter' in *Early Modern Culture* Vol. 11 (2016), pp. 53-64. For broader discussion on providence in wonder literature in England, see: A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

fearful creatures, but, as far as I know, none have ever been seen in Holland'.[141] Both authors place the home of dragons far away; perhaps owing to their reduced presence in the culture of their respective countries, whereas the German-speaking authors we are about to examine placed dragons firmly within their own lands. While the dragon in the English pamphlet is a foreign interloper, coming from afar on an extraordinary occasion to signify and decry the sins of the local citizenry, the dragons of Germany are instead permanent residents with a vendetta against the mortal population of central Europe.

Though less written about in academic works, dragon sightings are often found in wonder literature across the German-speaking lands in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. An un-dated, but most likely early seventeenth century given a reference to veterans of the Dutch War of Independence (1568-1648), pamphlet entitled: *Höchstmerckwürdige, doch gewisse, und in denen dieserhalb gehaltenen Acten gegründete Nachricht, von einem abscheulichen Drachen*, discusses the incident of a dragon having suddenly appeared and taken up residence in the village of Gatersleben's bell tower, and the subsequent efforts of the citizens to drive the beast away. A solution was eventually put forth by ex-cannoneer Melchior Staupik: 'that a so-called frog should be tied to the dragon's tail, set on fire, and thereby perhaps make the harmful beast go away. Because one must, he said, cast out one devil by another'.[142] He indirectly identifies both dragons and frogs as symbols of the Devil and suggests that by tying an explosive device (referred to as a frog) to the tail of the beast -

[141] A. Coenen, *Visboek* (1578), p. 29. *'draken en basiliskusen wist me uß gestrene dierne zeet vreest, Maer ene die hebbe ic niet geweten dat in ons hollant zy geweest'.*
[142] Anon, *Höchstmerckwürdige, doch gewisse, und in denen dieserhalb gehaltenen Acten gegründete Nachricht, von einem abscheulichen Drachen/ Welcher sich zu Gattersleben, ohnweit Bernburg*, p. 2 https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=1.28/CMD?ACT=SRCHA&IKT=8079&TRM=%273:634068X%27&COOKIE=U999,K999,D1.28,Ec5f90ddb-f,I0,B9994++++++,SY,QDEF,A,H12,,73,,76-78,,88-90,NGAST,R77.97.250.93,FN (Accessed: 20 June 2020). *'Das man einen sogenannten Frosch an des Drachen Schwans binden, ihn anzünden, und dadurch vielleicht die schädliche Bestie zum Weichen bringen sollte. Denn man müsse, sagte er, einen Teufel durch den andern austreiben'.*

one devil would be driven out by the other. Agreeing that this made sense, the townsfolk retrieved some gunpowder from the local alchemist, and once the 'frog' was attached to the dragon it was set on fire. The dragon did not take kindly to having a lit explosive attached to its tail and went berserk, eventually leaving the bell tower and flying away. As it fled, the dragon was observed by a soldier called David Engelbach who provided a description of the beast, saying that it was the size of a medium cow with fiery eyes, webbed claws, and a bluish complexion.[143] Curiously, he could not confirm if it had wings or not but believed it likely did after witnessing its ability to travel swiftly through the air. The accompanying woodcut chooses to definitively give the monster a pair of wings, likely to make the monster more identifiable to an illiterate audience (see appendix fig. 41). This image is not as bombastic as others of the genre but is typical of them, depicting a dragon flying over a landscape trailing fire and being gazed upon by a shocked onlooker. The dragon is easily identified with its serpentine body, wings, and fire-breathing, but is a very simplistic cover-page woodcut designed to give a prospective reader a quick idea of what the pamphlet entails.

The dragon here is clearly named as a creature of the Devil but is otherwise portrayed as merely an animalistic beast without the fierce intelligence of Fafnirian monsters. Though an agent of evil this dragon gets up to very little mischief besides simply being where it is, and the text offers no comment on what this incident means making it one of the less religiously charged pieces of wonder literature we will be examining in this section. A lack of direct textual comment however does not necessarily mean a lack of message, it is likely simply indicative of the fact that an audience would have prior knowledge and understanding of what manner of portent a dragon is, as we have seen in previous chapters. Indeed, as we shall see in similar wonder literature like the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* around which the

[143] Ibid., p. 3.

rest of this chapter shall focus, dragons were universally a portent of incoming evil if not the evil themselves.

This chapter shall primarily comprise of the analysis of select folios from the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* and the associated materials that seem to have served as inspiration for them. Using this source to guide us through the field of wonder literature, we shall see how serpents and dragons appeared as symbols of Satan, terrifying portents of the apocalypse, and as messengers of God's ineffable will in the miraculous world early modern German-speaking people believed they lived in. Often inspired by the art and artists we discussed in the previous chapter; we shall see how the terrifying eschatological dragon of Protestant iconography became a part of the miracles of early modern German religious culture.

Only discovered in the past decade and printed in facsimile for the first time in 2013 (being subsequently reprinted in 2017), the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* (*Book of Miracles*) is perhaps one of the most striking visual depictions of the miraculous world in sixteenth century Germany. Composed in the mid-sixteenth century (c.1545-1552), the *Book of Miracles* is a compilation of large and richly detailed gouache and watercolour illustrations depicting miraculous events each with its own caption.[144] These illustrations are not wholly original. As we shall see they were usually adaptations of various images that were circulating in and around the free Imperial City of Augsburg, but they are richly coloured unlike most woodcuts and contain a host of the artist's own embellishments.[145] As a compilation, it offers

[144] Given the dating of some events within and the use of passages from the 1545 Luther Bible, historians believe it to have been created c.1545-1552. See: J.P. Waterman, 'Miraculous Signs from Antiquity to the Renaissance' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 6-47.
[145] J.P. Waterman, 'Miraculous Signs from Antiquity to the Renaissance' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 6-47, and T. Borchert, 'The Book of Miracles' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 48-100.

a cross-section of the genre of wonder literature and iconography that provides a wide-ranging insight into the kinds of events attributed to divine providence that were appearing in pamphlets and broadsheets across Germany at this time, including the appearance of dragons.

Being a compilation, it is also highly subjective to the particular tastes of its compiler. We have some information on at least one of the artists who contributed to this book (the artist identifies themselves as 'I, Hans Burgkmair' on Folio 117, likely the less well-known younger Burgkmair (1500-1559) rather than his famous father who died in 1531) but we still know nothing of the patron who commissioned this book, if other artists of Burgkmair's workshop were involved or if he illustrated every folio, the reason for the book's compilation, or the methodology for choosing what to put into the text.[146] There appears to be a certain predilection for celestial events with seventy-five of the 155 non-biblical images depicting phenomena ranging from eclipses and comets, to bleeding suns and battles in the heavens, but why this peculiar kind of miracle should occur so frequently is unknown – likely it is solely the tastes of the artist(s) or patron.[147]

While this unusual work does provide a unique look into the breadth of wonder literature circulating in the German-speaking lands in the mid-sixteenth century; it is limited both in the tastes of the compiler, and in the fact that we know so little of its history. On the former, it is useful for this thesis that serpentine monsters should appear so often within its pages. Indeed, around half of all the 'monsters' in the book are somewhat draconic in one

[146] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 117, and for discussion on the artist(s) see: T. Borchert, 'The Book of Miracles' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 48-100. It is interesting to note that fol. 93 states that the subject of its illustration, a child born with multiple faces and limbs in 1513, had been originally recorded by a Hans Burgkmair, possibly the father of the principal artist of this work.

[147] Thirty-five images are drawn directly from the Bible and presented with the relevant Bible quote (fifteen from the Old Testament, twenty from the New Testament. Additionally, a further two are from the 'Book of Josephus' (writings by the first century Romano-Jewish historian and soldier Flavius Josephus), and another one is nebulously ascribed to the 'time of Job'), seventy-five of the non-biblical images depict some kind of celestial phenomenon, and fifteen of the non-biblical images present the appearance or monstrous birth of unusual creatures (many of which are dragons or dragon-like and are covered in this chapter).

fashion or another, though this is not to say serpents and dragons comprised almost half of all miracle pamphlets – they were merely one motif amongst many. With regards to the latter, we unfortunately have no indication as to the reception of this work due to not knowing the identity of the patron(s) it was intended for. Its style and form are not dissimilar to contemporary manuscripts of a like nature such as Conrad Lycosthene's (1518-1561) *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (1557), and Pierre Boaistuau's (1517-1566) *Histoires Prodigieuses* (1560) that similarly collect miraculous occurrences, though the full-colour painted images in the Augsburg book suggest a more boutique finish than the woodcuts of these other, popular works.[148] Lycosthene's work in particular enjoyed great success in the German-speaking lands despite (or perhaps because of) its condemnation by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), though it was by no means an outlier.[149] As Spinks has shown, wonder books were popular at this time, especially amongst Protestants, and it may be that either the unknown patron of the Augsburg book, or its artist, was inspired to create their own.[150]

While the book presents no contents page and has no set divisions between sets of folios, the images are grouped in roughly three sections: the first depicts miraculous events from the Old Testament, the second covers various wonders from the time of the Roman Empire to the time of the book's composition, and the last segment is comprised of illustrated segments of the book of Revelation. Serpentine beasts and dragons appear in this text several times in the second and third segments, taking on varying forms and roles in the images they are presented in.

[148] C. Lycosthenes, *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (Basel, 1557), P. Boaistuau *Histoires Prodigieuses* (1560).
[149] J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), pp. 81-104.
[150] Ibid.



Book of Miracles. fol. 90r (see appendix fig. 42).[151]

Their first appearance is in Folio 90 where we see a version of the dragon-tailed Tiber monster which was popularised by Luther and Melanchthon in their pamphlet: *The Papal Ass of Rome and the Monk Calf of Freyberg* (Wittenberg, 1523) where the monster was illustrated by Lucas Cranach the Elder (see appendix fig. 42 and fig. 13).[152] It is notable that this version downplays the anti-papal message of Cranach's woodcut, imitating earlier versions like that of Wenzel von Olmütz instead.[153] Indeed, there is a significant lack of overt anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant imagery presented in any of the illustrations in the *Book of Miracles* or in the associated captions. Joshua Waterman suggests that this is due to the precarity of the Protestant faith in the politics of Augsburg during the Interim, around the time that the work was created.[154] In fact, the captions attached to the images are decidedly neutral throughout and offer little in the way of interpretation, being more of a narration of the depicted events rather than telling the reader what these miracles mean. The sources that the *Book of Miracles*

[151] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 90r.
[152] Ibid.; and P. Melanchthon, and M. Luther, *The Papal Ass of Rome and the Monk Calf of Freyberg* (Wittenberg, 1523).
[153] For more, see the discussion of this woodcut in chapter 2.1.
[154] J.P. Waterman, 'Miraculous Signs from Antiquity to the Renaissance' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 6-47.

draw upon are, however, certainly not so neutral, being more typical of this genre in their moralising and regularly seek to explain what God or the Devil are hoping to achieve with such signs - suggesting that perhaps the patron of this text was either playing it safe given the politics of the Interim or is simply more fascinated with miracles than with explanations for them.



Book of Miracles. fol. 127r (left) and fol. 129r (right) (see appendix fig. 43 and fig. 44).[155]

The most dramatic appearance of dragons in this work comes perhaps from the images of Folios 127 and 129 where entire flights of dragons are illustrated. Folio 127 depicts a swarm of dragons that the accompanying text tells us appeared over Bohemia and the Vogtland in October 1533, remaining in the sky there for several days (see appendix fig. 43).[156] Where they came from, what they did besides flying around, or where they went is not elaborated on. There were apparently around 400 of these dragons who were varied in size, each with a snout like a pig, and a crown-like crest upon their heads. The image shows the dragons as having a pair of feathered wings which, while not unique, is unusual as most of the winged dragons we have encountered in this thesis are normally illustrated with bat-like

[155] *Book of Miracles*. fols. 127r., fol. 129r
[156] Ibid. fol. 127r.

membranous wings; and the monsters themselves are quite drab in colouration whereas the monsters we have seen so far are usually depicted with some vibrancy or at least in red or greenish tones rather than a grey-brown (see Chapter 1.0 for a discussion on colour). The meaning behind this phenomenon is not explained in the *Book of Miracles* itself but is alluded to in Sebastian Franck's (1499-1542): *Chronica, Zeitbuch unnd Geschychtbibel von Anbegyn biss in diss gegenwertig M.D.L. Jar verlengt.* where he sees the dragons as a warning.[157] Given the moralising nature of most wonder literature, it is likely a warning against sin and on omen of the approaching end time.

Curiously, these dragons are somewhat reminiscent of Cranach's crest in their dark colouration, crowned head, and feathered wings (which is how Lucas Cranach the Younger sometimes rendered them) – all they are missing is the ring in their mouths (see appendix fig. 40). Whether this is a subtle allusion to the Cranach family and workshop is unclear. Alternatively, these dragons are not too dissimilar from the locusts illustrated in folio 182 in colouration and crown though it remains uncertain as to if this was the artists intent.[158] If it is, then we have a suggestion that these dragons are an apocalyptic sign just like the plague of locusts of Revelation 9.

Folio 129 suggests that 1533 was a particularly active year for dragons, depicting another swarm of them appearing in that year, this time flying near Hilpoltstein and at the 'Hoffleins House', on the Friday after St Ursula, the '24th day' (see appendix fig. 44). [159] They appeared for only two hours after ten o'clock in the evening rather than for several days, and physically they are illustrated quite differently to the Bohemian dragons, possessing no

[157] S. Franck, *Chronica, Zeitbuch unnd Geschychtbibel von Anbegyn biss in diss gegenwertig M.D.L. Jar verlengt.* 4th edition (Bern, 1550/51), fol. 259v.
[158] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 182r.
[159] Ibid., fol. 129r.

limbs at all, nor wings – flying instead by some presumably supernatural means, and are vibrantly multi-coloured. St Ursula's feast day is traditionally held on the day of her death: 21st October, suggesting that this dragon sighting occurred within the same month as the one presented in folio 127. While these events may come from the same month, they are derived from different sources. Folio 129 comes from the preacher Martin Glaser's (fl.1530s) *Ein wunderbartlich gesicht von den Drachen* (Zwickau, 1533) rather than from Sebastian Frank.[160] Glaser's account of these events suggests that the dragons are presaging a contamination in the air, and invokes Ezekiel 12:24 ('For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel').[161] Though he does not cite any specific transgression or single out any particular group, Glaser seems to believe that people have been rebellious against God and that His punishment is coming, these dragons being His final sign of warning.



Image of the constellation *Draco* from Glaser's pamphlet (see appendix fig. 45)[162]

[160] M. Glaser, *Ein wunderbartlich gesicht von den Drachen* (Zwickau, 1533) https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN823785572&PHYSID=PHYS_0010&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001&view=picture-download (Accessed: 15 June 2020).
[161] Ezekiel 12:24.
[162] M. Glaser, *Ein wunderbartlich gesicht von den Drachen* (Zwickau, 1533).

The image that does appear at the end of Glaser's text is only a single, small woodcut which depicts a lone, limb-and-wing-less dragon covered with and surrounded by stars as well as two smaller beasts, making the illustration in the *Book of Miracles* by contrast a wholly original interpretation of events (see appendix fig. 45).[163] The Glaser woodcut (made by an unknown artist) seems to be depicting the constellation Draco (the beasts flanking it representing Ursa Minor and Ursa Major which appear either side of Draco in the night sky) suggesting that Glaser, or his artist at least, linked the miraculous appearance of the dragons over Hilpoltstein with some known celestial phenomenon.[164] Alternatively, this depiction of the constellation Draco may have simply been the only woodcut of a dragon of any kind available to those who were printing Glaser's short pamphlet, and they were unwilling to go to the expense of having a more bespoke one made. The patron of the *Book of Miracles*, however, may have instructed his artist(s) to create an illustration more in-line with Glaser's textual description of the dragons, rather than basing their work off the 'stock' woodcut which was part of the original text.

Curiously, there may be a scientific explanation for the sighting of these dragons rooted in our current understanding of the night sky. These 'dragons' may in fact have been meteor showers or comets, indeed we have numerous accounts across the globe of the Leonid meteor showers in late 1533.[165] The occurrence of meteor showers visible from the German-speaking lands in October 1533 might explain the appearance of dragons in the sources for

[163] Ibid.
[164] For more on dragons in astronomy see chapter 1.0.
[165] For information and sources on meteor showers seen around the world in 1533 see: P. Jenniskens, *Meteor Showers and their Parent Comets* (Cambridge, 2006), Table I; D. Pankenier, Z. Xu, and Y. Jiang, *Archaeoastronomy in East Asia: Historical Observational Records of Comets and Meteor Showers from China, Japan, and Korea* (New York, 2008); R.C. Kapoor, 'Tales From India. 1: Meteor Showers in Classical and Colonial Sources' in *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 25, 3 (2022) pp. 518-552; D. Crouzet and J. Good, 'Circa 1533: Anxieties, Desires, and Dreams', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 5, 1 (2001) pp. 24-61; J.F.C. Hecker, *The Epidemics of the Middle Ages* trans. B.G. Babington (1844); and J. Goad, *Astro-Meteorologica* (1699), p.174.

both folios 127 and 129, the differences in depiction in the *Book of Miracles* being down to a difference of artist between the pieces or that the artist was simply ignorant of this fact and by chance illustrated the dragons in folio 129 in the manner they did. It is certainly strange coincidence that these two sightings of dragon flights should both occur in October of 1533 and that the two separate accounts of this phenomenon both ended up in the same compilation book, particularly given that one of them strongly resembles meteors shooting across the sky. While the instance of a natural phenomenon may explain this, it could equally be a case of accounts aping one another, or indeed sheer coincidence. After all, as this thesis argues, dragons were a common motif in early modern Germany deeply ingrained within the cultural consciousness of the German people – making independent generation of dragon miracles quite likely.



Image showing two fiery dragons from: *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543) (see appendix fig. 46).[166]

If it was a result of a meteor shower it would certainly not be the only case of dragons finding themselves intertwined with natural phenomena in wonder literature. For example, the

[166] Anon, *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543).

broadsheet *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543) that reports on sightings of celestial phenomenon over Zaisenhausen has an illustration depicting two dragons made of fire spewing blazing spheres across the landscape.[167] The account paints a rather apocalyptic picture, claiming that a star with a long tail appeared in the sky on the 4th of May 1543 which the citizens of nearby Phorzhaim (modern day Pforzheim) interpreted as a sign that God would soon punish them for their sins. The star would in fact be revealed as a fiery dragon which laid waste to a brook and some fields before leaving the area. This was taken to be a divine warning by the local chroniclers, and a broadsheet recounting the tale soon circulated across Germany and Switzerland. Both text and image seem to suggest an occurrence of ball lightning, the dragon becoming a cypher for the destructive 'fiery' energy that people would have witnessed but could not easily explain in much the same way people might interpret a meteor shower as a flight of monsters passing overhead (see appendix fig. 46). Though we cannot be sure that early modern people saw such unusual phenomenon and ascribed them to dragons, and indeed the true cause of such wondrous occurrence is of less importance compared to contemporary interpretation, we can see that in the worldview of those who wrote this account dragons represented strange and mysterious elemental forces that they viewed with equal parts of awe and fear.

[167] Ibid.



Book of Miracles. fol. 133r (see appendix fig. 47).[168]

The next serpentine monster in the *Book of Miracles* appears a few folios later with folio 133 showing a sea creature that was allegedly caught near Venice and brought to the city in 1534 (see appendix fig. 47).[169] While the text does not directly refer to it as *Drache*, the creature's form is overall suggestive of a dragon with reptilian features and wings, as well as bearing a striking resemblance to the beasts of Revelation with its seven heads. Indeed, this sea creature is very similar to the Great Red Dragon shown in Folio 186, albeit without Satan's crowns and with a blue rather than red colouration, which is both more suggestive of the sea but also a similar palette to the biblical monsters in folios 185 and 189 (see appendix fig. 54 and fig. 57).[170] This is of little surprise given that the illustrations for these folios draw inspiration from the same artist: Hans Sebald Beham. This sea creature bears similarity to a monster found in Beham's 1537 *Biblicae historiae artificiosissime depictae* making him a likely source of inspiration for the artist who would also find inspiration in Beham's portfolio for other folios of the *Book of Miracles* as we shall see later.[171] Like folio 127, the textual

[168] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 133r.
[169] Ibid., fol. 133r.
[170] Ibid., fols. 185r, 186r, 189r.
[171] H. S. Beham, *Biblicae historiae artificiosissime depictae. Biblische Historien, figürlich fürgebildet* (2nd edition) (Frankfurt, 1537), fols. C1v, C2r.

account of this miraculous occurrence comes once again from Sebastian Franck where the sea creature is regarded as a particularly ominous portent.[172]



Book of Miracles. fol. 150r (see appendix fig. 48).[173]

By contrast, the dragon we see in Folio 150 has a supporting, rather than central role. This image depicts a celestial battle seen in the clouds above Poland where an armoured man with a fiery-red sword fights against a vast horde of enemies while stood between three crosses (see appendix fig. 48).[174] A dragon can be seen lurking behind the warrior at the very edge of the scene, the text telling us that it only comes forth to devour the man after he is victorious in repelling the attackers. This battle allegedly took place between eight in the morning and one in the afternoon, and the following folio shows us what happened the next day: an angel appeared atop three rainbows, ushering in a prolonged period of fair weather with no sign of any further enemies or the dragon.[175] This is the only celestial battle to feature a dragon presented in the *Book of Miracles*, such a monster being absent from similar scenes such as Folio 124 which shows a battle in the nights sky near Strasbourg, and it is also the

[172] S. Franck, *Chronica, Zeitbuch unnd Geschychtbibel von Anbegyn biss in diss gegenwertig M.D.L. Jar verlengt.* 4th edition (Bern, 1550/51), fol. 266v.
[173] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 150r.
[174] Ibid., fol. 150r.
[175] Ibid., fol. 151r.

only image in the book where the source material has been split into two folios (the original woodcut shows both the battle and the angel in a single image).[176]

Interestingly, the dragon here is not the main opponent of the knightly figure who serves as the focal point of this celestial battle. He is no dragon-slayer in the mould of St George who we discussed in Chapter 1.0; rather, he is a warrior slain in his hour of triumph by an opportunistic monster. The broadsheet from which this image was derived, *Warhafftige und erschrockliche newe Zeitung, des Gleichen vor nie gehört, so geschehen ist in dem Königreich Polen* (1545) offers some explanation for this hero's vulnerability in the interpretive text which accompanies the scene.[177] First though, it is worth noting a minor difference in the image itself between the original woodcut and painted adaptation in the *Book of Miracles* (beyond the splitting of the scene into two separate folios), for the dragon in this broadsheet is depicted in full, rather than partially obscured by the clouds as in the *Book of Miracles*, taking on a larger role in the image though not appearing as ethereally sinister as its watercolour counterpart (see appendix fig. 49). This prominence is likely because the broadsheet plainly states the dragon to be the Antichrist and an agent of the Devil, who threatens to sweep in and devour Christianity even if it is successful at fighting off a horde of other foes whom the broadsheet identifies as Turks and other enemies of God (presumably heretics, witches, etc.). The *Book of Miracles*, as always and for unclear reasons, does not include such interpretive comments though the associations between the figures of this tableaux and their interpretive counterparts are quite straightforward to the sixteenth-century mind.

[176] Ibid., fol. 124r.
[177] Anon, *Warhafftige und erschrockliche newe Zeitung, des Gleichen vor nie gehört, so geschehen ist in dem Königreich Polen* (1545).

Narratively this piece is quite unusual in that we see depicted a dragon on the cusp of victory rather than being impaled upon the weapon of a dragon-slayer. This Antichrist-dragon is cunning, waiting for the right moment to strike, and while the appearance of the angel assures us that the dragon's time will ultimately pass; the moment of its defeat is not shown directly. The dragon's actual fate is left to the imagination of the viewer, the artist relying upon the viewer's prior knowledge of the Antichrist's defeat and the successful commencement of Christ's reign on Earth.[178] This piece therefore asks the viewer to very much ponder the dragon in the present moment, to consider the all-pervasive threat of the Devil in their lives right now – assuring them that while there are hordes of enemies without, the Devil will ever be right behind you looking over your shoulder for a moment of vulnerability. Its focus is fixed on the current dangers which assail Christendom, but while the dragon is uncommonly victorious in this scene, the broadsheet offers hope that after the darkness there will always be light in the form of the angel and its rainbows, making this piece oddly optimistic for this manner of publication rather than outright admonitory. Indeed, the *Book of Miracles* affords the entirety of the next folio (Folio 151) to an image of the angel and its rainbows which provides sharp, yet reassuring, contrast to the image before.

[178] For discussion on contemporary general knowledge concerning Antichrist, see: B. McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 2000).



Book of Miracles. fol. 153r (see appendix fig. 50).[179]

This reassurance is short lived, for serpentine monsters reappear in a most horrific fashion shortly thereafter in folio 153, which shows a number of snakes bursting from a haybale and from the mouths of several dead men while another man tries to light the haybale on fire (see appendix fig. 50).[180] The accompanying text tells us that in 1545, in the summer around St Margaret's day (20 July), a horde of vipers and lizards appeared in Hungary killing many and ruining grain and fruit. Unlike the other, more bombastic appearances of dragons in the *Book of Miracles*, folio. 153 presents instead a vision of a monstrous plague of vermin sweeping across the landscape. Several broadsheets were created regarding this event that were later copied into miracle books with varying amounts of disturbing iconography. One image that was published by Aegidius Aquila (fl.1549-1552) in 1551 features an illustration composed not only of the horrifying tableaux we see in the *Book of Miracles* folio, but also shows a dead woman having snakes erupt from her stomach to the right of the aforementioned scene (see appendix fig. 51).[181] The accompanying text views this plague as an admonition against sin and beseeches people to live a godly life lest this, or any other horrific event,

[179] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 153r.
[180] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 153r.
[181] Anon, *Warhafftige und erschrockliche neüwe Zeitung, so im land zu Hungern, von nattern gezüchte und eydexen* (Vienna, 1551).

should occur again.[182] Notably, several of the snakes (most visibly on the serpent protruding from the very top of the haybale) appear to have crests, calling to mind either the crowned king of snakes: the Basilisk, or the lesser-known tradition of putting a peacock-feather crest atop the serpent of Eden to represent Satan's pride.[183] Either way it is a powerful denotation of malign evil intelligence behind the event rather than a simple natural phenomenon, a fact with that the somewhat apocalyptic tone of the accompanying text agrees with.

This scene would be notably recreated in Sebald Mayer's (active 1540-76) leaflet: *Eidechsen- und Natternplage in Ungarn*, that would then itself be copied in Lycosthenes' *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (albeit the image is reversed with the woman on the left of the image rather than the right), amongst other publications of which it is uncertain which inspired the version in the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* (see appendix fig. 52 and fig. 53).[184] The exclusion of the dead woman from the *Book of Miracles* folio seems odd given the prominence it receives in other publications. Given the amount of dead space in folio 153 it could not have been due to the spatial limits of the medium but must instead have been deliberate decision regarding content – it may have been felt by either the patron for whom the book was made or the artist that the serpents exploding from her nude corpse were simply too horrifying an image, indeed had it been included it would have been the most visceral of the non-biblical scenes present in the work. It may have also been felt to be unnecessary given that the image already includes snakes writhing out of the orifices of a pile of dead men, a startling image which recalls legends of bosom serpents - stories that concern instances of

[182] Ibid.
[183] Ruth Mellinkoff provides a thorough examination of the use of a crown of peacock feathers to denote Satan in her work on the Isenheim altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald; noting that early sixteenth century artists like Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien anointed their serpents of Eden with such crests. See: R. Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim, Reflections of Popular Belief In Grünewald's Altarpiece* (London, 1988), pp. 19-43.
[184] S. Mayer, *Eidechsen- und Natternplage in Ungarn* (Dillingen, 1551); and see: Lycosthenes, *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (Basel, 1557), p. 603.

animals invading the human body and living inside them, usually to the detriment of the host. Instances can be found across cultures and often involve snakes slithering into the gaping orifices of unsuspecting victims, only to poison them from within, and potentially one day leave them in a violent fashion.[185] Regardless of the reasons for the non-inclusion of the dead woman, this image remains a vision of blight and violation, one of the less fantastical yet most violent of images found in this collection that shows the very real fear evoked by the everyday serpents of the German-speaking lands.

Additionally, though the reference to St Margaret's day in the *Book of Miracles* is likely there to help give the reader an approximate timing for the event, it is interesting that St Margaret of Antioch is a saint most associated with being swallowed by Satan in the form of a dragon and escaping from his stomach by virtue of her faith. She is often depicted bursting out of a dragon, not unlike how the serpents here are seen in woodcuts of this event bursting out of corpses in a gross inversion of her story. St Margaret is also associated with childbirth and pregnant women, making the unholy posthumous birth of a horde of serpents a specific perverse offence against the saint, and as such is perhaps a further reason why the nude woman has been omitted. Whether this association with the saint is intended, or if allusions to the 'bosom serpent' legends are more what the artist planned, we cannot know. Though it does speak to the continued malleability of serpents and dragons as an iconographical symbol.

[185] For more on the legends of the Bosom Serpent see: D. Ermacora, R. Labanti, and A. Marcon, 'Towards a Critical Anthology of Pre-Modern Bosom Serpent Folklore' in *Folklore* Vol. 127 (3) (London, 2016), pp. 286-304; and H. Schechter, *The Bosom Serpent: Folklore and Popular Art* (New York, 2000).



Book of Miracles. fol. 185r. (see appendix fig. 54).[186]

The remaining dragons and dragon-like creatures in the *Book of Miracles* are from illustrations of apocalyptic beasts from the Book of Revelation, all of which have been noted to be somewhat derivative of various Luther Bible illustrations, especially from work done by Hans Sebald Beham in 1539, that perhaps hints at the patron of this book holding at the very least some Protestant sympathies.[187] These illustrations, while ultimately being inspired by them, do not directly imitate the style and composition of those in the *Septembertestament* or 1534 Luther Bible, largely owing to the greater space provided in the formatting of the *Book of Miracles* and the allowance of lavish colouring which was not always present in early sixteenth-century Bibles. As we see in folio 185 which shows the beast from the pit attacking the two witnesses (Revelation 11:5-8), the artist uses the space to present an expansive scene of the death of the witnesses, dominated on the right by richly dressed onlookers, and on the left by a fearsome blue dragon (see appendix fig. 54).[188] Likewise folio 186 depicts a very colourful rendition of the Great Red Dragon chasing the woman clothed with the sun (Revelation 12:1-4) (see appendix fig. 55), and folio 187 shows the Beast from the sea

[186] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 185r.
[187] J.P. Waterman, 'Miraculous Signs from Antiquity to the Renaissance' in *The Book of Miracles* (Facsimile by B. Taschen) (Cologne, 2017), pp. 6-47. H.S. Beham, *Typi in apocalypse Ioannis depicti* (Frankfurt, 1539).
[188] *Book of Miracles*. fol. 185r.

(Revelation 13:1-4) in a richly coloured scene which appears inspired by its counterpart in the 1534 Luther Bible, but the creature is noticeably lacking the wings it often appears with; making it much less draconic and more distinct a creature in comparison to the Great Red Dragon (see appendix fig. 56 and fig. 17).[189] Unusually, all of these monsters are given fur by the artist, including the Great Red Dragon - eschewing the more traditionally scaled (or at least a mixture of fur and scales) depictions of that beast favoured by the sixteenth-century artists we saw in the prior chapter. These images once again demonstrate that to the early modern mind, the physical characteristics of a dragon were by no means definitively set.



Detail from *Book of Miracles*. fol. 189r (see appendix fig. 57).[190]

Lastly of note, folio 189 shows a single blue dragon at the pouring out of the bowls of wrath, spewing blasphemies in the form of frogs (see appendix fig. 57).[191] The Bible places several other apocalyptic beasts in this scene, but the artist has condensed them down into a single form – that of a dragon (see Chapter 2.1 regarding Illustration to Apocalypse 16 in the

[189] Ibid., fols. 186r and 187r.
[190] Ibid., fol. 189r.
[191] Ibid., fol. 189r.

1522 *Septembertestament*).[192] While Cranach may have done this initially to save on space, later artists, particularly this one, were under no such constraints yet the advantageous iconographic short-hand of using only a single dragon remains. Interestingly, this blue dragon appears to be a bloated version of the dragon from folio 185, seemingly well fed since devouring the two witnesses (see appendix fig. 54). This would suggest that this artist, and perhaps those who also substituted the three beasts of Revelation 16 for a single dragon like Cranach did, did not see the beast from the pit in Revelation 11 as representing solely the Antichrist, as commonly depicted in late medieval and early modern understandings of the Antichrist's life – but as a single manifestation of the combined malign influence of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.[193] Regardless of the precise theological implications, this does cement the reputation of the dragon as a preferred symbol used to represent apocalyptic evil in all its guises.

As we have seen in this thesis thus far, serpents and dragons were rarely virtuous portents of good, and the monsters found in the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* do not stray far from the terrifying creatures we saw so effectively used in the previous chapter. Indeed, the serpents and dragons of wonder literature embody the ancient meaning of the word 'monster' perfectly - the Latin 'Moneo' meaning to warn, advise, or remind – and the beasts we encountered in this compilation of miraculous events are powerful warnings whether they simply fly ominously through the air or ravage the land like a plague, devouring grain and erupting from corpses.

Across the genre of wonder literature and as we have seen in this chapter, most signs of God's providence are usually unfavourable and an indictment against sin, and the

[192] L. Cranach, 'Illustration to Apocalypse 16' in M. Luther, *Septembertestament* (Wittenberg, 1522).
[193] B. McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 2000).

occurrence of the ever-loathed serpents and dragons in the images and literature surrounding miracles is therefore unsurprising. The selection of images from across early sixteenth-century Germany found in the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* provides us with a useful snapshot of the tropes and concepts these monsters held in wonder literature of this time – painting them as symbols of Satan, terrifying portents of the apocalypse, and as messengers of God's ineffable will.

The dragons of folio 150 and folio 133 certainly have all the Satanic overtones one would expect as manifestations of the apocalyptic beasts from folios 185-189, yet in several of these examples the dragons are not embodiments of evil or stand-ins for the Devil, they are instead the harbingers of God's wrath. Folio 129 has dragons who herald God's anger in the form of polluted air, while the plague of serpents and lizards in folio 153 call to mind the plagues God sent against the Egyptians. While equally terrifying as those monsters who take on the mantle of Satan, these serpents and dragons are instead presented as natural forces through which God works. The association between dragons and natural phenomenon will be explored in greater detail in a later chapter (3.2), but what these miracles reveal is that people considered serpentine beasts, while terrifying and repugnant, as a fundamental part of God's creation.

2.3 RELIGION, GENDER, AND SERPENTINE BEASTS IN EARLY MODERN GERMANY

The monstrous serpents of early modern Germany often manifested in art, literature, and folklore in overtly gendered or sexualised ways. Whether this was done via the use of particular pronouns, the depiction of physical sexual characteristics on serpents and dragons, or by the description of these monsters undertaking sexual activities with humans – these imagined creatures were routinely given complex and unusual gendered attributes. This is particularly noticeable in the Reformation period where the sexualisation of the dragon, alongside its satanic, apocalyptic attributes that, as we have seen, became more and more prominent in the religious rhetoric of this time, became part of deadly discourses that actively led to the persecution of women.

When serpents and dragons are given a discernible gender, they are often identified as male predators representing greed and unbridled lust, such as the different incarnations of the dragon slain by Sigurd that we saw in Chapter 1.1. Narratively they represent a dark mirror to the dragon-slayer as a manifestation of the sinful traits which they must overcome, and as a carnal spirit of temptation for women to either denounce or succumb to. Indeed, it is the relationship that these monsters have with women which shall concern much of this chapter: for serpents, dragons, and women have been inextricably linked in conceptual terms since pre-history. Daniel Ogden devotes an entire chapter of his 2021 book to the subject, exploring the *drakaina* of the classical world – women who were compared to dragons by metaphor, and anguipedes (creatures with the upper-half of a woman and a serpentine lower-half) – revealing a multiplicity of ancient people and creatures associated with the monster.[194] It would appear that little has changed since then, as women are repeatedly depicted in myth and folklore as

[194] D. Ogden, *The Dragon in the West, from Ancient Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 59-83.

the principal victims of abduction by these creatures, the sexual partners of draconic demons, and occasionally they are the monsters themselves.[195] Indeed, when women take up the role of monster their gender compliments the dichotomies of the *Chaoskampf* so that not only do we have the dichotomy of dragon-slayer and dragon, good and evil, and order and chaos – we also have male and female. The narrative cycle thus finds completion and a host of different concepts find their home within these stories – a tradition that goes back to ancient Mesopotamia where the primordial Tiamat finds herself in battle with the storm god Marduk.[196]

The first part of this chapter shall examine how serpents and dragons were gendered in the early modern German-speaking lands, considering in particular how these creatures interacted with both masculinity and femininity, and the role that the Reformation played in gendering such depictions. The second part of this chapter will consider the roles that serpents and dragons, as gendered and actively sexual beings, played in the witch hunts that engulfed early modern Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – examining case studies from east-Germany where dragons were linked with witchcraft and exploring the tripartite conceptual connections between devils, dragons, and witches. This chapter will conclude by stating that whether the dragon appears female or male, or even as a simple un-gendered beast, in this religiously charged period of early modern German history - it is ultimately humans of the female sex who suffer.

[195] For more on the hybrid monstrosity of women in early modern art see: M.F. Hansen, 'Ambiguous Delights: Ornamental Grotesques and Female Monstrosity in Sixteenth-Century Italy' in C.A. Hammeken, and M.F. Hansen (eds.), *Ornaments and Monstrosity in Early Modern Art* (Amsterdam, 2019), pp. 45-72.
[196] For more on this Babylonian legend see: T. Jacobson, 'The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1) (1968), pp. 104-108; W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Pennsylvania, 2013); and T.R. Kämmerer, and K.A. Metzler, *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos Enûma elîsch. Alter Orient Und Altes Testament* (Münster, 2012).

Gendering the dragon

The serpents and dragons of popular culture and religious belief are often attributed a particular gender when they appear. That is not to say that they could be ungendered; indeed, when dragons appear as mere beasts such as those slain to create Seyfrid's invincible skin in *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, they are not given a particular gender and are portrayed as mere animals not unlike the beasts we will discuss in Chapter 3.2. However, when such monsters take on a greater role in a narrative, such as the cursed abductor of Kriemhild in the aforementioned story, more personality including a gender is ascribed to them. While the most famous of these gendered dragons are male, like Fafnir, there is also significant iconographical depiction of female dragons in art which historians are only just beginning to examine the significance of.[197] In fact, not only were serpents and dragons given specifically gendered attributes, they were also eroticised and depicted as engaging in sexual or sexually suggestive activities. Though not always depicted with biological signifiers of sexual maturity like developed breasts or genitalia, serpents and dragons have traditionally held a host of psycho-sexual connotations. Indeed, in the ancient world serpents were sometimes symbols of fertility, and of the cycle of life and rebirth, though after hundreds of years of the symbol being Christianised (as we have seen in Chapter 1.0) the sexual nature of the beast became a more negative characteristic.[198]

Most commonly gendered within oral or textual traditions, male serpents and dragons represent the much greater proportion of these creatures to be ascribed a gender. Some like

[197] See the pioneering work in this topic with regards St George which we shall discuss in greater depth later in this chapter: S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178; and S. Riches, ''Hyr wombe insaciate': the iconography of the feminised monster' in C. Meek, and C. Lawless (eds.), *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women Pawns or Players?* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 177-196.
[198] For serpents and fertility see: J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* (Yale, 2010), pp. 46, 88-94, 175-176, 224-225.

Fafnir or Satan were explicitly male before their transformation into a monster, retaining their gender following their metamorphosis, whereas others like the dragon slain by St George are usually read as implicitly male given their appetite for virgin princesses. Unlike female dragons, they are rarely sexualised via the depiction of male physical sexual characteristics such as genitalia in artwork, and are often portrayed little differently to normal animals, being simple-minded creatures who are representative of evil, greed, and chaos that just happen to have a male pronoun. Indeed, many of the dragons in prior chapters are explicitly male in their description or possess male-presenting human faces, yet no sexual connotations are ascribed to them at all. For example, the various incarnations of the pope-dragon motif are rarely given any sexualised physical characteristics (Gottland's woodcut from Chapter 2.1 being a notable exception with its prominent breasts, see appendix fig. 37), nor are they presented in any sexually suggestive scenes.[199] There is no additional overt symbolism as a result of gendering the monsters in these woodcuts, the sheer malign monstrousness of the dragon is chief here, as in many cases, rather than its gender identity.

The fact that the gendering of such dragons as male is usually unproblematised is certainly worth commenting upon. There are a few reasons as to why a male gender may be ascribed rather than none at all, chief of which is the subconscious bias of the commonly male author or artist. For them, the male gender may simply be the default – anything that is not explicitly female must be masculine even if it lacks overt male traits. Alternatively, it may be that these authors and artists are consciously or subconsciously drawing upon the notion of

[199] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552). Given long-standing accusations of lechery against Renaissance popes like Alexander VI (1431-1503, reigned 1492-1503), it is surprising to not see an example of a pope-dragon taking on an aspect of sinful male sexuality. It may simply be a case we have no extant examples, or that artists decided the predatory nature of the dragon was sufficient subtext if they even considered it at all.

the dragon as a symbol of power and therefore, in their patriarchal worldview, obviously male.[200] Indeed, when dragons begin engaging in sexual activity in a dominant role, they invariably take on a male persona as they present a sexual threat to the women in their thrall. Often this is quite explicit; as we have seen, the cursed man who became a dragon in *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* kidnaps Kriemhild with the express desire to sleep with her and break his curse (consensually or not), even threatening to drag the princess to Hell after the fact.[201] On other occasions the sexual nature of the male dragon is subtext, such as the dragon of Silene whose captive virgin princess becomes the prize of his battle with St George. The sexual nature of the female dragon, however, is usually presented as submissive or even degenerate – no doubt a result of the same male-authored sexual biases.[202]

Gendering a serpentine beast, specifically making them female, through a presentation of physical sexual characteristics in iconography is more common than text applying gendered terminology, though some examples of both can be found within the German-speaking lands in the late medieval and early modern periods. Depicting some serpents and dragons as specifically female is reasonably uncommon within the entire corpus of material concerning these creatures, but instances of it are unusual enough to warrant comment. The two most notable include the feminisation of the serpent of Eden which infrequently appears in art, and the addition of female sexual characteristics to the dragon slain by St George.

[200] A powerful female dragon would certainly be a huge subversion of the natural order, perhaps why the only female dragons we see are those who are experiencing the moment of their death, and thus cannot challenge established power dynamics.
[201] S. Holzbauer (ed.), *Das Lied Vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (Klagenfurt, 2001), pp. 117-120.
[202] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178.



L. Cranach, *Adam and Eve* (c. 1523) (see appendix fig. 58).[203]

The serpent in the garden of Eden is occasionally depicted as a hybrid creature, having the lower body of a snake but the torso or head of a human. This creature is often referred to as a Draconiopides (alternatively Draconcopedes, or Dracontopides) and most commonly bears a female head in reference to Rabbinic belief that Lilith, Adam's first wife, was the serpent in the Garden of Eden.[204] Christian scripture does not mention Lilith at all, and Christian tradition (derived from Revelation 12:9) instead identifies the serpent of Eden with the explicitly male Satan. This did not however entirely remove the female serpent from the Christian consciousness and many examples of a Lilith-based Draconiopides exist in art and

[203] L. Cranach, *Adam and Eve* (c. 1523).
[204] For further reading on Lilith, see: S. Hurwitz, *Lilith, die erste Eva: eine Studie über dunkle Aspekte des Weiblichen* (Zurich, 1980); B.E. Mcdonald, 'In Possession Of The Night: Lilith As Goddess, Demon, Vampire' in R.S. Sabbath (ed.), *Sacred Tropes: Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an As Literature and Culture* (Boston, 2009), pp. 173-182); R. Graves and R. Patai, *The Hebrew Myths* (New York, 1964), pp. 65-69; and V. Tuttle, 'Lilith in Bosch's Garden of earthly delights' in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* Vol. 15, No. 2 (1985), pp. 119-130.

sculpture, the most famous being on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.[205] In Germany, instances of this creature are as rare in occurrence as they are anywhere else in Europe but cover a range of mediums, from a stained-glass window at Ulm Cathedral that shows the serpent with a crowned woman's head wrapped around the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (see appendix fig. 1), to a delicately carved wooden pea pod thought to have been used as a prayer bead which contains ten minutely carved Bible scenes including what appears to be a serpent with a humanoid torso handing Eve an apple.[206] Notable for its creation by a renowned Reformation artist is a woodcut of Adam and Eve by Lucas Cranach (c.1523) that depicts a Draconiopides with a woman's torso whispering in Eve's ear as she hands an apple to Adam (see appendix fig. 58).[207] This example has the serpent's body closely mirroring Eve's own, highlighting the female nature of original sin and more closely equating Adam's two wives with one another. Unfortunately, the Draconiopides was a relatively uncommon symbol, and substantial academic works on their occurrence across medieval and renaissance Europe are scarce.[208]

Conversely, historian Samantha Riches has done extensive work on the gendering of the dragon in the story of St George, initially in her 2000 book *St George Hero, Martyr and*

[205] The most comprehensive discussion of the Sistine Chapel serpent can be seen in: J. Schuyler, 'Michelangelo's Serpent with Two Tails' in *Source: Notes in the History of Art* Vol.9, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), pp. 23-29.
[206] The 'peapod' (believed to be of North German origin c.1500) is currently part of the collection of the Kunstgewerbemuseum (Berlin) and has been photographed as part of the Art Gallery of Ontario's Boxwood Project. See: http://boxwood.ago.ca/object/peapod-ten-biblical-scenes (Accessed: 28 May 2020).
[207] L. Cranach, *Adam and Eve* (c. 1523). See also: M.M. Dowd, and T. Festa (eds.), *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology* (New York, 2012).
[208] See: J.K. Bonnel, 'The Serpent with a Human Head in Art and Mystery Play' in *American Journal of Archaology* Vol. 21, No. 3 (Jul-Sep., 1917), pp. 255-291; G. Jaritz, 'Draconcopedes, or, the faces of devilish virgins' in F. de Asís García García, M.A.W. Vadillo, M.V.C. Picaza (eds.), *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages, Perspectives across Disciplines* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 85-94; N. Goodison, 'The Serpent with a Woman's Face: Transformation in *Libeaus Desconus* and the Vernacular Fair Unknown Tradition' in M. Edlich-Muth (ed.), *Medieval Romances Across European Borders* (Turnhout, 2018), pp. 205-228; N.C. Flores, *"Virgineum Vultum Habens": The woman-headed serpent in art and literature from 1300 to 1700* [PhD Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981]; and I.A. van Leeuwen, *Evil woman? She-devil? Monster? A study on the cultural context of the snake with a woman's head in the iconography of the Fall* [MA Thesis, Universiteit Utrecht, 2021].

Myth and later expounded upon in a 2003 article discussing the feminised monster.[209] Foremost she draws to the reader's attention a number of images of St George and the dragon which depict the dragon as having female genitalia or breasts. While these images only represent a minority of the vast corpus of iconography related to St George, Riches found enough of them in Northern Europe (in an interview she claims to have found over fifty, and she presents over a dozen in *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth*) that the phenomenon is worth investigating.[210]

Riches does note that these orifices, which she interprets as feminine pudendum, may alternatively be read as a wound or an anus. The wound interpretation is however somewhat unconvincing as St George is usually depicted stabbing the beast through the mouth (the source of the dragon's fiery breath and therefore its power) rather than the tail or abdomen. While Riches admits that the anus interpretation is equally valid, she prefers her reading of a gendered dragon possessing a pudendum due to other contextual clues such as the orifice in question not possessing clenched musculature as other depictions of monsters with an anus do.[211]

[209] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178; and S. Riches, ''Hyr wombe insaciate': the iconography of the feminised monster' in C. Meek, and C. Lawless (eds.), *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women Pawns or Players?* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 177-196.
[210] https://www.threemonkeysonline.com/gendered-monsters-art-and-politics-in-the-representation-of-st-george-and-the-dragon/ (Accessed: 10 November 2019).
[211] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178. It is worth noting that there is one early modern example of a dragon's anus being its weakness. In the anonymous English burlesque, *The Dragon of Wantley* which parodied the traditional dragon-slaying narratives the eponymous dragon is defeated when a knight kicks its 'arse', after which the monster groans, soils itself, and then dies. See: Anon, 'The Dragon of Wantley' in T. Percy (ed.), *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* Vol. 3, 3rd Edition (London, 1794), pp. 297-308.



L. Beck, *St. George Fighting with the Dragon* (c. 1515).[212]
Note the pudendum near the base of the dragon's tail (see appendix fig. 62).

Riches notes that German/Netherlandish artists active around the time of the Reformation in particular played with this idea of the feminised dragon, which she links with their conception of female sexuality.[213] The dragon represents a base and wild sexual promiscuity, being pierced by the phallic symbol of St George's lance Ascalon and often being positioned in a sexually submissive position beneath the saint on his rearing horse. She is then contrasted with both St George's own celibacy and the virgin status of the captive princess. The sexual identity of the dragon is primarily achieved through the depiction of female genitalia between the dragon's rear set of legs, examples of which identified by Riches include the Baumgartner altarpiece by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) (see appendix fig. 59), multiple works depicting St George by Ishrahel van Mackenem (c.1445-1503), and scenes of

[212] L. Beck, *St. George Fighting with the Dragon* (c. 1515).
[213] Riches uses a few English examples as well, but for the purposes of this thesis, this chapter shall focus on those created within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire.

the saint battling the beast by Martin Schongauer (c.1450/1453-1491) (see appendix fig. 61), Leonard Beck (c.1480-1542) (see appendix fig. 62), and others.[214]

Female genitalia are not however the sole identifier of the dragon's sex; human breasts or more animalistic dugs are occasionally also used to suggest femininity, motherhood, and sexual lewdness. Within a similar time period Riches identifies Albrecht Altdorfer's (c.1480-1538) 1511 woodcut *St. George and the dragon* which depicts the dragon with multiple dugs (see appendix fig. 63), and later Peter Gottland's woodcut which we discussed in a previous chapter: *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552) that has pronounced breasts (see appendix fig. 37).[215] Interestingly, the three-headed papal dragon which Gottland likely based his work off, a motif which Riches does not mention, was sometimes referred to (though not always depicted with presenting physical characteristics) as female – *Our Holy Lady St Interim* (see appendix fig. 31).[216] Despite representing the male figure of the Antichrist and having the heads of its fathers (the Pope, a Turk, and Lucifer), this monster is titled as female as perhaps another derogatory swipe at both the figures involved and the Interim itself.

[214] See: A. Dürer, *The Baumgartner altarpiece, detail of left wing 'Saint George'* (Munich, c. 1502-4); A. Dürer, *St. George on foot* (c. 1500); M. Schongauer, *St. George and the dragon* (c. 1470); I. van Meckenem, *St. George* (c. 1500); I. van Meckenem, *St. George and the dragon* (c. 1500); I. van Meckenem, *St. George and the dragon* (15th century); The Danube Master, *St. George and the dragon relief sculpture* (Konopište Castle, 1500-1520); and L. Beck, *St. George Fighting with the Dragon* (c. 1515).
[215] A. Altdorfer, *St. George and the dragon* (1511), and P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552).
[216] Anon, *Our Holy Lady Saint Interim* (Bern, 1552).



Detail from: A. Altdorfer, *Saint George killing the Dragon* (c. 1515-18) (see appendix fig. 64).[217]

Similarly, there are a few further pieces of St George related artwork from this period which Riches does not identify but that also present a feminised dragon. In addition to the aforementioned woodcut, Altdorfer also produced an engraving entitled *St. George killing the dragon* that shows a dragon with both pudendum, anus, and possibly a dug protruding from its underbelly – combining all possible means of sexualising a female dragon (see appendix fig. 64).[218] Cranach himself also painted a version of St George slaying the dragon (c. 1511-13) in which the monster is given three rows of multiple dugs to highlight the beast's animalistic motherhood (see appendix fig. 65).[219] In addition, there is a 1520 piece by Wolfgang Huber (1485-1553) which has the dragon presenting its rear orifice to the audience while it faces St George as well as seemingly having a few dugs (see appendix fig. 66).[220] The way the dragon presents itself to the viewer in the Altdorfer and Huber pieces is particularly

[217] A. Altdorfer, *Saint George killing the Dragon* (c. 1515-18).
[218] Ibid.
[219] L. Cranach, *The holy saint George in battle with the dragon* (c. 1511-13).
[220] W. Huber, *Heiliger Georg mit dem Drachen* (1520).

evocative, drawing attention to the sexual licentiousness of the monster by making its pudendum/anus the focal point of the dragon's anatomy rather than its head.



Detail from: H. Burgkmair, *St. George* (1508) (see appendix fig. 67).[221]

Another example, in part inspired by another one of Cranach's prints (*St. George*, 1507), made by Hans Burgkmair (1473-1531) in 1508 shows a dead dragon with a pudendum that the saint's steed is sedately stepping over as St George looks down to address the princess he has just saved (see appendix fig. 67).[222] In this piece the princess is placed in particularly close proximity to the slain monster's rear end. While partially a constraint of the composition of the piece, which St George and his steed dominate almost in its entirety, it does help to draw further attention to the sexual depravity of the dragon contrasted with the virgin chastity of the princess – encapsulating the binaries of early modern expectations of female sexual behaviour. Elizabeth Savage points out in her 2021 work that this image of St George was

[221] H. Burgkmair, *St. George* (1508).
[222] L. Cranach, *St. George* (1507), H. Burgkmair, *St. George* (1508).

paired with a piece depicting the Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) armoured and on horseback with the implication that Maximilian's attempts to revive the crusades are equal to the saint's triumph over the Devil in the form of the dragon.[223] The addition of sexual organs to the dragon in this piece therefore feels somewhat unnecessary as it does little to enhance the equation between St George and Maximilian, but it is indicative of the motif's spread and popularity that it should be used even when it serves little iconographical purpose – the implementation of the orifice and what it stands for having become just a standard part of the visual language of St George and the dragon.

Beyond the context of the tale of St George that Riches examines, there are other examples of dragons possessing an anus or pudendum. A 1550 engraving by Heinrich Aldegrever (1502-c.1555) that shows Hercules about to deliver the killing blow to a dragon is one such piece (see appendix fig. 68).[224] Hercules, nude but for the pelt of the Nemean Lion about his shoulder, is afforded some modesty with his right leg obscuring his genitals yet the monster is afforded no such discretion and bears an orifice just behind its left leg. In Friedrich Mayer's 1594 *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch*, we see three images of firework devices in the shape of dragons which bear similar physical characteristics (see appendix fig. 5).[225] The first is a free-standing firework dragon which spews fire from its mouth yet nevertheless possesses the detailing of an anus or pudendum, and the second is a device which is propelled along a rail by the expulsion of fire out of its posterior orifice. While in the latter case this may simply be a convenient manner of locomotion to ensure that the dragon moves forwards rather than backwards, the inclusion of the orifice on the former serves no practical purpose

[223] H. Burgkmair, *Maximilian I* (1508); E. Savage, *Early Colour Printing, German Renaissance Woodcuts at the British Museum* (London, 2021), pp. 54-57.
[224] H. Aldegrever, *Hercules Slaying the Dragon* (1550).
[225] F. Mayer, *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch* (1594) pp. 293, 295, 305.

and can only exist as a conscious stylistic choice. The third also seems designed to travel upon a rail, suspended from ropes, and while it does not have a pudendum – it does have three dugs along its underbelly signifying that the dragon belongs to the female sex. These devices demonstrate that the perceived sexual licentiousness and perversion of dragons is not solely in the religious sphere as described thus far in this section, it is also an apparent aspect of the creature's mythology in wider popular culture (see Chapter 1.0).

Though Riches alludes to the fact that many of her examples take place around the time of the Reformation, and notes a few of the aforementioned examples were made as part of Reformation rhetoric (such as the Gottland image), she does not belabour a connection between the occurrence of these feminised dragons and the religious changes occurring in central Europe at this time or suggest any causality.[226] Given the use of these motifs by artists like Dürer, Cranach, and Altdorfer just prior to the Reformation, it is somewhat surprising that creatures like the pope-dragon we discussed in Chapter 2.1 do not more commonly feature female sexual characteristics; the only examples being the breasts that prominently adorn Gottland's aforementioned dragon, and a pair or dugs that can be found on the papal-crowned dragon that features in the pamphlet *Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* that we encountered in Chapter 2.1 (see appendix fig. 24).[227] This rare association between the pope-dragon and female sexuality could be seen as tying into a few different strands of thought. Principally it may be seen as furthering the dichotomy between dragon/dragon-slayer by adding a female/male component to their oppositional nature, though it also ties into earlier Protestant efforts to feminise the Pope as seen in Cranach's *The Origins*

[226] S. Riches, *St George Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 158-178.
[227] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552), and *Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* (Dahlem). See: L. Roper, *Living I was your plague: Martin Luther's world and legacy* (Princeton, 2021), pp. 126-133, and R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 9-10.

of the Antichrist (1545) where the Pope features with a prominent vagina, and in '*Illustration to Apocalypse 17'* in Luther's *Septembertestament* (1522) also by Cranach and repeated in subsequent illustrated Lutheran Bibles where the Whore of Babylon wears a papal tiara perhaps, as Scribner has suggested, in reference to the infamous 'Pope Joan' legend.[228]

This underutilisation of the female dragon in early Protestant iconography may in part be due to Luther's own sensibilities (he disapproved of Cranach's woodcut *Birth and Origin of the Pope* for depicting the Pope's birth so crudely) or the fact that St George's female dragon was simply not mainstream enough for the Reformation generation of artists to fully embrace.[229] It was certainly an attractive motif for Reformation artists – it was yet another means of denigrating those whom the Reformers were attacking with their propaganda. However, its existence is perhaps more a testament to widely held views about women and sexuality in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rather than any particularly religious motivation or concerted effort of propaganda. Indeed, as Elizabeth Morrison comments in her book on beasts in the medieval imagination, it was a 'commonly held medieval belief that women were a slightly lesser species of human with a more bestial, sensual natural than men' so it is of little surprised that such a mentality would produce female monsters.[230]

In both the traditional narratives of the story of St George and the dragon, and the unusual images unearthed by both Riches and this thesis, it is a member of the female sex who is victimised. Whether it is a princess being threatened by a male dragon's greed and

[228] L. Cranach, *The Origins of the Antichrist* (1545); and see: M. Luther, *Septembertestament* (Wittenberg, 1522). The medieval legend of Pope Joan concerned a talented woman who rose through the Church hierarchy whilst disguised as a man and eventually became Pope. Her sex was however revealed when she gave birth during a procession and died shortly thereafter. The legend was widely believed in the late medieval period, it being thought the Church covered-up her reign as Pope, but it was called into question during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. For more see: C.M. Rustici, *The Afterlife of Pope Joan: Deploying the Popess Legend in Early Modern England* (New York, 2006); and A. Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan* (Chicago, 2000).
[229] L. Cranach, *Birth and Origin of the Pope* (1545).
[230] E. Morrison, *Beasts, Factual & Fantastic* (London, 2007), p. 87.

monstrous lust, or a dragon presenting female sexual characteristics being slain by St George, there is always a female presence suffering at the hands of masculine power. As we shall see in the next section, the use of serpents and dragons in gendered rhetoric extended from images and stories into the real world where women alleged of witchcraft were killed for the relationships they supposedly had with monsters.

Devils, dragons, and witches

The uses and abuses of serpents and dragons by Protestant Reformers in early modern Germany were not solely confined to their works of theology or propaganda. The height of how intensely serpents and dragons were connected to Satan in this period due to the religious upheavals of the Reformations can be seen through their appearance in witch trials where they manifest either as a form of Satan himself, a type of demon, or some other malevolent supernatural entity. The European witch hunts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw belief in, and fear of the Devil reach incredible heights as the end of days loomed large in the minds of European Christians. During the great witch hunts it was believed that the accused regularly consorted with devils who gave them their supernatural powers; and given that as we have seen Satan's preferred form in Revelations is a dragon, it is unsurprising to see monstrous serpentine beasts appear in accounts of witch trials.

Serpents and dragons, as beasts already commonly associated with greed and the forces of evil, easily fell into demonological frameworks that existed in the early modern German-speaking lands.[231] Whether they were depicted as independent entities, or the Devil in disguise – the serpents and dragons that appear in witch trials are unholy beings who facilitate the villainy of a witch in the same manner as a demon might, though they usually have a particular emphasis on economic and sexual evils. In the accounts of witch trials, dragons are often believed to steal dairy produce, and those who use their services are accused of being 'milk-witches' – economic deviants as well as socio-religious pariahs of which

[231] For more on demonological frameworks in late medieval and early modern Europe, see: S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford, 1997); S. Clark, 'The Scientific Status of Demonology' in B. Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 351-374; R. Kieckhefer, 'Witch Trials in Medieval Europe', in D. Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2nd edition) (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 23-30; H.C. Erik Midelfort, 'The Devil and the German People' in D. Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2nd edition) (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 211-222; and L. Roper, 'Witchcraft and the Western Imagination' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (2006), pp. 117-141.

women were most usually those accused.[232] The link between milk and dragons is a amalgamation of the idea of the 'milk-witch' who steals dairy from her neighbours, stories of dragons who hoard wealth, and the concept of witches having demons of various shapes as their 'familiars' - which all come together in the form of witches employing dragons or demons in the shape of dragons to steal wealth (dairy being valuable to a rural community) for them. Luther himself describes this theft of dairy products and corn in a sermon: 'Dragon brides and dragon bridegrooms who fetch cheese, butter, corn' suggesting that this combination of ideas had started to coalesce before the height of the witch trials in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian Paul Einhorn (d.1655) would go on to actively condemn these kinds of produce-stealing dragons that he saw in Baltic folklore as a form of demonic worship and affiliation.[233] In some cases, this idea of the witch and her dragon took on a sexual element as well. Indeed, witches were often believed to have sexual relations with the Devil and given that the Devil supposedly had the power to take on the form of beasts, including dragons, it is unsurprising to find cases of witches engaging in sexual activities with serpentine beasts.[234] Sometimes these dragons are indeed the Devil in disguise (or a demon such as an incubus who has chosen the form of a

[232] For more on milk-witches in the European witch hunts, see: G.L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Harvard, 1929), pp.163-173; N. Hayes, 'Negativizing Nurture and Demonizing Domesticity: The Witch Construct in Early Modern Germany' in N.J. Miller and N. Yavneh (eds.), *Maternal Measures* (London, 2000), pp. 172-192; L. Jackson, 'Witches, Wives and Mothers' in D. Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2nd Edition) (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 311-323; D. Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London, 1996), pp. 119-144; A.R. Cederström, 'Of Milk and Men: Normative Masculinity in Scandinavian Milk-Witch Legends' in *Journal of Folklore Research* Volume 58, No. 2 (May-August, 2021), pp. 1-29; and A.J. Rose, 'The Witch on the Wall: The Milk-Stealing Witch in Scandinavian Iconography' in *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 71 (2015), pp. 27-43.

[233] M. Luther, 'Auslegung über 1. John 4:1' in J.G. Walch (ed.), *Dr. Martin Luther Sämmtliche Schriften* (St. Louis, 1880-1910), p. 1604. *'Drachenbräute, und Drachenbräutigam, die holen Käse, Butter, Korn'.* https://babel hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015074631832&view=1up&seq=829&skin=2021 (Accessed: 5 January 2022); P. Einhorn, *Wiederlegunge Der Abgötterey und nichtigen Aberglaubens/ so vorzeiten auß der Heydnischen Abgötterey in diesen Lande entsprossen/ und bißhero ingebrauche blieben* (Riga, 1627); and P. Einhorn, *Reformatio gentis Letticae in Ducatu Curlandiae* (Riga, 1636).

[234] See: W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers. Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago, 2003); and L. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1994).

dragon), other times the dragon is depicted as being more akin to a beast from folklore rather than outright stated to be a demon, but is nonetheless a malign supernatural entity easily associated with diabolic influence.[235]



Satan rescues his lover from the pyre in the form of a dragon with breasts at the 1555 Derenburg witch trials (see appendix fig. 69).[236]

Indeed, in a popular pamphlet from the 1555 Derenburg witch trials published by one Jörg Merckel (fl.1550s), Satan is depicted as a dragon swooping down to save his lover – the alleged witch Gröbischen – from the pyre (see appendix fig. 69).[237] The pamphlet's woodcut demonstrates clearly the connection that existed between the Devil, dragons, and witches in the collective imaginings of early modern German-speaking society. Though we might refer to this as an example of wonder literature today, it was a news item to contemporaries and

[235] Wealth-stealing dragons (*Plón*) appear in Sorbian folklore and may have been the influence for many of the dragons we shall see in this chapter. See: W. von Schulenburg, *Wendisches volksthum in sage, brauch und sitte* (Berlin, 1882), pp. 49-51. The coat of arms of Drachhausen depicts a dragon from local legend that was said to have given a farmer gold in exchange for millet porridge but set the local church on fire when the farmer's wife burnt the porridge.
[236] Anon, *Ein erschroekliche gesicht / so zu Derenburg in der Graffschafft Reinsteyn / am Hartz gelegen / von dreyen Zauberin / unnd zwayen Mannen / inn ettlichen tagen des Monats Octobris im 1555. Jare ergangen ist* (Nürnberg, 1555).
[237] Ibid.

enjoyed a wide circulation – if not introducing the idea of this tripartite connection to an audience, then at the very least affirming existing associations in people's minds.[238] It is also worth noting, that unusually, this Satan-dragon has a pair of prominent breasts. Within the context of the pamphlet, this addition to the dragon's physical form likely serves to show the sexual lewdness of the Devil and makes the relationship between Satan and the accused witch Gröbischen openly carnal and socio-sexually debased. The choice of breasts rather than any other human sexual organ could be due to a variety of reasons, one of which may be the artistic choice of echoing images of diabolical dragons like those discussed previously in this chapter (indeed, the Gottland image of the three-headed papal dragon was published only a few years before sporting prominent breasts).[239] Another might be to make the relationship between Satan and Gröbischen almost homosexual in nature, thus making their relationship even more sinful according to the religious beliefs of the time. Either way, the female is diabolised in the body of the dragon and the association between Devil, dragon, and witch made extraordinarily explicit.

Being in the possession of a dragon was but one of the many supernatural accusations used against those accused of witchcraft. In the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein between 1580 and 1730 as well as being accused of being witches, many faced the slander the likes of 'weather cat', 'she-devil', 'werewolf', and 'dragon'.[240] 'Dragon', as has been noted by Rolf Schulte in his work on werewolves, is a very specific type of slander – being much better

[238] M. Lücke and D. Lücke, 'Hexenprozesse in Territorium des Bistums Halberstadt' in *Geschichte und Kulturdes Bisturms Halberstadt 804-1648, Symposium anlässlich 1200 Jahre Bistum Halberstadt* Protokollband (Halberstadt, 2006), pp. 679-689.
[239] P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552).
[240] K.S. Kramer, 'Hohnsprake, Wrakworte, Nachschnack und Ungebühr. Ehrenhändel in holsteinischen Quellen' in *Kieler Blätter zur Volkskunde* 16 (1984), pp. 63-85. In the period of this thesis Schleswig nominally fell under the domain of the Kingdom of Denmark, whilst Holstein was a fief of the Holy Roman Empire. However, they share a long and complicated history of interconnectedness that sees them often taken together in historical studies.

defined by its appellations to notions of greed than the somewhat less distinct connotations of calling someone a werewolf.[241] Associating someone with a dragon usually served to connect them to the idea of magical, unlawful gain – usually by direct theft – and superstition regarding these dragons was deeply entrenched in Nordic and Germanic cultures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[242]

We can see perhaps the most famous example of these beliefs seeping into the witch hunts in Johann Matthäus Meyfart's (1590-1642) 1635 book opposing the persecutions. He writes of Margaretha Ramhold who was accused of having a dragon and being a milk-witch.[243] Her family were of modest means but grew in affluence to the point where they could afford to lend money at interest. This new wealth roused suspicion and resentment, and she was eventually accused of having a dragon visit her house - bringing Margaretha stolen wealth. She was subsequently arrested, interrogated, and tortured before being found guilty and executed in 1628 by the authorities in Coburg.[244] In this case, and indeed in the cases we will examine shortly, there does not seem to be a dragon sighting based on the misconstrued experience of any natural phenomenon such as some of the miraculous events we examined in the previous chapter. Rather, they seem to be imaginings brought about for the sole purpose of persecution. Peer pressure and mass hysteria may have brought about instances of people genuinely believing they had seen dragons when in reality they had not, but more likely many

[241] R. Schulte, 'The Werewolf in the Popular Culture of Early Modern Germany' in W. de Blécourt (ed.), *Werewolf Histories* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 185-204.
[242]K. Sander, *Aberglauben im Spiegel schleswig-holsteinischer Quellen des 16. Bis 19. Jahrhunderts* (Neumünster, 1991), p. 67.
[243] J.M. Meyfart, *Christliche Erinnerung, An Gewaltige Regenten und Gewissenhafte Praedicanten, wie das abschewliche Laster der Hexerey mit Ernst auszurotten, aber in Verfolgung desselbigen auff Cantzeln und in Gerichtshaeusern sehr bescheidentlich zu handeln sey* (Erfurt, 1635). Meyfart's work was censored in Coburg, and on publication attracted hostilities from those who advocated for the persecution of 'witches'.
[244] Ramholt's interrogation records can be found at: Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, *LAF 12552*. For a thorough cataloguing and analysis of the witch trial records found in the Coburg archives which this chapter will discuss, see: E. Friedrich, *Hexenjagd im Raum Rodach und die Hexenprozeßordnung von Herzog Johann Casimir: spezieller Beitrag zur Geschichte des Coburger Landes* (Rodach bei Coburg, 1995).

of these accusations were born out of the natural associations between dragons, wealth, and witches – making the dragon an effective tool for accusers to wield against their well-off neighbours.

In two pieces of work discussing economics and the supernatural, Johannes Dillinger brings to light the economic interactions between witches and dragons.[245] The dragons that Dillinger observes in witch trials from Saxony, Thuringia, and northern Bavaria are not quite monsters of the calibre of Fafnir, rather they are smaller creatures that bring stolen goods such as gold, grain, or diary produce to their master – their evil is that of 'transfer magic' stealing goods from others for the ill gain of the 'witch'. Dillinger attributes this particular kind of dragon, found mostly in Protestant east Germany, to be the result of influence from Slavic regions where folklore includes various types of dragons including those which tend to resemble household spirits or familiars rather than the huge beasts that we see become the foe of dragon-slayers.[246] Margaretha Ramhold was not the only milk-witch accused of harbouring this manner of dragon in the Coburg area in the first few decades of the sixteenth century, and Dillinger highlights a few of these cases that can be found in the Coburg State Archives.

Margaretha Hönin was suspected by her neighbours of being a milk-witch in 1580, on account of witnesses having claimed to have observed a dragon at her house – which was seen as evidence of why she possessed what her neighbours considered a suspiciously large amount of dairy produce. Trial documents suggest that Hönin was miserly in nature, though

[245] J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015), pp. 453-459; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.
[246] Ibid. Dillinger enumerates on this in three blog posts: http://brookes-culturalthinking.blogspot.com/2017/02/dragons-and-magical-worldview-of-pre html (Accessed: 20 January 2022), https://brookes-culturalthinking.blogspot.com/2017/03/the-dragon-as-household-spirit-what html (Accessed: 20 January 2022), and http://brookes-culturalthinking.blogspot.com/2017/03/dragons-in-human-form html (Accessed: 20 January 2022). More can be found on these kinds of dragons in Y. Luven, *Der Kult der Hausschlange* (Cologne, 2001).

whether that accusation is fair or the judgement of the jealous neighbours who brought the accusations against her we cannot know – the only version of Hönin we have is the version these records present us with; that of a woman obsessed with maintaining (one might even say hoarding) her wealth.[247] Dillinger notes that she was portrayed in the trial documents as being 'irrationally and antisocially preoccupied with her wealth and obsessed with the fear of losing it' and it may very well be this behaviour that aroused suspicion, envy, and resentment amongst her neighbours which led to her trial.[248] She was said to have had more milk than her neighbours thought she ought to have from her cows. This could easily be an envious exaggeration on their part, or perhaps her parsimonious habits meant that she used little dairy produce herself and thus had plenty left over, something her accusers never seem to consider and a somewhat more reasonable explanation than her using magic dragons to steal the alleged excess. What is important to note is that her seeming obsession with wealth and perceived hoarded abundance of it made her not unlike a dragon in her accuser's eyes. It is therefore little surprise that it should be the idea of the dragon with which she is associated. Not unlike what we saw with the Papacy in an earlier chapter, Hönin is effectively dehumanised by the equation of her perceived traits with those of a terrible monster, thus making her an easier and more legitimate target for the witch hunters.

One witness testified that 'dragon shooting' ('*Drachenschießen*') had been seen by her house (this possibly referred to tongues of flame resembling a dragon's form); while another, one Caspar Dacer, stated for the record that he had publicly said a dragon had been seen.[249]

[247] Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, *LAF 12535.*
[248] J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.
[249] Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, *LAF 12535*, p. 7, p. 22. '*Drachenschießen'.* The form of this 'shooting dragon' that the court conjures is somewhat reminiscent of the dragons we see illustrated in the Augsburg Book of Miracles (see Fol. 129) and described by Glaser in his pamphlet (M. Glaser, *Ein wunderbartlich gesicht von den Drachen* (Zwickau, 1533)), suggesting that all three parties were exposed to the same folkloric traditions that spawned their respective interpretations of dragons.

Furthermore, another witness claimed to have seen the dragon many times, and while they did not know where the dragon went, they did know that Hönin was said to have suddenly had a lot of milk.[250] The Coburg authorities even wrote to the law faculty at the University of Jena for an expert opinion.[251] Here we see the cultural understanding of the dragon combine with the paranoia and frenzy of the witch trials which were reaching their heights under the rule of Duke John Casimir (reigned as Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Eisenach 1572-1596, and Duke of Saxe-Coburg 1596-1633). The ideas of witches as social pariahs, dragons being symbolic of greed, and both witches and dragons having associations with the Devil (as we saw previously the millenarian zeitgeist of Protestantism often emphasised the draconic form of the Devil/the Antichrist) can be seen to run together easily. Indeed, one woman accused of being a milk-witch during the Coburg witch trials was directly asked if she had learnt her magic, including the use of dragons, from the Devil - 'Whether learned from the Devil or from another, and by what opportunity they come, how long did she do the magic'.[252] The combination of these ideas perhaps reached their greatest symbolic and ideological heights in this place and this period due to the peculiarities of the German Reformation, as this thesis has discussed, and the ease with which their semiotic associations joined together ultimately leading to deadly consequences in these documents.

Several other alleged milk-witches can be found in the Coburg archives who were accused of consorting with dragons to steal the wealth of others beyond Ramhold and Hönin, and indeed this source base remains one underutilised in English-language scholarship.[253] In 1611, the widow Ecksteinin was accused of allegedly having a dragon come to her every

[250] Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, *LAF 12535*, p. 37.
[251] Ibid., *LAF 12534.*
[252] Ibid., *LAF 12549. 'Ob vom Teuffel, oder von weine sonsten gelernet, und durch was gelegenheit sie darsuekommen, Wie laung sie die zauberey getrieben'.*
[253] Ibid., *LAF 12449, LAF 12549.*

evening.[254] Trial records indicate that witnesses were asked about seeing dragons or even ghosts in her house, and they corroborated that they had seen dragons on many occasions around or entering her home.[255] While not described as miserly as Hönin was, Ecksteinin was noted to be well-off but, alongside her husband, had been socio-economically disruptive within the community – denying loans, arguing over land, etc. A few years after her, one Petronella Liebermännin was similarly accused of having a dragon and likewise fitted the profile of a woman behaving in what was perceived to be an economically antisocial manner.[256] She had the reputation of being a fierce creditor, no doubt arousing resentment from her debtors which in turn likely became the seed from which her trial would come to pass. Both these women triggered the anxieties and envies of their neighbours - the dragon becoming a symbol of these milk-witches perceived avarice, and from there - their connections to the demonic. Dragons were the easiest way for their accusers to express their socio-economic anxieties and brand their victim with them.

By contrast, decades later in 1686, Claus Rottmann came under suspicion when witnesses saw a dragon flying near his house; however they were unable to confirm if the creature actually flew into the building and the accusations came to nought.[257] Unlike the other accused milk-witches, his gender may have helped to create this ambiguity and ultimately saved him from the pyre – it is likely that any antisocial economic practices exhibited by a man would be seen as much more tolerable to society at large than a woman engaging in the same modes of behaviour. Though, it is also worth mentioning that near the end of the seventeenth century when this case occurred, the height of the witch hunts in

[254] Ibid., *LAF 12542.*
[255] Ibid., *LAF 12542*, p. 28, p. 107, p. 156, p. 159, p. 160.
[256] Ibid., *LAF 12546.*
[257] Ibid., *LAF 12591.*

Germany had passed (though it had not yet ended entirely) which, when combined with a fading belief in the reality of dragons as we shall explore in Chapter 3.2, may account for why accusations against Rottmann failed to go very far.



A dragon fathering Alexander the Great (see appendix fig. 70).[258]

In his work, Dillinger focuses on these dragons as a cypher for an economic idea of ill-gained individual profit and the social disharmony resulting from such human actions.[259] What he neglects is the idea that the dragon can also be a powerful cypher for sexual impropriety. As we have seen so far in this chapter, the dragon has a complicated relationship with its gender and sexual nature – taking on roles such as sexualised threat and discrimination as the, usually male, author or artist desires. Though sexual interaction with humans is hardly a primary attribute of a dragon, there is some precedent in legend which, when combined with the notions of metamorphic dragons discussed earlier in this thesis and

[258] British Library, London, Burney MS 169 'Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Les faize d'Alexandre* (Vasco de Luren trans.) (Netherlands, c. 1468-1475)', fol. 14.
[259] J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015), pp. 453-459; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.

the habit of Satan having sexual relations with witches, leads to the appearance of witches engaging in sexual relations with dragons. For example, in medieval and early modern Europe some believed that Alexander the Great was fathered by a dragon, imbuing the conqueror with a dragon's ferocity and avarice. Manuscripts that include this tale often include illuminations of a dragon (sometimes identified as the Egyptian sorcerer-pharaoh Neptanabus/Nectanebo or the god Zeus Amnon transformed into a dragon) either laid in bed alongside Alexander's mother or, in some less suggestive scenes, simply entering or leaving the bedroom window (Philip II of Macedon, Alexander's human father even occasionally appearing as a cuckolded observer, see appendix fig. 70).[260] Interestingly this does not denigrate Alexander at all in the medieval and early modern consciousness; his status as a successful male from a well-regarded classical civilisation makes his conception by a dragon another part of his fearsome legend rather than branding his mother a sexual deviant or Alexander himself a spawn of monstrous evil. The precedent of classicism, however, does not protect those women who were accused of sex with dragons in early modern Europe – the ties to the diabolical in this millenarian age were much too strong.

[260] Some examples can be seen at: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig XV 8, 'Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation and assistant, *Livre des fais d'Alexandre le grant* (France, c. 1470-1475)', fol. 15; British Library, London, Burney MS 169 'Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Les faize d'Alexandre* (Vasco de Luren trans.) (Netherlands, c. 1468-1475)', fol. 14; and British Library, London, Royal MS 20 B XX, '*Le livre et la vraye hystoire du bon roy Alixandre* (Paris, c. 1420-1425), fol. 83v.



Hans Baldung's *The Witch and Dragon* (1515) (see appendix fig. 71).[261]

Sexually charged images of witches were common in printed publications in the sixteenth century, Charles Zika describing them in two chapters of his 2003 book as often a disturbing blend of gross caricature and erotic fantasy conjured by male authors and artists.[262] Zika highlights Hans Baldung's (c.1484-1545) *The Witch and Dragon* (1515) as perhaps one of the most provocative and shocking of these images, certainly the most sexually explicit of Baldung's artworks (see appendix fig. 71).[263] The engraving depicts a nude young woman stood above a coiling serpentine monster and two *putti*, arranged in a bizarre and crudely sexual tableaux. The nude witch is pointing her rear end towards the dragon's upturned face and is in the process of twisting round to look down at an efflux of unidentified liquid which

[261] H. Baldung, *The Witch and Dragon* (1515).
[262] C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, 2003), pp. 237-304.
[263] H. Baldung, *The Witch and Dragon* (1515); and Ibid., pp. 290-292.

is passing from her vagina into the monster's opened mouth. One *putto* clambers up the dragon's head, placing his fingers up the creature's nose, while the other watches the scene from between coils in the monster's tail that terminates in a wide orifice of uncertain categorization from which a vapour or smoke pours out.[264] This smoke appears to be blowing the witch's hair upwards as she plunges a leafy rod or wand into the mystery orifice with both hands. This unusual scene has garnered equal parts revulsion and fascination by those who have studied it, being excluded from the works of more prudish art historians and exciting debate amongst others as to the exact nature of the stream which passes from the witch to the dragon.[265] The most likely and prevailing interpretation is that this stream is the witch's menstrual blood with which she is feeding the dragon in a perverse erotic ritual.[266] In recent years, Yvonne Owens has argued that this piece represents sixteenth-century beliefs in the impurity of menstrual blood, and makes an argument for this witch belonging to the motif of the 'poison-maiden', and the dragon being more specifically a basilisk – both sharing a deadly gaze and united in the perceived poisonous nature of their bodies.[267]

[264] The *putti* who sit at the scene's periphery tormenting the dragon are a little harder to place within the metaphors often ascribed to *The Witch and Dragon* and indeed are hardly analysed in discussions of this piece. These children could be seen as little more than classical set-dressing, after all they live up to their traditional mischievous reputation with their fingers up the dragon's nose, or their child-like bodies could also be further symbolic links to ideas surrounding menstrual blood, the womb, and the witch's body.

[265] Some historians have argued that it is not vaginal fluid at all, but is instead fire emanating from the dragon's mouth, entering the witch as part of a demonic sexual contract. However, given that the stream is narrower at the witch's end and widens as it approaches the gaping maw of the beast, it is much more likely that the witch is the origin. See: C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2003), p.290; and K. Siefert, 'Hans Bandung Griens Karlsruher Hexenzeichnungen – Eine Neuinterpretation' in *Kritische Berichte* 25 (1997), pp. 69-77.

[266] This theory was first put forth by Carl Koch in 1941 and has been taken up by a few art historians in the decades since. In recent times the most expansive discussion into this image and the connotations of menstrual blood in the sixteenth century has been put forth by Yvonne Owens. See: C. Koch, *Die Zeichnungen Hans Baldung Griens* (Berlin, 1941), pp. 31, 100; and, Y. Owens, 'Pollution and Desire in Hans Baldung Grien: The Erotic Spell of the Witch and Dragon' in A. Pollali, and B. Hub (eds.), *Images of Sex and Desire in Renaissance Art and Modern Historiography* (London, 2017), pp. 344-364.

[267] Y. Owens, 'Pollution and Desire in Hans Baldung Grien: The Erotic Spell of the Witch and Dragon' in A. Pollali, and B. Hub (eds.), *Images of Sex and Desire in Renaissance Art and Modern Historiography* (London, 2017), pp. 344-364. In a c.1525 broadsheet honest women are actually advised to gird their waists with serpents in order to protect themselves from the 'poison of scandal, from evil love, and shameful play' which speaks to the associations between women, snakes, and poison though spins those connotations in a somewhat more

Ultimately this piece, like all instances of women engaging in sexual activities with serpents and dragons of any kind, is in a way a retelling of the Fall and its core themes. Though the act of original sin caused by Eve and the Serpent of Eden was not of an overtly sexual nature in the Bible, coitus between a witch and dragon can be seen as physical expression of the same contract – that of a woman willingly embracing damnation.[268] In this image Baldung gives us an Eve in the figure of his nude witch, though here we have a slight inversion where it is the woman feeding the serpent to initiate her demonic contract rather than consuming a gift from the beast. The expulsion of her menstrual blood is an outward, physical expression of her inner spiritual corruption and a manifestation of her agency. She willingly gives herself to Satan, and embraces what early modern commentators believed to be her inherent poisonous nature as a woman.

The dragon is thus reduced to a somewhat passive figure, eagerly consuming her blood, and releasing it as smoke – almost like a furnace of sin at her feet. Indeed, the placing and treatment of the dragon is also comparable to images of St George slaying the dragon of Silene as discussed earlier in the chapter. In images of this battle, the dragon is usually curled submissively underfoot with a lance through its mouth, the source of the dragon's fiery breath and its power. Unlike St George, this witch is instead feeding the dragon with a traditionally hot humor and is penetrating the monster with her rod in its rear orifice instead – not slaying the beast but rather stoking its fires as evidenced by the smoke billowing from the monster.[269]

positive fashion than Baldung's *The Witch and Dragon* (1515) in seeking to avoid poison through serpents rather than invite it. See: A. Woensam, *The Wise Woman – The Gendered Ideal of Marital Virtue* (c.1525).

[268] Early Gnostic writings do propose a sexual union between Eve and the serpent took place, though this was rejected by early Church Fathers, see: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (c. 180). The 'serpent-seed' doctrine was revived in nineteenth century America and, though rejected by mainstream Christianity, sees continued use to this day as a means of promoting white supremacy, and antisemitism.

[269] The witch and dragon and intertwined in such a way that they in effect create a kind of ouroboros - a traditional symbol of fertility, life and death, and eternity. Whether the artist intended this allusion is unclear, but the symbol's ancient links to fertility, combined with the witch's menstrual blood do align fairly neatly.

Furthermore, the erotic overtones of the whole piece play much at odds with the virginal nature of St George himself and the princess he is usually rescuing; rather, we have a nude witch partaking in sexually provocative acts with the monster.



Detail of witches riding dragons across the sky and fighting. from P. van der Heyden (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565) (see appendix fig. 73).[270]

Similar examples of eroticised witches who are riding dragons across the sky appear across Europe at this time. A version of Cranach's *Melancholia* (1532) currently housed at the Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, depicts a flight of nude witches and a man they appear to have abducted in the background riding various animals that an early modern audience might consider to be unclean or associated with Satan: a boar, a goat, a horned cow, and a dragon (see appendix fig. 72).[271] Zika argues that this assemblage of figures represents sexual disorder, channelling the chaotic and sometimes Bacchic energy of stories and artwork of the

[270] P. van der Heyden (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565).
[271] L. Cranach, *Melancholia* (1532). There are several versions of this image. The one hanging in the Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, is in portrait orientation and described as above, the more famous piece hanging in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, has instead a landscape orientation and the dragon is replaced instead with a lean dog (whose head, incidentally, looks not unlike the dragons depicted by Cranach we discussed in Chapter 2.1). The reason for this change of animal remains unclear.

'Furious horde'.[272] Though the dragon plays a less prominent role in this piece than in Baldung's, it remains a part of this sexually charged composition. Similarly, Pieter van der Heyden's (1530-1572) engraving (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder c.1525-1569) *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565) includes within its crowded composition three witches riding upon the backs of dragons, two of which doing so whilst nude and one of them holding a bundle of snakes – likewise evoking a scene of sexual disorder of which the dragon is a key component (see appendix fig. 73).[273] Another Dutch engraver, Jan de Bisschop (1628-1671) created *A Witch Riding on a Dragon* (c.1643-1671) that shows a woman, the front of her clothes left open revealing her breasts, riding a dragon through the nights sky (see appendix fig. 74).[274] The dragon here is more prominent than in either of the prior two pieces, and while not as explicit as Baldung's image of a witch and dragon pairing, the semi-nude witch hints at the erotic undertones we see in all these examples of witches riding dragons.

These three pieces, though very different in composition, display a powerful connection between devils, dragons, and witches – but also in particular the female witch whose sexualised body becomes deeply entwined conceptually with the physicality of the diabolic and draconic. The combination was both perverse and monstrous to the sensibilities of early modern German-speaking society, and thus provided further ideological reason for the witch hunts to continue. Notably, we see a late example from England in the frontispiece of a 1684 tract by Richard Bovet (born c.1641) concerning witches that similarly shows a witch riding a dragon (albeit clothed this time), with a caption identifying the dragon as a

[272] C. Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, 2003), pp. 333-374.
[273] P. van der Heyden (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565).
[274] J. de Bisschop, *A Witch Riding on a Dragon* (c.1643-1671).

guise of Satan: 'A Witch rideing on the Devill through the Aire' (see appendix fig. 75).[275] Though not eroticised in the same way as earlier works we have seen, this piece affirms that the association between devil, dragon, and witch survived in the European imagination until near the very end of the seventeenth century after the height of the witch hunts had passed – perhaps owing both to its conceptual strengths and the perfect vessel the dragon represented for the expression of fear.

It is little surprise then that within this framework of ideas we see witch-dragon sexual relations leap from the images we have seen into the reality of the witch trials where the dragon became identified with sexual demons like the incubus. While some of the milk-witches we have encountered previously were implied to have more than just a commercial relationship with their dragon, Dillinger highlights two examples of explicit sexual acts with dragons.[276] The earliest Saxon witch trial to include human-dragon sexual relations was in 1536 in Brücken, Saxony, where the accused woman described her relationship with an incubus who changed forms between that of a man whilst it was with her and a dragon when it ventured abroad in search of goods to steal for her.[277] It supposedly brought her cheese, butter, and money in a similar vein to other dragons, and when the demon assumed the form of a handsome young man they dined together and had sex. More than a hundred years later in 1652, a Saxon woman would reiterate these ideas – claiming to be clairvoyant that had seen women from her neighbourhood having sex with a dragon in the sky, implicating them as

[275] See the frontispiece of: R. Bovet, *Pandaemonium, or, the devil's cloyster being a further blow to the modern sadduceism. Proving the existence of witches and spirits. In a discourse deduced from the fall of the angels. The propagation of Satan's kingdom before the flood* (London, 1684).
[276] J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.
[277] See Ibid.; M. Wilde, *Die Zauberei – und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen* (Köln, 2003), pp. 113-114, p. 204, p. 267; and Staatsarchiv Coburg, Coburg, *LAF 12549.*

witches.[278] While this story drew upon ideas present throughout this past chapter, it came at a time when the witch hunts were in decline and was regarded as too outrageous a tale and no persecutions came of it. The fact that this would-be-clairvoyant should choose a dragon as the means by which she should accuse her neighbours is, however, testament to how sexually charged the dragon had become in the witch trials – it had become the perfect cypher for sexual impropriety.

As well as the problematisation of women choosing to have sex with the dragons, there is also the masculinity of the dragons themselves to consider. While demons in witch-trials manifest in varying guises, the guise of the dragons here are explicitly male. This is somewhat unsurprising as female dragons engaging in homosexual liaisons with women accused of witchcraft would perhaps be a few taboos too far for the sensibilities of early modern religious society, if not entirely inconceivable (though Satan in the form of a dragon with breasts in the 1555 Derenburg pamphlet discussed earlier comes very close). The male dragon in these cases very much represents the dragon as a symbol of power and domination, cousins of folkloric monsters who kidnap princesses. Dragons become female when they are the ones being killed, they become male when they become mechanisms of persecuting women.

Indeed, the ways in which these dragons are used to persecute are multifarious. In these examples the transaction that occurs between the dragon and the 'witch' is not only an extramarital affair of cuckoldry (where a husband is present) but also a form of prostitution as the accused offers sex in exchange for the goods which the dragon brings her. Not only is the

[278] For more on this case, see: E. Friedrich, *Hexenjagd im Raum Rodach und die Hexenprozeßordnung von Herzog Johann Casimir: spezieller Beitrag zur Geschichte des Coburger Landes* (Rodach bei Coburg, 1995), p. 94; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.

accused a heretical religious outcast and a social outcast, they are now also a sexual deviant. The accused are transformed into the witch imagined by Baldung – equal parts scandalously erotic and damned – an individual anathema to the Christian society of the early modern German-speaking lands. Though examples of dragon-based milk-witches are rare, and the sexual relations between witches and dragons even rarer – these instances speak to the versatility of the dragon as a concept, and what heights of symbolism it reached in this period. The dragon as a symbol of fear and greed we saw in the first chapter, the dragon-as-apocalyptic evil explored in Chapter 2.1, and the dragon as a sexualised monster seen earlier in this chapter, all come together in semiotic harmony.

More than anything these dragons represent anxieties and fears in society that found their expression in the form of monsters – economic anxieties, bodily anxieties, and anxieties regarding women. The idea that your wealth could be stolen by these monsters and spirited away to witches in service of Satan was a simple means of expressing economic anxieties and tensions in a society already riven by the paranoia of the witch hunts.[279] Associating someone with a dragon sighting was an easy way to brand those whose economic activities were deemed antisocial with the stigma of witchcraft, women particularly so whose economic activities were much more likely to fall into 'unacceptable' categories constructed by their neighbours. Moving beyond the economic anxieties identified by Dillinger, this thesis has argued that when a sexual dimension was added, further anxieties regarding the body were touched upon that made the accused's interactions with the alleged dragon to take on additional perverse dimensions. Anxiety about serpents, dragons, and the human body can be found in folklore which pertain to the idea of the invasive 'bosom-serpent' – the belief that

[279]J. Dillinger, 'Treasure and Drache. Ritual and Economy in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ritual Year* 10 (2015), pp. 453-459; and J. Dillinger, 'Money from the Spirit World' in M. Lindeman (ed.), *Money in the German-Speaking Lands* (New York, 2017), pp. 10-25.

your body may be violated by a snake if you fall asleep alone in the wilderness and you awake with a serpent inhabiting your insides.[280] The sexual relations here draw upon similar ideas of serpentine violation and perversion, but with the notion that the alleged witch gives in to the monster willingly as we saw in Baldung's artwork – making them religiously, economically, and sexually deviant. As historians have noted across this period, the witch trials also reveal a general anxiety about and fear of women – particularly those possessed of some independence from a man like Ecksteinin or those who attract the envy of their neighbours like Hönin and Ramhold. Women made up the vast majority of the victims of witch trials, their behaviour, if deemed antisocial by their peers, being the reason for their persecution.[281] More often than not, it is women who become the targets of persecution that involves dragons – their long history of association with the monster that stretches back to ancient tales of Tiamat being reinvented once more in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through its combination with the terrors of the witch hunts.

[280] See chapter 2.2 on miracles, particularly the section regarding: *Book of Miracles*. fol. 153r.
[281] R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London, 1996); E. Bever, 'Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community' in *Journal of Social History* Vol. 35 Issue 4 (2002), pp. 955-988; L. Roper, 'Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany' in *History Workshop Journal* 32 (October, 1991), pp. 19-43; L. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1994); M. Wiesner, *Gender, Church and State in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 1997); and C. Larner, 'Was witch-hunting woman-hunting?' in D. Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2nd edition) (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 253-256.

Conclusion – tools of terror and their victims

In the first part of this chapter, we saw how serpents and dragons were gendered in the early modern German-speaking lands, considering in particular how these creatures interacted with both masculinity and femininity, and the role that the Reformation played in gendering such depictions. The demonisation of the female sex in images of St George and the dragon demonstrated how artistically female sexual characteristics were used as a symbol of sexual debasement – fulfilling a series of binaries in opposition to the male purity of the dragon-slayer. The second part of this chapter uncovered the roles that serpents and dragons, as gendered and actively sexual beings, played in the witch hunts that engulfed early modern Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – where dragons in the service of milk-witches, as steeds in artwork, or as demonic lovers in witch trials served to create a sexual conceptual connection between devils, dragons, and witches for the purposes of persecution.

As we have seen in the traditional narratives of the story of St George and the dragon, the unusual images unearthed by both Riches and this thesis, and in the images and trial records concerning 'witches', it is a member of the female sex who is victimised. Whether it is a princess being threatened by a male dragon's greed and monstrous lust, a dragon presenting female sexual characteristics being slain by St George, or a woman accused of using dragons to steal milk, there is always a female presence suffering at the hands of masculine power. Regardless of if the dragon appears female or male, or even as a simple un-gendered beast, in this religiously charged period of early modern German history - it is ultimately the female sex who suffer. It would not be until later centuries that we see woman taking up the mantle of dragon-slayer in defence of women's rights, the cover of *The Suffragette* in October 1913 for example depicting a Joan of Arc-esque knight bearing a belt

with the initials WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union) and shield labelled 'Purity' defending themselves from a man representing 'The Press' and his dragon whose collar reads 'Indecency'.[282]

The sources we have looked at in this chapter were created by male artists or scribes, privileged by their sex and steeped in a society where women were often considered lesser beings. We do not have sources that contain the female perspective untouched by the hands of a male writer, we do not know how a woman at the turn of the sixteenth century felt about having her sex associated with monstrosity and bestial denigration when she saw the images of St George running down a female dragon. Would she see only a dragon that happened to be female like herself and think little of it, or would she see the binaries presented by the artist and wonder at her own place in the world? What did the women accused of being dragon-consorting milk-witches feel about the charges brought against them free from the environments of the patriarchal courts, the hand of male scribes, and the condescension of history? We cannot know. We can however see the injustice of the dragon against them in how this symbol manifested in male hands in the sixteenth- and seventeenth- century German-speaking lands.

Serpents and dragons thrived in this period of religious reform and turmoil; their baleful forms rendered a weapon on many fronts. They were a tool of fear and hatred brandished against one's enemies whether they be the powerful pope or a frail widow. The association between dragons and satanic apocalyptic evil reached its heights in the millenarian fervour of the Reformation, making an already terrifying symbol conceptually deadly as well.

[282] C. Pankhurst (ed.), *The Suffragette* No. 53, Vol. II, October 17 (1913).

3.0 BEYOND THE REFORMATION

According to Zakiya Hanafi, monsters can be thought of as an 'ideological cluster' constructed within a social group and that 'what constitutes a monster at any given time or place is a contextualised, localised set of characteristics, defined and accepted by the community'.[1] The serpentine monsters we have seen so far have been those moulded by Protestants in the German-speaking lands whose specific contexts have given rise to what we might term the 'Reformed dragon'. The following two chapters will draw this thesis to a close by exploring serpents and dragons in contexts that go beyond the immediate geography and theology of the Reformation, and beyond religious culture. Dragons are multifarious in their appearance – this thesis so far exploring monsters with many different physical characteristics – and may wear any number of physical features while still occupying the same role as an embodiment of a fearful and terrible power in opposition to moral ideals. Despite this varying physical appearance, they have so far usually stood for a particular set of concepts and connotations that we discovered in Chapter 1.0. In these next two chapters we shall see how these monsters took on divergent paths of conceptual evolution in alternative contexts.

Indeed, it is perhaps most helpful here to imagine the idea of the dragon as being a kind of fluid with no definitive shape. Within the amorphous blob of 'dragon-ness' there floats a range of concepts and ideas freely intermingling with one another, some more related than others. Whenever a human thinks about a dragon or commits their ideas of a dragon to words or art they are in effect dipping a vessel into this fluid and forcing a shape upon the amount of liquid they gather. Sometimes this shape has wings, other times it does not. Sometimes this shape is that of apocalyptic Antichrist come to end the world, other times it is

[1] Z. Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine. Magic, Medicine, and the Marvellous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution* (London, 2000), pp. 14-15.

a simple animal fond of licking salt from the walls of caves. Every individual takes a different amount of the dragon from this pool, and we see different permutations of the monster as a result, all sharing some characteristics but not representing the whole. In different times and places, we see the dragon take very different shapes, and in these chapters, we shall see how the shape forced upon the dragon by Protestant Reformers, and the concepts it contains, are both similar to but also markedly different from the shape of the dragon conceived of by Catholics and in the annals of natural history.

The first of these two chapters will examine the Catholic response to serpents and dragons, looking at both Catholic areas of the German-speaking lands and Catholic areas outside of the Germanosphere (particularly Italy). These case studies will serve to highlight the fact that the particular shapes that the serpentine beasts took on in the previous three chapters are very specific to their time and place, and that the Catholic response to them has some subtle but notable differences to those of the Protestants we have seen thus far. The serpents and dragons of early modern German religious culture were unique; spawned from a very particular milieu of ideas and a context that was especially receptive to, and creative with, their fear-inspiring aspect. The Catholic response to the dragons they encountered maintained some of this terror but was markedly less apocalyptic in nature than what we saw in the previous three chapters.

The second of the two chapters in this final section will explore the natural history of the dragon, highlighting how the ideas we have explored thus far in the thesis found both new and similar expressions in a time of changing ideas and values within natural philosophy. This chapter will demonstrate that belief in dragons did not suddenly disappear in the late seventeenth century, as many traditional narratives of the history of dragons maintain, but that instead there is a more nuanced and contested dialogue between scholars that continues

beyond the period of this study into the eighteenth century. Here will be especially highlighted the fervour with which the idea of the dragon was contested in this period, with defenders of the beast supporting the dragon's existence in the face of emergent scepticism. This chapter will close the story of the early modern German monstrous serpents as the dragon finds itself extirpated from the annals of natural history and thrust almost fully into the realm of fantasy, where dragons find themselves today.

3.1 CATHOLIC RESPONSES TO THE SERPENTINE MONSTERS

Thus far, this thesis has largely dealt with serpents and dragons within a Protestant context – examining how they existed and were involved in a cultural atmosphere dominated by the Reformation. While the Reformation is not unimportant to areas of the German-speaking lands and beyond where Protestantism was not widespread, it is important to discuss serpents and dragons in contexts where Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation held greater influence. This chapter will discuss how Catholics, both within the German-speaking lands and abroad, responded to the serpentine monsters they found and how these encountered differed somewhat in their tone to the creatures we have seen in this thesis so far.

The connotations that serpents and dragons held for Catholics were broadly the same – they were just as detestable a monster as we have seen in previous chapters. Indeed, when Papal Nuncio Giovanni Battista Rinuccini (1592-1653) arrived in Ireland in October 1645 he was greeted by an assembly of local women at Kenmare Bay and when one of them attempted to kiss him, his secretary wrote that the nuncio as 'he drew himself back as if she were a dragon' in fear and disgust.[2] The Italians evidently did not appreciate the Irish custom, and Rinuccini's secretary's words reveal that the dragon was a byword for terrifying monster in their culture. While serpents and dragons may have been just as repugnant a category of creature to Catholics and Protestants alike, there were key differences in the intensity of certain aspects of draconic belief. Indeed, Rinuccini's secretary's likening of the woman to a dragon speaks mostly to the fear she struck within the Papal Nuncio, rather than to the diabolic connotations that equivalencies between women and dragons spawned in the sources of the previous chapter. As we shall see throughout this chapter, Catholic understandings and

[2] Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Mis. Medicea, 436 ins 19, '*Lettera di Alessandro Neroni sul viaggio in Irlanda del Nuncio Apostolico* (1645)'. *'egli ritiratosi in dietro come se fosse stato un drago'.*

uses of the dragon tended to be far less diabolically charged than the Protestant ones we have seen so far.

Indeed, this thesis argues that the dragons we have seen in the previous three chapters dealing with Reformation iconography, a Protestant-leaning book of miracles, and witch trials in predominantly Protestant areas, all took on a particularly Satanic and apocalyptic tone with the specificities of their form, narrative, and meaning being influenced by the especially rich culture of draconic folklore that the German-speaking lands possessed. While Catholic areas of Europe shared some of these cultural influences, the legend of St George for example being popular across Christendom, and still maintained a level of millenarianism that saw some of the deadliest witch crazes take place in Catholic bishoprics, the overt and continued association between dragons and the end of days was less present. This is partly due to the less effective program of Catholic visual culture in this period when compared to that of Protestantism (which we shall discuss later), and also partly due to Catholic identity already being firmly established. Where Protestantism cast itself as dragon-slayer and the Catholic Church as decrepit dragon to be slain in a bid to establish what they stood for, to Catholicism the Reformation was but another heresy in a long line of upstart rival confessions. They soon came to regard the Reformation as a severe threat, but it was far easier for the Protestants to cast themselves as a heroic underdog against a venerable institution than it was for Catholics to do so.

This chapter will not offer a complete picture of what serpents and dragons meant to European Catholics at this time; indeed, that would require a study or two in and of themselves. Rather, it will examine a few case studies of Catholic responses to these creatures through the use of several examples we have encountered thus far as well as a few additional sources that have not previously been discussed. Though these sources are by nature largely

reactionary, they reveal much about how Protestants and Catholics came to have subtly differing views on the dragon over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This chapter will start by remaining in the German-speaking lands this thesis focuses upon but will look primarily at the Catholic heartlands of the Habsburg empire and how their relationship with the dragon differed to that of more Protestant northern Germany. It will then move further afield to the Italian peninsula where we will see how the papacy reacted to the pope-dragons we saw in Chapter 2.1. Finally, we will briefly touch upon the dragons encountered by missionaries and other Catholic explorers – seeing how these foreign dragons fitted into their existing worldview and how the dragon increasingly became a global phenomenon in European eyes.

Dragons did not always find themselves saddled with the intense Satanic overtones Protestant Reformers liked to pair them with; this can be seen for instance in some of the monuments and architecture of the southern German-speaking lands where dragons were regarded as more simply a beast or animal with some folkloric connotations than as a diabolic symbol of apocalypse. For example, in Vienna today one can find on *Steindlgasse* the House of the Golden Dragon that was built in 1566 and that has operated as a restaurant for the past three hundred years.[3] Occupied first by a city councillor from whom the street takes its name, this building seems to have raised no eyebrows with its monstrous name. Instead of being read as a representation of Satan, it perhaps stood as a cypher for St George. As we saw with the chivalric Order of the Dragon, founded by Emperor Sigismund (1368-1437) in 1408 as a primarily anti-Ottoman alliance, their insignia was a dragon; its body bent around to form a circle (its tail wrapped around its neck, though sometimes it was instead shown as an ouroboros eating its own tail), and the dragon's back opened with a red cross situated in its

[3] *Haus zum gülden Drache* https://www.werbeka.com/wien/wien3/gdrache.htm (Accessed: 17 April 2022).

centre.[4] This dragon served as a proxy for its own slayer, the cross upon its back representing St George's triumph over the monster and the hope that members of the order would defeat their own dragon. The House of the Golden Dragon being built within living memory of the 1529 Ottoman Siege of Vienna may in fact be referencing the defeat of the same dragon that the members of the chivalric order sought to combat.

This is of course not the only public display of a draconic monument in the early modern period to have survived to this day in the southern German-speaking lands. Klagenfurt's new square is dominated by a draconic fountain that we discussed briefly in Chapter 1.0. It is composed of two elements; a large Lindwurm made of slate that was erected in 1590, and a statue of Hercules that was added in 1624 alongside water features.[5] This fountain serves as a monument to the legendary founders of the city who slew a dragon and built upon the lands it had once terrorised, however they are not a part of this fountain. Originally, they were perhaps intended to be represented by the dragon itself, much as the dragon sometimes serves as a cypher for St George, but the addition of Hercules thirty-four years later makes that reading impossible as the new hero would then be assaulting the city's legendary founders. Perhaps then Hercules was added to better represent them; after all, the lone body of the dragon can also be easily read as a monument to beast rather than its slayers.

The choice of Hercules over a saintly figure, more than anything, serves to reduce any possible Satanic associations the dragon may have. By adding a classical figure, rather than a Christian one, the dragon became recontextualised. While a series of dragon-slaying narrative binaries are maintained, the combat between a paragon of the Christian God and a representative of the Devil is removed by mere fact of Hercules's pagan heritage. The dragon

[4] For more on the insignia see: D'A.J.D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe 1325-1520* (Woodbridge, 2000), p.350.
[5] B. Kienzl, and W. Deuer, *Renaissance in Kärnten* (Klagenfurt, 1996), p.56

fountain, and the city that it represents, can no longer be as easily read as an avatar of Satan, the choice of Hercules over St George helps to remove interpretations that are so religiously charged and makes the narrative a simpler one of man verses beast. A cosmological battle between the specifically Christian forces of good and evil is avoided.

There is also perhaps a conceptual need for the presence of a dragon-slayer in order to complete the dichotomy and satisfy the ideals of the *Chaoskampf* that motivated the addition of Hercules to the fountain. Indeed, should no dragon-slayer arise then the dragon otherwise remains unchallenged and evil triumphs. In the uncertain and terrifying times of the early modern period, it is perhaps unsurprising that the people of Klagenfurt should not allow a dragon to dominate their public space. Its fear-inducing gaze no longer watches them pass by the slate behemoth on a daily basis unchecked, the club of Hercules now hovers frozen in time above the monster's head in protection of the city – a reminder that all evil can be defeated and that their city is one of heroes, not monsters.

Of course, this is not the only draconic monument found in the southern German-speaking lands to feature a dragon. The *Mariensäule* in Munich provides a very public display of the symbolic roles serpentine creatures played in the imagination of Catholicism. A centre of the Counter-Reformation and Capital of the Duchy of Bavaria, Munich was a vital stronghold of Imperial power. After having been spared from destruction from occupying Swedish troops during the Thirty Years' War, Emperor Maximillian I (1573-1651) had a pillar bearing a statue of the Virgin Mary erected in the city in 1638 where it stands to this day.[6] In 1639 four bronze putti were added to the base of the column each one bearing down upon an animalistic representation of an evil, seemingly in reference to Psalm 91:13.[7] These

[6] M. Schattenhofer, *Die Mariensäule in München* (Munich, 1970).
[7] While the Munich Mariensäule would inspire other monuments devoted to the Virgin Mary in places like Wernstein am Inn (originally erected in Vienna 1645), Prague (erected 1650, destroyed 1918, and rebuilt in

animals are a lion who represents war, a basilisk embodying pestilence, a snake representing unbelief, and a dragon as the manifestation of hunger. Three of these creatures are members of the family of serpentine monsters with which this thesis has concerned itself, affirming their negative connotations as harbingers of evil but also tying them to specific worldly troubles. The basilisk being chosen to represent pestilence likely stems from the legend of their vile generation which we shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 3.2, the serpent as unbelief a reference to the diabolic serpent of Eden, and the ever-avaricious dragon infamous for ravaging the countryside and devouring innocent maidens suits hunger well. Additionally, the avariciousness of this dragon calls to mind the creatures who served milk-witches that we encountered in the previous chapter who steal produce from the unsuspecting - leaving the victims hungry while the dragon's master hordes essential goods. While obviously evil, these monsters are not apocalyptic in their presentation, and this monument is ultimately a reminder that not only can these creatures be killed but that the ills they represent can be overcome.

Looking beyond the German-speaking lands, as mentioned in a previous chapter concerning iconography it was often difficult to find positive interpretations of the dragon as we can see from the difficulties that Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585) endured due to his family arms bearing the beast. While we saw some positive connotations held by the symbols of the serpent and the dragon at the end of Chapter 1.0, the struggle the papal court had in depicting the dragon in a favourable light is testament to how strong the terrifying aspects of the monster had become. Indeed, following Gregory's election in 1572, a series of Catholic Italian emblematists and naturalists would take on the challenge of finding something positive to say about the Boncompagni tailless dragon after decades of Protestant visual culture and

2020), Freisinger (1674), and Trier (1866), not all these pillars would feature the putti treading upon animals. W.F. Kalina, 'Die Mariensäulen in Wernstein am Inn (1645/47), Wein (1664/66), München (1637/38) und Prag (1650)' in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 58 (2004), pp. 43-61.

propaganda from across northern Europe associating Pope, dragon, Antichrist, and Satan with one another.[8] Marco Ruffini has written an article on this topic, derived from his 2005 work on natural science and emblems, using the emblem controversy as a case study for exploring the limits of 'nature' and the 'natural'.[9] Indeed, it was a combined effort of emblematists and naturalists, led by Gregory XII's illegitimate son Giacomo Boncompagni (1548-1612), that took to the task of wading through natural philosophy, humanistic culture, and the weight of early modern intellectualism to find some way to put a positive spin on the dragon.

Most notable amongst the naturalists was Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605), regarded by some to be the father of natural history studies, who attempted to legitimise the Boncompagni dragon by proving that dragons were real. He alleges that on the day of Gregory's election a dragon was caught and killed by a local farmer, its body given over to him in Bologna to be displayed in Aldrovandi's museum. The creature was in fact a hoax and a horrific example of taxidermy, being composed of bits of snake, fish, and birds.[10] He widely circulated images of the creature and wrote a treatise on the natural history of serpents and dragons that prominently featured it.[11] Paula Findlen has argued that this approach was designed to dispel associations with Antichrist by demonstrating that the dragon was an example of natural phenomenon rather than a mythical, supernatural form of evil.[12] Aldrovandi was ultimately unsuccessful in securing patronage from any of the Boncompagni family at the papal court,

[8] M. Ruffini, 'A Dragon for the Pope: Politics and Emblematics at the Court of Gregory XIII' in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* Vol. 54 (2009), pp. 83-105.
[9] Ibid.; and M. Ruffini, *Le imprese del drago. Politica, emblematica e scienze naturali alla corte di Gregorio XIII Boncompagni (1572-1585)* (Rome, 2005).
[10] P. Findlen, 'Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities' in P.H. Smith and P. Findlen (eds.), *Merchants & Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2002), pp. 297-323.
[11] U. Aldrovandi, *Serpentum et draconum historiae libri duo* (Bologna, 1640). A copy of the picture can be found in: A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus, quo universae Denique naturae divitiae* (Rome, 1665), p. 93
[12] P. Findlen *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 17-47.

his work on dragons only being published in 1639 many years after his death, and his fake dragon would eventually be removed from the museum (possibly by accident, possibly due to the corpse chimera eventually beginning to deteriorate) and was stolen from amongst the museum's rubbish.[13] Ruffini argues Aldrovandi failed to actually address the central issue: he did not deal with the problem of the dragon's significance adequately, only its existence.[14] Indeed, this thesis suggests the failure was ultimately due to the fact that dragons being natural phenomenon and supernatural portents of doom are not mutually exclusive and both could easily co-exist within the early modern mind; we have already seen, for example, instances of both animalistic dragons and a man cursed by Satan in the form of a dragon within *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* in Chapter 1.0.

Emblematists gained a little more interest from the papal court but were similarly unsuccessful in their efforts. A large number of their tracts can be found in the Boncompagni archive in the Vatican Library and reveal the names of many lesser-known artists and authors alongside their more famous, and infamous, contemporaries.[15] Most thorough of these emblematists was the priest Principio Fabricii (fl.1580s) whose 1588 work, usually shortened to *Delle allusioni*, attempts to address every possible negative reading of the dragon and argues for a positive one instead.[16] The work is lavishly illustrated with 256 engravings to accompany Fabricii's arguments which were rooted in multiple disciplines from natural philosophy to theology but varied greatly in their persuasiveness (see appendix fig. 76).

[13] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,Vatican City, Boncompagni D8 (B. Pisanelli, *In emblemata Pontificii stemmatis* coniecturae), fols. 123v, 124r.
[14] M. Ruffini, 'A Dragon for the Pope: Politics and Emblematics at the Court of Gregory XIII' in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* Vol. 54 (2009), pp. 83-105.
[15] Ruffni provides a list in his article which includes figures like Fracesco Ghesio da San Gimignano, Girolamo Negri, and Alfonso Ceccarelli.
[16] P. Fabricii, *Delle allusioni, imprese, et emblem del signor Principio Fabricii da Teramo, sopra la vita, opera et attioni di Gregorio XIII Pontefice Massimo. Libri VI. Nei quali sotto l'allegoria del drago, arme del detto Pontefice, si descrive anco la vera forma d'un principe christiano; et alter cose, la somma delle quali si legged oppo la dedication dell'opera all'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor duca di Sora* (Rome, 1588).

Notably, these dragons are all illustrated to resemble the Boncompagni dragon (though they sometimes possess tails that the Pope's dragon did not) to make sure the intended message of the piece was not lost on its intended audience.



P. Fabricii, *Della allusioni* (1588), pp. 145, 101, 85, 97, 345.[17] Top row (left to right): Emblem 97, Emblem 75. Middle row (left to right): Emblem 54, Emblem 61. Bottom row (left to right): Emblem 231 (see appendix fig. 76).

In eleven of the emblems the dragon is presented like the Brazen Serpent (which we discussed in Chapter 2.1), drawing connections with stories of the Old Testament as well as with Christ.[18] This is not a huge leap given that serpents and dragons were related creatures,

[17] Ibid., pp. 145, 101, 85, 97, 345.
[18] Ibid., pp. 76, 80, 82, 86, 151, 161, 212, 218, 281, 330, 345.

and it is certainly more convincing than the argument of Emblem 97 which attempts to convince the reader that the dragon is a good omen.[19] While we have seen dragons as omens sent from God rather than Satan in Chapter 2.2, none of them portended something good, instead acting as divine punishment, a warning against sin, or a sign of the rapidly approaching end of days.

Fabricii also drew upon some of the less Biblically charged connotations of the dragon that existed in early modern Europe, such as the constellation *Draco* which he depicts or alludes to in astronomically inspired emblems several times throughout his work: the ancient story of the enmity between dragons and elephants in the natural history of the dragon, and the ancient symbol of the ouroboros.[20] These all served to distance the dragon from more apocalyptic ideas, though Fabricii did not always shy away from them. Perhaps most directly addressing the apocalyptic concerns of the papal court, Fabricii contrasted the physical appearance of the emblematic dragon with that of one of the beasts of the apocalypse in Emblem 75.[21] As this thesis has demonstrated in Chapter 2.1, many artists did not care for the specificities of the complex monsters of the apocalypse and indeed often used a basic dragon in their place, but this does not seem to have been something Fabricii was aware of or, if he was, he cared not to address it. Similarly, Emblem 54 shows a dragon attacking an apocalyptic beast while it is in the act of menacing a group of people, depicting enmity between the presumably godly dragon and the tyrannical Satanic beast.[22]

Emblem 61 meanwhile depicts a dragon being crowned with the papal tiara, though this pope-dragon is representative of the power and legitimacy of the papacy as defender of

[19] Ibid., p. 145.
[20] Ibid., pp. 214, 228, 243, 302, 339, 344.
[21] Ibid., p. 101.
[22] Ibid., p. 85.

religion rather than any of the other connotations Protestants gave the same image.[23] Indeed, Fabricii incorporates the dragon into the papal regalia as a symbol of their power, office, and legitimacy in several emblems throughout the book, most notably in Emblem 231 (the very last emblem in the book) where we see the pope with a dragon staff (mimicking the Brazen Serpent) on a chariot pulled by dragons, going up to Heaven.[24] In seeking to normalise the dragon as a symbol of the papacy he does perhaps go a little far, and unfortunately for Fabricii these images only really worked within the cultural vacuum of this book.

Fabricii hoped to sway the entirety of both popular and aristocratic culture to his new reading of the dragon, but he was ultimately unsuccessful and people to this day still believe in many of the traits of the dragon he railed against. His approach was undoubtedly both bold and exceptionally thorough, but the failure of Fabricii and his fellow emblematists demonstrate just how deeply engrained the cultural imagination that supported a wholly negative reading of the symbol was.

The fact that little ever came from the efforts of these emblematists and naturalists, and that this symbolic *faux pas* on the part of the Papacy was never remedied or repudiated is perhaps testament to the fact that the diabolic connotations of the dragon just were not as strong in the Latin/Mediterranean sphere and there were much greater concerns for the Holy See than answering the challenge of every anti-papal piece of Protestant artwork and literature. However, the fact that several people identified the Boncompagni dragon as problematic shows that there was an awareness of the intensity of Satanic associations with the dragon. The failure to do much about it and the disinterest of the Pope himself is perhaps indicative of a more general failure by Catholics to respond to Protestant visual culture, as we

[23] Ibid., p. 97.
[24] Ibid., p. 345.

saw in Chapter 2.1 with Hans Brosamer's (c.1490-1554) *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529) which displayed nowhere near the level of iconographical competency or flair as its Protestant counterparts.[25]



Pope Urban VI as pope-dragon from Joachim de Fiore's *Vaticinia de Pontificibus* (c.1431-1447) (see appendix fig. 77).[26]

It is also worth noting that, in a twist of fate, it was in fact Catholics who invented the pope-dragon first. An example of a papal-faced dragon produced in Florence that pre-dates the Protestant examples of previous chapters can be found in Joachim de Fiore's *Vaticinia de Pontificibus* (c.1431-1447) (see appendix fig. 77).[27] This piece depicts Pope Urban VI (1318-

[25] H. Brosamer, *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529). For how ineffective this was see: J. Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Germany* (London, 2009), p. 74; J.L. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London, 2004), pp. 115-119; and R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 232-233. This is of course not to say that Catholicism did not have a rich visual culture (see S. Ivanič, *Catholica. The Visual Culture of Catholicism* (London, 2022)), just that it did not respond to Protestantism with the same immediacy and efficacy that Reformed iconography achieved.
[26] British Library, London, Harley MS 1340 'Joachim de Fiore, *Vaticinia de Pontificibus* (Florence, c. 1431-1447)', fol. 8r.
[27] Ibid.

1389) whose election to the Holy See was contested, resulting in the appointment of Antipope Clement VII (1342-1394) and the beginning of the Western Schism (1378-1417).[28] It is somewhat unsurprising that such a controversial figure should be associated with Satan. After all, the Western Schism was viewed by contemporaries as somewhat of a disaster of the Church and a colossal failure of the office of the Papacy which saw many of the early Renaissance Popes battling against conciliarism movements that threatened their authority.[29] Protestant artists of the sixteenth century may not have been familiar with this particular work, but they could have been familiar with others like it that may not be extant and chose to revive this symbolic method of attacking the Papacy. Alternatively, it could simply have been an obvious and easy method to symbolically align a disliked Pope with Satan that artists in the Western Schism and the Reformation independently conceived.

Outside the grand halls and patronage of the papal court, the early modern period was a time of exploration for Europeans. Catholics often found themselves at the forefront of European exploration, whether as missionaries of Christianity trekking the ancient Silk Road to Asia or as adventurers on the ships of Catholic naval powers destined for the New World. This last part of the chapter will round off discussion of Catholicism by examining what they made of the dragons they encountered during missionary work, particularly in China. It is important to reiterate that while the Chinese *Lung* may have some superficial resemblance to the dragons of Europe that this thesis discusses – they have separate cultural origins to western serpentine monsters, and many physical and narrative differences to the creatures we

[28] The identification with the Great Red Dragon of Revelation is clear from the inclusion of stars around the pope-dragon's tail, as we discussed regarding several of the pieces in Chapter 2.1. However, the artist has not actually coloured this pope-dragon red – opting instead for a green which was a common colour for dragons in Medieval manuscripts.

[29] Conciliarism would be defeated by the Renaissance Popes who ruled the Papal States as effectively absolute monarchs. For more see: J.H. Burns, and T. Izbicki (eds.), *Conciliarism and papalism* (Cambridge, 1997); J.J. Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy* (New York, 2011); and E. Duffy, *Saints and Sinner: A History of the Popes* (Yale, 1997).

have encountered in previous chapters.[30] Indeed, there is an argument to be made that terming these creatures 'dragons' at all is a misnomer that verges on the culturally insensitive, yet it is how western visitors in this period identified these creatures – drawing surface parallels and imposing some of their own understanding of dragons onto the *Lung*.

Missionaries to Asia noted symbols and draconic folklore in places such as China and India and brought stories back to Italy where naturalists like German polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) wrote about them.[31] Though he spent much of his career working in Rome, his tracts were widely circulated across Europe and were read by the leading intellectuals of his time. Unlike other authors of his period, he offered not only a description of dragons in Europe (that we shall see in chapter 3.2); but also explored dragons in China from a European perspective. While dragons beyond Europe are not part of the scope of this thesis, Kircher's understanding of the Chinese 'dragon' is a rare example of westerners engaging with this creature within the bounds of natural science. Kircher's *China Illustrata* (1667) contains multiple references to dragons as they appear in the mythology and symbology of both the Imperial Court and day-to-day lives of Chinese people, as well as a study on the serpents of China.[32] Kircher never went to China, though he desired to do so, and compiled *China Illustrata* from a range of sources from travel writing like Marco Polo (1254-1324), to works by Jesuit missionaries like Michał Boym (1612-1659).[33]

[30] S.G. Bruce (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Dragons* (New York, 2021), pp. 197-232.
[31] This thesis will discuss the European dragons that Kircher studied in the following chapter concerning serpents, dragons, and the sciences.
[32] China Illustrata is the common name by which the work is known, its full Latin title being: *Athanasii Kircheri e Soc. Jesu China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis Naturae et artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata, auspiciis Leopoldi primi, Roman. Imper. Semper augusti Munificentissimi Mecaenatis* (Rome, 1667).
[33] For more on Kircher's sources and his place within early modern sinology see: M. Reed and P. Demattè, *China on Paper. European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles, 2007).

Kircher did not make any overt attacks on the use of the dragon as an imperial symbol, the same concerns as we saw over Gregory XIII's draconic heraldry earlier in this chapter are not repeated here, though he does cite work by one Fr. Tigraut that discusses the allegedly demonic science of positioning a building according to how dragons living underground are orientated.[34] It is unclear in the text if the dragons themselves are demonic, or if it is solely this form of geomancy (likely an observation of some manner of seventeenth century *Feng shui*) which is under attack, but otherwise, Kircher and his Jesuit sources largely treat what they identify as a Chinese 'dragon' as a permutation of some pagan folklore, rather than evidence of Satanic influence.

Indeed, the physical ephemera that surrounds serpents and dragons in China that he describes are not artefacts of devil worship but are instead treated as curiosities of folklore and Asian medicine. Kircher is quick to point out that Chinese creations with names like 'dragon's blood' are often not literal, being instead names for common items like varnish or tinctures, and in more literal cases such as the 'serpent stone' Kircher approaches them with cool analysis rather than zealous suspicion.[35] The so-called 'serpents stone', which can suck poison from a wound and thus cure venomous bites, is one of the few instances of Kircher having first-hand experience with something allegedly Chinese in this work. He describes how he tested a serpent stone (one of three he received from fellow Jesuit Fr. Henry Roth) on a dog that had been bitten by a viper to great success and notes how a contemporary Roman physicist did the same with a poisoned man.[36] This product, either derived from the head of a cobra or created artificially with crushed fragments of snakes, is not treated as supernatural in any way by Kircher – only as a subject of scientific curiosity. Similarly, the illustration

[34] A. Kircher, *China Illustrata* (1667), pp. 129-152, 114.
[35] Ibid., pp. 85-87.
[36] Ibid.

accompanying this part of the text that shows the stone as well as the cobras it allegedly derives from is included for scale purposes.[37] These cobras lack the characteristic hood found on the real animal, suggesting that the artist was merely drawing upon their own experiences of snakes rather than having actually seen a cobra, a recurring theme in some of the art of this volume.

[37] Ibid., p. 86.



Illustrations of a mountain in Kiamsi Province (top) and of Chinese deities (bottom) from A. Kircher, *China Illustrata* (1667), pp. 176, and 141 respectively (see appendix fig. 78).[38]

[38] Ibid., pp. 141, 176.

In Part IV Chapter IV, Kircher describes briefly a mountain in Kiamsi Province which is called the 'Dragon and Tiger' due to locals claiming that the two peaks look like a dragon about to spring onto a tiger.[39] This description is accompanied by an illustration of a two-peaked mountain upon which sits a dragon about to accost a tiger, the artist seemingly never having laid eyes upon a tiger before and choosing to render a very European dragon, rather than what western observers described as a Chinese dragon despite a faithful depiction of a Chinese Lung being present elsewhere in the book in an image as part of the section on Chinese idolatry (Part III, Chapter I) (see appendix fig. 78).[40] This choice may either be out of ignorance, the artist having no familiarity with the Lung (a different engraver being responsible for the faithful image), or once again we see artists using the western dragon as a crutch – choosing the familiar dragon over something more exotic to prioritise accessibility over accuracy.

Writing on Chinese fauna and flora in Part IV (with chapter X dedicated wholly to serpents), Kircher uses dragons as both a familiar reference for his readers, and as a category of animal in and of itself.[41] In the former instance the *Fenghuang* (what the text calls: *Fum Hoam*) is described as having a dragon's head, Kircher's Jesuit sources resorting to using familiar animals to describe this fantastical creature they saw embroidered on the robes of the Emperor and his court, that they presumed to be a representation of a real form of peacock rather than a mythological bird.[42] With regards the latter, Kircher places the alleged giant serpents found in Carrajam, from the accounts of Marco Polo, in the category of dragon due to their immense size, though notes to the reader that despite apparently being dragons they

[39] Ibid., pp. 176-177.
[40] Ibid., pp. 141, 176.
[41] Ibid., pp. 202-204.
[42] Just as the Chinese Lung is equated to the western dragon by westerners (a problematic and not wholly accurate equation which falls outside the scope of this thesis but is worth keeping in mind), the Fenghuang is equated on a superficial basis to the phoenix by western observers.

are not poisonous and possess no venom.[43] As we discussed in the introduction to this thesis, European dragons were often extremely nebulous in their precise shape with many different qualifiers existing in mutual exclusivity with one another. Here Kircher has decided that the enormous size of these serpents alone is enough to allow their categorisation as dragons.

Kircher's Chinese dragons are quite simply big and interesting animals, and despite his religious occupation he does not draw links between them and the chosen form of Satan in the book of Revelation. What draconic beliefs Kircher does identify in China as ungodly are ascribed instead to foreign paganism, and the illustrations in the book demonstrate that there is no real understanding of the fundamental difference between the western dragon and the Chinese *Lung.* For Kircher and the missionaries whose work he uses, the dragon as a fact of natural history comes to the forefront of their thinking rather than the monsters of apocalypse, something we shall see more of in other pieces of Kircher's work we shall see in the next chapter.

Missionaries did not only report on the sightings of dragons abroad, but they also wielded the image of the dragon themselves in an effort to inspire terror in those they sought to convert. The Jesuit missionary Charles Garnier (1606-1649), who was later canonized in 1930 as one of the 'North American Martyrs', spent some time with the indigenous Huron people whom he was attempting to convert. Mairi Cowan points out that Garnier ordered images to be made to help his conversion effort that were tailor made for the sensibilities of the indigenous audience – for example, giving Jesus flat and shining hair rather than frizzy

[43] He also speaks at length about his own theories as to why some places in the world are free from non-venomous creatures (he proposes that venom is drawn out of the ground by the animal, and should the ground have no venom in it then the animals living there shall not be venomous), and discusses folk cures for snake-bites which involve boiling the offending serpent in a jar of wine with its head sticking out so that the venom may evaporate from its mouth leaving a venom-free body which the victim then eats.

hair, and no beard. [44] When the time came for Garnier to order an image to terrify the unconverted, he chose a terrible scene of a soul being tortured:

> 'and another chain of burning iron in the middle of the body, a dragon; terrible twisted around her body biting her ear, but that dragon; has a horrible scale and not of a beautiful blue as I have seen, two powerful and dreadful demons on both sides of her who tear her through the body with two harpoons'.[45]

Amongst the flames and harpoon-wielding demons, a dragon can be found biting the tormented soul's ear. The dragon, the missionary decided, was a suitably terrifying symbol to cow the indigenous population into obeisance. Though the dragon would not have held the same connotations for the Hurons as it did Garnier, he evidently felt it to be an effective symbol in communicating the myriad horrors of hell to them, or else he would have chosen different specifications as with the aforementioned Jesus example. Garnier even asks for the dragon to specifically have a 'horrible scale' and not a 'beautiful blue' hue, presumably to maximise the fearful aura the dragon would project.[46] Just as Garnier asked for Jesus to be changed to suit Huron sensibilities, he may also be doing the same to the dragon. In Huron culture there existed a serpentine monster called the Angont who was a source of death, disease, and misfortune that lived deep within the swamps.[47] Garnier's 'horrible scale' may be in reference to this vile, poisonous swamp snake. While not necessarily apocalyptic, this dragon does possess some of the Satanic overtones of dragons we have seen in previous

[44] M. Cowan, 'Jesuit Missionaries and the Accommodationist Demons of New France' in M.D. Brock, R. Raiswell, and D.R. Winter (eds.), *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period* (Cham, 2018), pp. 211-238.
[45] L. Campeau (ed.), *Monumenta Novae Franciae* VI (Rome, 1992), pp. 264-267. *'et une autre chaine de fer bruslant au milieu du corps, un dragon; effroiable entortillé à l'entour de son corps qui la morde vers l'oreille, mais que ce dragon; ait une écaille horrible et non d'un beau bleu comme j'en ay veu, deux démons puissants et effroyables à ses deux costez qui la déchirent par le corps avec deux harpons de fer'.*
[46] L. Campeau (ed.), *Monumenta Novae Franciae* VI (Rome, 1992), pp. 264-267.
[47] For more on Huron culture as observed by French missionaries, including the Angont, see: B. Vimont, *Relationes des Jésuites, v. II* (Quebec, 1858).

chapters as it finds itself used in what Jean Delumeau has termed the 'evangelism of fear'.[48] This demonstrates that while it was more often than not Protestants who leaned heavily on the dragon's associations with Satan and the Book of Revelation, Catholics did share these beliefs, even if they did not express them as often and as vigorously as their rival confession did. For while the connotations of the dragon may not be entirely universal amongst Christendom, its ability to inspire terror is.

As we have seen in this chapter, when Catholics responded to the dragons that they encountered it was not necessarily with the apocalyptic overtones we have become so familiar with over the course of this thesis. The fountain at Klagenfurt saw its dragon paired with Hercules instead of St George, the Pope was generally uninterested by the apocalyptic implications of his heraldry, and the Chinese dragons chronicled by Kircher were simply the fauna of far-off lands. These dragons are not avatars of Satan, harbingers of the apocalypse, warnings against sin, or the lovers of witches. More often than not they are simply representations of an animal that was believed to exist and whose natural history we shall explore in the following chapter.

[48] J. Delumeau, *Le péché et la peur: La culpabilisation en Occident (XIIIe – XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1983), pp. 369-550.

3.2 THE NATURAL HISTORY OF DRAGONS

One of the earliest accounts of dragons in the annals of natural history can be found in the eighth book of Pliny the Elder's (23/24-76 AD) *Naturalis Historia* (77-79 AD) where he describes the natural enmity between these monsters and elephants:

> 'Africa produces elephants… But it is in India that produces the largest, as well as the dragon, which is perpetually at war with the elephant, and is itself so enormous a size, as easily to envelop the elephants with its folds, and encircle them in its coils. The contest is equally fatal to both; the elephant vanquished, falls to the earth, and by its weight, crushes the dragon which is entwined around it.'[49]

For over a thousand years after he wrote these words, Pliny's description of this conflict between titans would help to inform natural philosophers and artists alike as to the behaviour of these beasts in the wild. Dragons were believed to be an intrinsic part of the natural order, their existence confirmed by the seemingly inviolable sources of countless instances of eyewitness testimony and the passages of scripture. In early modern German religious culture, the dragon was a fact of life, a fact which saw a significant continuity of belief in this period despite emerging scepticism.

The early modern period was one of intense scientific discovery and exploration as natural philosophers were afforded new avenues of inquiry with the advent of the printing press, the colonisation of new lands, and intellectual movements like humanism. This included the study of dragons as part of the natural world, and the natural philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not omit the many varieties of monstrous serpents from their enquiries into the natural order. The scholars of the German-speaking lands regarded serpents and dragons as yet another category of fauna to incorporate into their works

[49] See: Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* (77-79 AD), Book VIII, Chapter XI. Translation from: J. Bostock, and H.T. Riley (trans.), *The Natural History of Pliny* Vol.2 (London, 1855), p. 259.

of natural history, and encyclopaedias compiled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often grouped together very real snakes with more fantastical yet presumed real monsters like dragons, basilisks, and cockatrices – treating them as a set of vaguely related serpentine species.[50] This cohort of creatures flourished just as much in the realms of natural philosophy as they did in religious spheres and often had the same connotations – the greedy, repulsive, fear-inducing monsters we have seen in previous chapters being no less powerful here outside of the realms of folklore and theology. As we saw earlier in this thesis, the rise of print culture in the sixteenth century would for a time help to propagate beliefs in dragons as they appeared in a range of materials from religious discourse to popular folklore. They were messengers from God, portents of doom, and the preferred form of the Devil at the end of the world. Serpents of all shapes and sizes filled the imaginations and excited the fears of people across the German-speaking lands in the early modern period, and it is little surprise that such potent creatures would be hard to shift from reality to fantasy in the cultural consciousness of the German-speaking peoples.

People were reluctant to give up their dragons for a few sceptics, and historians of the dragon are often too quick to gloss over a continuity of belief in this period of transition, instead relying on grand narratives to neatly explain the 'death' of the dragon. Martin Arnold for instance accounts for the decline of belief in the dragon by pointing to a growing sense of 'rationalism' in the Western world in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a kind of scientific rationalism that he says eventually culminated in 'Charles Darwin's ground-breaking theories of evolution' and the eventual transition of the dragon into an entirely

[50] See examples we shall discuss later in this chapter such as: C. Gessner, *Historia Animalium* (1551-8, 1587); A. Lonitzer, *Kreuterbuch* (1577); and E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1683).

fictional creature.[51] While not explicitly cited by Arnold, he alludes to narratives like that of the so-called 'Scientific Revolution' of the seventeenth century which remains a hotly contested topic by historians.[52] Instead of falling into such a problematic and overly-simplified narrative as that of the western world becoming too rational for dragons, this chapter shall instead explore how the dragon's defenders remained an impassioned force within natural philosophy up until the very end of the seventeenth century – preserving the natural history of the dragon in the face of those emerging sceptical voices who deemed the monster simply too fantastical to exist in the form popularly believed in Europe at this time.[53] This thesis, concerned as it is with religious culture, seeks to shine a light on this overlooked continued belief in the dragon which was often supported by the monster's scriptural provenance as an intrinsic part of God's creation.

The discussion of the natural history of the dragon in this chapter will begin by examining the medieval traditions that described the origins of serpentine creatures and set the standards for early modern explorations of them, before moving on to the appearance of real snakes in early scientific discourse and experimentation, and the place dragons held in early modern encyclopaedias. After this, we will explore the emerging scepticism regarding the existence of the dragon and the debates that surrounded it – looking at academic dissertations where the nature of the beast is contested, seeing what it was about these creatures and the

[51] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 203-212, 222.
[52] For discussion on the contested idea of the 'Scientific Revolution' see: S. Shapiro, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1996); J.I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006); R. Chen-Morris, 'The contested domain of seventeenth-century natural knowledge' in *Metascience* 25 (2016), pp. 259-261; H.F. Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (Chicago, 1994); P. Dear, *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1995); P. Dear, 'The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy: Toward a Heuristic Narrative for the Scientific Revolution', *Configurations*, 6 (1998) pp. 173-93; M.J. Ossler (ed.), *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 2000); and M. Biagioli, 'The Scientific Revolution is Undead', *Configurations*, 6 (1998) pp. 141-418.
[53] For claiming the flying dragon is an impossibility due to its wings being unable to support it see: S. Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive bipartitum opus de animalibus sacrae scripturæ* Vol. 2 (London, 1663), pp. 428-440.

religious cultures of early modern Europe that saw them survive, and even thrive, in the discourses of natural history and the imagination of people in the seventeenth century.

This chapter falls within the section entitled ‘beyond the Reformation’ as it does not deal directly with the theological disputes that birthed Protestantism, but natural history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not exist within a vacuum and we shall see here how ideas about serpents and dragons in scientific discourse were influenced by religious paradigms. This chapter offers a different lens through which we can observe serpents and dragons in early modern German religious culture, as well as giving an opportunity to compare the more bestial dragons of nature to the apocalyptic ones of Lutheran millenarianism of previous chapters. It also provides a bookend to the story of the dragon as the liminal space it occupies between reality and the realm of imagination is contested.

Classifying monsters - real serpents and 'real' dragons

Serpents and dragons of all morphologies invariably turned up in many works of natural history from ancient times through to the period of this thesis's study. The fascination and horror experienced by authors remained consistent from the chroniclers of the Roman Empire to the scholars of the Renaissance who found themselves with more than a thousand years' worth of sources to draw upon. Most notably, the examination of serpents and dragons in the discourse of early modern natural history existed within the context of those medieval works which preceded them, and often cited these older texts alongside contemporary materials and classical writing. Early modern bestiaries and encyclopaedias tended to draw upon earlier medieval traditions, perpetuating myths for centuries based on the perceived authority of the older sources. The basilisk for example, despite being the entirely fictitious king of serpents, had a rich history in bestiaries produced in the German-speaking lands of the medieval period. The legend of the basilisk (and its often-unclear relation: the cockatrice) was well developed, with its signature deadly gaze accepted as biological fact as we can see in Conrad of Megenberg's (1309-1374) widely read *Buch der Natur* (written c. 1349), and luminaries of medieval scientific discourse like Theophilus Presbyter (c. 1070-1125) and Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) devoted space in their works for comment on the basilisk's vile reproductive cycle and habits.[54] By and large, early modern natural historians did little to advance the existing knowledge base of Western European scholarship regarding fantastical serpents like winged dragons, after all they did not exist so could not be observed and studied in the same way other species might. Rather, their works tended to largely be a synthesis of

[54] See: F. Pfeiffer (ed.), *Das Buch der Natur von Konrad von Megenberg,*(Stuttgart, 1861), pp. 192, 263-5; C.R. Dodwell (trans. and ed.), *Theophilus, the various arts* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 96-98; and R. Hildebrandt and T. Gloning (eds.), *Hildegard von Bingen, Physica* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 372-373.

existing ancient and medieval ideas with original thoughts generally being concerned with systems of classification.

Though considered real animals, the monstrous serpents and their more mundane counterparts were regarded as especially foul (and often born of the most disgusting of natural processes) to both medieval and early modern authors.[55] Pseudo-Paracelsus in *De natura rerum* (1572) describes basilisks as being born from putrefaction and, as we saw in chapter 2.3 with Hans Baldung's *The Witch and Dragon* (see appendix fig. 71), it was through a shared association with putrefaction that serpentine creatures could come to be equated with women to the denigration of both parties.[56] This attribute of being born from the foulest of natural processes and thus being naturally loathsome creatures did little to enhance the reputation of serpents and associated beasts in print and was in fact commonly found amongst publications across central Europe in the sixteenth century. As we saw earlier in this thesis, Adam Lonitzer (1528-1586) in his 1557 *Kreuterbuch* (Herbal) lists snakes, basilisks, and dragons as amongst the most detestable animals in the world alongside vermin, toads, scorpions, and spiders; placing them at the lowest level of the natural world's hierarchy.[57]

Though despised and written of in the most scornful of terms alongside their mythical brethren, real snakes were subjected to lines of scientific cataloguing and experimentation by

[55] For more on the pre-medieval basilisk see: M. Sammer, *Der Basilisk: Zur Natur- und Bedeutungsgeschichte eines Fabeltieres im Abendland* (Munich, 1998).
[56] Pseudo-Paracelsus, 'De natura rerum' in K. Sudhoff (ed.), *Theophrast von Hohenheim gen. Paracelsus, Sämtliche Werke, I. Abteilung* (Munich, 1928), p. 11:315-316. For more on Paracelsus and pseudo-Paracelsus on basilisks see: W.R. Newman, 'Bad Chemistry: Basilisks and Women in Paracelsus and pseudo-Paracelsus' in *Ambix* Vol. 67 No. 1 (2020), pp. 30-46, and T. Willard, 'The Monsters of Paracelsus' in J.E. Clay (ed.), *Beasts, Humans, and Transhumans in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 151-166. For the connection between women and the basilisk in art, see: H. Baldung, *The Witch and Dragon* (1515), and Y. Owens, 'Pollution and Desire in Hans Baldung Grien: The Erotic Spell of the Witch and Dragon' in A. Pollali, and B. Hub (eds.), *Images of Sex and Desire in Renaissance Art and Modern Historiography* (London, 2017), pp. 344-364.
[57] A. Lonitzer, *Kreuterbuch* (1577), p.580; K. Crowther-Heyck, 'Wonderful Secrets of Nature: Natural Knowledge and Religious Piety in Reformation Germany' in *Isis* 94, no. 2 (June 2003), pp. 253-73.

physicians and natural philosophers. Indeed, many of the scholars in this chapter wrote as much concerning mundane snakes as they did fantastical ones, and by the end of the seventeenth century a great deal of tracts concerning snakes were being produced. Notably, material concerning experiments on snake venom performed by Italian scholar Francesco Redi (1626-1697), and the academic disputes he had with French apothecary Moyse Charas (1619-1698), were published widely and attracted both considerable attention from the contemporary European scholarly community, and from modern historians of science.[58] So notorious were these spats that they spilled over into other contemporary tracts regarding snakes such as English physician Edward Tyson's (1651-1708) research on the anatomy of rattle-snakes where he commented on the dispute, noting that both men had performed experiments supporting their claims but ultimately reasoning that Redi was correct.[59] It is not the intention of this thesis to discuss at length the scientific history of the serpent, for their fate diverges from that of their more fantastical cousins and works like that of Redi and Charas do not stray into the realms of religious culture. Therefore, we shall turn our attention to the trial of the dragon, and similar monsters like the basilisk, who came under a very different kind of scrutiny – one that questioned their existence rather than one that questioned their scientific qualities.

While real snakes were finding their place in the annals of early modern scientific experimentation, dragons were continuing to appear in works of natural history produced by

[58] J. Schickore, 'Trying again and again: Multiple Repetitions in Early Modern Reports of Experiments on Snake Bites' in *Early Science and Medicine* Vol. 15, No. 6 (2010), pp. 567-617; J. Tribby, 'Cooking (with) Clio and Cleo: Eloquence and Experimentation in Seventeenth-Century Florence' in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991), pp. 417-439); P. Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994); M. Baldwin, 'The Snakestone Experiments: An Early Modern medical Debate' in *Isis* 86 (1995), pp. 394-418; and P. Catellani, and R. Console, 'Moyse Charas, Francesco Redi, the Viper and the Royal Society of London' in *Pharmaceutical Historian: Newsletter of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy* 34 (2004), pp. 2-10.
[59] E. Tyson, 'Vipera Caudi-Sona Americana, Or the Anatomy of a Rattle-Snake, Dissected at the Repository of the Royal Society in January 1682/3' in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (London, 1683), pp. 25-54.

some of the leading minds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Swiss scholar Conrad Gessner (1516-65) is amongst the most famous and the most thorough natural historians to classify dragons in his *Historia animalium* (1551-8, 1587).[60] Published originally in Latin, it proved popular enough to be published in German: the first four volumes that were titled *Thierbuch* were published in 1563 and the fifth volume *Schlangenbuch* would be published in 1589 only two years after the Latin version was published posthumously.[61] As research by Phil Senter, Uta Mattox, and Eid. E. Haddad has shown, Gessner drew from a variety of classical sources as well as contemporary folklore – the *Schlangenbuch* therefore becoming perhaps the most comprehensive contemporary accumulation of non-supernatural draconic knowledge in Europe.[62]

Gessner recognised that there was room for variation in a dragon's physical characteristics, adding illustrations that showed serpentine, legged, and winged varieties of dragons. He addressed many classical sources that variously and inconsistently include crests, poison, and the ability to breath fire – suggesting, like Philostratus (c.170-147/250 AD), that these differences in physical descriptions in fact point to the existence of different kinds of dragons.[63] Generally though, he describes the traditional 'large reptile' we have encountered

[60] C. Gessner, *Historia Animalium* (1551-8, 1587).
[61] Gessner's works also entered the English-speaking world when they were adapted into English by Edward Topsall in: E. Topsall, *The Historie of foure-footed beastes* (London, 1607); and E. Topsall, *The Historie of Serpents* (London, 1608).
[62] C. Gessner, *Schlangenbuch* (1589). This thesis uses the translation from P. Senter, U. Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (Bloomington, 2016), pp. 67-124.
[63] Senter, Mattox, and Haddad provide the following timeline for the appearance of various physical traits of the dragon in works of natural history, a useful list though far from complete: Homer's *Illiad* - The drakōn is a venomous snake (c. 9th century BC), Aristotle's *History of Animals* – The drakōn is a snake (c. 4th century BC), Nikandros's *Theriaca* – The Aesculapian snake is a drakōn (c. 2nd century BC), Pliny – the python is a draco (c. 1st century AD), Aelian's *On the Characteristics of Animals* and Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* – The drakōn is crested and bearded (c. 2nd/3rd century AD), Acts of Philip – The dragon spits fire (c. 4th century AD), Augustine's *On Pslam 148:7* – The draco can fly (c.420), Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* – The draco can fly (Published posthumously c. 600-25), Pseudo-Aristotle's *De proprietatibus elementorum* – The draco is venomous (In Figure 1 Senter, Mattox, and Haddad incorrectly place Pseudo-Aristotle in the 8th century, rather than the ninth century he is estimated to have lived in), Abū 'Alī al-Husayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā/Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* – Morays and stingrays are dragons (1025), Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi/Leo

throughout this thesis, albeit with an emphasis on them typically possessing a pronounced comb and beard. Gessner primarily divides dragons into two species: 'Those of one kind stay in the mountains and mountainous areas, are large, speedy, fast, and have a comb; the other live in bogs and swamps, are slow, lazy, and comfortable, and no comb grows for them', describing both as varieties of large snakes which can reach monstrous sizes (the largest he cites is 500 feet long).[64] The presence of wings or legs on these monstrous serpents are apparently variable, as is their colour - Gessner mentions black/green hues and red which he seems to indicate throughout the text are the most common, in addition to ash and yellow.

Beyond their appearance, Gessner also offers some insight as to their alleged observed behaviour; including their excellent eyesight and hearing, their diet (apples, herbs, eggs, and various animals, though he also notes they can live for long periods without eating) and the dragons' relationships to other animals - having a rivalry with eagles, enmity with lions, hatred for leopards, and a taste for battle with elephants.[65] In somewhat sharp contrast to the character of dragons we have seen throughout this thesis, Gessner does at one point extoll the friendship of dragons; repeating legends of dragons learning to love beautiful maidens and offering stories from folklore of men able to forge friendly bonds with such a creature. His source for these tales is Claudius Aelianus's (c.175-c.235 AD) *De Natura Animalium* which Gessner had translated (published in 1565).[66] Such a positive depiction of the dragon is likely

Africanus's *History and Description of Africa* – Moroccan vipers are dragons (In Figure 1 the authors incorrectly place Al-Fasi in the 14th century, though in the text correctly identify him as a sixteenth century writer, this work published in 1550), Gessner's *Historia Animalium* – Some dragons have wings and are bipedal (1587), Kircher's *Mundi subterranei* – Flying dragons produce fire and some dragons are quadrupedal (1678), Linnaeus – The dragon is mythical (While the authors do not mention it specifically, they are likely referencing the removal of the dragon from Linnaeus's 1748 edition of *Systema Naturae*).

[64] P. Senter, U. Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' (2016), pp. 89-91.

[65] 'They have sharp eyesight and good hearing and rarely sleep, and because of that, poets call the guardians of treasures'. Ibid., p. 91.

[66] Ibid., pp. 91-96.

due to *De Natura Animalium* pre-dating the widespread adoption of Christianity in Western Europe, Aelianus being somewhat free from the overbearingly evil connotations of the Christian serpent that would come to predominate dialectics surrounding the dragon in later centuries.[67]

Gessner did not stop at describing the dragon's lived experience, but also how dragons can be killed and their medicinal uses after death.[68] According to Gessner, Indians catch dragons by laying a red cloth in front of a dragon's cave that has golden letters sewn into it that can magically put a dragon to sleep. They then decapitate the beast with an axe so as to retrieve a 'dragon stone' - beautiful, fire-coloured stones hidden inside the dragon's head that Gessner enigmatically tells the reader holds 'strong powers'.[69] Beyond this dragon stone, we are told that many parts of the dragon have uses, particularly in medicine. Apparently, the dragon's flesh is the colour of glass and has the ability to cool things, therefore being prized as a delicacy in the hot lands ruled by the Moors, while its fat can either be dried to help heal growing wounds and sores or mixed with old oil and honey to help improve a person's eyesight. The dragon's spine can be used to calm toothaches, its head given as a gift will prevent runny eyes, and should the tongue be boiled with gall juice and wine, it can help prevent nightmares.[70] While he does not elaborate on the uses of the dragon's famous poison,

[67] See: J.H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent, How a Universal Symbol Became Christianised* (Yale, 2010).
[68] Further medicinal uses can be found in a work of natural history and medicine by an unknown author titled *Hortus Sanitatis* (Mainz, 1491) which may have influenced Gessner.
[69] P. Senter, U. Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' (2016), p. 96.
[70] He also notes that there are many things called 'dragon's blood', like Indian cinnabar, that do not actually come from a dragon and therefore do not possess any healing abilities like the other dragon parts he cites, and that anyone selling dragon's blood in Europe is in reality peddling 'nothing but goat blood with mountain cinnabar or service berries… boiled thick'. Ibid., p. 97.

he does discuss several different remedies for it and notes that his sources discuss varying levels of how poisonous a dragon is, though the bite of a male is apparently more harmful.[71]

Flying snakes, though in the dragon chapter, get their own section at the end – suggesting Gessner considered them a similar class of creature but still a distinct entity.[72] He places them firmly as a non-European species; specifically citing them as native to India, the Kingdom of Narsinga, and Egypt - where they are routinely killed by the ibises of the Nile during migration.[73] Though smaller in stature and generally less fearsome, they are seemingly just as poisonous as their larger draconic brethren, the flying snakes of India apparently having urine which causes those who are exposed to it to 'become putrid and often their member rots off'.[74] Little else is written of them barring the relation of one anecdote on how the flying snake is completely unknown in France outside of an exceptional incidence where a farmer killed one with a spade near Rochelle and presented it to King Francis, believing it to have been blown across the ocean by windstorms.[75] He finishes by relaying an account by Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576), also known as Cardanus, of five dried corpses of flying snakes he had seen in Paris that were found at different times, but that were similar in their form, of which Gessner says: 'No human could have created or cut these figures or bodies so identically. In addition, one could have given them larger wings without a doubt, so that the figure would cause less suspicion'.[76] Cardanus's report actually expresses scepticism, while

[71] Ibid., pp. 96-97.
[72] Gessner also talks briefly of 'Python' which it is important to note is not the actual species of pythons, but the name of a particular mythological dragon killed by Apollo. Ibid., pp. 108-110.
[73] The Kingdom of Narsinga was the European name for the Vijayanagar empire that comprised much of southern India which was ruled by Narasingha Raya when Portuguese explorer's first came to the subcontinent. European maps continued to name the region after him long after both his death and the decline of his empire.
[74] Senter, Mattox, and Haddad note that Gessner is drawing from Megasthenes's *Indika* (now lost but quoted in Aelianus's *On the Characteristics of Animals*) where it reads more like: 'When they drop urine, when it falls on anyone's skin it becomes putrid and causes sores.' P. Senter, U. Mattox, and E. E. Haddad, 'Snake to Monster: Conrad Gessner's Schlangenbuch and the Evolution of the Dragon in the Literature of Natural History' (2016), p. 109.
[75] Ibid., pp. 109-110.
[76] Ibid., pp. 110.

Gessner seems to believe that the identical nature of the snakes and their non-comically large wings are sure signs of authenticity, somewhat underestimating the taxidermic talents of the hoaxers.[77]



Illustration of a ray disfigured into the shape of a dragon from Vol. 4 of Gessner's *Historia animalium* (see appendix fig. 79).[78]

This seems in stark contrast to his warnings against 'Jenny Hanivers' in Vol. 4 of *Historia animalium*, dispelling the popular notion that these dried and disfigured rays or skates were miniature dragons.[79] He writes:

> 'The vendors of their skeletons into varied and wonderful shapes for [exhibition to] the multitude. They also exhibit others which resemble the serpent or the winged dragon. [To make these] they bend the body [of a ray], distort the head and mouth, and cut away other parts. They take away the forward parts of the sides [the fins or wings] and raise up the remainders that they may simulate wings, and other parts they modify as they wish. I depict here [Fig. 7 herein] such a specimen as was once brought to me'.[80]

[77] G. Cardano, *De subtilitate* (Paris, 1551)
[78] C. Gessner, *Historia animalium* Vol. 4 (Zurich, 1558) p. 803.
[79] See: S. Kusukawa, 'The sources of Gessner's pictures for the *Historia animalium*' in *Annals of Science* Vol. 67, No. 3 (2010), pp. 303-328; P. Findlen, 'Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities' in P.H. Smith and P. Findlen (eds.), *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 297-323; and E.W. Gudger, 'Jenny Hanivers, Dragons and Basilisks in the Old Natural History Books and in Modern Times' in *The Scientific Monthly* 38 (6) (1934), pp. 511-523.
[80] C. Gessner, *Historia animalium* Vol. 4 (Zurich, 1558), p. 945, Translation from E.W. Gudger, 'Jenny Hanivers, Dragons and Basilisks in the Old Natural History Books and in Modern Times' in *The Scientific*

Gessner's acceptance of the flying serpents, but not of Jenny Haviners is likely due to the fact that the flying serpents conform to the standards of the classical sources Gessner has relied upon for his work on dragons (even though he is only experiencing them through the medium of Cardanus's report) whereas the Jenny Haviners that he has personally seen barely resemble the large, elephant-killing beasts he had read about in Pliny, Philostratus, and Aelianus.

Gessner's work was very popular. As previously mentioned, it was translated out of Latin into the vernacular of several other European languages where it enjoyed a wide readership.[81] It represents an impressive synthesis of existing draconic knowledge, drawing upon classical, medieval, and contemporary sources while also attempting a loose system of categorisation. Between the vast readership of the material and its intellectual breadth, Gessner's work on dragons can be taken as largely representative of the state of the dragon in Western European natural history in the sixteenth century. We see here a creature presumed to be very real and very dangerous, whose body varies greatly in size and form, but is possessed of great medical properties. It is not necessarily evil, but it is fearsome, and related to several other serpentine beasts capable of flying through the air. Gessner believed wholeheartedly in these creatures but recognised that they could be faked, which was perhaps the overriding sentiment amongst scholars of the time.[82]

A century after Gessner, German polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602-80) would also approach the dragon in his work, doing so several times in his expansive and varied corpus.

Monthly 38 (6) (1934), pp. 511-523. *'Pharmacopolæ & alij quidam Raias exiccate, & sceletos earum in varias & admirabiles vulgo fotmas effingere solent, cum alias, tum que serpentem aut draconem alatum præ se ferat corpus enim inflectunt, caput & os distorquent, aliqua incidunt, aut circumcidunt: laterum anteriorem pattem aliquousque rescidunt: reliquam erigunt, vt alas simulet: & alia pro arbittio comminiscuntur. Talem sceleton olim mihi depictum, cum e raia factum esse ignorarem, hic apposui'.*

[81] S. Kusukawa, 'The sources of Gessner's pictures for the *Historia animalium*' in *Annals of Science* Vol. 67, No. 3 (2010), pp. 303-328.

[82] See the 'Hamburg Hydra' in the conclusion of this chapter, the 'Draco' of Jena in chapter 1.0, and Aldrovandi's specimen in Chapter 3.1.

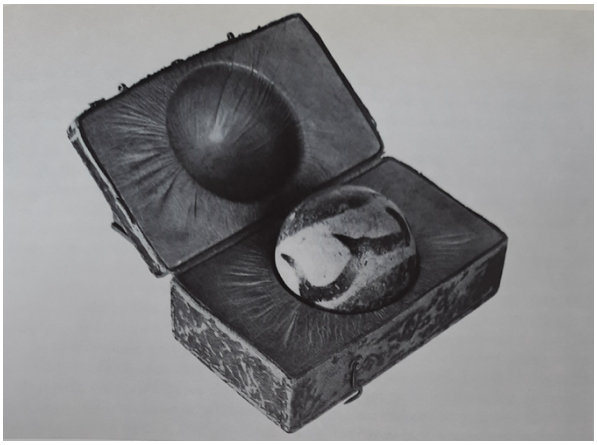
While we have discussed Kircher's experience of Chinese dragons in the previous chapter, here we will look at the European dragons that he primarily addresses in *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665) – a expansive geological study and exploration of everything relating to the subterranean world.[83] He devotes a whole chapter of this work '*De Draconibus*' to dragons (which he presents as a primarily subterranean cave-dwelling beast) and recounts several anecdotes relating to their behaviour from both eyewitness testimony and legend.[84]

His most contemporaneous account comes from November of 1660 where a man from Rome named Lanio happened upon a dragon in the coastal marshes. He managed to slay the monster but died later from poison and another man retrieved the dragon's head. The story was apparently told to Kircher by Lord Jerome Lancta (fl.1660s), curate of Cardinal Barberini's (1597-1679) museum, and he tells the reader where the head can now be found.[85] He also tells the reader of another dragon that can be found in the Museum of Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605) which was allegedly caught in the Bononine Field by Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585) before his election to the Holy See in 1572.[86] For Kircher, it is not just the eyewitness accounts that matter (though he does tend to place emphasis on how credible his sources are), but also the alleged physical ephemera of these creatures and where to see them. It is not enough to describe encounters with these monsters, for Kircher their physical remains are important evidence as well.

Similar near-contemporary accounts come from Switzerland which Kircher relates originate from reliable sources like Renward Cysat (c.1545-1614), a Swiss apothecary and city councillor as well as the father of Kircher's fellow Jesuit Johann Baptist Cysat (c.1587-

[83] A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus, quo universae Denique naturae divitiae* Vol. 2 (Rome, 1665).
[84] Ibid., pp. 89-97.
[85] Ibid., p. 90.
[86] Ibid., p. 93.

1657), and a Swiss prefect and 'worthy gentleman' Christopher Schorer whom Kircher used to verify Cysat's accounts.[87] Schorer provides a first-hand eyewitness account of a dragon at Mount Pilate in 1619, as well as a second-hand account of a local hunter named Paul Schumperlin encountering a dragon in 1654, and the story of a dragon skeleton being found in 1602 in the same area – suggesting an abundance of dragons in the Alps.[88] Cysat's accounts likewise make it clear that Switzerland has a rich draconic legacy and covers historical examples of dragons in Switzerland such as that of the brothers Syntram and Beltram who slew a dragon near the city of Bernenine in 792, and the legend of the knight Winkelried who defeated a dragon in the 1240s but died after raising his blood-drenched sword in celebration of the kill and accidentally splattering himself with the beast's poisonous gore.[89]



The dragon stone of Lucerne (see appendix fig. 80).[90]

He also offers two stories that leave physical traces of encounters with dragons, which is no doubt why Kircher speaks at length on these Swiss examples. Cysat tells us of a stone

[87] Ibid., pp. 93-94.
[88] Ibid., pp. 93-94.
[89] Heinrich von Winkelried was a historical figure who lived in the late thirteenth century about which little is known. It was not until the early sixteenth century that he became associated with a dragon-slaying legend.
[90] Photograph found in R. Cysat, *Collectanea Chronica und Denkwürdige Sachen Pro Chronica Lucernensi et Helvetiae* Vol. 2, ed. J. Schmid (Luzern, 1969), between pp. 584-585.

formed from the hardened blood of a dragon that can be found in Lucerne and that allegedly has healing properties (see appendix fig. 80), as well as of a garment held at the Church of St Leodegard that recounts the story of a man who fell into a cave with some dragons and, unable to escape, lived with them for several months - subsisting on licking moisture from the rocks as the dragons did. The dragons did not kill him, and when they eventually flew out of the cave, he escaped by grabbing onto the tail of one of the creatures and allowed himself to be pulled through the air. He died shortly after the dragon set him down when he returned to civilisation and attempted to resume a normal diet, but had his story recorded in needlework for others to see.[91]

There is much more in Cysat's works that Kircher could have drawn from including discussions of dragons in Ethiopia and India, and a very lengthy section discussing dragon/serpent stones where he repeats the medicinal qualities of these objects found commonly in earlier medieval works.[92] Cysat's accounts, while folkloric to a modern reader, were a valuable source of credible dragon reporting for Kircher and other dragon defenders. He held positions of respect and authority as a city councillor of Lucerne and as author of a number of scholarly works. For Kircher in particular, Cysat's Catholic faith and Jesuit son doubtlessly also played a favourable role in his accounting. These were not merely unverified accounts; they were written by a trusted individual whose own belief in dragons was seemingly beyond reproach.

Outside of Swiss examples, one account Kircher also spends a lot of time on is a passage from Giacomo Bosius's (1544-1627) *History of the Cult of Saint John of Jerusalem* (1621) recounting a 1345 tale of the knight Deadato of Gozon (d.1353) who killed a dragon

[91] Ibid., pp. 560-584.
[92] Ibid., pp. 560-584.

on the Isle of Rhodes.[93] The knight, after careful observation of the dragon and its habits, built a fake dragon and trained his horse and dogs to fight it. He then offered his vows at the Church of St Stephen and went to battle the monster. Aided by his dogs, Deadato killed the dragon and despite nearly being crushed by the dead creature he was pulled from the scene alive by his servants, going on to become a local hero.[94] Kircher relates this story as evidence that dragons were not a modern phenomenon, but one that existed in the past as well, paying particular attention to the dragon's physical characteristics described in the story:

> 'it had a head shaped like that of a large horse, but it was wide like a cow's head. The head was scaled like a snake's, and was situated at the end of a long neck. It did have elongated ears like those of a mule's. Its horrific gaping mouth was fitted with massive teeth, it had oversized eyes, breath that burned like fire, and four feet with claws like those of a bear. Its tail and other hind parts were similar to those of a crocodile. The entire body was well-protected by an extremely tough hide of overlapping scales, it had two membranous wings, and its long sides were a colour similar to that of dolphin fins'.[95]

He also describes its colouration as being blue and golden, capable of swift movement in land and air, and emitting both a terrible hiss from its mouth and a rattling from its scales – a true assault on the senses.[96] While missing the beard or comb that Gessner ascribes them and being of more exotic colouring than the drabber palette that the Swiss scholar states dragons

[93] Dieudonne De Gozon was the 27th elected Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Saint John from 1346 to his death in 1353. His dragon-slaying legend has earned him the title of '*Extinctor Draconis'* though the origins of the tale are murky, and it seems that it was widely known until the sixteenth century. See: F.W. Hasluck, 'Diedonné de Gozon and the Dragon of Rhodes' in *Annual of the British School at Athens* 20 (1914), pp. 70-79; and V. Lozanova-Stantcheva, 'Towards the sources of the legend of the dragon of Rhodes' in *Études Balkaniques* LVIII (2022), pp. 29-47.
[94] A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665), pp. 91-93
[95] Ibid., p. 92. *'Draconis forma hæc erat: corpus magni equi aut bovis crasfitiem habebat, collum longum & asperum in serpentis caput desinebat, auribus aonstabat ad similitudinem muli sat prælongis: os horrendo rictu acutissimisque dentibus instruebatur, oculos prægrandes habebat, præfulgidos & veluti ignem spirantes, quaternis pedibus, acutissmis in morem ursi unguibus instructis incedebat, quoad caudam & reliqua membra crocodilo prorsus similis; totum corpus durissima squamarum intricatim dispositarum incrustatura armatum munibatur duabus alis cartilagineis, lateribus protensis instruebatur, colore brachiis delphini haud absimilibus'.*
[96] For more on the sensory experiences of the dragon see Chapter 1.0.

to generally be, this description does largely map onto the 'big lizard with wings' that is typical of the early modern conception of the beast and seems to be generally how Kircher imagines the winged variety of dragons himself.

After all of these examples, both contemporary and medieval, and with prompts to the reader to visit sites of physical draconic ephemera to see the truth for themselves, he devotes the last part of the chapter to the genesis of the dragon. He posits that the dragon is born from spontaneous generation within decaying matter – he imagines a pile of rotting dead animals, amongst them a quadruped, a rabbit, a flying beast, and snake whose respective residual sperm imparts traits like four legs, long ears, wings, and serpentine aspects respectively to the monster being birthed from their putrefaction.[97] Dragons of different sexes can reproduce sexually, but many allegedly are born from this foul process of fermenting corpse hybridisation. Like his academic predecessors, Kircher imagines the birth of these loathed creatures as a revolting and rare circumstance as befits their nature which is as vile as it is legendary.

De Draconibus pays great credence to its eyewitness accounts that broadly match the characteristics of the dragons we see described by Gessner, and exalts the works of classical authors, including Aelinus and Pliny. Kircher also considers dragons in a range of hagiographical sources like Laurentius Surius's (1523-1578) *Life of Saint Margaret* (1570-75) or Saint Jerome's (c.342/7-420 AD) *Life of Saint Hilarion* (c.392 AD) which he regards as highly authoritative.[98] Furthermore, Kircher notes that dragons can be found all over the world and mentions places like Ethiopia, Egypt, and India to demonstrate that they were far from a wholly European phenomenon.[99] As a result, Kircher's work comes across as overly

[97] A. Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665), pp. 95-97.
[98] Ibid., pp. 89-97.
[99] Ibid., p. 90.

defensive in nature, grasping at evidence that the author considers irrefutable and absolute. Often, he seems more intent on proving dragons exist than he does at simply describing their habits. *De Draconibus* can perhaps then be read as a rebuttal, to what exactly is alluded to in its opening paragraph:

> 'There is a great deal of debate among writers with regards dragons: do animals of this sort actually exist in nature, or as is often the case with many other things, can they only be found in fables and fairy tales? At last, however, it was necessary to set aside our doubts, which we did easily, in light of not only having read excerpts from a variety of established authors, but also having heard the accounts of trustworthy eyewitnesses'.[100]

He places great value on works of natural history by prior authors, likely Gessner in particular given his later reference to two types of dragons (one winged, the other not), and to eyewitness accounts that have been deemed trustworthy. However, Kircher makes clear in *Mundus Subterraneus* that his greatest authority is in fact the Bible, saying that:

> 'Since monstrous animals of this kind for the most part select their lairs and breeding places in subterraneous caverns, I have considered it proper to include them under the head of subterraneous beasts. I am aware that two kinds of this animal have been distinguished by authors, the one with, the other without wings. No one either can or ought to doubt concerning the latter kind of creature, unless perchance he dares to contradict the Holy Scripture, for it would be an impious thing to say it when Daniel makes mention of the divine worship accorded to the dragon Bel by the Babylonians, and after the mention of the dragon made in other parts of the sacred writing'.[101]

[100] Ibid., p. 89. *'Magna inter Authores de Draconibus alatis controversia est, utrum vere in natura rerum hujusmodi animalia extiterint; utrum, quemadmodum multa alia, fabulosis narrationobus adnumeranda sint; Nam & ego sane diu multumque utrum similia animalia extiterint unquam, anceps hæsi; donectandem ex varia Authorum omni exceptione majorum lectione, quin & oculatorum virorum testimonio ab hac dubitatione facile me removeri passussum'.*

[101] Ibid., p. 89. *'Quoniam vero hujusmodi monstrusa animalia in subterraneis antris utplurimum natales suos nidosque sortiuntur, ea tanquam nobile instituti nostri argumentum, subterraneis bellius jure merito adnumeranda duxi. Non nescio, duplex hujus animalis genus ab Authoribus recenseri, alatum unum, sine alis alterum. Se posterioris generis animantibus nemo dubitare aut potest, aut debet, nisi quis forsan Sacris Literis*

This belief in dragons based on their scriptural provenance is something we shall see again in this chapter and is a line of reasoning shared by many of the devout in this period. However, it is clear that something has changed between Gessner and Kircher's respective works of natural history. Where Gessner draws from a variety of sources to present a comprehensive image of the dragon, Kircher does so to instead fight for the creature's existence. In the mid-sixteenth century, the dragon's place in scholarly work of natural history was simply factual. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, it was argumentative.

contradicere audeat quod nefas esset dicere, ubi apud Danielem 14, aperte de Bel dracone a Babyloniis cultu divino prosecuto, mentio fit, variisquw aliisin Sacris Literis draconum mentio fit'.

Belief and scepticism – debating dragons

As already stated, it can be easy to focus upon the sceptics and ignore the fervent continuity of belief evidenced in individuals like Kircher. However, to understand what they were reacting to we must briefly turn to the arguments of the dragon deniers. The scepticism Kircher was responding to comes in several forms: some doubted eyewitness reports, others felt that the dragon was simply too fantastical to exist in the form people believed it did, and a few offered some alternative interpretations as to what people had been claiming to witness.[102] Explanations for what dragons 'really were' began to appear in this period, many of them being precursors to the theories we saw in the introduction to this thesis. Being several hundred years removed from the modern disciplines of anthropology and psychoanalysis, early modern scholars did not suggest explanations that were exactly like those of scholars we met in the introduction to this thesis like Jung, Sagan, Jones, or Arnold; but they do look to their environment as Blust does – finding in the natural world potential answers to explain away the monsters they were starting to believe to be unreal.[103] Dragons have long been linked with natural phenomena, and in the seventeenth century dragons stopped being natural phenomenon mistaken for monsters but rather the inverse.

[102] Kircher does not name any of these detractors or their specific grievances but arguments like those of Bochart, whom we shall discuss shortly, which claim that the flying dragon could not exist, would doubtlessly have been familiar with Kircher. Indeed, Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665) was published only two years after Bochart's *Hierozoicon* (1663) and goes some way to affirming the existence of the flying dragon.
[103] See: C.G. Jung, 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious', Translated from "Über die Archetypen des kollectiven Unbewussten," *Von der Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zurich: Rascher, 1954).' in Sir H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, and W. McGuire (eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 9, Part 1* (London, 1959), pp. 3-42; C. Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York, 1977); D.E. Jones, *An Instinct for Dragons* (London, 2002); M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018); and R. Blust, 'The Origins of Dragons' in *Anthropos* Bd. 95, H. 2. (2000), pp. 519-536.



De Bry's untitled illustration of European explorers encountering native Americans and their dragons (see appendix fig. 81).[104]

First though, it is worth noting that there is the possibility that some 'dragons' may have simply been exotic reptilian fauna unfamiliar to European commentators and some of the eyewitness accounts called into question by dragon sceptics were in fact genuine instances of people encountering large lizards. We see such an example of this in an engraving by Theodore de Bry (1528-1598) that depicts a scene of European explorers discovering native Americans roasting and eating dragons (see appendix fig. 81).[105] A throng of conquistadors observe several dragons tied to a small hut, and while it is unclear as to if the native Americans had domesticated the dragons or hunted them and brought them back alive, it is clear that these creatures were destined for the same fate as their compatriot who roasts on a fire in the background. It may be that the 'dragons' were, in fact, iguanas. The account from which de Bry takes his inspiration is that of Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) whose

[104] T. de Bry, 'Untitled' in J.L. Gottfriedt (ed.), *Newe Welt vnd americanische Historien* (Frankfurt, 1655), p.220.
[105] Ibid. This image, sometimes informally given the title 'Native American Indians roasting dragons', was first published in the de Bry firm's 1590-1634 work 'Grand Voyages' and would later be reproduced in a variety of formats, including the German translation and abridgement of 'Grand Voyages' cited here.

unfamiliarity with this species of lizard leads to a somewhat uncertain description that de Bry would interpret as being broadly in line with European expectations of draconic physiognomy – leading to the image he would create depicting native Americans roasting winged dragons.[106] Similarly, André Thevet (1516-1590) in his *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1557/8) writes of many creatures that inhabit Africa, amongst them lions, tigers, leopard, buffalos, hyenas, and dragons.[107] It may be possible that the dragons he mentioned in passing were crocodiles, Nile monitor lizards, giant plated lizards, African rock pythons, or any one of a number of large reptiles found in Africa which he mistook for a dragon. Alternatively, Thevet might have written them in because his readers, who may be versed in Pliny or at least familiar with the version of the African dragon he wrote, simply expected them to be amongst the fauna of the continent. While scholars did not at this point advance the theory of mundane undiscovered species being mistaken for fantastical dragons, it is worth noting that such incidences did likely happen in the period of this study and were only explored in later centuries.

As we have already seen in chapter 2.2, unusual natural phenomena were sometimes attributed to dragons. Indeed, the flights of dragons from folios 127 and 129 of the Augsburg *Wunderzeichenbuch* are potentially occurrences of meteor showers (see appendix fig. 43 and fig. 44), and the broadsheet *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543) which depicts two dragons made of fire spewing blazing spheres across the landscape may have been a rare instance of ball lightning (see appendix fig. 46).[108] If these incidences are not in fact entirely

[106] A. Vespucci, *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle isole nuovamente trovate in quattro suoi viaggi* (Florence, 1504).
[107] A. Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique* (Paris, 1557/8), p. 6v.
[108] *Book of Miracles*, fols. 127r, 129r, and Anon, *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543).

fabricated pieces of wonder literature, dragons here are a cypher for natural phenomenon that people could have witnessed but could not easily explain with their current understanding of the world.[109] This association between dragons and natural phenomena, which has been present since ancient times, would however lead to the beginning of their expulsion from the annals of natural history.

We see some early indication of complications in the relationship between the dragon and natural phenomenon in the corpus of works attributed to Albertus Magnus (c.1200-1280). Here we find several references to dragons that would inform early modern German-speaking natural historians such as in *De Mineralibus* where he discusses the hunting of serpents for stones in their heads (which he refers to as 'Draconites' and describes as able to dispel poisons and bestow victory on the holder) – an anecdote replicated as we have seen earlier in Gessner and Cysat's works.[110] Most notable however is an anecdote in Albertus Magnus's *De animalibus* where he states that some of his contemporaries were foolish enough to mistake meteors for dragons saying that '…the smoke that spreads like mist at both ends in the shape of wings, the unskilled think this is a flying animal breathing fire'.[111] Dragons and natural phenomena are clearly linked here, and we see an acknowledgement that one may be

[109] Elsewhere in Europe, dragons were even more closely aligned with unusual weather phenomenon such as the Hungarian Sárkány whose battles caused thunder and rain, or the Kulshedra of Albania who causes a multitude of natural disasters. In Bulgarian, Serbian, and North Macedonian folklore it is a demon known as an Ala who causes bad weather, and it is dragons who wield lightning against them in defence of fields and harvests.
[110] D. Wyckoff (ed. and trans.), *The Book of Minerals* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 86-87. The authorship of many of Albertus Magnus's works is hotly contested by historians, with an increasing number of them being attributed to pseudo-Albertus Magnus instead. For the purpose of this thesis, the true authorship if of little relevance as the early modern scholars who had access to these works believed them to all belong to Albertus Magnus himself. For more on the authorship of the Albertus Magnus corpus see: L.G. Kelly (trans. and ed.), *Pseudo Albertus Magnus 'Quaestiones Alberti de Modis significandi' A Critical Edition* (1977); P. Grund, 'Textual Alchemy: The Transformation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's *Semita Recta* in the *Mirror of Lights*' in *Ambix: The Journal for the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry* 56 (3) (2009), pp. 202-225; and H.R. Lemay, *Women's secrets: a translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's De secretis mulierum with Commentaries* (New York, 1992).
[111] A. Magnus, *On Animals. A Medieval Summa Zoologica* trans. K.F. Kitchell, I.M. Resnick (Baltimore, 1999), pp. 25-28

mistaken for the other. It does not take much more of a logical step to begin explaining all dragon sightings as being naturally occurring instances of meteors or similar phenomenon, and from there the dragon's existence only becomes increasingly more suspect. Indeed, a 1624 dissertation by a Caspare Pomerano (fl.1620s) on the subject of meteors states that the flying dragon is merely a type of meteor:

> 'The flying dragon is a meteor consisting of thick fire smoke lit by unevenly arranged materials… why merely natural work, its colour, shape, flying, sparkle, and also why it leans on the right and roof of a building, and why it hangs over the windows and suns, can be rendered as natural causes'.[112]

This rendering of the dragon as natural causes would be repeated throughout the century, though where the dragons of sixteenth century wonder literature were cyphers for unexplained natural events, the scholars of the seventeenth century would instead begin to suggest the reverse. In another dissertation regarding meteors, this time written in 1653 by one Jakob Mylius (fl. 1650s), the flying dragon is similarly reduced to natural meteoric phenomenon in language not unlike that of Pomerano:

> 'The flying dragon is a fiery meteor of the lowest air, made of thick and finer smoke at the same time, so that twisted and wandering, it seems to represent the figure of a flying dragon'.[113]

Mylius goes into great detail regarding the physics of the fire of these meteors as he understands them, and we begin to see that within some educated circles the dragon is being

[112] C. Pomeranus, *Exercitationum Physicarum Nona, de Meteoris Aeterno Naturae* (Frankfurt, 1624), p. 6. *'XV. DRACO VOLANS est Meteorum Igneum fumi crassioris, conflans materia accensa, inæqualiter compacta, draconis volantis imaginew rapræsentans. XVI. Naturæ huic opeti non raro se admiscet Cacodæmon, Draco ille antiquus, cui id nominis Apoc 12&13. ttribuitut; quia princeps penes quempotestas aeris. Eph 2.v.2. Cæterum Draconis volantis, quatenus mere naturale opus, ejus coloris, figuræ, volatus, scentillationis, item cur incubet quasi tectis & culminibus xdium, cur fenestris & funibulis quasi immineat, causæ reddi naturales possunt'.*

[113] J. Mylius, *Diatribe physica de dracone volante et igne fatuo* (Leipzig, 1653), p. 2.*'Draco volas est meteoron ignitum infimi aeris, ex fumo crassiori simul & subtiliori sie intorto & oberrante, ut Draconis volantis figuram videatur repræsentare.'*

conveniently explained away. They are not zealous in denying the dragon's reality; their tone more matter of fact than the vehemence of Kircher's rebuttals, but their explanations of what dragon sightings actually are do go some way in eroding the credibility of all instances of dragons. While this erasure of the dragon in natural history to be replaced with the physics of atmospheric phenomena is not directly refuted by the dragon's defenders, their insistence on other forms of the creature's existence would imply that there could be a place in this world for both meteors and dragons.

More aggressive in tone than Pomerano or Mylius, Johann Georg Schmidt (1660-1722), a pharmacist and natural scientist, railed against dragons in his work *Die gestriegelte Rocken-Philosophie, oder auffrichtige Untersuchung derer von vielen super-klugen Weibern hochgehaltenen Aberglauben* (Volume 1 was published in 1705, and Volume 2 was published in 1722) where he attacks superstitions of all kinds, especially those he describes as being exchanged by women while communally spinning yarn.[114] In the seventy-second chapter of this book he addresses the superstition that whoever brings the first harvest in must place some of the first sheaves in each corner of the barn so that they cannot be stolen by dragons.[115] The goods-stealing dragons here are reminiscent of those we saw aiding witches earlier, but Schmidt demands a more specific definition, asking:

> 'so I would like to know what one actually understands through the dragon? Because this name can be understood from three different ways. First the Devil in and of himself; on the other hand, the fiery dragon that is so called, travelling through the air,

[114] J.G. Schmidt, *Die gestriegelte Rocken-Philosophia, oder auffrichtige Untersuchung derer von vielen super-klugen Weibern hochgehaltenen Aberglauben* Vol. 1 (Chemnitz, 1705); and J.G. Schmidt, *Die gestriegelte Rocken-Philosophia, oder auffrichtige Untersuchung derer von vielen super-klugen Weibern hochgehaltenen Aberglauben* Vol. 2 (Chemnitz, 1718).
[115] J.G. Schmidt, *Die gestriegelte Rocken-Philosophia* Vol. 1 (1705), pp. 460-463.

> and thirdly, a natural dragon, a cruel, large, poisonous worm or snake, such as the knight St George is said to have slain'.[116]

He identifies three kinds of dragon: the Devil himself, meteorites or other naturally occurring fires in the sky, and large poisonous worms or snakes that he associates with the creature killed by St George. None of these are satisfactory for Schmidt as he says that Satan cannot even pick up a straw without God's allowance never mind carry away entire sheaves of wheat, natural fires in the sky that people call dragons cannot steal goods as they are merely sulphurous vapours (and if they tried they would just burn down the whole barn), and the big evil snakes the like of which are fought by godly saints are simply not native to Europe. While he does not discount the existence of dragons entirely, beyond such a form being a guise of the Devil, he relegates them either to simply being aerial phenomenon as suggested by writers before him, or to being regular snake-related animals that exist in distant lands. Schmidt certainly falls in the camp of the dragon sceptic for whom the creature is explained away by natural phenomena or is too distant or mundane to warrant serious concern.

Notable about Schmidt's derision of this folklore is that we can see how belief in dragons was still held by groups of people of significant size at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but whose voices are not always represented in history. While it may be the sceptical Schmidt whose voice we hear most clearly in this work, that of the masses of women he so disparages for holding this belief regarding dragons and the harvest are also alluded to. In fact, these women spinning yarn likely function as a rhetorical device for an even larger and less specific group of people who still hold these beliefs. These are people who, due to Schmidt even writing about them, evidently did in fact still tell tales about and

[116] Ibid., p. 461. *'so möchte ich doch wissen, was man denn eigentlich durch den Drachen verstehe? Denn es kan dieser Name aus drenerlen Art verstanden werden. Erstlich der Teufel an und vor sich selbst; zum andern der in der luft fahrende feurige also gennante Drache, und drittens ein natürlicher Drache, welcher ein grausamer grosser giftiger Wurm oder Schlange, dergleichen der Ritter St. George soll erlegt haben'.*

believe in the reality of dragons, even if a group of educated intellectuals like Schmidt doubt their existence.

A different challenge comes from French biblical scholar Samuel Bochart (1599-1667) who includes dragons in his *Hierozoicon* (1663), a study of all the animals mentioned in the Bible, where he calls into question some of the dragon's alleged biological capabilities. Bochart dismissed the ability of dragons to fly, citing both the fact that their wings would not be capable of carrying their enormous bodies, and the biblical 'serpents curse' where God cursed the serpent of Eden to forever crawl upon their belly in the dust (Genesis 3:14).[117] For Bochart, the dragon as it was popularly conceived in European culture could not exist – it was both a biological and a scriptural impossibility. Instead, he believes the naturally occurring dragon must be incapable of flight and that accounts which state otherwise must be inaccurate.[118] Bochart's work was printed in many editions across Europe over the course of the seventeenth century and represents a different kind of threat. Instead of replacing dragons with natural phenomenon he began to peel away their more fantastical qualities – reasoning them slowly out of existence. By invoking the 'serpents curse' he used one of the greatest tools of the dragon's defenders against them – the Bible. This would not stop people from using scriptural authority to defend the dragon, and as we shall see his charges against the dragon were answered directly with another kind of reasoning, but making the very idea of the dragon seem an impossibility was a dangerous chink in their armour.

People were, however, reluctant to give up their dragons and the voices of a few sceptics at the beginning of the seventeenth century did not lead to a wave of unbelief. In fact,

[117] S. Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive bipartitum opus de animalibus sacrae scripturæ* Vol. 2 (London, 1663), pp. 428-440.
[118] For more on Bochart's beliefs surrounding serpents and dragons see: J. Fraikin, 'Serpents et dragons dans le bestiaire sacré de Samuel Bochart ou le folklore dans la Bible' in *Cahiers Internationaux de Symbolisme* 86-87-88 (1997), pp. 97-128.

at the turn of the century we can find people who not only wholeheartedly believed in the creatures, having been given no reason to doubt what to most was simply an established fact of the world, but who actively sought to collect one for themselves. In the inventory of the Habsburg *Wunderkammer* that was assembled by Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612) and inventoried between 1607 and 1611 by Daniel Fröschl (1563-1613), we see listed a variety of unusual objects and specimens such as a liturgical cup made of rhino horn, a coconut shell, and a bezoar that was believed to safeguard against poison.[119] Amongst these artefacts are a series of paintings of things that the emperor was unable to acquire, including a unicorn and a dragon.[120] The picture of a dragon appears to be both a tacit acknowledgement of the creature's definite, if wondrous, existence, as well as being somewhat aspirational – an image of one making do until a suitable draconic artefact could take its place. Though the emperor did not necessarily have physical evidence of the dragon at hand, the addition of the painting of the dragon to his collection is certainly indicative of the fact that people at the very top of the social ladder still believed that these monsters were out there. Dragons were considered rare and miraculous enough to find a place reserved for them in an Imperial *Wunderkammer*, but that did not make them any less real in the minds of many.

It was however because of the miraculous nature of the creature that the sceptics often cast doubt upon eyewitness testimony, whilst the believers upheld the vast quantity of eyewitness reports concerning dragons and the authority of textual sources that ranged from classical writers to the Bible itself. As we have seen already, Kircher falls into such a camp,

[119] For more on this unusual item, see; S. Ivanič, 'Religious Materiality in the *Kunstkammer* of Rudolf II' in S. Ivanič, M. Laven, and A. Morrall (eds.), *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* (Amsterdam, 2019), pp. 177-192; and for Rudolf's other poison-evading cups in his *Wunderkammer* see: M.P. Stark, 'Mounted Bezoar Stones, Seychelles Nuts, and Rhinoceros Horns: Decorative Objects as Antidotes in Early Modern Europe' in *Studies in the Decorative Arts* FALL-WINTER 2003-2004, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2003-2004), pp. 69-94.
[120] For the full inventory see: R. Baur, and H. Haupt, 'Das Kunstkammerinventar Kaiser Rudolfs II, 1607-1611' in *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 72 (1976).

and we can see his logic repeated in the work of other contemporary scholars like George Kaspar Kirchmaier (1635-1700), a professor at Wittenberg who wrote on a variety of topics such as alchemy, philology, and natural history.[121] In his *Disputationes zoologicae de basilisco, unicornu, phoenice, behemoth et leviathan, dracone, et aranea: ad illusrandum varia scripturae sacrae loca* (1661) he discusses several animals that had recently had the shadow of doubt cast upon them by scholars and, desiring to explore the 'truth', he draws upon a series of both classical and contemporary sources to make his case. [122] He is not so trusting of classical sources as Gessner, doubting Pliny's claim that dragons are not poisonous due to dragons being serpents, which as far as Kirchmaier seems concerned universally were, but he does put great stock in contemporary eyewitness testimony, the sheer weight of evidence (particularly the scriptural kind), and his own logic founded upon his understanding of the natural world.[123]

Indeed, he disregards the phoenix entirely as he lacks any recent evidence of it, it does not appear in the Bible (beyond some translations of the Book of Job), and he thinks a fiery bird capable of returning to life is a natural impossibility.[124] Meanwhile, the unicorn is accepted because: 'who cares any longer to be of such simplicity or obstinacy as not to hesitate to oppose his own view to so many proofs, both divine and human, for the existence of the unicorn?'.[125] With regards the dragon, Kirchmaier seems to accept this monster as fact

[121] He even speculated in a 1685 book *De Atlantide, ad Timaeum atque Critiam Platonis* (co-authored with Johann Christian Bock) that Atlantis was in Southern Africa. Modern scholars agree that Atlantis is wholly allegorical, an invention by Plato to simply serve as an antagonist to his similarly imagined ideal state of 'ancient Athens' in his work *The Republic*.
[122] G. K. Kirchmaier, *Disputationes zoologicae de basilisco, unicornu, phoenice, behemoth et leviathan, dracone, et aranea: ad illusrandum varia scripturae sacrae loca* (Wittemberg, 1661). The translations of this text come from E. Goldsmid*, Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* (Edinburgh, 1886).
[123] 'Pliny has denied (though wrongly) all poisonous qualities to the Dragon, saying, "The Dragon has no poison." But seeing that it is a Serpent, and that experience gives evidence of a contrary nature, we can put no trust in Pliny on this point, for the dragon does poison the air.' E. Goldsmid*, Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1886), p.29.
[124] E. Goldsmid*, Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 25-47.
[125] E. Goldsmid*, Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 13-4.

for he does not regard it as a natural impossibility, even disregarding Pliny as we have seen due to his belief that the dragon must be poisonous because of its serpentine nature, and he finds recent eyewitness testimony for it in a dragon sighting near Rome stating that: 'we have here ocular proof: we should surely admit other proof after this'.[126] The scriptural precedence of the dragon, as we have discussed in previous chapters, is also a merit in its favour for Kirchmaier who explains the antagonism between man and dragon as 'deep-seated in our mind, there remains the remembrance of the great deception that old and wicked Dragon the Devil wrought in our first parents'.[127] Working at the University of Wittenberg, the intellectual home of Martin Luther, it is unsurprising that Kirchmaier should prize scriptural provenance as a part of his understanding of natural philosophy.[128] However, scripture does not go wholly unquestioned, in the instances of the behemoth and the leviathan Kirchmaier does not treat them as unique entities and instead equates them with elephants and whales respectively.[129]

A later text by Kirchmaier, *De Draconibus Volantibus*, which was written with Johann Daniel Major (1634-1693) in 1675, also discusses of the flying dragon and unsurprisingly continues to defend the creature's existence.[130] This piece touches upon several topics, and much of the portion concerning the existence of dragons is written in response to scholarly denials of the existence of 'bird-like dragons' in nature (i.e., flying dragons). They summarise

[126] E. Goldsmid, *Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1886), p. 33.
[127] Ibid., p. 23. It is interesting to note that this manner of 'ancestral memory' is also promulgated by more recent scholars like Sagan and Jones. Though where Kirchmaier blames Satan as the source of these memories in his form of the serpent of Eden, modern writers instead believe the memories originate from ancient predators like the dinosaurs. See: C. Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York, 1977); and D.E. Jones, *An Instinct for Dragons* (London, 2002).
[128] For more on the 'rationalisation' of mythological creatures in European universities see: B. Roling, *Drachen und Sirenen: Die Rationalisierung und Abwicklung der Mythologie an den Europäischen Universitäten* (Leiden, 2010).
[129] E. Goldsmid, *Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 120-141; and E. Goldsmid, *Un-natural History, or Myths of Ancient Science* Vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 146-155.
[130] G. K. Kirchmaier, and J. D. Major, *De Draconibus Volantibus, Ac interpersis ex Natura curiosis aliis, Epistolica dissertation* (Wittenberg, 1675).

the arguments of the sceptics as being that there is no place in the world dragons seem to appear abundant, and that a recent Roman report (presumably the 1660 report of Lanio in the coastal Roman marshes) of an instance of dragon-slaying is suspect.[131] Extensive examples from both Kircher and Gessner are given by Kirchmaier and Daniel to refute these allegations, and familiar names like Cardanus, Pliny, and Aelinus can be found in their rebuttal. Indeed, lengthy sections from both *China Illustrata* and *Mundus Subterraneus* are referenced - a testament to Kircher's popularity, particularly amongst those who argue in favour of the dragon in these waning decades of the seventeenth century. *De Draconibus Volantibus* makes it clear that other authors have listed places such as India and Egypt as being abundant with dragons and argues in favour of eyewitness testimony by effectively stating that there are countless examples from both antiquity and contemporary sources, and so they cannot all be wrong. Kirchmaier and Major do not resort to the Bible as evidence in this piece, their focus instead seems to be a presentation of a vast number of sources to repute these biological and zoological attacks on the dragon's existence.

Daniel Norlindh (1662-1728), who would later become a bishop in the Church of Sweden, wrote a dissertation regarding dragons in 1683 after a trip to Germany, England, and the Dutch Republic, that shows that not only were these debates international, but also that scholars close to the end of the seventeenth century were still seriously considering the dragon as a real animal, though their tone continued to be argumentative as they drew upon the same kinds of sources as the other draconic defenders.[132] Indeed, Norlindh repeats several of the historical examples that we have already seen used by Kircher like that of Deadato of Gozon and of the 1660 instance of Lanio slaying a dragon in the Roman marshes, and, like Kircher

[131] Ibid., p. 12.
[132] D. Norlindh, *Dissertatio de draconibus* (Uppsala, 1683).

and Kirchmaier before him, Norlindh also cites the Bible as evidence for the existence of dragons, mentioning Deuteronomy 32:33, and making indirect reference to Daniel 14:23-30.[133]

Norlindh writes principally in defence of the dragon against attacks carried out by Samuel Bochart, whom we discussed earlier. Norlindh counters Bochart's arguments that dragons did not possess large enough wings to fly and had been divinely cursed to crawl in the dirt by claiming that dragons are still cursed to drag themselves along the ground like serpents, but that if they reach a high place they can jump off and their wings allow them some ability to glide:

> 'though they are supposed to crawl on the belly, so long as they are in very low places, they cannot elevate themselves; but while they seek precipitous cliffs, whence they can rise so high that the wings can catch the winds, they can easily ride to other places. Thus, we think that the things which are brought to the contrary by Bochartus have been overthrown'.[134]

Supremely confident in this piece of deductive reasoning, Norlindh goes on to use the existence of dragon-like animals as evidence that dragons must exist, asking why 'is it that we so vigorously deny the existence of dragons, since there are also other animals of the same, if not more terrible species?'.[135] While he does not elaborate on this point, unlike his rebuttal to Bochart, he is likely referencing creatures like the basilisk which he later mentions as being a

[133] Ibid., pp. 15-17.
[134] Ibid., p. 13. *'modo teneatur divisio Draconum in alatos & sine alis. De his non est dubium quineandem adhue pati cogantur maledictionem; de istis vero, qui non ita presse sub nomine serpentis veniunt aliter est sentiendum quam, quam definiantur titulo serpentis. Posterius quod attinet, nec illud omni modo verum. Anser glaciei imposita nive nondum opertae, nullatenus sese juvare potest, cum ubi pedem figat non habeat, demissa vero de loco superiori etsi pedicus careret, in loca tamen remotiora volare posset. Eadem Draconum est ratio, etsi ponantur in ventrem serpere, quamdiu quidem in depressioribus versantur locis, sese elevare nequent, dum vero praeruptes petunt rupes unde praecipites dare se possunt ut ventos alae concipiant, facili negotio in alia vehi possunt loca. Ita quae a Bocharto in contrariam partem adferuntur profligata arbitramur'.*
[135] Ibid., p. 18.

real creature who, in Norlindh's eyes at the very least, had not yet come under the same scrutiny as the dragon had.

Despite advocating so strongly for the dragon's existence, Norlindh was generally sceptical about many theories concerning the actual origins of dragons, including Kircher's theory in *Mundus Subterraneus* which he is unconvinced by despite obviously drawing heavily from that work in other regards. Traditional legends of Basilisk generation and reproduction is taken to be credible by Norlindh however, and he theorises that a dragon might be born from a similar process – basilisks and dragons being closely related species – but falls short of claiming ultimate knowledge on the topic.[136]

Norlindh's dissertation reveals much about the defence of the dragon at the end of the seventeenth century. It shows that this debate has lasted decades and crosses European borders – the Swedish Norlindh leans heavily on Kircher, a German scholar working in Rome, and is mostly refuting the arguments of the Frenchman Bochart. It also shows that in the minds of many, even in the 1680s, the matter had not yet been entirely settled, especially as it would seem amongst those with strong religious leanings - Kircher was a Jesuit, Kirchmaier and Major both taught at Wittenberg, and Norlindh would become a bishop. For all of them the Bible remained a supreme authority. It is also worth noting that confessional lines had seemingly nothing to do with dragon belief or unbelief. Samuel Bochart was a Protestant who raised questions about the dragon, yet it was also the Protestant Kirchmaier who taught at Luther's own Wittenberg, and Nordlindh would eventually become a bishop in the Church of Sweden who acted as some of the dragon's fiercest defenders alongside the devout Jesuit Kircher whom they both cited.

[136] Ibid., p. 29-33.

The dissertations and academic works we have spent much of this chapter discussing would not necessarily be widely read and were written for a scholarly audience. However, they were generally reflective of wider pro-dragon beliefs in the German-speaking lands. We can see this in popular publications such as *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* printed between 1681 and 1691.[137] While still largely written for a literate, educated audience, *Relationes Curiosae* reached a wider readership than the university dissertations by virtue of being circulated as a supplement to the Hamburg newspaper, *Relations-Courier,* that was sold by the printer Thomas von Wiering (fl. 1680s). Wiering intended *Relationes Curiosae* to cover all manner of topics including history, mathematics, all areas of natural philosophy, unusual occurrences, and the cultures of far-off lands – satiating his readers' appetites for knowledge, whatever form that may be. To compile and edit this periodical, Wiering procured the services of polymath, author, and novelist Eberhard Werner Happel (1647-1690) who worked on the *Relationes Curiosae* for its entire run. The periodical was very successful, running continuously for ten years and producing multiple editions in many different languages.[138] For example, it was translated into Swedish and sold as a supplement to the official Swedish newspaper *Swenska Mercurius*, both printed by Nils Wankijf (d. 1689), for forty-eight issues which included all of the original illustrations from the German editions.[139] *Relationes Curiosae* explored many different subjects over its

[137] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* (Hamburg, 1681-1691).
[138] M. Dos Santos Lopes, 'Writing New Worlds: Eberhard Werner Happel and the Invention of a Genre' in A. Nünning, and K. M. Sicks (eds.), *Turning Points: Concepts and Narratives of Change in Literature and Other Media* (Berlin, 2012), pp. 351-360; and U. Egenhoff, *Berufsschriftstellertum und Journalismus in der Frühen Neuzeit. Eberhard Werner Happels 'Relationes Curiosae' im Medianverbund des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Bremen, 2008).
[139] A. Engholm, 'A Magazine of the Fantastic from 1682' in *Foundation 72,* Vol. 0, Spring (Reading, 1998), pp. 88-93. Engholm provides the additional information that the Swedish editions came out on Tuesdays, each issue being around 8 pages in length, and the pages themselves being approximately 15 x 8.5 centimetres. Each issue cost 2 öre silver coins during their original print run, and it was revived several times (six issues in 1700, nineteen issues in 1701, and thirty-eight issues in 1723).

decade-long publication; some items were deeply factual, while others bordered on what a few of Happel's contemporaries would consider the impossibly fantastical, yet they were all considered valid parts of the seventeenth-century world and, unsurprisingly, that meant wonderous serpents and dragons occasionally slithered their way into its pages.

In the five bound collections of the *Relationes Curiosae* published between 1683 and 1691, we see curious tales concerning serpents and dragons appear a total of twenty-six times over the periodical's ten-year print run. The greatest concentration of these can be found in Volume 1 collecting the periodical's articles up to 1683 which contains five articles on serpents, three on dragons, and a further three concerning basilisks (including two illustrations of the latter monster).[140] Volume 2, which was published in 1685, contains six articles on serpents, and features none that directly deal with dragons.[141] This would then be precipitated by a lull in articles on serpents with only one article being present within Volume 3 published in 1687, though we do find two new articles on dragons here.[142] Volume 4, published 1689, would be the last to reference either creature, contained within six articles on serpents (one of which, '*Der Schlangen Tanz'* was accompanied by an illustration of the same name), and none on dragons - though there is an illustration of '*Der wohlgebildete Berg'* that does

[140] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1683). Serpents: 'Die faugende Schlange', pp.76-77; 'Die unerhörte Schlangen-Cur', pp.84-85; 'Der Indianische Schalangen-Fresser', pp.379-381; 'Der Malabarische Schlangen-Meister', pp. 429-430; and 'Die gutherzige Schlange', p. 639. Dragons: 'Die greuliche Drachen-Geschichte', pp.39-43; 'Der ganzer 6 Monathen ben zween ungeheuren Drachen in einer abscheulichen höhle wohnende Schweißer', pp.163-167; and 'Die erschröctliche Drachen Höhle', pp.217-219. Basilisks: 'Die warhaffte Basilisk', pp.228-229; 'Der Hahn oder Drachen-Basilisk', pp. 229-230; and 'Die Bruth eines solchen Basilisken', p. 230.
[141] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 2 (Hamburg, 1685). Serpents: 'Der Indianische Schlangenstein', pp. 79-80; 'Die Gifftigkeit der Schlangen', pp. 223-224, 'Das Schlangen-Gerücht', pp. 229-230; 'Die versteinerte Schlange', pp. 583-584; 'Des Burrhi Urtheil über diese Schlange', p. 584; and 'Anderer Leute Urtheil vom Hananischen Schlangen-Stein', p. 585.
[142] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1687). Serpents: 'Die durch Beschwerung berstende Schlange', p. 691. Dragons: 'Das kämpfende Drachen-Gespenst', pp. 527a-528a; and 'Der überwundene Drache', pp. 527b-528b.

include one.[143] Published in 1691, Volume 5 does not contain any articles that directly concern serpents or dragons. This may be due to waning interest in these kinds of wonderous stories, or perhaps simply the editorial whims of Happel and Wiering. Indeed, Volume 5 has a very strong focus on historical and recent events compared to previous volumes that could be a result of a changing focus for the periodical in its final years. This manner of article had always been a part of *Relationes Curiosae*, for example Volume 3 includes articles on quite a few recent political events that Happel seems to have found interesting such as the rise and fall of the Cromwellian Protectorate in England (1653-1659), as well as the lynching and cannibalism of Dutch statesman Johan de Witt and his brother Cornelis in 1672 complete with grisly illustration.[144] Volume 5 continues this trend but in much greater number and in particular contains vast quantities of material relating the events of the Crusades.[145] Such a surfeit of crusading content, whether shaped by editorial whims or contemporary readership trends, left little room for much of the scientific, mathematical, or travel writing so common in previous volumes and, as such, is not necessarily a slight against serpents and dragons in particular.

Amongst the articles that do concern dragons, we can find familiar tales such as that of the man who spent several months trapped in a cave with them that we saw in Cysat and Kircher, and the slaying of the dragon of Rhodes by the knight Deadato of Gozon which we also saw related to us by Kircher.[146] Whether taken from Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* or

[143] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 4 (Hamburg, 1689). Serpents: 'Die Malthesische Schlangen Augen und zugen', pp. 323-324; 'Die kühlende Schlange', pp. 550-551; 'Der Schlangen Tanz', p. 551; 'Die schländliche Schlangen Bermischung', pp. 555-556; 'Der heilsahme Schlangen Stein', pp. 556-557; and 'Die Indianische Schlange', pp. 728-729. Dragons are mentioned only briefly in one article: 'Der wohlgebildete Berg', p. 647; and can be found in the accompanying illustration inserted between p.646 and p.647.
[144] Vol. 3, pp. 332-341, pp. 353-358.
[145] *Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 5
[146] *Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 1, pp. 163-167, pp. 39-43.

some other record, it would seem that these accounts were circulating widely in the late seventeenth century and attracting interest as unusual tales of dragons. Notably, these two stories explicitly place dragons in both history and geography – giving definite times and places dragons have been active and situating them firmly within reality. Unlike Kircher however, Happel's tone is not defensive and more closely resembles that of natural historians like Gessner. Indeed, Happel does not recount any revolutionary new information on this family of serpentine creatures. For example, the discussion on Basilisks over the course of three articles in Volume 1 broadly aligns with what we have seen previously in medieval and early modern works.[147]



'Der Schlangen Tanz' from Vol. 4 of Happel's *Relationes Curiosae* (see appendix fig. 82).[148]

Note that most of the snakes in this illustration are possessed of some kind of ruff about their necks, likely the artist's approximation of a cobra's hood based on the description they were given of a type of serpent they had never seen before.

[147] Ibid., pp.228-229, pp. 229-230, p. 230.
[148] E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 4 (Hamburg, 1689), between pp. 550-551.

He does, however, manage to include several articles over the years in *Relationes Curiosae* which explore rich serpentine traditions in locations that were far away from his European readers – delving into more detail than earlier authors as increasing reports from European explorers and travellers made their way back home. In particular, Happel seems to have had a preference for serpentine tales that came from India – writing several articles directly dealing with India that cover everything from snake-eating to dancing with snakes.[149] In the latter article he provides an image of an almost entirely nude Indian man dancing with a whole nest of snakes to the tune of a similarly almost-nude band – enhancing his fanciful relations of the distant sub-continent with orientalist panache (see appendix fig. 82). These exciting tales of unusual animals in exotic locations, embellished with images like this one, fit more within the realms of travel writing than natural history – but they reinforced beliefs in the fantastical when descriptions of the snakes of India that were typical of the travel writing genre at the time were presented in the same publication as the locations of terrifying dragon's lairs.[150] Both were presented as equally real and worthy of interest.

Happel's *Relationes Curiosae* falls somewhere between wonder literature, travel writing, and an encyclopaedia that lends it a unique nature as being broadly representative of the world in which the people of the German-speaking lands in the late seventeenth century believed they were a part of. While wonderous and worth some curiosity, the dragon is presented as no more unusual than the pyramids of Egypt, astronomical calculations, or the anatomy of insects. Though Happel also included Mermen and weather wizards, these were all part of the late seventeenth-century worldview, and though there were individuals who

[149] Vol. 1, 'Der Indianische Schalangen-Fresser', pp.379-381; and 'Der Malabarische Schlangen-Meister', pp. 429-430. Vol. 2, 'Der Indianische Schlangenstein', pp. 79-80. Vol. 4, 'Der Schlangen Tanz', p. 551; and 'Die Indianische Schlange', pp. 728-729.
[150] Vol.4, 'Die Indianische Schlange', pp. 728-729. Vol. 1, 'Die erschröctliche Drachen Höhle', pp.217-219.

championed ideas that would later become associated with the Enlightenment and began calling the dragon into question, they do not appear to have represented the majority. Dragons endured in the natural history of the world as many people understood it, and while they were never ‘mundane’ animals, their sightings being wonderous and terrifying events of note, they were no less real because of it.

Conclusion – 'we have here ocular proof: we should surely admit other proof after this'

Dragons are highly emotive creatures, arousing hatred, spreading fear, and inciting wonder. Where in previous chapters we have seen authors and artists use the image of serpentine monsters to build negative associations, here we have found those who have been motivated to write out of passions inflamed by any who would deny the dragon. The reserved natural histories like those of Gessner which built upon their medieval forebears gave way to the fervour of men like Kircher who took offence at the very idea that their belief in dragons was misplaced. Resorting to every eyewitness account they could muster, scriptural provenance, and their deductive reasoning, the dragon's defenders devoted long and sometimes rambling tracts to affirm their understanding of a reality inhabited by dragons. Though they had no real answer to the assertion that dragons could in fact be meteorites, they fought ferociously against notions of the dragon's biological impossibility, its apparent lack of abundance in the world, the question of the accuracy of eyewitness reports, and the alleged parameters of the 'serpent's curse'.

Though the nature of the beast was contested, dragons survived and even thrived in the discourses of natural history and the imaginations of people in the seventeenth century. The narrative of dragons suddenly becoming unreal in the face of Cartesian rationalism, and the so-called 'scientific revolution' does not hold up; people of early modern Europe were not willing to easily give up their monsters and belief persisted in publications like *Relationes Curiosae* despite some scholars insisting the dragon could not exist in the way many believed it did. Europe did not give up on the dragon as a part of natural history overnight and even into the eighteenth century some continued to believe.

As we saw in chapter 1.0, there were several natural philosophers and scholars in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who excavated the bones of cave bears which they believed to be dragons. Johannes Paterson Hain (fl.1670) in his *De draconum Carpathicorum cavernis* (1672) provided sketches of bones he found in the Carpathian Mountains, Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1730) described similar specimens in his 1726 work on the natural history of the Danube, and Franz Ernst Brückmann (1697-1753) examined them as genuine pieces of dragon ephemera in his *Antra draconum Liptovensis* (1739).[151] All three of these authors took the remains to be genuine dragon bones, for in their world view there was little else they could be – huge skeletons in the traditional lairs of folkloric creatures pointed only to the serpentine monsters that had been so deeply ingrained in their cultural imagination.



The 'Hamburg Hydra' as illustrated in Albert Seba's *Thesaurus* (1734) (see appendix fig. 83).[152]

[151] J.P. Hain, *De draconum Carpathicorum cavernis* (1672); L.F. Marsigli, *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus, observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in VI tomos, digestus, cum tabulis aeri incises* (1726); and F.E. Brückmann, *Antra draconum Liptovensis* (1739).
[152] A. Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurate description – Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke cabinet der voornaamste seldzaamhenden der naturr* (Amsterdam, 1734), between pp. 158-159.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) in his *Systema Naturae* (1735) cast his doubts upon the dragon and placed them in the category '*Paradoxa*' alongside other fantastical creatures that he did not quite know what to do with, but his inclusion of dragons in his seminal work rather than outright dismissal is telling of a continued belief in dragons in some parts of the European population – so entrenched were they in the cultural imagination that it would have been deemed unusual for him not to mention them at all.[153] Indeed, a draconic specimen that Linnaeus decried as a forgery made of snakeskin and bits of weasel in *Systema Naturae* had in the previous year been mentioned in a work of natural history in which the zoologist Albert Seba (1665-1736), despite having never seen the so-called 'Hamburg Hydra', described it as genuine and included a sketch of the seven-headed monster in his work (see appendix fig. 83).[154] Linnaeus would eventually remove the dragon in the 1748 edition of his *Systema Naturae* but his initial reticence to do so, and Seba's acceptance of such creatures shows that even scholarly circles in the eighteenth century were struggling with letting go of their belief in dragons.[155]

In the long term however, the eighteenth century would offer a different kind of death for the dragon. The rediscovery of the *Nibelungenlied* in 1755 did not see a re-emergence of belief in real dragons, instead these monsters moved from reality into the realm of legend and fairy tale – co-opted by proto-romantics and nationalists as symbols of allegory, though unlike the Protestant Reformers these new users and abusers of the dragon did not believe in the

[153] C. Linnaeus, *Systema naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per classes, ordines genera, & species* (Leiden, 1735), p. 11.
[154] C. Linnaeus, *Systema naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per classes, ordines genera, & species* (Leiden, 1735), p. 11; A. Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurate description – Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke cabinet der voornaamste seldzaamhenden der naturr* (Amsterdam, 1734), between pp. 158-159. This case is particularly notable for the fact that Seba was an inspiration for Linnaeus and the two men met twice – Seba's curiosity cabinet potentially inspiring Linnaeus's 'Paradoxa' category. Their differing opinions on the 'Hamburg Hydra' a notable break in their ideologies.
[155] C. Linnaeus, *Systema naturæ sistens regna tria naturæ, in classes et ordine, genera et species redacta tabulisque æneis illustrate. Editio sexta, emendate et aucta* (Stockholm, 1748).

actuality of their subjects.[156] Denis Diderot (1713-1784) even remarked that 'There are already in books all too many fabulous stories of dragons', believing the dragon to be over-accounted for in European literature in the eighteenth century, but not accepting their status as a real entity, only a product of fiction.[157] The dragon became a shadow of its former self in the German cultural consciousness, and renowned authors like Kircher would see a drop in their popularity for holding onto ideas and beliefs that scholars flourishing in the eighteenth century sought to distance themselves from. René Descartes (1596-1650) described Kircher as 'more charlatan than scholar' and the Cartesian rationalists of later centuries would follow his example.[158] The time of the dragon as a subject of natural history would come to an end, despite the best efforts of those like Kirchmaier and Nordlidh. Kircher would be one of the last to describe their physiology and behaviour at length. After this, serpents and dragons would find new places in the emergent fields of the natural sciences and by the end of the eighteenth century, snakes would be taxonomized while dragons would be exiled to the realm of myth.

That is not to say that dragons did not hold the power to inspire fear as we have seen throughout this thesis, but they slowly became different creatures as the continuation of belief we saw in this chapter eroded after the end of the period with which this thesis concerns itself. The dragon took on a particular conceptual shape in the Reformation as we have seen in previous chapters, and what we have seen in this chapter is the last attempt to maintain that shape of Biblical terror lurking in the wilds of Europe before the dragon would be forced to metamorphosise once again into something familiar but new – a fanged fable built for an age

[156] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 212-223.
[157] D. Diderot and J. d'Alembert, 'Dragons' in *The Encyclopedie* Vol. 5 (1755), p. 104. *'Il n'y a déjà dans les livres que trop de ces histoires fabuleuses de dragons'.*
[158] R. Descartes, 'Descartes to Huygens, 14 January 1643'. Translation from T.L. Hankins, and R.J. Silverman, *Instruments and the Imagination* (Princeton, 1995), p. 19. For more on Kircher's life and legacy see: P. Findlen (ed.), *Athanasius Kircher - The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (New York, 2004).

where they could no longer threaten the apocalypse or have women thrown onto the pyre, but could frighten children from the realm of fantasy and embody the evils of a world people might naively think is behind them.

Ultimately however, placing the end of belief in dragons at the dawn of the alleged 'scientific revolution' is somewhat of a premature pronouncement of death, and the simple narrative of dragons declining in the face of 'rationalism' is in fact a much more complex affair complicated by religious cultures that were unwilling to discredit centuries of belief. This thesis has shown that the sceptics of the seventeenth century did not immediately slay the dragon; believers fought their corner valiantly and we see a continuation of the dragon in works concerning natural history up until the end of the century. Furthermore, throughout this chapter which has focused on the extant materials written by the most vehement of dragon sceptics and defenders, there have been hints at an unspoken majority for whom dragons remained a part of their natural history – an uncontroversial aspect of their lives that simply was, and did not therefore need to produce great tracts on science, philosophy, and theology to justify their beliefs. While hard to measure, this continuing faith in the reality of the dragon amongst the general population is alluded to during this debate. Whether it was the women that Schmidt derided for their folk beliefs or the readers of *Relationes Curiosae* who entertained the unusual in all its forms, there were many for whom the ideological debates surrounding the dragon played no part in their lives and these serpentine creatures continued to lurk just beyond the horizon.

4.0 THE CONCLUSION – THE REFORMATION OF THE DRAGON

Reimagining dragons – serpentine monsters after the Reformation

Dragons, and all their related serpentine brethren, are constantly being reimagined with new iterations emerging constantly from the minds of people across the globe. In this thesis we have seen many serpentine monsters slither out from the religious culture of the early modern German-speaking lands whose forms have been varied but their association with the socio-religious upheavals of the Reformation has been clear to see. We can perhaps call these creatures 'Reformed dragons', having been hammered into the especially apocalyptic, diabolic shape we saw in Protestant iconography, in the art of miracles, and in the witch crazes by those living in a time of great religious upheaval who chose to use this ancient symbol as a weapon of their faith.

The Reformed dragon however was not to last long. The dragons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took on a much different role to those we have seen thus far in this thesis, becoming objects of fantasy rather than monsters people perceived as being very much real, if sometimes distant, animals. Arnold gives us a few such examples, his book contending that the eighteenth century was where dragons fell entirely into the realm of imagination as 'rationalism' removed them from our lived reality.[1] Dragons would appear in some Gothic works like Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm*, though proved more popular in the Romantic Revival with sexualised dragon women appearing in poems like John Keats's *Lamia* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Rhododaphne*, as well as artworks like John Collier's

[1] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 203-212, 222.

Lilith to name a few.[2] Arnold argues that these literary dragons would soon give way to the 'nursey dragon' a fable for children heralded by the dragon-like Jabberwock from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871).[3]

The Penguin Book of Dragons gives a few more examples and follows Arnold's narrative that once natural historians stopped entertaining dragons as real, they became instead fairy tales and even friends and companions rather than demonic aggressors.[4] Indeed, Kenneth Grahame's short story *The Reluctant Dragon* depicts a creature who lives a gentle Bohemian lifestyle and the children who befriend him even manage to convince St George that the dragon is not a threat.[5] Edith Nesbit meanwhile wrote several children's stories with draconic villains, as well as one titled *The Last of the Dragons* in which a princess and a dragon choose to ignore tradition and become friends instead.[6] This represents a sharp break with the dragons we have seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the immediate turbulence of the Reformation subsided and Europe began to come to terms with a permanent break between confessions, the Reformed dragon lost some of its teeth and metamorphosised again. The miraculous and apocalyptic dragon of the Reformation with its papal crown was no more, the animalistic dragon pursued and catalogued by natural philosophers eventually

[2] Ibid., pp. 213-218; B. Stoker, *The Lair of the White Worm* (London, 1911), J. Keats, 'Lamia' in J.N. Cox (ed.), *Keats's Poetry and Prose* (London, 2009), pp. 412-429; T.L. Peacock, *Rhododaphne* (London, 1818), and J. Collier, *Lilith* (1887).
[3] M. Arnold, *The Dragon, Fear and Power* (London, 2018), pp. 219-223; L. Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (London, 1871). While largely written in nonsense language, the poem 'Jabberwocky' does follow the traditional dragon fight, though it is a young boy rather than a knight who appears with his special sword to slay the monster, which he does so by decapitating the beast. The Vorpal Sword therefore stands alongside St George's 'Ascalon' and Sigurd's 'Gram' and a great dragon-slaying weapon.
[4] S.G. Bruce (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Dragons* (New York, 2021), pp. 283-322.
[5] K. Grahame, 'The Reluctant Dragon' in *Dream Days* (London, 1898), pp. 179-245.
[6] E. Nesbit, 'The Last of the Dragons' in *Five of Us and Madeline* (London, 1925), pp. 171-78. This dragon even undergoes its own metamorphosis, though where the Medieval and early modern dragons shifted between man and beast, this dragon turns into an aeroplane at the end of the story.

vanished from their works, and in their place came a creature whose terror belonged only in the realm of fantasy.

Dragons however, being more of a category of creature rather than a singular well-defined entity, are particularly metamorphic, and in the past hundred years dragons and the dragon-slaying narrative have re-emerged in a multitude of guises – some of which are not too far removed from the subjects of this thesis. J.R.R. Tolkien's Smaug is an archetypal reimagining of the dragons of northern Europe which serves as the baseline for these monsters in the modern world, a mighty physical manifestation of greed, fear, and evil who would be all too recognisable to the artists of the Reformation.[7] By contrast, Frank Herbert's *Dune* and its sequels sees the dragon reimagined most radically for the genre of science-fiction in the sandworms of Arrakis.[8] Much like his deconstruction of messianic figures, the dragon tropes are de-mythologised by Herbert – its wealth (the 'spice melange') being simply a by-product of its life cycle rather than something actively hoarded, and the protagonists of his works come to ride the sandworms rather than slay them.[9]

Instead of reinventing the dragon, Terry Pratchett's Discworld novel *Guards! Guards!* parodies the traditional dragon-slaying tales, heavily referencing and satirising the topes and narrative structures discussed in this thesis. While more humorous than many of the dragon-slaying tales we have encountered in the early modern German-speaking lands, Pratchett does recognise their deep cultural importance:

[7] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London, 1937).
[8] See F. Herbert, *Dune* (Boston, 1965). Herbert himself likened the sandworms to the dragon of Beowulf in an interview as the creature that guards the 'gold' http://www.sinanvural.com/seksek/inien/tvd/tvd2.htm (Accessed: 27 November 2022).
[9] While Herbert plays with draconic tropes, they are however played somewhat straight in later novels, the transformation of God-Emperor Leto II into a human-sandworm hybrid and his hoarding of the spice being reminiscent of the metamorphosis stories this thesis has discussed. See F. Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune* (New York, 1981).

> 'A realm of fancy, Vimes thought. That's where they went, then. Into our imaginations. And when we call them back we shape them, like squeezing dough into pastry shapes. Only you don't get gingerbread men, you get what you are. Your own darkness, given shape'.[10]

Pratchett's draconic antagonist is not unlike the human villain Lupine Wonse who summons them, and this explicit allusion to dragons occupying a liminal space between imagination and reality, as well as being reflections of the fears and anxieties of those who create them, resonates with what we have seen of the Reformed dragons.

Samantha Shannon's *The Priory of the Orange Tree* meanwhile upends the tropes of the traditional dragon-slaying narrative in a feminist reimagining of the legend of St George where the differences between the dragons of the eastern and western worlds are explored.[11] Despite the changes to the dragon-slayer in this narrative, some of Shannon's dragons bear an even greater resemblance to the monsters of this thesis than Smaug - being harbingers of an apocalypse and the chosen form of her world's equivalent of Satan. While the heroines of this story would be unfamiliar to the authors and artists of the Reformation, the villains would certainly strike a very recognisable image as avatars of unholy evil.

It is also worth noting that the imagery of St George and the dragon has continued to be employed in political cartoons for centuries after the pope-dragon with all the same elements of diabolic dehumanisation we saw in chapter 2.1 turned on new subjects. The Bodleian Library holds several instances of Georgian political cartoons where Napoleon is rendered a human-dragon monstrous hybrid being run down by a British St George.[12] The

[10] T. Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!* (London, 1989), p. 395.
[11] S. Shannon, *The Priory of the Orange Tree* (London, 2019).
[12] Bodleian Library, Oxford, Curzon b.20(43), 'St George and the dragon (London, 1803)'; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Curzon b.23(253), 'St George and the dragon (London, 1805)'; and Bodleian Library, Oxford, Curzon b.23(254), 'St George and the dragon (London, 1805)'. All of these pieces are satire on the fear of a French invasion of mainland Britain.

dragon has continued to stand as an 'other' to be hated, feared, and overcome by a dragon-slayer in political images from the monster we saw in the cover of *The Suffragette* whose collar read 'Indecency' and served a man labelled 'The Press', to being a manifestation of all the enemies of the Kaiser in a propaganda poster issued at the beginning of World War I.[13] The dragon's appeal as the quintessential foe to any cause is perhaps unrivalled, and the formula used by Protestants in their struggle with the papacy remains a familiar one.

These are but to name a few examples of a slew of media that continues to constantly reinvent, reimagine, and recreate these ever-popular monsters. Whether the Reformed dragon will rear its head again remains to be seen, though some of its echoes can still be felt to this day in modern fantasy. What is important to remember though, is that the dragon metamorphosises as the cultures surrounding it does, and as we have seen in this thesis, the dragon found its darkest and most apocalyptic qualities exerted in the turbulence of early modern German religious culture.

[13] C. Pankhurst (ed.), *The Suffragette* No. 53, Vol. II, October 17 (1913); and E. Kaempster, *Unser Kaiser an sein Volk* (1914).

Why serpents and dragons?

'Why serpents and dragons?', is the principal question of this thesis, asking why those who conjured such an image in religious discourse chose to do so and to what ends. As we discussed in the introduction, the very word 'monster' is derived from the Latin 'Moneo' which means to warn, advise, or remind; and this thesis has sought to uncover what exactly it was the people of the German-speaking lands so feared that they would employ the terrifying imagery of serpentine monsters. The Reformed dragon that we saw take shape in sixteenth and seventeenth century German-speaking religious culture gathered a certain set of the dragon's historic connotations, emphasising links to the Devil and applying them to the perceived enemies of a new godly Protestant culture and identity. It is in the shape of these monsters that we have seen the fears and anxieties of this religious movement and those who practiced it; the Reformed dragon was an icon of all that the Reformation stood against and was in itself a uniquely Protestant invention.

In chapter 1.0 we saw what cultural material the authors and artists of the Protestant Reformation had to work with. Serpents and dragons in the early modern period had a range of cultural connotations and were deeply entrenched within the German-speaking people's collective imaginations. We saw how dragon-slaying stories abounded in the late medieval and early modern periods with stories featuring the likes of St George, Sigurd, Dietrich von Bern, Ortnit, and others all solidifying the dragon's place as a horrific monster of evil fated to die upon the weapons of the righteous and heroic. These monsters had to be slain for all the terror and devastation they wreak upon the landscape, having an avaricious appetite for virgins, treasure, and chaos. These stories were immensely popular, often borrowing characters and ideas from one another to create a cultural landscape where people of all walks

of life would be at least passingly familiar with the tyranny of the dragon and the virtue of the dragon-slayer.

These dragons did not just exist in stories for the people of the early modern German-speaking lands; they left their traces in ways that could be experienced by individuals themselves. The draconic propaganda of the Reformation was all the more powerful for existing in a world where people had seen the bones of these monsters and experienced the heat of dragon fire, even if it was merely from a gunpowder-fuelled effigy. The terror of the dragon could be seen and felt, and therefore made all the more real. The connotations of these monsters were only compounded when they appeared as symbols in natural philosophy, standing in for notions of vileness, fire, and obscene wealth. However, it is here that we glimpse some rare associations that while not entirely positive, are not entirely negative either – demonstrating that dragons simply were a part of the world early modern people believed they lived in and possessed facets that went back centuries.

Moving on to exploring serpents and dragons as they appeared in the Protestant Reformation, we saw that the dragon was an exceptionally effective piece of iconography for Reformers in chapter 2.1, having both scriptural and cultural provenance as a familiar symbol to the German people. We saw how dragons became a convenient byword for eschatological evil, standing in for the more complicated physiologies of the various beasts of Revelation as a general symbol for Satan, Antichrist, and the apocalypse. This idea became combined with the dragon's legendary association with greed and spawned the pope-dragon (as well as its derivatives and associated motifs) as a means of denigrating and dehumanising the papacy. These images were very easy to understand for people across the social spectrum due to the dragon's place in popular culture and the simplicity of the image itself – blending man and monster to warn against a pope they believed to be inhuman and irredeemably evil.

This motif was then elevated when pope-dragon met a dragon-slayer, adding further layers of allegorical insult to the papacy by constructing an idealised opposite to their monstrosity. The Protestant-papal conflict became mythologised by this appropriation of the dragon-slaying narrative, taking its place alongside hagiographical and folkloric tales of good triumphing over evil. The very simple binaries created by these images effectively conveyed notions of what was Protestant and what was not, thereby forging a self-righteous sense of identity amongst the fledgling religious movement whose position was depicted as good and holy while their enemies were evil, apocalyptic, and avaricious. This monster perfectly fulfilled its function as a warning against everything that the Reformers loathed and fought against.

We see more of these ideas manifest in chapter 2.2 where we explored serpents and dragons in the art of miracles, using the Augsburg *Book of Miracles* as a case study and a guide to this strange and often terrifying genre. The serpentine monsters within these pages were harbingers of fear, warnings against sin, and manifestations of divine retribution. Whether they glided through the air in great swarms portending some incoming judgement, or terrorised the land in a pestilential frenzy, they reminded people of their own sins and the sins of others in what many people presumed to be the end of days. As symbols of sin and coming apocalypse, the dragons in this book certainly had all of the Satanic overtones one would expect, yet in several folios the dragons were not cyphers for the Devil; they were instead creatures sent by God. While equally as terrifying as those monsters who represent Satan, these serpents and dragons are instead presented as natural forces through which God worked. Though they may be implements of fear, found disgusting and relegated to the lowest orders of the basest creatures, and considered to be universal symbols of evil, serpents and dragons were still acknowledged as part of God's natural order and could be called upon by him to

remind people of their moral failures as well as warn them against the punishment that would follow. Ultimately these creatures very much represented the world of the Reformation, one that people believed was miraculous, terrifying, and soon to end.

In the final chapter concerning the Reformation, we turned our attention to serpents, dragons, and the question of gender. In the first part of chapter 2.3, we saw how serpentine monsters could be gendered, looking in particular at images of St George and the dragon where the monster has been given female sexual characteristics. Artistically, female sexual characteristics were often used as a symbol of sexual debasement – fulfilling a series of binaries in opposition to the male purity of the dragon-slayer. In much the same way as the dragon was used as a vehicle to 'other' the Pope, it was also used here as a tool of alterity against female sexuality, warning against women whilst simultaneously promoting the virtue of the male dragon-slayer.

When considering 'why dragons?' with regards witchcraft in the second part of this chapter, the answer was much the same as with the pope-dragon: to associate someone you wish to persecute with the monstrous traits of the dragon, to dehumanise them, and to vilify them. Unlike the religious and political satire directed at one of Europe's most powerful men, the accusations of women conspiring with dragons led to trials against, and executions of, innocent people. Whether these dragons served milk-witches as thieves of produce, acted as demonic sexual partners, or carried sorceresses across the night's sky, these monsters provided an ideological framework in which persecution thrived.

Looking beyond the Protestant Reformation in chapter 3.1, we saw how especially apocalyptic and Satanic the dragons of the previous three chapters were when compared to the Catholic response to these creatures. When encountering serpentine monsters Catholicism was

more likely to view them as simply one of the many evil creatures that inhabited the earth, with only varying degrees of concern for the eschatological ideologies espoused by Protestants and often a preference for classical readings of dialogues. While Catholics still associated dragons with Satan from the Book of Revelation, they did not approach them as a topic as vigorously as Protestants did owing to a less robust culture of visual propaganda and a differing set of assurances with regards their own religious identity. When Jesuit missionaries brought back accounts of the dragons of Asia, Kircher regarded them as simply interesting mega-fauna and ascribed these symbols of imperial power no diabolic overtones. Though, in the case of missionaries to north America, we see the shared Christian belief in the Devil manifest as Catholics used the fearsome image of the dragon in a similar way as their confessional rivals – proving that while the connotations of the dragon may not be entirely universal amongst Christendom, its ability to inspire terror is.

In chapter 3.2 we brought the thesis to a close by examining the natural history of the dragon. Here we saw the effect that early modern German religious culture had upon belief in serpentine monsters, with many scholars vehemently defending the existence of dragons against any and all detractors. These monsters did not quietly shuffle out of the pages of natural history, men like Kircher fought for them with a combination of eyewitness accounts, deductive reasoning, and scriptural provenance that would prolong belief in the dragon beyond the end of the seventeenth century. While these contested dragons were not warnings against papists, sinfulness, or witches, they were demonstrative of the fact that these were creatures deeply entwined in the cultural consciousness of the early modern German-speaking lands with a particularly powerful religious element to that belief.

Primarily, this thesis has shown that serpentine monster were tools of fear in an atmosphere of heightened religious tension. The serpents and dragons conjured by the

authors and artists of the Reformation certainly tell us a great deal about the preoccupations of early modern German religious culture. They reveal a mindset consumed with anxieties – fears concerning society, nature, and religion whether they be the perceived avaricious economic activities of neighbours accused of witchcraft or the controversial actions of the papacy. They warn against those things that religious culture in the grip of the Reformation found unpalatable, what the Reformers hated, and what they believed themselves not to be. Ultimately, as with most of the religious anxieties of early modern Europe, these serpentine monsters were concerned with matters of the soul - they were the hellish creatures who represented what people felt to be the greatest impediments to salvation. The Reformation was a period of intense anxiety regarding soteriology as the established Church order was rent asunder and the fate of people's immortal souls was cast into doubt as new and different, often radical even, theologies became more and more prevalent. The serpents and dragons of this thesis are reflections of that doubt – they are the fear of a soul in peril made manifest in wing and scale. Though mighty and terrible, the dragon could still be slain, however, whether that was by some saintly manifestation of the Reformation's righteousness, by burning women at the stake, or by the doubt of natural historians. Ultimately this is the answer to 'why serpents and dragons?' in this period; monstrous as they may be, these creatures are fated to be defeated. They are instruments of great fear, but always something that can be overcome.

Final thoughts – 'A dragon is no idle fancy'

This thesis opened with a quote from Tolkien, wherein he remarked that:

> 'A dragon is no idle fancy. Whatever may be his origins, in fact or invention, the dragon in legend is a potent creation of men's imagination, richer in significance than his barrow is in gold. Even to-day (despite the critics) you may find men not ignorant of tragic legend and history, who have heard of heroes and indeed seen them, who yet have been caught by the fascination of the worm.'[14]

As we have seen in this thesis, the dragons conjured by the imaginations of the authors and artists of a time of great religious upheaval were terrible indeed. They were as miraculous as they were malicious, lighting up the night's sky in wonderous rainbow panoplies and sending innocent women to their death by fire. They were monsters of the apocalypse, rare specimens, and scorned victims – everything wrong and evil with the world from a certain point of view. Serpents and dragons leapt out of myth into the midst of the Reformation and became part of the legend of the period as well.

Though speaking in the context of the Second World War, Jonathan Boff offers the following quote which is useful in our thinking regarding the monstrous serpents of this thesis and where they fit within broader considerations of mythological symbols across time:

> 'Myths are, after all, rich phenomena which bridge past, present and future. They are representations of yesterday, created today, which seek to shape tomorrow. They can teach us much about how those who believe them see all three'.[15]

[14] J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monster and The Critics' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-95.
[15] J. Boff, ''Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat': Making Strategy in the United Kingdom in the Long Shadow of World War II' in M. Strohn (ed.), *The Long Shadow of World War II: The Legacy of the War and its Impact on Political and Military Thinking since 1945* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 111-126.

Times of change and revolution are often ones where shared pasts become revisited and reimagined. Myth and folklore are powerful manifestations of a cultural identity and, as we have seen in this thesis, those identities have been formed, challenged, and changed by their incorporation of serpents and dragons. The Reformation is certainly one such period where myths ran rampant and legendary creatures like dragons were not an uncommon sight. While the serpentine monsters of the early modern German-speaking lands have a particularly rich cultural heritage, there are potential avenues of further research beyond the purview of this thesis worth considering that still tap into the power of these myths.

Reformation Europe, seeing the combination of huge religious upheaval and the proliferation of the printing press, was a time of incredible creativity for artists and authors who were faced with both startling new possibilities and an ever-changing sea of often arbitrary limitations. Instances of unusual serpentine fantasy such as firework contraptions that spew flame from a draconic anus, or the multi-headed pope-dragon antichrist who haunted mediums as diverse as Bibles and tankards, were only possible because of a unique melting-pot of cultural, technological, and religious interactions in this particular time and place. Such oddities however were not alone, and the many fantastical creatures of the Reformation are perhaps worthy of their own studies. Indeed, the religious art and rhetoric of this period is filled with both oblique and startlingly direct references to numerous aspects of folklore and classical mythology.[16] The monstrous serpent in its varying forms is but one of a host of figures to find itself reinvented. The papal dragon, for example, shares its crown at times with the mythical wild man, at others it lends its crown to a number of different animals like wolves and lions that, while less unusual than a dragon, still had rich cultural heritages

[16] An especially complex example would be 'Karlstadt's Wagen' which has been explored in depth in a recent article: L. Roper and J. Spinks, 'Karlstadt's Wagen: The First Visual Propaganda for the Reformation' in *Art History* April 2017, Vol. 40(2), pp. 256-285.

worth exploring.[17] The work of Robert Scribner remains the great starting point for the study of the iconography of the Reformation, and indeed the thesis emerged out of a desire to offer a deeper analysis and study of some images to which Scribner devoted only a few lines to. Other such studies can be born from this work and others like it, giving more Reformed monsters and animals their time in the spotlight.

Ultimately, this thesis has sought to examine serpentine monsters as both an expression of a society in turmoil and as creatures that were real to the people of that time, asking what these monsters can tell us about the past and those living in it. If monsters serve to warn us, to instil fear, and in a way protect us, then studying them reveals much about what a society cares about and what it does not care for. Fear and hope, two sides of the same coin, are what define a culture – they reveal how they think about themselves, what they will tolerate, and what they aspire to be. The serpents and dragons of early modern German religious culture have shown us what those early Protestants wished to exclude from their religion and their identity, all of what they feared and hoped to overcome. These serpentine beasts are special, for offering a window into the soul of these people and allowing us to learn more about the fearful way they saw the world. There are other ways of glimpsing into the past, but I suspect that this thesis will not be the last to discuss serpents and dragons. Their appeal will likely live on as long as humanity does, though their precise form may change, for the 'worm' will continue to fascinate – a shadow of fear perpetually on the edge of humanity's consciousness.

[17] See examples such as: M. Lorch, *The Pope as Wild Man* (Dahlem, 1545); S. Grimm, *Das Wolffgesang* (Augsburg, 1522); and Anon, *Leo X, Murner, Emser, Eck, and Lemp as Animals* (c.1521-1525); where we can see the Pope depicted as a wild man, a wolf, and a lion respectively.

‘I desired dragons with a profound desire. Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighbourhood, intruding into my relatively safe world, in which it was, for instance, possible to read stories in peace of mind, free from fear. But the world that contained even the imagination of Fáfnir was richer and more beautiful, at whatever cost of peril.’[18]

J.R.R. Tolkien

[18] J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘On Fairy Stories’ in C. Tolkien (ed.), *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London, 2006), pp. 109-161.

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APPENDIX

Fig. 1

Detail of a stained-glass window depicting the Fall in Ulm Cathedral (c. 1420). Photo from: J. Hargreaves, *A Little History of Dragons* (Glastonbury, 2006), p. 27.

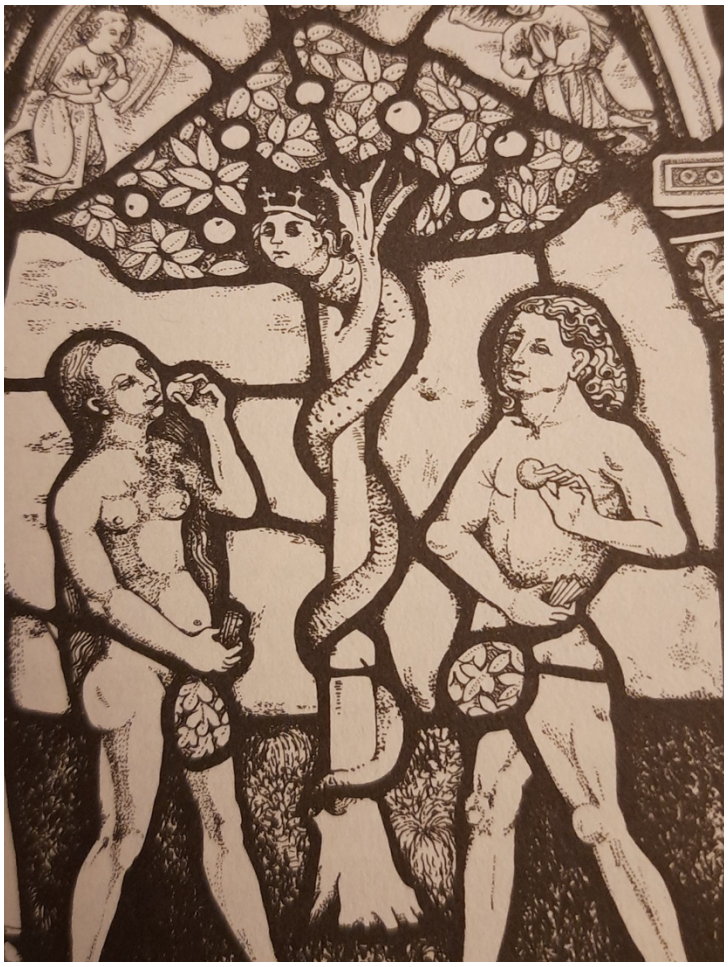


Fig. 2

Photo of a crocodile skull in Karlštejn Castle taken from: A. Pluskowski, 'The Dragon's Skull: How Can Zooarchaelogists Contribute to Our Understanding of Otherness in the Middle Ages' in F. de Asís García García, M.A.W. Vadillo, M.V.C. Picaza (eds.), *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages, Perspectives across Disciplines* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 109-124.

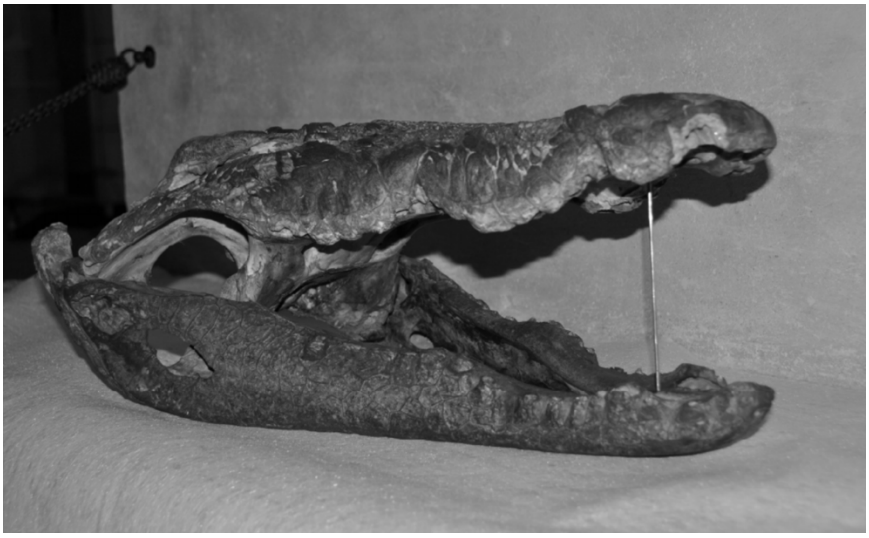


Fig. 3

Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Douce 346, '*Nuremberg Shrovetide Carnival (1449-1539). Schembartsbuch* (Nuremberg, c.1449-1539)', fol. 207v, fol. 244r, fol. 240r (from left to right).

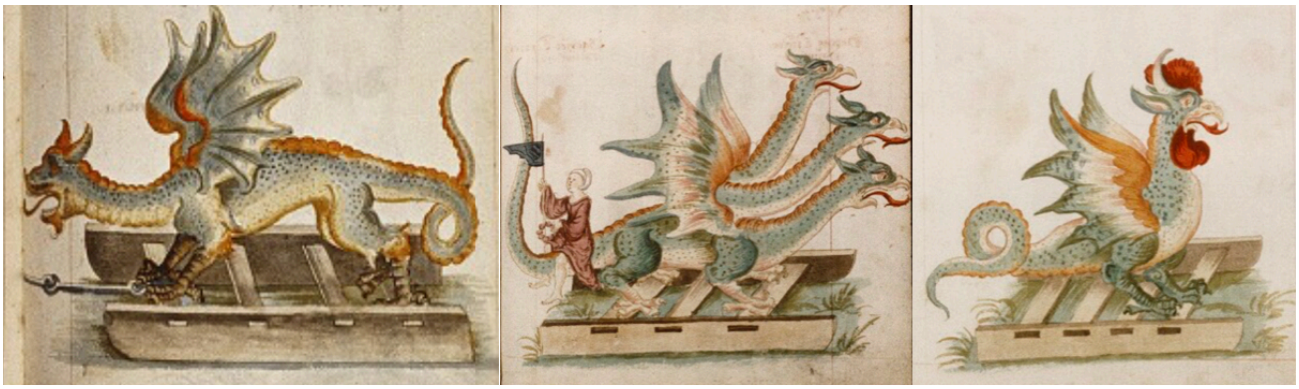


Fig. 4

D. Graminaeus, *Beschreibung derer Fürstlicher Güligscher etc. Hochzeit* (Düsseldorf, 1587), Illustration 30.

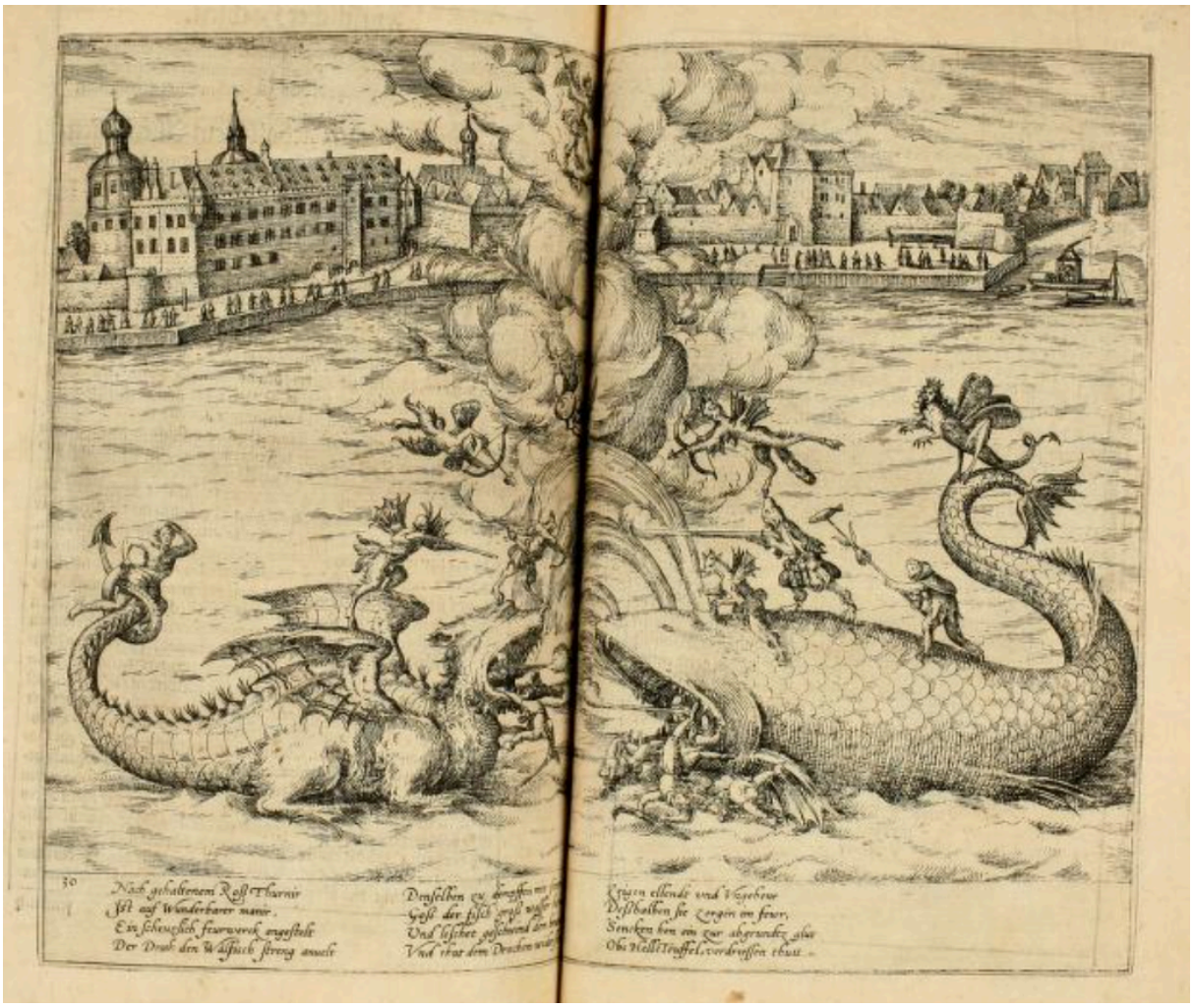


Fig. 5

F. Mayer, *Büchsenmeister und Feuerwerksbuch* (1594) pp. 293, 295, 305 (from top to bottom).



Fig. 6

The coat of arms of Klagenfurt from the *Klagenfurt Schützenbuch* (Klagenfurt, 1608).



Fig. 7

M. Maier, *Atlanta Fugiens* (Oppenheim, 1618), pp. 65, 109, 209.



Fig. 8

'*Anfang. Exaltation.*' from S. Michelspacher, *Cabala: Spiegel der Kunst und Natur, in Alchymia* (Augsburg, 1616).

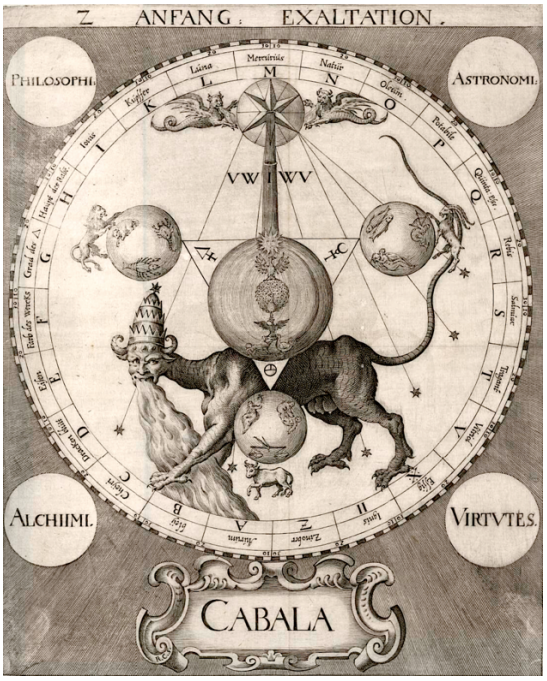


Fig. 9

The title page to Petrus Apian's *Astronomicum Caesareum* (1540) featuring a draconic volvelle.



Fig. 10

L. Cranach the Elder, *Martin Luther as Junker Jörg* (1521-22).



Fig. 11

H. Göding the Elder, *Martin Luther in Patmos* (1598).



Fig. 12

Anon, *Luther against the Papacy* (Leipzig, 1617).

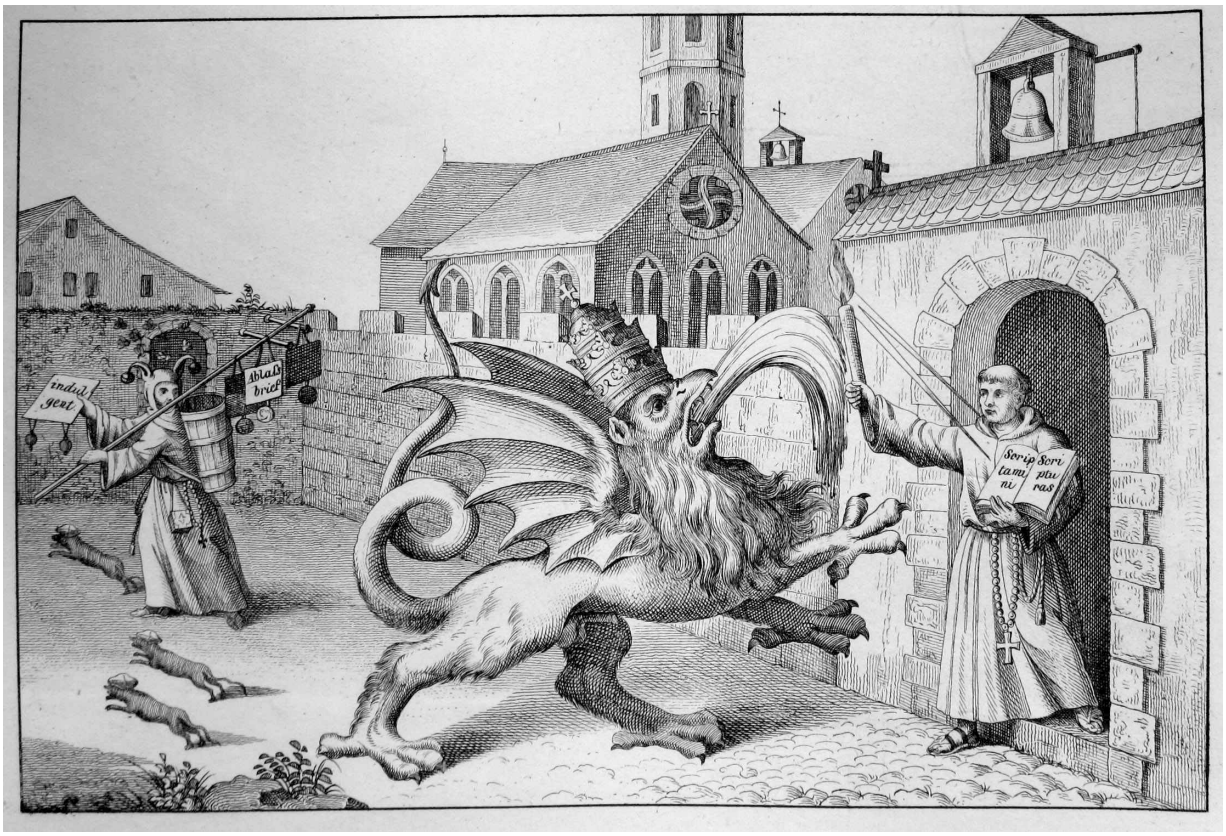


Fig. 13

L. Cranach's depiction of the Papal Ass from: P. Melanchthon, and M. Luther, *The Papal Ass of Rome and the Monk Calf of Freyberg* (Wittenberg, 1523).



Fig. 14

Illustrations by L. Cranach from M. Luther, *Septembertestament* (Wittenberg, 1522).

Illustration to Apocalypse 11 (left unedited, right edited to remove the papal tiara)

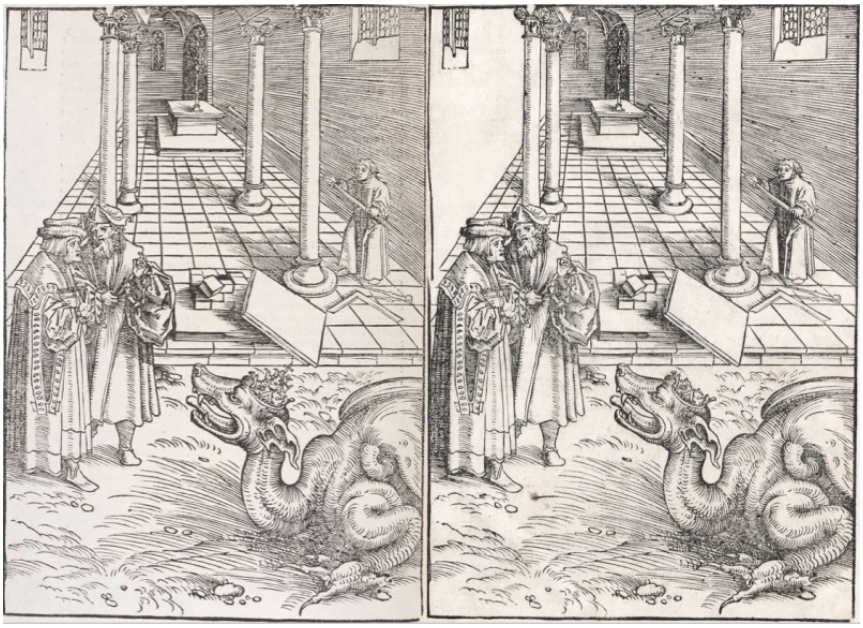


Illustration to Apocalypse 13



Illustration to Apocalypse 16



Fig. 15

H. Holbein, ‘Illustration to Apocalypse 11’ in *Septembertestament* (M. Luther trans.) (Basel, 1523).



Fig. 16

Illustration to Apocalypse 11 by an unknown artist from Cranach's workshop found in *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1534).

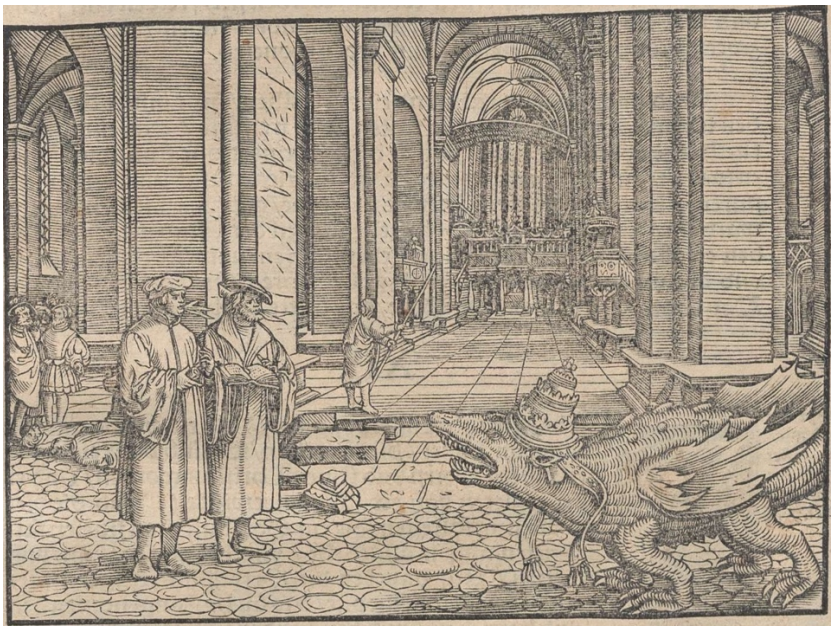


Fig. 17

Illustration to Apocalypse 13 by an unknown artist from Cranach's workshop found in *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1534).



Fig. 18

Illustration to Apocalypse 16 by an unknown artist *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1534).



Fig. 19

Anon, 'Gog and Magog' in *Das Newe Testament* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1530).



Fig. 20

E. Altdorfer, 'The Destruction of Gog und Magog' in *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Lübeck, 1534).



Fig. 21

Anon, 'Gog and Magog' in *Biblia* (M. Luther trans.) (Wittenberg, 1534)



Fig. 22

H. Brosamer, *Seven-headed Martin Luther* (1529).



Fig. 23

Anon, *The seven-headed papal beast* (1530).

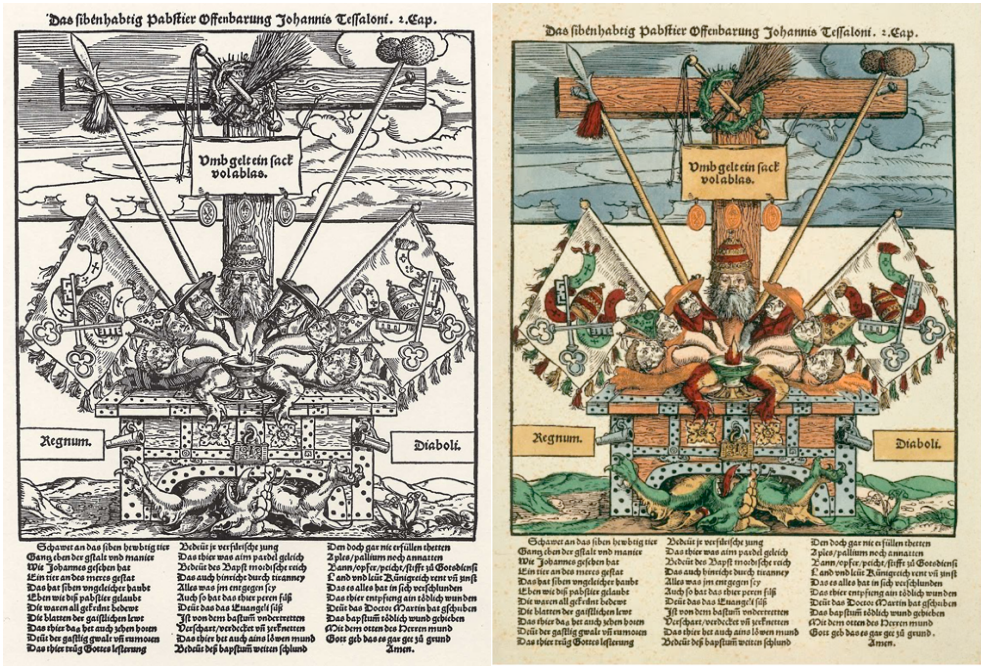


Fig. 24

Anon, Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts (Dahlem, c.1547-1554).

Note that the image on the right (an alternative-coloured version of the original) edits-out the dragon's dugs.



Detail from: *Anon, Duke Christoff of Wurttemberg and the Papal Beasts* (Dahlem, c.1547-1554)



Fig. 25

L. Cranach the Younger, *Johann Friedrich der Großmütige, Kurfürst von Sachen* (1547).



Fig. 26

J. Mellinger and T. Stella, *Mansfeldici Comitatus typus chorographicus, olim manu prestantissima artificis D.M. Tilemanni Stelle S. diligenter omnia loca persustrantis in charta delineates* (1571).



Fig. 27

H. Hondius, *The Papal Pyramid* (1599).



Fig. 28

Detail of frontispiece to: *The first Examinacyon of Anne Askew* (J. Bale ed.) (London, 1546).



Fig. 29

A. Osiander, *Eyn wunderliche Weyssagung von dem Bapstum* (Nuremberg, 1527), fol. Cii r (left), and fol. Biii r (right).



Fig. 30

Hymn-sheet Parody on the Interim (c. 1548).

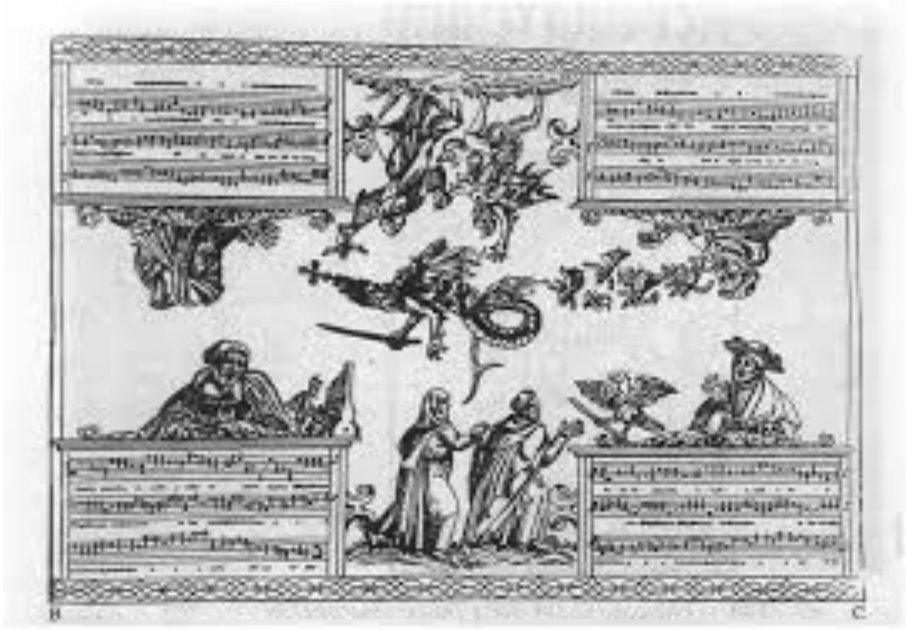


Fig. 31

Our Holy Lady St Interim (Bern, 1552).

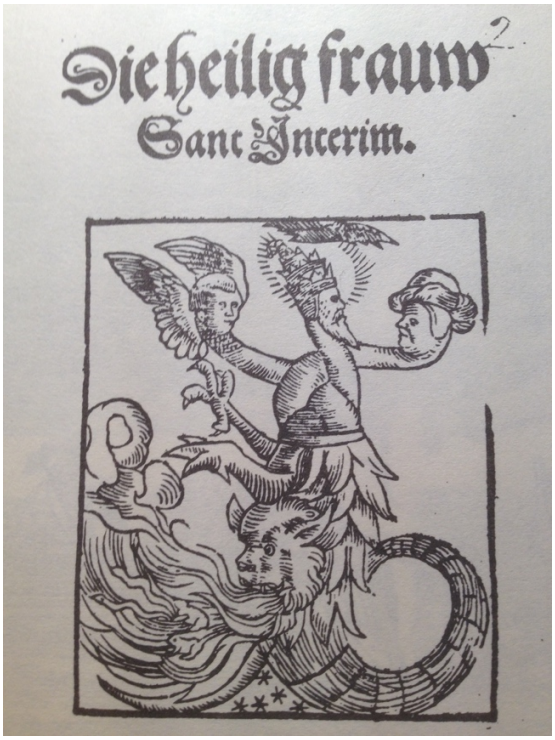


Fig. 32

Satire on Interim (1548).



Fig. 33

Panel from a Siegburg *Schnelle* tankard (c. 1550-80). Photo from: A. Morrall, 'Protestant Pots: Morality and Social Ritual in the Early Modern Home' in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 263-73.



Fig. 34

Mockery of the Augsburg Interim (c.1549).

https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18200295 (Accessed: 30 August 2021)

http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=2353159&viewType=detailView (Accessed: 30 August 2021)



Fig. 35

Anon, *Satire on Papacy* (1555).



Fig. 36

Anon, *Christ Defeats the Pope as Three-headed Beast* (Magdeburg, c. 1550).



Fig. 37

P. Gottland, *St George and the Dragon – Allegory of the Triumph of the New Faith over the Old* (1552).





Fig. 38

Anon, *Verthooninghe ende verclaringhe van den Cleefschen S. Joris* (c. 1615)

The Display and Explanation of St. George of Cleves



Fig. 39

An example of Phillip Melanchthon's crest as seen on the frontispiece of M. Luther and P. Melanchthon, *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (Wittenberg, 1538).



Detail from: M. Luther and P. Melanchthon, *Unterricht der Visitatorn, an die Pfarhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen, itzt durch D. Mart. Luth. Corrigiert* (Wittenberg, 1538).



Fig. 40

Lucas Cranach's coat of arms, with which he signed his work after 1508.

Detail from: L. Cranach, *Catherine of Mecklenburg* (1514).



Detail from: L. Cranach, *Cupid* (c.1530).



Detail from: L. Cranach, *Venus Standing in a Landscape* (1529).

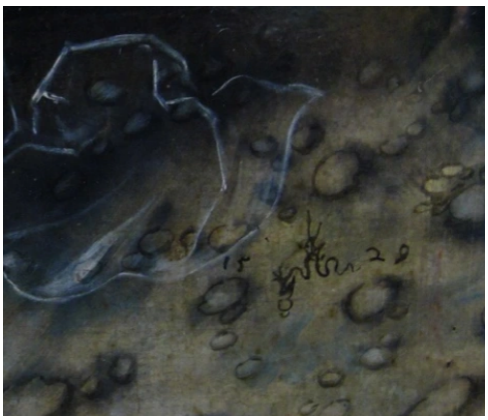


Fig. 41

Image from: *Höchstmerckwürdige, doch gewisse, und in denen dieserhalb gehaltenen Acten gegründete Nachricht, von einem abscheulichen Drachen/ Welcher sich zu Gattersleben, ohnweit Bernburg*, p. 2.

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=1.28/CMD?ACT=SRCHA&IKT=8079&TRM=%273:634068X%27&COOKIE=U999,K999,D1.28,Ec5f90ddb-f,I0,B9994++++++,SY,QDEF,A,H12,,73,,76-78,,88-90,NGAST,R77.97.250.93,FN (Accessed: 20 June 2020).



Fig. 42

Book of miracles Folio 90.



Fig. 43

Book of miracles Folio 127.



Fig. 44

Book of miracles Folio 129.

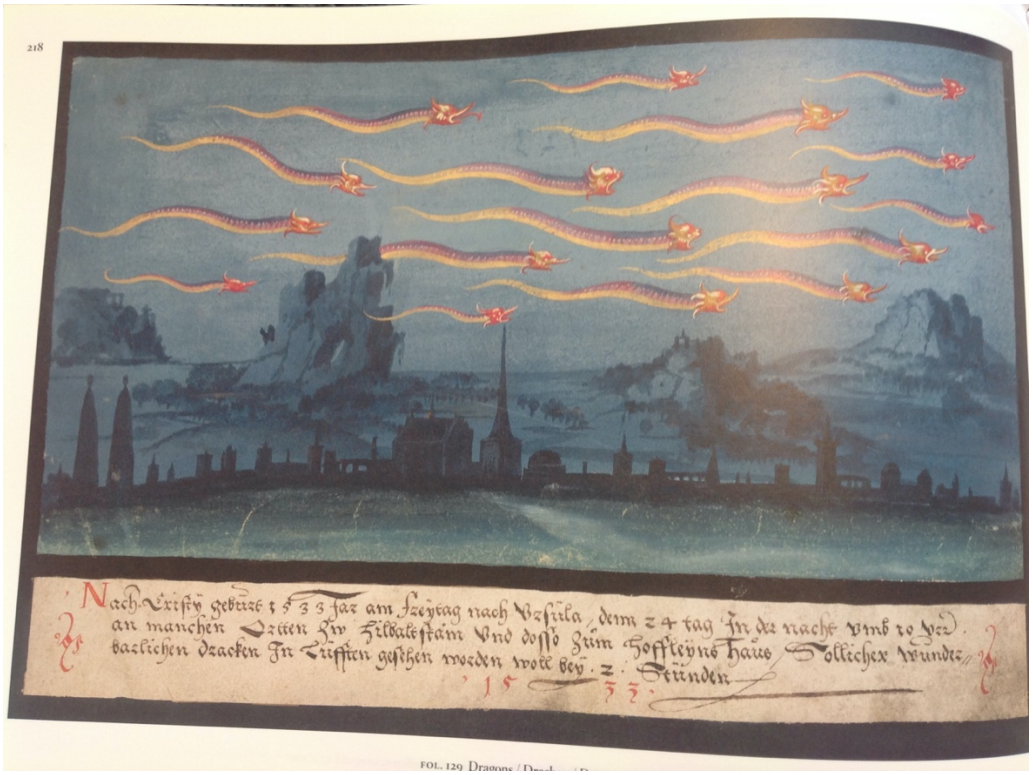


Fig. 45

Image from: M. Glaser, *Ein wunderbartlich gesicht von den Drachen* (Zwickau, 1533).

https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN823785572&PHYSID=PHYS_0010&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001&view=picture-download (Accessed: 15 June 2020).



Fig. 46

Image from: *Ein wunderbarlich erschyockenlich gesicht/so auff den vierdten tag des Manens dises xxxxiij. Jars in dem dosff Zessenhausen* (1543).



Fig. 47

Book of miracles Folio 133.



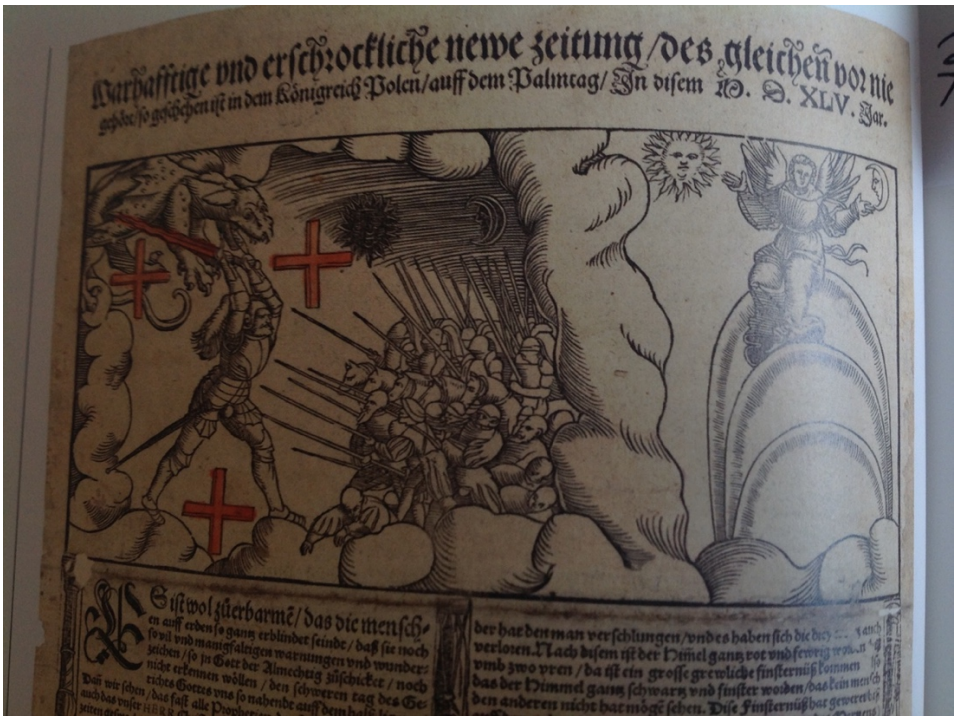
Fig. 48

Book of miracles Folio 150.



Fig. 49

Image from: *Warhafftige und erschrockliche newe Zeitung, des Gleichen vor nie gehört, so geschehen ist in dem Königreich Polen* (1545).



Dragon detail from: *Warhafftige und erschrockliche newe Zeitung, des Gleichen vor nie gehört, so geschehen ist in dem Königreich Polen* (1545).



Fig. 50

Book of miracles Folio 153.



Fig. 51

Warhafftige und erschrockliche neüwe Zeitung, so im land zu Hungern, von nattern gezüchte und eydexen (Vienna, 1551).

Note the crest on the serpent appearing directly from the top of the hay bale.



Fig. 52

Image from: S. Mayer, *Eidechsen- und Natternplage in Ungarn* (Dillingen, 1551).



Fig. 53

Image from: C. Lycosthenes, *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (Basel, 1557).

Note, this image appears to much more directly imitate the image in fig. 51 than the Mayer pamphlet in fig. 52 (note the snake appearing from the top of the hay, and the representation of hills and the sun in the background), but otherwise flips the image.



Fig. 54

Book of miracles Folio 185.



Fig. 55

Detail from: Book of miracles Folio 186.



Fig. 56

Book of miracles Folio 187.



Fig. 57

Detail from: Book of miracles Folio 189.

Note the resemblance between the dragon in this image and the one in fig. 54. It appears that the artist intended to correlate the two monsters by making this dragon appear a well-fed version of the other.



Fig. 58

L. Cranach, *Adam and Eve* (c. 1523).

Note the way that Eve and the serpent's bodies mirror one another - aligning women even more closely with sin and evil.



Fig. 59

A. Dürer, *The Baumgartner altarpiece, detail of left wing 'Saint George'* (Munich, c. 1502-4).



Fig. 60

A. Dürer, *St. George on foot* (c. 1500).



Fig. 61

M. Schongauer, *St. George and the dragon* (c. 1470).



Fig. 62

L. Beck, *St. George Fighting with the Dragon* (c. 1515).



Fig. 63

A. Altdorfer, *St. George and the dragon* (1511).



Fig. 64

A. Altdorfer, *Saint George killing the Dragon* (c. 1515-18).



Fig. 65

L. Cranach, *The holy saint George in battle with the dragon* (c. 1511-13).



Fig. 66

W. Huber, *Heiliger Georg mit dem Drachen* (1520).



Fig. 67

H. Burgkmair, *St. George* (1508).

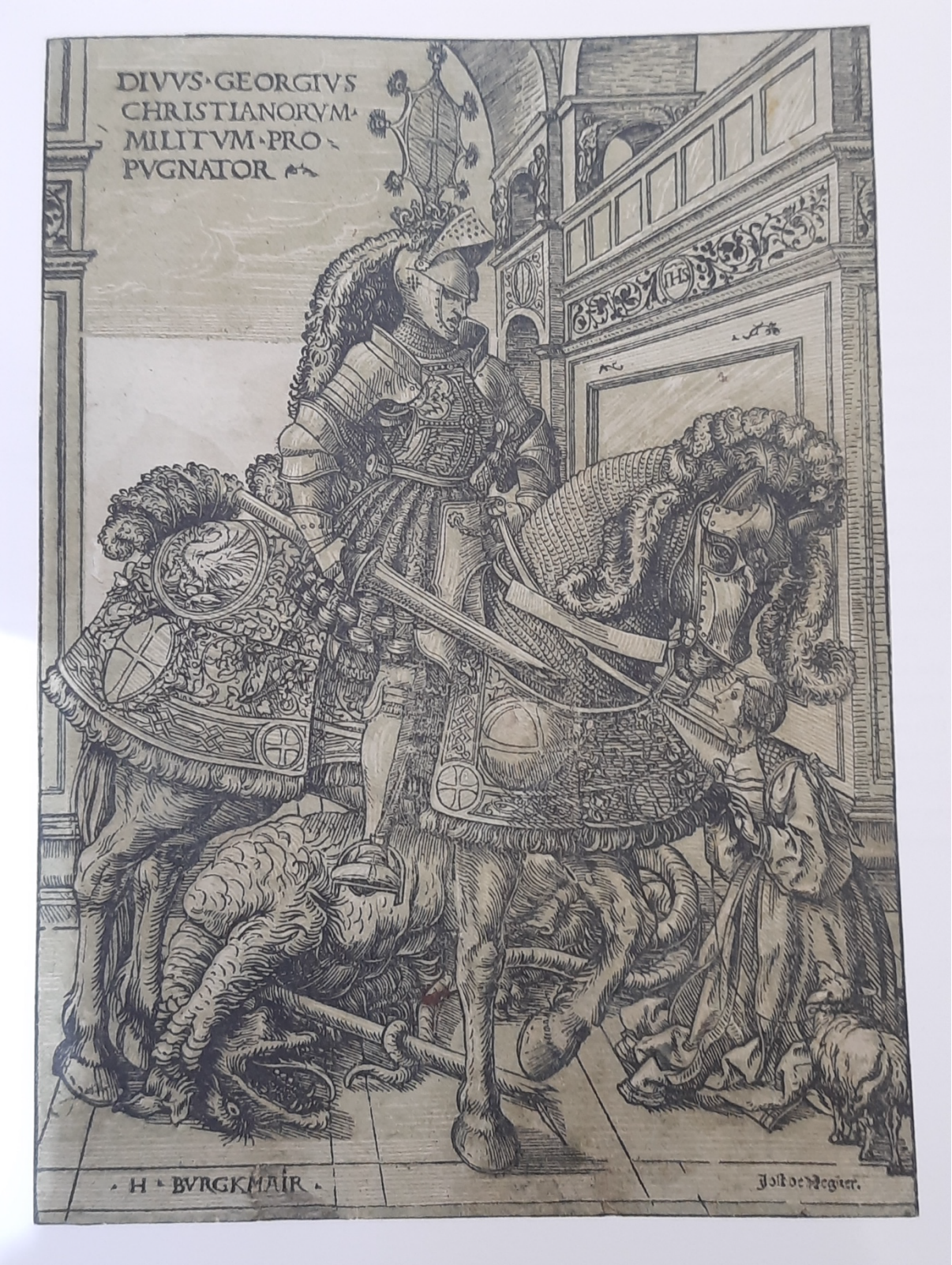


Fig. 68

H. Aldegrever, *Hercules Slaying the Dragon* (1550).



Fig. 69

Anon, *Ein erschroekliche gesicht / so zu Derneburg in der Graffschafft Reinsteyn / am Hartz gelegen / von dreyen Zauberin / unnd zwayen Mannen / inn ettlichen tagen des Monats Octobris im 1555. Jare ergangen ist* (Nürnberg, 1555).



Fig. 70

British Library, London, Burney MS 169 'Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Les faize d'Alexandre* (Vasco de Luren trans.) (Netherlands, c. 1468-1475)', fol. 14.



Fig. 71

Hans Baldung, *The Witch and Dragon* (1515).



Fig. 72

L. Cranach, *Melancholia* (1532). Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.



Detail from: L. Cranach, *Melancholia* (1532). Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.



Fig. 73

P. van der Heyden (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565).



Detail from: P. van der Heyden (after Pieter Bruegel the Elder), *Saint James and the Magician Hermogenes* (1565).



Fig. 74

J. de Bisschop, *A Witch Riding on a Dragon* (c.1643-1671).



Fig. 75

Frontispiece to: R. Bovet, *Pandaemonium, or, the devil's cloyster being a further blow to the modern sadduceism. Proving the existence of witches and spirits. In a discourse deduced from the fall of the angels. The propagation of Satan's kingdom before the flood* (London, 1684).



Fig. 76

Emblems from P. Fabricii, *Della allusioni* (1588), pp. 145, 101, 85, 97, 345.

Top row (left to right): emblem 97, emblem 75. Middle row (left to right): emblem 54, emblem 61. Bottom row (left to right): emblem 231.



Fig. 77

British Library, London, Harley MS 1340 'Joachim de Fiore, *Vaticinia de Pontificibus* (Florence, c. 1431-1447)', fol. 8r.

Note the stars around the tail which purposefully align this creature with Satan as he appears in (Revelation 12:4).



Fig. 78

Illustrations of a mountain in Kiamsi Province (top) and of Chinese deities (bottom) from A. Kircher, *China Illustrata* (1667), pp. 141, 176.



Fig. 79

Illustration of a ray disfigured into the shape of a dragon from: C. Gessner, *Historia animalium* Vol. 4 (Zurich, 1558) p. 803.



Fig. 80

The dragon stone of Lucerne from: R. Cysat, *Collectanea Chronica und Denkwürdige Sachen Pro Chronica Lucernensi et Helvetiae* Vol. 2, ed. J. Schmid (Luzern, 1969), between pp. 584-585.

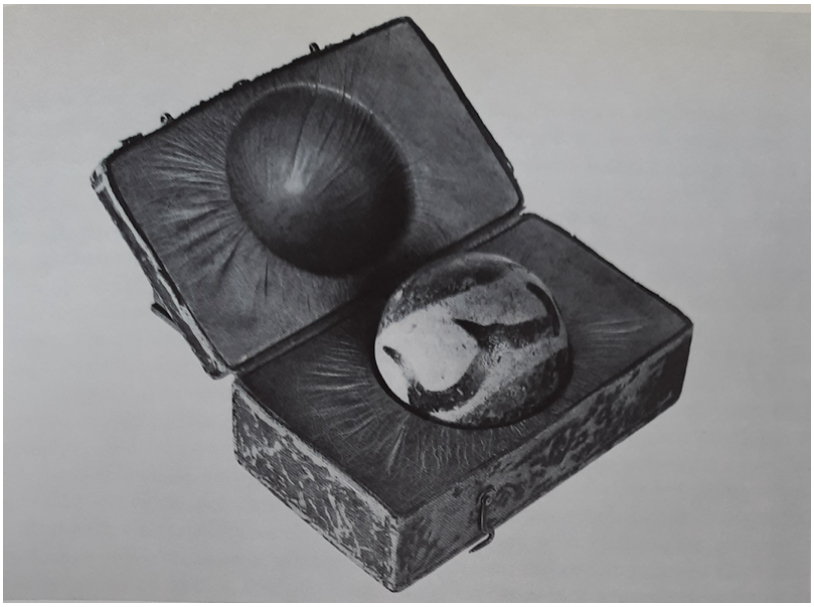


Fig. 81

De Bry's untitled illustration of European explorers encountering native Americans and their dragons. T. de Bry, 'Untitled' in J.L. Gottfriedt (ed.), *Newe Welt vnd americanische Historien* (Frankfurt, 1655), p.220.



Fig. 82

‘Der Schlangen Tanz’ from: E.W. Happel (ed.), *Die grösten Denckwürdigkeiten dieser Welt. Oder so gennante Relationes Curiosae* Vol. 4 (Hamburg, 1689), between pp. 550-551.



Fig. 83

The ‘Hamburg Hydra from: A. Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurate description – Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke cabinet der voornaamste seldzaamhenden der naturr* (Amsterdam, 1734), between pp. 158-159.

