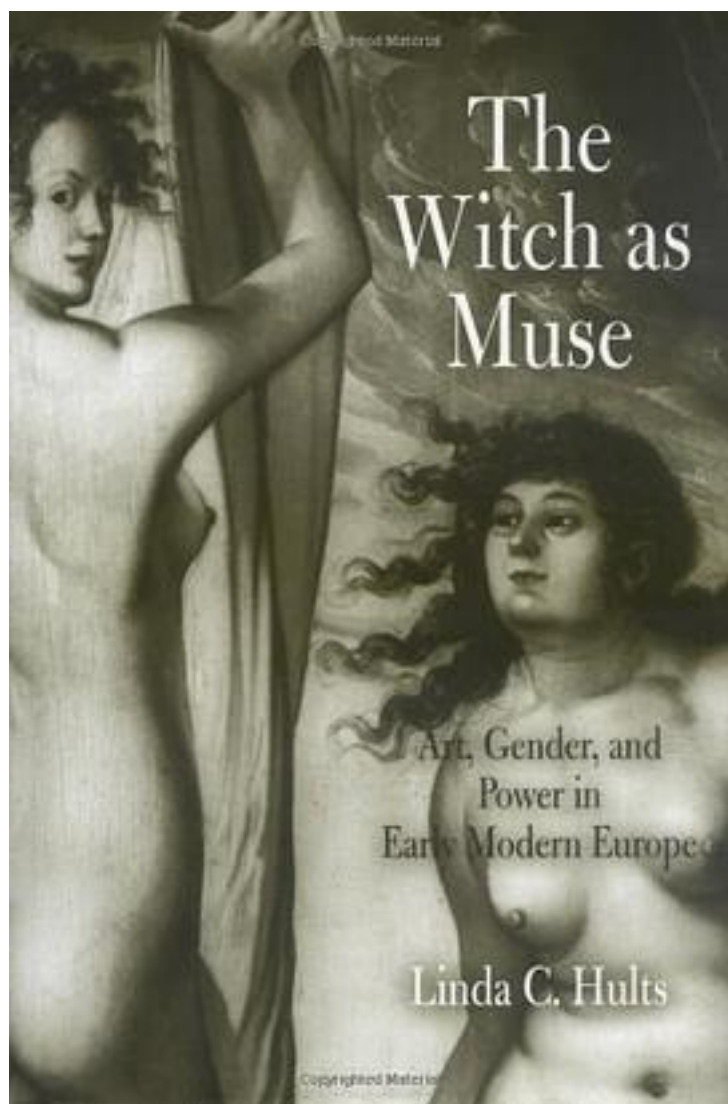


The Witch as Muse



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Occult topics have long fascinated artists, and the subject of witches-their imagined bodies and fantastic rituals-was a popular one for painters and printmakers in early modern Europe. Focusing on several artists in depth, Linda C. Hulst probes the historical and theoretical contexts of their work to examine the ways witches were depicted and the motivations for those depictions. While studying the work of such artists as Durer, Baldung, Jacques de Gheyn II, and Goya, Hulst discerns patterns suggesting that the imagery of witchcraft served both as an expression of artistic license and as a tool of self-promotion for the artists. These imagined images of witches were designed to catch the attention of powerful and important patrons. As witchcraft was being debated in political and intellectual centers, these images of witches were likely to be seen by those in power. Durer's early engravings of witnesses made in the wake of the *Malleus maleficarum* of 1487 were crucial in linking the seductive or aged female form with the dangers of witchcraft. The polarized idea of gender pervaded many aspects of early modern culture, including art theory. As the deluded female witch embodied the abuse of imagination and fantasy, so the male artist presented himself as putting those faculties to productive and reasoned use. Because there was little agreement about what constituted witchcraft and how society could best control the phenomenon, the images were viewed differently in various political, social, and religious contexts, but the aim of the artist was always calculated to further his career by the portrayal of witches.

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