

Hexenküche

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As Silvia Federici shows in *Caliban and the Witch*, the rise of capitalism was aided by the transformation of the social category of womanhood, wherein witch hunts formed an essential counterpart to primary accumulation. The expulsion of magic from a world coming under the reigns of labor rationalization was a structurally necessary moment for the ascent of capitalist modes of production in the early modern period. Likewise, the naturalization of women's domestic labor and gestational capacity facilitated the emergent modes of expropriation. The eighteenth-century afforded authors and artists an opportunity to reflect on the effect these transformations had on European society, and magic remained a salient signifier for speculating on the transformations still on the horizon such as the political ascent of the bourgeoisie and industrialization. Paradigmatic for such aesthetic reflection and speculation through the idiom of magic is Goethe's *Faust*.

One theme in *Faust* that retains particular salience today is the manner in which magic mediates between the titular hero's prototypically capitalistic, productive "eternal striving" and the deviant, nonprocreative eroticism of the characters surrounding him. This confrontation is nowhere more apparent than in the "Witch's Kitchen" scene. In the scene Faust and his demonic companion, Mephistopheles, employ the services of a witch to assist Faust in his quest for ultimate gratification. Throughout, various forms of productivity are performed as experimental modes of articulating and regulating desire. Lockian conceptualizations of the rational self are confronted with more playful modes of selfhood that are expressed through the medium of magic. In this manner a relatively short scene employs the idea of magic in the European cultural imagination to raise transformative questions on the relations between gender, labor, domesticity, theories of value and exchange, personhood and art. Goethe's musings on this nexus illustrate ways that women's abortive capacities transgress and subvert the ideological underpinnings of modern homo-economicus, presenting it with a threat at once so powerful and so seemingly impossible as to only be signifiable in the languages of magic and poetry. The "Witch's Kitchen" has long been understood as a critical piece of literature on the subject of gender, recently being analyzed by Patricia Simpson in her historical review of literary portrayals of prostitution. By using methodological tools based on the works of Silvia Federici, Johann Huizinga and a critical reading of John Locke, this presentation integrates the aesthetic dimension of hitherto under-theorized portrayals of magic in the "Witch's Kitchen" into the conversation on gender in eighteenth century literature and its prevailing relevance for contemporary discourses.