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THE FLYING CHARM: TO COLOGNE IN THE WINE CELLAR. ON THE HISTORY OF A SCHOLARLY LEGEND

Willem de Blécourt

Meertens Institute, Amsterdam

wjcdeb@historicalanthropologist.eu

Abstract: The charm *Over Hedges and Bushes* (Dutch: *Over heg en haag*; English: *Over Thick and Over Thin*; German: *Oben aus und nirgend an*) primarily occurs within the legend *Following the Witch*. It is impossible to study the one without the other. The crux of the legend consists of the pendant charm *Through Thick and Through Thin* and equivalents, which ridicules the original charm. In this contribution, both the modern European distribution of the legend and its earlier history are investigated from a Dutch perspective. It is argued that the pendant charm is the modern version of calling on God during a witches' flight or a witches' banquet. This change made the legend, previously used to underline the reality of the witches' flight, into a joke. It transfigured the deadly fall from the air, which earlier was a warning against conversing with demons, into a hazardous undertaking which affected bodily apparel. It questioned the actions of men who tried to follow the superstitions of women. Yet the legend will not have been understood everywhere in the same way.

Keywords: migratory legends, witches' flight, charm, satire.

The twentieth-century Dutch-language versions of the charm *Over Hedges and Bushes to the Wine Cellar in Cologne* are embedded in two stories. The first is an adapted version of the Migratory Legend *Following the Witch*. The second story is the one about the lover discovering that his girl-friend is a witch and ending the relationship (De Blécourt 2017). In contrast to elsewhere in Western Europe, in Dutch the charm is supplemented with a destination, to Cologne in the Wine Cellar, which adds a third story, *The Ride With the Fairies*. The following is an example of the legend:

> On the heath in Genk lived a woman with her daughter, but they were ill-famed. People told a lot of things about that woman. A boy courted the daughter, but a friend of him warned him that the woman was a witch.

> The next time when he visited them the boy pretended to be drunk and saw that the woman took a jar out of the chimney. She put the ointment [out of the jar] on herself and then on her daughter and said:
>
> May the devil carry us over hedge and bush to Cologne in the wine cellar.
>
> Then they flew off, out of the fireplace. When they were gone the boy also wanted to go to the wine cellar. He copied everything he had seen and heard, but he made a mistake with the words and said:
>
> May the devil carry me through hedge and bush to Cologne in the wine cellar.
>
> The devil took him and carried him through hedges and bushes and thorns to Cologne. When he arrived he was not wearing anything anymore and bled everywhere. The woman was angry and to punish him she gave him two cow's legs. The black Friars brought the boy back home for he could not do that on his own. But he kept the cow's legs.

This story, which I have slightly abridged, was told to the legend collector Fernand Beckers in 1947 by an eighty-one-years-old man at Sint-Huibrechts-Hern, a village in the Belgium province of Limburg, about twenty kilometers due west of Maastricht (Beckers 1947: 137-138). It was the first of over a hundred stories about the witches' journey to the wine cellar which were collected by students in Flanders (Dutch-speaking Belgium) over the next fifty-five years (Van Effelterre 2005). For the most part these stories are indexed under nr. 511 (Sinninghe 1943: 84-85). They exhibit the usual variation; for instance, the devil is not mentioned everywhere as the actual carrier and the courtship occurs in only about one third of the stories. The destination can also vary: it may be a cellar in Aachen, in Amsterdam, Leuven or even Berlin. The story was also known in the Netherlands, but due to a different kind of field work the quantitative results amounted to less than a fourth of the Flemish texts, a difference explained below.

In this article, I will not speculate about the meaning of the cow's legs however enticing that may be (a horse's leg also figures), but instead discuss the abundant variants of the legend in the Dutch language (dialects included). I will then pay attention to the modern European distribution of the story, internationally known as *Following the Witch* (Christiansen 1958, ML 3045; cf. Thompson 1956, G242.7). Finally, I will delve into its history. It appears that the Dutch rendering with the lover following his girl friend is more or less unique within

Europe. In its latest incarnation the wrongly pronounced charm also appears relatively young; my estimate for its origin would be the first half of the nineteenth century or perhaps a little earlier, as the oldest notations date from the 1840s (Van Haver 1964: 381-385). Another reason for this relatively late date is that in the early modern period there existed a perfect alternative. Instead of the wrong pronounciation of the charm the name of God was mentioned. That, however, could only happen at the end of the story. As this concerns a specific charm within a narrative which was unlikely to have any meaning outside the narrative, it requires that both are studied together.

Another thing I would like to mention by way of introduction is that notwithstanding the story's twentieth-century presence in the memory of the elderly informants, who were as a rule living in the Belgium and Dutch countryside, I still consider this a "scholarly" legend initially transmitted by intellectuals discussing the witches' ability to fly. How it was exactly transmitted from one group to another can easily be the subject of another article; suffice to say here that the story circulated in popular print and that the early folklorists mined these for there collections (see: e.g. De Blécourt 2015). The legend is also very much fabricated, in the sense that its different parts were partly made up and partly combined. It was also, at least in the Dutch context, a Catholic legend which only in its later phases spread to non-Catholic people. On top of that one may also wonder why being inquisitive about the girl's status has to lead to such a severe result for the boyfriend and not for the girl. More importantly, flying was not an issue in Dutch witch trials until the late sixteenth century and by then the trials were practically over (De Blécourt 2016). It was the most contested subject in early-modern European witchcraft theory. Thus the early-modern notion of use of ointment, in the Netherlands but also in adjacent Flanders and Germany, derived from a demonological source, is restricted to that period; in Flanders it extends to the first half of the seventeenth century. The ointment was a narrative device and not actually used (Ostling 2016). The role of devil and ointment in the later legend are among the reasons I consider this particular legend a "scholarly" or academic legend.

THE VARIANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The stories and charms catalogued by Jacques Sinninghe (1947) and Jozef van Haver (1964: 381-385) constitute the legend's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history and thus, given the scarcity and haphazardness of the research, reveal some of the legend's status before the much more thorough research of the 1950s and 1960s. The comparison makes one cautious of the substantial

gaps in the earlier notations (the same applies to the English and to a lesser extend the German research, see below) and any conclusion can only be tentative. At least as concerns the Netherlands, the endeavours in the 1960s can in some way be seen as supplementary to the earlier ones.

Nevertheless, the legend seems to have dwindled in the meantime: against the fourteen references in Van Haver which portray the existence of legend type 511– sixteen if one counts the Frisian texts which were omitted by Van Haver – there are only seven that have been encountered in the later research (WEV013105; Krosenbrink 1968:38, 109-110; Dinnissen 1993: 21-22, 139; ENGELS127; De Blécourt 2010 = Brouwers) – fifteen if the eight Frisian texts of Jaarsma are included, although only five of them feature something of a narrative. As the new research was much more thorough and systematic one would expect a substantial increase in the number of tales; since this did not happen, it can be interpreted as the story being in decline. Jaarsma's fieldwork in North-eastern Frisia was the most intensive in the Netherlands (Meder & Venbrux 2004) and because of its quantity any inclusion of his results distorts that of the other fieldworkers; it also skews a historical comparison. Heupers, after Jaarsma the second most prolific field worker in the Netherlands, did not come across the legend in Utrecht, the province in the centre of the Netherlands. The legend was thus, apart from eastern Frisia, primarily present along the Dutch eastern border. In that area it is mentioned eight times before 1950 and seven times in the 1960s. However, it mostly occurred in its simple form, namely without the extention of the lover travelling after his girl friend. This over-arching theme is restricted to only a few texts from the provinces of Groningen (Huizenga-Onnekes 1970: 47), Overijssel (Elderink 1937: 246-247) and Limburg (Kemp 1968: 192-194; De Blécourt 2010). The question is whether or not it was always incorporated in the legend. During the 1960s the theme of marrying a witch had apparently lost its power.

The 1920s version from Groningen (Ter Laan 1930: 183-184) contains the charm:

Duvel, neem mie op.	Devil, take me up
Over hegen, over stegen,	Over hedges, over alleys
Over ale wegen	Over all roads
Tegen baargen op	Against mountains

This is the only recorded instance where the transvection is incorporated in the charm. I will further discuss this in the section on Flanders.

From the east of the Netherlands stems one of the most elaborate spells in which rhyme words are added and the journey is described in more detail:

Stip, stap, stoet,	[meaningless rhymewords]
Ut vorsgat oet,	Out of the hole in the roof
Deur ut sloep (slop),	Through the hole in the barn
Ovver de beume,	Over the trees
Met maone klaor,	With a bright moon
En stearne helder,	And sparkling stars
Naor Köln in 'n wienkelder.	To Cologne in the wine cellar

In this instance it is a witch who makes the mistake and says "deur" (=through) instead of "ovver" (Krosenbrink 1968: 38), but the story and certainly the charm seems to be a literary elaboration by the author (Blanken 1953: 303). A Frisian version which mentions forests, trees, mountains and rivers over which one should travel (Jaarsma CJ021302) seems more genuine. As in all the Frisian versions here it is significant that the charm appears in Dutch in an otherwise Frisian texts. This shows that the charm and therefore also the legend were imported there.

FLEMISH VARIANTS

The 115 Flemish legend variants of *Following the Witch* were mainly noted among men: 84 versus only 31 from women. Viewed by province, the differences are even more pronounced. In Limburg, the province that provided more than half of the legend texts, 46 were told by men and 13 by women. Only in the province of Antwerp, where a mere eleven legends were collected, was the number about equal between men and women: six versus five. In Vlaams-Brabant, the eleven texts from women were still sett against twice that amount of texts from men. It seems reasonable to conclude that this was a male tale, which occasionally was also remembered by women. I do not know the reasons for the particular geographical distribution, only that it corresponded with the

stories presence in the eastern parts of the Netherlands (and the few in Western Germany, as described below).

In contrast to the Netherlands, the Flemish fieldworkers only worked for a couple of weeks in their assigned area. The variants they collected show the whole range of oral transmission, from the barely remembered notion of the invisible witches flying through the air to Aken in the winecellar (Celis 1954: 131) and "the witches flew to the wineplaces in Germany" (Daniels 1965: 149) to the more elaborate stories about the lover following his girl-friend. Sometimes it is even a witch who mispronounces the charm (Princen 1965: 134; Callens 1968:100; Ooms 1968: 96) or the story is transposed onto the eighteenth-century goat riders, a male band of robbers (Beckers 1947: 343; Princen 1965: 69) or onto free masons (Van Wesenbeeck 1969: 57; Coremans 1977: 82). In one instance the boy became a witch himself since the girl told him the right formula afterwards (Smets 1965: 169). Twice the mispronounced charm is joined to the story about the hunchbacks (ATU 503), who in Flanders happened upon a meeting of witches rather than fairies (Jackers 1958: 218-218; Schoefs 1996: 432-433). This is just to show the kind of exceptions that occurred. I have not tried to make my display of them exhaustive although their numerical occurrence is below a handful each.

These slight variations nevertheless make it hard to conclude that the devil, who features in the legend about Genk quoted at the beginning of this essay as well as in a version from Groningen, makes more than a cursory appearance. The informants of Celis, for instance, left the devil out when they told about the witches flying to the wine cellars, but when they told about a goat-rider who botched the charm, they added that he was associated with the devil (Celis 1954: 227). In another instance, it is merely stated that the witch had sold her soul to the devil and he is not mentioned in relation to the flight (Kesteleyn 1964: 143). Dreezen, on the other hand, noted two flying legends in which the devil appeared: once in the charm (Dreezen 1967: 223) and once in an elaboration of the narrator, "then the devil brought them there" (Dreezen 1967: 225). In a legend recorded thirty-five years later, the devil again is part of the charm (Beerten 2003: 141-142). Although the devil occupied a regular place in intellectual theories about flying witches, little of it trickled down in the later stories. This appears in accordance with the position of the devil in popular witchcraft discourse.

The detail of the ointment, applied before the witch flies off, is more pronounced in Flanders. It is almost exclusively connected to the courtship variants: of the thirty-six texts in which the boy follows his girl-friend to the witches' meeting, twenty five reveal that the girl has smeared herself – once with holy water kept in a jar (Deraemaecker 1977: 591-592) and once with face powder

(Smets 1965: 169), which I consider acceptable variations. Only twice a follower applies ointment outside the context of a courtship; once he is not specified (Beckers 1947: 142) and once it concerns the girl's father who spies on both his wife and his daughter (Jackers 1958: 215-217). This implies that the notion of witches applying ointment is transmitted within the narrative of the courtship story and not as a part of the narrative about flying witches in general. Since the courtship narrative is the youngest addition to the legend, and the greasing was not transmitted separately, it provides another indication of the constructed nature of the legend. Another regular feature, which I counted seventeen times, is the presence of the girl's mother. It may mean that witchcraft is considered hereditary, yet in every case it is a part of the courtship variant and it thus remains unclear whether it has any value beyond this particular legend.

Notwithstanding the relatively large amount of legend texts, especially compared to the adjacent countries, very little can be concluded about the flying charm. Mostly it is mispronounced and sometimes not even that, but it hardly exihibits any variation. People fly over the hedges and bushes, or through them, to the wine cellar. The emphasis lies on the "over" and "through" confusion, including in the few instances where the bushes are replaced by "everything" (Bohez 1956: 137; Mattheeuws 1963: 168, among others). The two words sound as different from each other in Dutch as they do in English. Only the destination of the journey varies, as well as the effect on the unfortunate follower. The legend does not elaborate on the relation between mispronouncing the charm and any worries the boy might have had about his girl-friend, at least it is nowhere mentioned why the boy (or anyone else) made the mistake. In six legends, however, the flyer is forbidden to pronounce the name of God. During the feast or on the way back the boy breaks this rule and everyone disappears (Princen 1965: 68, 69; Coremans 1977: 68-70) or he falls down because his vehicle is suddenly gone (Beckers 1947: 138-139; Vankerkhoven 1964; Deraemaeker 1977: 341-342). For some reason, the effect of this fall is less severe than the obstacle course to the wine cellar.

The Flemish folk narrative researcher Marcel van den Berg has interpreted the popularity of the legend in terms of its humor. In essence it is a joke and the follower of the witch (usually a man) plays a silly, ridiculous role (1993: 1681). There is much to say for this approach as the man's stupidity explains why the mistake is made and it gives the narrator the opportunity to elaborate on the effects on the man's body. In the Flemish texts this is done to some extent. It is told that the protagonist is "torn to pieces" (Beckers 1947: 142), that he was only wearing rags (Dreezen 1967: 223), "mauled and blodied" (Jackers 1958: 218-219), or without clothes (Van der Linden 1964: 121-122). This is the same in the legends from the Netherlands. There the witch's follower emerges "more

dead than alive" (Scolius 1853: cvii), or "not without pain" (Dykstra 1896: 155). Or as a Frisian informant put it: "They were hit and punched by branches and completely soaked and under the mud and their hands and faces were scratched and skinned" (Jaarsma CJ021302). As I will elucidate below, this reveals a crucial difference in relation to the earlier, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century versions of the legend. The question is, at what point in the story does the joke start? If the man is portrayed as stupid by mangling the charm, would he not already be considered daft by spying on a witch, or by courting her?

EUROPEAN DISTRIBUTION

The flying legend can be counted among the so-called "migratory legends", mainly *fabulates*; they can only be called *memorates* in their half-forgotten, truncated form. This specific notion of the legend is mainly popular among Irish, English, Scottish and Norse, Swedish and Finnish folklorists. Although Katharine Briggs included these legends in her *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales*, they have not made their appearance in the international folktale catalogue (Uther 2004). Only in Spain have attempts been undertaken to incorporate some of these legends into the folktale catalogues; the legend under discussion was given the type number *746, ensuring abiding attention. Yet also in the international context it only concerns a gradual difference from the other folktales, not more than for instance the one between Tales of Magic and Anecdote, or between Fable and Formula Tale. This omission of the Migratory Legend has not advanced its research. As an international (European) team of legend researchers is needed to access the regional variants, here I can only scratch the surface.

There are several Spanish variants of the tale, restricted to the attempt at flying; at least in the 1930 catalogue the destination is not given. The charm (or "formula") has more religious connotations here: a girl says "with God and Holy Mary" instead of "without" or "below rivers, mountains, with all the devils" instead of "above rivers" (etc.) (Boggs 1930: 84). Aragonese researchers classify the tale as *The Novice Wizard*; they generally concern a man following his wife and when, after saying "I believe in God and Saint Mary" and being bumped around the house, he finally arrives at the meeting place, he thanks God, and everyone disappears (Samper 2015: 21-22). In Spain, the humor is less evident (I think). There are huge stretches of Europe I do not have any information about, but apart from Spain the legend was also told in Croatia, where the formula was generally "not against tree, nor stone", which was then

pronounced without the negative (Bošković-Stulli 1992: 148-149). Again, this illustrates the need for more precise local research.

In Great Britain and Ireland, the flying legend is rare and the one with the spell is separated from the journey to the wine cellar, which is mostly conducted by fairies (ML 5006*). ML 3045 has not been encountered in Ireland (Almqvist 1991: 275) and England and Scotland both yielded only a few examples. In the case of England, where mostly the charm was recorded and was mispronounced by a fellow witch (Burne 1883: 158), this result can be ascribed to the poor state of legend research. This cannot be concluded for Ireland, however, with its abundant research. Scotland exibits three versions, albeit not in sufficient detail (Macdonald 1995: 40) (I have not consulted these texts in the Edinburgh archives). In a rather fantastic Scottish version dating from the early nineteenth-century, there is no charm that has to be repeated and the meeting is dispersed when the man refers to God (Briggs 1970: 751-754). It is not known to what extent the more recent Scottish stories are derived from this, if at all. The Scandinavian legends are better preserved, if not always accessible.

Under the type designation ML 3045, Reidar Christiansen has grouped a selection of Norwegian legends which correspond to the flight to the wine cellar in the Dutch-language legends. But in as far as the imitator is described, it is a servant and sometimes a discharged soldier. That it concerns a servant implies that he follows his mistress and not his girlfriend (Christiansen 1958: 46-48). The Swedish tale catalogue has five subtypes of the same story about a "man" without further specification. Subsequent types figure a soldier, a servant or a husband as the main character (Af Klintberg 2010: 275-279). If lovers are a theme in the Swedish legends, they remain invisible. It can be concluded that the Scandinavian folklorists did not notice any lovers. Witches do have daughters, which is also the case in the Netherlands and Belgium; only the specific Norwegian tale about the White Serpent, which is cooked and gives a girl the power of clairvoyance, does not occur in the Low Countries (cf. KHM 17). The adjacent type, in which someone discovers the daughter of a witch to have particular powers, would even better lend itself for a lover's story. In Norway, however, the minister discovers the girl's abilities (Christiansen 1958: 41-44; cf. Kvideland & Sehmsdorf 1988: 187-190). The Swedish legend catalogue has a separate section about how the owner of a milk-stealing creature is discovered. As far as can be seen, she is an old woman instead of a young girl (Af Klintberg 2010: 293). The theme, similar to that of the English familiar (de Blécourt 2018), is likewise unknown in the Dutch language area. Both tales have been recorded in Scotland (MacDonald 1995: 35-38).

As far as conclusions can be drawn about Scandinavian flying spells, there is little that discerns them from their Flemish counterparts. Mistakes are made

by mangling the prepositions: "out here" becomes "down here" (Lindow 1978: 169-170), "up and out" is turned into "up and down", "bump against nothing" into "bump against everything". Even the "through" instead of "over" error occurs several times (Af Klintberg 2010: 275-276). This means that stories may have been translated from another language, perhaps Dutch or German, into Norse or Swedish. It also implies that a more thorough examination is necessary to establish the precise patterns of the tale's distribution. Although it should be possible to discover the year of publication or even that of notation of the Scandinavian texts, I have not undertaken this exercise here but have kept it for the German texts.

GERMAN VARIANTS

The tale about the witches of Menzing, near Munich in Bavaria, was probably not local. It contains one of the oldest examples of a courting boy, but as far as can be found out it is unique in southeastern Germany. There are only corraborating texts from the Upper Palatinate, about 150 kilometers to the north. In the Menzing text, the boy finds his girl-friend preparing for a journey to the Blocksberg on a sheaf of hay and is invited to come along on the condition that he should not speak. Near Vienna the boy cries out because of a dangerous manoeuvre and he is dropped in a wine cellar (Schöppner 1853: 341-342). Apart from an odd geography in the story (Vienna is definitely not on the way to the Blocksberg), the boy is not spying on his girl-friend and the wine cellar merely seems a place to fall into, not a destination. Above all: no charm needs to be pronounced and there is thus no opportunity for any mistake. These are all internal indications that the story was not local, or at least not very well remembered. The Palatinate legends concern a farm hand spying on his mistress, a wine cellar in Bohemia and a mangled charm: "touch everything" (*überal an*); there the legend is supplemented with a suspicious Apuleian ending (Schönwerth 1857: 372-374).

A legend from Cochem (Eifel) further to the west, published a few years later, does follow the pattern more closely: the boy spies on his love and her mother and imitates their actions, but says "through" (*durch*) instead of "over". This version ends with the boy waking up with a golden cup (Schmitz 1858: 47-48), which refers to another legend (ML 6045). In the early twentieth century a story with a similar beginning was found in the same Eifel area. In that instance, the boy had to walk for three years before he was home again (Zender 1980: 384). Texts from Xanten (Bodens 1937: 194) and Recklinghausen (Münsterland) (Henßen 1954: 48-49) confirm the legend's presence in the west of Germany,

adjacent to the border with the Netherlands. Legends were clearly exchanged accross administrative boundaries.

For the whole of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany I have found over thirty legend texts about people following a witch or witches. No doubt there are more, but they will have to do for a first overview. Typically they restrict the legend to one (at the most two) occurrences per area. The collecting of repertoires only began in earnest during the nineteen-twenties and most of the texts date from before that time. In the North of Germany the destination of the flight is often the Blocksberg (Kuhn 1859: 68-70; Bartsch 1879: 115; Jahn 1886: 340), a legendary meeting place of witches which by the nineteenth century had solidified on the Brocken in the Harz mountains. In Schwaben, the destination was the Heuberg (Meier 1852: 183). Sometimes the witches flew to a cellar (Baader 1851: 121-122; Colshorn 1854: 245-246); only in Saterland was the wine cellar's location (Bremen) made part of the spell (Siebs 1893: 391 = Van der Kooi & Schuster 2003: 229-230). In most cases the destination is not specified.

In the German legends too, the mispronounciation of the charm hinges on the "over" – "through" opposition (f.i. Woeste 1848: 45-46), or the similar "nothing" – "everything" one (Jahn 1886: 344). Yet the results seem to be less severe or less pronounced than what was found in Flanders. A man arriving at the witches' meeting place in the form of a bloody skeleton (De Cock 1921: 22) does not occur in Germany. In exceptional cases clothes are torn and travellers end up with bruses (Reiser 1895: 181), or are scratched and damaged all over (Meier 1852: 183). It may indicate that the joke was only understood in some places.

One of the earliest modern examples of the charm can be read in Wolf's *Niederländische Sagen*, but this is only the first part: *Over haeg en over heg, tot Keulen in den wijnkelder*. Instead of the mispronounced repeat spell, it features the farmer on a calf shouting: "God bless us all", whereupon the calf disappears and the man finds himself in a strange land, apparently after he survived the fall (Wolf 1843: 469). Something similar is reported from Northern Germany, where a boy on the return journey cries out: "What an efficient jump for a three-years old bull" and has to walk for more than a week to get home (Kuhn 1848: 134; also Siebs 1893: 391, goat). These legends can be grouped together with others in which the taboo of speaking, or more specifically pronouncing the name of God, has taken the place of the attempt to copy the witch's spell. Next to the fall on the return journey, this is expressed in the blessing during the witches' meal. In a legend from the Allgau a man sees the witches dancing around stark naked and giving homage to someone with goat's feet, upon which he cries out "Jesus, Maria and Joseph" and he is left alone in a swamp (Reiser

1895: 181). In the valley of Paznau a man proclaims that salt is a gift of God, whereupon everyone disappears (Alpenburg 1861: 200-201).

EARLIER HISTORY

Tracing legends back beyond the nineteenth century amounts to following thin threads of written or printed evidence. The motif of witches gathered in a wine cellar had a long history, going back to the thirteenth-century (de Bourbon; see: Broedel 2003: 111-112). In medieval times it mostly appeared in Latin texts, which could be read by intellectuals all over Europe. In the late sixteenth century both cellar and spell became connected to the German Blocksberg. The first instance of this connection appears in a pamphlet about the witches in Osnabrück, which was mostly a fictional report and not very accurate historically. In this pamphlet it is mainly stated that witches travelled to wine cellars after convening on the mountain (Behringer 2000: 210). In the seventeenth century the wine cellar motif became even more popular through pamphlets on witch trials and through its appearance in the several versions of the Faust story (Peuckert 1963). The story was also brought to England and Scotland; the 1590 pamphlet about the witches of Berwick even provided a woodcut.

The wine cellar story featured in the early seventeenth-century sermons on witches (*Hexenpredigten*) (Meder 1605: 80) and at the end of the seventeenth century in the "other part" of the German edition of Remigius (Nicholas Rémy). Now the story already has a number of elements which would resurface in the twentieth-century texts and it certainly has a man spying on witches. After annointing himself with cream he reached the wine cellar, where he was recognised by the inn-keeper's daughter. In this version the man himself and not the witch was put to trial (Remigius 1693: 443). Bartholomäus Anhorn in his *Magiologia* of 1675-76 claimed to have heard the story from a man whose stock of wine had been mysteriously depleted (Brunold-Bigler 2003: 226-227). Like the mountain motif, wine had a strong biblical connotation as it had always been part of the communion (Utz Tremp 2017).

The legend Following the Witch itself had a complicated history, starting with the Apuleius' tale of Pamphilë, book three of *The Golden Ass*, popular in the late Middle Ages (Scobie 1983: 176-187). North of the Alps, however, only the first half was used and the part of the man wanting to change into a bird but becoming an ass was dropped in favour of the flight with the of elves which could end in disaster. A first trace of the deviation from Apuleius can be found in the late thirteenth century collection of sermon exempla, *Historiae Memorabiles*,

by Rudolf von Schlettstadt in which the servant of a monastery takes shelter with a woman who he sees annointing herself and flying away on a vase. He finds himself merely sitting on an ass (instead of changing into one) and ends up at a green meadow (Montesano 2018: 112). The fall of the observer can be found in the early thirteenth-century *Otia Imperialia* of Gervais of Tilbury:

> .. they swiftly crossed the sea with the crowd of lamiae and traversed the earth; but, if in this crowd any one named Christ, he at once fell to the earth, wherever he was and to whatever danger. We have seen in the kingdom of Arles a woman of Beaucaire who thus fell into the middle of the Rhone, up to her navel, and escaped, not without terror (Lea 1939: 174).

The fall itself was derived from the story of Simon the Sorcerer, or Simon Magus. He was the first heretic and his fall is about what God allowed the devil to do and about the power of the Catholic church.

The Italian version of *Following the Witch* by Bartholomeus de Spina from 1523 featured a charcoal burner whose wife had the habit of disappearing at night. While the man pretended to be asleep, he saw his wife anointing herself and flying out of the chimney. He followed her and ended up in a wine cellar, where he was apprehended the following morning. In the middle of the sixteenth century *Following the Witch*, now without the wine cellar, circulated in Germany. The *Zimmersche Chronik* related the story about a companion of a wizard who flew with him on calves to the mountain of Venus, could not keep silent and fell into a stork's nest. In the version by Wolfgang Buttner of 1568, it was situated in the village of Poplitz (Anhalt). A woman used an anointed broom, and her servant copied her with his straw fork, ultimately arriving at the assembly of witches. He was warned not to speak on the return journey, but he noticed he was riding on a calf and made a remark about it. He was thrown off and became a cripple (de Blécourt 2016: 90-92). The version in Del Río, which has the advantage that it was translated into English (Maxwell-Stuart 2000: 95-97), stemmed from the letters of a Flemish physician Balduinus Ronsseus. Here the servant followed his misstress by touching a beam in the hayloft, participated in a meeting with witches and was dropped in a swamp on the way back. In all likelihood both the Dutch and the German versions were indebted to Spina's tale.

The first half of the charm turns up in accounts from trials in Rostock. A man from Güstrow on trial in 1583, who had been to the Blocksberg four times, had been transported there by the devil in the form of a black horse. When he mounted it, he said:

ich hebbe my glath gesmeret,	I greased myself smoothly
dat my niemand begripe	So that no one can grasp me
help mi düfel in dießer pipen	Help me, devil in this pipe [?]
auf und darvan	Up and away
und nergends ahn.	And into nowhere

They had eaten and danced and at the side of the mountain there was a lake with little fish swimming and the longer you looked at them the bigger they became. There were also red apples, but you should not take (eat) them, otherwise you had to remain there (Bartsch 1880: 15). In 1584 a woman repeated the spell; she had put black ointment on her body and also said: Auf und darvan und nergens an (Up and away and into nowhere) (Bartsch 1880: 19). The spell re-emerged in 1623 a trial in Konitz (today's Chojnice) (Grässe 1871: 593-594), but there may be some more examples still hidden in the archives. This German equivalent of the Dutch "over bushes" spell was known earlier in the sixteenth century, but at that time it had very little to do with witches. In the later records of the witch trials there is no sign of any reported mispronounciation by an observer. There is also no independent corroboration from popular printed sources. The annointment, as well as the presence of the devil, occurred in both the pamphlets and the trial accounts. Both the spell and the story were in all probability separate translations from the Italian, as an Italian version of the spell already appeared in the 1428 trial of Matteuccia da Todi (Montesano 2018: 159):

cum aqua et vento	over water and wind
ad nucem de Benevento	towards the walnut (tree) of Benevento

Or in a more extended version (Montesano 2018: 175):

Unguento, unguento	Ointment, ointment
mandame a la noce de Benivento	send me to the walnut of Benevento
supra aqua et supra ad vento	over water and over wind
et supraad omne maltempo	and over any tempest

If any version of the mispronounced charm would have existed in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, it would be something like "God bless you". This motif also appeared in the sixteenth-century Italian sabbat stories in which whole feasts disappeared when the change participant pronounced a blessing. The story was taken up by Bodin in 1580 and by del Río about twenty years later. It was also translated and reprinted in several seventeenth-century German volumes meant for entertainment.

CHANGES

Thus, an earlier version of the flight through the bushes or other obstacles was that concerning a tumble on the return flight from a meeting of witches. The latter did not cause as much harm to the follower as the former because it was meant to implicate the witch rather than to ridicule the observer. The older texts are still preserved among the modern legends, if only to a limited extent. It seems higly unlikely that the joke of the foolish man circulated earlier; at least, I haven't found it amoungst the other witchcraft jokes that were current in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. It is therefore to be presumed that its distribution took place rather quickly, possibly during the early nineteenth century or slightly earlier. Such a rapid distribution was certainly not unheard of, as can be seen in the case of other jokes, but also with fairy tales.

The joke's character as a male tale with a male protagonist of a young age indicates that it was told by older men, partly to warn their younger listeners that they should not marry a witch and partly to make fun of them if they showed too much interest in a particular girl. In the nineteenth century, courting a witch was certainly still an issue, at least in the eastern parts of the Netherlands (de Blécourt 2017). The mispronounciation of the charm was crucial in this plot, not because the charm was easily mangled as "over" and "through" did still sound completely different, in whatever language. The only reason for the boy to make the mistake was therefore that he was stupid, and it is a wonder that he managed to remember the rest of the charm correctly. This stupidity extended through the rest of the legend. At the same time, however, the overall message was still serious. It did not just serve to underline that young men should not include witches among their marriage candidates, but also to proclaim that some women still (wrongly) believed that by applying ointment- they would be able to fly to a witches' meeting, in this case to a wine cellar.

As far as I am able to see, this analysis applies specifically to the Dutch-language legends. Elsewhere in Europe, the *Following the Witch* legend did not address marriage prospects and the results of pronouncing the charm wrongly

were slightly less severe. I leave it to my colleagues to come up with a reasonable explanation for these differences.

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BIO

Willem de Blécourt is a historical anthropologist specialized in the study of witchcraft, werewolves and fairy tales in Europe from the Late Middle Ages to the twentieth century. An Honorary Research Fellow at the Meertens Institute (Amsterdam), his books include *Tales of Magic, Tales in Print. On the Genealogy of Fairy Tales and the Brothers Grimm* (2012), and the edited book *Werewolf Histories* (2015). He is currently putting the last touches to: *The Cat and the Cauldron. A Cultural History of Witchcraft in the Low Countries.*