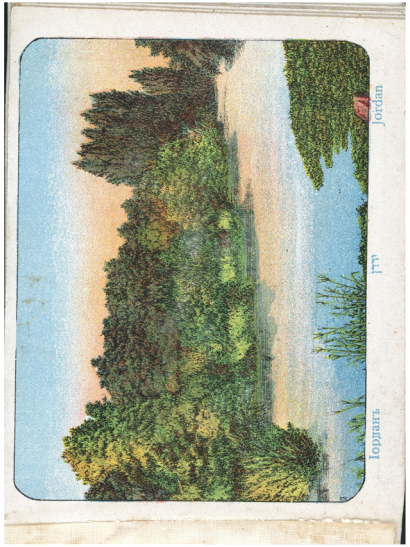
Research
Final Major Project

Maya Bell

‘Flowers of the Holy Land’

These books are made up of full-page colour illustrations (what look to be chromolithographs) of landmark sites in the "Holy Land", opposite to which are mounted arrangements of dried flowers picked from the location shown. The book is bound in boards of olive wood with leather spine. It was published by A. L. Monsohn lithographers, a Jerusalem business dating to 1892.





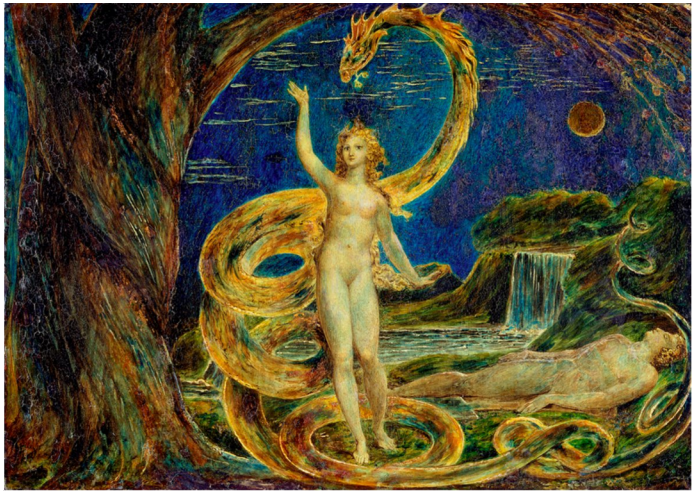




Women in Christianity

This got me to thinking about the Bible's portrayal of women, and all of the contradictory ideas within the Bible that promote women as both inherently sacred *and* sinful.

Based on the stories of Genesis, we know that Eve tempted Adam with the forbidden fruit and thus triggered human's expulsion from Paradise. From this story alone, the identification of woman with evil, temptation and sin thus became a primary ingredient in Christian tradition. While man was associated with the spiritual, the reasonable and the godly, woman was linked to flesh, matter and the world.



William Blake, *Eve Tempted by the Serpent,* 1799-1800

'The male is taken to be the normal representative of the human species, the norm for imaging God and for defining anthropology, sin, redemption and ministry.' The female, in contrast, is seen as 'subordinate and auxiliary to the male. Women never appear in patriarchal theology as representatives of humanity as such. Their normative position is that of absence and silence. When patriarchal theology mentions women, it does so to reinforce its definition of their "place" in the system.'

- Rosemary Radford Ruether

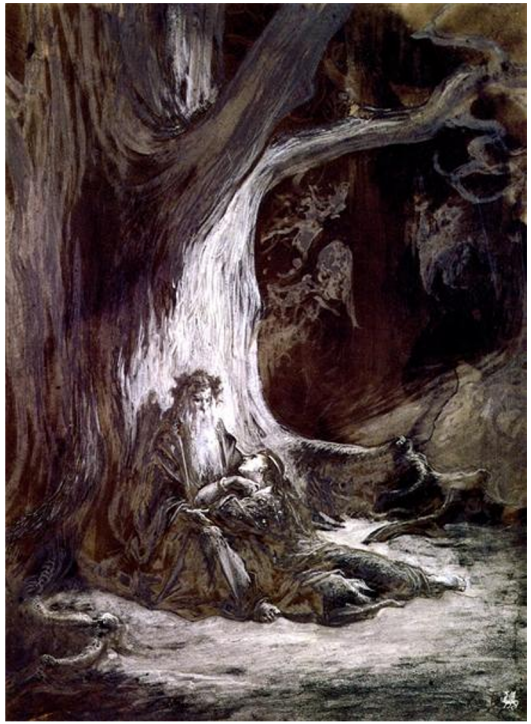
Exodus 22:18

“Thou shall not permit a witch to live”

This verse, with very little clarification or means to identify the attributes of a ‘witch’, not only authorizes the executions of a witch or ‘sorceress’ but explicitly commands them, thus contributing to the slaughter of thousands of defenseless people throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

Witchcraft

- There had been a widespread belief in the existence of witches and the power of black magic for hundreds of years due to the influence of pagan ideas throughout Europe. It seems that countless people practiced folk-medicine that often involved cures and charms.
- Communities throughout history in an all different cultures have relied on the healing knowledge of a shaman-like figure, whether considered to be a ‘wise’ man or woman, often knowledgeable about subjects such as the natural world and herbalistic healing, or ‘magic’.
- In a world where almost all people believed all occurences to be a matter of either work of God, or work of the Devil, there were often difficulties in explaining why certain events may have taken place. It was easy then, to blame these people in such a perceived position of power for events such as an unexplained deaths or crop failures.



Gustave Doré, *Vivian and Merlin*, c. 1867

Malleus Maleficarum

- Before the fifteenth century, there had been no real Christian opposition to the idea of witchcraft or sorcery. However, when in 1487, German clergyman Heinrich Kramer wrote *Malleus Maleficarum ('Hammer of the Witches')*, based on the teaching of Exodus 22:18, it became the second most sold book behind the Bible until 1678.
- It was a foundation for treating witchcraft not as a superstition, but as a dangerous and heretical practice of associating with the Devil — and therefore, a great danger to society and to the church.
- *Hammer of the Witches* incorporated misogynistic ideas and phraseology from Christian religious texts and classical philosophers. These texts, written exclusively by men, depict women as inferior, deceitful, and even malicious.



The Witch Trials

- Following the release of *Hammer of the Witches* the great age of witch trials, which ran between the 15th and 17th century. Was responsible for the deaths of an estimated 80,000 people, 80-90% of which, were women.

- There are many different factors that contributed to this craze, such as economic factors between churches and societal constructs, but arguably the biggest factor was fear mongering born through the misogyny of Christian ideas.



Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Witches*, ca. 1497.

Witchcraft and Sexuality

- Sexuality is a topic synonymous to witchcraft, with a woman's sexuality being considered as one of their tools for conducting the devil's work.

- 'A better parallel to "witch" is the word "whore". Both are time-honoured tools for policing women, meant to shame them into socially prescribed behaviour. A whore transgresses norms of female sexuality; a witch transgresses norms of female power. Witches are often called unnatural because of their ability to threaten men.'

- Heinrich Kramer's obsession with a 'witch' inspired his book.



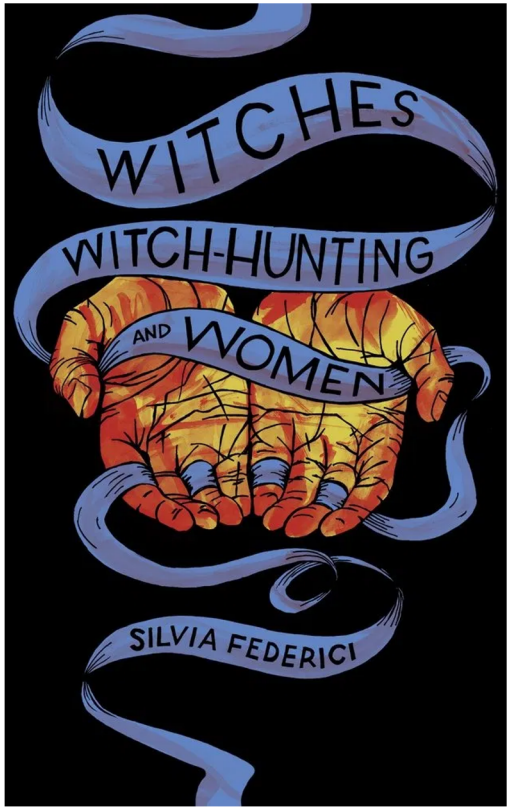
John William Waterhouse, Circe offering the cup to Ulysses, 1891

Sylvia Federici

- She has released two influential books *Caliban and the Witch* and *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*, in which she explains how violence against women during the witch trials was a necessary precondition for capitalism.

- Moving from communal living into capitalism. In order for capitalism to work - waged laborers had to leave their settlements to work, which means someone else needs to be at home doing the domestic work. Gender roles, and the subjugation of women, became newly necessary.

- “The body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers, the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance.”

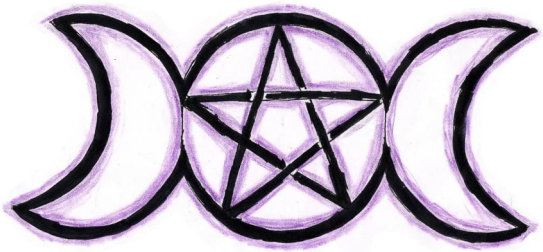


Based on this research, I am going to look at making work that considers ideas about reclaiming the sacred nature of women's bodies from a patriarchal view outlined in society, particularly in sources such as the Bible.
I would like to explore aesthetics that portray the bodies of women not as sinful entities but rather as powerful ones.

The Goddess Movement

The ‘goddess movement’ has been referred to as the answer to the male-oriented religion of Christianity, and it refers to ideas embraced by witchcraft, radical feminism, the occult, and the liberal church. It is based on ideas that the New Age that is about to dawn upon us will be, according to the occult world, a feminine age. Likewise, those who hold this view believe that this current, masculine age has been an age of destruction and broken relationships among humanity.





Climate Change as the Destruction of the Feminine

Climate change is the manifestation of the destruction of the feminine by a masculine society that believes that humans have dominion over the earth — but as we are seeing it will be Mother Nature who has the last word. The destruction of the planet parallels the oppression and exploitation of women in many cultures around the globe — the erasure of the divine feminine has horrific effects, for the center will not hold.

‘Mother Earth, like the sea, are historically considered feminine entities – a telling truth in a patriarchal world. What Western society has sought to exploit and oppress, perhaps William Congreve said it best in 1697: “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.”’



Justine Kurland, Slumber Party, 2000

Justine Kurland

Looks at the ways in which female bodies inhabit and activate the natural world through storytelling to illuminate the landscape as means of self-empowerment and personal expression.

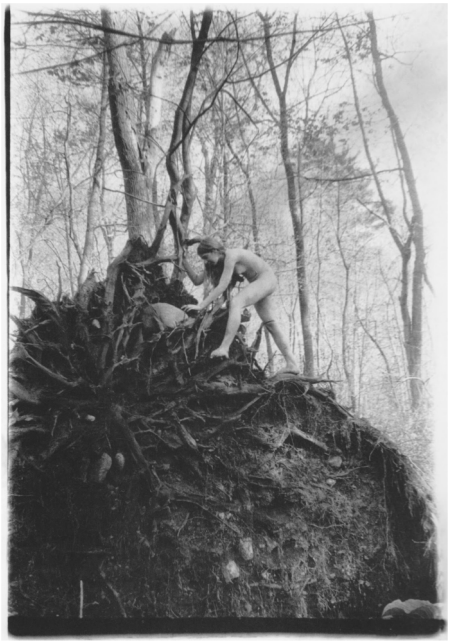
Justine Kurland photographs teenage girls setting off smoke bombs, skinny dipping, and climbing trees as a way to rebel against patriarchal institutions and disrupt gendered expectations.







Francesca Woodman







Esther Teichmann

One artist I've been looking in to is Esther Teichmann. Her images are steeped in notions of mythology and 'womb-like' spaces - beds, swamps, caves and grottos, tying her subjects femininity into the space pictured.













Another aspect of her work that I am interested in is the way in which she collages and layers her images.



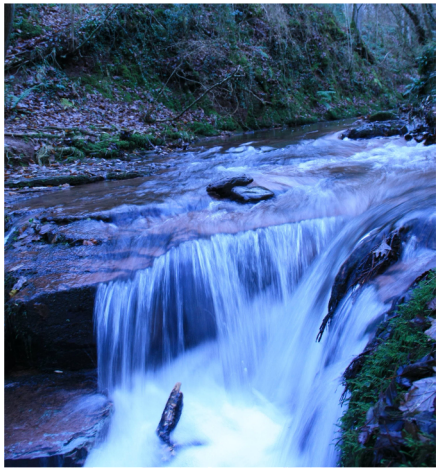




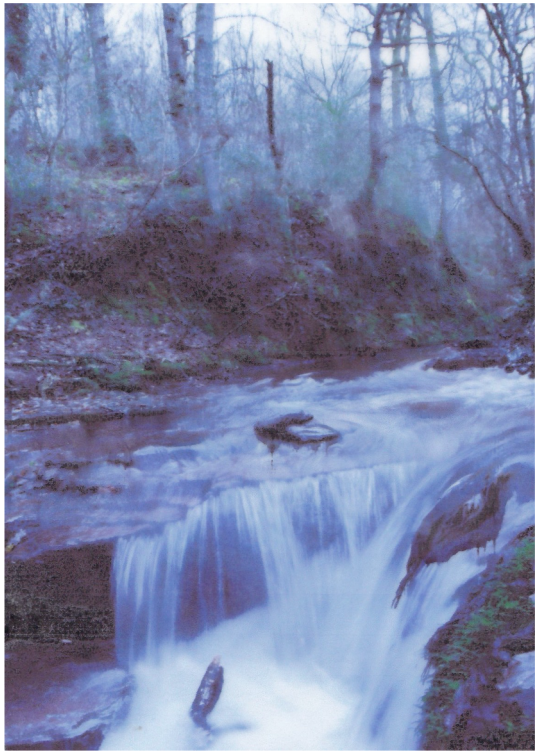
Pwll-Yr-Wrach

In looking for an interesting place with regards to the topics discussed, my research led me to a place near Brecon called ‘Pwll-Yr-Wrach’, or the ‘witches pool’, which was one of the locations where women were supposedly tried in wales for witchcraft through a method known as ‘dunking’ which worked on the premise an accused woman who sank was considered innocent, while floating indicated witchcraft.



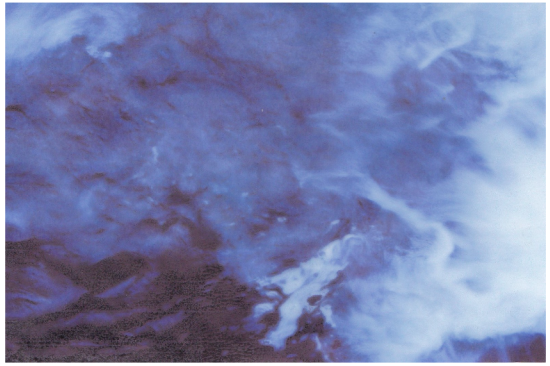








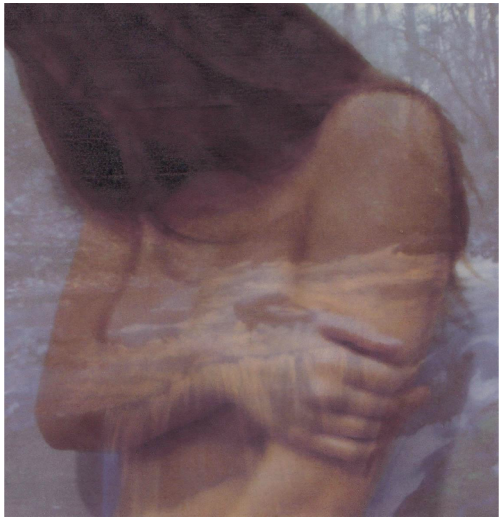


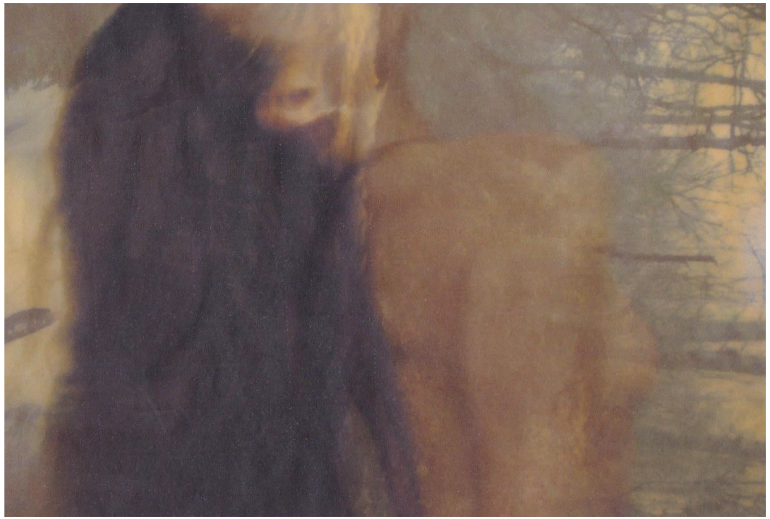


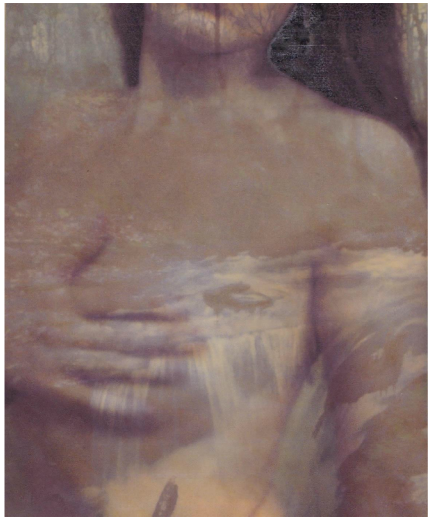


Combining Images

I used these images to experiment in combining the female body with a space using tracing paper. In layering these images on, the female subject embodies the space that is steeped in oppressive history.







Collaged Images







