THE APPARITION OF THE THREE WITCHES: PLACE-MAKING AND MAGICAL SPACE IN PAINTINGS ADAPTED FROM SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

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Abstract: *This essay is concerned with place-making in works by Anglo-Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (*The Three Witches*, 1785) and French painter Alexandre-Marie Colin (*The Three Witches from *Macbeth, 1827). I examine the role that space plays in painting, in relation to the social construction of place, power and identity. In what way does the pictorial representation of Shakespeare's scene or character correspond to a theatrical/metaphoric space on stage? Unlike the spaces of Shakespeare's theatre, which are both visual and theatrical, place-making in painting is visual and colour-oriented, in the sense that pictorial images make the place of action in the scenes depicted through lighting, colour, and characters' movement. These hybrid spaces speak to the viewers about the play's setting and characters, but they make a place of their own, involving the spectators of both play and painting. Shakespeare introduces the witches in the first scene of* Macbeth*, thus giving special emphasis to their actions. Shakespeare portrays these witches as supernatural beings who give Macbeth cryptic prophecies, inviting him to enter magical space. The two painters make place on canvas by exploiting the viewers' imaginary picture about Shakespeare's play and the existing conventions. Therefore, the two paintings make places that audiences could imagine while attending a performance of Shakespeare's tragedy.*

Keywords: *place-making; magical space; William Shakespeare; art.*

People gain incalculable personal and social advantages from art, as they look to the arts to support them through trying times. Art serves as a reminder that everyone has profound emotions, relationships, and the capacity to have an effect on others. Art relates to a universal human experience. Art critic Eleonora Redaelli observes that

> In the artworld, several theories have engaged in articulating the relationship between the art practice and place. Theories of art explain through linguistic constructs the materials, methods, and meanings chosen by the practice. This process of reflection on art contributes not only to mediating its reception, but to the development of the art itself. (404)

Redaelli gives a strong point on how the "theoretical accounts of art do not simply describe the general principles of the practice, rather they draw from other cognate discourses, such as philosophy or social theory, directing attention to the value and meaning of the practice" (404). Redaelli sees that place-making has a valuable importance with history, when she observes that "placemaking does not imply disrupting a place, but rather developing its potential while honouring its past" (409). The idea of "creative placemaking"

(Redaelli 403) encompasses a variety of environmental art forms that commemorate history and culture.

It is not possible to see creative place-making initiatives that artists actively participate in as the exclusive role of arts and artists in society. The articulation of these features, as well as how a new policy paradigm enabled this mode of creative action, lead to a clearer understanding of what artists produce when they interact with the world outside of their studio or a museum. This essay focuses on the concept of place-making in works by Anglo-Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (*The Three Witches*, 1785) and French painter Alexandre-Marie Colin (*The Three Witches*, 1827). I examine the role that space plays in painting, in relation to the social and experiential construction of place, power, and identity. The basic question ask is: in what way does the pictorial representation of Shakespeare's scene or character correspond to a theatrical/metaphoric space on stage? The spaces of Shakespeare's stage are both visual and theatrical, while place-making in painting is based on visual coordinates, such as colour, lighting, and perspective (including focal point). Pictorial images make the place of action in the scene depicted, which is slightly different from the one represented on Shakespeare's stage, but also similar to it.

The painting's hybrid space speaks to the viewers about the play's setting and characters, but it also creates a specific observational place of the painting, which involves the viewer of both the play and the painting in the experience of the landscape being portrayed. Creative place-making projects in contemporary arts and architecture stand out in the context of the real world by utilizing a variety of artistic mediums. By honouring a place's history and distinctive culture, adding new layers of significance, and creating a shared vision for the neighbourhood, artists call attention to specific aspects of a place. It becomes evident that artists participate in place-based art projects in a range of capacities, including those of researchers, collaborators, and facilitators. Artists, thus, act as historians who research local history and gather first-hand knowledge from neighbours and interviewees, as well as attendees of neighbourhood meetings. Framing Victorian paintings alongside contemporary place-based practices clarifies how visual art can operate as public discourse: both the canvas and the site-based project produce shared vantage points, amplify particular voices, and invite collective interpretation. Seen in this light, the painting's experiential and observational place is not an isolated aesthetic effect but part of a broader cultural strategy—one that uses artistic form to make place legible, contested, and communal, and that reverberates throughout the composition. Creative place-making in Victorian art, therefore, is a form of discourse, which speaks to viewers about the painting's experiential and observational place, which reverberates throughout the artistic composition.

Applying what we witness with contemporary arts to Victorian paintings, which are, thus, transformed into social spaces through place-making, it can be argued that the history of Shakespeare's plays is remembered and space is given visual bounds. Place-making in painting is visual and discourse-oriented because pictorial images create the site of action through events represented on canvas. The settings of Shakespeare's theatre, however, are both visual and dramatic, implying dynamics on stage. Mick Lennon discusses the role of the arts in place-making, saying that "placemaking is thereby the term commonly used in the related fields of architecture, planning and urban design to describe the process of creating spaces that are desirable for people to live, work and visit" (Lennon 449). The comfort derived from places created in art can also be applied to Shakespeare's drama. In Shakespeare's time, as today, people went to the theatre to see spaces that they had never visited, but only heard of. They created a mental space about those locations, which they were ready to compare to what they saw on stage. Yet Shakespeare's stage was bare, devoid of decors, and settings were represented through language. Therefore, the mental spaces and observational capacities of each spectator are important, and they create a certain place in the audience's minds.

The question of mental or imaginary space has received attention in many approaches to mind and consciousness in art. For example, in "The Space of Perception" (2008), art critic Tim Mehigan explores the evolving understanding of consciousness and perception, particularly focusing on the concept of mental space. Mehigan discusses how these philosophical shifts have influenced the separation of mental and physical space, a distinction that was crucial for the development of modern science. Mehigan also examines the impact of Renaissance art, particularly the technique of single-point perspective, on the conceptualization of space and perception, showing how the Renaissance changed ideas about space in painting. As Mehigan observes,

> On the basis of a mathematical idea – for mathematics is needed to draw the orthogonal lines and geometric relations that obtain between the objects depicted on the flat surface – [Renaissance] art could suddenly produce a representation of objects in space that conformed more or less to the way these objects seem to appear to human perception. (10)

This artistic innovation paralleled philosophical developments in the Renaissance and contributed to bridging the gap between mental and physical realms. This statement is especially important when discussing Victorian art, which was inspired by Renaissance perspectival views.

Considering the correlation between space and place in painting, art critics have reached a consensus regarding the definite distinctions between space and place. In "The Metaphysics of Space as Device and Subject in

Painting" (2023), Ella Whateley examines painting to explore how an individual's sense of an inner world directly affects their experience of the outer world. The painter's challenge is to influence the viewer's experience of the world and one primary method is to translate three-dimensional space into two-dimensional form. As Whateley observes about Renaissance art, "During the Renaissance, the development of perspective placed painted subjects in the illusion of a constructed space. These mimetic spaces drew the viewer behind the surface of the painting into a world of metaphor and spiritual signification" (211). Thus, visual language of represented space becomes device and subject through which painting creates a space of spiritual emulation. The relationship between space, place, the human being and being-in-the-world, therefore, is a common concept that appears in painting, and yet there is also diversity in the reality, imagination, and the representation of space and place in various painters.

The concept of "space" is addressed in Yuan Ding's *The Relationship Between Space Field and Real Space in Art* (2021). Ding states that "no art can exist without the limitation of time and space" (7). The space of art, which also limits the look and shape of creative works, is a crucial requirement that undergirds the mode of expression. Ding also remarks that "the understanding of space has directly changed the face of art, especially painting" (7). When chasing the allure of expression, art acknowledges the existence of space. Space encompasses not simply the area in which people live, but also the practice of art. Ding argues that "space is to art what earth is to plants" (10). Therefore, the visual cognition that underlies art was initially derived from space, and this sort of cognition subsequently expanded into an aesthetic perspective before becoming a component of its worldview. Planar two-dimensional space has been investigated, as our understanding of space has evolved and grown. Instead of simplifying, flattening broadens the area of human understanding. The development of technical tools and the extension of vision have allowed artworks to influence space from a variety of angles.

Space in art is the region above, below, and within an item. Space may be created by artists, photographed, or built by architects. This component is present in all visual arts. It might be two-dimensional or three-dimensional, positive or negative, open or closed, shallow or deep. Space is not real in a drawing or painting, yet it seems that way. The focus of the painting is positive space. Negative space is the void inside, above, and around. Artists strive to create aesthetically appealing compositions of their topics and items in order to draw the audience in. The framework that supports the topic in the image and guides the viewer's attention across the artwork is thought of as the composition, which is also known as the design or structure of what is being shown. In the two paintings discussed, place-making techniques, such as the use of colour, lighting, perspective and focal point, allow the viewer to see

what is not directly represented in the painting, the emotions experienced by the characters, or the experience of place.

In direct relation to space is the experiential and symbolic place in painting. In the introduction to *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place* (2002), Meredith Wilson and Bruno David discuss the notion of "place markings" (7) in paintings: "Place markings are not found randomly across the landscape, but rather are an ordered component of socially constructed space" (Wilson, David 7). As they conclude, "We thus conceive of place markings not simply as *signs* loaded with conscious, intended messages, but rather as the result of relations between people, places, and things that have emerged from historical circumstances (however perceived)" (7). Therefore, social space is inscribed in painting, and this is a form of place marking for Wilson and David, or, as I see it, of place-making in that particular painting.

The Tragedy of Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's shorter tragedies, first performed in 1606 for King James I at Hampton Court. Shakespeare introduces the witches in the first scene of the play, thus giving special emphasis to their appearance. The witches are portrayed as supernatural beings who give Macbeth cryptic prophecies, thus creating a magical atmosphere from the very start of the play. The three witches appear to Macbeth and his friend Banquo after the battle, on a Scottish heath, which is an area of open uncultivated land, with specific vegetation of heather, gorse, and coarse grasses. This deserted landscape suggests despair and desolation, while the atmospheric conditions indicate a coming storm. At the start of the play, the witches famously ask, "Where shall we three meet again? / In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" (1.1.1-2).[1] These characters' encounter is always marked by destructive weather phenomena because they are creatures of darkness. The Second Witch answers, "When the hurly-burly's done / When the battle's lost and won" (1.1.3-4), while the Third Witch answers, "That will be ere the set of sun" (1.1.5). The evil creatures meet at sunset, during the indistinct hour when it is neither day nor night, therefore an ambivalent moment of the day. Similarly, the battle lost and won suggests an ambiguous universe of politics where categories of good and evil are mingled, as there are always two sides to one battle; for one party, the battle is won, for the other, it is lost. These linguistic associations suggest the ambiguity of the witches' discourse.

The paintings *The Three Witches* (1785) by Henry Fuseli and *The Three Witches from Macbeth* (1827) by Alexandre-Marie Colin are apparently confusing because their title is almost identical; they represent the same scene from *Macbeth*; and the paintings look strikingly similar. The two painters

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[1] All references to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are keyed to the Folger Digital Texts, edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Shakespeare's works | Folger Shakespeare Library.

make place on canvas by exploiting the viewers' imaginary picture about Shakespeare's play and the existing conventions. Thus, the two paintings show spaces that the audience could imagine while attending a performance of Shakespeare's tragedy. In terms of dramaturgy, the actions of the dark forces represented by the witches, which are inextricably linked to the play, rediscover a connection to the notion of universal harmony that should be represented by good kingship, such as the reign of King James I, when England and Scotland were formally united under the same crown. However, in the scene represented in the two paintings, good and evil are contradictory forces, annihilating each other, and ambiguity is represented by the witches' statement, "Fair is foul and foul is fair / Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.12-13). This means that there is no such thing as good and evil, beautiful or ugly; beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and "the fog and filthy air" are appropriate atmospheric conditions to experience dark mood. Through the conversation among the three witches, Shakespeare expresses the impossibility of taking just one side in a given situation.

In painting and more broadly the visual arts, beauty is an essential paradigm. The idea of beauty serves as a unifying theme in both literary texts and visual representations, such as paintings, engravings, and book illustrations, all of which represent appearance as reality. Although the aesthetic ideals of literature and the visual arts are similar, they approach their respective mediums differently. A visual image, especially a painting, commonly appropriates a literary notion or passage to serve as the inspiration for a visual translation that results in what is referred to as "literary art." Such a translation of literary text into art encourages the spectator to read the textual equivalent by broadening the viewer's understanding of the particular language of visual creation. As a result, a reference to the original is made, implying that understanding the painting and the words together is necessary to completely appreciate the visual artwork.

On the other hand, landscapes, such as the deserted heath, the meeting place of Macbeth and Banquo with the three witches, represent states of mind. However, these mental landscapes have been represented differently in art through the ages. In contrast to the Renaissance, when natural environment served as a backdrop for biblical, mythical, and historical subjects, landscapes in art underwent a remarkable evolution in the later Victorian period. Landscape rendition gained a stronger awareness of perspective and proportion as a result of developments in painting technique brought about by the Renaissance. The sixteenth century in England saw the formal recognition of landscape painting as a distinct genre alongside historical painting, portrait painting, genre painting, and still life. The development of Romanticism in the late eighteenth century was the most significant time for landscape painting. Via romantic art, spectators can observe how emotions tend to occupy

landscape. Artists are drawn to the untamed beauty and wildness that has not been damaged by urbanization or human interference; they frequently show how human beings have tamed nature and they try to show its heavenly force.

Aerial perspective creates the illusion of distance by adjusting the focus and value relationships between the object and the ground. If the background is blurred and the item can be seen clearly, the object will appear to be moving forward. If the object is not sharp and tonally consistent with an uncertain ground, it will appear to be retreating. In addition, colour perspective increases the sensation of depth, as wavelength theory makes clear: warm colours appear to go forward while cool colours seem to recede. The hues in the front seem deeper, cozier, and more vivid. Since the human eye cannot focus on both, simultaneously separating the backdrop from the foreground, placing warm and cool colours next to one another facilitates separation. All these artistic techniques were used by the two artists to make place out of the bleak landscape and dark natural environment already suggested in Shakespeare's play.

As we can see in the two paintings (*The Three Witches* by Henry Fuseli and *The Three Witches from Macbeth* by Alexandre-Marie Colin) (Figure 1 and 2), the landscape is not visible at all; rather, darkness creates the gloomy atmospheric mood, just as in Shakespeare's play. In both paintings the three witches are in the foreground, larger than life, with their faces illumined, as distinct from the darker and indistinguishable background. This feature focuses the viewer's attention to the weird sisters, leaving the Scottish landscape of the heath in the dark, as if unimportant. However, the landscape is important just because *it is not there*. It is the same dark atmosphere and ambiguity of purpose expressed by the witches' paradoxical phrase, "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (1.1.12). By extending Shakespeare's contradictory expression, the paintings' witches might say, "Light is darkness, good is evil, we are neither good nor evil, we just are." The three witches in the two paintings *are* the landscape. By showing the three witches larger-than-life in the foreground, the two paintings state the overwhelming nature of their prophecy and their importance in the development of the play's action. The non-existent figures of Banquo and Macbeth are left outside the composition in order to suggest that the magical atmosphere and the witches' prophecies are overbearing.

In none of his previous plays did Shakespeare include otherworldly entities (witches, spirits, and ghosts) with such force. Without the witches' prophecies, this tragedy would not have had the same impact. If Macbeth had not yielded to the witches' prophecy, which fuelled his own ambition, to assassinate King Duncan, none of the ensuing terrors would have overcome Scotland. As Park Honan states in *Shakespeare: A Life* (1998), "*Macbeth* is the quintessence of his [Shakespeare's] career" (333), because nothing he had written before accounts for "*Macbeth*'s atmosphere, or its enormous suggestiveness, its stunning compression and economy of means, and its stunning panoply of images" (333). The witches have a significant impact on how Macbeth's subconscious is revealed. Because Macbeth accepts evil in his inner world, they are right there to advise him. The Weird Sisters do not actually offer any predictions. Whether the news they deliver to Macbeth has already occurred or is likely to do so (after the Thane of Cawdor prophecy is

Figure 1. Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), The Three Witches or The Weird Sisters, ca. 1785, oil on canvas, 24 ¾ x 30 ¼ inches. The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

handed to him), the choice of committing murder belongs to Macbeth. Further in the play, only Macbeth is able to see the ghost (the spirit of Banquo) at the banquet. Because of the traits he has shown beforehand, Macbeth, who is beyond limits in his evil, is not entirely an invulnerable inhuman being. In the

banquet scene, the ghost is an illusion because it projects Macbeth's own mental problems and inconsistencies.

Johann Heinrich Füssli, also known as Henry Fuseli, was a Swiss painter who was born in Zürich and died in Putney Hill, London, on April 16, 1825. His paintings rank among the most dramatic, avant-garde, and luxurious pieces of his day. Fuseli is well-known for his depictions of nude figures in tight, aggressive stances that allude to strong emotions, even nightmarish visions, in his paintings and sketches. In addition, he enjoyed creating morbid fancies, as the one in *The Nightmare* (1781). Fuseli was always drawn to literary and theatrical themes and he became particularly interested in illuminating Shakespeare. He painted a number of pieces for John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, to which he was one of the initial contributors.

The Three Witches (1785) by Henry Fuseli (Figure 1) is among the best-known representations of the three witches from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The witches are arranged in a row, each one pointing theatrically towards the front, in a profile view. Fuseli played on his contemporaries' taste for Gothic horrors when he depicted these images. As Christopher Baker observes in *Creator of Nightmares: Henry Fuseli's Art and Life* (2024), "Fuseli played to the enthusiasm for such entertainment, finding an especially rich vein of ghosts, premonitions and murder in the works of Shakespeare—defining for generations through his paintings the appearance of sleepwalking figures and witches from studying *Macbeth*" (Baker 12). In representing his nightmarish figures, as Baker observes, Fuseli has been inspired by literary works ranging from "the handbook of witchcraft, *Maleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches) (1487) and scenes from Shakespeare's and Voltaire's writings to medical texts on nightmares" (81). Indeed, Fuseli's nightmarish scenes are suited to late eighteenth-century viewers and their taste for ghostly stories, just as Shakespeare himself responded to his period's taste in debates about witchcraft, seeing that even King James I published a book on witchcraft entitled *Daemonologie* (1597).

The source for Fuseli's painting is *Macbeth*, Act I, scene 3, lines 39–47, when Banquo and Macbeth meet the Weird Sisters on the heath. As Banquo says, "What are these, / So wither'd and so wild in their attire, / That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' Earth, / And yet are on 't?" (1.3.40-43) Banquo is horrified at the apparition of the three witches and he recognizes their otherworldly manifestation. From their "wild" (1.2.41) clothing, which means unkempt and unusual, to their "wither'd" (1.2.41) faces, the three witches do not seem to be of this world. The ambivalent spatiality of the witches' origin is highlighted from the start, and Banquo suggests a sense of repulsion towards these weird creatures. However, since Banquo's rational mind cannot accept these nightmarish visions, he wonders whether they are alive or dead, or even the devil: "Live you? or are you aught / That man may

question?" (1.3. 43-44) To Banquo's inquiring mind, death and the otherworld are mysterious places, faraway lands from which nobody returns. By contrast, creatures of evil, or the devil, are ambiguous figures, whose origin should be questioned by the scientific mind.

At the same time, however, Banquo sees that the figures look somewhat human and they appear to understand his questioning: "You seem to understand me, / By each at once her choppy finger laying / Upon her skinny lips" (1.3.44-46). This is a theatrical gesture signifying silence, expressing the mysteries of magical practices. Although the witches seem to understand the questioning of the rational mind, as practitioners of magic they emphasize the secrecy of their practices and the mystery of human endeavours. As concerns their gender, the witches' appearance is also ambivalent, as Banquo says, "You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so (1.3.47-49). Women with beards are hybrid creatures, and people in Elizabethan and Jacobean England enjoyed watching such anomalous beings at fairs, as curiosities. In the context of the dark atmosphere created by the play's weather, the sunset, and the shabby allure of the apparitions, these women with beards stand for ambivalent gender traits. Just as their prophecies are ambiguous, their monstrosity is visible at first sight, as are their actions.

Most of these physical traits emerging from Banquo's description of the three witches are represented in Fuseli's painting. The three witches are seen in half-length profile to the left, each pointing with an outstretched arm to the left of the image. The three wear long beige skirts and beige headgear. The wind is blowing from their back and creates an unnatural sense of movement. Yet they are focusing on the sky. The whitish hair of one of the witches serves as a visual cue that it is windy. The three witches hold one finger to their mouth, indicating silence. Traditional witches they are, so they are uncaring about their looks and unattractiveness, just as in Banquo's description. The witch in the background looks like the elder and the most repulsive one. The elder witch must also be smaller, because her fingers are covered by her sleeve. This looks like a degradation of the witches over time and demonstrates the many stages of a witch's life, like any human being. A large bug is present next to the witches, to their left. Given that it is black and has a white dead skull on its back, the butterfly may be a demonic symbol, as it appears to be the product of evil. The observer may feel disturbed or confused because of the gloomy hues in the painting. Except for the witches' heads, there is no light elsewhere in the image. They are wearing a variety of facial expressions. While the third witch-figure appears to be grinning, the other two are scowling. The witch standing between the others appears perplexed and bewildered. The dark environment is suitable to the description of fair and foul (not just) weather in the play.

In his early paintings, Fuseli depicted Shakespearean scenes in horizontal canvases, giving the audience a view of the scene that was comparable to what they would see on stage. However, the focus on the witches' faces is different from the stage view, where the audience can see the entire body. The image is rather similar to the focalization of the camera in TV or movie adaptations of Shakespeare's play, if Fuseli had been aware of such directorial imagery. As it is, Fuseli's focalization on the witches' figures highlights their importance in the play and intensifies the atmosphere of horror and dramatic expectation. At the same time, the theatrical gesture of silence (finger on the lips) is more visible, giving a sense of tragic doom and mystery to the entire scene. As Andrei Pop observes about Fuseli's paintings, in "Henry Fuseli: Greek Tragedy and Cultural Pluralism" (2012), "Fuseli's theatrical painting is also related to the eighteenth-century revival of ancient Athenian tragedy, which inaugurated an aesthetic practice of comparing apparently incompatible moral

Figure 2. The Three Witches from Macbeth *(1827) by Alexandre-Marie Colin. Oil on canvas, 31 x 39.5 inches. In the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Sandor Korein*

and cultural totalities" (78). Indeed, as I see it, the images of the weird sisters infuse Fuseli's painting with a sense of inevitability of fate, like in Greek tragedy, and make an emotional place of horror and utter desolation.

The second painting, entitled *The Three Witches from Macbeth* (1827) (Figure 2), is by Alexandre-Marie Colin, a French painter of historical and genre subjects. His genre paintings are vivacious and alive, and his religious and historical paintings are characterized by a style based on meticulous study of past masters. Compositional dramatism in Colin's painting, with a focus on movement and intricacy, points to the significance of aggressive actions, as well as anatomical and environmental information. The characters are placed on an unsteady framework to emphasize mobility. Predominance of colour in the artwork and the use of light (storm lights, auroras, twilight) to thaw the forms emphasize the chromaticism of the painting.

In Colin's painting, like in Fuseli's composition, the three witches' faces are in the foreground, suggesting these characters' prominence in the scene, whereas the background is dark and indistinguishable. Likewise, the three witches point to something in the distance, probably to Macbeth and Banquo, whom they may see, but the two men do not appear in either painting. Though strikingly similar to Fuseli's painting, Colin's image shows each of the three witches with a different expression—apart from the wicked gaze common to all three of them. The central witch looks puzzled, holding a finger to her mouth; another one looks pensive, with her left hand on her sister's shoulder, holding a broken stick in her right hand, meaning probably broken magic practices; and the third one holds a caduceus in her hand, slightly tipped over her head.

In ancient mythology, the caduceus was a Greek or Roman herald's wand, typically one with two serpents twined around it, carried by the messenger god Hermes or Mercury. This may lead to associations with the hermetic sciences, because Hermes Trismegistos was the symbol of occult lore in Greco-Egyptian mythology. At the same time, the allusion to the Rod of Asclepius (the Greek god of medicine), which has only one snake and no wings, is traditionally used as a symbol of medicine. Colin's suggestion in the composition is that the three weird sisters might be just three old hags who dabble in herbs and magical potions, although their looks seem evil. Though similar to Fuseli's composition, Colin's representation of the witches is more symbolic but less faithful to Shakespeare's text in point of body language. This is because Colin represents the rational nineteenth-century mentality, when the existence of ghosts and witches is questioned by science. At the same time, however, Banquo himself, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, questions the supernatural and devilish nature of the witches, while Macbeth does not.

We can see in both paintings (*The Three Witches from Macbeth* by Henry Fuseli and *The Three Witches* by Alexandre-Marie Colin) the use of the technique of chiaroscuro, which is developed to create a mood. In visual arts, the term "chiaroscuro" refers to the utilization of stark contrasts between light and shade, typically impacting the entire composition. It is also a technical

term used by painters and art historians to describe how light contrasts are utilized to model three-dimensional objects and people and create a feeling of volume. Although using tonal contrast has been practiced since antiquity, the word "chiaroscuro" first appeared during the Italian Renaissance. This is the technique of directing light and strong tonal contrasts to create volume, modelling, and creating atmospheric depth of field. The Renaissance maestro Leonardo Da Vinci, the famed Dutch Golden Age painter Rembrandt van Rijn, and the leading Baroque painter Caravaggio are a few of the best-known painters that experimented with chiaroscuro. Compared to artworks created without using this method, chiaroscuro artworks appear substantially three-dimensional. Because it allows artists to create the illusion of depth and dimension on a flat canvas, chiaroscuro is especially important in the development of painting as a fine art.

Colour has long been understood to have symbolic meaning. Colour symbolism has varied over time and is understood and interpreted differently in different cultures and nations. In both paintings there is the same palette of colours. Black is often used to symbolize death, evil, witchcraft, terror, and sadness because of its connection to darkness. Grey is the hue that some metals and stones naturally have, but it also conjures up images of the outside elements, dullness, decay, and aging. Grey is the hue of ashes and dust and is a blend of the colours black (which symbolizes death) and white (which symbolizes serenity). As a result, grey is connected with both death and sadness. The use of white does not apply to this type of symbolism and it does not appear frequently in the two paintings discussed; white is utilized to stand for righteousness, serenity, and purity because of its connection to light. The two paintings are dark, or reddish dark, in order to suggest the ominous atmosphere before the storm, at sunset, just as in Shakespeare's play.

In the arts, repetition refers to the act of using a line, colour, or other elements repeatedly throughout an artwork. It may be utilized to emphasize specific components, provide visual appeal to a work, and establish rhythm and structure. Additionally, repetition may be utilized to give a composition cohesiveness and a sense of harmony or flow. An artwork's rhythm is created via repetition. The design concept or rhythm is more difficult to articulate than the others. However, it explains how certain compositional features influence the viewer's movement through the work. Contrast draws focus, generates salience, and draws attention. While creating cadence and viewing pace, the repetition of parts helps to guide the viewer's attention throughout the composition. The handling of line, form, size relationships, and edges, as well as the gradation of value and colour, are some of the components utilized to produce the effects of movement and energy (tension) in art. Each of these aspects plays a crucial part in producing visual movement. The three figures of the witches in the two paintings are almost in the same posture, suggesting

their unity of purpose, and they seem to move with the wind, or the force of their actions. Though seemingly repetitive, by using the same place-making techniques, the two paintings elicit different meanings.

The most aesthetically appealing part of the arrangement of an artwork is its focal point. Within a composition, there may be several focal points arranged in a hierarchy, ranging from dominant to subordinate. The region of maximum contrast is always where the human eye is drawn to. The focal point in both paintings are the witches. The centre of interest in a painting refers to the overall subject or dominant theme that anchors the composition, while the focal point is the specific visual element—often created through contrast, placement, or emphasis—that immediately draws the viewer's eye. In other words, the centre of interest is conceptual and thematic, whereas the focal point is perceptual and optical. For example, a landscape may have the sea as its centre of interest, but a brightly lit sailboat within it as the focal point. As *The Dictionary of Art Terms* by Edward Lucie-Smith explains, "the centre of interest is the main subject of a composition, while the focal point is the area to which the eye is irresistibly drawn" (Lucie-Smith, *The Dictionary of Art Terms*, Thames & Hudson, 1981, p. 92). This distinction underscores how artists balance thematic intention with visual strategy to guide interpretation. Areas of stark contrast between light and dark naturally catch the viewers' attention. Bright hues, minute details, sharp edges, irregularities, patterns, and any arrow-like pointers catch the attention. In the two paintings, the focal point is represented by the three witches themselves, their posture, and their body language. Facial expression is important, as in both paintings their mimic and eyes suggest evil intentions.

Each painting inspired from a scene in a Shakespearean play, or a Shakespearean character, is the sum total of at least two directions: the painter's artistic message—intended to attract and puzzle the viewer—and the viewer's expectations of artistic message—because Shakespeare has been considered a model of high theatrical art. When interpreting spaces represented in painting, viewers are attracted not only by the composition as such, but also by Shakespeare's name, which suggests that the viewers' interest in the painting is increased. The ugly and nearly monstrous portrayal of the witches from *Macbeth* by Henry Fuseli captures the fears of the eighteenth century regarding the corruption of natural order and the power of the unknown. Their united presence and shared gaze allude to a communal, nearly oppressive power over Macbeth's fate. Colin's more sympathetic treatment highlights the witches' uniqueness, showing singular motions and facial expressions. This shows the depth of the witches' influence and points to a complicated power dynamic in which each one of the witches plays a distinct role in Macbeth's fate.

Both paintings represent the otherworldly figures as three old women, suggesting that any supernatural interpretation rests with each individual viewer, rather than with the artist. The technique of place-making, suggested by the characters' position, colour, and the surrounding dark atmosphere, evinces the centrality of the three witches within the landscape. While Banquo and Macbeth are not visible in either painting, place-making techniques suggest theatrical movement, dynamic action, and the witches' dark purposes through colour, focal point, repetition, and chiaroscuro. Each of these artistic techniques suggest the dark atmosphere of the Scottish heath, the witches' relative evil intentions, and the viewer's sense of horror and surprised curiosity, and they are part of the technique of place-making.

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