

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Magic  
edited by  
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## THE *STRIX*-WITCH

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-94882-1 — The Strix-Witch  
Daniel Ogden  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108948821](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108948821)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108953474

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First published 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-94882-1 Paperback  
ISSN 2732-4087 (online)  
ISSN 2732-4079 (print)

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108953474  
First published online: May 2021

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**Abstract:** The *strix* was a persistent feature of the folklore of the Roman world and subsequently that of the Latin West and the Greek East. She was a woman that flew by night, either in an owl-like form or in the form of a projected soul, in order to penetrate homes by surreptitious means and thereby devour, blight or steal the new-born babies within them. The motif-set of the ideal narrative of a *strix* attack – the ‘*strix*-paradigm’ – is reconstructed from Ovid, Petronius, John Damascene and other sources, and the paradigm’s impact is traced upon the typically gruesome representation of witches in Latin literature. The concept of the *strix* is contextualised against the *longue-durée* notion of the child-killing demon, which is found already in the ancient Near East, and shown to retain a currency still as informing the projection of the vampire in Victorian fiction.

**Keywords:** owl, vampire, soul-projection, motifs, witch

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ISBNs: 9781108948821 (PB), 9781108953474 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2732-4087 (online), 2732-4079 (print)

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