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**“It’s Just a Bunch of Hocus Pocus”: An Exploration into Ways the Portrayal of Witches on Screen
Effect the Way Witches and Witchcraft are Viewed in Real Life.**

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XXXXXXXXXX

Submitted as Masters of Philosophy to University of Glasgow, School of Arts in the subject of Film and
Television Studies

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Introduction: *You Say Witch Like It's a Bad Thing* | Witch Stereotypes and Summary of the Thesis

0.1: What a Witch Means to Me

As Margot Adler once said, “The first time I called myself a witch was the most magical time of my life” (Adler, 1979: 31), and I have been a witch officially since I was nine years old. I have grown up with



Fig. 1: My own witchcraft origins, aged 9 (Hallowe'en 2003)

what I know to be true about witchcraft, as will become clear through this thesis, and have mostly been uninfluenced by outside media and fictional accounts. I am also aware of and acknowledge that what I may deem as truth may not be for other witches. Every practice is different, after all. However, I know there are many who do not know how to differentiate what is true with what is fiction and it has led to stigma and persecution for centuries. In the modern era, our main source of knowledge comes from the media which we consume so readily, and more often than not take as gospel, but if that media is wrong, then by definition what we know to be true is wrong too.

Throughout my time as a witch I have battled endless media-fuelled stereotypes, and so this thesis aims to establish what is deemed to be fact from what is designed to be fiction, and ultimately explore the origins of such fantasy and the impact it has had on the wider perception of witches in real life.

I should add here that this thesis will be a combination of my own experiences as a witch and as part of a modern coven, alongside textual analysis and literature reviews that aim to support my claims and help this paper in its endeavour to understand why we as a collective public view witches the way that we do and in the guises they have been seen. For context, throughout this study it is important to note that where I mention my coven this includes my in person coven, consisting of myself and a handful of other witches who will remain anonymous but have given their permission to be quoted; and public forums on social media which we refer to as our “online coven”. No names will be used and permission has been sought to use direct quotes. Permission, after all, is the very fundamental base of real witchcraft. The majority of this

thesis throughout my explanation and exploration will be written in an autoethnographic style, utilising a mixture of real and imagined, autoethnography and fictional, and using what I understand as means to explore where such belief took flight, as it were.

In order to build a foundation with which to attempt to pick apart the long standing recognisable stereotypes of what supposedly makes a witch a witch, I will first establish a base from which I draft my opinions: that of my own experiences. Being a witch in a modern world is not without its difficulties. I identify as an eclectic witch, and I use the term ‘identify’, as such terminology is yet another stereotype that states witchcraft and the path are a form of religion, which is not entirely true. For some modern witches this may well be the case, but for myself personally my path is a way of life and therefore part of me. Throughout the last century there have been many inaccurate attempts in the portrayal of witches that have meant practitioners such as myself have been forced to deal with undue prejudice in a Christian-dominated Western society. I have lost count of the amount of times I have been questioned about the way I identify, about my path, or told my “path is wrong”. For context, the term ‘path’ herein refers to the method of my practice of witchcraft. A witch’s ‘path’ is the road with which they map their manifestation and magick. Moreover, magick of the real sense is spelled with a ‘k’ to differentiate it from that of stage magicians and charlatans. When referring to fictional accounts of magical use, I will not include the ‘k’, but when referencing true belief and practice I will. I have been told by people I do not know that I will “go to Hell” for wearing a pentagram around my neck, or “even worse”: having it tattooed on my body. I have been sneered at when I called myself a witch and told “witches are only in fairytales¹”. A small comment at the time, but ultimately so important as it stuck with me. As a practising witch, I am not alone in being stereotyped in such a way, and for the purpose of expanding my exploration into witch stereotypes, I will be drawing from not only first-hand experience of the matter, but similarly the experiences of my fellow sistren and brethren in the modern witch chat rooms of social media and in my own life. The main purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the societal discourse and influences

¹ I cannot place this quote as it was said to me by a complete stranger once during a social event.

throughout the last century, and those before it, that have led to such stereotypes becoming the accepted appearance and characterisation of what has come to be known as the witch, and how the media industry have fuelled such objectification.

0.2: Methodology of Witchcraft

As previously stated, the majority of this study will exist in autoethnography. My experience as a witch has led to my curiosity as to how and why such portrayals exist, and so writing about such things makes sense from my own point of view. However, I will, where possible, back-up my claims and statements with historical or academic facts and theory to express the ideology of this thesis. My methodology within this thesis is to combine the real-life experiences of myself and witches in my coven and online coven, with the portrayals of witches on the screen and in the media. This thesis will be split into chapters and throughout the exploration will be referenced in a combination of autoethnographic means and textual analysis.

The texts chosen for this study have been selected following a discussion with my online coven as to which films and television shows have had an impact on them as witches throughout the years. This impact could be a positive or a negative one. To cut down the many, many witchcraft portrayals of which I could write, I created an online poll of almost any and all well-known media texts regarding witchcraft based on extensive online research. After putting the poll to my coven for a fortnight, I took the most popular texts. Most of these I had watched myself and therefore knew, and some I had not watched at that point but did so in preparation for this paper. In doing this, I feel I have broadened my own mind and opinions and have, at the same time, realised how important such a study. Some texts on the list have been difficult to watch to say the least as they portray witches so abysmally it was hard to finish them. Some, on the flip side, have been surprisingly beneficial and informative to this thesis.

Before I begin the study itself, I would like to just define a few witchcraft terms if I may. Some may be reiterated throughout the chapters, but if I do so now you can read on with a little more knowledge. For

instance, I will interchange the words 'witch' and 'Neo-Pagan' as the same thing, meaning someone who practises the 'path' of magic. I will also mention 'spells', 'charms' and 'hexes' at various points. For the most part and from my understanding, 'spell' is the blanket term, a 'charm' is with good intentions and 'hex' carries negative intentions. A 'curse' is also negative, but isn't so much practised in Neo-Paganism and exists more in the context of Voodoo practice and other forms of what has come to be known as 'witchcraft' but should instead be viewed entirely separately. This difference will be further explored in Part Three.

Finally, as a blanket disclaimer, I would like to seek your forgiveness should I get too passionate in my statements. I have been a witch most of my life and I am determined to fight for our right to exist and to be understood. Sometimes, therefore, my tone may become informal. That being said, and without further ado, we shall attempt a chapter summary before beginning the paper in full.

In Part One of this thesis, titled *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, I will attempt to elaborate upon and explain the main feats of witchcraft in the modern era and lay a foundation for what I specifically mean by the term 'witch'. These include Neo-Paganism, Wicca, Druidism and others, ultimately aiming to define what is meant in this context as 'witch'. To do so, I will draw upon the writings of contemporary witch writers and members of my coven, as well as my own experience as a practising eclectic witch, whilst delving into texts such as fairy tales, and the folklore of beings such as the striga and Baba Yaga, to explore how and why such stereotypes initially took hold and what it was that seems to have kept them at the forefront of societal view of the witch figure. Ultimately this section will lay the groundwork for the remainder of the thesis, within which I will draw upon the modern concept of a witch and attempt to explore the history behind the figure by breaking it into stereotypes, especially when it comes to how, when and why the witch became caricatured in the Western world. These stereotypes, which have been established through extensive conversation with my own coven, who wholeheartedly agree that these are the stereotypes we collectively wish to understand the most, will include: the green skin and warty appearance; the misconception that all witches are women; the generalised Western opinion that to be a

witch must mean to do the Devil's work, as well as the origin of this fear and its place in popular culture and on the screen; the white magick vs black magick debate, exploring the concept that to be a witch does not always mean to practise dark magick; and eventually conclude with a final account of how I believe the way such stereotypes have been portrayed on the screen have led to a lasting impression of what it means to be a witch. Once this is established, I will begin to explore one of the most prominent stereotypes of the witch: that of the green skin, warts and Baba Yaga-esque appearance. To do this, I will begin at the very beginning of mainstream cinema and appearances of the witch figure, most notably that of the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Drawing upon academic texts exploring the beginning of the witch on the screen, I will attempt to follow the chain of portrayals since *The Wizard of Oz* that have helped, or hindered, the unfortunately stereotypical appearance of the wicked witch. Once the Wicked Witch of the West has been explored, I will use her figurehead to explore texts that have, especially in the modern-age of the internet, fuelled the fire of misconception. The purpose of this chapter will ultimately be to follow the progression of the physical appearance of the witch, and how and why those who do not follow the path have come to accept these traits as gospel, with real life accounts of how such portrayals make us, as a collective coven, feel about the way we are satirised.

Part Two, titled *Sorcerers, Wizards and Warlocks, Oh My!* aims to address the gendered stereotypes of magick and witchcraft. The chapter will begin with an exploration of the 'flower power' movement of the 1960s, in which gender politics made their resurgence, and the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, or W.I.T.C.H., who were a group of feminists in 1968 hoping to reclaim the term 'witch', support the feminist movement and fight against the patriarchy, and even included freedom for lesbian separatists who were also fighting for their rights at the time. Some screen portrayals of the era seemed to back-up their gender-reclamation work, and the American television programme *Bewitched* (1964) will be used as an example. Alongside the feminist allegations of the term 'witch', this chapter will similarly explore the term 'wicked', and analyse the appearances of witches throughout cinema who are not made to

be ‘ugly’ such as their counterparts in the previous chapter, and yet their actions make them so. This section will also explore the terms of ‘wizard’, ‘warlock’, and ‘sorcerer’. Such terms are so often aligned alongside witchcraft, and yet have nothing to do with the real-life craft. This chapter aims to explore those screen portrayals who have helped to fuel this inaccuracy, most notably in modern times the *Harry Potter* octology (2001-2011); the *Hobbit* trilogy (2013-2015) and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-2003); standalone films such as *Willow* (1988), *Warlock* (1989) and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (2010); and popular television series such as *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997) and *Merlin* (2008). Such terms are not apparent in modern day craft, which has come to be perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions faced by those who follow the path. Whilst attempting to establish my grounds for this thesis, I reached out to the coven to ask if anyone identifies as such terms. My question was met with great debate and anger on some part, as these terms are seen as the things that make witchcraft “pantomime”. Therefore, I will be using this outrage as the foundation for the second half of this chapter, in exploring how such stereotypes came to be. In this section I will utilise a sub-chapter entitled: *The Devil is in the Details* in order to address perhaps the most angering of stereotypes amongst real witches: that to practise witchcraft is to worship the Christian Devil. Such a conception began in the dark ages and was fed by the witch trials held around the world, but in the last century it has made a resurgence with the portrayals of witchcraft on screen. Since the dark ages, certain symbols that are used in the craft, such as the pentagram, have been taken and misused by the Church of Satan or Luciferianism, and over the centuries these have come to incorrectly represent Paganism too. The use of such symbols in cinema and on television have fuelled their misconstruction, so much so that wearing a pentagram in the modern era has resulted in my being judged incorrectly as a supporter of Satan by complete strangers. Such an association is fascinating, and so this chapter will seek to establish exactly when and why these symbols became a mark of fear and not their original use. For this chapter specifically, I will be looking at films that fuel such a misconception, especially those released around the so-called ‘Satanic Panic’ of the 1970s and 1980s. These films, mostly of the horror genre, include *Wicker Man* (1973); *Mark of the Devil* (1970); *Season of the Witch* (1972) and *Summer of Fear*

(1978). Such titles of the era fuelled the public's fear and fascination with Satanic Panic, and so have had a lasting impact on the cultural opinion of what it means to be a witch. Such misrepresentation has continued into the modern era, with popular films such as the *Witches of Eastwick* (1987) and shows such as *Supernatural* (2005); and the *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018) proving to reinforce the incorrection of this damaging stereotype.

By and by, in Part Three: *I Put a Spell on You*, the difference between white and black magick will be established with its roots and definition in the context of ancient and modern practices and these differences explored through the cinematic and television portrayals that have fuelled such a misconception, such as *Practical Magic* (1990), *Charmed* (1998) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996); *The Craft* (1996); *Hocus Pocus* (1993) and *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013). The discourse between white and black magick, good and evil, is one that has been mostly discussed in a Christian world context. Within the witch community there are some who identify by these names, but many who do not agree with the labels thrust upon us by society. With this in mind, this chapter aims to understand whether such texts as mentioned have had an influence on the collective hive mind regarding such oppositional designation.

Ultimately, the final section, within which a conclusion will be drawn, I seek to pull together both topical and textual analyses of my proposed symbolic portrayals of the witch and the context within which they stand in a modern society, hoping finally to conclude exactly whether, and how, the screen portrayals of witches have had a lasting effect on the opinions of society.

0.3: Stereotypical vs Stereological: The Capitalistic Consumption of the Hallowe'en Witch

At a certain time of year it seems that the general population cannot get enough of witches. As soon as the first of September rolls around on the western calendar the same old green face paint, adhesive warts, hooked prosthetic noses and tacky pointed black hats appear in the majority of supermarkets and high-street stores. The figure of the witch becomes the property of the corporations who utilise her, and year after year witches are exploited for consumer based pleasure and financial gain. Most people, it seems,

don their black hats and pointed noses and pay no heed, nor second thought, to the origins or the very real witches that they are appropriating. If an individual were to dress as Jesus Christ or another religious stereotype for Hallowe'en they are likely to be chastened, so why not those appropriating the witch? Most people who indulge in the commercialised aspects of the Hallowe'en season have no mind for the origins or traditions, or else they simply assign a sense of whimsy to the illegitimate religious beliefs that they are sequestering. In the interests of honesty, I will add here that I, myself, have indulged in donning such a costume during the Hallowe'en season. However, I do so ironically. If such costumes are subconsciously, or consciously, designed to alienate and appropriate my 'people', so to speak, I will acknowledge this and seek to educate through deliberate indulgence. If society views me in this way, who am I to argue?



Fig 2. An example of Hallowe'en costume capitalism in a British supermarket. *Original origins unknown.*

Furthermore, consumers who are, in this sense, uneducated, seem to pay no mind to the Pagan symbols with which they adorn their houses all year round, everything from the “five-pointed star to the Christmas tree; apple pie in Autumn to the Easter eggs in the Spring”². The witch, in this role throughout the Western society, becomes nothing short of a freak or a farce in the eyes of the consumer who does not seek further answer nor reason. Yet the witch was not always represented this way. She was once worshipped, and then feared, and now mocked and humiliated by a consumer society. So, how did this come to be her fate?

² According to *The Real Witches Year* by Kate West (2001)

It seems that, for the most part, the aforementioned false witches that appear around Hallowe'en, and the contaminated imagery which accompanies her, have not only consumerism and capitalism to blame, but rather another medium seemingly far more impactful and ingrained in the opinions, customs and views of the Western world. The screen, both cinematic and television, are as much at fault for these distorted images that have come to be recognised as 'the witch'. It seems that the iconography and lasting imagery put forth by the screen has much to answer for in making the witch what she is seen to be in modern times and customs. The ever growing demand for a good old fashioned villain, the wicked hag in her pointed hat with her green skin, hooked nose and warts, leering at and desiring to kidnap and consume children, has been fuelled by the screen in many guises and forms over the last century, appearing to be a comfortable portrayal for the camera to recreate with little question. Whilst it could be argued that such consistent representation has *helped* the growth in recognition of witchcraft, placing those who follow the path in reality into the public eye and educating a desire to do things right, such portrayals have similarly fuelled misunderstanding, fear and unwarranted, unwanted caricature of this once ancient and sacred belief system. The use of 'fairytale' witches as the only source, especially in films and television aimed at children, is ultimately damaging to our way of life, and this paper seeks to support such a claim.

This begs the question, then, how did this all begin? How did the witch, once a figure of healing and wisdom, become one of abject horror and sin? Moreover, why was this view encouraged and given the free reign needed for it to become the only accepted form?

Such corporate decisions as to what makes a witch a witch often lay waste to the reality of those who identify as witches in the modern world. Certain stereotypes have plagued witches for centuries, and the green skin, warts and black clothing is just the latest in the portrayal. Other stereotypes include black cats as familiars; pacts made with the Christian devil; witches only being female, and males limited to warlock or wizard as a path; the pentagram and other symbols as sigils (i.e. a symbol of magickal power) of wickedness; dark magic is the only available path; and the magic practised by witches is likely to cause harm or devastation. To all of these stereotypes, I, a witch, say, unironically, 'boo'. The ultimate purpose of

this thesis, therefore, is to identify such stereotypes and use primary and secondary resources to understand how and why they came to be what is widely considered the norm.

0.4: A Note on the Christian Perception of the Witch - Historical Context

It is important to note, in defence of Christianity, which I will admit, will potentially not happen much throughout this paper's establishment of witch history as the two rarely coexist in peace, that even in the *Hebrew Bible*, specifically the *Book of Samuel*, the witch figure is seen as a healer and prophet. The *Book of Samuel* recounts how Saul seeks out the Witch of Endor in order for her to summon the spirit of the prophet Samuel. Saul hopes that the resurrected spirit might give him advice to use against the Philistines in battle, and Saul only does so after consulting the prophets of God had failed him. "7: Saul then said to



Fig 3. A painting depicting the Witch of Endor as described in the *Book of Samuel*

his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a witch, so I may go and inquire of her." (Samuel 28:3-25). It was only as the Christian church began to expand throughout the world and apply an expanding theology that the Witch of Endor, and her 'summoning of Samuel', aligned her with necromancy, and therefore by association, the Devil. As a result, the Witch of Endor came to be known as the Medium of Endor, as simply using the word 'witch' in the Holy text proved to be too much for theologians.

The term 'witch' had come to be associated with a being who was beyond Christian recognition and control, much like 'pagan' has come to mean "anyone outside of the Christian faith" (Oxford Dictionary), and therefore a fear of the untameable wicked witch was born and nurtured. This fear was escalated with the 1603 coronation of James VI of Scotland who, when he "became James I of England, his fear of the magical and mystical was brought to England. Having personally led witch hunts in Scotland, he signed a draconian Witchcraft Act in 1604 which stayed in statute until 1736. Now the whole country was looking for witches" (Cawthorne, 2003: 221).

It seems that, throughout the 14th and 15th Centuries, those who lived in fear of the Christian God became more and more bloodthirsty in their need to expose and punish witches, "after all, God made everything, including witches, and those who do not believe in them shall be burned as heretics" (*ibid*, 412). The definition between 'witch' and 'heretic' became blurred, as both had come to represent a person acting outside of the Catholic faith. In England, witches were hanged as a form of execution, but in Scotland their many 'witches' were "burned at the stake, which was the legal, recognised execution for a heretic" (*ibid*). After Pope John XXII authorised a "Catholic church-wide inquisition of all those believed to engage in sorcery" (Burton Russell, 173: 2000), 'Witch Hunt Fever' swept across Europe. In Europe alone, between the years 1520 and 1811, prolifically up until 1741, it is believed that between 40,000 and 50,000 witch hunts and subsequent witch trials and executions took place over the three centuries. This period of time, all three hundred years of it, has come to be known as the 'Great Witch Hunt of Europe' for seemingly obvious reasons. Although these witch hunts inevitably stemmed from fear of the unknown and uncontrollable, the motivation may have been much more simple. In Nigel Cawthorne's explanation of this time period, he states: "By and large, the witch craze of Europe sprung up at times when countries were beset by religious wars. France and Germany, particularly, were torn apart by war between Protestants and Catholics. Cities and whole regions would change their religious affiliation overnight, sometimes more than once. In the face of such uncertainty, an inevitable collective madness sets in and someone must be blamed" (Cawthorne, 2003: 78).

When recounting the translated confession of accused witch, George Haan of Germany, for instance, Cawthorn transcribes: “I must say that I am a witch, though I am not. I must renounce God for that is what is expected of me, though I have never before. Every word from my tongue is lies, yet they are lies for which I must die”. (*ibid*, 169). These words are impactful and powerful, yet all but lost to history.

These estimated numbers in Europe do not, of course, include the thousands tried and executed in the New World of America, most notably the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. Much like the reasoning behind the European witch hunts, notably the claim that wars were to blame, across the Atlantic ocean “the colonial powers of France and England were at war in 17th Century America” (*ibid*, 92). These wars, coupled with the “constant Indian [sic] attacks, cruel winter and crippling taxes, the Puritans of New England began to believe such lasting misfortune was surely the Devil’s work, through his agents on Earth - witches” (*ibid*).

0.6: Not All Witches Live in Salem, but Many End Up There

It is interesting to note that the Salem Witch Trials began with the accusation of a slave of West Indian origin, and such a notion will be further explored in Parts 2 and 3, with reference to the allegory of green skin coupled with potential racist connotations of this recognised portrayal of witchcraft and the origin of the term

‘black magic’. The Salem Witch Trials began after “a group of young girls gathered in the house of Reverend Samuel Parris in Salem village to listen to the West Indian tales of the slave woman Tituba” (Cawthorne, 2008: 78). With the United States record of witch trials included, the total rises significantly to almost 100,000 trials and subsequent executions of ‘witches’. For the most part it has been theorised in the years since the Salem Witch Trials that “those executed at Salem were put to death not because they were



Fig 5. A sketch depicting the claims made against Tituba.
Artist unknown.

witches, but because they denied it. Denying the existence of witchcraft was proof of being a witch, but confessing to one's own dallying automatically meant a reprieve under Puritan law" (*ibid*, 125) which surely makes one a traitor and a heretic more than a witch, though these terms were of course interchangeable in society at the time. The lasting impact of the Salem Witch Trials, however, is undeniable, even in modern times, with countless retellings on screen and stage, most notably Arthur Miller's seminal play *The Crucible* (1953), have kept the legacy of the event alive until modern times.



Fig 6. A performance of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, depicting the mania of the Salem witch trials.

One victim of the Salem trials, Dudley Bradstreet, who at one time was a highly revered Justice of the Peace in Massachusetts, came to be accused of witchcraft after he “refused to sign any more death warrants for so-called witches” (*ibid*, 169). Such an action, in the eyes of the Puritans, made Bradstreet a witch himself, or at least a sympathiser. However, further investigation into the case of Justice Bradstreet has led to the discovery that Bradstreet was put to death eventually not as a witch, but as a traitor. His name was sullied when he was accused of “selling powder and shot to the Indians and the French, sleeping with Indian squaws and fathering Indian children” (*ibid*, 177). With these accusations, it seems that those who accused, jailed and executed Bradstreet did so out of political reasoning and not because of his supposed deal with the Devil. As a result, it was around this time in Salem and New England that many began to see the witch trials for what they truly were: a political stunt.

Many of those executed in Europe were accused of not only dallying with the devil, but were “often travellers, spiritualists and *gipsies* who existed outside of the so called ‘norm’” (*ibid*, 182). It was not only

women who received these punishments, as a great deal of these executions were of men and children as well. Barbara Zdunk of Prussia³ was executed as late as 1811, according to official records, and is believed to be the last European woman executed on the grounds of witchcraft, although this was not officially cited as the reason as, by 1811, “witchcraft had ceased to be a criminal offence in Europe” (*ibid*, 203).

Just a year later, in Germany, the Brothers Grimm published *Hansel and Gretel* (1812), in which the main antagonist is a blinded witch in the woods, using the lasting legacy of the witch trials as means to sell stories. However, just because witchcraft and magic was no longer illegal, it would take just over a century for witchcraft to slowly begin to creep into culture once again outside of the world of folklore and fairy tales.



Fig 7. Barbara Zdunk of Prussia is the last person to be criminally accused of and executed for witchcraft in Europe. *Photographer unknown, c. 1900.*

³ According to: <https://www.skwigly.co.uk/showcase/forgotten-witch-barbara-zdunk/>

Part One: *Something Wicked This Way Comes* | The History of the Witch, Context of Paganism, and Fairytale Foundations.

1.1. What is a Witch? What does it mean?

1.1.1. A Brief Summary of the History of the Witch in World Myth

The earliest recording of the figure of the ‘witch’ dates back to the ancient folklore and myths of multiple civilisations. “Although the specific term ‘witch’ did not appear until Old English Celtic language referred to their healing women as ‘wiccan’, later translating to ‘witch’ or ‘sorcerer’ with the aid of the Old German dialect, according to the *Old English Dictionary*” (Greene, 2021: 78), there have been “plenty of witch figures in folklore throughout world history” (*ibid*). For the most part the witch, wiche, or wiccian, in these myths would often be represented by a womanly figure, although the act of magic would be woven betwixt and between many mythologies. Modern Neo-Pagans have reclaimed such deities, reviving them in their practices as a means of keeping their legacies alive. Though this paper focuses primarily on Western culture, it is important to note that the complex belief system that has been since labelled ‘Neo-Paganism’, has drawn upon a history of Western colonisation, adopting and sustaining the cultures of those throughout the world that may have otherwise been lost to mainstream religion throughout the centuries.

Neo-Paganism is defined by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as “a modern spiritualist movement which seeks to incorporate beliefs or ritual practices from traditions outside the main world religions, especially those of pre-Christian Europe and North America” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

In Ancient Greece and Rome, the goddess Hecate^{4a}, mother of Circe and mistress of the Underworld, represented witchcraft, sorcery and magic. The deity was often called upon for protection and safe travel, and her daughter Circe^{2b} was believed to be an enchantress who bewitched the hero Odysseus. Another representative of the Underworld, the Polynesian deity Kanaloa is believed to be aligned with earth magic, appearing as a squid or octopus and believed to transform into many guises. Although never documented

⁴ Chamberlain, L. (2016) *Wiccan Magical Deities*.

through more than words, many tribes of First Nation America believed, and still do in some Native reserves, in the *Wakan Tanka* (Great Spirit), or the *Atira* (Earth Mother). This symbolism and iconology has often been aligned with witchcraft, known in the Western world mostly as Mother Earth or Mother Nature. In Ancient Egypt, the Great Mother Aset, also known as Isis, was goddess of magic and healing, represented often as a vulture or winged figure. She would often be compared to Heka^{2f}, goddess of magic and medicine, who held two snakes in her hands and would often be called upon at Egyptian funerals. In Ancient Norse mythology, Freya^{2g} was the goddess of ‘Seidr’, the Norse word for ‘fate magic’. Freya has been attributed to not only being an enchantress, but also for being beautiful and bewitching. “Witchcraft was widespread in the ancient cultures of the Middle East. Figures who had magical power to heal sickness or perform other acts or sorcery appear in the literature of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan” (Cawthorne, 2003: 371). Such beliefs and stories are proof that the sorceress figure, a woman who could cast magick upon those who were unsuspecting, has flooded cultural belief for centuries, and what was more it seemed that she should not be underestimated or angered lest she turn malevolent. “Certain goddesses, particularly the Roman and Greek Diana, Selene or Hecate - were associated with the performance of malevolent magic. In the second century, Lucius Apulieus tells how the women of Thessaly would assume various animal forms and go about gnawing bits off of dead man's faces” (*ibid*, 381). One thing is certain throughout the beliefs listed above: the magical woman should not be challenged. “During the decline of the Roman Empire, such powers and fears were attributed to women and the old hag who practised witchcraft became a common figure in literature” (*ibid*) and, based on this archetype, later the successor of the literary form took up the mantle: the screen.

In the Western world, and the United Kingdom specifically, the Wodes of what is now known as Wales believed in the goddess Cerridwen⁵, the keeper of the cauldron. Cerridwen would demand offerings in return for her protection and wisdom, as the cauldron that she guarded contained all of the knowledge in the world, perhaps referring to the first association of witches and cauldrons together. North of the border,

⁵ Grimassi, R. (2001) *Beltane: Springtime Rituals, Lore and Celebration*.

in what is now Scotland, the Celts worshipped the dark mother, Cailleach^{6a}. Christian colonists from Rome heard a term that they deemed to mean ‘dark mother’ and consequently decided that such practices were ungodly and should be stamped out, planting a seed of persecution when viewing these operations. However, had they sought to understand, they may have learned that Cailleach was goddess of storms and could be temperamental, meaning the Celts feared her not for her wrath upon them for their misdeeds, but rather her capacity to keep balance between darkness and light. If she was not appeased by those who worshipped her, she would extend the winter months indefinitely in order to punish the mortals who disobeyed her. Across the Irish sea, in what is now known as Ireland, the goddess Brighid^{4b} was a prophet who was worshipped for her powers of divination. After the Romans brought Christianity to Ireland, Brighid came to be seen as a Christian figure and was representative of youth and honoured at Candlemas. In modern Wicca, Brighid is still worshipped once a year within Neo-Paganism and Wicca, on the February festival of Imbolc, also known as Candlemas, a time of rebirth and growth after the long winter^{4c}.

The majority of these notable ‘witches’ of ancient beliefs, it seems, appear to be female or feminine. The reasons for this, or at least theories, will be discussed in more depth in Part [2](#), which as mentioned



Fig 8. Lost in translation: the two Horned Gods, Left, a depiction of Herne the Hunter with his stag antlers, and right, Lucifer/Satan with his goat horns.

above will detail the gendered stereotypes associated with witchcraft and Paganism. For now, the final Ancient witch to be introduced is Herne the Hunter⁷ of English folklore. Herne is one of the first and only men to appear in the witch category of ancient myth. Although a great deal of deities throughout the world possess powers of sorcery and enchantment, Herne, often

⁶ K, A., & K, A. (2003) *Candlemas: Feast of Flames*.

⁷ Franklin, A. (2003) *Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Solstice*.

combined with Cernunnos, is the only one to be referred to specifically as a witch. God of the hunt, Herne, or Cernunnos, had antlers protruding from his head and would call upon the spirits of the forest to aid in his hunt or else carrying away souls to join him forever. In this guise, Herne is often seen as a god of death, and it is “believed his appearance and existence played an important role in the correlation of witchcraft with the Christian representation of Satan, where his antlers seem to have been replaced with goat horns over the centuries that followed” (West, 2001: 21).

1.1.2: The First ‘Real’ Witch and ‘The Hammer of Witches’

The first documented recording of the term ‘witch’, rather than *Wiccha* or *Wiccian*, being applied to a woman accused of magic amongst mortals is often attributed to Dame Alice Kyteler. Kyteler’s life and ultimate demise has been documented by Irish scholars throughout the centuries, most notably by Thomas Wright in 1842. Here paraphrased, according to Wright,

“in 1324, County Kilkenny, Ireland, following the death of her fourth husband, Kyteler was accused of poisoning him and her previous husbands with ‘maleficarum’, also known as ‘harmful magic’.



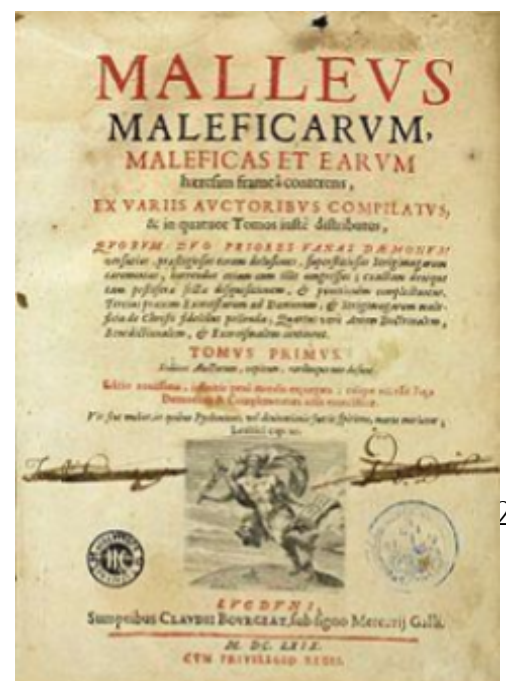
Fig 9. An unknown artist’s rendition of the accusation of Alice Kyteler, c. 1300

She was arrested, accused of denying and contesting the faith of Christ and Christianity; cutting up animals at the crossroads to use

in potions and to summon a demon who she used to kill her husbands; and meeting at night in a churchyard to conjure black magic to undermine the Catholic church. However, before Kyteler could be put on trial and executed for her actions, she fled to England. Her poor servant, Petronilla de Meath, was flogged and burned to death in her stead”. (Wright, 1842).

Around the same time as Kyteler’s accusations, Europe was beginning to enforce witch trials of their own, with the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*) (Kramer, 1486) being first published in Germany just over a century after Kyteler’s execution and ultimately reigniting the flame of witch-hunt fury in Europe.

Until the 14th century within which Kyteler lost her life, witchcraft throughout Europe had been synonymous with healing, and a town *Wiccha* was simply a healer who could be forgiven if mistaken through a modern gaze as a midwife or nurse. It was only as Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, began to take hold of society and easier oceanic travel meant mythologies and common consciousness could be spread further that the *Wicchia* came to mean something different; something darker. “Those who err and say that there is no such thing as witchcraft, that it is purely imaginary, are in every part heretics as the counterparts within which they refuse to believe” (Kramer, 1486: 2). It is often contested by ‘witch historians’, such as Nigel Cawthorne, as to why this switch occurred in the 14th and 15th centuries, and whether the knowledge that there is far more than just the small country of origin within which the common people dwelled had a part to play in the spreading fear of the dark and unknown. “In England there has been a long history of witch hunts when the punishment, prescribed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, was only a period of fasting. In the eighth century, the Archbishop of York made the punishment for *maleficarum* a forced fast of seven



years. It was King Athelstan in the tenth century who introduced the death penalty for ‘murder by witchcraft’” (Cawthorne, 2003: 197). It is easy, and has been for centuries, to blame Christianity for such a change in the opinion of those who practise magick and magickal arts, especially amongst the modern witchcraft practitioner population. This is due in part, it seems, to the vast spread of Christianity throughout the world at the same time as the most famous witch trials the world over.

1.1.3: My Own Foundation for Witches on Screen

With a cultural and societal basis for the persecution of witchcraft laid, I seek now to lay foundations for the modern gaze within which I will be analysing witches of the screen with regard to real life witches. The definition of witch according to Oxford Dictionary is “a woman thought to have magic powers, especially evil ones, popularly depicted as wearing a black cloak and pointed hat and flying on a broomstick” or “an offensive term for an unpleasant woman”. I have much chagrin for this definition and so within this context I will rather be setting my own. Within my experience following the path, a witch is a person of non-specified gender who seeks to use magick for manifestation, desire and to aid themselves and others. Magick cannot and should not be used to manipulate free will, nor should it be used for evil purposes lest it return to the sender “three-fold⁸”. Such a definition was taught to me in childhood by my mother, a practising Wiccan, when I first enquired about learning the craft from her, and in the many Pagan books I have read since. By the very nature of the craft, in which the path must be discovered, not thrust upon the witch as structured religion often is, my mother set me on a journey of discovery to find my own path. She did this by answering any and all questions I had about her practice, but also by giving me books to read (whilst indulging my fantasies about summoning dragons, as I had come to understand from fictional accounts of magic), and, most importantly, the use of screen representations.

The first experience of witches on the screen that I remember really paying attention to as someone to aspire to was Sabrina Spellman in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996). When I was a child in the 1990s we

⁸ West, K. (2003) *The Real Witches Handbook*.

were lucky enough to have satellite television, meaning I had access to a wide range of programming which included that of American television networks such as Disney Channel and ABC. As I was born in 1994, I didn't truly begin to pay attention to *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* until 1998 when it was in its second season.



Fig 11. Sabrina Spellman and her cat Salem were my first witch role models.

At four years old, I had already begun to notice my mother's wiccan practice and began to gain interest in magick, and so it was she who turned me to *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* in the hopes, though fantastical, I may learn some of the basics of the craft. I learned quickly that magick in a real world context wasn't simply as easy as pointing my index finger to get what I wanted as Sabrina did, but it was more about a feeling and a desire to manifest. We had a grey cat at the time, not quite as black as Salem, but she instantly became my familiar, a notion that my mother was happy to hear as association with a familiar is a profound element of Neo-Paganism and Wicca. It didn't bother me at all that Alice did not speak as Salem did in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, just feeling the power of having my own familiar was enough. As I grew a little older, I saw myself in the character of Sabrina Spellman. She was bullied in school, as I was, and used her powers as a means to cope with such a feat. It gave me courage during my days at school to know I had an inner power that bullies could not take from me, even if it did not manifest itself in my pointer finger. The

Hallowe'en of 2000, when I was 6 years old, I dressed up as Sabrina and delighted in spending my evening at our annual party explaining who and what Sabrina was to my friends. To me she was an idol of witchcraft, potentially my first, especially episodes that dealt with 'real problems' that a young girl, or young witch, may face. In 5.13: *Now You See Her, Now You Don't* (2000), Sabrina uses magic to diet, ultimately losing a dangerous amount of weight until she literally disappears and becomes invisible. For a young girl such as myself, who was dealing with my own lack of body confidence, this episode was an important lesson not to use magick to solve such problems. Whether intended for real witches or not, this episode, as well as many others, carried an important lesson for young witches.

Although I credit *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* as the beginning of my understanding of magick and its limits, other shows such as *The Worst Witch* (1998) and films such as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001) were means of understanding magick in a way a child may understand. Whereas many children my age could look at such texts as simply fantasy, to a young witch like me they were a manual of how to survive as a witch in a "muggle" (Rowling, 1997), or mortal, world. Once my child mind learned that true magick is more than pointing and hoping, or use of a wand and spoken incantations, I was able to watch these texts and pick out messages laid for real life witches. Like Sabrina, Mildred Hubble in *The Worst Witch* was bullied by her peers and used her magick to get revenge or cope with her plight, although a similar lesson occurred in that it never worked out the way she intended. *The Worst Witch* also introduced the "Witches' Code", a fictional version of the *Wiccan Rede*, a set of guidelines for witches to prevent their magick causing troubles upon others or themselves.

The real life *Rede*, a word meaning "counsel" or "advice" when defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was first recorded by Doreen Valiente, a follower of Gerald Gardner, the "father of Gardnerian Wicca" (Heselton, 2012: 6), in 1964. It famously states that witches following Wicca



Fig 12. *The Worst Witch*, BBC.

should “harm ye none, do what ye will”⁹, meaning witches may not bring harm to others. This is where the white magick vs dark magic debate is most apparent, as many followers of witchcraft do not believe in the *Rede*. Nonetheless, the *Rede* has often laid foundations in fictional fantasy literature and screen in lieu of rules, such as the “Witches Code” in *The Worst Witch*, which states “magic should not be used for selfish or trivial purposes” and “no spells should be used for personal gain”. As a child, this was my first introduction to the guidelines and advice that came with practising the path, as my mother intended. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, as well as the films that followed in the series and the books that I read alongside them, featured many elements of real life witchcraft that were important for a young witch to learn, such as the importance of the number three, seen in the ‘Golden Trio’, as it’s referred to in the fandom, of Harry, Ron and Hermione; as well as the importance of a good magick teacher when starting out in magick. When I turned thirteen, an important age for a young witch, I was gifted my first wand by my mother. Though I was disappointed that I couldn’t use it like they did in *Harry Potter*, I was nonetheless excited to learn how to really use it in spellwork. A wand, however, is not used how one would think and is instead a form of channelling energy into the circle¹⁰. It cannot be used to point at others or as a weapon of sorts. Such a notion would not have even come to me had I not started my magickal journey with such screen texts.

1.1.4: What a Witch is: Context from the Coven

To add context outside of my own experience to the term ‘witch’ in the modern guise of Neo-Paganism and Wicca, I turned to my online coven for their opinions. For the sake of this study they will remain anonymous, but the forums used are open to the public via social media platform Facebook.

⁹ Valiente, D. (1964). *The Wiccan Rede*.

¹⁰ I have no citation for this statement, it’s simply a known fact of Wicca and Paganism.



Fig.13. One of the Pagan forums available on Facebook

Neo-Paganism is a varied practice and therefore no one path is the same, and so to place a firm foundation I sought to gather as many opinions as possible about the term ‘witch’ before continuing to pick apart what it means in the context of this paper. “A witch, to me, is a wise person, someone to be trusted”, stated one member. With this statement, it seems many in the community wish to reclaim the mantle that was taken from witches by the patriarchy of the dark ages. Where once the witch was an old woman; a village healer; or a midwife, who could be sought out for advice and wisdom, the witch soon became a symbol of evil and sin. Folklore of the time began to adapt and change to fit this narrative, and along with it placing the figure of the witch alongside that of a fictional being who could not be trusted for they could not be understood. Such views were fuelled by the stories being invented and told of wicked witches in the woods who lure in and eat children; myths and legends of old hags who use children as slaves; or else elderly women who manipulated those around them and used their magic for their own personal gain. Such notions, in a modern gaze, simply belong in a story, yet, in the 21st Century, these are still the beliefs of some amongst the general population who think a witch is simply fictional, or else believes the misrepresentations adorned to us through fairy tales.

1.2. When and why does Witchcraft become a fairytale?



Fig. 14. An illustration of *Hansel and Gretel*

1.2.1. Grimm and Grimmer - German Witches and *Hansel and Gretel*

“The old woman took the children by the hand and led them into her house, feeding them and putting them to bed. But the old woman had only pretended to be friendly. She was a wicked witch who was lying in wait there for children. She had built her house of bread only in order to lure them to her, and if she captured one, she would kill him, cook him, and eat him; and for her that was a day to celebrate. Witches have red eyes and cannot see very far, but they have a sense of smell like animals, and know when humans are approaching. When Hansel and Gretel came near to her, she laughed wickedly and spoke scornfully, "Now I have them. They will not get away from me again."” (Grimm & Grimm, 1810).

Arguably, the most well-known fairytale witch in the Western world is that of the wicked witch portrayed in *Hansel and Gretel*, written in 1810 by the Brothers Grimm. However, the story of the twins lost in the woods was penned by the German brothers based upon an Italian folktale entitled *Nennillo E Nennella* (Basile, 1634).

The main focus of the tales, both Italian and German, is to focus on the danger that the unknown fairs to Godly young children such as Hansel and Gretel and Nennillo and Nennella. “As fairy tales go, such a tale has a reasonably short historical lineage, belonging to a group of European tales especially prevalent in the Baltic regions, about children who outwit witches and ogres” (Carruthers, 2015: 5). The fear that swept Europe in the light of the Great Famine of 1315-1321, in which “many desperate parents were forced to desert their children to die, or leave them to fend for themselves” (*ibid*). It was far “easier in the collective consciousness of those having to undertake such feats to pretend their children were simply taken by dark beings” (*ibid*). With the rise of Christianity in Europe, such beings began to become the opposite of those who were Godly and good, the desperate god-fearing parents just doing what they could whilst the evil, dark witches took away their children.

In the original versions of such tales it was usually both parents who chose such a fate for their children, whereas, as time moved on and attitudes changed it became the figure of the evil stepmother, every part as evil as the witch in some regards, who chose to abandon the unfortunate children. Furthermore, in later depictions of witches in fairy tales, the stepmother and witch were often combined, such as the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Grimm & Grimm, 1812). Many folktales and fairytales feature a fear of the deep, dark woods, where strangers and dangers lurk unseen, and this is greatly in part due to the acts of the unfortunate families who made these decisions during times of famine. “In so many variants of the *Hansel and Gretel* story, the witch or ogre is found deep in the woods where nobody dares to tread” (*ibid*, 6).

1.2.2. Slavic Witches and the Shtriga



Fig. 15. A modern image of the Shtriga folklore

In Slavic folklore, where it is believed the stooped hag imagery of the witch originated when crossed with the Albanian *shtriga*, a vampiric figure who steals the lives of children, there is the legend of *Baba Yaga*, a folktale with no discernible author.: “The two orphans looked inside the house and saw a witch resting there, her head near the threshold, one foot in one corner, the other foot in another corner, and her knees quite close to the ridge pole. The children were afraid, and stood close, very close together, but in spite of their fear they said very politely: "Ho, grandmother, our stepmother sent us to thee to serve thee." (*Folk story, no documented origin*). The witch looked over the children and, deciding they would do, said, "All right; I am not opposed to keeping you, children. If you satisfy all my wishes I shall reward you; if not, I shall eat you up.”” As the original illustrations of Baba Yaga, a name which translates to “grandmother sorceress” in Russian and Polish language, depict an old woman with a haggard face and long, ripped cloak, it is not too out of field to assume this is where the imagery of the wicked witch began to take shape, along with the previously mentioned *shtriga* of Albanian folklore.

The *Shtriga*, although never aligned with a specific folktale, is a vampiric witch figure in folklore who also wears a long, tattered cloak, has a hooked nose and seeks to consume infants. Albanian myth states those who fear the *Shtriga* should ward their homes with garlic,



Fig.16. An illustration of Baba Yaga.

contributing to the vampire folklore that followed, and hold a strong belief in God, as a *Shtriga* is not born, but made by a lack of faith, children and a sinful envious attitude. Through a Christian gaze, it could be argued that such depictions of the ungodly refer to the creature's embodiment of the deadly sins of greed and envy. The *Shtriga* appears in episode 1.03 of *The Witcher* (2019), although she is not portrayed quite as hag-like as in other adaptations or even the original folklore. She does, however, consume innocent souls.

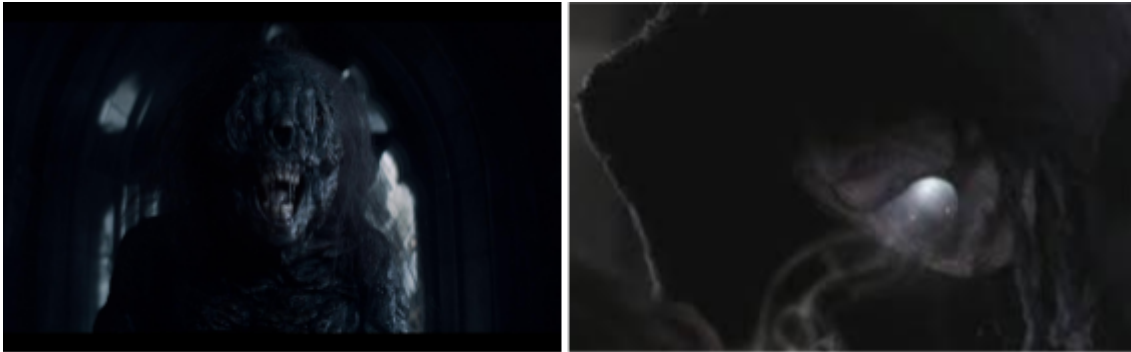


Fig. 17 & 18. The *shtriga* as appears in *The Witcher* (left) & *Supernatural* (right)

The *Shtriga* also appears in the American television show *Supernatural*, where, in

episode 1.18: *Something Wicked*, a witch-like figure is terrorising patients in a children's hospital. The figure in the episode is depicted as wearing a long, tattered black cloak that covers their face, which is wizened and wrinkled, and long, claw-like fingers. The *Shtriga* consumes the souls and youth children in order to appear as humanoid, but is eventually defeated with iron bullets.

According to European folklore, iron is said to repel witches as it supposedly burns their skin, an element often played upon with fantastical witches, and joked about amongst real witches.



Fig. 19. An example of the joke made by real witches regarding the stereotypes given to us

of

1.2.3. Unhappily Ever After: The Expected Construction of the Wicked Witch and the Undying Fairytale

With the original folklore and fairytales beginning to depict witches in such a way, it can easily be seen how these portrayals came to become the expected for the wicked witch in adaptations of the fairytale on screen. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the evil queen takes on a similar form in order to trick Snow White into accepting the poisoned apple.



Fig. 20. The hag figure in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Where once the queen was beautiful, the “fairest in the land” (Grimm & Grimm, 1812), the envy and greed she displays in her jealousy of the Princess Snow White causes her to take the shape of an old beggar woman.

Although it could be argued she takes this guise to appear genial and harmless to the innocent, virtuous Snow White, it could also be read that the queen takes this form as a mask for her wickedness. Since the 1930s there have been endless adaptations of fairy tales and fairytale witches specifically. In *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013), based upon the original fairytale but with a twist that sees Hansel and Gretel now grown and seeking revenge on their own childhood witch, the wicked witch is portrayed as beautiful until she is forced to show her real self, which includes an elongated nose and chin, cracked skin and hideous, ugly features. Furthermore, she is the head witch of a coven of various ‘witches’, appearing all to have skin-modifications and features that resemble those of lepers. This image of the

wicked witch is often used in cinema and the small screen, from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* through to *The Witches* (2020). Throughout history, witchcraft and leprosy has been aligned due to both of these groups being persecuted. Both ‘conditions’ are “forms of insidious harm”, explained in *Witchcraft and Leprosy: Two Strategies for Exclusion* by Mary Douglas. Douglas further explains how they are both “filthy in culture, outcasts from society and politics” (Douglas, 1991, n.p.). The witches portrayed in *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* are symbolic of this ancient alignment, whilst following the traditions of cinematic portrayals based on that of the imagery concocted by Baba Yaga.

In *Into the Woods* (2014), the wicked witch is similarly portrayed with a stooped appearance; blackened, rotten teeth; wild white hair; and a wrinkled, lengthened face. Like the evil queen, this witch is consumed with greed and envy, which once again transforms her appearance to one resembling Baba Yaga.



Fig. 21. The witch in *Into the Woods* reflects the hag-like stereotype.

The witch in *Into the Woods* is based on the antagonist from the Grimm fairytale *Rapunzel* (Grimm & Grimm, 1812), although in the original German text this witch was referred to as a sorceress. The difference between witches and sorceresses, at least according to Neo-Paganism, is the intention of the craft. In a fairytale sense, a sorceress uses their powers to cause great difference, often causing troubles; whereas a witch often uses her powers for personal gain or appears as wise and all-knowing. These distinctions are often interchangeable in the screen context, so I feel it is important to define them for the purposes of this study.

1.2.4. The Mediaeval Fear of the Feminine

It could be argued that such fairytale portrayals of the witch as a woman to be feared, who seeks to eat children and spread diseases, such as leprosy, centre around a mediaeval fear of the feminine. Around the time Baba Yaga and the *shtriga* were becoming the accepted imagery for such a character, the patriarchy in Europe was similarly holding fast to discourse. Therefore, by making the villain an old woman and calling her a witch, the men in charge of these societies could spearhead the narrative around what was accepted and what was not. Where once the old woman was a wise person to go to for advice, now they were to be feared and outcast. The patriarchy were living in fear of a powerful woman who practised magick, the ultimate symbol of free will, and so this figure was granted the mantle of evil-doer. It was a sin to divorce and remarry, making the stepmother a taboo, and it was a sin to lust, be envious or be greedy, and so such attributes were pinned to the character of the witch in a bid to keep the God-fearing, Christian populous from straying too far from the righteous path.

1.3. The Beginnings of Witches on Screen

1.3.1. To Hag or Not to Hag - Hag vs Witch

What is it that makes a witch a witch? What is the general expectation of a witchy appearance? One could be forgiven, due to the limited exposure of truth, for thinking that, in answer to these queries, all witches have green skin, or have warts upon their face, or a hooked nose, or wear black robes and pointed black hats. The near century of witches appearing as such on screen have long since been drilled into the collective psyche. One look at the Hallowe'en section of a store, for instance, will demonstrate these elements as culturally accepted and understood, and on Hallowe'en night many a young girl, as well as some boys, may don the black hat, hooked nose and taloned fingers and flit about trick or treating with no mind to the origin of their illusionary chosen dress. All in all, cinema and the small screen have much to

answer for in the accepted witch appearance. The question remains, then, where did such stereotypes come from? Why the green skin? Why the warts? Why the black dress and pointed hat?

For the most part, such an explanation can be traced back to two moments in cinematic history: 21st December 1937, and 12th August 1939.

“As Disney’s feature film debut, and a pivotal cinematic moment, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) has often been understood as a standard bearer of formulaic tendencies, repeating cycles of archetypes that have structured thematic and narrative content, character types and high-contrast dualities between good and evil” (Pallant & Holliday, 2021: 5). In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the villain - the Evil Queen - is depicted as beautiful until she turns herself ugly in order to do ugly deeds.

As the Old Woman, the hag-like witch figure who directly poisons the pure, innocent Princess Snow White, the Queen’s beauty fades away and is replaced by the guise of an old woman. She has wrinkled skin, her warty nose and chin jut out of her face to form a semi-crescent shape in profile, and she dons a black cloak with a pointed hood. Furthermore, the hag has a familiar of sorts: a black crow who is always present during her moments of villainous witchcraft. Ancient folklore and mythology world over collectively views the crow as an omen and has done for centuries, a being of despair and death. However, when a crow is in the context of modern witchcraft, most notably as a spirit guide, “a crow can symbolise adaptability and transformation” (Farmer, 2006: 43). In the case of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, although perhaps not intended, the crow who watches the Evil Queen could be interpreted to symbolise the transformation of the Evil Queen into the Wicked Hag. The hag, in this sense, is a bastardised rendition of the ancient Wiccan ‘crone’ figure, the third face of the Triple Goddess in Neo-Paganism. However, this is where the mirage fades, as the crone is a figure of wisdom and guidance, a reward for surviving the faces of ‘maiden’ and ‘mother’, and not a malicious or evil being as is portrayed by the hag.



Fig. 22. An ugly guise for ugly deeds.

The wart on the hag's nose is a reference to the witch hunts of Europe as discussed in the introduction. During such witch hunts, witchfinders would seek 'devil's marks' or 'witch tags'¹¹ upon the accused, and these marks were often found in the form of abnormal body mutations: moles, freckles, scars or warts. In the 17th Century, it was believed that the Devil would leave these marks upon his loyalists as a means of identifying them. "Devils marks were blemishes in the shape of a figure or animal, birthmarks, scars or tattoos which did not bleed when pricked, and in women were usually found on the breast, neck or face" (Cawthorne, 2003: 268). As a witch with a face full of freckles and a neck with a few moles, I find this fact particularly fascinating. The wart that appears on the hag's nose is a subtle mark of evil that over time has come to be directly associated with wicked witches and old hags sent to tempt away the pure and virtuous.

The hag's prominent nose and chin are an homage to *Commedia dell'Arte* in Venetian Renaissance historical culture. According to '*Commedia dell'Arte: A Guide for Actors*' (1994) by John Rudlin, "Such features, originally exaggerated using mask design for the character of the greedy merchant, or the trickster, connote a wicked or a mischievous character, and in the art form refer to the villain on many occasions" (Rudlin, 1994: 70).



Fig. 23. The tropes displayed in *Commedia dell'Arte* that have been assigned to witches.

¹¹ Cawthorne, N. (2003) *Witchcraft: A History of Persecution*.

With this in mind, it becomes easy to see why the artists at Walt Disney Pictures chose to adopt such characteristics for their villainous Queen in her trickster hag guise. The hag exists to tempt the pure, wholesome Snow White, and to break her purity by tricking her into accepting a poisoned apple. Furthermore, this act is undertaken in a wizened voice, a potential reference to the hiss of the snake who tempted Eve in the *Book of Genesis*, as a wrinkled, skeletal hand emerges from the black cope to hand the virtuous Snow White with the red apple. Red has come to be universally recognised as a symbol for danger, but the innocent young Princess does not know this. She accepts the apple, and is punished for her dealings with the hag. As a result of the hag's villainy, the hooked nose, prominent chin and single nose wart came to be associated with evil deeds and impure actions and therefore *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* provides a strong base for exploration as to witches on screen. "The Evil Queen demonstrates an entirely new dimensional vivacity within character construction. The witch, a mature, empowered woman, typifies evil, providing the way for a fundamental message not present in prior cinema: the strong message of good versus evil" (Greene, 2018: 54). The exaggerated traits of the hag that have come to be viewed as those of the 'witch' are an incorporation of fairytale and mythology, yet have come to have a lasting, not always positive, legacy. This could be, in part, due to the strong woman behind the guise of the hag or the witch. "Opposite of the purity of Snow White, the strength unknown to many female viewers of the period resonated, perhaps explaining the enduring popularity of such a 'witch' figure" (*ibid*, 57). Time and time again witches have appeared in this ilk, so much so that it is hard to deny the influence this portrayal has had on the way witches are viewed in real life.

1.3.2. America's Home-Grown Fairytale

The turn of the century, 1900, marked a time of change and adaptation in the United States of America, as the country was "declared a world power by President William McKinley" (McKinleyMuseum.org). This time of change came to be reflected further afield than just politics, as advances in both cinema and literature provided more freedom as to genre and content. This was the case indeed when, in Chicago in

May, writer L. Frank Baum published a children’s novel that would come to be one of the most recognised stories of all time, “America’s best home-grown fairytale” (Library of Congress, 2000). *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) was one of the first full-length pieces of literature, that is to say one that was not a fairytale or folktale, to introduce the concept of witches as a main plot point. In 1902, the novel was produced for stage, and then it was adapted three separate times as silent films between 1902 and 1922. Witches disappeared from the cinematic screen after these silent adaptations left the witches and “‘stuff of fairytales’ to the fledgling animation industry” (Greene, 2018: 38) . It was only after 1934, when the Production Code Administration (PCA) established censorship policies in Hollywood films, that witchcraft slipped through the cracks of ‘what not to do’, and witches became popular once more. “Despite its Catholic base, the Production Code itself had no text regulating the portrayal of witches. The fact that witches were left out demonstrates a lack of any real connection between theology and witchcraft” (*ibid*: 39).

This *faux pas* on behalf of the PCA paved the way for the most notable adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*, this time as a “technicolor triumph¹²” [sic] in August 1939, when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer brought the magical tale to life, birthing with it the iconic “Hollywood witch” (*ibid*).

“I’ve never heard of a beautiful witch before,” states Dorothy upon her interaction with Glinda after meeting in Munchkinland. Glinda the Good Witch, dressed in her pastel pink and silver ball gown, with her oversized crown and star shaped wand, smiles in a sickly sweet manner and replies, “Only bad witches are ugly”. With these two conversational lines, not entirely important to the overall plotline of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), the cinematic foundations were nevertheless laid for what is



Fig. 24. “Technicolour triumph”

¹² According to the promotional poster

expected of, not only wicked, but any witch on screen. Baum's novel does not describe the witches in much detail outside of "good" and "wicked", and so their lasting legacy and appearance is down to the production department at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Good witches, if one follows the logic of *The Wizard of Oz*, should be blonde, beautiful and wear pastel colours, a trope that has appeared time and time again through the subsequent decades.



Fig. 25. A good witch appears in pastel and is fairylike.

It seems that a good witch should also speak with a higher, gentler voice to demonstrate her virtue, and appear more as a fairy figure than that of a hag. Wicked witches, by contrast, should be ugly, green skinned, covered in warts and wear pointed hats. She must speak in a croak of a voice to emphasise her impurity. "Her appearance alone solidified standards for the Hallowe'en witch, creating a legacy that has lasted well into the next millennium, not only for the wicked witch, but for all witches." (Greene, 2018: 58). The character choices for the wicked witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, therefore, have come to, over the near century since the film was made, connote THE witch, not simply a wicked one. This notion has bled out into culture the world over, especially around Hallowe'en. "The witch flies on a broomstick, stirs a cauldron, gazes into a crystal ball, has magical powers, cackles, and generally provides a foundation for the witch in popular culture whilst utilising every stereotype from every fairytale" (*ibid*: 59).

Such traits of the Wicked Witch are apparent a few moments later in her introductory scene of *The Wizard of Oz*, when, in a plume of ominous red smoke, the Wicked Witch of the West appears.



Fig. 26. The wicked witch appears in a plume of red smoke.

Although many have argued that the grand use of vibrant colour in the 1939 classic was purely due to the introduction of technicolour film, especially with the change of colour for the shoes (from silver as they are in Baum’s book, to red in the film), those who are passionate about the portrayal of witches may think differently. The decision for the colour red for the smoke, for instance, universally symbolises danger and anger. Directly upon the Wicked Witch’s entrance, the audience are told she is a danger to the virtuous, virginal young protagonist, and should not be trusted as emphasised through the colour choice.

The choice of a flowing black cloak, reminiscent of the Puritan dress of centuries earlier, and crouched



Fig.27. The Puritan dress.

gait are synonymous with ominous history and recognition, as was observed in the hag in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

The crouched figure adds to the hooked profile caused by the protruding nose and chin, and there is something about the stooped figure that adds to the sinister nature. When speaking in a 1977 essay featured in *The Making of the Wizard of Oz*, Margaret Hamilton, the actress, recalled that “the black cape and gown caused a mediaeval look, harking back to the early witch hunts of the 17th Century” (Harmetz, 1977: 316). In the same essay,

Hamilton further discussed the reasoning behind the most iconic witch stereotype that was birthed by *The Wizard of Oz*: that of green skin.

1.4. The Alternative ‘Green’ Witch

1.4.1. Driven by Technology, or Fuelled by Oppression?

The colour green has come to be associated with wicked witchcraft through the use of specific symbolic media. “The unique colour choice was applied to the character by the film crew, as, in this new technicolour world, black clothing next to skin created a separation of the face and hands to the rest of the body” (Harmetz, 1977: 317). As a result of such a decision, driven by technological advances, the green skin of witches came to be forever synonymous with the wicked witch figure for decades to come. “There has never been a reason behind the choice of green specifically for *The Wizard of Oz*, although it has been speculated that green is cognizant of monsters, greed, envy and the unclean or sick” (Greene, 2018: 59).

The use of green has been used many a time as a symbol of the wicked since this decision was made. Villains in the Disney cinematic fairytale adaptations to follow *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for instance, are often flanked in a green glow or even dressed in the sickly green colouring to emphasise their villainy. In the Disney animation *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) Maleficent disappears in a surge of green flames. The 1985 film *The Black Cauldron*, arguably one of the most terrifying Disney films ever made, depicts the witch king flanked by lime green undead soldiers. In 1989, *The Little Mermaid* utilised the colour green during the highest moment of power for Ursula, the sea witch. In 2009’s *The Princess and the Frog*, the

voodoo priest Dr. Facilier is depicted as the servant of green spiritual figures, whom he refers to as his “friends on the other side”. This specific imagery not only absorbs the colour green into witchcraft, but also the sacred practice of voodoo. In *Tangled* (2010), the villain and witch Mother Gothel carries a lantern with a distinctly green glow. All of these villains are depicted in such a flash of green due to the technological decision made in 1939 to paint the Wicked Witch’s skin green, and the legacy it subsequently left.



Fig. 28. The green tinged skin of Frankenstein’s monster.

Not only has the colour green since been associated with witches, but with villainy in general. The colour chosen for Frankenstein's monster, for instance, in the 1931 Hollywood adaptation, was a shade of blue-green, despite the film being recorded in black and white.

The colour green in cinema has come to represent evil and the monstrous, therefore "aligning the wicked witch with the horrific" (Greene, 2018: 59) and further extenuating the witch as the outsider or the other. These connotations, therefore, may similarly exist in a racial context. With just over half a century having passed since the American Civil War and the Abolition Act of 1865, "animosity was still very present in the United States of America against anyone of a different skin tone or race" (Greene, 2018: 59). It may be that the colour green on the creature of Frankenstein's monster in 1931, or on the Wicked Witch of the West in 1939, is an allegory in the wake of the Thirteenth Amendment which states that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States" (Library of Congress) . Such a thought harkens back to the truth of Tituba in the Salem Witch Trials, a West Indian slave who was the first to be accused of witchcraft. The West Indies have a history of practising *Obeah*, a "form of voodoo and spiritual practice that may seem much like maleficarum in the eyes of the uneducated, close-minded Puritans" (O'Neal, 2020: 5). Perhaps much like the pre-Abolition collective confederate view of slaves from the West Indies, witches on screen "are thought to be dangerous and wily, capable of drawing on their evil powers to wreak destruction on, and cause harm to, their community" (Creed, 1994: 76).

Many Neo-Pagan witches take offence to the use of the colour green in such a way, however. In Wicca and modern witchcraft the colour green is not a colour of evil, greed, envy or monstrosity. Green is a colour of vitality, freshness and balance and is symbolic of the mother figure. The use of green, therefore, for figures who are far from the stereotypical mother is problematic amongst modern witches. Yet such symbolism maintains a hold on the collective vision of witchcraft, perhaps directly influencing the view of modern witches and causing common misconception. To be a green witch in the sense of Neo-Paganism is to be one with the Earth, to use the Mother Goddess as a base for magickal ability, and to encourage growth

and creativity¹³. It is not a colour of malpractice or maliciousness, yet such a view sustains amongst the uneducated and of course, began in 1939 with the Wicked Witch of the West, and continued throughout cinema, along with the pointed hats, hooked noses, warts and all, a fairytale copy of the real.

1.4.2. “Burn Them All”: *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, the Abandoned Child Fights Back



Fig.29. Hansel and Gretel as depicted in *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*.

As previously touched upon, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* was a 2013 film adaptation of the Grimm fairytale. In the film, Hansel and Gretel are now grown adults and make their living hiring out themselves as a form of pest control, namely to kill witches. Their story began as it did in the fairytale: abandoned in the woods by their parents, taken in by a witch who fed Hansel in order to fatten him up, and ultimately destroying their captor in her own oven as in Grimm’s story. This is where the story differs, as instead of returning home Hansel and Gretel decided instead to hunt more witches rather than return to the parents that abandoned them, with Hansel proudly remarking: “Most people will say witches aren't real, it's stuff of fairy tales. Then, one day, they show up at your door and eat your kids. That's where we come in” (*Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, 2013). The duo have made a successful living out of doing so and have become well-known in the hex-hunt line of work. Their adulthood is not without its dilemmas. Hansel now has a magical form of diabetes following the great deal of sweets that were fed to him by the blind witch. This creates issues with the plotline when he is separated from his insulin. However, the sibling bond

¹³ West, K. (2003) *The Real Witches Handbook*.

remains strong between the pair, who as adults are played by Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton, although this comes into question throughout the narrative of the film when conflict comes between them. The main narrative of the story is that children are going missing and witches are suspected, fitting the story of the original witch in the fairytale who coveted the taste of children whilst combining it with another German folktale, that of the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Despite being an “age old story”, as stated by

Gretel, there are complications in order to keep the story flowing. Upon arriving in the town of their latest assignment, for instance, they save a young, beautiful woman from being executed as a witch as they decide she doesn’t “fit the usual appearance”. Hansel concludes this after checking her teeth, skin and hair, claiming “a witch cannot hide their power, it sets in like rot and turns them ugly”. This is most likely a direct reference to the ‘witch marks’ which were used in the Middle Ages to identify so-called witches by witch hunters. The woman, Mina, turns out to be a witch after all, causing further conflict for Hansel who has fallen in love with her, but she is a good witch. She certainly

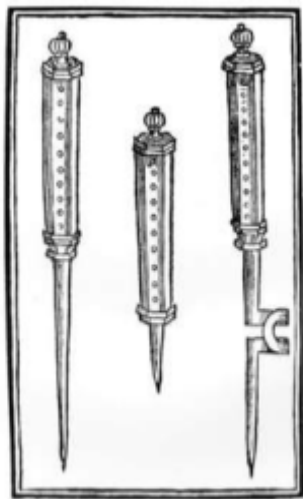


Fig.30. Witch ‘prickers’ as illustrated in the Dark Ages.

fits the stereotypes discussed prior within this chapter: she is blonde, white and dresses in light-coloured clothing. It appears that she uses her magic to heal those in need of it, using it on Hansel himself, and so is allowed to live when all other witches must perish in order for Hansel and Gretel to get paid. This is a double-standard that greatly reflects the reality faced by witches throughout history and has been visited countless times throughout this thesis: a good witch must be beautiful, a dark witch ugly. In *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, witches who practise dark magic have darkened, wizened wrinkled skin, rotten teeth and have an animalistic quality to their appearance and movement, which are the factors Hansel and Gretel search for when



Fig.31. The ‘animalistic’ qualities assigned to the wicked witches.

fighting against witches, allowing Mina to slip through the proverbial net.

The wicked witches in question are part of the coven run by Muriel, the ‘grand witch’, played by Famke Jansenn. Jansenn, being of Dutch heritage, is instantly set apart as the ‘other’ alongside the English Arterton and American Renner. The use of a foreign accent for the witch is seen several times throughout cinema, notably in *The Witches* (1990). Muriel disguises herself as a beautiful raven-haired woman when not her ‘true self’, further confusing the twins as they fight to discover the witches' coven. She uses this disguise to trick a group of untrained witch-hunters in the forest, seducing them before enchanting their own hunting dog to attack them.

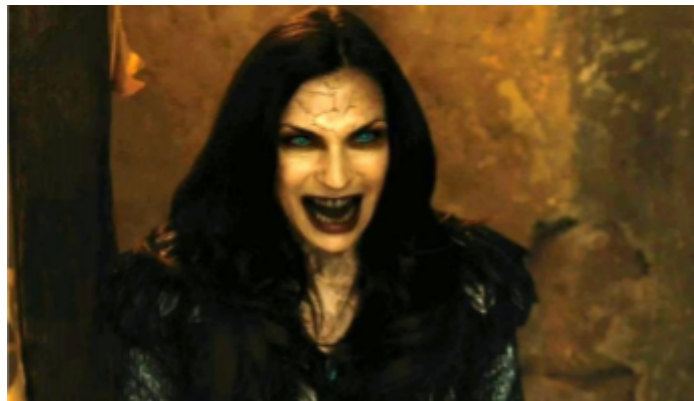


Fig.32. Muriel in her 'true form'.

Like many high witches in other fiction, such as in *The Witches* (1990), she prefers others to do her work for her. This is a direct reference to the mediaeval fear of a witch using her magic to control the mind of the innocent, and is a trope often seen through witch fiction.

Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters could, potentially, be viewed as a witch liberation narrative. Throughout their assignment in trying to save the children and destroy the wicked witches, Gretel discovers that she is a white witch, here meaning that she has access to good magick, descended from her mother who was also a white witch. This explains why the twins are immune to dark magic, and why “witches always seem to find [them]”. Ultimately, Muriel seeks to use the white witch within Gretel to sacrifice her to the blood moon in a Satanic-style ritual at the climax of the film. Gretel and Mina exist as a method of liberating the oppressed, the witches, in proving that not all witches are bad, a redeeming quality to the more-often used fairytale narrative, though still highly problematic.

Part Two: *Sorcerers, Warlocks and Wizards, Oh My!* | Gendered Witchcraft and Stereotypes, Gardnerism and the Devil

2.1. Gendered Stereotypes in the Magickal World

When considering the terms ‘warlock’, ‘wizard’ and ‘sorcerer’, one could be forgiven to imagine a fantastical image, one of a bearded, robed figure with a staff, standing off against great beasts such as dragons. However, this is yet another gross misunderstanding that has permeated modern society with regard to the practice of witchcraft and magick. In truth, amongst modern day Neo-Pagans, there is no such thing as a warlock, a wizard *or* a sorcerer.

The purpose of this paper initially was the attempt to explore why certain stereotypes have come to be. Therefore, this chapter will focus on one of the most infuriating stereotypes in the magickal communities and covens that at least I have been a part of: the notion that witches are purely female. Fundamentally, this stereotype is nothing more than a misconception. From the very beginning real life witches are told that witchcraft has no gender. Whether you are female, male, non-binary, intersex or any other gender, the term is witch regardless. In the real life witchcraft communities, we do not acknowledge such fictional, fantastical terms as “warlock”, “wizard” or “sorcerer”, although the world seems comfortable in acknowledging them for us. It may not help when video game franchises, such as *Skyrim* (2011), and tabletop gaming franchises, such as *Dungeons and Dragons* (Gygax & Arneson, 1974), nurture these terms, which could also be praised for keeping them in our vocabulary, if only they would not align them incorrectly or even misrepresent.



Fig. 33. An example of wizardry in *Dungeons and Dragons*.

2.1.1. What is a Wizard? The Influence of Merlin.

When compared to the real life witch, a wizard is a fantastical being with phenomenal powers learned not by nature but by scholarly study. The general consensus amongst witches is one that places the wizard as equal to a stage magician or charlatan, and aligning the wizard with the witch in fiction and on screen has done great harm to the magical community and their desire to exist without mythopoeia. A wizard is



Fig. 34. Merlin as depicted in a painting from the Middle Ages.

almost always a male, and often portrayed as the masculine counterpart to the feminine witch, as in the *Harry Potter* octology (2001) in which witches and wizards are finitely split by gender. Perhaps the most notable historical literature wizards who have unknowingly aided in the nurture of such a stereotype is the character of Merlin, who first appeared in literature of the 12th Century as a prophet and an enchanter, an aide to King Arthur. It is thought that the original Merlin, as he appeared in Briton mythology, is a “derivative of the Welsh enchanter and charlatan prophet Myrddin” (Koch, 2005:

156). Moreover, the original Merlin was sired by a mortal woman and an incubus, further feeding the mediaeval stereotype, as previously discussed, that magic can only come from villainy and demonic force. The original 12th Century Merlinus became significantly less feared throughout the various retellings of the legend of King Arthur, going from all-powerful and to be feared to court mage, notably tamed in his abilities through the centuries. The word ‘mage’, after all, is “derived from the same archaic linguistic route as the word ‘magician’” (Oxford Dictionary), meaning one who pretends to manipulate magic. However, it is also the route of the word ‘magick’ in the real sense, and so perhaps this observation is detrimental to the power Merlin really holds. Through the centuries Merlin has remained one of the most well-known wizards and has set into motion many elements of the wizard archetype, such as the long white beard and straight pointed hat. The character was developed and reincarnated for the modern era with the BBC production of *Merlin* (2008), which admittedly did remove the stigma around wizards, removing the bearded old man imagery with that of a young teenaged Merlin. Nonetheless, the popularity of such a show which, as well as other things, once again portrayed the witch as something to be feared, could only potentially harm the stereotypes modern witches seek to lift.

Alongside BBC’s *Merlin*, the past two decades one of the biggest sources of this stereotypical harm has presented itself in notable franchises, namely, for the purpose of this study at least, those of the *Harry Potter* octalogy (2001); the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001); *The Hobbit* trilogy (2013); and individual films, such as *Oz, the Great and Powerful* (2014) which depicts the origin of character of the Wizard of Oz, the definition of charlatan; and the live-action adaptation of Disney’s *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* (2010) which, though based on the segment of the same name in *Fantasia* (1940), the 2010 film in itself also



Fig. 35. Teenage Merlin as depicted in the 2008 BBC series.

brings to mind elements of the 1963 Disney film *The Sword in the Stone*, an adapted take on Arthurian legend, ultimately bringing us back to Merlin as a wizard spearhead.



Fig. 36. Merlin as depicted in *The Sword in the Stone*.

It is important when speaking of Merlin to also mention his canonical opposite in gender, magical ability and alignment: Morgan le Fay, also known as Morgana. Although her very name tells the audience or the reader that she is, in fact, a fairy, she nonetheless is painted with the same brush as the likes of Disney villain Maleficent. Also a fairy, the way in which Maleficent is presented, right down to her green tinged skin, is a construct that ultimately depicts her as more of a wicked witch. Fairies, according to



Fig. 37. Maleficent is technically a faerie, though she is depicted with witch-like tropes.

modern lore, are fundamentally brighter in spirit and appearance, such as the blonde, pale skinned Tinkerbell of *Peter Pan and Wendy* (Barrie, 1904) or even, though she is a witch, our old friend Glinda. Morgana and Maleficent, with their dark robes, dark hair and dark

deeds, are constructed to oppose their virtuous counterparts and appear much as wicked witches despite, in fact, being fairies. These portrayals are more aligned with the Irish folktales of fae as “mischief makers and sinners” (Koch, 2003: 121) rather than with regard to modern interpretation. Maleficent is pitted against the

blonde-haired, gentle and virtuous Princess Aurora, where Morgana is often left to face-off with the all-powerful wizard Merlin.



Fig. 38. An illustration of Morgan le Fay.

Morgan le Fay first appeared in literature an entire century after Merlin, written for the first time into the 13th Century *Morte d'Arthur*, widely taken as the most detailed and most repeated account of the Arthurian Legend. Based on the Celtic goddess Morrigan, who is still celebrated in certain Neo-Pagan beliefs in modern times, Morgana possesses magical abilities that, unlike Merlin, she does not learn from a book. This in itself further benefits the difference between witch and wizard: a witch is, a wizard does. In other words, a witch is a born and a wizard is learned. Morgan also brings into question the virtue of the witch-like figure as she is depicted as sexual and provocative, taking (or forcing) lovers such as Arthur's secondhand knight Lancelot and even Merlin himself with her bewitching wiles. In more modern texts, Morgana is described as an enchantress, an altogether different creature to the witch. An enchantress, which takes its linguistic route from the French *enchanté*, meaning 'charmed' (Etymological Dictionary, 1966), uses their magic to literally enchant, to put their subject under a light-hearted charm, whilst a witch uses their magic for many other reasons, often heavier and darker. Aside from Morgana, the most notable enchantress in literature and cinema is that of the Enchantress who transforms the Prince into a Beast in

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991 & 2017). With this in mind, the enchantress is a far more problematic label as they pay no heed to free-will or consequence.

When pitted against Morgana, Merlin is starkly different in comparison. Morgana already possesses her powers and, yes, uses them for her own gain. Merlin, in most of his portrayals, uses the powers that he has learned for good, primarily to aid King Arthur but also to care for the less fortunate. Morgana is evil where Merlin is good, and it is this side of Merlin that has inspired his successors through to the modern days of cinematic adaptation.

In imagery of Merlin, discounting the BBC adaptation at least, he is depicted with a long pointed white beard, flowing bright coloured robes, and a pointed hat. He does not often use a wand as a witch or fairy might, but moreover carries some sort of staff for channelling his magic. Such imagery has been transposed onto the characters of Albus Dumbledore in *Harry Potter*; Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, and the hat comes into play in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. This symbolism is instantly recognisable to most as a wizard, a wise old mage who means only to do good with his magical abilities. This is the legacy of Merlin, but it is all-in-all problematic when dealing with real-world witches.

2.1.2. A Wizard is Never Late - Tolkienesque Wizardry

In *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, at least, there is no mention of witches as even existing in the fictional world of Middle Earth. This allows the wizard to stand separate from witchcraft and in doing so create a lore of his own. Gandalf, and other wizards in the series such as Saruman and Radagast, instead exist as “pseudo-Gods” or “angels incarnate” (Tolkien, 2002: 139), guardians of Middle Earth and “protectors of the people” (*ibid*), at least until Saruman turns to the dark side and becomes evil.



Fig. 39. Gandalf the Grey as appears in the Peter Jackson Tolkien film series.

Even so, the only time the audience really see Saruman use his wizarding powers is in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) when he is pitted in a wizarding battle against Gandalf; and in *The Desolation of Smaug* (2014) in which Saruman is still on the side of the good and uses his magic to fight back the Ringwraiths in a good vs. evil battle of power. In contrast, Gandalf and even Radagast are seen using their powers much more, hereby fitting the legacy of Merlin and his performing good deeds with these powers that they have learned. Radagast uses his magic in *An Unexpected Journey* (2013) to revive a sick animal and to protect the animals for which he cares deeply. He also gives his magical staff, the channel of his power, to Gandalf when Gandalf's own is broken. The symbolic passing of the baton is an ancient tradition carried on from Ancient Greece¹⁴ that has come to symbolise the passing of power. This care and attentiveness marks Radagast as the epitome of what a wizard should be, at least following Merlin's lead. Gandalf is very much the same, although there is a heavy Biblical undertone to the construction of Gandalf's character. I said previously that Gandalf is viewed as a pseudo-God, and if one were to read his character along with the Christian beliefs of the book's original author, J. R. R. Tolkien, the fact that Gandalf sacrifices his life and is reborn as a higher being much like Jesus Christ in the *Holy Bible*. Transforming from grey to white, one would find that Gandalf has seemingly succeeded Merlin in being the wizard towards which cinematic portrayals should aspire, at least with younger generations. The tropes remain the same: the robes, the long white beard, the pointed hat, but there is something about Gandalf and his Christian construction that may

¹⁴ According to the Unofficial Idiom Dictionary, anyway.

have something to do with his memorability. That being said, in a paper about witches, it is very clear that Gandalf is not trying to be what a witch has come to be understood as.

The area between witch and wizard gets foggy, then, when we turn to the influence of *Harry Potter*.

2.1.3. *You're a Wizard, Harry*

It is seemingly impossible to deny that “*Harry Potter* is a cultural tool, providing a reference point for development and identity. Young people actively identify with the world painted by the films,” (Bell, 2019: 37) and in doing so, their knowledge of real life magick may be grossly skewed. “With its magical wands, robes and potions, the wizarding world seems to be an enchanted escape into a world where the irrational and mysterious reign supreme, but at closer look the ordinary world and magical wizard world are not as different as they appear,” (Lauer & Basu, 2019: 104). The magickal desires summoned to mind by fans of the Potterverse may be forgiven for imagining wand-waving witches and wizards who can fix their life-problems with the wave of a magical wand. As a cultural tool, there is a great deal of responsibility for a series as globally phenomenal as that of *Harry Potter*. The series has a platform to address the truth behind the fantasy, the real life witches that inspire the characters and the complete fallacy that is the ‘wizard’ trope. However, as a blockbuster movie series, which expands into the spin-off films of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, which blatantly tailored the wizarding world to an American audience where previously the *Harry Potter* series was quintessentially British, they fall vastly short of such a responsibility. So much was proved at the 2022 British Academy of Film Awards ceremony when actress Emma Watson, known for portraying young witch Hermione Granger in the series, claimed she was there to “represent all the witches”. A “well-known feminist” and “outspoken activist” (MailOnline.com), it has been taken by the witch community that she was downplaying the importance of real witchcraft in her “desperate bid to find support¹⁵”. Her comment did not sit well with the witch community and angered many on social media, with others claiming, “she does not speak for us, nor do we ask her to¹⁶”.

¹⁵ According to a comment made in my online coven.

¹⁶ Another comment from a social media based witch blog.



Fig. 40. Emma Watson speaking on behalf of 'all witches'.

As previously mentioned, the character of Albus Dumbledore ultimately does embody much of what was set into motion by Merlin. He, too, has a long white beard, a pointed hat, and bright coloured flowing robes. Unlike Gandalf, Dumbledore uses a wand to channel his powers, much like all of the wizarding world of *Harry Potter*. Dumbledore, however, is where the physical influence of Merlin stops. Wizards in this franchise appear as ordinary as non-magical people. They are, however, always male, and the female magical beings within the franchise are known as witches. This is where the line has become blurred with younger generations seeking to learn the real-life witchcraft path. Magic is very gendered in *Harry Potter*, and this has posed a problem for terminology in real magick.



Fig. 41. Albus Dumbledore presenting the stereotypical wizard look.

To its credit, *Harry Potter* ultimately steered clear of the Hallowe'en witch appearance stereotype, at least as far as green skin is concerned, although the black robes and pointed hats make an appearance as school uniform and broomsticks are a primary source of transport.

Unlike Merlinesque wizards who use their powers for good, there is a great emphasis throughout the *Harry Potter* series on good versus bad. The main villain, for instance, is referred to as “the Dark Lord” and he greatly lives up to this antagonistic version of what is known to be a wizard. Lord Voldemort carries many of the tropes assigned to the Hallowe'en wicked witch with his physical appearance in that he has a grotesque, malformed face and he wears all black robes.



Fig. 42. Lord Voldemort embodying the stereotypical 'witch' imagery.

He takes pleasure in killing, even children, and has a familiar in the form of a giant snake, another common form for a witch familiar to take¹⁷. Other minor villains throughout the franchise, those who follow Lord Voldemort, are portrayed in a similar guise. Bellatrix Lestrange, perhaps the closest the franchise gets to the wicked witch archetype, has wild hair and dresses in a typically gothic fashion in her corset and laced sleeves. Severus Snape, although ultimately is revealed to be on the side of the good all along, nonetheless is portrayed as having a hooked nose, a famous witch stereotype, and swoops around in black robes “like a bat”.

¹⁷ First documented in ‘Wych Hunt Pamphlets’ of 17th Century Europe, now available in many symbol books amongst witches.



Fig. 43 & 44. Bellatrix Lestrange and Severus Snape embodying many of the witch stereotypes.

Ultimately, the engagement and love that an entire generation, and beyond, of the world hold for the *Harry Potter* film series has had arguments for and against the way it has commanded attention and pointed awareness to the magickal community of real life, even if that is only in the secrecy of it all. Much like the wizarding world in the series, magick followers are forced to operate in almost complete secrecy lest they be targeted for their beliefs and their practises. In this way, *Harry Potter* accurately portrays the reality of modern day wiccaphobia as seen in the Middle Ages. “Media representations of witches in the last two centuries can almost be directly attributed to the success of the *Harry Potter* boom. Many who are opposed to real witchcraft, or at least what they understand of it (an opinion that is often grossly wrong), may credit the series to a trend in young people researching the occult, and even threatening a resurgence in the so-called Satanic-Panic. The one place where the series falls short, it seems, is in its alienation of the real life magickal community and the misrepresentation therein”. (Hjelm, 2006). It has been said that *Harry Potter* was “the series that got children reading, spearheading the children’s literature category completely” (*The Scotsman*, MacMillan, 2005) but one element that is often neglected is that *Harry Potter* also got children believing in magic again. After the Satanic Panic of the 1970s and 1980s, and the witch-phobic or witches-as-villains films that had preceded the franchise, *Harry Potter* could not have come at a better time for young people wanting to learn magick. Granted, much like my disappointment with *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, it is not possible to wave a wand and say some Latin and magic to happen. However, there is no denying that *Harry Potter* has become an immersive world, with many followers, viewers and fans

frequently discussing the franchise as if they lived it, right down to which school house they would belong to. It seems to be an identity marker amongst people nowadays to say whether one would be a Gryffindor or a Slytherin. The portrayal of the wizards in *Harry Potter* as ordinary folk with glasses or ginger-hair or dressed in plain clothes rather than fine robes was an important factor in changing the observation of the real-world as to what magic could and should be. If only they had not, as so many do, misrepresented the word ‘witch’.

2.2. “You Ain’t No Witch, Witches are Girls!” or, Some are Warlocks.

For those born in the generation before this, the term ‘warlock’ may conjure to mind the 1989 film of the same name, in which a warlock is sent forward into the future by the powers of Satan to escape persecution as a witch. Although the film now has a cult following, there is very little about the plotline that can be considered reality. In Neo-Paganism, warlocks simply do not exist, although film and television industries seem unable to accept this fact and instead align the term warlock with a male witch of considerable darkness and power. This trope, one that has become just as harmful to the modern male witch as the term wizard, although for different reasons, has come to be accepted thanks to the portrayals displayed on screen. Arguably a very 1990s specific trope, ‘warlock’ is a term that literally means ‘traitor’ or ‘the Devil’ when taken back to the Old English from which the word originated, and has cropped up in literature from the same time. Somewhere throughout history it was decided that witches could only be female and therefore men who practised the Craft could only do so if they had their own title, although it was after the 17th Century witch craze if so. Documented men executed for witchcraft during this time¹⁸ were given the title ‘witch’, so ‘warlock’ was a later doing. In itself, such a notion fuels the patriarchal quest to humiliate the witch and alienate us as simply a female notion, setting the male species apart from the female even in their discrimination.

¹⁸ Documented in various original documents in Salem, Pendle, Scotland etc.

Whereas some of the more modern (though not by much) portrayals of the warlock may not be as well-known as *Warlock*, they too have sought to harm the notion that a male witch can simply be just that - a witch. Salem Saberhagen, the talking black cat in the *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996) series, is introduced as a warlock rather than a wizard or sorcerer, but no further investigation is given to this. The



Fig. 45. Salem Saberhagen as portrayed in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996), a warlock trapped in a cat's body.

Devil certainly has nothing to do with it, at least where Salem is concerned, so perhaps he is given this title simply because 'wizard' seemed too fantastical, but, much like the post 17th Century witch-documentation, the audience would not be prepared to accept a male witch with such a title. He had to be different to

Her. In *Halloweentown* (1998), a Disney Channel Original Movie that jumped on the witch bandwagon in wake of the likes of *Hocus Pocus* (1993), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed* (1998) to promote witchcraft in a fantastical guise amongst the tweens and teens of the Western world, the warlock may not worship Satan specifically but he is the main antagonist of the narrative, adding fuel to the misconception that warlocks are dark beings and, by extension, as are witches. In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) the warlock is tarnished with



Fig 46. The warlock as portrayed in *Halloweentown* (1998)

the same brush but is arguably much more poignant to the story. In the historical lore given by the series there was once a "War of the Warlocks" and being such a creature seems to be something to aspire to, despite the darkness that comes with the title. "I happen to be a very powerful man-witch myself," Xander proudly announces, then hesitates to correct himself, "Or male... is it warlock?" (2001).

Julian Sands' portrayal of Warlock in the film of the same name brought to mind a whole new threat and is the direct reaction to the Satanic Panic that was sweeping America in the 1970s and 1980s. Warlock draws his powers from Satan, but for all intents and purposes he is structured precisely as a witch. The saving grace for this portrayal is that the film *Warlock* (1989) has been identified as a horror, a "long identified dismissible genre in mainstream cinema" (Leeder, 2018: vii), and a fantasy, providing a little distance between it and the modern male witch. The term warlock has since been tainted in the media due to the 'copycat murder' that took place in Canada in 1995 when a 14 year old boy attempted to replicate the Warlock's occult practices¹⁹. If not directly a result of the warlock fading from narratives, this sad occurrence had much to do with the drop in the film's popularity at least. Warlocks, indeed, seemed to disappear from all but video and roleplaying games post-1990s, as though the notion itself realised its absurdity and put itself to bed.

2.3. What is this Sorcery?

The same can not be said for the term 'sorcerer' which has a much more broad understanding, and therefore a much more problematic claim to modern witchcraft misconception. Unlike warlock, the term sorcerer can be genderfluid if the suffix 'ess' is added on, although mostly a generally masculine symbol of magic, the male sorcerer has peppered the media for hundreds of years. Notable sorceresses in cinema and television have included the aforementioned Morgan le Fae; Yennefer in *The Witcher* (2019); and Princess Zelda in the video game of the same name and its animated spin-offs. For this study, however, I will be focusing on the male sorcerers who call themselves as such and shy away from warlock or wizard for a variety of reasons.

According to etymology, a 'sorcerer' is a term derived from Old French that literally means "one who shapes their fate or fortune" (Oxford Dictionary). When translated to this context, I have taken this to mean a sorcerer is set apart from other titles as they use their magic to better themselves and to shape their own

¹⁹ <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1996/7/1/a-teen-says-warlock-drove-him-to-murder>

fates and fortunes by selfish means, although this is a loose translation. To my understanding, too, a sorcerer uses ‘flash’ and misdirection in their magic, much like a stage magician would, and thus special effects often include smoke and mirrors. Nonetheless, branding oneself a sorcerer in the context of modern witchcraft is unheard of. A male witch is a male witch. Much like the warlock and wizard, however, many have come to refer to male witches as sorcerers purely because that is what they see to be the norm in film and on television.

Any attempt to define a sorcerer outside of such expectations may take a whole new paper, so during this chapter I will briefly discuss the most famous sorcerers in cinema and television. I will begin with Disney’s *Fantasia* (1940) in which the final segment, aptly entitled *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, depicts Yensid, a sorcerer, who leaves his magical sorcerer's hat in the reach of his apprentice.



Fig 48. Yensid, the sorcerer, in *Fantasia* (1940)

The apprentice, who is animated to be Mickey Mouse, dons the hat and uses it to create mischief through the use of magic that is not his. The premise implies that the sorcerer is not powerful without his hat, but towards the end of the animation Yensid manages to cease and fix all of the magic caused. He does not speak a word, but through the use of the music and animation he is portrayed as an oppressive figure with a good heart. In 2010, a live-action adaptation of this short animation was created and explored more of the lore around Merlin, who in this version is portrayed as a sorcerer and not a wizard. The story focuses

on the difference between real magick and the magic of a stage magician or charlatan, embodied in the character of sorcerer-turned-stage-magician Drake Stone, whilst also portraying the age-old battle for good versus evil.



Fig 49. The sorcerer turned stage-magician, Drake Stone, in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (2010)

Elements of the original animation are used in the film, including the infamous scene where the sorcerer's apprentice accidentally bewitches the brooms to bring in water that nearly floods the room. The implication in both of these versions is that a sorcerer is not born, he is taught. This trope is continued throughout portrayals of sorcerers in film and television and most stories are a rags to riches tale of discovering power, learning to use it, and then becoming 'all powerful'.

This trope is ever prevalent in *Willow* (1988). Willow, portrayed by Warwick Davis, is a dwarf and aspiring sorcerer who, throughout the film, learns to use his powers to protect the baby in his care. At the beginning, Willow is not taken seriously as a sorcerer and is treated instead more like a stage magician, using illusion and misdirection to perform magic tricks for entertainment, but, as the story progresses, he learns to use real magic and grows as a sorcerer. He refers to himself as such, thereby setting him apart from witchcraft.



Fig 50. Willow, a trainee sorcerer, in *Willow* (1988).

All in all, films such as *Willow* and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* are difficult for these reasons when it comes to the terminology used in modern Paganism. As far as reality is concerned, a wizard, warlock or sorcerer is more in line with stage magic than real magick, and the line between the two have been blurred significantly by cinematic portrayals of sorcery and charlatan magic.

Throughout history, especially in the last century, there has been one important male witch who sought to address and dismiss such tropes: Gerald Gardner, the father of modern wicca.

2.4. The Father of Wicca (Gardnerism)

In the modern era, if one should call themselves a witch, a follow-up question is often 'does that mean wiccan?'. Certainly, through my research in online forums, in the United States 'wicca' and 'witch' seem to mean the same thing. This, however, is not the case if the origins of the words, as previously discussed, are taken into account. Although the two words have a similar etymological base, they have come to mean two different things. A 'witch' is a practitioner of the magickal path, a believer in the ancient deities and one who relies on the interwoven magick of the energy we all possess. 'Wicca' is a concept created in the 1940s by a man named Gerald Gardner, and those who follow his teachings are those who should be truly labelled 'Wiccan'.



Fig 51. Gerald Gardner, the 'father of modern Wicca'

Gerald Gardner, a self-professed witch turned wiccan and referred to as the Father of Wicca by those who follow his teachings, was known mostly for the creation of Wicca, also known as Gardnerism. Born in 1884 in Lancashire, England, a county especially known for its history of witchcraft, Gardner “always knew himself to be a witch” (Heselton, 2012: 205). Following a “dream he had as a young boy, in which he learned he was a reincarnated witch” (*ibid*) Gardner then made it his life's work to seek, understand and practise a form of modern witchcraft. “After the dream, Gardner published an account that would later become ‘Witchcraft Today’, stating that ‘a witch remembers their last incarnation’. This account, as well as Gardner’s fascination with ancient reincarnation myths, would become the base of modern witch beliefs” (*ibid*). Although some modern witches may not agree with Gardner’s beginnings, many have come to accept the power he held in bringing witchcraft into the mainstream.

Many elements that are taken as read in witchcraft amongst those who know no better, such as animal sacrifice as seen in ancient practises, were outlawed and tabooed by Gardner throughout his teachings. He introduced the notion that witches who claim to care for the Earth upon which they dwell should also care for the creatures upon it too, and condemned any deity who asked for a sacrifice to prove loyalty. Gardner’s

teachings, many penned before he created Wicca and therefore are seen throughout many branches of Neo-Paganism, resonated with many witches of the era and after. However, it was the formation of his ‘Witch Cult’ that either condemned or cemented Gardner’s influence in witchcraft history.

The Witch Cult, ‘cult’ here meaning “a group devoted to a concept or notion” (Dictionary), was started by Gardner in the 1940s for the sole purpose to use combined energies to force Hitler to stop the advance of World War Two.



Fig 52. An example of equipment used by the ‘witch cult’ of Gardner.

Shortly after the end of the war, cinema saw many advances in liberation narratives, most notably with *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958). Often considered to be a “predecessor to *Bewitched*” (Greene, 2021: 184), the film tells the story of “fun and fancy free” (*ibid*) Gillian and her family who are witches and have previously been forced to hide. Now, in the postwar-world, she is permitted to step out of the “proverbial broom closet and claim what is hers by right - freedom” (*ibid*). For a brief moment in cinema post-Gardnerism, witches were seen through a lenient and welcoming gaze, but this was soon taken away with the rise of feminism.

2.5. Flower Power and Feminism

2.5.1. W.I.T.C.H and Guerilla Feminism

In August 1968, a group of young women deposited “objects of ‘female torture’ in a rubbish bin outside the Miss America Beauty Pageant. Bras were burned, curlers and girdles melted, and an early

warning as to the power of symbols was introduced into politics' ' (Rowbatham, 1989: 245). The women who had deposited such items were on a mission: to be seen and spread the word of 'real' women. "The women's movement sought to understand the under implication of oppression" (*ibid*) and the witch was a powerful symbol of such. This, therefore, is why the women who had deposited such items and made such a spectacle at the pageant called themselves the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, or W.I.T.C.H. for short.

"Proclaiming that witches were the original female rebels, hounded, persecuted and burned because they had knowledge the men wanted to be suppressed, W.I.T.C.H devoted themselves to hit-and-run guerilla theatre which they referred to as 'zaps'" (Brownmiller, 1999: 49). Following on from the advances made by 'Flower Power Feminism' in the 1960s, W.I.T.C.H existed to



Fig 53. A gathering of the 'Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell', c. 1969.

live up to the hype given to them by the witch trials of the past, and the stereotypical portrayals of witches up until 1968. They would use the witch stereotype to their advantage in their war against the patriarchy and the forced female portrayal. "For Hallowe'en 1968, W.I.T.C.H women donned the fright makeup expected of them and invaded Chase Manhattan Bank in New York," an establishment notoriously operated and owned by men, "to 'put a Hex on Wall Street'" (*ibid*). Stunts such as these brought both witches and W.I.T.C.H into the media, using the legacy of witchcraft to stir up fear and spread the word of the importance of feminist politics. Many feminists denounced their methods, "excoriating W.I.T.C.H for reinforcing sexist stereotypes" (Echols, 1989: 97) in their use of the stereotypical witch construct as a form of puppeting their demands. They were further denounced for their radical methods. Even Radical Feminists could not agree with many of the beliefs preached by W.I.T.C.H, such as "the belief that all should be free from oppression and sexually stereotyped roles, sisters and brothers included" and "a

declaration that the ruling class were the enemy and all oppressed people allies” (*ibid*). Other groups of feminists chose not to ally themselves with W.I.T.C.H as they did not agree with their principals. They were fighting for female power, whereas W.I.T.C.H seemed to want the deconstruction of politics as they were known. Again, this radicalisation did little for the real life witches who were being misrepresented through the movement. “W.I.T.C.H may not have known or cared much for the real history of witches, but the organisation lived for *jouit de faire*.” (Brownmiller, 1999: 49). W.I.T.C.H, “along with Lesbian Separatists and other radical feminism groups” (*ibid*), used their scare tactics and spectacle rebellions to catch the attention of the patriarchy, although in doing so they may have done irreversible damage to the perception of what it means to be a witch.

Luckily, the 1960s also brought a surge in situation comedies on the ever growing television networks, and amongst them was a quirky show about a witch who just wants to live as a housewife. Although *Bewitched* (1964) may have been in direct contrast with the radical feminism efforts occurring in real life, the show provided another viewpoint through which to observe witchcraft and, though far from perfect, *Bewitched* did more for the correct portrayal of real life paganism than the real life so-called Witches International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell.

2.5.2. Where There’s a Witch, There’s a Way - The Housewife Witch

Whilst second-wave feminists were fighting the good fight against the patriarchy in real world, it seems many women of the era were content to continue the housewife life that they had been raised to embody. Change doesn’t happen overnight, although the arrival of a certain magical situational comedy may have done more for housewife freedom than originally thought, “providing a status as a historical-cultural document that uncompromisingly negotiates the political climate outside of the television” (Metz, 2007: 77).

When *Bewitched* first aired on ABC in 1964, “the show unwittingly bridged civil rights struggles and second wave feminism, critiquing Nixon era politics and the real life highs and lows of American

suburbia” (*ibid*). It featured a young housewife, Samantha, who is also a beautiful witch, and her mortal husband Darrin, who unknowingly married the witch who is now his wife. Samantha simultaneously fights against and represents the 1960s housewife expectation.



Fig 54. *Bewitched* first aired in 1964.

Though she may use her powers to create shortcuts for her chores, she nonetheless “endorses Darrin’s patriarchal dominance in every episode” (*ibid*: 92). Although she “embodies the dutiful, fulfilling all-American housewife, she provides female viewers respite from male domination. Whilst her patriarchal husband makes threats to keep his wife in line, Samantha’s construction is a deliberate nod to a truism of the patriarchy of the time - that whilst men may control things on the surface, it’s their wives who run the show” (*ibid*: 95). Such gendering of characters can be explained away as a result of the era and even ignored by the patriarchy of the time, especially considering Samantha is a fantasy being, a witch. However, Samantha had far more influence than she was given credit for. At the time, the concept of such a union was pure fantasy, and the fact Samantha looked just like any other woman was seemingly unheard of. Moreover, Samantha was blonde, a symbolism that was carried over from Glinda and has continued into modern cinema to symbolise a good witch. Real life witchcraft was still firmly in the broom closet, but the influence and legacy of *Bewitched* has much to do with the freedom witches now have.

On the surface, the sit-com is purely about the mismatched young couple and their journey through married life. However, as well as representing witchcraft as something to covet and not to fear, Samantha Stephens also did much for the portrayal of the 'other'. Although beautiful, blonde and white-skinned, Samantha nonetheless came to stand for all outsiders in a politically controlled world. "Not only does the Stephens marriage represent gender politics of the time, but it echoes of the, at the time, taboo cultural/mixed race marriages too. In #202: *Salem, Here We Come*, Hepzibah, Queen of Witches, directly contemplates whether the marriage should be dissolved. In this instance, the sit-com uses a witch/mortal marriage as a substitution for interracial" (*ibid*: 79). Furthermore, "Numerous episodes are dedicated to Samantha being discriminated against due to her different heritage" (*ibid*).

As well as navigating the gender and race politics of the 1960s, *Bewitched* allowed real-life witches to be seen in a way they never had. Coupled with the rise of Wicca and Gardnerism in the United Kingdom, *Bewitched* provided a safe-space for real life witches to feel as though they would no longer be discriminated against or misunderstood. Yes, real magick does not involve a wiggle of the nose as it does with Samantha, nor can housework be 'twitched' to do itself, but all the same Samantha and her magical world encouraged real-life witches to feel recognised in a way that did not villainise them at the same time.

2.6. The Devil is in the Detail: Satanic Panic and the Fear of Fluidity

2.6.1. In Satan We Trust

"That old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little" (20 Rev. 2:3).

For those who do not know the truth about witchcraft and Neo-Paganism, or those who have not done enough research before forming assumptions and opinions on what it means to be a witch, it can be almost too easy to associate witchcraft with the goat-like antiChrist. From the pentagram to the horned god, many who do not understand modern magick may be forgiven for their misunderstanding, especially with how the association has been nurtured and portrayed on the screen and in the media throughout the years. However, the truth is far more simple: there is no room for the Christian devil in Neo-Paganism. As a rule, we do not believe in the Devil, in Hell or in purgatory, anymore than we believe in the Christian God.



Fig 55. God cast Lucifer out, causing him to become the Devil of Christian mythology.

The symbolic imagery that comes to mind when speaking of the Devil, also known as Satan, Lucifer, the antiChrist, Baphomet, Beelzebub, Iblis, *et cetera*, as the polar opposite to the virtuous God of the Christian faith, is often that of a horned goat-like being with hooves and sometimes bat-like wings, portrayed in black or red as described in *The Book of Revelations*. This is the imagery that is often associated with the Prince of Demons, and has come to be just as culturally accepted as witches with green skin and pointed hats. The Devil is also associated with, much to the chagrin of real witches, the five-pointed star known as the pentagram or pentacle. This specific association dates back to 1897 when French occultists began to use the symbol to represent the Hebrew Leviathan. It appeared in their book *La Clef de la Magie Noire* (de Guaita, 1897). The symbol was then repurposed following the establishment of the Church of Satan by Satanism forefather Anton LeVay, which became recognised as a belief system in

1968. The pentagram, which in Paganism symbolises the five elements that make up the Earth, was inverted from the elemental symbol, superimposed with a goat's head and renamed the “Sigil of Baphomet²⁰”.

Baphomet, a name that has come to be synonymous with Satan, is instead a goat-like humanoid deity associated with early Pagan practices. He does not represent the evil that is linked with Satan, but instead represents the opposites of life: man and woman, animal and human, good and evil. It was only when Baphomet, like the pentagram, was adopted by the Church of Satan that the representation turned negative. This was greatly helped by the media and the unfortunate events that plagued the Church of Satan and, in unwanted association, Neo-Paganism.

So how, why and where did this association begin?

2.6.2. Historical Witchcraft in a Marriage with the Devil

“Mediaeval witchcraft was an act of popular rebellion against the oppression of feudalism and the Roman Catholic Church” (Michelet, 1992: 55) that, when allowed to go unchecked, fueled a fire that proved difficult to extinguish. The popularity of the rising in ‘witches’ during the period was beginning to make those in charge of Europe at the time look incapable of controlling their own people. This, above all else, is the sole reason that witchcraft became aligned with the Christian Devil. When given such a title and a justification it became easier to explain away just how and why those women and men who were rebelling against the crown, and the way in which their countries were being run: ‘the Devil made them do it’. Therefore, a long and turbulent ‘marriage’ between the Christian Devil and those who practise witchcraft was born, out of superstition and a fear of losing control over the common people. If those who were succumbing to witchcraft were doing so at the behest of the Devil then it wasn’t truly their fault: it was beyond their control, right? These so-called ‘witches’ weren’t enemies of the state or crown, they were simply doing the bidding of the demons who visited them with demands and promises to make their simple

²⁰ According to various books of symbols written through the decades.

lives worth living. What, then, would those in charge do when these demons began giving their human puppets more power and abilities beyond the perception of those in charge? What would happen if and when these ‘witches’ entered a pact with the Devil himself to use his dark powers to control and manipulate those around them? That could not be allowed to happen. That was when the tolerance of those who were not acting in their right mind broke, and it became their fault for dallying with the Devil and allowing him in.

The witches were no longer seen as victims of the Devil, but were now seen as harlots who sought him out and invited him in. In *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer wrote that “the power of God is more powerful than that of the Devil, so divine works are more true than demonic operations. Therefore it is unlawful to hold the craft of the Devil in a higher regard, and these witches are beyond the touch of God” (Kramer, 1487). With these damning words in what came to be known as the ‘Witch Hunting Manual’, witches firmly became servants, or even lovers, of the Christian Devil, beyond the reach of the Christian God, and therefore should be persecuted for their weakness in letting in the demons. As Kramer’s word was often taken as gospel in Europe’s quest to save themselves from witches, his damnation of all those who believe magick is doing the bidding of the Devil meant that what had initially been seen as something beyond human control was now something of human invitation. Kramer further posited that “although God holds the power to manipulate and transform human beings as he so sees fit, the Devil does not. Therefore, in pretending to be more than he is, the Devil can dalliance with unsuspecting witches and manipulate them into doing his bidding before they truly understand why”. Kramer is essentially saying, in his pamphlet that became vital to witch hunters, that the Devil wears a disguise and all those who fall for it are victims of their own right and should be punished accordingly. Town healers, who previously had been revered, were now only capable of their healing powers because they have made a pact with the Devil, and therefore should be shunned or punished for it. Although Kramer was most likely not the first European to make such accusations, he was the first to put them down on paper and distribute them far and wide. Therefore, it is Kramer’s opinion that has permeated the history of witchcraft where the Christian Devil is concerned.

Over the centuries following on from Kramer's damning words and the witch hunting hysteria of the Middle Ages, it seems that the witches' dalliance with the Devil became firmly set in what has come to be understood as the function of a witch. Moreover, the innocent besom broomstick that was used by most peasant households of the time now became a symbol of witchcraft, one that has persisted to this day. Whereas nowadays modern witches use their besom broomstick to "dismiss the ritual circle" (West, 2003: 39), in the Middle Ages it was believed to be "symbolic of riding the Devil's stick" (*ibid*), euphemism fully and unfortunately intended. Not only were women witches, heretics and traitors but they were now also, apparently, lovers of the Devil. Whether this was consented or forced upon them, the Middle Age courts neither knew nor cared. Throughout the following centuries, although more understanding was forged about what a witch truly is, and spiritualism was given more of an audience, the association with the Christian Devil has not faded from common understanding, and therefore modern witches still find themselves fighting against such stereotyping. Some modern Pagans embrace the association, celebrating Baphomet as a deity and calling themselves 'Luciferian Witches', but for the most part many members of the Neo-Pagan community reject such accusations. Modern understanding has allowed us to differentiate ourselves with the help of logic - we don't believe in the Christian God, so why would we believe in his counterpart? - but many of us are still faced with the horrible reality of being stereotyped, especially when the media does not make an effort to separate us.

2.6.3. The 1970s and the Reintroduction of Devil Worship

The quiet suburban towns of the 1970s, especially in the United States of America, held an underlying secret life. These tranquil homesteads were silently rife with fear and terror amongst the green lawns and white-picket fences. Anyone who had access to a television or a newspaper could be forgiven for being, and often became, swept up in the so-called 'Satanic Panic'. Influenced by the history of the fear of the unknown, the Devil and those who do his bidding, as discussed in the previous section, as well as the media, the people of America were feeding right into the media's panic. The horror film genre was growing

in popularity, fuelled partly by the Hammer-House-Horror films, which, when coupled with a series of real-life murders, the rise in the newly named ‘serial killers’, and the dangers facing particularly women, became all too real to anyone who had access to mass media.

The lines between truth and fiction were becoming blurred in the minds and lives of the general population. It became difficult to know what fears are real and which are fabricated, whether to trust or distrust the media, the movies, and even the neighbours. “Media representations stimulate real emotions and affect the consumers ability to tell the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’, and ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’, thus adding fuel to the flame of Satanic Panic in late 20th Century America.” (Hughes, 2021: 6). Horror films that were released in the 1970s that did not help the claims of Satanism influencing such practices include *Equinox* (1970), *Lucifer Rising* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Satan’s School for Girls* (1973). Such films have a cookie-cutter narrative and depict young people being drawn in by Satan, or demons under his control, and forced to commit gruesome acts in the name of the Devil. When such films are released and become popular alongside the real life crimes committed in the name of the Devil, those living in the 1970s could be forgiven for their confusion when it came to what was real and what was false.

According to assorted newspapers of the time²¹, ‘Satanic Panic’ is the term used to describe this mass fear that held America and beyond in its talons throughout the 1970s and 1980s. A series of political advances triggered a large amount of freedom for many young adults and teenagers throughout the time period, and it became easier to blame the growing rebellion on the Biblical Satan rather than the corrupt government at the time. The advances in gender politics made after the ‘free love’ movement of the 1960s meant that sex was no longer a taboo subject, but rather than acknowledge the outward sexualisation of teenagers as a bi-product of the swinging sixties, instead the older generations chose to blame these freedoms on the occult, aligning the Christian Devil with the Pagan religion and cementing the biggest misrepresentation that modern Pagan’s face. The media portrayed this growing provocation amongst the young people of America as a pandemic to be afraid of, blaming Satan for the “wild sex parties, underage

²¹ Including ‘*The New York Times*’; ‘*The Guardian*’; and ‘*South Florida Sun Sentinel*’. [accessed through www.newspaperarchive.com]

drinking and recreational drug use that seemed to be the pastimes of young people who were now free and liberated” (Greene, 2021: 235), whilst conveniently forgetting that it was the older generation who had set these wheels in motion throughout the 1960s. Nonetheless, gender politics had a lot to answer for. Since the 1960s many laws had changed or been abolished, allowing more freedom which was then victimised by the media. For instance, “sex was no longer taboo, young adults no longer had to wait until marriage; abortion was legalised; the divorce rate tripled; unwed teenage mothers were accepted rather than shunned; and women were streaming into the workplace. America was not ready for such swift change, and so they sought a fictional villain to blame: Satan.” (Nathan, 2001: 13). This, coupled with the rise in horror film popularity, convinced parents and law enforcement nationwide that their communities were in danger of being abused, hunted and sacrificed in the woods by Devil-worshippers.

Whether inspired by, or the inspiration for, horror and slasher films, a series of real life ritualistic murders and sacrifices to the Devil did little to aid the brush with which the youth were now being painted. The ‘Son of Sam’, with Sam being another name for the Devil if one should read the works²² of occultist Alestair Crowley, murders that took place in New York between 1976 and 77 were committed in the name of Satan when the murderer, David Berkowitz, claimed that he heard Satan himself telling him to murder. Berkowitz received his orders from Satan when the Devil spoke to him in the form of his neighbour's dog, and killed eight people before he was apprehended. Once in jail, it should be noted that Berkowitz changed his moniker to ‘Son of Hope’ in an attempt to redeem himself²³.

²² Most notably ‘The Book of Lore’, written in 1904.

²³ According to the Netflix documentary ‘Son of Sam: A Descent into Darkness’



Fig 56. An example of the press surrounding the Satanic Sex Cult of Fall River, Massachusetts.

The most documented crime to be blamed on Satan in the 1970s were the Fall River Cult Murders of 1979²⁴. Committed by a group of young men who ran a so-called ‘Satanic Sex Cult’, in a town only a stone’s throw from Salem and already made famous for the unsolved Borden axe-murders, the people living in Fall River had good reason based on their history to blame the influence of Satan for the murders. The three young women who were killed in the murders over the space of 18-months were found with ritualistic wounds on their bodies, buried in shallow graves in the middle of the woods and surrounded by so-called Satanic symbols. They had been abused, stoned, and tortured in the name of Satan before their untimely deaths. According to the convicted cult-leader in his confession, the women were chosen due to their faith in God, but their contradictory sinful nature as sex-workers, and he believed their sacrifice would please Satan. The cult-leader referred to himself as Satan, and incorrectly called these ritual gatherings ‘covens’, though he did not identify as a witch. All the same, the media were not interested in the incorrect labels and instead used the murders to align witchcraft with Satan, once more fuelling the misrepresentation that has followed real witches since the 17th Century. Many misinformed people began to fear witchcraft when they should have simply been fearing the Devil, believing the two to be linked, which of course is factually incorrect. Rituals and rites were being villainised by Satanists. Pagan symbols,

²⁴ All information gathered here about the cult has been paraphrased from *Morbid: A True Crime Podcast*, Episode 76: *The Bridgewater State Triangle/The Cult Murders of Fall River and Freetown*

such as the pentagram, were claimed and incorrectly used by occultists, changing the perception of such symbols and encouraging incorrect opinions.

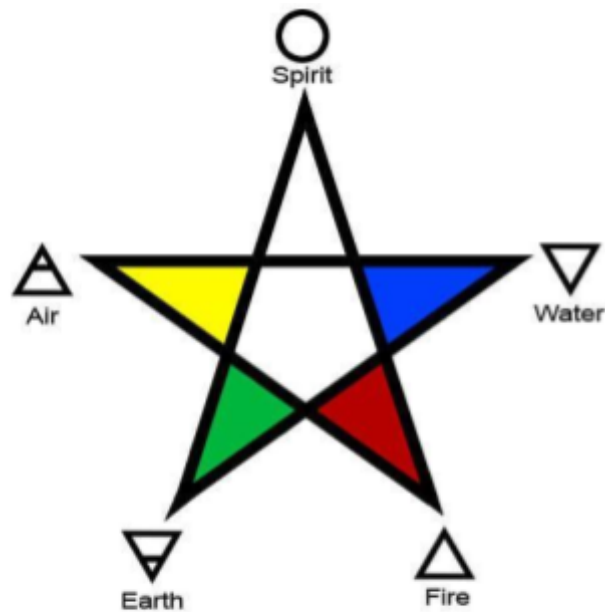


Fig 57. The 'correct' pentagram, a representation of the elements used in practicing magick.

The pentagram, which was inverted by the Satanic church, became a symbol of sacrifice instead of the protective symbol it is in Paganism. Fear of these symbols were further fuelled by the high-profile serial killers using these symbols, such as the previously mentioned Son of Sam. Witchcraft became less about open-minded women cooking herbal brews, or covens dancing naked in the woods to salute the moon, and instead incorrectly became more about groups of people getting together to supposedly invoke demons and sacrifice virginal children or animals to Satan. Such gatherings were being incorrectly labelled as rites, the name given to real spellcraft, and the media did not explain the difference. Furthermore, the lack of a Holy book or set deity in Paganism meant it was harder for witches to argue this bastardisation of their faith that stemmed from a lack of understanding for the ancient craft. Paganism, as a whole, is a fluid faith with endless deities from ancient belief systems, but the lack of a named deity instead seemed to encourage fear in the uneducated general public. Worshipping the Earth herself was not good enough of an explanation. The real intentions of path-following witchcraft became lost, and that unfortunately meant many witches

kept quiet about their faith for fear of being punished for their beliefs. They did not want to be misaligned with a devil they did not believe in, but unfortunately that was not a decision for them to make.

A lot can be said about the patriarchal subtext of aligning witchcraft with the Devil. Traditionally, Satan is a masculine figure, and in the portrayal of him influencing witches, who have traditionally been mostly feminine, there is a great deal of connotation here for the patriarchy and the historical control it has had over women. The witch, who in this instance is stereotypically female, cannot go about her supernatural practice without the influence and say so of the Devil, a man, whether by seduction, forced assault or the selling of one's soul. Perhaps this portrayal grew in popularity following the feminist politics of the 1960s in an attempt for men, who may be feeling inferior in the face of feminist advances, to gain some of the control they felt that they were losing. Such patriarchal connotations continued throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, letting up only with the onset of Third Wave Feminism in the 1990s, when women sought to be equal to men and to treat both genders the same.

Misrepresentation has been fuelled in films of the era, too, which when added to the media panic, influenced those who did not have all the facts to make their own decisions. Horror films that specifically and incorrectly align witchcraft with Satanic practices include: *Mark of the Devil* (1970); *The House that Would Not Die* (1970); *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971); *Season of the Witch* (1972); *Wicker Man* (1973); *Suspiria* (1977); and *Summer of Fear* (1978), as well as many more over the following decade. Although these films have the blessing of being specifically of the horror genre, and not necessarily mainstream releases, movies such as *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987) brought the supposed Satanic/Witch alignment into main screen cinema.



Fig 58. *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987) didn't do much to help the true portrayal of witches.

The Witches of Eastwick, a dark fantasy comedy released in the late 1980s, tells the story of three beautiful young witches who can only access and unlock their power once they give their body to 'Daryl', who is a form of the Devil. One by one, Daryl seduces each witch and helps her to unlock her power, which is starkly obvious as a connotation for the patriarchal control over women. Although at the end of the film the three witches banish Daryl using their combined magic, emphasising the sisterhood needed for witches to thrive, they are each pregnant with Daryl's sons, a symbol for the inability to escape that seed of Satan needed for the magic to work.

Although the Satanic Panic seemed to fade away by the 1990s, elements still remain in the world of real life witchcraft. Even today we find ourselves having to argue against those who have been incorrectly taught that witchcraft and the Devil go hand-in-hand, and modern portrayals of witches do little to help our plight. In 2018, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* aired on Netflix and caused a stir amongst real life witches and the Church of Satan alike. For the most part, the series was snubbed by both parties as it incorrectly portrays both, with the Church of Satan outwardly complaining that "the show portrays our beliefs as evil" (NYTimes, 2018). The themes of Devil worship by a young teenage witch are a sickening notion to both sides, and as a result the show was sued by the Church of Satan and has since been cancelled by Netflix, though that seems to be for other reasons.

Supernatural (2005) is a paranormal-drama that was released on the CW in 2005. It tells the story of two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester, who spend their lives hunting down the supernatural and defeating them. Naturally, through the fifteen seasons that the show spawned, the brothers encountered witches on occasion. In fact, as of 10x03: *Soul Survivor* (2015), a witch became a regular member of the cast, for better or worse. Rowena MacLeod, played by Scottish actress Ruth Connell, is an immortal, powerful witch who has been dismissed by her coven for “being too experimental”. Throughout Season 10 Rowena is one of the main antagonists, but between the Season 10 finale and her final episode in 15x03 she redeems herself greatly. However, before Rowena is explored I will first explore some of the witches who appeared before her throughout the series.

Witches first appear in 03x09: *Malleus Maleficarum* in the form of a “friendly neighbourhood coven” with a “hidden secret”. Stereotypically set in Massachusetts, the coven of four witches includes a member who has been possessed by a demon and is now practising dark magic to murder those who have wronged her. The Winchester brothers infiltrate the coven and discover their secret, resulting in the use of silver bullets to do so. According to folklore, “silver bullets are typically used to defeat werewolves” (Norman & Norman, 2021: 165), but in the case of *Supernatural* they were used against witches in the earlier seasons. The tracking down of the coven prompts Dean, the elder brother, to remark, “I hate witches, they’re always spewing their bodily fluids everywhere. It’s creepy and they’re skeezy.”

Witches are further tackled by the brothers in episode 07x05: *Shut Up, Dr Phil* in which the witches are an 800 year old married couple who, in the process of divorcing, are using their magic to ruin each other's lives and causing damage to the community along the way, including the use of nails in cupcakes. They are not killed in this episode but instead given “couples therapy” and learn to overcome their differences and stop using their magic for wrong. In 07x08: *Season Seven, Time for a Wedding*, Sam is put under a spell by a woman who stalks him after she seeks help from her “wiccan” friend. Firstly, this is another example of Americans using the term ‘wicca’ to mean witch, whereas in the United Kingdom they

are two very different things. Secondly, the wicca in question within this episode is actually a demon in disguise, doing the Devil's business in trying to get to the Winchester brothers.



Fig 59. Witches in *Supernatural* (2005) are very much at the liberty and control of Lucifer.

The witches in *Supernatural* seem to be very much at liberty of Lucifer, who is a character in his own right following 05x01: *Sympathy for the Devil*. Rowena who, as previously mentioned, is a main character following Season 10, acts like a “fangirl” when faced with her “Master”. Whilst watching Lucifer from afar whilst he is trapped in his “eternal cage”, Rowena excitedly squeals and remarks “He’s so alpha isn’t he?”, prompting the Winchesters to point out that she is drooling. However, once Lucifer ultimately kills her and she is resurrected she does not see him in the same light and no longer wishes to worship the Devil. This could be an allegory for the history of witch persecution, in that once we were liberated and allowed to speak out we wish to be known for more than our supposed Devil worship. For the most part Rowena is often included for comedic effect, acting like a Mother to the wayward Winchester brothers and often required to break them out of problems they find themselves in. In 12x11: *Regarding Dean*, Dean Winchester is bewitched by a “powerful family of witches” to begin losing his memory and Rowena is called in to find the cure. “Witchcraft this complex will take time, more than Dean’s got” Rowena tells Sam upon coming to the rescue, “Soon he’ll forget how to speak, how to swallow, and then Dean will die. Luckily for you, you called the right witch”. Towards the end of her time on the show, Rowena has gone from a wicked witch to a liberated one, determined to use her magic for good. She is self aware, claiming:

“I am a flawed, petty, evil creature, Samuel, and I don't know if I can be redeemed, but I have to try” and ultimately fulfilling her wish to redeem herself.

To its credit, *Supernatural* establish in the very first episode that the pentagram is to be used for protection, as it is in real life witchcraft, and not in Devil worship, and they refer to any black or dark magic as “hex” or “curse” which is true to Neo-Pagan practice, too. When casting spells the witches

throughout the series use a mixture of English, Celtic and Latin to do so, another element used by real life witches, and great emphasis is placed on the importance of “casting a salt circle for protection” (West, 2003: 39) which is an important aspect. The witches of

Supernatural are a mixture between fantastical

and reality, and this is a comfortable place to be in the 21st Century when regarding the

witch community. Whether intentional or not, *Supernatural* is often used amongst the online witch covens to explain certain aspects of our practice, not just the pentagram but aspects of other episodes that do good rather than harm to our community. Ruth Connell, who plays Rowena, refers to herself as a “witch sympathiser” and shows a great deal of interest in true witchcraft. When I met her at a comic convention in 2019²⁵, for instance, she noticed my pentagram tattoo and “welcomed me to her coven”.

If nothing else, the outcry from witches and Satanists against their incorrect portrayals of what a witch is had at least caused the media to finally start representing our beliefs correctly, although it will be difficult to make up for forty years of incorrect media portrayals and misrepresentations, especially when the media seem ‘Hellbent’, if you pardon the pun, on portraying witchcraft as fantastical, evil, or both.



Fig 60. Rowena is a main character in *Supernatural* and comes to embody the ‘liberated witch’.

²⁵ Starfury’s *Crossroads* 2, June 21-23 2019, Birmingham, UK.

Part Three: *I Put a Spell on You* | The Resurgence of Witchcraft in Culture, the Difference between Black and White Magick, and the Power of Three

3.1 “There’s a Little Witch in All of Us”: Everyday White Magick

One of the biggest misconceptions faced by modern practitioners of Wicca, Paganism or witchcraft is that we use our magickal powers for good or for evil, with no grey in between. This, for most, is not the case. Kate West, a leading scholar and practitioner of magick, seeks to define the difference in *The Real Witches Handbook*, stating “Magick itself is neither good nor bad, white nor black, but instead it is a natural force rather like electricity is” (West, 2001: 5). Ultimately, in literal black and white, “If magick is used in a positive and beneficial way it is often called ‘white’, and when used negatively it is often referred to as ‘black’. However, most witches adhere to the main ‘rule’ of the craft: ‘Harm ye none, do what thou wilt’. Translated, this simply means ‘do not be selfish in your practice’, and although some modern witches do perform magick to the detriment of others, the vast majority of magickal workings are for the benefit of others.” (*ibid*)

Since the mediaeval period when a so-called ‘witch’ was often the village healer, as mentioned in previous sections, those calling themselves as such have sought to do good with their practices and not to bring harm down upon those who visited them for their services. There was no question of ‘white vs black’ magick during these time periods, and such a definition only came to exist when the Devil was introduced into the equation by the aforementioned superstitions of the dark ages. As such, these healers still exist in our modern society, although they now take the form of traditional healers, homoeopaths and acupuncturists, and such mediums are no longer referred to as witchcraft in layman's terms²⁶. Homoeopathic recipes are readily available in high-street pharmacists and chemists, or occasionally even

²⁶ Although several homoeopaths I personally know are also practising witches.

recommended by medical doctors. White magick, the only real form of magick acknowledged by practising Neo-Pagans who are true witches, permeates the everyday life of those who do not identify as a witch.



Fig 60. Kitchen witchery is everyday commonplace in today's society, but not everyone realises it.

Kitchen witch methods such as the use of a lavender bath to induce a good night's sleep, for instance, or the recommendation of garlic or ginger to settle an upset stomach. Putting a dock leaf on a nettle sting, or burning citronella to escape the onslaught of mosquitos or wasps of a warm evening. Licorice tea to promote a healthy voice; honey and lemon for a cold and sore throat; and the recent phenomenon of 'manifestation' are all methods of white magick used by the general population. The promotion of such amongst the younger generations especially, it seems, have platforms such as TikTok and #witchtok to thank for their promotion, which will be explored further in the final chapter. Being a witch has become a so-called "trend²⁷", much to the simultaneous joy and chagrin of those who have practised witchcraft for years if my online coven is to be taken into account. However, if such social media promotion brings about the popularity and recognition witches often crave, then it is a lesser evil to stomach: as long as it does not promote inaccurate facts, such as the use of black magic.

²⁷ A glance on the TikTok app and a quick search for #witchtok will prove this.

3.2: *Friends on the Other Side: The Truth Behind Black Magic*

Black magic has come to be a regularly used term thanks to inaccurate portrayals of witches in the media, including in films and television. You may notice that I have dropped the ‘k’ at the end of magic, and that is intentional. Black magic is not considered to be true magick, and so I will not refer to it as such. As discussed in the previous chapter, black magic came to be as soon as the Devil was introduced into the equation and the use of magic of any kind was thought to be the work of demonic forces and those who have sold their soul to Lucifer. “Many people will automatically associate black magic with witchcraft, although this association is firmly the legacy of the magnificently successful propaganda campaign that was waged by the Christian Church against innocent wise people who practised the old ways” (Bowes, 2021: 10). Putting my own thoughts towards black magic aside as a practising witch, I will instead seek to outline the beliefs of black magic practice in an academic way.

At its core, black magic is the practice and intention of bringing harm to others or using the energies of the universe to get what you want through manipulation and negative manifestation, “often through the introduction of supernatural forces, or the practice of necromancy” (Melton, 2000). The term ‘black magic’ itself came to be around the same time as the term ‘occult’, and has previously been referred to as ‘the left hand path’ by various, unsourced mediaeval scholars. At its etymological base the word “sinister” literally translates to “on the left” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Traditionally, following this logic, “the left hand is the hand of the Devil” (*ibid*) and therefore black magic is the work of dark forces. Moreover, “images depicting Adam and Eve depict Eve to be standing on Adam’s left” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), perhaps setting the female race up to forever be tainted with the ‘sinister’ brush. “To say that the practice of black magic does not exist would be arrogantly naive, but its practitioners are meddling with forces beyond our control which can lead to the darkest hour” (Bowes, 2021” 11). Where white magick does not seek harm upon any, whether to the target of the manifestation or the caster of the spell in the first place, black magic uses nefarious methods to cast its rituals. Unfortunately, the ‘black’ in the term ‘black

magic' does have the same connotations as the racist term 'black', and came into modern vocabulary in the 1600s, alongside the rise in the practice of Voodoo.

“Voodoo tradition makes its own distinction between black and white magic, with sorcerers like the *Bokor* known for using magic and rituals of both. But their penchant for magic associated with curses, poisons and zombies means they, and Voodoo in general, are regularly associated with black magic in particular, and the introduction of the term now commonly used” (Owusu, 2002: 34).



Fig 62. An example of Haitian Voodoo practice.

Voodoo and black magic as it is commonly understood is often said to have come from slaves brought to America and Europe from countries such as Haiti and the West Indies, where Voodoo is a common and expected practice. As previously mentioned, *Obeah* is the “name often given to the magic used by those of Caribbean origin, only changed over the centuries due to appropriation and discrimination” (Dictionary.com). In its original form *Obeah* is a form of spiritual practice that places a lot of emphasis on the power of the spirit world and the ancestors. When explained as such the practice almost seems welcoming under a modern gaze, but when such methods were introduced into a heavily white, Christian society in the 17th and 18th Centuries, they came to be associated with the Christian Devil as a result. Consequently the term ‘black’, thought to indicate the skin-tone of those who practised *obeah*, was associated directly with Voodoo, although the Christian church tends to deny this as a collective. Instead the church claims that “the term black in ‘black magic’ is instead “a reference to the ‘Black Mass’, a sacrilegious parody of the Catholic Mass as performed by Satanic groups who seek to oppose Catholicism” (Summers, 1927: 155). The question remains, however, why is such a demonic ceremony named black in the first place? There seems to be a lot of underlying racist connotations to the term ‘black magic’ which are determined to be hard to prove.

Throughout the centuries, especially those in which the cinema and screen have played a part in the interpretation of such things, the term black magic has often been depicted alongside ritualistic Voodoo practice, or else Devil worship. Much like Neo-Pagans, “true practitioners of *obeah* do not acknowledge the Christian Devil” (O’Neal, 2020: 87). To date there have been two Hollywood films named *Obeah* which were released in 1935 and 1987 respectively. The first, in 1935, was a black and white horror film that depicted a sailor who washed up on an island in the Caribbean. Whilst there, the victimised white man is subject to various Voodoo practices for malicious purposes and witnesses another white captive of the tribe murdered in a ritual. In *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film*, author Gary Rhodes refers to *Obeah* as “a lost film” (Rhodes, 2006) and further goes on to claim it “should stay lost” due to its heavily racist connotations.

The 1987 film titled *Obeah* is a low-budget horror film that follows a similar plotline. This time, instead of a lone sailor, a couple is shipwrecked on a Caribbean island otherwise occupied by a native tribe who practice *obeah*. The young woman is the main victim of the rituals performed upon them with non-consensual results, adding further fear to the notion of literal ‘black’ magic that has been nurtured by such a film.

Since the 17th and 18th centuries the term *obeah* has ultimately been mostly replaced in the white vocabulary with the word “voodoo”. Films that have subsequently been released with such a topic refer to the practice as such, allowing little room for education and plenty for misrepresentation. Disney’s *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) features a voodoo priest as the main villain. Set in New Orleans, Louisiana, it is one of many films and shows to use Louisiana and the states history with slavery and Caribbean practice to forge their narrative. The Voodoo man, Dr Facilier, uses his “friends on the other side” to bring forth spirits to do his bidding. They are accessed through his *obeah* practice and he appears to make deals with them in order to get what he wants, that is until they turn on him and drag him to the other side instead. Although *the Princess and the Frog* made great advances in that Tiana, the protagonist, was the first

African-American princess²⁸ to appear in Disney's catalogue, the film's attempt at representation fell down where everything else was concerned, namely in Dr Facilier's 'voodoo' that was really *obeah*.

Another text to utilise the history of New Orleans was the third season of the anthology series *American Horror Story*, this time labelled: *Coven*. Set in and around New Orleans between present day and the 19th Century, *Coven* explores many aspects of witchcraft, none of which are depicted accurately. The series as a whole, especially the sections set in 2013, greatly offended many real life witches on my online forums, and so for the purpose of this study I will be focusing on the flashbacks to 1830 and the "Plantation of Pain" (*American Horror Story: Coven*, 2014).

The "Plantation of Pain" is home to Delphine LaLaurie, played by Kathy Bates. LaLaurie is based on the real-life socialite and plantation owner of the same name who was known for "torturing and murdering her slaves²⁹". In a pre-Civil War America, the real Madame LaLaurie was "mysteriously widowed two times" before her Plantation mansion "caught fire in 1834 and the responding emergency services discovered many of her slaves in the attic". They were in "varying stages of torture and subsequent death", and Madame LaLaurie escaped to France to avoid punishment for her crimes. It is believed that LaLaurie treated her slaves as such after "her Uncle was murdered by his own slaves in 1771" and so she sought revenge.

In *American Horror Story: Coven*, LaLaurie starts off similar to the real-life story, but soon deviates with the introduction of the *obeah* threat written into the storyline. Due to the mistreatment of her slaves, LaLaurie is overpowered by a group of *obeah* practitioners who take her to their priestess, Marie Laveau. Marie Laveau force feeds LaLaurie a potion that she has brewed, giving her immortal life so that she may live in neverending torment. She is then buried alive and dug up again by a woman loyal to her, sparking a war between LaLaurie, and Laveau and the slaves who follow her, bringing a great deal of racial connotation into the narrative. The treatment of LaLaurie in *American Horror Story* is perhaps a direct reference to the *voodoo* practice of 'zombification', although this is not zombie in the Hallowe'en sense.

²⁸ <https://www.today.com/popculture/anika-noni-rose-opens-about-her-legacy-1st-black-disney-t187661>

²⁹ Facts about the original LaLaurie Plantation were taken here from *Two Girls, One Ghost Podcast*, Episode 56: *New Ghoulains*.

Zombification in true *voodoo* is the process of reanimating the corpse of a loved one by a shaman, but is “typically not a part of everyday Voodoo practice”. Ultimately, the fact that Lavaeu is the villain in the *Coven* storyline and not LaLaurie, who has been torturing and killing slaves, further adds to the racist connotations of the storyline. Lavaeu’s magic is seen as evil, a form of black magic, and therefore adding fuel to the origin of the term.

I feel it is important to mention one of the other pivotal characters in *American Horror Story: Coven* is a member of the 2013 group of witches named Queenie. Queenie is a “loud and proud black witch” who is an “heir of Tituba, the first witch accused in Salem” (Greene, 2021: 372). LaLaurie becomes servant of Queenie in a reverse narrative aimed to give the power not only back to the black community but also the witches: “Through the storyline of Queenie, she confronts the legacy of not only slavery but the witch trials too” (*ibid*).

Wherever the origin of ‘black magic’ truly lies, it is undeniable that modern Neo-Pagans do not practise or acknowledge it, despite how the modern media tries to taint us with such a brush. We do not seek to harm others through our practice, nor do we animate the dead, the supernatural or the Devil to do our bidding for us. Yes, necromancy is a practice in witchcraft, but it is not an act of reanimation but instead it is a case of inviting in the spirits of those we’ve lost during rites held on Samhain, the 30th October, so that we may once more share our lives with them. They are not forced to enter our realm through the veil, however, as forcing them to do so would be a black magic practice. Our consideration for the free will of those we seek to involve in our magick continues to be voluntary on the behalf of our target. That, more than anything, is the difference between white and black magick, and that is a difference that film and television seem to find it difficult to acknowledge.

3.3: “*That’s the Thing About Magic, There’s Always Consequences*”: Black Magic in Popular

Media

After the 1970s and 1980s popularity of the Satanic-Panic fuelled horror films, the 1990s and 2000s seemed determined to change the narrative. However, they did not seem to want to make witches more appealing, or to make them practitioners of white magick, but instead to make black magic the butt of the joke or, more likely, “whimsical entertainment that sought to provide escapism” (Greene, 2018: 189). Throughout the 1990s, a series of films and television shows were released that sought to make witches less of a threat, but also less of a reality at the same time. The fantastical Hallowe’en witch was now the norm and as a result most of the current generation view these witches as the ones to believe. Witches as present in the likes of *The Witches* (1990), *Hocus Pocus* (1993) and *The Craft* (1996) did more damage to the witch image than good. Although mostly aimed at children or young adults, which in itself is a reason to surely avoid the damaging stereotype, there are elements of the witch films that came previously which have been resurrected in these films. Aspects of the fairytale witch with her hooked nose, warts and her appetite for children are apparent in the Sanderson sisters featured in *Hocus Pocus* and *The Witches*, and the struggle with good vs evil, white magick vs black magic, is the main narrative in *The Craft*. Whilst majorly entertaining, there is a damaging narrative to these three films specifically that seems to have permeated my generation when it comes to the view of witches. After all, the 1990s saw a few films portraying witches as fantastical, fictional and comedic beings straight out of their fairytale ancestry, or else to be feared by the children and young adults towards whom these films are aimed at. To see this claim in practice, one should also look to the 1990 adaptation of Roald Dahl’s novel, *The Witches*.

3.3.1. “A Witch Who Dares to Say I’m Wrong Will Not Be With Us Very Long”: *The Witches* and Nurturing a Fear of Witchcraft in Children

The Witches has been adapted for screen twice in the last three decades in the years 1990 and 2020, with both times based on the 1983 novel of the same name by children’s author Roald Dahl. Both adaptations have unfortunately, or fortunately depending on the gaze you look through, proved unpopular amongst audiences. In 1990, *The Witches* was adapted for screen by puppet-creator and “creature shop” curator Jim Henson. It starred Anjelica Huston as the main antagonist the Grand High Witch, a predecessor to one of her arguably more famous roles: that of Morticia Addams in *The Addams Family* (1991) and *The Addams Family Values* (1993). *The Witches* is a story told from the point of view of a ‘know-all’ Grandmother, played in this version by Swedish actress Mai Wetterling, as she seeks to protect her Grandson, known only as “Hero Boy” in the book and 2020 adaptation, but named Luke in the 1990s adaptation in the hopes of “making him more personable” (Jay, 2013: 134).



Fig 63. The use of Grandmother as narrator adds wisdom to the warning.

The use of a Grandmother as a narrator creates a sense of wisdom in her words, especially when read in the context of the aforementioned triple goddess in Neo-Pagan practice, a decision that in this narrative is a double-edged sword in context. On one side of the metaphorical blade, Grandmother’s wise words protect her Grandson from falling prey to the wicked witches he encounters. On the other hand, her wise words unfortunately potentially nurtures a sense of fear of witches in any children watching the film, especially when coupled with Jim Henson’s special effects.

The witches are, rightly, a great focus of the narrative in a film named after them. However, the use of special effects to create the true appearance of these child-hating witches cause them to instantly appear nightmarish. In the 1990 adaptation upon which this section of this study is focusing, the witches in their true guise appear with hooked noses, bald heads, warts, hunched backs, long gnarled fingers, flat-feet where they have no toes, and contact lenses that turn their eyes a milky, faded purple colour, a stark difference to their disguised appearance which has been referred to as “sexy” (Huston, 2015: 199). In her own words, Huston recalled: “That was the first time I'd imagined that this horrible creature in a children's movie should have sex appeal. It made sense, for if a witch was to be at the center [sic] of this plot, she needed to be sexy to hold the eye” (ibid). The Grand High Witch certainly appears as so in her silken ‘little black dress’ and purple train, purple being the second universal colour of villainy after green, as discussed in Part One. It is crucial to the plot of *The Witches* that so-called “real” (a problematic term in itself) witches “dress in ordinary clothes and appear as ordinary women, though they often wear disguises: gloves



Fig 64. The Grand High Witch brings 'sexy' to wicked witches on screen.

to cover their long fingers, uncomfortable shoes to cover their lack of toes, itchy wigs to cover their bald heads, and are hideous beneath their human face masks” (*The Witches*, 1990). Much emphasis is placed on their appearance and their attempt to cover their true form, which I believe to greatly cause damage to the way real-life witches wish to be perceived, especially given the cult following that the film ultimately possessed. Children who have seen this film may expect

real-life witches, those who look like ordinary people because that’s what they are, to secretly be wearing a disguise and instead covet the demise of said child.

Despite *The Witches* not performing as well in the box office, this British-American film set a precedent that many witches on screen then sought to take. Following on from Huston’s portrayal, witches in so-called ‘family friendly films’ seemed to do the same. The use of Sarah Jessica Parker in *Hocus Pocus*

(1993), for instance, brought a great deal of sex appeal to her character as Sarah Sanderson. Parker has, of course, literally built a career since 1998 around sex (with regard to ‘*Sex and the City* (1998)’), and continues to be cast in roles with tremendous sex appeal to this day. Lamia in *Stardust* (2007) melted her haggard, terrifying guise to one of the appealing Michelle Pfeiffer, known for her portrayal of a beautiful witch in her former role in *The Witches of Eastwick*. The stark contrast of the beautiful woman who then transforms into a hideous monster sought to embody a fear of these so-called villains in the minds of those watching. Unfortunately, those watching were mostly children of an age where *The Wizard of Oz* is a non-existent comparison, one that would otherwise have informed them that wicked witches do not need to use disguises and should be proud of their appearance and have no need to hide. Therefore a fear of witches in disguise was nurtured amongst *The Witches* generation, and the notion that a witch could be beautiful *and* good became almost lost in translation: now they must wear a disguise.



Fig 66. Lamia in *Stardust* revives Michelle Pfeiffer’s history of portraying witchcraft.

The hag witch of previous cinema had returned, this time with a face for all occasions, and she was making herself known. However, it should be noted that the Grand High Witch’s second-in-command Miss Irving, her secretary of sorts, chooses a blonde wig for her disguise and dresses in lighter colours, a precursor to her ultimate choice to save Luke and spare him from the witches’ wrath. She alone redeems the portrayal of witches in this particular film in the minds of those watching, though only by a little. Similarly, throughout the narrative of the 1990 film there is a great deal of question stirred as to whether Grandmother is a witch or not. This large plot-point question mark exists, in my opinion, to not entirely scare children away from witches, although it is very subtle if so and therefore if it does exist for this purpose it falls short. It is a part of the narrative that Grandmother certainly had a brush with a witch as a child, as is made clear by the story she tells Luke about her girlhood friend vanishing, and the Grand High Witch seems to recognise her now that she is an old woman.

The coven of witches who feature in the 1990 film have gathered together in this grand hotel for their annual conference under the disguise of the ironically chosen “Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children”. This name is, as I said, ironic due to the fact that such a coven have really gathered together to kill the children of England, marking the return of the child-hating witches that became the norm for the subsequent decades of witch cinema. Further adding to the stereotypes of witches before them these witches have chosen to do so by luring in children with “candy” laced with “formula 66”, a special concoction brewed by the Grand High Witch herself. “First the children start to shrink,” she gleefully tells her awaiting congregation of wicked witches, “then they grow fur. Then a tail. Child is no longer a child. Child is...” and with a stereotypical witches’ cackle she announces, “a mouse! A plain brown little mouse. The mouse will be lured into a mouse trap and SNAP! The child is no more! Parents will kill their own children.” Her plan is received by the watching witches with whoops of glee and excitement, further cementing a fear of witches in any unsuspecting person watching who does not know any better. With the choice to turn children into mice, the Grand High Witch is embodying aspects of the fairytale witches of time gone by, those who transformed their prey into swans or frogs, and proving herself, and the film along with her, to be a product of misrepresentation all over again. *The Witches*, perhaps more than the films of the previous decades, proved to be uniquely dangerous to interpretation of what a witch is. Coupled with Ursula in Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*, which was released in 1989, cinema was now not only misrepresenting witches for entertainment but were now also doing it for family-friendly films that will be watched by the very children these “villains” seek to destroy.

My final observation of *The Witches* with regard to the villainization of witchcraft and what a witch truly is, is that the Grand High Witch has an indiscernible foreign accent. It is called as such in Roald Dahl’s book, and is brought to life in the film by Huston: “There was some sort of a foreign accent there, something harsh and guttural, and she seemed to have trouble pronouncing the letter w” (Dahl, 1983: 36). This is a direct reflection of the witch as Other, a foreigner or an outcast of what is recognised as current society. This fear when referring to witches could date back to the Salem witch trials and the prosecution of

Tituba, a slave woman who supposedly began the hysteria, and is also in direct line with the green skin of the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*. A witch who is presented as outside of what is considered normal: i.e., has green skin or speaks with an indiscernible foreign accent is structured so as to be feared. This in itself is an unwelcome construction through the gaze of the 21st Century.

A study on *The Witches* would not be complete without bookending it with the 2020 remake, this time directed by Robert Zemeckis. In this film the Grand High Witch is played by Anne Hathaway, who unlike scream-queen Anjelica Huston, may be known to some of the audience due to her previous family-friendly roles in the likes of *The Princess Diaries* (2001) and the fairytale romantic-comedy *Ella Enchanted* (2004). Furthermore, the 2020 film cast Octavia Spencer, an African-American actress, as Grandmother and gave her powers of her own. In doing so the film seems to have unwittingly called to mind the literal ‘black’ magic fears of the 1700s that were previously discussed in this section, especially as Grandmother in this 2020 version practices voodoo and hoodoo.

Unlike the 1990 adaptation of *The Witches*, the 2020 film is, in my opinion, far more terrifying due to the lack of real special effects and the emphasis instead on computer-generated imagery to achieve the



Fig 67. Casting Octavia Spencer as Grandmother in the remake seems to have unwittingly revived ideals of voodoo in witchcraft.

scariness of the witch’s true form. Whereas Huston’s Grand High Witch simply had a prosthetic nose and long wizened hands which do not look very real by modern standards, Hathaway’s Grand High Witch instead had a mouth that split open like the Cheshire Cat and a forked tongue hiding within, with two fingers on

each hand that give a very inhuman, alien-like appearance.



Fig 68. Anne Hathaway's 2020 Grand High Witch is a far-cry from the sexiness of Anjelica Huston's 1990 portrayal.

Although the 1990 effects will have been terrifying in the original time period, they nonetheless nowadays look dated, but the 2020 effects will undoubtedly continue to be nightmarish for a long time to come. Unfortunately this means that children who were unlucky enough to experience *The Witches* through the 2020 film may find themselves scarred for life and unlikely to want to explore the truth of witches in the real world.

3.3.2. “Now I Think I’ll Have a Child... On Toast!”: *Hocus Pocus* and the Impact of the Cult Witchcraft Film

Hocus Pocus was released in 1993 by Walt Disney Pictures and has since been given “cult film status” (Wallace, 2016: 2). In this context, a ‘cult film’ refers to a film that “a film that a certain group of people admire very much” (Dictionary.com) . At the time the film made “just short of double its money back in box office profits” (Vulture.com, 2019) and has come to be viewed as a cult film by those of us who remember it fondly as children, or even those who don’t. However, in the last few years this cult status has grown “from forgotten fluff to bankable buzz” (Wallace, 2016: 25) and as a result there is a sequel in production scheduled for release in 2022. It is now hailed as the “Home Alone of Hallowe’en” (ibid: 37) and “is constantly capturing and recapturing the childhood experience of Hallowe’en, no matter how old [you] get” (ibid). *Hocus Pocus* is a figurehead in modern cinema focused on fantastical witches, which is ultimately as damaging to the truth of witchcraft as witches in disguise had been with *The Witches*.

Although good for fans, “repetition [as] the heart of festivity” (ibid: 26) is damaging to real-life witches when it comes to the constant repetition of films that do us harm as a community. “Movies can become as integral to our celebrations as songs, scents and foods” (ibid) and *Hocus Pocus* has achieved that status.

Directed by Kenny Ortega, a choreographer now mostly known for his family friendly and coming-of-age Disney Channel Originals *High School Musical* (2006) and *Descendants* (2015), the cult classic is set in Salem, Massachusetts, around the festival of Hallowe'en. *Hocus Pocus* tells the story of three young people who accidentally bring three evil child-murdering witches back from the dead. Already the synopsis features several legends or myths about witchcraft: Salem, child-murdering, and the power of three.



Fig 69. The Sanderson Sisters have become a cult portrayal of what it meant to be a wicked witch in the 1990s.

The three Sanderson sisters: Winifred, played by Bette Midler, Mary, played by Kathy Nijimy, and Sarah, played by Sarah Jessica Parker, were hanged by the Salem townspeople in 1693 after murdering a young girl and using her life force to make themselves “young and beautiful forever” (*Hocus Pocus*, 1993). Before being dropped to their deaths, Winifred puts a curse on their memory using her “ungodly book”, a tome “wrapped in human skin”, so that “on all Hallowes Eve when the moon is round, a virgin will summon [them] from under the ground”, and in doing so will allow them to continue “sucking the lives from little children”. The Sanderson sisters are hanged by the townsfolk of Salem, and lie dead for three-hundred-years until Max Dennison, a teenage boy played by Omri Katz, lights the “black flame

candle, made from the fat of a hanged man” as a joke in order to impress his little sister Dani, played by now *The Walking Dead* actress Thora Birch, and his crush Alison, played by Vinessa Shaw. His actions accidentally and subsequently bring the witches back to life and the narrative of the film revolves around the three young teenagers trying to stop the ancient witches from surviving past sunrise.

In order to do so, Max, Dani and Alison enlist the help of Thackery Binx, a three hundred year old black cat who was transformed into such by Winifred.



Fig 70. Thackery Binx, a boy in a black cat's body, keeps the stereotype alive.

Formerly, he was the older brother of Emily, the child the witches consumed, and after he failed to save her he has instead spent the last three centuries trying to stop anyone lighting the candle and bringing back the witches. His form as a black cat is a direct link to historical witchcraft, as black cats were thought to be trapped souls of those a witch had encountered, and also to real-life witchcraft, as well as a reference to the Salem Witch Trials when women who “dallied” with black cats were “surely doing the work of the Devil” (Burton Russell, 1972: 145). Black cats have more recently become a symbol of rebellion amongst modern witches, many of whom seek out black cats as familiars specifically for the reason they are seen as outcasts and are statistically “the least adopted colour of cat” (RSPCA.org.uk, 2018), or else to align ourselves with other outcasts. There is a long history of witches and black cats, as outlined above in Burton Russell’s account in *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, and this is a stereotype that I, as a practising witch, cannot deny as my own familiar takes this form. Nowadays black cats seem to be one of the most

recognised symbols of witchcraft. Therefore, Binx being cursed into such a form is a direct nod and acknowledgement to real-life witches. The other widely-recognised black cat portrayed in popular witch culture is Salem Saberhagen in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996). Another talking cat, Salem is also a human trapped in the body of a black cat much like Binx, although Salem was transformed as punishment for trying to take over the world. He exists as more of a comic relief figure in the television series, whereas Binx is the voice of reason in *Hocus Pocus*. Regardless, the choice to make these black cats talk is also a potential acknowledgement of the role black cats play as familiars of real-life witches. It is a belief of Neo-Pagans that should a familiar seek us out it is for a reason, and there are rites that exist to forge the mind of a familiar with that of their witch - a form of communication, much like talking - and we are bonded to our companions for life. Such a practice may sound fantastical to those who do not follow the path, and so Neo-Pagans can, for the most part, ‘forgive’ film and television for turning this practice into whimsical fiction, especially when that film and television is produced by a family-friendly company such as Walt Disney Pictures.

There are elements of *Hocus Pocus* that reflect the reality of witchcraft. Although the Sanderson sisters seem to be greatly inspired by the three witches that appear in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, they have also come to represent the power of three in the magickal sense. The power of three is a common practice

and acknowledgement amongst Neo-Pagans and Wiccans and such a belief dates back beyond recent memory. The triple goddess is the main deity in Wicca, for instance, and is categorised by the maiden, the mother and the crone. It could be argued that the Sanderson sisters embody this, with wise and matriarchal Winifred taking the role of mother, the one who guides the others; forgetful, holistic Mary attempting the role of crone, the one who seeks to protect others; and youthful, flirtatious Sarah embodying the naive maiden. “Don’t get your



Fig 71. An illustrative example of the Triple Goddess.

knickers in a twist, we're just three kindly old spinster ladies spending a quiet evening at home!" Winifred calls through the door when the angry mob arrives in search of young Emily, directly referring to their number and their ages. "Sucking the lives out of little children" the idiotic Sarah then chimes in, causing Winifred to then attempt to throttle her as she blows their cover to those seeking to execute them.

The triple goddess is often stylised in the three moon phases: waxing, full and waning, which adds further fuel to the use of the full moon as symbolism in *Hocus Pocus*, as it is the full moon that brings the witches back to life. The full moon is the symbol for the mother, who in this instance is represented by Winifred, and it is she who casts the curse in the first place. The power of three is also seen in "the practice of reflection. This has three phases also: beginning, fruitfulness and rest" (West, 2003: 23). These, in modern times, have come to be referred to as birth, life and death and represent the phases of life, much like the phases of the moon. When represented in *Hocus Pocus*, Dani represents birth as the child who the witches seek to leech the life force out of; Max and Alison represent life as they are teenagers and learning to fall in love with each other; and the three witches in their resurrection have come to embody the final phase of reflection: death. The power of three is brought into practice amongst modern pagans often with those who follow the path in a coven. Covens have three members who gather together to perform their rites, therefore maximising the power of them. In the context of *Hocus Pocus*, the obvious coven is the three Sanderson sisters, although Max, Alison and Dani could also be viewed as a coven as they work together as a three to maximise their powers and stop the Sanderson sisters returning for good.

"Sisters, All Hallows Eve has become a night of frolic, where children wear costumes and run amok!" states Winifred as she catches her first glimpse of the modern Hallowe'en festival. The use of the festival of Hallowe'en as a setting is a concept utilised by many films and television programmes throughout the past decades where regards witches. Hallowe'en has come to be associated with evil and darkness, although in reality it is the Pagan new year, Samhain, and therefore a festival of rebirth and memory. We use Samhain to remember our ancestors and celebrate their life before they passed through the veil, and over the centuries many Pagan traditions have unfortunately become comical symbols of the

holiday with much of the meaning lost along the way. In *Hocus Pocus* the use of Samhain reflects this as the witches are reborn and returned from the dead on the night of Hallowe'en. Although twisted for fictional, fantastical purposes, the intention remains the same. Furthermore, the witches pose such a threat in *Hocus Pocus*, as they did in *The Witches* as witchcraft is not the norm within the universe of the films. Unlike *The Wizard of Oz*, in which "the Wicked Witch of the West is not a disturbance to the natural order, despite her frightening demeanour as witches and magic are not foreign to the world of Oz as they are in *Hocus Pocus*" (Wallace, 2016: 67). It is this, perhaps more than anything else, that makes the Sanderson sisters mildly terrifying as representations of witches.

For the most part, when one digs deeper, there are many elements of *Hocus Pocus* that are accurate to the path and practice of Pagans. Perhaps this is why *Hocus Pocus* remains a solidly accepted text amongst the Pagan society, as evidenced by conversations amongst my online coven. There are, however, many faults alongside the positives, but we can mostly ignore these as the positives outweigh them. Nevertheless, to a non-Pagan such elements can be damaging. For instance, the use of a "virgin" to light the candle instantly makes the practice ritualistic and references the Satanic practices of the 1970s when virgins were sacrificed in occult rituals. "Much emphasis is placed on connecting the magic of *Hocus Pocus* to the occult" (*ibid*). The black flame candle being made from "the fat of a hanged man" also carries occultist connotations that can be damaging to the reality of witchcraft. "The witches talk at length about their passion for Hell and their loyalty to Satan. Their spells are ritualistic and sacrificial, and Winifred's spellbook is a gift from the Devil himself" (*ibid*). The Sanderson sisters, whilst searching for the three children, come across a house owned by a man dressed as the Devil. As he opens his front door to greet trick or treaters, the Sanderson sisters instantly react to him as their "master" and bow to him, seeking his aid to catch the children. He invites them into his home and many references are made to further devil practice as the Sanderson sisters speak with him: "Thou mustn't speak to Master in such a way" Sarah tells 'Satan's' wife as she berates him for inviting the women in. Whereas this scene may be viewed as comedic, it is nonetheless damaging to real-life witches who are fighting to remove themselves from the

Devil-worship labels given to us through the Satanic Panic eras. The reliance of the Devil as their “master” also undoes any feminist connotations of the Sanderson sisters and, much like *The Witches of Eastwick*, removes any power the women hold as they appear to only get their power from the Devil. This is apparent also when a character tells Winifred to “go to Hell” and she light-heartedly responds, “I’ve been thank you,



Fig 72. Winifred refers to a man dressed as the devil as ‘Master’.

I found it quite lovely”. As previously stated in this thesis, Neo-Pagans do not acknowledge, believe in or worship the Christian Devil or believe in the Christian Hell.

Another uncomfortable aspect of the Sanderson sisters as misrepresentations of witches is their tendency to engage in necromantic, and therefore black magic,

practice. In an attempt to catch the children when they enter the graveyard, which, according to Binx, the witches cannot set foot on as it is “consecrated ground”, Winifred uses her magic to resurrect her ex-lover Billy Butcherson: “Unfaithful lover long since dead. Deep asleep in thy wormy bed. Wiggle thy toes, open thine eyes, twist thy fingers toward the sky. Life is sweet, be not shy. On thy feet, so sayeth I!” Resurrected and reanimated in what is essentially a voodoo practice, Billy emerges from his grave, looking quite preserved for a 300 year old corpse, and dutifully seeks to do Winifred’s bidding. This, similarly, harkens back to the Haitian Voodoo practice. “It is common practice amongst Haitian Voodoo practice to ‘reignite’ the dead. Although we, in the Western world, may call this practice ‘necromancy’, in Voodoo it is part of the practice of walking the line between living and dead. Corpses supposedly become possessed, but not in



Fig 73. Billy Butcherson embodying the zombie element of the necromancer stereotype.

the Christian diabolical sense. Instead the spirit of life reignites them as though relighting a candle, and they are treated like slaves. The irony here is what would later happen to the people of Haiti once the Western world got

involved.” (Lipscomb, 2020 :204). Indeed this is the case with Billy, who Winifred uses as her slave to do her bidding.

In a symbolic attempt to regain the feminism attuned to witches, Billy, a male, has had his mouth sewn shut by Winifred as punishment for kissing her sister. However, ultimately Billy manages to cut open his sewn lips and calls Winifred, “Wench! Trollop! You buck-toothed, mop-riding firefly from Hell!”, ultimately reasserting his dominance as a male over her, a female. “Naturally, whenever Hollywood puts a witch on camera, questions arise about that character as a representation of women in society. Feminists and scholars have wrangled with whether to see Hollywood’s witches as heroines of feminism or as the scapegoats of a sexist hegemony. On the one-hand these are women who are literally empowered, on the other they’re typically ugly, evil outsiders who must perish for being powerful” (Wallace, 2016: 95). As well as worshipping Satan and practising black magic, their “ugly” appearance is another damaging aspect of *Hocus Pocus* when pitted against real-life witches and harkens back to my introduction in which I discussed the dangers of the Hallowe’en witch. Witches and their appearances are constantly being stereotyped on screen, so much so that we’re not sure how we are supposed to look either. If we don’t know, how can those who are only just learning about us supposed to?

Ultimately *Hocus Pocus* as a film is greatly inaccurate to what is recognised as true witchcraft. Although entertaining, such misrepresentations can and are greatly damaging to those who may not know the truth behind the fiction, therefore introducing and tending incorrect conceptions of what it means to be a witch. Witches, rather than their true form, are instead something to be afraid of, or to find comedic, and *Hocus Pocus* did little to encourage correct representation. One can only hope the sequel will do better, but it is doubtful and remains to be seen. Perhaps *Hocus Pocus* will prove us all wrong and will instead be a product of the time period. This is the 2020s, an age of speaking out and fighting injustice, and so films of the 2020s may well reflect such a political ocean (if one chooses to ignore the 2020 adaptation of *The Witches* which I, for one, do).

3.3.3. “Oh, Relax, It’s Only Magic”: An Anecdote on 1990s Teen Rebellion Meets Magic in *The Craft*.

Where *The Witches* and *Hocus Pocus* were aimed at the family-friendly viewer and children in general, *The Craft* was aimed at a slightly older audience. Following the Satanic Panic of the 1970s and 1980s, it seemed storytellers of the 1990s wanted to reignite the embers of the nation’s relaxing views on the occult and the teenagers proven to be drawn to it. Telling the story of four teenage witches who have supernatural powers, *The Craft* unfortunately is the closest to reality that witches had at the time. “Released at the height of witch film popularity, the film is a call-to-arms for teenage misfits all over America” (Greene, 2021: 298). To its credit there are parts of the film that follow some aspects of true Neo-Paganism and Wicca, such as invoking the elements to bring strength to the magic they cast, using the words “blessed be” (*The Craft*, 1996), the power of the coven, and utilising the power of manifestation to “get what [they] want” (*ibid*). Furthermore, “witchcraft is framed as natural and a woman’s birthright, passed from mother to daughter” (Greene, 2021: 300), which invokes the maiden, mother and crone narrative of Wiccan practice amongst real-life witchcraft. “By presenting the girls as spiritual misfits and victims of society rather than seekers of the Satanic per se, the film allows the audience to align themselves with the characters rather than resent them” (*ibid*: 299). However, that is where the representation gives way to cinematic licence and horror tropes take over.



Fig 74. The coven of four in *The Craft*.

The witches in *The Craft* unusually have a coven of four, perhaps a direct rebellion against the power of three that permeates so much of Neo-Paganism. In a group of four witches one will always be the outcast if following the rule of three, and this certainly lends itself to the narrative of the film where Nancy sets herself apart from her witch ‘sisters’. Nancy, one of the witches who is both the protagonist and antagonist, appears in a stereotypical gothic garb and ultimately uses her magical powers for evil as she evokes magic practice to get what she wants and to seek revenge. As previously discussed these are the defining tropes of black magic, and in a film aimed at the impressionable teenage years this is a decision that does more harm than good. Most real-life witches, for instance, “dislike this film immensely” (quoted from my coven, 2022).

The witches in *The Craft*; Nancy, Rochelle, Sarah and Bonnie, possess physical manifestations of their power. Much like *Hocus Pocus*, the magic is cast in the form of spectacular light effects that possibly consumed much of the film's budget for the time. Much like the utilisation of technicolour to make the wicked witch of the West green, the witches of the 1990s seem to be a manifestation of the new technologies being pioneered in the film industry of the time. This, coupled with old-school effects are used to bring the coven in *The Craft* to life. Nancy, for instance, floats above the ground in one scene, an effect that echoes back to the Golden Ages of cinema, and in fact theatre, in its use of wires to do so.

Ultimately *The Craft* has gone down in witch-cinema history as a misrepresentation due to the overwhelming horror elements woven into the plot. “The film reflects a society renegotiating its understanding of witchcraft and female power following the Satanic Panic of the 1980s. Where are the boundaries between good and bad magic?” (Greene, 2021: 300). In short, *The Craft* falls down in their attempt to capture the teen rebellion that witchcraft allows, especially when other narratives of the time were managing to capture teenage witchcraft as wholesome and welcoming, such as in the television shows *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996) and *Charmed* (1998) which seemed far more focus on presenting witchcraft as something to embrace instead of fear.

3.4. No Nicer Witch Than You: Using White Magick in the Return of Female Power and Sisterhood

The later 1990s cinema and small screen offerings in the world of witch representation mostly, and thankfully, pushed away from the depictions of witches aligned with the Devil, with ugly appearances and an appetite for the consumption of children. Instead, the later contributions turned to embodiments of sisterhood and natural energies, with a spotlight on feminine power. Changing views on the help that magic can provide, instead of the negativity that surrounded it in previous decades, began to emerge as audiences and culture appeared to become more open-minded. This section will analyse three texts specifically with the idea of finding the emphasis on female power, sisterhood and reclaiming the feminine, arguably last attempted in the 1960s with *Bewitched*.



Fig 75. Sally and Gillian Owens bring back white magick in *Practical Magic*.

Whilst the majority of cinema in the 1990s was focusing on the power of three and the ways in which their fictional covens could cast black magic to bring about harm to children or each other, there were other attempts running parallel that sought to present magick in a more realistic form. In cinema, the film *Practical Magic* was released in 1998 and depicted a very green witch's way of living. Directed by Griffin Dunne and focusing on two witch sisters, *Practical Magic* is still revered amongst modern Neo-Pagan covens as “the only representation to whole-heartedly believe in” (quote from my coven, 2022). Sally Owens, played by Sandra Bullock, and Gillian Owens, played by Nicole Kidman, are two witch

sisters raised in the craft by their maiden aunts and taught (literal) practical magic. Throughout the narrative of the film the sisters try to exist without the use of their magic, but ultimately rely on it to get themselves out of a necromantic situation that, yes, is a little too cinematic but can be forgiven after the correct representation everywhere else throughout.

Throughout the plotline of *Practical Magic* there is a lot of emphasis on not only the power and importance of white magick, but also the use of real-life magickal beliefs. The aunts teach the sisters to use herbs from their own garden to protect themselves or else to brew into “potions” for manifestation. Sally runs a village shop that specialises in so-called “herbal remedies” that prove to be popular amongst the community despite being essentially (literal) witches brews. Gillian attempted to pull away from the witch lifestyle and chose to move away, but ultimately returns to the ancestral home. This storyline decision alone anoints a sense of belonging and loyalty to others following a chosen path that is reflected by many who practise real-life paganism. The main emphasis of the narrative is essentially on family and the importance of keeping those you trust close to you, and this is needed during the fantastical element of the story which centres around a curse placed on the Owens family and the possession of Gillian by Sally’s dead ex-lover Jimmy. However, despite the fantastical element of the storyline, it is still handled with care with reference to the reality of practising witches whilst hammering home one important point: “Witchcraft is just another mundane activity that some people do, it’s a part of life” (Greene, 2021: 313). A circle is cast in salt, an element of true Pagan ritual, and the non-magical community come together to help the sisters rid themselves of the black magic that is at work in their home. Neo-Pagans do tend to place belief on curses, but a specific line spoken by one of the characters in *Practical Magic* echoes truth throughout the cinematic narrative: “Curses only have power if one believes in them”. For those who may not fully understand the truth of Pagan practice, this line is simply a choice of a scriptwriter. However, amongst witches watching, the line, as well as others, allows the real witches to feel seen and listened to.

Another enduring aspect of *Practical Magic* that resonates amongst the real-life witch community is the emphasis on the feminine. Yes, men can and do become witches, but a great deal of cinema have

chosen to only allow them magick if they earn it or if they pay for it with darkness. Often cited as one of the reasons *Practical Magic* is so accepted amongst the community could be put down to the fact that “the narrative allows women the freedom of choice: to practise magick or not, to be a victim or not, to live alone or in a relationship. The film not only asks questions about the use of one’s magick, but it also introduces those who don’t know they possess magick to learn” (*ibid*). One of the reasons why many Pagan ‘teachers’, which in my case was, as mentioned before, my Mother, choose *Practical Magic* as an important teaching tool is due to the care taken with the representations chosen in the narrative. “The film pulls back the mysterious macabre curtain on witchcraft, revealing instead everyday human beings - not monsters, not immortals, not satanic covens. Witchcraft is normal and practical, just something some people choose to do” (*ibid*).

3.4.2. “The Power of Three will Set You Free”: How the Halliwell Sisters *Charmed* a Generation

Charmed was a television series released in 1998 on The WB. It told the story of three sisters, the Halliwells, who recently came back together as young adults only to discover they have magical powers that have laid dormant. They must navigate this new world in which they find themselves, relying greatly on each other as they do. There are many tropes of the 1990s supernatural drama prevalent in the series, such as the old spooky manor as the home, and elements that are shared with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996). In order to destroy witches they must be burned alive, a reference to the Scottish witch trials where witches were burned as heretics. There are, too, aspects of real life witchcraft in the series, not least the power of three as previously discussed and the use of Wiccan phrases throughout the spell-casting: “the Power of Three, so might it be”. Piper, Prue and Phoebe frequently prove that the only way they can survive this new way of life is with each other. In Season 3 Prue leaves and is replaced by Paige, a half-sister, further adding the power of three: “the Power of Three

will set us free”. Paige is played by actress Rose McGowan, who later played a witch in *Once Upon a Time* (2011) as a reference to her beginnings in television.



Fig 76. The Halliwell Sisters and their Book of Shadows.

The witches' powers are unlocked when they discover the “Book of Shadows”. In real life witchcraft, the “Book of Shadows is a journal used by a practising witch to record and document spells and rites” (West, 2003: 36). A Book of Shadows is different to a grimoire which is “a book compiled by more than one practising witch and shared amongst covens” (*ibid*). The Book of Shadows in *Charmed* allows them to tailor and unlock their magical abilities throughout the seasons and ultimately is what they pass on to their children. Many spells featured in the *Charmed* Book of Shadows are accurate spells in real-life witchcraft, such as the “To Bind” spell in 02x02: *Morality Bites*. In real witchcraft, this spell is considered to be a hex and an example of dark magic as it is against the free will of the target, designed as it is to remove their energies and powers. The use of rhyme for the spells in the book is also accurate to real witchcraft for “To bind the spell well every time, let the spell be spoken in rhyme³⁰”. Ultimately, the Book of Shadows may have been damaging to those watching in that the majority of the spells are not used in real witchcraft. There is a love potion, for instance, which is frowned upon for the same reasons as the binding spell. The Book of Shadows was made available to purchase as a tie-in to the programme, so

³⁰ Taken from *The Wiccan Rede*.

young witches who are first discovering the path may have expected their magick to manifest like the magic in the show.

Finally, there is a lot of reference to “white light” in *Charmed*. In real witchcraft “to surround oneself in white light is to protect oneself whilst casting and manifesting” (*ibid*). Whilst in *Charmed* the white light is physical, a result of advancing special effects in the industry, the white light in real witchcraft is a result of imagination and manifestation and cannot be physically seen. It is not uncommon for one witch to tell another to “surround thyself in white light” if they are feeling anxious or unsure. This notion has begun to bleed into everyday manifestation practice, perhaps as a result of #witchtok, or as a result of shows such as *Charmed*. “*Charmed* demonstrated a rising consciousness of the modern Witchcraft movement which perhaps allows real witches in search of new social boundaries in which they can wield their new powers safely” (Greene, 2021: 308).

3.4.3. “Having Magic and Being a Witch is Great and All”: Comfortable Home-Grown Witchcraft in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*

As previously mentioned, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* was my first real introduction to the magical world. Yes, I was disappointed when I couldn’t just point my finger and magic happened, but as soon as I was old enough to grasp what I was supposed to be grasping from *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* there was no going back. The television show first aired on ABC in September 1996 as an adaptation of the Archie comic of the same name. It features Sabrina Spellman, a teenage witch played by Melissa Joan Hart who is trying to balance her newly inherited magical powers whilst also navigating the expectations of a teenage girl in suburban America. She is being raised by her maiden aunts, Hilda and Zelda Spellman, played by Caroline Rhea and Beth Broderick, a trait that is often repeated in witch media.



Fig 77. Sabrina lives with her maiden aunts, a trope often repeated in witch media.

This is greatly due to the inspiration of the power of three in real-life witchcraft, as well as emphasis on the feminine and the Pagan ‘teacher’: i.e., someone to introduce a young witch to the path. Such a trope was seen in *Practical Magic*, too, as well as in characters who appeared as spiritual guides in *The Craft* and *Charmed*. Also living in the Massachusetts home of the Spellmans is Salem Saberhagen, voiced by Nick Backay, the warlock-turned-black-house-cat who exists as the voice-of-reason, often giving fatherly advice to Sabrina, as well as comic relief. For the most part, Salem is comedic due to his comments about what it is like to live as a cat. There is a great deal of truth in his words, which may echo with cat-owners worldwide: “Drop everything and pay attention to me”; “When I’m happy I eat, when I’m upset, I eat... I’m a cat!”; and “Would you be terribly upset if I threw up in your shoes?”. Salem’s legacy has continued since 1996, with many witches of my online coven naming their own black cats as such. Salem is, of course, named after the location of the most famous American witch trials. Though the show is set in the fictional town of Westbridge, Massachusetts, which is referred to as “about an hour from Salem” in 1x23: *The Crucible* when Sabrina goes on a school trip to the site of the witch trials, the town seems to be cursed for the witches of the narrative even now. Although not a direct relative, the Spellmans have been tasked with caring for Salem as he lives out his century-long cat-shaped punishment, inflicted upon him by the Witches Council, after trying to literally “take over the world”. Anecdotally, I would briefly like to

discuss the Witches Council. The use of a higher power to govern over witches is a trope that occurs occasionally throughout witch media. It is seen in the *Harry Potter* franchise in the guise of the Ministry of Magic and in *The Witches* where it manifests as the Grand High Witch. Yennefer in *The Witcher* rebels against her school/controlling body, Aretuza, and suffers for doing so. This is a purely fictional element of witch stories as real-life witches do not answer to a higher-council, which is very much a Christian trait. Real-life witches do not conform to rules laid down for us and so it seems the introduction of these sorts of establishments in fictional witch stories is an attempt to control the uncontrollable.

Sabrina Spellman receives her powers on the eve of her sixteenth birthday in the pilot episode. Like many witch narratives, the use of an age in which powers manifest is another fictional element of these tales and has little to do with real-life witchcraft. However, in this context it allows Sabrina the space she needs to learn how to use her new powers, with her family as a guide, and provides the opportunity for plot narratives that would carry the show for seven seasons. Sabrina is “half-mortal”, with a witch father and a mortal mother, which adds another layer to her difficulty in navigating her powers. She doesn’t find out about her father being a witch until her powers “activate” on her 16th birthday in 01x01: *Pilot* episode. She is gifted a “black pot” by her aunts, who then go on to explain that “it is a cauldron” and tell her that she is a witch. She is also gifted “the magic book” in order to learn all she needs about being a witch. In real-life witchcraft, age thirteen is typically when parents wanting to pass on their beliefs will tell their children about what it all means. It is not really known where the thirteen age limit came from, but it is believed that it was done as a rebellion against the rumours being painted for us by the Christian church throughout the centuries. It is tradition to gift a witch their first pentagram and blank Book of Shadows on their thirteenth birthday, which I received from my Mother.

Hallowe’en plays an important role in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, the biggest reference to real witchcraft. Sabrina, in the first season, is not interested in Hallowe’en and does her best to avoid it. However, she is told in 01x05: *A Halloween Story* that “a witch can’t run from Hallowe’en” or “it will find [you]”. She is also told that “Hallowe’en is not about trick or treating or parties, but about honouring the

dead” by her aunts. This honours the truth behind the festival of Samhain, the Neo-Pagan festival. Sabrina is taken to the Other Realm where she is gifted a coupon to “spend an hour with one dead person of [her] choice”. She spends an hour with her grandmother in a touching scene that reflects many a ritual performed by many a Neo-Pagan on Samhain, although we do not necessarily get to physically see and speak with our loved ones.

Although the witches in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* do not believe in a deity as real witches do, they do often interact with figures from folklore who are recognisable as pseudo-Gods of childhood. These include Father Christmas in 02x11: *Sabrina Claus* and Mother Nature in 04x12: *Sabrina Nipping at Your Nose*, with the latter being the closest the series comes to real Pagan deities.

All in all there were many elements of the series, which ran for seven seasons from 1996 to 2003, which opened the door for those curious about witchcraft to learn about it in a healthy environment tailored at younger people and teenagers. Going through a magical journey alongside Sabrina, for me at least, was a worthy aid for my introduction to witchcraft. Sabrina often used magic to solve her problems, but often found ways to ultimately learn to get along with a healthy balance of mortality and magic, as real witches do.

3.4.4. “Villain’s Don’t Get to Have a Happy Ending”: Regina Mills in *Once Upon a Time* as a Catalyst for Witch Representation Change.

Once Upon a Time (2011) is a Canadian-American television show that aired in 2011 until 2018 on ABC. The concept for the seven subsequent seasons was centred around a combination of fairy tales, folktales and Disney characters in a unique form of storytelling that crossed-over the well-known narratives. In doing so, a great many traditional fairytale witches were introduced into the plot and manipulated in accordance to the advances being made in the real world, giving them more character depth and metaphorical soul. These included the blind witch from *Hansel and Gretel*, the witch-next-door from *Rapunzel*, the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900), and the Snow

Queen from the fairytale of the same name. However, the witch who had the most development placed upon her was the Evil Queen, also known as Regina, from *Little Snow White* by Brothers Grimm.



Fig 78. Modern liberated witchcraft embodied in Regina Mills.

Played by Lana Parrilla, Regina begins the narrative as her typical fairytale self and embodies much of what Disney put in place with the Evil Queen in 1937 and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. She is reliant on her magic mirror, she despises Snow White out of pure jealousy, and she transforms into grotesque figures to get what she wants. In fact, the entire plotline of the programme circles around a curse placed upon the characters by Regina. She despises her stepdaughter Snow White, played by Ginnifer Goodwin, who in this instance has survived the sleeping curse from the original story. Also in the original tale, the Evil Queen sought evil upon Snow White purely due to a jealousy for her beauty: “The queen took fright at the mirror’s words and turned yellow and green with envy. From that hour on whenever she looked at Snow-White’s beauty her heart turned over inside her body, so great was her hatred for the girl” (Grimm & Grimm, 1857). However, Regina in *Once Upon a Time* has more depth to her construction from the beginning. She despises the Snow White of the show as she believes Snow White’s actions as a child led to the assassination of Regina’s true love. Instead of envying her beauty, Regina seeks revenge over her stepdaughter for betraying her.

This narrative is how the series begins, with Regina casting a curse to bring fairytale characters to the real world, trapped in the fictional town of Storybrooke, Maine. However, throughout the following

seasons Regina is liberated again and again until ultimately she is no longer classed as an antagonist or a villain, but rather a heroine worthy of the tropes assigned to the title. At first, Regina manages to forgive Snow White for her childhood misdoings and find love with someone else, a fate not permitted to witches in fairy tales prior. Regina goes from ripping out the hearts of her enemies, a trait carried over from the original fairytale, and instead seeks to help other fairytale characters find their true love: “When I was the Evil Queen, I spent every day not giving a damn about anyone, and in return, no one cared about me. I thought all I needed was my vengeance to keep me warm at night. But then my enemies became my family and that’s when I finally felt happy”.

Of all the liberated witch characters throughout the 2010s, Regina is perhaps one of the strongest. She seems to have had the hardest journey, not least in her basic form as a fairytale witch and transformation to fairytale heroine, but in her ultimate salvation and liberation. The plotlines Regina was central to, as well as the character choices made by the writers, have carried the Evil Queen on a journey of growth and given her a depth of character previously seemingly unseen in witch-media. Regina makes the “wicked witch” seem two-dimensional through her three-dimensional storylines and characterisation, and in doing so encourages the viewers of *Once Upon a Time* the ability to look deeper than the first appearance of a witch. Much like warts, green-skin and an evil streak, being a witch is more than skin deep - being a witch is about what is inside and the choices made. Throughout the texts studied in this thesis, Regina has proved more than any that audiences should not take witches at face value and should instead peer past the misrepresentation to what lies below, even if real witches can’t put someone to sleep with just a click of the fingers.

Conclusion: *So Mote It Be* | Witch Liberation, and the Modern Legacy of the Fairytale

0.7. A Summary of the 2010s Witchcraft Landscape

The liberated witch narrative previously discussed in *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* leads me to conclude with an overview of what such a notion includes. In an era of fourth wave feminism and social media, this decade more than others allowed a further exploration into what makes a witch so. With the onset of smartphones and use of social media platforms such as Facebook, which launched in 2004 but “has significantly grown in popularity through the 2010s” (*ReadWriteWeb*, 2017), and TikTok in 2016, witchcraft has a new means of becoming known. Through the use of a 2020

hashtag on the latter platform, #WitchTok, many ages were now able to access the so-called “occult” (*FinancialTimes*, 2021) and learn about the spiritual path followed by many. Since this hashtag and the use of social media for witches to spread their practice and awareness of what a witch really is, the Neo-Pagan community worldwide have been able to make change throughout media in the way we are represented. Hand-in-hand with the LGBTQI+ and Black Lives Matter movements also using social media platforms to challenge prejudice, dismiss stereotypes and make change, the #awitchforlifeno Halloween has allowed witches to attempt the same. For

the most part, too, people are listening. The use of such a platform has made advances in the way witches are treated in the Western world by their own governments, with an 11,250 signature petition (started by myself) to include Handfasting, the Pagan wedding ceremony, as a legal form of marriage; and to have ‘Pagan’ or ‘Wicca’ added to the religion section of the National Census. These advances have certainly been made possible thanks to the popularity of #witchtok and other forms of expression through social media. My own coven, for instance, is a Facebook group where I have never met any of the members face-to-face, but I can turn to for advice on my practice or give advice on others. Pagans and Wiccans no



Fig 79. #WitchTok in action.

longer feel we have to hide our practice in the modern era of #livingyourbestlife and, for now at least, it seems most of the misunderstandings and prejudice has passed into the history books. In potentially direct response to the rise in witch popularity, the cinema and small screen alike have needed to adapt their methods of storytelling to continue the liberated witch narrative that witches are living in real life.

Some examples of the 2010s liberated witch, aside from the aforementioned Regina Mills in *Once Upon a Time* (2010), also include *The Witcher* (2019), *Game of Thrones* (2010) and *A Discovery of Witches* (2018). *A Discovery of Witches* (2018) focuses on the liberated witch figure in the form of protagonist Dr Diana Bishop. Advertised as a “reluctant witch” (*A Discovery of Witches*, 2018), Diana must learn to be comfortable with her powers in order to understand the magical world which she now finds herself a part of. In *Game of Thrones* (2010) witchcraft is represented in the cult-like Melisandre, although she is also referred to as a sorceress or a priestess. Melisandre could be identified as a dark witch as she uses sacrifice, seduction and manipulation to get what she needs in her rituals. However, this could be read as Melisandre also being a liberated woman in a show with strong gender divides and expectations. Melisandre often strips naked whilst other women cover-up, she has flaming red hair and is always hot to the touch in a world that emphasises the cold of winter. She is liberated in that she is unapologetic but also able to admit when and where she is wrong. Ultimately, Melisandre is not a true witch in the Neo-Pagan standard, but she deserves a mention here as her liberation plays a large part in her own narrative, and the nature of the



Fig 80. Melisandre, an enchantress who is referred to as a witch, in *Game of Thrones* (2010)

2000s and 2010s advances in feminism had a part to play in her character construction.

The Witcher (2019) features a significant amount of time dedicated to the liberation and fight for free-will of Yennefer, the featured witch. Yennefer begins her narrative as a magickally-blind hunchbacked orphan who is beaten and abused by her adopted family until

she is recognised by Tissaiea, the ‘high witch’ trope of *The Witcher*. Yennefer is then invited to attend Aretuza, this universe’s answer to Rowling’s Hogwarts, the magical school, and liberates herself through honing her magical powers. Yennefer is far more powerful when she accepts her magical abilities and uses them as she wishes, rather than as she was taught. This may be a trope for a wicked witch, but Yennefer uses her new found freedom to help others, namely in her support of ‘witcher’ Geralt. Despite the title, Geralt is not a witch nor does he necessarily hunt them. Instead he is more of a glorified monster-hunter with supernatural abilities, therefore has flaws. It is these flaws that Yennefer compliments with her triumphs, able to adapt her magical practice thanks to her liberation.

There is an element of Yennefer’s magical journey that is of particular interest when reviewing women as witches. It is an arguable concept that to be a woman is to be capable of bearing children, at least in the historical and evolutionary sense, but this ability is taken from Yennefer in her desire for magical supremacy. Women who are trained at Aretuza are given the opportunity to make themselves physically desirable. Given that Yennefer grew up as a hunchback and an outcast, she chooses to take this option and pay the price. That price is sterilisation and the complete removal of her reproductive organs, the very things that arguably make her a woman. In *The Witcher* universe it seems one can not be both a stereotypical woman and access all-power, presenting a level of dilemma to the magical conquest. Yennefer pays the price in order to make herself desirable, magical and immortal, and therefore profitable to those who may seek to ‘hire’ the services of a witch. She has her reproductive organs removed as a result, and is assigned a royal household to become the resident witch, or ‘mage’, of. In being assigned to these royal households, the magical wielders of this world are limited to what they are permitted to do with their magic. Quite often, their main role is to aid the royal household in waging war, something that becomes tiresome in Yennefer’s mind.

When observing the history of witchcraft and the persecution of women thereof it is interesting to note the decision made by Yennefer in this regard. Witches of history supposedly seek to harm and covet

children, yet witches in *The Witcher* are constructed in an oppositional way. However, once Yennefer has lived without her ‘womanhood’ for a while she begins to regret her decision, therefore dedicating a great deal of her narrative to her attempting to regain her ability to bear a child. It seems that ultimate power is not everything, and she learns to use her powers for good, not war, as a result.



Fig 81. Yennefer using her ‘forbidden power’ in the pursuit of peace.

As a final observation on Yennefer as a witch, it is interesting to note that the use of fire magic is forbidden to all those practising magic within the Continent, i.e. the world of *The Witcher*. Fire is a very important element used in real life witchcraft due to its properties for cleansing, as well as reclaiming a long history of persecution and the act of burning women as heretics. The fact that it is forbidden in *The Witcher* adds an element of rebellion and oppositional practice to other witch media, such as the aforementioned Melisandre in *Game of Thrones*. In a pivotal scene in the final episode of season one, Yennefer uses fire magic in order to save the Continent from attack, but as a result she loses her magical powers as punishment. The sacrificial lamb trope is one not often used in witch media and is what makes Yennefer stand out as a liberated witch stereotype throughout the landscape.

0.8. Conclusion: A Witch is for Life, not Just for Hallowe’en.

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to answer the query put forth at the very beginning: how has witch media affected real life witchcraft, and how do these media representations (or misrepresentations)

reflect the changing views of society on such a topic? When reflecting on exactly how the media landscape of the last decade has influenced the way society views real life witches, I have attempted to create a roadmap and timeline of exactly how and when significant advances and setbacks occur. From the 1930s to the 2020s witches have been paraded, ridiculed and caricatured on the screen in such a way to create a lasting opinion amongst those who are perhaps less educated on the truth of the real witch's plight. We have been persecuted, hunted and executed since the human race realised the power within, we have been portrayed as jealous, wicked hags, and for the most part this has been performed out of fear of the unknown, the unexplained and the uncontrollable. Throughout this thesis I have identified key moments in the history of witches on the screen, both cinematic and small, that have had a lasting impact on the way witches are portrayed and understood in today's society. From the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) in her hag-like guise, poisoning innocent fourteen year old princesses out of pure jealousy, to the green-skin and jealousy-driven portrayal of the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), I identified the cinematic witch beginnings and how they laid the groundwork for what was to come.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, witches were given a little bit of a break through the likes of *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958) and the television programme *Bewitched* (1964). Witches hung up the hag disguise adopted from fairytale and folklore and instead adopted the housewife, woman-next-door persona that is perhaps the closest to the reality of witches throughout society. However, despite these advances, witches were soon to be portrayed once again as wicked and power-hungry, with their ugly deeds reflecting in their ugly appearance. We became the subject of horror films throughout the 1970s and suddenly relied on the Christian devil for power, something that had not occurred since the Dark Ages (supposedly). During the 1980s being a witch became synonymous with worshipping Satan, due in part to the Satanic Panic sweeping Western society and films such as *Witches of Eastwick* (1989) which unwittingly caused the undoing of the good work that the housewife witches had done in the decades earlier. However, in the political climate of the time growing throughout Western society and the rise of feminism, real witches

began to fight back and the practice became commonplace throughout small towns. By the time the 1990s arrived the cinematic landscape for witches was happy to walk the line between wicked and good, providing a good smattering of both types of witches for the public to pick and choose. On the one hand, on the side of the white magic, there came films such as *Practical Magic* (1990) which came very close to real witchcraft. Similarly, shows like *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996) and *The Worst Witch* (1998) encouraged young people to question what it means to practise magic safely and in the light. On the other hand, the dark magic side, films such as *Hocus Pocus* (1993) and *The Witches* (1990) revived the hag stereotypes of films that had come before and, what is more, did so for the family audience. This meant more opinions could be formed whilst also misconceptions could be spread further.

Finally, in the last two decades of the 2000s and 2010s, witches have been given more of a voice on the screen and the liberated witch stereotype has been explored, providing a more realistic landscape in order to form opinions. Clearly fantastical witches appear in family films such as the *Harry Potter* *Octalogy* (2001-2011), whilst shows like *Game of Thrones* (2011) encourage adult fairytales and the exploration of magic for nefarious purposes. In the recent social media age of #WitchTok and #liveyourbestlife, knowledge is at the fingertips of anyone seeking it. Witchcraft books are available in high-street bookstores and are no longer considered 'niche', and owning crystals has become everyday commonplace. The liberation of witches in shows such as *A Discovery of Witches* (2018), *The Witcher* (2019) and *Once Upon a Time* (2011) have encouraged young women (and men) to seek answers from a higher power and tap into energies long since lying dormant. This thesis has sought to break down the individual texts explored and balance them against the real life climate within which they exist, seeking to discover how and why such witch stereotypes were adopted, explored and accepted.

In [Part One: Something Wicked This Way Comes](#), I laid the foundations for the study with a brief history of witchcraft and witch persecution. I mentioned the Salem Witch Trials and the Great European Witch Hunt and sought to back up my facts with academic texts by leading witch historians. I then explored the history of witches in fairy tales and discussed how the hag stereotype has bled into witch

media for hundreds of years, despite instead being similar to Slavic folklore and not witches precisely. I gave some examples of witch media that relied upon such stereotypes, namely the films of the Walt Disney Studios but also films such as *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013). With these foundations laid, I then further explored the gender politics surrounding witchcraft in [Part Two: Sorcerers, Wizards and Warlocks](#), Oh My. I used a historical base to identify the main differences between witches and the sorcerers, wizards and warlocks often aligned with magic in fictional accounts. After backing up my reasons for these titles being false, I then used selected texts to further explain. These texts included *Merlin* (2008), *Willow* (1988) and Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003). My purpose for outlining these differences was to provide education as to why such stereotypes have come to exist and I aimed to discover why they have endured. In the second half of Part Two I attempted to lay historical foundation for the reasoning behind aligning witchcraft with the occult and Satan worship, using real life examples as well as looking at texts such as *Witches of Eastwick* (1989) which helped to nurture the belief in the age of cinema. I discussed why I think this has endured and what can be done to re-educate those who still believe that this is the case.

Finally, in [Part Three: I Put a Spell on You](#), I attempted to explain the differences between white and black magic and I went into detail regarding the race connotations of such a label. In my attempt to explain black magic I used the Satanic Panic information from Part Two as well as historical context for the origins of black magic and voodoo practice, and then I linked this to witch media such as *Obeah!* (1935) and *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013) to further express my point. I explored texts such as *Hocus Pocus* (1993) and *The Witches* (1990) which greatly focus on wicked witches who practice black magic and necromancy. This was done in an attempt to demonstrate how the stereotype has become fantastical, whilst also becoming almost commonplace in the minds of the general public. Overall, throughout these three parts, I created a roadmap of beliefs generated from witch media in cinema and on television, and attempted to explore how and why they came to be taken as gospel. I set out at the beginning of this thesis to demonstrate why I think the way witches are portrayed on screen has affected the way we view witches in real life, and I feel I have provided enough evidence and context in order to do this and to potentially

open the door to further study into the philosophy and psychology of how on screen portrayal can influence our hearts, minds and beliefs as consumers in the real world.

0.9. A Place in This World: Final Thoughts on Representation

With technological advances and a drop in expense for computer-generated imagery throughout the 2000s and 2010s, a resurgence in supernatural television and literature coupled with a rising interest in so-called ‘true crime’, the desire for mysterious storylines and complex, layered villains-cum-antiheroes became the requirement. Much like Regina in *Once Upon a Time*, villains were now worthy of redemption, and as witches are typically villains, this included us. This did not only apply to witches, with many films, especially those of family-orientation, adapting to not include a traditional antagonist at all (as in *Encanto* (2021)), or to liberate the antagonist in the climax of the film (such as Te-Fiti in *Moana* (2016)). Otherwise films began to develop the villain’s backstory so that more sympathy can be given to the reason for their wrath, as in *Maleficent* (2012) and *Cruella* (2021), hoping to make them more relatable in a world of speaking-out and being proud to be who you are. Kenny Ortega, the mind behind *Hocus Pocus*, wrote a three-part musical film series for Disney Channel entitled *Descendants* (2015) which focused on the children of villains who desire to be accepted and loved more than the generation that came before. As a result of these advances in conscientious storytelling in cinema and screen, the witch, who up until now had been literally black and white in her representation, now had the option to have more layers added to her, or him, or they.

In an era of speaking out, speaking up, not taking abuse or spreading hate, liberation and a change for acceptance for all, it does not seem appropriate that the witch should be left behind. Throughout this study I have attempted to establish and explain the history of witch persecution, both before and after the invention of the camera, and the witch-fear that still exists in some areas of the world that has arguably stemmed from what has been shown on the screen. I have established texts that have done considerable harm to Neo-Pagans and witches in real life, and I have praised the very few texts that have tried hard to

represent witches with a level of understanding and respect. It is the 21st Century, after all, and I shouldn't have to hide my pentagram in a liberal society. Throughout our long history of persecution, execution, ostracism and misrepresentation, the time has come for witches to take their place outside of the salt-circle and demand a change in thought. The texts named throughout this study have encouraged mistakes in an understanding of what a witch is or does, and it needs to be challenged.

We do not worship the Devil, nor do we believe in, or deserve to go to, the Christian Hell. We do not despise children nor covet their consumption for our own gain. We do not have green-skin, always wear black or have long gnarled fingers and noses as a general rule. We do not put curses on others or turn them into anything undesirable, nor do we seek to cause harm to others.

That being said, we *do* place a lot of emphasis on inner power and the importance of manifestation. We do believe that the Earth flows with energies that can be handled to aid our everyday lives. We come in all shapes, sizes, colours, orientations and we are accepting of all. We deserve liberation, and we deserve a chance to be heard and understood outside of the Hallowe'en caricature we have been subjected to for centuries.

Hopefully with small steps, such as this study, we will have a chance to be more understood as social media and easy access to research allows a chance for education. I am optimistically hopeful for the liberation of my expanded community and welcome the freedom to celebrate our craft free of prejudice, hopefully with the help of the media, the cinema and the small screen. One can hope.

So mote it be.

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Honourable Mentions

Throughout my study for this thesis I have watched and consumed so many witch media texts of cinema and television, but could not fit all of them into the main body. Therefore, here is a list of the honourable mentions that I observed and studied but did not acknowledge.

- A Simple Wish* (1997) Directed by Michael Ritchie. [Feature Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.
- Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) Directed by Joss Whedon. [Feature Film]. USA: Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Avengers: Endgame* (2019) Directed by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo. [Feature Film]. USA: Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) Directed by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo. [Feature Film]. USA: Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971) Directed by Robert Stevenson. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.
- Bewitched* (2005) Directed by Nora Ephron. [Feature Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.
- Brave* (2012) Directed by Mark Andrews & Brenda Chapman. [Feature Animation Film]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Captain America: Civil War* (2016) Directed by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo. [Feature Film]. USA: Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Dark Shadows* (2012) Directed Tim Burton. [Feature Film]. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Doctor Strange: The Multiverse of Madness* (2022) Directed by Sam Raimi. [Feature Film]. USA: Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Doctor Who* (2005) [Television Programme]. BBC One. 26 March.
The Shakespeare Code (2007) *Doctor Who*, 3x02. BBC One. 7 April.
- Emerald City* (2017) [Television Programme] NBC. 3 March.
- Enchanted* (2007) Directed by Kevin Lima. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Frozen* (2013) Directed by Chris Buck & Jennifer Lee. [Feature Animation Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Frozen 2* (2019) Directed by Chris Buck & Jennifer Lee. [Feature Animation Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Good Witch* (2015) [Television Programme]. Hallmark Channel. 8 February.
- Grimm* (2011) [Television Programme]. NBC. 28 October.

Kiki's Delivery Service (1989) Directed by Hayao Miyazaki. [Feature Animation Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

Lucy Worsley Investigates... The Witch Hunts. (2022) [Television Programme]. BBC One. 24 May.

MacBeth (2015) Directed by Justin Kurzel. [Feature Film]. USA/France: StudioCanal.

Mary Poppins (1964) Directed by Robert Stevenson. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Productions.

Mary Poppins Returns (2018) Directed by Rob Marshall. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Matilda (1996) Directed by Danny DeVito. [Feature Film]. USA: Sony Pictures.

Mirror, Mirror (2012) Directed by Tarsen Singh. [Feature Film]. USA: Relativity Media.

Nanny McPhee (2005) Directed by Kirk Jones. [Feature Film]. UK/USA: Universal Pictures.

Room on the Broom (2012) Directed by Max Lang & Jan Lacheur. [Short Animation Feature]. UK: Magic Light Pictures.

Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost (1999) Directed by Jim Strentsum. [Feature Animation Film]. USA: Warner Home Video.

Season of the Witch (2011) Directed by Dominic Sena. [Feature Film]. USA: Relativity Media.

Snow White and the Huntsman (2012) Directed by Rupert Sanders. [Feature Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

Terry Pratchett's The Colour of Magic (2008) Sky One. 23 March.

The Brothers Grimm (2005) Directed by Terry Gilliam. [Feature Film]. UK/USA: Miramax.

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian (2008) Directed by Andrew Adamson. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005) Directed by Andrew Adamson. [Feature Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

The Covenant (2006) Directed by Kenny Harlin. [Feature Film]. USA: Sony Pictures.

The Craft: Legacy (2020) Directed by Zoe Lister-Jones. [Feature Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.

The Huntsman: Winter's War. (2016) Directed by Cedric Nicolas-Tyson. [Feature Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993) Directed by Tim Burton. [Feature Animation Films]. USA: Walt Disney Pictures & Skellington Productions.

The Swan Princess (1994) Directed by Richard Rich. [Feature Animation Films]. USA: Columbia TriStar Film.

The Vampire Diaries (2009) [Television Programme]. The CW. 10 September.

The VVitch (2015) Directed by Robert Eggers. [Feature Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

Wandavision (2021) [Television Programme]. Disney +. 15 January.

Witch Finder (2022) [Television Programme].BBC Two. 8 March.

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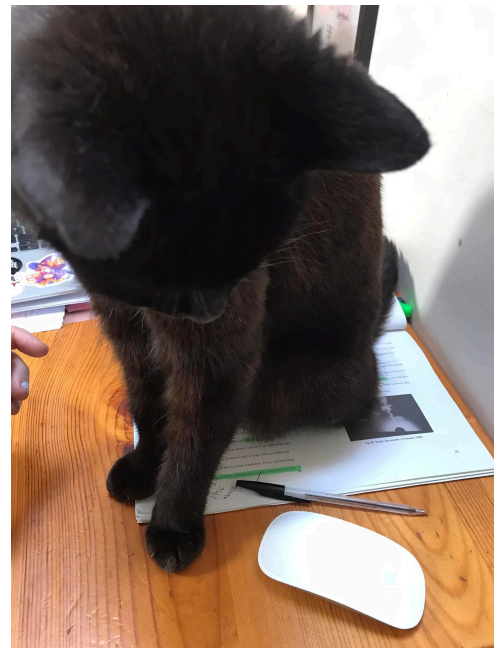
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(Edit: Oscar passed away in January 2023, and so this paper is dedicated to him)