

HOLLINS UNIVERSITY

MFA in Dance Program

Witch Time:

A Contemporary Reclamation of the Euro-
American Witch Stereotype

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Introduction

“when woman thinks alone, she thinks evil...” Malleus Maleficarum¹

A witch as woman stereotype, is someone who can bend or shape consciousness, manipulate energies, conjure knowledge of the body and confidence of the feminine erotic power—their toil is both spiritual and political. During the late thirteenth, early fourteenth centuries, the term witch—rooted from the Anglo-Saxon word ‘wick’, to bend or shape consciousness,² and the Indo-European word ‘weid,’ which means to know or see³—constructed within European heteronormative societies. The witch and witchcraft stereotypes were manipulated, as early as the early thirteenth-century, in the European witch trials, also known as the burning times. The trials perpetuated specific stereotypes/stigmas of the witch that informed and imbedded misogyny and patriarchy, such as being outspoken, sexually confident, connected to intuition, and/or anatomically intellectual. The root of the tortuous witch hunts was to suppress non-Christian religious beliefs, specific medical practices, and the feminine erotic power that challenged set systems of authority surrounding the Western Church and State.

In unpacking the history of constructed witch stereotypes, the oppression of women as witches and female healers, there is evidence that these embodied and lived practices have been passed down through various Euro-American generations—leading into how contemporary women are beginning to shift and reclaim the negative witch connotation as a source of empowerment. This research engages with women who fall within the constructed witch

¹ Kramer Heinrich and Jacob Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (Bronx, New York: Benjamin Bloom, Inc., 1928), pt.1, qu. 6, 43.

² Donna Read, *The Burning Times* (National Film Board of Canada, 1990), 10:18.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34ow_kNnoro.

³ Asia Suler, “Real Witches See Possibility,” *One Willow Apothecaries* (blog), accessed November 12, 2018, <https://onewillowapothecaries.com/real-witches-see-possibility/>.

stereotype and conjure sex positivity of feminine erotic power through their professions and lifestyles as a sign of resistance and reclamation: like female performance artists, such as Euro-American contemporary choreographers, and female medical practitioners.

Christianization

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” - I Samuel 15:23

The ‘Old Religion’ of Europe is currently known as Paganism, and has evolved into other branches like neo-paganism, and Wicca, but not without martyr. Before the Roman Empire invaded Europe and adopted Christianity, around 380 CE, the mass of Europeans practiced paganism. The Old Religion, or Paganism, is a nature-oriented religion, that worships multiple deities—a god or goddess—and believes the Spirit of the nature goddess lives in all things.⁴ The Old religion accepted and praised goddesses, therefore it was not uncommon for women to be prophets and leaders. Most Pagans lived on a particular part of land, often valleys, and each community had particular ceremonies and traditions for their specific locations on top of the hillsides. Each community also had Goddess’ and Gods for specific ceremonies that shifted with the seasons and important parts of their life experiences; like the beginning of harvest, abundance of animals for herding, and talking about the relationship of the moon, stars, and planets. The practice did not have much to do with belief, rather they based worship around action, experience, celebration, and customs:⁵ Christianity is when belief became a way of life.

Many generations throughout Europe, towns and villages celebrated May Day, a celebration of spring. The queen of May resided over the festivities and the Morris Men woke up the earth with bells, and staffs. Rituals like this were the religious practices of most people in

⁴ Donna Read, *The Burning Times*, 2:05.

⁵ Read. 17:00.

Europe, until the 1700s when the traditions became targeted as witchcraft due to the Christianization of Europe:

“the Dominican Inquisitors who developed the stereotype of witchcraft into its mature form wanted to squelch the social and doctrinal nonconformity that he thought was especially rife in Europe’s mountainous regions. Witches were one of a number of marginalized groups scapegoated to relieve social tensions developing after the Reformation, specifically the Wars of Religion.”⁶

Though I argue misogyny as a key factor in the witch trials, the demonization of the feminine spirit is an unfortunate consequence of Christian anxiety. After the Crusades, Christianization of Europe manipulated and demonized the feminine spirit to over power and to discredit Old Religion that upheld feminine power. There was a split in Christian practice between the formal Catholic and Protestant churches and the religion of ordinary people, like peasants and merchants. The formal Catholic and Protestant doctrines were practiced by orthodox authorities and considered the religion of the elite. The religion practiced by ordinary people was full of the Old Religion: they valued feminine divinity and nature and more often than not, was a follower of Mary, the virgin mother. Still tied to their previous pagan culture of nature and feminine divinity, newly converted Christian’s worshiped Mary as a goddess because she was familiar to their previous Pagan practices. The split between the religion of the elite and the ordinary became more apparent when newly converted Christians popularized Mary and caused a rise in new Christian churches being built and dedicated in her name.

Joan of Arc, an avid convert to the Virgin mother Mary, was a woman who led the French to a victory over the English after a hundred-year war in 1429. Two years after victory, she was condemned as a witch/heretic and executed for her crimes. In later years, the French

⁶Linda C. Hulst, “Chapter 1: The Witch as Woman,” in *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1–26.

wrote about how her life guided her to win in battle and how she was prophetic and valiant in battle, and her presence was inspirational and goddess-like. Joan of Arc preached that in her earlier years, a magic tree, a hilltop shrine, and a sacred spring in the French country-side is where she first heard the voices that helped her lead in battle. It was normal for women to have possibilities, like to be known as prophets, mystics, powerful, and visionaries when Joan of Arc was young. She named the voices after Catholic saints, but her faith still lingered in the Old Religion, and claimed the voices gifted her authority higher than the Church.⁷

Since the church viewed a direct conduit to the divine as threatening, they found Joan of Arc's individual aspirations and connections to a higher power unacceptable and worthy of punishment. If people could rely on themselves a direct connection to the divine, then the Church's orthodox 'guidance,' or authority, would not be necessary or sought after. Meaning Joan was a direct challenge to the authorities of that time and the Church was in the mists of squashing challenges to aid in the transition of Christianization. It was a time of social upheaval, as families were driven from their farms and into cities, and those who insisted on reform were branded as enemies of god and charges of witchcraft galloped hot on the trail of peasant rebellions. The charges ended with being condemned to public death, like Joan of Arc burning at the stake. Matilda Joslyn Gage, a leader of the early women suffrage movement,

“blamed the Medieval Church, Christian and protestant, for beginning the witch-hunts... What she regarded as Christian degeneracy contrasted with what she had read of the veneration of women and goddesses in some pagan societies.”⁸

Two hundred years of terror turned the image of Paganism into devil worship, and folk culture into heresy. Joan of Arc, like many others during the burning times, was a scapegoat for the

⁷ Read, *The Burning Times*. 20:40.

⁸ Marion Gibson, “Retelling Salem Stories: Gender Politics and Witches in American Culture,” *European Journal of American Culture* 25, no. 2 (June 2006): 85–107, <https://doi.org/10.1386/ejac.25.2.85/1>.

Church and State to inflict fear and diminish the Old Religion's philosophies. Orthodox authorities manipulated its doctrine to coin the Devil as opposite of God to demonize and transform the wild-horned god of the Old Religion. Along with this manipulation of doctrine came many others to discredit one belief system and insure the spread of another, like the story of Lilith.

Lilith

“It is not accidental that this myth of Lilith gained popularity among Christians and Jews during the Middle Ages (the time of the height of witchcraft and the cult of the Virgin Mary). Both cultures were threatened by the disintegration of the feudal structure, and in both religions, the orthodox authorities were fighting against liberalizing tendencies.” -Lilly Rivlin⁹

The ancient myth of Lilith has many guises through multiple cultures and beliefs. In Abrahamic religions and myths, like in Hebrew sacred texts, she is Adam's equal and first wife and the Devil's queen. The story of Lilith, and other biblical stories, were manipulated and framed to curate a fear of feminine power during the Middle Ages to justify the prosecution of women as witches and to discredit the Old Religion—institutionalized sexism through patriarchal rewritings. In *Genesis I*, the male and female are created equal, but in *Genesis II* the woman is an afterthought – created from man for man's accompany. The earliest extant of Lilith in European cosmogony is from the eleventh century text, *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* by Robert Graves and Raphael Patai to reconcile the two creation discrepancies between *Genesis* 1:27 and 2:22.

“God then formed Lilith, the first woman, just as He had formed Adam... From Adam's union with this demoness sprang innumerable demons that still plague mankind... Adam and Lilith never found peace together; for when he wished to lie with her, she took offense at the recumbent posture he demanded. “Why must I lie beneath you?” she asked. “I was also made from the same dust and am therefore your equal.” Because Adam tried to compel her obedience by force, Lilith, in a rage, uttered the magic name of God, rose

⁹ Lily Rivlin, “Overview: Who Is Lilith? -1 Lilith,” in *Which Lilith?: Feminist Writers Re-Create the World's First Woman*, ed. Enid Dame, Lilly Rivlin, and Henny Wenkart (Northvale, N.J.: Northvale, N.J. : Jason Aronson, 1998), 8.

into the air and left him.”¹⁰

Lilith and Adam were created at the same time and from the same dust: God had created all of humankind in His image. Adam tried to dominate Lilith, including her trying to be on top in intercourse, in which Adam found appalling and refused to comply—Adam viewing Lilith’s gesture of equality as domination. This story is openly sexual, especially, compared to the largely popular myth of creation involving Adam and Eve. Adam was created by God first, and Eve was created second from Adams rib to accompany him. Eve then eats the forbidden fruit, an apple, from the tree of knowledge of good and evil in which they then run for the leaves to, for the first time, have sex. The story of Lilith and Adam suggests that both are equals and that Lilith is aware of her feminine erotic power, in which Adam finds threatening. The story of Adam and Eve suggests suppression of sexual behavior and shame after Eve eats the forbidden fruit—institutionalizing patriarchal thought.

Lilith denied being controlled and fled to the red sea in which she shunned the world of male dominance and God punished her to reside within the demon realm. The object of the story was to characterize this woman living on the margins of society as uncivilized, without male guidance, and therefore dangerous—even demonic. Lilith is sexually independent and strong willed but is punished for it as a sin. It seems unreasonable to call for such punishment, but the patriarchal systems would be threatened by a declaration of such equality and in one blow,

“Lilith is transformed from a co-progenitor into a mother-creator-destroyer, similar in some respects to a sister mythic figure, the Indian Mother Kali, who is depicted simultaneously as an awesome force of life and death... But whereas Kali remains a harmonizer of opposites, the divisive Western mind reduces Lilith to her negative and destructive attributes. Lilith is not allowed the depth and multiple reality that Kali’s ever-

¹⁰ *Alphabet of Ben Sira: Lilith*, as quoted in *The Book of Genesis*, by Robert Graves and Raphael Patai.

moving hands symbolize. She becomes her opposite. A one-dimensional personification of the destructive life force...”¹¹

Lilith underwent an essence and physical change, from her great beauty in earlier incarnations to a malformed hag seductress; hag being a negative connotation, where as it used to mean ‘sacred knowledge’ and termed for the revered wise old woman.¹² The Orthodox authorities were engaging in ambivalent controversy superstition that the general population would turn to, in this case Lilith was a scapegoat for instinctual drives as evil—women could alleviate their mundane frustrations on this evil woman archetype that bolstered women’s self-hatred infused by the symbol of crooked womanhood, and men could condemn their natural sex drive to Lilith. The Lilith archetype morphed into a negative, feared, and hated stereotype to suit the convince of the establishments to justify the subservience of the innate feminine nature. It justified the exhibition of vital female qualities—sensuality, independence, passion—being regarded with suspicion. It is from such traditions like this and their influence on cultural models that perpetuates misogyny and patriarchy, hence, the presence within many medieval fairytales of the old hermit woman/witch, or hag, who lived in the forest.

Witch Trials

“In looking at the history of witchcraft, we see three striking points for consideration: First: That women were chiefly accused. Second: that men believing in women’s inherent wickedness and understanding neither the mental nor the physical peculiarities of her being, ascribed all her idiosyncrasies to witchcraft. Third: That the clergy inculcated the idea that woman was in league with the Devil, and that strong intellect, remarkable beauty, or unusual sickness were in themselves proof of this league.” - Matilda Joslyn Gage¹³

¹¹ Rivlin, “Overview: Who Is Lilith? -1 Lilith.”

¹² Read, Thea Jensen, *The Burning Times*. 35:00.

¹³ Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church, & State : The Original Exposé of Male Collaboration against the Female Sex*, Reprint (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1980, 1893), 51-2.

The witch craze of Europe, swept most of the lands around the mid-fifteenth century and was “...neither a lynching party nor a mass suicide by hysterical women. Rather, it followed well-ordered, legalistic procedure. The witch hunts were well-organized campaigns, initiated, financed, and executed by Church and State.”¹⁴ It is from religious persecution that the Medieval Inquisition – a group of institutions within the governing system of the Catholic Church to combat religious dissent established by Pope Gregory XI in the thirteenth century and licensed by Pope Innocent IV for the suppression of heresy – announced women as the primary source of witchcraft.¹⁵ In the late Middle Ages and into the early Renaissance, the Inquisition became an extension of papal government notorious for the torture, trials, and execution of heretics. It was this authority that codified the witchcraft stereotype, centralized in three allegations that consistently emerged in European witchcraft history: First, witches were accused of female sexuality—every conceivable sexual crime towards men. Second, they were accused of being organized and plotting against men if women gathered in groups. Third, accusation of magical powers affecting health—harming and healing.

Between the thirteenth century and seventeenth centuries, it is estimated that 110,000¹⁶ people were placed on trial during this time. Though numbers are still being disputed, approximately 60,000¹⁷ people were condemned and murdered, and of that number an estimation of eighty percent of them were said to be women. The men on trial for witchcraft were often prescribed as more practical and “tied reality of village life, whereas women’s was ambivalent,

¹⁴Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 2nd ed. (CUNY: The Feminist Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Read, *The Burning Times*, 49:00.

¹⁶ Hults, “Chapter 1: The Witch as Woman,” 1.

¹⁷ Hults, 1.

mysterious, and more readily linked to demonic power,”¹⁸ perpetuating the concept that women were more innate to such sins.

Women targeted were often peasants, elderly, and lay healers. Some historians have argued that women were more immune to diseases, like the black plague, distorting the population ratio of women to men. Stressing that in a patriarchal society, women beginning to outlive men is unacceptable because of the excessive number’s women could not marry, therefore forced into independence. In the sixteenth century, women’s rights to own property was taken away, so widows, spinsters, and beggars became vulnerable to easy blame, easy scapegoats.

The accused would be stripped and the hair on their heads and pubic regions would be shaved to strip the witch of magic, because it was believed that spells could exist in clothes and hair was extremely powerful.¹⁹ They would then go through three levels of torture, which would become increasingly cruder. First level torture was often prescribed as psychological torture along with 40 hours of food, sleep, and water deprivation. Second level torture typically consisted of public humiliation, extremes of heat and cold, and being restrained. Third level of torture often included murder torture and physical damage, including amputation, piercing, crushing, and mutilation. A popular third level instrument is called the Pair of Anguish, in which the Inquisitor would screw the accused’s thumbs and toes down and insert metal pear-shaped instrument either into the mouth, vagina, or anus.²⁰ The inquisitor would then begin to rotate the Pair of Anguish

¹⁸ Eva Labouvie, “Men in Witchcraft Trials: Towards a Social Anthropology of ‘Male’ Understandings of Magic and Witchcraft,” in *Gender in Early Modern German History*, Ed Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55.

¹⁹ Read, *The Burning Times*, 37:00.

²⁰ David Goran, “The Pear of Anguish: Medieval Torture Device Used against Women Accused of Witchcraft,” *The Vintage News*, November 7, 2016, <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2016/11/07/the-pear-of-anguish-medieval-torture-device-used-against-women-accused-of-witchcraft/>.

to open the four leaves of the device, forcefully spreading the insertion point. After tearing open the chosen insertion point, a long-pointed screw would penetrate the insertion point the further the Inquisitor screwed. During the first level some confessed, by the second level almost everyone confessed, and by the third it was so increasingly torturous that everyone confessed to kneeling to the Devil to end the pain or died before they had the chance to confess.

Across Europe, the accused would end up confessing in the same manner because the Interrogators, known as the 'Inquisitors' and financed by the Inquisition, all had the same handbook with the same questions and the same formula of torture. A Jesuit priest named Frederick Von Spee, one of a small group of clergies that was disillusioned by a confessor to condemned witches wrote:

“why do you search so diligently for sorcerers? Take the Jesuits, all the religious orders and torture them. They will confess. If some deny, repeat it again. They will confess. Should a few still be obstinate, exorcise them. Shave them. Only keep on torturing, they will give in. Take the canons, the doctors, the bishops of the church, they will all confess.”²¹

At the time, this kind of writing was disregarded because of the popular propaganda of the time like advisories from the pulpit—like men being advised from the pulpit to beat their wives out of the kindness of their souls, and not rage.²² Not to mention, the only people that could read the books of superstitions and news were wealthy men who could afford and dedicate time and money to an education. Women, even if they could dedicate to such luxuries, were not allowed to read as it was suspicion of witchery but were not outside of the patriarchal ideology of the witch stereotype. They too motioned female vulnerability to evil and served to reinforce the male status quo by accusing other women of witchcraft.

²¹ Read, *The Burning Times*, 41:00.

²² Read, 27:00.

Lay-healers and Witches

“The witch-healer's methods were a as great a threat (to the catholic church, if not the protestant) as her results, for the witch was an empiricist: she relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine, she believed in trial and error, cause and effect... her magic was the science of her time” – Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English²³

During the burning times, the witch was not only accused of killing, sex crimes, and conspiracy, but healing and helping. Before the trials, women had been the popular physician of the people for thousands of years. The healers of the common people were known as ‘wise-women’ or ‘lay-healers’ and revered as strong women of nature—it was the Church that coined lay-healers as the witches. Statan William Perkins, an outstanding contributor to the Puritan movement, preached that there were ‘good’ and ‘bad’ witches: ‘good’ witch being someone who cured the harm inflicted by the ‘bad’ witches. Explaining that “... of the two the more horrible and detestable monster is the good witch... which are better known than the bad, being commonly called wisemen or wise-women...”²⁴ It seemed that the priests were enraged that lay-healers were getting praise for work that was, in their eyes, meant for God only. Illness was widely accepted as inflicted by the Devil or God, relying healing upon confession of sin to clergy. The male-university trained doctor performed his rituals in the presence of a priest, justifying the healing under God’s will—displacing unlicensed healers accreditation and labeling their practices as witchcraft

The Church was the helping hand in legitimizing the doctors’ professionalism and condemning the non-professional healers to heresy because the Church could control male upper-class healing, therefore permitting it acceptable while making female healing, as part of

²³ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 48.

²⁴ Williams Perkins, “The Damned Art of Witchcraft,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, by Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2004), 94–96.

peasant subculture, unacceptable. The *Malleus* states that "...if it is asked how it is possible to distinguish whether an illness is caused by witchcraft or by some natural physical defect, we answer that the first [way] is by means of the judgement of doctors...if a woman dare to cure without having studied she is a witch and must die."²⁵ It was not possible for a woman to study medicine because women were not allowed to study in a university setting, setting up a handy excuse to prosecute the lay-healer. It also set up a scapegoat for the doctor's failings of his everyday practices as anything he could not cure was obviously the result of sorcery and heresy.

It is even speculated that the doctor's frequency in the European witch trials and testimony's that sent many to their death suggests that one of the undertones of the witch craze was to discredit a women's medical knowledge to produce male monopoly throughout the medical field. The largest discrepancy between 'female' superstition and 'male' medicine was finalized through the trained physicians' role in the trials. In one stroke the trials established the male physician on the side of God through Law, and of higher moral intellect than that of the female healer—placing her with lesser moral intellect and on the side of evil and magic.

The actual practice of lay-healer's healed patients through more humane and empirical approach, while the trained physician relied heavily upon superstition and untested ritualistic practices. The physician to Edward II "...held a bachelor's degree in theology and a doctorate in medicine from Oxford, prescribed for toothache writing on the jaws of a patient, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen," or touching a needle to a caterpillar and then the tooth."²⁶ It was witches who developed an extensive understanding of the human anatomy while doctors were simultaneously still prognosing from astrology, faith, and superstition.

²⁵ Heinrich and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*.

²⁶ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 52.

Many of the herbal remedies developed by lay-healers are still used in modern pharmacology—they had pain-killers like Wild Lettuce, anti-inflammatories like Willow Bark, and digestive aids like ginger and dandelions. Lay-healers even utilized Ergot (a principal drug in today’s medical field too quicken and aid labor and recovery) to ease the pain of labor that the Church and licensed doctors would not use—they still believed women should endure pain for it was the Lord’s just punishments for Eve’s original sin. So vast was the witches’ knowledge that in “...1527, Paracelsus considered the “father of modern medicine,” burned his text on pharmaceuticals, confessing that he “had learned from the Sorceress all he knew.”²⁷ Proving that women accused of witchcraft had in fact been early scientists and workers that utilized plant extracts and elemental combinations not yet understood by the establishments in control.

In European cities, both physicians and lay healers practiced in market squares. During 1600s, in London, “fifty physicians affiliated with the College of Physicians, outnumbered by some 250 mainly unlicensed practitioners (not including surgeons, apothecaries, midwives, and nurses) who made a living.”²⁸ Physicians, or ‘regulars,’ would highly benefit from the suppression of lay-healers because they were their competition in business and by the early 1800s, the formally trained ‘regular’ doctors only significant distinction from the lay-healer competition was that usually middle-class males that were always more expensive. The ‘regulars’ had nothing to recommend them over lay practitioners, as their formal training meant little in Europe except for the prestige of the upper and middle-classes being treated by a ‘gentleman’ of their own class.

²⁷ Ehrenreich and English, 53.

²⁸ Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 13.

Midwifery

“No one does more harm to the to the catholic church than midwives” -*The Malleus Maleficarum*²⁹

The notorious guidebook that lead the Inquisition and perpetuated the codification of witchcraft stereotypes is a book called the *Malleus Maleficarum* (hammer of witches), released in 1487 by Heinrich Kramer and co-author Jacob Sprenger. *Malleus Maleficarum* is a highly sexual book that in sum reflects the projection of man onto other that leaks their own fear of sexuality and of women. The *Malleus Maleficarum* declares:

“All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable... Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort with devils... it is sufficiently clear that is not matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft... And blessed be the Highest Who has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime...”³⁰

The book reinforced women as an obstacle for man’s holiness, shifting sexuality as the root of all evil, and no longer a gift—associating witchcraft with sex-related crimes. The establishments were degrading the woman by destroying her self-respect. Church doctrine expellee’s female and male pleasure, only supporting procreation, and any pleasure or enjoyment surrounding reproduction is condemned.

The propaganda of witch stereotypes often included women flying on broomsticks and was often satyr of the time for popular artists against witch prosecutions, often drawing phallus and penis shaped monsters or broomsticks between the legs of the witches to highlight the absurdity of accusations against the women as witch in relation to pleasure and sexuality. In surviving documents of Ireland’s first accused witch in 1324, inquisitors described finding Lady

²⁹ Heinrich and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, pt. 1, qu. 11, 66.

³⁰ Heinrich and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, pt. 1, qu. 6, 47.

Alice Kyteler's stash of flying ointment "In rifling the closet of the ladie, they found a pipe of ointment, wherewith she greased a staffe, upon which she ambled and galloped through thick and thin."³¹ The description is prescribing Lady Alice's sin as having a device and lubricant in which she used to masturbate.

If a woman was familiar with her reproductive and pleasure sites, she was under suspicion of witchery. *The Malleus Maleficarum* also singled out certain types of women as exponentially more evil, such as adulteresses, fornicators, and midwives. Midwives were discredited because they were an occupation held majority by peasant women and worked to ease the pain of labor, therefore coined as practicing through the Devil. The Church upheld that pain in labor was the Lord's punishment for Eve's original sin, in which doctors did not practice pain relieve in birth—demonizing midwifery.

By the early 1800s, European physicians had gained a stronghold monopoly over medicine, by discrediting the unlicensed healer as a stereotyped witch. In America, the medical field was still open to anyone demonstrating healing skills. But by 1830, thirteen states had passed a law outlawing 'irregular' practice, naming 'regular' doctors the only legal healers. However, there were educational institutions, called Sect schools, that allowed the 'irregular' healers to practice and remained the popular practitioner until the early 1900s.

A small group of elite 'regular' doctors travelled to Germany to learn the germ-theory of disease and came back to American to open the first American-German style medical school, Johns Hopkins. Starting in 1903, conforming to the Johns Hopkins model of practice and research became necessary for survival. Money began pouring into by the millions from foundations to the new ideal Johns Hopkins model, forcing many practices to close. The Flexner

³¹ John Drelincourt Seymour, *Dame Alice Kyteler The Sorceress of Kilkenny A.D. 1324* (Pierides Press, 2010).

Report, published in 1910 and written by Alexander Flexner, was the ultimatum to American medicine from funding foundations. It was thanks to the Flexner Report for, determining which schools would receive foundational money, finalizing medicine as a branch of ‘higher’ learning. As the only way to access such prestige was through the school Flexner deemed worthy, which were lengthy and expensive training—shutting off the profession to blacks, most women, and poor white men. Women who did receive the privilege to attend such institutions often struggled and forced to drop out because many professors would not discuss the anatomy of the body in front of a woman—denying the woman control and knowledge of the body, subsequently also denying her eroticism.

“Midwives in America were ridiculed as “hopelessly dirty” and held responsible for “the prevalence of *puerperal sepsis* (uterine infections) and *neonatal ophthalmia* (blindness due to parental infection with gonorrhea). Both conditions were easily preventable by techniques well within the grasp of the least literal midwife (handwashing for puerperal infection, and eye drops for the ophthalmia). So, the obvious solution would have been to make the appropriate preventive techniques known and available to the mass of midwives. This is in fact what happened in... most other European nations: Midwifery was upgraded through training to become an established, independent occupation. But the American obstetricians had no real commitment to improved obstetrical care. In fact, a study by a Johns Hopkins professor in 1912 indicated that most American doctors were *less* competent than the midwives... If anyone deserves a legal monopoly on obstetrical care, it was the midwives, not the MD’s. But the doctors had power, the midwives didn’t. Under intense pressure from the medical profession, state after state passed law outlawing midwifery and restricting the practice of obstetrics to doctors.”³²

In 1910, approximately fifty percent of American women had their children delivered by midwives, most of who were blacks or working-class immigrants. After the Flexner report, fifty

³² Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 86-7.

percent of poor and working-class women were left with no obstetrical care due to the new monopoly over medicine, causing a lack of access due to expenses.

Nurses to Female Doctors

“But the drive to “professionalize” nursing is, at best, a flight from the reality of sexism in the health system. At worst, it is sexist itself, deepening the division among women health workers and bolstering a hierarchy controlled by men.” Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English³³

By the early twentieth century, the only health profession left in America for women is nursing. Nursing was not a challenge to the male monopoly as it perpetuates the conforming of and housewifization of women. The institutionalized self-perpetuating new breed of nurses began with the Florence Nightingale, Lady with the Lamp, run by Dorothea Dix, an American hospital reformer. The Lady with the Lamp enforced the leisure of the Victorian ladyhood with training that emphasized character, and not skills. It was the male doctor who had the mysticism of healing while the woman mothered patients. Caring for the sick was viewed as a ‘natural,’ and therefore an acceptable, interest for ladies of the middle and upper classes, even though it was simply extravagant housework. The female nurse embodied the sexist spirit of femininity defined by Victorian society, an equivalent vocation to motherhood.

Ida Rolf, one of the few women doctors of the early 1900’s, earned her PhD in biological chemistry at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1920. She is known as the creator of structural integration, or ‘Rolfing:’ a type of bodywork that focuses on the fascia and connective tissues of the body in relation to reorganizing how the body communicates with gravity. Ida Rolf began to cumulate this practice in the 1930s, codified in 1972, and during her

³³ Ehrenreich and English, 98.

progress doctors and people referred to her as the ‘White Witch.’ The old witch was a woman of medicine, and the new women of medicine was still stereotyped as a witch.

She is considered a witch because she performed bodywork that cured people before the institutions had knowledge of what fascia was, implying mysticism, and considered a woman working in alternative medicine, a lay healer. She was a woman who had knowledge of the body who practiced medicine on lower-class citizens, repeating and perpetuating the stigma of lay healers and midwives as witches, putting her in a place of power and therefore erotic. Her power is viewed as erotic and demonized because she is in place of power, similar to Lilith’s self-respect being demonized. She was a female with expertise that the male orthodox authorities did not have, like Joan of Arcs, a direct pipeline to knowledge that challenged current orthodox authority – the male doctor monopoly. Ida’s prosecution did not cost her her life like Joan’s did, but it cost her being viewed as professional because she had expertise un-aligned with what was considered unorthodox to modern medicine of the 1900s. Ida Rolf being named a witch stripped her from professionalism, placing her second to any male doctor, and shaming a strive to professionalize alternative medicine – institutionalizing the prestigious male monopoly, elitist and exclusive, racist, and sexist ideal of the modern medicine man.

The competition between male and female healers has consequentially formalized a system that stereotypes women of medicine as witch. The antagonist is not the man that calls a woman a witch, or the women that perpetuates her own suppression, but the whole system that has institutionalized sexism throughout centuries of competition for control that ended with supporting male power while displacing power of women.

A Reclamation of Witchcraft Through Artistic Practice

“...they’re turning themselves into witches: women who create things and shift perception, who trust their intuition, and who have the power to change the world. Their work is spiritual and political at the same time.” - Pam Grossman³⁴

Early modern dance pioneers, and visual artists, like Remedios Varo and Leonor Fini, were before their time in depicting the witch as a powerful woman, a reshaping of subjectivity that pop culture was failing to portray. They were “using occult images, ritual gestures, and witch iconography to not only connect to the divine, but to continue to make space for themselves in a field which is still dominated by men,”³⁵ evolving the depiction of women pushing against marginalizing patriarchal societies, never falling into line with how the establishments were suppressing them, towards a symbol of empowerment.

In the early 1900s, modern dance pioneers were inadvertently and/or purposively projecting the witch women stereotype. Female modern dance pioneers were a new type of artist, known as the dancer who choreographed for herself. These female dancers broke away from the orthodox dance style—ballet, originating from European royal court dancing—and created a new avenue of exploration that focused less on the fantasy and romanticism and more on nature, sensations, and challenging the notion of dance. They were shifting perspective and trusting their intuition to guide and lead their movement explorations and artistry.

Mary Wigman, a modern dance pioneer of the German dance-lineage purposively investigated the witch as woman in her dance *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance), first composed in 1914 and later filmed in 1930 of a premier version from 1926 (*Hexentanz II*). In the film of *Hexentanz*

³⁴ Kristen J Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive* (Berkeley: ThreeL Media, 2017), 68.

³⁵ Kristen J Sollée, Pam Grossman, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive* (Berkeley: ThreeL Media, 2017), 67.

II, a viewer can see a solo of Wigman wearing a cloak and mask to cover her body, only her hands and lower legs emerging. She is in a sitting position in which she executes various incantatory hand gestures and thudding movements exemplifying the sound score. The clip personifies Wigman dancing purely from a sense of her own power, convincing audiences of an incantatory aesthetic.

The German culture stereotypes of the witch largely involves their take on the Lilith lure, in which she has morphed into a demon baby eater. Mary Wigman leaked incantations of Lilith in her work through the witch aesthetic in an effort to reform the power of the demon woman for the dancer. In 2007, Betsy Fisher performed her remake of *Hexentanz II* in which she describes “...the feeling that there’s an incredible power in this figure; the power that can destroy and the power that can create...”³⁶ Fisher is ultimately experiencing empowerment through cultivating the evil woman back to its ancient form of Lilith, as creator and destroyer.

Martha Graham, a renowned American modern dance pioneer and creator of the Martha Graham Modern Dance Company, released an autobiography called *Blood Memory* (1971). She describes in detail how she created and performed many of her works, beginning in 1926. The title *Blood Memory* refers to her description of herself as a person who calls upon the past into the present, a reference Carl Jung’s notion of the collective unconsciousness. Martha Graham describes her choreographic process as:

“There are always ancestral footsteps behind me, pushing me, when I am creating a new dance, and gestures are flowing through me. You get to the point where your body is something else and it takes on a world of cultures from the past.”³⁷

³⁶ Lea Marshall, “TALES from the DARK SIDE.,” *Dance Magazine* 81, no. 10 (October 2007): 58–63.

³⁷ Martha Graham, *Blood Memory*, 1st ed. (New York: New York: Doubleday, 1991,) 13.

This work she describes considered ancestral work, categorized under the practice of witchcraft, in which she was inadvertently practicing. She infers that she undergoes a change in her consciousness, sometimes referring to dances of possession,³⁸ in which many female modern dancers claim. It is this shift in consciousness that leads the collective masses in stereotyping the dancer as witch.

In the 2018 remake of *Suspiria*, dance is used as an apparatus to convey and express the power of witches. Two modern dance pioneers, conveyed through the director of the company and coven, that express the witch women stereotype are Mary Wigman and Martha Graham. Director of the film, Mr. Guadagnino, explains that the witch power is best unleashed through modern dance because “If you are a witch, you are on the fringe. You are not at the center. These are women that don’t go for the establishment—they go for what is on the border of the establishment. I thought it was more important that they were going to be radical artists.”³⁹ Both dance and witchcraft face social stigma for their practices, evolving around eroticism, knowledge, and manipulating energies. Both live and flourish in the liminal space between reality and mysticism because performing and practicing either requires instinctual desires to conjure distinct energetic shifts.

Following the line of pushing against establishments of authority and creating art as a way of rebellion and empowerment, calling for a shift in today’s political climate, Liz Lerman—a critically acclaimed and award-winning visionary American artist in the fields of

³⁸ Ramsay Burt, “Chapter 8: Primitivism, Modernism, and Rital in the Work of Mary Wigman, Katherine Dunham, and Martha Graham,” in *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, “Race,” and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (London: Routledge, 1998), 165.

³⁹ Gia Kourlas, “Luca Guadagnino Unleashes the Witchy Power of Modern Dance,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/02/arts/dance/luca-guadagnino-dance-suspiria-damien-jalet.html?rref=collection/sectioncollection/dance>.

choreography, performance, writing, teaching, and speaking⁴⁰—began a project in 2018 titled *Wicked Bodies*. This new evening length work is inspired by Deanna Petherbridge’s exhibit *Witches & Wicked Bodies* in which Deana cites her exhibit to Liz as “...not 500 years of witches, it is 500 years of Misogyny” a word that the museum would not let Deanna use.⁴¹ She will be conducting three residencies that bring together women movers from various backgrounds, to women elders in different artistic scholarly fields, and finally collaborating with technical experts, like animators and videographers. The work is projected to reflect on generational trauma of “...women and our bodies that have been constant and persistent for centuries.”⁴²

These female artists, from early female dance and visual art pioneers to the twenty-first-century female artists like Lerman and Petherbridge, innately fall into the witch stereotype—reclaiming witchcraft through artistic practice. They are on the outside of society, like the witch hags from the forest, and tapping into exploring trauma of ancestors to find their own voice, or intuitive self. Fighting for a place in male dominated environments, threatening male power. These women, in particular the female movement artists, are anatomically aware of their bodies. All aspects conjuring a powerful erotic energy around them, all fighting for a shift away from the patriarchal and misogynistic governing systems that minimize women success and empowerment through stereotypes of the witch to scare women of their own worth.

⁴⁰ Liz Lerman, *Wicked Bodies | A New Evening-Length Work by Liz Lerman*, Dance, accessed October 12, 2018, <https://lizlerman.com/wicked-bodies/>.

⁴¹ Liz Lerman, “Artist as Activist: Liz Lerman in Conversation” (February 20, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D13qoPHMbm4>, 48:14.

⁴² Lerman, *Wicked Bodies | A New Evening-Length Work by Liz Lerman*.

The Shift

“Double, bubble, war and rubble,
 When you mess with women, you’ll be in trouble.
 We’re convicted of murder if abortion is planned.
 Convicted of shame if we don’t have a man,
 Convicted of conspiracy if we fight for our rights.
 And burned at the stake when we stand up to fight.
 - W.I.T.C.H.⁴³

For generations, the witch was the women on the margins of society, hiding from the Euro-American establishments sought to murder them. Though not all witches are females, witch history seems to connote women’s power in particular. Murder turned into suppression and most depictions of witches, with womanhood caught in the crossfire, were reflecting male subjectivity and catering to the male desire. Charles Leland, Matilda Joslyn Gage and L. Frank Baum were the first published thinkers, historians, and writers to ignite a shift towards reinventing witch as good.

Charles Leland, historian and author of *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*,

“reinvented witches as heroines of Progress... *Aradia* brought together magical stories and rituals the Leland believed had survived in Italy from Pagan times... The stories were of Diana, goddess of witches, and her messianic daughter *Aradia* (or Herodias) who had brought Dianic religion to the world.”⁴⁴

Matilda Joslyn Gage, as sited earlier, traced the horrific history of witch burnings and torture to the religious belief of the wickedness of the woman to flip history on its head and declared that a witch was not evil but “a woman of superior knowledge.”⁴⁵ L. Frank Baum, Gage’s son-in-law, wrote a clearly feminist, empowered by female fantasy, novel called *The Wizard of Oz* (1900). The novel is of female fantasy because the particular attack on masculine power is distinct

⁴³ Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive*, 53.

⁴⁴ Gibson, “Retelling Salem Stories,” 89.

⁴⁵ Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church, & State: The Original Exposé of Male Collaboration against the Female Sex*, Reprint 1893, (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1980).

through the discovery that the only person powerful enough to send Dorothy home is Glinda the ‘Good Witch’, to which she pronounces that Dorothy has always had the power within her.⁴⁶ The witch-like heroine is celebrated “...whilst the book’s male characters are the brainless (scarecrow), heartless (tin woodman), and cowardly (lion). Unlike the potent and emancipated witches, they are ‘a great mistake’.”⁴⁷ Portraying leading male characters as vulnerable in consideration to leading characters, contradicting stereotypical gender roles of ‘male confidence.’ Not to mention the possibility of the ‘wicked witch’ melting from water as an abstracted version of generational trauma from women drowning as a way to determine if they were witches.

By the early 1900s, witches had morphed into a radical idea from reformulating the witch as good through unpacking the history and origins of the witches of the burning times. The radical idea of becoming liberal metaphors female self-empowerment and symbols of the American feminism.

In the mid-twentieth century, the liberalizing symbol of witch became skewed through the male gaze of housewifization. In American pop culture, there was a noticeable difference in how the witch was being stereotype. The films *Bell, Book and Candle* (1948) and *I Married a Witch* (1942) both personified a shift towards liberalizing the powerful woman, because she was finally given a back story, but “Both films thus end with the sexy witch safely domesticated.”⁴⁸—giving the witch a happy ending only through being tamed by marriage and still catering to the male dominated perspective of desire.

⁴⁶ L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (S.l.: S.l.: The Floating Press, 2009), 128, 152.

⁴⁷ Gibson, “Retelling Salem Stories,” 90.

⁴⁸ Gibson, 93.

Reclamation

‘The tongue is a witch,’ Anglican minister George Webbe famously said in 1619... Writing and uttering contested words can be a tool to subvert patriarchal rule. It is as much a political act as it is a radical ritual: a spell. Feminist magic, if you will.’
 - Kristen J. Sollée⁴⁹

In the current era, the witch woman becoming stuck in housewifization begins to break free and fly towards a more liberalized symbol of female aspirations beyond motherhood. Reclaiming the negative connotation of witch used to punish and police female sexuality into a positive one, is curating a process of women reclaiming their lives through “Insurrectionary speech becomes the necessary response to injurious language, a risk taken in response to being put at risk, a repetition in language that forces change.”⁵⁰ Like the term witch for women, ‘queer’ was once a derogatory term for any sexuality claiming as different from hetero-sexuality, reclaimed by the collective action to denounce the terminology from negative name-calling to a positive umbrella term for anyone identifying as non-hetero-sexual.⁵¹ A hetero-sexual identifying person, cis-gender, can also fall under the language reclamation of queer as queer can classify any person who strays from the traditional orthodox thoughts of what sexuality is: includes but is not limited to, a ‘straight’ person who supports same-sex couples and/or people who focus on female sexual pleasure.

Similar to queer, the witch stereotype in twenty-first-century feminism is being reclaimed in collective action in terms of empowering the feminine spirit through the act of a reclamation spell—ingredients include an intention and repetition of the word to complete and conjure a desired outcome into existence. The queer reclamation spell ignited change, we are now

⁴⁹ Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive*, 85-6.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997), 163.

⁵¹ Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive*, 85.

emerging from conjuring the reclamation spell to ignite the shift and emerging into a new collective definition of the witch as woman stereotype as a source of empowerment.

The current collective reclamation spell of the current feminist wave in America is *Womynism*—coined from Alice Walker’s intersectional lens of feminist theory ‘Womanist.’⁵² The use of ‘Feminism’ has been extracted to create an inclusive and intersectional movement against suppressive ideology. The ‘a’ in woman was extracted to emphasize language institutionalizing a *wo-man* needing a man to survive, pushing back against the orthodox stories and gendered language that perpetuated patriarchy, like Eve coming second to Adam. *Womynist* is reclaiming eroticism to restore feminine spirituality towards deconstruction of the still thriving patriarchal ideals. The erotic power in women is

“a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives.... It is a short step from there to the false belief that only by the suppression of the erotic within our lives and consciousness can women be truly strong. But that strength is illusory, for it is fashioned within the context of male models of power. As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and notational knowledge. We have been warned against it all our lives by the male world, which values this depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fears this same depth too much to examine the possibilities of it within themselves. So women are maintained at a distant/inferior position...”⁵³

It is through the rediscovering of the female erotic power within the context of the female fantasy outside of sex that a woman begins to conjure a sex positive attitude, considered to be that of witchery in the male gaze. In 2014 pop culture, Linda Woolverton directed an updated version of the witch from *Sleeping Beauty*, *Maleficent*. The storyline breaks through the old good/bad witch

⁵² Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004).

⁵³ Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 53–54.

binary naming Maleficent as simultaneously a hero and villain: a step towards embracing the feminine erotic power.

Feminine eroticism points to innately including intuition. An artists' process is often defined as an intuitive one as it is often an unexpected process of conceiving an image.

“Images touched by the deeper unconscious formed a manifest intuition. Our rationalist Cartesian culture despises the uncontrollable unconscious; its intuitions are feminized and in effect castrated as a force, a power.”⁵⁴

In 2018 *The Chilling Adventure of Sabrina*, lead protagonist Sabrina, embodies the new type of witch—woke and liberated as likely to cast spells that are socially conscious verses destructive. In the end of the season, Sabrina follows her intuition that she cannot beat Satan and joins him, which can be viewed as perpetuating female sexuality as inherently deviant—demonizing her intuitive self. This is not the case, rather her choice to join Satan symbolizes a young girl choosing to survive within the existing patriarchal system that the feminine power is not yet liberated from.

The mainstream witch is malleable, shapeshifting from generation to generation: like the hippy witch of the 70s, the 80s cult witch, or the 00s neo-pagan witch.⁵⁵ The current resurgence of witchcraft in Euro-American societies mainstream media, are reclaiming and openly embracing elements of Witcraft practices: working towards rebranding witchcraft as a living, nature-based religion and stripping away satanic associations Two major influencers of the witch reclamation renaissance are Bri Luna, the Hoodwitch,⁵⁶ and Pam Grossman, American Author

⁵⁴ Carloe Schneemann, “On Intuition,” in *Technologies of Intuition*, ed. Jennifer Fisher (Toronto: YYZBOOKS, 2006), 95–96.

⁵⁵ Charlotte Richardson Andrews, “The Season of the Witch: How Sabrina and Co Are Casting Their Spell over TV,” *The Guardian (London, England)*, October 30, 2018.

⁵⁶ “The Hoodwitch,” *The Hoodwitch*, accessed February 20, 2019, <http://www.thehoodwitch.com/>.

and creator The Witch Wave podcast.⁵⁷ They are considered modern mystics, influencing occult media. Azealia Banks and Lana Del Rey are female musicians who openly claim witch practices and partake in the witch renaissance by promoting female sexuality and sex positivity in their music. Claiming witchcraft today strikes as the ultimate feminist force, strengthening the crafts diversity to shift and mold to a multiplicity of needs and generations to negotiate empowerment.

Conclusion

“Whether in art, film, music, fashion, literature, technology, religion, pop culture, or politics, the witch is an enduring symbol of liberation and oppression, and an icon of sexual and intellectual freedom.” – Kristen J. Sollée⁵⁸

The current cultural climate has a progressively shifting view of the witch as a symbol of feminine power but is still as equally a symbol of female hardship and persecution. Although the witch-hunting era of Euro-American societies officially ended, it has simply morphed into other kinds of modernized witch-hunts. Women being scapegoated for a society’s ills through witch accusations have not ended for all women across the globe. In Ghana, women are still deemed witches and sent to “witch camps,” “two thousand people accused of witchcraft have been murdered in Northwest India over the last fifteen years – the majority women – and an estimated six hindered elderly women were killed in 2011 because they were suspected of practicing witchcraft in Tanzania.”⁵⁹ Until 2013, New Guinea laws revered citizens murdering a witch in self-defense, but murders blamed for witchcraft in recent years are still rising. A video released in 2015 revealed four women being accused of witchcraft and buried alive in Papua.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Pam Grossman, *The Witch Wave*, The Witch Wave with Pam Grossman, accessed December 20, 2018, <https://witchwavepodcast.com/episodes/>.

⁵⁸ Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive*, 149.

⁵⁹ Sollée, *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive*, 146.

⁶⁰ Helen Davidson, “Papua New Guinea Students Share Video Appearing to Show Women Tortured for ‘Witchcraft,’” *The Guardian*, October 23, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/23/witchcraft-papua-new-guinea-students-share-video-appearing-show-torture>.

The resurgence of witchcraft stereotypes in art and pop culture is not just a trend, but an awakening of people realizing the current patriarchal, racist, matriarchal systems are simply not working. The focus on witchcraft parallels people focusing on freedom in relation to feeling they have a choice to heal themselves.

Witches are any woman who does not conform to the patriarchal stereotypical ideal of what a woman should be—not having knowledge of the body, loss of connection to intuition, unaware of their erotic self, and clueless of ancestors—and their success stereotyped as undeserving and therefore magical. Intuition and female erotic power are stereotyped as magic because it is different from the established ‘regular’ healing and knowledge. Women who have full autonomy and/or are in leadership positions who are not reinforcing patriarchy, but actively working to deconstruct such systems, are *womyn* of power: these *womyn* who threaten patriarchy are the contemporary positive and confident reclamation of the witch stereotype as empowerment.

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