ABSTRACT

Witch-Media: A Lens for Understanding Female Empowerment

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From the ancient era to modern times, magic and witchcraft has both fascinated and terrified people. As magic has continued to capture the cultural imagination, witches have become a prominent figure in modern media. Books, television shows, movies, and even social media accounts use the image of the witch to represent something significant. These characters, some of whom have become essential facets of popular culture, can be boiled down to one thing: women with power. Whether intentional or not, witches in popular media, or "witch media" as I have begun to call it, communicate ideas about empowered women. Sometimes witch media expresses anxiety around women with power, sometimes it as an intense desire for it. Regardless, the world of witch-media has until now remained an untapped resource for researching and understanding the complicated connection society has with empowered women. This thesis begins the necessary conversation around witches and witchcraft in movies and television by analyzing three prominent themes: sex and sexuality, horror, and feminism. Witches are heavily sexualized, exposing the desires and anxiety around sex positive empowerment culture. Witches are also made into villains, ostracizing those women who have power. And lastly, witches are often associated with feminism in media in a shallow attempt to captivate an audience and show empowered female characters. Each chapter analyzes these components separately before bringing them together in the conclusion through a new example of witch-media, *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina.* Ultimately, the study of witch-media serves as a new lens through which to examine our society's views of and relationship with women and women's empowerment.

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WITCH-MEDIA: A LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

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Baylor University

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Honors Program

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To my parents who supported me throughout my time at Baylor. And to my fiancé, Jonathan, without whom I may never have completed this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For centuries, witchcraft has captured the cultural imagination. From the infamous witch hunts of the early modern period, to modern books and movies, witchcraft has found ways to fascinate and terrify people. Magic can be exhilarating or horrifying, empowering or destructive. It is no wonder that countless movies and television shows have featured witches as villains, heroes, and everything in between. While, like many people, witchcraft always fascinated me, witchcraft as a topic for academic research began to interest me while watching the popular Netflix series *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, a modern adaption of the loveable witch from the original Archie comics. The character of Sabrina in *Chilling Adventures* and the world she lived in seemed so at odds to each other. Sabrina herself was a powerful witch who had the confidence to do what she wanted and push back against what she was told to do. However, the society she functioned in was very patriarchal and tried to push her back down at every turn. Additionally, the show portrayed her character as a fascinating and dangerous creature, someone who was half witch and half human. The people around Sabrina insisted she had to decide between the two sides of herself because no one could be both a powerful witch and a human. *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* inspired me to not only think about how cool witches are, but also what their powers mean and how they could be used to reflect certain aspects of our society and culture. I began to look at witches as something more than a woman with magical powers, but as an empowered woman, a woman who had the

means to upset the social order through her own abilities. The role of witches in movies and television everywhere seemed to be hiding secret messages, and I was determined to discover them.

While researching *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina,* I discovered new movies and television shows about witches and witchcraft and realized just how complex, unique, and sometimes unsettling these examples could be. My original goal was to use previous research on the cultural figure of the witch to build an argument about the significance of Sabrina Spellman in the new Netflix series. However, I could not find previous scholarship that gave the same amount of weight to the witch itself as I wanted to. Instead, I began researching as many movies and television shows about witches and witchcraft as I could find to try and synthesize an image of the witch in media. In the process of doing this research and writing my thesis, I have come to call this sub-genre "witch-media" in order to encapsulate all of the horror, comedy, romance, and tragedy about witches and magic. The image of the witch is used across many genres in countless ways. To narrow all of those depictions down into one idea would be difficult except for one thing: all witches are, without a doubt, women with incredible powers.

In this thesis, I argue that witch-media represents our culture's messy and confused connection with powerful women and empowerment rhetoric, revealing both an anxiety over the idea of an empowered woman and an intense desire for it. With a focus on the western cultures of the United States and Great Britain, I found that our culture interacts in a variety of ways with powerful women and witch-media reflects that. The desire for empowered women is often seen in 90s girl power television shows like *Charmed.* Shows like *Charmed* have since been heralded as "feminist" series that depict

strong, independent women. In my chapter, "Complicated Portrayals of Women's Empowerment: Depictions of Feminism in Witch-Media," I explore these shows and their supposed "feminist" messages through their witch characters. These shows, and the witches in them, send mixed messages about the complicated topic of feminism and empowerment, further emphasizing the confusion that comes with empowerment rhetoric. In my next chapter, "The Sexualization of Witchcraft: Do Powerful Women have to be Sexy?" I analyze the overt and subtle sexualization of witches. To be an empowered woman can become synonymous with being a sexual woman, and witch-media contributes to that idea. Lastly, in the chapter, "The Witch as Villain: The Horror of the Empowered Woman" I look at how witches are portrayed in a specific genre, horror. Horror most clearly reveals the anxiety surrounding the idea of powerful women. When witches are made into villains, they become a warning against powerful women and the damage they can do to people and society. All three of these topics interconnect and overlap. Additionally, there are many other facets of witch-media that have yet to be discussed and explore. These three chapters represent three important topics to begin the conversation of the witch as a cultural icon.

Literature Review

An interesting phenomenon that begins with the wave of 90s girl power teen shows is the labeling of teen television as "feminist," especially witch-centered shows like *Charmed*.[1] The 1990s saw a major wave of movies and television directed at teen

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[1] See for example Emily Todd VanDerWerff and Caroline Framke, "How Buffy the Vampire Slayer Transformed TV as We Know It," *Vox*, March 10, 2017, https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/3/10/14857542/buffy-the-vampire-slayer-explained-tv-influence. Susan Orlean, "Girl Power," *The New Yorker*, May 11, 1998, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1998/05/18/girl-power. and Megan Angelo, "The Witches of

girls. Time magazine even wrote an article articulating the market power of young

women at the time, who were inspiring countless movies and television shows aimed at

them.[2] The beginning of third wave feminism and movements such as Riot Grrl and girl

power were beginning to inspire a new focus of popular culture on teen girls.[3] However,

these new feminist movements were also rising at the same time as postfeminism was

coming to prominence, an idea that scholar Rosaling Gill says came about in the 1990s.

In the article "Postfeminism, popular feminism and neoliberal feminism? Sarah Banet-

Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in conversation," Gill contributes her

ideas on the postfeminist movement, stating that it pushed back against a perceived

feminist redundancy, the juxtaposition of Girl Power and misogynistic critique in the

media, and the idea that any gender inequality left in our culture was a direct result of

biological differences.[4] Postfeminism is an important part of feminist history that

challenges and critiques many feminist, especially third wave feminist, assertions. In this

period, girl power media was rising and becoming a powerful indicator of our changing

culture. What's more, these shows may have claimed girl power, but rarely did they ever

claim feminist, balancing between the rise of third wave feminism and postfeminism.

Cult classic shows like *Charmed* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* emerge amid these

'Charmed' Are Out to Slay Demons. And the Patriarchy.," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2018, sec. Arts, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/05/arts/television/charmed-reboot-jennie-snyder-urman-witches.html.

[2] Orlean, "Girl Power."

[3] Alexandra West, "'Not in My Movie': The 90s Slasher Cycle and Grrrl Power," *Offscreen* 20, no. 7 (July 2016): 1–1.

[4] Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill, and Catherine Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism? Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in Conversation," *Feminist Theory* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 3–24, https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700119842555.

varying cultural ideas and use the image of the witch to negotiate an effortlessly empowered woman.

Now, our culture has entered into a somewhat contested fourth wave of feminism that is powered by the internet and media, although some argue that feminism has not changed enough to create a new wave.[5] However, teen television created in the contested fourth wave of feminism is certainly different that the third wave girl power shows of the 90s. Reboots of the old feminist witch shows such as a new version of *Charmed* (2018) based on the original 1998 TV show and the newest iteration of Sabrina Spellman in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018) are more unapologetic about their uses of and references to feminism. Media outlets such as *The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Washington Post,* and *The New Yorker* have all contributed reviews of these series and one of the common questions at the core of these articles is: is it feminist? One *New York Times* article titled "The Witch Continues to Enchant as a Feminist Symbol" explores the idea of witch-media as feminist and empowering while mentioning shows such as *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* and movies like *Suspiria.* An NBC article compliments the clever way that *Chilling Adventures* uses horror to "tackle the necessity and benefits of feminism,".[6] Yet another Washington Post article notes that "girl power can be a horror story."[7] Women and power have always been at the center of feminist

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[5] Ealasaid Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?," *Political Insight* 4, no. 2 (September 2013): 22–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-9066.12021.

[6] "'Chilling Adventures of Sabrina' Uses Horror to Show Women's Anger as Righteous and Necessary," accessed September 24, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/chilling-adventures-sabrina-uses-horror-show-women-s-anger-righteous-ncna924606.

[7] Alyssa Rosenberg, "In 'Chilling Adventures of Sabrina,' Girl Power Can Be a Horror Story - the Washington Post," *The Washington Post*, accessed September 24, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2018/10/26/in-chilling-adventures-of-sabrina-girl-power-can-be-a-horror-story/.

conversations, but now teens armed with the internet and Netflix are being thrown into the midst of all of it. Atlantic writer Sophie Gilbert recognizes this shift in her article about the new politics popping up in issues of *Teen Vogue*.[8] Teens are becoming part of the political conversation, and certainly part of the feminist one. These witch centered teen shows are an example of how teens are being brought into the newest conversations on feminism and female empowerment, conversations that are more direct about feminist issues than the shows of the past might have been.

Complicating the matter of feminist television is popular feminism, marketplace feminism, or consumerist feminism. All of these terms roughly describe the same tendency of the media to appropriate feminist ideas and package them up nicely to sell to consumers. In the book *We Were Feminists Once* author Andi Zeisler asks the question of how consumer culture may have appropriated feminist ideals for better or worse. She recognizes the questionable goals of companies appropriating feminism in order to create profit. However, she also begins a conversation surrounding the importance of balancing labeling media as feminist and recognizing it's inevitable shortcomings.[9] Sarah Benat-Weiser takes a similar approach to what she calls popular feminism, researching the rising image of feminism among celebrities and in media, but recognizing the surface level nature of this brand of feminism. She writes, "the visibility of popular feminism, where examples appear on television, in film, on social media, and on bodies, is important but it often stops there, as if seeing or purchasing feminism is the same thing as

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[8] Sophie Gilbert, "Teen Vogue's Political Coverage Isn't Surprising," The Atlantic, December 12, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/12/teen-vogue-politics/510374/.

[9] Andi Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrrl to CoverGirl®, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 58.

changing patriarchal structures."[10] The visibility of strong female characters and

feminism presented in shows like both versions of *Charmed, Sabrina the Teenage Witch,*

and *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* are important to our culture but it is still important to

remember that it can be easy for these shows to misrepresent feminism or portray

potentially harmful aspects of it. Neoliberal feminism is a portion of the feminist

movement that often appears in witch-media that focuses on individualism, striving for a

perfect work-life balance, and overcoming those obstacles without help.[11] In media that

depicts women with unbelievable power, it can be easy for neoliberal themes to come

through as the witches on screen use their magic to fix their problems on their own.

Feminism will undoubtedly be represented in media about empowered women, but it is

important to consider the complex levels of feminism and the difficulty media will

always have in portraying that accurately.

Sexuality is a major part of depictions of witches in movies and television. As

Barbara Creed identifies in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism,*

Psychoanalysis, sexuality has long been associated with witches and witchcraft. Movies

and TV shows, historical stories of witches, and even modern-day self-proclaimed

witches all seem to have some sort of association with sexuality. One of the first movies

to depict witches, *Häxan,* is meant to be a documentary of witchcraft based on the

Malleus Maleficarum. Unsurprisingly, there are some explicit scenes in the movie,

including witches each individually licking a goat's behind, meant to be a depiction of

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[10] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[11] Catherine A. Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 7, 2020, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190901226.001.0001/oso-9780190901226.

Satan.[12] Even today, there is still often an element of sexuality in depiction of witches on television or movies. Something as simple as the decision to make witches look either gorgeous and alluring, or old and disgusting, is playing into tropes on sexuality. In her article "The New Witch of the West: Feminists Reclaim the Crone", Kathryn Rountree identifies the enchantress/crone dichotomy among depictions of witches. Witches tend to either be hyper-sexualized, beautiful young women, or old and disgusting post-menopausal women (and therefor supposedly sexually inactive).[13] This dichotomy still largely exists today, with many depictions of witches easily falling into one of these two categories. Rachel Moseley's article "Glamorous Witchcraft: Gender and Magic in Teen Film and Drama" highlights the focus on femininity and attractiveness for many teen-witch characters, including Sabrina from the 90s television series *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* Sabrina's emphasis on clothing, hair, and makeup as well as dating emphasize femininity and conventional beauty as a witch.[14] The new Sabrina in *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* could easily fall into the same tropes. There are certainly many elements of sexuality in the show. Sabrina in this series is also always well dressed and has makeup on. Similarly, all of her witch colleagues at school are beautiful and highly sexual. There is even a whole episode of *Chilling Adventures* centering around a yearly orgy in the woods that the members of the Church of Night participate in. Sexuality is a major element of the series, as it is in many movies and shows centering on witchcraft, creating a firm connection between being and being sexy and beautiful.

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[12] Benjamin Christensen, *Häxan* (AB Svensk Filmindustri, 1922).

[13] Kathryn Rountree, "The New Witch of the West: Feminists Reclaim the Crone.," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 1997, 211–29.

[14] Rachel Moseley, "Glamorous Witchcraft: Gender and Magic in Teen Film and Television," *Screen* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 403–22, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/43.4.403.

It would be nearly impossible to discuss witches in popular culture without touching on the horror genre. Historically, witches have been a source of fear for people. From approximately 1500-1700 communities used to burn accused witches at the stake out of terror. Fear of the unknown, fear of unbalanced power structures, and fear of paganism compelled people to perform these acts of violence against anyone. Historical studies have cited copious reasons for these witch-hunts including war, political upheaval, community tensions, religious changes, and a wide variety of other reasons. Occasionally, historians will touch on the influence of gender. However, this is mostly to note that a majority of accused witches in England and America (approximately 80%) were women, and this likely had to do with social connotations. The *Malleus Malificarum,* a handbook on how to identify and kill witches written by two priests in 1487, explains that women are more susceptible to witchcraft than men largely because of their highly sexual natures and how easy they are to persuade. This fear of magic led to an unidentifiable number of deaths. Historical records show that at least 45-60,000 people were killed as witches.[15] However, not all of these trials would have been written down and recorded. Early first-wave feminist Matilda George believed that as many as 9 million people may have been murdered as witches.[16] While there is no way of knowing exactly how many people were killed during these witch-hunts, we are certain that there were at least several thousands. The fear that drove those witch-hunts is not used to create terrifying horror movies. The list of horror movies featuring witches is endless. There are

[15] Alison Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe," *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, March 1, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199578160.013.0026.

[16] Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church and State: A Historical Account of the Status of Woman Through the Christian Ages, With Reminiscences of the Matriarchate* (American Theological Library Association, 1909).

the classics, such as *Suspiria* (1977) and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) as well as their

recent reboots *Suspiria* (2018) and *Blair Witch* (2016), to more modern examples like

The Witch (2015). Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous Feminine* uses the movie *Carrie*

(1976) as a way to explore the history and tropes of women depicted as witches

throughout the history of the movie horror genre. Creed tracks the various ways witches

have appeared in horror movies over the years and how certain tropes relate to the history

of witchcraft dating back to the time of witch hunts. While witches began as mostly an

excuse to use newly developed special effects, witches eventually moved quite firmly

into the horror genre, creating a new anxiety of women and witchcraft.[17]

The horror genre's depiction of witches often draws upon the themes of

gynaehorror, a feminist critique of the genre focused on female bodies and reproduction.

Gynaehorror, as defined by Erin Harrington in her book *Women, Monstrosity, and*

Horror Film: Gynaehorror, is "horror that deals with all aspects of female reproductive

horror, from the reproductive and sexual organs, to virginity and first sex, through to

pregnancy, birth, and motherhood, and finally to menopause and post-menopause,".[18]

Horror that somehow seeks to exploit or subvert women's bodies or roles in society is

nearly ubiquitous in the horror genre, with every film drawing on gynaehorror in some

way. Horror movies about witches are no different. A woman with power in some cases,

is a subversion of a woman's role in society. Even without the term gynaehorror, Creed is

able to discuss elements of gynaehorror in *Carrie* and other witch horror movies. Creed

highlights the scene when Carrie gets her period for the first time, and the association it

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[17] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2015).

[18] Erin Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film: Gynaehorror*, 1 edition (Routledge, 2017), 3.

has with the coming of her powers. Additionally, Carrie's mother's warnings on sexuality and the scene when Carrie is drenched in pig's blood are all examples of gynaehorror. Other films also focus on women's sexuality, such as *Suspiria* (1977). Television series *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina,* with all of its elements of horror and heavily implied feminism, falls into gynaehorror tropes. However, it subverts some of them as well. While virginity and sexuality are highly emphasized for Sabrina as a witch, she takes a stand against it and calls out the absurdity of saving herself for the Dark Lord. In the second season, Zelda is put under a spell to become the perfect housewife, but it is used to make the viewer uncomfortable and show Zelda's role as housewife as a subversion instead of an expectation. While gynaehorror features prominently in the show, it is not always in ways one might expect.

Even the history of witchcraft shows elements of gynaehorror. Barbara Creed writes about the sexual nature of witchcraft dating back to the *Malleus Maleficarum.* Women were more likely to fall into the Dark Arts because they were more sexual. Witches were also often accused of having sex with the devil, and some victims of witch trials would even end up describing in detail what having sex with Satan was like. The two priests who wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum* even gave ample warning over the danger of women stealing men's penises or making them not work. Women's sexuality was a very real source of anxiety in the witch trials. Even in the 1400s, witches and gynaehorror went hand in hand.

The research that I conducted was widespread and extensive. To further illuminate the specific topic of witches as an icon and representation of female empowerment, I stitched together research on witches, feminism, various shows and

movies, and genres in order to construct this thesis. What I found is that witch-media reflects the western world's uncertain relationship with empowered women in a powerful way that invites further research. This work is meant to be an introduction into the world of researching witch-media through the lens of the witch and is therefore not an exhaustive analysis. It covers the important topics of feminism, sexuality and horror, and many examples in order to lay the foundation for future research. However, there is still much research that needs to be done on other topics such as rage and diversity, and many examples of witch-media that I was not able to incorporate. It is my hope that by beginning this conversation, academics will continue to view the witch in a new way and reexamine both old and new examples of witch-media. In doing so, it will be possible to gain more knowledge and understanding about how our society interacts with powerful women to reflect both a fear of and desire for empowerment and how the witch is an important icon of empowerment in our media and culture.

CHAPTER TWO

Complicated Portrayals of Female Empowerment: Feminism in Witch-Media

While the goals of feminism have changed over time, one of the primary purposes of feminism has been to empower women. Whether it be through voting, working outside the home, overcoming sexual assault and harassment, or a number of other things, feminism has sought to give women new powers and abilities to aid in their search for gender equality. Witches represent women that already have innumerable unimaginable powers that allow them to do things others cannot. It is no wonder then that they have been used in media to create interesting and dynamic characters that young women and girls can look up to. These amazing and powerful witches have represented the ultimate empowered woman, using their powers to be independent and function on more equal ground with men. The 1990s saw the development of third wave feminism and girl power, a movement largely characterized by the rise in movies, television, and music for and about teen girls.[1] Among the shows that were most popular and empowering were classics like *Charmed, Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* These amazing and fun shows have since been heralded as feminist series for their depictions of empowered teenage girls and young women. While these shows and many others like them provide powerful women for others to look up to and increase recognition of the importance of telling women's stories, it is also important to remember that feminism is a complicated and multifaceted concept that can undoubtedly be difficult to capture in a

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[1] Nadya Labi, Jeanne McDowell, and Alice Park, "Girl Power," *TIME Magazine* 151, no. 25 (June 29, 1998): 60.

show meant to keep audiences interested in plot and character development for 30 minute or hour-long sections.

In this chapter, I explore the many versions of feminism that contribute to the original *Charmed* (1998) as well as its reboot (2018) in order to provide an example of how "feminist" shows engage with a deep history and intellectual tradition of feminism through the iconic character of the empowered witch. Both versions of *Charmed* have contributed to and interacted with its feminist cultural context in fascinating ways, and while neither series is perfect, both shows manage to project a feminist message unique to their time periods. First, I will examine consumer and popular feminism in both versions of *Charmed* to analyze how they use and reflect feminist ideas to gain an audience of young women looking for powerful role models. Then, I will introduce neoliberal feminism and discuss how often and easily it appears in witch-media in a variety of ways. While these shows have made important and positive contributions to the feminist movement, it is also important to acknowledge a "feminist" show's weaknesses in order to overcome them and truly recognize the positives without getting weighed down in the negatives.

Consumerist feminism encapsulates all of the ways that marketing is used to sell movies, TV shows, or objects to women who want to feel empowered. In the book *We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrl to CoverGirl, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement*, author Andi Zeisler discusses the history of corporations using feminism to sell product. This phenomenon has existed almost since feminism was born.[2] As time has gone on, Zeisler believes that the marketplace has co-opted feminist ideas to create the

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[2] Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once*, 4.

most popular version of feminism. She defines this marketplace feminism or consumerist feminism as "a mainstream, celebrity, consumerist embrace of feminism that positions it as a cool, fun, accessible identity that anyone can adopt… It's decontextualized. It's depoliticized."[3] Author Sarah Benat-Weiser writes about the intersections of popular culture and popular feminism. Similarly to Zeisler, Benat-Weiser sees a new brand of popular "happy" feminism that can include things like hashtags, marches, and commodities.[4] For Both Zeisler and Benat-Weiser, the primary issue with these popularized and commercialized feminisms is the way they simplify issues of gender equality into something simple and easy, such as buying something in order to create equality.[5] This can also be extended to feminist media. While Zeisler recognizes the importance of the knowledge and awareness that feminist media spreads, she also cautions that trying to gatekeep feminism such as asking whether something is feminist enough or in the right ways is not helpful.[6] No form of media is going to be able to live up to the depth and complications of feminism. Susan J. Douglas also raises a valid concern in her article "Diverting Seductions of Marketplace Feminism" that an abundance of empowered female characters can lead to the false conclusion that our society has found gender equality.[7] Empowering female characters, like the witches in *Charmed*, are incredibly important in the world of feminist media. However, feminist

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[3] Zeisler, xiii.

[4] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[5] Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once*, 6. And Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[6] Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once*, 58.

[7] Susan J. Douglas, "The Diverting Seductions of Marketplace Feminism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 43, no. 1 (September 2017): 204–6.

media does not equate to gender equality, one it is important to put feminist media in conversation with the larger social feminist movement.

The original *Charmed*, which aired on The WB network from 1998 to 2006, emerged while several major moments in feminism were occurring. Third wave feminism and the girl power movement both began in the 1990s. However, at the same time the ideas of postfeminism were emerging as well. Specific definitions and dates for third wave feminism are difficult to provide. Scholars have debated when it started, when it ended, and if it has ended or is still ongoing. As feminist scholar Elizabeth Evans states "there is no monolithic third wave."[8] Despite the difficulties in defining third wave itself, it is possible to define some of the major parts of third wave feminism that were ongoing in the 1990s. An early part of third wave feminism was a counterculture movement called "Riot Grrrl." The Riot Grrrl movement was started on the west coast of the United States with female bands that focused on aggressive music, political activism, and publishing zines which are self-made and self-published magazines that can be about a wide variety of topics. Later, popular UK based girl-band the Spice Girls popularized girl power which became the mainstream counterpart to Riot Grrrl's countercultural movement.[9] Girl power became a recognizable part of culture as the Spice Girls remain ever popular with their empowering and catchy songs, teen rom-coms began to take over the box office, and teen television rose in popularity and in numbers.[10] However, at the same time, ideas of postfeminism also began to really take root in the 1900s. Postfeminism

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[8] E. Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminisms: Neoliberalism, Intersectionality, and the State in Britain and the US* (Springer, 2015), 21.

[9] West, "Not in My Movie."

[10] Labi, McDowell, and Park, "Girl Power."

characterized a reaction against second wave feminism, or in some ways an attempt to move beyond feminism.[11] Feminism was beginning to be seen as unnecessary and even contradictory as representations of women in media clashed with the intense scrutiny women in the real world.[12]

Fourth wave feminism, similarly to third wave feminism, is a highly debated and difficult to define topic. Some scholars have placed fourth wave feminism beginning in the late 2000s or early 2010s.[13] Those who are proponents of fourth wave feminism make this distinction because of new uses of the internet and particularly social media in order to drive feminist thought and activism.[14] Like with third wave feminism, fourth wave feminism can be easier to define by its movements than as a monolithic idea. One of the primary ideas behind fourth wave feminism ins intersectionality.[15] Intersectionality recognizes the complicated social and political factors at play in people's lives. When trying to understand social inequality and division, it is better to look at multiple intersection factors, such as race and gender as opposed to just one factor, such as just race.[16] #MeToo was a major movement driven by social media that highlighted the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. The use of the hashtag was encouraged and created

[11] Mary Evans, "Postfeminism," 2006.

[12] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[13] Ruth Phillips and Viviene E. Cree, "What Does the 'Fourth Wave' Mean for Teaching Feminism in Twenty-First Century Social Work?," *Social Work Education* 33, no. 7 (October 2014): 938, https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2014.885007.

[14] Munro, "Feminism," 23.

[15] Ruxandra Looft, "#girlgaze: Photography, Fourth Wave Feminism, and Social Media Advocacy," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 31, no. 6 (December 2017): 894, https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2017.1370539.

[16] Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Polity Press, 2016), 11, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=4698012.

by one of the actresses of the original *Charmed* series, Alyssa Milano, in 2017.[17] The

#MeToo movement is an important part of fourth wave feminism that emphasized to the

public how common sexual harassment is, with one survey conducted in 2018 in response

to the movement finding that 81% of women in the United States had experienced some

form of sexual harassment.[18]

The use of social media makes it possible for younger generations to easily

partake in feminist activism and discussion.[19] Younger people, especially teen girls, are

becoming more involved in political movements and feminism, as shown by the

increasingly political nature of issues of *Teen Vogue.*[20] Accordingly, teen shows like the

reboot of *Charmed* and *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* have also increasingly reflected

feminist ideas beyond empowerment to tap into the growing market of socially and

politically aware teens.

Neoliberal feminism describes the convergence of neoliberal ideas with liberal

feminism to create a new feminist agenda, often nicknamed "lean in culture" after the

self-proclaimed feminist manifesto *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg. Neoliberal feminism,

which writer Catherine Rottenberg defined in 2018, has an individualistic focus that

relies on personal force and effort to overcome obstacles. Neoliberal feminist recognizes

gender inequality, but the error lies more in the individual's inabilities to make things

right than on an issue with the larger social structure. Increasingly, neoliberal feminism

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[17] Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *The #MeToo Movement* (Santa Barbara, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018), 1, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=5583957.

[18] Hillstrom, 1.

[19] Phillips and Cree, "What Does the 'Fourth Wave' Mean for Teaching Feminism in Twenty-First Century Social Work?," 939.

[20] Gilbert, "Teen Vogue's Political Coverage Isn't Surprising."

also focuses in on the problems many women have trying to create a balance between family and work[21] In her book *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* Rottenberg notes that neoliberal feminism is more marketable than more traditional forms of feminism.[22] In another article written with Sarah Banet-Weiser and Rosalind Gill, Rottenberg draws a connection between neoliberal feminism and postfeminism through their shared belief that there is not a socio-economic structure shaping the lives and inequalities of women.[23] In the same article, Sarah Banet-Weiser states that neoliberal feminism and popular feminism actually work together to create a dominant image of both variants of feminism in society.[24] In conversation with Zeisler's criticisms of marketplace feminism and Banet-Weiser's research in popular feminism, it becomes clear that neoliberal feminism is a form of the "mainstream, celebrity, consumerist embrace of feminism that positions it as a cool, fun, accessible identity that anyone can adopt… decontextualized… depoliticized" feminism that Zeisler describes.[25] Neoliberal feminism is accessible and ideal. Watching someone overcome all odds through sheer willpower to make their lives better can be a rewarding and fun story to watch. However, like Rottenberg's criticisms of the political movement, it ignores the very real reality of the social structures in place that can make it very difficult for women to overcome their obstacles on their own.

Popular and Consumerist Feminist

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[21] Catherine A. Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (Oxford University Press), 45, accessed January 20, 2020, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190901226.001.0001/oso-9780190901226.

[22] Rottenberg, 44.

[23] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[24] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg.

[25] Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once*, xiii.

Popular teen witch shows from the 1990s to now benefit from consumerist and

marketplace feminism. They all depict empowered women who are able to fight

monsters, win over men, and overcome their issues with incredible powers. These women

can be powerful role models for young girls and women to look up to. The original

Charmed (1998-2006) series is a great example of a show that reflects many of the ideas

of third wave feminism and benefitted from feminist ideas of female empowerment and

popular feminism without fully committing to the idea of feminism. *Charmed* is about

three sisters in their 20s, Prue, Piper, and Phoebe Halliwell, who discover that they are

powerful witches who need to use their power to fight evil and protect the innocent. The

girls' powers have been passed down through generations of women who get more and

more powerful as each generation goes on. The Halliwell sisters are the most powerful

witches to have ever walked the earth and by working together they can fight and banish

the most powerful demons. At the end of season three Prue was killed by the Source of

All Evil's assassin and was replaced in the series by a long-lost younger half-sister named

Paige. However, unbeknownst to the sisters, Prue had managed to return from the

afterlife because of her strong devotion to her sisters but stayed away from Piper and

Phoebe so as not to mess with the importance of having only three sisters for their

powers. [26]

Throughout *Charmed's* run on television network The WB it was lauded for its

use of strong, empowered female characters. It was a hugely successful show with good

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[26] "Charmed" (Spelling Television, Northshore Productions, Paramount Pictures, 2006 1998).

ratings and an audience of primarily young women and girls.[27] In an interview showrunner, producer, and head writer Brad Kern acknowledged the significance of his main characters being powerful women. He stated, "We're always aware that we have three strong women, and we protect that with everything we've got… What we've done for female characters is a great personal satisfaction I have on the bigger picture."[28] The Halliwell sisters were great role models for young women everywhere and represented a powerful sisterhood that they could aspire to. The creators and cast knew the importance of these witches and made sure to feature them prominently in the show.

Charmed had strong and empowered female main characters that made an impact with its audience and firmly placed it in the world of 90s girl power. However, *Charmed* also existed in a cultural context that began to embrace fashion and beauty in a way that second wave feminism had not before.[29] The fashionable wardrobe of the Halliwell sisters was a major part of the show and contributed to its large fan base.[30] In an interview titled "Hex Appeal", one of the costume designers praised the actors for how hot they are and easy to dress, and discussed how to get the *Charmed* look at home.[31] Author Rebecca Feasey draws connections between postfeminism's embrace of fashion and beauty and *Charmed's* commitment to great costume design in her article "Watching

[27] Annabelle Villanueva, "3 Is the Magic Number: A Trio of Beautiful Witches Casts Its Spell over Audiences with 100 Memorable Episodes. (Anatomy of a Hit Charmed)," *Hollywood Reporter*, January 16, 2003, Gale In Context: Biography.

[28] "'Charmed Life': Showrunner Brad Kern Discusses His Ongoing Love Affair with Three Fetching Witches. (Dialogue)," *Hollywood Reporter*, January 16, 2003, Gale In Context: Biography.

[29] Rebecca Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed': Why Teen Television Appeals to Women," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 5, https://doi.org/10.3200/JPFT.34.1.2-9.

[30] Feasey, 6.

[31] "'Charmed Life.'"

'Charmed': Why Teen Television Appeals to Women."[32] In reference to the show's feminist roots and fabulous costume design Feasey writes, "feminine fashions, beauty practices, and female consumerism can be championed as part of the contemporary feminist project."[33] *Charmed* was simultaneously appealing to girl power and third wave feminism through their strong female leads and postfeminism through their focus on fashion and beauty. Bringing together two seemingly different ideas allowed the show to appeal to a wider audience.

Charmed's 2018 reboot may have a similar formula to the original series, three powerful witch sisters fighting the forces of evil, but it is a show that clearly reflects more popular versions of feminism today despite beginning only 12 years after the first version ended. Airing on the CW, the network that used to be the WB, *Charmed* (2018) centers around two sisters and an estranged half-sister living in a college town in Michigan. After the death of their mother, half-sister Macy introduces herself to Mel and Maggie and the power of three sisters coming together sparks their powers. Macy has the power of telekinesis, like Prue and Paige from the original series, Mel can freeze time like Piper, and instead of premonition like Phoebe, Maggie is able to read people's minds. Soon after the sisters receive their powers, they are warned that the first sign of the apocalypse has happened, the election of Donald Trump, and it will be their job to fight back and try to stop the end of the world.[34]

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[32] Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed,'" 6.

[33] Feasey, 6.

[34] Jennie Snyder Urman, Jessica O'Toole, and Amy Rardin, "Charmed" (The CW, 2020 2018).

In an official description for the new Charmed, the creators of the show call it "fierce, funny, feminist."[35] Beyond the reference to feminism in the description, the casting and plot lines in the show clearly reference many modern feminist issues such as sexual harassment, intersectionality, and the #MeToo.[36] All three of the *Charmed* sisters are played by women of color who are either Latinx or Afro-Caribbean.[37] The first episode of the series features a professor at the local college who is a serial sexual harasser being reinstated despite victim testimony against him. Macy participates in protests along with many other students on campus to try and get him removed.[38] Just like how the original *Charmed* combined girl power and postfeminism, the reboot is combining intersectionality and #MeToo in a recognizable way that gains attention and reflects important aspects of fourth wave feminism. While the show has been described as a little too forced and heavy handed with its use of feminist themes, it has also been praised for its diverse casting and its attempts to provide a representation of the female experience for viewers.[39] *Charmed* (2018) utilizes popular feminist themes and marketing in order to appeal to an audience that has already been exposed to similar major movements like #MeToo. Both versions of *Charmed* use versions of and movements in feminism in order to appeal to their audiences and market the show towards women looking for role models and empowered women in media.

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[35] James Hibberd, "Charmed Reboot Gets CW Pilot Order, Adds 'Feminist' Story Line," *Entertainment Weekly*, January 25, 2018.

[36] Brad Silberling, "Pilot," *Charmed* (The CW, October 14, 2018).

[37] "The CW's 'Charmed' Reboot Takes on Rape Culture and Trump: 'The Weakest of Men,'" *The Daily Beast*, October 11, 2018, Gale In Context: Opposing Viewpoints, http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A557690088/OVIC?u=txshracd2488&sid=zotero&xid=b273a434.

[38] Silberling, "Pilot."

[39] "The CW's 'Charmed' Reboot Takes on Rape Culture and Trump."

To a certain extent, stories about witches will always have a slight neoliberal edge to them. These movies and TV shows are about women that have the power to overcome remarkable odds on their own, a very enticing idea to a neoliberalist. Nearly every story about a successful witch involves her using her powers in order to beat evil or get what she wants. To varying extents, every show and movie analyzed in this thesis is about a witch using her powers to achieve her goals. For example, in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, a comedy show that aired on ABC and later the WB from 1996-2003, features a young witch as she tries to navigate high school and college with magical powers. Sabrina is able to navigate high school easily (for the most part) by using her powers to get good grades, change mistakes, get back at the school bully, and get a boyfriend. While many of these stories do not confront the larger social issues facing women such as equal pay or sexual harassment, they can still represent Sabrina taking on responsibility of her actions to fix her problems. In the second episode of the first season of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* Sabrina gives truth serum sprinkles to her high school rival Libby to prove that Libby has been spreading rumors about her.[40] Sabrina has a problem, she decides to find a way to fix it, and she uses her magic to help her do it. Rottenberg defines a neo-liberal feminist as someone who takes "full responsibility for her well-being and self-care."[41] In this episode, Sabrina does exactly that as she takes her issues with bullying into her own hands and uses magic to try and fix it.

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[40] Gary Halvorson, "Bundt Friday," *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (ABC, October 4, 1996).

[41] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

Charmed does not exhibit the same characteristics of neoliberal feminism that *Sabrina the Teenage Witch Does*. One of the things that *Charmed* excels at most is its focus on sisterhood and overcoming obstacles together. The sisters have to rely on each other in order to survive and fight evil. This reliance is most clearly exhibited by the fact that all three sisters have to work together in order to banish a demon. If just one sister is missing, they cannot perform the incantations required to fight evil. Every time the Halliwell sisters fight and win against a demon, they do it together.[42] In this way, *Charmed* avoids the hyper-individualism of neoliberalism and instead promotes working together to solve problems.

However, the show does not entirely escape neoliberal themes. As the show goes on, the sisters begin to get married and have families. Striving for a work-life balance and figuring out when and how to have kids without sacrificing a career has become one of the major talking points in neoliberal feminism.[43] Through hard work and power, all the sisters seem to strike a good work life balance at the end of the series. An episode in season 4 titled "Lost and Bound" features Phoebe getting engaged to her boyfriend Cole. While Phoebe accepts the engagement, she tells Cole that she is nervous about becoming like Samantha from *Bewitched* who has to suppress her power to be a fulltime housewife. Phoebe does not want to leave behind her job as a witch and a demon fighter. However, Cole proposes with his grandmother's ring, which he does not realize has been cursed. When Phoebe puts on the ring, she slowly starts turning black and white and begins to act

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[42] Snyder Urman, O'Toole, and Rardin, "Charmed."

[43] Catherine Rottenberg, "Neoliberal Feminism and the Future of Human Capital," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 329–48. And Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

like a housewife by making food, focusing on household duties, and ignoring what she needs to do in order to fight the demon Ludlow.[44] This episode confronts growing anxieties over work-life balance as Phoebe tries to imagine how she will manage being both a wife and a powerful witch demon-hunter. This plot reflects the importance of learning how to work and maintain a family life that is found in neoliberal discourse.[45] It also represents the rise of neoliberal feminism as it is written prior to the movement really coming to fruiting in the early 2010s, revealing how researching and analyzing witch-media and empowerment can reflect important aspects of culture.

Conclusion

Witches are amazingly powerful women who can do many things that other women can only wish they could do too. They serve as powerful role models for so many and represent what it could be like for a woman to be confident and empowered. Because of this, witch-media interacts with feminism in numerous interesting ways. Several facets of feminist movements appear in witch-media frequently. In this chapter I considered how popular and consumerist feminism appears in two versions of the TV series *Charmed* and how the two series reflect their individual feminist contexts. Both versions of *Charmed* were informed by popular feminist movements from their time period, both contributing to media representations of feminism and consumerist feminism. Additionally, I discussed how neoliberalism can frequently appear in witch-media and some of the drawbacks of this trend. In a sub-genre about powerful women,

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[44] Noel Nosseck, "Lost and Bound," *Charmed* (The WB, January 31, 2002).

[45] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

empowerment rhetoric and feminism feature prominently in witch-media. However, while these representations are important and helpful, it is also important to remember that they are not always positive representations. While it is important to analyze these themes and consider their implications for the culture at large, it is also important to remember where these shows fail to represent feminism accurately. It is nearly impossible to represent feminism accurately due to its many iterations, ideas, and complications. It may be tempting to label a show about witches as empowering or feminist, but the label is indeed far more complicated than that. In the next two chapters, these ideas are even further complicated in the more specific areas of sexuality and horror.

CHAPTER THREE

The Sexualization of Witchcraft: Do Powerful Women Have to be Sexy?

Female characters in film, television, and other forms of media often face an

oversexualization that plays up their body and sex appeal as opposed to other notable

character traits.[1] Although witches may be strong, empowered women, they fare no

different in most movies and television shows. The sexualization of witches can even be

traced as far back as the first film to feature witchcraft: *Häxan,* or as it is often translated

into English, *Witchcraft through the Ages* (1922).[2] *Häxan* is a Swedish-Danish

documentary-style silent film that pulls from the infamous 1487 witch hunting manual

the *Malleus Maleficarum.* There is no singular main character in the movie, but it features

some naked women and strange and erotic scenes such as witches lining up to kiss the

behind of a satyr. Additionally, the *Malleus Maleficarum* itself connects witchcraft with

sex and female sexuality. Some of the many places where sexuality comes into play

include the fear of female witches stealing men's penises and the idea that witches have

sex with the devil.[3] In this chapter, I will explore how sexualization appears in witch-

media to establish a firm connection between powerful witches and powerful sexuality.

However, sexualization does not always appear in media in an obvious way that involves

revealing clothing or sex scenes. Sometimes it can appear in more subtle ways, such as a

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[1] Caroline Heldman, Laura Lazarus Frankel, and Jennifer Holmes, "'Hot, Black Leather, Whip': The (De)Evolution of Female Protagonists in Action Cinema, 1960–2014," *Sexualization, Media, & Society* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 2374623815627789, https://doi.org/10.1177/2374623815627789.

[2] Benjamin Christensen, *Häxan* (AB Svensk Filmindustri, 1922).

[3] Henricus Kraemer, *The Malleus maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger.* (New York: Dover, 1971).

focus on beauty or relationships. While subtle, these examples still reinforce a connection between beauty and power. First, I will explore this less overtly sexual theme in the popular 1990s sitcom *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* As a family-friendly show about teenagers, *Sabrina* may not seem to deal with sexualization throughout the show. However, Sabrina is still sexualized through relationships and beauty to confirm that even powerful women must also be beautiful and attractive. Next, I will examine some examples of more overt sexualization in witch-media. Some of these shows and movies include *I Married a Witch* (1942), which depicts a femme fatale witch and *Charmed* (1998), which depicts very fashion forward sisters in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Throughout the many waves of feminism and in different contexts, feminist critique has taken different approaches to sex and sexuality. The most current and widespread way of viewing sex is generally as a positive and empowering way for women to embrace their bodies. While it may be a very current view, this opinion has its roots in the sexual revolution of the 1960s.[4] This revolution generally refers to a time in the 1960s to roughly the early 1980s when sexual attitudes and behaviors began changing. The sexual revolution describes a wide spectrum of sexual changes including having sex and living together before marriage, free love, and the rise of Playboy.[5] For women specifically, the sexual revolution helped them gain more authority over their sex lives and taking charge of their sex and pleasure.[6] However, feminism and the sexual

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[4] Jayne Swift, "Whores in the Religious Marketplace: Sex-Positivity's Roots in Commercial Sex Cultures," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 40, no. 2 (June 2019): 94.

[5] Tom W. Smith, "A Report: The Sexual Revolution?," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1990): 415.

[6] Paula Kamen, *Her Way: Young Women Remake the Sexual Revolution.* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 173.

revolution were not the same movement and were not synonymous with each other. In the article, "Sex War: The Debate Between Radical and Libertarian Feminists", written in 1984, several feminist authors describe the differences in opinion feminists had on sex. Called "the sex wars," this debate describes the more radical belief that sexual practices primarily promoted violence against women, and the more libertarian belief that sexuality and the experience of pleasure between consenting people can be very liberating.[7] Since the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the sex wars of the 1980s, sex positivity has grown and become a recognizable part of modern culture.[8] In her article "Whores in the Religious Marketplace: Sex-Positivity's Roots in Commercial Sex Cultures" published in 2019, author Jayne Swift defines sex positivity as a framework that critiques the regulation of sex by dominant institutions, affirms sexual exploration, and promotes sexual freedom.[9] With a sex positive feminist framework, the sexualization of women in media can be empowering and reaffirm that women can take control of their sexual lives and representation.

Feminist theorist Andrea Dworkin considers one of the root sources of female oppression to be sexual intercourse itself. In her book *Intercourse*, Dworkin identifies how the way sex functions in our society creates a lack of privacy and violation for women as well as a means for domination and objectification for men. Therefore, being sexually attractive also becomes an issue as it panders to social expectations to be

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[7] Ann Ferguson, "Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists," *Signs* 10, no. 1 (1984): 106.

[8] For information on sex positive feminism, some of the many sources include Carol Queen and Lynn Comella, "The Necessary Revolution: Sex-Positive Feminism in the Post-Barnard Era," *Communication Review* 11, no. 3 (July 2008): 274–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420802306783. Sarah Jill Bashein, "Sex-Positive Feminism & Safety," *Women's Health Activist*, 2016, Gale Academic OneFile.

[9] Swift, "Whores in the Religious Marketplace," 93.

pleasing and desirable for men. These issues make sex and sexuality a fundamental source of oppression for women. For Dworkin, sex positivity does not represent liberation but rather further entrenchment into the male dominated world of sexual intercourse and desire.[10] In a New York Times opinion piece published in 2019, a college student declared "Sex positivity is a scam…the movement tends to embrace people who are having sex, whereas not being sexually active is considered not liberating.[11] To this college student, sex positivity risks focusing too much on sex and putting too much emphasis on importance behind it and ignoring people who may have legitimate reasons for not having sex or being sexual. A contemporary and colleague of Dworkin's, Catherine MacKinnon also took a skeptical approach to sex and gender dynamics. In her book *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State,* MacKinnon highlighted the inherently dominant position of men and submissive position of women. This dynamic, MacKinnon believes, could make it difficult for women to know when they are being coerced into sex.[12] MacKinnon's theories take a more cautious approach to sex instead of embracing it fully. Sometime, sex positivity can be interpreted as too simplistic and focus on sex. In these cases, sex and sexualization of women amounts more to oppression through the control by the dominant social orders than it does to the liberation of women.

In relation to witchcraft, sex and sexuality has been around since the witch hunts. As mentioned earlier, the witch hunting manual, *Malleus Maleficarum,* sexualizes witches and their magical powers by describing witches as having sex with the devil,

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[10] Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, Anniversary edition (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

[11] Kevin Liao, "Is Everybody Really Doing It?," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2019, sec. Smarter Living, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/15/smarter-living/the-edit-sex-abstinence.html.

[12] Emily Bazelon, "The Return of the Sex Wars," *The New York Times*, September 10, 2015, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/magazine/the-return-of-the-sex-wars.html.

becoming sex demons called succubi, casting curses to make men unable to have sex, and stealing their penises.[13] In her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* Barbara Creed also notes the history of witches and sexualization. She describes the associations between witchcraft and menstruation. Many women supposedly came into their powers once they reached sexual maturity and began menstruating. Witches' powers could also be associated with their monthly cycles.[14] In a chapter from the book *Women Who Fly: Goddesses, Witches, Mystics, and other Airborne Females*, author Serenity Young identifies witch folklore with male fantasies, particularly those of the succubi. Young discusses early representation of witches as young, beautiful and seductive, claiming it was the Christian church who later primarily refigured witches into old and ugly. She also highlights the figure of the succubi, a female witch or demon who had sex with men at night while they slept.[15] Even before Hollywood took over the image of the witch in modern witch-media, witches were highly sexualized as empowered women were closely associated with sexual women.

Sabrina the Teenage Witch and Surreptitious Sexuality

Sabrina the Teenage Witch features high school witch Sabrina Spellman in a series of typical teenage shenanigans with the added complication of magic. With a target audience of teen and preteens, and the feel of a wholesome magic family sitcom, *Sabrina* is a fairly safe and uncontroversial show. Sex is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when watching *Sabrina the Teenage Witch.* Main character Sabrina dresses like a

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[13] Kraemer, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger.*

[14] Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 2015.

[15] Serinity Young, *Women Who Fly: Goddesses, Witches, Mystics, and Other Airborne Females* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

normal 90s teen girl, which may include some tight clothes but nothing that takes it out of the family friendly genre. And while Sabrina has relationships with popular boy Harvey, college cutie Josh, and even gets engaged to Aaron, sex is never mentioned, and even kissing is rarely ever featured in the show. Despite all this, there is still an argument to be made that Sabrina is sexualized in this show in less obvious ways.

Rachel Moseley's article, "Glamorous witchcraft: gender and magic in teen film and television" discusses how depictions of femininity and glamour play prominent roles in teen witch-media. In her discussion of *Sabrina,* Moseley highlights that Sabrina gets her powers when she turns sixteen, a time of transition from child to woman that signifies obtaining femininity and sexual power. During this time, Sabrina plays with her personal image through magic, and decides on a conventionally pretty, feminine way of dressing.[16] This decision reinforces the importance of femininity over other forms of identity (such as the goth style that Sabrina tries but shakes her head at).[17] Femininity is synonymous as well with sexual appeal. The concept of femininity has been constructed overtime to coincide with things that men find attractive.[18] This concept is further reinforced by Sabrina's successful relationships throughout the series. Sabrina has several long-term relationships and eventually ends the series with her soulmate and high school sweetheart, Harvey.

While Sabrina manages to use witchcraft to achieve an alluring femininity, Sabrina's two friends that are featured in the beginning of the series, Jenny during season

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[16] Moseley, "Glamorous Witchcraft," 406.

[17] Moseley, 407.

[18] Doug P. VanderLaan, Lanna J. Petterson, and Paul L. Vasey, "Femininity and Kin-Directed Altruism in Androphilic Men: A Test of an Evolutionary Developmental Model," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 45, no. 3 (April 1, 2016): 619–33, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0632-z.

1 and Valerie during seasons 2-4, do not have successful love interests in the show. They both are somehow outside of the realm of normal femininity and attractiveness. Jenny has curly hair, dresses in a slightly more tomboy-ish style, and seems perfectly content to stick out from the crowd a little. For example, one of her lines in the show is "I don't want to fit in. I researched it. Awkward people tend to be much more successful later in life."[19] Jenny is smart, confident, and not very traditionally feminine. Valerie, on the other hand, is awkward but does not want to be. She is incredibly shy and unsure of herself. While she tries to fit in, it never quite works. Her lack of any amount of confidence and inability to be easily cool like Sabrina means that she is also not the right kind of feminine to get interest from boys. Lastly, Sabrina's enemy in the show, Libby, never has a truly successful relationship either. Libby is seen with men, but none of them last, and she tries to seduce Harvey several times with no success. In Libby's case, she is almost too feminine. She's a cheerleader, always wearing the right clothes, and practically perfect. However, she also lashes out against other women who do not achieve the same level of feminine success that she does. Libby, while neither awkward nor shy, is so confident in herself and so stereotypically girly that she is also deemed not the right kind of feminine or appealing to have a substantial love interest. The only female character in the show who is the right kind of feminine and attractive to get a boyfriend and keep him is Sabrina, who is also a powerful witch.

Sabrina the Teenage Witch may not be a sex heavy, body revealing steamy show, but that does not mean that it escapes the trend of witches being sexualized. Through Sabrina's perfect femininity and string of love interests, it is clear that she is sexually

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[19] Robby Benson, "Pilot," *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (ABC, September 27, 1996).

appealing and alluring. Alternatively, her friends and other characters in the show are not able to achieve the same level of appeal for the men in the series. Sabrina shows how narrow the window for proper femininity and sex appeal really is and how being empowered in the right ways can get you a boyfriend. Sabrina uses her magic to fit into the narrow definition of femininity and conform to society's standards, showing that empowered women can and should use their power to conform to societal expectations to be beautiful and desirable. The other women in the show who do not have the magic available to fit in are shown as unappealing and never get or maintain boyfriends, indicating that power is synonymous with beauty and relationships.

The Tradition of Overt Sexualization of Witches Through Time

I Married a Witch features Hollywood sweetheart Veronica Lake as a witch named Jennifer trying to get revenge through love. After Jennifer and her father Daniel were burned at the stake in colonial Salem, Jennifer curses the descendants of Puritan Jonathan Wooley always to marry the wrong woman. In 1942, Jennifer and Daniel's souls are freed from imprisonment and Jennifer is able to regain her body and begin personally trying to torture the most recent Wooley descendent, named Wallace, through seduction. This movie simply oozes 1940s sex appeal and sexuality. For starters, actress Veronica Lake is well known for her beauty and sex appeal, especially her famous long blonde hair, gently falling over one eye that seems to be featured in every movie poster she is in.[20] The trailed also features two scenes with Jenifer in lingerie while laying on a bed, playing on the beauty and sexuality of the actress Lake. Additionally, the same

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[20] Veronica Lake and Niven Busch, "I, Veronica Lake," *Life*, May 17, 1943.

trailer for the show glosses over Jennifer's revenge plot, solely focusing on her attempts to seduce Willard as if she simply fell in love with him. While Jennifer does accidentally drink a love potion that makes her fall in love with Willard, her seduction begins with a dark motive, and she never truly loves him. Lastly, the trailer highlights Veronica's sex appeal mixed with her character's magic by superimposing the word, "hex-appeal" over an image of Jennifer and Wallace staring into each other's eyes.[21] From the beginning of the movie's advertising one of the major focuses on the film is the main witch's sex appeal and love story. The trailer makes it clear that one of the most important things about this movie and the character Jennifer is the sex appeal.

There are also a few plot points from the movie itself that further emphasize the sexualization of the character Jennifer. For example, when Jennifer first regains her body, she is trapped in a burning building and is saved by Wallace. Jennifer is naked as she stands in front of Wallace in a smokey room, and he has to cover her with his coat and carry her out of the building. She stands quite confidently in front of him, sure of her sex appeal, while Wallace stumbles over his words and decides to look away. Jennifer is just as sure of her sexuality as she is her magical powers, both of them becoming powerful tools at her disposal in the movie. As an empowered woman she is able to exude confidence and sexuality, unlike her the woman she is trying to take Wallace away from who does not have magical powers or the same level of confidence in her sexuality.

The general plot of the movie is focused on sexuality and sexualizes Jennifer as well. Jennifer is trying to steal Wallace away from his fiancée, a woman named Estelle,

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[21] "I Married a Witch - Original Movie Trailer - YouTube," accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJpxVbzzZt4.

creating a love triangle where Jennifer becomes the homewrecker, even if Estelle is not the right woman for him to marry. However, Jennifer is unable to lure Wallace away from Estelle. Instead, she has her father make a love potion that is meant to make Wallace fall head over heels for her, but she accidentally drinks it instead. The fact that Jennifer is unable to use her sexiness or her magic to seduce Wallace is an indication that she does not have any real power, all of her confidence was misplaced and useless.

The end of the movie centers around Jennifer falling in love with Wallace through a love potion and eventually leaving her father to stay with him. This ending represents a sort of breaking of Jennifer's witch past through love and marriage, making her into a more sexually acceptable housewife. Previously, Jennifer was empowered through her magic and her sexuality. However, now, she has neither of those things as she settles down into a more acceptable normal life. Additionally, it is not clear if Jennifer ever overcomes the love potion she drank. At the end of the movie she tells Wallace "Love is stronger than witchcraft."[22] However, it is possible that Jennifer is still in love with Wallace because of magic, making their entire relationship questionable as she is not able to truly consent. The end of the movie sees Jennifer no longer seducing men but rather potentially being forced to settle down into marriage. Once Jennifer moves away from her witchcraft and magic, she also moves on from seduction and sexuality, further reinforcing that only empowered women are sexualized. While Jennifer was in control, magic and sexuality were synonymous with each other as she relied on both tools, and both contributed equally to her confidence. Witches as empowered women in this case

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[22] René Clair, *I Married a Witch*, Comedy, Fantasy, Romance (Rene Clair Productions, Paramount Pictures, 1942).

are shown as just as much power in their seductive abilities as their magic. However, both of these things are also cast as negative traits that Jennifer overcomes in the end.

Popular girl power TV show *Charmed* features three sisters, Piper, Phoebe, and Prue, (who is later replaced with Paige), as they discover that they have magical powers and learn how to use them together to fight evil. Piper is able to freeze time, Phoebe can see the future, and both Prue and Paige have telekinetic powers. Together, the sisters are the most powerful witches to have ever walked the earth and are able to banish any demon they come across. One of the clearest examples of sexuality in the show is the costume design. At first, the sisters wear the kind of fare that you would expect in a teen show set in the 1990's: tank tops probably without a bra, tight shirts, skirts, etc. However, as the show continues the clothes start to get a little crazier and a lot more revealing.[23]

One of the draws of the show *Charmed* may be its powerful sister trios, but another major draw is the clothes. Fashion was incredibly important to the series, contributing in a major way to its popularity.[24] The clothes were meant to show off the actresses, who were noted to be "drop dead gorgeous" in one article about the costume design.[25] That same article is titled "Hex-Appeal: Keen Fashion Sense is a Must for Any Modern Witch " which, like in the trailer for *I Married a* Witch, highlights both the sisters' power and their sexiness. Additionally, the subtitle reinforces that a powerful woman needs to also look nice and sexually appealing.

Fashion becomes so prominent in the series that it actually becomes an ongoing joke that the Halliwell sisters will always be dressed inconveniently for the hard work of

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[23] "Charmed."

[24] Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed,'" 6.

[25] Villanueva, "3 Is the Magic Number."

fighting evil.[26] In an episode in season 3 the girls are told that they need looser, more practical clothing to fight in, ideally an outfit that was not braless and strapless. In return the girls quip "in that case, I have nothing to wear."[27] This joke informs the audience that wearing appealing clothing is more important that wearing practical clothing, even when fighting evil. Each episode plays into the sexualization of empowered women simply through the clothing they wear. There are also occasional episodes that feature sexuality more prominently, for example "She's a Man, Baby, a Man!" This episode features the Halliwell sisters trying to take down a succubus after Piper continually receives vivid sex dreams revealing how the succubus is killing men for their testosterone.[28] In an earlier episode, called "Dream Sorcerer," Prue is attacked in her sleep by a serial killer.[29] However, the attack scenes are filmed more like sex scenes. These episodes put the sisters in sexual situations in order to further sexualize the actresses and associate their powers with sexuality. Beyond sex dreams and succubi, all of the sisters have various relationships throughout the show. In season 1 episode 5, Piper and Phoebe lament not having boyfriends and cast a spell to attract men to them.[30] All of the sisters also get married in the series. These instances reinforce that despite the sisters' magic and empowerment, it is still incredibly important to be in a relationship and receive fulfillment in life from men.

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[26] Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed,'" 6.

[27] David Straiton, "Blinded by the Whitelighter," *Charmed* (The WB, January 25, 2001).

[28] Shamira Ibrahim, "Remember That 'Charmed' Episode About Gender Roles?," *Vice* (blog), October 15, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/yw9k8m/charmed-gender-change-episode.

[29] Nick Marck, "Dream Sorcerer," *Charmed* (The WB, November 4, 1998).

[30] Marck.

Reviews of the show, even early on, emphasize the sexuality beneath the surface of the show. One review stated that the sisters were "hot, hot, and hot" and believed that it would become a big hit if the show got much more "scary, savvy, and sexy."[31] Another review comments on how male viewers are lusting after the three sisters.[32] In a show about three magical sisters, perhaps the other most defining characteristic of the main characters becomes their sex appeal rather than their powers. Instead of their incredible abilities and magic, these three empowered women become more well known for their good looks and fashion sense, minimizing their incredible abilities and the importance of their actions in fighting evil and helping others.

Conclusion

As these examples in witch-media show, sexuality and empowerment have a long and entangled history with witches. In some ways, power and sexuality work together to create empowered, confident and capable characters, although the emphasis on sexuality and sexualization of witches creates a connection that implies the two must go together. Sabrina uses her powers to further cultivate her feminine identity and confidence. She obtains and maintains romantic relationships that identify her as an ideal and alluring woman. This trait is in contrast to women without powers in the show who are unable to emulate the same effortless femininity that Sabrina possesses without the help of magic. Magic and sexuality work together to empower Sabrina through appearance. On the other

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[31] David Bianculli, "'Charmed': Just Wait A Spell," nydailynews.com, accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.nydailynews.com/archives/entertainment/charmed-wait-spell-article-1.813713.

[32] David Zurawik, "'Charmed' Is Fun, for a Spell Preview: Pretty-Witch Show Isn't Exactly Spellbinding, but It's Not Half Bad as Light Melodrama.," baltimoresun.com, accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1998-10-07-1998280074-story.html.

hand, Jennifer from *I Married a Witch* is unable to use her magic and her appearance effectively to achieve a similar goal. In her case, she must resort to a more aggressive form of magic than Sabrina by brewing a love potion. What's more, even this fails as she accidentally drinks the potion herself. Although Jennifer tried to use magic and sexuality to her benefit, she is unable to do so successfully. In this case, sexuality and magic are disempowering instead of empowering like in *Sabrina*. Jennifer is simply routinely rejected despite her abilities until her own magic works against her and she becomes a lovesick woman wishing for the man whom she had tried to torture. Lastly, in *Charmed* the sisters' most important characteristics are their magic and their sex appeal. There is no real issue with succeeding or failing to seduce men throughout the series. All the sisters have several relationships with varying amounts of success. Their sexuality and power do not work together but instead are two important but separate parts of their identity. The beauty and sexualization of the sisters are what reviewers commented on, and it was routinely used and played up in the show. In this case, sexuality seemed to combine with magic in a more arbitrary way. Instead of overtly empowering or disempowering the women, it seems like something that was forced into the show as if it was simply necessary for these witches to also be hot and sexy.

It would be easy to try to argue that these examples of sexuality among witches are either empowering or disempowering and how that reflects feminist perspectives on sex. Each of these shows could be a combination of both, and contexts such as the sexual revolution, sex positive feminism, or more skeptical approaches to sex can inform different readings of the shows. Regardless, sexuality and witchcraft are never far from each other. Both represent a type of undeniable power that is particularly interesting to

women. The fact that witches are so often sexualized shows how the two types of power, magic and sexuality, have become so closely linked. To be a truly empowered, women must also be sexualized.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Witch as Villain: The Horror of the Empowered Woman

Beyond the witch media world of girl power infused, feel good shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*, there is a whole other realm of witch-media that does not center on the witch being a fun and loving protagonist. The horror genre is probably the source of media that has most prominently featured witches, making them into villains and monsters who use their powers for terrible things. Horror provides the ability to make the witch into a truly terrifying villain as opposed to the spunky protagonist or the antagonist you know will be defeated in the end. Truthfully, horror more closely resembles historical depictions of witches. European witch hunts did not break out in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because witches were known to fight enemies or demons and try to save the world from the apocalypse. Witches were persecuted out of fear because they had power that society believed that they should not possess. Beyond the fear of witches, it is difficult to pinpoint why witch trials raged across Europe. Witch hunts could have been due to war, social politics, misogyny, hallucinations or many other things. Historians have debated the true historical facts of these witch trials.[1] Either way, the idea of a witch as a villain and as a woman with power she should not have has lived on in our cultural imagination through horror movies. In this section of the thesis, I argue that horror ultimately uses witches as a way to express anxiety over women with power.

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[1] For more information on witch trials see John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1987); James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

First, I will introduce gynaehorror, a form of feminist horror film analysis created by Erin Harrington.[2] Gynaehorror, or horror based on women's bodies, is incredibly common throughout the horror film industry, and horror films with witches are just as susceptible to gynaehorror as other horror genres. I will use the gynaehorror framework to begin analyzing the witch as a source of horror. To do this, I will primarily use Erin Harrington's book *Women, Monstrosity, and Horror Film: Gynaehorror* and Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis.* Both of these books provide valuable insight into the role of women in horror, particularly witches, creating a solid base to move into more specific horror analysis. Next, I will narrow in on two common witch archetypes in horror. The first archetype is the dominatrix, a witch who is terrifying because of her ability to control others, particularly men. This archetype shows up in one of the first movies to feature a witch as the main villain and can also appear in less obviously horrific places. The second archetype I will examine is the crone. The crone is particularly common in children's movies but can also appear as a villain in horror. This archetype encapsulates an anxiety around women who lack the power to have children, but still have power themselves.

Witches and Gynaehorror

Gynaehorror appears in almost any horror movie, and horror movies with witches are no different. This term, created by Erin Harrington, is defined as "horror that deals with all aspects of female reproductive horror, from the reproductive and sexual organs, to virginity and first sex, through to pregnancy, birth, and motherhood, and finally to

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[2] Erin Jean Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film: Gynaehorror*, 2018, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1574460.

menopause and post-menopause."[3] Countless examples of witch-media horror utilize gynaehorror to create disgust and fear. *The Love Witch* (2016) is one such example that heavily relies on themes of sex and sexuality. Witch Elaine is desperate for love and uses her magic to seduce men into sleeping with her and even marrying her. However, the first man she has sex with goes mad and dies. When Elaine buries him, she places a magic concoction with him made from her urine and a used tampon. This scene is meant to use a woman's menstruation to create disgust and fear. The themes of love and sex throughout the movie and Elaine's predatory behavior presents female sexuality as a terrifying thing that ruins men's lives with Elaine's total body count eventually reaching four.[4] *The Love Witch* is a perfect example of gynaehorror as Elaine's sexuality, menstruation, and body are all heavily utilized throughout the movie for fear. However, this movie is just one example of the countless movies that feature both witches and gynaehorror. While Harrington did not coin the term until 2017, gynaehorror has existed long before her book was written. Other authors such as Barbara Creed have picked up on gynaehorrific themes even without the specific term.

Gynaehorror may have been named by Harrington, but Barbara Creed began picking up on gynaehorror themes even earlier. In the chapter "Woman as Witch: Carrie" from the book *The Monstrous Feminine*, Creed discusses the history of witches and their associations with the body, sexuality, and menstruation, before making the connection to modern horror movies. Both witchcraft and magic were often associated with a woman's menstruation, with some cultures deeming girls who had prophetic dreams with the

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[3] Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film*, 2017, 3.

[4] Anna Biller, *The Love Witch*, Comedy, Horror, Romance, Thriller (Anna Biller Productions, 2016).

oncoming of their menstrual cycles to be witches or shamans. Pregnancy and childbirth were also associated with witchcraft. Some considered a woman's ability to create a human being to be magical. And a woman's or mother's curse was considered to be more dangerous and potent than a man's curse.[5] Women with magical powers could be terrifying when they were believed to be able to curse someone or cast spells. However, at other times their magic was beneficial, such as when they could tell the future or create new life.

As time went on and the church labeled witches as agents of the devil, they became much more terrifying.[6] Just like in history, witches in movies were not always used as terrifying villains. silent films mainly used witches to show off a bit of impressive movie magic. One of the earliest films to feature a scary witch was the beloved children's classic *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).[7] Even once witches began to be featured in horror, the horror primarily focused around the witch hunt as a source of fear. The first movie to feature a witch as the main villain was *Burn, Witch, Burn!* (United States) or *Night of the Eagle* (United Kingdom), first released in 1962.[8] However, Creed identifies the Stephen King horror movie classic *Carrie* as an example of the witch as a villain in Hollywood horror.

Carrie may not actually be a stereotypical witch who brews potions and casts spells, but she possesses telekinetic powers that associate her with witches. If witches are

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[5] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2015), 73.

[6] Creed, 74.

[7] Victor Fleming et al., *The Wizard of Oz*, Adventure, Family, Fantasy, Musical (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), 1939).

[8] Sidney Hayers, *Night of the Eagle*, Horror (Independent Artists, 1962).

a representation of women with power, Carrie certainly has that power. One of the first things that Creed notes is that Carrie does not her powers until she receives her period, which occurs when she is sixteen. This plot point takes its cue from a long history of associating female power with menstruation.[9] Additionally, by using female sexuality and reproduction the film draws heavily on the motif of gynaehorror. Even more notably, the scene in which Carrie gets her first period, and therefore her powers, is intensely uncomfortable. In her article "Monstrous Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film," author Aviva Briefel says that menstruation is "a narrative event that positions the audience in an uncomfortably close relationship to the female monster."[10] The scene in which Carrie starts her period reflects this discomfort and takes it further as the event is shared with classmates. Carrie begins menstruating while showering after gym class at school and having grown up in a very sheltered and religious home, she does not know what is happening to her. Thinking that she is dying, Carrie begs the other girls for help who in turn laugh while throwing tampons at her and yelling "plug it up!"[11] This scene utilizes Carrie's menstruation to make the audience uncomfortable and confront women's periods and how they should be hidden. When Carrie gets home and informs her mother of her new period, her mother gets angry and claims menstruation is a result of sin and Eve's weakness before locking Carrie in a closet to pray.[12] These two scenes show that menstruation is a source of shame, disgust,

[9] Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 2015.

[10] Aviva Briefel, "Monster Pains: Masochism, Menstruation, and Identification in the Horror Film," *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2005): 16, https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2005.58.3.16.

[11] Brian De Palma, *Carrie*, Horror, 1976.

[12] De Palma.

and sin. Combined with Carrie receiving her powers through menstruation, Carrie's

telekinetic powers are firmly associated with sexual maturity. However, menstruation

does not stop at the beginning of the movie. Towards the end of the movie, Carrie is set

up to become prom queen so that her fellow students can dump a bucket of pig's blood

on her, mirroring Carrie's own menstrual blood in the beginning of the movie. Like in the

beginning, this blood becomes a catalyst for Carrie's powers as she becomes angered

enough to destroy the building and everyone attending prom. Creed sums up her analysis

of *Carrie* by claiming "women's monstrousness is linked to her reproductive function."[13]

The Dominatrix Witch

While women with power may be scary, women who explicitly have power over

men is even scarier. This theme occurs both within the world of horror and in more subtle

ways outside of horror. *The Love Witch,* a film analyzed in the beginning of this chapter,

is not only an example of sexual gynaehorror, it is also an example of a women

controlling the lives of men. Elaine is so terrifying because of her ability to seduce men

into sex and marriage. A film analyzed in the chapter on sexuality, *I Married a Witch,* is

also an example of a woman controlling men. While *I Married a Witch* is not explicitly a

horror movie, it includes some horror elements such as witches as villains, curses,

malicious intent to ruin people's lives, and witch burnings. Ultimately, *I Married a Witch*

is a romantic comedy instead of a horror movie, but it is only a few plot points that keeps

this movie from becoming terrifying. Regardless of genre, the movie expresses real

anxiety over women with power, particularly over men. In this movie, the main villainous

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[13] Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 2015, 78.

witch is Jennifer, a woman who has successfully cursed several men to marry the wrong man and who goes on to try and use her own personal powers to seduce yet another man named Wallace.[14] Jennifer is able to control these men's lives and make them miserable through her magic. Instead of having the right to choose who they marry, Jennifer's magic chooses for them. However, Jennifer's plan to control Wallace ultimately backfires when she drinks the love potion meant for him and falls head over heels in love with him. This one mistake is why *I Married a Witch* is a comedy and not a horror movie. Because Wallace is able to gain the upper hand through Jennifer's love for him, he reduces her power over him despite her magic. This trope is actually not unique to this one movie. Perhaps the most recognizable example is popular TV show *Bewitched.* In *Bewitched,* regular guy Darren realizes his wife Samantha is actually a powerful witch. Everything remains fine in their relationship, but Samantha is repeatedly told to not use magic around the house and do everything the normal way.[15] Darren ultimately makes this request out of anxiety over his wife being more powerful than him. If Samantha were to use her powers to try and control Darren instead of helping him, then *Bewitched* would quickly turn from a family friendly comedy into a horror story about women using magic to gain the upper hand on men.

Another example of witches controlling men is *Night of the Eagle* or *Burn, Witch, Burn!,* the first horror movie to feature a witch as the main villain.[16] In this movie, husband and wife Norman and Tansy fight over Tansy's use of voodoo before having to

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[14] René Clair, *I Married a Witch*, Comedy, Fantasy, Romance (Rene Clair Productions, Paramount Pictures, 1942).

[15] *Bewitched*, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Romance (Ashmont Productions, Screen Gems Television, 1964).

[16] Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 2015.

come together to protect themselves against another more sinister voodoo witch.[17] The main issue at the beginning of the movie is Tansy's use of magic to control her husband's academic career. While she may have been using it to help him, it still represents control and power. It is unacceptable for a woman to have a hand in controlling the distinctly male dominated world of work. Although Norman does not ultimately believe in magic, he still destroys Tansy's magic to ruin what he thinks is an illusion of control that she has grasped on to. What is even more telling is that Norman forces Tansy to destroy everything herself, driving home his point that she has no power, even with her supposed voodoo. However, magic is quickly proven to be real as yet another woman, the wife of one of his coworkers named Flora, tries to control Norman's life with magic, this time with decidedly more negative consequences. The movie truly becomes a horror movie when one of Norman's students suddenly accuses him of rape, his house is burned down and nearly burns Tansy alive, and Flora begins to try and kill him. Flora uses her magic to infringe on Norman's reputation, his property, his wife, and his life. Norman is forced to fight for his life and is eventually able to wrest control back from Flora. The happy ending of this horror movie is Flora's death and the return to normal life where Norman can remain in control. These movies make it clear that one of the ways a witch can become a villain is by trying to encroach on the world of men and trying to control it. It is fine for a woman to have some power unless she begins to challenge the patriarchal social order.

The Crone

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[17] Hayers, *Night of the Eagle*.

The archetype of the crone is found everywhere from horror, to children's movies, to many people's imaginations. One of the stereotypical images of a witch is an old woman, otherwise known as the crone. The crone is one third of the goddess trinity that Kathryn Rountree identifies in her article "The New Witch of the West: Feminists Reclaim the Crone." A woman who is no longer able to have children but who is able to speak her mind to men without fear of losing male favor, the crone "offers nothing attractive to the patriarchy."[18] Her very existence is already terrifying and uncomfortable. She also encapsulates the menopausal and post-menopausal elements of gynaehorror that Harrington includes in her definition. Going through menopause means that a woman can no longer have children, making her "barren," a term used only for infertile women and never infertile men. A menopausal or post-menopausal woman's body is unproductive where it could be or perhaps even should be productive. It can no longer fulfill its main purpose of producing children and is therefore transgressive.[19] Both Rountree and Harrington identify the older woman or the crone as a repudiation of society and the patriarchy, making her very existence a threat. Author Douglas Brode notes that movies have taken this image of the witch and consistently turned her into an ugly old crone, casting out the inherently insurgent crone and cast them out as villains.[20]

Popular horror film classic *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) features a crone as one of its many villains. When young couple Rosemary and Guy move into a new apartment, they quickly become acquainted with the elderly couple next door. While they seem like nice

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[18] Rountree, "The New Witch of the West," 226.

[19] Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film*, 2017, 223.

[20] Douglas Brode, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

people at first, it is later revealed that they are part of a coven of witches who have

impregnated Rosemary with the son of Satan.[21] The crone in this example, Minnie

Castevet, is not the only villain in the movie, with all the members of the coven and even

Guy joining in on the conspiracy to bring Satan's son into the world. However, she plays

a prominent role in the plot and is distinctly able to fill the role of a crone. Minnie is

elderly and of course post-menopausal. She herself can no longer bring children into the

world and fulfill the purpose of a woman's body. However, she uses her powers to help

impregnate a young fertile woman, forcing another to do what her own body cannot. The

horror of the movie lies in being forced to carry a baby who is a result of rape, especially

rape at the hands of the devil himself. This plot line, a woman being impregnated

partially by a crone, is not unfamiliar to the world of witch horror. Another movie, *The

Lords of Salem* (2012) also features a coven impregnating a young woman with a demon.

The leader of the coven, Margaret Morgan, is the crone in this example and the main

driver behind the plot.[22]

Not all horror movies with crones specifically feature the impregnation of a young

woman with some sort of demon. *Drag Me to Hell* (2009) uses a crone to kick off the

whole movie, although she dies early on. When bank loan officer Christine refuses an old

woman an extension on her loan in order to impress her boss, the old woman curses her

to be tortured for three days before being dragged to hell.[23] The crone uses her magic to

get vicious revenge and destroy a young woman's life for eternity. Yet another movie,

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[21] Roman Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*, Drama, Horror (William Castle Productions, 1968).

[22] Rob Zombie, *The Lords of Salem*, Horror, Thriller (Alliance, Automatik Entertainment, Blumhouse Productions, 2012).

[23] Sam Raimi, *Drag Me to Hell*, Horror, Thriller (Universal Pictures, Ghost House Pictures, Buckaroo Entertainment, 2009).

Suspiria (2018) features a coven of witches who use the body of a young dancer, Susie, to become a host for their aging leader, therefore making her young again and allowing her to live longer.[24] Here, an old crone yearns for more life and a younger body, and so she takes it for herself. She trades the life of a young girl for the continued life of her own.

All of these movies, *Rosemary's Baby, The Lords of Salem, Drag Me to Hell,* and *Suspiria* have at least two things in common. The first is that they all feature a crone as a villain. The second is that in all three cases the crone preys on a younger woman to try and ruin her life. In *Rosemary's Baby* the viewer is meant to assume that Rosemary is left to become the mother of her devil child. In *The Lords of Salem*, Heidi disappears immediately after giving birth. Finally, in *Drag Me to Hell* Christine is unable to overcome her curse and is literally dragged into the fiery pits of hell at the end of the movie. All three of these women had their lives completely derailed by an old witch for personal gain or revenge. The message that lies behind this common plot trope is that women will attack other women, especially the old preying on the young. Rountree identifies that the crone is a threat to the patriarchal system because she is a woman who no longer has an obligation to please men or become a mother.[25] However, in horror movies the people who suffer most at the hands of the crone are young women, not men. This trope even goes beyond horror movies, although it may be most recognizable in the horror genre.

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[24] Luca Guadagnino, *Suspiria*, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery, Thriller (Frenesy Film Company, Videa, First Sun, 2018).

[25] Rountree, "The New Witch of the West," 226.

Children's movies often feature some sort of a crone as a villain. *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Tangled* (2010), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), and *Enchanted* (2007) are some of the movies that feature a crone in one way or another trying to destroy a young woman's life. Sometimes the image of the crone is used as a disguise, such as in *Snow White* and *Enchanted*, but this does not negate the trope that crones are the ones that hurt young women. It is primarily while in the disguise of the crone that the witches take action to try and ruin the protagonist's life. The primary difference in plot between these children's movies and horror movies are that the crone does not succeed in children's movies. The crone as an enemy to young women and girls extends beyond the world of horror and is exposed even to even young audiences.

Rountree and others identify crones and older women to be a threat to society and the patriarchy. However, in movies, especially horror movies, they are a threat to primarily younger women. This phenomenon reflects the very power that researchers have assign to crones. Instead of showing the power that crones have to push back against the patriarchy and upend the social order, these stories pit women against women. These stories reject the real power that crones have and reflect it somewhere else as a distraction. Crones so often attack women instead of men so that the audience does not have to confront the ways that the crone challenges the patriarchy.

Conclusion

Horror is at the core of the world of witch-media, providing copious films and even a few television series to be analyzed and examined. The primary conclusion that can be drawn from examining witch-media horror films is that there is copious anxiety surrounding various aspects of female empowerment. In some cases, the goal of the

horror is to use women's bodies and power to create disgust and shame, such as in *Carrie* and *The Love Witch.* Both of these movies heavily used gynaehorror themes to vilify female bodies and sexuality, as well as the power that comes with it. *Carrie*'s focus on menstruation and power associated fear and sin with female sexual maturity. *The Love Witch*'s central theme of sexual magic and its danger creates a similar fear around women's sexuality and the power that comes with it.

Other movies feature female witches in control of other people's lives. These movies, such as *Night of the Eagle* and *I Married a Witch* reveal the terror that surrounds the idea of a woman controlling a man's life. In both cases, a witch tries to control a man's life and must eventually be vanquished in order for things to be made right again. In *Night of the Eagle* the witch, Flora, must be killed in order to remove her power and restore the correct social order. In *I Married a Witch,* Jennifer's own magic backfires in order to control her instead of controlling Wallace. Without that mistake, the social order could not be restored.

Finally, the crone that makes appearances throughout the world of horror and beyond creates a rare image of a woman who is not a threat to man but rather a threat to other women. Despite cultural analysis that the crone is a threat to the patriarchy, in movies the crone is often a threat to young women. This trope pits women against each other and reflects the fear of the crone attacking the patriarchy onto something else, therefor masking it. Witches with power are terrifying to the existing patriarchal order, and horror movies exemplify that in a wide variety of ways.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Witch-media as a topic for discussion and research provides an insightful view into society's negotiations with female empowerment over time. Starting with *Häxan* in 1922, dynamic depictions of witches have created fascinating villains and heroes for audiences both to love and to hate. Through these movies and television series, the witch has become a cultural icon of female empowerment. Through analysis of witch-media, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of our culture's ideas of female empowerment. Our society has a complicated relationship with powerful women, expressing both a desire to empower women and a desire to suppress empowerment because of fear of women's powers. In this thesis, I specifically analyzed three components of witch-media and their connections with empowerment, feminism, sexuality, and horror.

Negotiations between feminist female empowerment and witch-media have created well-loved shows and movies to which young girls turn for powerful role models. Some of these shows emerge during third wave feminism and the 90s girl power movement including *Charmed. Charmed* was a hugely popular show about sisters who also happened to be the most powerful witches to ever walk the earth. The show has been heralded as a feminist series, but its interactions with both girl power feminism and postfeminism complicate that idea.[1] *Charmed* reflected the complex feminist context in which it was created by incorporating both girl power and postfeminist sensibilities to

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[1] Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed.'"

appeal to a wide audience and inspire many young women. The reboot of *Charmed* premiered in 2018 and, similarly to its predecessor, incorporated many ideas aspects of its own unique feminist context. *Charmed* (2018) incorporates intersectionality and #MeToo in order to incorporate major feminist topics of the time and contribute to the conversation. Analyzing these two similar but different versions of *Charmed* reflects how female empowerment and feminist rhetoric can work closely together in witch-media to create feminist role models for viewers.

Neoliberal themes run throughout witch-media as strong female leads use their powers to fix problems on their own. Even before the neoliberal feminism became a talking point in feminist discourse, shows like *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed* were reflecting some of these neoliberal ideas. Sabrina spent her high school and college career relying on her powers to fix her problems and carry her through life. Her individualistic mindset meant that she faced problems on her own in a way similar to neoliberal feminism. In *Charmed*, characters like Phoebe began struggling with how to gain a work-life balance so that she could get married but not lose her work and her identity to become a wife full time. A major component of neoliberal feminism is trying to strike a perfect work-life balance through hard work and perseverance, which *Charmed* begins to reflect through Phoebe who worries about getting married.[2] *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed* may technically predate neoliberal feminism, but they both begin to show signs of the rise of the movement. Analyzing shows like these can lead to a greater understanding of the deeper roots of neoliberalism and its interactions with media and culture.

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[2] Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, 45.

Witches, despite their powers and abilities, or even because of them, are often sexualized in movies and TV shows. Family-friendly shows like *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* may not feature sex scenes and other hallmarks of a sexy show, but the main character Sabrina still faces sexualization in the series. Sabrina receives her powers on her 16th birthday which symbolizes her transition from a teenager to a young woman who is now sexually mature. She also uses her magic to conform to fashion and beauty standards and maintains several relationships throughout the show.[3] Femininity, which is connected to attraction and sex appeal, is an important aspect of Sabrina's image and she uses her magic to maintain it.[4] These actions create a firm link between magical empowerment and sexual empowerment. In *Sabrina*, being a witch and having magical powers also means being attractive and sexualized. Compared to other female characters in the show who are not as sexualized or successful in dating life, it becomes clear that a connection is being drawn between sexual power and magical power.

While *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* took a more subtle approach to sexuality, there are plenty of examples in witch-media that use more overt sexualization. The 1942 movie *I Married a Witch* features a femme fatale witch named Jennifer who tries to seduce a man named Wallace to ruin his life. In the movie, Jennifer's powers of sexuality and seduction are connected to her magical powers. She relies on both to try and succeed in her plans. However, both eventually fail as she accidentally drinks a love potion meant for Wallace and falls hopelessly in love with the man whose life she was trying to ruin. *I Married a Witch* creates another link between power and sexuality that affirms that

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[3] Moseley, "Glamorous Witchcraft."

[4] VanderLaan, Petterson, and Vasey, "Femininity and Kin-Directed Altruism in Androphilic Men."

empowered women are also sexual women. Jennifer ultimately fails in her goals, revealing that her power was not as great as she thought it was all along. Neither magic nor seduction are able to ruin Wallace's life and instead they end up married in the end.

Charmed is another series that sexualizes female witches, primarily through fashion. The Halliwell sisters' clothes were an important part of the show that created some buzz in the media. Their fashionable choices became an important part of their identities to many viewers.[5] However, the clothes they did wear could lean on the side of being revealing and impractical for fighting evil, as was joked about within the show.[6] Additionally, certain episodes placed the sisters in very sexual situations, such as the oddly sexualized sequences when the Dream Sorcerer tried to kill Prue in the first season.[7] The three examples of witch-media combined begin to show how the sexualization of witches has establish links between sexual power and empowerment. In these cases, it is impossible for a woman to be empowered without also being sexualized.

The witch has been a mainstay of horror villains since the movie *Night of the Eagle* in 1962.[8] Gynaehorror is a term that defines how horror movies often use the female body and reproductive system in order to create terror and disgust.[9] Gynaehorror features heavily throughout witch-media horror and has its roots in the history of witchcraft and the *Malleus Maleficarum*.[10]*The Love* Witch, a movie from 2016 about a witch named Elaine who uses sex magic to seduce men, uses gynaehorror as a source of

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[5] Feasey, "Watching 'Charmed.'"

[6] Straiton, "Blinded by the Whitelighter."

[7] Marck, "Dream Sorcerer."

[8] Hayers, *Night of the Eagle*.

[9] Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film*, 2017.

[10] Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 2015.

fear. Elaine's sexuality and magic are the reason she is such a terrifying villain. She seduces men against their will and the force of her magic can even kill them. In this movie, magic and sexuality become truly synonymous with one another as something to fear in a woman.

The classic Stephen King movie, *Carrie*, is another example of a horror movie that uses gynaehorror connected to its main character to establish fear and power. Carrie gains her telekinetic powers immediately after getting her first period while at school. The scene in which Carrie first begins to bleed is uncomfortable as she desperately tries to figure out what is wrong with her and the other girls laugh. The scene forces the viewer to confront menstruation and fear while drawing an association between sexual maturity and menstruation and supernatural power. In *Carrie*, a horrifying power in menstruation and maturity links monstrousness and fear to a woman's reproductive functions.[11]

A common archetype found in witch-media horror is the dominatrix witch. These villains are horrifying specifically because of the ways they control men's lives. Jennifer, from the previously mentioned movie *I Married a Witch*, is an example of a dominatrix witch. While *I Married a Witch* is not technically a horror movie, Jennifer does try to control Wallace's life through a curse and seduction. Had Jennifer succeeded instead of accidentally drinking the love potion, the movie would likely have become a horror movie. In order for the movie to become a comedy, Jennifer had to fail at her attempts to control Wallace and then be broken of her magic and seduction by getting married to the very man she was trying to control.

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[11] Creed.

The first horror movie to feature a witch as the main villain is *Night of the Eagle.*[12] This movie also features a dominatrix witch. The first dominatrix in the movie is Tansy, Norman's wife, who is trying to use voodoo to help her husband's career. However, meddling in the male dominated world of work is unacceptable for women, and Norman stops Tansy efforts. Unfortunately, another witch tries to control Norman's life by attempting to ruin Norman's life instead of making it better. After a series of unfortunate events, Norman must try and kill this witch, named Flora, in order to gain control over his life again. These two movies, *I Married a Witch* and *Night of the Eagle* reflect anxiety surrounding women's empowerment and how it could affect men's lives. It may be acceptable for women to have powers in shows like *Charmed* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, but once those powers are used to meddle in the lives of men, it becomes unacceptable and terrifying.

Another witch villain archetype is the crone. The crone is the opposite of the young and beautiful enchantresses found in the 90s teen witch shows, *The Love Witch* and *I Married a Witch.* The crone is the other half of the enchantress/crone dichotomy. She is ugly and old, past her reproductive years and no longer productive in society. The crone is a threat to the patriarchal system precisely because she is no longer able to have children and be part of the normal social order. Without the need to appeal to men, the crone is able to have more freedom.[13] However, despite the crone's threat to the patriarchal social order, horror movies with crones as villains almost never directly reflect this. Instead, the crone is almost always targeting a young woman.

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[12] Creed.

[13] Rountree, "The New Witch of the West."

Horror movies like *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Lords of Salem, Drag Me to Hell,* and *Suspiria* all feature crones who target and ruin the lives of young women. The crones in *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Lords of Salem* specifically ruin young women's lives by impregnating them with a demon child, forcing the work that they themselves cannot do onto others. In *Drag Me to Hell* and *Suspiria*, the crones attack young women for more personal reasons. *Drag Me to Hell* features an old woman getting a revenge on a bank loan officer for refusing her extension by cursing the officer to be tortured for three days and then sent to hell for eternity. In *Suspiria*, an old and powerful witch uses the body of a young dancer to regain youth and live longer. These older villains effectively ruin the lives of younger women despite the supposed threat crones have to men and the patriarchy. Crone-centered horror movies play out this way in order to reject the power that the crone has and reflect it on to women instead. These plots ignore the real power that crones have and instead pit women against women in a way to distract from the real possibilities for their power.

All of these themes come together in the Netflix series *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina.* While the new series has loose connections to the well-loved 90s sitcom *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *Chilling Adventures* is not a direct reboot of the original TV series, nor was it ever meant to be. The character Sabrina Spellman has gone through many iterations, emerging first in an Archie comic in 1962.[14] The newest television version of Sabrina is actually based on a recent comic book series, also named *Chilling Adventures*

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[14] Bob White, Dan DeCarlo, and George Gladir, *Archie's Madhouse #22*, 1959 Series (Archie Comics Publication, Inc, 1962).

of Sabrina, that was first published in 2013.[15] This version of Sabrina is probably the

creepiest, and also the most overtly feminist. This new series demonstrates all of the

themes and ideas that have been laid out throughout this thesis. It is a new example of

witch-media that has complicated interactions with feminism, that exudes sexuality, that

reflects gynaehorror, and that exhibits the power of the crone. *Chilling Adventures of*

Sabrina and the changes in witch-media it exemplifies, reflects a very current idea of

female empowerment.

Chilling Adventures of Sabrina is a show that attempts to directly engage with

feminist discourse with references to empowerment, consent, and other feminist ideas.

Like both versions of *Charmed*, it reflects the current feminist culture in which it was

created. However, while *Charmed* also represented consumerist feminism, the way

Chilling Adventures interacts with these ideas resembles Zeisler's discussions of

consumerist and marketplace feminism even more. As a result of this interaction, the

series is full of short, memorable quotes that are meant to comment on the patriarchy and

catch viewers' attention. For example, in Season 1 Episode 10, Lilith tells Sabrina "I

know you're scared, Sabrina. Because all women are taught to fear power. Own it."[16]

Lilith is not only talking to Sabrina but also to the viewer when she tells Sabrina to own

her power. Additionally, in the beginning of the series in episode 1, Sabrina declares, "I

have reservations about saving myself for the Dark Lord. Why does he get to decide what

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[15] Devin Fuller, "Excited for the 'Sabrina' Reboot? Here's How the Teenage Witch (and Her Cat) Have Evolved," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2018, sec. Arts, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/arts/television/chilling-adentures-sabrina-teenage-witch-history.html.

[16] Rob Seidenglanz, "Chapter Ten: The Witching Hour," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, October 26, 2018).

I do or don't do with my body?"[17] This question touches on consent and harkens back to the #MeToo movement and sexual harassment. These quotes are designed to stick in viewers' minds and create a strong association between the show and feminism. The simplification of feminism into easy solutions is one Banet-Weiser's concerns with popular feminism.[18] These phrases are fun and quote-able, but they also gloss over important details and depth in feminist issues, simplifying feminist issues into simple solutions like owning the power that you have been denied. Additionally, *Chilling Adventures* plays into the world of marketplace feminist in even more obvious ways as well.

The third season of *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* was marketed through a makeup palette created in collaboration with NYX makeup. The palette consists of 30 eyeshadows, two blushes, and one highlighter packaged in a container that looks like a spell book.[19] This marketing tactic reflects the tension around makeup, beauty, and sexuality in the feminist world. Andrea Dworkin problematizes how makeup is meant to attract and ultimately satisfy the male gaze.[20] While a woman might want to wear makeup for herself, its allure and what is considered attractive has been predetermined by what men find attractive. Rachel Moseley established that shows like the original *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* used magic to reinforce typical ideas of femininity and beauty rather

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[17] Lee Toland Krieger, "Chapter One: October Country," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, October 26, 2018).

[18] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[19] "Chilling Adventures of Sabrina Spellbook Palette | NYX Professional Makeup," NYX, accessed February 10, 2020, https://www.nyxcosmetics.com/eyes/eyeshadow-palettes/chilling-adventures-of-sabrina-spellbook-palette/NYX_816.html.

[20] Dworkin, *Intercourse*.

than empowering the women or freeing them. Selling a makeup palette as marketing plays into some of the same tropes as it encourages women to make themselves feminine and beautiful. Like *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed,* this makeup palette draws a direct connection between empowerment and beauty and sexuality. The show itself also reinforces beauty and sexuality for its witch characters. All of the witches in the series consistently look impeccable. They always have perfect hair and makeup despite whatever is transpiring in the plot. Sabrina herself is always rocking a bold red lip. Additionally, in episode 14 of the series, the witches take part in a holiday that involves them running through the woods at night to have sex.[21] Witches and witchcraft are associated with sexuality through holidays and beauty throughout the series to link continually the empowerment of characters like Sabrina with sexual empowerment and freedom.

    Chilling Adventures also falls into a lot of the neoliberal feminist tropes discussed in the first chapter. Neoliberal feminism privileges working hard and trying harder in order to gain power and gender equality.[22] While it is often difficult if not impossible for women to work towards equality on such a specific and individualistic basis, neoliberal feminism has become increasingly popular and prominent.[23] In *Chilling Adventures,* Sabrina often uses her powers to try to fix everything herself, solving all of her problems on an individualistic basis. For example, she attempts to resurrect Tommy, to take on a group of evil witches trying to destroy the town, to help her friend with bullying

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[21] Salli Richardson-Whitfield, "Chapter Fourteen: Lupercalia," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, April 5, 2019).

[22] Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg, "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism?"

[23] Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*.

problems, to save the world form the destruction of the Green Man, and to become the

Queen of Hell. Sabrina rarely ever asks for help, and when she does receive it, she

typically is the one in charge and making decisions herself. This focus on trying to fix

problems through self-determination and will power reflects the neoliberal idea that

empowered women need to do everything themselves. The message of the show is often

that Sabrina has the power to do everything; she just needs to use it the right way in order

to fix her problems instead of throwing off a larger system that she cannot fight against.

Gynaehorror appears in the show from the very first episode when Sabrina begins

to question her Dark Baptism. The Dark Baptism is a rite of passage for young witches

when they turn sixteen. In the ceremony, the witch signs her name in the Book of the

Beast, giving over control of her life to Satan in exchange for greater power.[24] The

ceremony references Sabrina's virginity, which she must maintain as she gives herself

over fully to Satan. Additionally, Sabrina wears a white wedding dress to the baptism that

turns black once she enters the sacred areas, thus symbolizing the ruination of her purity.

This ritual references Sabrina's sexuality and virginity, firmly placing it in the

gynaehorrific.[25]

Although the first two seasons reflect how the witches' powers are controlled by

men and male deities, a shift occurs at the end of the second season and throughout the

third season. At the end of the second season, Sabrina and her friends trap Satan in

Sabrina's boyfriend's body, dethroning the Dark Lord and removing him as the deity and

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[24] Lee Toland Krieger, "Chapter Two: The Dark Baptism," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, October 26, 2018).

[25] Harrington, *Women, Monstrosity and Horror Film*, 2017.

leader of their coven.[26] While this act begins to create some problems for the witches in the third season, such as dwindling powers, no one is quite willing to release Satan and beg for forgiveness. Instead, Sabrina's aunt Zelda finds a new deity to revere and gain power from: Hecate. Hecate is an old and powerful goddess that Zelda "remembers" while she is trapped in limbo.[27] Hecate is called the Triple Goddess with three forms: the maiden, the mother, and the crone. This trinity reflects the cultural movement to reclaim the goddess and the crone that Rountree describes in her research.[28] As feminist witches in the real world have reclaimed the goddess as a deity they can connect to and recognized that she can be young or old, *Chilling Adventures* has presented a new religion for its coven of witches that does the same thing. *Chilling Adventures,* like many real-life witches, is reclaiming these categories for women as a source of power. A trinitarian goddess also reflects the power and importance of the Christian God, who is referenced throughout the show as the False God. The Christian God has been considered a source of patriarchal oppression for many women throughout history. The juxtaposition of God and this trinitarian goddess highlights this patriarchal oppression and provides an all new female deity for women to connect to on a deeper level without misogyny or patriarchy. Through a vision that Zelda has of the future, it also seems that this new coven of witches who pray to Hecate will consist of only women. Creating this new system and praying to a new female deity represents throwing off the old patriarchal systems of oppression and creating a new environment where women can be truly

[26] Rob Seidenglanz, "Chapter Twenty: The Mephisto Waltz," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, April 5, 2019).

[27] Rob Seidenglanz, "Chapter Twenty-Eight: Sabrina Is Legend," *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (Netflix, January 24, 2020).

[28] Rountree, "The New Witch of the West."

empowered, and where they are fully in charge of the entire system. However, this solution to the patriarchy in the show seems to require completely excluding men. It will be interesting to study how this new matriarchal system functions in the next season of *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina.*

The witch has featured as an important cultural icon in movies and TV since the very beginning of Hollywood. Romantic comedies, teen television, horror, and everything in between has utilized witches as empowered female characters. Studying these examples of witch-media can illuminate the complex ways in which our society interacts with empowerment and powerful women. Some shows such as *Charmed* reflect a desire for female empowerment and independence by staying dedicated to depicting strong female characters. Other shows, such as *Night of the Eagle* express an anxiety over the possibilities that could happen if women were truly empowered. While this thesis has analyzed several shows and movies in three specific contexts, feminism, sexuality, and horror, there is still much research to be done in order to understand more fully female empowerment and witch-media. There are countless other examples of witch-media that have valuable information to provide on feminist cultural context, on connections between sexualization and empowerment, and on examples of gynaehorror or empowered female villains. There are also many other topics that can be analyzed in witch-media including rage and diversity. My research primarily focused on white western ideas of witchcraft, but there are other cultural ideas of witchcraft that can yield equally as fascinating information. This thesis could be only the beginning of a plethora of information that can enlighten cultural ideas and interactions with female empowerment. With witches featuring prominently in movies, television series, and books, it is no

wonder that they have become so closely intertwined with society's difficult relationship with empowered women. Researching these representations of those difficult relationships can inform our past and current interactions with powerful women.

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