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Evil No More: The Image of the Witch and Women in the United States From Seventeenth and Twentieth Centuries

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By

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We certify that we have read this document and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Introduction

From colonial America to the twentieth century, witchcraft shifted from threatening and corruptive ways of Puritan everyday lives to women embracing the power of the witch. Hence, the witch was once the symbol of women being overpowered by Satan and Puritan society but is now the symbol of female empowerment. Neopaganism and its subgroups such as Wicca, and other organizations emerged as a way for women to cope and bring awareness of liberation for themselves. Today women who identify as witches are still prevented from being fully accepted by society in the same vein as men. Therefore, women in colonial America and the twentieth century have been affected by the idea of witchcraft and witches. However, the way in which the witch is conceptualized has fundamentally changed because of the increasing significance of feminism and political liberation. While the idea of the witch was once utilized to oppress women in colonial America, it has now become a means for their liberation.

In order to understand how the image of the witch was once a symbol of Satan and evolved to one of liberation and empowerment, we must define the terms associated with this specific topic. First, Neopaganism is an umbrella term that can best be pertained to the large spiritual movement in the United States that revived the ancient polytheistic religion that has a close relationship to modern witchcraft.[1] Second, Wicca is a subculture of Neopaganism that specifically follows an earth based religion, in which their goddess or goddesses are venerated, nature's annual cycle of seasons is celebrated, and magic is practiced.[2] Subsequently, the concept

[1] Helen A. Berger, *Witchcraft and Magic: Contemporary North America* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 29.
[2] Ibid., 28.

Neopaganism and Wicca may vary on how one can interpret both terms, however they can be comparable in many ways. Helen A. Berger explains that Neopaganism has provided the template for magical practices and yearly celebrations for many other forms of Neopaganism.[3] A Neopagan is an individual who follows a religious, spiritual, or cultural community that is based on worship of nature or the earth. Wicca is therefore a subsection of Paganism because it can be spiritual but have varying rituals or practices. Neopagan and Wicca are essentially utilized in a relatable context where it can be understood interchangeably depending on how one chooses to interpret them.

Through a comparative historical approach between colonial America and the twentieth century witch, this paper will demonstrate how women have been oppressed throughout time, not just at the hand of accusations (colonial America) but also through identification (twentieth century). To illustrate what the image of the witch entailed in both colonial and twentieth century America, this paper will attempt to examine, analyze, and explain how the image of the witch shifted from the representation of Satan to a resemblance of women's empowerment and liberation. Subsequently, this will allow for the reader to gain an understanding in regard to the vast difference between witches in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. This emphasizes how the perception of women and the idea of the witch have changed throughout history. This paper will be organized in two respective subsections titled *Women and Witchcraft in Puritanism* and *Women and the Witch in Twentieth Century America*. Throughout each section, this paper will provide examples of how the iconography of the witch has been utilized as a symbol. One being a figure of Satan by the Puritans and nonbelievers versus as an emblem of liberation and empowerment for women by members of Wicca and other organizations.

[3] Ibid., 28.

Women and Witchcraft in Puritanism will discuss the history of how the Puritans understood witchcraft. Furthermore, the examination of the treatment of the accused factors into the comparative historical approach between the Puritan witch and contemporary witch. The analysis of different sources such as newspaper clippings, a diary, and first-hand witness accounts will demonstrate how the Puritans believed that Satan played a role in the image of the Puritan witch. This will demonstrate the mistreatment of the women who were accused of witchcraft during the Puritan era as well as how women were limited with their roles in their villages.

Women and the Witch in Twentieth Century America will discuss how the image of the witch began to emerge as a symbol for empowerment and liberation amongst women beginning of the twentieth century. This section will examine different documents such as postcards, newspaper articles, and groups like the Hermatic Order of the Golden Dawn which was known to be an occult organization that adopted aspects of witchcraft and W.I.T.C.H (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), a group that combats women's oppression while utilizing the idea of the witch to spread their ideas via consumerism. Additionally, this section will discuss the Neopagan movement and its aspects that helped further the idea of the witch and women's rights. This paper will illustrate how the Neopagan movement and its female members were affected by external cultural forces such as members of various religions and mainstream media outlets. This portion of the paper will exemplify the multiple ways the image of the witch embodies the rapidly evolving perceptions of women and womanhood. This serves as a primary catalyst for the feminist movements in the late twentieth century.

Chapter 1: Women and Witchcraft in Puritanism

The understanding of Puritan women and witchcraft in Colonial America played a role in their oppression because of their fragility and vulnerability to sin. The Puritan way of life limited women in their ability to exercise their own agency because of the way Puritan women were perceived by traditional beliefs due to a heavily gendered society within religion and social class. This idea also furthered the reason why Puritan women were accused of witchcraft during the Puritan era. The witch craze existed in Europe between 1400 and 1782 while it had made its way to colonial America sometime in the seventeenth century. Witch accusations began after 1622 near the Virginia colony when the colonists began to allege other individuals of practicing witchcraft. During the seventeenth century, New England Puritan women were held to specific and traditional standards that they were expected to follow. Simultaneously, the traditional role for a woman factors into how the treatment of those who were accused of witchcraft played out in New England colonies. Women were treated with intense abuse and were threatened because they appeared to come off as "different" due to the presence of the Devil infiltrating the village. Therefore, the Puritans believed that womanhood was perceived to have characteristics of submissiveness, fragility, and were more easily influenced; that means Puritans acknowledged that the witch encapsulates the propensity for Satanic worship, is viewed as evil incarnate, and acts as a threat to the Puritans' livelihood.

Given that Puritan womanhood was perceived to have passive qualities and the witch represented the negative qualities, many scholars have postulated Puritans were prejudiced toward women because they were perceived to be influenced by witchcraft and Satan. Elizabeth Reis believes that Puritan womanhood and evil were interconnected in the eyes of New England

Puritans. In *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*, Reis explains, "Puritans regarded the soul as feminine and characterized it as insatiable, in consonance with the allegedly unpleasable nature of women"[4] The representation of the Puritan soul defined as being feminine is crucial to understanding how the soul unites with their God through restoration and conversely with the Devil through committing acts of sin. Reis continues to explain,

> The body, for its part also entangled women, Puritans believed that Satan attacked the soul by assaulting the body. Because in their view women's bodies were weaker, the devil could reach women's souls more easily and breach these "weaker vessels" with greater frequency. Not only was the body the path to the soul's possession; it was the very expression of the devil's attack. A witch's body clearly manifested the soul's acceptance of the diabolical covenant.[5]

Since a Puritan woman was generally perceived as the weaker sex by their male counterpart, they were potentially more susceptible to witchcraft accusation based on the Puritan religious belief. Puritan women were held up to certain standards which played into how they were perceived by their male counterparts as the weaker sex. Some of these standards and roles that colonial women were primarily expected to fulfill were their roles as wives and mothers, taking care of and cleaning the home, cooking meals, sewing, tending to the garden, taking care of sick and injured members of the household, and many other tasks on top of these.

In *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich explains that gender norms in Colonial America were difficult for Puritan men and women to conceive equality.[6] One of the many Puritan principles

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[4] Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 93.
[5] Ibid., 93-94.
[6] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 8.

that so many Puritans had recognized was practically engraved into their society. This makes it nearly impossible for them to break the pattern of their hierarchical structure that was implemented for many years. Within the Puritan hierarchical structure, it was sustained as "one human being was of necessity almost always subject to another– child to parent, servant to master, subject to ruler."[7] Reis explained how the Puritans viewed women as being the weaker sex. This social structuring positioned Puritan women in a vulnerable state where they were expected to be passive and submissive to conform with the Puritan way of life. This allegedly made women more susceptible to being influenced by the Devil. Given the factors that men and women had contrasting roles from one another, it may possibly play in hand with the events leading to more women being accused of witchcraft. A woman's submission to her husband can correlate with her succumbing to the Devil because of her passive and submissive attributes. The Puritan lifestyle and belief system greatly reflects how sexism and witchcraft were incremental in the oppression of women at the time. This idea is significant because Puritan lifestyle informally established that sexism and the world of witchcraft's purpose was to govern and control women in order to maintain a patriarchal order.

While there were tasks women were responsible for, their male counterparts had other responsibilities that incorporated overlooking the household and performing leadership-like roles such as priests, ministers, politicians, etc. Puritan women were held to a double standard when it came to witch accusations. Reis discusses,

> The representation of the soul in terms of worldly notions of gender and the understanding of women in terms of the characteristics of the feminine soul, led by circular reasoning to the conclusion that women were more likely than men to submit to

[7] Ibid., 8.

> Satan. A woman's feminine soul, jeopardized in a woman's feminine body, was frail, submissive, and passive—qualities that most New Englanders thought would allow her to become either a wife to Christ or a drudge to Satan.[8]

It is important to consider a Puritan woman's role she was expected to uphold, but they were also expected to be submissive and passive to their husbands. Submissiveness and passivity correlate with how women were expected to behave under Christ but at the same time, the same could occur with the Devil. It makes sense that Puritan women were easily perceived as an unchallenging target for Satan to overtake. If a Puritan woman was not submissive or passive, they were still suspected and at risk of being incriminated for witchcraft. The double standard that is being presented here makes it impossible for any Puritan woman to be safe within her own village and home. Reis states that "The Puritans' earthly perception of women's bodies and souls corresponded to their otherworldly belief in Satan's powers"[9] Women who were healers and were familiar with herbal remedies were perceived as ones who would associate with the Devil. Why does this Puritan ideology on women regarding their bodies and souls not apply to their male counterparts? From what was gathered and researched, there are no accounts of how a male can be held to the same standards as a woman. Considering that a Puritan woman was perceived as having the weaker body and soul, let us say that a Puritan male allegedly has a strong body and soul. Reis continues to explain that:

> It seems ironic that Puritans envisioned the body as protecting the soul rather than the reverse, so that a strong body rendered a person's soul less vulnerable to Satan's exertions. The body, after all, was usually seen as the weaker link in the soul-body relationship. However illogical, the belief was nonetheless common that the body became

[8] Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 94.
[9] Ibid., 95.

> the path to the soul. A strong body was less likely to submit to the devil's temptations and thus better able to protect the soul, but from the devil's domination.[10]

It is explained that it is necessary for a Puritan to have a strong body and soul in order for them to overcome the Devil's temptations and domination. Theoretically in this case, a Puritan man has a stronger body and soul that will overcome the Devil's temptations, making it much easier on the male sex. By incorporating the Puritan ideology of body and soul between both genders, a Puritan man tended to have an advantage over a Puritan woman who was more at risk of incrimination and victimization for a crime she most likely never committed. The reason for this established Puritan ideology was because they were set in their beliefs and that was all they knew. When some of the Puritan women began to behave strangely, the Puritan men did not know how to cope with these "events" to which was the root cause that altered their mentalities. The gendered split that saturated Puritan society and its relation to witch accusations of colonizers demonstrate the mass hysteria that was present in Salem, Massachusetts. The Puritan religion can be considered a gendered establishment which means that there was a schism between how men and women understood each other. With the limitations that were placed upon women within Puritanism, it demonstrates that women were confined to isolation and restriction from other duties that were considered to be masculine in public spheres. As a result, gender was present within the Puritan society that influenced the treatment of women.

Mass hysteria infiltrated the minds of the Puritans which illustrates the reason why there was a prominent gender split between a man and woman. With keeping the Puritan beliefs and

[10] Ibid., 97.

traditions in mind, the spread of witch accusations factor into how crucial the endless abuse and threats women encountered throughout the duration of the Salem Witch Trials. Another indication for the risk of witchcraft accusation towards women was their social standing in Puritan society. Author Carol F. Karlsen believes that Puritan womanhood and the witch played hand in hand with the qualities of powerlessness and social class. Historians often argue whether social class plays a role in the susceptibility in being accused of witchcraft for women. In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, Karlsen explains,

> Most observers now agree that witches in the villages and towns of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth- century England tended to be poor. They were not usually the poorest women in their communities, one historian has argued; they were "moderately poor"[11]

It is not known whether women in lower classes were purposely targeted or if it was purely happenstance. There are a few scholars who contend that women were accused of witchcraft based on social class. The evaluation of the accused and their social class is difficult to determine a commonality among those accused. Generally utilized class indicators such as the amount of property owned, yearly income, occupation, and political offices held are almost useless in analyzing the position of women during the colonial period.[12] It was common for lower class women in Colonial New England and their labor to translate to their husbands' financial needs. Occupations that were open to women did not pay nearly enough for them to support themselves, and marital status defined whether a woman has decent material condition. Class position does not necessarily imply if one were to be more susceptible to witchcraft accusation. Karlsen

[11] Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 77.
[12] Ibid., 77.

continues to explain "The familiar stereotype of the witch as an indigent woman who resorted to begging for her survival is hardly an inaccurate picture of some of New England's accused" and "the poor account for only a minority of the women accused"[13] Instead of focusing on the exuberant beggar stereotype that was tethered to Puritan women, Karlsen centralizes on the position of accused witches as solely females who were positioned in uncertain social and economic echelons. This is often because a Puritan woman was permitted to inherit, had inherited, or disinherited property. Karlsen deviates from the idea that women who were accused of witchcraft were outgoing beggars and instead focuses on the concept of a woman as being socially pregnable within a predominantly patriarchal society. This same idea can pertain to some aspects of Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft.*

As Boyer and Nissenbaum explore the division between Salem Town and Salem Village, they discover an unusual pattern within the demographics at the time of the witch trials. Boyer and Nissenbaum reveal that the accusers resided on the western side (Salem Village and agriculturalists) while all the accused witches resided in the eastern (Salem Town and merchants) or outer communities. Ultimately Salem Town and Salem Village had differences and it resulted in an intense rivalry because the village wanted to be distinguished from Salem Town. The overall focus of Boyer and Nissenbaum's work is the number of afflicted girls and the minister of the Salem Village (Reverend Samuel Parris) and how they held a significant role in the witchcraft accusations toward the easterners. As the village girls recurrently succumbed to

[13]Ibid., 79.

hysterical trances, many of them accused multiple people of higher and lower social status and essentially abstained from accusing the top social class of practicing witchcraft. Boyer and Nissenbaum's perspective on how women and their social status affected the chances of being accused of witchcraft is that there was no justification as to why they were accused. Though they do not answer as to why accusations mostly pertain to Puritan women, the authors do portray women as having passive behavior and qualities in a "political struggle between vying groups of men and sometimes as psychological struggle within individual men."[14] Perhaps the idea of depicting women as passive demonstrates how they were more inclined to be accused of witchcraft because according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, "the pressure to accuse such men were not intense [...] they remained 'off limits' psychologically and politically. They could not be brought down in the Village meeting or in the courts, and neither could they be brought down as witches."[15] Essentially, Boyer and Nissenbaum demonstrate that men were less likely to be accused of witchcraft because of the traditional social order that was established by the Puritan lifestyle in colonial America. In essence, maybe the concept of the Puritan social order set women up for failure due to the continuation of treating them as passive and submissive beings. Instead, it can be demonstrated that women were casted off as pawns within a male dominated society that limited their ability to exercise their own agency. The gendered social order that the Puritans adopted in colonial New England played a significant role in regard to who was at risk of witch accusations because of the new system that was based on gender.

[14] Boyer, Paul S. and Nissenbaum, Stephen. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1974), 178.
[15] Ibid., 188.

Collectively, both Reis and Karlsen's arguments demonstrate how Puritan women were affected by many aspects of the Puritan lifestyle. These features reinforced the reasons why women were accused of witchcraft due to the passive and submissive attributes that they possessed. Reis discusses the Puritan's thoughts about a woman's nature, what made it more likely to be an omen for witchcraft, and how it can be easily manipulated by Satan. Karlsen addresses how Puritan women were more likely inclined to be accused of witchcraft based on their social standing in colonial New England. Both Reis and Karlsen address gender issues that Puritan women encountered while trying to survive the challenges of living in the New England colonies. Karlsen and Reis' arguments coincide with each other on the Puritan ideologies and how they were understood by Puritans through religion as well as on how women's social positions were being suppressed in a patriarchal society. That being said, the case of a Puritan woman's passive qualities demonstrates what the Puritan mens' beliefs about witches and womanhood were. Puritans believed that witchcraft transpired because women were perceived to be morally weak and lacked agency. It was normal for male individuals to be considered the superior sex due to the reoccurring natural instinct and the thought process of males throughout history. Males had typically believed that females were more susceptible to the manipulation of the Devil because of their weaknesses.

In order to understand and demonstrate how Puritan women were oppressed by the heavily gendered lifestyle and the hierarchical economic structure, there will be several accounts from women reciting their experience of being accused of practicing witchcraft. Their accounts represent and expose how women were predisposed to witchcraft allegations along with the archetypes that make them more in line to be accused. Some of these archetypes that were

affiliated with witchcraft allegations were of lower social economic status, a woman's appearance, or "strange" behavior. Before the Salem Witch Trials, the first American witch hunt and accusations occurred in Hartford, Connecticut in 1662. In March of the same year, John and Bethia Kelly mourned for their eight-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, in their Connecticut home. Elizabeth was reported to be fine days before she returned home with their neighbor, Goodwife "Goody" Ayres. Her parents were confident that Goodwife Ayres was a witch who demonically possessed their daughter and testified that she appeared ill the night after Bethia returned home with her daughter. The little girl professed to her father saying, "Father! Father! Help me, help me! Goodwife Ayres is upon me. She chokes me. She kneels on my belly. She will break my bowels. She pinches me. She will make me black and blue."[16] Goody Ayres was one of many women who were accused of witchcraft in the Hartford, Connecticut witch hunt as the town overcame with hysteria. It is important to note that Ayres was "known for spreading stories of encounters with the devil."[17] This concept served as a way to add fuel to the fire where a rumor such as this one would continue to depict her as one who practices black magic. Goody Ayres' story served as an example of demonstrating that women were more predisposed to the manipulation of the Devil which is represented by the Puritan belief. The majority of the colonists' beliefs relied on their associated religion and biblical passages from the bible. Goody Ayres' story exemplifies how the Puritans viewed women. Reis discusses how the male Puritans

[16] David D. Hall, Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693, 2nd Ed, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 153.
[17] Walter W. Woodward. "New England's Other Witch-Hunt: The Hartford Witch-Hunt of the 1660s and Changing Patterns in Witchcraft Prosecution." *OAH Magazine of History* 17: 4 (2003): 16–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163616.

traditionally believed that a woman's soul (or characteristically known as the feminine soul) were more likely to submit themselves to the Devil because of the passive qualities women had. Furthermore, Goody Ayres was classed as a goodwife taking care of Elizabeth Kelly and considering her place in Puritan society, she was regarded as being in the lower class. Similar to what Karlsen discussed in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England,* a Puritan woman's social class and economic status can determine whether she were to be accused of witchcraft.

Goodwife Ayres story depicts how women were more susceptible to the Devil's manipulation and their own vulnerability to sin because of the passive and submissive qualities women allegedly sustained. Alse Young's account of witchcraft accusation revealed the cultural construction of gender roles in the Puritan villages that possibly contributed to witchcraft allegations and how women were treated. Before the witch craze of 1662, Alse (Alice) Young of Windsor, Connecticut was sentenced to the gallows structured in Hartford's Meeting Square in May of 1647. Young was sentenced to death by hanging along with five other residents of Connecticut. Alse Young was one of the first people on record to be executed for witchcraft in the thirteen colonies. There is little to no documentation on Young's life and court proceedings that led to her execution for alleged practice of witchcraft are scarce. The only definitive information historians possess of Alse Young is that she was born in New Windsor, Berkshire, England in 1615. At the age of 20, Young traveled to newly colonized America and settled in Windsor, Connecticut where it is believed that she married John Young and together they had a daughter named Alice Young. In 1647, Young was accused of witchcraft. Though there are no records that pertain to the initial reasoning for her accusation, there is documentation of her death

recorded in the diary of Matthew Grant. Grant was Windsor, Connecticut's first surveyor, second town clerk, and ancestor of President Ulysses S. Grant. Matthew Grant's diary contains entries about his family records and personal life. Beyond this, there is a list of accused victims and the dates of their deaths. Alse Young's death was recorded by Grant and simply stated, "may 26. 47. alse young was hanged."[18] John M. Taylor, author of *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut, 1647-1697* explained about the Matthew Grant diary:

> It has been surmised for several years--- but without confirmation--- and credited by the highest authorities in Connecticut colonial history, and known only to one of them, that Grant's manuscript diary contained the significant historical note as to the fate of Alse Young[19]

Grant's diary is quite significant because it provides key evidence as witness of the execution of witches in Windsor, Connecticut. Essentially, the diary illustrates the oppression of women in the context of the witch craze. Though Grant's diary may play a significant and historical role in Alse Young's fate, it does not state what her economic status was when she was accused of witchcraft which makes it challenging to utilize Karlsen's discussion about the discourse of Puritan women and witch accusations. Reis' concept about the cultural construction of gender roles in Puritanism is that their beliefs were about religion. As Reis explained how womanhood

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[18] Matthew Grant. "Matthew Grant Diary," ca. -1654 1637. Connecticut State Library, State Archives.

For the transcribed version: Matthew Grant Diary. Transcribed by Jesse Parsons (1927-1943). Revised by Christine A. Pittsley (2008). Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Conn.
https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll14/id/1425

See inside cover for "a list of persons who were hanged." This is the only known original source providing the name of Alse Young, the first person in Connecticut hung as a witch [1647]. The "diary" also has sermons by Thomas Hooker and others, Grant family records, and Windsor church covenant, rules for measuring land, extracts from various religious books, and other miscellaneous material.

[19] John M. Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut, 1647-1697* (New York: Grafton Press, 1908), 146.

and evil were interconnected, Puritan's cultural beliefs about gender had encouraged many to believe that it was a woman's heinous nature that would make them embody the witch incarnate. One thing that does illuminate how gender was constructed in the Puritan colonies was through their religion. A common theme in many of the accusations made against women had to do with their allegiance either to God or the Devil.

Elizabeth Kelley's account represented the construction of gender roles within Puritan society which was another reason why Puritan women were more prone to witchcraft accusation. Anne Cole and Rebecca Greensmith accounts demonstrate how social status potentially can result in an accusation of witchcraft. Ann Cole, a resident of the Connecticut colony who was accused of witchcraft, was in an odd state of mind. In one account, Cole was "taken with strange fits, wherein she (or rather the devil, as 'tis judged, making use of her lips) held a discourse for a considerable time."[20] This led Cole to blaming her bewitchment on her neighbor Rebecca Greensmith who was described as an aged woman considerably ignorant and was speculated in the Kelly case. With regard to Rebecca Greensmith, her testimony was the most damning one. While Greensmith was in jail, two ministers interviewed her attempting to acquire a confession. John M. Taylor discloses the Minister's accounts from the interview with Rebecca Greensmith titled *Promise to Satan—A merry Christmas Meeting—Stone's lecture—Haynes' plea–The Dear Devil—The corvine guest—Sexual delusions* which states:

> She forthwith and freely confessed those things to be true, that she (and other persons named in the discourse) had familiarity with the devil. Being asked whether she had an express covenant with him, she answered she had not, only as she promised to go with him when he called (which she had accordingly done several times). But that the devil

[20] Charles J. Hoadley and LL. D. "A Case of Witchcraft in Hartford." The Connecticut Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly, 5:11 (1899), 558.

> told her at Christmas they would have a merry meeting, and then the covenant should be drawn and subscribed.[21]

There was more to Rebecca Greensmith's testimony beyond alleged meetings with the Devil, but there was also the way the Devil "utilized" her body as well. It is important to note that not all women during the seventeenth century were not eternally perfect, but there were women who willingly claimed they had been bewitched by some means. Further reports claim that Rebecca Greensmith implicated her husband Nathaniel had some form of involvement with her and the activities that were relevant to witchcraft. Taylor includes that:

> Had Rebecca been content with purging her own conscience, she alone would have met the fate she had invoked, and probably deserved; but out of "love to her husband's soul; she made an accusation against him, which itself secured his conviction of the same offense, with the same dire penalty.[22]

The ministers and magistrates would interrogate women who were accused of witchcraft with such ferocity that the victim would have no other choice but to confess or die. Even if the victim denied these allegations, they would still be punished or hanged for their alleged crimes. In this case, Rebecca Greensmith was severely interrogated based on the attitudes of the ministers and magistrates which factors into how women accused of witchcraft were treated by not only other women but also higher male authorities. The case of Rebecca Greensmith can represent the economic status that Puritan women had to live with because of the limited roles that were adopted over time. This can be comparable to Karlsen's argument regarding social and economic status and how it could determine if a woman were to be accused of witchcraft.

[21] John M. Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut, 1647-1697* (New York: Grafton Press, 1908),, 97-98.
[22] Ibid., 98-99.

Karlsen explains that "For Puritans, hierarchy and order were the most cherished values. People who did not accept their place in the social order were the very embodiments of evil."[23] In order to keep Puritan witches from overcoming the Puritan social order and power, Puritan men resulted in suppressing Puritan women who were outcast and considered threats. This concept demonstrates how Rebecca Greensmith was depicted as the weaker sex compared to the three male individuals who forcefully interrogated accused witches like Greensmith. Hartford's venerable Reverends Samuel Stone, Joseph Haynes, and Samuel Hooker formed a prosecutorial tribunal with the goal of gathering evidence and recorded notes.[24] It was reported that Rebecca Greensmith broke apart under the "ministerial assault" and when Haynes presented evidence that portrays Greensmith as a witch, she felt as if "she could have torn him in peeces"; and as she broke down even more, Greensmith said she felt "as if her flesh had been pulled from her bones… and so could not deny any longer"[25] There were tactics that were used to traumatize their victims of interrogation of the accused witch. A male of higher authority overusing their power to degrade any woman has been a common theme throughout the course of history, especially during the witch craze. Though it is not accurately noted, Reverends Haynes, Stone, and Hooker may not always treat women in a degrading way but in relation to accused witches, they were most likely guaranteed to abuse them in some way.

In addition to the perception from male ministers, there were also reports on how women presented themselves which can be considered another form of degradation towards women compared to their male counterparts. In the *Hartford Daily Courant* newspaper dated Sunday,

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[23] Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 181.
[24] Walter W. Woodward. "New England's Other Witch-Hunt: The Hartford Witch-Hunt of the 1660s and Changing Patterns in Witchcraft Prosecution." *OAH Magazine of History* 17: 4 (2003), 17.
[25] Ibid., 17.

May 11, 1930, there is an article titled "Ancient Elm Holds Memory of Witch Hangings" that recounts the past witch hangings. More specifically, this article recites on Rebecca Greensmith and her husband as the accused witches. One excerpt states:

> And of this choice crew, Rebecca Greensmith was leader. A shameless woman, Rebecca Greensmith. The dignity of advanced years ill became her, for the ugly marks of a long and wicked life were stamped upon her. With her straggly white hair, her gaunt and seamed face she resembled to no small extent our modern story book conception of a witch.[26]

Despite the *Hartford Daily Courant's* article appearing in 1930, the article still represents the degeneracy of Puritan women in colonial America. This article degrades Greensmith's physical appearance rather than commemorating her as a victim of witchcraft accusations. By describing her with "white straggly hair" and a "gaunt and seamed face," there are aspects of dehumanization that detract from her ability to exercise her own agency and power. The article further discusses Rebecca Greensmith's husband in a completely stark contrast. It says,

> Nathaniel Greensmith, unfortunate man, was her third husband. So far as we can learn he was a rather weak, inoffensive creature, a victim of his own weakness and of circumstance—the latter in the form of a will wicked wife who was to betray him.[27]

In this circumstance, Nathaniel Greensmith was degraded by the *Hartford Daily Courant* but not in the same vein as his wife. The article degrades Nathaniel Greensmith by describing him as a weak, inoffensive, and unfortunate man, however as her husband who was also accused of witchcraft, he does not receive threats or abuse as harshly. This newspaper article attempts to make Nathaniel Greensmith appear as the victim as opposed to Rebecca Greensmith who was perceived as a stereotypical witch. From what was gathered about Rebecca Greensmith, she

[26] "Ancient Elm Holds Memory of Witch Hangings," *Hartford Daily Courant,* May 11, 1930, 3.
[27] Ibid., 3.

appeared rather unpleasant during her time in the Connecticut colony. It is important to note that Rebecca Greensmith did commit some formidable acts that made her appear as if she were a literal witch but that is not the point. Gender roles during the 1660s in the Connecticut Colony bled into the Salem Witch Trials and the treatment of women who were accused of witchcraft worsened. The Hartford witch craze was the icing on the cake regarding the harsh abuse and threats toward women. Even more so, the perception of accused women proceeded to retrogress as well.

Conclusion

Women of the 17th century endured many forms of oppression, and a lack of both equality and rights during their time in colonial New England. Women (and some men) have been victims to witchcraft throughout history because of their susceptibility to their feminine qualities, social class, their appearance. Because of this, Puritan traditions "manipulate" societal normality that results in warping the mind of Puritans unintentionally. The Hartford witch craze was the precedent to the Salem Witch Trials and its mass hysteria, which factored into how women who were accused of witchcraft were treated and mentally abused while imprisoned. It was determined that for the most part, men were safer than women because of their masculine qualities compared to a woman whose feminine qualities essentially put them in the spotlight. The expectations of women were to be submissive and passive and if there were a lack thereof, then they were more likely to be accused. In the next part, this paper will discuss the twentieth century witch and how history has changed its course regarding witchcraft and how it is deemed more acceptable than in the seventeenth century.

Chapter 2: Neopaganism in Twentieth Century

As the "New Woman" was evolving throughout the twentieth century, the witch trend continued to thrive in American popular culture through literature, television, and film. Beyond the idea of the witch materializing in popular culture, it is also incorporated through a religious aspect as women continued to branch outside their modern notions of womanhood which redefines how we see witches today. Simultaneously, the foundation of modern pagan witchcraft was dawning in the United States. The twentieth century was a prime time for women, their empowerment, and liberation. Altogether, various forms of witchcraft rematerialized and were brought into a new light through similarities that pertain to the religion, spirituality, or symbolism of a witch. When women were conforming to their new norm, feminist groups were established along with the foundation of modern pagan witchcraft. As Neopaganism transpired in the United States, it has provided many women with an autonomous community that granted them liberation, freedom, equality from a male-dominated society. There were also rituals and magic that were administered for a sense of empowerment. What Puritans considered womanhood disappeared in the early twentieth century. Feminist groups and various other organizations such as the revitalization of the occult (The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn) in the early to mid-twentieth century and W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, Women Inspired to Tell their Collective History, Women Interested in Toppling Consumer Holidays, and various other groups) in the late twentieth century emerged as part of the women's liberation movement. Therefore, the ways Puritans understood womanhood was abandoned in the twentieth century due to the views women had that evolved and thus the idea of the witch changed in this extent. Feminism and political liberation did not necessarily

rescind the essence of witches many centuries prior but rather influenced the characterization of said witches. Ultimately, liberated women willingly and gracefully adopted the title of the witch to revel in and acknowledge their feminism and liberation.

The development of the mass consumer market in the United States played a pivotal role in the popularization and commercialization of Halloween and its widespread accessibility to many people via television, retail, etc. With its nationwide appeal, the aforementioned holiday adopted the ubiquitous imagery of the witch. Further stemming from this came the emergence of Halloween-themed postcards in the early twentieth century to which women have found other ways to empower and liberate themselves after the awareness of their limitations. The Halloween postcards were pivotal in American consumerism which could very well have played a significant role in influencing many women to perceive the witch in a new light. As consumerism in America was developing in the early twentieth century, the idea of the witch evolved into something desirable. One of the many factors of consumerism playing a pivotal role in changing how the witch was perceived was through what William R. Leach explains in The *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* is how Americans were shaped to believe that consumerism and capitalism was the new road to living more freely. American consumerism provided a new landscape of living for many Americans in the early twentieth century as it became the catalyst for steering away from a conventional agrarian, religious, and traditional family or communal life. Leach discusses different characteristics that shaped and influenced how American people thought and altered their minds into believing that consumerism and capitalism was the new and improved culture of the United States. One characteristic that emanated was the concept of advertising which was common for emerging

retail companies, businesses, and other institutions. Advertising serves as one of many examples of enticing an individual to capitulate to a specific product or reconditioning their life. Leach explains that advertising provides an:

> overall visual outcome [that] was a provocative, startling, brilliant, and sometimes suffocating blends of color, glass, and light, never subtle, always carnivalesque, employing a prescribed palette of colors and aiming to circulate money and goods in the biggest conceivable volumes.[28]

The image of the witch on the Halloween postcard presumptively did not intend to advertise the witch to gain any kind of exemption from it. Instead, these postcards captivated the attention of many women due to the help of American consumerism because it is important to note that it promotes individuality. This was during the time when women were beginning to really branch out of their traditional familial roles and religious values and embracing the "new woman."

Alternatively, representations of the witch in the early twentieth period epitomized different concepts about womanhood, such as liberation, empowerment, and the desire for equality. Women's magazines in the early twentieth century highlighted new ways for women to embrace the "New Woman" especially around different holidays such as Halloween. There were magazines that illustrated to women what decorations they should acquire for Halloween and how they should be displayed in order to hold a memorable party. It is important to note that Halloween was understood in a different way during this period in time. This is because there was no trick-or-treating and less frightening aspects than there are today. Daniel Gifford has written that Halloween was "meant to be a party for women in which they think about courtship, love, and romance. They invited mixed-sexed crowds to these parties so they can do things like

[28] William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 344.

bob for apples, where faces come very close to each other."[29] Women were understanding that they were limited in many different opportunities because they have been oppressed for many centuries prior. Gifford works at the National Museum of American History and spent some time studying Halloween postcards that circulated amongst women with illustrations of witches. He has found that artists between 1905 and 1915 tended to portray witches as "beautiful sorceresses with blushed cheeks and ample curves."[30] The postcard depictions of beautiful witches were meant to showcase women in a positive light. For example, one postcard in particular depicts a beautiful sorceress sitting posed in a long dress holding a broomstick with bats and owls flying around her in which they represented the early twentieth century idea of Halloween (See *fig. 1*). Gifford comments that "She has her marker as a witch, but she has retained her beauty, […] These women are taking on the power of a witch. They are saying, 'I am going to take on that ability to choose my fate, but I am not going to turn into a hag to do it.'"[31]

Megan Gambino explained that Gifford has their own theories as to why the "beautiful witch" trope was captivating; rather than writing the postcards off as superficial, "Gifford sees these beautiful witches—images that were passed from woman to woman—as part of a shrewd power play, considering the historical context"[32] It is important to note that during this time, women were underprivileged. Traditionally, men have always been the top authority over

[29]Megan Gambino, "Women of the early 1900s rallied behind beautiful, Wartless Witches," Smithsonian.com, October 27, 2014. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/early-20th-century-women-rallied-behind-beautiful-wartless-witches-180953134/ Retrieved March 19, 2022.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Daniel Gifford, "Halloween Postcard- Early 20th Century." Smithsonian Magazine. Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved from https://www.thinglink.com/card/581863743151931393?fullscreen=true.

[32] Megan Gambino, "Women of the early 1900s rallied behind beautiful, Wartless Witches," Smithsonian.com, October 27, 2014. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/early-20th-century-women-rallied-behind-beautiful-wartless-witches-180953134/ Retrieved March 19, 2022.

women and society. Additionally, many of the limitations women had to come to terms with included not being allowed to vote until 1920. Gifford continued to explain that

> This is the period of the New Woman—the woman who wants to have her say, to be able to work, marry who she chooses, to divorce, and, of course, to be able to vote," Gifford explains. "There are lots of questions about how much power women have at this time. What sort of boundaries can they push? How far can they push them? What sense of control do they have over their own lives and their own fate?[33]

Witches were generally perceived as possessing magical abilities and notable powers, and it is possible that women yearned to embody the "beautiful witch" trope without appearing grotesque and evil. As the period of the "New Woman" began to emerge, women were beginning to become more self-aware. The "New Woman" was the constituent of the beautiful witch trope, and it serves as symbolism for liberation. Since there was a desire for liberation from being oppressed for so many years, women rallied behind the image of the witch due to their ability to decide their own fate because of the enticement American consumerism procured for many women through postcards. This can theoretically be the first step for America to recognize that witchcraft is commonplace in American culture.

2.1 The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

While the early twentieth century advertising movement contributed to a friendly and obtainable image of witches, the Hermetic Order insisted that witchcraft was something discrete and unique. That affected how the Hermetic Order understood women in ways regarding how they were capable of achieving their agency in a patriarchal society. The reinvigoration of the occult played a pivotal role in furthering women's equal rights and utilizing the image of the

[33] Ibid.

witch unofficially in the United States. The organization perceived women in ways such as equal counterparts that brought agency for many women to disengage with the societal standards that were expected of them at the time while embracing and understanding what witchcraft meant to both parties.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (more commonly the Golden Dawn) was a clandestine group dedicated to studying and practicing the subject of occultism, metaphysics, and paranormal activities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Golden Dawn was known to be a "magical order" that was first active in Great Britain and soon made its way to the United States by the beginning of the first World War. The primary focuses and practices were based on the supernatural in human affairs and spiritual evolution. Many of the practices and their concepts were built off of older traditions of 'witches' and 'magick' that many of the members utilized. More specifically, concepts of the group's practice are centered around contemporary traditions such as Wicca that was inspired by the Golden Dawn. This soon became one of the largest substantial transformations in twentieth century western occultism. One important factor that the Golden Dawn offered for women was how womanhood was understood not only by the organization as a whole, but by their male counterparts as well. Another factor being how womanhood thrived utilizing witchcraft in a positive light amongst the organization.

The emergence of the Golden Dawn in the United States came at a difficult time where there was a prevalence in poverty, strict patriarchal systems, diseases, high mortality rates in women and children, domestic violence, and alcohol consumption. Overall, the impermanence of the living conditions in early twentieth century America had made it difficult for people and families to survive in the United States. During this tumultuous time, women were not granted

the same freedom and power similar to that which the Golden Dawn had provided. When the Golden Dawn was established in Great Britain in the nineteenth century, the birth of modernity in late-Victorian society was considered to be a complicated process, in which progressive ideas and ideals often clashed with traditional values and norms.[34] The emancipation of women was one of the primary issues where the only roles delegated to them were those of wives and mothers. Authors of *Women's Agency and Rituals in Mixed and Female Masonic Orders*, Alexandra Heidle and Joannes Augustinus Maria Snoek explain that "Women were regarded as not only physically inferior to men, but also psychologically and intellectually lower. The 'new' and modern woman challenged man's alleged superiority, and often chose to reject the role as wife and mother that was thrust upon her by society"[35] Similar to American women, British women found themselves rejecting these traditional roles that were mandated upon them. They found themselves outside the acceptable norms of British society and therefore had to find alternative communities in which to interact; and thus, one alternative resulted in the occult milieu.[36] Great Britain experienced women rebelling against their social norms well before the United States had. Additionally, the "new woman" emerged during the Victorian era in Great Britain well before it had emerged in the United States in the twentieth century.

In order for there to be change, Golden Dawn teacher and leader Florence Farr wrote in her book *The Modern Woman: Her Intentions*,

> Life seems hopeless to the middle aged. Most of them once thought they could put it right in a week if they had a free hand. They try, they fail, they marry and spend the evening of their lives trying to destroy the illusions of their children as quickly as possible, so that

[34] Alexandra Heidle and Joannes Augustinus Maria Snoek, *Women's Agency and Rituals in Mixed and Female Masonic Orders* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008 Aries Book Series, V. 8.), 246.
[35] Ibid., 246.
[36] Ibid., 246-47.

> they also may "settle down" to hard facts. To excuse himself a thinker will say, "I know the dangers of cultivating the imagination; I know that unless it is nipped in the bud this wildflower of the mind will twine its tendrils round me, cover me with its shadows, intoxicate me with its fragrance, and destroy reason and physical health."[37]

Farr explains that for change to transpire and to acquire better equality rights, the vision that women aspired for is the key to social reform and revolution especially in the United States. The Golden Dawn promoted and cultivated women's rights and its activists and supported educators while the group was also against anticolonial radicals who were opposed by these new changes. The way to overcome these obstacles was through the implementation of magic. Essentially in the eyes of the group's female members, the Golden Dawn encapsulated the image of the witch as a symbol of liberation and empowerment.

When it comes to gendered particularities, the Golden Dawn offered its female members the same opportunities as their male counterparts. The group allowed women to advance on a hierarchical basis that can be expressed through the understanding of a form of witchcraft. Since the group was based on multiple traditions before its time, they utilized every one of those former traditions in their own way and it ultimately made up the Golden Dawn. The Golden Dawn was structured on an initiated hierarchical basis similar to that of a Masonic lodge; however, women were granted admission on an equal premise with men. Women of the Golden Dawn had made endless contributions to the organization and had played a pivotal role in the running of it. The majority of women who were admitted to the Golden Dawn originally emanated from Christian institutions of either Catholic or Protestant denominations. Unlike these

[37] Florence Farr, *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*, Gerritsen Women's History, No. 799 (London: F. Palmer, 1910), 79.

external Christian institutions, women were granted roles that men would normally possess. Female members of the Golden Dawn were granted the status of priestess and were given permission to write doctrines and to develop and design ceremonies. Given the opportunities that were provided, the group's female members were moving from a religion that was purely dominated by males to one of the occult that gave women freedom and power from subordination. The Golden Dawn was built off of a structure that was made up of communication with the spirit realm, tarot cards, astrology, and other such forms. Though the Golden Dawn was founded primarily by men, women had the chance to advance through the degrees on an equal level with male members and assume administrative offices in the various Temples that were established. Each Temple was overseen by three Chiefs: The Imperator, the Praemonstrator, and the Cancellarius.[38] In the feminine form, the three offices were titled Imperatrix, Praemonstratrix, and Cancellaria.[39] The Golden Dawn was founded on a solidified principle that there was a feminine aspect of the Godhead and was just as important as their male aspect.

As the teachings differ greatly from traditional patriarchal Christianity in western customs, an attempt to embrace and highlight the feminine aspect. This was established by one of the female Golden Dawn members Mina Mathers who was heavily involved with the group. The so-called Rites of Isis were demonstrated in Paris, France for the public to acquire more of an understanding of the female aspect of the Divine. The Rites of Isis have been understood as a symbol of the universal feminine principle which should be in balance with the male principle.[40]

[38]Alexandra Heidle and Joannes Augustinus Maria Snoek, *Women's Agency and Rituals in Mixed and Female Masonic Orders* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008 Aries Book Series, V. 8.), 252.
[39] Ibid., 252.
[40] Ibid., 258.

Members of the Golden Dawn structure their transcendental understanding of the universe and themselves based off the kabbalistic Tree of Life where the male and female fundamentals should always be in complete balance. The group's principles can be best compared to Hindu and Buddhist tantra; that is *shiva* as the masculine aspect, and *shakti* as the feminine. These two principles do not insinuate that a strict dualistic world be established but rather a form of monism since one cannot exist without the other.[41] Mina Mathers explains the purpose of this specific ideology and states:

> When a religion symbolises the universe by a Divine Being, is it not illogical to omit woman, who is the principal half of it, since she is the principal creator of the other half--that is man? How can we hope that the world will become purer and less material when one excludes from the Divine, which is the highest ideal, that part of its nature which represents at one and the same time the faculty of receiving and that of giving—that is to say, love itself in its highest form—love the symbol of universal sympathy? That is where the magical power of woman is found. She finds here force in her alliance with the sympathetic energies of Nature.[42]

It is indicated that the feminine facet of the Divine in the Rites of Isis outlined and emphasized the balance between male and female counterparts. Furthermore, a woman in her biological embodiment had a distinctive function in the role of performing magic. In Mina Mathers' perspective, a "Woman is the magician born of Nature born by reason of her great natural sensibility, and of her instructive sympathy with such subtle energies as these intelligent inhabitants of the air, the earth, fire, and water"[43] A woman had the ability to be a suitor of magical works because of her natural sensibility. Women were seen as equivalent in the eyes of

[41] Ibid.,258.
[42] R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order*, (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1997), 121-22.
[43] Ibid., 122.

the Golden Dawn because there was an idea that man and woman balanced one another within nature because one cannot be without the other, similar to Yin and Yang in Taoism.

One of the most significant qualities of the Golden Dawn is that it embodied some archetypes of the witch that represented elements of liberation and empowerment. One of the beliefs and thought processes that the Golden Dawn female members upheld was the idea that, at the core of their belief in magic, they will have the ability to change and influence the world. Though it was common for the members to regularly embrace the concept of magic, outsiders perceived them (especially women) to be "nutcases" due to these individuals advocating for their rights and their affiliations with "magic." As a result of these contentions, movements were established, and books were published and these specific kinds of social changes were formed by these so called "nutcases." Through these changes, the United States was overwhelmed with racism, misogyny, and nationalism. The Golden Dawn female members persevered through these preconceived notions on the concept of magic in the United States. Italian historian and anthropologist Ernesto de Martino (1908-1965) had published works that centered on religion and the supernatural in Italy. De Martino's work that was issued in the United States titled *Magic: A Theory from the South* focuses on the utilization of magic amongst the people in Naples, Italy in the 1950s. He gathers that the majority of scholars believed the so-called "magic" should have ceased to exist following the Enlightenment was not only still being utilized but had an efficient dynamic.

All the spells that were enacted have a purpose of giving the user the feeling of control over their own lives, that which women (and female members of the Golden Dawn) primarily desired in twentieth century America. De Martino explains "One might say that the root of...

magic, is the immense power of the negative throughout an individual's lifetime, with its trial of traumas, checks, frustrations, and corresponding restrictedness and fragility to the positive"[44] To be more specific, de Martino believes that trauma, loneliness, melancholy, illness, and fear affect an individual in a way that removes their ability to exercise their own agency in their lives. In twentieth century America, there was a rift created between women who preferred to exercise their own agency and those who followed traditions that were already established. Women of the Golden Dawn can be comparable to enamored young females in Southern Italy that de Martino discussed in *Magic: A Theory from the South*. Users who practice magic were taught that agency was robbed from them due to the limitations (by laws that trapped them in awful marriages, owning their own property, and trapped in a social order centered on class, race, and sex) that women were expected to live up to. To deal with the hierarchical system, women utilized magic to combat and cope with those societal standards. Through the utilization of practicing magic, users counted on magic to do the heavy lifting rather than allow it to do the heavy lifting. In other words, magic was perceived as an escape from the world that kept women from true self-expression and empowerment.

Golden Dawn member Florence Farr and her comrades did not refrain from magical practice and instead published books, campaigned for women's rights, and offered speeches. Initially, practicing magic has perpetually been deemed as morally wrong by many outsiders such as practicing Christians. It was not until the twentieth century when women desired to

[44] Ernesto De Martino, *Magic: A Theory from the South*, Translated by Dorothy Louise Zinn, (Chicago: Haul Books, 2015), 85.

branch out of their normal traditions. Though Florence Farr, Mina Mathers, and many other female Golden Dawn members' contributions were not technically for the United States, they did pave the way for women to branch beyond their oppressed lives and yearn for freedom that the group had provided for them. The Golden Dawn unofficially utilizes the image of the witch to essentially expand their rights, livelihood, agency, and power in order to acquire a humane life that is liberating, especially for women through the encapsulation of the witch.

2.2 W.I.T.C.H.

Where the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was an organization that promoted equality and the quality of a woman's life through opportunities of practicing magic and rituals in a patriarchal society, the group W.I.T.C.H was a group in the mid to late twentieth century known to be a radical feminist group who campaigned against the patriarchy and female oppression. The group embraced the iconography of the witch through American consumerism and by adopting the Golden Dawn's mentality on female empowerment. This represented various forms of feminism that had acclimated to modern Paganism such as Wicca and perceived the image of the witch as the first steps in combating women's oppression. Through this perspective, W.I.T.C.H essentially used the Golden Dawn's philosophy and modern consumerism to their advantage to spread their ideas and beliefs more universally.

Initially, the group W.I.T.C.H was primarily deemed to be designated as more of a political group than spiritual or religious. Beyond the political side of the group, there can be a spiritual aspect that members of different covens utilized while protesting. W.I.T.C.H did not exclusively practice rituals and magic as a whole considering that the group itself was made up

of a number of different witch covens and those who did not practice witchcraft. In order to be acknowledged as whole by outsiders, the group had developed and contributed leaflets for individuals to envision the goals that were established by them. One of their leaflets explained how W.I.T.C.H understood witchcraft and harnessed the symbol of the witch for their greater message. The group adopted the "witch-cult hypothesis" that was developed by archeologist Margaret Murray. It essentially argued that medieval witchcraft rituals were part of a "definite religion with beliefs, rituals, and organization as highly developed as that of any other cult in the world."[45] This alludes to the belief that Murray thought that pagan practice had prevailed long before Christianity arrived in Europe and was widely practiced. The arrival of Christianity led to the downfall of the practice of Paganism that lasted until the eighteenth century in parts of England and Western Europe.[46] Paganism was conquered by different branches of Christianity and pagan practitioners were prosecuted and discredited. Eventually these proceedings resulted in events such as the Inquisition in Europe and the Salem Witch Trials in colonial America. Subsequently W.I.T.C.H allegedly adopted the witch-cult hypothesis and believed that those who were prosecuted as potential witches in European history (and perhaps the Salem Witch Trials) had been members of a prevailing pre-Christian pagan religion that was pined for the suppression of that specific practice.

Based on the witch-cult hypothesis, W.I.T.C.H's manifesto postulates how "nine million women" had been burned to death during the witch trials in the seventeenth century (this claim

[45] Kathleen L. Sheppard, *The Life of Margaret Alice Murray: A Woman's Work in Archaeology*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), 173.
[46] Ibid., 173.

was formerly made by first-wave feminist Matilda Joselyn Gage).[47] Their interpretation of utilizing the witch-cult hypothesis is that they firmly believed in the idea that a pre-Christian pagan religion thrived before the rise of Christianity. Furthermore, the group believed that more women were burned for their beliefs that greatly deviated from Christianity because paganism was perceived to be the Devil's work and resulted in the suppression of the witch during the witch trials in colonial America. Ultimately, this is how W.I.T.C.H understood the concept of witchcraft and womanhood:

> If you are a woman and dare to look within yourself, you are a Witch. You make your own rules. You are free and beautiful. You can be invisible or evident in how you choose to make your witch-self known. You can form your own Coven of sister Witches (thirteen is a cozy number for a group) and do your own actions... You are a Witch by saying aloud, "I am a Witch" three times, and *thinking about that.* You are a Witch by being female, untamed, angry, joyous, and immortal.[48]

By adopting the witch-cult hypothesis, W.I.T.C.H constructed a notion that a woman can be who she desires to be and that means she has the power to declare herself as a witch with her own free will without the burden of a patriarchal presence looming over her. Because of W.I.T.C.H's beliefs about women and witchcraft, it prominently captured the interest of "feminist witches" rather than "traditional witches." Feminists witches of W.I.T.C.H have formed their own covens within the group which provided many practicing members an opportunity to freely empower themselves. Through the group's understanding of womanhood and witchcraft, they have contributed objectives on what a "feminist witch" meant to them through the leaflets that were published in 1968. One postulation of W.I.T.C.H is that any group of women can form their own coven and declare themselves witches (which was previously implied) by effortlessly deciding to

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[47] Chas S. Clifton, *Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America, (The Pagan Studies Series),* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2006), 120.

[48] Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 290-91.

do so and implementing it magically.[49] This assumption about the "feminist witch" is that it conflicts with the traditional way of practicing witchcraft i.e., the conventional training, hierarchical structures, and the roles of priesthoods. The second postulation of the "feminist witch" from the group's perspective was that witchcraft was inseparable from politics.[50] W.I.T.C.H primarily focused on advocating for women's rights and the right to practice witchcraft. One last conjecture of the group's interpretation of the "feminist witch" is that it was necessary to create new rituals, "festivals of life, instead of death."[51] Somehow or another, W.I.T.C.H perhaps desired to continue with some traditions from the "traditional craft" in order to keep the message of the group's campaign.

Cynthia Eller, author of *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America*, explains about W.I.T.C.H, "These first feminist witches did not gather to worship nature, but to crush the patriarchy, and to do so in witty, flamboyant, and theatrical ways. They engineered various political actions, drawing on the witch theme"[52] The group would spread their message through different acts of witch-like representations such as protesting or "hexing" in different locations in the United States by handing out cloves of garlic and cards that have multiple messages about the inequalities that women faced. Though W.I.T.C.H. utilized the image of the witch as a powerful symbol for women's liberation from oppression, it is important to note that the group was more political than it was religious or spiritual. Eller explains that W.I.T.C.H. was "never pretending to be a spiritual group, and [was] probably unaware of the

[49] Ibid., 206.
[50] Ibid., 206.
[51] Ibid., 207.
[52] Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), 53.

neopagan revival in America, W.I.T.C.H. anticipated several of the motifs of the feminist spirituality movement that was to follow upon the meeting of feminism and neopaganism"[53] The significance of this group was symbolism because "feminists were identifying themselves with everything women were taught not to be: ugly, aggressive, independent, and malicious." By acquiring this symbol, women crafted their own version of a witch, turning the witch into "female power, knowledge, independence, and martyrdom"[54] The basic concept of modern contemporary witchcraft illuminated a kind of redemption that many women sought as the second wave feminist movement progressed. As a result, there were many demonstrations that W.I.T.C.H. portrayed to American mainstream society that could have frightened them. Owen Davies, author of *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft After Salem*, explains:

> The one big negative in the coming together of feminism and the witch movement was the promulgation of the 'Burning Times.' This was a term coined by Gerald Gardner to describe the historic persecution of the witches he had adopted as pagan ancestors. As the majority of those executed as witches in the early modern period were women, the notion was propagated in feminist circles, particularly by the American radical Mary Daly, that the Burning Times represented 'gendercide'…[55]

Considering the attempts that women were making to progress in the late twentieth century, the Burning Times is supposed to represent the many lives that were lost in the European and Salem Witch Trials because women were oppressed in the same vein as those who were victims prior. In this circumstance, it can be thought as 'gendercide' due to the constant attempts in maintaining the traditional social order that had been implemented throughout history. The

[53] Ibid., 54.
[54] Ibid., 55.
[55] Owen Davies, *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft After Salem*, 1st edition, (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013), 215-16.

concept of the "Burning Times" can be comparable to W.I.T.C.H's belief on the adoption of the witch-cult hypothesis because of the idea of women's oppression, marginalization, and lack of equality.

Moreover, W.I.T.C.H's beliefs bled into the Wiccan understanding of the marginalization, oppression, and lack of equality for women and practicing witches throughout history. As the "Burning Times" served as the colonial American persecution of witches, many modern Wiccans and members of W.I.T.C.H essentially modeled their narratives of oppression and marginalization around this historic model.[56] This concept had provided practicing Wiccans new ways of establishing themselves and their communities in the contemporary struggle against oppressive cultural forces within mainstream society, comparable to women or practicing pagans during the "Burning Times" of the early modern era. Modern day experiences of "oppression from the mainstream society have encouraged Wiccans to find historical analogues that might provide a language for contemporary concerns."[57] Through this lens, the "Burning Times" and the oppressive nature of mainstream culture are theoretically interwoven with one another and have provided a road map for the future for women and witchcraft to come. In some cases, W.I.T.C.H. was the precursor to the birth of Wicca and other neopagan religions in the United States progressing into the 1970s.

[56] Glenn W. Shuck "The Myth of the Burning Times and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary American Wicca." *Journal of Religion & Society* 2: (2000), 1–9.
[57] Ibid., 2.

2.3 Women, Neopaganism, and its Domains in the United States

Organizations like the Golden Dawn and W.I.T.C.H, together with American consumerism, have paved the way for spiritual freedom, liberation and empowerment for women, and more notably, the Neopagan movement in the United States. The Neopagan movement served many purposes for practicing pagans, witches, and women. While the movement pursued change for spiritual freedom and women's equality, there have been challenges members encountered from external cultural forces such as their perception of paganism and women and its interconnection from Christian denominations and mainstream society. One challenge that female members were confronted with was harsh criticism and judgement from these external cultural forces. This can include how pagans practiced their beliefs and traditions because it was perceived to be wrong in the eyes of Christian institutions. Another challenge that practicing pagans and Wiccans endured was the discrimination from these outside groups. This constituted different perceptions from various media outlets and how members were treated within the American workforce or government regulated facilities. Ultimately, women and pagans alike were forced to weather the storm brought onto them by their unwavering Christian constituents and mainstream society through different media outlets and the workplace.

The Neopagan movement unfolded in the United States in the late 1970s. Neopagan religions continued to progress and advance because of the feminist movement due to a patriarchal society and religions that had overshadowed American society for a long period of time. Neopagan religions are considered to be particularly diverse, versatile, and eclectic. There are various facets stemming from Neopaganism such as branches, networks, and communities.

These emanate from the traditions of witchcraft to which Neopaganism acts as an umbrella term due to its complexity. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America* author Margot Adler states, "While these groups all differ in regard to tradition, scope, structure, organization, ritual, and the names for their deities, they do regard one another as part of the same religious and philosophical movement."[58] In the middle of the 1980s, moreover it was estimated that from 40,000 to 100,000 Americans were involved with this assortment of Neopagan religions.[59] The emerging religion only continues to keep growing as it progresses into the twenty first century.

Being one the most renowned religions in America, Christianity was (and still is) primarily dominated by a patriarchal system that perceived women and feminism as negative in the eyes of the alleged oppressor. Throughout history, "witch" and "pagan" tended to encompass negative associations from outsiders because they were different. Margot Adler explains that "Negative associations with these words are the end result of centuries of political struggles during which the major prophetic religions, notably Christianity, won a victory over the older polytheistic religions"[60] As these words were misunderstood, Pagan stems from the Latin *paganus*, defined as a country dweller, and is itself derived from *pagus*, the Latin word for village or rural districts.[61] The literal meaning of the word *Pagan* correlates with how individuals

[58] Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 22.
[59] Danny L. Jorgensen and Scott E. Russell. "American Neopaganism: The Participants' Social Identities." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38: 3 (1999), 325–38.

[60] Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 27.
[61] Ibid., 27.

have been treated since they were deemed to be outsiders by Christians throughout history because of the differences in their beliefs from one another. Margot Adler refers to followers of witchcraft as The Craft. Neopagan witchcraft is perceived to be one of a number of modern polytheistic religions compared to Christianity that is deemed to be a monotheistic religion. People in the West typically assume that religion must contain beliefs, principles, or traditions that must involve a remote, superior deity that is typically male. Because of this, the Western concept of *religion* is contradicted by the "nature religion" that is Neopaganism. Instead, Pagans perceive religion in a different light compared to the Western concept of religion. They oftentimes emphasize that the word *religion* means to "relink" and "to connect" and "therefore refers to any philosophy that makes deep connections between human beings and the universe"[62]

Ostensibly, Neopaganism is based around the desire to craft deep and personal connections with other people who have the same interests. Adler explained that "A group of women in a feminist Witchcraft coven once told me that, to them, spiritual meant, 'the power within oneself to create artistically and change one's life'"[63] Neopaganism and its domains create an atmosphere that women gravitated toward because it provided them beauty, vision, imagination, intellectual satisfaction, growth, feminism, environmental activism, and lastly, freedom. These characteristics constitute what Neopaganism is and that it is comprised of women who realized they could benefit from it. Women desired acknowledgement with one another and the universe because they are just as human as their male counterparts. Through

[62] Ibid., 30.
[63] Ibid., 31.

aspects of Neopaganism like witchcraft or Wicca, they were able to make connections with each other and come together to conquer the challenges of being a woman in the United States.

Even though paganism was known to be a peaceful practicing religion, the Neopagan movement emerged along with other events like the feminist movement and the Satanic Panic. These events coinciding with one another makes it easy for Pagan members to be targeted by nonbelievers or Christian constituents. One tribulation that Pagans contended with is that female members were confronted with harsh judgment and criticism from external cultural forces such as Christians. As the Neopagan movement had expanded in the United States, many Christian affiliates ensured to make it common knowledge that they did not believe in the Pagan practice because it was perceived to be sinful and satanic. This idea can be demonstrated through various newspaper and media outlets that discuss the challenges and hardships that Pagans, witches, and women received from nonbelievers. In the USA Today newspaper, there is an article titled "Topic: OCCULT & HALLOWEEN; Witchcraft is a scary, dangerous practice" where Jack Kelley interviews a practicing witch, Bryan Jordan. The interview provided more of an insight on what modern day witchcraft incorporated in 1990. Jordan discussed how witchcraft (and Paganism) was no threat to any other religion, especially Christianity. He explained how members of Christianity affected their community negatively for a long time by stating:

> The Christians have shunned us for so long that we're just trying to clear the air. We're not evil. We're not going to eat your babies. We're not out to stop Christianity. They've made us look bad. They've tried to stop us. They yell at me for wearing my pentagram with my star pointed up, which symbolizes man. The pointy black hat idea was made up by someone hundreds of years ago. None of us wear those gaudy things. We dress and look like anyone else, except I have pink

> hair. And we don't fly on broomsticks. But we do have cats or some kind of animal to symbolize life. Ours has a blue mohawk.[64]

It can be alleged that many Christians thought their lives and the United States would be negatively impacted due to the idea of the Devil being associated with Paganism and witchcraft. It is important to note that Jordan appears to be a male individual, but his story can represent the Pagan and witchcraft community as a whole. The significance of his narrative was to highlight the hardships that the Pagan-witchcraft community had to cope with in the late twentieth century. Altogether, many Christians had some kind of an influence over many other institutions and the American government which made it challenging for practicing Pagans and witches to freely express themselves without the burden of harassment.

One other struggle that practicing Pagans and witches experienced was discrimination from these outside groups. Many of these groups had varying perceptions of the pagan-witchcraft community because of the influence that Christianity had over the American government. There have been cases where an individual who practiced witchcraft or Paganism in the workforce was harassed by their employer because of their beliefs and was considered to be unacceptable. Furthermore, there have been instances where government officials such as the police force were arresting individuals simply for practicing their beliefs or traditions in a public space. Essentially these individuals of the Pagan-witchcraft faith have been mistreated in the workforce or by a government regulated facility. Practicing witch, Zsuzsanna Budapest (known by her pen name, her given name being Zsuzsanna Emese Mokcsay), believed that she was a victim of a modern-

[64] Jack Kelley. "Topic: OCCULT & HALLOWEEN; Witchcraft is a scary, dangerous practice." USA TODAY, October 31, 1990, 11A.

day witch hunt. Budapest was a Hungarian refugee who had maintained that she inherited her powers from her mother. In a *Los Angeles Times* newspaper article titled *'Witch' To Go on Trial*, Steve Harvey discussed Budapest's arrest and the reason behind it. It was reported that Budapest was "arrested and charged with fortune-telling Feb. 10 in Venice after giving an undercover policewoman a tarot card reading."[65] It is important to note that fortune-telling and tarot card reading was considered to be unlawful in California during this point in time.

Under California law, Zsuzsanna Budapest was charged with breaching a municipal by-law that made tarot card readings and fortune-tellings prohibited by the state. Her arrest can serve as one of many instances of a female member of the pagan-witch community being mistreated and neglected by government officials. The *Los Angeles Times* newspaper article explains that Budapest believed that "Christianity had given witchcraft a bad name, painting it as sorcerous and villainous."[66] Religion has had a profound influence on the American government throughout the country's history even though it is deemed to be secular and because of this influence, minority communities and religions were more susceptible to mistreatment and forms of oppression. Subsequently, Budapest boldly stated that, "I am the first witch to go on trial for my beliefs in 300 years."[67] The American government evidently does no criminalize women and witches the ways Puritans did during the late seventeenth century, but Zsuzsanna Budapest's trial represents something quite significant. Her trial epitomizes the greater issue of how the Pagan-witch community was limited on what they could practice and converse about their beliefs and

[65] Steve Harvey. "'WITCH' TO GO ON TRIAL." *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, Apr 10, 1975.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

traditions in public or workspaces. As Budapest was on trial, she believed that she was deceived by the undercover officer that visited her shop she ran in Venice Beach called Feminist Wicca and fought the law with the slogan "Hands Off Wimmin's Religion."[68] Because of the law prohibiting tarot card readings and fortune-telling, it subjected Pagan-witch members into fear of these external cultural forces into being cautious. As a result of Budapest's trial, she was found guilty but eventually the state's Supreme Court reversed the guilty verdict and determined that it was unconstitutional and that it violated the Freedom of Religion Act.

Following the state Supreme Court's overturning Budapest's verdict, she continued to protest for women's rights in California and was able to expand the freedoms for members of the witchcraft community. Zsuzsanna Budapest did not let these external cultural forces prevent her from being able to express her as well as the Pagan-witch community's practices, beliefs, and traditions. Predominantly, Budapest was one of many leaders in the Pagan-witch community in the United States to pave the way for future members to come and for women and feminism in general.

Conclusion

Ultimately, women throughout history have been oppressed by a predominantly masculine society for many centuries. The treatment of women throughout history can best be represented in the image of the witch. In seventeenth century Colonial America, Puritan women were more prone to being accused of witchcraft by higher male authorities from both the town

[68] Erik Davis, *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), 210.

government and church priests. Puritan women who were more affected by these witchcraft accusations were typically of, but not limited to, low socioeconomic status and rejected from society. Subsequently, Puritans believed that the image of the witch had affiliations with Satan and in the eyes of the Puritans, the witch was fearful and would bring harm to those around them. Overall, the Puritans viewpoint of women as witches presented them as fragile and susceptible to the Devil and sin.

In the early twentieth century, the image of the witch had shifted to a symbol of female empowerment and liberation in the United States. In this case, the iconography of the witch has transformed women's perceived weaknesses, showcased by the stereotypes of American society, into strengths. The image of the witch permitted women the ability to connect with foundations transcending themselves and their reliance on nature. Their silence and dissidence were adapted from qualities that were based on social norms and were transformed into admirable traits of freethinking. The "new woman" in conjunction with the idea of Halloween demonstrates how modern consumerism altered the witch into an optimistic and beneficial embodiment of liveliness through magazines and postcards. As a result of the "new woman" emerging, organizations like the Golden Dawn adopt an unbiased way of thinking with regard to gender relationships. Furthermore, the Golden Dawn embodied the concept of the witch that they gravitated to and discovered that practicing magick was a way for them to gain power. Groups like W.I.T.C.H and Neopaganism foster the archetype of the "new woman" and the Golden Dawn's perception of female empowerment, as well as utilizing consumerism and mass production to spread their message and ideas universally, thereby transforming the idea of the witch in American culture.

Ultimately, the witch will serve as a symbol of empowerment as women continue to persevere and advocate for their rights in the twenty-first century in the United States.

Appendix

Figure 1. *Halloween Postcard-1905-1915.* Postcard depicts a beautiful sorceress sitting posed in a long dress holding a broomstick with bats and owls flying around her in which they represented the early twentieth century idea of Halloween.

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