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THE BODY



The Characterization of the Female Body as Grotesque in Western Thought in Relation to The Historical Figure of **THE WITCH**



THE PURPOSE OF OUR ZINE IS TO SHOW HOW "GOOD" HAS ALWAYS BEEN REPRESENTED THROUGH BEAUTY, WHILE "EVIL" HAS BEEN DEPICTED AS UGLY AND MONSTROUS. WE WILL BE USING THE FIGURE OF THE WITCH TO PRESENT THIS TOPIC, AS THE DOMINANT DEPICTION OF THE WITCH IN THE MEDIA AS AN UGLY MONSTROUS CREATURE IN THE BODY OF A FEMALE.

FROM THE 15TH TO THE 18TH CENTURY, FEAR OF THE WITCH AND HER POWER LED TO CENTURIES LONG WITCH HUNTS THAT MEANT TO EXECUTE ANY WOMEN THAT DIDN'T FIT INTO NORMS OF FEMININITY AND WOMANHOOD

20TH CENTURY MEDIA PERPETUATES THE IDEA THAT WITCHES ARE AGING, GROTESQUE WOMEN WHO USE MAGIC TO GRASP AT POWER, AND KILL AND EAT CHILDREN FOR THEIR MASTER 'THE DEVIL' LET'S EXPLORE DEEPER WHY THE WITCH IS DEPICTED AS DEVIANT FEMALE BOTH IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE AND POPULAR CULTURE

*In conclusion...*

*The Body Marks What is Proper Versus Improper*

We take what is proper as if it is GIVEN rather than an ARBITRARY creation

The monstrous witch marks differences between good and evil

The deviant female goes beyond the borders of what is respectable

The sexual, social, behavioral transgressions of the female makes her the "other", a being to blame for societal disorder



The accusers of witchcraft invented an US vs THEM between the NORM and the WITCH



## Circe by Madeline Miller

Even at the moment of her birth, Circe was seen as a plain and talentless disappointment. She is kept in hiding in the underground halls of her father's palace, as he is ashamed of her ugly appearance.

She discovers her own power in witchcraft, which leads to further shunning by her family, especially her father. She lives through decades of isolation on a remote island until around the time the events of The Odyssey take place.

She finds her own happiness in the end alongside the lives of mortals, not gods.

Throughout her journey, Circe finds power in her intelligence, sexual appeal, confidence, and witchcraft - all traits that were used to paint her as a villain in previous incarnations (and by extension, historical witches).

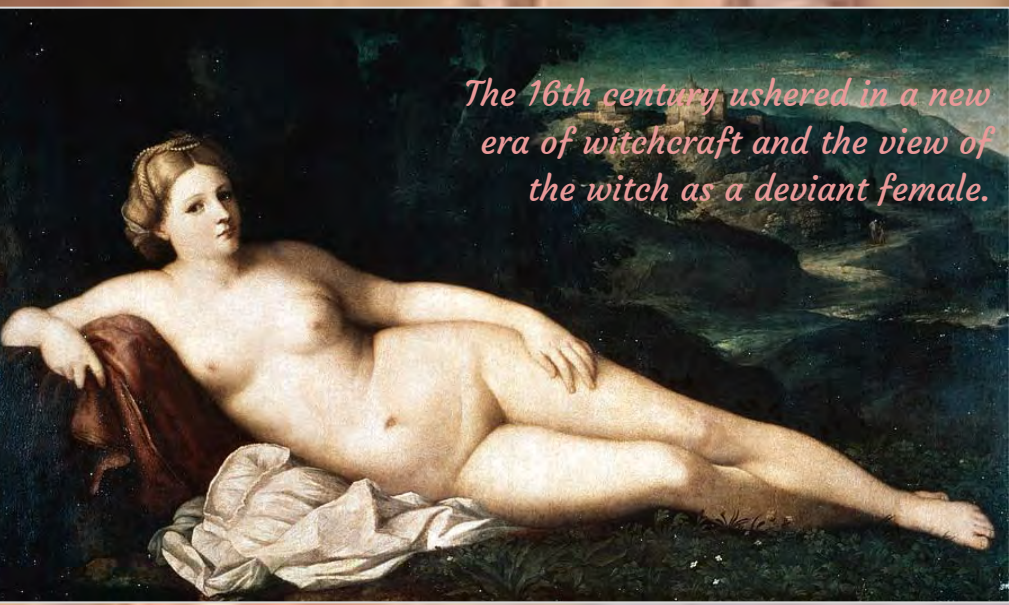


20th century media used film to define what evil witches look like on screen. We can thank Disney for the tradition of equating evil woman to witch. Disney's evil witches often match descriptions of many anti-witch texts. The good witches contrast with bad witches, especially in appearance. We will further explore these tropes and depictions of women, witches, and the dichotomy of good and evil.

For hundreds of years, women have been stereotyped as the figure of the witch. In early depictions of the witch, she served as a warning to women attempting to exert power outside the bounds of the domestic sphere. Women with occult knowledge, or simply poor, social outcasts, were victims of persecution in Early Modern Europe.



The 16th century ushered in a new era of witchcraft and the view of the witch as a deviant female.



**AESTHETICS: WHITE SKIN AND CHEEKS**    **BLOND HAIR**    **RED LIPS**  
**SMALL FEET**    **SUPPLE WAIST**  
**ROUND AND FIRM**    **BREASTS, PINK NIPPLES**

Women's Social Identity Has Been Conditioned to Their Cultures Perception of the Body

A plumpness was a sign of wealth and status  
 Softness, delicateness were the standard  
 behavior  
 Beauty became a necessary attribute of moral character and social position: Ugliness became associated with social inferiority and vice

The 16th-18th Century Concern for order and clearly defined social boundaries manifested in the appearance of the [female] body



## Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West

In the Broadway musical Wicked, Elphaba's reputation as the Wicked Witch of the West is thrust upon her by society due to her appearance.



Elphaba consistently follows her convictions, and ends the Wizard's mistreatment of animals. She is subsequently rewarded with a smear campaign headed by the Wizard and a mob of witch-hunters raring to attack her. She embraces her status as the Wicked Witch of the West, knowing that her good deeds may never come to light.

Glinda and Elphaba's lover aid in her escape from the mob, allowing her to live in an accepting environment away from society.





## Revisionist Media on Witches

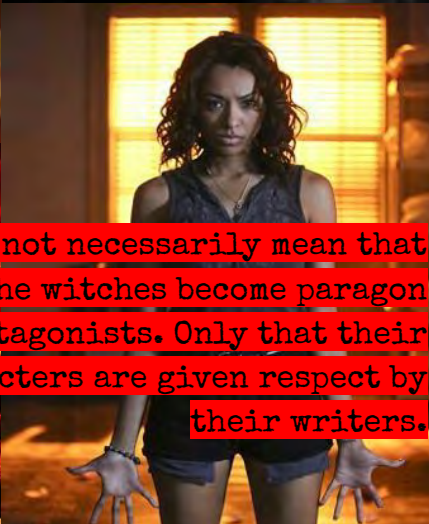
Even though in these fairy tales, many of the witches have done quite evil things, they can be seen as aspirational through a modern lens. In a more self-referential context, many people start to question **why** these women are written like this. The struggles that some of these women face, not only within the world of the story, but from the outside world of the author and the readers are incredibly common.



In the 21st century, many writers have taken old stories with witch antagonists and rewritten them into a story of female empowerment. The demonized features of the witches, such as their strange looks, strong ambitions, intellect, and magic become admirable traits when painted in a sympathetic light



This does not necessarily mean that the witches become paragon protagonists. Only that their characters are given respect by their writers.



The 16th century ushered in a new era of witchcraft and the view of the witch as a deviant female.

Nudity becomes vulgar  
Modesty was a sign of social and moral distinction  
First victims of new social morality were, you guessed it : **Women**

Women were represented as insidious temptresses, whose objective was to seduce men and deliver them to satan

Medical science reinforced this vision of female sexuality by declaring erotic fulfillment to be biological necessity for women

Hysteria (thought to be expelled from the uterus) was made responsible for delusions of diabolic possession and other mental illnesses



The female villain was the disobedient wife- In the Age of Reason, women accused of being shrew were muzzled like dogs, prostitutes were whipped or caged and subjected to fake drownings  
Capital Punishment was created for women convicted of adultery



The concept of witchcraft did not exist in the Middle Ages, nor were there trials and executions even though magic was a part of everyday life. Magic has always been feared by the ruling class as a tool of insubordination among lower classes.

15th began fear of popular magic and sorcery was declared a form of heresy and a crime against god, the state, and nature

The main target of the attacks: **Women**

Women were the ones called to heal neighbors, give amulets or potions, and help see the future, and this claim to magical power undermined authoritative powers, giving the poor a sense of power to control natural and social environments



## The Attack on Magic

The combination of intense social and economic struggle primed the Backdrop for witch hunts: Revolts from the peasant class against land privatization were led by women

## The Little Mermaid: Sea Witches and Queer-coding

In the Disney adaptation of The Little Mermaid, the sea-witch's appearance (Ursula, in this case) is based off of Divine, one of the most prominent drag queens in history.

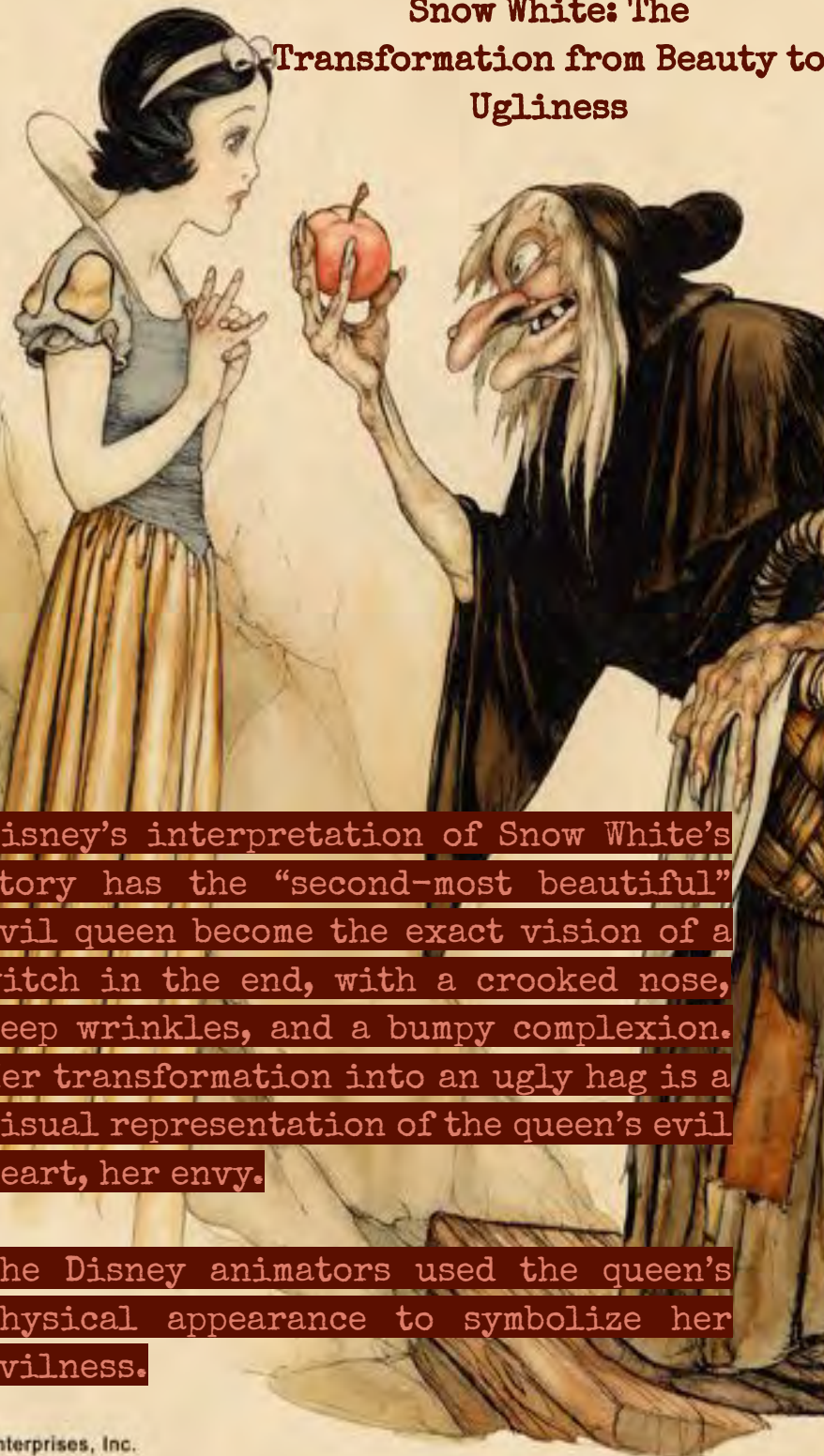
The persecution of witches and the LGBTQ+ community are very similar in spirit - both communities dared to defy societal norms

purely by existing. Many storytellers subsequently gave (usually villainous) characters traits that are associated with negative stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community, similar to how many villains in fantasy media have are witches or are similar to witches.

Ursula just happens to be a combination of both. Ursula is only one example of queer-coding, but there are many more merely under Disney's repertoire (for example: Jafar from Aladdin, Scar from The Lion King, and, more positively, Li Shang from Mulan).



## Snow White: The Transformation from Beauty to Ugliness



Disney's interpretation of Snow White's story has the "second-most beautiful" evil queen become the exact vision of a witch in the end, with a crooked nose, deep wrinkles, and a bumpy complexion. Her transformation into an ugly hag is a visual representation of the queen's evil heart, her envy.

The Disney animators used the queen's physical appearance to symbolize her evilness.

**LATE 15TH CENTURY AUTHORS OF NOTORIOUS MALEFICARUM DECLARED THAT THERE WERE THREE THINGS IN NATURE: THE TONGUE, AN ECCLESIASTIC, AND A WOMAN, WHICH KNOW NO MODERATION IN GOODNESS OR VICE LIKENED WOMAN TO THE CHIMERA, A BEAST WITH A LION'S NOBLE HEAD, A VIPER'S TAIL, AND THE FILTHY BELLY OF A GOAT**

**WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS GREW OUT OF AMBIGUOUS SOCIAL SITUATIONS, AND WERE GENERATED BY TANGIBLE, PERSONAL MISFORTUNES AND BY REAL HOSTILITIES BETWEEN NEIGHBORS**

**MAJORITY OF WOMEN ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT FIT THE SAME MOLD OF SOCIAL DEVIANT POOR, OLD, POWERLESS SPINSTER, PAST PRIME OF FERTILITY THEIR ACCUSERS OFTEN A GENERATION YOUNGER**

**INVOLVED EMONIZATION OF BIRTH CONTROL AND NON-PROCREATIVE SEXUALITY**



**THE WITCH-HUNT DEEPENED THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN-TEACHING MEN TO FEAR THE POWER OF WOMEN**

**PARAMETERS OF WITCH HUNTS: SCAPEGOAT, INNOCENCE (LIKELY), PARANOIA, CREATING FALSE EVIDENCE, DISRUPTION OF THE "NORM" (ACCUSED), MAJORITY OVER MINORITY, MOB MENTALITY, ELITE CLASS VS LOWER, PUBLIC PUNISHMENT (PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL, WHETHER FOUND GUILTY OR NOT), INNOCENCE, NOT GUILT, HAS TO BE PROVEN**



## The War Against Women: European Witch Hunts

Witch hunts were crucial to the construction of a new patriarchal order in which women's bodies, their labor, their sexual and reproductive powers were placed under state control and made into economic resources.

Hunting socially deviant monstresses provided an outlet for tensions created times of uncertainty, change, and isolation.

As the most dependent members of society, women became most vulnerable to these changes



Witch hunters were interested in eliminating general forms of female behavior they no longer tolerated, and had to be made abominable in the eyes of the population.



## The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Good and Wicked Witches

In contrast, the Wicked Witch of the West was not extensively described in the novel - the most prominent description of her notes her as being one-eyed. The 1939 movie is what solidified her iconic appearance, with green skin, a hooked nose, and a protruding chin. Interestingly, the movie omits the eyepatch that she would ostensibly be wearing if she was missing an eye.

Of course, when translating the book to a visual medium, the good and evil must embody opposites. By making Glinda beautiful, the Wicked Witch of the West is turned into something monstrous.

**Glinda:** ...are you a good witch, or a bad witch?

**Dorothy:** Oh, but I've already told you, I'm not a witch at all! Witches are old and ugly.

**Glinda:** I'm Glinda, the Witch of the North.

**Dorothy:** You are?! Oh, I beg your pardon! But I've never heard of a beautiful witch before.

**Glinda:** Only bad witches are ugly.





## The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Good and Wicked Witches

"She (Glinda) was both beautiful and young to their eyes. Her hair was a rich red in color and fell in flowing ringlets over her shoulders. Her dress was pure white but her eyes were blue, and they looked kindly upon the little girl."



Glinda and the Good Witch of the North are both described to be beautiful. (In the case of the Good Witch of the North, she was described to be beautiful in her youth, as during the time of the book, she was quite elderly.)



"There lived here then, away at the North, a beautiful princess, who was also a powerful sorceress. All her magic was used to help the people, and she was never known to hurt anyone who was good."

## Salem Witch Trials

Samuel Parris was reverend of Salem village, And interpreted people who were against him, were against god Vast majority of Parris's followers were accusers, majority of accused didn't go to his church

Accused: mostly women 75-80%; many accused were of high social standing, different than in Europe, similar tropes in terms of midwives being accused



Accused witches were women who stood to inherit (or own) property independently of men; economic stability and independence within a patriarchal society Language used to describe the women accused were deeply misogynistic; Cotton Mather described one woman as a hag, similar to European descriptions

The Salem episode was not fundamentally a religious event caused by fear of Satanic attack on the church, but the result of a clash between old-style agrarian Puritanism and emergent capitalism which divided the village into western and eastern camps

Puritans were first generation settlers, or 2nd gen, from Europe and brought European understanding of women and their bodies, vulnerable to satanic temptation; also believed they could be particularly demonic or pious, based in idea women had weak bodies, easily fall prey to the seductions of the Devil or the teachings of God

The trials came about because of the actions and decisions made by the local ministers and government officials who gave way to their fears of a global force of evil assaulting their city on a hill.





they were questioned where the rest were and they tried to find them. pagan tradition had mythologies of these devilish women who steal children  
 Witches Sabbath: This image pornographically exploits the

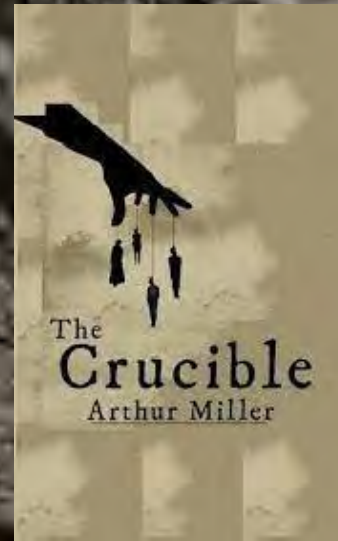


Church authorities were convinced Jews practiced blood rites, also a belief gathered with the children they stole to murder then eat

## *Witches' Sabbath*

Painting by the Spanish artist Francisco Goya  
 1798 oil on canvas

Apparent anti semitism, the name sabbath came from the Jewish sabbath; Jews were often seen as heretics female under the guise of condemnation. Disfigured, old, evil looking women



*"I want to open myself! . . . I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him, I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss His hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!"*



## *THE CRUCIBLE - 1953*

Jews brought the plague and leprosy. The gathering of the witches is important. If one witch was accused, This is where witches would contact the devil and partake in orgies In Germanic





**Hocus Pocus - 1993**



*Plays on the theme of the Salem Witch Trials and depicts the three witches as antagonists*

*In the 90s, witches are to be admired, not feared.*

What Is The Meaning Behind The Hunt For Witches?

... NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE

Shift in legal procedure from private to public accusatory system, central-ization of state power, impact of the Reformation and Counter Reformation on social life



Devil beliefs arise in periods when one mode of production is supplanted by another → the material conditions of life and metaphysical underpinnings of the social order are transformed

The expansion of rural capitalism led to growth of poverty, hunger, and social dislocation



# 20TH CENTURY



Notice the beauty of the evil queen and the "monstrous" features of the witch



Snow White - 1937



Seductresses

Circe, although beautiful, is portrayed as demonic, luring men and turning them into swine. She is seen as a seductress and has been called a witch in certain translations



Ulysses - 1954