

Witches, Bitches, and White Feminism: A Critical Analysis of *American Horror Story: Coven*

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American Horror Story: Coven (2013) is the third season of the popular horror anthology on FX¹. Set in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana, the plot centers on Miss Robichaux's Academy and its new class of female students—witches descended from the survivors of the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692². The all-girls school is supposed to be a haven for witches to learn about their heritage and powers while fostering a community which protects them from the anti-witch prejudices of the outside world, however, it soon becomes clear that the coven is under attack both from infighting within and from multiple forces outside of the coven as well. While the show deals explicitly with issues regarding femininity and race, the show implicitly deals with issues of modern feminism through their use of witches. There is a well-known history of associating feminists as both “witches” and “bitches”. Less well known is the deep association and critique of whiteness pervading academic, mainstream and celebrity feminisms (Mohanty 2003, 169-189; Moreton-Robinson 2010; Wicke 1994). This paper borrows from Dina Georgis' concept of “the better story” (2003), that is, that stories are “emotional resources for political imagination and for political renewal” (Georgis 2013, 1). Georgis argues that:

“Story, understood psychoanalytically and metonymically, stands for the way we narrate the past, seek and transmit knowledge, and imagine our future. Story is the principle of how we seek to make sense of human experience” (Georgis 2013, 1).

I argue that *Coven* is telling a story about the history of feminism and contemporary issues within the broader feminist movements of North America, using witchcraft as an allegory in

an attempt to tell a better story—one that pushes us to imagine a better future.

This paper combines ethnographic content analysis and intersectional feminist analysis to engage with the television show *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013) to conduct a close textual reading of the show and unpack how the representations of a diversity of witches can be read and understood as representing a diversity of types of feminism. I argue that this season of a popular television series can be read as an allegory for contemporary issues within feminist theories and practices. *Coven* represents prominent issues within feminist dialogues such as the persistent white supremacy—particularly within academia—the political differences between generations, anti-feminist men's movements (so-called men's rights, the Red Pill, etc.), as well as the diverse subgroups of feminism represented by the diverse characters in the show (including critical disability and environmental feminisms). I argue identification with the characters and conflicts in *Coven* can encourage creative political mobilizations, concluding with a brief discussion on the enduring symbol of the witch and witchcraft for feminists. Popular culture texts, like *American Horror Story: Coven*, help contemporary white feminists be self-reflexive, imagine better stories, and hopefully practice better futures.

Ethnographic content analysis as its primary method of analyzing AHS's *Coven* season. David Altheide, credited with creating this method, describes it in this way: “Ethnographic content analysis is used to document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships” (1987, 68). Ethnographic content

analysis thus varies from standard content analysis as it allows for a deeper engagement and understanding of the text, the symbols and meaning within the text, and theoretical relationships with other texts and socio-political realities. This method is particularly useful for allowing the researcher deep involvement with the text to develop a descriptive account of the complexities of the narrative (Ferrell et al. 2008, 189). In closely examining the text (*Coven*) to explore the themes and relationships depicted, ethnographic content analysis sheds light on how these elements of the show connect and represent real-life issues, and can be used as a starting point for imagining solutions to said issues.

The methodology for this analysis consisted of watching *Coven* twice before reviewing it a third time and taking detailed notes on both content and recurring themes. Data was coded conceptually as was potentially relevant, for multiple purposes (Altheide 1987, 69). The notes were then coded by theme and combined into the following major theme groups discussed below: White Witches, Voodoo Queens, Witch-Hunters, and the Academy. Naomi Goldenberg, one of the seminal scholars of the feminist analysis of religion, names twelve factors³ of the phenomenology of modern witchcraft in her book *Changing of the Gods: Feminism & the End of Traditional Religions* (1979, 111-114). These phenomena factors can be utilized in contemporary feminist theories and practices as they are in the *Coven* television show.

The first factor of Goldenberg's phenomena of witchcraft is female deities. She argues that any religion that deifies a female principle is likely to be seen as primitive, blasphemous, and evil to scholars and clergy in a patriarchal society (1979,

111). In *Coven*, the Supreme (the term for the leader of the coven) serves the function of absolute authority, as she possesses the strongest powers amongst them all. Despite all of their powers, witches are considered mythological outside of the coven, with the public unaware of their continued existence until the final episode of the series. I extend Goldenberg's thinking to apply to women's and gender studies and feminism; any discipline or movement that puts a woman, or group of women, at the forefront will be seen as blasphemous and ineffective.

The third factor is viewing nature as sacred Goldenberg notes that, "many theologians have pointed out that Judaism and Christianity consider nature as inferior to 'man'—as something to be conquered by 'him'"⁴ (1979, 111-112). Indigenous feminist scholar and activist Andrea Smith emphasizes how the relationship between the Judeo-Christian understanding of nature and the belief that women as inferior to man manifests within colonial histories through the link between violence against indigenous women and the colonization of the land (2005). This connection is further developed in the following discussion of the *Coven* character Misty Day, a nature loving witch who is given the earth-centered powers to heal and is driven to heal the earth and its creatures in return.

The fourth factor is the value of individual will. In witchcraft, "there is no guilt attached to asserting one's will and to rallying deities to one's aid," whereas in Judaism and Christianity, "attempts to rally physical and psychic sources to achieve an individual goal are considered degenerate forms of magical thought which do not have a religious character" (Goldenberg 1979, 112). In *Coven*, the valuing of individual will is demonstrated on a number of occasions with various characters; Marie and Fiona seek immortality from the deity Papa Legba, Zoey seeks answers to her questions from a Ouija board, and Cordelia seeks fertility help from the Voodoo Queen. All these 'witches' appeal to higher powers for aid in exerting their own will, as opposed to passively accepting the forces as taught in Judeo-Christian religion and culture. Every single character asserts their will and attempts to live their life authentically, and feel no guilt for their ambitions. Within dominant concep-

tions of feminism, a woman's ambition is seen as strength, and peoples fighting against systems of oppression is encouraged. Guilt only enters feminist conversations when addressing white guilt, which is too often both paralyzing and an unproductive action in the attempt for broader struggles for freedom (Faria 2016: 82; Young 2003).

A spiraling notion of time is the fifth factor of Goldenberg's phenomena of witchcraft is. She claims:

"witchcraft is a religion that does not hold a notion of the linear progress of time to some judgment day of euphoria or catastrophe. Time—in its everyday, annual and large-scale varieties—is lived as circular and repetitive" (1979, 112).

Coven clearly demonstrates the spiraling sense of time with its use of flashbacks, deaths, and resurrections. Flashbacks draw connections and parallels between characters and events from various time periods. The deaths and resurrections of multiple main characters carried out by their peers also goes against linear chronologies and the inability to control past, present, and future.

Goldenberg's sixth factor builds on the spiraling nature of time, through a cyclical notion of bodily growth and decay. For witches, "the body's growth and decay is accepted as inevitable and not depressing—definitely not a consequence of sin. The triple aspect of the Goddess as maiden, mother and crone in different stages of growth and decay emphasizes this" (Goldenberg 1979, 112). Through the flashbacks in *Coven* the audience sees Fiona transform from maiden before she ascends, to mother of Cordelia and all in the coven as Supreme, and then as crone as she begins to fade and dies. This is represented as inevitable, since even the Supreme cannot escape it and eventually Fiona does meet her death⁵. Feminisms engagement with mentorship by older women and by fighting against the normative beauty standard, sexism, ageism, and disability attempts to remind the broader culture that aging is a natural process—even for women.

The eighth factor is a lack of division between good

and evil. *Coven* successfully portrays complex characters that are neither good nor evil, who play the part of both heroine and villain throughout the plot. Broadly speaking, feminists as a group have surely been accused of misandry and charged with claiming all men are evil (or that all white people are evil, or all cis gender or straight people), despite that feminists in general are more interested in critical analysis than in simplified moralistic and gendered divisions.

The absence of a sacred text is the ninth factor discussed in Goldenberg's text. She notes that within witchcraft, "a pluralism of beliefs is encouraged. One symbol can mean several things to several people and even several things to one person" (Goldenberg 1979, 113). Thus, like feminism, people are able to take away particular things or become engaged in different subgroups, themes or texts from a number of movements or disciplines within feminism more broadly. However, Goldenberg also notes that, "the written word is the respected word. A religion that exists in the modern world and does not utilize texts is bound to appear uncivilized in the sense of not 'of the civic body' or not 'of the polis'" (Goldenberg 1979, 113). Thus, the institutionalization of women's and gender studies within the academy does give feminism a certain amount of grounding by the research and texts produced⁶. Similarly, in *Coven* there is no particular text the girls must read, but instead they seek out the books with the information necessary to enrich their own lives and powers.

The tenth factor is lack of law or rigid discipline. In contrast,

"The picture of a person in Jewish, Christian and even Freudian lore is of a being something with amoral passions which need the control of some sort of law to keep them from wreaking their gluttonous, wicked designs on the self and the planet." (Goldenberg 1979, 113)

Goldenberg describes this as the "lion tamer fantasy of human personality," however, "the Craft subscribes to no such fantasy" (1979, 113). Witchcraft rejects the religious laws of Judaism and Christianity on the basis that they do not contribute to a better life on earth (Goldenberg 1979, 114). For witches,

there is no need to call on a higher order to know how to accomplish a task, as people are self-regulating and self-governing (Goldenberg 1979, 113). In *Coven*, there are no laws beyond protecting the coven and looking out for each other, although the girls are also supposed to respect the authority of Cordelia, Fiona, and Myrtle. Feminists are self-governed by their own morality and ethical choices and those of their chosen communities, indeed often protesting and resisting laws which they find unjust and oppressive. The girls' lack of authority for their elders simply because they are elder demonstrates a sense of feminist resistance to hierarchical structures and an attempt at centering mutual recognition and respect.

In the world of *Coven*, which is set in the contemporary period with flashbacks to the 1800s and the decades in between, witches continue to be executed by religious fanatics and an ancient order of Witch-Hunters. These issues lead to the return of the Supreme (the leader of the coven) after a long absence, to help her daughter run the school. Yet the Supreme also has an ulterior motive—as she will die when the new supreme ascends to power, and she intends to murder the next supreme to maintain her life and strength. Thus, the witches are under threat both from without their coven and within.

The witches of the coven are almost entirely white—but they are not the only witches in town. On the other side of New Orleans, live the Voodoo Queens—or black witches—with whom they have shared a ten-year truce over territory in the city. While white feminists and black feminists can work collaboratively there are many instances when either white feminists fail to support anti-racism and/or anti-colonialism or perpetrate white supremacist logics and exclusive discourses. In *Coven*, the divide is often underpinned by both racism and colonialism, as it traces back to the New England Witch Trials when white witches fled south from Salem to New Orleans, claiming territory that was already occupied by the Voodoo Queens. The tension between the current Supreme and the Voodoo Queen is also rooted in Fiona's blatant disregard and disrespect for the history of white witches' magic which is rooted in the Voudon magic of Tituba—a slave brought to serve a master in Salem—who gave them the gift of magic to begin with in Salem⁷.

I argue that this divide within feminism between white feminists and feminist of colour—including indigenous feminists—is based on the same harms of racism, colonialism, and other interlocking systems of privilege and oppression. Black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the feminist theory of intersectionality, which is the relationship between power, oppression, and privilege that radically changed feminist thought for third wave feminists. In her seminal article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991) Crenshaw critiques identity politics, not for upholding dividing lines between identity categories and the domination of those who deviate from the social standard of white cis gender heterosexual middle class able-bodied man, but “that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (1991, 1241). In her article, Crenshaw uses intersectionality to demonstrate how a woman of colour experiences patriarchy and racism simultaneously, and thus her experience of patriarchy is different than that of a white woman's, and her experience of racism different than that of a man of colour (Crenshaw 1991, 1252). Crenshaw also cautions against catch-all interventions which are directed at women as a group: “When reform efforts undertaken on behalf of women neglect this fact, women of color are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged” (Crenshaw 1991, 1250). Indeed, *Coven* demonstrates how this conflation of difference not only re-centers whiteness and marginalizes feminist of colour—it marginalized witches of colour as well.

Justyna Sempruch fails to convincingly critique Mary Daly and other second wave radical feminists' universalization of the witch as a feminist symbol specifically for neglecting racial and cultural difference, as Audre Lorde refutes this in her open letter to Daly (2007, 66-71). Lorde writes to Daly expressing that her use of the Goddess resonated with her and her African heritage:

“Your words on the nature and function of the Goddess, as well as the many ways in which her face has been obscured, agreed with what I myself have discovered in my searches through African myth/legend/religion

for the true nature of old female power.” (Daly, 2007, 67)

Further, she critiques the alienation Daly associates with witchcraft and suggests she look to the female bonding of African women, telling her that power, strength, and nurturance “is there to be tapped by all women who do not fear the revelation of connection to themselves” (2007: 69). Thus, for Lorde⁸ and for other black feminists, the power of women and witchcraft is tightly tied to a sense of community. In *Coven*, the witch-hunters of Delphi Trust can only finally be defeated through the combined efforts of both the white witches of the coven and the black voodoo priestesses. Lorde writes,

“For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.” (Lorde, 2007, 112)

Racism, colonialism, capitalism, class warfare, and ableism are oppressive tools of the patriarchy; feminists cannot find freedom with these tools though they may sometimes provide a veneer freedom, it comes at the expense of marginalized women. The fact that we must form solidarities across difference and give up privileges to end the oppression of others is only frightening to those who believe their lives to be more worthy than others. Ignorance to the intersectional nature of privilege and oppression is the monster that continues to haunt feminism.

Fiona Goode (played by Jessica Lange) is the Supreme of the Coven. The audience is first introduced to her in “Episode One: Bitchcraft,” as she checks in on the stem cell research she has been funding with her late-husband's money. The doctor tells her that if she were worried about her looks it would be both safer and easier to quit smoking and have cosmetic surgery, to which Fiona rebuts that what she wants is “vitality”. She then does cocaine, dances and cries at her reflection in the mirror. Reluctantly the doctor gives her doses of the RM47 serum for five days. Unhappy with the results, she

scares him with her witchcraft and then kisses him—which ages him to the point of death and she immediately looks younger. She then smashes the mirror. The character of Fiona Goode can be read as an allegory for white second wave feminism. While Fiona demonstrates leadership and courage, she also fails to dismantle both the hierarchies within the coven and within broader social contexts by reifying white witchcraft as both separate and superior to black/Voodoo magic. Fiona puts her career above her relationship with her daughter as she struggles to achieve success while simultaneously promoting the image that she “has is all.” Fiona returns to the Coven and is disappointed in how her daughter Cordelia has been running the school. Fiona forewarns of a storm coming for them all and insists on staying and returning to actively fulfill her role as Supreme, despite her daughter’s threats and objections. She has barely moved in before she goes out. Motherhood is a contentious issue throughout *Coven*, particularly for Fiona and Cordelia. For many white second wave feminists, silence regarding motherhood has not been due to hating the idea of motherhood, but rather because a professional career is central to this feminist identity; being “only a mother and seeing motherhood as the “paramount source of oppression (Hallstein 2008, 146). Fiona is largely absent as a mother for Cordelia, which is justified through her position as Supreme. Fiona’s method of mothering is juxtaposed to her daughter’s struggles with fertility and her nurturing, protective relationships with the students of the coven⁹.

In this section of my analysis I borrow the definitions of witchcraft set out by Douglas Ezzy in his 2006 article on ethics and consumerism in contemporary witchcraft. Ezzy uses the term “traditional witchcraft” to refer to “the tradition as it developed among the small groups that emerged in the 1940s. Traditional Witchcraft focuses on the celebration of both fertility and death, with the aim of enhancing their spiritual development in this life” (Ezzy 2006,15). In contrast to “traditional witchcraft” is what he terms “white witchcraft,” which is distinguished from the latter because white witchcraft is aggressively individualistic, and:

“Issues of social justice, gender equality, and environ-

mentalism barely rate a mention for white witches [...] while some traditions of Witchcraft are individualistic, a more egalitarian understanding of gender roles and environmentalism are issues central to many people’s interest in Witchcraft [...] The focus of white Witchcraft is on individualistic success and self-transformation [...] white Witchcraft is unrelentingly optimistic.” (Ezzy 2006, 20)

Additionally, white witchcraft promotes a hegemonic form of femininity that is both compulsorily heterosexual and centered on “real woman” being able to attract men (Ezzy 2006, 20). Ezzy notes that the concept of white witchcraft spawned out of the rising popularity of witchcraft in popular culture and neo-paganism in the 1990s and early 2000s. White witchcraft gained traction in mass-produced books that sought to profit from the genres of both neo-paganism and self-help books, he explains:

“The [popular white Witchcraft] book explains instead how to use Witchcraft practices to be more powerful, to get your own way, persuade others to do what you want, have an encyclopedic memory, heal yourself and others, to find a lover, dominate others, consult the dead, get really rich, and become a financial wizard. In short, the book is a manual for self-empowerment to live out the American dream. It contains no discussion of environmentalism, gender dynamics or the complexities of spiritual ethics and practice.” (Ezzy 2006, 19)

Coven makes a subtle reference to this in “Episode Four: Fearful Pranks Ensur,” when the witches’ council is first introduced, and “Episode Eleven: Protect the Coven,” when two thirds of the witches’ council is murdered by the other member. Quentin Fleming is the only male witch introduced on the show and is a famous author (although it is suggested that this success is a result of Fiona’s magic). I argue that Fleming’s gender thus represents a break for traditional ideas of witchcraft and can be seen to represent the rise of so-called white witchcraft that is centered on self-help books

and personal success over social justice, ethics, and spiritual practices (Ezzy 2006, 27). The absolute destruction of Fleming by Myrtle in an episode dedicated to protecting the coven can be seen as reclaiming of witchcraft for feminists and pagan practitioners. Fiona Goode and the Witches council¹⁰ represent the older, past generation of witches, which can be understood as an allegory for second wave feminism— especially when paired with Cordelia and “the girls” who represent the third and fourth waves of contemporary feminism.

In this section, the following character-studies to demonstrate that each of the young witches in the coven acts as an allegory of a different branch of contemporary feminism¹¹. The relationship between each girl and the distinct branch of feminism they represent, are further enforced through the depiction of their personal hells, revealed in the second-to-last episode of the season as the girls perform the Seven Wonders¹². Zoey (played by Taissa Farmiga) is the first character introduced in *Coven*. She narrates her story of how she came to the Academy as we are taken through her journey. It begins with her sneaking into her house with her boyfriend to whom she is about to lose her virginity. However, once they begin having sexual intercourse her boyfriend begins hemorrhaging in his brain. The scene cuts to Zoey crying and her mother explaining that they (her parents) should have warned her sooner that she was a witch¹³. Suddenly Myrtle Snow of the Witches’ Council and two black men with albinism wearing black suits come and drag her away to a train to New Orleans. I argue that like the title character in *Marnie* (1964), Zoey “represents a female subject who has a horror of her own sexuality. From a certain perspective, we can argue that this woman has internalized her culture’s own abjection and rejection of feminine sexuality and subjectivity”¹⁴ (Samuels 1998, 95). While this horror is perhaps more understandable than Marnie’s (as she killed someone, Zoey killed someone *with her sex*), it is still reflective of her culture’s abjection and rejection of both feminine sexuality and subjectivity.

Despite the trauma of accidentally killing her boyfriend with sexual intercourse, Zoey is able to find a connection with

Kyle at the fraternity party. Even after Kyle is killed and dismembered in the bus crash, Zoey goes along with Madison's plan to resurrect him. When their resurrection is less successful than they had hoped and Kyle is left with poor cognitive function and severely limited speech, Zoey takes care of him and enlists Misty to help better heal his wounds. Zoey not only heals enough to find connection with someone in an intimate way again, but also learns to reclaim her sexuality through bisexual experimentation with Madison and Kyle. Madison claims that Zoey should share Kyle with her as a boyfriend since they both helped piece him back together out of the "boy parts." Zoey is jealous and sullen because Madison begins having sexual relations with him immediately and Zoey is apprehensive about sex. Madison gently invites Zoey to join Kyle and her in bed together and the three of them engage in sexual activities. Through this supportive experience, Zoey reclaims her sexuality and can share another level of intimacy with Kyle for the rest of the show¹⁵.

Nan (played by Jamie Brewer) is a clairvoyant witch who constantly suffers from hearing the thoughts of those around her. While Nan is never mentioned as having Down's syndrome, the actress who portrays her, does. I argue that Nan's gift of clairvoyance can be read as a metaphor for disability and that Nan represents feminist engagement with critical disability studies within the coven. Feminist disability scholar Rosemary Garland-Thompson, explains that feminist disability studies:

"situates the disability experience in the contexts of rights and exclusions. It aspires to retrieve dismissed voices and misrepresented experiences. It helps us understand the intricate relation between bodies and selves." (2005, 1557)

Taken literally, Nan retrieves the voices and experiences of all those around her, getting to know them intimately through their thoughts beyond not only the surface level of appearance, but also any other intimacy that can be garnered through regular social interaction. Nan is often portrayed as frustrated by the constant voices but finds ways of coping such as wearing headphones and listening to music. In this way, her "excess"/gift/

disability, can be understood as socially situated and not a medical condition, "a cultural interpretation of human variation rather than an inherent inferiority, a pathology to cure, or an undesirable trait to eliminate" (Garland-Thompson 2005, 1557).

Feminist disability studies seek to disrupt tired stereotypes about people with living with disabilities (Garland-Thompson 2005, 1557). Jamie Brewer's performances on *American Horror Story*¹⁶ not only contribute to feminist disability studies, but so does her own activism. Not only has Brewer broke new ground depicting characters with Down's syndrome that are not focused on their medical condition, she is also a political activist. Brewer served on ARC Governmental Affairs Committee for Texas to improve the legal rights of disable people, she fought successfully to remove the use of "retarded" in state legislation¹⁷ and was the first person with Down's Syndrome to model at New York Fashion Week (Nianias 2015). Nan is the heart of the coven and is the only character not to fight and bicker with the other girls. Disability studies are likewise essential to feminist thought, as "disability proves to be an especially useful critical category in three particular concerns of current feminist theory. First is probing identity; second is theorizing intersectionality; third is investigating embodiment" (Garland-Thompson 2005, 1559). When Fiona and Marie murder Nan as a sacrifice to Papa Legba, the coven suffers a great loss; when feminists neglect the intersection of disability they fail to address the interconnectedness of oppression in a way that is essential to substantive social change.

Misty Day is first introduced as a member of an Evangelical Christian group. While at a church event, she brings a dead bird back to life by holding it in her hands. Unfortunately for her, another member of the group witnesses this and she is subsequently accused of witchcraft and burned alive. Misty's powers allow her to raise herself from the dead, and she transforms from modest Christian to Stevie Nicks-inspired nature lover. I argue that Misty represents ecofeminism and animal rights theories and activism within feminism

more generally. Ecofeminists are distinguished by "arguments that reveal the intimate and mutually reinforcing relationships between human chauvinism, androcentrism, ethnocentrism, and heterosexism" (Lee 2009, 30). Thus, ecofeminism like Misty, is an integral but often overlooked part of the coven of feminism. When Misty attempts Descensum during the test of the Seven Wonders and enters her own personal hell, she relives her high school science class where she was forced to dissect a frog by her teacher – which she then brought back to life—and then is forced to cut open again in an endless cycle. Misty is unable to return from her hell before sunrise and becomes trapped there forever. This is similar to (white) ecofeminism and animal rights activists and theorists, who seem unable to address animal rights and environmental issues without drawing analogies to plantation slavery and the holocaust (Kim 2011; Wren 2014). Despite the heavy and repeated criticism from black activists, and activists of colour, scholars, and their allies, the movement seems trapped in a cycle of the same problematic discourses.

Having each of the girls represent a unique branch within modern feminism and allowing each witch to be a complex character—neither entirely good nor entirely evil—allows viewers to critically engage with the moral complexities of both each character as well as what they can be understood to represent politically. While each witch is imperfect on their own, when they bring their talents together they make the coven strong; thus, it is only when the intersections of feminism come together that it can be its strongest force. Importantly, Madison who only serves her own purposes throughout the season and deliberately kills or allows her sisters to die is also met with death and symbolic exile from the coven. It is not that all types of feminism are equal, but that only feminisms, which are intersectional and work in solidarity with other oppressed groups, will move social progress forward.

Madame Lalaurie (played by Kathy Bates) is premised on the historical figure that tortured and murdered her slaves¹⁸ at her mansion in the French Quarter of New Orleans in the 1830s. In her dissertation in English and history at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Kristin Nicole Huston examines

“transatlantic (re)presentations of Creole women in the nineteenth-century literature and culture” using Delphine Lalaurie as a case study¹⁹ (2015). She notes that while:

“My goal is not to vindicate her, but instead to examine the sensational depiction of the events at her home, and to note that she, not her doctor husband, was the target of most of the outrage, from 1834 to today.” (Huston 2015, 130)

Historical records show that a fire broke out at her mansion at 1140 Royal Street on the morning of Thursday, April 10, 1834 (Huston 2015, 131). The following afternoon she fled with her family to France, and after finding her gone an angry mob destroyed and ransacked the house. Four days after the house was destroyed, it was reported that the yard was dug up and bodies removed— including the body of a child (Huston 2015, 132). In *Coven*, Lalaurie is depicted as using the blood of slaves to attempt to keep herself youthful. After her husband’s illegitimate child is born to a slave girl in their house Lalaurie kills the baby for its blood and paints it on her face in front of the infant’s mother.

Delphine Lalaurie is one of the most interesting and complex characters in *Coven*. As Huston notes in her dissertation, many of the horrifying stories about Lalaurie were concocted by abolitionists “to garner emotional support” from readers by running stories in papers across the country (2015, 133-136). Additionally, Huston suggests that tensions between Americans and French Creoles in the city of New Orleans also contributed to the popularity and horrifying elaborations of the story of what had happened at the property; “Interrogating the crimes committed by Delphine Lalaurie was an opportunity, not only to police a former colony, but to make a moral statement” (2015, 139 & 141). Accusations of Delphine using slaves for experiments ran rampant. *Coven* depicts her giving several monologues about her lust and insatiable need to cut up animals and people. However, not only was Delphine married to a medical doctor—she had petitioned the courts for separation in 1832 on the grounds that he was beating and mistreated her (Huston 2015, 137-138). It seems an odd coinci-

dence that a woman in the 1830s with no medical training would be accused of experimenting on slaves, when her husband was a doctor accused of a violent temper. It seems more likely that any experimentation conducted on slaves was carried out by the doctor, blamed on his wife, a victim of domestic violence who spoke up and attempted to change her circumstance. This follows a similar pattern in patriarchal culture that prefers the demonization of women. As early feminists were demonized as witches, Lalaurie’s history has been selectively remembered and told to reproduce a strong woman as a monstrous villain. Delphine undergoes a transformation during *Coven*, from sadistic slave-torturing racist to a more critically engaged person via Queenie’s (a young, black woman) historical and cultural tutoring. Fiona gives Delphine to Queenie to be her own personal slave after hearing her use racial slurs against her.²⁰ Queenie eventually takes it upon herself to educate Delphine about African-American. Delphine and Queenie continue to have a complicated friendship until Delphine is finally killed.²¹

While the friendship between Delphine and Queenie may suggest hope that even the most ignorant white women/feminists can learn how to critically engage with their white privilege and anti-racism, it is problematic that it remains up to Queenie—a black woman—to educate Delphine. If Fiona is so offended at Delphine’s racism, and after all she did bring her out of the ground and into the Academy, should she not use her own time and energy to educate her? Feminists who are oppressed cannot be expected to perform the labour of educating privileged folks. Accountable allyship is about lessening the emotional labour of people of colour and trans women in particular, and performing that labour in solidarity with anti-oppression work. This friendship between Delphine and Queenie critically examines how teaching white women how to be anti-racist often is only done via the labour of women of colour and not their allies. It also demonstrates that learning about oppression and unlearning privilege is a long

While the flashback sequences provide rich backstories and details to help the audience piece together charac-

ters and storylines, the shifting temporalities of *Coven* are perhaps most important to the character of the Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau. The two most important geographic temporal contexts are: firstly, the trans-Atlantic slave trade which brought Laveau and her people from West Africa to America, and secondly, Hurricane Katrina (which is also a trans-Atlantic phenomenon). I argue that these two historic moments referenced in *Coven* separately demonstrate the atrocities committed against black people in American history and together represent a continued history of systematically denying the humanity of black peoples and their communities.

Tituba is well known in history as the slave who practiced voodoo or magic in front of some local girls in Salem and sparked the witch-craze, or what is elsewhere known as the Burning Times. Little is known about the historical person—including her race which shifts between ‘Indian’²² or black depending on who the vilified population was at the time of the writing (Rosenthal 2003, 50). In either case, in American folklore Tituba has fulfilled the myth of the woman, like Eve or Pandora, who is “the originator of sin and death [...] the pains of the world come from the action of a woman” (Rosenthal 2003, 50). Tituba is credited with bringing witchcraft to America from a darker less-civilized place (the Caribbean or West Africa). Although Tituba is not depicted in *Coven* she remains an important character for my analysis of the show and the complex relationships between witches (and feminists). As Rosenthal notes,

“In popular imagination, the Salem witch trials began with the slave Tituba telling tales of voodoo to a circle of girls who then reacted in fright with bizarre behavior, leading to accusations of witchcraft. Although discredited as an act that actually occurred, this story continues to appear regularly in popular narratives.” (2003, 48)²³

However, *Coven* deviates from traditional popular narratives as it links the very beginning of white women’s witchcraft to the voodoo circle in Salem and does not (at least explicitly) ever blame her for the witch-hunts and executions that followed. In the first conversation between Fiona and Marie, Marie reminds

her that, “Everything you got, you got from us.” To which Fiona responds, “She [Tituba] couldn’t tell a love potion from a recipe for chocolate chip cookies if she had to read it.” Rightfully insulted, Marie tells Fiona that Tituba learned necromancy from the Shamans of her Arawak²⁴ tribe.

The Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau is immortal and lived in New Orleans at the same time Delphine Lalaurie tortured her slaves. In fact, Marie’s lover Bastien, is kept as a house-slave and seduced by Delphine’s daughter Pauline. When her father discovers them, they decide to claim he raped her and Delphine takes him to the attic to be punished/tortured. He is beaten and restrained and has a hollowed-out bulls head placed over his own. In the contemporary story line of *Coven*, Laveau owns a hair salon in a predominately black neighborhood, one of the more devastated wards in New Orleans. Not only does the Voodoo Queen provide culturally specific services and employment opportunities at the salon, she also keeps the religious-cultural practices of Voodoo alive and teaches them to younger generations.

While the white witch coven is constantly fighting within itself—often violently, the Voodoo witches are represented as both having more stable and respected leadership, but also a stronger sense of community. As discussed in the following section, Marie uses her magic not only to benefit herself and her friends but also to care for and protect the wider community. The belief-system of Voudon²⁵, like all other spiritualities of the colonized world, has been heavily influenced by the religious systems of their colonizing nations. Voudon is “constituted out of the multiple practices of the African slaves brought to the Caribbean” (Boutros 2011, 187-88) and has been a significant way for Haitians to keep their African heritages and cultures alive. Yet historically, they were forced to do so in secret out of fear of being punished by their foreign masters (Boutros 2011, 188). Zombification was, and continues to be, done only to individuals who break the moral code of their communities, therefore, it is seen to be a punishment from their community for their behaviour.²⁶ In *Coven*, we see two instances of zombification by Marie; the first, is in “Episode Four: Fearful Pranks Ensnare.” At Marie’s beauty salon in 1961, a black

woman discusses her son Henry’s first day of integrated high school and how his father has faith in the future. Meanwhile, the audience is shown Henry riding his bicycle being pursued by three white men in a truck, who then corner, catch, and lynch the young man. When Marie discovers what has happened she conducts a ritual and raises zombies to go find the three men who lynched Henry and murder them. Although the white men obviously did not consider themselves part of the black community nor vice versa, by geographic proximity and their intrusion of the community via their murder of a member, these men can be seen to have violated a moral code and thus deserving of punishment. This is yet another example where Marie uses her magic for the protection of her community and not for selfish or vain reasons.

The second instance occurs in the same episode after Marie receives the Minotaur’s head in a box at the salon. Marie has had enough of the tenuous truce with the white witches. The audience is shown a flashback to the 1970s when Fiona and Marie sat down and divided the territory in New Orleans in a truce. Her friend Gentile tries to talk Marie out of conducting the ritual to raise zombies, but is unsuccessful. The witch-hunters are an ancient order of men whose goal is to rid the North American continent of witches. I argue that the witch-hunters can be read as an allegory for the contemporary men’s rights movement.²⁷

In the pre-opening credit scene in “Episode Nine: Head” the audience is shown Chattahoochee National Forest in 1991. In this flashback sequence, we see young Hank Fox with his father, camping in the woods. Hank’s father gives his son his first drink of coffee and hands him a gun instructing him how to commit his first hunt.²⁸ Witch-hunting is depicted as a father-son ritual akin to the hunting of deer or other game. The audience quickly realizes the prey is in fact a woman; a witch. Young Hank finds her and she begs him not to kill her. Hank hesitates, being moved by the woman’s pleas and in that moment, she attacks him with fire.²⁹ Hank’s father quickly pushes his son out of harm’s way and his arm catches fire—but he manages to shoot the woman dead. Hank’s father sternly tells Hank, “No mercy. Never forget

what they are.”

Sempruch notes that white second wave radical feminists Mary Daly and Andrea Dworkin “portray the witch-hunters as obsessed (religious) maniacs” (Sempruch 2004, 122). Similarly, *Coven* portrays witch-hunters as (corporate) maniacs trying to simultaneously eradicate an entire population of women while participating in the exploitative institution of free-market capitalism. Indeed, the only way the witches can convince the executives of Delphi Trust to meet with them to discuss terms of surrender is by casting a spell to have the IRS and FBI decide to investigate their company for fraud. The spell does not create the illegal actions of the corporation, but only alerts the authorities to its existence—potentially aiding in justice that otherwise would have gone undetected and unpunished as white-collar crimes too often do despite their wide-spread negative impacts.

The Delphi Trust was established in 1826³⁰, located in Atlanta, Georgia. Delphi Trust is the transnational corporate front for the witch-hunters. It is appropriate that Delphi Trust is a transnational corporation, and as I argue, a symbol of men’s rights as an organized movement because most leaders of the movement are not poor or working class,

“Rather, they are men with the educational and financial resources needed to form organizations, create websites or hire attorneys. But just as the multi-billionaire Koch brothers’ well-financed right wing anti-statism appeals to many lower-middle class whites, the men’s rights movement’s anti-feminist backlash rhetoric could possibly appeal to men with less education and less resources.” (Messner 2016, 14)

Harrison Renard³¹, Hank’s father, both embodies this position of a financially successful and highly educated white man who is the CEO of Delphi Trust. The name “Delphi Trust” is interesting for a few reasons: First, and perhaps most obviously, as a reference to the Delphi Oracle. The Greek and Roman god Apollo was the patron of Delphi, a young, male deity associated with light, medicine, knowledge, and colonists. The witch-hunters

believe themselves to be righteous, (on “the side of light”) in their fight against the “darkness” of witchcraft. Medicine, rationality, and imperialism through conquest are traditionally masculine endeavors. Delphi was often fought over by kings for control of the oracle, given that the oracle was always a woman; these men were quite literally fighting for control over women. While most of the ancient worlds believed the oracles of Delphi were a gift from Apollo, it has been argued that the oracles were produced by chemically induced hallucinations (Harissis 2014). Thus, although men’s rights discourses may sometimes carry an air of truth and authority, they are more often based in belief than in sociologically or economically supported facts, not unlike the prophecies of the oracles.

Secondly, the Delphi Method is a social science method that “was conceived as a group technique, whose aim was to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts, by a series of intensive questionnaires with controlled opinion feedback” (Ladenta 2006, 468). Again, returning to the link between masculinity and rationality, although this method appears objective, it has been noted that a major weakness of this method is that the person conducting the study can easily manipulate the study. It also tries to quantify qualitative research (Ladenta 2006, 469). Although men’s rights discourses often accuse feminists of misappropriating data and statistics to support their own political agendas, this is equally true of men’s rights discourses as well.

Thirdly, Freud’s concept of the Apollo archetype, which is a person who prefers mastery, order, and surface level understanding, rather than looking beneath appearances. This figure relies on thinking over feeling and is frequently objective over subjective (Bolen 2014, 135). The men of Delphi Trust perform their profession with confidence, emphasizing detachment from the women they kill, yet fail to look beneath the label of “witch”. Men’s rights activists also claim to utilize rhetoric over feelings and objective rationality over feminist theories and methodologies. Thus, Delphi Trust can be seen as an icon of masculinity, rationality, enlightenment and colonial conquest. Delphi Trust represents the antithetical symbolism to that of feminism and witchcraft in *Coven*.

Kyle is the president of a fraternity at a local university, first introduced when Madison takes Zoe to a large house party. Through his conversation with Zoe, we learn that he is from the 9th Ward, an economically impoverished section of New Orleans and is attending university on a scholarship. We also learn that he lives alone with his mother, as his father left them when he was very young. While Kyle is talking with Zoey, his fraternity brothers drug and gang rape Madison upstairs while one of the young men films the assault on his smartphone. Kyle helps Zoe look for Madison when she becomes worried and finds the sexual assault taking place. While Zoey tends to Madison, Kyle confronts the fraternity members on the bus and is assaulted for condemning their actions. With Kyle unconscious, the rest of the fraternity steals the bus and drive away. Madison appears outside and uses her powers to flip the bus, causing a major explosion. Later it is revealed that all but one of the young men on board was killed.

Madison conceals the sexual assault from everyone else at the witch academy, but is shown dealing with her trauma alone in the shower. Zoey goes to the hospital in hopes that Kyle was the lone survivor, but instead finds it is one of the rapists. Zoe masturbates the comatose rapist, then mounts and rapes him in order to use her curse (gift?) to kill him as she had previously accidentally done to her boyfriend. Grateful to Zoey for trying to get revenge on her behalf and staying quiet about the assault, Madison takes Zoey to the morgue to try to resurrect Kyle with a spell she stole from Cordelia. Unfortunately, after breaking into the morgue the girls discover that the bus “accident” was so catastrophic that all of the bodies are in pieces. Madison suggests that they pick the “best parts” and create the perfect boyfriend. Historically witches were accused of stealing male fertility, and in some cases, even dismembering male bodies (Sempruch 2004, 120). Madison both dismembers and then reassembles a male body. While Madison and Zoey are successful in bringing Kyle back to life, he is severely brain damaged and lacks speech or full cognitive function.

Zoey befriends Kyle’s mother out of guilt because of

her involvement in his death. After she helps to bring him back to life she continues to feel guilty, as if she were withholding him from his mother and needlessly continuing her grief and suffering. Zoey decides to take Kyle home to his mother’s house. However, the audience soon learns that Kyle’s mother sexually abuses him and continues this upon his return. It is significant that the show depicts mother-perpetrated incest, which is discussed significantly less than father-perpetrated incest and very little research has addressed the specific effects of mother-perpetrated incest (Kelly et. al. 2002, 426). Psychologists working in the field of child abuse studies suggest that “heightened public awareness of the potentially more subtle nature of mother-son incest is clearly needed, given the tendency toward denial of this form of sexual abuse” (Kelly et. al. 2002, 436). Thus, the show is hopefully contributing to more public awareness and helping people who need resources to know that they are not alone. In stark contrast to the well-mannered young man Kyle was before his death in the bus crash, raised-from-the-dead Kyle is sullen, angry and violent. I suggest that this transformation can be read as Kyle confronting the sexual abuse he is experiencing, especially given that studies suggest, “men who did not initially perceive the sexual experiences as abusive endorsed more PTSD³² symptoms, aggression, and total symptoms than did men who perceived the CSA³³ as abusive” (Kelly et. al. 2002, 432). Indeed, men who were abused by their mothers (as opposed to non-maternal female perpetrators) reported more disturbances in psychosocial functioning, including symptoms of aggression, self-destructive behavior, and dissociation (Kelly et. al. 2002, 434-436).

Zoey and Madison hide Kyle at the academy and Zoey reluctantly agrees to share him with Madison. However, one day Zoey walks into their shared room to find Madison having sex with Kyle. Madison confronts her afterwards and invites her to join both her and Kyle in bed for a *ménage à trois*. As time passes, however, Kyle refuses to engage in sexual activity with Madison and eventually declares his love to Zoey who returns the feelings. Madison overhears the exchange and becomes jealous. Kyle explores his sexuality and learns healthy sexual

behaviors through his relationships with Madison and Zoey. Although the show presents Kyle as regaining cognitive function and speech when Fiona discovers him and uses her more powerful magic to heal him, I argue that his recovery is due to confronting his trauma and learning how to have a healthy consensual relationship with a woman. At the end of the season Kyle is hired on as the butler so that he can stay with Zoey at the school. Kyle's permanent inclusion in the coven reifies men's place within feminism, and shows how men can not only benefit from feminism but can also be involved in supporting women.

Miss Robichaux's Academy was founded in 1790 as a finishing school for women. It was then turned into a military hospital, and later bought and turned into a school for young witches. The institutionalization of witchcraft within a boarding school for 'exceptional young ladies'³⁴ is reflective of the institutionalization of feminism via women's, gender, and sexualities programs within the university setting. Unlike the male-dominated institutions like the state, economy, military, medicine, or major religion, feminists gained an early foothold within academia (Messner 2016, 7). However, this created new challenges for feminism,

"professionalization created the conditions for sustaining feminist reform efforts on many fronts, including the creation of career paths for feminists in law, academia, medicine, social work and other professions. But on the other hand, it led to a division of activist energies away from radical social change efforts towards finding sustainable funding sources for service provision, and also ushered in different organizational processes, with bureaucratic hierarchies displacing earlier feminist commitments to democratic decision-making processes." (Messner 2016, 10)

Thus, while institutionalized feminism has been a gateway for feminists to enter significant socio-political institutions which were previously almost exclusively male-dominated, this has reproduced hierarchy in the form of university-educated career feminists and those working at the grassroots level (who are

often marginalized via multiple intersections of oppression in addition to gender).

Coven concludes with Cordelia's rise as the new Supreme.³⁵ She decides to come "out of the shadows" and reveal to the world (via a media interview) that there are witches and that the school exists as a home for any young women who want to come learn about their powers, history, and to form a positive, trusting community. The final scene reveals Kyle as the butler," and both Queenie and Zoey welcoming the new students as teachers. Cordelia stands on the main staircase with Queenie on her left and Zoe on her right, "Up until now we've survived, but that's all we've done. But as I look at your faces, all of them beautiful, all of them perfect, I know together we can do more than survive, it's our time to thrive." One of the new students asks them "What's a supreme?" To which Queenie replies, "You're looking at her." Cordelia smiles and the credits roll.

Feminists, like witches, remain unpopular speakers of truth to oppressive powers and patriarchy. Although some popular feminists may find acceptance and praise from the general public, most will carry on the fight for social justice while being marginalized and discredited. While Sempruch criticizes second wave feminism for inventing and creating mythical stories³⁶ about witchcraft and witches (Sempruch 2004, 113), I argue that these stories exemplify playing with history and a construction of a feminist mythos that is not different than other patriarchal constructed narratives (such as Hobbes' state of nature or Locke's signing of the social contract). Indeed, Goldenberg, agrees, "using witchy words as magic words, that is, as words to make things happen, was not an uncommon practice in 1970s feminism" (Goldenberg 2004, 204). What is wrong with telling stories and playing with history to inspire new theories and political action? Sempruch further complains that,

"As a radical feminist identity, the 'witch' strategically represents both the historical abject figure subjected to torture and death, and a radical fantasy of renewal in the form of a female figure who desires (and articu-

lates) a cultural transformation 'that has not happened yet' and also the one who already marks that transformation. Thus, the feminist witch succeeds in subverting her own (abject) identity by converting it into a political fantasy; nevertheless the 'category of women for merely 'strategic' purposes,' as represented by the 'witch,' remains problematic." (Sempruch 2004, 115)

While I self-identify as a socialist and sex radical feminist-- and indeed reject many of the understandings of sexuality and conflation of sex and gender by radical feminists--I fail to see the issue of adopting an abject female figure who desires cultural transformation as a symbol for feminism. In contrast to how misogynists rally behind the symbol of the hunter, I think it is important that feminists have a symbol of their own in which they can both identify, imagine radical social change, and fantasize a different world for women and other marginalized peoples who have for too long been seen and treated as inferior. Perhaps feminists will always be "the granddaughters of the witches you weren't able to burn."³⁷

Notes

1. *AHS: Roanoke* recently concluded marking the end of the 6th season.
2. For more on the Salem witch trials and their impact on American culture see (Adams 2003; Reed 2015).
3. Due to constrictions of this article's length I touch upon only the most important of these twelve factors.
4. She purposefully puts *man* and *him* in quotes because she is not pretending that these words are generic (Goldenberg 1979: 111).
5. Fiona does not accept this fate willingly and her attempts to do anything within her power to remain young and powerful can be read as representative of mainstream culture's preoccupation with remaining young, or at least appearing youthful. When Fiona accepts that aging is inevitable she finds some level of peace and closure with her daughter, whom she then recognizes Cordelia inheriting her place in the world as part of the next generation and the next Supreme.
6. While some people may argue there exists certain texts within feminist scholarship that may be considered canon (such as the works of Bell Hooks, Judith Butler, or Jessica Valenti), yet this remains subjective. Sempruch critiques radical feminist texts of being blind to witches (and thus women's) actual difference in order to make their point (Sempruch 2004: 116). I would argue that this is excusable within the confines of the metaphor. However, the trans and whorephobia within a majority of these texts is inexcusable (but Sempruch remains silent on this issue).
7. While Marie Laveau is also depicted as meeting Fiona's sharp words with her own fiery retorts it is important to remember that the genesis of the long-standing divide between the white witches and the voodoo queens is the displacement of the voodoo

- priestesses from part of their territory with the arrival of the witches from Salem and their explicit anti-black racism. While both Fiona and Marie are less than cordial with each other the historical violences that underpin their relationships cannot be ignored. Their ability to unite their communities against the patriarchal violences of the Delphi Trust demonstrates their ability to acknowledge these historical impacts, set aside personal feelings, and work together towards a shared goal of survival.
8. I would also like to explore Lorde's piece "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (2007: 36-39) in relation to poetry, spells and the power of words for survival, but felt it was beyond the scope of this paper.
 9. None of the girls of the coven ever discuss any interest in motherhood. The girls belong to a generation of women who are perhaps too buried in student debt, job insecurity and a rejection of the institution of marriage to be considering marriage and/or children.
 10. The Witches' council is made up of three witches who are supposed to serve as advisors to the Supreme. Fiona's council consists of Myrtle Snow (her childhood rival), Cecily Pemproke (the secretary for the council) and Quentin Fleming (the only male witch, who is portrayed as flamboyantly queer). Myrtle gauges out one eye from each of Celily and Quentin to give to Cordelia to help cure her blindness after an acid attack and then dismembers them in acid for their role in burning her at the stake in "Episode Eleven: Protect the Coven."
 11. Not included in this analysis is Madison (celebrity feminism) and Queenie (black feminism) as celebrity feminism is less essential as a branch of feminism and black feminism is discussed elsewhere via other characters such as Marie.
 12. Only the next Supreme can complete all Seven Wonders, and thus by doing so ascends to her new position and the old Supreme dies.
 13. It is also revealed at this point that while magic is passed on genetically not every women in every generation possesses the gift of magic, this also suggests that Zoey's mother is not a witch.
 14. See also *Teeth* (2007).
 15. It is suggested that Zoey can have sex with Kyle without killing him because he already died one and is somewhat a member of the undead, and thus cannot be killed (at least by Zoey's magic death-sex powers.)
 16. Brewer's breakout acting role was as the character "Addie," a young girl with Down's syndrome, in the first season of *American Horror Story: Murder House* (2011).
 17. It is important to remember that in the U.S— until 1984— doctors refused to carry out life-saving procedures on people with Down's syndrome and by 1981 60,000 had been physically and sexually abused through forced sterilization (Nianias 2015).
 18. Lalaurie also emancipated a number of slaves that she owned (Huston 2015: 130), however this does not excuse either her continued purchase of or mistreatment and torture of other slaves.
 19. Huston even briefly notes the representation of Lalaurie in *Coven* (2015: 130).
 20. Despite claiming to be outraged by Delphine's racism towards Queenie, Fiona is often racist towards Marie in particular. I read this as a pointed critique of white feminists' attempts to practice committed allyship to women of colour when convenient or to their own ends.
 21. After she is finally killed for good she goes to her own hell which is shared with Marie; Marie must torture Delphine's daughters forever while Delphine watches helplessly— Marie's worst nightmare is being just like a slave owner and Delphine's nightmare is to experience the torture she inflicted on so many others during her (supernaturally) long lifetime.
 22. The term "Indian" is being used in this context to refer to Native American ancestry.
 23. Rosenthal goes on to explain that simply because "the narratives about her are fictitious does not diminish her significant role in giving credibility to accusations of witchcraft. Because Tituba confessed to witchcraft early on, probably after being beaten by her master, the Rev. Samuel Parris, she gave credibility to the belief that the minions of Satan were assaulting New England's children of God" (2003, 48).
 24. The writers for *Coven* were clever to not elaborate on their description of Tituba as Arawak, as the Arawak peoples were the first people encountered by Christopher Columbus and are indigenous peoples of South America. However, Columbus transported many of these indigenous peoples to Jamaica as part of the slave trade (Arawak 2006). Thus, *Coven* accurately connects Tituba to both her potentially indigenous heritage as well as that of (Afro-Caribbean) slavery.
 25. Out of respect for Hatian culture and cosmology I use the terms "zombi" and "Voudon" in place of "zombie" and "voodoo" in recognition of their cultural meanings and not their appropriation by popular culture (mis)representations.
 26. The word 'zombi' most likely comes from the Kongo word 'nzambu,' which simply translates to "the spirit of a dead person" (Davis 1985:12). In traditional Haitian cosmology, the fear people have regarding zombis is not of the walking-dead, but becoming a zombie themselves, and therefore a slave (Davis 185, 187). This fear is rooted in the colonial history of Haiti, where many Haitians were brutalized as slaves and the island served as a major slave-trading post for ships traveling from West Africa to the Americas (Davis 1985, 195-205).
 27. The rise of 1960s 'second wave feminism' "sought to attract men to feminism by stressing how the 'male sex role' was impoverished, 'unhealthy', and even 'lethal' for men's health, emotional lives and relationships," and was moderately successful (Messner 2016, 8). However, "now severed from its progressive roots, a more reactionary tendency within the men's rights movement unleashed overtly anti-feminist and sometimes outright misogynistic discourses and actions"(Messner 2016, 8). Michael Messner argues that the radical power of feminism in the 1980s and '90s "fractured under a broadside of anti-feminist backlash, and fragmented internally from corrosive disputes among feminists around issues of race and class inequalities, and divisive schisms that centered on sex work and pornography" (2016, 9). This vulnerability within feminism partially contributed to the rise of more organized and overtly anti-feminist men's right organizing—particularly using the internet as a tool for networking and disseminating content (Messner 2016, 9).
 28. Activist-artist Mirha-Soleil Ross makes a similar analogy between men's right of passage, hunting, and the murder of women—specifically the "hunting" of sex workers in her performance piece *Yapping Out Loud: Thoughts from an Unrepentant Whore* (2002).
 29. There is perhaps a connection between the pyrokinesis of the witch Hank could not kill in his youth and that the witch Kaylee that he successfully murders as an adult was also blessed with the power of pyrokinesis.
 30. This choice of year seems out of place since the first witch to be hanged in New England occurred in 1847 (Woodward 2003, 16).
 31. "Renard" being the French word for "fox" is both a clue to the relationship between Harrison and Hank, but also I suggest, revealing of how the witch-hunters believe themselves to be the predators but fail to realize that they are also someone else's prey.
 32. Post-traumatic stress disorder
 33. Child sexual abuse
 34. Again, I wish to return to the point that all of the staff, instructors, and students who attend the school without interruption (leaving due to their death exempted) are all white and cis gender.
 35. Setting aside the matrilineal implications of Cordelia succeeding Fiona, her rise to power can be seen as a step towards a more nurturing and social-justice oriented feminism in which differences amongst feminists are embraced and solidarities fostered.
 36. Stories based on and beyond historical accounts of the witch-craze and Burning Times.
 37. The original source of this popular feminist motto is unknown.
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