

**Witchcraft in Their Lips: Exploring How Witches in Horror Films from
the 1960s and 1970s Work Through Complex Changes in Traditional
Female Roles**

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Abstract

Witches, monsters typically associated with women, are under-represented within academic scholarship on the horror film. As character archetypes, witches straddle many different genres of cinema, from comedies to fantasy films, with representations of witches in film changing to reflect shifting social contexts. This thesis looks at how different witch portrayals in horror films made in the 1960s and 1970s work through the complex changes in society surrounding traditional female roles using the ambivalence of the horror genre. By using close analysis of horror films like *Season of the Witch*, *Carrie*, and *Suspiria*, films that revolve around three different witch character types, we can see how witches in horror films provide different ways for women to inhabit the world that directly undermine and challenge traditional feminine roles. These roles include the housewife, the teenager, and the mother or maternal mentor figure, societal roles that were undergoing complex changes that can be seen reflected in the films of the time. Focusing specifically on narrative, dialogue, and plot, and using ideas presented in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*, two writers who both express dissatisfaction of living within the confines of traditional societal roles, this thesis discusses how witches in horror films from the 1960s and 1970s work through the changes brought about by second wave feminism.

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Claudia Bunce 22 June 2021

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Introduction

In this thesis, I will be analysing portrayals of the witch in a selection of horror films from the 1960s and 1970s in order to show how these portrayals work through the complex changes happening within society at that time. As an avid horror film enthusiast and academic it is my observation that horror films reflect the social changes taking place at the time of their making, with witchches reflecting the changes that second wave feminism had on traditional female roles in society during this particular period of social and cultural ferment in the 1960s and 1970s. My research has revealed that, unlike other traditional horror monsters such as vampires and werewolves, there are relatively few scholarly studies about the witch in the horror genre, a marginalisation which I found surprising. While there are films that focus on female versions of horror monsters¹, the witch is the only monster that has had a predominantly female image for the majority of its existence. Male witches do exist, but they are less common than female witches in films. In this thesis, I will be arguing that, during the 1960s and 1970s, horror film witches reflect the complex changes in society surrounding traditional female roles and work through these complexities using the ambivalence of the horror genre. In the horror films selected for analysis in this thesis, the witch functions as a figure of rebellion and subversion, and provides a new way for women to occupy the world.

Witches have been an important part of storytelling since ancient times. The first inspirations for modern witches come from the goddesses of life and death featured in ancient religions around the world. Ancient Greek epics and poetry feature characters like Medea and Circe, powerful sorceresses who use magic to control people and take revenge. Witches appear in Shakespeare as malevolent beings who look into the future

¹ For instance, female vampires in films like *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and *Byzantium* (2012), and female werewolves in the *Ginger Snaps* film series (2000-2004).

like the witches in *Macbeth*, or as horrific women who birth monsters like Sycorax in *The Tempest*. As Shahrukh Husain in her introduction to *The Virago Book of Witches* writes, witches are “a part of every known culture since the dawn of time, casting spells, healing the wounded and spinning fate” (1994, p. xiii). Children are introduced to them most commonly through fairy tales, where they are almost always presented as ugly hags who feed on children. It is this childhood fear of fairy tale witches coupled with the historical religious belief that witches are the aides of Satan that places the witch as a horror monster in modern popular culture.

In this thesis, I will be discussing how changes in feminist thought influenced different witch portrayals in horror films during the 1960s and 1970s. I have chosen the 1960s and 1970s because these were pivotal decades for social change and new phases in the horror genre. This thesis is divided into a literature review for the first chapter followed by three chapters of close analysis of select films. Each of the close analysis chapters discusses a specific type of witch that I have identified, with the focus of that analysis being on narrative, dialogue, and plot. The first close analysis chapter will look at witches as housewives and how the housewife witch either destroys or subverts expectations surrounding the traditional housewife role. The films discussed in this chapter include *Burn Witch Burn* (1962), *Season of the Witch* (1973), and *Eye of the Devil* (1966). The second close analysis chapter focuses on teenage witches and discusses how the horror witch represents and embodies teenage anxieties surrounding otherness and identity while also exploring the complexities of teenage femininity. This chapter focuses mainly on the 1976 film version of *Carrie*. The final close analysis chapter discusses the witch as a mother or maternal mentor figure and examines how the film *Suspiria* (1977) in particular exaggerates negative traits of motherhood, and uses the ambivalence of the horror genre to work through who or what is a witch.

This thesis uses works from two key feminist writers to help understand how these witch portrayals represent changes in feminist thought during this time period. The first is Betty Friedan, whose book *The Feminine Mystique*, first published in 1963, highlights the sociological and personal problems women faced in the late 1950s and early 1960s while trying to conform to the post-war image of the ‘happy housewife’. Friedan discusses the societal expectations placed on women and how they were viewed before the majority of the films discussed in this thesis were released, and as such provides a base of ideas to explore the witch as housewife in chapter two. The other writer is Julia Kristeva, a philosopher and linguist whose work has been used in film studies many times before. I will be using Kristeva’s theories on the foreigner from her book *Strangers to Ourselves*, first published in 1988, in chapter three to examine how teen witches challenge the bullied teen stereotype and the typical coming-of-age narrative. In the final chapter, these two writers are brought together to discuss the film *Suspiria* using theories on motherhood advanced by both writers to analyse the witch as an alienating maternal mentor figure. Using the works of Friedan and Kristeva, this thesis will show how witch figures in horror films worked through the complex changes in traditional feminine societal roles during the 1960s and 1970s and became alternative female role models for women in this time.

History of the witch in cinema

In cinema, witches have been terrorising audiences since the beginnings of the medium. Silent film auteur Georges Méliès used witch characters in a number of his films, including *The Witch* (1906) in which Méliès himself plays the titular antagonist. *Häxan* (1922) is another silent film that focuses on the witch. Director Benjamin Christensen creates an early example of the documentary that looks at the historical sources of the witch from ancient times, followed by a lengthy re-enactment of the way

mass hysteria led to the rise of witch trials in Medieval Europe. Christensen then links that hysteria to modern day mental illness in women, imploring the audience to have empathy for those who suffer from behaviours that were previously associated with the Satanic.

The most well-known cinematic witch is the Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton) from the 1939 film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, one of “the first films to present a terrifying picture of the witch” (Creed 2007, p. 73). The Wicked Witch, a key antagonist in L. Frank Baum’s *Oz Series* of books, has become the quintessential image of evil cinematic witches that later films have copied. Echoes of her character can be seen in films as diverse as *Hocus Pocus* (1993) and *Spirited Away* (2001). There have been reinterpretations of her character that try to explore The Wicked Witch’s motivations, a key example being the novel *Wicked* (1995) by Gregory Maguire and the Broadway stage show that is based on it (first performed in 2003). The Wicked Witch added to the childhood association of witches being evil, which has caused many of their portrayals in cinema to also be evil. However, her re-examination in works like *Wicked* show that the Wicked Witch, much like witch characters in general, are constantly changing depending on cultural context.

Witches are commonly found in children’s films as the main antagonists, a modern example being the Grand High Witch (Anne Hathaway) in the 2020 film version of *The Witches*. However, there are examples where the witch is portrayed as good. *The Wizard of Oz* has Glinda the Good Witch (Billie Burke), who helps guide Dorothy (Judy Garland) on her journey to get home, and other good witches can be found in the Disney film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971) and the Czechoslovakian fantasy film *The Girl on the Broomstick* (1972).

Witches also exist in comedic narratives, such as *I Married a Witch* (1942) and *Bell, Book, and Candle* (1958). But comedic witches have been more frequently seen on TV rather than in films. The most famous comedy witch is Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery) from the TV show *Bewitched* which originally aired from 1964 to 1972. This sitcom revolves around the premise of a witch trying to be the perfect housewife without using her magical powers, and the majority of the comedy comes from her failed attempts at being ‘normal’ or from hiding her witchcraft from the suburban neighbourhood around her. Later sitcom *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003) contains similar themes of hiding witchcraft from the ‘normal world’, but also explores teenage and high school anxieties instead of marital ones. Other TV witches come from dramatic fantasy narratives, such as *Charmed* (1998-2006), or in horror narratives, like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013-2014).

This thesis only discusses cinematic portrayals of witches. However, analysis of a selection of TV movies, standalone narratives that were made for public broadcast that were not intended for cinematic release, will be included. This thesis will also move away from films aimed at children and comedic interpretations of witches, and instead focus on the witch in horror films. Horror films reflect societal anxieties and cultural changes better than any other film genre. Monsters in horror films change meaning with each generation, and witches are no exception. Horror monsters each have their own subgenre category within the horror genre, where the main focus is on the monster and what it represents for the creators. The hysteria of the witch trials has been used by countless directors to reflect different anxieties of society at different historical moments. The most obvious example is Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1953) which uses the Salem witch trials as an allegory for the witch hunts organised by Senator McCarthy during the 1950s. The

changes in societal gender roles can be seen in several witch films from the 1960s and 1970s, an era that also featured changes within the horror genre itself.

Major changes in horror films in the 1960s and 1970s

One of the reasons that I chose the 1960s and 1970s as a time period to focus on was because of the emergence, and impact, of the new second-wave feminist movement. Another important reason is due to the changes that were happening in the horror film genre during this time as well. Many scholars believe that 1960 is a benchmark year for horror primarily because of the release of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and its far-reaching influence (most notably Robin Wood, Carol Clover, and Charles Derry). As influential as *Psycho* is, Mark Jancovich is correct when he argues that *Psycho* is merely continuing a trend of horror films "that are concerned with a crisis of identity within modern society" (2002, p. 4). Before this time, horror film narratives were focused on outside malevolent forces. These can be seen in the 1950s B-movies about alien invasions, but films were beginning to explore horror found in the home and family. This trend arguably started with the French film *Les Diaboliques* (1955), which was a big influence on Hitchcock. 1960 still remains a benchmark year in horror, but not just due to the release of *Psycho*. Other releases that year include *Eyes Without a Face* (dir. Georges Franju), *Peeping Tom* (dir. Michael Powell) and *Black Sunday* (dir. Mario Bava). Each of these film narratives focus on the evil hiding within mankind, and explore the monstrosity of humanity and the human mind, either through the destruction of the family unit, like in *Psycho* and *Eyes without a Face*, or by subverting traditional horror monsters.

Onscreen violence was also becoming more prevalent at this time. While still tame compared to today's standards, the horror films of the 1960s experimented with how much violence could be shown on screen. This is what eventually led to the splatter films

of the 1970s, brought about primarily through low budget movies like *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), which gave way to the rise of exploitation cinema, a genre that replaced the B-movies of the 1950s. Exploitation cinema also used sexualised violence and the fetishization of the female body, which could be argued led to the rise of the slasher genre of the 1980s.

The changes in the horror genre that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s were both extreme in terms of violence, and inspiring in terms of how they influenced subsequent horror filmmakers. The films of this era influenced later filmmakers, and are still being referenced and remade today². It is for these reasons that I have chosen to focus on this time period in this thesis. I was also able to find more horror films that feature witches during this time period compared to other decades. Portrayals of witches in horror films underwent changes that reflect the changes happening in the horror genre. While the majority of films from this time focused on the witch as an evil worshipper of Satan, there are a few that presented more complex portrayals that focus on the witch's place in society. The housewife witches of *Burn, Witch, Burn* and *Season of the Witch* use witchcraft to escape the confines of the domestic sphere and subvert their husbands' patriarchal power. Then there is the cult leader witch of *Eye of the Devil* who uses her femininity to intimidate traditional societal gender roles. The teen witches in *Carrie* (1976) and the TV movies *The Spell* (1977), *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978), and *Summer of Fear* (1978), whose witchcraft is an extension of teenage anxieties of otherness and belonging, are more realistic portrayals of teenage girls rather than the film stereotypes that had previously been seen in teen films. Even the witches in *Suspiria* (1977), who are

² New films in both the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween* franchises are to be released either later this year or in early 2022.

the antagonists of the narrative, can be seen as maternal mentor figures as well as evil witches.

Defining the witch

But first clear definitions of what constitutes a witch character and a horror film is needed. Neither are easy concepts to define. Witches have changed so much over the years, from the Satanic Witch to the contemporary Wiccan. Shahrukh Husain explains that she herself was unable to come up with a satisfying definition for a witch because “the witch constantly challenges definition, remaining baffling and enigmatic to the end” (1994, p. xxi). Husain discusses the many different iterations of the witch in mythology and literature in order to give an understanding of how the witch is represented around the world, and draws on the myths and legends of ancient societies. Husain also places other mythological creatures into the witch category that are not typically thought of as witches, like fairies and gorgons (1994, p. xiii-xiv). She writes that witches:

represent the essence of the feminine mind, teaching us their ancient wisdom, their wiles and their guiles and the truth that every woman must learn about her own magic. All witches possess formidable magic and this, from the beginning, has caused them to be driven out of society, cloaking them in the inalienable garb of Otherness (Husain 1994, p. xv).

Husain provides a way to link witches directly with feminist values. In this definition we can see that witches contain a mixture of femininity and strangeness, and choose to be outsiders in order to find knowledge and magic.

Another reason to interpret witches through a feminist lens is that they are the only “incontestably monstrous role in the horror film that belongs to woman” (Creed 2007, p. 73). Barbara Creed in her book *The Monstrous Feminine* takes a different stance

from Husain in defining what a witch is and instead uses historical ideas about the witch as a basis for her definition. Creed puts an emphasis on the witch's suffering and persecution, especially under the Catholic church, and says that the witch "is represented within patriarchal discourses as an implacable enemy of the symbolic order" (Creed 2007, p. 76). According to Creed, the witch is defined by her defiance of the patriarchal order, and this is what makes her evil in the eyes of men and why it is men in particular who say that she must therefore be destroyed. Creed extends her definition of the witch further, arguing that the witch "sets out to unsettle the boundaries between the rational and irrational" (Creed 2007, p. 76).

Parts of Creed's definition are suitable for use in this thesis, but not every aspect. The idea that witches are figures of disruption and rebellion against the 'symbolic order' is present in almost every film that features witch characters. However, the witch, or any cinematic female figure, should not be define solely based on her relation to male dominance. It is my contention that a witch should be defined by her own attributes and actions, and not just those in contrast to accepted patriarchal norms. Creed's definition relies too much on female suffering at the hands of the patriarchy when the witch should be defined as an entity on her own. This definition also limits the possibilities of who can be a witch character.

Vicky Christidis in her PhD thesis, *Something Wicked*, also acknowledges the difficulty of defining what a witch is, writing that it is "difficult to isolate what exactly constitutes a "witch" figure in film" (1999, p. 3). Because of this difficulty, the definition that Christidis uses in her thesis is very general and relates directly to the witch as a film character. She defines the witch as "a female or male figure who is regarded as a witch... within the context of the film's narrative" (Christidis 1999, p. 4). While vague, this definition does help to encompass all the different possibilities when it comes to witch

portrayals in film, and Christidis is the only scholar to actively acknowledge that male witches exist. However, for my own working definition I will add some of Creed's thoughts about witches bringing about the disruption of patriarchal society and also Husain's thoughts on witches representing something essential within femininity.

For this thesis I define a witch as a person with special powers who brings about social disruption as a result of using their powers that leads to the subversion of traditionally held feminine beliefs and gender roles. This definition encompasses every type of witch that is portrayed in the films I have chosen, either through the characters' own admission of being a witch or through their actions in the plot. Some of the witch characters this thesis focuses on are not traditionally seen as witches, but they could be seen as witch figures through this definition. I also did not want to base my definition on any kind of moral alignment, since during my research I have found that being good, evil, or neutral does not impact on whether or not they are a witch.

Defining the horror film

This thesis is informed by genre theory, and the fact that films can be categorised into different genres. Genre theory frames the argument of this thesis that films in the horror genre are reflective of societal and cultural changes. Beginning in the late 1960s, genre theory sought to examine how films are categorised and why people feel the need to categorise them. Genre theory was first used in literary studies before being adopted into film studies as a way to discuss films that featured similar narratives, visuals, and plot devices. Rick Altman, a leading scholar on genre theory, argues that genres accomplish several actions at once for audiences, critics, and filmmakers:

genres provide the formulas that drive production; genres constitute the structures that define individual texts; programming decisions are based primarily on generic

criteria; the interpretation generic films depends directly on the audience's expectations. (1999, p. 14)

Genre allows both critics and audiences to categorise films and to select films to watch based on their generic classifications. Genre theory includes the study of how different genres are defined, and how that definition evolves over time.

Altman discusses that one of the reasons people rely on genres is because “narrative can serve as a form of societal self-expression, directly addressing the society's constitutive contradictions” (1999, p. 26). A film can be seen as a reflection of society's concern at the time, which is why changes happen in genres over long periods of time. But ultimately during these changes there remains some similarities that allow for different film genres to continue being used. Barry Keith Grant describes these changes as a type of sequence that evolves from an early stage in which the common elements of the genre are formed before moving into “a classical period of archetypal expression” (2007, p. 35) where these elements are refined. After this, the genre goes through what Grant describes as “a more intellectual phase in which conventions are examined and questioned” (2007, p. 35), and then finally entering into a fourth stage of irony and self-parody. These stages act as a kind of cycle within cinema as new trends emerge in cinematic narratives and new subgenres are created (including the exploitation movie, the slasher movie, etc.). The witch horror film, where cinematic narratives are concerned with witches, witchcraft, and the witch trials, is a subgenre that emerged during this genre cycle to reflect on the changes happening at a time when traditional female roles were being challenged³.

³ Both Altman and Grant also include leading theorists on cinematic genre theory, including Steve Neale, David Bordwell, and Thomas Schatz.

There is an ongoing debate over how horror films should be defined, and many scholars have put forward their own arguments over how to categorise horror films. I will be discussing only a few of the most influential and broadly referenced definitions provided by scholars in this introduction. Genre studies focusing on the horror film began in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s, with many scholars using the Universal films of the 1930s or the Val Lewton films of the 1940s to form the basis of their definitions⁴. A good overview of the history of both the horror film and of horror film genre theory in the 20th century can be found in Mark Jancovich's introduction in *Horror, the Film Reader* (2002, pp. 1-19). In this introduction, Jancovich goes through some of the most influential writings on the horror film, discussing the strengths and problems of each essay and writer that he mentions. He writes that scholars first looked at the horror films in terms of formula, meaning that genres were defined by "formulas and spectacles" and points out how they differed "from the classical realist style of narrative cinema" (Williams 2012, p. 160). But when that kind of analysis created "a dissatisfaction with these ways of understanding genre" (Jancovich 2002, p. 12) scholars instead turned to a more structuralist approach to the horror film.

Inspired by the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and structuralist linguistics, scholars used structuralism in order to "identify the specific recurrent oppositions that defined a specific genre" (Jancovich 2002, p. 12). This approach allowed scholars to view a large collection of films as belonging to one genre while acknowledging that differences occurred between individual films, and also looking at the elements that could "distinguish it from other genres" (Jancovich 2002, p. 14). This structuralist approach

⁴ Examples include *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (both 1931), and *Cat People* (1942).

then led to post-structuralist genre studies as the horror genre evolved through the latter half of the 20th century.

One key scholar on the horror film is Robin Wood, whose essay ‘The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s’ (originally published in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 1986; version used here from Jancovich’s *Horror, the Film Reader*, 2002) provides insight into what I have already briefly touched upon, the changes to the horror film genre that occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s. Wood defines the horror film as “an encounter between civilisation and that which it represses” (2002, p. 14), where the monster represents what is repressed and is trying to break free. This repression then gives rise to the ‘other’, someone who “bourgeois ideology cannot recognise or accept” (Wood 2002, p. 27) and must therefore be either assimilated or destroyed. Wood’s definition of the horror genre is one that has as its central conflict “the actual dramatization of the dual concept of the repressed/the Other, in the figure of the monster” (2002, p. 28).

Wood refers to the horror monster as the key figure needed for a film to be labelled as horror instead of using the more inclusive term antagonist. I am hesitant to use the word monster mainly because of its association with the supernatural, and there are plenty of horror films where the antagonist is not supernatural at all. There are even some horror films where the antagonist is something that is not tangible in any sense, like a character’s paranoia or fear (*The Innocents* 1961), an unknown/unseen force (*Final Destination* 2000), a building (*The Haunting* 1963, *Cube* 1997) or even a bad drug trip (*The Oregonian* 2011, *Climax* 2018). I believe that the term monster does not quite cover every type of antagonistic force that exists in horror films, and I will not be using it in my definition.

One of the most influential essays on defining the horror genre is Linda Williams' "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" (originally published in 1991, version used here from *Film Genre Reader IV*, published 2012), in which she uses audiences' physical reactions to different film genres to influence definitions of what those genres are. Williams describes horror, melodrama, and pornography as 'body genres', or film genres that revel in showing bodily excess to the point that the audience feels a similar physical reaction themselves. These genres become defined through audience reaction meaning that "the success of these genres is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on screen" (2012, p. 162-163).

Williams also discusses how within these 'body genres', the body of female characters on screen have become "the primary embodiments of pleasure, fear, and pain" (2012, p. 162). Therefore, in horror, the film not only has to produce a physical reaction of fear in the audience, but it achieves that reaction through the way in which the female body is destroyed as a victim of the antagonist. I agree with this idea in most cases, since there are a large number of female victims in horror films especially in popular subgenres like slasher and exploitation films. The destruction of the male body has only become more prevalent in horror films during the 21st century⁵. But this part of the definition is not needed within my thesis since I am not looking at women in horror films in the same way that Williams is. However, the notion that horror movies are produced specifically with the intention to frighten the audience and elicit a visceral reaction is important in a definition of a horror film.

After looking at the way that all of these seminal scholars of the horror film define what the horror film genre is, I have tentatively created my own loose definition drawn

⁵ Films like *Hostel* (2005) and *Tusk* (2014) both explicitly feature the destruction of male bodies.

from my research. For this thesis, a horror film is a film that has been created with the intent to scare its audience, and where something unforeseen happens to the protagonist that disrupts the previously presented status quo with traumatic and often fatal consequences. The definition is deliberately vague to try and encapsulate all types of horror movies. Unlike Wood, there is no mention of the monster for reasons I have already stated above, but also because sometimes the fearful bodily reaction that a horror film produces comes from guessing who or what the monster really is⁶. By keeping the definition more fluid, it can be adapted to all sorts of films that sit under the umbrella term of ‘horror’, and can be applied to the films discussed in thesis that fall under the subgenre of ‘witch films’.

Friedan and Kristeva

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* is one of the first texts to actively engage with the dissatisfaction of the traditional female role in society without referring to female hysteria. It is also a popular piece of sociological research that has continued to be studied long after it was first published in 1963. When originally published, *The Feminine Mystique* sold around 765,000 copies within the first few years of its publication run (Gill 2013, p. 424), and it has continued to be reprinted since. I have chosen to use Friedan’s book as one of the key texts because of its continued popularity and because of the way that her theories of female dissatisfaction continue to impact people even today.

Another reason why Friedan’s work appealed to me was the fact that it is frequently seen as a precursor to the ideologies of the second-wave feminist movement. The second wave feminist movement, which roughly spans from 1968 to 1982 (Mendes 2011, p. 487), focused on women who were fighting the inherent misogyny present in the

⁶ A film like *The Wailing* (2016), for instance, maintains its fear by not revealing until the last minute which character is the real antagonist.

Western world that categorised women as ‘other’ (Walters 2005, pp. 97-112). Friedan’s work helped identify a hidden truth that, as Margaret Walters describes, “middle-class women lead restricted lives, and too often lapse into a depressed acceptance of that restriction” (2005, p. 102). These are themes that can be identified in the films analysed in this thesis, where a housewife becomes a witch as a reaction to such restricted lives. There is also a connection between the time of Friedan’s writings, the influence of her ideas, and the time frame of witch films that is used for this thesis. The concurrency of these events creates a closeness between *The Feminine Mystique* and the films being analysed.

Betty Friedan was inspired to write this book after attending a college reunion. While compiling a questionnaire for her classmates, Friedan became aware of what she called ‘the problem that has no name’, that is the unspoken dissatisfaction among housewives who are continually trying to live up to their societal role. This problem, as Friedan describes it, is that many housewives:

simply did not fit the image of the modern American woman as she was written about in women’s magazines, studied and analysed in classrooms and clinics, praised and damned in a ceaseless barrage of words ever since the end of the Second World War (2010, p. 1).

The proper societal roles for women in the 1950s were based solely around their gender as a collective whole. Women were being defined through their sexual and biological functions and not as individual people, and were consequently being pressured into becoming wives and mothers, and living for and through their husbands and children.

The Feminine Mystique examines reasons as to why this female ideal manifested itself particularly in the post war years of the late 1940s and the 1950s. Friedan looks in

depth at how media geared towards women created a “picture of the modern American housewife” (Friedan 2010, p. 21) that women should aim to embody. She also looks at how advertising perpetuates the housewife stereotype while encouraging mass-consumerism among housewives as a way to suppress their individual selves (Friedan 2010, pp.166-189). Ultimately, Friedan writes that the solution to this ‘problem that has no name’ is to allow women the opportunity to live and express themselves how they want to in order to create a complete and mature identity, and this usually involves rejecting the ideals and the limited housewife image of the Feminine Mystique. As Friedan herself describes it, a woman “must think of herself as a human being first, not as a mother with time on her hands” (2010, p. 279). Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* as “an intervention ... [calling] upon readers to break the cycle and to free themselves from the ‘housewife trap’” (Fraterrigo 2015, p. 34).

While Friedan’s ideas were revolutionary at the time, more recently “she has been criticised, correctly, for being narrowly middle class” (Walters 2005, p. 102). Many modern scholars have noted that Friedan’s examples are limited to the white middle-classes, and that she ignores the lower classes, women of colour, and queer women (Fraterrigo 2015, pp. 35-36; Gill 2013, pp. 425-426; Hollows 2000, pp. 10-12; Meyerowitz 1993, 1456; Walters 2005, p. 102). Scholars also note that because Friedan describes the Feminine Mystique as universal, there are inevitable inaccuracies in what she writes. Jo Gill claims that Friedan’s assertion that the norm was “a white, middle-class, heterosexual, suburban experience ...was, in fact, atypical” (2013, p. 425), and that her book belittles those women who do find fulfilment within wife and mother roles. Personally, I find that Friedan is prone to exaggeration that can be uncomfortable at times, especially when she compares the psychological effect the housewife role has on women to those who experienced the concentration camps of World War Two. I find this

comparison downplays the atrocities of the Holocaust rather than strengthen Friedan's argument.

But Friedan does have those who support and defend her, and even those who find her theories dated cannot deny the impact that *The Feminine Mystique* has had. Elizabeth Fraterrigo accepts Friedan's limitations while also exclaiming that "she proposed the centrality of cultural messages in a mass-mediated society for the prospects of girls and boys" (2015, p. 36). Friedan is one of the first critical writers to look at how popular culture can affect perceptions of gender, another reason why I have decided to use these concepts from *The Feminine Mystique* in this thesis, especially in my chapter on the witch as housewife.

At first glance there do not appear to be many similarities between Betty Friedan and Julia Kristeva, apart from the fact that they are both female writers. Kristeva herself is a Bulgarian born philosopher and psychoanalyst who has written extensively on a vast array of topics. Although Kristeva herself does not identify as a feminist, she has been labelled as one by other scholars (Goodnow 2010, pp 1-2). Kelly Oliver writes in her preface to *The Portable Kristeva* (2002) that Kristeva has written on numerous subjects relating to the humanities, including "philosophy, literary theory, linguistics, cultural studies, psychoanalytic theory, and feminist theory" (2002, p. vii). I first became familiar with Kristeva through her work on the abject, especially her book *Powers of Horror*. I will expand on this in my next chapter when looking at how Barbara Creed uses Kristeva's theory of the abject within the horror film genre.

Katherine J. Goodnow also uses Kristeva's concepts to analyse films, in particular the films that belong to the New Zealand new wave movement. Goodnow uses a selection of Kristeva's work in order to demonstrate how her theories can inform film analysis. By

separating Kristeva's ideas thematically rather than chronologically, Goodnow is able to use multiple texts when discussing films like *An Angel at My Table* (1990), *Crush* (1992), and *Vigil* (1984). Goodnow also describes Kristeva's writing as being interested "in the ways by which any established order is challenged, undermined, or changed" (2010, p. 2), which ties into my interest in looking at how witch characters in horror films challenge traditional female roles, undermine the expectations of those roles, and also how the ambivalence of the horror genre provides a formal structure in which these changes can be explored and worked through.

What I have found during research for this thesis is that Kristeva and Friedan share hidden similarities, especially when it comes to the mother-child relationship. Friedan's descriptions of what she calls symbiosis are reminiscent of Kristeva's writing on the abject. Friedan describes symbiosis as the "biological oneness... between mother and child" (2010, p. 232). This biological symbiosis is then replaced with a psychological symbiosis where the mother emotionally supports the child until the child's mind matures and they become fully independent from the mother. However, Friedan explains that recently:

the symbiosis concept has crept with increasing frequency into the case histories of disturbed children. More and more of the new child pathologies seem to stem from that very symbiotic relationship with the mother, which has somehow kept the children from becoming separate selves. (2010, p. 233)

As a result of the lack of intellectual growth and output the housewife experiences because she is adhering to the traditional gender roles of the Feminine Mystique, she ends up instead living through her children in order to "gratify her own infantile dreams"

(Friedan 2010, p. 233). This leads to a lack of growth within the child, and an inability to move away from the mother figure.

Compare this to how Kristeva describes the abject in relation to motherhood and childbirth:

The abject confronts us... within our personal archaeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before existing outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling. (Oliver ed. 2002, p. 239)

Kristeva describes the need for the child to break away from the mother in terms that are similar to Friedan. Both writers understand that the mother and child must be separated in order for the child to achieve their full maturity and independence.

The similarities between these two ideas of symbiosis and the maternal abject is how I first connected the two writers. But I do not want to replicate previous analyses on the horror film by using Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* when discussing the witch character, since Barbara Creed has already provided an in-depth exploration on the witch in horror films using *Powers of Horror*. I instead decided that using another of Kristeva's books, that being *Strangers to Ourselves*, would provide a different way of looking at how witches can be seen as outsiders to the status quo.

Strangers to Ourselves is a historical and philosophical study of the foreigner, and looks at how society has perceived 'others' throughout history. Kristeva argues that the foreigner will remain an outsider to society until everyone can accept that we all contain otherness inside ourselves. Oliver describes Kristeva's foreigner as an "outward manifestation of the estranged psychic relation between conscious and unconscious"

(2002, pp. 226-227). Kristeva's concept of the foreigner can be linked to the alienation that teenagers feel as they are coming of age in high school. They can also be used to show how the witch can use this alienation to gain power over those around her. By analysing *Carrie* and *Suspiria* with ideas from *Strangers to Ourselves*, I aim to show how the witch character subverted previously held beliefs surrounding teenagers and also how we can interpret the witch in horror films.

Kristeva and Friedan have no outward similarities since they are writing at different times and with different objectives, but they are both interested in how alienated groups are created through societal traditions. Friedan focuses on how women have become dissatisfied living within the role that society has given them. She presents the problem that has no name as the inertia felt by women in the post-war years of America, and how the only way one can combat this is through the destruction of the happy housewife image that has been reinforced through women's media of the 1950s. Kristeva, meanwhile, discusses how society creates outsiders by looking at the foreigner throughout history and not focusing on one specific time period. By analysing where the foreigner comes from, in both a legal and conceptual way, Kristeva is able to see that everyone in society has a form of otherness. These two writers propose different ways of looking at how the portrayal of the witch character in horror films from the 1960s and 1970s provides a way of working through the complex changes in traditional female societal roles brought about by values of second-wave feminism.

Chapter 1 – Literature Review

Despite being one of the least written about horror monsters, there are some key academic writings that discuss the witch figure in film. Some of the key scholars who have written on witches in film will be discussed in this chapter, including how they are relevant to this thesis, and also highlight some of the witch films made during the 1960s and 1970s. The majority of the resources available, which include books, essays, and a PhD thesis, focus on films that treat witches as a form of Satanism or look at the historical representation of the witch trials. There are a few key works that analyse witch films not associated with either of these themes, but there are not many academic texts written about horror film witches as characters in their own right.

During initial research for this thesis, about 70 films made between 1960 and 1979 that featured witches or witchcraft in either the title or plot synopsis were found. This initial list was shortened when it became apparent that some films were impossible to get hold of, either online or in a physical copy, or did not actually feature witches at all⁷. Out of these films, much like the academic resources, the majority deal with historical witch-trials or link witchcraft to Satanism. These films are arguably the most well-known and include titles like *Black Sunday* (1960), *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *The Devils* (1971). Looking deeper into possible films to discuss, a second collection of 'witch films' were revealed that explore the idea of the witch in modern times. These films include *Burn Witch Burn* (1962), *Eye of the Devil* (1966), *Season of the Witch* (1973), and TV movies like *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978), and *The Spell* (1977). These lesser-known films explore witches and witchcraft in a contemporary

⁷ *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* (1976), for example, is not about sea witches.

setting rather than a historical one, and move away from the common myth that witchcraft is associated with Satanism.

Sarah Ward has provided a general overview of popular witch films in her *Screen Education* article, 'All of Them Witches'. Her article is a good place to start to discover the most popular witch films in cinematic history, and therefore an obvious starting point for this literature review. Ward looks at how witchcraft is used in films as "shorthand for preternatural opposition to or deviance from normality" (2016, p. 35), and she also looks at how witch characters within cinema are symbols of non-conformity. She discusses film adaptations of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), specifically the adaptations from 1957 and 1999, and claims that *The Crucible* explores the universal anxieties "about the adversarial ideas of fitting in and standing out that have furnished an entire subgenre of witch-related films" (2016. P. 36). She then discusses the outsider characters in *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Craft* (1996), and *The Witch* (2015), and gives the reader examples of witch films from different decades and genres to watch as an introduction to the witch character in film. She also highlights one of the key overarching themes that most witch films examine in some sense: that of the witch as an outsider, and fighter against authority.

This concept of witches being a symbol of nonconformity is one that is repeated often throughout the discourse on witches in media. One of the more interesting papers by J. Sage Elwell explores how Lars von Trier's film *Antichrist* (2009) could be interpreted as a spiritual or symbolic sequel to the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. Elwell claims that the character She (Charlotte Gainsbourg) in *Antichrist* is a grown-up version of Dorothy, one who has lost her childhood innocence. Since the narratives of both films mirror each other, She is destined to become a witch herself. But what is most interesting about Elwell's argument is that she describes the witch as "an affront to the established

symbolic order and the patriarchal discourses that constitute it” (2012, p. 20), echoing how Barbara Creed defined the witch in horror films. Once again, the witch is a character defined by her nonconformity rather than a connection to Satan or the witch trials.

Another article that explores witches in popular culture is by Buket Akgün, and focuses on how female witch characters from classical mythology are portrayed and received in Japanese manga. Akgün narrows her article to analyse seinen and shōnen manga specifically, which are male age demographics for manga. Seinen manga is aimed at high school teenage boys, while shōnen manga is instead aimed at younger boys. Akgün claims that despite manga such as *One Piece* (1997-present), *Berserk* (1989-present), *Soul Eater* (2004-2013), and *Witchcraft Works* (2010-present) being primarily aimed at boys belonging to those two age demographics, the popularity of these titles with girls of the same age resulted in “positive change in the representation of female characters” (2019, p. 2). These characters are based on witches from classical mythology, like Circe and Medusa, to create an interesting blend of both Western and Japanese mythological influence within the manga series’. Akgün argues that these changes in representation of female witch characters means that this series:

enables identification and/or infatuation with these aggressive, nonconformist, independent, and powerful women, formerly demonised and repressed by patriarchal discourse (2019, p. 12).

Akgün continues the tradition of analysing and defining witch characters through their rebellious nature and symbolic opposition to patriarchal values.

Elwell’s and Akgün’s argument that witches represent a disruption or subversion to traditional patriarchal values is echoed throughout most films that feature witches. The following four sources I will discuss in depth during this literature review all include

ideas about the witch as a subversive character within films, and also a character that stands against oppression within the confines of a stifling patriarchal society. I want to add to this argument by discussing how the witch figure in horror films from the 1960s and 1970s challenges previously held feminine beliefs, using theories from Betty Friedan and Julia Kristeva. In order to better understand the academic scholarship on witchcraft and witches in horror films, I will summarise four of the most in-depth analyses of witches in cinema.

Starting with one of the more thorough explorations on the witch in cinema. Vicky Christidis' PhD thesis 'Something Wicked' (1999) looks at archetypes of the warrior witch in film. Christidis acknowledges the different types of witch portrayals in films, and creates new ways to interpret these portrayals in a more positive light. Christidis' theories directly oppose what has previously been written about witches by the next scholar Sharon Russell. Russell's essay, called 'The Witch in Film: Myth and Reality' (2004), focuses on the fact that witches are unfortunately more commonly portrayed as evil beings, but there are limitations to her film analysis. Russell has a large filmography that she references, but generalises the differences between films by claiming that they all link witchcraft and Satanism. The third key scholar is Barbara Creed, whose book *The Monstrous Feminine* (2007) has an in-depth discussion on witchcraft present in the movie *Carrie* (1976). Creed also gives historical context to show how witches have previously been perceived, in both real life and cinema. Finally, the fourth scholar, Brenda S. Gardenour Walter, offers the most recent analysis of witches in horror films in her book *Our Old Monsters* (2015) which traces the origins of witches, werewolves, and vampires from the studies of Aristotle to how they are represented in media from the 1960s up to today. Each one of these scholars provides differing ways of looking at how witches are portrayed and represented in films, and how these portrayals have changed over time.

Vicky Christidis and *Something Wicked*

Drawing on Jungian archetypal theories, *Something Wicked* sets out to expand the understanding of witch characters in film, since Christidis herself writes that “the image of the witch in cinema has not been adequately explored” (1999, p. 2). Christidis discusses witch characters from every genre in order to look at witch characters who seek to “redress perceived oppressions and ... to fight with whatever skills they possess” (1999, p. 5) and classifies these witch characters as a new archetype she calls the ‘warrior witch’. What Christidis really aims to do is to move the witch away from the Satan-worshipping stereotype it has become, showing that there are different ways witches have been portrayed in all genres of film.

According to Jung, archetypes are universal collective patterns and groups that are often unconsciously perceived by people. They can be inspired by folklore, mythology, and fairy tales, and usually contain repeated characters and tropes that are found in these stories and legends (Christidis 1999, pp. 38-41). Christidis identifies three main ‘warrior witch’ figures that are seen in different historical eras presented in film: 1. The Pagan Witch, 2. The Medieval Witch, and 3. The Contemporary Witch. Through these three figures, Christidis argues that “the archetype of the witch in film was not a fixed archetype, but one that was fluid and contained many archetypes within its complex embodiment” (1999, pp. 44-45). Out of these archetypes, she claims that the ‘warrior witch’ is the most recognisable in a cinematic context. Christidis is also one of the few scholars to acknowledge that male witches exist in film, something that she criticises others for ignoring. She argues that ignoring the male witch comes from the presumption made during the Middle Ages that only women could be witches (1999, p. 4).

This perception of the witch that comes from the Inquisition and the Middle Ages is what largely informs her definition of a Medieval Witch, the most common type of witch figure found in horror films (1999, pp. 50-51). According to Christidis, a medieval witch is either portrayed as “an innocent victim of the witch craze hysteria” or as “a demonic figure in league with the Devil” (1999, p. 221). She also asserts that the first type of medieval witch is predominantly found in historical dramas while the second type is more common in horror films, but within both of these genres the witch is almost always associated with the Satanic. I agree with her arguments here, based on the films I was able to find and watch myself. The witch-trials were a fascinating time, in which mass-hysteria and genocide was common. Historically, more women than men were killed, but that does not mean that men weren’t accused, tried, and executed. The most famous fictional retelling of the Salem witch trials, Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1953), contained both men and women being accused of witchcraft, and eventually killed because of that accusation.

Films in the Medieval Witch category usually revolve around the witch trials in Europe and North America, especially the ones that took place in Salem. During my research it became apparent that many of the films that dealt with witch trials are not actually about witches. The characters who are accused of witchcraft are often innocent people who possess no magical powers. These films instead are more concerned with the trials themselves and, in the horror film, exploring the torture that the witchfinders inflict upon those accused of witchcraft. Examples of films from my time period include *Witchfinder General*, *Mark of the Devil* (1970), and *Inquisition* (1976), all of which are horror films verging on an early prototype of torture porn. But this narrative can also be found in earlier films like *Day of Wrath* (1943) and *The Undead* (1957), and the proto-documentary *Häxan* (1922). Another plot device in witch trial films is to use the

reincarnation of a witch to enact revenge on the descendants of those who originally killed her, as we see in the TV film *Crowhaven Farm* (1970). While some films that contain this plot are interesting in terms of female characters and questions of fate versus free will⁸, there is once again very little in the way of actual witchcraft being used onscreen. Instead, the historical setting of the witch trials is used as a background for narratives that focus on mob hysteria and its effects.

Christidis defines the Pagan Witch as someone who practices a type of witchcraft that predates “the beginnings of the Judeo/Christian religion and therefore [does] not have a direct link to the ... Satanic” (1999, p. 217). This means that the Pagan Witch also has an unknown source of power that is not immediately recognised as inherently evil due to its relation to the Devil. Many Pagan Witch films are a symbolic exploration of Christianity vs Paganism, and feature narratives about fighting and subverting the major religion in secret. The contemporary setting of these films means that they challenge the idea that “Christianity supposedly destroyed the Pagan religion” (Christidis 1999, p. 169). Christidis places horror films like *The Wicker Man* (1973), *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982), and *Eye of the Devil* into this category. Each of these films contain hidden cults that have continued practicing pagan rituals in defiance of Christianity.

The main difference between Pagan Witch films and Contemporary Witch films is that the witches in Contemporary Witch films work within a Judeo/Christian society instead of fighting against it (Christidis 1999, p. 270). Contemporary Witch films explore acceptance of difference within a society that is initially against the concept of witchcraft instead of a battle between religions. The majority of these films are romantic comedies and focus on marriage and courtship, and the film will often end with the witch character

⁸ *Death by Invitation* (1971) is a lesser known film that explores this idea in depth.

giving up their powers in order to marry and therefore be accepted into the previously shunned Judeo/Christian society. Examples of the Contemporary Witch include the films *I Married a Witch* (1942), and *Bell, Book, and Candle* (1958). But Christidis has identified that “a major shift in societal attitudes towards women and marriage has taken place” (1999, p. 273), which means that more recent Contemporary Witch films end with the acceptance of the witch character without losing their powers, as we see in the film *Practical Magic* (1998).

These three key types of witch figures provide an initial framework to build upon, and Christidis’ thesis helped narrow down the types of films this thesis will focus on. It is also one of the only academic sources that looks at a large selection of films from different genres, instead of limiting the scope to only discuss witches in horror films. Christidis focuses on how the three witch figures she identifies stand out as strong characters in the films that she studies, providing a base from which I can branch out with my own research.

Sharon Russell and the Witch Myth in Horror Films

One of the earliest essays on the witch in horror films comes from Sharon Russell. Her essay, ‘The Witch in Film: Myth and Reality’, was originally published in the 1984 edited collection of essays on the horror film, *Planks of Reason* (the version referenced here is from the 2004 revised edition). In this essay, Russell claims that “there are few serious treatments of witches as figures of terror or power” (2004, p. 65) in both film and literature, and she uses examples of films from many different genres in order to prove her point. I do not agree with this statement, especially since she follows it up by stating that films that feature Satanism and Devil cults focus on male characters “as the centre of the cult rather than the female” (2004, p. 65). From these two statements, it seems that

Russell assumes that all portrayals of witches feature female witches as servants of Satan, who have no power within these cults.

In response to Russell's claims I would argue that there are plenty of films that show female Devil worshippers as equally strong as their male counterparts, if not more so in terms of both belief and power. Films that came out before her essay was published include *Black Sunday*, *Belladonna of Sadness* (1973), and *Superstition* (1982), and this tradition of strong female Satanists continues afterwards with films like *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), and *Lords of Salem* (2012). The witch characters in these films use their alliance with Satan in order to gain power for themselves and fulfil their own desires, usually revenge against the Judeo-Christian oppressors that originally sought to destroy them in some way. *Belladonna of Sadness* follows this narrative, with the main character, Jeanne (voiced by Aiko Nagayama), becoming a witch in order to take revenge on the Baron who raped her, the Baroness who denounced her as a witch, and the court that watched it all happen. Despite getting her power from a male Devil, what Jeanne chooses to do with that power is what makes her a strong character, both through helping other villagers behind the Baron's back and also getting revenge on what was done to her⁹.

Christidis also comments on the inadequate scope of Russell's essay, writing that one of Russell's major problems "is that she has explored only the negative manifestations of the [witch] myth, not the positive" (1999, p. 20). Russell seems to be making the argument that because witches are mainly portrayed as antagonists in horror films that somehow makes them weak, thereby adhering to the Judeo-Christian moral values that she dismisses at the beginning of her essay. Russell writes that the witch myth has been used by men to confirm the belief that women are inherently evil, referring to

⁹ *Witches of Eastwick* later subverts this narrative by having the Devil as both the one who empowers and then oppresses the witches, who use the power he gave them to ultimately defeat him.

this practice as “a product of the misogyny inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition” (2004, p. 63). But Russell herself does nothing to try and change these perceptions. She even goes so far as to imply that every film that contains witches portrays them as either evil or Satan worshippers, ignoring any independence that these characters might possess, or any films that represent witches in a more complex manner. While I will concede that at the time Russell wrote her article there were more negative than positive portrayals of witches in film, her argument falls flat when she uses a film that features good witch characters as an example, *Burn Witch Burn*, a film based on a Fritz Leiber novel about witches in a university town. I discuss this film in depth in my chapter on witches as housewives, but I will argue here that one of the main female characters in this film can be classified as a good witch.

However, there is one point on which I agree with Russell, and that is that early films about witches focus on the morality of the witch trials where “it is witchcraft itself which is often the focal point of early explorations” (2004, p. 66) of the witch in film. Russell argues that until the 1940s, witches in cinema were seen in mainly historical films about the witch trials in Europe and Salem where the question becomes not whether witches are good or evil, but whether those who are accused have supernatural powers or are normal people who become innocent victims of mass hysteria. Different films treat this idea in numerous ways. *Day of Wrath* (1943) suggests that there might be magic at work but it might easily just be in the characters’ mind. *The Seventh Victim* (1943) implies that strange occurrences are being acted out by members of a Satanic cult who have convinced themselves that they have magic powers, when in actuality they do not.

One of the more positive aspects of Russell’s paper is how she looks at the first films to feature witches when film as a medium was still a new entertainment. Russell claims that witches were used in early silent films in order to test new special effects that

directors were exploring. Russell calls these films ‘trick films’ and writes that “it is the maleficium attributed to witches, the spells and charms that they cast, that interest the filmmaker because these acts provide an excuse for various trick occurrences” (2004, p. 66). In these silent films, witchcraft is still at the centre of the narrative, but in a vastly different way. Instead of questioning whether or not witchcraft actually exists, directors use witchcraft as a type of performance to show off their filmmaking abilities and wow their audiences with new ‘tricks’. Other scholars also assert that this was the case with witches in early films, particularly Brenda Gardenour Walter who writes that “From the earliest days of cinema, the witch has been an object of visual consumption” (2015, p. 102).

This kind of filmmaking, described by film scholar Tom Gunning as the ‘cinema of attractions’, became less popular with audiences as sound movies were becoming more common. During the 1930s and 1940s horror films were more interested in creating and maintaining an uncomfortably spooky atmosphere rather than creating cinematic tricks¹⁰. Filmmakers were more interested in exploring narratives that would haunt their audiences and they needed an atmosphere that disoriented the audience. But a similar trend that built on early cinema’s ‘trick’ films appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. During these decades, the films that did focus on special effects and ‘tricking’ the audience were the witch trial films that contained extended scenes of what was then considered realistic and gruesome torture. The one scene that stands out the most from these films is during a torture scene in *Mark of the Devil* when a suspected witch is tortured by having her tongue cut off, all of which is shown in graphic detail¹¹. Even if Russell’s ideas are limited, her essay is

¹⁰ The obvious example here is *Cat People* (1942) directed by Jacques Tourneur.

¹¹ The original poster for *Mark of the Devil* even boasts that the film is so disgusting that audiences will receive vomit bags as they are admitted.

successful in showing the changes in witch films and witch portrayals that took place during the first half of the 20th century.

Barbara Creed and the abject witch

In her book *The Monstrous Feminine*, Barbara Creed begins her chapter on witches by claiming that “There is one incontestably monstrous role in the horror film that belongs to woman – that of the witch” (2007, p. 73). Creed uses Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* and her work on the abject to analyse Brian de Palma’s film *Carrie* and she uses Kristeva’s theories to justify the possibility that Carrie White is a witch. Creed also uses Freud’s theory of the castrating woman to explain how the witch character expresses male fears of female power in fictional works. In order to understand the lineage of Creed’s analysis, it is first important to understand Freud and Kristeva’s theories.

According to Julia Kristeva, abjection is something that disrupts the status quo and threatens the self unless it is removed. Creed focuses specifically on Kristeva’s “construction of abjection in the human subject” (Creed 2007, p. 8), and uses this theory of human abjection to discuss femininity and the mother-child relationship in films like *Carrie*, *Alien* (1979), and *The Exorcist* (1973). Creed goes into great detail in the first chapter of *The Monstrous Feminine* to relate how Kristeva’s ideas and her own are connected to the characters in horror films, arguing that:

definitions of the monstrous as constructed in the modern horror text are grounded in ancient religious and historical notions of abjection...These forms of abjection are also central to the construction of the monstrous in the modern horror film (2007, pp. 8-9).

Abjection has to do with bodily waste both belonging to the human body and needing to be removed from it. The abject are things that were once a part of you that must now separate so that the body can grow and they include excrement, vomit, and in the case of feminine bodies, menstruation and birth. According to Kelly Oliver in *The Portable Kristeva*, Kristeva's theory of the abject focuses on how identities are created and separated from other identities that exist, on both an individual or societal scale (1997, pp. 225-226). Oliver defines the abject as described in *Powers of Horror* as being "what calls into question borders and threatens identity" (1997, p. 225). The abject, as defined by Kristeva, is anything that could threaten to break the borders that surround people's identity.

Creed uses Kristeva's theory on the abject to discuss female horror monsters, because, as Oliver explains:

the abject is identified with the maternal body since the uncertain boundary between maternal body and infant provides the primary experience of both horror and fascination (1997, p. 225).

The infant experiences both a connection and separation from the maternal body, which Kristeva ties back to bodily wastes. There is a connection and separation to what comes out of our bodies, and it is this feeling that Kristeva defines as abjection. Using Kristeva's theories, Creed is able to define the 'monstrous feminine' as being more than just a horror monster who happens to be female. Rather, it is instead a horror monster that uses traditionally feminine means to appear horrifying. In relation to *Carrie*, this means creating a horror narrative "from the perspective of a female rite of passage" (Creed 2007, p. 5), the rite here being menstruation. I will go into more detail about Creed's discussion on *Carrie* in my chapter on Teen Witches.

Creed also uses psychoanalytic theory to examine how witches are commonly portrayed in films. Her arguments resemble what Russell has argued, namely that witches are “depicted as a monstrous figure with supernatural powers and a desire for evil” (2007, p. 76). However, in Creed’s overview of the witch in film she focuses primarily on portrayals of the witch as a character who “sets out to unsettle boundaries between the rational and irrational” (2007, p. 76), or as characters who unsettle the norm through the use of the abject. This notion of unsettling the boundaries of society is what I will explore while also using Kristeva as a key theorist. Kristeva’s explorations on the foreigner inspire my own analysis of *Carrie* as a teen witch that subverts previously held feminine beliefs surrounding the teenage experience.

Brenda Gardenour Walter and the theology of witches

Brenda Gardenour Walter’s book *Our Old Monsters* discusses how witches came to be perceived as evil, starting as far back as the teachings of Aristotle that influenced medieval theology and medicine. She claims that these medieval ideas adapted from Aristotle led to the creation of anti-women propaganda that was used as the basis of witch hunter ideologies. These ideologies, the most infamous being the *Malleus Maleficarum* (published in 1487), were written to prove the dangers of witchcraft, and reinforced the toxic belief that women were fundamentally evil (Walter 2015, pp. 89-97).

Walter argues that these witch hunter perceptions led to the predominant portrayal of witches as villains in popular culture narratives. Focusing primarily on Satanic witches, Walter claims that the negative portrayals of wicked witches come directly from the anti-women writings of the medieval era, which is something that we see continue when witches are frequently depicted “as a threat to male authority and patriarchal structures” (2015, p. 101). Both the historical medieval witch and the cinematic Satanic witch are closely linked through how they are depicted, with both ending up being bound by

conservative gender politics and traditional religions. Walter's Satanic witch mirrors Christidis' Medieval Witch; they both are beholden to a powerful male occult figure and they are both frequently involved in narratives that revolve around the witch trials. By concentrating on the Satanic witch, Walters provides an in-depth discussion about the historical origins of a singular type of cinematic witch character.

Walter is the only other scholar that has commented on the significant number of horror films with witches that were made during the 1960s and 1970s. She claims that this increase in witch films was in part due to a new youth culture that actively celebrated horror and exploitation films, but she goes on to claim that the main reason was the rise of second wave feminism:

The primary catalyst for the production of witchcraft films during this period, however, was the rise of the feminist movement, in which liberal-minded women advocated for equality and challenged male hegemony and privilege. (2015, p. 104)

Walter argues that the influx of anti-feminist Satanic witch films comes from the irrational fear of the independent woman. I would qualify this argument by pointing out that not all of these portrayals are inherently anti-feminist. Since most of these films fall into the exploitation genre, it seems more fitting to say that the creators were most likely anti-feminist in how they show abuse of the female body on screen, but that does not mean that the characters they create are anti-feminist. There are some incredibly strong female characters in witch-finder films, who stand up to the male authority and oftentimes defeat them, like Jeanne in *Belladonna of Sadness* and Vanessa (Olivera Katerina) from *Mark of the Devil*. There are too many Satanic witch films to claim that all of them are anti-feminist. This argument ignores the nuances and complexities that these characters possess, whether they are good or evil.

What is the most interesting aspect about Walter's book is instead how she discusses the transitional paradigm shifts that led to witches becoming the embodiment of evil. Walter goes into great detail about how the ideas of Aristotle, and his theory of the four humours, eventually led to the belief that the female body was impure while the male body was the epitome of purity and goodness. By examining how this line of thinking influenced medieval medicine, Walter argues that it directly affected how male authorities saw the female body, leading to the belief in the female maleficent body. This belief is also reminiscent of Kristeva's theories on the abject and how Creed uses those theories to explore witch characters in *The Monstrous Feminine*.

Walter expands on Creed's work on the abject witch and places them into a historical context, where she explores how the stereotype of the evil witch first came to be by tracing it back to medieval times. Based on medieval medicine, which is itself based on Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, Walter argues that the growing fear of demonic activity and possession led to the belief that female bodies were naturally corrupted as opposed to male bodies. She writes that, in opposition to the purity of male bodies, the female "maleficent body, which would eventually become that of the Satanic witch, was cold, dry, and humorally imbalanced" (2015, p. 69)¹². Walter goes on to claim that this notion of the 'maleficent body' created the belief that women were workers for Satan, based on the fact that their bodies were inherently maleficent. Walter connects the maleficent body to the abject through beliefs about menstruation, noting that:

women were predominantly cold and unable to refine their humours through digestion. As a result, women produced an abundance of toxin-laden blood that

¹² The four humours form the basis of Ancient Greek medicine, where it was believed that imbalanced humours were what caused people to be sick.

collected in their wombs and was discharged once a month through menstruation.

(2015, p. 99)

Walter's explanation of the 'maleficent body' closely resembles Creed's theory of the 'monstrous feminine'; female bodies are places of abject destruction and maleficent disorder. Linking the 'monstrous feminine' to a clear historical origin allows Walter to create a direct path from Ancient theology to modern day filmmaking.

Moving forward

Each of these scholars provides new ideas about how the witch is represented in cinema. Russell provides an overview of the witch in early film and how the character was used as a way to explore new cinematic special effects. While her theories need to be supported by further elaboration and research, she does present the groundwork on which others have based their own ideas. Creed uses Kristeva's theory of the abject in order to explore why people find different horror monsters scary. Her chapter on the witch introduces the concept that non-traditional witch characters exist, as seen in her choice of film, *Carrie*. Meanwhile, Christidis has taken what both these previous scholars have written and expanded it beyond the horror genre to include witch characters of all types. Her scope is impressive, and the three key witch types she examines provide new ways of analysing all kinds of films that feature witch characters. Finally, Walter uses historical evidence to link medieval representations of the witch back to ancient philosophers. She then goes on to explain how these philosophers influenced modern cinematic portrayals of the Satanic witch, but unfortunately, she only focuses on the negative aspects to these portrayals. I want to move away from the idea that witch portrayals during the 1960s and 1970s were negative, and discuss how the strength of these characters challenge previously held feminine beliefs regarding wives, mothers, and teenagers.

Before moving forward, there are some issues that should be addressed. Given that we have reached an age where information is easily accessible via the internet, films are also easier to find, share and watch than they would have been when these women were writing. I understand that I come from a privileged place in history in terms of being able to find most of the films that I initially sought out. I am saying this because it is highly possible that 20 years ago the only films available to film scholars were those that managed to get a wide international release. Modern technology has allowed me to locate and watch many obscure films that perhaps weren't available before.

I will also acknowledge my own limitations for solely focusing on female witches. Given that I am looking at a specific time period from a feminist perspective, it makes sense to focus on female witch characters. But that is not to say that male witches do not exist in film, although they are rarely the main characters and are usually seen as supporting members of covens¹³. *Simon, King of the Witches* (1971) stands out as a key example from this time of what Christidis might call a male Contemporary Witch. Later films like *Evilspeak* (1981) and *The Covenant* (2006) also explore male witches and witchcraft within a predominantly male environment. However, it is my observation that witches have always been a predominantly female monster. The majority of films I watched had female witches as the main characters. It is fair to say that witches and witchcraft belong to the female realm, and what this thesis aims to show is that female characters who used witchcraft were able to work through the complex changes happening to gender roles in society at the time without referencing or worshipping Satan. They instead used their own strength to break away from traditional female roles, like those examined in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.

¹³ *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Witches* (1966) both contain covens with male members.

Chapter 2 – The Witch as Housewife

This chapter explores the housewife-witch, and how this character uses witchcraft to destroy or subvert the traditional housewife role as outlined in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. A housewife-witch is a married woman who belongs to a female, domestic sphere, but also practices witchcraft, usually either without her husband's knowledge or consent. The most well-known example of this is Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery) from the sitcom *Bewitched* (1964-1972), which is about a witch who marries a normal man and tries to adapt to the normal world. In the comedic versions of the witch as housewife, the witch characters are "almost all defined in relation to the men in their lives" (Murphy 2009, p. 43), men who seek to domesticate and control the witch in a suburban environment rather than allow them to use their powers. This narrative contains similarities to the issues raised in the second feminist movement, which was prominent during the late 1960s to the early 1980s. In this chapter I will use *The Feminine Mystique*, one of the key texts from second wave feminism, to analyse two horror films that feature witches as housewives, and one where the housewife rejects the witch.

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan looks at how mass-media, particularly women's magazines and advertising, has created a repressive image of the American housewife. I discuss two films that explore a similar image of unfulfilled and confined female domesticity, but successfully destabilise this image through the figures of witches and the practice of witchcraft. As Beatrice Murphy puts it, when the character of the:

maternal, modern, ultra-domesticated housewife is suggestively combined with that of the disruptive, archaic and powerful witch, the resulting hybrid figure has the potential ... to tell us a great deal about the conflicted position in which American women often found themselves during this time. (2009, p. 41)

It is this conflicted position that I wish to explore using Friedan's theories about the dissatisfaction of American housewives, and how the witches in these films subvert the feminine beliefs outlined in *The Feminine Mystique* by presenting an alternative way of being in the world.

The films, *Burn, Witch, Burn* (1962) and *Season of the Witch* (1972), both feature housewife characters who discover and use magic as a means to break away from their normal domestic routines. Tansy Taylor (Janet Blair), from *Burn, Witch, Burn*, is an embodiment of the stereotypical housewife that Friedan describes, where she has no job apart from housework, and lives through her husband, Norman (Peter Wyngarde). But unlike Friedan's vision of the unhappy housewife, Tansy is fulfilled in her subversive role as housewife/witch through the use of protective magic which she has been using to help Norman advance in his academic career and protect him from those who wish him harm. Joan Mitchell (Jan White) from *Season of the Witch* is also a housewife and mother who has forsaken her identity for those of her husband and daughter. Over the course of the film, she discovers a new identity through practicing witchcraft, and eventually joins a coven to cement her new role as a witch. Witchcraft for both women becomes a subversive element within their marriages, one that creates conflict with their families and the society around them but allows the women freedom to escape this housewife image and role.

Friedan argues that in order to become satisfied in their life, women needed to break free of the stifling housewife identity that mass-media forced upon them, and find their own identity away from the domestic sphere. Friedan's solution, presented at the end of *The Feminine Mystique*, is achieved through the characters by way of witchcraft, after they have already been set up as victims of 'the problem that has no name'. Witchcraft becomes a way to fight against the Feminine Mystique through subversion and

destruction of previously held patriarchal beliefs that housewives exist only for their husbands and children.

The third film, *Eye of the Devil* (1966), directly contrasts with the previous two films. In this film, the housewife ends up losing her identity as wife and mother through the denial of pagan magical beliefs and the rejection of witchcraft. The witch character still ends up winning, but here it is at the destruction of the housewife. The analysis of this film focuses on the similarities and differences between the housewife Catherine (Deborah Kerr) and the witch Odile (Sharon Tate), and how they each try to navigate the patriarchal world around them. Unlike Tansy and Joan, Catherine is unable to save her husband or her family from the evil forces around them, and she subsequently is changed at the end of the film through the loss of her role as a wife and mother.

By studying these films through Friedan's critique of female domestic life presented in *The Feminine Mystique*, we can see how her claims about the unhappiness of a certain class of women are true. Since they were all made within a ten-year time span, these films also shed light on the changes, or maybe the lack of changes, in society during that time. Albeit, a white middle-class society. Strangely enough, the limitations of scope regarding diverse representation within Friedan's work is somewhat advantageous for the analysis of the films chosen. Both *Season of the Witch* and *Burn, Witch, Burn* feature almost exclusively upper-middle class white households, in both main and supporting roles. *Eye of the Devil* features an elite upper-class family opposite lower class workers, yet Friedan's ideas are still applicable to the film.

In the following case studies, I will examine the power and radical potential of witches and witchcraft. In *Season of the Witch* witchcraft and mythology changes Joan's life to the point where she can destroy the patriarchal image of her housewife role through

the literal destruction of the symbolic patriarchal figure of her husband. In *Burn, Witch, Burn*, I look in depth at how Tansy is able to convert Norman through her use of witchcraft, and influence not only his life but his beliefs. The witches in both films are strong women in their own way. But while Joan seeks to escape and destroy in order to have a new life, Tansy seeks to both protect and subvert the life she and her husband have. Both characters are looking for roles that are more than what society wants them to be. In *Eye of the Devil*, Catherine remains within her societal role and loses her family because she cannot change her beliefs. All three films show how witch characters in films from the 1960s and 1970s provide alternate role models for women at this time of great and complex societal change.

***Season of the Witch* – Destroying the Feminine Mystique**

Season of the Witch (1972) is George A Romero's third directorial feature film, and his second film in the horror genre. Romero got his start directing during the independent cinema movement that began in the late 1960s, his first feature being the influential zombie film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Romero has been credited as the father of the zombie film for the way he "established the template which all subsequent zombie films conform to or digress from" (Kooyman 2014, p. 97). While he is most famous for his series of zombie films, which began with *Night of the Living Dead* and ended with *Survival of the Dead* (2009), he also created a number of subversive horror films that explored well-known horror monsters and ideas, including *Season of the Witch* and the vampire film *Martin* (1978).

The production history of *Season of the Witch* is complicated. The film went through three different edits and title changes during the 1970s. The first edit of the film, the cut that Romero originally envisioned and which is now lost, was called *Jack's Wife*

and was meant to be released in 1972. However, the distributor, Jack Harris, recut the film and marketed it as a soft-core porn film called *Hungry Wives*. This version of the film did not do well at the box office. It was re-released as *Season of the Witch* after Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) became a success (Williams 2003, p. 47). I have chosen to use the *Season of the Witch* title when referring to the film, because this is the version of the film that I have been able to watch and study.

There is some debate as to whether *Season of the Witch* can be classified as a horror film. Tony Williams believes that it is not, arguing that while the film “touches on supernatural elements” (2003, p. 47), as a whole it is more concerned with examining social issues and character explorations. I argue that *Season of the Witch* can be classified as a horror film since it fits into my own definition of a horror film. The narrative concerns a character being plagued by an unknown element that disrupts the status quo of suburban life, with fatal consequences.

The film's emphasis on social commentary allows for *Season of the Witch* to be analysed in relation to Betty Friedan's ideas in *The Feminine Mystique*. Throughout *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan describes the ‘the problem that has no name’ as the “strange, stirring ... sense of dissatisfaction” (2010, p. 5) that many middle-class American women felt in the 1950s. This problem is created through the boredom and repetitive nature of the traditional housewife role, and creates a loss of identity in the women who experience it. Friedan spends the majority of the book trying to figure out what this problem is, where it came from, and how to minimise its impact on American women. She describes the women who suffer from this unnamed problem as having “a hunger that food cannot fill” (2010, p. 15), a hunger to have a life outside of the family, and of having more to their existence than just being a wife or mother.

In *Season of the Witch* (1973), Friedan's 'problem that has no name' becomes a psychological manifestation for the main character of Joan Mitchell (Jan White) through her nightmares of oppression, to the point that they eventually bleed into the physical world. Dream sequences are used throughout the film to explore Joan's subconscious, and the damages caused by the social and cultural expectations surrounding the Feminine Mystique. Roughly halfway through the film, the dreams change into nightmares where Joan is being physically and sexually attacked by an anonymous male figure in a mask. If the previous dreams shown are Joan's growing frustration with the boredom she feels in her family life, then this escalation into nightmare territory means that the 'problem that has no name' is becoming stronger. The anonymity of the man is important to this theory, since Joan sees people from her own life in her dreams. Her husband, daughter, and lover, Gregg (Raymond Laine), all appear as characters in her dreams, so the question becomes who is the man in the mask?

The mask itself bears a strong resemblance to the Green Man, an artistic motif that was originally developed in second century AD Rome that later become popular in medieval European churches (Basford 1998, pp. 9-19). Kathleen Basford points out the strange juxtaposition of having a pagan image featured within a Christian church, but argues that the Green Man might be a demonic character, or was at least seen as demonic by members of the church (1998, p. 19). As a motif, it most likely represents either a demon encountered by Christ when He descended into Hell, or one of the damned (Basford 1998, pp.13-14) although nowadays he is seen as a benevolent nature god by modern standards. Basford says that "A Green man who, at first glance, may seem the very personification of springtime ... may, on closer inspection, reveal himself as a nightmarish spectre" (1998, p. 19) and describes the expressions on the Green Man carvings as "powerful fantasies of the eerie and macabre" (1998, p. 7). Given that the

Green Man's face we see in the film is used as a mask, the eyeholes create a "dark foreboding" (Basford 1998, p. 7) feeling with their empty darkness becoming menacing and adding to the anonymity of the character.

Joan herself was raised a Catholic, and as such continually hides her interest in witchcraft from her family especially from her husband. In one scene, she performs a pagan ritual instead of going to Ash Wednesday mass, and conceals her deceit by putting ash from her own fireplace on her forehead. Her terror of the Masked Man could be a reaction based on her religious upbringing, and this analysis would tie into Basford's theories about why the Green Man was used as a motif in Christian churches. The Masked Man could be a representation of pagan religions due to his mask resembling an iconic pagan figure, or a demon come to corrupt Christians. His frequent attacks could be seen as attacks against the Catholicism that Joan at first believes in.

However, the Masked Man could also represent the Feminine Mystique, specifically the notion that "the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity" (2010, p. 28). Friedan writes about how the Feminine Mystique strips women of their identity until they are only seen within their sexual and biological functions and how girls are encouraged to think this way through their educators (2010, pp. 119-145). When writing about changes to women's education in the 1950s, Friedan describes teachers and professors as focusing less on trying to cultivate the minds of their female students and instead instilling the belief that "all women must be educated to be housewives" (2010, p. 127). This attitude in educators, Friedan argues, results in women only being seen as sexual beings and in biological terms, which limits their growth towards maturity. She writes:

The girl's evasion of growth in college is explained by the fact that for a girl, identity is exclusively sexual; for the girl, college itself is seen even by these scholars not as the key to a larger identity but as a disguised 'outlet for sexual impulses' (2010, p.130).

This connects to how Joan's dreams express her subconscious oppression. The women who went to college simply to find a husband left without being able to mature into their own identity. Instead they were pushed into an identity that the Feminine Mystique had already outlined for them. The fact that the Masked Man in Joan's dreams frequently tries to sexually assault her could be seen as the Feminine Mystique trying to push Joan back into the housewife role she wants to leave through witchcraft. Witchcraft in *Season of the Witch* is a subversive force that allows Joan to eventually escape from the Feminine Mystique and destroy the sexual role that she has been assigned.

In the beginning of the film, she has dreams where she is dominated by her husband in many symbolic ways, "in which conventional images of domesticity are combined with images of entrapment and submission" (Murphy 2009, p. 58). During the opening dream sequence, Joan comes across another version of herself sitting on a swing and wearing a white dress. This dream version of Joan appears to be how her husband sees her, as an innocent person with a child's mind that needs protecting. A later dream sequence reinforces this idea as Joan's husband literally treats her as a dog, putting her in a collar and lead, and taking her to a kennel for someone else to look after her while he's away on business. Joan's husband Jack (Bill Thunhurst) sees his wife as an innocent childlike being who needs protection from the outside world. During the aforementioned Ash Wednesday deception, Jack never questions if his wife ever went to mass or not, and seems to view her Catholic faith as something that he allows her to indulge in, as long as

it doesn't disrupt his complacent lifestyle. He doesn't even think that she is capable of lying to him.

Friedan goes into great detail about how the Feminine Mystique affects women's intellectual growth, to the point where they become developmentally challenged. Friedan states that the most culturally desirable feminine traits describe women as being "passive, conformist, incapable of critical thought or original contribution to society" (2010, p. 142). Jack places these values onto Joan regardless of whether they are a true part of her personality or not. Friedan describes this as a common occurrence in the years after WW2. When soldiers returned from the war, they had a "pent-up hunger for marriage, home, and children" (2010, p. 146), a hunger that Friedan claims allowed men to see their wives as their mothers, or another kind of female caregiver. This psychological change caused men to view women in the most stereotypical feminine roles as a way to reclaim what was lost during the war years.

This also created a gendered way of looking at post-war societal geography. Jo Gill points out how Friedan confirms the "long-standing association between the city, rationality, masculinity, and the public world of work and the suburbs, irrationality, femininity and a privatised domestic sphere" (2013, p. 431). This gendered geography is seen in *Season of the Witch*, where the only people we see consistently in suburbia are women. Husbands only join their wives after work has finished, and other men have to be invited into this domestic sphere.

There are other dream sequences that show Joan's subconscious fears, and they all relate to the Feminine Mystique in a number of ways. Joan herself is afraid of aging, as shown through dreams where she continually comes face to face with an older version of herself. For Joan, aging is a sign of joining the adult world, and of losing the desirability

that youth brings. Another dream involves a realtor walking through her life as if it were in a showroom, pointing out amenities that include Joan's friends (all middle-aged women), her daughter, and her social standing. Instead of looking proudly on these achievements, Joan stares blankly around at everything, either bored or numb with how manufactured her life has become.

The way that Joan's life is represented has been described by Tony Williams as one that focuses on specific modes of social entrapment and how people try to break free of them (2003, p. 48). Joan bought into the image of the "Happy Housewife Heroine" (Friedan 2010, pp. 21-50) which has left her now feeling unhappy and unfulfilled. The social entrapment surrounding Joan comes from the ideals and values that have been advertised to women in the 1950s. These ideologically loaded advertisements imply that women should have no lives beyond their husband and children, and these values are reinforced in magazine stories where:

The end of the road, in an almost literal sense, is the disappearance of the heroine altogether, as a separate self and the subject of her own story. The end of the road is togetherness, where the woman has no independent self to hide even in guilt; she exists only for and through her husband and children. (Friedan 2010, p. 32)

At the beginning of the film, Joan is a housewife who is "'living dead' in spirit" (Williams 2003, p. 51). There is a subversive reversal of the traditional zombie film in *Season of the Witch*, where Joan at first finds herself "suffering the process of decay in a manner parallel to Romero's zombies" (Williams 2003, p. 51). Joan only fully becomes an independent human again by killing the symbol of her oppression, her husband, and embracing witchcraft as a new religion. A witch's primer in the film even states that;

The religion offers, further, a retreat for emotional women, repressed women, masculine women and those suffering from personal disappointment or nervous maladjustment. (*Season of the Witch*, 1973)

Joan's friend Shirley (Ann Muffly) comments on the primer, exclaiming "What other kind of women are there?" Shirley's question solidifies the possibility that Joan's plight comes from being stuck in the harmful world of the Feminine Mystique, and that women will benefit from leaving it.

There are ways in which the witchcraft in *Season of the Witch* comes across as a new religion rather than as traditional witchcraft. There is an emphasis on ritualistic spells, as seen through a montage of Joan collecting all the props and ingredients needed for casting spells, which can be seen as a parallel to Catholic ritual. But what heightens the concept of witchcraft being a religion is the emphasis on belief. One of the many conversations about belief occurs towards the beginning of the film between Joan, Gregg, Shirley, and her daughter Nikki (Joedda McClain). Gregg argues that things like witchcraft and voodoo work because of belief playing tricks with the mind:

Voodoo only works because people believe it works. I mean, you get a guy who believes in the power of voodoo or something and he knows a hex has been put on him, he worries himself to death. I mean, that's how those cats work. They put the voodoo on you, they make sure you know you've been voodooed. I mean, they send you a sign, or uh, stick pins in a doll or something, make sure you know about it, and your mind does the rest. I mean, it's all a mind trip. (*Season of the Witch*, 1973)

Joan counters this by questioning that if the spellcaster believes in voodoo or witchcraft, and that belief is strong enough, then that belief means that it would work for the

spellcaster as well. Joan and Gregg don't come to any conclusion, though both of them believe that their argument is correct. This conversation shows one of the key questions at the heart of the film: is belief enough for witchcraft to work, or is it all just in the mind? This conversation also shows a common gendered dichotomy that appears in 'witch films', that of science and reason versus witchcraft and magic. This dichotomy will be examined more in depth in my analysis of *Burn Witch Burn*.

Later in *Season of the Witch*, Joan casts a spell to summon Gregg to her. After waiting for the spell to take effect, Joan eventually telephones Gregg and asks him to come over, but she still believes that it was her witchcraft that brought him to her. She later tells the leader of the local coven, Marion (Virginia Greenwald) about it, but the leader replies with some doubt as most of the time, spells don't actually work:

Marion: I thought you were intrigued by it when you were so afraid. Being afraid is necessary to believing.

Joan: I know it's real, that it works. I've actually caused things to happen.

Marion: Well, we'll have to talk about it. We'll have to see if you can learn. It's a long process, we'll have to see if the interest is as great after all the study.

Joan: It's not a question of interest! It's a question of knowing, of believing.

Marion: It is involving, isn't it? Well, we'll have to see if we can help. It's so easy to start relying on it, forgetting what it's really meant to be. It won't work more often than not if you use it foolishly. It's not like the stories, you know? You can't use it to turn on the lights or

switch a television channel. And you've got to feel that way about it. I mean, really feel it, inside. Don't play with it, don't use it lightly. Knowing you've abused it can destroy you from within, with fear if nothing else. (*Season of the Witch*, 1973)

At this point, Joan is not afraid of witchcraft because she is completely consumed with fear of the Masked Man, and of the Feminine Mystique that has suffocated her for so long. But does this lack of fear of witchcraft help her? Like Marion said, fear is important to believing, and without fear Joan makes mistakes. She foolishly tries another spell, with Gregg as a witness, as a last attempt to get rid of the Masked Man who has been haunting her. Joan believes that she has managed to vanquish the Masked Man from her dreams through witchcraft, and she is shocked when he returns one final time. This final confrontation with the Masked Man leads to the death of her husband, Jack, who is shot when Joan mistakes him for the Masked Man instead. But there is an ambiguity as to whether Joan really mistook her husband for a malevolent dream entity, or if she actually knew that it was him. Joan's belief in her own powers is misguided by the end, which leads Tony Williams to claim that she "clearly exchanges one form of self-oppression [Catholicism, marriage, the Feminine Mystique] for another [witchcraft]" (2003, p. 58). Williams' observation is based on the fact that by the end of the film, Joan might be a witch but she is still predominantly known among her circle as Jack's wife rather than as herself.

However, there is a more positive way to view this ending, as film scholar Bernice Murphy explains. Murphy sees the witchcraft in the film as a "possibility of magical empowerment ... a means of escaping her overbearing husband and dull, routine-driven life" (2009, p. 57). Jack has to die in order for Joan to escape the Feminine Mystique, and live a fulfilling life away from her husband. There are parallels between the ending and

the dream sequences that Joan has been experiencing throughout the film. During the initiation into the witches' coven, Joan has a rope put around her neck by Marion and is led into the centre of a circle of cloaked figures. But unlike the leash in her dream, Joan is completely aware of the rope's presence; it doesn't just appear out of nowhere like the leash does. She allows the rope to be put around her neck, and is fully aware of where she is being led; into a place that will hopefully provide her with fulfilment.

Joan also appears more forceful in her personality in the final party scene. Earlier in the film, she was quiet and only spoke to ask for other people's opinions rather than offer her own. At the end she proudly proclaims that she is a witch, and embraces the compliments given to her appearance. Jack's death almost appears to have been predicted in *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan describes women developing toxic and lonely lives that end up infecting their husbands and children because of "their wasted energy" (2010, p. 309). Joan managed to escape the destructive force of the Feminine Mystique by destroying its main perpetrator within her family, her husband. By embracing witchcraft at the end, she has moved on from the housewife position she was in before, speculatively into a future with more freedom. *Season of the Witch* shows that using witchcraft can subvert previously held feminine beliefs by empowering the housewife to destroy those beliefs and embrace a life away from the expectations associated with the Feminine Mystique.

***Burn Witch Burn* – Subverting the Feminine Mystique**

Burn, Witch, Burn (1962)¹⁴ is based on the Fritz Leiber book *Conjure Wife* (originally published in 1943, copy referenced here from 1991), and was released one year before Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published. The narratives of both

¹⁴ Released in the UK as *Night of the Eagle*.

Season of the Witch and *Burn, Witch, Burn* contain many similarities; they both feature male characters who expect their wives to give up their own ambitions and focus only on the goals of the husbands. Both feature a dichotomy between male science and reason, and female witchcraft and magic. And in both films, the women use this witchcraft to subvert the traditional housewife role. But while Joan in *Season of the Witch* destroys her husband in order to escape from the housewife role and fully embrace her new identity as a witch, it is the husband in *Burn, Witch, Burn* who has to re-examine his beliefs and give up his own ambitions rather than the wife.

In *Burn, Witch, Burn* Tansy Taylor (Janet Blair) is a housewife, since she does not have a job and seems to spend most of her time either entertaining the faculty at the college town where she lives with her academic husband, Norman (Peter Wyngarde), or else trying to secretly further Norman's career through witchcraft. Throughout the film it becomes clear that she has set aside her own ambitions to focus only on those of her husbands, a phenomenon that Friedan writes about as being a key part of the Feminine Mystique. Friedan writes that "The end of the road is togetherness, where the woman has no independent self to hide even in guilt; she exists only for and through her husband" (2010, p. 32). However, this case study will examine how Tansy has subverted this idea of 'togetherness' through witchcraft. By the end of the film, Norman is forced to change and embrace Tansy's magic in order to save both of them from the malevolent forces of another professor's wife, Flora Carr (Margaret Johnson). In the world of *Burn, Witch, Burn* it is the women who hold the power over their husbands, by using witchcraft for their own objectives.

Since *Burn, Witch, Burn* is a rather obscure film, there is very little scholarly writing on it. Writer Ian Johnson writes about it in relation to the film's composer, William Alwyn, and describes the film as "an excursion into the occult within the

suffocating confines of academia” (2005, p. 291). Most of the academic writing instead focuses on the novel *Conjure Wife* rather than any of the film adaptations, of which there are three¹⁵. Bernice Murphy in her book *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture*, looks at how Leiber combines all the common tropes of the witch-as-wife narrative that became popular during the 1940s and 1950s in comedies like *I Married a Witch* (1942) and *Bell, Book, and Candle* (1958) and the sitcom *Bewitched* (1964-1972), with Murphy calling the book “the most notable literary version” of this type of narrative (Murphy 2009, pp. 43-44). But unlike the above examples, *Conjure Wife* and *Burn, Witch, Burn* are not comedic; in fact, the question of the original book’s genre, and whether it is fantasy, science fiction, horror, or a mixture of all three, has been written about numerous times (most notably Kafka 1975; Bartter 1992-3; Malmgren 1988). However, *Burn, Witch, Burn* is definitely a horror film version of the typical witch-as-wife story, and can even be considered an early example of contemporary gothic horror (Johnson 2005, p. 291). Like its comedic counter-parts, the witch in *Burn, Witch, Burn* is forced to give up her powers by her husband, but with horrific rather than comedic results.

One of the key narrative developments in the *Burn, Witch, Burn* is that women work to further their husbands’ careers through witchcraft without the husbands knowing about it. Friedan writes that “the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity” (2010, p. 28). What this means is that in order to fulfil their feminine roles, women must lose their own identity and take on their husbands and children’s identities instead. This idea is explored more fully in the book *Conjure Wife*, where Tansy and Norman are facing off against three other faculty wives rather than just

¹⁵ *Weird Woman* (1944), *Burn, Witch, Burn* (1962), and *Witches’ Brew* (1980) are the three adaptations of Lieber’s novel.

one. However, it exposes the preconceived notion that women only live to fulfil their husbands' desires, which is a theme that Friedan identifies in many of what she calls 'Happy Housewife' stories. These stories were published in women's magazines during the 1950s and created an image of the housewife that was "young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive" (Friedan 2010, p. 23) and concerned only with her house and family. Tansy fits into this category, fulfilling the typical housewife image not only in looks but in action. She discontinues using magic once her husband finds out and demands she stop, but, unlike Flora Carr, she doesn't have a job within the university. Even the magic she uses is somewhat passive, mainly focusing on protective charms and spells, with an emphasis on defence rather than offence. Flora, on the other hand, is a more dominant woman who rules over her husband and tries to kill Tansy and Norman so that both she and her husband Lindsay Carr (Colin Gordon) can ascend the social and academic ladder.

There are some subtle physical differences between Flora and Tansy that add to both their characters and motivation, which also serve to highlight the feminine values Friedan identifies in 'Happy Housewife' stories. The fact that Flora does not fit the typical feminine role, while Tansy does, means that she has to be defeated by the end of the film. Flora wears non-descript clothing that hides her figure, has rather messy hair, and walks with a limp. This limp is an important part of her physicality as it gives Norman a clue as to who later possesses Tansy, but it can also be seen as a physical manifestation of her inner evil. These physical characteristics make Flora appear less feminine and more androgynous, especially when compared to Tansy. In contrast, Tansy visibly uses makeup and wears form-fitting dresses that expose more skin. Flora comes across as masculine due to the fact that she actively participates in an academic world alongside her husband, appearing as an equal to him and the other men of the university.

She also uses her powers in an active way to get what she wants, rather than Tansy's passive magic that helps Norman. Tansy's femininity sets her apart from the other faculty wives. One of them, Evelyn Sawtelle (Kathleen Byron), voices her disdain for Tansy by saying "I could never accept a woman like Tansy" seemingly because she is so different from what these women are used to and presents herself in a more stereotypical feminine way. The other wives seem to view her as a threat by presenting herself as an image of a perfect housewife, and also someone who is younger and livelier than them.

But the fact that she is feminine does not mean that Tansy is a weak character or a weak woman. Going back to the idea of 'togetherness' in Friedan's writing, she uses the term as another way to promote the 'Happy Housewife' image that becomes "a religious movement [for women] to make up for the lack of identity" (2010, p. 34). This faux religion is the same one that places a large emphasis on the domestic sphere, which is where "all women must now live or deny their femininity" (Friedan 2010, p. 29). Men may come and go as they please, but women should be confined to the domestic duties of the home. Because the Feminine Mystique requires women to relinquish their own desires to focus solely on their husbands, they suffer an identity crisis. In order to avert or ignore this crisis, Friedan explains how women turn to alcohol, or food, or even extra-marital affairs in order to survive (2010, pp. 203-213).

At first glance, Tansy seems to embody this image; she looks after the house and her husband, attends social gatherings that she hates in order to appear respectable in front of their peers, and seemingly has no personal life to speak of. But in actuality, Tansy is the more active member in her marriage. Sharon Russell writes that it is Norman who is the "most important for the development of the plot" (2004, p. 67), but I would argue that Norman reacts more to Tansy's actions instead of driving the plot with his own. It is Tansy's move to protect Norman that first led to her using witchcraft, and in the film,

Norman only acts once Tansy has already placed herself in danger in order to protect him. In this way, Norman is forced into an active role by his wife. Witchcraft is not only how Tansy is able to subvert the Feminine Mystique, it also changes Norman's whole ideology.

Norman is a sociology and anthropology professor, and he is an expert on folklore and belief systems of ancient civilisations. He staunchly refuses to believe in any kind of superstition, from benign everyday good luck charms to old versions of magic and voodoo. Tansy begins using these practices after accompanying Norman on a research trip, and creates a strong identity as a witch. This identity allows her to maintain a respectable outwards appearance while protecting the one she loves from any perceivable threats. There is something noble in the way Tansy loves Norman, putting him before everything else including herself.

While Norman teaches his students that superstition and witchcraft are "a morbid desire to escape from reality" (*Burn, Witch, Burn*, 1962), Tansy takes his research and uses it for her own gain. She is undermining everything that he believes in, forcing him to change his beliefs in the latter half of the film and further subverting the definition of 'togetherness'. Tansy and Norman's 'togetherness' is tested throughout the film, and in the end, it is Norman who has to change his beliefs completely in order to save his wife, subverting his own previously held belief that, as described by Friedan, a wife needs to change to accommodate her husband.

Like *Season of the Witch*, belief that witchcraft is real and can be used is an important part of the witchcraft presented in this film. The film begins with a voice-over narrator saying:

Ladies and gentlemen, the motion picture you are about to see contains an evil spell, as used by practitioners of witchcraft for centuries. Even today, in many parts of the world, people practiced black magic and witchcraft. Charms, amulets, voodoo candles, grave dirt, and locks of hair are believed to ward off evil spirits and spells. You may doubt the effectiveness of these spells, but through every civilization, people have believed in witches. Could they all be wrong? I don't think so. (*Burn, Witch, Burn*, 1962)

We first meet Norman giving a lecture on how recent scientific discoveries are undermining what ancient cultures originally believed was magic, asserting his own belief that magic does not exist. When Norman first discovers Tansy's charms he demands an explanation, and this conversation ensues:

Tansy: I was trying to use conjure magic. Trying to work spells. Trying to change the future! That's what you really want to hear, isn't it
Norman?

Norman: That's exactly what I don't want to hear.

Tansy: Then believe what I told you last night.

Norman: About one dried up spider, yes, but not all that rubbish....

Tansy: What do you want to believe?

Norman: I want some kind of explanation.

Tansy: Well, isn't it obvious? I'm a witch.

Norman: I don't find this very amusing.

Tansy: Norman, I only have so many answers. Take your choice. (*Burn, Witch, Burn*, 1962)

Belief in witchcraft and magic in *Burn, Witch, Burn* is presented as a choice that the characters have to make, with Norman constantly questioning whether or not the bad things that happen are really the cause of malicious magic or just pure bad luck. Not long after the above conversation takes place, Norman forces Tansy to give up practicing magic. Before she does, Tansy tells him “I will not be responsible for what happens to us if you make me give up my protections” symbolically placing the outcome of whatever happens next into Norman’s hands. After her charms are destroyed, “Norman’s faith in his sober-minded rejection of magic is soon undermined by a succession of alarming incidents” (Murphy 2009, p. 45).

Without her protective charms, both Tansy and Norman become vulnerable to the malevolent magic of Flora, and Norman slowly finds his rational belief breaking. Friedan writes that the Feminine Mystique “has succeeded in burying millions of American women alive” (2010, p. 273), and by denying her the right to perform magic, Norman has unwittingly led his wife into the same fate. Things start out small: an obscene phone call in the middle of the night, then almost being knocked over by a delivery truck. But it’s when Norman arrives at the university the next day that we discover the full extent of what Tansy was protecting him from. First, a student named Fred Jennings (Bill Mitchell) threatens Norman for failing him. Then Jennings’ girlfriend, Margaret Abbott (Judith Stott) accuses Norman of sexually assaulting and raping her, before Jennings again threatens him, but this time with a gun. All of these problems are resolved and Norman is proved innocent, but it makes his place at the university precarious.

But it's not until that night where the bad luck becomes deadly and we learn how Flora intends to manipulate and control both Norman and Tansy for her own gain. At a bridge party earlier in the film, it is briefly mentioned that another professor, Evelyn Sawtelle (Kathleen Byron) is researching hypnosis through audio prompts¹⁶. Norman receives a package containing a recording of one of his lectures, which, unbeknownst to him, Flora has tampered with. The recording emits a subliminal radar-like droning noise that begins to affect Tansy, but not Norman. There is a possibility that the hypnosis noise only affects those who believe in magic and witchcraft. It is reminiscent of what Gregg says in *Season of the Witch*: "Voodoo only works because people believe it works". This concept is further reinforced when they receive a phone call emitting the same noise. Tansy is emotionally affected and tries to make Norman hang up, but he himself hears nothing. Since Tansy believes and Norman doesn't at this stage, she is the only one who is aware of the imminent danger, and it manifests in this moment as an unknown entity banging on their door that disappears immediately once the noise is gone. This scene supports the idea that Norman's rational belief in science is what is standing in the way of the hypnosis noise affecting him, and only when Norman changes his beliefs does the recording affect him during the climax of the film.

Tansy realises how vulnerable the couple has become at this point and decides to try and counter the magic against them by taking it all onto herself. She tricks Norman into a spell by getting him drunk, sharing his drink, and having him recite the phrase "What's mine is yours, what's yours is mine." This spell allows Tansy to take Flora's spell into herself, and it compels her to attempt suicide. Norman finds out what is happening through an audio message Tansy left, and races to save her by going to the

¹⁶ Hypnosis through audio recording is also expanded on in the witch film *The Lords of Salem* (2012), released 50 years after *Burn, Witch, Burn*.

holiday cottage they own, which is near where Tansy intends to drown herself. In both the film and the book's narrative, this is the plot point that forces Norman to change his beliefs because his wife will die if he doesn't, since "as a witch without magical protection she is easy prey for evil rivals" (Murphy 2009, p. 46).

Tansy's belief in conjure magic has forced Norman to also believe in it, showing her dominance over him in a subtle way. The spell he performs in an act of desperation saves Tansy only because Norman starts to believe. He discovers that his love for Tansy is more powerful than the cold logic of his old beliefs, or even revenge against Flora. This belief allows Flora to briefly torment him through the hypnosis noise, making Norman believe that a supernatural eagle is trying to kill him, before Flora herself is killed. Flora dies, but not at the hands of either Tansy or Norman. Flora's downfall instead comes as an accident, seemingly brought about for believing herself to be more powerful than the men around her. In fact, she is more powerful than anyone around her, but because she has to practice her magic in secret, the unconscious ineptitude of her husband leads to her accidental death. In an ironic turn, a stone statue of the eagle she had been tormenting Norman with falls on her, leaving it ambiguous as to whether it was her own magic that killed her or if the old buildings of the college are just falling apart, or if it is a mixture of both.

This ending differs from the book where Norman's "male logic and intelligence ... ultimately saves the day" (Murphy 2009, p. 47). Norman, in the book, creates an equation that helps him overcome the witches in the university and save Tansy from their influence. Since Flora's death in the film is perceived as an accident in the film, there is no resolution to the dichotomy presented between science and magic. Neither magic nor science ultimately wins. Norman is left with proof that magic does exist, but his enemy is killed in an ambiguous manner rather than through science or logic.

Tansy and Norman watch their house and all their possessions burn down, realising that they now only have each other left in the world. “The frantic illusion that togetherness can impart a spiritual content to the dullness of domestic routine” (Friedan 2010, p. 34) has been overturned through Norman’s acceptance of witchcraft. In *Burn, Witch, Burn*, what first gave the wife power in her domestic situation has now brought the couple closer; the husband, in being forced to change what he believes because of his wife’s magic, has disrupted the hold the Feminine Mystique has over the traditional gender roles they embodied and there is now a more equal and complete togetherness that they both share with each other, subverting Friedan’s theories that togetherness is achieved when the housewife only lives for her husband and children, rather than as an individual in her own right. Witchcraft makes the husband and wife equal partners in Norman and Tansy’s marriage.

***Eye of the Devil* – Destruction of the Housewife**

Moving away from the housewife-witch for this final case study, I will instead be examining what happens when housewife rejects witchcraft in favour of the Feminine Mystique by analysing the 1966 film *Eye of the Devil*. Like *Burn, Witch, Burn*, *Eye of the Devil* is also adapted from a book, *The Day of the Arrow* by Philip Lorraine originally published in 1964. There are a number of differences between book and film, the main one being that the book is from the first-person perspective of a male character while the film is shown from the perspective of a female character. For this analysis I am solely going to focus on the film, especially since the witch character has a larger role in the film version. The plot of *Eye of the Devil* is reminiscent of *The Wicker Man* (1973); both films are about a man who is being used as a human sacrifice in order to ensure subsequent fruitful harvests, and both films share a tone of rising tension leading to a shocking climax. Both films also emphasise the rituals behind pre-Christian paganism, with the

narratives following the performance of the human sacrificial ceremony. But *Eye of the Devil* contains an interesting dynamic between the two lead female characters, Catherine (Deborah Kerr) and Odile (Sharon Tate), one a housewife and the other a witch.

The rituals that are presented in *Eye of the Devil* are presided over by two mysterious siblings, Odile and Christian de Caray (David Hemmings). On his movie review blog, *1000 Misspent Hours and Counting*, Scott Ashlin explains the overview of the main ritual in detail:

Their religion holds that the earth requires periodic sacrifices if it is to remain fertile, and that it is the responsibility of the village's seigniorial family to provide these sacrifices in the form of the reigning marquis. The village priest presides over the ceremony at the head of a circle of twelve local notables, while the Caray family is in charge of the actual killing (2019).

Christian is the one who shoots the arrow, becoming Philippe's (the reigning marquis played by David Niven) murderer, and it becomes apparent over the course of the film that Odile is a witch who uses her powers to ensure that nothing and no-one interferes with the ceremony, especially Catherine. She also uses witchcraft to charm Jacques (Robert Duncan), Philippe and Catherine's son, into trusting her and believing in the cult she worships in order to manipulate him into taking on his father's role later in life. By the end of the film, Odile and Père Dominic (Donald Pleasance) are able to convince Jacques to be a possible future sacrifice for the good of the town and the vineyards. Odile is also the one who protects and wears a mysterious amulet that has some sort of spiritual value to the cult, but this is never explicitly explained within the film.

It is also never explicitly stated whether or not Odile is in fact a witch, but there is evidence within the film that she is. During the scene where Jacques and his sister,

Antoinette (Suky Appleby), first meet her, Odile shows off her powers for them. First, she transforms a toad into a dove, and then accurately predicts the weather in front of Catherine. Later in the film, she is seen to influence Catherine by hypnotising her, and almost leading her to jump off the castle battlements in an attempt to kill her. Director J. Lee Thompson shoots these scenes with Odile in an unnerving way to show the audience that there is something mystical about the character. The camera swirls around her as unsettling music plays which gives the character a certain mysticism. What also adds to this mysticism is the way that Odile is portrayed by Sharon Tate. Tate rarely closes her eyes, even to blink, giving an unending and penetrating stare to the other characters in the film. She is softly spoken and maintains an aura of calm deliberation that hints at a hidden malevolence.

Tate's performance manages to be both calm and ominous, a direct contrast to Deborah Kerr's portrayal of Catherine. Kerr uses the growing feeling of unease that Catherine must be feeling to create a portrayal of hysteria that gradually rises throughout the course of the film. As such, she is much more animated than Tate, in both gesture and voice. The difference between the two can easily be seen in the rooftop scene, where Tate maintains Odile's calm and soft voice even as she tries to lure Catherine to her death, while Kerr becomes disoriented as she flounders near the edge of the battlements. The camera movements also add to the disorientation that Odile's voice creates. The camera rotates around the two figures in quick cuts, that makes the scene disorienting. Odile is also shot almost exclusively in extreme close-ups to make the audience sympathise with Catherine's struggle to locate her.

Catherine de Montfaucon is the housewife of this film, a representation of the Feminine Mystique, and the direct opposite of Odile. She embodies Friedan's description of a happy housewife heroine by being "gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen,

sex, babies, and home” (2010, p. 23). The moment that anything happens outside of this world, Catherine is unable to cope. When her husband leaves for Bellenac, his familial estate, Catherine almost immediately disregards his request for her and their children to remain in Paris. It is as if Catherine cannot function away from her husband. By contrast, Odile outright rejects any notion of the Feminine Mystique even going so far as to attempt to destroy it by almost killing the symbol of the Feminine Mystique in the film, Catherine. During the confrontation on the roof of the castle, Odile and Catherine have the following conversation about letting the children play near the edge of the roof:

Odile: Christian and I were playing on the roof at home and here when we were much younger than they are.

Catherine: Because nobody cared enough to stop you! But I do care about my children, and I don't want you seeing them anymore.

Odile: But don't you think that kind of ultimatum should come from Philippe?

Catherine: Has Philippe said nothing to you about Christian and the children?

Odile: Did he say he would? Did he lie to you? Oh, but you must be used to that by now. Men always lie. Personally, I have no use for them. Except Christian. (*Eye of the Devil*, 1966)

This exchange shows the audience that Odile has rejected any possibility that a woman can only be fulfilled through her husband, and that she is happy with her choice while Catherine becomes more and more hysterical and unsure as the conversation continues. Unlike Catherine, for whom “no other road to fulfillment was offered” (Friedan 2010, p. 15), Odile understands that she has a choice between marriage and being single. By

saying that she has no use for men, Odile is saying that she does not want to become a married woman and give in to what is expected in the Feminine Mystique.

An observation from Friedan can be applied to Catherine's predicament here. Friedan says that "women who think [the problem that has no name] will be solved by more money, a bigger house ... often discover it gets worse" (2010, p. 15). Catherine follows Philippe to his familial estate, the bigger house as it were, and from there things do get worse for her. Throughout the film we can see her becoming more and more reliant on Philippe, who himself is growing distant from his wife. Odile is right when she says that Philippe is lying to Catherine; he assures her that everything is fine and that nothing bad is going to happen, keeping the truth that he will die from her. Because of Catherine's dependence on Philippe and his refusal to explain what is going on, she begins to spiral into hysteria. Catherine is scared of losing Philippe, because she is scared of losing the only life that was possible for women at the time, and the only way of living she knows.

Friedan questions the outcome of the Feminine Mystique on the minds of housewives with little to no personal life outside their family by asking:

But what happens when women try to live according to an image that makes them deny their minds? What happens when women grow up in an image that makes them deny the reality of the changing world? (2010, p. 48)

Catherine's mind deteriorates as she discovers what is happening at Bellenac and the true nature of the cult, while simultaneously trying to deny that there is anything supernatural going on. As Philippe says to her one night "Believe. Believe or leave!", Catherine's only choice is to accept the pagan rituals going on around her and that her husband must die. When she refuses to accept that, she loses her identity after Philippe's death.

Odile also faces challenges from the male establishment. After attempting to kill Catherine on the battlements, Odile is whipped by Philippe and admonished by Père Dominic, who says “I told you to frighten her, not kill her. My child, where is your conscience?” Odile’s only reply to this is “What hypocrites you all are. What stupid hypocrites!” This small exchange tells us about Odile’s mind and how she views the events around her. She can see that what the cult is doing, that being a human sacrifice, is morally wrong, yet she has no problems with it. Père Dominic and the other key male leaders of the village, including Philippe, the Doctor, and the Chief of Police, see the sacrifice as something noble, and essentially hide behind religion and ceremony to get away with murder. Odile still believes that the sacrifice is necessary, but she also doesn’t try to convince herself and others that murder can be justified. This is why she has no qualms about attempting to kill Catherine; Odile sees her death as necessary for the ceremony to be performed without any problems, and believes that some deaths are necessary for others to live.

Odile calling the male leaders hypocrites could also be seen as the witch calling male defenders of the Feminine Mystique hypocrites. Friedan tells several stories about how husbands regret the choice that their wife makes to follow the happy housewife lifestyle. The husbands want the wife to dote on them at home, but the housewife, without outside stimuli, becomes so bored that she begins to live vicariously through the husband. This causes the husband to begin resenting the wife for not having a life of her own, even though he originally pushed for this happen. Odile has to fight for her place within the cult, despite being powerful, because in the eyes of the men she is a woman first and a witch second. Not only does she have to prove herself to the men of the cult over and over again, but she has to fight against the belief that she might be “violating the God-given nature of woman” (Friedan 2010, p. 65). The men can present themselves as ‘normal’ to

the world outside Bellenac, while Odile remains an outsider even within the realms of the cult for not following the previously held belief that all women should marry and have children.

What is interesting about this particular witch character is that she is the most powerful woman in the film surrounded by supposedly powerful men. Odile alone is able to subdue Catherine's attempts to stop the ritual through her witchcraft. She almost kills Catherine twice, firstly through a form of hypnotism on the roof and then by sending her into the forest and into the range of a hunt. The men, meanwhile, are barely able to keep Catherine away from Philippe by rendering her drugged, unconscious and locked in her room. It becomes clear throughout the course of the film that Odile holds the true power among the cult members. While Catherine is hallucinating on belladonna, Odile shares a look with Père Dominic. This shot is significant in the film, with Odile's face partially hidden by Dominic's so that it appears as though both of their faces have become one. This symbolises the fact that Odile is the one who is the true face of the pagan religion, that she is the one with true power in the hierarchy of the town. The fact that Catherine is imprisoned by the men and easily escapes also adds to this theory. The men are unable to contain Catherine for more than a few minutes, while Odile can render her helpless multiple times throughout the film.

The duality between Odile and Catherine becomes apparent over the course of the film, mainly through similar dialogue they both use at key moments. After being whipped by Philippe, Odile calls him mad, and it is left unsure whether she means mad as in angry or crazy. At the end of the film, Catherine also calls Philippe mad for believing in the cult, but it is obvious here that she is referring to madness of the mind, and not anger. Catherine also calls everyone hypocrites, a call back to when Odile called the men hypocrites as well. During this scene, Catherine is also kneeling beside Philippe, echoing

Odile's position on the floor after her whipping. But while Odile maintained an air of defiance and independence, Catherine instead is now begging and almost hysterical in her interactions with Philippe as she tries to persuade him to not go through with the ritual. By symbolically aligning Catherine and Odile, we can see that they are both looking for ways to gain power over the men in their lives; Catherine so that she can return to her previous happy housewife image with her husband, and Odile in order to maintain power within the cult.

The relationship between Philippe and Catherine is the reverse of the one in *Burn Witch Burn*. In that film, Tansy is the one practicing and participating in witchcraft while her husband Norman refuses to believe in it until Tansy puts herself in danger. In *Eye of the Devil*, Philippe is the one who believes in the pagan beliefs of Bellenac while Catherine, his wife, refuses to believe and he dies. The revelation that Philippe, and the rest of the town, believes in this paganism is treated as a large reveal within the film's narrative, and causes Catherine to realise at this point that Philippe is prepared to continue with the ritual since it is his familial duty.

The adoption of pagan beliefs into Catholic ceremony is one of the more interesting parts of the film. The fact that Père Dominic, a member of the Catholic church, is involved sets this film apart from other pagan horror films, and it is not a subversion of Catholic ritual like we see in *Season of the Witch*. Ashlin writes that the beliefs in *Eye of the Devil* have "assimilated Christian notion in an extremely realistic manner" (2019). Philippe's belief seemingly comes from the idea that his sacrifice is needed in order to save the vineyards of the town from some form of natural destruction. But it actually goes much deeper than that, which we find out through his father Alain (Emlyn Williams). Alain explains that the ritual, which involves 12 men dancing around one still man who is then killed with an arrow, pre-dates Christianity but was then absorbed into the Christian

faith. The twelve anonymous dancing men become the twelve apostles, and the one man in the middle becomes Jesus. In this way, Alain explains that those chosen for the sacrifice are revered as gods.

Earlier in the film, Catherine questions the town's dependence on Philippe to uphold certain rituals that seem strange to her. When talking about the possibility of saving the vineyards, she asks "Do the people here think that you are some kind of magician? A god?" At this point in the film, Philippe doesn't answer her, but it is clear by the end of the film that he does believe that to some extent. Before Philippe leaves for the ritual, he tells Catherine "It's our belief in something that makes that thing, for a moment or forever, divine". Philippe, through his belief, becomes a god, similar to the way in which Tansy and Joan become witches through their belief. Catherine, like Norman, rejects Philippe's beliefs which puts him in danger, but unlike Norman, Catherine does not suddenly start believing Philippe and the cult.

Tansy and Philippe both sacrifice themselves but for different reasons; Tansy acts out of love for Norman and a desire to keep him safe, whereas Philippe sacrifices himself because of his duty to the town and its people as the Marquis de Montfaucon, and it is hinted at the end of the film that his son Jacques will follow his father's path if it is required. In *Burn Witch Burn*, Norman is ultimately able to save Tansy by changing his beliefs out of love for her. But in *Eye of the Devil*, Catherine's love is not enough to counter the strong belief Philippe has in the ritual, and since she is not willing or able to change her own beliefs in an attempt to help him, Philippe ultimately dies. Catherine cannot work through these complicated changes because she herself finds it impossible to change. But by the end of the film it is also revealed that Philippe refuses to be saved. His duty to the townspeople is stronger than Catherine's love for her husband.

Catherine refers to Philippe's belief in the cult as a sickness, calling him ill and mentally disturbed. This implies that she thinks he can be cured. As seen in *Burn Witch Burn*, in order to save someone from carrying out a dangerous ritual one needs to believe in the cause as much as in the cure. Catherine cannot change her beliefs, not only that Philippe is wrong about the cult but also in her belief in the Feminine Mystique. In their final scene together, she tries to appeal to Philippe by reminding him of the life they led before he came to Bellenac by saying "Philippe, you are my husband. I am your wife. We have two lovely children, and once we were all so happy".

The destruction of Catherine's belief in the Feminine Mystique is not a positive experience like it was for Joan in *Season of the Witch*, and in this case, it was because it was not Catherine's choice. Philippe instead forced her to abandon her ideals about the perfect nuclear family by destroying it through his own beliefs in the cult at Bellenac. The fact that the film ends with Catherine being unaware that the destruction of her family will be completed when Jacques is older, makes the ending of *Eye of the Devil* all the bleaker. What we are watching is the complete breakdown of a family at the hands of a powerful cult¹⁷, where the witchcraft on display here trumps the beliefs in the Feminine Mystique. The housewife is left abandoned by her husband, whose belief in a pagan ritual was stronger than his love for her.

Odile, meanwhile, remains independent and content in living outside the confines of the Feminine Mystique. The witch character here presents an alternative to the 'Happy Housewife' image, subverting the belief that women can only be happy as wives and mothers. Odile, Tansy, and Joan all become witches who have found fulfilment outside of the traditional feminine roles that Friedan presents in *The Feminine Mystique*, showing

¹⁷ There is also some irony to be found in the fact that Sharon Tate is in a film about the destruction of a family by members of a cult.

that during the 1960s and 1970s, witches and witchcraft allowed women freedom to move away from the traditional female roles of previous years.

Chapter 3 – Teen Witches

This chapter will be discussing the teen witch in *Carrie* (1976) and three TV movies inspired by the Brian De Palma film, using ideas from philosopher and linguist Julia Kristeva to explore how the figure of the teen witch works through complex social changes regarding teenagers and challenging the typical ‘coming-of-age’ narrative by exploring the teenage experience of the ‘other’. Kristeva’s theories have previously been used to analyse horror films. Most notably, her book on the abject, *Powers of Horror* (1982), is used by Barbara Creed in her own book *The Monstrous Feminine* (2007) to analyse horror films that feature female monsters. But for this chapter, I will use a different book by Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (first published in 1988, copy referenced here from 1991), in order to offer a new way of discussing horror films that feature teenage witches.

Since *Carrie* is the main case study for this chapter, a number of questions arise in relation to the film. The first question is whether or not *Carrie* can be classified as a ‘witch film’. If it is a ‘witch film’, then how does that relate to the teenage experience? I believe that using concepts from Kristeva’s *Strangers to Ourselves* can show how *Carrie* expresses teenage anxieties of alienation and bullying through the use of witchcraft. What this chapter aims to do is look at the intersection between witchcraft and teenage isolation, and examine how the teenage witch works through the expectations placed on them by embracing the ‘other’ within themselves. Later TV films from the 1970s, including *The Spell* (1977), *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978), and *Stranger in Our House* (1978), were inspired by *Carrie*’s depiction of high school and witchcraft, and will also be analysed through Kristeva’s theories regarding the foreigner, since they also contain narratives that examine teenage isolation and bullying, and later empowerment

through witchcraft, providing evidence that there was a subgenre cluster of such films made in this decade.

As in the previous chapter, I will discuss how witches in these films work through previous paradigms about what constitutes the feminine identity. But instead of using Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique*, Kristeva's ideas on the foreigner will be used instead to explore how teen witches challenge the more conservative 'coming of age' narratives usually present in teen films. All of these films use witchcraft to explore the complexity of the teenage experience. By portraying the teen witch characters as morally ambiguous in their pursuit of acceptance, these films subvert the typical teen narratives which focus on the overcoming of personal demons to move into adulthood. Rachel Moseley argues that teen films use make-overs as "a mechanism through which appropriate feminine identities are constructed and reinforced" (2002, p. 406).

Moseley's article looks at the intersection between femininity and feminism in teen witch narratives and identifies how these narratives use 'glamour', a type of spell that changes the outward appearance of a person or object. A glamour in a teen film will usually take the form of a make-over of an outcast character as a way to make them appear socially acceptable¹⁸. Moseley uses *Carrie* as an example of a film where the glamour is "a temporary distraction" rather than being "central to their power" (2002, p. 412). The teen witch, in the films discussed in this chapter, is stronger without the glamour. She is stronger once she accepts her difference and the 'other' inside her.

Carrie White as Teen Witch

Can Carrie White (Sissy Spacek) be called a witch? This is an important question to ask since *Carrie* is not a film typically associated with witches or identified as a 'witch

¹⁸ Some examples of characters who have undergone a 'glamour' make-over in teen films include Sandy (Olivia Newton-John) in *Grease* (1978), Allison (Ally Sheedy) in *The Breakfast Club* (1985), and Tai (Brittany Murphy) in *Clueless* (1995).

film'. Her character fits my own definition of a witch, in that she brings about social disruption through the use of telekinetic powers. In the original Stephen King novel, published in 1974, there are a few references to witches. Carrie herself asks whether she might be a witch when she first displays her powers to her mother (King 2011, p. 78), and later Mrs White calls her a witch to her face (King 2011, pp. 96-97). In the film, the only reference to witches comes when Margaret White (Piper Laurie) whispers "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" to herself. Mrs White recognises Carrie as a witch through her powers, but scholars have pointed to the way in which her powers manifested as to how Carrie can be identified as a witch.

In her article 'Ragtime: the Horror of Growing up Female', Serafina Kent Bathrick connects historical witch hunts to the film, writing that *Carrie's* portrayal of women is connected to "the kinds of fears of women which prevail in most pre-industrial cultures" (1977). These fears arise from the belief that women became powerful during their monthly menstruation. Bathrick writes that because DePalma directly links Carrie's telekinetic powers to menstruation he is asserting "the position of women in this tradition of healers and rebels" (1977) since there are many pre-Industrial societies that saw menstruation as the time when women were the most destructive. Carrie is a witch, according to Bathrick, because her powers are an embodiment of this belief.

This is similar to Barbara Creed's argument in defining Carrie as a witch character. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, Creed defines Carrie as a witch because of the way that she defies the patriarchal status quo. Creed elaborates by adding that Carrie's powers manifesting with the onset of her menstruation also contribute to her identification as a witch, explaining that:

Woman's blood is thus linked to the possession of supernatural powers, powers which historically and mythologically have been associated with the representation of woman as witch. (2001, p. 79)

The consensus surrounding Carrie White being a witch character focuses on the fact that her powers are apparently brought on with the onset of puberty and her period. Moseley explains that this is because the beginning of a girl's period:

both marks adolescence and captures the moment of transition from child to woman, and thus the attainment of adult femininity and (sexual) power. (2002, p. 406)

According to these scholars, Carrie White is a witch because her powers are connected to her first period and her journey into womanhood, rather than simply because of the fact that she has powers.

Creed and Moseley both claim that this connection to menstruation also makes Carrie a monstrous being. Moseley writes that Stephen King's narrative realises a "historically specific male fear of women, female power and female sexuality" (2002, p. 411). Creed furthers this argument by stating that Carrie represents both "witch and menstrual monster" (2007, p. 78), and that by connecting Carrie's powers to menstruation means that her period is "represented in the film as an abject substance and helps to construct Carrie as monstrous" (Creed 2007, p. 81).

Carrie's powers and identity as a witch also makes her monstrous to other characters in the film, especially to her mother. Carrie's mother, Margaret White (Piper Laurie), uses her religious beliefs to justify her treatment of Carrie. The first scene that mother and daughter share together illustrates how Margaret uses her twisted beliefs to exert her control over Carrie. When she learns of what happened to Carrie at school, Margaret does not focus on the emotional trauma Carrie must have suffered from

receiving her first period, followed by the intense bullying from her classmates. Instead, Mrs White believes that Carrie's period is proof that her daughter must have sinned in some way. Ignoring Carrie's questions and anguish, Margaret repeatedly slaps her and recites Bible verses at her daughter, before locking her in her prayer closet to atone for her apparent sins. Mrs White's misinterpretation of the bible marks her as the true antagonist of the film, but also aligns her with the antagonists in witch-trial films. If Carrie is a witch then her mother is the witch-finder.

Carrie ends up becoming both the monster and the victim. She gets revenge on those who have abused her by using telekinetic powers, but her revenge leads to the death of many of her classmates¹⁹ and eventually her own mother. The ambiguous nature of the character means that Carrie is both victim and monster, subverting what audiences have come to expect from teenage characters.

Instead of adhering to a typical 'coming of age' narrative which ends with the teenage characters ready to face adulthood, Carrie destroys her classmates in a manner that is cathartic to anyone who has endured bullying in high school. Carrie uses her anger at the way she has been bullied to fuel her revenge and because the audience has experienced the abuse and bullying alongside the character, it feels justified. Carrie's actions are monstrous but despite the violent way in which she gets revenge, her character remains sympathetic. This juxtaposition presents an alternative to other bullied teenager narratives because of the violence Carrie uses, and also because it then leads to her own death. The uncomfortable moral ambiguity surrounding the prom massacre gives *Carrie* a complexity that allows the film to explore the teenage experience of the 'other'.

***Carrie*, Kristeva, and embracing the 'other'**

¹⁹ In the 1999 sequel, *The Rage: Carrie 2*, Sue Snell states that 73 people died.

Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* is a philosophical and historical study of the foreigner. Starting in biblical times and moving through the Renaissance and Enlightenment into modern times, Kristeva maps out social and legal definitions of what it means to be foreign, and how people perceive foreigners in these different eras. What Kristeva's ideas illuminate is that foreigners have always existed in some form, and therefore discrimination against foreigners has also always existed. This hatred towards those classified as 'other' has been present in society since ancient times; the only thing that has changed is how society regards and treats foreigners in sociological and legal ways, recording how specific laws have changed how foreigners are defined and the social reactions to these changes. Kristeva begins the book by looking at how individuals perceive foreignness or otherness in everyday life, concluding that there is a foreigner inside us all. She writes:

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognising him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. (Kristeva 1991, p. 1)

Kristeva argues that in order to accept the foreigner in society we must first accept the 'other' in ourselves.

Kristeva's description of the foreigner can be applied to the way that high school cliques are presented in teen films. In most teen films, everyone belongs to a group or else you are an outcast, and if you stray from your group then you are an outcast. If you are labelled as an outcast then you are labelled as an 'other', an "image of hatred" (Kristeva 1991, p. 1). This image reminds the rest of the student cliques that they could easily achieve the outcast status themselves. The outcast in teen movies is usually subject to discrimination, bullying, and is ignored by every other clique in the school. Teen

comedies often feature outcast characters, like Martha Dunnstock (Carrie Lynn) in *Heathers* (1989), Fern Mayo (Judy Greer) in *Jawbreaker* (1999), and Cady Heron (Lindsay Lohan) in *Mean Girls* (2004). However, while these characters find some form of acceptance in the end, Carrie White does not.

These themes of otherness and acceptance are present in *Carrie*. Carrie's quest for acceptance is what leads to her downfall at the hands of her classmates who are shown bullying her from the very beginning of the film. De Palma's film opens with the end of a volleyball game, where Carrie is unable to hit the ball, causing her team to lose. As the other girls walk past her into the locker room, we get an insight into how they view Carrie. Kristeva writes that, "hatred provides the foreigner with consistency ... Hatred makes him real" (1991, p. 13). The only way that Carrie exists to her classmates is through their hatred of her. This hatred is shown as the girls enter the shower room and Chris Hargensen (Nancy Allen) spits "You eat shit!" at Carrie as she passes her. After getting her period for the first time in the school showers, Carrie panics and runs around the showers trying to find help. Her classmates instead throw tampons and pads at her, while chanting "Plug it up! Plug it up!" This abuse only stops with the intervention of Miss Collins. There is also graffiti on the wall of the gym that says "CARRIE WHITE EATS SHIT", and students laugh at her attempts to speak in class.

Carrie White is the scapegoat, the person her classmates feel that they can abuse without consequence because she is different. Characters' reactions towards Carrie show how her peers view her as "an object of fascination ... a problem, a desire – positive or negative, never neutral" (Kristeva 1991, p. 39). This might explain why the girls express such glee at the chance to bully Carrie when she freaks out after getting her first period; the spotlight is taken away from any strangeness they themselves might possess, and unites everyone against a common target of ridicule. The humiliation of Carrie White

leads to her becoming withdrawn since even the teachers humiliate and ridicule her. In one class, after Carrie comments on a poem written by Tommy (William Katt), the English teacher, Mr Fromm (Sydney Lassick), mocks her opinion:

Mr Fromm: Any criticisms? Anybody?

Carrie: It's beautiful.

Mr Fromm: Carrie White! Beautiful. Bee-yoo-ti-ful! Oh, beautiful for spacious skies for amber waves of grain. Is that the kind of beautiful you mean? Is it, Carrie? I'm afraid, Carrie, this is hardly a criticism.

(*Carrie*, 1976)

This moment shows that during her time in high school, Carrie has become the scapegoat for everyone in the school. Hatred unites everyone against Carrie and pushes her strangeness to the forefront of her being until she is defined by being an 'other'.

In his in-depth analysis of *Carrie*, Joseph Aisenberg writes that "the movie's conflict is principally a tug of war over Carrie's image and what it represents for each of the characters, including Carrie" (2011, p. 84). This war over Carrie's image creates the ambiguous morality within the film that has rarely been explored before. There are no completely good characters, except for Tommy Ross. The motivations of the characters are left intentionally grey including supposedly 'good' characters like Sue Snell (Amy Irving) and Miss Collins (Betty Buckley). Sue's motives are hinted at during a scene where the girls are getting the gym ready for prom. Sue and her friend Frieda (Noelle North) have the following conversation in the film while putting up prom decorations:

Frieda: Is it really true that Tommy is taking Carrie to the prom?

Everybody's talking about it.

Sue: Whatever you heard, it's true.

Frieda: Why's he doing it?

Sue: Because I thought I owed it to Carrie.

Frieda: Where does that put everybody else?

Sue: They can deal with it in their own way. (*Carrie*, 1976)

This dialogue shows that Sue really sees her plan to get Carrie to prom as a way to atone for the bathroom incident. While it is an admirable thing to do, there is also a selfishness to Sue's act. She is really helping Carrie in order to make herself feel better since she was the girl who handed out sanitary napkins to everyone else so they could throw them at Carrie.

Miss Collins has ambivalent feelings towards Carrie herself, an ambivalence that offers a new way of considering teacher and mentor roles within teenage films. Timothy Shary points out that in teenage rebellion films of the 1950s, narratives often used the "typical scenario of depicting an inspiring teacher who tries to gain authority over his delinquent charges" (2012, p. 23). The teacher in these narratives becomes a parental figure who helps the outsiders in high school society overcome their personal demons, with Shary explicitly referencing the film *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) as a key example. Contrasting with these types of teacher mentors, Miss Collins instead sees Carrie as a burden, and faces a crisis of self when dealing with her. Since Carrie is one of her students, Miss Collins has a duty of care towards her. She does try to calm Carrie while the other girls are throwing tampons at her, and makes sure to check on Carrie's mental state throughout the rest of the film. But Miss Collins also reacts to Carrie in the way that most of her classmates do as well, seeing her as an 'other'. Directly after the bathroom incident, Miss Collins expresses her frustrations with Carrie to the principal, saying that

“The whole thing just made me want to take her and shake her too, you know what I mean?”. Miss Collins feels frustrated by Carrie, but she also experiences guilt for feeling that way at the same time.

The ambiguous responses of Miss Collins come to a head when, while simultaneously encouraging Carrie to go to prom, she exclaims to Tommy and Sue “Don’t you think you’re gonna just look a little ridiculous when you walk into the prom with Carrie White?”. In this moment, how Miss Collins actually sees Carrie is shown with startling honesty. Miss Collins tries to be supportive but instead she is seen as “overcompensating for her sadistic feelings of disgust towards Carrie’s monstrosity” (Aisenberg 2011, p. 166).

Sue and Miss Collins use Carrie to assuage their own guilt for their participation in Carrie’s suffering, Sue in her participation of the bathroom prank, and Miss Collins for ignoring the bullying that Carrie previously experienced. This ultimately leads to their downfall; Miss Collins is killed during the prom massacre, while Sue is left with PTSD from witnessing the event. Neither character fully accepts the foreigner within themselves, and so Carrie White is never fully accepted either.

Challenging ‘glamour’

Rachel Moseley defines a ‘glamour’ as “magic in which femininity is produced as [a] superficial and deceptive charm” (2002, p. 404). The word itself does not appear in *Carrie*, but it can be argued that Carrie White uses a form of glamour when she goes to the prom. Makeover transformations are the most prevalent versions of glammers seen in all types of teen movies, from comedies to dramas to musicals. The function of the glamour also recalls what Kristeva writes about the foreigner and the uncanny, saying that “artifice neutralises uncanniness” (1991, p. 187). Masking the uncanny, or the otherness

people possess, allows for foreigners to assimilate themselves into society. Carrie is able to hide her 'otherness' through artificial means like make-up and clothing, but these means are not permanent. Moseley states that in *Carrie*, the prom transformation is a pivotal scene in the film since it "employs this transformation ... in order to make its withdrawal more powerful" (2002, p. 412).

Chris Hargensen is the only character not taken in by Carrie's transformation. By dowsing Carrie in pig's blood, Chris removes the glamour that Carrie had been wearing while also attaching her own agenda on her victim; to restore high school society to the status quo by reminding everyone that Carrie is still an outcast. The way in which DePalma films the initial reaction to the pig's blood shows that while one or two people in the audience are laughing at Carrie, the majority appear to be too shocked and horrified to respond. The slow motion used to show the audience reaction heightens this shocked feeling, making it appear as if Carrie's classmates are frozen by the events. There is also no soundtrack except for the swinging of the bucket, meaning the audience doesn't hear whatever laughter there may be.

The silence and slow motion of reality contrasts with what Carrie herself is experiencing. Through Carrie's eyes, it appears as if the entire gym is laughing at her. The juxtaposition between the quiet slow reality and the frenzy of noise and sounds in Carrie's mind creates a grotesque image of how she is feeling in the aftermath. Chris reminds the prom goers of Carrie's difference and this leads to the destruction of the prom, the death of her classmates, and eventually to Chris's own demise at the hands of Carrie. This moment in the film, the pig's blood falling and the immediate aftermath, shows us that the strength of Carrie's powers does not lie in creating glammers, but rather it is "too bloody, dangerous, bodily, sexual and excessive to be represented with glamour"

(Moseley 2002, p. 412). Carrie's powers really lie in creating destruction and exacting revenge.

Carrie challenges the typical use of the glamour in teen films. As Moseley states, despite 'glamour' being present in the film "Carrie and her magical power are quite explicitly distanced from it" (2002, p. 412), leading to Carrie accepting her powers and by extension her 'otherness'. Kristeva discusses the power of femininity in regards to otherness and how dangerous it can be:

The death and the feminine, the end and the beginning that engross and compose us only to frighten us when they break through ... Such malevolent powers would amount to a weaving together of the symbolic and the organic ... their presence in our fellow beings worries us the more as we dimly sense them in ourselves. (1991, p. 185)

This powerful femininity lies at the heart of Carrie's acceptance of her powers. When Carrie embraces her feminine witch self and her powers, a split screen technique is used to show the full extent of Carrie's destruction that also allows her to take "literal control of the frame" (Aisenberg 2011, p. 232). By focusing on Sissy Spacek's eyes, Carrie becomes an otherworldly being, a witch who stands before the burning stage defying her class mates and destroying them in revenge. Carrie creates her own fire, and refuses to be burnt by it, her otherness finally becoming "crystallised as pure ostracism" (Kristeva 1991, p. 24) as she moves slowly through the engulfing flames and makes her way home.

By the time she returns home, Mrs White no longer recognises Carrie as her daughter. Carrie is instead a witch who must be destroyed. Mrs White's religious fervour turns her into the witch finder general and she uses her authority to kill Carrie in order to protect her beliefs. In a chapter on foreigners and Judaism called 'The Chosen People and

the Choice of Foreignness', Kristeva writes that "The faithful devour the foreigner" (1991, p. 75), which is what Mrs White does to Carrie by attacking her with a knife. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva asks whether or not the death of the parents is where true freedom starts since one must exile oneself in order to experience true independence (1991, pp. 21-23). This goes back to Kristeva's own theory of the abject, where in order to become complete there has to be a separation between mother and child or else the death of the child's identity is imminent. In *Carrie*, however, it is the literal death of the parent that leads to the death of the child, and it begins with the parent exiling the child against her will. Mrs White tries to kill her daughter, only to be crucified herself. The grief Carrie then feels is strong enough to destroy her house and herself while cradling her mother's corpse. Carrie exiles them both together in death.

Carrie challenges the idea that any teenager can gain acceptance. That is the key reason 'glamour' is used in teen witch narratives; to change your outward appearance to fit the socially acceptable image of a teenage girl. It is used in comedic teen witch narratives like the film *Teen Witch* (1989) and the sitcom *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), where the witch characters change themselves to be accepted in high school society. Despite using a glamour to appear like the rest of her classmates, Carrie is not accepted, because her peers cannot accept her 'foreign-ness' and by extension the foreigner within themselves. Therefore, Carrie's otherness can never be accepted and she will always remain an outcast even in death.

TV Movies Inspired by *Carrie*

The popularity of *Carrie* led to a number of imitation TV movies that were broadcast in the late 1970s. These TV movies continued a number of familiar themes, most notably the theme of the outsider turning to magic in an attempt to get revenge on

their classmates, challenging the stereotypical teenage ‘coming of age’ stories where the protagonist is looking for acceptance rather than revenge. The most blatant TV movie inspired by *Carrie* is *The Spell* (1977, directed by Lee Philips), but traces of *Carrie*’s influence can be found in both *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978, directed by Robert Day) and *Stranger in Our House* (aka *Summer of Fear* 1978, directed by Wes Craven). Each of these three films feature teenage girls who use magic to embrace their difference and to enact revenge on their bullies.

There are limited scholarly resources on made-for-TV movies. Amanda Reyes’ book, *Are You in the House Alone? A TV Movie Compendium 1964-1999* (2016)²⁰, discusses the history of the TV movie with brief analyses of the most popular genres. The medium of the made for TV movie was used primarily to create genre films that reflected the current trends in their cinematic counterparts, but on a much smaller scale. Reyes notes the similarities in both the filmmaking and content between TV movies and grindhouse cinema, where both relied on “low budgets, slumming film stars and tight shooting schedules” (2016, p. 6) and she points out how both frequently used narratives that involved societal taboos in order to achieve higher ratings and viewers. The TV movie had to maintain a family friendly approach compared to grindhouse movies and the limited budget of these TV movies meant that filmmakers had to rely more on slow-burning suspense and thrills rather than visual horror to create a more “restrained terror” (Reyes 2016, p. 8). But some TV movies managed to explore and address social problems by focusing their narratives on topics like rape, abuse, juvenile delinquency, and occultism.

The Spell

²⁰ Most of the quotes about the TV movies analysed here are from this book, but provided by different movie reviewers.

The Spell was the first in a trend of TV movies that Lance Vaughn describes as the “telekinetic oddball train” (2016, p. 161) that were made after the success of *Carrie*. While exploring similar themes of bullying, teenage alienation, and the mother-daughter relationship, *The Spell* mainly differs from *Carrie* in its portrayal of the teenage protagonist. While Carrie White is an abused girl who the audience can sympathise with, her counterpart in *The Spell*, Rita Matchett (Susan Myers), is unsympathetic and comes across as “antisocial and vexatious in the creepiest ways” (Reyes ed. 2016, p. 207). Rita revels in being different from her classmates instead of being beaten into submission and consumed with self-doubt like Carrie White, challenging the typical portrayal of the bullied girl character by using the horror genre to work through the changes that come with adolescence. She has a complex relationship with her mother, Marilyn (Lee Grant), but not one that is built on abuse. Marilyn loves Rita, but their relationship is strained through the changes Rita is experiencing because of puberty and because of Rita’s disdain for the people in her life.

Rita has telekinetic powers and is studying witchcraft in order to strengthen herself, which is why she looks down on other teenagers. She believes herself to be superior to her classmates, which ends up alienating Rita from others. Rita is taunted by the other girls in her class for being perceived as fat, and this adds to her alienation. This physical difference identifies Rita visually as an ‘other’, but over the course of the film, her interest in witchcraft is ultimately what sets her apart and classifies her as an ‘other’. Rita’s portrayal of the ‘other’ brings to mind a concept of Kristeva’s from *Strangers to Ourselves* that was not present in *Carrie*. Kristeva writes that the foreigner maintains his ego through his perception of the people around him:

In the eyes of the foreigner those who are not foreign have no life at all: barely do they exist, haughty or mediocre, but out of the running and thus almost already cadaverised. (1991, p. 7)

This is how Rita feels towards almost everybody, the exception being her mother, and she has hostile encounters with most of the other characters she comes across. Because of her powers, she views the people around her as inferior. She especially hates her father, Glenn (James Olson) and her sister Kristina (Helen Hunt). We are shown that Glenn constantly points out Rita's weight in humiliating ways, thinking that it will motivate her to lose weight. From the interactions between them, it is easy to see that Glenn cares for his younger daughter more than his elder one, but we come to learn that Rita feels the same way about them. One night, after getting caught coming home late, Rita explodes at her mother saying:

Rita: I don't love my father any more than he loves me, and Kristina could die for all I care! Kristina is a simpering, little toad, she traps you with all her looks. Underneath she's weak and stupid, unworthy and useless! (*The Spell*, 1977)

This impassioned speech shows that, as the foreigner, Rita looks down on those who are not foreign. Kristina and Glenn don't have the same powers as Rita and add to the bullying she receives, and so she sees them as unworthy of her love.

Witchcraft in *The Spell* becomes both the thing that defines Rita as different, and allows her to see herself as superior to them. It can be argued that her witch mentor, gym teacher Jo Standish (Leila Goldini) is the one responsible for instilling Rita's love of her difference in her. When talking to Marilyn about Rita's bullying Miss Standish says:

Miss Standish: I know you'd like her to be more like other girls. But some girls will be different. Most of the people who've left a meaningful legacy in this world have been. (*The Spell*, 1977)

It can also be assumed that Miss Standish is the one who made Rita believe that she should punish those who hurt her, since Miss Standish also punishes people in acts of revenge. This contrasts with Miss Collins, who encourages Carrie to fit in with her classmates by using make-up and going to prom, despite her ambiguous feelings towards Carrie as a person.

The witchcraft in *The Spell* is introduced to us through telekinetic ability, and like *Carrie*, we begin with a high school gym class. The class is told to climb up a rope, which Rita fails at. While struggling to climb the rope, the lead bully Jackie (Doney Oatman) has already reached the top and is showing off for the rest of her classmates before suddenly falling to her death. Through the editing, it is implied that Rita caused this accident. The camera cuts quickly between Rita's face and the girl on the rope, until she falls. Similar editing is used in later scenes that showcase Rita's telekinesis, like when a car almost runs her father over, or when her sister almost drowns in a swimming pool. In all of these scenes, quick edits are used to show the audience that Rita is the one in control of the situation through her telekinesis by using close-ups on her face, another similarity with the way that Carrie's powers are shown. Her father, her sister, and her bully are all people that Rita seeks to punish, challenging the image of the bullied teenager. Rita does not appear meek or quiet, and does not feel any remorse for her acts of revenge.

As unsympathetic as she may be, Rita's actions can be somewhat forgiven since she is only fifteen, and she is portrayed as dealing with all of the contradictions and confusion that teenagers encounter during puberty. She also stands out amongst other bullied teen characters by fighting back against her bullies using witchcraft. Miss Standish is the real villain since she exploits Rita's telekinesis and her sense of difference, making her think that those around who aren't 'others' are, as Kristeva states, mediocre and worthless. Witchcraft is once again used to showcase teenage difference and revenge, with *The Spell* taking on similar themes as *Carrie* albeit with a greatly altered narrative that subverts expectations surrounding the bullied teen character by exaggerating the narcissism that the foreigner feels in regards how they perceive those who are not 'others'.

The Initiation of Sarah

The Initiation of Sarah is even more blatant in copying *Carrie*. The TV film not only contains a protagonist who is an outcast with telekinesis, but *The Initiation of Sarah* copies direct narrative points; there is an attempt at a recreation of the pig's blood scene, and of the destruction of the prom, but in very different contexts. The largest difference between the two films is that *The Initiation of Sarah* takes place at a college sorority house rather than at high school. Two step-sisters, shy Sarah (Kay Lenz) and popular Patty (Morgan Brittany) are hoping to get into the same exclusive sorority in their university, Alpha Nu Sigma (ANS). Patty gets accepted easily, while Sarah is instead accepted into the less socially popular Phi Epsilon Delta (PED). Sarah already possesses telekinetic abilities before she arrives at college, as seen in the opening where she stops a man from molesting her sister. Her powers are exploited by the PED house mother Mrs Hunter (Shelley Winters), who wants to "harness Sarah's powers, add a little black magic,

stir in some human sacrifice and destroy the opposing sorority for good” (Reyes 2016, pp. 162-163). The film ends with Sarah sacrificing herself in order to destroy Mrs Hunter.

While *Carrie* and *The Spell* are more focused on the mother-daughter relationship, *The Initiation of Sarah* instead focuses on the relationship between two sisters, although it should be noted that Sarah is adopted while Patty is the biological child of their parents. This relationship is further explored through the university sororities, and the way in which they create bonding through violence. The sisters have a strong bond that is tested through the initiation ceremonies of their respective sororities. ANS is viewed as a more popular sorority on campus, and because of that the president Jennifer (Morgan Fairchild) actively tries to keep the two sisters apart because Sarah does not fit into her image of a popular girl. This forced separation is an attempt to maintain the status quo of the university hierarchy, because Jennifer views the girls of PED as inferior to herself and her sorority sisters, and does not want the two sororities associating with each other. This notion of difference inspiring hatred is explored through Sarah becoming more confident and standing up for herself against Jennifer. But because of her ‘otherness’, Sarah ends up “challenging both the identity of the group and [her] own” (Kristeva 1991, p. 42). Jennifer sees Sarah as a threat through the way she initialises changes within PED which could damage the exclusive nature of ANS. Because of this, Jennifer has her sorority and a popular fraternity take part in a humiliating prank that involves the popular students throwing rotten food and mud on an unsuspecting Sarah, in an homage to the pig’s blood scene from *Carrie*.

Andrew Grunzke writes that sororities are used in horror films to discuss the social function of violence. He says that by being preoccupied with the possible violence involved in initiation rites that sororities have, horror filmmakers can “examine the dual function of violence” (Grunzke 2015, p. 126). He elaborates:

By going through the violent rite of passage ... [the] violence serves to foster group unity. When this rite fails and unity is not achieved, however, the memory of that violence becomes an event that serves to separate and exclude people. (2015, p. 126)

Sarah questions the idea that violence is needed in initiation rituals to achieve unity by refusing to allow Mrs Hunter to sacrifice one of her sorority sisters, a girl nicknamed Mouse (Tisa Farrow). Instead of separating the sorority, this act brings the girls closer together after Sarah's death.

The initiation ritual also allows Sarah to get revenge on Jennifer and all of the girls in ANS through her powers and a spell. The witchcraft element of the film is a mixture of telekinesis and occult ritual which also includes an element of human sacrifice. The occult initiation ritual is an attempt to magnify Sarah's powers. However, this is also where Sarah learns how she is being used by Mrs Hunter, and her revenge is forgotten in an effort to save her own sorority sisters.

What Sarah has been able to achieve, unlike Carrie or Rita, is some kind of acceptance among her sorority. Sarah is able to find girls who are different, other 'foreigners' on her campus, and they are able to create and nurture their own sorority without violence. The theme of sisterhood is emphasised through the choices that both Patty and Sarah make. After Jennifer's mud prank on Sarah, Patty leaves ANS because of the way in which the girls treat her sister and the rest of the unpopular girls on their campus. Her leaving ANS foreshadows the sacrifice that Sarah also makes at the end of the film. The friends she has made within PED are more important to her than her powers or her life. Patty ends up joining PED herself, since she has come to accept that her previous thoughts about popularity and sororities have been wrong. Patty changes herself

and embraces her differences, because “exile always involves a shattering of the former self” (Kristeva 1991, p. 30).

The way the characters completely change themselves, for better or worse, can be seen as instances of what Kristeva writes about exile and the former self. There are different types of exile present in *The Initiation of Sarah* and *The Spell*. It can be argued that Jennifer’s final punishment is a form of exile, since Sarah and Mrs Hunter take away her youth and beauty, and therefore her social standing within the university. By taking away the things she prized most of all, Jennifer is left as a shell of her former self since she can no longer rely on her looks to get what she wants.

Rita in *The Spell* also places a self-imposed exile from her family in order to please Miss Standish and get revenge. Her form of exile coincides with Kristeva’s theories on independence. Kristeva asserts that the children’s exile is “at first no more than a challenge to parental overbearance” (1991, p. 21), and that might have been how Rita’s exile first started. In the climax of the film, Marilyn confronts Rita with her own newly discovered powers, and defeats Rita by overpowering her and forcing her to end the exile she placed on herself so that their family can have peace again. Rita’s mother essentially brings her back into the familial unit as a way to stop Rita from becoming a stranger to her family. The changes in personality that the characters undergo in these two films is seen as so complete that they become different people. In this way, the exile forces them to destroy their previous selves, or as Kristeva says to ‘shatter’ them, in an effort to either embrace their new found strangeness (Patty) or be reinstated into the status quo (Rita).

Stranger in Our House

In the previous films discussed in this chapter, the audience is meant to view the teen witch characters somewhat sympathetically despite some moral ambiguities surrounding the choices they make. However, in *Stranger in Our House*, the witch character is also the main antagonist. Reyes writes that this TV movie explores a theme common in other Wes Craven movies from the 1970s, that of the nuclear family being corrupted by outside forces (2016, pp. 32-33). Previously, Craven had released two horror films, *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) that focus on outsiders corrupting the family unit through violence. *Stranger in Our House* uses a teen witch character to explore that idea.

In Craven's films, the foreigners are the outside corrupting forces that infiltrate the family. The foreigner in *Stranger* is Julia (Lee Purcell), a shy country girl from the Ozarks who goes to live with her aunt and uncle, the Bryant's, after the death of her parents. Once she arrives, her cousin Rachel (Linda Blair) starts to notice strange things happening in the house, and finds evidence of black magic being used against her family members. She eventually realises that Julia isn't who she says she is and is instead a witch looking to ingratiate herself into the upper-class life of the Bryant's through murder and seduction.

Class is a key theme in *Stranger in Our House* that isn't present in the other two TV movies. The Bryant family lives in a gated community, isolating them within a "self-made upper class Promised Land" (Reyes ed. 2016, p. 33), and lending a feeling of xenophobia to the narrative. It is implied that the threat Julia poses is not one based completely on witchcraft, but also because she comes from a lower social class. Once again, there is this feeling of artifice being used to hide strangeness, although in this case it is not just a 'glamour' that Julia uses. Julia does change her appearance to fit in more with her new family, but then she uses her magic to steal Rachel's boyfriend and seduce

both her brother and father. Julia uses magic in this way to secure a permanent place to live with a lavish lifestyle. This challenges what we have previously seen in teen witch narratives. In *Stranger in Our House*, the teen witch Julia overtly uses her femininity and sexuality along with her magic to secure her place in life, rather than to get revenge on a particular person or group.

This is the only film discussed in this chapter that does not feature telekinesis as a part of the witchcraft. Instead, there are more typical instances of witchcraft involving spells being made out of the bodily waste of the victims (like hair, nails, teeth, etc.) and the use of a 'glamour'. Once again Kristeva's argument that uncanniness can be neutralised through artifice is present, and so the artifice only has to be removed for the uncanny to be noticed and destroyed. As Reyes asserts Julia needs to use a glamour to hide her 'otherness' since she "cannot properly assimilate into this shiny new world by herself" (2016, p. 33), especially given the class divide between Julia and the Bryant's. Kristeva says that:

The other leaves us separate, incoherent; even more so, he can make us feel that we are not in touch with our own feelings, that we reject them or, on the contrary, that we refuse to judge them. (1991, p. 187)

The uneasiness that Rachel feels about Julia is not reciprocated in any of her close friends and family, making those around her think she is going insane. Julia's use of magic has the side effect of alienating Rachel because the other characters don't see the damage that Julia is doing. *Stranger in Our House* is interesting in that Julia transfers her strangeness onto Rachel, in effect making her the 'foreigner' in her own home, which is reflected in the title, *Stranger in Our House*. Rather than having to accept her strangeness to find

fulfilment, as seen in the previously discussed films, Rachel is forced into becoming an 'other' against her will.

These three TV movies show how themes of otherness and teenage alienation were becoming more popular in works of supernatural horror on the small screen. The foreigner that Kristeva identifies can be seen in narratives involving teenage witches not only during the 1970s, but up until today. Films like *The Craft* (1996), *Evilspeak* (1981), and *The Witch* (2015) also have main characters who are teenage witches and who experience extreme alienation and abuse at the hands of their peers and families, and find acceptance only by accepting their inner foreigner through the use of witchcraft. By using witchcraft as a means to explore teenage alienation, filmmakers have been able to speak to multiple generations of teenagers who can relate in some way to feeling like an outsider, or foreigner, during their adolescence. In the previous chapter, it was shown how the 'happy housewife' characters are subverted through witchcraft allowing the housewife fulfilment outside of traditional domestic feminine roles, and here we can see how teen witches function as agents of subversion within typical teenage coming of age narratives by presenting a different way of surviving the challenges and expectations of being a teenager through the use of witchcraft.

Chapter 4 - The Witch as Maternal Mentor

For the final chapter of this thesis, I will be using concepts from both Betty Friedan and Julia Kristeva to discuss how witches in the Dario Argento film *Suspria* (1977) challenge and work through changes to traditionally perceived feminine values regarding educators and maternal mentors, and exploring how witches in horror films create new complex role models for women. Friedan's discussions of educators and mothers from *The Feminine Mystique* provide an example of how these types of figures were viewed at the beginning of the 1960s. Friedan claims that mothers tried to infantilise their children as a way to keep those children dependent on them for as long as possible. Mothers would also attempt to live vicariously through their children's own lives as a way to find the fulfilment that was lacking in their own. Looking at the witches in *Suspria*, the majority of whom are teachers, we can see that these characters embrace and exaggerate Friedan's descriptions and use them as a way to gain power. The witches use infantilisation and vicarious living in order to exert control over their students and impose an extreme form of malicious compliance.

The world of the witches in *Suspria* is one of control and power, and is enhanced by the setting of the film, which is where Kristeva's theories on the foreigner are most evident. The setting resembles a fairy tale, and maintains the vagueness that fairy tales have in their narratives by removing almost every identifying factor within the witches' world. Fairy tales in general have indistinct settings that focus on important landmarks rather than specific details, and *Suspria* continues this tradition. This becomes especially apparent when comparing the original film to the 2018 remake directed by Luca Guadagnino, which very deliberately sets the narrative in a specific time and place. The witches of *Suspria* use the idea of the foreigner to isolate the dance academy from the

world, but also to try and isolate the students from each other so that no one discovers the teachers are actually witches, allowing them to assert their dominance over the students.

Suspiria is a film that has been the subject of serious academic scholarship, including Alexandra Heller-Nicholas' 2015 in-depth book on the film, *Suspiria*, and Maitland McDonagh and James Gracey's books focusing on director Dario Argento's filmography. However, the majority of scholarship concentrates on the cinematic fairy tale aspects of the film as a whole rather than solely focusing on the witch characters. I will be focusing specifically on the witches in *Suspiria* in order to show how these characters challenge feminine beliefs surrounding the maternal mentor figure, and also explore how *Suspiria* subverts its own definition of witches by presenting two contrasting types of witch. The film itself contains very little world building within the narrative, which allows for conjecture about the witch characters and their powers. The lack of world building creates ambiguities about who actually is a witch, and in this chapter, I will show how the heroine, Suzy Banyon (Jessica Harper), can be perceived as a witch. But first I will discuss how the teacher witches in *Suspiria* are malicious maternal mentors by using concepts from both *The Feminine Mystique* and *Strangers to Ourselves*.

Malicious Mothers

The witches in *Suspiria* being malevolent mothers comes from the changes Argento made when he created his Three Mothers Trilogy, which includes the films *Suspiria*, *Inferno* (1980), and *Mother of Tears* (2007). Argento was inspired by an essay by Thomas De Quincey found in his book *Suspiria de Profundis* (originally published 1845, copy referenced here from 2013) which Maitland McDonagh describes as a "literary rendering of an opium dream" (2010, p. 130). The essay, titled 'Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrows', describes imagined interactions between Levana, the Roman goddess

of childbirth, and the three Ladies of Sorrow, personifications of grief who are companions of Levana (2013, pp. 138-144). The Sorrows are known as Mater Lachrymarum (Our Lady of Tears), Mater Suspiriorum (Our Lady of Sighs), and Mater Tenebrarum (Our Lady of Darkness). De Quincey chooses these three beings to represent emotional responses to grief, and, due to their relationship with Levana, specifically the grief of losing a child.

Argento builds each of the films in the Three Mothers trilogy around one of the Ladies of Sorrow, who he has reimagined as powerful witches rather than emotional personifications of grief. There is a strong contrast between Argento's Three Mothers and De Quincey's Ladies of Sorrow, who are described in a more passive and abstract way in De Quincey's work, to the point where they appear almost ghost like. De Quincey describes Mater Suspiriorum as one who is "humble to abjectness" (2013, p. 142), whereas her counterpoint in *Suspiria*, Helena Markos (Lela Svasta), is described by Barbara Creed as "an abject figure who dwells in abject things" (2007, p. 77). Markos is physically not shown entirely in the film, and when she is seen it is mostly in extreme close ups that show decrepit and grey skin that looks like it is breaking off of her face.

Kristeva's own theories on motherhood are similar to the representation of the witches in *Suspiria* as malicious maternal figures. When discussing the mother-child relationship, Kristeva moves away from previous interpretations advanced by Freud and Lacan. Kelly Oliver summarises a key argument from Kristeva's book, *Tales of Love*, as:

Language acquisition and socialization, insofar as they develop out of regulations and law, have their foundations in the maternal function prior to the law of the father of traditional psychoanalysis. (2002, p. 296).

Kristeva disputes Freud's theories on motherhood by claiming that they are a fantasy of masculine control. However, in *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva contradicts her own idea by identifying the maternal body with the abject. Barbara Creed writes that since the harmful nature of the abject is threatening in itself, then it must be removed to "the other side of an imaginary border which separated the self from that which threatens the self" (2007, p. 9). These negative connotations means that Kristeva views the maternal body and female sexuality as a miserable experience "because to identify as women, females must identify with an abject maternal body" (Oliver ed. 2002, p. 300). In *Suspiria*, Helena Markos becomes the physical representation of the abject maternal body.

The similarities between the Ladies of Sorrows and the Three Mothers contribute to the theory that witches within the world of *Suspiria* are mother figures. Argento expands on the world of the Three Mothers in the subsequent films in the trilogy, especially in *Inferno*, which contains a large introductory narration that links the films together. It is in this narration where the witches are first referred to as mothers by Argento, echoing De Quincey's essay by referring to them as 'Mater', the Latin for mother. By using this identifier, Argento directly connects motherhood to witchcraft, but not motherhood as we traditionally think of it. The witches in the Three Mothers trilogy instead exaggerate the negative traits associated with motherhood as outlined in *The Feminine Mystique*, traits like vicariously living through their children and infantilising grown women as a way to control them. Exploring *Suspiria* by itself, which contains no reference to the witches being mothers, the witches can still be seen as maternal mentors through the fact that they are teachers. Led by Madame Blanc (Joan Bennett), Miss Tanner (Alida Valli), and the unseen Helena Markos, the teachers at the Tanz Dance Akademie use these negative traits of motherhood in order to assert control over their students.

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan argues that mothers who grew up being influenced by the Feminine Mystique are more likely to damage their children, particularly their daughters, by consistently infantilising their children during their teenage years and thus not allowing them to create their own “emerging sense of ... self which used to mark human adolescence” (2010, p. 229). Infantilisation occurs when the parental figure increases “the intensity of their preoccupation with their children” (Friedan 2010, p. 231) to the point where the parent begins to live vicariously through the child. Friedan argues that infantilising the child makes them more dependent on the parent, usually the mother, and makes the child less likely to leave the safety of the parent and the childhood home. However, it negatively affects the child by not allowing them the space to grow into adulthood, stunting their growth until they become “like a puppet with someone else pulling the strings” (Friedan 2010, p. 229).

In *Suspiria*, the witches use a more literal version of infantilisation through witchcraft by forcing Suzy to become ill and dependent on them during her recovery. Suzy is told by Madame Blanc and Miss Tanner that she has a room available in the academy and no longer has to share a flat with fellow student Olga (Barbara Magnolfi). While the teachers assume that Suzy will move into the academy, Suzy shocks them by refusing to, saying she instead wishes to stay with Olga. The exchange ends with Miss Tanner exclaiming:

Miss Tanner: I had no idea you were so strong willed. I can see that once
 you make up your mind about something, nothing will
 change it for you. My compliments. (*Suspiria*, 1977)

It soon becomes apparent that the teachers see Suzy’s rejection as proof that she is too independent, and therefore she must be controlled. While on her way to a class, Suzy

passes by one of the cooks polishing silver and Albert (Jacopo Mariani), Madame Blanc's nephew. As Suzy approaches, the cook reflects a beam of light from a knife she is holding into Suzy's eyes, blinding her and eventually leading her to collapse into unconsciousness in her dance class with blood coming out of her nose and mouth. When she awakes, Suzy is in bed while Madame Blanc and Miss Tanner forcibly make her drink water. Behind her back, Olga has packed her bags and returned them to the academy, meaning that Suzy is now living there as Madame Blanc originally wanted.

The need for Suzy to remain in the academy echoes what Friedan describes as infantilisation. Suzy is forced into a passive role when the witches use magic on her to make her sick and dependent on them for care. Friedan describes the passivity of the younger generation who grew up with housewife-mothers as "a deterioration of the human character" (2010, p. 230). This deterioration makes it easier for mothers to then use their own children "to gratify her own infantile dreams" (Friedan 2010, p. 233), to the point where the personality of the child is taken over by the mother. This can be seen in *Suspiria* through the way magic is used against Suzy. Heller-Nicholas describes the short sequence with Suzy being blinded by the cook as one where the witches magic is somehow draining Suzy of her energy. She writes that "it is as if [Suzy's] energy is being sucked out through the light" and that "this gesture brings Suzy under the witches' control" (2015, p. 50). Suzy is then frequently drugged by the witches, causing her to take on a "vacant sleepwalking quality" (Friedan 2010, p. 229) which is how the children of mothers under the influence of the Feminine Mystique grow up.

By literally reducing Suzy to the passive role of an invalid, the witches are able to assert control over her. Friedan describes the actions of these mothers as subconscious, that the infantilisation of their children is a reaction from the unfulfilled mothers who have given up their own dreams due to the restricting world of the Feminine Mystique.

The witches in *Suspiria* are instead consciously infantilising Suzy for their own desires, turning what Friedan explores as a subconscious reaction into a conscious way to control someone.

The world of *Suspiria*

The witches are also able to exert control over their students by creating an isolated fairy tale world that removes their students from the stability of the real world. *Suspiria*'s fairy tale world connects with Kristeva's theory that the foreigner inspires hatred, and leads to an environment of hostility between the students. This hostility allows the witches to alienate the students from each other and maintain their control over them.

The world of the Tanz Dance Akademie in *Suspiria* is one that is literally alienated in both time and place, especially when compared to the 2018 version. One of the major changes in the 2018 *Suspiria* can be seen in the way that director Luca Guadagnino deliberately sets the film in the heart of 1970s Berlin, and grounds this setting in the real world by explicitly referencing current events, like the Baader-Meinhof protests. But in the original, there is a vagueness that permeates the setting. 1977's *Suspiria* exists in a state of uncanny displacement, which is only intensified through the look and feel of the woods surrounding the academy. These woods look every bit like a fairy tale wood. The trees are impossibly tall and straight, and surprisingly barren on the lower branches. The first real look we get at the woods is during the opening when Pat (Eva Axén) is running away from the academy in the rain. There is a claustrophobic feel to the wood in this moment, which is enhanced by the musical score and the word 'witch' that is whispered throughout. The woods have been made uncanny through the minimal lighting that casts most of the trees in shadows, only illuminated by the headlights of the taxi that Suzy is sitting in. Heller-Nicholas describes the scenery during the opening as

“bars and grids that lock its characters within the confines of *Suspiria*’s horrors” (2015, p. 46). Just like Suzy, the audience becomes trapped in the uncanny, detached fairy tale world of *Suspiria*.

While the Tanz Dance Akademie and its surroundings provide a visual representation of alienation, the interactions between characters reinforces Kristeva’s theories on the foreigner. These can be seen most obviously in Suzy’s interactions. Since she is an American immigrant in Germany, she has to deal with a new culture and language. When she first arrives, the taxi driver refuses to help her with her bags, insults her attempts at speaking German, and then ignores her when she tries to make conversation. Suzy’s interactions with the taxi driver ties in with what Kristeva says about hatred for the foreigner:

Detestation tells you that you are an intruder, that you are irritating, and that this will be shown to you frankly and without caution. (1991, p. 14)

To the taxi driver, Suzy has become a representation of a foreigner, and therefore she attracts his hatred.

Kristeva writes that “alienation of the foreigner ceases within the universality of the love for the other” (1991, p. 84). If we cannot recognise the foreigner in ourselves then we cannot relate to the foreigners who share the space around us, which leads to the alienation of the other. The effects of this alienation are shown in the scene where Miss Tanner takes Suzy to the locker room and we meet other students, most notably Olga and Sarah (Stefania Casini). During these conversations with various students, it becomes apparent that for the majority of the students there is an emphasis on gaining material wealth. Olga is the first to approach Suzy, and reminds her that she owes Olga rent money for letting her stay in her apartment. When Suzy asks to borrow spare dance shoes, the

girl who lends her some first asks if she wants to buy them, then reiterates that she wants them back when Suzy refuses to buy them from her. This shows that class and wealth add to the way that students are alienated from each other as well. If witches are focused on gaining “great personal wealth” as Professor Milius (Rudolf Schündler) later tells Suzy, then this value system must have trickled down into the students. This is reinforced by the comments Olga makes at the supposed crush fellow student Mark (Miguel Bosé) has on Suzy. Olga tells her that while Mark is attractive, he has no money:

Olga: He never has enough money for room and board at the school.
 That’s why that bitch Tanner has got him under her thumb. She
 gives him a thousand and one errands to do! (*Suspiria*, 1977)

By keeping this environment of personal alienation between the students, the witches are able to maintain a competitive atmosphere that does not encourage close friendships.

This alienation can also be found in Friedan’s descriptions of the emptiness of living as a housewife. Since women aren’t encouraged to socialise outside of home, there is less chance for the creation of meaningful relationships, and women stagnate within their own mind. Friedan writes that “the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness, in women” (2010, p. 246). Friedan claims that the extreme outcome of this condition is the total loss of identity to the point that women “have given up their adult frame of reference to live at the lower human level of food and things” (2010, p. 248). Women who alienate themselves physically end up alienating themselves mentally as well, and can be controlled more easily.

This is what the witches are doing in *Suspiria*; however it does not always work. Sarah is able to create meaningful relationships with both Pat and Suzy, allowing her to see through the teachers’ disguise and recognise them as witches. She takes on the

spiritual embodiment of the word ‘caritas’, which is Latin for charity. Kristeva writes that within its original meaning ‘caritas’ was:

not dependent upon reciprocity and cannot be understood in the realm of debt, dependency, and gratitude. *Caritas* is infinite, it grows, goes beyond itself and ourselves, thus welcoming foreigners who have become similar in their very distinction. (1991, p. 85)

Unlike other students, Sarah does not care about material wealth, but instead cares deeply for the women she has relationships with. First Pat, who Sarah was talking to through the front door of the academy before she ran off, and then Suzy, who helps Sarah finally solve the mystery of where the teachers go at night. Sarah accepts Suzy as an ‘other’, thus breaking the alienating environment of the academy and giving both girls strength to fight against the witches.

Suzy as a witch

The witch characters in *Suspiria* are identified as the antagonists of the narrative within the first scenes of the film. Through the narration and score, the audience is introduced into the fairy tale world of the film, and to the female dominated world of the witches. The film begins with a male narrator relaying the events that led up to the beginning of the film’s narrative:

Narrator: Suzy Banyon decided to perfect her ballet studies in the most famous school of dance in Europe. She chose the celebrated academy of Freiburg. One day, at nine in the morning, she left Kennedy airport New York, and arrived in Germany at 10.40pm local time. (*Suspiria*, 1977)

The voice over fades away as the score takes over completely before cutting to Suzy's arrival at the airport. Heller-Nicholas discusses this opening through a gendered lens, writing that the fade-out of the male voice over symbolically represents a move from the masculine world of facts to the feminine world of magic (2015, p. 15).

This is something that we saw in the housewife films that I discussed in chapter two where there is also a separation between masculine logic and feminine magic. In both *Burn, Witch, Burn* and *Suspiria*, magic and witchcraft belong to a female dominated world and effectively take over the male world of science and logic. This idea is reinforced through the original score by rock band Goblin, which creates a prevailing atmosphere of anticipation that surrounds the narrative and directly states that witches are the main antagonists. As Pat runs through the woods away from the Tanz Dance Akademie, a menacing hiss of "Witch!" is heard in the soundtrack, following Pat through the rainy night. This antagonistic presence is reinforced by the supernatural elements surrounding Pat's death; as she is calming down in Sonia's (Susanna Javicoli) apartment, she looks out of the window and sees two disembodied eyes watching her in the darkness. She is then killed by someone hidden offscreen.

Suspiria identifies the witches as malevolent from the opening killings, and their motives are expanded upon during Suzy's conversation with Dr Frank Mandel (Udo Kier) and Professor Milius. The conversation with Professor Milius in particular provides the film's definition of what a witch is. Milius describes witches as:

Milius: They are malefic, negative, and destructive. Their knowledge of the occult gives them tremendous powers. They can change the course of events and people's lives, but only to do harm... Their goal is to accumulate great personal wealth, but that can only be achieved by

injury to others. They can cause suffering, sickness, and even death to those who, for whatever reason, have offended them. (*Suspiria*, 1977)

The audience is shown this tremendous destructive power the witches have through the three key death scenes in the film, which Heller-Nicholas describes as “murder vignettes” (2015, p. 46). These vignettes include the murders of Pat and Sonia in the opening scenes; the death of the blind piano player Daniel at the hands of his own dog; and the death of Sarah as she searches the academy and gets lost within its rooms. Each of these deaths are extreme in their cruelty and violence, to the point where they become theatrical and death becomes more of a performance. Daniel’s death is the most brutally ironic as it is his service dog, an animal that he has to trust due to his blindness, who kills him while under the influence of the witches. He is killed because of a previous altercation between himself and Miss Tanner where she accuses his dog of attacking Albert, which ends with him being fired and forced out of the academy. In the words of Milius, he is killed because he offended the witches.

Pat and Sarah are killed because they have discovered that the academy is run by witches, and their ‘murder vignettes’ are filled with incredible melodramatic violence. Sarah is chased through the labyrinthine corridors of the school until she falls into a blue lit room inexplicably filled with barbed wire, where she is found by the witches and her throat is slit. Pat is stabbed in Sonia’s bathroom so many times that her heart can be seen beating in her chest, before being hung from the stained-glass roof of the apartment building. The over-the-top violence of these deaths, matched with the vivid colours and lighting, creates a spectacle or performance of murder. The key irony in *Suspiria* is that it is a film about ballet that contains hardly any dancing in the narrative. Instead, the death scenes take the place of dance sequences, with the movement of bodies and the editing

taking that place of choreography. Within the world of *Suspiria*, the spectacle of death makes each murder scene a perverted performance of violence orchestrated by the teachers who run the Tanz Dance Akademie, as a way to showcase their malevolent power.

Professor Milius's definition of witches also allows for the possibility that Suzy herself is a witch. Suzy is able to "change the course of events" by discovering where the secret lair of the witches' coven is hidden within the academy; she kills Helena Markos through "her own intuition that has developed throughout the film" (Heller-Nicholas 2015, p. 63). It could also be argued that she has "accumulated great personal wealth" at the ruin of others, since it is never explicitly stated what personal wealth actually is. Her destruction of the coven allows her to be free, and to be confident in her abilities to protect herself, something that is hinted at through her departure from the burning academy building. When she leaves the academy, Suzy smiles, a small gesture that can be interpreted as her celebrating her escape. Suzy also fits into my own definition of a witch character. She disrupts the status quo of the Tanz Dance Akademie by refusing to live in the school and not buying into the materialistic values of her fellow dancers. She also displays intelligence and strength when facing off against the coven and Helena Markos herself. Her character is similar to Carrie White, in that she is isolated in a place of education and has to face a malicious maternal figure. Like Carrie, she must accept the strangeness inside herself in order to fully access her powers.

This raises the question of where magic and power comes from in *Suspiria*. There are supernatural moments in each of the death scenes. The aforementioned floating eyes that Sarah sees before she is attacked, and the uncanny labyrinth the academy becomes that Sarah explores before falling into a room of barbed wire are both moments where the witches exhibit their supernatural powers. Daniel's death is arguably the most

supernatural. Before he is attacked in the Königsplatz²¹, strange shadows dance across the buildings surrounding him accompanied by fluttering sound effects, with Thomas Sipos describing this moment as portraying “cloaked witches on broomsticks” (2010, p. 156). This is then followed by Daniel’s dog attacking him. This means that the ‘murder vignettes’ in the film can not only be seen as dance sequences, but also as ways for the teacher witches to show off their powers of destruction.

Suzy’s powers manifest through an ability to see through the artifice created by the witches within the academy. It can be argued that Suzy’s powers were muted due to the witches drugging her food and putting her under an infantilising spell in an effort to control her, but even while under that spell she is able to work out certain things that other characters cannot. One night, she and Sarah listen to the teachers’ footsteps to try and figure out where the teachers go every night. Sarah believes that they leave the building, but Suzy is able to notice that the footsteps lead into the academy rather than out of it. Even while under the influence of the witches, Suzy is able to showcase her powers.

Suzy’s powers are seen most clearly during the final confrontation with Helena Markos. Markos uses the reanimated corpse of Sarah to attack and distract Suzy from her hiding spot. Suzy, though repulsed by Sarah’s corpse, realises that Markos is the one controlling it and attacks the invisible witch instead. This is what causes the destruction of the coven. This ability to see the hidden truth is reminiscent of Tansy in *Burn, Witch, Burn*, who is also able to feel when there is a negative presence within her home. After a bridge night with the other members of the faculty, Tansy is agitated and anxious until she finds a little destructive charm that was placed in her home by Flora Carr to cause

²¹ An open square in the centre of Munich’s cultural district.

chaos between Tansy and Norman. Suzy is also able to feel the negative influence of Helena Markos, and kills her instead of attacking her dead friend.

Friedan writes that the “Feminine Mystique has made higher education for women seem suspect, unnecessary, and even dangerous” (2010, p. 290). Suzy’s steps towards further education have been dangerous because of the teacher witches at the Tanz Dance Akademie, but by moving forward with her dancing Suzy has gained a confidence and strength that she might not have had before her conflict with the witches. Friedan also claims that educators were more focused on teaching girls how to be good wives and mothers than providing a thorough education for them (2010, pp. 294-300). Suzy’s character growth over the course of the film subverts the idea from the Feminine Mystique that women should only be educated enough to fit into a traditional feminine role. If *Suspiria* is a fairy tale, then there is no prince character; Suzy saves herself through her own powers that she can only use by accepting her strangeness and destroying the malicious maternal witches.

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva argues that the foreigner loses his mother in order that he can truly be free from all societal relationships. She claims that since the foreigner exiles himself from his mother, he “proudly hold on to what he lacks... No obstacle stops him, and all suffering, all insults, all rejections are indifferent to him” (1991, p. 5). The stranger must remove himself from the mother in order to be free. In the climax of the film, Suzy destroys the maternal witches of the Tanz Dance Akademie and is able to free herself from the building before it collapses. The place where the witches were hidden is destroyed in flames, a symbolic death that harkens back to the historical witch trials and their executions. Suzy subverts the expectations of witches that the film had previously presented. Even though she is a witch herself, she causes the death of the others in an ironic homage to one of the most infamous execution methods from history,

that of being burned alive. The destruction of the academy frees Suzy from the witches, which is symbolised through the small smile she gives the audience as she walks away.

Conclusion

In this thesis I examined the witch in a selection of horror films from the 1960s and 1970s. What the case studies of these films showed is that the witch was a figure of subversion who represented the ‘other’ and the foreigner, a figure who raised questions about social and cultural expectations in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of great change. While the Wicked Witch of the West from the 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz* was the most identifiable cinematic witch portrayal in the first half of the 20th century, by the middle of the century witches were taking the roles and identities of housewives, teenagers, mothers, and maternal mentors which were roles that enabled women to work through many of the social changes in these decades. Traditional female roles were becoming more complex as values from the second-wave feminist movement began to influence societal perceptions and expectations. By using the ambivalence of the horror genre in narratives about witches and witchcraft filmmakers were able to explore these changes and work through the complexities facing women

Betty Friedan’s argument that housewife-mothers are living stifling lives that lead to dissatisfaction within marriage provides a historical framework for looking at the witch as housewife. There are instructive comparisons to be made between the portrayals of witches like Tansy Taylor from *Burn, Witch, Burn* and Joan Mitchell from *Season of the Witch* and the women Friedan describes as trapped in domestic roles where “the highest value... for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity” (2010, p. 28). Tansy and Joan use witchcraft as a way to escape the narrow domestic view of women and find fulfilment away from the home, subverting the belief that women should only live for their husbands and children. Contrasting these portrayals is the housewife Catherine and the witch Odile from *Eye of the Devil*. This film shows that the housewife can be destroyed through Catherine’s inability to change and accept the witchcraft around her.

The witch is presented as an outsider within these films, whether she is a housewife breaking away from her traditional role in society or a female cult leader among men who uses her magic to charm and destroy patriarchal figures. This outsider status is examined in films that feature teen witches, and can be seen in *Carrie* and its TV movie copycats. Analysing *Carrie* using concepts from Julia Kristeva shows that the film challenges typical teenage narratives and teenage girl characters. Carrie White is both victim and monster, an ‘other’ who becomes an “image of hatred” (Kristeva 1991, p. 1) within high school society. Carrie tries using a glamour to hide her difference, but only becomes stronger once that glamour is removed. Her destruction of the prom during the climax shows her true powers lie in destruction and revenge, but she can only access these powers once she accepts the foreigner inside her. In this way, *Carrie* challenges the use of the glamour as seen in teen ‘coming of age’ narratives.

These themes are echoed in the TV movies *The Spell*, *The Initiation of Sarah*, and *Stranger in Our House*, where teen witches use witchcraft to accept themselves as an ‘other’. The characters of Rita and Sarah especially illustrate the theory that the teen witch can only find fulfilment once she accepts that she is different. These teen witch characters then use this difference and their power to get revenge on those who previously bullied them for not fitting into the acceptable societal image for teenage girls. This undermines the typical teenage coming of age narrative, where the teenage girl typically changes herself to be accepted by her peers. With the ambiguity found in teen witch horror narratives, the teenage girl may change but she will not be accepted. But by accepting that she is different teen witches gain power that their peers do not possess.

By using ideas from both Kristeva and Friedan, we can begin to understand the complexity surrounding the witches from *Suspiria*. The witches in this film are also teachers, and become malicious maternal mentors throughout the course of the film. They

use concepts outlined in Friedan and Kristeva to maintain control over their students, like infantilisation and alienation. But the witches are destroyed by a student who could be interpreted as a witch. Suzy Banyon shows that witches within the world of *Suspiria* are not all evil, but they do have similar goals of wanting to amass great personal wealth, whether that be material possessions or personal growth. Suzy challenges the expectations on who is a witch character within the narrative of a film that contains a specific definition of what a witch is. This allows for witches to be seen in a more complex light than what has previously been shown in cinema, and cements their status as beings that can be used to work through complex societal changes.

Witches are important characters within the horror film genre, especially since they are the only horror monster that are typically associated with women. They are also under-represented in academic scholarship that has tended to focus on other horror monsters, like vampires and werewolves. But this is changing as more scholars are discovering the importance witches have within the horror genre. During the writing of this thesis, new works have been published that focus on witches in cinema. Janine Engelbrecht has written an article published this year that also looks at the connection between motherhood and witches in the fantasy film genre. In another article published this year, Jenny Stümer analyses the 2016 film *The Love Witch* through a feminist lens and argues that director Anna Biller's stylised cinematic aesthetics exaggerates the staged femininity within the film.

This thesis aims to add to the growing discourse on witches in cinema by providing a new way to discuss witch characters, by looking at them through ideas that show how the portrayals of witches changed during a significant era of the horror film genre. These changes show that witches from the 1960s and 1970s use the ambivalence of the horror film genre to work through the complex changes in society surrounding

traditional female roles, and provide different ways for women to inhabit this new, changing world. Moving forward, it would be interesting to study how later witch films were inspired by this period to continue distancing themselves from narratives solely focusing on Satanism or the witch trials. I hope this thesis inspires other film scholars and academics to discuss and witch films in new and interesting ways.

Appendix 1: Witch Films Released during the 1960s and 1970s

This is a list of all the films I managed to find and watch during my research. It is by no means exhaustive.

- *Baron Blood* (1972), Motion picture, Jumbo Cinematografica, Italy & West Germany, dir. Mario Bava.
- *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971), Motion picture, Walt Disney Productions, USA, dir. Robert Stevenson.
- *Belladonna of Sadness* (1973), Motion picture, Mushi Production, Japan, dir. Eiichi Yamamoto.
- *Black Sunday* (1960), Motion picture, Unidis, Italy, dir. Mario Bava.
- *Blood Sabbath* (1972), Motion picture, Barbet Film Productions, USA, dir. Brianne Murphy.
- *Burn Witch Burn* (1962), DVD, Shock Entertainment, Kew, Victoria, dir. Sidney Hayers, aka. *Night of the Eagle*.
- *Carrie* (1976), DVD, MGM, NSW, dir. Brian De Palma.
- *The City of the Dead* (1960), Motion picture, British Lion, UK, dir. John Llewellyn Moxey, aka *Horror Hotel*.
- *Crowhaven Farm* (1970), TV film, ABC, USA, dir. Walter Grauman.
- *Cry of the Banshee* (1970), Motion picture, American International Pictures, UK, dir. Gordon Hessler.
- *Curse of the Crimson Altar* (1968), Motion picture, Tigon British Film Productions, UK, dir. Vernon Sewell.
- *Daughters of Satan* (1972), Motion picture, A & S Productions, USA, dir. Hollingsworth Morse.

- *Death by Invitation* (1971), Motion picture, Kirt Films, USA, dir. Ken Friedman.
- *The Devils* (1971), DVD, Euro Cult, dir. Ken Russell.
- *The Devil's Hand* (1961), Motion picture, Crown International Pictures, USA, dir. William J. Hole Jr.
- *Eye of the Devil* (1967), Motion picture, MGM, UK, dir. J. Lee Thompson.
- *The Girl on the Broomstick* (1972), Motion picture, Filmové studio Barrandov, Czechoslovakia, dir. Václav Vorlíček.
- *The House That Dripped Blood* (1971), Motion picture, Amicus Productions, UK dir. Peter Duffell, segment 'Sweets to the Sweet'.
- *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978), TV film, ABC, USA, dir. Robert Day.
- *Inquisition* (1976), Motion picture, Ancla Century Films, Spain, dir. Paul Naschy.
- *Mark of the Devil* (1970), Motion picture, HI-FI Stereo 70-KG, West Germany, dir. Michael Armstrong.
- *The Naked Witch* (1964), Motion picture, Alexander Enterprises, USA, dir. Claude Alexander & Larry Buchanan.
- *Season of the Witch* (1973), Motion picture, Jack H. Harris Enterprises, USA, dir. George A. Romero, aka. *Jack's Wife*, *Hungry Wives*.
- *Simon, King of the Witches* (1971), Motion picture, Fanfare Films Inc., USA, dir. Bruce Kessler.
- *Something Weird* (1967), Motion picture, Mayflower Pictures, USA, dir. Herschell Gordon Lewis.
- *Spectre* (1977), TV film, NBC, USA, dir. Clive Donner.
- *The Spell* (1977), TV film, NBC, USA, dir. Lee Philips.
- *Stranger in Our House* (1978), TV film, NBS, USA, dir. Wes Craven, aka. *Summer of Fear*.

- *La Strega in Amore* (1966), Motion picture, Arco Film, Italy, dir. Damiano Damiani, aka. *The Witch, The Witch in Love*.
- *Suspiria* (1977), DVD, Blue Underground, USA, dir. Dario Argento.
- *Tam-Lin* (1970), Motion picture, American International Pictures, UK, dir. Roddy McDowell, aka. *The Ballad of Tam-Lin, The Devil's Widow*.
- *Terror* (1978), Motion picture, Entertainment Film Distributors, UK, dir. Norman J. Warren.
- *The Terror* (1963), Motion picture, American International Pictures, USA, dir. Roger Corman.
- *The Uncanny* (1977), Motion picture, The Rank Organisation, UK & Canada, dir. Denis Héroux, segment 'Quebec 1975'.
- *Virgin Witch* (1972), DVD, Kino Lorber, New York, dir. Ray Austin.
- *Viy* (1967), Motion picture, Mosfilm, Soviet Union, dir. Konstantin Yershov & Georgi Kropachyov.
- *The Witch's Curse* (1962), Motion picture, Panda Cinematografica, Italy, dir. Riccardo Freda.
- *Witchcraft* (1964), Motion picture, 20th Century Fox, UK, dir. Don Sharp.
- *Witchfinder General* (1968), DVD, Shock Entertainment, Kew, Victoria, dir. Michael Reeves, aka. *The Conqueror Worm*.
- *The Witches* (1966), Motion picture, Hammer Film Productions, UK, dir. Cyril Frankel.

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