

# In a Stranger Field

Studies of Art, Audiovisuals  
and New Technologies in Fantasy,  
SciFi and Horror Genres

Eds. Mario-Paul Martínez  
& Fran Mateu

ASOCIACIÓN DE DESARROLLO Y DIFUSIÓN  
DEL GÉNERO FANTÁSTICO  
"UNICORNIO NEGRO"

**MASSIVA**  
GRUPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN UMH

  
**FANTAELEX**  
CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE GÉNERO FANTÁSTICO  
ACTUALIDAD Y NUEVAS TECNOLOGÍAS

In a Stranger Field. Studies of Art, Audiovisuals and New  
Technologies in Fantasy, SciFi and Horror Genres.

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# THE CRAFT: RIFFS, ADOLESCENCE AND WITCHCRAFT

/javi moreno



Figure 1. Opening frame from *The Craft* (Andrew Fleming, 1996), where the iconic *Tomorrow Never Nows* of the Canadian alternative rock group *Our Lady Peace* played.

## To Know. Filmic rootwork or *The Craft* cinematographic precedents [introduction]

LIRIO

*Do you hear the voice of your mother?*

SARAH

*What about her?*

LIRIO

*She's telling you to be strong. She was a witch too, of course. Didn't you know?*

SARAH

No.

Witchcraft cinema has always been a rare jewel. In between B movie, horror or family humour, witchcraft tends to behave as a plot binder rather than the theme itself; like one of the components of a potion. Very often witches' appearances are contingent to the villain archetype. Or perhaps we should qualify: the poisoned apples villain. And it is that if we made a list of cinema witches and warlocks, the former would win to the point that the warlock would be considered an oddity within the genre. Such issue would correspond to a multifaceted Western tradition of historical, folkloric or mythological character where witchcraft is understood as a magical science practiced mostly by women. Wicked East and West witches, versus Good North and South witches<sup>1</sup> do nothing but show the moral dichotomy the witch character rides between in cinema. Symbol of the perverter of established order, on occasion, however, there also are witch friends<sup>2</sup>. Although it should be understood that good and evil are somewhat narrow words to understand the subject.

I do consider that developing a genealogy or a filmic *rootwork*<sup>3</sup> of the witch is a much wider task of what I can develop here, and certainly

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<sup>1</sup> As it is related in the Lyman Frank Baum *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) novel or in its cinematographic homonym *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> The weight of malevolence usually requires at times of its kind counterpart; something we find for example in the Icelandic film *The Juniper Tree* (Nietzchka Keene, 1990), where the plot centres about two witch sisters, one good and the other bad.

<sup>3</sup> In the magical Hoodoo practices of the South of USA, the use of roots and plants.



a path full of secrets, half-truths, bastard daughters and unrecognized heritages. Regarding to flesh and bone witches it happens the same way. A great deal of the historical-mythical narratives are usually told by the uninitiated and by the enemies; generally, of course, by men. From the Homeric Circe to those women burnt by Inquisitors, the inheritance that remains is abrupt, always mythical and not without a big dose of romanticism. About cinema, which is the matter that concerns us, we cannot find a uniform evolutive trend or limited genres. While witchcraft could be protagonist in a comedy as in a thriller, we could mark some milestones.

Until the exultant goths Nancy, Bonnie, Rochelle and Sarah arrived, walking in slow motion down the high school corridor and awakening the terror of their clean and hygienic North American classmates, diverse film latencies have flourished in cinema. Before the nineties *The Craft*, the topic of witchcraft has been treated (and the magic one of course) since the dawn of cinematography. A winners' vision about the medieval witch and the tortures described in the *Malleus Malleficarum*<sup>4</sup> is found in the Swedish *Häxan: Witchcraft Through the Ages* (Benjamin Christensen, 1922). Near to a documentary and with an expressionist touch, "it shows the perception of witchcraft during the Middle Ages. The dark arts were the path to reach all fantasies the time repressed. However, they were also associated with everything that could not be understood, what religion had labelled as unacceptable" (López, 2018). From the cursed ecstatic witch, to the hysterical woman medicated

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<sup>4</sup> German 1486 criminological-religious treatise, written by the Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger. Divided in three parts, the first section of the book makes a dissertation about the proven existence of heresy and its heretical character. Secondly, certain sorcery formulas are described and especially the Devil's pact. Finally, all kind of tortures are offered, humiliations and interrogatories as pain methodologies for the witch to declare. This book became the best-seller of the Holy Inquisition, created in 1184 in the south of France to persecute the Cathars and maintained until the 19th century (depending on the country). A clue of this text is provided by the very same title feminized noun *malleficarum*, essential to understand the misogyny that it fired, affirming that is the woman's very own insatiable appetite the one that ended triggering the appearance of a witch, the commitment of its crimes and, what is intolerable, the forced conversion of men to Satan's faith.

by science, this rarity is a statement about the political condition of sorcery. And it continued to delineate the archetypal character of the evil witch of *Snow White and the seven dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937). Disney showed us about that a genre prototype of a stepmother obsessed with youth and with beauty, that was even capable of trying to annihilate Snow White with a hexed apple just not to be eclipsed by her. An iconography that will set a mystique of the femininity of the witch as an evil woman (inside and outside the cinema).

The *akelarre*<sup>5</sup> described in *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966) already showed us how these reunions seemed to work as an escape valve to the rigid regulatory rules around the body and the private life imposed by the Church<sup>6</sup>, perpetrator of the true abuses. *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968) gives account of corrupt inquisitors. Who really is the Devil in these narrations? Is it a true fallen spirit to whom offer? Or of the oppressors that devise evil torture plans themselves?<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the films that boarded the inquisitorial question or those that had a historicist spirit, the habituality and potency of the symbol made the witch become not only that recurring magical villain, as in the bloodthirsty *Black Sunday* (Mario Brava, 1960), or in the Argento's *giallo*, *Suspiria* (1977), precursor tapes to the slasher genre. Beyond terror, they were also caricatured in two family films of the nineties such as *Hocus Pocus* (Kenny Ortega, 1993) or *The Witches* (Nicolas Roeg, 1990), this last tape is where it shows how some women of power, lashes of children, come out the closet as execrable beings and with a *vermin* nature, that like to taste the bones of the smallest.

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<sup>5</sup> Word of Basque origin that etymologically could come from the words *aker* (goat, great goat) and *larre* (meadow), what would come to mean "meadow of the goat", related to the gathering places of witches or sabbats in front of the Devil's figure in Goat form.

<sup>6</sup> Or in a more desperate way in *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> In this regard we can also mention the film *Akelarre* (Pedro Olea, 1984), about the witch trials that took place in Inza's village (Navarre). Inquisition and marginality, as always, shook hands.

In a very different discursive line is where North American series such as *Bewitched* (Sol Saks), aired between 1964 and 1972, or *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (Hal Sutherland, 1971) arise. Confirmed as extraordinary beings, the protagonist witches (not antagonists) no longer have a horrible physique but are the living representation of the white North American woman; be it as a married housewife or as a teenager in age to promise. It is inaugurated the birth of the pop witch, the desirable witch, admirable and beautiful. A bit rebellious, but always a good neighbour. After all, they are witches:

Series about witches have always been a good way to measure the degree of submission of the woman. After all, we are talking about women with superpowers, capable of turning you into a hairy toad or a ridiculous Little cup of tea whenever they are pleased, that choose, like the Samantha from *Bewitched*, to use them to keep their house untouched with no more effort than the famous and absurd movement of her nose. It was in the sixties -not even the end of the sixties, when the first feminist revolution broke out- and all that had to worry the average North American woman was to have the laundry ready in time and make happy, domestically speaking, her husband (Fernández, 2018).

In the antipode of the clean North American white witch, and as a hypersexualized symbol of the eighties B series culture, appears Elvira, nicknamed the Queen of Darkness and portrayed by Cassandra Peterson, with a curriculum that includes a television program about offal movies, beer advertisements and occasional incursions in cinema.

Between good, regular and wicked witches, often moral metaphors of what a woman can or cannot do, in a field of audiovisual test witchcraft, for all audiences or for teenage films of blood and boobs, halfway between the pop witchcraft icons and the dark practices premiered the film *The Craft*.

## To Will . California and ecstasy in the akelarre

*BONNIE, NANCY, ROCHELLE*

*(together)*

*Now is the time. This is the hour.*

*Ours is the magic. Ours is the power.*

Directed by Andrew Fleming and produced by Douglas Wick, *The Craft* aired May, 3rd 1996 in the North American cinemas by Columbia Pictures and September, 19th the same year in Spain, under the title of *Jóvenes y Brujas*. With original script by the same director and Piter Filardi<sup>8</sup>, it tells the story of Sarah (Robin Tunney), a recently arrived to Los Angeles young woman that feels isolated between her new high school classmates and family. Soon she establishes friendship with three marginalized girls: Nancy (Fairuza Balk), Bonnie (Neve Campbell) and Rochelle (Rachel True), three self-taught witches that will consider her the fourth chosen one that will finish forming their circle<sup>9</sup>. Fascinated by one of the high school dream-boys, clear-cut brainless football team captain, Sarah ends up spending a night out with him. Spiteful by the girl's refusal, he will end spreading rumours where he says Sarah is the "lousiest lay he's ever had". Through the spells and their latent powers, more and more awake, the four witches find the way of taking revenge on anyone that harms them; until Nancy, traversed by Manon's power, the all-embracing entity they are devoted to, they begin to lose control. A power issue that will end up disputing the antagonistic fight between good and evil. A witches fight.

As a good witch-grunge film was shot in Los Angeles (California, USA), one of the cradles of the noisiest sounds of the nineties. In addition to the Sony Pictures studios, some of the locations used during filming are the schools Verdugo Hills High School (Tujunga, L.A.) and St. Benedict's School (Montebello, L.A.), that give its name to St. Benedict's

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<sup>8</sup> The same who would also write and direct four years later *Ricky 6*, a film about the heavy metal lover Ricky Kasso, accused of Satanism and murder during the eighties.

<sup>9</sup> Also called coven or coventicle, is the name that is usually given to groups, more or less closed, of practitioners of certain witchcrafts. Comes from the Latin *conventum*, from old French *convent* and the English *convent*, translated as "company" or "group".

school where the four protagonists attend, Culver City streets, Long Beach Harbour Place Tower buildings (where Nancy moves with her mother after killing her progenitor's lover with telekinesis and received a good pension) or Leo Corrillo State Park's beach, really close to Malibu, where they invoke the Watchtowers. Another of the most iconic filming sets, especially for the followers of the occult, is the esoteric shop run by Lirio (Assumpta Serna). Panpipes Magickal Marketplace, as it is known in real life, was bought after the film by Fairuza Balk herself.

One of the main novelties *The Craft* brought was leaving behind the archetype of the witch-monster of the fairy tales or the complacent witch of the American dream. An issue that seemed deliberate, in order for it to happen Fleming and Filardi were advised enough so that the witches, readers and occult science practitioners of the time, we perceived that the film had a sustenance on the real witchcraft practice. And we would be ecstatic with it. Obviously, levitation, telepathy and atmospheric phenomena control were necessary as part of the supernatural plot, but many details exist that correspond with existing rituals. In this regard the witch Pat Devin, member of the Covenant of the Goddess (Florida) and Crone Priestess of the Dianic Feminist Tradition<sup>10</sup>, was hired as the main adviser of the film.

Devin was a Wiccan practitioner, a neopagan religion developed during the first half of the 20th century in England. Linked to ancient pagan religions, nevertheless it has a ritual body of hermetic nature, heir of groups such as the Golden Dawn. With a decentralized and eclectic character, since its appearance different orders and traditions have been developing with major or minor hierarchy among its ranks (as High Priestesses, High Priests and first grade initiates, second grade, etc.). Aware of the importance the film could have for the teenage

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<sup>10</sup> A tradition of essentialist feminist witchcraft created by the Hungarian witch and activist Zsuzsanna Budapest, whose devotional body focuses on the Roman goddess Diana. This deity has been pointed out during the Middle Ages and later, as one of the main entities that run the Witches' Sabbat. Budapest, as a militant feminist, organized several squads against sexual violence, and specifically *Take Back the Night* in Southern California, movement that sought a reappropriation of the street and the night by women, frequent victims of night rapes.

collective imaginary that reconfigured the traditional image of the witch and it adapted it more to her religious practice, Devin intervened in several script questions.

From such advice the reconfiguration of Lirio's character arose, much more luminous and less creepy than the writers desired, or the fact of avoiding Nancy's death by impalement, as an execution for her lust for power. A question that once again posed the witch as a woman that, having wanted to be too powerful, ended up sacrificed. The forest ritual has some classic tips of a wiccan initiation and the invocations to the Watchers of the Watchtowers too, as the inclusion of the ethical principle «everything you do, will be returned to you triplicate». Even the book that Nancy buys to invoke the spirits is a real book<sup>11</sup>. Devin also influenced the actresses themselves, although some already knew what they had in hand. One of them was initiated as a witch by her, although she does not tell whom (Brightshadow, 1998), she gave Rubin Tunney (Sarah) a Scott Cunningham classic, Rachel True (Rachel) already knew witchcraft and the awakening of the Goddess, since at the filming time she was Reading *The Spiral Dance* (Starhawk, 1979), and Neve Campbell (Bonnie) had researched on her own. Fairuza Balk (Nancy), however, being 22 years when she participated in the film, had already received a pagan education since childhood, she spoke of certain hereditary magical practices (with a possible gypsy ancestry from her mother) and was a self-confessed Wiccan. In fact, she was along Pat Devin another of *The Craft* advisors.

Manon, not being a real historical deity<sup>12</sup>, is the name chosen deliberately to prevent that after watching the film teenagers, ran to the beach to invoke more dangerous deities such as Hecate. Initially devised as a hermaphrodite by Devin, for Fleming it was somewhat excessive and decided it would stay as a masculine entity. Something that did not

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<sup>11</sup> This was *The Book of Ceremonial Magic* Arthur Edward Waite, published in 1898. The author is also the co-author of the famous Rider-Waite Tarot.

<sup>12</sup> Although it has been wanted to see an influence of the Irish Celtic god Manannan mac Lir, a derisive deity of the sea and magic. The name was inspired by Marcel's Pagnol novel *Manon des sources* (1963).

quite fit with the sorcerous feeling of the time. In one of the film scenes Nancy explains to Sarah that «It's like God and the devil, I mean, it's everything, it's ... the trees, it's the ground, it's the rocks, the moon, it's Everything. If God and the devil were playing football, Manon would be the stadium that they played on, it would be the sun that shone down them» (Fleming, 1994). In this way, beyond the Inquisition Christian propaganda and the perception of social media about witchcraft among the young as a Satanist cult, a witch cult was raised that was not Satanist but inclusive to the Devil<sup>13</sup>. At this crossroad between fiction and reality, *The Craft* made known magical practices that did not quite fit the sweetened vision of the New Age<sup>14</sup>. Even the film, advised by a Wiccan<sup>15</sup>, gave the opportunity to some teenagers to usurp the power, to be ecstatic with it. Something that stipulates the difference between this and other manifestations of traditional witchcraft where the same ethical codes do not always exist. Where both blessing and cursing is permissible, sign praises to Diana as to whisper to the Devil.

But the beginning of the Age of Aquarius also taught that the teenage witches of the nineties we had to work it. As Nancy, Bonnie, Rochelle and Sarah, in a time prior to the domestic inclusion of the Internet and the reigns of the pagan IRC (and what to say, of pdf books), we had to go through many esoteric shops where to browse books that one could not afford and interrogate the consequent (and patient) Lirio regent of the place.

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of Wicca the cult to a God and to a Goddess was assumed, or in the case of Dianic Wicca, to Diana. Precisely from their ranks there has been many efforts to demarcate themselves from Satanism along all the 20th century, as it could be one more reason for police and religious persecution. Currently, and that is something that it is perceived in the theme of series such as the current *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, traditional witchcraft has no problem in claiming the Medieval symbol of the Devil.

<sup>14</sup> Cultural-spiritual movement of postmodern character that is defined from the astrological Age of Aquarius and is characterized by relativism and eclecticism.

<sup>15</sup> Where the notion of “as long as you harm none, do as thou will” prevails.

## To Dare . Empowerment among the cursed

*DRIVER*

*You girls watch out for those weirdoes.*

*NANCY:*

*(lowering her glasses and smiling)*

*We are the weirdoes mister.*



Figure 2. Frame where it shows Rochelle, Nancy, Bonnie y Sarah (from left to right)

W.I.T.C.H. lives and laughs inside each woman. Is the part in each of us, under timid smiles, the approval before the absurd masculine domination, the makeup or the suffocating clothes for the skin that our sick society demands us to wear. There is no “almost” W.I.T.C.H.. If you are woman and dare to look inside you, you are a Witch. Create your own rules. You are free and beautiful [...] Everything repressive, what is orientated just for men, greedy, puritan, authoritarian, those are your objectives. Your weapons are theatre, satire, explosions, magic, herbs, music, costumes, cameras, masks, chants, stickers, templates and paint, films, tambourines, bricks, brooms, weapons, voodoo dolls, cats, candles, bells, chalk, fingernails, Molotov cocktails, poisonous circles, wicks, tape recorders, incense and your own and beautiful limitless imagination. Your power comes from your own being as a woman, and it activates while working together with your sisters. The power of the Group is more than the sum of its individual members, because it is all together. You have the commitment of freeing our sisters from oppression and of stereotyped sexual roles (whether they like it or not) as well as ourselves. You become



a witch when speaking out loud «I am a Witch» three times and thinking about it. You become a Witch being a woman, not docile, angry, joyful and immortal. (New York Group of Witches, W.I.T.C.H., 2015: 75-76)

This is how the radical feminist group W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, Nueva York, 1968 – 1970) conjured 30 year before. In the North American *yippie*<sup>16</sup> movement context, this group of women fought from the street performance and political action in favour of abortion and against marriage as an institution, masculine violence or the glass ceiling. Initiated by a small group of militants, it was Robin Morgan, witch that defended the cult of the Goddess movement and knower of the herbal properties by familiar tradition, who gave the idea of forming a group that acted in the form of an *akelarre*<sup>17</sup>, whose performances could act as spells and with a horizontality that positioned the group above the individual. «The image of several women reunited secretly with the objective of conspiring against the world is seductive and evokes witch gatherings in a lost place centuries ago» (Wildburg en W.I.T.C.H., 2015: 34).

In *The Craft* there is no mention about feminism, however we can find some prototypical strategies of the *akelarre* revisited by W.I.T.C.H.; no longer a political performance, but as a life test between the four protagonists. The whole movie seems to speak, of base, about power and privileges. And obviously it is not the girls who have such privileges. Nancy, Sarah, Rochelle and Bonnie are not the student prototypes that could be erected as those protagonists that are expected from a supernatural horror film; neither do we find the typical high

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<sup>16</sup> This was the name that usually took the militants of the Youth International Party, an antimilitarist political party and in favour of freedom of speech that appeared in 1967 in USA, at the same time that the *soixante-huitard* French movements. Facing the passive attitude of the hippies, the yippies performed numerous theatrical and vindicative actions on the street.

<sup>17</sup> Facing the contemporary concept of coven, the *akelarre* can be found in the medieval revisions of the group of witches and warlocks, generally worshipers of the Great Goat or a faery deity condemned by the Church. During the 20th century the term *akelarre* has been reclaimed specially by groups and theoreticians of traditional witchcraft (initiatc and less visible than the Wiccan), but also by certain feminisms.

school corridor story. They do not fit totally with the classic feminine genre stereotypes of within the teenager's cinema. Bullying victims, they seek recognition, feeling good about themselves, find love or fit in; but they are, from beginning to end, marginal. A clear marginality versus the univocity of the subjects that usually are privileges: Laura Lizzie (Christine Taylor) or Chris Hooker (Skeet Ulrich)<sup>18</sup>, as their clear persecutors.

De facto, it is about four women in a youth male chauvinism and classist environment of a religious school<sup>19</sup> where the successful girls are white, cheerleaders and upper-middle class. With *luck* they are reduced to sexual medals for the successful males<sup>20</sup>, obviously white, sportsmen and with a clear social status: the possibility of becoming a whore prowls all the time in the film's plot. It is only necessary to be questioned under the words of those who possess the privilege of credibility. So, raised this way, we find a plot context where the protagonists do not belong (for several reasons) to the hetero-centred white majority.



Figure 3. Nancy Down's altar.

<sup>18</sup> Both Skeet Ulrich and Neve Campbell starred that same year in the horror film *Scream*, which will change the course of the North American slasher genre.

<sup>19</sup> Beyond the cameras it was not easy for the stage team to find a high school that would allow them to record a film about witchcraft.

<sup>20</sup> The nerd, the fat or the black (the queer is not seen), as assumed stereotypes within this cinematographic genre do not even appear in the film.

Nancy Downs is the deepest reactive to the imposed order of her environment. Brazen, with a Gothic aesthetic and strong character, she had an affair with Chris and, apparently, he infected her with a venereal disease. In the middle of the AIDS pandemic and other sexually transmitted infections, the nature of the infection is not mentioned in the film and is understood as something shameful. Apparently bisexual, and in case we did not have the menu to not fin in the well-thinking North American disposed society enough, Nancy is of a humble origin. She lives in an exclusion situation (in what is almost a caravan) with her mother and her repulsive abusive boyfriend, both alcoholic. She implores, studies and deepens more than any of her companions to possess «all of Manon's power», reaching gifts such as telepathy, the ability to manipulate dreams, telekinesis, levitation or glamour<sup>21</sup>. And not just that, also lots of money; what she desired.

«I don't like Negroids. Sorry», is the sentence that Laura utters, prototype of the popular white teenager, to explain Rochelle the reason of the continued humiliations she and her chorus of friends proffer. She is black, just that. Radicalized, however, during a ritual she will ask «not to hate those who hate me, especially racist pieces of bleached-blond shit like Laura Lizzie». She will find the pleasure of getting revenge on her by making her go bald in front of her eyes through a spell, and she will be the first one to manifest levitation through the game *light as a feather, stiff as a board*. And finally, she will become arrogant and discriminate Sarah for not obeying Nancy.

Bonnie is white, heterosexual and has no financial problems. However, her body is full of strange sores that makes her look, in her own words, «a monster». A shameful situation that makes the girl go very covered and with hair in her face. It is after the empowerment of the witches, that she asks so much for her healing, that it happens. And her beauty emerges. From that moment she will begin to dress with neckline and visibilize her body with pride; something that, in Sarah's eyes, ended up turning her into a conceited and superficial one.

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<sup>21</sup> Art of hiding the true form of things, situations or the own body, creating an illusion.

Sarah is also white, heterosexual and, for what she lets us glimpse of her great house, wealthy. Her mother, apparently a witch, died when she was born and granted her the legitimacy of being a *natural witch*<sup>22</sup>. Versus her companions, self-taught witches and that gain their power through effort, Sarah from the beginning of the film already shows strong telekinetic powers. Disgusted with her life, marked in her wrists by a suicide attempt, and annoyed by her powers, something that Nancy deeply envies, her efforts go into trying to make Chris Hooker fall in love with her. Her exclusion reason: probably being a natural witch and not understanding it. Halfway through the circle of excluded that has given her shelter and the normality of the rest of the high school boys, she manages to charm him until she has him as a lapdog. But you can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig, and so Chris, despite his conjured character flaunts his masculinity trying to rape Sarah. Deeply infuriated, Nancy goes after him and gives him his due, throwing him throughout a window and ending his life. This is how everything becomes ugly for a witch that will finally dominate all the sorcerous arts, including climate control. Versus her antagonistic Nancy, she will demonstrate that the Invocation of the Spirit also serves to exercise *goodness*.

The students of St. Benedict's high school Nancy, Bonnie and Rochelle (and to whom Sarah will be added) are called by their classmates, almost prophetically, the Witches of Eastwick. An audio-visual nod to

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<sup>22</sup> While most traditions of witchcraft allow any person, with the proper initiations overcome and answered oracles, to become a part of groups or orders, it exists the witch typology that inherits not only the knowledge, but also the power, called the *Cunning Fire* of their ancestors, sisters and related spirits. Such is the case of some hereditary familiar witchcraft traditions, as the Italo-Argentinian tradition Via Stellare of which I am a part, where when a family member dies, the power of their descendants (of blood or adopted) grows and even the gifts that ancestor had are acquired. A transmission of powers that can also be observed in the series *American Horror Story: Coven* (Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, 2013 – 2014). In it the Miss Robichaux's Academy of New Orleans, coven under the form of a select school for girls, has a Supreme who rules the other witches. When she is sick or about to die, the one that will become new Supreme experiments a flourishing of her powers. In this way the Fire is transmitted through the blood of a same family (something also usual in the case of the families of catholic European or South American healers) or of the blood of the witch pact that unites its members.

the North American super production *The Witches of Eastwick* (George Miller, 1987), starring Cher, Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer. In it, the three are endowed with power, but with some limitation until they invoke the Devil. This, under the appearance of Daryl Van Horne (Jack Nicholson), with a doubtful taste, obscene and endowed with big *macho* qualities, offers them an amplification of their strengths. Similarly, to *The Craft*, the power of the circle will grow exponentially when they make the Invocation of the Spirit. A ritual that, without alluding the classical pact, causes Manon to cross the body of her daughters and endows them with superhuman powers. This confirms one of the main characteristics of any self-respecting witch: the deal with the spirits as a paradigm of power acquisition, be it through a pact, where a witch-spirit or witch-fairy or witch-Devil exchange occurs, or through the gift of the spirit to the witch. But of course, in this production it ends being a masculine and parental entity the one that has the power and grants it.

A number of girls are marginalized by racial, social and genre issues in a hostile environment that points them out, peruses them and ridicules them. Stalked by heteropatriarchal persecution, like that of any witch and any woman (powerful or not) throughout history, they end un allying and forming an association that reminds of the feminist sisterhoods. A term coined by Kate Millet in the seventies within the second feminist wave to name the twinning and support among women; a sorority without social classes, ethnic origin or sexuality distinction.

And against political exclusion, witchcraft as a defence. Also, in the seventies the witch and activist Sybil Leek appealed to her comrades to defend themselves of the dark wizards and political persecution: «We cannot risk moving on in unknown territory. We have no other defence than the occult sciences, the Old Religion» (Leek, 96 – 97). A situation of horizontality that will end decompensating in the film when one of the witches will be *blessed* by Manon.

## To Be Silent . Spirit Riffs [conclusions]

NANCY:

*We summon and stir thee!*

*Lend us your powers.*

*Show us your glory.*

*We invoke thee.*

*Manon! Fill me!*

*The Craft* can be the contribution of Andrew Fleming to the evolution of the slasher genre, originated in the context of *exploitation*, where the maniac can be anyone. The question of power as an ambiguous internal agent, which may well develop as an ally, may well manifest as an enemy, that keeps no one safe in the plot; the persecutor may be your best friend or it may even be you, corrupted by irrepressible instincts. Such was Nancy's fate. "I bind you from doing harm, Nancy. Harm against other people and harm against yourself": this is how it sounded Sarah's spell to dominate her former friend.

Always to remember will be the soundtrack, that placed the film in the teenager musical North American present. Along with the themes designed by the New Zealand composer Graeme Revell<sup>23</sup>, a selection of alternative rock and punk rock was added that reunited in a single album *Elastica* with their *Spastica*, the Singer-songwriter Jewel, Letters to Cleo with the reinterpretation of the *Dangerous Type* of The Cars (as historical background for the glorious walk of the witches in slow motion in their high school), Spacehog or the Our Lady of Peace band with an electronic version of the Beatles *Tomorrow Never Knows*, for the multi-frame intro to the film. But it will be precisely the version of *How Soon is Now?* (The Smiths), played by the band Love Spit Love, the iconic theme. And not precisely because of this film, but because two years later it became part of the opening of the famous television series *Charmed* (Constance Burge, 1998- 2006), known as *Embrujadas* in Spain.

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<sup>23</sup> Author of original soundtracks for *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992), *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994), *Spawn* (Mark A. Z. Dippé, 1997) or *Sin City* (Robert Rodríguez, 2005).



Figure 4. Cover of the original soundtrack of *The Craft*, published in 1996.

The case of *How Soon is Now?* it is representative to understand how *The Craft* was formed as a whole series of musical chords, of style and trend. A binder of audiovisual riffs and distortions that reverberated far beyond Fleming's film, thus defining an entire *ninety* imaginary of what being a witch means. An empowered and riot witch, of course. Along with the Californian background character (grunge and somewhat apocalyptic), certain anarchist philosophy and goth-punk aesthetics would be imprinted on the teenage witchcraft thereafter.

That same year appeared *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (Scovell Nell) and was retransmitted in USA between 1996 and 2003. With a familiar style suitable for all ages, retakes the argument of its 1970's predecessor, «the first North American super heroine witch»<sup>24</sup>. It posed a witch worried about the typical problems of a teenager, who used discreetly her powers and that held a high non-violent ethical code. Somehow, Sarah would be the only of the four witches of *The Craft* that could look more like Sabrina.

<sup>24</sup> (Author's Translation). This is how it was described in the first chapter.

October 1998 we find two new audiovisual witch apparitions, almost, by magic, at the same time: *Charmed*, made by Constance Burge, presents three sisters, who fought the same with demons than run a pub. Gifted with powers like teleportation, time detention or clairvoyance, their lives were also crossed by bills, legal problems and, above all, by loves. *Practical Magic* (Griffin Dunne) was a super production of Warner Bros. Pictures that did not finish charming the public all that it could be expected. With Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman as protagonist sisters, it was posed to us with the question of orphanhood as in *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* (also in *Charmed*) and two aunts that raise them and transmit their ancestral wisdom. The problem: due to a curse, they cannot fall in love or the men fruit of their desire, will die. Again, the legitimacy of a witch-woman for her ability to be a lover or wife. A year later, and in a very different discursive line, it will appear *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez). A horror genre was inaugurated with a fake documentary format where, on this occasion, the well-off youth are the ones that want to find a witch in the forest. However, this is not similar at all to the girls that could integrate in a North American residential neighbourhood.

At the end of the nineties the young sorceresses seemed to be fashionable and we always found as a dramatic constant in the plot, the difficulty of the witch to find love (in a man). The supernatural origin of a witch woman always appeared as a blight to a heterosexual normative life; something to which, on the other hand, their protagonists always seem to aspire. Well, the constant domestic sorority of independent women living and supporting each other, as a more or less familiar bond, was also recurrent.

Almost fifteen years we had to wait for the witches return in full reign of the series. As the phenomenon that inaugurates the new *witch* visuality of the 21st century, the third season of *American Horror Story* (Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, 2013) arrives under the subtitle of *Coven*. Closer to *The Craft* than any other later audiovisual contribution, everything occurs in New Orleans, current hoodoo and the *trendiest* witchcraft capital. Once again, a story of teenage white witches (heirs



of Salem's tradition)<sup>25</sup> that dress in black and have a refined sense of aesthetics, versus the black voodoo witches, is proposed. Beyond the colour of the witchcraft they practice, the plot is crossed by class and ethnic origin issues. The interest in witchcraft, historical in this case, also continued with the disturbing *The Witch* (Robert Eggers, 2015). Set in the 17th century New England, its plot was developed from the statements of alleged witches in various Inquisitorial processes.

Along with the sequel *AHS: Apocalypse*, 2018 has been a great year for audiovisual witchcraft that is genealogically related to *The Craft*. To situate *Hereditary* (Ari Aster) arrived, a horror film well documented on Paimon's cult, a devil whose way of being invoked is described in the *Ars Goetia*, a grimoire<sup>26</sup> of the 17th century. Then came the remakes of the old TV series: *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, the Satanist version of the saga, and *Charmed*, this time with three black sisters, one of whom is feminist and lesbian.

We could conclude that the merit, beyond the intrinsic issues to the film itself (as a greater or lesser quality of the performances, of the direction, of the soundtrack or of the real witchcraft documentation) is, along with all that, what ended up summoning *The Craft* since then<sup>27</sup>. As any good spell, its effects can endure a long time. From a despicable and cannibal being of green complexion to nearly a fairy of bright beauty and healing powers, the witch has always had a *monstrous* character in cinema. It is that *other* that is on the sidelines precisely because of her power; a privilege that ends up locking her as much as it frees her (justice always behind). *The Craft*, continuing with the trail of *Bewitched* or the original *Sabrina*, opened the door to the witch as a heroine who is even beyond the order of morality. Being able to choose benevolence, the contemporary audiovisual witches can play freely with the liminality

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<sup>25</sup> Almost as a footnote to the series, a year later Adam Simon and Brannon Braga produce *Salem* for WGN America. With a Marilyn Manson's opening that has a lot to do with the *AHS: Coven* opening, once again the witch of the time lacking kindness and from a dark, tenebrous, point of view, is shown.

<sup>26</sup> European manuscripts about magic generally found from the Late Middle Ages.

<sup>27</sup> Beyond the rumours of a future remake with the same actresses.

that comes from invoking the dead, cursing or defying the Newtonian laws of reality. Among the characters always the iconological struggle between the witch-monster and the witch-wife, the witch-bitch and the witch-virgin.

«If we want to overthrow the industrial patriarchy, I believe we must resort to deeper energies, energies that the ruling classes of Christianity and industrialism have always tried, desperately, to deny and repress. Those are the energies of magic» (Evans, 2015: 288). They are young and witches, and they want power. But that teenage desire to be something more than in a beginning they were not, it ends up bringing them consequences. The one that wanted more power, ends up crazy. And the one that did not want it, ends up with more power than anyone else. The moral of the tale and the darkness of the bad witch that had so much depth in the audiovisual culture appears. Three girls that trying to escape to a situation that marginalizes them, they fail and end up diminished. However, the white, innocent, heterosexual, attractive and upper-middle class one, ends being the witch with more power. Privilege again. And here it seems that the heteropatriarchal logic of mainstream cinema of the West Coast, also ended up winning.

In a heteropatriarchal filmic context where the powerful forces of gender obligatoriness lurk, witchcraft became a subversion model for many teenagers beyond their sex, their gender, their sexuality, their social class or their ethnic origin. An initiatic formula of sorority. Being a witch to move a broom telekinetically with the nose? No, thanks.

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