UCL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL
EDITION II

Dear Reader,

It's my pleasure to welcome you to the second issue of the UCLHS Journal. This month we're celebrating the days getting shorter and our jumpers getting thicker with an exploration of 'Spooky History'. My affection for this season, and academic interest in cultural Otherness and how it reflects our anxieties as a society has undoubtedly influenced the choice of theme for this month. Jennifer's Body being my Bible, the current resurgence of 2000s slasher flicks in popular consciousness has been especially interesting to me and I'm curious as to how our current era of uncertainty will manifest itself in the horror genre in years to come. My personal affinity for all things spooky has made this edition especially exciting to curate and I'm proud to welcome some new faces to our writers room who have expanded the variety of articles for this issue. I invite you all to share in the hard work of our writers, whose efforts and commitment have once again been admirable.

Our headlining article explores the role played by race and femininity in the collective panic of the Salem Witch Trials by focusing on the first accused - Tituba. We then return to our Historic Pub of the Month, Becca's Words of Wisdom, and introduce some new and exciting sections, including a book review from History Soc's own Vice President, and our very own meme page. You'll find articles approaching everything from the origins of Friday the 13th, to the spread of Vampirism in the 18th century Habsburg Empire, to the intersectional history of environmental thought, written in light of the recent Indigenous Peoples' Day. Our op-eds explore society's attitudes to the institutionalised and disabled, as well as challenging the cultural figure of the witch.

So whether you're like me and love a scary movie or whether you're like my flatmate, Becca, and hide behind the sofa; I'm sure that you'll find something of interest in this "spooktacular" issue of the History Journal.

India Wickremeratne, Editorial Officer

Who could access humanity in the age of the Salem Witch Trials?

How race and femininity defined Tituba as a carceral subject.

Anouska Jha & Faith Zoradey

"The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone, and I must tell you all that I shall not proceed unless you are prepared to believe me if I should find no bruise of Hell upon her."

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From Arthur Miller's The Crucible in 1953

To this day, the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 Massachusetts remains an intriguing event for historians and non-historians alike. With over 200 people (mostly women) accused of witchcraft and over 20 executed, the trials were a manifestation of the paranoia bred within a highly superstitious Puritan society in economic crisis. The aspect of Puritanism, a sect of Christianity, is significant for the purpose of this article; it emphasises the disgust and suspicion New England society had towards 'strange' women, and how this disgust fed into the tortuous action taken against women accused of witchcraft.

This article takes into account the specific example of Tituba - an African Indian slave who was accused, and then confessed to witchcraft in 1692. The grounds for her accusation rested not only on her femininity but also her racial identity, both of which were amplified by the strong Puritan conceptions of blackness and inhuman qualities. This article therefore addresses several questions: How was femininity/ the female body tied to the subhuman qualities of witchcraft? Why was race such a powerful indicator of the dynamics of 1600s New England society? And finally, how do modern media, and social perspectives on religion and race depict how such tensions are to be resolved?

The dichotomies of the body and soul, and masculinity/femininity, were prevalent in seventeenth century Puritan New England. The perception of women's bodies held that whilst all humans carry an innately 'feminine soul of insatiability that could only be redeemed by marrying to the grace of Christ', women were more vulnerable to be targeted through the weakness of their bodies. The body, in Puritan thought, acted as a protective layer from the devilish forces that were believed to corrupt the essence of human morality. Therefore, the horrors of the Salem Witch Trials were based on the notion that women's corporeality furnished them with the devil's purpose, making them prime targets for accusation and torture. Evidently, we cannot attribute the trials purely to religious and gendered doctrine, as the story is one of something far deeper; a fear that the patriarchal image of femininity would be stripped bare by the unfamiliar assertions of power made by those women accused of witchcraft.

Tituba certainly bore the brunt of such ideologies. She encountered a pre-

disposition in partaking in witchcraft, making her likelihood of being accused even more substantial. Fascinatingly, Tituba admitted to her guilt; is this evidence that she herself was convinced of the 'vulnerability of her soul to the Puritan devil?' If so, Tituba's story in the Salem Trials is not only one of tragic victimhood in the face of male persecutions of witchcraft, but also of her own internalised perception of her body, which caused her to partake in such gender dynamics.

When I think about the figure of Tituba and how she exists in 17th century America, many things come to mind. Firstly, how her body is perceived by those who wished to execute her for witchcraft. Secondly how her being deemed a witch denoted her as non-human. With Tituba having South American and African ancestry, (there is a discrepancy amongst researchers as to where she came from, but these two ethnic categories are the most prominent in their conclusions) she exists as an "other" in Puritan New England. This pulls her further from what her accusers considered a good "person" and rather places her in a category of distrust. Further, can those such as Tituba within that context, aside from being considered witches, be considered human at all in the eyes of America?

Visual representations of Tituba often aim to highlight her ugliness and her darkness. She is often depicted as tall, with large hands and arms, unkempt grey hair, and gaudy colourful jewellery. Particularly Granger's depiction of Tituba and the Children (the children whom she was accused of teaching witchcraft, hence her trial) shows a clear contrast between the innocent white American children who are properly dressed with clean and pressed clothes, kept hair and in neutral tones, compared to the grotesque figure of Tituba who appears to be bursting with colour; offsetting the scene.

Tituba was a slave before and at the time of her execution (Feb 1692), so: White America's Property. Property, around the time of White America's founding, was not only defined by Man's relationship with external objects, but also Man's relationship to "human rights, liberties, powers, and immunities that are important for human well-being, including: freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, freedom from bodily harm, and free and equal opportunities to use personal faculties", all things that Tituba did not have access to. She was not seen as human, rather as dispensable property. Da Shaun L Harrison perhaps is more explicit about the ways in which Tituba and others like her are not seen as human "what to the slave is humanity when the human was the master." So, when witches are seen as supernatural beings that are enemies of Puritan America, it cannot be surprising that an enslaved Black Woman was the first to be disposed of in the Salem Witch Trials. In fact, it makes perfect sense.

Granger's depiction of Tituba and the Children

Writers' Response

As our first collaborative piece, I thought it worth including a section for our writers to explore their own personal responses to the research process

Faith

Nigeria is the second most religious country in the world, with the two main religions being nearly equally practised (Islam and Christianity). As a result of the culture that this religiosity cultivated, most of my interactions with witchcraft were minimal and through media rather than real life experiences. They came in the form of Nollywood movies (a form of Nigerian media that often uses indigenous spiritual practices to move the plot of often exaggerated storylines), or offhand comments about certain individuals being accused of "juju", a form of black magic. There is a level of distance created by the community for self protection, and underlying suspicion and slight hysteria still persists around witchcraft within the social fabric of Nigerians in Nigeria and abroad. Even other Christians accuse certain sects of Christianity of practicing witchcraft- some Pentecostal attitudes (the Pentecostal Church was founded in America) towards Celestial Church (Founded in Benin, West Africa) often expose this. From this, I can draw parallels with how the Pentecostal Church, perhaps perceiving themselves as more "refined" as they wear correct, western-like attire to Church, dash disdain at Celestial Church of Christ for their more open embrace of West African traditions. I imagine that the Pentecostal church appear to themselves as the innocent children as depicted in Granger's illustration of Tituba and the Children, whilst the Celestial Church is an unrefined Tituba, in alternative garb and expression.

Anouska

In researching the contents of witchcraft and race in the Salem Trials, I came across an article that resonated personally with me, claiming that a Hindu woman in 2015, Deborah Schoenfeld, was fired from the US Military for practicing 'witchcraft' and 'bringing demons into the office'; she was practicing yoga and was listening to Indian prayer music. Coming from Hindu origins, this article shows to me how the residual flaws of the Salem trials and the notions of race/creed/gender as an indication of a disjuncture from traditional humanity still persist. It suggests that witchcraft is not a term in and of itself, but is a microcosm of a more problematic issue in society, where the ideologies and hesitations of majority groups (whether racial or gendered) are manifested into unwarranted action against those who practice/ appear as 'other'. As historians, this analysis of the multifaceted strains of ideology is not alien to us, yet it is fascinating to see how it still functions in this particular context. Thus the Salem Trials, Tituba's accusation, and literary/illustrative descriptions of the event continue to be a metric through which we can measure how femininity and race are discussed in society today.

Historic pub of the month

Stephanie Cunningham

The Viaduct Tavern
126 Newgate Street,
London,
EC1A 7AA

Continuing last month's introduction to historic pubs around London, this October, we've chosen to lean into this month's slightly spooky theme by exploring The Viaduct Tavern, supposedly London's most haunted pub and featured in an episode of Buzzfeed Unsolved. Scary. Dating back to 1869 and named after the nearby Holborn Viaduct which opened in the same year, The Viaduct Tavern is the last surviving Victorian era gin palace in London, and it has many of the original features to prove it. Throughout the pub, you can find gilded mirrors, a particularly elaborate ceiling made from copper, and even original paintings which bear the mark of a First World War soldier's bayonet. However, claims that the cellars of the Tavern were the former cells of Newgate Prison are unfortunately false, and much of the ghostly goings on have been debunked. The only truly terrifying occurrence during our visit was finding out that a single pint cost £6.80. Still, if you're a fan of ornate-bordering-on-ostentatious pub interiors (which I certainly am) then this is worth the visit where maybe you'll get lucky and see a spirit - and not the over-priced kind.

Why we fear Friday 13th

Isabelle Churchill

We may consider ourselves belonging to an ultra-rational, ultra-secular era in our society, yet the continued prevalence of superstition questions this. In fact, superstition has long influenced the way societies behave and think, becoming arguably the ultimate form of herd mentality. Our greatest obsession of all superstitions, Friday the Thirteen, permeates even the most rational of all domains, construction, with high-rise structures often 'missing' a 13th floor, as well as perhaps the least rational, the Media, with several frenzied stories being published like clockwork, whenever the spooky date rolls around.

However, how did we come to fear a certain day so intensely, and why wasn't Monday the 5th feared instead? At least Monday carries a universally suffered reputation of doom. History of Superstition specialist at Lawrence University, Edmund Kern, exclaims, 'the first thing I say when I talk about superstition is that anyone who says they can tell you the origin of one is lying'. Additionally, the origins of this superstitionare especially disputed, meaning it is perhaps wise to separate Friday the 13th up into its two constituent aspects, looking particularly at the number 13, and why we hold such meaning to it.

Though the fear of the number thirteen in western cultures appears to have an array of origins, most are connected with religion, like many other superstitions. The number 13's spooky connotations began with the ancient Roman belief that witches gathered in a group of 12, with the 13th member being the devil. Fear of a thirteenth member of a meeting is also apparent in two well known ancient events. Judas was the 13th guest to arrive at the Last Supper as well as the eventual betrayer of Jesus. Meanwhile, ancient Norse lore states that the appearance of the god Loki at a dinner in Valhalla, led to the introduction of evil and turmoil in the world. With 12 gods already in attendance, he was the thirteenth guest. In fact, twelve was long seen by mathematicians as the perfect number, and our whole world is made up of it, from months in the year to inches in a foot. Thus, the appearance of 13 challenges this perfection. We can still see the very real fear of the number 13 permeating our society today with the floor number being erased on 80% of skyscrapers in some western cities as well as the row being missed out on most commercial aeroplanes.

The question should now turn to why our society has come to be suspicious of the date Friday the 13th. Though there is a popular belief (now debunked by historians) that the superstition began in

1306, when King Philip of France apparently arrested members of the Knights Templar, its origin is now credited to Boston stock promoter Thomas William Lawson. In 1907 Lawson wrote the novel 'Friday the Thirteenth', detailing a broker bringing down Wall Street on the date, and was soon adapted into a successful silent film. The continuation of the day's spooky persona throughout the rest of the 20th century can certainly be blamed on popular culture. And, the blockbuster horror film series 'Friday the 13th', first released by Paramount in 1980, chronicling the murderous tendencies of a teenager on a summer camp who happened to be born on Friday the 13th, has kept the fear of the date in the public consciousness ever since.

It is likely a disappointment to you that the history of the origins of Friday the 13th is rather inconclusive as we often have a fixation on the idea that our superstitions originate from a non-descript spooky period of medieval history, having been perfectly concocted in a witch's cauldron. Yet this belief is as crooked as that very witch's nose, with folklorists indicating that there is in fact no written evidence of the superstition of Friday the 13th until at least the nineteenth century. In fact, it wasn't until the early 1990s when psychotherapist Dr. Donald E. Dossey coined the term paraskevidekatriaphobia (fear of Friday the 13th). Perhaps the most effectual manifestation of the superstition Friday the 13th on our society is the supposed impact it has on the stock market. A 1987 University of Miami study found that you are more likely to have your portfolio value drop on a Friday the 13th as opposed to any other Friday. The feared date is estimated to be lose investors in excess of $800 annually. Yet psychologists often blame 'confirmation bias' for this phenomenon as people come to blame superstition for their misfortunes rather than their own actions, and an arena such as the stock market is perhaps most sensitive to this. Friday the 13th is therefore a reminder that history can sometimes be messy and inconclusive. We must remember not to assume that we can always study tidy stories that have simple answers. Perhaps the unknown quality of the origins of Friday the 13th makes it far scarier, especially for historians.

Becca's Words of Wisdom

Becca Moore

Hi everyone. Hopefully you're now all settled into (or back into) uni life and are enjoying having a face to face social life outside of your front door. This month, with Halloween creeping up, I'm giving you my very best tips for a bangin (spooktacular!) night out. Enjoy!!

Try London's unusual nightlife - Museum Lates, Late at the Tate, Flight Club, Ballie Ballerson and Bounce Ping Pong bar

Download the apps you need- Dusk, Fatsoma, RA Guide and TicketSwap

Make friends in toilets (and actually follow through!!) - Arranging that coffee or drink can begin a beautiful friendship (it's worked for me!!)

Be creative with alcohol transport - CapriSun screw caps can squeeze into any and all items of clothing.

Try out different areas of London - Don't just stick to Zone 1 - try Shoreditch, Brixton, Camden or Peckham!

Stay safe - Keep an eye on your drink, on your friends and know how you're getting home

The Enlightened Undead

Emily Tubbs

Vampire 'epidemics' in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Enlightenment.

Before Count Dracula, outbreaks of vampirism had been plaguing the Habsburg Monarchy since the early 18th century. So, what can these outbreaks reveal about people's attitudes towards reason and religion in this period?

With Halloween approaching and considering our current experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth looking back at a past epidemic that has not been given much attention – the spread of vampirism across the Habsburg Monarchy in the 18th century. While seen now only as staples of fiction, vampires and the history of vampirism can teach historians a lot about people's attitudes towards science and religion, and the ever-relevant conflict between superstition and reason. Before looking into what vampirism can teach us about 18th century attitudes, we must look at the context of the time. The European vampire 'epidemic' was highlighted by the defeat of the Ottomans to the Habsburgs in 1718. The Habsburg Monarchy, led by the Holy Roman Emperor, now incorporated large swathes of Eastern Europe. One particularly significant addition was that of the Kingdom of Serbia, where vampire folklore was common. It is no surprise then that, from 1718 onwards, stories of supposed vampire attacks arose throughout Habsburg lands.

The vampires that allegedly resided in the Habsburg Monarchy in the 18th century were usually found in small villages where several people had fallen victim to an undetermined disease. When the remaining villagers would exhume the corpses of the deceased, their bodies would be undecomposed, leading to the conclusion that they had never been dead at all. The usual response to these so-called vampires was to stab them through the heart, although decapitation and cremation were also common. The villagers' response can teach us several things about attitudes towards religion in this period. In his article, "The frightening borderlands of Enlightenment: The vampire problem", Peter Bräunlein discusses the connections between religion and vampirism in the eastern Habsburg territories such as Transylvania, Hungary, and Moravia. According to him, religious authorities were almost always present at the exhumations and disposals of supposed vampires, a tacit endorsement of the villagers' actions. The religious presence

indicates that these exhumations were not the work of hysteric mobs. Instead, they were a systematic and, presumably, practiced response that was justified by local religious authorities, proving the latter's enduring importance at the time.

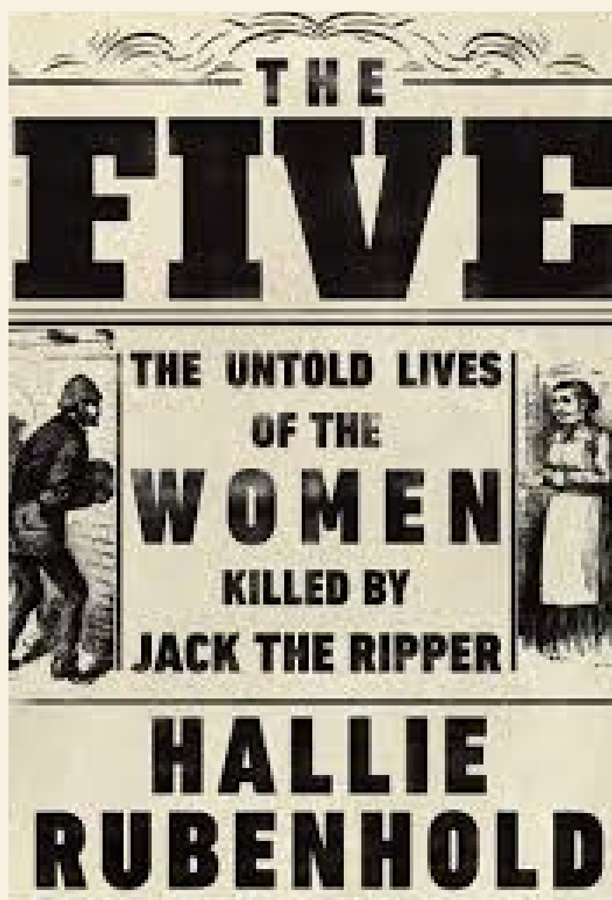
The eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy's reactions to vampirism contrast with their western counterparts. For instance in 1755, the Habsburg ruler Maria Theresa sent her personal physician, Gerard van Swieten, to investigate tales of vampirism in the east of the Monarchy. That she sent a physician and not a religious figure implies her disbelief that anything unnatural was the cause. Perhaps Habsburg officials were also embarrassed by stories of vampirism, especially in a period when the Habsburg administration was undertaking largescale reforms to modernise the Monarchy, including placing the Church increasingly under state control. This might explain why Maria Theresa tasked her own personal physician with the investigation or, indeed, why she launched an investigation at all. Habsburg reforms in the Enlightenment involved a significant shift in attitude towards superstition. When Maria Theresa instructed van Swieten to find the root of the vampire rumours, he deduced that there was a natural and secular cause. He concluded that the reason bodies did not decompose was because of extremely cold soil. His investigation led to several important developments.

In the following years, it became increasingly difficult to prosecute people accused of offences related to superstition, including witchcraft, without concrete evidence. In cases of alleged vampirism, the exhumation and subsequent disposal of suspected vampires was stopped. These developments also showed the vast cultural differences present, not only within the Empire, but between rural and urban populations.

In summary, in looking at how vampire 'epidemics' were handled in the 18th century, we can see attitudes towards reason and religion across the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as the division between peoples in the east and west. That investigations into vampirism authorised by the Crown were often led by physicians and not religious figures shows this shift towards natural, and not religious, explanations. It also contrasts with the importance placed on religious figures in villages supposedly suffering from vampirism and suggests that western elites, attempting to reform the Monarchy, were embarrassed by those rural villages in the east where vampirism seemed to thrive.

'The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper' by Hallie Rubenhold

Book Club with Molly Wear



It is no secret that in recent years, there has been a surge in interest for true-crime media. However, in 'The Five', Hallie Rubenhold critiques this focus on male violence by telling the stories of the lives lived by the women brutally murdered by Jack the Ripper in 1888. Through these stories, it is stressed that the fates of these women were not just crime stories, they were tragic and preventable deaths that were consequences of a post-industrial society, which treated the poor as disposable. We are probably all familiar with the narrative that 'Jack the Ripper murdered prostitutes', despite there being no evidence that three of the five women ever engaged in prostitution. This notion was pushed to stress the moral failings of the women, even going as far as implying that 'bad women' were deserving of punishment. This heavily influenced the coroner's investigation, which even started to investigate the victims themselves. The investigation also failed to consider the fact that three of these women were homeless, a factor that would further suggest that these were crimes targeting the poor.

One of the things that struck me most throughout the book, and something that definitely set this apart from other historical works, was Rubenhold's use of highly emotive language. A great amount of detail is given to exploring the feelings of both the women and their family and friends. This, along with the 'life in objects' section - a list of the items that were found on the bodies of the women - is highly successful in humanising the women, and allowing them to be remembered as actual people, rather than simply statistics in "Jack's" story. When reading this book, one cannot help but also think about the ever-growing popularity of true crime stories in documentaries, podcasts and other forms of media. Rubenhold offers a critique of a culture in the modern day focused on serial killers and violent crime, the majority being by men and against women, stating that victims of serial killers are remembered as 'no longer human beings, but cartoon figures whose bloody images can be printed onto T-shirts'. In contrast, when telling the stories of the lives of each victim, Rubenhold completely skips their murder, and goes from the day they died straight to its aftermath - this usually being grief felt by families. By taking out details of the horrors that these women endured, Rubenhold avoids contributing to the misery porn of the true-crime industry, and allows her reader to focus on the lives and personhood of these women, rather than their devastating deaths.

> 'It is only by bringing these women back to life that we can silence the Ripper and what he represents'

Overall, if you are interested in working-class and women's history, I would definitely recommend this book; it tells an important narrative that restores a degree of agency and dignity to the victims of crimes against the poor, and offers a highly engaging argument around how we remember these crimes in history. It is obviously well researched and goes into great detail, but it is still more of a casual read, and would serve as a nice break from academic reading.

Career's Advice

The Careers Department has sent us a list of upcoming events for undergraduates looking to learn more about preparation for life after UCL

Thinking of doing a PhD in History?

01/11 at 1PM on Zoom

Thinking of doing an MA in History?

05/11 at 12PM on Zoom

Sign up details and Zoom links will be circulated nearer the time

Job Hunting and Applications Workshop

17/11 at 2-4PM

January Internship Workshop

18/11 at 1-2PM

Indigenous People's Day & Intersectional Environmentalism

Jonas Lim

Writer's note: Please excuse that, despite my claim for 'intersectionality', this short piece has focused primarily on the racial aspects of intersectional environmentalism as it was written in the light of the Indigenous Peoples' Day. In our following issues, I hope to explore class or gender to debunk popular misconceptions about climate change and its solutions through history.

This eleventh of October marked the 29th anniversary of Indigenous Peoples' Day since the City Council of Berkeley renamed it from its original form 'Columbus Day' in 1992. Established to restore agency to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the occasion received particular interest this year because President Biden signed a proclamation to make Indigenous Peoples' Day a national holiday. Though the need to incorporate indigenous peoples into the historical narrative should be a pretty straightforward affair - even without approval from a white president - the long-overdue recognition implies a pressing need to contemplate the perceptions we have held relatively unquestioningly about the past and the Eurocentricity of traditional historiography.

In the light of such events in October, I will introduce a brief history in this article of how discourses around the environment and environmentalism have put a white 'Europe' at its centre, marginalising the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) communities.

<u>How non-white communities were, and are, more vulnerable to the effects of western environmental degradation</u>

Environmentalism has existed long before we found the language to express it from a European viewpoint. Though we often associate the incorporation of environmentalism in building our social spheres of life as a modern concept, the history of non-European environmental thought predates the invention of European 'scientific' environmentalism. Moreover, the dichotomous categorisation of nature as an external 'environment' as opposed to a 'social' sphere of human life is a distinctly European way of conceiving the structures around us. As those privileged enough to have their stories heard were often white activists, the ideas and accounts for environmental justice from BIPOC communities were often ignored and silenced.

This Eurocentric way of thinking about the environment is problematic as it excluded the very people who are most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation from the environmental discourse. As history unfolded into the 19th century and European empires went through mass industrialisation, the benefits of capitalist developments were almost exclusively reserved for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant men, whereas non-white communities often had to deal with the consequences of industrialisation through

the destruction of the environment. For instance, in the United States, cities were 'colour-coded' in order to regulate the kinds of housing you could purchase based on the colour of your skin. Even as the government created the Federal Housing Administration to provide loans so that the average person could own a home. 'Green-coded' homes, those that were of the highest value, were in all-white neighbourhoods, whereas districts that were coded 'red' were reserved for either integrated or all-black communities in the working-class. These red coded homes would be located where unregulated industrial production and waste emission affected life standards most severely (Melin Oliver, 2020). Environmental degradation frequently threatened the lives of non-white workers in the agricultural sector as well. For example, Mexican workers deployed in the U.S. under the Bracero program were sprayed with DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, a chemical compound used as insecticide famously introduced in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring for its hazardous effects on the environment and human health) before they were sent to their contractors. Even today, dump fields and industrial sewages are located in places populated predominantly by Black and Brown communities who were chosen, in the words of a North Carolinian environmental protester Almena Myles, 'because we were rural and poor and they thought we couldn't fight' (Bergman, BBC, 2019). Ironically, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and Asian migrant communities were being exploited to accelerate environmental destruction, from which they themselves would suffer the consequences. The glorious narrative of 'progress' and 'rationality' we often associate with capitalist development often erases the histories of these people, upon whose labour and sacrifice of living conditions Western industrial development relies.

Why we should think intersectionally when thinking about the environment

The importance of thinking about intersectional histories of the environment and climate change comes from the fact that the obstacle to solving the climate crisis is a man-made one rather than a scientific one, in which certain individuals hold more responsibility than others. Merely directing the majority of the solutions for climate change to individualistic consumerism-based lifestyle reforms cannot address the bigger structural forces responsible for creating the climate crisis, and alienates people who are not affluent or privileged enough to maintain a "sustainable" consumerist lifestyle. Apocalyptic prognoses not based on sufficient scientific evidence that 'we're all doomed to die no matter what we do' are bigoted and unhelpful. Such statements disregard the fact that climate change will first impact the peoples and societies least responsible for it. Environmentalism and the struggle for environmental justice can only be sustainable when people of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, classes, and nationalities have equal voices in the solution. Such inclusivity can only be achieved by considering environmental history and the intersectional nature of environmental thought, and this is where we as historians, not scientists, can contribute to the struggle for environmental justice.

Editor's Picks

Whether you're new to the city, or just looking to make the most of your new-found freedom, I've collated some of my favourite spots in London for you to explore this month.

Primrose Hill

NW3 3NA

During the winter lockdown last year, one of the highlights of my week would be meeting my parents on Primrose Hill to walk my dog, Frankie. Although the weather is no doubt turning colder and outdoor socialising is becoming more gruelling, the Hill remains one of North London's prettiest outdoor spaces and is one of the most popular spots for UCL students off-campus. With Guy Fawke's celebrations approaching and people needing plans for bonfire night, Primrose Hill was a shoe-in for my recomendations this month.

Special Mention

The Pembroke Castle
180 Gloucester Avenue
NW1 8JA

If you do find yourself in Primrose Hill, The Pembroke Castle has a lovely beer garden and decently priced pints considering its location. It can be hard to find bargains in the area but this is a great place to get a drink after a chilly walk on the Hill.

Cafe BAO

4 Pancras Square, Kings Cross, N1C 4AG

One of my flatmate's best finds in the last month has been the Bakery Counter at Cafe BAO. It has the fluffiest buns I've ever tried - we bought a box of 10 for £12, steamed them at home and had them with leftover roast chicken. The Peach Red Bean and White Chocolate buns were my personal favourite and so, with most of its in-house menu items under £10, Cafe BAO makes the perfect mid-week treat.

The Summer Exhibition at the RA

Burlington House, Picadilly, W1J 0BD

The summer exhibition at the Royal Academy is perfect for anyone searching London's art scene for something different. With a wide range of both well known and up-and-coming artists, the exhibition showcases a broad variety of works, ranging from paintings and statues to pieces of architecture. There's also not a lot of galleries where you can even get a drink to take around the exhibition!

Voices from the writing room

Not "Laughing With You"

Catrin Beynon

'The Long History of Exploiting People with Disabilities for 'Entertainment.'

There exists a long history of people with disabilities being exploited for 'entertainment'. For instance, a significant number of entertainers in medieval/Tudor courts would have been people with physical or mental differences. Entertainers with restrictive growth conditions or dwarfism, for example, were common. Some historians such as Suzannah Lipscomb now argue that many performers also possessed what we would now define as learning disabilities. In certain instances, these entertainers would have been highly respected and admired for their difference. For example, the famous Tudor 'fool' William Somers, whom Lipscomb believes had a learning disability, held a privileged position at court and was even painted into the famous Tudor dynastic portrait; pictured on the right with a monkey on his shoulder. However, the respect that these entertainers received should not be overstated. These individuals were not treated as equals, but rather their differences marked them as curiosities to be objectified and/or laughed at. Whether as a source of wonder or outright horror, they were ostracised from the rest of society as an unknown 'Other'.

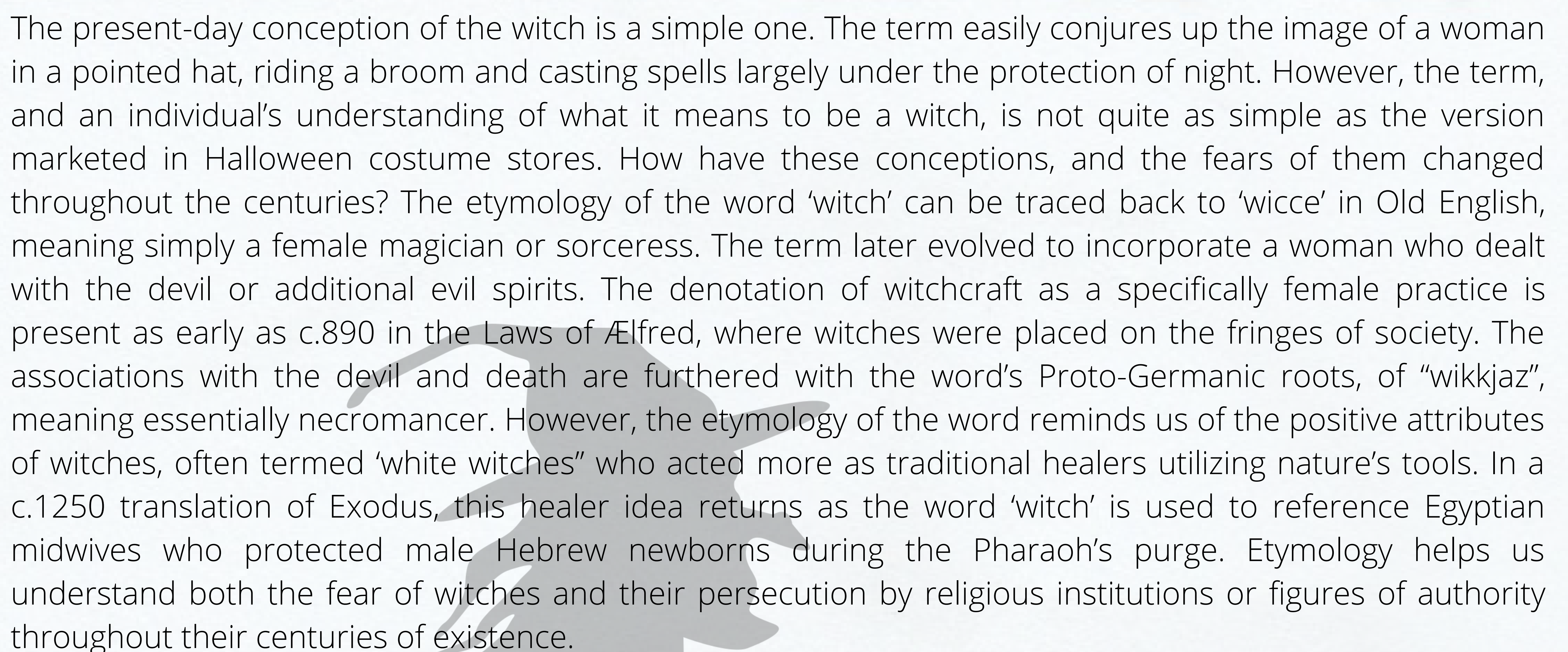
Another example of people with disabilities being exploited for 'entertainment' concerns London's Bethlem Royal Hospital, or 'Bedlam.' Bethlem was established in 1247 and for over three hundred years it was England's only public institution for those considered at the time to be severely mentally ill. Despite the stigma surrounding mental illness, up until the end of the eighteenth century, the hospital actively encouraged the public to visit. Not all of those who came to Bethlem harboured ill intentions. Of course, friends and family visited patients and others came out of a sense of obligation or charity. However, most came out of a desire for 'entertainment' and viewed the hospital and its inhabitants as little more than another of the city's tourist attractions. One of the most famous depictions of Bethlem, Hogarth's A Rake's Progress VIII, illustrates this depraved sightseeing. Here you can see two well-off women snickering at the patients they observe on their tour of the hospital.

Countless other examples of such exploitation exist, including into the present day. Just last month the Bond franchise was criticised for its exploitative portrayal of people with visible differences and/or disfigurements. In my opinion, however, the biggest offender is horror films. Here, time and time again people with disabilities - in particular severe mental illness - are exploited for entertainment. Their representation is particularly poor in this genre because here they are invariably cast as the villain of the story. We are not only being invited to be 'entertained' by people with disabilities in horror films but also to fear them. Examples of this include the Halloween franchise, Psycho and Split. So be warned, the scariest thing you do this Halloween may be the messages you perpetuate.

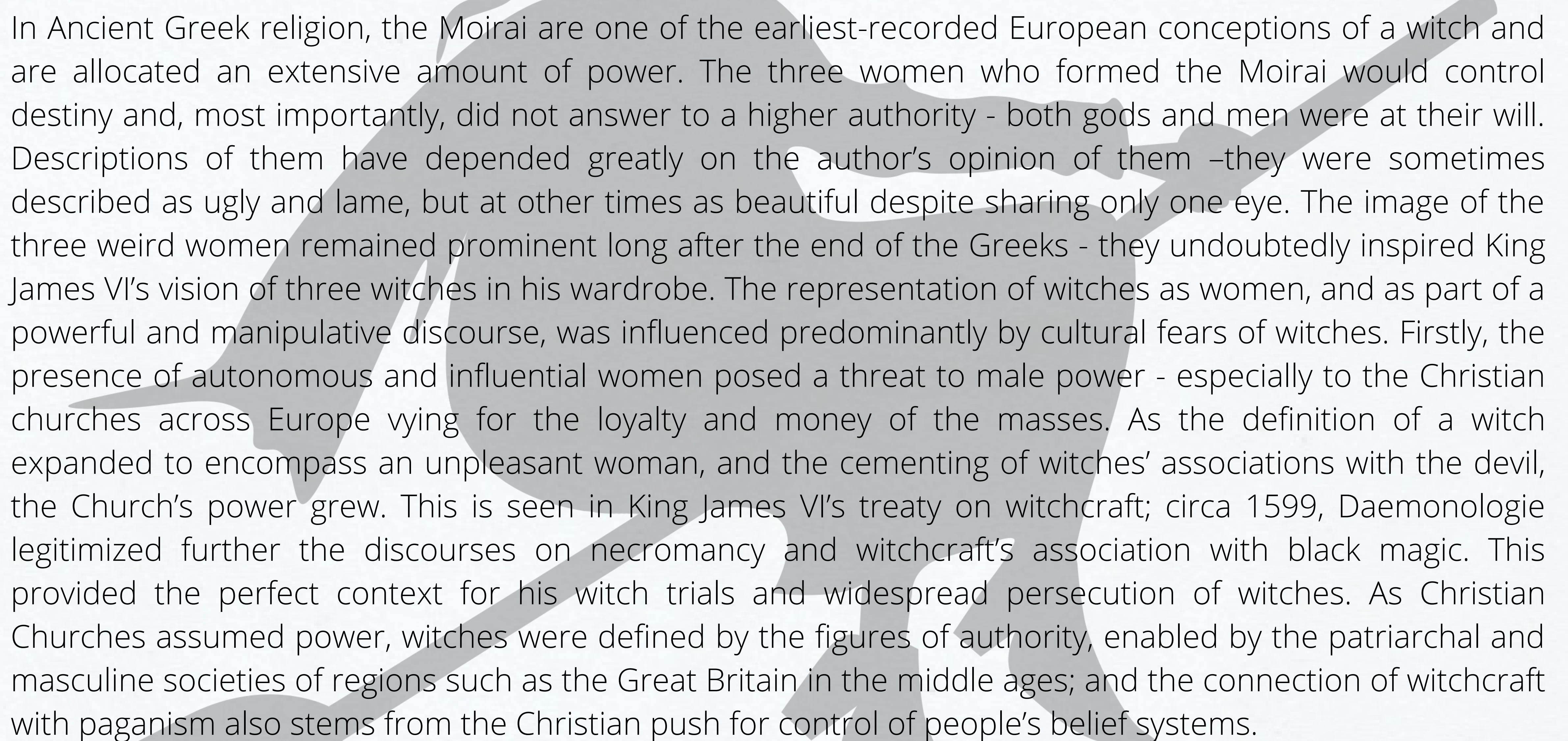
Voices from the writing room

A Vindication of the Witch

Phoebe Thomas



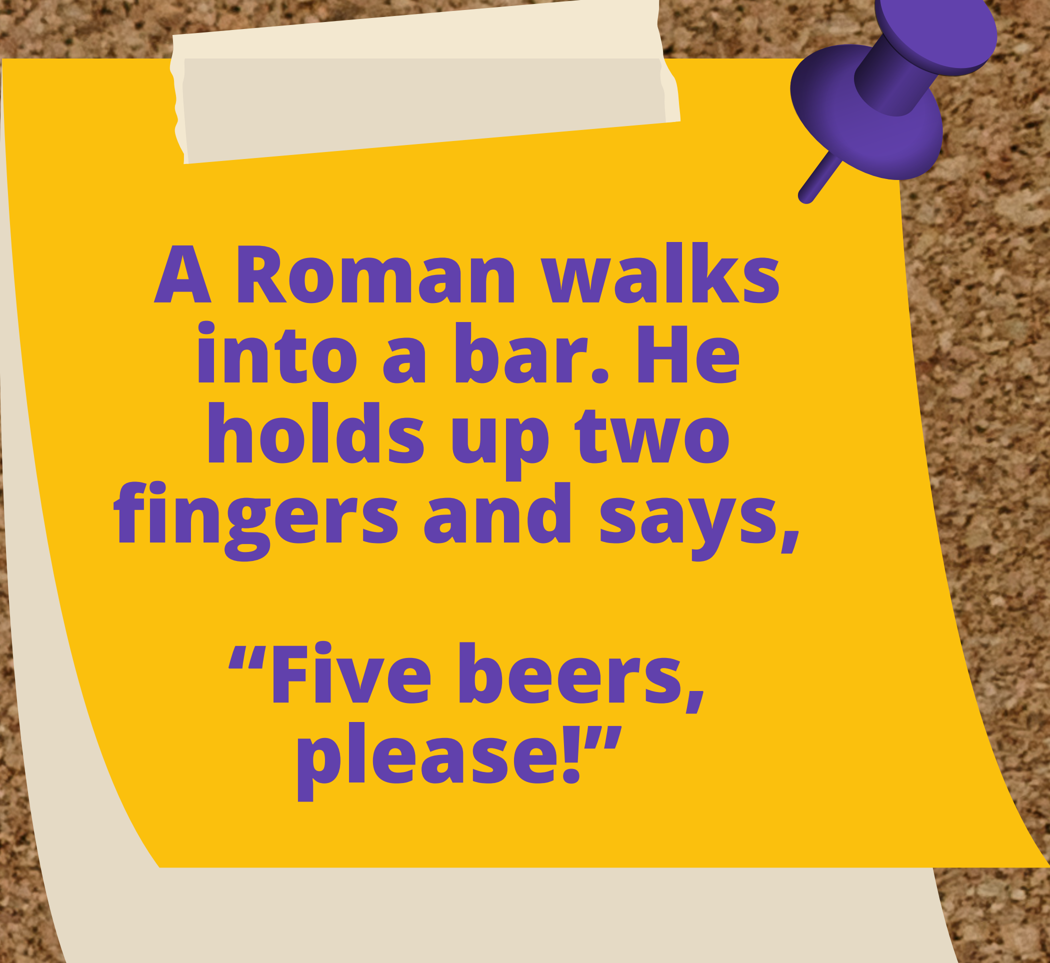
The present-day conception of the witch is a simple one. The term easily conjures up the image of a woman in a pointed hat, riding a broom and casting spells largely under the protection of night. However, the term, and an individual's understanding of what it means to be a witch, is not quite as simple as the version marketed in Halloween costume stores. How have these conceptions, and the fears of them changed throughout the centuries? The etymology of the word 'witch' can be traced back to 'wicce' in Old English, meaning simply a female magician or sorceress. The term later evolved to incorporate a woman who dealt with the devil or additional evil spirits. The denotation of witchcraft as a specifically female practice is present as early as c.890 in the Laws of Ælfred, where witches were placed on the fringes of society. The associations with the devil and death are furthered with the word's Proto-Germanic roots, of "wikkjaz", meaning essentially necromancer. However, the etymology of the word reminds us of the positive attributes of witches, often termed 'white witches" who acted more as traditional healers utilizing nature's tools. In a c.1250 translation of Exodus, this healer idea returns as the word 'witch' is used to reference Egyptian midwives who protected male Hebrew newborns during the Pharaoh's purge. Etymology helps us understand both the fear of witches and their persecution by religious institutions or figures of authority throughout their centuries of existence.

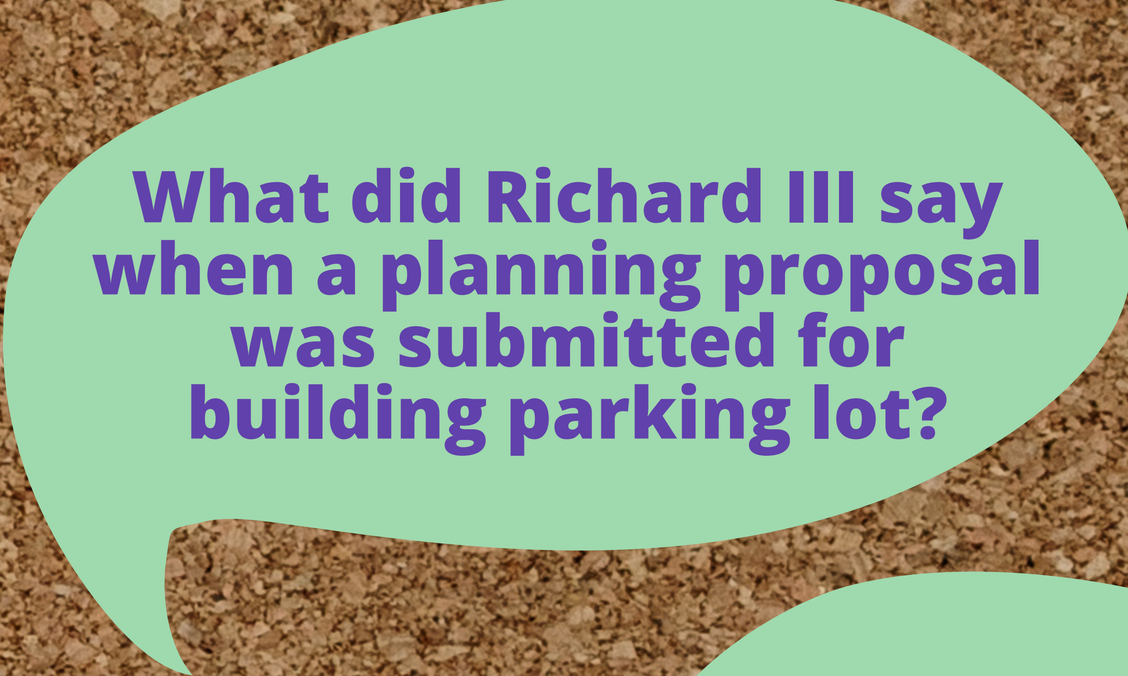


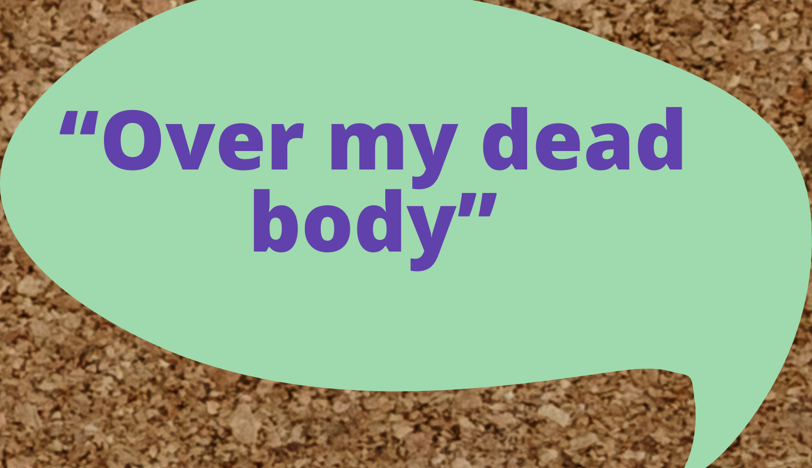
In Ancient Greek religion, the Moirai are one of the earliest-recorded European conceptions of a witch and are allocated an extensive amount of power. The three women who formed the Moirai would control destiny and, most importantly, did not answer to a higher authority - both gods and men were at their will. Descriptions of them have depended greatly on the author's opinion of them –they were sometimes described as ugly and lame, but at other times as beautiful despite sharing only one eye. The image of the three weird women remained prominent long after the end of the Greeks - they undoubtedly inspired King James VI's vision of three witches in his wardrobe. The representation of witches as women, and as part of a powerful and manipulative discourse, was influenced predominantly by cultural fears of witches. Firstly, the presence of autonomous and influential women posed a threat to male power - especially to the Christian churches across Europe vying for the loyalty and money of the masses. As the definition of a witch expanded to encompass an unpleasant woman, and the cementing of witches' associations with the devil, the Church's power grew. This is seen in King James VI's treaty on witchcraft; circa 1599, Daemonologie legitimized further the discourses on necromancy and witchcraft's association with black magic. This provided the perfect context for his witch trials and widespread persecution of witches. As Christian Churches assumed power, witches were defined by the figures of authority, enabled by the patriarchal and masculine societies of regions such as the Great Britain in the middle ages; and the connection of witchcraft with paganism also stems from the Christian push for control of people's belief systems.

Witches today are able to practice with greater freedom in the western world; the UK for example, repealed the Witchcraft Act in 1951, and Wicca practitioners are beginning to be accepted by government bodies. In countries such as Romania, witches are still able to wield a strong political and social influence, and in regions such as Costa Rica, a return to Mayan practices is beginning to take place. However, how different is witchcraft as a spiritual practice to the formal, organized religions that we recognise? The existence of witches has taught us more of the power of the governing body in creating discourses and historical narratives that legitimise persecution. Perhaps what we should have feared was never witches, but the ease at which a prejudiced image of them was created and manipulated. Their experience remains a warning to lessons that humanity has not yet learnt – that one must always ask questions and read behind statements, especially when characterizations of a minority on the fringes of society are made at the unchecked discretion of the majority.

Comedy Corner







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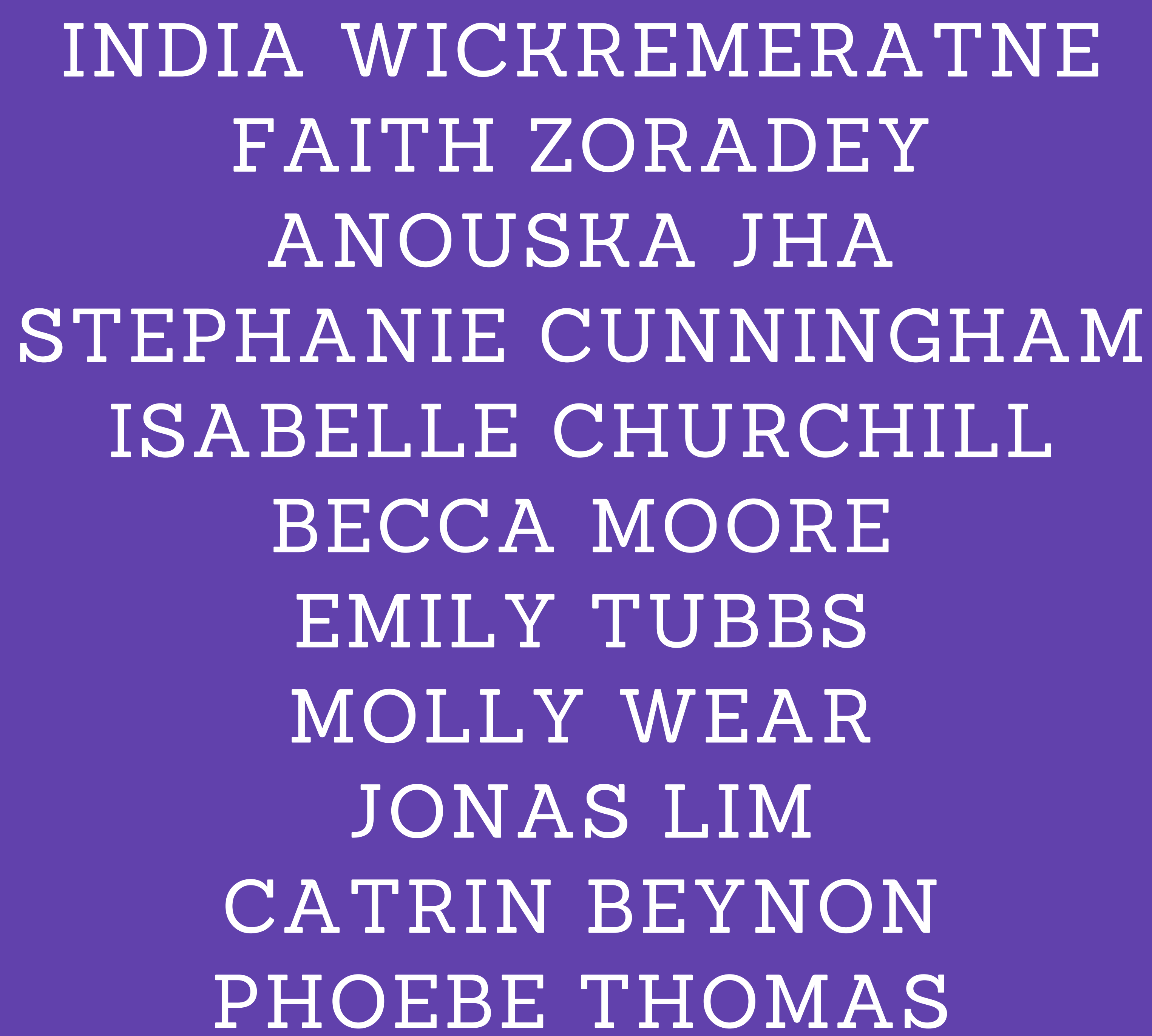
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