SOME NOTES ABT THIS AFF:

* The aff is critiquing the highly competitive and capitalist ideologies of debate, ie the means of producing to appease the bourgeoise through manufacturing suffering for trophies when really all we did was spend a shit ton of money just to feel like better ppl also things like spreading that mandate the means of production as well
* The aff must perform the entire time- during cx I will be reading my opp’s tarot- sacrificing the most competitive part of the round for fostering human connections and submitting ourselves to the cosmos
* YOU MUST IMPACT TURN T- accessibility comes b4 fairness AND your fariness is bad bc it is ground in debate’s obsession w competition but here there will never be ‘fair’ if we don’t take down the systems such as T

#### Once upon a time, the witches lived happily ever after in society. Womxn healers of all cultures and backgrounds were the true proletariat- they worked with and for the people, while the ruling elites hired male doctors. But alas, the Church feared the power of the witch. They feared her logic. They feared her relentless questioning of the way things were. They feared her femininity.

Ehrenreich and English 10 [Barbara Ehrenreichand and Deirdre English (American author and political activist AND former editor of Mother Jones and author of numerous articles for national publications and television documentaries. She has taught at the State University of New York and currently teaches at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is a faculty mentor at the Center for the Study of the Working Family at the Graduate School of Sociology), New York City: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, “Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers” <https://www.feministes-radicales.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Barbara-Ehrenreich-and-Deirdre-English-Witches-Midwives-and-Nurses-A-History-of-Women-Healers.-Introduction..pdf> //BWSKR]

We come now to the most fantastic accusation of all: The witch is accused not only of murdering and poisoning, sex crimes and conspiracy—but of helping and healing. As a leading English witch-hunter put it: For this must always be remembered, as a conclusion, that by witches we understand not only those which kill and torment, but all Diviners Charmers, Jugglers, all Wizards, commonly called wise men and wise women...and in the same number we reckon all good Witches, which do no hurt but good, which do not spoil and destroy, but save and deliver...It were a thousand times better for the land if all Witches, but especially the blessing Witch, might suffer death. 12 Witch-healers were often the only general medical practitioners for a people who had no doctors and no hospitals and who were bitterly afflicted with poverty and disease. In particular, the association of the witch and the midwife was strong: "No one does more harm to the Catholic Church than midwives," wrote witch-hunters Kramer and Sprenger. The Church itself had little to offer the suffering peasantry: On Sundays, after Mass, the sick came in scores, crying for help,—and words were all they got: "You have sinned, and God is afflicting you. Thank him; you will suffer so much the less torment in the life to come. Endure, suffer, die. Has not the Church its prayers for the dead?" (Jules Michelet, Satanism and Witchcraft) When faced with the misery of the poor, the Church turned to the dogma that experience in this world is fleeting and unimportant. But there was a double standard at work, for the Church was not against medical care for the upper class. Kings and nobles had their court physicians who were men, sometimes even priests. The real issue was control: Male upper class healing under the auspices of the Church was acceptable, female healing as part of a peasant subculture was not. The Church saw its attack on peasant healers as an attack on magic, not medicine. The devil was believed to have real power on 13 earth, and the use of that power by peasant women—whether for good or evil—was frightening to the Church and State. The greater their satanic powers to help themselves, the less they were dependent on God and the Church and the more they were potentially able to use their powers against God's order. Magic charms were thought to be at least as effective as prayer in healing the sick, but prayer was Church-sanctioned and controlled while incantations and charms were not. Thus magic cures, even when successful, were an accursed interference with the will of God, achieved with the help of the devil, and the cure itself was evil. There was no problem in distinguishing God's cures from the devil's, for obviously the Lord would work through priests and doctors rather than through peasant women. The wise woman, or witch, had a host of remedies which had been tested in years of use. Many of the herbal remedies developed by witches still have their place in modern pharmacology. They had pain-killers, digestive aids and anti-inflammatory agents. They used ergot for the pain of labor at a time when the Church held that pain in labor was the Lord's just punishment for Eve's original sin. Ergot derivatives are the principal drugs used today to hasten labor and aid in the recovery from childbirth. Belladonna—still used today as an anti- spasmodic—was used by the witch-healers to inhibit uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened. Digitalis, still an important drug in treating heart ailments, is said to have been discovered by an English witch. Undoubtedly many of the witches' other remedies were purely magical, and owed their effectiveness—if they had any—to their reputation. The witch-healer's methods were as great a threat (to the Catholic Church, if not the Protestant ) as her results, for the witch was an empiricist: She relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine, she believed in trial and error, cause and effect. Her attitude was not religiously passive, but actively inquiring. She trusted her ability to find ways to deal with disease, pregnancy and childbirth—whether through medications or charms. In short, her magic was the science of her time. The Church, by contrast, was deeply anti-empirical. It discredited the value of the material world, and had a profound distrust of the senses. There was no point in looking for natural laws that govern physical phenomena, for the world is created anew by God in every instant. Kramer and Sprenger, in the Malleus, quote St. Augustine on the deceptiveness of the senses: . . .Now the motive of the will is something perceived through the senses or the intellect, both of which are subject to the power of the devil. For St. Augustine says in Book 83: This evil, which is of the devil, creeps in by all the sensual approaches; he places himself in figures, he adapts himself to colors, he attaches himself to sounds, he lurks in angry and wrongful conversation, he abides in smells, he impregnates with flavours and fills with certain exhalations all the channels of the understanding. 14 The senses are the devil's playground, the arena into which he will try to lure men away from Faith and into the conceits of the intellect or the delusions of carnality. In the persecution of the witch, the anti-empiricist and the misogynist, anti-sexual obsessions of the Church coincide: Empiricism and sexuality both represent a surrender to the senses, a betrayal of faith. The witch was a triple threat to the Church: She was a woman, and not ashamed of it. She appeared to be part of an organized underground of peasant women. And she was a healer whose practice was based in empirical study. In the face of the repressive fatalism of Christianity, she held out the hope of change in this world. The Rise of the European Medical Profession While witches practiced among the people, the ruling classes were cultivating their own breed of secular healers: the university-trained physicians. In the century that preceded the beginning of the "witch-craze"—the thirteenth century—European medicine became firmly established as a secular science and a profession. The medical profession was actively engaged in the elimination of female healers—their exclusion from the universities, for example—long before the witch-hunts began. For eight long centuries, from the fifth to the thirteenth, the other-worldly, anti-medical stance of the Church had stood in the way of the development of medicine as a respectable profession. Then, in the 13th century, there was a revival of learning, touched off by contact with the Arab world. Medical schools appeared in 15 the universities, and more and more young men of means sought medical training. The church imposed strict controls on the new profession, and allowed it to develop only within the terms set by Catholic doctrine. University-trained physicians were not permitted to practice without calling in a priest to aid and advise them, or to treat a patient who refused confession. By the fourteenth century their practice was in demand among the wealthy, as long as they continued to take pains to show that their attentions to the body did not jeopardize the soul. In fact, accounts of their medical training make it seem more likely that they jeopardized the body. There was nothing in late medieval medical training that conflicted with church doctrine, and little that we would recognize as "science." Medical students, like other scholarly young gentlemen, spent years studying Plato, Aristotle and Christian theology. Their medical theory was largely restricted to the works of Galen, the ancient Roman physician who stressed the theory of "complexions" or "temperaments" of men, "wherefore the choleric are wrathful, the sanguine are kindly, the melancholy are envious," and so on. While a student, a doctor rarely saw any patients at all, and no experimentation of any kind was taught. Medicine was sharply differentiated from surgery, which was almost everywhere considered a degrading, menial craft, and the dissection of bodies was almost unheard of. Confronted with a sick person, the university-trained physician had little to go on but superstition. Bleeding was a common practice, especially in the case of wounds. Leeches were applied according to the time, the hour, the air, and other similar considerations. Medical theories were often grounded more in "logic" than in observation: "Some foods brought on good humours, and others, evil humours. For example, nasturtium, mustard, and garlic 16 produced reddish bile; lentils, cabbage and the meat of old goats and beeves begot black bile." Incantations, and quasi-religious rituals were thought to be effective: The physician to Edward II, who held a bachelor's degree in theology and a doctorate in medicine from Oxford, prescribed for toothache writing on the jaws of the patient, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen," or touching a needle to a caterpillar and then to the tooth. A frequent treatment for leprosy was a broth made of the flesh of a black snake caught in a dry land among stones. Such was the state of medical "science" at the time when witch-healers were persecuted for being practitioners of "magic". It was witches who developed an extensive understanding of bones and muscles, herbs and drugs, while physicians were still deriving their prognoses from astrology and alchemists were trying to turn lead into gold. So great was the witches' knowledge that in 1527, Paracelsus, considered the "father of modern medicine," burned his text on pharmaceuticals, confessing that he "had learned from the Sorceress all he knew." The Suppression of Women Healers The establishment of medicine as a profession, requiring university training, made it easy to bar women legally from practice. With few exceptions, the universities were closed to women (even to upper class women who could afford them), and licensing laws were established to prohibit all but university-trained doctors from practice. It was impossible to enforce the licensing laws consistently since there was only a handful of university-trained doctors compared to the great mass of lay healers. But the laws could be used selectively. Their first target was not the peasant healer, but the better off, literate woman healer who 17 competed for the same urban clientele as that of the university-trained doctors. Take, for example, the case of Jacoba Felicie, brought to trial in 1322 by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris, on charges of illegal practice. Jacoba was literate and had received some unspecified "special training" in medicine. That her patients were well off is evident from the fact that (as they testified in court) they had consulted well-known university-trained physicians before turning to her. The primary accusations brought against her were that . . .she would cure her patient of internal illness and wounds or of external abscesses. She would visit the sick assiduously and continue to examine the urine in the manner of physicians, feel the pulse, and touch the body and limbs. Six witnesses affirmed that Jacoba had cured them, even after numerous doctors had given up, and one patient declared that she was wiser in the art of surgery and medicine than any master physician or surgeon in Paris. But these testimonials were used 18 against her, for the charge was not that she was incompetent, but that—as a woman—she dared to cure at all. Along the same lines, English physicians sent a petition to Parliament bewailing the "worthless and presumptuous women who usurped the profession" and asking the imposition of fines and "long imprisonment" on any woman who attempted to "use the practyse of Fisyk." By the 14th century, the medical profession's campaign against urban, educated women healers was virtually complete throughout Europe. Male doctors had won a clear monopoly over the practice of medicine among the upper classes (except for obstetrics, which remained the province of female midwives even among the upper classes for another three centuries.) They were ready to take on a key role in the elimination of the great mass of female healers—the "witches." The partnership between Church, State and medical profession reached full bloom in the witch trials. The doctor was held up the medical "expert," giving an aura of science to the whole proceeding. He was asked to make judgments about whether certain women were witches and whether certain afflictions had been caused by witchcraft. The Malleus says: "And if it is asked how it is possible to distinguish whether an illness is caused by witchcraft or by some natural physical defect, we answer that the first [way] is by means of the judgement of doctors..." [Emphasis added]. In the witch-hunts, the Church explicitly legitimized the doctors' professionalism, denouncing non-professional healing as equivalent to heresy: "If a woman dare to cure without having studied she is a witch and must die." (Of course, there wasn't any way for a woman to study.) Finally, the witch craze provided a handy excuse for the doctor's failings in everyday practice: Anything he couldn't cure was obviously the result of sorcery. The distinction between "female" superstition and "male" medicine was made final by the very roles of the doctor and the witch at the trial. The trial in one stroke established the male physician on a moral and intellectual plane vastly above the female healer he was called to judge. It placed him on the side of God and Law, a professional on par with lawyers and theologians, while it placed her on the side of darkness, evil and magic. He owed his new status not to medical or scientific achievements of his own, but to the Church and State he served so well. The Aftermath Witch hunts did not eliminate the lower class woman healer, but they branded her forever as superstitious and possibly malevolent. 19 So thoroughly was she discredited among the emerging middle classes that in the 17th and 18th centuries it was possible for male practitioners to make serious inroads into that last preserve of female healing—midwifery. Nonprofessional male practitioners—"barber- surgeons"—led the assault in England, claiming technical superiority on the basis of their use of the obstetrical forceps. (The forceps were legally classified as a surgical instrument, and women were legally barred from surgical practice.) In the hands of the barber surgeons, obstetrical practice among the middle class was quickly transformed from a neighborly service into a lucrative business, which real physicians entered in force in the 18th century. Female midwives in England organized and charged the male intruders with commercialism and dangerous misuse of the forceps. But it was too late—the women were easily put down as ignorant "old wives" clinging to the superstitions of the past.

#### Once upon a time, the witches lived happily ever after free of the white man and his colonization. Even beyond traditional analysis, witchcraft prevailed in pre- capitalist societies in the West. But alas, the Church feared the power of the witch. Indigenous women were not witches, powerful and beautiful, but rather the wretched devil worshipper. SO, She was to be burned at the stake if she dare question the power of the Conquistadors. The white man cried witch but all they saw was sheer freedom apart from any power domination. However, through identification with local religion, indigenous groups have fought back against the genocidal notions of colonization and capitalism with their craft. Her deviance became a target, but it was also her ammunition.

Federici 04 [Silvia Federici (scholar, teacher, and activist from the radical autonomist feminist Marxist tradition), 2004, New York: Autonomedia *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, pg. 219-220//BWSKR]

The history of the body and the witchhut that I have presented is based on an assumption that is summed up by the reference to “Caliban and the Witch,” the characters of the Tempest symbolizing the American Indian’s resistance to colonization. The assumption is the continuity between the subjugation of the populations of the New World and that of people in Europe, women in particular, in the transition to capitalism. In both cases we have the forcible removal of entire communities from their land, large-scale impoverishment, the launching of “Christianizing” campaigns destroying people’s autonomy and communal relations. We also have a constant cross-fertilization whereby forms of repression that had been developed in the old world were transported to the New and then reimported into Europe. The differences should not be underestimated. By the 18th century, due to the flow of gold, silver, and other resources coming from the Americas into Europe, an international division of labor had taken shape that divided the new global proletariat by means of different class relations and systems of discipline, marking the beginning of often conflicting histories within the working class. But the similarities in the treatments to which the populations of Europe and the Americas were subjected are sufficient tot demonstrate the existence of one single logic governing the development of capitalism and the structural character of the atrocities perpetrated in this process. An outstanding example is the extension of the witch hunt to the American colonies. The persecution of women and men through the charge of witchcraft is a phenomenon that, in the past, was largely considered by historians to be limited to Europe. The only exception admitted to this rule were the Salem witch trials, which remain the focus of the scholarship on witch-hunting in the New World. It is now recognized, however, that the charge of devil-worshipping played a key function also in the colonization of the American aboriginal population. On this subject, two texts, in particular, must be mentioned that form the basis for my discussion in this chapter. The first is Irene Silverblatt's MOOII, SUII, (HId Witches (1987), a study of witch hunting and the redefinition of gender relations in Inca society and colonial Peru, which (to my knowledge) is the first in English to reconstruct the history of the Andean women persecuted as witches. The other is Luciano Parinetto's Streghe e Porere (1998), a series of essays that document the impact of witch-hunting in America on the witch trials in Europe, marred, however, by the author's insistence that the persecution of the witches was gender-neutral. Both these works demonstrate that also in the New World witch-hunting was a deliberate strategy used by the authorities to instill terror, destroy collective resistance, silence entire communities, and turn their members against each other. It was also a strategy of enclosure which, depending on the context, could be enclosure of land, bodies or social relations. Above all, as in Europe, witch-hunting was a means of dehumanization and as such the paradigmatic form of repression, serving to justify enslavement and genocide. Witch-hunting did not destroy the resistance of the colonized. Due primarily to the struggle of women, the connection of the American Indians with the land, the local religions and nature survived beyond the persecution providing, for more than five hundred years, a source of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance. This is extremely important for us, at a time when a renewed assault is being made on the resources and mode of existence of indigenous populations across the planet; for we need to rethink how the conquistadors strove to subdue those whom they colonized, and what enabled the latter to subvert this plan and, against the destruction of their social and physical universe, create a new historical reality.

#### Even as the rise of secularism increased, the witchhunt never ended; it was continued by the new dominating force- CAPITALISM. The witch-hunt was revitalized under a lens of the bourgeoise- the witch, as the other, disrupted order and worked independent from the means of production. She was a threat to be eradicated at all costs.

Federici 04 [Silvia Federici (scholar, teacher, and activist from the radical autonomist feminist Marxist tradition), 2004, New York: Autonomedia *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, pg. 141-142//BWSKR]

This is how we must read the attack against witchcraft and against that magical view of the world which, despite the efforts of the Church, had continued to prevail on a popuJar level through the Middle Ages. At the basis of magic was an animistic conception of nature that did not admit to any separation between matter and spirit, and thus imagined the cosmos as a living organism, populated by occult forces, where every element was viewed as a universe of signs and signatures, marking invisible affinities that had to be deciphered (Foucault 1970: 26-27), every element - herbs, plants, metals, and most of all the human body - hid virtues and powers peculiar to it. Thus,a variety of practices were designed to appropriate the secrets of nature and bend its powers to the human will. From palmistry to divination, from the use of charms to sympathetic healing, magic opened a vast number of possibilities. There was magic designed to win card games, to play unknown instruments, to become invisible, to win somebody's love, to gain immunity in war, to make children sleep (Thomas 1971; Wilson 2000). Eradicating these practices was a necessary condition for the capitalist rationalization of work, since magic appeared as an illicit form of power and an instrument to obtain what one wanted without work, that is, a refusal of work in action. "Magic kills industry," lamented Francis Bacon, admitting that nothing repelled him so much as the assumption that one could obtain results with a few idle expedients, rather than with the sweat of one's brow (Bacon 1870: 381) Magic ,moreover, rested upon a qualitative conception of space and time char precluded a regularization of the labor process. How could the new entrepreneurs impose regular work patterns on a proletariat anchored in the belief that there are lucky and unlucky days, that is, days on which one can travel and others on which one should not move from home, days on which to marry and others on which every enterprise should be cautiously avoided? Equally incompatible with the capitalist work-discipline was a conception of the cosmos that attributed special powers to the individual: the magnetic look, the power to make oneself invisible, to leave one's body. to chain the will of others by magical incantations. It would not be fruitful to investigate whether these powers were real or imaginary. It can be said that all precapitalist societies have believed in them and, in recent times, we have witnessed a revaluation of practices that, at the time we refer to, would have been condemned as witchcraft.

#### The capitalist state can try to conceal the witches, but they can never eliminate them. The modern day witches live within modern Paganism, a religion and community that prioritizes equality and inclusion through its entire theory. We must be ready to accept the narratives of disabled and otherized bodies, but we cannot use normative academic spaces as a starting point. Thus, the ROTB is to vote for the debater who best methodologically and performatively deconstructs normative power structures. The aff achieves this through telling the story of the witch’s fight against capitalism.

Bensefis 15 [Simcha Bensefis (queer poc witch), August 7th, 2015, Gods & Radicals Press, “The Importance of Intersectional Witchcraft, <https://godsandradicals.org/2015/08/07/on-the-importance-of-intersectional-witchcraft/> //BWSKR]

This week I performed a trabajito in the form of sigil writing and spell casting to protect the protestors who, at the time of this writing, are dangling themselves across the St. John’s Bridge and floating in kayaks below it to stop the Shell icebreaker ship Fennica from leaving it’s port and heading to the Arctic to assist in drilling for oil. Why did I do this? It’s because I feet obligated to be involved in the struggle to save our planet. Like I feel obligated as a person of color to march in Black Lives Matters protest. I use my education, my citizenship status, my economic privileges and my light-skin passing privileges to further various social justice causes. So why wouldn’t I use my craft? Many people are abhorrent to getting involved in politics. This is true for pagan communities too. I don’t mean this as a call out but I know many pagans and witches who have remained silent on issues of white supremacy, racism and homophobia even when it comes from other pagan communities. I am a witch, I am a person of color, and I am queer. I know what it feels like to be physically attacked, to be systemically oppressed, and to be silenced. The adage rings true once again for me: the personal is political. I believe that not taking a stance actually sides with the oppressor, or the systems in place that oppress us. There is no neutral ground here. Desmond Tutu was right. So for me, my witchcraft will be intersectional or it will be bullshit. But what does that mean? What is intersectionality? It is a feminist sociological theory as defined first by American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality’s basic premise is that a person’s experience cannot be understood separately, each category and context must be examined together to see the interactions of different identities. Basically, intersectionality studies the intersections of forms or systems of oppression, domination and discrimination. It is a cornerstone of critical theories work. So why is this important for pagans? Well, as a marginalized group of people we also exist along many other lines such as ability, national origin, class, sexual orientation, gender etc. Our experience as pagans intersects and is affected by our experience as other kinds of people as well. In some cases, we may reinforce dominant cultural norms within our own pagan circles. What do we do with intersectional theory? How can we use it with our craft, within our communities? How can it help us? Well, here is how it can look. One of my first and foremost uses of intersectional theory is education. I think that through education we can create more just community. This includes not only educating others but educating ourselves too. Don’t know much about classism or ableism? Do some research. You may be surprised in the ways in which we can oppress others without this awareness! My favorite method of education is critical conversations, in which I engage my self and others in sometimes-uncomfortable dialogue about oppression, privilege and identity. Direct action is also another way in which I use intersectionality in my life. I see my identities as an able-bodied witch as a boon to help further community justice. For me this has taken the shape of attending protests or marches and in my spiritual life through intentional ritual: I have utilized hexes to fight gentrification and created community circles to heal from the pain of systemic racism. I think it’s important to acknowledge some of the current issues in pagan communities where intersectionality can help us. One example is that of the Icelandic Ásatrú organization (Ásatrúarfélagið) being harassed via hate mail as well as their new temple being threatened with vandalism due to their support of LGBTQ people. This organization is acting from an intersectional center and should be lauded for their efforts. Another current issue is the policing people of color in pagan sects like Heathenism and Wicca: many argue that these are European based religions as justification for being unwelcoming to people of color. I counter that argument because if White pagans can worship the Egyptian pantheon, become Voudoun oungans and mambos, or use Native American smudging practices, then why can’t pagans of color worship Freya or become a Wiccan high priestess? This of course touches on the hotly debated subject of cultural appropriation in pagan communities. My take is, when in doubt (or if it definitively isn’t yours), don’t do it! For further reading I strongly suggest checking our Adrienne Keene’s blog Native Appropriations as well as the section on cultural appropriation in Bringing Race to the Table: Exploring Racism in the Pagan Community, edited by Crystal Blanton, Taylor Ellwood and Brandy Williams. Two other pesky plagues in our communities are nationalism and gender essentialism. Nationalism is a newer phenomenon to be sure, but it is against the spirit of paganism and community. It also perpetuates things like imperialism, militarism and Islamophobia. If you use Facebook, check out Druids United Against Islamaphobia, they are doing cool work in this area. Gender essentialism is the belief that the cisgender dichotomy (male and female) is innate and that there are intrinsic differences between the two genders. In some witchcraft schools of thought, there must be a man as priest and a woman as priestess to conduct ritual. This implies only men may invoke gods and only women may invoke goddesses. I find this limiting and I think it does not honor the diversity of gender expression. I believe gender essentialism is contrary to the spirit of paganism as well: many of our beloved gods and goddesses embody both male and female aspects, are something in between, or perhaps nothing of the sort! It is also vital to remember that throughout history transgender, third gender, gender nonconforming and queer people have been deeply involved in sacred rites. Nationalism and gender essentialism, like racism, homophobia and other oppressive systems, are contrary to a just world. So it is very important to critically examine and dismantle our participation in systems of oppression like nationalism and gender. If there is anything I wish for you to take from this essay, it is this: we can utilize intersectionality to create more justice within our communities. We can educate others, organize against oppression, and create new communities and ways of being. There is plenty of room at the table for all the diversity of people that exist in the world. Our communities are vast, growing and beautiful. We should dedicate ourselves to the cause of creating this affirming and kind justice. We can start right here, in our own circles. This is why intersectionality is important to witchcraft. Many of us have rights and redes to do no harm, so I leave with the question: What about systemic harm? Let’s do something about that!

#### Uncared for bodies are trapped in the witchhunt, always eradicated by the predominant system of capitalism. We must be able to reject normative power structures in order to take down the systems of oppression.

Hedva 16 [Johanna Hedva (writer and activist), May 10 2016, Guts Magazine, “In Defense of De-Persons” <http://gutsmagazine.ca/in/> //BWSKR]

In capitalism, the primary purpose of one’s life—both ideologically and materially—is to accumulate value. This is done through one’s labour, but of course primarily relies upon the exploitation of the labour of others and various resources of all kinds. As Silvia Federici has argued, such exploitation requires an accumulation of differences, beyond Marx’s “primitive accumulation” of natural and labour resources, to justify itself: self/other, white/black, male/female, society/nature, us/them, life/death. “The order that collects differences, the order that collects what Marx called labor still objectifying itself, is the order of governance,” write Moten and Harney. Governance was invented for that which is ungovernable—I’d like to suggest that it was invented for de-persons in their promiscuous lack of self-control (a feeling of detachment from, or unfamiliarity with, the world). Within such a system**, the person who is unable to labour because of their difference from the normatively ableist** well, is considered not only useless because they cannot work to accumulate value, but they also stand in direct opposition to two important tenets of capitalist ideology. The first is the premise that capitalist technology can take command of the body. As Carolyn Lazard has written: Capitalism objectifies the body. It views the body as an exploitable resource and attempts to render it indestructible and unstoppable with the aid of technology… And yet as advanced capitalism has deemed the physical body an obsolete, outdated tool, the body still remains. It continues to fail under capitalist conditions and gets pathologized as illness. The body is another inconvenience that must be enhanced and optimized. The second tenet the de-person antagonizes is the promise that neoliberalism can reduce everything, including the decision to survive, down to personal choice, a matter of willpower, and a problem the market can solve. In neoliberalism, “wellness” is a prevarication: it usually stands in for “life,” but life in terms of wealth, race, power, and, primarily, ability. Wellness in this context is paradoxically both an innate moral virtue and an individual’s own responsibility to maintain—and is soaked in ableism. Mia Mingus puts it perfectly: Ableism cuts across all of our movements because ableism dictates how bodies should function against a mythical norm—an able-bodied standard of white supremacy, heterosexism, sexism, economic exploitation, moral/religious beliefs, age, and ability.

#### Thus, we advocate for the acceptance, embodiment, and performance of the Pagan figure of the Disabled God/dess. She is the ever-loving Divine of Paganism. She is resurrected and re-incarnated into many different forms, including human forms, and we must recognize some of those forms she takes are disabled and have embodied experiences.

Walker 14 [Lucas Walker (San Francisco Theological Seminary, M.A.T.S. Religion & Psychology., Graduate Student), 2014, academia.edu, The Disabled God/dess: Reflections Upon Paganism, Christianity, and The Disabled Experience, https://www.academia.edu/11464495/The\_Disabled\_Goddess\_Reflections\_Upon\_Paganism\_Christianity\_and\_The\_Disabled\_Experience?auto=download//BWSKR]

The primary principle of magic is connection. The universe is a fluid, ever-changing energy pattern, not a collection of fixed and separate things. ... All is interwoven into the continuous fabric of being.”38 The Disabled Resurrected Messiah The core of Eiesland’s liberative theology is what one might call the shadowed center: the resurrected Jesus. When discussing Eiesland’s theological position with my Protestant seminary colleagues, we all agreed: of course, Jesus returns to Earth in His resurrection bearing the marks of His torture and death—holes in His hands and feet, and a spear-wound in His side.39 We just never use the word ‘disabled’ to confront (t)His reality. Eiesland reminded us that at the center of Christian theology stands a disabled survivor. However, that awareness requires a shift in interpretation of the entire mythos of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. For millennia, Jesus has been interpreted primarily as Lord and Conqueror: Savior.40 The idea of a disabled God may seem disrespectful to some,41 blasphemous to others. The Gospel reality though, is His disabled body. 37 Eiesland, Disabled God, 103. 38 Starhawk, The Spiral Dance, 155. 39 See all four Gospels for various versions of the story, but specifically John 20:24-29, wherein Jesus appears to the disciples in a closed room, passing through the door, but nonetheless fully physical, bearing the marks of His death and torture. 40 Luke 19:10; and the perennial American favorite hymn, “Battle Hymn of The Republic.” 41 As it does to some people when Jesus is (correctly) imaged as a brown-skinned man.Disability theology challenges the inherent bias of the abled/otherwise-privileged majority which seeks to cast the Divine in its own image. It recontextualizes the Christian mythos into the lived reality of all people, “... unmasking the ways in which theological inquiry has frequently instituted able-bodied experience as the theological norm.”42 The genius of Eiesland’s work is to point out the blunt visibility of disability at the heart of the Christian story. The Disabled Resurrected Goddess I believe it is safe to say there is no one ‘heart’ of the Pagan story, as there is to the Christian story. However, what disability theology has challenged Christianity to do—locate disability in its center as an indivisible element of the Divine involvement in the world—can similarly challenge the Pagan community. As priestesses and pastoral leaders, we must offer a call that Pagan communities, in their diversity, locate the heart of their own story, and see how disability is (already) present there. I believe we can safely state that embodiment of all beings is a central aspect to Paganism(s), each body bearing unique witness to the Divine. Thus, we unearth what is already present in the Divine story which we embody, and which we enact in ritual, when we locate disabled and other marginalized persons in the center of our faith. “Particularly and inclusively, we participate in the re-imaging of all creation through our bodies’ ambiguities, differences, limits, and joys.”43 We will discuss this further below. 42 Eiesland, Disabled God, 99. 43 Patterson, Barbara. “Redeemed Bodies: Fullness of Life,” Eiesland & Saliers, Human Disability and The Service of God, 140. Note, as in Eiesland and Creamer, the continuing emphasis that ‘limits’ are an integral feature of disabled experience —not something to be ignored or overcome. Page !18 of !26 ￼Paganism does not operate around a story of the Divine in hypostatic union with a human (the standard Christian position on Jesus’ full humanity and full divinity). However, myths of the death, un-bodying, and resurrection of the God/dess are pervasive: Sedna, whose fingers were amputated to create all ocean life;44 Inanna, resurrected from the underworld of Ereškigal;45 Osiris, dismembered and reassembled by Isis;46 and countless others across time and cultures. The concept is inherent even in non-theistic Paganism, since the annual seasons and evolutionary epochs are constantly recurring cycles of death, rebirth, resurrection, reincarnation.47 At the heart of the myths and tales which inform our tradition, it is important to remember, like Jesus for Christianity, the returned/resurrected body of the God/dess bears the marks of differentness and of trauma, borne out of Her love for us. Resurrection-return, including of the God/dess, is itself founded on the power of incarnation. Individuals, human or divine, are brought into reality, perhaps endlessly: incarnated embodiment of the human, as of the Divine. “In time, all ‘fixed’ things dissolve, only to coalesce again into new forms, new vehicles.”48 And in some of those incarnations, as in some cycles of the great stories of the God/dess from time immemorial, the body may quite literally be differently abled. Disabled. The disabled body, resurrected or reincarnated, but in any wise present in reality as we know it, drives our great myths and our lived reality. 44 Monaghan, Patricia. The Book of Goddesses & Heroines (St Paul MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993), 309-310. 45 Ibid, 113, 168-170. 46 Ibid, 176-178. 47 Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. “The Wheel of The Year,” The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft, Second Edition (New York: Checkmark Books for Facts On File, Inc., 1999), 355-358. 48 Starhawk, The Spiral Dance, 42. Page !19 of !26 From this theological place Pagans are free, as we always emphasize, to reinterpret and deepen those myths, as well as their attendant rituals and embedded theologies. A Pagan person who espouses a Disabled Goddess thus sees disabled realities as essential to our understanding of both our own religion and our selves in community.

#### Not all bodies are the same nor do they ever have the same experiences. Universality is cruelly optimistic and forces identity to be static. Thus, portrayal of the disabled Pagan God/dess is not just femme, She is non-binary, She is disabled, and She is the otherized body that Western capitalism despised – breaking the model of universality.

Hedva 16 [Johanna Hedva (writer and activist), May 10 2016, Guts Magazine, “In Defense of De-Persons” <http://gutsmagazine.ca/in/> //BWSKR]

“We must now collectively undertake a rewriting of knowledge as we know it.” —Sylvia Wynter I want to make a defence of “de-persons.” According to the American Psychiatric Association, I am one. That is, I have been diagnosed with depersonalization/derealization disorder (DP/DR for short), which means that I have “significant, persistent, or recurrent depersonalization (i.e., experiences of unreality or detachment from one’s mind, self, or body).” What that means is that, at various times, my body, self, environment, and the world itself do not feel real. There are many ways to talk about “personhood,” and many of them are discourses about what isn’t personhood, or more sinisterly, who does not qualify to be part of that category. DP/DR falls into this kind of discourse on personhood: the kind that defines who is not. The suffix “–hood” as it is attached to the word “person” is important here: “–hood” means “a state of condition or being.” So, when we’re talking about personhood, by definition, the state of the condition or the being of a person can be said to be different than the person. In other words, personhood is apart from the person, personhood is not the person. There is another way of looking at “–hood”: the Proto-Germanic etymology of “–hood” can literally be translated to mean “bright appearance.” I am moved by this at the same time that I’m antagonistic to what it arrogates—the implication that to “be” anything one must not only appear, but also be bright. Before I go further, I’d like to claim the soil that I stand on, so I can dig as deep as I can down into it. I am not a representative for a specific kind of experience; I am presentative of it. That is, I’m doing it right now, in front of you, and in front of myself. I am a proponent of aporia: thinking with holes in it, thinking that contradicts itself, that circles back, that reveals the knotting and fraying and re-weaving of an argument so that it contains all of its mistakes, so that you can see them, and so that I won’t forget how I got here. My address is from an affirmation of messiness, a testimony of and to disorder, an honouring of incomplete-ness. Anne Boyer writes: “It’s not just our errors we become brave about, but our projects’—and our own—incompleteness.” So here I am, in transit. If I’m going to wander around personhood, I’ve got to reckon with universality, because universality is the foundation for how we construct “persons.” It’s the bedrock beneath the patches of soil upon which all of us stand. Sara Ahmed explains it: The universal is a structure not an event. It is how those who are assembled are assembled. It is how an assembly becomes a universe… The universal is the promise of inclusion… Universalism is how some of us can enter the room. It is how that entry is narrated as magical; as progress. I am guilty of hoping for such magic. I’ve played the game of universalism, as we all have: it’s the main game in town. So this is me trying to get out of town. The concept of the “person” that has been defined, deployed, policed, and immured by universality is one that promises self-determined completeness, wholeness, and power. In other words, that which can be both mastered and the master. A defence of a de-person could be said to be an embodiment of incompleteness, a demonstration of bad thinking, a performance of un-comprehension, a refusal of mastery at all. Again, I’m trying to get out of town—I’m headed for the wilds.

**Debate has lost all practical meaning in national circuit settings. We viciously trade manufactured images of suffering for self-moralizing trophies. We exist in paradoxes; we play champion of the weak, but the oppressed can never speak in our debate ivory tower.** Fahey 16 [Sean Fahey (Debate Coach, VBI Writer/Instructor, PDI Research Fellow, Rebel Without A Cause, my favorite human), “An Open Letter to the LD Community: Are We Putting Our Pedagogical Money Where Our Mouth Is?” The Public Debate Initiative. November 25, 2016. <https://publicdebateinitiative.org/2016/11/25/an-open-letter-to-the-ld-community/>] SF

National circuit debate **often** only produces the privileged conjecture of what world the oppressed must desire if they think like the rest of us, and that approach disguises itself as a humanist gesture from elites to cover up their conscious use of narratives of real suffering to fulfill self-interested ends, which constitutes the total commodification of the suffering of the Other. Which is to say, the suffering of the Other is used as a strong persuasive tool to breed fear-based politics around a narrative of moral absolution to Western liberalism. In a society structured heavily by class lines, we continually consume images of the suffering to relieve deep-seated anxieties about our own social locations through displacement. This is why people watch mindless reality television and shows like *Narcos* or *Orange is the New Black*, which serve as disaster porn for an increasingly numbed audience. When heteronormative, sexist, and racist violence is what average people watch before they go to bed, how do we actually process impacts of structural violence and social death against groups of people who are largely not even present? In *The Illusion of the End*, sociologist Jean Baudrillard examines this frenzied devouring of suffering[[1]](#footnote-1): “We have long denounced the capitalistic, economic exploitation of the poverty of the 'other half of the world' [['autre monde]. We must today denounce the moral and sentimental exploitation of that poverty - charity cannibalism being worse than oppressive violence. The extraction and humanitarian reprocessing of a destitution, which has become the equivalent of oil deposits and gold mines. The extortion of the spectacle of poverty and, at the same time, of our charitable condescension: a worldwide appreciated surplus of fine sentiments and bad conscience. […] material exploitation is only there to extract that spiritual raw material that is the misery of peoples, which serves as psychological nourishment for the rich countries and media nourishment for our daily lives.” Without an authentic attempt to place the exploited in the center of our discussions, we commodify their real, lived experiences to moralistic ballot appeals that quarantine potentially liberatory discussion to a 45-minute discursive proxy wars where the only real goal is the accumulation of communal prestige. Fiat fuels our politics of exaggeration by establishing an undue assumption of reality behind the advocacies of debaters. This allows debaters to make claims like voting aff is a “try-or-die” situation for the marginalized people the aff speaks about, but after the round the aff doesn’t happen, no one is saved and those people may still ‘or-die’, but the judge and debater leave and feel like they’re done the ‘right’ thing.

#### Prefer the aff’s use of storytelling- stories of ableism and lived experiences are key to understanding the present and future of disability and order

Campbell 03 [Fiona Anne Kumari Campbell (B.L.S. (Hons) Latrobe; J.P. (Qual) Qld), 2003, Centre for Social Change Research, School of Humanities and Human Services, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, “THE GREAT DIVIDE: ABLEISM AND TECHNOLOGIES OF DISABILITY PRODUCTION,” pg 2-3//BWSKR]

The telling of stories is a significant medium for the communication of ideas and values of culture as well as the transmission of the ‘memory’ of a body of people; a form of anamnesis that makes connections between the past, present and the future. Stories help us make sense of the world and the way in which we interpret the ‘nature’ of things and interpolate ways of difference. Sometimes these stories are explicitly named and actively exchanged, whilst others are more mundane, somewhat insidious - passing on in a multitude of remnants, connected, disconnected, contrary and multiple, eventually taking on the status of being considered a naturalized state of affairs, part of an a priori objective form of social ordering. The focal concerns of this doctorate relate to matters of ordering, disorder and constitutional compartmentalization between the ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ (c.f. Canguilhem, 1978) and the ways that stories about wholeness, health, enhancement and perfection are told. The Great Divide is for all intents and purposes a story (stories) about the creation and production of a certain kind of difference known under the contemporary neologism ‘disability’. As such, the stories are not finished, they are ongoing, they are highly contestable and the scripts are therefore necessarily partial. I have not set out to provide stories that speak of coherency or indeed conspiracy. Rather, just as the neologism ‘disability’ is elusive and catheretic, patterns of disorder and incongruity become the order of the day. This dissertation will demonstrate that the neologism ‘disability’ easily evades capturing and enumeration. I am in agreement with Barbara Altman (2001) who argues that disability’s inherent complexity leaves such a2 phenomenon empirically indefinable unless such stories of ‘disability’ are reduced to a focus on a specific (contained) aspect of lived experience. Uncritical stories and namings of disability are in a deconstructed sense, stories of disability fabrication – stories that seem to objectively tell us how ‘disability’ and its kindred twin ‘impairment’ are to be framed and thus understood. Undeniably a significant amount of storytelling that masquerades as disability is not really about impairment or disablement at all – the ‘real’ story being told is about ableism – the ways our bodies should be or at least strive to become. The ableist story unfolds as a comportment of living from our early years as a child and into adulthood, creating a code that helps each of us to make sense of the contingencies and exigencies of living.

# Frontlines

## Overview

CI: debaters may read an embodied performance if the rotb is not self serving to their type of identity politics

Vote aff to encourage the performance of the Pagan God/dess, to perform the life of the Witch outside of the capitalist constraints of the debate space. This fluid identity is a rejection of the cruel optimism associated with forced universality onto static identity, that’s Hedva 16 and comes before all other offense on the flow because it is a question of being in the debate space, that’s Spurlock and Spanos. The role of the ballot is to vote for the debater that best methodologically and performatively deconstructs normative power structures, that’s Walker. Only the aff extinguishes the remnants of the capitalist witch-hunt on the disabled body explained in Federici in favor of the recognition of value of personhood outside of productivity, causing a rupture in the capitalist modes of debate enforced on the disabled body, so you affirm. storytelling is a good idea, so vote aff. The argument is good, and that’s the tole of the aff. my method is not rejecting the topic, my method is telling stories to reject the fake wokeness of debate. The aff allows for depersons to have a voice within our space. [topicality]- this means the aff comes before T, before we can understand what is fair and what isn’t, or to have ‘violations’ against each other, we must all be allowed to be ‘persons,’ but we aren’t.

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### T overview

Err aff on theory – the aff serves to critique the debate space as a whole which means that the K flow comes before you even consider evaluating the T flow because the K flow critiques the T flow along with the ableist and exclusionary structures of the debate so if anything, the aff turns T because it proves that the application of arbitrary rules to exclude the stories of the disenfranchised body in the debate space

The aff is also an impact turn to T for 2 reasons- 1. Your conception is based in the universalizable maxim of what is fair, which is what we critique. 2. You make debate too predictable which excludes those who are not predictable- also k2 authenticity- over transparency of arguments leads to scripting of social discussions- your not an avticist, you’re just reading a pre-scripted 2nr your coach wrote youThis means we control the internal internal link- w.out accurate view of how we exist in debate we cant have accurate policy discourse – the aff allows us to understand now we are complicit in the oppression we try to solve back, and make better informed args on how we execute policies. This o/w limits- we should prioritize being critically educated and better advocates over havin the same bland rounds about util and extinction

**Counter Interpretation**: The affirmative may read a position that is based in an embodied performance if the role of the ballot allows for an inclusive discussion of structural oppression vis-à-vis performance and methodology. To clarify, I can read a nontopical aff about embodied performance insofar as the role of the ballot is not self-serving to my form of identity politics. My rotb is deconstructing normative power structures. This allows for hella links, like onticide, deleuze, Baudrillard, antiblackness, fem, futurism, etc.

CI: the interp plus my aff

1. Solves predictable limits- its all affs on the topic plus my aff so you don’t have an infinite prep burden
2. ac is a good idea- if we win any risk of solvency then the ci solves
3. accessibility- the aff is good for queer and disabled debaters because it allows us to understand our indetities without attatchment to norms that oppress us. THIS O/W YOUR STANDARDS- the abuse you talk about is abt in the round, but the aff is key to getting queer/disabled debaters into the space itself.

Critical Education – nat circuit debate hides inaccessibility by saying that their affs or TVAs ‘solve’ for disability oppression but they ignore the real ableism, classism, racism, etc that occurs in our space

1. k2 fairness- accessibility controls the internal link. We cannot determine what is fair or what constitutes in round abuse if we cant be in the round because of anxiety or because tournaments are so expensive. Means the discourse of the ac o/w and precludes T.
2. k2 education for obvious reasons – the world of their interp is the violent norm that the aff critiques, it is a world of debate that they have only justified with warrants that are generally accessible, my arg is that we can not access that world of “fair dialogue” and “engagement”

also, err aff on time skew they get 6 min to collapse on T and 15 point the line by line but I only get 3 min to respond to T, another possible off, and extend the AC even if I get the last speech this isn’t lay the judge keeps a very good flow and could definitely pinpoint the one arg I missed because they had so much time for it

#### Princess Nokia uses her music to inspire young womxn, queer folx, poc, etc. It is a form of empowerment that she endorses. Her music is to make us all feel like we can be some punk rock motherfuckers. Its not that deep.

Madden 17 [Joe Madden, Nov 10 2017, NME, “Princess Nokia: the modern pop icon talks politics, female empowerment and debut album ‘1992 Deluxe,” https://www.nme.com/features/princess-nokia-interview-politics-feminism-hip-hop-2157872//BWSKR]

“Oh, I never fit in anywhere,” she shrugs. “I’m a loner. I don’t even have many friends. And I accept that. I enjoy what I enjoy, and yeah, sometimes I’m a skater, sometimes I’m a goth kid, I’m a raver, I’m a hippy, I’m a theatre nerd. I’m a weird kid. I’ve got so many personalities eatin’ me up inside. And I think that’s the basis of the music and my whole identity: not caring about not fitting in, y’know? When I was a kid, the coolest thing to me was being a Bowie kid. I’d see all these non-binary glam-rock kids – and I was like, I get that. The not fitting in. I mean, I’ve always been really rock’n’roll – that whole ‘balls out, middle fingers up’ thing – but you don’t have to look a certain way to fit a certain subculture. Whatever moves your heart is whatever moves your heart, right?” Frasqueri’s lairy rock’n’roll side fully manifests itself during live shows. “I’m influenced by TLC, MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, but I’m also punk, and I’ll play Korn and Slipknot during my sets. I spit out beer at people, I smoke weed, I show my butt. I’m smelly and my armpits are unshaven and my make-up’s all ruined – but that’s a part of the beauty. It’s messy. It’s kind of real, alternative, emo hip-hop. I show people how I feel; I cry onstage, I bleed onstage, I hit myself onstage, I get people up onstage. Anything goes.” These inclusive-but-anarchic performances have been a half a lifetime in the making. “When I was young, all I wanted was to have a show where young girls could mosh together and hold hands and take off their bras and just be so liberated on some real punk-rock s\*\*t. I want girls to feel free; I want them to feel like they’re empowered, liberated feminists. “There’s been an entire sisterhood cultivate itself around my music, at my shows all around the world, and it’s been really emotional for me,” she continues. “I had this one show in Dubai, and I stop a girl to say hi, and she starts crying, and I’m like, ‘Why are you crying?’ and she says, ‘You can say the things I’m not allowed to say. You can say things that my family would be really disappointed to hear from me. And it’s not that these things are wrong, it’s just they’re not accepted.’” Is she opening an avenue into hip-hop for women who might otherwise feel alienated from the genre, given its current propensity for grimly casual misogyny? “I do feel like I’ve helped bring certain women back into hip-hop, but I don’t allow misogyny or sexism to lower my perception of hip-hop. Because hip-hop is a beautiful thing. And there are still many wonderful people who I’ve met within that world, and so I don’t want to put hip-hop down. Sure, there are some things that I don’t agree with within hip-hop, and there are some things that I don’t relate to or would ever associate myself with – but I won’t talk bad about it.” Given Frasqueri’s assertion that she rarely fits in anywhere, does she feel a part of the hip-hop scene? Again, she pauses her make-up – this time to shoot me a look that suggests she’s mystified I’d even ask. “Yeah I’m part of it! To say that I’m not would negate my accomplishments and the recognition that I’ve had. I mean, I make ‘classic’ hip-hop, and yet it broke Top 10 charts. I got nominated for XXL magazine’s Freshman Class 2017. This is my first hip-hop project, but the fact that I’ve been so successful within the first year – just one year of putting this music out…” She’s a little exasperated, and I’m regretting my question.

## A2 coalitions args

####  The coven is the greatest coalition. Only the aff solves

Gachman 15 [Dina Gachman (Dina Gachman is the author of the book Brokenomics and her writing has appeared in Jezebel, Marie Claire, Salon, and Refinery29), October 20th 2015, Bustle, “6 Things You Didn’t Know About Real Witches In America,” <https://www.bustle.com/articles/118066-6-things-you-didnt-know-about-real-witches-in-america> //BWSKR]

The first sentence of Alex Mar’s new book Witches of America is the very cryptic, “Witches are gathering.” She goes on to explain, “They are gathering for the season of death, the days leading up to the high holiday of Samhain.” Yikes. But before you start conjuring images of stereotypical witches gathered around a cauldron and casting spells, rest assured that Witches of America goes much deeper than movies like The Craft or Harry Potter or TV shows like True Blood. Before she wrote the book, Mar, a filmmaker and writer, made the documentary American Mystic, which followed three people around the country who are members of different fringe religious sects. ADVERTISING inRead invented by Teads One of those people was a Pagan priestess and witch named Morpheus who was living off the grid in California. Mar was so intrigued by Morpheus and the world of witchcraft, she decided to immerse herself in American Paganism and find out for herself what the different belief systems that make up witchcraft in America were all about. In the book, Mar spends time with Morpheus and her followers, she travels to the Midwestern wilderness and the swamps of New Orleans, and she delves into the history of witchcraft, the roots of Wicca, and the origins of feminist covens in the U.S. The book is never judgmental or heavy-handed. It’s a fascinating look at witchcraft in the U.S., and it’s the perfect book to read in October (because Halloween is kind of like Samhain-lite). Here’s a look at six things the book reveals about real witches in America. There are plenty more where these came from… Witches of America by Alex Mar, $9, Amazon They Have Their Own Con It might not be as gigantic as Comic-Con, but come February, witches and Pagans from all over head to California for PantheaCon. It’s a “gathering of the tribes” that’s open to “Pagan, Heathen, Wiccan, Reconstructionist, Indigenous, spiritual and magical groups,” and it’s held at a DoubleTree hotel, of all places. If the image of witches hanging out at a DoubleTree Starbucks doesn’t sound spooky enough, remember that witches are people too. And as a rule, (most) humans love coffee. As Mar writes, the PantheaCon she attended had seminars about things like wheat weaving, Pagan 12-step recovery, and “reclaiming the slur ‘warlock.’” They Don’t Want To Recruit You Despite what you’ve seen on True Blood or in oodles of horror films, witches aren’t out there luring more witches into their evil lair. They take their practice seriously, and they only want people who are serious about the craft to join their circles (literally and metaphorically). Plus, the majority of witches in America aren’t casting evil spells. They’re trying to connect to something deeper out there in the universe. There are Feminist Covens Wicca and witchcraft have long been associated with goddess worship and feminism, even though there are plenty of men practicing witchcraft as well. Mar writes about a Hungarian refugee and second-generation psychic named Z who founded the first feminist witches’ coven in America: The Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, which inspired other covens like the Amelia Earhart Coven in New York, the Jane Addams Coven in Chicago, and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Coven in Orange County. There should be an Amy Schumer Coven #1, or an Oprah coven #26! Just kidding. Sort of. They Celebrate Getting Older If nothing else makes you want to dedicate yourself to the study and practice of witchcraft, this will: Many feminist covens think of females as maidens (the young ones, basically), mothers (those who have given birth to a human or to a creative endeavor), and crones (the elders). Now, in most parts of America, calling a woman a crone is just about the worst insult you could come up with, but many covens think of crones as wise elders who deserve your damn respect. It’s not a sad, pitiful time of life; it’s a time to be celebrated and to feel beautiful and powerful. There’s nothing scary about that. You Can Study With a High Priestess Via Skype Mar writes about her decision to train in Feri, which is a modern American witchcraft that “seeks to transform the individual through practices of ritual magic, meditation, and energy work.” She finds a teacher, but, like the Pagans drinking Starbucks at PantheaCon, the training isn’t what you might expect. “The fantasy of studying with a high priestess does not include billing through PayPal,” Mar writes. Her teacher is a human being after all, with kids and rent and mundane issues of her own. So yeah, Mar starts her training via email and Yahoo groups. And yes, Feri teachers charge. Black Candles, Daggers, and Swords Are a Thing And so are blood offerings, sex magic, and a desire to have your eyes eaten by crows rather than being buried in a coffin. Some of this is part of the drama of witchcraft (the corsets and daggers) and some (blood offerings, dead crows that come back to life) is a reminder of the darker side of witchcraft. As the Feri priestess Morpheus tells Mar, “We don't share the dominant culture’s terror of dead things.” But that’s not to say that some of the dark practices aren’t intended to bring about positive outcomes. Still, there is a darkness to all this, and Mar lets us in on it – the light and the dark, the creepy and the mundane.

1. Jean Baudrillard, “The Illusion of the End.” Stanford University Press. Stanford. 12/1/1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)