# Salem Witch Trials

#### Part 1 is the Fall From Heaven

You’ve heard of vampires, witches and the succubus. They are traditionally female monsters. They terrify you because they challenge the notion of male power: they can make a grown man scream. Well, female monsters are based off of the Hebrew myth of Lilith. Everyone knows the story of Adam and Eve, but they don’t know that before there was Eve, there was Lilith. Lilith was Adam’s original wife, created not from his rib, but at the same time by God from the same dust as Adam. Adam told Lilith that her job was to be subservient to him- he told her that it was her duty to lay beneath him, complacent. But Lilith knew the truth- she was created from the same Earth as Adam, at the same time, equal- and she left the Garden of Eden and refused to come back. So God created Eve from Adam’s rib, so that Eve could never repeat Lilith’s actions and claim she deserved equality. From this story, Lilith has been spun as a monster, a witch, and other forms of the Other in myths rooted in ancient Assyrian culture. She is a warning of the power of women, painted as evil to warn the danger of women forgetting their place.

Forget the picture of Lilith as a monster and know her as she really was: Lilith was the first feminist. The reason women became considered “witches” when they were powerful is based on Lilith’s story.

#### Part 2 is the Trial

Enter Salem, Massachusetts 1692. Picture Tituba. A slave at the home of the Parris family, Tituba was blamed when the two children became “afflicted with witchcraft”. She was one of few slaves not hung for being a witch, but was ostracized for her gender and race and her persecution started the hysteria in Salem. Women in Salem hung from the gallows while others all over the world were beheaded, burned at the stake, or left to rot in jail. The Salem Witch Trials are only one example of persecution of women as “witches” on the basis of being outspoken and refusing to conform. Witch trials have been a common theme in history as a method of quieting the outspoken or powerful woman.

#### Empirical and historical evidence proves witch trials were sexist. McLachlan and Swales:

Hugh V. McLachlan and J. K. Swales. Lord Hale, Witches and Rape. British Journal of Law and Society, Vol. 5, No. 2, (Winter 1978), pp. 251-261. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1409631>. CM

**Consider** first the interpretation of **witchcraft prosecutions as** a manifestation∂ of **intersexual hostility**. Geis maintains that: "The obvious misogynistic∂ character of witchcraft prosecutions is their most fundamental and∂ pronounced character."[4] Three types of evidence are presented to support∂ this claim. Firstly, it is claimed that **misogynic views** are expressed by∂ certain writers on witchcraft. Specifically, these writers argue that there is a∂ prima facie case for **expect**ing **witches to be female** rather than male **on the**∂ **grounds that females are morally and intellectually inferior.** Secondly, there∂ is a detailed account of the trial of two Lowestoft women accused of witchcraft.∂ In this account it is asserted that the judge (Lord Hale) brought to the∂ trial preconceived views about women. These views are said to have marred∂ his ability to evaluate evidence fairly and impartially in that trial. Thirdly,∂ Geis cites **the number of** males and **females** discovered to have been∂ **executed as suspected witches** by a particular English court and of the∂ number of males and females accused of being witches in an English∂ county: "C. L'Estrange Ewen found women to **outnumber men by 102 to 7**∂ **among persons executed** on the Home Circuit for witchcraft. Alan Macfarlane,∂ in his study of Essex county witchcraft prosecutions, discovered∂ that 266 of the 291 persons accused were women. Of the 25 men, eleven∂ were married to an accused woman or were named in a joint indictment∂ with a woman."[5]

#### History is filled with examples of women as monsters because it was a way for people to justify fearing their power- ancient myths were populated with female monsters to send a message to society. Creed:

Barbara Creed. *The Monstrous Feminine- Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis.* Routledge 1993. CM

As well as its expression in surrealist art (see illustrations), the myth of the *vagina denlala* is extremely prevalent. Despite local variations, the **myth** generally **states** that **women are terrifying** because they have teeth in their vaginas **and** that the women **must be tamed or** the teeth somehow removed or **softened** - usually **by a hero** figure - before intercourse can safely take place. **The witch**, of course, **is a familiar female monster**; she is invariably represented as an old, ugly crone who is capable of monstrous acts. **During** the European **witch trials** of recent history **she was accused of** the most hideous crimes: **cannibalism, murder,** castration of male victims, **and** the advent of **natural disasters** such as storms, fires and the plague. Most **societies** also **have myths about the female vampire**, a creature **who sucks the blood of helpless**, often willing, **victims** and transforms them into her own kind.∂ **Classical mythology**, too, **was populated with gendered monsters**, many of which were female. The Sirens of classical mythology were described as enormous birds with the heads of women. They used their magical songs to lure sailors close to shore in order to drive the sailors' ships into hidden reefs. The Sirens then ate their helpless victims. The Medusa and her two sisters also presented a terrifying sight. They had huge heads, their hair consisted of writhing serpents, their teeth were as long as boars' tusks and they flew through the air on golden wings. Men unfortunate enough to look upon the Medusa with her evil eye were immediately turned to stone. In classical times, pendants and other jewellery depicting the Medusa's frightening appearance were frequently worn to ward off evil spirits, and war- riors painted the female genitals on their shields in order to terrify the enemy. Freud takes up this point in his short essay, 'Medusa's head':∂ If Medusa's head takes the place of a representation of the female genitals, or rather if it isolates their horrifying effects from their pleasure-giving ones, it may be recalled that displaying the genitals is familiar in other connections as an apotropaic act. What arouses horror in oneself will produce the same effect upon the enemy against whom one is seeking to defend oneself. We read in Rabelais of how the Devil took flight when the woman showed him her vulva.∂ (p. 274)∂ It is not by accident that Freud linked the sight of the Medusa to the equally horrifying sight of the mother's genitals, for **the concept of the monstrous- feminine**, as constructed **within** by **a patriarchal** and phallocentric **ideology,** is related intimately to the problem of sexual difference and castration. If we accept Freud's interpretation that the 'Medusa's head takes the place of a representation of the female genitals', we can see that the Medusan myth **is** mediated by **a narrative about the *difference* of female sexuality** as a difference which is grounded in monstrousness and which invokes castration anxiety in the male spectator. 'The sight of the Medusa's∂ head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone.' The irony of this was not lost on Freud, who pointed out that becoming stiff also means having an erection. 'Thus in the original situation it offers consolation to the spectator: he is still in possession of a penis, and the stiffening reassures him of the fact' (ibid., 273). One wonders if the experience of horror - of viewing the horror film - causes similar alterations in the body of the modern male spectator. And what of other phrases that are used by both male and female viewers- phrases such as: 'It scared the shit out of me'; 'It made me feel sick'; 'It gave me the creeps'? What is the relationship between physical states, bodily wastes (even if metaphoric ones) and the horrific - in particular, the monstrous-feminine?

These “monsters” and “witches” are based off of the identity of Lilith, but many historians are beginning to acknowledge that the feminine monsters occur because men fear powerful women. Painting them as monsters allowed men in power to ostracize them to avoid being undermined or questioned. Wells:

Kimberly Ann Wells, Screaming, Flying and Laughing: Magical Feminism’s Witches in Contemporary Film, Television, and Novels. May 2007. CM

**Lilith is** known as **a perpetually disobedient female figure.** **As Adam’s first wife, “refusing to assume a subservient role to Adam** during sexual intercourse and so deserting him,” (Wikipedia) **she has become associated with feminism.** **She is seen as demanding equality** in being created at the same moment in the J1 strand of Genesis (Baring Cashford 510). Baring and Cashford claim that “what ‘went wrong’ with the first [marriage] was obviously Lilith’s equality and independence” (511). Baring and Cashford argue that Lilith, “in Hebrew myth, gathered around her all the associations of night and death without repose” (520). Lilith is also Biblically credited as being the mother of demons and succubi, so her appearance in a narrative about vampires is a no- brainer. With her name having been translated as lamia or “a witch who steals children” **there is also** very much **a historical precedent for associating Lilith with witches,** as Baring and Cashford explain: “**In** the same **imagery** as was **employed for Lilith**, **thousands were accused of** copulating with demons, killing infants and seducing men– of **being**, in a word, **witches**” (512). **Lilith shows up** so much **in** positive and negative **representations of female sexuality, rebellion, and power because her refusal to submit to Adam and even to a patriarchal God casts her as a figure that is** much more **feminist** than the more submissive Eve. **In searching for female figures** that do not cast women as weak and submissive, **artists are drawn to Lilith** again and again **as an expression of female power and resistance to patriarchy.**

#### Part 3 is the Nullification

The judges are the jury and we are the representations of women seeking the names of former witches cleared. Retrospectively affirm the nullification of the juries that hung, burned and beheaded women- allow women to take back the identity of the witch as a liberation strategy.

#### The precedent is there- jury nullification was used to stop the Salem Witch Trials.

Frank Parlato. Jury Nullification Has Long History of Righting Wrong Laws. Niagara Falls Reporter. June 5 2012. <http://www.niagarafallsreporter.com/Stories/2012/June5/FrankParlatoJuryNullification.html>. CM

The Salem witch trials began in 1692. **After** a splendid year-long government conviction rate and **the execution of 33 witches, in May, 1693, juries** decided the court of Oyer and Terminer had gone too far. They **nullified the witchcraft law with 52 consecutive hung juries and/or acquittals**. Frustrated, **prosecutors ceased bringing cases to trial. Juries made it impossible to** hang or otherwise **put to death known witches in Salem.**

#### Take this nullification to the next step. The aff is a symbolic nullification of the gender roles that affect women inside and out of the debate space. Embracing the monstrous is a liberation strategy.

#### Forget the notion of the witch as the persecuted- the witch is something to be feared. I subvert the concept of being “monstrous” and embrace it as a symbol of strength. The narrative of the monster allows women to take back their identity and reject the societal constructs that tell them to be quiet. Ruberg:

Bonnie Ruberg. Girl Power: Women Monsters and Monstrous Women. 1 November 2005. Escapist Magazine. <http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/issues/issue_17/105-Women-Monsters-and-Monstrous-Women.4> CM

**Monsters**, by definition, **are altered human beings**. Zombies, for example, fit this mold nicely, as do ghosts and vampires. **Women monsters**, as seen above, **have been altered not just physically, but also ideologically**. They've changed themselves **by stepping outside the accepted image of complacent womanhood**. Yet they possess the remnants of humanity. **We**, in turn, **see ourselves in the monsters. We begin to understand our own monstrousness, our own departure from the "human**."∂ **Women** gamers **are** in this way also **monsters.** We - indeed, all **intelligent, independent females** - **break the accepted standards of womanhood**. We have defamed our traditional femininity by dabbling in a supposedly male world, that of video games. As many men would readily agree, we have made ourselves a monstrosity. In hopes of fighting this image, **women** have struggled **for years** to convince the gaming industry of our true humanity; they **have sought out power and respect**.∂ Women, of course, have a right to want strong female characters in the games they play. But maybe they've been looking in the wrong places. **What better role model than the monster**, whose ability to incite fear is so powerful it reaches out from the game? In the parallel worlds of survival horror and the gaming industry, both dotted with damsels and heroines, perhaps **it's time to turn and embrace ourselves, the monsters.**

#### Witchcraft has become a symbol of feminism and female power- taking back the identity of the monstrous that was created to otherize women. Wells:

Kimberly Ann Wells, Screaming, Flying and Laughing: Magical Feminism’s Witches in Contemporary Film, Television, and Novels. May 2007. CM

In her 1984 New York Times review of John Updike’s Witches of Eastwick, Margaret Atwood suggests “What a culture has to say about witchcraft, whether in jest∂ or in earnest, has a lot to do with its views of sexuality and power, and especially with∂ the apportioning of powers between the sexes. **The witches were burned** not because∂ 7∂ they were pitied but **because they were feared**” (3 emphasis mine). Atwood’s∂ comments illustrate that **in examining witches, we participate in the feminist project of**∂ **studying** the “apportioning of powers between the sexes”– how we understand the∂ **connections between gender and power** today, and that much of the current struggle∂ with contemporary women understanding and embracing feminism has to do with fear∂ of change. That old and ugly women are bad witches and beautiful women are good∂ witches reveals the various ways and understandings of witches in fiction provides, as∂ well, an understanding of women within the culture that produces that fiction.∂ Interestingly, Anne Llewelyn Barstow’s pivotal study of real women accused as∂ witches in the sixteenth century argues that the fact “that European **women** first∂ emerged into full legal adulthood as witches, that they were first accorded independent∂ legal status in order to be **prosecuted for witchcraft, indicates** both **their vulnerability**∂ **and** the level of **antifeminism in** modern European **society**” (41). This **emergence of**∂ **women as legal entity and witch**, at the same historical moment, also **shows how**∂ strongly **connected the concept of independent woman and** our modern concept of∂ **witch has been** ever since. **Both feminist and witch are scapegoated as evil**, with evil∂ meaning **those who endanger society’s family values** and therefore who **must be**∂ **punished for exercising powers that patriarchy defines as more rightly belonging to**∂ **men**: independence, outspoken belief in oneself, sexual freedom, education, and choice∂ in occupation. **Both groups are women who struggle with patriarchy and power**. Susan∂ 8∂ Faludi traced a backlash in the late 1980s that still seems to grow stronger, partly∂ because while many people believe in the principals of feminism, **many are afraid to**∂ **identify as feminists for fear of that backlash and corresponding “witchhunt**,”∂ represented by the widespread use of denigrating terms like “feminazi” **among** certain∂ **conservative groups**.

This intersectional liberation strategy focuses on a reorientation of power. We deem it magical because it crosses the multiplicities of power that interact with oppression- this allows the witch to be more than a white feminist movement. The aff embraces any form of magic that focuses on a positive reinterpretation of power relations, as many women, people of color, and other identities have done in the past through a third wave feminist sexual liberation. Prude-Hunt:

Alisa Prude-Hunt. The Politics of Sluttiness (Can You Afford to be a Ho?). <http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/docs/IO/39266/prudeafford.pdf> CM

**The way** in which **hooks went about having sex** with people **was** arguably **a political act**. In **resisting the conventions of** male and female **sexuality**, she felt that she **was reclaiming her sexual autonomy.** I think hooks feels that **this defiance of convention and stereotype is the key to** the **sexual liberation of** white women and **women** of color alike. For women to liberate themselves from the bounds of the “status quo,” **the white woman’s rejection of her sexuality as “pure”** and bordering on childlike **is just as essential as the black woman’s rejection of her role as a “ho**” or a “mammy.” And we’re left to assume that **hooks** intentionally **sought** out sexual **partners she knew would respect her** for who she was, as a woman of color, and not a caricature of black womanhood. hooks’s **demand for respect defies** not only **sexism**, but racism as well. In the same way I’d originally overlooked the key word, assertive, in hooks’s description of a formerly “sexually assertive” Madonna, I’d completely ignored the way in which she engaged with sex in her own life (“Power” 10). **The how** really, really **matters**.∂ Such **pointed and confrontational analyses embody** hooks’s **demand for the acknowledgement of** black **women’s humanity**. In order for a black woman to even begin to claim her sexuality, she must first be humanized. While hooks shows us through her own sexual experiences that sexual liberation is possible for a black woman, she makes it very clear that no sexual agency can be reclaimed so easily if black women are not afforded the same spectrum of sexual identity and expression as white women are.∂ An undertone in hooks’s work is a coming to terms with the notion that most sex comes with political responsibility. Through her critical analyses of contemporary society, **hooks seeks for all women to understand** **the power dynamics** that our culture has **fused to sex,** lest we fall victim to a trap of exploitation and a reinforcement of stereotypes thinly disguised as progressive. If we do not see through this veil, hooks warns, we become Madonnas fooled into thinking we’re Ellen Willises, and Whitney Houstons thinking we’re Audre Lordes.∂ But most important, perhaps, to hooks’s work is a **striving towards an inclusive feminism,** a want to **liberate all women from a society that restricts the freedom of sexual identity and empowerment**. This map of hooks’s mind fills me with the same sense of “promise and possibility,” the same “vision of freedom” that the image of a black Madonna evoked in her (10). When reading hooks’s work, the confident college girl I imagine her to have been is brought to life, the demand of her own agency evoked in every word she writes.

#### My advocacy opens the debate space to new voices and challenges the patriarchal order that exists in academic activities. Affirm the metaphor of the witch to deconstruct the negativity that surrounds the notion of being a “monster”- I do not want to fit in because it is the things that make me different that make me powerful.

#### Part Three is Affirming Magic

#### The role of the ballot is to affirm the becoming of sorceresses- this is the only way to break down static identities which key to solving oppression. Ramey:

Joshua Delpech-Ramey. Deleuze, Guattari, and The Politics of Sorcery. SubStance Vol. 39, No. 1, Issue 121: Spiritual Politics After Deleuze (2010) pp. 8-23. University of Wisconsin Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40801056>. CM

Becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, is neither the immanent mode of existence ultimately transcended by the Platonic Ideas in which they participate, nor is it the form of oppositional mediation in which Hegel saw the reason of history’s ruse. “**Becomings**,” generally written in the agrammatical plural, **are the multiplicity of experiential states in which lines are blurred** **between human consciousness** and animal awareness, between biopsychic life and the nature of matter itself. What the authors have in mind, in general, are processes of transformation that issue in strange, uncanny, or even fantastic hybrids: the stuff of fictions, and science fictions, that tell of inconceivable life forms, the “eldritch feralities” of H.P. Lovecraft’s lore. But becomings abound also at the interstices of speciation and phylogenetic variation, even when such mutants exists only in rumors of werewolves, the legends of vampires, tales of she-wolves and ape-men. For Deleuze and Guattari, becomings accrue at the vanishing point where history and legend meet, at the twilit horizon where monstrosities of fiction reveal dynamics that translate the most profound facts of biopsychic life. **In becomings, borders between the sexes and the species, groups and individuals, matter and mind grow indiscernible, imperceptible.** Yet such becomings are not vague, and involve definite thresholds. Deleuze and Guattari in fact identify a *series* of thresholds in becoming: becoming- woman, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, becoming-intense. As one can observe in the ordering of this series, **the movement of becoming is** quite specific: it is **a movement *away* from the stereotypically “male” ego, fixated on its isolated body, paranoid about its fragile identity**, us- ing its reason to defend itself against the world, ***toward* the more supple** and supine flesh and less dualistic **mind of “woman,**” *further* toward the instinctual immanence of the animal, *into* an inhabitation of the depths of vibrational and energetic patterns verging on the white noise of chaos. In literature and anthropology, **reports abound of *sorcerers* who are capable of traversing and operating upon this line of increasing intensity through which the human being ecstatically finds itself capable of powers and affects outside the normal range.**