Spellbound: The Significance of Spell Books in the Depiction of Witchcraft on Screen.

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Witches (and their male counterparts, warlocks) are unique among horror monsters in that they exist more commonly outside the genre than in it. Along with classic horror films such as *Suspiria*, *Rosemary's Baby,* and *Black Sunday*, the witch also appears frequently in adaptations of secondary-world fantasy stories (*The Wizard of Oz*), romances (*Practical Magic*), comedies (*Bewitched*), fairy tales (*Snow White*), coming-of-age stories (*Sabrina the Teenage Witch*), and historical dramas (*Witchfinder General*). This generic hybridity of witches reflects the complexity of the witch archetype: the ambivalent figures who can occupy both heroic and monstrous spaces, and whose use of magic can be either beneficial or malevolent. Many texts that fall outside the horror genre while remaining in the realm of the fantastic—the Oz and Harry Potter stories for example—present both types of witches, even pitting them against one another.[1] A significant number of witch films—such as *Bell, Book, and Candle* and *The Witch*—operate, however, in the mode of magical realism, presenting witchcraft as a magical intervention in an apparently non-supernatural world.

The diversity of ways in which witchcraft is practiced, and magic is depicted, on screen reflects the diversity of witches and settings. Magical powers can be innate or learned, and the means of exercising them vary from the creation of physical objects such as potions and amulets, through the combination of words and gestures into spells, to the summoning of demons. Spell books and grimoires (an equally potent but less-familiar type of magical text) figure prominently in the onscreen activities of witches, but their narrative roles, like the identities of the witches they serve, are complex and varied. They may function as a critical aid to learning for neophyte

witches, a repository of knowledge for experienced witches, a manual that establishes the rules by which the magical world operates, and a tool that grants access to lost, proscribed, or otherwise inaccessible magical knowledge.

A spell book, for the purposes of this essay, is a magical recipe book: a collection of instructions on how to perform spells, including recipes for potions, formulas for incantations, and directions for conducting rituals. A grimoire, also featured in many of the texts discussed here, is more expansive than a spell book. It contains history, context, and discourses on the principles of magic as well as instructions on how to perform spells. Both, in varying ways, are "repositories of knowledge that arms people against evil spirits and witches, heal their illnesses, fulfill their sexual desires, divine and alter their destiny, and much else besides."[2] Despite the differences in their contents, however, there is a consistency in the aesthetic appearance of spell books and grimoires on screen. Both are presented as aged heirlooms creating a link with the past, and existing mythology, even in contemporary representations. The spell book in *Hocus* Pocus, for example, is an enchanted object, bound with leather, with a moving eye on the cover. It has agency and responds when it is summoned, and glows with energy when opened. The spell book in *The Witches of Eastwick,* titled *Maleficia*, is kept in a velvet lined glass case with a silver dagger, framed like a sacred object on an altar. As well as an instruction manual, the spell book can be a magical object in its own right. It may speak, glow, animate or burst into flames to demonstrate its magical qualities. **<Image 1: Four** Spell Books>

The four screen texts considered here as case studies illustrate the diversity of types of magic and spell books depicted on screen, and—because they feature both witches and warlocks (male witches)—reveal the ways in which depictions of witchcraft are gendered onscreen In *Charmed*, the spell book is a plot device, and the means by which the witches' power is revealed;

in *The Craft*, spell books are a crucial part in the learning of magical practice; in *The Covenant*, the grimoire is a historical narrative and link with the past; and in *Warlock*, a legendary grimoire is a key which unlocks a higher power. The onscreen practice of witchcraft is varied and fluid however, and unlike traditional forms of religion, there is no central text where the rules are written down and no hierarchical body to regulate and organize. This essay, then, is an exploration of the ways in which cinematic depictions of spell books and grimoires reflect that complexity and diversity.

Historical Context

Many films featuring witches create a clear link to the past and ground their narratives in the real-life history of witchcraft. *Hocus Pocus* and *Warlock*, for example, open with prologues set in at the time of the seventeenth-century witch trials, while in *The Covenant,* the witches are descended from the original witches of Salem. History functions, however, as more than just scaffolding on which these films erect their plots. Modern depictions of witchcraft on screen also draw heavily on complex and contested historical beliefs about witches and their practices.

The Practice of Witchcraft

The most important aspect of the depiction of a spell book on screen is the witch who uses it. It is often the act of using a spell book and performing spells that separates the witch from other characters with supernatural powers, such as seers, psychics, and telekinetics. The term "witchcraft" traditionally covers a number of different practices that were traditionally split into two broad areas: maleficia and diabolism (Wicca, discussed later, is a twentieth-century development, albeit one rooted in ancient pagan traditions). Maleficia, as it was understood in

the medieval and early modern eras, could be practiced with either good or evil intent, and its spells generally had a clear purpose. It was "folk magic," designed to solve specific problems by manipulating the natural world (including the human body) in specific, predictable ways. It presupposed that a web of hidden forces, connections, and energies lay beneath the visible surface of the world, and that those with knowledge of it could use that knowledge to reshape the world around them. Practices associated with maleficia included the preparation of medicinal potions, incantations and the wearing of amulets and talismans.

Diabolism involves worshiping and making a pact with the Devil, and female witches believed to practice it were frequently accused of sexual liaisons with the Prince of Darkness. Fears about witches—predicated on a religious worldview shaped by fear of the Devil, demons and damnation—centered on this aspect of witchcraft, and were heightened by religious leaders' perception that the established Church was vulnerable to disruption. The Church's anxieties were also heightened by the obvious parallels between religion and witchcraft: a belief in higher powers and paranormal events, and an emphasis on ceremony and ritual. Incantations parallel prayers and blessings, blood rituals evoke the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the "black mass" of diabolism is a conscious inversion of the traditional Catholic mass. The era of the witch trials was, not coincidentally, a time of religious schisms and reformations in Europe and America. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), a guide to identifying witches, was designed to help users find evidence of diabolism and (in so doing) to create a plausible theological model of the Devil's activity on earth. As a religious document sanctioned by the Catholic Church, it is primarily concerned with the practice of diabolic witchcraft rather than folk magic.

References to spell books are rare in historical documents about witches. One obvious reason for this is that these documents were composed in an era before literacy was

commonplace, particularly among women, and books were scarce and expensive. The details of magical practice would have been passed on, like other craft knowledge, by oral tradition rather than in writing. *The Malleus Maleficarum* refers to spells that witches perform and ways of remedying them but there is no direct reference to the books or grimoires that contain these spells. Wicca, a modern form of pagan witchcraft distinct from that which obsessed early modern religious leaders, is—in sharp contrast—centered on a particular text. It originated in the 1950s in England, spurred by Gerald Gardner's claims that, in 1939, he had discovered a secret pagan coven in the New Forest and that its members had given him *The Book of Shadows*, a grimoire detailing their practices and rituals, which had been handed down through generations. The *Book of Shadows* has become absorbed into modern Wiccan mythology, and Wicca in turn promoted what Owen Davies has described as "a new, positive image of the witch . . . one that was empowering and defiant."[3]

Witches and Gender

Three-quarters of those executed for witchcraft in seventeenth-century Europe and North America were women, but what Hans Peter Broedel calls "the stereotype of the female witch" existed in Western culture well before the age of witch trials.[4] The majority of medieval and early modern texts depict witches as female, and references to them reach back to classical antiquity. Traditionally seen as a figure of horror and a threat to society, the witch has, in modern times, also been embraced as an icon of women's empowerment and defiance. Feminist scholars read the witch hunts of the early modern era as a religiously motivated attack on women—one grounded in misogyny, fear of women wielding power over men, and a lack of understanding of the female body. Modern Wicca—like traditional witchcraft, overwhelmingly

practiced by women—represents a reaction against this traditional, misogynistic image of witches. It gained popularity throughout the 1960s and 1970s as a form of alternate spirituality—free of the patriarchal and hierarchical elements of traditional churches—and as part of a movement described sometimes as "magical feminism." Practitioners of Wicca embrace the title of "witch" as an empowering feminist archetype imbued with agency and wisdom, but—particularly when writing for the general public—take pains to distance themselves from its traditional association with diabolism and the use of folk-magic for malevolent purposes.

The witch's historical status as a shifting signifier—one whose mythology encompasses notions of monstrosity, abjection and fear as well as empowerment and liberation—is reflected in the evolution of the witch in horror and, especially, on screen. Barbara Creed reads the traditional witch of horror—grotesque, malevolent, and powerful—as an archetype of the monstrous-feminine. Linking representations of witches on screen to religious frameworks of abjection, she argues that the witch's monstrosity is rooted in her femaleness and fears of women's "imaginary powers of castration."[5] Modern depictions of witches, influenced by Wicca and shaped by Western culture's growing acceptance of women's agency, are more complex. Women with the ability to reshape the world, and a willingness to wield it, are no longer seen as innately monstrous or inherently malevolent.

Witches on Screen

Until recently in British and American popular culture, the witch-as-heroine featured mainly in comedies, romances, and teen dramas, while the witch-as-monster inhabited the realm of horror, fantasy, and fairy tales. Witches of either type remained relatively rare on screen, however, until witches-as-monsters—absent from the classic Universal monster movies of the

1930s and ‘40s—began to appear in British-made films of the 1960s and ‘70s. Whether outright horror stories (like *The Blood on Satan’s Claw* [1971]) or historical dramas with horror overtones (like *Witchfinder General* [1968]) the British witch film—even those set in the present—referenced early-modern campaigns against witches.

Horror films that specifically use the witch trials as a reference point tend to represent witches as victims of zealous witchhunters rather than as monsters. A common narrative—used in *Black Sunday* (1960), *Mark of the Witch* (1970), and *Necromancy* (1972), among other films—involves a witch returning from the past to seek vengeance for her torture and persecution. Presenting witches as victims of a sadistic patriarchy gave the films a veneer of social relevance during an era of emergent feminism and—combined with the loosening of censorship restrictions—gave filmmakers an opportunity to show female witches bound, tortured, and partially nude on screen. These dynamics created films where, as Creed notes, “emphasis… tended to be more on the witch-hunt or the male leader of the coven than on the witch,”[6] and where witches were more sexualized than overtly monstrous. As Leon Hunt puts it “by the late 1960s, one thing was clear: the occult = sex.”[7]

Rosemary’s Baby (1968), one of the first major American horror films to feature witches, positions them as unambiguously monstrous. They use both traditional maleficia and diabolism to arrange the birth of the Antichrist, and Rosemary’s husband makes a demonic pact with the witches in the apartment next door, offering them his wife Rosemary in exchange for career success. Rosemary is raped by the Devil and throughout her pregnancy, the coven uses folk magic on to imprison her in her apartment building and control every aspect of her life. She is given an amulet to wear, potions to drink, the coven performs incantations and ceremonies around her. The coven consists of both men and women, but they use their magic for specifically

anti-feminist ends: imprisoning Rosemary in her home, robbing her of all agency, and using her body to provide their (male) master with a (male) heir.

Spell Books on Screen

Whether they depicted witches as fully formed monsters or hapless victims of a ruthless patriarchy, these films rarely featured spell books or grimoires. Innocents unjustly accused of witchcraft had no need of them, and tales of monstrous witches tended to focus on the effects of magic rather than the process of practicing it. The rising popularity of witches on both large and small screens in the 1990s changed this equation. *The Craft, Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Little Witches* all depicted teenage girls in the early stages of experimenting with witchcraft, using spell books and grimoires to access and use (not always wisely) powers that would otherwise be beyond their grasp. Witchcraft in these texts is linked—perhaps due to the growing prominence of Wicca and the resulting redefinition of the witch archetype—with self-empowerment and teenage rebellion, and they depict a range of magical practices. In them, and in onscreen texts that followed, the spell book comes into its own.

Charmed: The Book of Shadows

The Book of Shadows is central to the narrative of *Charmed* (1998-2006), a television series about three sisters—Prue, Piper, and Phoebe Halliwell—who discover a copy in their grandmother's house after she dies. It calls them to the attic and it reveals that, like their mother and grandmother before them, they come from a long line of witches and have innate magical powers. Over the first few episodes, a series of events convince them that what the book says is true. Each sister has a natural power—Prue is telekinetic, Piper can freeze time, and Phoebe can

see the future—but to perform specific spells, they must come together and invoke the "power of three." Working in concert, they are the most powerful witches of their generation. The first episode intercuts between learning about the sisters and the police investigation into a serial killer who is targeting witches. The killer turns out to be a warlock who wants to steal his victims' powers and who, naturally, finds the sisters an irresistible target. This heroine/victim dynamic structures the show's narrative for its entire eight-season run. The sisters' magic makes them powerful, but also makes them targets (primarily of men and male demons).

Beyond revealing the sisters' true nature to them in the first episode, *The Book of Shadows* plays a central role in their practice of magic and their interactions with the supernatural world. It is a repository of spells, but also a compendium of information about the depth and breadth of the supernatural world, compiled by the generations of Halliwell witches who came before and so, also provides a tangible connection to their heritage. Having become aware of the existence of magic and their ability to practice it only in adulthood, the sisters are obliged to learn about magic on an ad hoc basis. With their mother and grandmother no longer available to guide them, the sisters are particularly reliant on the book. It gives them access to the collected wisdom of their ancestors, enabling them to use their magic with a degree of sophistication they would never be able to achieve on their own. When their natural power makes them targets for demons, monsters, and other dark forces, it also provides valuable foreknowledge of what their enemies are capable of and how they can be defeated.

The book is not simply a book, however, but a powerful magical object in its own right. When the sisters reach for it on any given occasion it may glow, snap closed, or move across the table or floor of its own volition. It appears, at times, to have both sentience and agency. Its evident powers make it a target for those who practice magic with malevolent intent, reinforcing

the sisters' dual status as empowered heroines and perpetually endangered victims. *The Book of Shadows* makes it possible for centuries of magical knowledge to be reliably transmitted from person to person, across centuries

The multigenerational nature of the book also embodies familial bonds between women, a central theme in the series. *Book of Shadows* is a generic title in the *Charmed* universe: Every family of witches is encouraged to have one, and to add to it from generation to generation.[8] It links the past to the present, but also witches to one another.

The Craft: Invoking the Spirit

The Craft follows four neophyte teenage witches on their journey into magic. Sarah arrives a new school where Nancy, Rochelle, and Bonnie recognize her as a natural witch. Together they form a coven and they use magic as a way of bonding, escaping their problems and punishing those who have hurt them. Their magic initially empowers them, but they soon begin to abuse it: injuring or even killing those they believe have wronged them, and then turning on each other. Sarah tries to leave the coven, but the others attack her with dark magic. Sarah fights back, driving away Bonnie and Rochelle by making their worst fears come true, and then defeating Nancy, the leader of the coven and the most corrupted of the four, in a magical duel. The film ends with a disempowered Nancy confined in a psychiatric ward and Sarah safe and still in possession of her own powers, newly aware of how easily they can be abused.

The books the girls use are instructional spell books rather than grimoires. Spell books fill the *mis-en-scene* throughout the narrative, surrounding them as they hang out in their bedrooms, open on the table at school as they eat lunch, and crowding the shelves of the occult bookstore that they visit regularly to buy or steal books. The shop is a supernatural resource

filled with books, candles, ingredients, and mystical objects. There is a temple at the back of the shop with a pentagram on the floor that animates, illustrating that the space is magical. It functions not as a site where hierarchy is reinforced, but as a place for witches to meet each other and learn from each other, mutually acting as guides, mentors, and arbiters of good and bad magic. The witch who runs the bookstore plays this role for the girls and acts as the audience's source of contextual information about witchcraft. She explains that magic is neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but that it is the intention in the heart of the witch that makes it so. On one visit to the store, Nancy buys a book titled *Invoking the Spirit* that enables her to venture into a new, more powerful form of magic involving the summoning of the all-powerful spirit of Manon. The book itself is marked as special because, unlike the other books, the shopkeeper warns them of the dangers—that they cannot undo spells and that whatever they send out will return to them threefold—she does not, however, prevent them from buying the book. Similarly, although the girls fail to heed the witch's warnings, it is to the bookstore that Sarah goes in search of sanctuary when she is under attack.

The Craft borrows the principles of Wicca, as well as its egalitarian ethos, loosely using them—rather than more traditional practices of witchcraft—as its magical reference point. Screenwriter Peter Filardi explains that the protagonists' approach to witchcraft is experimental: "They are sole practitioners. They're creating their own mythology as they go."[9] Each spell has a clear aim and direct effect. Their early magic is playful and its effects are aesthetically appealing, typified by "glamouring" and ceremonies surrounded by butterflies. At this stage, their books are always with them when they perform rituals. They choose spells that solve their problems: Sarah finds love, Bonnie's scars heal, Rochelle's bully is punished, and Nancy's abusive stepfather dies and leaves her money. When they perform the ritual of invoking the spirit—going to a beach at

sunset and repeating the incantation from Sarah's book while seated in a circle—the tenor of the magic changes. An aesthetic shift accompanies the magical ones, and the powers they conjure are represented as a storm—crashing waves, lightning, and dark clouds. From this point on, their magic becomes more powerful and destructive.

The ceremonial summoning of Manon also evokes the summoning of the Devil within diabolic witchcraft. The film is rich with religious metaphor and Nancy discusses the process of "invoking the spirit" as a form of communion—"you take him into you, it's like he fills you, he takes everything that's gone wrong in your life and he makes it all better again." After the ritual, she walks on water in a Christ-like pose. From this point on, the girls' magical effect is harmful and more powerful, and they begin to turn on each other. Nancy, Bonnie, and Rochelle use dark magic against Sarah. They appear in her dreams, convince her that her father is dead and make her hallucinate snakes and insects. The abuse builds to a standoff between Sarah and Nancy who fight using a combination of magically charged strength and spells.

The Craft exemplifies the depiction of a particular "feminine" mode of magic. There is an emphasis on the power of the collective—on women learning together and mentoring each other—and the four protagonists are depicted as strongest when they cooperate with one another. Their unwise experiments with the spell book that allow them to summon Manon endanger the girls as individuals, but even before that, it destroys their mutually supporting friendship, and thus, the unity of the group.

The Covenant: The Book of Damnation

The Covenant is superficially similar in many ways to *The Craft* but there are key differences between the films' depictions of the way that magic is "possessed" and made visible.

Male witches are rare on screen, particularly in horror, and neither "wizard" nor "warlock"—the terms used interchangeably in popular culture to refer to male witches—has the same monstrous connotations as "witch." The witch, Creed argues, is both persecuted and monstrous because she is female, but in *The Covenant* and *Warlock*, male monstrosity is constructed differently, and structured in relation to other men. The framing of magic in these films is as distinctly masculine as the framing in *The Craft* is feminine.

The Covenant is set at an elite private boarding school in the New England town of Ipswich, near the site of the original witch trials. Caleb, Pogue, Reid, and Tyler—the film's protagonists—are "the sons of Ipswich," seventeen-year-old descendants of the town's founding families. Unbeknownst to those around them, their ancestors actually *were* witches, and they themselves possess magical powers. They form a coven but, unlike the girls in *The Craft,* they experience no journey of discovery, and spend no time exploring the limits of their powers. Having been raised by their families with the knowledge that they are witches, they already known how to work magic and understand how to control their powers. The challenge—for them as for the witches in *The Craft*—is learning when *not* to use them.

As in *The Craft*, there is a trajectory through which magic begins as casual and fun then becomes dark and threatening. Early scenes show the members of the coven using magic for relatively innocent purposes: jumping off a cliff in order to join a beach party below, starting a stalled car, or defusing a fight by causing a rival to vomit. Caleb, the oldest and most responsible of the four, is the most aware of the price that magic exacts. "It's addictive, you moron!" he tells Reid, the most impetuous of the four, and reminds him that any use of magic ages the user prematurely. Chase, a new student who arrives at school and befriends the coven quickly proves even more disruptive than Reid. The descendent of Ipswich's *fifth* founding family, he was raised

by adoptive parents and so grew up without knowledge of his powers or guidance in using them. Addicted to magic, he tries to steal power from the other members of the coven, but Caleb confronts and—after a near-fatal struggle—defeats him.

The members of the coven possess pedigreed bloodlines and carry themselves with an air of privilege and entitlement that comes from "old money." Magical abilities are passed through families according to a system of primogeniture, as Caleb explains: "Every generation produces only one, the eldest male." The group dynamics of the coven follow a similar pattern: Caleb is the leader of the group because, as the oldest, he will be the first to ascend and therefore the most powerful. The power and privilege that magic brings is rigidly and specifically masculine. The young women in the film exist as little more than prizes for the male characters to compete for or fight over. The fights and near fights, which begin in the first scenes of the film, are part of a steady string of confrontations in which the protagonists jockey with each other to establish their position in the masculine pecking order. Magic becomes a means by which this competition is carried out.

The magical Book of Damnation—an ancient grimoire controlled by Caleb's family—validates, explains, and reinforces the rules of this male-dominated system of magic. It first appears in the title sequence: an aged volume illustrated with images of witches being tortured. The camera zooms in on key passages: "age of thirteen," "powers develop," "age of eighteen," the first son ascends," "power to take life," and "visitation by a darkling." When Chase's arrival unsettles the coven's well-ordered universe, it is to the Book of Damnation that they turn for guidance and in it that Caleb discovers the existence of the fifth Ipswich bloodline to which Chase belongs. The book is kept in Caleb's family's barn and it is he, as the eldest of the group, who controls their access to it. It is treated with reverence and ceremony and the barn where it is

kept is a gothic space lit with candles. Caleb summons the book and it hovers over a circle of flames.

The book itself is a narrative grimoire—a history of the Ipswich families' magical powers and statement of the "rules" that govern them—rather than an instructional spell book. Rather than offering the protagonists spells that they can use to change the world, it declares the realities of the world as it is. The final scene of the film freezes and slowly dissolves into a hand-drawn image like those in the book, suggesting that the events of the film's narrative have become the next episode in the Book of Damnation, and a lesson for future generations.

Warlock: The Grand Grimoire

A similar masculine form of magic is also present in *Warlock*, where a male witch makes a diabolical pact in his quest for greater power. The film opens with the title character (whose name is never revealed) being sentenced to death in the 1690s. Before he dies, Satan appears and propels him, along with the witch hunter who condemned him, through time to twentieth-century Los Angeles. The warlock goes first to a spiritualist book shop and asks the woman who runs it to channel him a spirit. When she complies, Satan possesses her and tells the warlock to assemble all three lost parts of his Bible—a book that, when assembled, will reveal the true name of God invoked during creation. If the name is spoken in reverse, all creation will be undone. When the book is finally brought together, the pages reconnect themselves and glowing orange writing appears on the cover as a storm breaks.

The stakes in *Warlock* are substantially higher than those of any other witch-centered tales considered here. The book that the title character seeks represents the power not just to change the universe but to unmake it. "The spell book!" a character declares at one point. "All

witches keep grimoires but one is indestructible, the Bible of black magic: *The Grand Grimoire*. Always, witches have lusted for it." Consistent with its expansive scope, *Warlock* depicts a wide range of magical practice. The warlock, in his pact with Satan, is promised power in exchange for the book. There is folk magic in the form of potions and pentagrams, and in strange happenings that take place in the warlock's presence (milk going sour, bread not rising, cows sweating). The warlock himself repeatedly exhibits superhuman powers—making objects move with his mind, hexing people by meeting their gaze, and healing his own wounds—but, like Nancy in *The Craft* and Chase in *The Covenant,* the power at his disposal does not satisfy him. The book, which promises literally unlimited power, becomes the focus of his desires and he pursues it ruthlessly, severing the finger of one victim to take their ring, and killing an unbaptized male child in order to prepare a potion. Both the warlock and the witch-hunter use magic, the line between them being drawn by the warlock's willingness to practice diabolism. The witch hunter, although motivated by his religious fervor, resorts to more straightforward forms of maleficia—using a "witch compass," for example, that allows him to track the warlock by using the magical "laws" of sympathy and contagion. Tellingly, it is basic folk magic that saves the day and the world. The Warlock is killed with a saline injection and the *Grand Grimoire* is buried in a salt plain. Even the most powerful spell book in the world, the film suggests, has its limits.

Conclusion: Spell Books, Grimoires, and Fan Practice

Spell books and grimoires are an essential part of the *mise-en-scene* of witchcraft on screen. While the former allow an accessible bridge to the supernatural, even for those with no natural powers, the latter provide the "rules" of the magical universe the witches inhabit and give

an ideological framework to the practices of magic. The two types of books underscore the significant differences between male and female witches, and the aesthetic differences between masculine and feminine forms of magical effect: Male magical power is displayed as literal physical power inherent in the body of the witch. Female magical power is rooted in external nature and accessed through knowledge that is shared between individuals and practices passed from one to another. For female witches, the spell book is more integral to their magical practice than it is for male witches. In the Harry Potter series, for example, it is Hermoine who places her faith in spells learned through books, and Harry who relies on instinct and physical strength. Across all these texts, the spell book has multiple functions: as a plot device, a learning tool, a sacred object, and as link between generations of witches.

The emphasis on empowerment, female bonding, and shared magical knowledge in "feminine" forms of magic have proven appealing to female audiences. Replica spell books and grimoires are popular pieces of show-related merchandise for fans of both *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. There are multiple editions of *The Book of Shadows*, from official mass-produced versions to hand-crafted versions on etsy.com. Buffy fans, meanwhile, can buy *The Official Grimoire: A Magical History of Sunnydale*, purportedly written by Willow Rosenberg, Buffy's best friend and the show's principal witch. The rise of the internet as a mainstream phenomenon in the1990s allowed teen witches and fans to form online communities and participate in discussions replicating the sisterhood depicted on large and small screens. Hannah E. Johnson argues that one of the pleasures of witchcraft is the "sense of *communitas*, a shared experience of the world which celebrates the sacred through ritualized actions, language and behavior."[10] Julian Vayne's study of contemporary witchcraft practice, found, however, that despite the vast resources now available online, "printed books still seem to be the key resource .

. . For serious study, the contemporary British teen witch is perhaps more likely to consult a physical text."[11] Engaging in magical practice (whether they believe in it or not) through buying and using spell books, adds a further dimension to these viewing pleasures and fan communities beyond the usual pleasurable identifications of cinema and television.

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Notes

[1] The duel between Molly Weasley and Bellatrix Lestrange—the series' iconic Good Witch and Bad Witch—at the climax of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2* (2011) is regarded by fans as one of the Potter saga's high points. See Vary, "'Harry Potter': Julie Walters on 'Not my daughter, you bitch!'"

[2] Davies, *Grimoires,* 1.

[3] Ibid., 279.

[4] Broedel 'The *Malleus Maleficarum*," 43-47

[5] Creed, *Monstrous Feminine*, 73-86; quotation on 75.

[6] Ibid., 73

[7] Hunt, 'Necromancy in the Uk', 83.

[8] "We're Off to See the Wizard," *Charmed,* season 4, episode 19; aired April 25, 2002.

[9] http://uk.complex.com/pop-culture/2016/05/the-craft-20-anniversary ~~Please add to bibliography with author (if known) and title.~~

[10] Johnson 'Vanquishing the Victim', 110. 99

[11] Vayne, 'The Discovery of Witchcraft', 63.