The background is a dense halftone dot pattern. A bright, multi-colored arc, resembling a rainbow, curves across the upper portion of the image. The colors transition from yellow and orange at the bottom to purple and blue at the top.

THE
INTERNET
IS
A
MEADOW

SIDSEL LEHN MEHLEN

The Internet Is A Meadow

Preface	5
Images are Fictions, Fictions are Real	7
Beyond the Archive	27
An Ontology of Cyber Witches	46
Bibliography	67

The images of the witch are many. Circulating within cinema and digital culture, there's a disparity between their historic and fictitious renderings. In their images (and their production), and in their archival inclusion and exclusion. Inserting the witch as a point of observation between historiographic discrepancies, this essay sets out to investigate the witches as figurative and literal bodies of corporeal presence and absence, in regard to the signification of their images within ongoing political, social and cultural settings; as an image, a memory, a phenomenon.

Images are Fictions, Fictions are Real

Disintegration of the Commons

In his 1983 essay, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Vilém Flusser entertained the hypothesis that ‘two fundamental turning points can be observed in human culture since its inception’; the invention of linear writing and the invention of *technical* images.¹ In signifying the struggle of writing against the image - conceptual thinking against imaginative thought - Flusser problematised the idea of simply decoding images as sequential events, by investing in the magic order of photography as ‘structurally different from the linear world of history’. He conceptualised the order of time and space belonging to images as one of magic; one in which the participation of everything contributes to a cosmos of mutual significance. He wrote; “*In the historical world, sunrise is the cause of the cock’s crowing; in the magical one, sunrise signifies crowing and crowing signifies sunrise*”.²

1. Flusser distinguished between the traditional and the technical image as respectively prehistoric and ‘post-historic’; where the technical image is produced by apparatuses, which are the products of applied scientific texts, the traditional image precedes texts. “[T]echnical images are abstractions of the third order: They abstract from texts which abstract from traditional images which themselves abstract from the concrete world.” Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p. 9

2. Ibid, p. 10

The founding image in which I encountered witches was through the reenactment of their violent demise. Growing up with a seasonal proximity to the burning of effigies resembling witches, our annual meetings would take place on St. John’s Eve where the neighbourhood would gather near the bonfire, and to the chants of Holger Drachmann’s *Midsommervisen* we would watch the effigy burn.³

Situated amongst a cluster of warfares and disputes across the continent, the witch hunts escalated at a time where famine, high child mortality rates and poverty reigned in vast areas of Europe. In their assertion of the ecclesiastical culpability in the persecutions, Peter T. Leeson & Jacob W. Russ accentuate the “*competition between the Catholic and Protestant churches for religious market share in confessionally contested parts of Christendom*” as a crucial factor to the increasing practice of witch hunting.⁴ As a result of the separation of the church, the determination of both Catholics and

3. As a relatively ‘new’ tradition in Denmark, witch figures started to re/appear in the late 1800’s, merging customs from the German Walpurgis Night with traditional celebrations of solstice. In Drachmann’s *Midsommervisen*, one can find the chants ‘*every town has its witch, and every parish its trolls. We will keep them from life with the fire of joy*’. Translation borrowed from *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*, p. 20

4. Peter T. Leeson & Jacob W. Russ: “Witch Trials”, *The Economic Journal*, Volume 128, Issue 613, 16 August, 2017. <https://academic.oup.com/ej/article-abstract/128/613/2066/5088765>

protestants to combat 'heresy' was accelerated by their desire to win over the larger part of the religious audience, and superstition became the dialectic of this subversion, ascribing witches as scapegoats for infanticide, natural disasters and death en masse.⁵

Silvia Federici has similarly examined the socio-political battleground of early 'modern' Europe, highlighting the gender-specific forms of violence perpetuated during the witch hunts, as an issue to be (re)aligned with the contemporary process of land enclosures.⁶ With *Caliban and the Witch*, she departs from Marx's analysis of the historical process of the development of capitalist relations - also known as *primitive accumulation* - by taking the viewpoint of the social position of women, examining the development of a new sexual division of labor, including the exclusion of women from waged work, and the reproduction of labor power. Attending to the transition from feudalism to capitalism as a notion belonging to the unfulfilled desires of the anti-feudal struggle, Federici situates the forced displacement of the working class in relation to the developing capitalist

5. The Inquisitions signified the heavy influence of the church in the deliberate eradication of 'heresy', additionally infamous for the severity of its persecution of Jewish and Muslim communities

6. In addition to the process of land enclosures, Federici highlights the 'enclosure' of knowledge as a consequence of the economic and social changes transpiring thereof

system, as a process in which "*naming and persecuting women as 'witches' paved the way to the confinement of women in Europe to unpaid domestic labor*".⁷ Theorising the relation between witch hunting and the increasing enclosure of the female body, as signified through the state control over women's sexuality and reproductive capacity, Federici proposes when asking 'why speak of the witch hunts again', that there are important structural aspects of the witch hunts that has yet to be analysed and situated in an appropriate sociohistorical context;

Most historians [...] have viewed the witch hunt from a limited angle: the birth of the medical profession, the development of the mechanical view of the world, the triumph of a patriarchal state-structure [...] What has remained unacknowledged is that, like the slave trade and the extermination of the indigenous populations in the 'New World,' the witch hunt stands at a crossroad of a cluster of social processes that paved the way

7. Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*, p. 67

for the rise of the modern capitalist world.⁸

(Silvia Federici)

Reconsidering the witch could then be configured, by attending to the sociopolitical and cultural ramifications of the developing ideas of gender designation, and confinement thereof, which allow us to consider an intersectional spectrum of the social stratification and subjugation arising, and sequential to the witch hunts, by centring the disintegration of the commons.

Wicked of the Screen

Since early film portrayals like Georges Méliès' *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896) and Segundo de Chomón's *La Maison ensorcelée* (1907), the character of the witch has often been emphasised by means of exaggerated features like hairy warts, a crooked nose and/or physical impairments. Borrowing notions from the demonological interpretations popularised throughout the 15th century, cinema-witches have repeatedly been portrayed as one-dimensional antagonists, whose jealous and destructive agendas have no limits. Luring men

and deceiving them, or planning the death of children, the magic abilities of these witches have often been limited to revenge magic, instigating female rivalry, breaking up marriages or causing death.

Though increasingly moving away from witches like the Wicked Witch of the West, the more 'appealing' and domestic version introduced in the mid-twentieth century, like the love-struck Jennifer of *I Married a Witch* (1942), portrayed a different incarnation of the demonological interpretations, misguidedly continuing the perpetuation of negative and harmful stereotypes which lead to the marginalisation and death of many women across Europe.⁹ Echoing claims of women's deceiving and manipulative nature, introduced in the misogynist manifesto *Malleus Maleficarum*, portrayals like Robert Zemeckis' 2020 remake of Nicolas Roeg's *The Witches* (1990) - the film adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1983 novel of same name - continue to revisit a dehumanising repertoire of the witch. Disassociating the sociopolitical context in which the character originated, the idea of witches as deceiving creatures in disguise as women, not

9. Although men were accused and executed for witchcraft, their stories have become different. The political and executive prosperity of the wizard often surpasses the magic trivialities and vengeance associated with witches and witchcraft, and specifically the term 'male-witch' affirms the gendered nature of the *witch*.

8. Ibid, p. 23

only perpetuates an insistent distrust in and contempt towards everything feminine and effeminate, but also highlights how supposed traits of 'unattractiveness', which are inherently connected to stereotypical ideas of femininity, has been used to depict the witch in order to justify her disposability as a subject of no desire.¹⁰

Towards the turn of the millennium, the gloomy and deceptive witch figures instigating female rivalry, sexual jealousy, and ceaseless havoc, did however undergo a radical modification. As elder witches were fading into the backdrop of motion pictures, the lives of teenage witches were increasingly brought to the front and centre of the screen. In a unification between adolescence and magic, young witches searched for their own identities, balancing their supernatural secrets with the social challenges of adolescence. In encountering identification and understanding towards the complexities and desires of the emotional body, and in the familiarity of their settings (like in the hallways of schools and teenage bedrooms as opposed to secluded huts in the forest), these currents

10. In apposition to the 'ugliness' of the witch, the same expendable manner in which sexualised female bodies are portrayed, was conceptualised by Gail Simone in 1999 as *Women in Refrigerators* (WiR). WiR is a trope, in which the mutilation, assault and disposal of female bodies functions as 'a plot device intended to move a male character's story arc forward'. Re-entering fictions as (over)sexualised 'informercials' mirroring the reality of gender-based violence, whether subconscious or intentional, WiR critiques the ceaseless portrayal of feminine and effeminate bodies as dispensable.

first and foremost retrieved the humanity of the witch. By virtue of the social obstacles they were facing, and the manners in which they embraced them, teenage witches framed a new image of empowerment and self-determination. Teenage witches took matters into their own hands, demonstrating a global movement determined to liberate witches from their dull reputations as part of a youth culture seeking new communities. But despite many efforts to imitate their supernatural powers, inanimate objects seemed to stay just that. Drawing their breath in special effects worlds built on CGI and fabulation, these representations often failed to disclose the historic violence committed against subjects of witchcraft accusations. In favour of fantastical notions, the issue at hand became one concerned with the pursuit of technological possibilities.¹¹

Additionally, as the image of the female witch has progressed, she has also grown increasingly younger, leaving images of elder witches stagnant, failing to highlight the mechanisms by which their bodies were disregarded in the face of the labour required for the emerg-

11. What Renaissance painting did for the medieval 'mass audience', cinematic portrayals did for the 20th century one. The epistemic spheres within which depictions of the witch circulated were usually limited to scholars, and so it was the visual interpretations of Renaissance artists that introduced the image of the witch to a widespread audience.



ing capitalist system. The priority of care given to child raising, was at the expense of the care previously provided to the elderly, who were forced to rely on their friends or neighbours for their survival.¹² Negligent towards their violent and fatal subjugation, witches stayed sedimented in my early memory as fictional figures.

The Witch and the Sodomite

In 1953, the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate instituted the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to examine the influence of comics on adolescents and its relation to the rise in juvenile crime. The committee was not interested in debating the merits of comics which treated social issues in a progressive spirit, but in claims that horror and crime comics inherently taught children racism, sadism and other indecencies. Psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* was published in 1954, in which he wrote about his rigid beliefs of mass media's corruption of children, specifically targeting the 'subversive' messages of horror comics, which allegedly encouraged 'loose sexual morals, homosexuality

12. The reorganisation of family life left particularly older women disadvantaged. Surviving by borrowing, theft, and delayed payments, unpaid rents were in the background of many witchcraft accusations. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, p. 73

and a confusion of gender roles.¹³

As a response to the widespread concern advanced by Wertham, the Comics Magazine Association of America issued the Comics Code Authority (CCA) the same year, as a set of moral guidelines for comics creators to self-regulate their content in compliance with the beliefs of the committee. Based on regulations from the prior Motion Picture Production Code - also known as the Hays Code, from 1934 -, the CCA contained regulations such as virtually no depictions of 'illicit' (non-heterosexual) attraction and/or nudity of any kind.¹⁴ Keeping in mind that crime and immorality were - and to large extents still are - defined by the patriarchal church and state (just as beliefs of immorality imposed on subjects of witchcraft accusations can be attributed to religious lobbying)¹⁵, the committee defined their ideas of immorality by ways of deviation from 'straight' morality, entertaining the idea that expressions of queer desire is something to be ashamed of.

13. Alan Kistler, "How the "Code Authority" Kept LGBT Characters Out of Comics", History, updated June 22, 2020. <https://www.history.com/news/how-the-code-authority-kept-lgbt-characters-out-of-comics>

14. On the article on marriage & sex, the CCA stated that "*illicit sex relations are not to be portrayed and sexual abnormalities are unacceptable*", <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibitions/artifact/code-comics-magazine-association-america-inc-1954>

15. The Hays Code was one of many constraints campaigned by the Catholic Legion of Decency

[T]he witch and the sodomite occupied a similar discursive and imaginative space, and the witchcraft accusations could be used alongside accusations of sexual transgression and heresy to discredit political opponents.¹⁶

(Kit Heyam)

On queer representation in early Modern thought, Kit Heyam examines the subtext of 'bewitchment', in order to consider the discursive strategies utilised for the conflation between social, sexual and religious transgression that both witchcraft and queer sex represented in early Modern thought. Introducing the queer reputation of Edward II with a poem from Francis Hubert¹⁷, Heyam suggests that the notion of bewitchment occupied a 'logical' explanation for the transgressive romantic and sexual desire on behalf of Edward towards other men. Through Hubert's poem, Heyam examines Edward's love and attraction towards Piers Gaveston in order to discuss how dominant historiographies have explicated queer attraction in early

16. Kit Heyam, "The Place of Witchcraft in Early Modern Queer History", *queer/disrupt*, December 20, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOLu-NeC7UeY>,

17. Francis Hubert, *The Historie of Edward the Second, surnamed Carnarvon*, 1629, stanza 220

Modern thought, through the rhetorical use of bewitchment. Rather than Gaveston being the subject of Edward's desire, Edward became the subject of Gaveston's bewitchment. In discussing bewitchment as a strategy of (self)exoneration, which reverses the roles of agents in regard to experiences of queer attraction, Heyam argues that diversifying our knowledge on the way early modern people thought about queer desire, can help to 'deconstruct and combat queerphobic attitudes who try to use the supposed newness of positive attitudes towards queer experience to undermine our rights today'.

As a cinematic practice, *queer coding* usually operates on a subtextual level in which aesthetics or traits associated with queerness are attributed onto a character without disclosing the character's gender and sexual identity. With the duality of securing representation under strict forms of (self)ensorship, as with the CCA and the Hays Code, as well as disrupting the dominance of heterosexist narration, the nature of queer coding can be seen as an expression of positive attitudes towards queerness. Queer coding have however often been used to emphasize notions of villainy and deviancy, and with characters like Disney's Ursula - who in addition to being a sea witch was based on

real life drag queen Divine (who was also known for frequently starring in John Waters' films) -, or HIM, the hybrid devil/lobster companion-nemesis of The Powerpuff Girls, dressed in feminine clothes with no moral conscience, we repeatedly encounter the embedded correlation between queerness and villainy.

On the notion of deviancy, a particularly prominent aspect in the collected works of John Waters can be observed in his character gallery of so called 'delinquents'. Inspired by his early cinematic encounter with the Wicked Witch of the West, Waters has approached the queer subject from an angle of 'wickedness' with an impulse to explore and reverse the roles of 'heroes' and 'villains'.¹⁸ By centring queer stories, like with *Cry-baby's* Wade Walker and *Pink Flamingos'* Divine, Waters has inquired scrutiny towards the negative dominance of queer representation in mainstream cinema and media, by exploring the correlation between queerness and deviancy through predominant perceptions of 'straight' morality. In embracing their 'off-course' or 'not-in-line with' narratives, Waters' filmography has complicated the stagnant proximities between queerness and villainy, by investing in the dreams and desires, and so the hardships, of queer

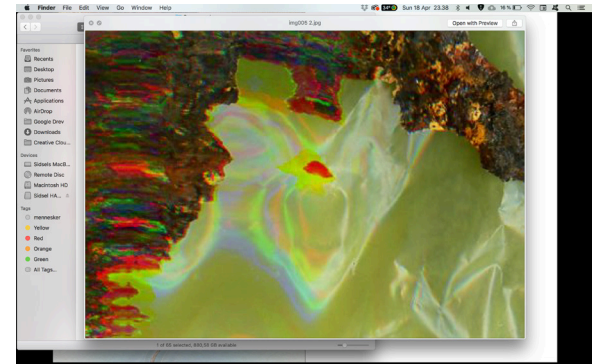
18. John Waters in conversation with Robert K. Elder: *The Film That Changed My Life - 30 Directors on Their Epiphanies in the Dark*. Chicago Review Press, 2011

subjects to pursue their authentic selves under the governance of heterosexist and queerphobic perceptions of, and attitudes towards, morality.

Decoding Images

According to Flusser, the symbolic character of traditional images is evident insofar as human beings place themselves between the image and its significance; *“Painters work out the symbols of the image ‘in their heads’ to transfer them by means of the paintbrush to the surface.”*¹⁹ He suggested that if one wishes to decode traditional images, one has to decode the encoding that took place ‘in the head’ of the painter. Technical images by contrast are more difficult to decode as their signification is seemingly reflected on their surface. What one sees on them do not appear to be symbols that one has to decode, but symptoms of the world through which they are to be perceived. They are ‘metacodes’ of texts signifying conceptual thought, not the world ‘out there’.

Returning to the notion of deviancy, it is apparent that the production of both witch and queer iconographies has been subjected to long histories of antagonism, perceptible



through the subtextual similarities in the shared 'imaginative space' between representations of sexual transgression and witchcraft. Flusser emphasised the 'non-symbolic, objective character of technical images' in relation to their criticism (or lack thereof) as an issue concerned with the analysis of the world that the image signifies, not the world of production in which the image came into being. For example, in considering the technological limitations of early cinematic portrayals, the issue became one of re/producing iconographies based on existing imagery in order to visually differentiate the witch, given that optical sound did not see its widespread use until the 1920s. Concerned with their lack of criticism and their assumed objectivity, Flusser argued that technical images are in the process of displacing texts; a question of *amnesia*, in which humans forget they created images in order to orientate themselves.

In *The Wretched of the Screen*, Hito Steyerl describes the 'poor' image in regard to its re/production and distribution online, as 'a *lumpen* proletariat in the class society of appearances'. Transforming quality into accessibility, Steyerl characterises the poor image by its low resolution and blurred sharpness;

[Poor images] testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images— their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism. [They] spread pleasure or death threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification.²⁰

(Hito Steyerl)

The low resolution of the poor image attests to its appropriation and displacement insofar as it has no assigned value within contemporary hierarchies of images. Steyerl remarks that the insistence on analog film as the 'sole medium of visual importance' in the pursuit of the 'rich' image, failed to regard its rootedness in high-end economies of film production within systems of national culture and capitalist production. In this sense, the poor image unfolds itself as Flusser's concern in action, insofar as the poor image reveals not only the content or appearance of the image itself, but indeed signifies the conditions of the social forces leading to its marginalization.²¹

20. Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, p. 32

21. In the subchapter, *Resurrection (as Poor Images)*, Steyerl remarks the marginalisation of images as an affect of the neo-liberal restructuring of media production leading to concepts of culture as commodity, the commercialization of cinema, and the marginalization of independent filmmaking, *ibid.*, p. 36

Pinning down on Flusser's notion of amnesia and Steyerl's remark on stultification, the commercial use made of wicked imagery might be reconsidered, by aligning the queer villain and the gloomy witch as 'poor images', in which the endorsement of heterosexual reproductivity for the continued survival of capitalism, and the exploitation of the (re)productive labor of the lumpenproletariat, is radically reconsidered in contemporary times of gender based violence and deepening economic inequality.²²

Beyond the Archive

22. Michael Villanova: "The Lumpen in Action: From the Past to Present". Sage Journals, September 22, 2020. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0309816820959824>

Translating the Witch

The archive has historically functioned as an institution of objectivity, however, most European countries have few dedicated monuments or archives in memory of the witches. The ones that do, attend to them mostly so in ways, which either commodifies their demonological reputations, or treats their memory as a punctuation mark behind a bygone time.²³ Noting the superiority of Western scientism in determining historical ‘situatedness’ and its social relevance, practices of cultural memory might offer an angle to challenge dominant historiographies, insofar as the absence of the witch from historical consciousness (the archive), can be reconsidered by turning towards the realm of mythology.

Artist Onyeka Igwe suggests that *“[mythology] is a way in which we understand our own past or family histories as being complicated and necessary fictions. But this is very often not afforded to our social or cultural*

23. Karen Gardiner, “Witch hunt tourism is lucrative. It also obscures a tragic history”, National Geographic, October 23, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/a-better-way-to-commemorate-the-witch-hunts>

histories”.²⁴ In regard to the witch, this is relevant insofar as we see her significance on an individual level where practitioners, magicians and healers alike reclaim their fields and divination, the witch being a spiritual ancestor. But when considering a structural perspective, one can begin to notice the many similarities between the witch hunts with those of contemporary modes of social stratification.

[U]nder the spreading influence of christianity, the name valkyrie degenerated; in medieval England a judge had burned at the stake an unlucky woman charged with being a valkyrie, that is to say, a witch.²⁵

(Jorge Luis Borges)

Described as a ‘linguistic nightmare’, Judith Jesch’s research on women, and the designation of gender roles during the Viking Age, illuminates the study of etymology as a deeply interdisciplinary field.²⁶ Grounded in cross-lingual

24. Onyeka Igwe, “Being Close to, with or Amongst: other ways of Knowing the Archive”, British School at Athens, June 5, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HUxslpzNrQ&t=367s

25. Jorge Luis Borges: *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, p. 152. Republished by Vintage Books in 2002, and translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni in collaboration with Borges. For the original version see, *El libro de los seres imaginarios*, 1967

27. Judith Jesch: *Women in the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991

texts and transliteration of alphabets, Jesch points out the orthographic inconsistencies between and within languages, and the issues arising in the transmission of terminologies translated from their origin to a linguistic commonality. As Jorge Luis Borges remarks, the etymological origin of the terminology *witch* arose as a pejorative to describe people who did not unify with the rigid beliefs of the church, and in return served to justify their persecution.

The witch has historically been the village midwife, medic, soothsayer or sorceresses, whose area of competence was appreciated and sought for. However, accusing and executing, especially women, with charges of witchcraft through rhetorical deteriorations, proliferated the demonisation of social, religious and cultural practices that was deemed 'ungodly'. As the religious contestation between catholics and protestants became increasingly politicised, pre-christian beliefs of magic started to decline; namely in Denmark, where people balanced beliefs of pagan and Christian magic, the *völvás* suffered the same deterioration as the *valkyries*.²⁷ Transpiring a shift in perception from the magical to the demonic, the efforts

27. In Norse Mythology, *völvás* represented an animistic and shamanistic world-view, and even Odin, the god of Wisdom, sought the *völvás* for their wisdom and insight

to suppress pagan and polytheistic beliefs and practices were enforced by law, and the *völvás* became associated with dangerous and harmful magic as a consequence of the ecclesiastical lobbying against 'heresy'.

This is perhaps where the witch can be situated as a cultural phenomenon, immersed in her differing notions as they appear according to her respective demographic and relating social (hi)stories.²⁸ Not only in regard to historical and folkloric discrepancies, but also in the historiography of witch-hunting as a practice concerned with the western European paradigm, 'leaving out what happened in eastern Europe, 'the Middle East', Africa, and Latin and South America'.²⁹ A paradigm which not only conceals the memory of various indigenous social and spiritual practices, and the situated knowledges thereof, but also obscures the colonial impact of the continued reality of practices of witch hunting today.

It is critical then, to push back against the misuse of 'witch hunting' today as a rhetorical strategy that serves to defend or exonerate abusers and perpetrators - usually

28. <https://100witches.tumblr.com/post/179767546963/one-hundred-witches>

29. Esther Otiz "In memory of witches", Equal Times, 30 March, 2018. <https://www.equaltimes.org/in-memory-of-the-witches?lang=en#.YMXsQS2w3OQ>



men in powerful positions - of sexual violence, by reversing the roles of victims. Witch hunting is not a general dynamic, but a specific gendered history of social persecution and violence against women. The phenomena of the witch-hunt metaphor is part of a framing, in which those accused are turned into victims, or even heroes, reversing not only the role of victims but attributing traits associated with women accused of witchcraft, including physical inferiority, vulnerability and social stigma. Whereas the word witch still associates negative stereotypes about women, and can be used to demean one's appearance by referring certain images, witch hunting refers to a different aspect where we leave the fantastical notions behind, and step into the reality of the torture and fatal persecution to which subjects of witchcraft accusations were subjected.³⁰

Re-membering

In 1992, artist Fred Wilson set out to investigate the collections of the Maryland Historical Society, exploring representations of, and objects owned and made by, African

30. Freja Mejlltoft Ovesen, "Sprogforsker: »Når vi kalder MeToo en heksejagt, gør vi 'skurkene' til ofre«", NetAvisen, 13 November, 2020. <https://navisen.dk/blog/sprogforsker-naar-vi-kalder-metoo-en-heksejagt-goer-vi-skurkene-til-ofre/>

Americans and Native Americans in Maryland.³¹ Allocated to the storerooms of the institution, these representations were not absent from the institution but were nevertheless missing from the entirety of the institution's public narrative. *Mining the Museum* served to illuminate subdued histories, assisting viewers to critically attune to 'the construction of history' by reframing whose truth was on display. Signifying subjects present in 18th and 19th century paintings who were often shown in the shadows, Wilson highlighted the presence of black children in these paintings by shining spotlights on their figures, and through added audio-tapes, gave the children a voice. What Maura Reilly describes as an "attempt to redress past representational or structural injustices, and as such [constituting] a kind of "counter-memory"³², Wilson's new interpretations intervened in the dominant narratives of the institution by not only bringing forth these artefacts, making them visible to the museum visitors, but through critically engaging with them, posing questions, signifying their implications.³³

31. *Mining the Museum*, The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, 1992-93

32. Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*, p. 123

33. Wilson's *Modes of Transport 1770-1910* showed a Ku Klux Klan hood placed inside a baby carriage, in proximity to a photograph of domestic workers pushing strollers, to signify the paradoxical 'irony' of black women raising generations of white supremacists.

Borrowed and translated from Jozefina Dautbegović's poem, *The Unidentified* (2003), the exhibition *From what will we reassemble ourselves?*³⁴ situated this question in regard to the genocide that took place in and around Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal No. 1 – An Artist's Impression* (2007), courtesy of Hito Steyerl, traces stories leading to the first Bosnian newsreel which was lost in 1993 during the siege of Sarajevo. In the video, Steyerl attempts to discern what was on the newsreel by including the voices of eyewitnesses, documentary footage, and drawings, sketched to resemble the content of the lost film. In approaching the memory of violence, Steyerl reflects on the fluctuating nature of memory, and how 'lives continue to be lived' in the aftermath [of a genocide];

[W]e have almost always waited in vain to access the other quantum state involved in superposition, the state in which the missing would still be alive—not potentially, but actually. Paradoxically alive, as things in a state of entanglement. In which we could hear their

34. *From what will we reassemble ourselves?*, Framer Framed, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2020-21

voices, touch their breathing skin. In which they would be living things outside the registers of identity, pure language, and the utter overwhelming of senses; things superposing on ourselves as things. They would form a state beyond any state hood—one in which they wouldn't be entangled with their own dead bodies, but with our living ones. And we would no longer be separate entities but things locked in indeterminate interaction—material extimacy, or matter in embrace³⁵

(Hito Steyerl)

In Ana Hoffner's video installation *Transferred Memories - Embodied Documents* (2014), seeking out different possibilities of seeing and listening are similarly explored. The opening sequence begins with a description of a video report on the Omarska camp, connecting the re/production of horror iconography between the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with that of

35. From the chapter, *Missing People: Entanglement, Superposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy*, Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, p. 153

the Second World War. As someone who did not grow up in the war, but was affectively marked by the displacement of the war, Hoffner describes the doubleness of being simultaneously inside and outside an 'event' as "[lacking] the legitimacy of speaking from an internal position, I had to imagine and even invent many relations and questions, and claim their importance".³⁶ In the video, a queer relationship develops between two people as they face images of atrocities together, subsequently describing their reactions to each other. In exploring the queer dimension of memory, which is not meant to be limited to the memory of queer people, the work raises questions of how queer temporalities can help negotiating our own memory with the memories of others;

While one became a viewer of atrocity imagery, the other became her witness. [...] neither of us had access to the image of the other, but would have to listen to its description [...] the constant shifting of positions to, in front of, and behind the camera was productive in order to understand the coevalness of

36. Ana Hoffner, *The Queerness of Memory*, p. 68

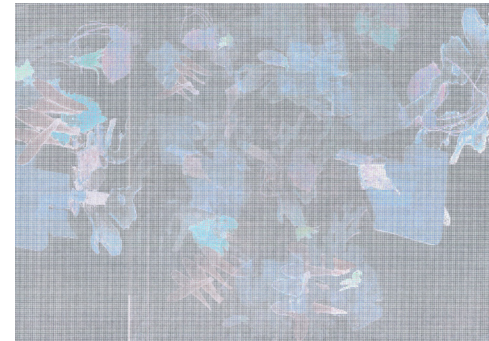
events, and the possibility of being inside and outside of events at the same time.³⁷

(Ana Hoffner)

Through the methodology of counter-memories as “a practice that persistently questions dominant modes of constructing the past while at the same time seeking to recuperate submerged histories or meaning”³⁸, Wilson, Steyerl & Hoffner respectively demonstrate the transformative power of cultural memory, elucidating not only what objects mean by themselves, but how meaning is produced when framed and governed, and furthermore in the absence of self-representational agents.

Embodied Practices

‘Myths are histories without archives’ (quoting Igwe quoting Claude Levi-Strauss). In turning towards the etymology of *beyond* as something out of reach or surpassing one’s comprehension, it is fitting to consider Sarah Ahmed’s writing on queer phenomenology. Ahmed notes that attitudes which consider desire towards ‘the same sex’ as something



37. Ibid, 68

38. Citation from Brian Wallis as it appears in Maura Reilley’s *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*, p. 123

that deviates from moral rectitude, also presumes that the ‘straight’ line is synonymous to the line of desire, and as such orientates the body towards ‘the other’; *“The line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it “is not” and what it “is not” then confirms what it “is”.”*³⁹ Ahmed suggests that bodies become orientated towards certain objects as a function of the orientation already taken, and that facing ‘this’ or ‘that’ way is affected by such orientation, and in return affects which objects come with-in reach of the body;

The normalization of heterosexuality as an orientation toward “the other sex” can be redescribed in terms of the requirement to follow a straight line, whereby straightness gets attached to other values including decent, conventional, direct and honest.⁴⁰

(Sarah Ahmed)

Ahmed emphasizes the normalisation of heterosexuality as a construction that depends on the commodification of women’s bodies as ‘containers’ or ‘vessels’ through which men

39. Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 71

40. Ibid, p. 70

can extend themselves.⁴¹ In this sense, we can return to the witch as someone who is not following such ‘straight’ line by attending to the desirability, or lack of same, with which she has often been portrayed, and as such, how empathy towards her has been disregarded. The absence of a romantic partner from the witch’s intimate life, specifically a man, is often ‘present’ in cinematic portrayals, and regardless if the nature of such absence is disclosed, - whether it is a self-determined choice, or a decision made for her -, the resulting outcome is interchangeable; the trajectory in which women’s bodies are presumed as pointing towards men is no longer in order, and in turning away from being a point on the ‘straight’ line, her relatability is rendered as something surpassing or beyond reach of moral rectitude.

As the witch hunts has often escaped an alignment with a broader context of both European medieval politics, and the subsequent colonial spreading of Western ideological paradigms, certain social histories of existence and resistance have subsequently been allocated to liminal spaces as a result of their erasure or supposed newness. Locating the witches as bodies of physical presence

41. Ibid, p. 71

detached from their geographical situatedness, while being immersed into the politics of how those 'events' has subsequently shaped the bodies extending from it, we might begin to approach the ramifications of the witch hunts through a scrutiny towards the normalisation of heterosexuality and heterosexist morality. In *Unruly Visions*, Gayatri Gopinath discusses how modes of dwelling and rootedness are created in the wake of dispossession and displacement, suggesting that the aesthetic practices of queer diaspora allows us to apprehend such modes as they attend to the historical formations of diaspora and indigeneity that has been obscured within conventional historical archives and canonical knowledge;

The aesthetic practices of queer diaspora constitute an alternative archive of what remains submerged within dominant epistemologies and also demand and enact a reading practice of dominant archives that renders visible their gaps, fissures, and inconsistencies.⁴²

(Gayatri Gopinath)

42. Gayatri Gopinath, *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*, p. 88

We might then begin to understand queer temporalities in relation to 'the queerness of memory' as a choreography between the archive and the *repertoire*. On performing cultural memory, Diana Taylor discusses the importance of embodied ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge, in which 'the repertoire of embodied practices' expands the traditional archive and extend (hi)stories from their written frameworks.;

The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being a part of the transmission. [...] The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. [...] They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next.⁴³

(Diana Taylor)

43. Diana Taylor, *The Archive & the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory*, p. 20-22

The failure to recognize the history of the witch hunts, and the human, cultural and spiritual costs resulting thereof, has seemingly placed its victims in a limbo of non-identification. A lack that not only fails to highlight the genocidal character of the persecutions, but also declines memorialisation of the past as a template for envisioning better presents and futures. Generating not only representations lacking historical abundance, but continuously contributing to the marginalisation and demonisation inherent to xenophobic attitudes, a queer perspective might be a necessary angle, in order to transgress dominant perceptions of the witch hunts as an antiquated issue concerned with religious disputes, in which subsequent dehumanising trajectories emerging from settler colonialism and political opportunism, and their hierarchies of race, sexuality, gender, class, age and ableism, is realigned. As Borges writes;

[A]s with all miscellanies [the book of imaginary beings] is not meant to be read straight through; rather, we should like the reader to dip into these pages at random, just as one plays with the shifting patterns

of a kaleidoscope.⁴⁴

(Jorge Luis Borges)

An Ontology of Cyber Witches

Spiritual Fatigue

The eradication of indigenous spiritual and religious practices, and the violent methods with which they were terminated, have often been immersed into dominant narratives of Western 'civilisation' and its 'successive' progression. While the emergence of Enlightenment to certain extents reiterated superstitious beliefs of witchcraft⁴⁵, a (then) new paradigm of philosophy and science largely failed to demand an inquiry of its socio-political inheritance. Coming back to my first encounter with the witch, such failure renders visible in the translation of a genocide into a global commerce. The conception that traditions alike are merely cultural customs without scrutinizing their affiliations, have ever so often dismissed a call for critical examination of the sociopolitical context from where those traditions originated. And sometimes defended with sentimental values prompted by conservative nationalism, they go celebrated without critically attuning to their symbolic value and the signification of the images they replicate.⁴⁶

The failure to reform the reigning

45. As early as 1584, Reginald Scott's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* was published in an effort to stop people from being executed for witchcraft, sparking ongoing criticism of the vile punishment and subjugation that took place.

46. Traditions like Sinterklaas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Columbus Day, etc, respectively perpetuate racist, xenophobic and other harmful stereotypes and prejudice, rewriting histories of oppression and genocide. Open source from White Noise Collective on problematic holidays, <https://www.conspireforchange.org/resources/problematic-holidays/>

landscape of Christian patriarchy can be seen in the ongoing colonial projects of the ‘Western’ world, ranging from assumed religious, political, and cultural superiority.⁴⁷ In *I’m Not A Witch* (2017), director Rungano Nyoni illustrates the Western imperialistic tradition of dumping and imposing failed and fatigued cultural, sociopolitical and economical ideologies on the African continent, through the lens of witch hunting. The opening scene shows the young girl Shula, the subject of witchcraft accusation, wearing a worn out t-shirt with the hashtag #bootycall across her chest. Shula (her given name as a witch) is brought to a remote residency by government officials, where she is forcedly settled with other women accused of witchcraft. Reduced to objects of exhibitionism they are frequently interrupted by tourists and visitors, pointing cameras at their faces, which Nyoni utilised as an opportunity to direct criticism towards mass-tourism and travel-capitalism as covert tools of settler colonial oppression.

The patriarchal model of the witch hunts administered the process of land enclosures, forced eviction and displacement of the working class, for the realisation of religious, political and economical self-aggrandisement,

47. The modern pharmaceutical industry being one of such projects

leaving especially women disenfranchised and dependent on a spouse/‘male-other’ for financial security. As underlined by Nyoni, this issue is continuous not only in regard to the burning of proverbial forests and expropriation of indigenous lands for agricultural and touristic commerce, but indeed also in the targeting of women, and especially children, within the continued legacy of witch hunting.

In various parts of the world, witch hunting continues to be a 21st century practice. According to the National FGM Centre, numbers on harmful practices of spiritual abuse in the United Kingdom, showed an increase in cases of child abuse linked to faith or belief by 12 percent in 2019 compared to the previous year, defining spiritual abuse as following concepts of witchcraft, spirit possession, and/or by the *“use of belief in magic or witchcraft to create fear in children to make them more compliant when they are being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation.”*⁴⁸ In Cameroon, witchcraft continues to be a crime in the penal code, and in Malawi, issues ranging from mental health to financial difficulties, or even prosperity, can

48. Sources on spiritual abuse from the National FGM Centre, “Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief”, <http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/calfb/>; and the Local Government Association “Tackling modern slavery” https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/22.12%20Modern%20slavery_WEB.pdf

be attributed to accusations of witchcraft.⁴⁹ As Nyoni's research on accusations of witchcraft in Ghana and Rwanda accentuates, the misfortune of one, is easily explicated as the evil doing of someone else, leading to self-conducted trials, subjecting present-day victims to violence, torture, and murder by vigilantes. In India, over 2,500 people, mainly women, were persecuted, tortured and murdered between 2000 and 2016, and as it were in the past, many contemporary accusations of witchcraft are rooted in disputes over property; *"long-standing cultural traditions of patriarchy, where men are supposed to control family resources, make women who may have inherited their own land easy targets."*⁵⁰

Unfulfilled Desires

For many centuries, practitioners of magic have been associated with the devil, resulting in terror regimes where people continue to be lynched for practising magical and spiritual beliefs. But as many reports have accounted for, the cyclical outbreaks of witchcraft hysteria are not only profoundly impacted by poverty,

49. Madalitso Kateta, "When rumours of 'blood suckers' and the life-sucking impact of poverty collide", Equal Times, 26 February, 2018. <https://www.equaltimes.org/when-rumours-of-blood-suckers-and#.YMXsmC2w3OR>

50. Seema Yasmin, "Witch Hunts Today: Abuse of Women, Superstition and Murder Collide in India", Scientific American, January 11, 2018. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/witch-hunts-today-abuse-of-women-superstition-and-murder-collide-in-india/>.

illiteracy and other deepening economic, political and social inequalities which has arisen with the increasing process of globalization, but also actively perpetuates it. On Max Weber's analysis of the 'disenchantment of the world', Federici elaborates on his *"warning [...] as referring to the emergence of a world in which our capacity to recognise the existence of a logic other than that of capitalist development is every day more in question"*.⁵¹

The increasing practice of state surveillance was of significant impact in making people compliant, instigating a sense of fear for being watched and judged by any action. In Denmark, it was not only sorceresses who were punished but also those who took their advice, and while practitioners of 'harmful sorcery' were executed at the stake, practitioners of white magic were punished financially and exiled.⁵² In this sense, the superiority of modern, Western science as a universal enforced standard to conclude and conceptualise our existence, should not be treated separately from century-long fears of social persecution or execution, for practising religious and spiritual beliefs other than

51. Silvia Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, p. 407

52. *Trolldomsforordningen* (The Ordinance on Sorcery) was incorporated into secular law in 1617, in efforts to increase public moral discipline. Following the ban, accusations and trials of witchcraft increased, with more than half of the Danish cases taking place in the period between 1617-1625

those in compliance with Christianity. Important here is to note, that while there are significant ideological and existential contradictions between Christian and Western scientific world-views, both can be characterised as political projects whose permanence has been solidified through patriarchal models of exclusion.

In this context, the ‘disenchantment of the world’, can be situated as an issue to be realigned, not only with the capitalist commercialisation and commodification of magic, but indeed also an issue concerned with the subjection of magical and spiritual practices and beliefs as ‘hoax’ alternatives to scientific world-views, as a result of the imposing of superstition on the genealogy of magic. Indeed re-enchanting the world would require an effort to attune our capacities to understand magic as something more, or else, than illusory; as something diametrically opposite to the advent of capitalism and all its endeavours, and in all probability, even mutually exclusive.

The increasing practice of state surveillance equally poses as a contemporary social issue, in which the intersection between digital domesticity and surveillance capitalism has brought on complexities to which the monitoring

and managing of our shared and personal spheres stages a menace to our privacy and autonomy. Emphasising the territorial dimensions of the witch hunts, by outlining the increasing attention towards ‘suspicious’ behaviour in public space, and the unsubstantiated claims with which accusations transpired, allow us to question the right to, or lack thereof, freedoms of expression and movement, and to whom those privileges are afforded.

Beyond traditional geography, the most prominent territorial dimension of feminist principles is the internet. [...] The internet hosts a continuum of our bodies, not a fractured or fragmented projection of data bits. The internet is in fact just another dimension of the world we all live in. As such, it flourishes with exclusions, exploitations, misogyny, sexism, racism... and flourishes with creation, passion and of course, hacking.⁵³

(hvale vale)

Excessively disenfranchising women,

53. Cornelia Sollfrank, *The Beautiful Warriors: Technofeminist Praxis in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 74



considering their livelihood became illegitimate, the global tendency to regulate and commodify marginalised bodies, and their situated knowledges, is yet another issue to be aligned with the gender-specific violence of the witch hunts. On issues of gender, sexual and erotic expression, reproductive rights, menstrual health, and wage and labor rights, many people continue to be largely excluded from executive decisions, gravely undermining and interfering with our agency and right to self-determination. With little to no sovereignty in making political decisions that reflect our own values, it suppresses the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives and pursue them authentically. On her blog hoodwitch.com, Bri Luna states, that being a witch is a matter of reclaiming power and to reconnect with our bodies, spirit and earth; *“to create paths towards a more regenerative, sustainable society through channeling our ancestors and wisdom from other realms.”*

Reclaim the Internet

With *The Beautiful Warriors: Technofeminist Praxis in the Twenty-First Century*, Cornelia Sollfrank brings together the voices of different feminist activists, hackers and community builders, respectively discussing

different feminist strategies for the contingency of (partial) recuperation, online as well as offline. On the chapters on The Feminist Principles of the Internet⁵⁴, hvale vale establishes these as a compass, that help us navigate the internet as a s_place⁵⁵ of public discourse, and as such, a space of resistance and transformation. Challenging mainstream assumptions of the neutrality of the internet, and the production of technology, the feminist principles resist against the capitalist logic that drives technology towards further privatisation, profit and corporate control.

Through advocacy for movement building across territories, the feminist principles object the state, the religious right and other extremist non-state actors who try to regulate and restrict queer and feminist expressions by monopolising and policing discourses of morality. Supporting the right to privacy and anonymity, and full control over personal data at all times, feminist principles constitutes “*the internet as a transformative political space facilitating new forms of citizenship*”.⁵⁶ Through interaction between sexual rights, women’s rights and internet rights activists coming from feminist

54. A political and analytical framework constituted by a group of 52 women and queer activists, focusing on women’s rights, sexuality, digital rights, and intersectional feminism. Ibid, p. 74

55. Neologism coined by hvale vale, combining *space* and *place*

56. Ibid, p. 84

and gender justice perspectives, the principles suggest that the right to information and freedom of expression should be strengthened through the participation in internet policy, and in reshaping principles of economic power which grounds itself in solidarity, environmental sustainability and the commons.

Femke Snelting’s chapter, *Codes of Conduct*, focusses on the transformation of shared values into daily practice, through the feminist potential of codes of conduct. As the rules of behaviour that a community agrees upon, codes of conduct provides a common ground from which the possibility of harassment is acknowledged, and as such, creates a template to confront systemic oppression through the work of articulation. Listing unacceptable behaviour takes away the burden from someone experiencing harassment to define the nature of harassment itself, while stimulating community members to reflect on their own contribution to the pervasiveness of oppressive behaviour and other mechanisms of exclusion. Snelting alerts, however, that without our attention, codes of conduct risk producing already-safe and already-diverse environments, in which the work is outsourced to the document. But it is also in this paradoxical context of uncomfortable

self-governance, that the potential of codes of conducts emerge, as a preferred medium for regulating behaviour, by addressing systems of oppression together.

The chapter *Feminist Hacking.*, contains Sophie Toupin's account on gender, and the body itself, as entities receptive to hacking and transformation. Here, the adjective 'feminist' makes the difference by indicating a specific form of politicized practice, in which co-production, as part of a feminist approach, acknowledges the people who hold marginalised identities for contributing their specific knowledges. As gender is in the process of being culturally shaped and reshaped by feminist hackers, digital technology can also be recoded in a feminist manner, including practices of body- and gender hacking. Toupin mentions Laura Forlano, who identifies with the practice of body hacking, comparing herself to the cyborg in order to articulate how she takes care of her diabetic body. Describing herself as a cyborg in relation to her dependency on external devices - an insulin pump and a glucose monitor - to keep her alive, the hybridity of her skin, bones and blood, that must constantly harmonise with sensors and tubes, is used to emphasise notions of the cyborg body. In her essay, *Data*

Rituals in Intimate Infrastructures: Crip Time and the Disabled Cyborg Body as an Epistemic Site of Feminist Science, Forlano draws on new materialism and feminist theories of nature, embodiment and technology in order to examine 'the disabled cyborg body' as an epistemic site of situated knowledge; "*These technologies and practices deserve attention in terms of what they can teach us about common discourses around science, innovation and infrastructure and, ultimately, about ourselves.*"⁵⁷

Towards the Commons

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Donna Haraway establishes the cyborg "*as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings*".⁵⁸ Accentuating the queer nature of cyborg 'sex' as 'nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism', Haraway criticises the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism, and the appropriation of nature, as a resource for the production of culture on which modern traditions of Western science and politics rely. This essentially brings us back to the question,

57. Laura Forlano, "Data Rituals in Intimate Infrastructures: Crip Time and the Disabled Cyborg Body as an Epistemic Site of Feminist Science", *Catalyst Journal* Vol. 3 No. 2, October 19, 2017, <https://catalystjournal.org/index.php/catalyst/article/view/28843>

58. Donna J. Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 4

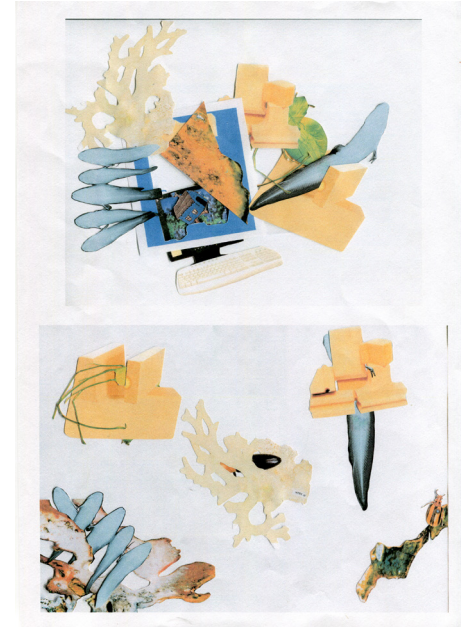
of our abilities to perceive the world outside the ‘logic’ of capitalism, by considering not only the colonial subjugation and erasure of indigenous people and practices, but also non-anthropocentric forms of embodied and situated knowledge. Haraway’s SF-worlding⁵⁹ proposes some interesting methodologies for thinking with, as well as making kin, through pedagogical practices of storytelling.

In *Staying with the Trouble*, the chapter *Sympoiesis*⁶⁰ refers the making of “world games” as a practice, in which the authority of worlding is decisively relocated to indigenous people’s stories and practices. Situating indigenous storytelling in specific histories allow us to negotiate different ways of seeing and listening, however, not as a co-opting of social and cultural identities, but as a way of actively participating, learning and contributing to diverse forms of storytelling which brings back agency to marginalised storytellers.

On the imaginative recourses of queer-coded villains, Tricia Ennis suggests that we don’t just understand them because of their style of dress or their mannerisms, but because

59. SF is a polysemic acronym, including, but not exclusive to, Science Fiction, Speculative Feminism, Science Fantasy, Speculative Fabulation, Science Fact and String Figures.

60. In its simplest term, sympoiesis means “making with”



of the space they occupy between the lines of society, creating templates for identification outside the binary of human sexuality, and the binary of humanity.⁶¹ Cultivated forms of identity, as constructed and constituted through dominant discourses which rely on colonial and racist ontologies, can then be reconsidered through theories concerned with the role of the internet in the formation of identity, subjects, and community. As Audrey Lundahl addresses, online spaces hold the potential for self-proclaimed witches and practitioners of magic alike, to self-actualise and connect;

[T]he digital expression of witchcraft allows many who hold these marginalised identities to find community and combat oppression by practicing magic. [O]nline is only one point of connection for the witches, though, who see the world, including the digital, as full of connection between bodies, spirits, and the earth.⁶²

61. Tricia Ennis, "The Strange, Difficult History of Queer Coding", Syfy, Updated May 11, 2020, <https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/the-strange-difficult-history-of-queer-coding>

62. Audrey Lundahl, "The Rise of the Internet Witch", Sacred Matters Magazine, October 31, 2017. <https://sacredmattersmagazine.com/the-rise-of-the-internet-witch/>

(Audrey Lundahl)

Coming back to the reproduction of horror iconographies, in regard to the notion of trauma in contemporary societies of post-ness, Hoffner remarks that trauma has become the main articulation of a commonality of pain on both individual and historical levels. It has become the easily proclaimed and simplified designation of unbearable states of being; *"it is increasingly referred to when particular historical events appear otherwise ungraspable or even unrepresentable, when narration and remembering as tools of social configuration seem to be insufficient."*⁶³ Acknowledging the history of witch hunting as a collective case of 'spiritual fatigue', the figure of the witch may be a way to reinsert ourselves into the memory of resistance in order to realise the unfulfilled desires of the commons. This requires firstly a proper context in which practices of witch hunting are dealt with and condemned as continuous acts of genocide, whose discontinuity is actively worked towards. Such discontinuity would in return require an honest and critical approach towards dismantling our sociopolitical and cultural heritage, in which we must accept *"the unsettling thought that everything could*

63. Ana Hoffner, *The Queerness of Memory*, p. 8

be different and that probability cannot reign in contingency".⁶⁴ As a place to begin, Sollfrank suggests that discourses on new materialism and queer deconstruction are working to 'queer' powerful dichotomies, by including new agents to change our understanding of the mechanisms that shape the social conditions of reality, and the lived experiences within it.⁶⁵

[M]eadows, forests, lakes, wild pastures — their memory still excites our imagination, projecting the vision of a world where goods can be shared and solidarity, rather than desire for self-aggrandizement, can be the substance of social relations"⁶⁶

(Silvia Federici)

The longing for the commons has been a long standing desire, specifically highlighted through the spatial confinement of freedoms of expression and movement. *The Internet is A Meadow* is perhaps more of

a poetic suggestion, rather than a pragmatic solution; an encounter between the imaginative templates of nature and the global public space of the internet. An imagined potential, which takes into consideration the futurity of social relations unfolding from feminist symposiums and SF-storytellers, in order to think through the continued enclosure of our bodies, our spirit and the earth. A humble contribution to the ongoing collaboration of generating new tools for storytelling, in order to better situate and enact our agency and ability to reimagine the future, which in the spirit of 'staying with the trouble' "*reflect on trauma through the entanglement of experience/embodiment of discourse and the desire for survival*"⁶⁷. Through the memory of resistance and the desire for the commons, we might begin to collectively and actively combat the amnesia and stultification, that has long infiltrated images and their significations. To (re) connect and reconcile.

64. In relation to positivism as a tool of epistemic privilege, where those who control hi-tech tools of measurement assume authority to establish facts. Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, p. 158

65. Cornelia Sollfrank: *The Beautiful Warriors: Technofeminist Praxis in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 6

66. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, p. 24

67. Ana Hoffner, *The Queerness of Memory*, p. 9

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