

#MeToo and the Witching Hour: Contemporary Feminist Discourse on the Representation of  
Witchcraft in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*

In recent years, contemporary cinema, and even graphic novels and comics books, related to witches and the occult have challenged how we view the feminine body, particularly through the rise of movements like #MeToo. For example, in the 2013 season of *American Horror Story*, the popular show tackles issues surrounding witchcraft and interpersonal female relationships in *Coven*, and, two years later, director Robert Eggers once again revisits the witch and her bodily autonomy in the art house film, *The Witch*. For both narratives, the body of the female witch serves as a vehicle through which femininity and feminine sexuality becomes celebrated through occult forces but demonized patriarchal influences, institutions, and characters. Since the body of the witch resists signification, characters and social institutions that succumb to patriarchal influences cannot understand this celebration of the feminine and feminine sexuality. As compelling as these examples of popular culture's fascination with witches are as visual narratives, Netflix's *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, or *Sabrina*, challenges and creates new discourse on what sort of bodily autonomy a witch, and a teenage witch no less, holds. The entirety of Part 1 of the series revolves around Sabrina's right to say no and her right to say yes, should the time come.

Since Jack Halberstam's foundational analysis of the slippery signification of the vampire and other gothic monsters, Gothic scholars have analyzed the figure of the vampire, a "technology of monstrosity" as Halberstam argues, as a metaphor for a wide range of cultural and sociopolitical anxieties. Halberstam writes in their book *Skin Shows* that "technologies of monstrosity are always also technologies of sex. I want to plug monstrosity and gothicization into Foucault's 'great surface network' of sexuality in which 'the stimulation of bodies, the

intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked to one another in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power” (Foucault qtd. in Halberstam 88, 89). The witch also becomes a similar technology of monstrosity and sex through its deep connection to the Earth and representation of hypersexuality in every cinematic representation of the witch in popular culture. Monica Germana’s research on the Gothic figure of the madwoman and the witch in her book suggests that “the madwoman may also, just like the sorceress, become the victimised instrument of [the] conservative agenda, exposed as Shoshana Felman suggests, by the pervasive cultural affiliation of madness and women” (Germana 67). The witch and the culture of madness has become so intrinsically linked with one another that it’s almost impossible to separate the two. The body of the witch is one that inherently resists signification and acts out against political attempts to subjugate and suppress women’s sexuality through the gender binary, patriarchal, and heterosexist restrictions that have historically been imposed upon, not only women’s bodies, but queer bodies as well.

In this thesis, I want to emphasize how *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* works with the body of the witch and the mythological tropes of the Mother, Maiden, and Crone in a sexualized sense. These elements come together in the form of the witch’s body to make her body and the idea of the witch a patriarchal and socio-political nightmare. Throughout Part 1 of *Sabrina*, the creative team politicizes the witch’s body to reflect the current sociocultural and political anxieties with the after effects of the #MeToo and #BelieveHer movements while challenging perceptions of toxic masculinity with the inclusion of Harvey Winkle and juxtaposing him with imposing patriarchal figures, like the Dark Lord and Father Blackwood.

While most of the criticism surrounding Part 1 of *Sabrina* remain positive, some critics

do have negative impressions of the show. Willa Paskin for Slate.com acknowledges the progressive movements that *Sabrina* makes by likening the series with CW's other witch show, *Charmed*. Both *Sabrina* and *Charmed* are remakes of popular 90s television shows, but with different twists. For example, *Charmed* has three Latine<sup>1</sup> sisters in place of three white sisters and focuses on issues on consent in the first episode and *Sabrina* focuses on issues of bodily autonomy and consent throughout the entire series. While Paskin acknowledges these progressive perspectives from both CW shows, Paskin does not acknowledge the parts of the show that make it a success, such as its commentary on current socio-political issues like consent and sexual assault. Paskin writes that the show tires “to be the moody, teen-tastic interpretations of [the original *Sabrina* series]” and that the only thing compelling about the show “to make [Paskin] watch it is . . . a compelling teen romance” (Paskin par. 6 and 7). Paskin argues further that this redeeming part of *Sabrina* is not so redeemable, that Harvey and Sabrina's relationship is “incredibly boring, a total narrative dead end” (Paskin, par.7).

Other critics, like Rolling Stone's critic, Rob Sheffield, acknowledges that “the optimism of the 1970s or 1990s versions [of Sabrina] would look absurd now. This is Resistance Sabrina” (Sheffield, par. 7). For Sheffield, Resistance Sabrina is a “darker show for darker times” (Sheffield, par. 7). While the figures of Hilda and Zelda are feminist figures that raise Sabrina to challenge authority, the ultimate authority is the Dark Lord and Father Blackwood, who throw their weight around and use their endless authority to manipulate the women around them. As a response to these patriarchal figures, *Sabrina* effectively challenges these deep seated sociopolitical issues that keep arising as contemporary society progresses. Even with the

---

<sup>1</sup> In the non-binary and genderfluid movements, the word Latine is used as opposed to Latinx or strictly Latino/a to be more inclusive.

inclusion of Susie Putnam (who is later known as Theo), *Sabrina* retains this progressive outlook since this is one of the only shows that actively shows a gender non-conforming character who will later become trans. Throughout *Sabrina*, the show challenges and juxtaposes toxic masculinity with what masculinity ought to be. For example, the characters of the jocks that endlessly tease and bully Susie throughout the first season are perfect examples of how toxic masculinity affects boys at the teenage level, teasing her about being a “dyke,” but then the creators give the audience Harvey Winkle, who takes his time with Sabrina, making sure that everything that they do that is sexually charged comes with her express consent. Witchcraft and Satanism simply become metaphors of oppression and the strategies through which these issues of oppression with a character that challenges everything about these institutionalized systems, like the Church and even the school board.

The first episode, “October Country,” opens with Sabrina and her aunts, Zelda and Hilda, preparing for Sabrina’s dark baptism as per the tradition of the Greendale coven. Throughout the first episode, Sabrina reveals her uncertainties to her aunts, who then arrange a meeting with the series’ primary antagonist, Father Faustus Blackwood, who tells Sabrina that she will retain free will in conjunction with unlimited power and a delayed aging process. The dark baptism is a ritual that every witch in the Church of Night undergoes on their sixteenth birthday. The ritual requires that the witch enters the woods at midnight, the High Priest ritually cutting open their palm, and the witch then signing their name in the Book of the Beast. By signing their name in the Book of the Beast, the witch agrees to “obey without question any order [they] may receive from the Dark Lord or any authority figure He has placed over [them]. In signing his Book, the Book of the Beast, [they] swear to give [their] mind, body, and soul unreservedly to the furtherance of the designs of the Lord Satan” (00:44:53), but in the first

episode, Father Blackwood tells Sabrina that she will retain her free will after she signs her name into the Book of the Beast. Since these instructions are a direct contradiction to what Father Blackwood tells Sabrina earlier on in the episode, she shakily flees from her dark baptism where she makes her final stand against the coven and firmly states that her “name is Sabrina Spellman and [she] will *not* sign it away” (00:47:59).

The first episode of *Sabrina* emphasizes the Dark Lord’s decision to charge Sabrina with breach of promise. As stated in the series, the concept of a Breach of Promise is a rather antiquated offense. Both in the series and in North American society, Breach of Promise often refers to a woman that is entering a marriage that ends up breaking this promise. If a woman does this, she may be sued by the person that had their promise broken.<sup>2</sup> In Chapter Four of *Sabrina*, the Dark Lord sues Sabrina Spellman for this exact purpose, which Angie Dahl suggests is a type of victim blaming and slut shaming language that echoes courtroom sexual assault cases (Dahl, par. 7). As more and more sexual assault trials, like Brock Turner, Brett Kavanaugh, Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey, Aziz Ansari, Louis C.K., and so many more come up time and time again, the victim blaming rhetoric is one that gets used all too frequently. Victims of sexual assault are interrogated with questions like “what were you wearing?” or “that punishment was a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action” (as seen in Michele Dauber’s tweet) or statements like “sexual assault victims are lying about their assaults.” These statements are ones that victims hear daily, so when we hear Father Blackwood ridicule Sabrina for “wearing, of all things, a wedding dress” (00:19:70), which becomes an intelligent metaphor. By highlighting the fact that

---

<sup>2</sup> Breach of promise is a law tort that originated during the Middle Ages. While many jurisdictions have long since abolished this rite, breach of promise still exists in many North American locations, including the United States. In Canada, Saskatchewan was the last known province to abolish breach of promise laws.

Sabrina was wearing her mother's wedding dress to the Dark Baptism, Father Blackwood's statement so clearly echoes the criticisms that victims of sexual assault and abuse endure in a court of law: that their choice of clothing made the victims responsible for the actions of their attacker. Dahl also points out in her online review that this language echoes the language that is used by defendants when their abuser is their husband, their girlfriend, their father, and so forth. Dahl further states that "Blackwood suggests that Sabrina's dress made a promise on her behalf, and the Dark Lord was merely responding to it; Sabrina led on Satan with her outfit" (Dahl sec. 2, par. 3). Blackwood essentially claims that Sabrina is subject to the punishments of the Unholy Court since her initial, willing plan was to consent to writing her name in the Book of the Beast

By shaming Sabrina publicly through trial, Father Blackwood attempts to make her subservient to his and the Dark Lord's wishes. Fortunately for Sabrina, she hires the infamous lawyer, Daniel Webster, to dance with the devil once again and beat him at his own game.<sup>3</sup> Even prior to the beginning of the trial, Father Blackwood meets with Zelda, not even Sabrina herself, and states that "the Dark Lord is not without mercy. But he'll require total submission from [Sabrina]" (00:10:12). Father Blackwood's language is imperative because it reiterates the idea that should Sabrina sign her name away, she will not possess free will, no matter what. Dahl states that Father Blackwood's language here is not only archaic, but it also reinforces the idea that Sabrina's body, that Sabrina's free will is something that the Dark Lord is entitled to. This happens again when Blackwood says that "when the accused [Sabrina] is confirmed guilty, not only will she abandon her mortal life immediately, but upon her death, she shall burn for 333 years in the Pit, as his pleasure demands" (00:17:00). Since Father Blackwood likens Sabrina and

---

<sup>3</sup> Years prior to the beginning of the series, Daniel Webster was an infamous criminal lawyer that made his career on freeing some of the worst murderers and criminals after he asked the Dark Lord to help him win his cases.

the Dark Lord to the metaphor of bride and groom, the language of this episode becomes increasingly troubling since it echoes the sentiment that the Dark Lord is entitled to Sabrina's free will and her body, which is a phrase that becomes all too real for female and queer viewers of the show, but also links back to the gothic idea that a witch, and a teen witch no less, is a feminine body that is "unregulated and unsettling" (Pulliam 147).

Jane Pulliam argues that when young women, like Sabrina, are forced into these subservient spaces and highly restrictive gender roles, they typically will not openly defy authority but instead 'defrock' authority and do what they wish to within reason. The example that Pulliam uses are two characters, Grace and Deborah, that are a part of the highly restrictive Puritan communities. For characters like Grace and Deborah, they claim that they are witches since women in these communities are subservient and less intelligent than men and therefore easily manipulated by Satan, but in contrast to these characters, we have Sabrina. The moment that Father Blackwood reveals he has lied to Sabrina about her free will, all that authority and trust she places in him gets stripped away and she openly defies his, and the Dark Lord's authority. She refuses to be tricked by the Devil.

When Father Blackwood says "as [the Dark Lord's] pleasure demands," his belief echoes that of incels, or involuntary celibate, and that Sabrina's body and existence belongs wholly to the Dark Lord. Incels and incel rhetoric is something is rapidly growing and their mission statement goes back to Elliot Rodger, who posted online what is now called "Elliot Rodger's Retribution." Men like Christopher Cleary, Alek Minassian, and Elliot Rodger write phrases like "[we] will slaughter every single spoiled stuck-up blonde slut. You will finally see [who's] the superior one. The true alpha male" (The Fifth Estate, par. 3 and 19). Even in advertisements from the 1950s that resurface as "memes" or purely aesthetics from an era long past show women

crying over burnt dinners or women bent over the laps of men with his hand raised above her backside as punishment for not “store-testing fresher coffee.” The subjugation of women is a longstanding issue and these advertisements, which are not only prevalent in the 1950s but today in some cases as well, perpetuate the idea that men are naturally superior and therefore entitled to women’s bodies, regardless of if they say no or yes. In the patriarchal mindset, women that say no are considered a challenge that needs to be conquered and women that say yes are considered too easy.

For Sabrina, she is thoroughly shamed by, not only Father Blackwood with his inquisition, but by the entirety of the coven that attends her trial. As Sabrina awaits her sentencing, the crowd jeers at her and calls her a “tramp” or “guilty,” effectively furthering the shame that Sabrina endures. While the episode ends with Sabrina winning her case, her freedom comes at the hands of the False God, under whose name she was baptized. Even though she wins her trial, she only wins because the court acknowledges the claim on her life and body by another patriarchal figure. The court still refuses to acknowledge that Sabrina holds the right to say no.

Similarly, we can see this in the costuming choices from Chapter 2, “The Dark Baptism.” For Sabrina’s birthday, Zelda and Hilda dress her up in her mother’s wedding gown, which immediately turns black as the trio enters the grove where the baptism takes place. Sabrina is then stripped of the black dress to her white slip and forcibly restrained as she flees from the forest. As stated earlier, Father Blackwood remarks upon Sabrina’s choice in clothing and suggests that the Dark Lord is entitled to her body because of her wedding dress. Costuming and fashion, particularly in media, are important choices that can denote a character’s mental state or other subtle details to the audience. As Catherine Spooner recounts in her book, “the way in which the eighteenth century Gothic heroine is clothed – or more characteristically, semi-clothed



– plays an important part in the construction of her identity and, indeed, the fashioning her body” (*Fashioning Gothic Bodies* 23). In Sabrina’s case, as she meets the coven in the woods for her Dark Baptism, the choices are all made for her for what she wears. She only wears her mother’s wedding dress at the behest of her aunties and she is only stripped half naked at the hands of the coven. This symbolizes that the decision to sign her name away is not her own, it is a choice that is made for her again and again, and when Father Blackwood condemns Sabrina for wearing a “wedding dress, of all things,” he says, in short, that the choices the coven made for Sabrina, the choices that her aunties made for her, are choices that she ought to be responsible for. “Wearing a veil [or in this case, a wedding dress] can be construed as provoking and incentive to remove it . . . is not only interpretable as sexual invitation but is presented as alarmingly coextensive with sexual invitation” (*Fashioning Gothic Bodies* 31). Sabrina thus ends up refusing to acknowledge that others’ decisions for her are her express consent and refuses to sign her name away. By refusing to sign, Sabrina makes the court recognize the authority she holds over herself and refuses to back down.

This decision mirrors a range of other events in the series that more broadly link to ancient rituals to contemporary feminist politics; for example, Roz’s efforts to get *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison off the banned books list at Baxter High. While Sabrina faces mistrial, Roz faces the threat of impending blindness as she attempts to devour books before she is totally blind. One of these books that she chooses to read for a school project is *The Bluest Eye*, which is deemed as inappropriate and Roz’s teacher refuses to let Roz read it. Roz then goes to Principal Hawthorne and asks if she may read it, to which he says no, and then she goes through the Baxter High library to look for a wide range of other ‘inappropriate’ books only to be told that there “has been a soft purge of bad books” since “certain topics and titles have no place in

the hands of impressionable youths” (00:05:27). Banning books is a frequent concern in American high schools, a practice that attempts to make youths less aware of current sociopolitical concerns, especially when the text is written by a minority author, like Toni Morrison. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, anxieties about literature, particularly Gothic fiction and romances, falling into the hands of women were coded as ‘corrupting’ women, a sentiment that has not disappeared even in the twenty-first century. Books, like *The Bluest Eye*, are removed from high school and even middle school libraries under the guise of protecting our youth from this corruption. Rock music is coded as ‘Satanic rock music’ and even churches perpetuate the rhetoric of ‘if you play a rock song backwards, you’ll hear the phrase hail Satan’ or other subliminal messages. Banning music or literature is an attempt at subjugating and controlling youths, forcing them to take an adult’s word as law and not questioning it, which does not happen with Roz nor Sabrina in this instance.

This subplot in “The Trial of Sabrina Spellman” effectively juxtaposes Sabrina’s plight with Roz’s since both fight against two very different oppressing patriarchal forces. The series is anachronistic, which we can see from the costuming choices to the music that plays in the background to how various set props pop up throughout the series. The nod towards the original series that aired in the 60s acknowledges the nostalgia that audiences yearned for when the series was initially announced but by combining these 60s elements with current sociopolitical criticisms, *Sabrina* creates an environment that celebrates gender diversity, rather than demonizing it, which we can see with Roz, Susie/Theo, Sabrina, and even Harvey. In *Sabrina*, we see the Gothic as a mix of a celebration of negative aesthetics that emerge in the age of reason, but also a mixture of the sublime, as Fred Botting writes. “The sublime was associated with grandeur and magnificence [ . . . but] also evoked excessive emotion. Through its

presentations of supernatural, sensational, and terrifying incidents, imagined or not, [the] Gothic produced emotional affects on its readers” (Botting 2-3). However, in *Sabrina*, the Gothic is not limited to the supernatural events that occur. While elements of the supernatural create the necessary horror that we experience as the audience in *Sabrina*, the mundane becomes equally, if not more, terrifying because of how closely they relate to our current political climate. Rather than the mundane becoming the only puritanical community, the fantastic community, a community that the mundane often retreats to and seeks solace in, becomes just as puritanical, if not more, than the mundane and highlights itself as a space that both the audience and Sabrina cannot feel safe in.

While Roz is not a witch in the series, she does possess a gift that her grandmother calls “the Cunning.” The women in Roz’s family historically lose their sight by the time they turn sixteen, a curse that causes blindness which is then supplemented by psychic sight. Ironically, as Roz’s eyesight worsens, her Cunning sharpens and she sees things that no one else can, like the Weird Sisters causing the collapse in the mines a few episodes later and that Sabrina is a witch. While Sabrina’s trial deals with the after effects of the #MeToo movement that gained traction in 2017<sup>4</sup>, Roz’s plight deals more with sociopolitical issues that run rampant in lower income communities. While Roz’s plight remains a subplot that the creators of *Sabrina* do not spend a large amount of focus on, highlighting Roz’s struggles with Sabrina’s allows for both characters to sympathize with one another in their fight against injustice, which is what #MeToo is all about: highlighting the struggles of the victims so that other victims may come forward with their own stories.

---

<sup>4</sup> The #MeToo movement was initiated by Tarana Burke, a social activist, in 2006. The movement recently regained traction in light of the Harvey Weinstein allegations and was popularized by Alyssa Milano, who played Phoebe Halliwell in the hit show, *Charmed*.

As Sabrina's trial progresses, so does the likeness to the contemporary #MeToo movement. The movement was created by a social activist of the name Tarana Burke in 2006 as a response to the sexual abuse that women of colour experience, especially in underprivileged communities. Recently, however, the movement has resurfaced as a way for women, both cisgender and not, to empathize with one another by simply stating that they, too, have experienced sexual assault. From this movement, other hashtags have begun to pop up, like #ChurchToo, #MeTooSTEM, and others involving sexual abuse, assault, and harassment in fields like finance, pornography, politics, and many others. While these offshoots from the overarching #MeToo movement remain relevant, misogynists and rape apologists keep coming back with a hashtag of their own: #HimToo. The hashtag initially began as a tweet from Pieter Hanson's mother, who tweeted that "this was [HER] son. He graduated #1 in boot camp. He was awarded the USO award. He was #1 in A school. He is a gentleman who respects women. He won't go on solo dates due to the current climate of false sexual accusations by radical feminists with an axe to grind. I VOTE #HimToo" ("This is MY Son': Navy Vet Horrified As Mom's Tweet Miscasts Him as #HimToo Poster Boy" par. 3). This original tweet has since been deleted, but several news outlets, including The Washington Post, have chronicled this tweet, immortalizing it in the #MeToo timeline. While the hashtag began as a way for men to divulge their own sexual assaults, it has since been twisted to perpetuate the idea that women are often making up allegations of sexual assault against men.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Katty Kay in her article "The Truth About False Rape Accusations" after Brett Kavanaugh's trial writes that less than 10% of rape accusations are false. She also writes that "official figures suggest the number of rapes and sexual assaults which are never reported or prosecuted far outweighs the number of men convicted of rape because of fake accusations" (Kay par. 8).

In a post #MeToo era, cisgender men become preoccupied with the notion of “I don’t want to have an Aziz Ansari moment, I don’t know how to invite a girl up to bed . . . without knowing where she actually is [into it]” (Bell 31). Terena Bell analyzes this difficult question and how several journalism outlets tackle this, for lack of a better word, “serious issue.” Magazines and editorials, like *Esquire*, *AskMen*, *BroBible*, and *PlayBoy*, have recently run columns like “Non-Masculine Behaviours Women Find the Most Sexy” or “How to Buy Her Flowers” and even changed slogans to be more inclusive and aware of the issues surrounding both sex and rape culture. One of the journalists that Bell interviews, Margaret Nichols, says that “it seems [silly] to stop publishing articles about sex out of some kind of concern that you’re feeding into sexual abuse and sexual exploitation” (Bell 30) since journalists have a duty to present unbiased facts in columns, but what Nichols and Bell fail to acknowledge is that the media has such a strong hand in perpetuating sexual and rape culture.

By seeking to place blame for the reasons as to why consent is such a hot button issue, journalists and society at large do not tend to acknowledge the fact that men seek to victimize themselves by stating that “they don’t know whether this girl doesn’t want to come upstairs with me” when the simple solution lies in two words: ask her. By creating hashtags like #HimToo and calling the #MeToo movement a witch hunt, which also minimizes the trauma that actual witch hunts have done, men place the blame entirely on women and their “false allegations” while ignoring the fact that toxic masculinity and the patriarchy are entirely to blame for sexual assault and abuse in the first place by perpetuating the idea that men are entitled to a woman’s body. Toxic masculinity erases the equality that is necessary for relationships to thrive on their own and effectively places the entire blame of the relationship on the woman.

Such issues in our contemporary moment may not seem Gothic in any political way beyond the actual violent act of sexual assault, but they do have significant Gothic undertones. Sandra M. Gilbert, a Gothic theorist who has written works with Susan Gubar on the trope of the madwoman in the attic, addresses this very same issue in “In the Labyrinth of #MeToo” as well and likens the pursuit of women, especially in Hollywood, to that of the tale of Bluebeard and even the Minotaur. She describes patriarchal culture as “the Male Beast at the center of the labyrinth” while more and more stories come to light with the Harvey Weinstein allegations (Gilbert 14) like Gwyneth Paltrow, Angelina Jolie, Katherine Kendall, Rose McGowan, and so forth being at the forefront of these horror stories about sexual assault. Gilbert highlights the underlying issue with the toxicity of the patriarchy: that the Minotaur, or Man Beast, can do anything without fear of repercussions, even going so far as to quote the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States when he says “You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful – I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything . . . Grab ’em by the pussy. You can do anything” (qtd. in Gilbert 17). This is what lies at the heart of rape culture and toxic masculinity: the idea that the men, the perpetrators of abuse, are at the heart of these issues and remain immune. Porn stars, sex workers, escorts, prostitutes, and even actresses are commodities to be used and abused as the Minotaur sees fit, especially since sex has become this highly commodified bestial *thing*, and even when sexual assault happens to sex workers, they’re seen as lesser than because of their occupation. The Minotaur is a hungry beast and preys upon female flesh.

The issue that Gilbert highlights is how problematic this way of thinking becomes: the entire fact that men assume that they are owed sex as payment for a date. Perpetuating this myth is incredibly problematic since toxicity breeds toxicity and patriarchal culture is steeped in

toxicity. And women are not immune from the toxicity that seeps out from patriarchal culture. In the case of *Sabrina*, the Minotaur becomes the Dark Lord and Sabrina immerses herself in the very culture that breeds the opposition that attempts to relegate her into the Bride position. Sabrina adamantly refuses to allow misogynistic men to relegate her into this sphere and only agrees to immerse herself in that culture to beat the Dark Lord at his own game, which highlights the fact that women can be just as bestial a Minotaur as men. Viewing toxic masculinity and the patriarchy as this Othered thing is what renders our entire society as Gothic. The Beast in the Gothic tradition goes head to head with the M<sup>6</sup>, challenging perspectives like colonialism, orientalism, racism, sexism and misogyny.

*Sabrina* thus explores and examines explicitly the comments on #MeToo and our current society's rape culture. Gilbert's argument about the toxicity of our current times is especially compelling because it situates Gothic tropes within the increasingly predatory phenomena of the digital age. Proving yet again the Gothic's adaptability, Gilbert provides a critical lexicon of monsters to account for the masculine monstrosity at the heart of the #MeToo movement. *Sabrina* performs a similar gothicization of contemporary political theory through its detailed and carefully planned mise-en-scene of witches, covens, and the contemporary. Writers for *Sabrina* borrow now standard feminist arguments, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that man is considered the default, which would render woman as the Other, or at least within the scope of the default patriarchal lifestyle that Western society revolves around. In *Sabrina*, the writers use a similar idea, situating toxic masculinity as the Other with femininity becoming the default, particularly

---

<sup>6</sup> The Minotaur is always a metaphor for some oppressing force that is not limited to patriarchy and toxic masculinity. The Beast, however, is something that opposes the Minotaur.

since so many female viewers can relate to the struggles that Sabrina faces. In popular culture, the figure of the woman is rendered as explicitly Bad or explicitly Good, something that de Beauvoir highlights as “the Praying Mantis, the Mandrake, [and] the Demon” and “the Muse, the Goddess Mother, [and] Beatrice” (1266). With de Beauvoir’s terminology, women are set so far apart from the earthly realm that they can only be one thing or the other but never both simultaneously.

Patriarchal influences often serve to dichotomize these feminine tropes, which Gothic literature also utilizes. *Sabrina*, by far, is not the only Gothic narrative to challenge these distinctions between the only apparent two types of women since toxic patriarchal culture has deemed itself fit to state that there are only these two types of women whether actual living women agree with the notion or not. Even a rudimentary Google search for “types of women” elicits results like “The Five Types of Women,” “Three Types of Women to Toss,” “The Four Types of Women” and so forth as if women can easily be relegated into these different spheres that are to be assigned to them. More oft than not, these “types of women” are categories that shame women in one way or another. For example, the femme fatale is a trope often utilized when women are overtly sexualized, attractive, and seductive to bring about ruin to men. In regards to *Sabrina*, the Weird Sisters take up this role of femme fatale, which we can see when Sabrina and the Weird Sisters lure the homophobic football players deep into the mines and eventually blackmail them to protect Susie. The Weird Sisters here are unapologetically sexual, relishing that they hold all this power over these boys, and utilizing it into manipulating them, both with the magical and the mundane.

The witch is a literary figure that has undergone a pop culture transformation in recent years. The body of the witch is a vehicle that writers use to explore sociopolitical anxieties, much



like the Gothic is a genre that creators come back to repeatedly to challenge political ideals and common anxieties that the public experiences. In *Sabrina*, Sabrina is the main metaphor that the show uses to comment on feminist movements, like #MeToo and #BelieveHer. However, that is not the only approach that the show uses to undermine common misconceptions around witches as well as femininity. By challenging how the public views witchcraft, the body of the witch, and the witch herself, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* shows that not all witches are evil and not all witches are good and that witches are only considered as forces of chaos since they retain control over themselves, their bodies, and actively challenge moments of injustice through of energy and the world around them. Because the witch refuses to be defined and controlled in this box that the rest of the world, whether it be fictional or our material plane of existence, the witch's body is a sociopolitical nightmare that resists signification and actively challenges our preconceptions surrounding bodily autonomy all the while remaining relatable and easily accessible. Especially with our current political climate, these issues surrounding consent that *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* challenges, the entire series becomes one that, not only millennial women, but zillennial children, both cisgender, transgender, and gender non-conforming, require since this is now the Resistance.

## Works Cited

- Aguirre-Sacasa, Roberto. *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*. Netflix, 2015.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. "The Second Sex." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch et al., Norton, 2010, 1265-1273.
- Bell, Terena. "Where Has All the Sex Advice for Men Gone?: In a Post #MeToo Era, Men's Magazines Are Pulling Sex From Their Pages." *Quill*, vol. 106, no. 5, Winter 2018, pp. 28-31.
- Botting, Fred. *The Gothic*. Routledge. 1996.
- Conway, D.J. *Wicca: The Complete Craft*. Ten Speed Press, 2001.
- Dahl, Angie. "Why *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*'s Witch Trial Resonates." *Comic Book Resources*. <https://www.cbr.com/chilling-adventures-sabrina-trial-scene/>. Accessed 11 April 2019.
- Fifth Estate. "Why Incels Are a 'Real and Present Threat' for Canadians." *CBC*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/incele-threat-canadians-fifth-estate-1.4992184>. Accessed 11 April 2019.
- Flynn, Megan. "This is MY Son': Navy Vet Horrified As Mom's Tweet Miscasts Him as #HimToo Poster Boy." *The Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/09/this-is-my-son-navy-vet-horrified-as-moms-tweet-miscasts-him-as-himtoo-poster-boy-and-goes-viral/?utm\\_term=.45f1df9ef328](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/09/this-is-my-son-navy-vet-horrified-as-moms-tweet-miscasts-him-as-himtoo-poster-boy-and-goes-viral/?utm_term=.45f1df9ef328). Accessed 1 April 2019.
- Germana, Monica. *Scottish Women's Gothic and Fantastic Writing*. Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Gilbert, Sandra M. "In the Labyrinth of #MeToo" *American Scholar*, vol. 87, no. 3, Summer 2018, pp. 12-25.

Halbertstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Lorenzi, Lorenzo. *Witches: Exploring the Iconography of the Sorceress and the Enchantress*. Centro di della Edifimi srl, 2005.

@MicheleDauber. "#brockturner father: son not 'violent' only got '20 mins of action' shouldn't have to go to prison. @thehuntingground." *Twitter*. 4 June 2016, 10:58 p.m., <https://twitter.com/mldauber/status/739320585222660096>. Accessed 11 April 2019.

Paskin, Willa. "Which Witch?: *Sabrina* and *Charmed* Return, Just When We Need Witches Most." *Slate*. <https://slate.com/culture/2018/10/chilling-adventures-sabrina-review-charmed.html>. Accessed 11 April 2019.

Pulliam, Jane. *Monstrous Bodies: Feminine Power in Young Adult Fiction*. McFarland and Company, Inc. 2014.

Sheffield, Rob. "The Witch Is Back!: Netflix's 'Riverdale'-like Makeover of Archie Comics Character Smells Like Teen Witchiness – and Gives Us a Resistance-Era Heroine." *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-reviews/chilling-adventures-of-sabrina-review-745479/>. Accessed 20 January 2019.

Spooner, Catherine. *Fashioning the Gothic*. Manchester University Press, 2004.