

## CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES: CHALLENGING WITCHES' STEREOTYPICAL MARGINALIZATION IN MULTIMEDIA FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS

Nurhadianty Rahayu<sup>1</sup>, Reza Pahlevi<sup>2</sup>, Movi Riana Rahmawanti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Jember, <sup>2</sup>Expedia Group Indonesia, <sup>3</sup>Universitas Ibn Khaldun, Bogor

\*[nurhadianty.rahayu@gmail.com](mailto:nurhadianty.rahayu@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This study attempts to critically explore the representation of witches in two genres of text, i.e. popular animated movie *Spirited Away* and a historical essay published on history.com. Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical-feminist Approach to Marx's 'primitive accumulation' are incorporated as the guiding framework in the data analysis process. Findings showcase that the representation of witches in animated movie highlights the criticism of capitalist disruption of Japanese gender roles as can be seen from the ambivalent characters of the movie's main witch antagonist, Yubaba and her twin sister Zeniba. Furthermore, in the historical essay, findings portray that witches' representation in historical article does not guarantee that they are free from marginalizing and stereotypical accusation. Even though the highlight is on the severe state-sponsored punishment and disciplining toward women's body during the great witch hunt, the actors exerting power are made invisible, resulting in the perpetuation of unjust power balance within the society.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, critical feminist perspective, Marx's primitive accumulation, witches' representation

### INTRODUCTION

During internet era, communicating becomes so easily done over the internet. Online website and social media provide platforms for their users to exchange written and spoken comments, as well as video

easily and to target specific readership for their content (Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2018). Djonov & van Leeuwen (2018) also propose that the participatory ideals of Web 2.0 technologies enable users who create and share content online to be powered by

algorithm turning users' activity into data. This algorithm then leads to the personalization of user's content suggestion based on the history of their internet use (Glover, 2023). In this context, for instance, once a user clicks on a topic about witches' history on internet, the suggestion of similar contents will be recommended.

Besides social media, streaming media platforms have also emerged as new way of watching TV or films (Özgün & Treske, 2021). A popular animated movie *Spirited Away* is one of the multimodal texts analyzed in regards of the topic of witches' representation in this study, and it is now circulated in one of the movie-streaming platforms. In several webs and movie streaming platforms, the interaction between the texts' producers and their consumers are indirect. History.com, for instance, does not provide comment column that gives space for readers to share what they think after reading the content. From this particularity, we argue that language as a semiotic system in web-based content and movie-streaming platforms becomes a fertile ground to explore in a critical manner.

The discourse of witches' representation involves how witches are portrayed from legends, myths, fairy tales, and historical records from pre-modern times. In scholarly publications, witches are represented in terms of their motherhood quality (see for example Engelbrecht, 2021; Papastavros, 2021); old femininity (Capdevila, 2018); monstrous power (Akgun, 2020); and victims of state violence (Federici, 2014; Roxburgh, 2018). However, the representation of witches in a popular animated film as compared to a historical text is still scarce. This study aims to enrich

a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010) of witches' representation by exploring how they are portrayed in popular text such as an award-winning animated movie *Spirited Away* and a historical entry in history.com web that is publicly available. The analysis is also deepened by interconnecting the issue at hand with witch-hunt history that is based mainly on the religious and state-sponsored oppression toward women from lower social classes (Federici, 2014).

### **Fairclough's Framework of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) promotes an analysis based on a three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 2010). The first dimension is the dimension of text, the second is discursive practice, and the third is social practice.

The first dimension is textual sphere, where analysis of text's form and meaning is conducted. Any text can be regarded as interweaving 'ideational', 'interpersonal' and 'textual' meanings. Texts as medium of meaning-making need to also be traced to the analysis of the forms of text such as their generic forms, their dialogic organization, the cohesive relation between sentences and clauses, the use of their vocabulary, and the grammar of the clause (Fairclough, 2010). However, as the first text to analyze in this study is an animated movie, we also incorporate Barthes' mythology (Barthes, 1972) to help us analyze the pictures as a part of language that produces certain meaning. Accepting Barthes (1972) suggestions that poses in pictures are able to signify values, identities, and perceived behaviors of the figures, the analysis involves the close reading of witches



identity formation through the visuals in the animation scenes.

The second dimension of CDA concerns about socio-cognitive aspects of text production and interpretation. Hence, the analysis involves the exploration of the relationship of the discursive event to the order of the discourse. In this phase, the intertextuality of past historical happenings or cultural beliefs are taken into account in shaping the text as it is.

The last dimension is the social practice which considers the context of situation, the institutional context, and the wider societal context (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The relationship between power and hegemony are at play in unveiling this particular dimension of CDA. In helping the process of analysis of the texts in this dimension, the intertwine of Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' is sharpened by the critical feminist approach (Federici, 2014). Federici argues that the shift of society from feudal system to capitalist type owes to the perpetual oppression of women's body as a means of reproducing labors. The exertion of power from the church that was later adapted by the state towards women from lower class of society in witch hunts during the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the United States of America and several other New Worlds also fueled the violence of women (Federici, 2014). This witch hunt history becomes the main framework of analyzing the dimension of social practice from which the interpretation of witches' representation in popular texts is based.

### **Critical Feminist Perspective to Marx's 'Primitive Accumulation'**

The social practice about witches' representation in pop culture products such as movie and other internet-based

information needs to be taken into account. This is enabled by looking at the intersection of capitalism and critical feminist perspective. It is, thus, important for us to consider the intersection between neo-Marxian concept of "primitive accumulation" that is fueled by feminist perspective of how female body has been appropriated for reproduction and accumulation of labor as proposed by Federici (2014).

The feminist approach to Marx's 'primitive accumulation' is rooted in Federici's criticism of Marx's account of it as an accumulation of land expropriation from the European peasantry and the formation of free workers but fails to mention such issue in relation to labor-power and the social position of women. She argues that the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century witch hunt was state-sponsored terror campaign that defeated European peasantry and resulted in the land expulsion. She mentioned that the transformation of the body into a work-machine and the subjugation of women to the reproduction of workforce required a systematic destruction of the power of women, which, in Europe and America, was achieved through witch-hunt.

Federici also criticizes the sexual division of labor that bound women to reproductive work, increasing their dependence on men and enabling the state to command women's labor. This escalates women's work as invisible and unwaged, forcing the condition of chronic poverty. This is the critical point from which Federici sets her notion of critical feminist perspective of 'primitive accumulation'. The witch-hunt, she argues, need to be considered in the history of the proletariat against missionaries' charge of devil



worshipping as a tool for the subjugation of the local population in the New World. She also maintains that the witch-hunt imposes men to fear the power of women and capitalist system's destruction of beliefs that are incompatible with their work disciplines.

The publication of *Malleus Malejficarum (The Hammer of Witches)* in 1486 marked the Church's power exertion by deciding witchcraft as social threat. This credo fueled the authorities to punish those who were identified as witches. Federici in her book reported that many witch trials accused mostly women from lower classes. The state propaganda generated a mass psychosis among the population which then perpetuated in the portrayal of witches in pop culture, illustrated as mostly women in old age, capable of shapeshifting, having a black cat, constantly boiling something mysterious in their bubbling pot. The historical facts can reveal much more complex issue than that. The representation of witches, in two public texts including a product of pop culture still bears an importance in tracing how the witches are portrayed as a result of the grave historical facts about witch-hunt and the internalization of their presence as dangerous to what-so-called the balance socio-cultural life.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework in analyzing the witches' representation in texts, including one of Ghibli animated movies, *Spirited Away* and the history of witches published on history.com website. Those texts are selected as data since studies on the different facets of witches'

representation through comparison of fiction and non-fiction works are still relatively scarce.

As the focus of this paper is to unveil how the discourse of witches are represented in a popular animated film and a historical essay, this study employs the framework from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2010). Fairclough (2010) proposes three-dimensional approach to analyze the discourse about witches' representation. First is the textual dimension in which the analysis is assisted by Barthes' notion of myth (Barthes, 1972) for the visual data of a Studio Ghibli animated movie, *Spirited Away*. While the textual analysis of the historical article follows Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014), particularly the ideational metafunction since unveiling this metafunction enables us to look at the experiential and logical representation of the witches, an important factor in understanding how texts are structured in an experiential and logical manner. Secondly, the discursive practice analysis is done by investigating the process of text production, circulation, and interpretation by the targeted readers (Fairclough, 2010). Thirdly, the socio-cultural practice is unveiled by deconstructing the representation of witches and tracing its development in the lens of how Marxian 'primitive accumulation' intersects with 'body-politics' feminism (Federici, 2014). Federici, (2014) proposed an intersection between Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' with consideration of the feminist perspective toward witch-hunts of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and neo-Foucauldian concept of feminist 'body politics' as a site of struggles



against capitalist exploitation. The feminist approach to 'primitive accumulation' is hence a focal point from which the representation of witches in an animated movie and a web-based historical essay is deconstructed.

Even though studies on representation do not always end up destructing the structural oppression, which in this case revolves around the history of violence toward witches, the reckoning of witches' socio-cultural, economic, and political vulnerabilities gives hope to criticizing the otherwise oppressive power structure through understanding what actually happens along the way.

In consideration of criticizing the power structure in witches' representation, CDA is a key framework to use for examining the interconnection between the *macro-level* (dominant) values and the *micro-level* of discursive strategies realized in texts (van Dijk, 2008). As scholars, we too, take our responsibility to showcase our stance against the perpetuation of domination in witches' representation from the premodern times. In the present case, the macro level refers to the issues of women exploitation in global witch-hunts and the shift of social structure from feudalism to capitalism during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. This issue is deconstructed through feminist approach of primitive accumulation and Foucauldian concept of body as the site of struggle. On the other hand, the micro level includes the linguistic and visual aid as discursive strategies appearing in the texts.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Looking at the stereotypical marginalization of witches in popular narratives such as animated movies and

nonfiction works, we need to consider the dialectical relationship between language use and its socio-historical contexts. Fairclough (2010, p. 93) proposes that critical discourse analysis to systematically investigate the causality between discursive practices, events, and texts with their wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. Through this we are enabled to trace how the practices events, and texts are ideologically constructed by relations of power and the struggles over power. Besides, the investigation opens up a space for exploring how the relationships between discourse and society also perpetuates the already established power and hegemony.

We use a three-dimensional framework of analysis (Fairclough, 2010) in exploring the linkages to discursive events about witches' representation in the texts under scrutiny. The first dimension reflects the linguistic representation of witches in texts. The second reckons how the discourse practices are at work by looking at the production, circulation, and consumption of text by the targeted audience. The last dimension unravels the realm of social practices, connecting the discursive strategies realized in the texts with wider social, economic, political, and cultural contexts within the relations of power and domination. This examining of the witches' stereotypical marginalization as social practice is interpreted with the help of critical feminist concept of 'primitive accumulation' questioning the body as a site of struggles proposed by Federici (2014).

### a. Witches' Representation in *Spirited Away*

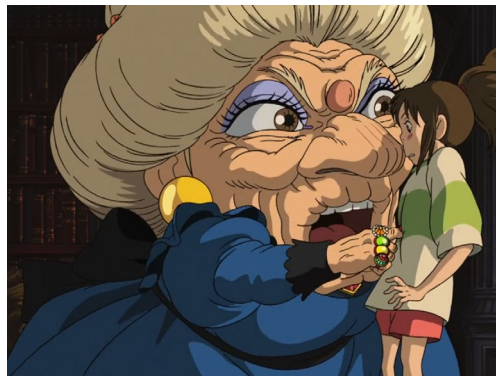
As *Spirited Away* is one of Japanese-based Studio Ghibli's animated movies, we need to question the portrayal of the twin witches' characterization in this film in the



light of Japanese traditional norms, exploring how fictional characters should or should not behave according to the belief system. The twin witches are called Yubaba, the bath-house entrepreneur who is illustrated to have greedy and monstrous nature, and Zeniba, her sorceress twin who displays sweet and nurturing characteristics. They embody contrasting natures that can be traced back to the ambivalence of *Shintoism* concept of good and evil (Papastavros, 2021, p. 4). Besides, scholars set a consensus that *anime* is closely intertwined with *Shinto* folklore, history, moral assumptions and aesthetics of the Japanese (Buruma, 2010; Ogihara-Schuck, 2014; Reider, 2005; Shinobu, 2001). McCarthy (2018) reports that Miyazaki's female characters are figures embellished by dangerous magic and power unless they are tamed by social structures. The character of Yubaba as a cunning entrepreneurial witch in this context is hence being tamed by her twin, Zeniba, suggesting that being powerful witches are to be seen within the perspective of Japanese socio-cultural norms, which in this case is illustrated by taming Yubaba's power.

#### *Linguistic and visual elements*

Zeniba in *Spirited Away* is portrayed as a powerful witch, yet she uses her power to foster interdependence and hard-work as central values to the Japanese way of life (Ogihara-Schuck, 2014). Her visual representation can be observed in Picture 1 below.



Picture 1. Yubaba's portrait as a powerful entrepreneurial witch

Considering Barthes' concept of denotative/connotative meaning making (Barthes, 1972), the picture technically showcases reality of Yubaba as the witch character that embodies old woman, with big head, wearing dark robe and many decorative embellishment and colorful eye-makeup. Yubaba's costume represents her cultural otherness as opposed to the very traditional costumes worn by her workers. Her bathhouse workers wear traditional kimono while she wears a Victorian-style dress (Papastavros, 2021). The movie's art director revealed that initially Yubaba was about to have the resemblance of characterization with that of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* (Reider, 2005). Hence, borrowing Barthes' notion of denotative interpretation, the visual of Yubaba can reflect her powerful figure whose fashion mirrors her capital owning role in society by wearing decorative eye makeup and jewelries. Her mansion was also illustrated as a very luxurious abode, highlighting the successful profit-making business that she runs under her magic capacity to force her workers to be obedient and oblivious of their true identity.



Picture 2. Yubaba's luxurious mansion



Picture 3. Zeniba's humble cottage



Picture 4. Zeniba's warm and affectionate characteristic

The connotative interpretation of Yubaba's visual appearance has a connection with her Otherness as she is the only character wearing Western attire while, with her magical power, exploiting her workers, and perpetuating the traditional representation of a witch as an old woman with shape-shifting capability. Her character is also an embodiment of what Kristeva (1982) calls as the monstrous Other. Comparing the duality of oppositional nature by the twin character of

Yubaba/Zeniba, we get to know the ambivalence of characters that Miyazaki wanted to depict in this movie. As to the physical appearance, Yubaba and Zeniba have no difference at all, the only difference is visible in the way in which they decorate their abodes and the paradoxical nature of capitalist-driven monstrous Other and traditional gender role of feminine homemakers.

#### *Discursive Practice in 'Spirited Away'*

In this dimension, we traced the production and interpretation of the movie. Studio Ghibli is the producer of animation whose movies have strong female characters and showcase the romantic imagination of living harmoniously in nature. In her study, Papastavros (2021) showcased the director/writer of the story, Miyazaki, that *Spirited Away* reflected the social tensions of Japan's 1990s economic bubble. The issue triggers the disintegration of traditional gender role that usually refers to women as homemakers and mothers (Dumas, 2018). Through Yubaba, as the main antagonist, this movie can be seen as a disruption to traditional gender roles, looking at her business-owning activity.

As to the interpretation of the movie by the consumers, we can look at several internet users review on IMDB website as can be seen on <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0245429/reviews> and a review published on The Guardian mostly appreciated the beauty of the animation, narrative, and music (Bredshaw, 2003), although many users also complained about the complexity of the plot. Academic analysis is also reported, varying the topic of their investigation into the issue of monstrous mother and witch representation in fantasy films see for

example (Papastavros, 2021; Rahayu, 2024). The process of reading and interpreting the movie sheds light to the discursive practices of a witch's representation that is more visible in the academic interpretation of the movie compared to user-made reviews on IMDB website. This is due to the distinct nature of web users' perspective and their more spontaneous style of communication as opposed to a more theoretically bound construal of the same movie in academic writing. The dialectic process of producing and consuming the film that focuses on witches' representation in *Spirited Away* reflects the director/writer's criticism toward the ambivalence of Yubaba's character as both mother and entrepreneur as a part of Western influence and the capitalist system (Dumas, 2018). Studio Ghibli as the production house of the movie intensifies this message and widens the film's distribution particularly after it receives global recognition of diverse awards, such as Oscar. The film is now made available on Netflix, making its accessibility easier for the user to watch and rewatch in their most convenient circumstance. This massive popularity of the movie then becomes a legacy of how witches are perpetually constructed as old woman, wearing dark robes, having the ability to shape-shift, and showcasing fearful personalities. The duality of Zeniba/Yubaba cannot be interpreted on the surface level, hence the representation of witches in *Spirited Away* is deemed influential in sustaining while at the same time disrupting witches' traditional representation.

### *Social Practice in 'Spirited Away'*

The capitalist way of denouncing traditional gender roles that is portrayed by Yubaba/Zeniba duality (Papastavros, 2021) also affects how the movie is locally and globally constructed through the intersection of sex, gender, and cultural norms. Considering the development of capitalism (Federici, 2014) and the historical event of witch hunt which marked the rage of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe, the portrayal of witches in *Spirited Away* can be seen as not only a challenge to witch-blaming but also a portrayal the many facets of witches' personality. The complexity and ambivalence of Yubaba and her twin Zeniba acts as the factor to elevate understanding about the duality of turning into a fast-paced of capitalist society and also defending the femininity of women as housemakers.

Borrowing the framework of critical feminist perspective on primitive accumulation (Federici, 2014), the character of Yubaba is such kind of revival of what used to be repressed from a witch, i.e. financial independence even though it is performed over the capitalist way of exploiting workers, depriving them off their identity and subjugating them in the new way of slavery. The antithesis of this witch personality is showcased by Yubaba's twin sister, Zeniba, who are represented as possessing the feminine nature of affection, nurturing while also being a housemaker along with her magical prowess. Capitalist dream has never been her interest, as she said to the protagonist, Chihiro, "My sister and I are two halves of a whole, but we really don't get along." This duality is actually never visible in the history of society's shift from feudalism into capitalism, since women were always





treated as the threat to capitalist way of production and fortune gaining for the upper classes of societal hierarchy. *Spirited Away* with its popularity denounces witches from denying their magical prowess, they are portrayed as powerful, capable of being financially independent while at the same time maintain their loving personality.

**b. Witches in Historical Essay**

Witches in the article *History of Witches* from history.com can be seen within the context of socio-cultural practices, particularly through the lens of Marxist theory and body-politics feminism.

*Coercive Marginalization and Othering*

When looking at the essay published on history.com from an ideational point of view, we can construe that the article mostly discusses the way in which the accused witches were punished –represented by the most frequently used process, i.e. material— and the identifying and attributive characteristics embedded to witches and factual information about witch’s history –represented by the second mostly occurred process types, i.e. relational.

The actors in most material processes are eliminated by employing passive voice as can be seen from the clause below:

||| [[*Ultimately, around 150 people were accused and 18 were put to death*]] |||

Around 150 people	were accused
Goal	Process: Material

And 18	were put to death
Goal	Process: Material

The use of passive voice makes the actors in the above clauses nonexistent because the highlight is in the number of victims. This showcases two possibilities of the text organization, first, because the essay consists of historical information, the authors of the article want to maintain objectivity. The second possibility is that the actors, which refer to the power holders either the Church, the legal officials, the society, or the government, need to be concealed so as to moderate the consequence of a hierarchical power relation within the society at that time.

In the article, relational processes are incorporated to portray witches as marginalized individuals who defy societal conventions and potentially dangerous to existing power dynamics. This portrayal can be seen on the clauses below:



||| [[Around 80 percent of them **were** women **thought to be** in cahoots with the Devil and filled with lust]] |||

Around 80 percent of them	were	women
Carrier	Process: Relational Attributive	Attribute

(that) thought to be	In cahoots with the Devil and filled with lust
Process: Mental Cognitive	Phenomenon

This depiction aligns with how witches are identified as women attributed with the mental imagination of cooperating with devil and filled with lust. This emphasizes the systematic targeting and vilification of women as marginalized groups by the power holders.

The third most recurring process type is mental process. This type of process is mostly used to represent the illogical reasoning of accusation done to those who are accused as witches such can be seen from the clause below:

||| [[Most of the witches were thought to be pagans doing the Devil’s work]] |||

Most of the witches	Were thought	To be pagans (doing the Devil’s work)
phenomenon	Process: Mental Cognitive	

As the attributive characteristic that is immersed to describe a witch is pagans, a belief system that has always been depicted as deviating Christianity, the power holder in this clause is the Church.

From the transitivity analysis done in the first dimension, we can conclude that the article maintains its objective quality by the use of impersonality realized by passive voices. The lack of agency in the use of passive voices affects how the text reveals the possible agents that are responsible for the grim happenings to those who are accused as witches. The most frequent process types in this historical narrative are material 55 out of 91 clauses, followed by relational 15 clauses, and mental 8 clauses. This indicates that the text is organized in an intention to showcase the physical treatment that is performed to punish the alleged witches as marginal and other beings deviating from the Christian teaching, as what the article says, “*The publication of “Malleus Maleficarum”—written by two well-respected German Dominicans in 1486—likely spurred witch mania to go viral.*” However, when the description shifted to the punishing activities, any identification as to who did the punishing is intentionally eliminated from the description.



### *Production and Target Audience*

The article *History of Witches* is produced by history.com editors and published on history.com. The platform used is a website or an online platform that can be accessed by anyone who has access to the internet. People can simply read the article by visiting the URL <https://www.history.com/topics/folklore/history-of-witches>. The implication of using this platform is that it allows widespread dissemination of historical information and facilitates access to a broad audience.

Online platforms like websites enable the History Channel to reach a global audience and engage users who may be interested in exploring various historical topics at their convenience. Additionally, online platforms often provide opportunities for interactive features, multimedia content, and user engagement, enhancing the overall user experience and making historical information more accessible and engaging.

The target audience of the article is likely individuals with an interest in history, folklore, and cultural studies. This could include history enthusiasts, students studying history or related disciplines, educators seeking resources for teaching about witch hunts and historical perspectives on witchcraft, and members of the public interested in learning about historical topics.

The web also mentioned the information revealing the contributors to the article.

HISTORY.com works with a wide range of writers and editors to create accurate and informative content. All articles are regularly reviewed and updated by the HISTORY.com team.

Articles with the “HISTORY.com Editors” byline have been written or edited by the HISTORY.com editors, including Amanda Onion, Missy Sullivan, Matt Mullen and Christian Zapata.

However, as to which editors contribute as the writers and editors of the essay are not explicitly stated. The claim of “*All articles are regularly reviewed and updated by HISTORY.COM team*” also corroborates the lack of agency as to who is the actual actor that review and update the article.

The engagement between the text’s producers and consumers is provided only through email, marking the limitation of users’ direct engagement in the comment box, which is not offered. The direct engagement between the text’s producer – HISTORY.COM team— and its targeted readers is hence framed to be personal and private instead of public. As Seelig et al. (2019) propose, social interaction required social listening to real-time conversations and discovering opportunities for engagement. This social interaction is the feature that is not provided by the website; hence the text producer’s way of communication adopts one-way transmission of information.

### *Socio-cultural Practices*

Pagan beliefs faced condemnation and witches were increasingly linked with malevolence and devilish rituals since Christianity spread. This transformation is noticeable in texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of Witches)*, a fifteenth-century guidebook for witch hunters that, the article argues, intensified the hysteria surrounding witches in Europe. This book was then massively used as a guide to identify, hunt and interrogate



witches, legalizing witch hunt as a hierarchical order from the Church. This document sheds light on religious influences driving the persecution of witches during the early modern era. *Malleus Maleficarum* considered witchcraft as heresy, and quickly became definitive guide for both Protestants and Catholics seeking to identify witches within their communities. Within a century, witch hunts became widespread, and the majority of those accused faced execution through burning or hanging. Women who were single, widowed, or otherwise marginalized in society were particularly singled out for persecution. Considering this issue in historical perspective, Federici (2014) connects witches' persecution as the result of the fear of uprising. She cited a study by Muraro (1977) of witch trials that happened in the Italian Alps in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She argued that peasant revolt as the realization of class struggle was central element in the tale of witches' secret gathering. The fact was that the 1525 uprising demanded the elimination of tithes and tributes, the freedom to hunt, hostels for the poor, and the right of each village to elect its priest, which ended in their defeat and massacre, leaving a legacy of authorities' revenge in the form of witch hunt.

The evolution of attitudes towards witch hunts is evident in various measures taken to address injustices. For instance, in Lower Norfolk County in 1655, legislation was introduced to criminalize false accusations of witchcraft, marking a significant shift in perceptions. The story of Grace Sherwood in Virginia further underscores the enduring impact of witchcraft allegations, despite changing sentiments. Sherwood's trial, which included a peculiar water test to

ascertain guilt, serves as a poignant reminder of the arbitrary and unjust nature of such proceedings. Legal reforms, like those implemented in Virginia to safeguard against wrongful accusations of witchcraft, symbolize a move towards greater fairness and accountability. Over time, as awareness grew and attitudes shifted, the era of witch hysteria in the New World gradually subsided, giving way to a more discerning and enlightened outlook. Nevertheless, the persistence of accusations, as seen in Sherwood's case, highlights the lingering effects of political class that was obsessed with punishing women's body.

The writing also stated that increase of the witch's persecution in the New World was illustrated as triggered by wars, smallpox epidemic, and the fear of attacks from native American tribes. How the authors addressed native American tribes that were capable of attacking them is in itself a process of Othering. Witches, hence, were not the only accused people of being an evil being.

While the portrayal of witches as the devil's disciples echoed in various historical and cultural narratives, including biblical accounts, their identity was initially constructed as "wise women" whose profession was misunderstood (History.com, 2023). However, *Malleus* described that witches infect the conception of the womb, change men into beasts, and offer children to devil. Besides, witches were accused simultaneously, in a contradictory statement, of rendering men impotent and arousing excessive sexual passion. There was an emerging patriarchal code as illustrated by the witch-hunt, that physical impotence was actually moral impotence (Federici, 2014). Both



patriarchal society and church authority through its biblical tale reinforce the association of witches with illogical supernatural powers and their perceived threat to established authority. This then becomes a legacy in earlier products of pop culture, even though there are more altered versions of witches' representation as the freedom fighters against violence and inequality, such as in *Maleficent* and *Spirited Away* (Engelbrecht, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

This paper explores the representation of witches in a Japanese-produced animated movie, *Spirited Away*, and a web-published historical article critically. The result of CDA framework opens an access to read the two texts beyond the surface level. The interconnection among Barthes' semiology in analyzing visual text in the movie, Halliday's SFL in investigating the language used in historical essay within Fairclough's text analysis, we report that both texts displayed multi-layered representation of witches. In *Spirited Away*, for instance, the representation of witch is within the ambivalence of an independent woman's struggle against the rise of capitalism and the obedient to follow the traditional role as a home-maker. In the history.com essay, though, witches are framed within their othering perspective by using passive voice, concealing the actors performing state-sponsored violence during the witch-hunt in Europe and the New World.

In consideration of the result of discursive practice analysis, both the movie and the web-published essay does not provide interactive space to maintain engaging communicative events between

the producer and the consumers of the text. In other words, both means act as a one-way information transmission.

The last element unveiled within Fairclough's CDA is the social practice dimension. Borrowing Federici's concept of critical-feminist approach to Marx's 'primitive accumulation', both texts represent witches as victim to the unjust patriarchal society in the dawn of burgeoning capitalism. This study still showcases limited insights into how the representation of witches helps shape public shift toward witches' negative representation in emerging social media platforms.

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