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### Final Paper

Witchcraft is a practice in which we have been studying all semester. Some people believe in witchcraft, and some do not. Salem's reputation was formed because of its fear of witches, but today it is known as a place where witches, also known as people who follow the Wiccan religion, gather openly. Witchcraft is explicitly black magic. A covenant with the devil was required with witchcraft. Wicca is mostly about what the Puritans called "white magic". There's a big perception that practices like Wicca, santeria, and voodoo are the same as witchcraft but they're not.

Witchcraft is the exercise of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events, practices typically involving sorcery or magic (Russell). The kind of magic that is affiliated with witchcraft is black magic. Many believe that individuals that believe in witchcraft participate in rituals similar to voodoo and cast spells and invocations to bring harm. There are many characteristic symptoms of witchcraft. One example is when a Christian is under assault of witchcraft and curses. The Christian becomes disoriented or confused. Satan wants to cloud his vision stopping the Christian from reaching their destiny towards God (Exposing Signs of Witchcraft: Spiritual Warfare). All Satan wants to do is to get you away from God in any shape or form. Another symptom is when one is targeted by curses, they will feel emotionally drained or debilitated. The person might assume they are sick, but it is not the flu. The "sickness" is witchcraft. Curses are released from witchcraft. Another symptom deals with curses. The curses

will arouse several fears which will end up plaguing the mind. Their mind will be targeted, and then what ends up happening is grotesque images will flash. The individual will lose sleep due to this and be drained (Exposing Signs of Witchcraft: Spiritual Warfare).

Beliefs and practices regarding witchcraft include serious violations of human rights including beatings, banishment, cutting of body parts, amputation of limbs, torture, and murder (Witchcraft and Human Rights). Some individuals who believed in witchcraft believed that witches were in a pact with the devil. To participate in witchcraft, a covenant with the devil was required. A covenant with the devil means that a pact is made between an individual and the devil. The individual gives their soul to the devil for diabolical favors like youth, knowledge, wealth, fame, and power. One major thing the devil would have an individual do is sign the devil's book with blood. Once an individual did that, they basically became a witch. Witches were also expected to have a mark on their bodies, a cut, scar, etc. Witches were also known that they could change shape, fly, or appear in spectral form, which meant people could say that they encountered an accused witch in a dream or vision and it could count as evidence (Zazzara).

Maleficium, sometimes referred to "black magic" is witchcraft that is performed for the purposes of doing someone or something harm. The suggestion is that maleficium was the domain of women witches and that male witches specialized in something more sorcery (Rhodes). Maleficium was a combination of sorcery and its association with the Devil.

There was a big event that happened in the past that circled around witchcraft and black magic. The event is well-known as the Salem Witch Trials. The Salem Witch Trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. The trials resulted in the executions of 20 people. 14 of those 20 people were women and all but one were hanged. Five of them, including two of them being

infant children, died in prison. Twelve other women had already been executed for witchcraft in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Chadwick Hansen writes a book called *Witchcraft at Salem* that basically claims that a few of the accused in Salem were guilty of practicing witchcraft and caused serious harm to others. A lot of people were under the influence that a lot of individuals were under mass hysteria.

Women were more susceptible to suspicions of witchcraft because they were perceived, in Puritan society, to have weaker constitutions that were more likely to be inhabited by the devil (Hammond). Women that specifically had knowledge of herbal remedies—things that could often demand “pagan” by Puritans—were the ones who were particularly at risk of being accused of witchcraft. In the Salem Witch Trials, the first three people who were accused and arrested for causing afflictions were three women. Their names were Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba. Each of these women exhibited many of the character traits of suspects for accusations of witchcraft. They were left to defend themselves (Hammond). More women and men ended up getting arrested later. Many authorities executed people and caused deaths of others before the trials were over (Hammond).

Puritans thought that witches were notorious for killing healthy infants and they had pets that did the “evil bidding”. The animals were usually called familiars. According to their knowledge, the pets, or familiars, would drink the blood of their witch masters. The pets would usually created, summoned, brought, or received by witches. They were often in exchange with Satan (Clary). Witches were known to look up to the devil as their master and could not say the Catholic “Our Father” prayer without making mistakes. Those afflicted of witchcraft were always being poked, pinched, or bitten. They always had bite marks to prove it (The Salem, Massachusetts Witchcraft Hysteria).

There are people that exist today who are members of the pagan movement.

Approximately 1 million Americans whose practices draw from a combination of pre-Christian European religions, Western occult, Masonic societies, and forms of witchcraft (Smith). Either people are identifying themselves as pagan or Wiccan.

Wicca is a modern Pagan religion. Its followers, who are called Wiccans, typically identify as witches and draw inspiration largely from the pre-Christian religions of Europe. Wicca is a broad movement with much diversity in its beliefs and practices (White). The practice can be traced all the way back to a British civil servant whose name was Gerald Gardner. Gardner became involved in a British occult community and claimed to have discovered a group of new witches operating in New England's New Forest in 1939. He later concluded that it was their teachings that provided the basis of Wicca (White). Gardner's neo-pagan beliefs had almost no connection to other forms of witchcraft (Carter).

Wicca is believed to practice white magic instead of black. While black magic accepts harming or injuring others to achieve results, white magic practitioners, such as Wiccans, refrain from using evil energies that would fall back on them. White magic is all things good. The people who practice white magic believe in the mystical strength of the elements and eliminating any negativity surrounding you without causing harm or injury to others. The magic holds power to heal, protect, and bless, making good dreams come true. White magic is used to heal the mind, body, and spirit of the negative and harmful energies surrounding us (Wishbonix).

Wiccan rituals typically take place in a practitioner's home, often at night, rather than in purpose-built structures. They take place in a circle, at one end of which is an altar. Common ritual tools include a censer of incense, a chalice, a pentacle, a wand, and a knife known as an athame (White). Groups of Wiccans call themselves covens. They are often led by a high priest

and a high priestess and can have as few as three members. Coven membership is typically granted through what's called an initiation ritual. Being initiated into a tradition connects the newcomer to that tradition's lineage—something that certain Wiccans place great importance on. Admittance to a coven is at the discretion of its members. Most Wiccan traditions welcome both women and men, although a few operate on a single-sex basis. Throughout Wicca's history, there have been covens that excluded gays or transgender people, but today such exclusions are now less common (White).

People who participate in the practice known as Wicca worship gods and goddesses. The most common gods in the Wiccan faith are a male “Horned God” and a female “Goddess” representing a polytheism. The male and female dichotomy played a huge role in iterations of faith. The Horned God is associated with the sun, animals, the woods, and nature in general (Witchcraft and Wicca). He shares some features with the Greek gods Pan and Sylvanus. The Goddess figure can be represented by a “mother goddess” as the mother of all creation. Hecate is another ancient Greek goddess of magic and witchcraft who is depicted with three faces, three connected bodies, or three female figures (Witchcraft and Wicca).

Wiccans claim to draw inspiration for their practice from ancient cultures, such as pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon and Celtic traditions. The Goddess they worship provides a female face for the divine, appealing to feminists who seek “girl power”. Wiccans see a divinity in nature, which resonates with growing environmental concerns, especially among the young (What Is Wicca? An Expert on Modern Witchcraft Explains.). Wiccans do practice a certain kind of magic and they believe that magic taps into a spirit world often referred to as the “otherworld”. They do magic to heal themselves, heal others, to try to find a new job, and other things. Whenever they use magic, they must emphasize that magic must not cause harm. The magic is viewed as

changing the practitioners as much as their circumstances, encouraging others to pursue self-growth and self-empowerment (What Is Wicca? An Expert on Modern Witchcraft Explains.). Self-growth and self-empowerment are much needed essential qualities to Wiccans. They try so hard to get that message across to everyone they know.

Voodoo is a traditional Afro-Haitian religion which came from West Africa. Today, an estimated 60 million people practice voodoo worldwide (Guynup). Voodoo is a worldview that encompasses philosophy, medicine, justice, and religion. Voodoo's principle is that everything is or has spirit. They believe humans are spirits who inhabit the visible world and the unseen world is populated by spirits, mysteries, the invisibles, angels, the spirits of ancestors, and the recently deceased. All these spirits are believed to live in a mythic land called "Ginen", which in other words it's a cosmic "Africa". The goal of individuals who practice Voodoo is serve all the spirits. Their activity is to offer prayers and perform various devotional rights directed at God himself and spirits in return for health, protection, and favor (Samuel). During religious rites, believers sometimes enter a tracelike stance in which the devotee may eat and drink, perform stylized dances, give advice to people, or perform medical cures. Voodoo ritual activity can either be a prayer, song, dance, or gesture. The rituals are aimed at refining and restoring balance and energy in relationships between people and spirits of the world that's unseen (Samuel).

Voodoo is like witchcraft, but it's not the same as witchcraft. While voodoo can be African magical tradition, witchcraft is European tradition. Witchcraft and voodoo have spell casting in common. Both practices can offer something to all of us in the modern world that virtually no other can. Also, both voodoo and witchcraft happen to be repressed. Many witches suffered torture and death at the hand of religious authorities throughout Europe and the Americas. Voodoo priests ended up being stolen from Africa as slaves and delivered to the

Americas. The slave masters at the time feared voodoo magic and experimented with print against each other at every turn (Samuel).

Santeria is a religion that is based upon the development of personal relationships through divination, sacrifice, initiation, and between practitioners of the religion and deities who provide their devotees with protection, wisdom, success, and those who guide in the time of crisis. Exchanges are highly important in this religion (Murphy). There is also such thing as a crowning ceremony where symbols are placed on an individual's head and then they can enter a ceremonial trance. Then a spirit-like figure can interact with the individual in the trance directly, heal, and prophesy those who approach (Murphy).

Santeria and Voodoo are religions which are practiced by people who believe in one God that is served by a lot of spirits. Both religions also believe in the possession of the spirits through song and dance. They both also share a similar beginning in African traditions and rituals. The two were brought by slaves from North Africa. Santeria is covered in Spanish Catholic elements. It developed in the culture of Spanish-speaking countries and colonies. Santeria sacrifices a lot of animals (Celine).

The media has a role in how witchcraft, Santeria, voodoo, and Wicca are portrayed. The media plays up the dark history of witchcraft and leans into the supernatural elements. For many witches that practice Wicca, who are still living, they feel the need to speak up about who they are and to educate those around them in hopes that Wicca can be normalized like every other religion (Pinigis). You can see Wicca portrayed in films like *Legend of the Witches*, *The Coven*, *The Craft*, and more. In the media, there's a resurgence of witchcraft especially in women. A lot of witches are played by women in movies, plays, etc. It would be unusual if you saw a male portraying a witch in any kind of media. You'll normally see witchcraft and voodoo portrayed in

supernatural fantasies or horror films. The media and popular culture portrays Santeria as well, but the portrayal is often inaccurate and in a bad light (Celine).

There is a perception that Wicca, voodoo, and witchcraft are the same. They have some similarities, but they are not the same. A lot of people affiliate witchcraft with practices like voodoo and Wicca. I think the reason to that is because since they are all three practices that involve magic and supernatural elements that many people have participated in. Voodoo is known as an African religion whereas witchcraft is the use of magic or sorcery to get desired outcomes. Voodoo and witchcraft rituals are different. There are a lot of differences between Wicca and witchcraft. One of the main differences between Wicca and witchcraft is that Wicca is a spiritual belief while witchcraft is the supernatural ability of magic. Wicca is a pagan religion while witchcraft is not a religion (Bhandari). Wicca is a belief while witchcraft is a supernatural ability to do magic. Wiccans worship gods while believers of witchcraft are known to worship devils. Wicca was introduced in the 1940s whereas witchcraft has existed as long as humans have. Wicca is not seen as a bad practice while witchcraft is in fact seen as a bad practice. One of Wicca's main focuses that is not a focus of witchcraft is worshipping Gods and Goddesses (Bhandari). Santeria is infused with Spanish Catholic elements while Voodoo has French Catholicism elements (Celine). In witchcraft, individuals worship the devil. In voodoo, individuals idolize spirits. Wicca and voodoo are both religions. Witchcraft is not a religion.



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