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Black Magic: Witchcraft, Race, and Resistance in Colonial New England

Timothy's main focus was on showing how witchcraft developed a relationship with whites and blacks. In the 1600's New England and other English colonies were demanding more African Slaves than Native Americans. They would sell Native American males that were captured in the welfare in exchanged of the Blacks or Caribs. (McMillan 101) They thought that it was easier to control the Africnas instead of the local Natives which were more knowledgeable. But with keeping the Africnas, they brought some of their culture with them and introduced witchcraft. The Europeans misinterpreted and undervalued the culture of the Africans. (McMillan 102) Accusations of witchcraft brought was one of the major conflicts. But they also thought that if they did let the Africans continue with witchcraft that would relieve them from the social and economic oppression. In 1681 the start of accusing people with arson crimes became a civil crime. In 1741, in response to fears of a conspiracy, four Whites and 18 Blacks were hanged in New York City. In addition to the more usual method of execution, burning at the stake was the fate of 11 other Black (McMillan 106) But as you can see not only blacks were the ones getting accused. Some whites were getting accused by the blacks for the same crime. In some cases they would use this to get out of punishments and show their resentment against them in public. At the end of the day blacks in New England were always viewed as the evil creatures are unable to control their satan wickedness. Whites also thought that if blacks could not convert to white then they could not cure the evil in them. But meanwhile

in the Colonial New England the blacks were powerless. Whites and Blacks could commit the same crime in witchcraft, but the Whites were not punished as severely as the Blacks were. Overall the article was very properly structured and also cited other journal entries from other authors.

Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images

Charles Zika is Professor of History at the University of Melbourne. He researches the cultural and religious history of late medieval and early modern Europe. Zika starts off by revealing an image of “The witches’ banquet”. It represents that a witches preparing themselves to have their feast of human flesh. In this article Zika wanted to explore aspects of cultural process of the fashioning of the cannibalistic witch in the early modern Europe, and in particular the contribution made by the visual images created through the relatively new technologies of print and print-making.

(Zika 78) Literary treatises as evidence of witchcraft that witches would cut humans up, suck on their blood, cook them and eat their human flesh. He also described that they would engage with the devil and eat young children. The visuals that were drawn were more so to describe the allusions of the sixteenth century to cannibalism of witches. They were linked to fears of moral disorder, based on female sexuality which perceived as essentially aggressive. (Zika 79) Going back to the image he starts off the article, he says that “Pierre de Lacre” the artist of the drawing showed that in the middle of the table there was a large serving plate and on it was several body parts of a child. Meanwhile the witches and their demonic partners surrounded the table. The victims of the cannibalistic nature of witches were identified as children. He also stated that the

witches that the only meat used at this feast is from corpses, the flesh of those who have been hanged, the hearts of unbaptised children, and [meat] from other unclean animals which Christians never touch. (Zika 79) Throughout the sixteenth century and even before artist depicted these witches as cannibalistic “savages”. It is known that these witches did not always ate human flesh but instead hanged and their bodies from trees which was mostly shown in images instead of eating human flesh.

Religion, Politics, and Witchcraft in Bermuda, 1651–55

Virginia Bernhard is Professor Emerita of History at the University of St. Thomas, where she taught for 35 years. Her specialties are early American history and Texas history. Her main focus on this article is about a closer insight of witchcraft in the seventeenth century Puritans. In May 1651 the first execution for witchcraft in Bermuda’s history took place (Bernhard 678). Between the years of 1651 to 1655 there was a virulent witch hunt that had almost got unnoticed by historians. Even between those years it caused twelve people to be accused of witchcraft and five of those were hung as punishment. Bermuda and England had conflicts but they were mainly about the religious freedom in Bermuda. Parliament’s Puritans had recognized the Church of England on a Presbyterian model. Bermuda’s trio of governors were replaced by anti-Independent Captain Thomas Turner who the Somers Island had done, but also sent two Presbyterian clergymen. Governor Turner he decided to set up a secret meeting to pass multiple acts surpassing Independents, discharging any “publick Officer or Magistrate” who adhered to the “Independent Church” and forbidding the dissident clergymen. (Bernhard 686) Eighteen assembly men refused to obey Governor Turner’s summons that they withdrew from the sessions

leaving Turner with only half the support. Later on London Golding wrote about how the woes of Bermuda's people under Turner and chronicling the assembly's actions against Independents. But in England they had a religious turmoil and a civil war since it was proving fertile ground for witch hunts. Over three hundred witches were accused and over one hundred of them were hung, in between the years of 1645 to 1647. In the article it also mentions that in the study that Malcom Gaskill had on this matter was that, a thread of religious strife, war, and witchcraft were closely intertwined. Some of these trials heard of Matthew Hopkins, he was the self-appointed Puritan "Witch. Finder General" from Essex, whose sensational witch hunts spawned other witch trials throughout the countryside. (Bernhard 686) Overall Bermuda and Somers Island Officials had a lot of religious conflicts with most churches not having ministers and having a crisis in politics. After all this crisis a witch hunt would take place. That's why most between these years there was so many executions of witches.

Witchcraft, Poison, Law, and Atlantic Africa

Diana Paton is William Robertson, who is a professor at the University of Edinburgh. She teaches Atlantic Slavery and Revolution and the End of Slavery in the British and French Atlantic Worlds. In the article Witchcraft, Poison, Law and Atlantic Slavery her main focus was on the Obeah Law which was created with intentions not to eliminate only those who practice and lead to collective rebellion but to criminalize the whole complex of America deviation and spiritual protection. Obeah was translated to "witchcraft" which has a concept of resistance, a religious practice and also a form of authority within enslaved people. (Paton 237) When it came time to start investigating obeah as a crime they also had to take into consideration if poison,

medicine, witchcraft and sorcery were part of the crime. In the early modern world, in both Europe and Africa, the phenomena that people later divided into the distinctive categories of malicious (rather than accidental) poisoning on one hand and witchcraft on the other formed part of the same conceptual world. (Paton 238) Poison was often related to women, which started suspicions that they were witches. Some used to say that they would get in from a local apothecary or even from the devil itself. These women only said these things because they were being tortured for the truth they were often even beheaded. “The 1760 act’s anti-obeah clause drew on the concept of witchcraft in English law and the Christian religion. It prohibited the practice of what it termed “Obeah or Witchcraft,” making conviction punishable by death or transportation off the island.” (Paton 259) As the centuries passed obeah was a crime and even in the twentieth century we still believe that it is because of what happened before.

Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Gender

Stephen Mitchell is a poet, translator, scholar, and anthologist. His main point of this article was to show how the word “witch” had an evil female connotation on it. He also points out that a variety of number of scholars have come to the conclusion that “women’s roles in magic often rely on their confidence in Iceland as a repository of pre-Christian views” (Mitchell 176). Men that later became witches were never as powerful as women and would never come close to it. Since women were the original ones to become “powerful magicians” as known witches. Also men were looked as “witchcraft” was to womanly for them. They would even challenge a men’s manhood because they would practice witchcraft. People back then would make the connection with a verse in the Bible [Gen. 3:2-3] that if Eve’s behavior was different then women wouldn’t have been so evil and enable witchcraft. Which brought them to even

further questions about why did Adam and Eve did not eat out of the tree of paradise. Even behind the word “female” it supposedly means that a female “doubts more quickly in their faith, this being the basis for acts of sorcery” (Mitchell 180). Some of the acts that witches did, people would relate it as a connection to the devil and think its a “Devil’s act”. But some would also think that witchcraft was related to orthodox religious hierarchy. When women were accused of acts it usually was something with sexuality, whereas men were typically charged with heresy and similar crimes (Mitchell 200). Overall the article focuses on the side of Christian views with witchcraft. Mitchell also includes some images to give us a clearer picture of what he is talking about.

SLAVE MEDICINE AND OBEAH IN BARBADOS, CIRCA 1650 TO 1834

Jerome S. Handler is Senior Scholar, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Black American Studies, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Handler’s main point in this article is to address the medical beliefs and practices of Barbadian Slaves. Obeah was often misunderstood by Europeans because of the features it would present. They also thought that slaves in Barbados thought it was a “spiritual power”. Obeah was actually a part of a medical complex for African Americans. The slaves in Barbados that survived the dangerous years of infancy and early childhood that have developed into adults who suffer from a wide array of ailments and diseases. Many ailments and disorders, if they did not kill, were merely endured, and, as in all human communities, slaves often relied on the body's capacity for healing itself without medical intervention (Handler 58). But in some other

cases slaves relied on resources of their own communities and attempted to read their own medical problems.