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# Black Magic & White Supremacy: Witchcraft as an Allegory for Race and Power

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Black Magic & White Supremacy: Witchcraft as an Allegory for  
Race and Power

By  
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“Being burned at the stake was an empowering experience. There are secrets in the flames, and I came back with more than a few” (Head 19’15”). Burning at the stake is one of the first things that comes to mind when thinking of witchcraft. Fire often symbolizes destruction or cleansing, expelling evil or unnatural things from creation. “Fire purges and purifies... scatters our enemies to the wind. What blows away need not be explained,” but can that fire be reclaimed (Burn, Witch! Burn! 26’40’)? Witchcraft is a perennial and obscure concept that exists in all cultures in one manifestation or another. While there is no singular explanation for the cultural invention of witchcraft, its presence is historically associated with times of social unrest. The theory of what constitutes a witch is an intangible and malleable idea, but there are key characteristics that unify different definitions. For the purpose of my research, I will define witchcraft by its core principle, drawn from a translation of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, one of the oldest and most definitive texts on witchcraft. A witch is a person with access to magic, which is understood as a means of manipulating the physical world through the use of spells and rituals (Mackay 30).

Dramatic representations of witchcraft have roots in Classic literature which painted witches as cultural and racial outcasts. Early representations of witches like Medea and Circe are marked by geographical and social otherness that is associated with their power which is rooted in the subversion of Greek cultural values. These stereotypes were perpetuated in seventeenth-century dramas such as *The Tempest* and *Sophonisba*, which depict witches as racially and culturally other (Purkiss 251). One of the first representations of a witch in

American literature is a character based on the historical figure, Tituba, in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Tituba is culturally credited with bringing witchcraft to the new world and is documented as ethnically ambiguous, descending from Africa or the Caribbean due to "a cultural wish to place her outside of "mainstream" America and into the darkness of our racial prejudices." (Rosenthal 50).

Representations of race in cultural media are reflections of the society that creates them, as Douglas Kellner states, "media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media demonstrate[s] who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed" (Kellner 7). Glenn Cerise and Landra Cunningham further this idea in their analysis of the archetype of the "magical negro" in film, stating that "the contemporary status of race in mainstream American culture is intimately bound to the process of representations within and through the mass media... Media images impact the way that whites perceive Blacks. As Blacks move closer to the realm of acceptability with whites, the images in movies can be critical to the extent of this acceptance" (Glenn and Cunningham 136). While it is true that media can reinforce social power dynamics, or be used to increase acceptance into the mainstream, I believe that representation in media can also be used to challenge racial paradigms, as I will demonstrate.

The intention of my research is to examine contemporary dramatic representations of witchcraft in television to examine how these ancient stereotypes are used as an allegory for current social issues, particularly the issue of race and power in America. I argue that representations of witchcraft in television are allegorical of race relations in America and that the possession and use of magic act as a metaphor for socioeconomic resources, elucidating the inequitable distribution of capital between racial groups. This inequity leads to both a symbolic and material link between race and class rooted in America's history of slavery and institutional racism. Furthermore, I argue that witchcraft as an allegory for race and power is intended to function as a call to action for the audience, encouraging marginalized people to reclaim their power through protest and rebellion, as the witches do in these series.

Similar to dramatic witchcraft, the concept of allegory was also born in Classic literature, and is tied to mythology. Allegory is a rhetorical element that is capable of "saying one thing and meaning another," using symbolism and metaphor to create an interpreted meaning beyond the literal (Bloomfield 307). Tate traces the history of allegorist back to ancient Greece, in the writing of Homer, the same author who constructed the archetype of the witch as a social other, with characters like Circe and Medea (Tate 215). Morton Bloomfield claims that allegory exists in two forms, historical and ahistorical. "Historical allegorical interpretation attempts to read the significance of a literary work in terms of its original or assumed original significance," while ahistorical allegory focusses on "the "universal" (i.e., contemporary) significance of a work which may be psychological, ethical, structural, mythic,

religious, or several of these” (Bloomfield 301). Diane Purkiss’s study of the allegory of the witch was historical, examining how Greek culture and geography influenced the perception and construction of the witch archetype.

My analysis will center on the ahistorical allegory of witchcraft, exploring how it creates meaning in regards to contemporary issues of racial justice. James Clifford coins the term “ethnographic allegory,” concerning forms cultural allegory which are present in my analysis. He states that it “draws a special attention to the *narrative* character of cultural representations, to the stories built into the representational process itself... Allegory prompts us to say of any cultural description not ‘this represents, or symbolizes that,’ but rather, ‘this is a (morally charged) *story* about that” (Clifford 100). This idea of ethnographic or cultural allegory is an apt prelude to my analysis of racial allegory in cultural media, focussing on symbols of witchcraft and race in television which coalesce to form a fictional narrative reflecting the reality of our socioeconomic inequity, shrouded in the myth of witchcraft.

To explore these ideas, I will be explicating two contemporary series that deal with witchcraft and issues of race. The first is Ryan Murphy’s *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013), which centers around an academy for witches in modern day New Orleans, depicting their conflict with a local tribe of Voodoo practitioners, and an organization of witch hunters. The second is Misha Greene’s *Lovecraft Country* (2020), which tells the story of a Black family in 1960s Chicago that becomes embroiled with a secret order of white witches who seek to use their family's magical bloodline as a means of gaining power. In my analysis of these series, I

will look at how witchcraft functions as an allegory for different forms of capital, and how those forms parallel dynamics of race and power.

The different forms of capital are best illustrated in the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu began his work in sociology in an effort to understand the dynamics between colonial capitalism and native nationalism in Algeria. He studied ethnography and sociology to focus on contemporary sociopolitical issues. His work operated at the intersection of class, culture and power, exploring symbolic goods and forms of capital (Wacquant 216). His work would become known as *activist science*, influencing teachers, scholars and political activists, exploring oppressive power structures and ideas of liberation (Harker 2). The structures he studied consisted of different forms of capital, functioning in tandem to form social systems which perpetuate and perpetrate oppression. To begin, it is essential to introduce and define the different forms of capital, and how they interact. Socioeconomic capital is comprised of three major forms, cultural, social and economic. All three forms of capital can be seen through the allegory of witchcraft when examining the primary evidence from both series.

Bourdieu claims that cultural capital is defined in three forms, “the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)...and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications” (Bourdieu 17). One of the most significant forms

of cultural capital is literacy, the ability to read and write in the language of your community. The idea of literacy is a recurring motif in both *Coven* and *Lovecraft Country* when characters discuss magic.

A particularly revealing scene in *Coven* occurs when Fiona Goode, the leader of the white coven visits Marie Laveau, the Voodoo Queen, in her hair salon. This series takes place after decades of a delicate peace between the coven and the Voodoo tribe, who have been at odds with each other since the white witches stole magic from the Black witches of Salem and fled to New Orleans. When Fiona returns to New Orleans, vowing to restore and protect her neglected coven after years of spurning her responsibilities as Supreme, tensions flare between the clans. Fiona addresses the animosity between the two women, telling Marie that “your kind and my kind have been going after each other for centuries, though it is kind of like a hammer going after a nail” (Boy Parts 29’05”). Marie responds to this show of strength by reminding Fiona that “everything you got, you got from us,” revealing that during the Salem Witch Trials, a slave named Tituba taught magic to the white women who would birth the line of white witches that Fiona is descended from (Boy Parts 29’20”). Fiona is unimpressed, remarking that “you wanna tell me that some illiterate, voodoo slave girl gave me my crown?” (Boy Parts 29’50”). She goes on to insult Marie’s heritage by telling her that Tituba wouldn’t know the difference between a spell and a recipe for chocolate chip cookies if she had to read it. In her analysis of this scene, Amy King states that Fiona “can easily make light of Tituba’s



illiteracy and the socioeconomic status of current voodoo practitioners to show that they are inferior to whites” (King 567).

However, it is not magical literacy that gives Fiona this sense of superiority, it is English literacy. This is made clear when we see that the witches of the coven use texts and recite spells in other languages, without knowing them. When the coven is being tormented by a vengeful spirit, one of the young witches declares that they “need a spell to make him move on,” and runs to a bookcase full of what we can assume are magical texts, when another witch argues that “there’s a shit ton of books in there, and not one of them is written in English” (39’15”). The witches then recite a Latin incantation which successfully banishes the spirit from the house. The spell took effect, even though they cannot read Latin. The idea of literacy as capital comes up again when the coven is discussing the possibility of Misty, a witch from a rural background, becoming the next supreme, Madison, a former movie star exclaims that “that swamp bitch can’t even spell her own name” (The Axeman Cometh 14’25”), reinforcing the idea that literacy is an important part of being in power. Another interesting example is when Fiona is casting a spell to bankrupt an organization of witch-hunters, she invokes the goddess Hecate, but uses the Shakespearean pronunciation of the name, subtly alluding to the fact that she has studied literature. These instances emphasize that even though white witches co-opted their magic from Black witches, they still hold their power in higher regard because of their connection to the dominant culture, signaled by their literacy in English.

In *Lovecraft Country*, literacy is the foundation of witchcraft. However, it is not English literacy. In this world, magic stems from the Book of Names, which is an ancient text discovered by an explorer who would found the Sons of Adam, the organization of white witches who control magic. Leti discovers that Christina's ancestor stole the book from the Arawak tribe, from the Caribbean. Interestingly, in *Coven*, Marie Laveau claims that Tituba was descended from the Arawaks, meaning that in both worlds, magic was discovered in the new world and co-opted by white colonists from the same native tribe. The Book of Names is a spellbook written in what is referred to as the Language of Adam, which is the language Adam used to name everything in creation during Genesis. In order to wield magic, the user must know how to read the Language of Adam to learn spells. Christina and the members of the Sons of Adam have deciphered some of the pages, and have access to powerful magic that they use to force Atticus to give his blood for their spells.

At one point Atticus comes to Christina seeking protection for his family, and Christina teaches him the symbol for protection in exchange for a key to an inter-dimensional portal (Jig-a-Bobo 10'00"). This is an example of Bourdieu's differentiation between objectified, and institutional cultural capital. The Book of Names is objectified capital, it is cultural material that can be passed down. However, the book is useless without the ability to read it, which must be learned as a form of embodied capital, "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 17). Christina has learned the language from the institution her father leads, the Sons of Adam. Atticus has some pages from the book, but he needs Christina

to teach him to read it. Here, it is clear that literacy is an important component of understanding magic as a metaphor for cultural capital. Education and literacy give the characters access to magic, just as education and literacy provide access to capital in our society.

One of the most important factors in attaining cultural capital is that it is the only form that requires investment, because “it cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent; it declines and dies with its bearer” (Bourdieu 18). In *Coven*, embodied cultural capital is the only form Fiona does not have infinite access to because she is dying. On the other hand, it is the only form that Marie Laveau has access to because she is immortal. This is what drives the antagonism between the two women as Fiona tries to attain the immortality that Marie has. When she discovers that it comes from selling your soul to a Voodoo deity, Papa Legba, she attempts to make the bargain and is rejected because she has no soul or goodness to offer. Inheritance is a crucial part of attaining all forms of capital, except embodied cultural capital. Fiona and the coven have inherited works of art and literature that fill their academy. The Supremacy is also inherited, there is only one leader of the coven in a generation, and it is because of this inheritance that Fiona cannot become immortal. Marie Laveau has no inheritance and can give none, but she has infinite time to learn. However, time is useless without access to other forms of capital, and as a Black woman, Marie does not have that access. Fiona points this out during their discussion at the salon when she tells Marie that “maybe in another century you could have *two* shit-hole salons” (Boy

Parts 31'25"). This is an allusion to the fact that because of her race, Marie is unable to attain generational wealth as easily as white people can.

The final form of cultural capital: institutional, is also allegorical to magic in both series. In *Coven*, the white coven operates out of an elite boarding school for young witches to learn their craft, while the Voodoo tribe has no such institution to pass down knowledge in the form of formal education. In *Lovecraft Country*, the white witches belong to the Sons of Adam, a patriarchal organization housed in a luxurious lodge with formal members and teachings. In both worlds, magic as cultural capital has been confined to institutions that control the knowledge and use of magic, just as our institutions control forms of cultural capital tied to wealth, such as educational and art institutions.

Another form of capital that both series explore through the lens of witchcraft is that of social capital. Social capital is the sum of “resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 21). In clearer terms, it is a kind of ‘social credit’ based on relationships and recognition with people and institutions, such as the ability to receive a loan, exist safely in a space, and to trust in law enforcement, the justice system, or medical professionals. The most obvious reflection on this form of capital in television is the depiction of race and power concerning encounters with law enforcement.

The fourth episode of *Coven* opens with two men chasing down a young black boy riding his bike through a white neighborhood in the 1960s. His mother sits in Marie Laveau’s

salon talking about how it is his first day at a recently integrated school (Fearful Pranks Ensue 01'25"). In the next scene, she is with the police as they remove his body from a tree after he has been lynched. After the murderers are found not guilty by an all-white jury, a vengeful Marie takes justice into her own hands and raises the dead to kill the men. This necessity for Marie to use magic to balance the scales of justice is in stark contrast to the white witches' interactions with the police. After Madison, one of the young witches of the coven, is raped at a frat party, she uses her magic to flip a bus full of her attackers, killing them. Later, another witch goes to the hospital and kills the sole survivor of the crash with her powers. When two police officers show up at the academy to question the girls about their involvement in the mysterious deaths, Fiona remains calm and collected. She pours two glasses of water for the officers, spitting in them both. When the officers drink, they fall under her control and she informs them that they will turn over all the information they've gathered on the academy, and never speak of the incident again. The fact that the policemen are Black compounds the contrast between race-based interactions with police. After the officers leave, Fiona confronts the girls about their fear of the police telling them "if there's one thing you learn before leaving this place, is that we, even the *weakest* among us, are better than the best of them" (Boy Parts 12'25"). This comparison is a reference to the relationship between witches and mortals, but also alludes to the idea of racial hierarchy and white supremacy.

Episode eight of *Lovecraft Country* has a similar premise, opening with a scene taking place at Emmett Till's wake in Chicago. This episode highlights the very real killing of Emmett

Till, and the way it shook the Black community while underscoring it with magical metaphor. Diana, Atticus's niece, leaves the wake alone and is chased into an alleyway by police. The police Captain, who is also a member of the Sons of Adam, interrogates Diana on the whereabouts of her mother. When Diana doesn't give him the information he wants, he curses her by spitting on her face and muttering an incantation (*Jig-a-Boo 07'00*). This scene is strikingly similar to Fiona's interaction with police, with the use of spit to cast a spell. While the dynamic of police and suspect have been reversed, the victim of the magic is Black in both instances.

The family has another encounter with the police when Leti discovers a burning cross on her front lawn. She goes outside with a baseball bat and smashes the car windows of the neighbors who have been terrorizing her. As the police sirens approach, the family performs a choreographed effort to avoid any possible escalation with them. Leti's sister, Ruby, gathers all the weapons from the house, throws them into the trunk of a car, and quickly drives away as the rest of the group walks to the curb with their hands in the air, kneeling down in compliance as several officers jump out of squad cars with their guns drawn (*Holy Ghost 28'35*). This sequence of events illustrates the lack of any social capital help by people of color in their relationships with law enforcement. They know before the police even arrive that they must take precautions to not be perceived as a threat, which would likely result in their death.

When Leti is arrested and carted away in the back of a police van, the same police Captain interrogates her, telling her that they've received several complaints from her

neighbors. Leti asks the Captain if he's "gotten the twenty-one reports [she] filed about harassment from those same neighbors?" He responds by turning to another officer and sarcastically remarking, "have we received any complaints?" To which the other officer answers "none that we can recall" (Holy Ghost 31'50"). He then holds onto a seatbelt while the driver swerves violently, throwing Leti around the back of the van. This exchange displays the relationship between law enforcement and people of color, and its reliance on social capital. Leti can file complaints with the police about racial discrimination and harassment from her neighbors, but it is still dependent on the officer's discretion and relationship to the victim, whether the law will help her or not.

These interactions with police are contrasted by Ruby's experience when she is disguised as a white woman. When Ruby begins a love affair with a man who turns out to be Christina in disguise as an attempt to gather information on her family, Christina offers Ruby a chance to experience the power of whiteness. When Ruby wakes up in the body of a white woman, she panics and runs through the street, bumping into a young Black boy on the sidewalk. When two police officers run towards the scene, Ruby puts her hands in the air in anticipation just like we saw during the cross-burning incident, but the officers walk past her and assault the boy until Ruby realizes that they think she is a white woman, and orders them to stop. The officers are kind and helpful to Ruby, and take her back to Christina's townhome (Strange Case 02'00"). The next morning, Ruby wakes to find another vial of the metamorphoses potion on the dresser next to a stack of money, left for her by Christina. Ruby

spends the day as a white woman, exploring the North Side of Chicago. She is stunned to be treated with respect by other white citizens as she is helped to cross the street, and told her ice cream is on the house when she tries to buy a cone. This is an example of social capital. The color of her skin is a signal that she should be trusted, helped and valued by those around her. When she returns home, Christina asks Ruby why she didn't spend the money she left on the dresser and Ruby responds that "I didn't have to. I enjoyed my entire day using the only currency I needed: whiteness" (Strange Case 16'50"). Here, Ruby perfectly articulates the concept of race as currency or social capital. Christina expands on this idea, further connecting the metaphor of magic to the reality of race and power when she explains to Ruby that the allure of the potion "wasn't just to be white. It was an invitation to do whatever the *fuck* you want. That's the currency of magic: Unmitigated freedom." (Strange Case 47'30"). Here, magic functions as a direct metaphor for social capital, it can provide privilege, trust, belonging and respect to its user, just as whiteness can.

The idea of magic as social capital is also explored through Christina's invulnerability. She possesses a spell called the Mark of Cain, which makes the bearer physically invulnerable. This is revealed when Atticus points a gun at Christina with the intent to kill her, and finds that he is frozen, and can't pull the trigger. She explains the magic and tells him that "you have to be smarter than this. You really can't just go around killing white women" (Holy Ghost 56'00"). Here, Christina's magical invulnerability functions as a metaphor for the kind of social



invulnerability white women have in our society, the same power that Ruby experienced during her day as a white woman.

The final and perhaps most important form of capital explored in these series is economic. Economic capital is the sum of material resources, such as wealth, property, businesses, etc. This final form is paramount because “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital” (Bourdieu 24). Economic capital can be converted into cultural capital in the form of the objectified state as purchased art, literature, instruments, etc. It can also be converted into social capital in the form of membership fees and dues, or the ability to buy a house in an affluent neighborhood in order to gain access to new relationships. The most important and unique aspect of economic capital is that it is hereditary. Cultural and social capital such as education, experience and relationships die with their bearer, but the money that provides access to those things is passed down through generations.

The metaphor of magic as capital is most clearly embodied by representations of economic capital and the idea of inheritance. The plot of *Coven* revolves around Fiona coming to the end of her reign as Supreme, and facing the reality that she will die and her magic will be passed to the next generation. When Fiona believes she has identified Madison as her successor, she explains the concept of magical inheritance, telling her “my life force is literally pouring out of my body and into yours” (The Replacements 47’35”). She reflects on her disreputable life and her neglect of the coven while looking at the portraits of former Supremes that line the walls of the academy. She states that “I don’t belong on these walls. I

took my inheritance too soon... and squandered it. All that power, all those gifts, I just took it and poured it back into myself, and dressed it up in Chanel” (The Replacements 48’40”).

The Supremacy perfectly embodies inherited economic capital and the other forms that come along with it, as Fiona makes clear in her lifestyle. When she thinks another witch is the next Supreme, she explains why she will “appreciate the power of the throne. It’s a skeleton key. Anything you wish for in the world. The Supremacy comes with a great deal of power and influence” (The Magical Delights of Stevie Nicks 9’50”). She then introduces her to rock ’n’ roll legend, Stevie Nicks, who is an old friend of Fiona’s. This is a clear display of the kind of socioeconomic power that accompanies the mystical power of the Supremacy. The supreme inherits wealth, notoriety, property, art, and most importantly: the magic that provides those things to the coven.

This is in direct contrast to Marie Laveau’s relationship to magic, and the structure of her mystical community. Marie is immortal and does not pass her magic to the next generation. She has also been robbed of the sense of history and legacy that Fiona has in her long list of predecessors whose portraits immortalize their service to the coven. Marie discusses her sense of displacement and the source of the racial antagonism between the Voodoo tribe and the white witches with Queenie, the only Black witch in the coven, telling her “their power is built on the sweat of our backs. The only reason you and I are in this country is because our great, great grandfathers couldn’t run fast enough. We’ll never be welcome here, and those witches are the worst” (The Dead 22’40”). This is an allusion to the

absence of family history or generational belonging experienced by the Black community in the wake of slavery, and how the effects can still be seen in the present day in the form of disproportionate inherited economic capital between racial groups.

Magic is also tied to money through the coven's relationship with a group of witch hunters, hired by Marie Laveau to exterminate the white witches. When the hunters turn on Marie and massacre the Voodoo tribe, Marie seeks asylum with the coven and helps to devise a plan to defeat them. While the coven hides behind the guise of a boarding school, and the tribe behind a beauty salon, the witch hunters use a large financial corporation as a front for their operations. When deciding how to strike back, Fiona declares that "they pray to one god, a green, merciless god: money" (*The Magical Delights of Stevie Nicks* 17'05"). She then performs a ritual, praying to *her* god, Hecate. The spell involves forming a circle with stacks of hundred dollar bills, and the effect of the spell bankrupts the witch hunter's corporation. This connection between money and divinity is grounded in the allegory of witchcraft as capital, and displays the white witches disproportionate access to both magic and economic capital in comparison with the black witches.

Similar to the coven, the Sons of Adam in *Lovecraft Country* also pass down their magic alongside material wealth through generations. The Sons of Adam have vast economic resources to accompany their magic, and the motif of inheritance is present here as well. Christina's family has a legacy dating back hundreds of years to her ancestor who discovered the Book of Names during his imperialist expeditions in South America, and the magic

discovered in that book has been passed down through the generations. Christina inherited her spell of protection from her father, which she is able to use as a form of currency. She casts the spell on Leti, who finds out she is pregnant and wants protection, in exchange for lost pages from the Book of Names that Leti and Atticus discovered. This is another example of magic as a symbol of currency. Christina explicitly alludes to the idea of magic as capital when she talks about her father's relationship to witchcraft, "The way my father and the other members of the order discussed magic, it wasn't particular. They spoke of it as they would money, politics, or any other means for bending the world to their will" (Rewind 1921 14'10"). This statement succinctly elucidates the basis of the idea that magic functions as an allegory for social, cultural and economic capital, and the influence they provide.

This allegory also illustrates the disparity of capital between Black and white people. Unlike the white witches, Atticus and his family do not know their family history and have had no resources passed down to them. Atticus knows nothing about his mother's ancestry until he discovers that his great grandmother was a slave of Christina's ancestor, and that she stole the Book of Names. This is the source of the conflict between the two groups, as Christina and her father need Atticus's blood for a spell to make them immortal because of his heritage. Her father tells Atticus about his magical ancestry, and how he is "a reservoir of that power, diluted no doubt, and also tainted somewhat" (Whitey's on the Moon 39'00"). While Atticus has not inherited material capital, he has inherited magic, which the white witches seek to steal once again for their own purposes. The idea of magic as capital stolen from Black people during

slavery is made even more clear during an exchange between Atticus's ancestor, Hanna, and Christina's ancestor, Titus, when Atticus and Leti perform a spell to temporarily resurrect them as part of a plan to stop Christina. Titus asks Hanna how she dared to use his magic, to which she responds "what's stolen ain't yours" (Full Circle 16'15"). This ties back to the same concept that emerged in *Coven*, the fact that at some point in history magic was stolen from people of color and used to consolidate power in the white community. This is an obvious allegory for white Americans amassing capital from Black people through slavery, and how that was transformed into social, cultural and economic capital that perpetuates white supremacy to this day.

So, what then is the purpose of this metaphor? The representation of racial inequality in media is not novel, so what are Murphy and Greene trying to accomplish with the allegory of witchcraft as socioeconomic power? Returning to Kellner's argument about the importance of representation in media, and how it shapes our perception of reality, it is clear that the allegory of witchcraft operates as a call to action for marginalized viewers to follow suit and claim their own power to rise up against their oppressors. When the witches of *Coven* are threatened by the presence of witch hunters, Fiona tells her charges that "when witches don't fight, we burn" (Bitchcraft 38'38"). Cordelia also reminds the witches that their "powers always spike in times of crisis. This is one of those times" (Go to Hell 06'10"). This is an ultimatum given to the witches, rise up against your oppressors, or burn.

The connection of rebellion to the symbol of fire is even more prominent in *Lovecraft Country*. In the penultimate episode of season one, Leti and Atticus travel back in time to the night of the Tulsa Massacre, to retrieve the Book of Names which originally perished when white citizens burned down Atticus's grandmother's home. A newly invulnerable Leti holds the book to protect it from the flames as the house burns down around her, killing Atticus's family. As the flames consume Tulsa, Sonia Sanchez's poem, "Catch the Fire" plays over the scenes of destruction. As Leti walks through flames unburned, the audience is asked "Where is your fire? I say where is your fire? / Can't you smell it coming out of our past? / The fire of living... not dying / The fire of loving... not killing / The fire of Blackness..." (Sanchez, 15-19). Sanchez's poem is a plea for people to "catch the fire" that has kept burning through centuries of oppression, and to channel it into powerful change. The metaphor of fire as the power of transformation is further solidified in the final episode of the season, when Atticus speaks with Hanna in an ancestral realm that she created, which is filled with magical fire she mistook for the flames of hell. She tells Atticus that it "took a long time to understand that the fire was my rage made manifest, that it could be tamed... I realized magic was not something to be feared, but a gift to pass on" (Full Circle 5'10"). Hanna literally catches the fire in her hand, and passes it on to Atticus. With the recovered Book of Names, they create a plan to stop Christina from achieving immortality, but Atticus is forced to sacrifice himself in order to bind Christina. When Christina realizes what has happened, lamenting that they bound her from magic, Leti

responds “not just you... every white person in the world. Magic is ours now” (Full Circle 53’25”).

Leti and Atticus’s restoration of magic to the Black community is a powerful metaphor for the possibility to reclaim social power and instigate change through protest and rebellion. Kellner states that cultural media such as television “provide[s] critical and political perspectives that enable individuals to dissect the meanings, messages, and effects of dominant cultural forms... it can empower people to gain sovereignty over their culture and struggle for alternative cultures and political change” (Kellner 17). Murphy and Greene use their medium to craft a magical reflection of society and the dynamics between race and power in our culture. Through the allegory of witchcraft, they are able to show their audience the power inherent in themselves to incite change. Just as the witches reclaim their power and embrace their identity in order to stand up to their oppressors, the audience is also emboldened to “catch the fire” and burn down the systems that oppress them.

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