

## *“Bewitched:” Between Housewifery and Emancipation*

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**Abstract:** It is not inconsequential that the first broadcast of *Bewitched* coincides almost perfectly with the publication of Betty Friedan’s preeminent work *The Feminine Mystique*, often considered the starting point of Second wave feminism. The book and the series have a common goal: enabling housewives to become aware of their alienation and gradually bring them towards emancipation. It is therefore by using the portrait of the American housewife of the 1950s discussed by Betty Friedan as a framework for analysis that we propose to show how *Bewitched*, through Samantha’s character as a housewife, renews the portrait of the typical housewife, but by being a witch, allows a whole generation of women to become aware of the bonds which imprison them and thus to tend towards a release.

**Keywords:** bewitched, witch, feminism, feminine mystique, emancipation, housewives.

One can learn a great deal about any given society by watching the monsters it produces, for they are allegorical manifestations of its deepest fears. By analyzing these monsters, one can then understand what frightens, worries or motivates said society. Having established that, it is then not that surprising to see the figure of the witch emerge during feminist campaigns. The proof is all around us: following the #MeToo movement, witches are everywhere. In cinemas, with Luca Guadagnino’s remake of *Suspiria* as well as on television with other reboots of classic shows about witches, like

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*Charmed* or *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*. The use of the witch as a feminist icon is relatively recent, dating back to the 1960's with W.I.T.C.H.'s (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) 'curse' on Wall Street, causing the market price to go down by thirteen points. Nevertheless, it doesn't change the fact that the two are now indissociable in our minds. This is due to the fact that the modern resurgence of the witch by feminist groups helped make it a symbol for victimized but still independent women, who were being victimized precisely because of their quest for independence.

One of the first manifestations of the link between witchcraft and feminism in popular culture appears at the beginning of the 1960's with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and the first airing of *Bewitched*, one year later. When one considers the social climate of change in this decade, it is not surprising to see that both the book and the series discuss the emancipation of American housewives. There's no denying the importance of *The Feminine Mystique* in feminism, but this paper aims to prove that *Bewitched* also played an important role, mostly because Samantha served as an effective model of emancipation for American housewives, a model that was absent prior to the series release. First, *The Feminine Mystique* will serve as the starting point for this analysis through showing how Samantha embodied the appearance of a typical 1960's housewife. Then will be analyzed the conditions according to which housewives identified themselves with the character of Samantha and then will be discussed how the witch succeeds in infusing in women the desire to change.

### ***The Feminine Mystique* and the Typical Housewife**

It is at the beginning of this decade known for its wind of political and social changes that Betty Friedan first publishes *The Feminine Mystique*, an instant classic considered by most to be the beginning of Second Wave feminism in America. In her work, Friedan shows American housewives as women stuck in what she refers to as the "feminine mystique," which manifests itself as a very narrow conception of femininity imprisoning women in the role of a passive being, devoted entirely to her family and her husband, whose place is outside of the world and inside the house. The women who were victims

of this mystique are portrayed by Friedan as depressed, lonely, and unable to pinpoint the exact cause of their unhappiness; this latter aspect is one of the strong points of *The Feminine Mystique*, to have put into words this feeling of ambiguous dread and which she dubbed the "Problem That Has No Name." At that time, doctors and psychiatrists were unable to understand an affliction that seemed to only target women and to be caused by a longing for something *more*. Therein lies another one of the book's strengths: not only did it name the problem; it also highlighted its causes while proposed possible solutions. In this sense, the "*Feminine Mystique* was a kind of self-help book because it changed how women felt about themselves and their lives. Some divorced, went back to school, sought employment, and negotiated more egalitarian marriages, and many saw their depression lift."<sup>1</sup>

Among the specific causes of this discomfort, Friedan mentions that women may find it so difficult to extricate themselves from this mystification largely as a result of their denial, voluntarily or not, of their own social potential. Even in the presence of numerous possibilities that were previously unavailable to them – largely because education was being more accessible to women than ever before at that time – women stayed reluctant in pursuing higher education or finding jobs for themselves outside the home. This could be explained by their association with "dysfunctional" models, since the heroines presented in women's magazines of the time are all women who, like them, have preferred to marry rather than pursue a career, those options being mutually exclusive at the time. For example, in articles published in *McCall's* or in the *Lady's Home Journal* of the 1950's, there's an unrelenting promotion of the idea that in order to be happy, women should live according to their 'nature' and should stop 'pretending to be men'. Thus, faced with this myriad of stories all agreeing to what the feminine mystique stands for, women find themselves at a loss for a clear emancipation model, mostly because "the new mystique makes the housewife-mothers, who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women... Beneath the sophisticated trappings, it simply makes certain concrete, finite, domestic aspects of feminine existence ... into a religion, a

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Whittier, "Everyday Readers and Social Movements: Considering the Impact of *The Feminine Mystique*," *Gender & Society*, 27, n° 1 (February 2013): 113.

pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity."<sup>2</sup> This leads to a feeling of being defeated among young women, as a student interviewed by Friedan states: "We don't like to be asked what we want to do. None of us know. None of us even like to think about it. The ones who are going to be married right away are the lucky ones. They don't have to think about it."<sup>3</sup>

However, this absence of role models for emancipation is not limited only to the public sphere: its ramifications also spread into women's private lives. In fact, they can't even look to their mothers for guidance, because these mothers are also housewives – and unhappy housewives on top of that. Indeed, Friedan tells us that these women experienced the war on the home front and the subsequent departure of men for Europe, which gave them the necessary space to occupy the positions usually reserved for men. Nevertheless, they also experienced the disillusionment caused by the return of these same men, which prompted their return to the domestic sphere. No longer the career women with jobs that brought them pride that women's magazines derided, they returned to their role as housewives, unhappy and unfulfilled, which is to say in the role that these same magazines strived to portray as the pinnacle of feminine joy. As the children of the baby boom began to grow, the mothers tried to make sure that their daughters did not repeat their same mistakes: they knew that their daughters need more to be happy. Unfortunately, despite their many efforts, it did not pay off:

But even if our mothers urged, insisted, fought to help us educate ourselves, even if they talked with yearning of careers that were not open to them, they could not give us an image of what we could be. They could only tell us that their lives were too empty, tied to home; that children, cooking, clothes, bridge, and charities were not enough. A mother might tell her daughter, spell it out, "Don't be just a housewife like me." But that daughter, sensing that her mother was too frustrated to savor the love of her husband and children, might feel: "I will succeed where my mother failed, I will fulfill myself as a woman, and never read the lesson of her mother's life."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W Norton, 2013), 36.

<sup>3</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 71.

This situation, while revealing the difficult relationship between mother and daughter in which the former is ignored even though she is, in that particular case, the voice of reason, clearly shows the extent of the pernicious power the feminine mystique held over women and girls, the ideals of which infiltrated the minds of these future housewives and succeeded in making them believe that the only way for them to achieve happiness is to comply with what society (read "patriarchy") considered to be the epitome of femininity: to be an accomplished mother and spouse. Even more pernicious, it created a feeling of competition between women where sad or depressed wives were not only seen as failed housewives, but as failed women; this only prompted more women to try to be *happy* housewives. Like the Aristotelian machine which only needs a starting impulse to function eternally, the creators of this feminine mystique only needed a flick to set in motion a dangerous ideology for women, an ideology which will long be maintained and promoted, often unconsciously, by the same women who were its victims.

Agreed, this overview of Friedan's book is, let's face it, a bit brief. If it does not dwell on drawing up an exhaustive list of the multiple causes of the entrenchment of women within this mystique – something the book already does really well – at least it tried to highlight the main characteristics of the American housewife as understood by Friedan, which could be summarized by a young woman at a loss for an adequate emancipation model and afraid to seize all the opportunities in front of her. Turning a deaf ear to the imprecations of her mother, she chooses to be a housewife and this choice is also telling of the 1960's housewives' tendency to ignore, or at least forget, their potential.

### **A Portrait of the Witch as a Young Housewife**

At the beginning of the 1960's, Betty Friedan's work is not the only one aiming to present housewives this way. Indeed, approximately a year after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, the character of Samantha Stephens is introduced to the American public as the heroine of the show *Bewitched* created by Sol Saks. This magicom would soon find its place within the annals of American pop culture and tells the story of Samantha, a witch, who marries Darrin Stephens, a mortal. The young witch waits until her wedding night

to reveal the truth about her nature to her husband. Following the revelation, Samantha promises her husband that she will not use magic anymore and that she will be a 'normal' wife; in other words, a promise of obedience and submission. Eight seasons will follow, gripping viewers with the couple's misadventures, misadventures often caused by the fact that Samantha has some trouble keeping her promise to Darrin.

Samantha, and this is a key element to this analysis, has all the appearances of the typical American housewife as described by Friedan for she too seems to forget and negate her own potential for the benefit of her life as a wife and mother. Here, Samantha's potential is symbolized by her magic, which she chooses to deny, at least in part. In giving up using magic Samantha presents the appearance of a typical housewife, since the promise of submission she makes to her husband who serves to silence her power prevents her from transcending the mystique, which is what one would normally expect from a witch. Indeed, if magic is what makes Samantha so strong and unique, it is also, historically, the case of the witch. As Mona Chollet tells us, if the witch has been demonized through the ages, it's because she is perceived as the uncontrollable woman who lives alone and casts spells, supplies potions, cares for the sick or injured, or helps women give birth.<sup>5</sup> This is what makes the witch a symbol for the victims of patriarchal oppression and this is also why feminist groups, but also more generally oppressed groups, claim the symbolic power of the witch.

The vast majority of accusations of witchcraft can be linked to a desire for emancipation, whether it was the desire to live alone or to have control over one's life and over one's own body. Sylvia Federici illustrates this by linking witch hunts to the arrival of capitalism in England. She explains that the arrival of the enclosures, that is to say the redefinition of the lands by the richest, led to the multiplication of beggars. Among these beggars were mainly widows who, due to the change in laws, found themselves without money and unable to survive on their own: "In other words, women were charged with witchcraft because the restructuring of rural Europe at the dawn of capitalism destroyed their means of livelihood and the basis of their social power, leaving

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<sup>5</sup> Mona Chollet, *Sorcières, la puissance invaincue des femmes* (Paris : Zones (La découverte), 2018), 17.

them with no resort but dependence on the charity of the better-off."<sup>6</sup> This situation feeds in these widows' anger and resentment that some will associate with the wickedness of the witch. Even more, old women were more persecuted because they represented the bridge between the old conception of the world - which saw the human being an integral part of nature - and the new one, inherited from capitalism and which sees the man as a production tool. The role of guardians of memory from which these women inherited placed them as threats to the new world order since "elderly women were the ones who remembered the promises made, the faith betrayed, the extent of property ... the customary agreements, and who was responsible for violating them."<sup>7</sup> They had to be silenced, one way or another.

The accusations of witchcraft were also closely linked to female sexuality, which they strongly condemned. Accused of infanticide, fornication or even prostitution, the witches were also women who opposed the capitalist conception of femininity and sexuality of women, a conception that greatly recalls that of the mystical feminine: "sexless, obedient, submissive, resigned to subordination to the male world, accepting as natural the confinement to a sphere of activities that in capitalism has been completely devalued."<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, the witch is a strong feminist symbol because she represents not only the persecuted woman, but also the women freed from all limitations and overall domination by the omnipotence that her powers give her. This is reflected, among other things, by the phallic imagery of the broom, a common household item and reclaimed as a symbol of sexual liberation through the witches' control. It is also reflected by the image of the old crone, a symbol of the aging female body freed from dictates of beauty. These two images, once assumed, are a way for feminists to assert themselves simply as women. Thus, if the witch is demonized, it is first and foremost because she is feared, independent, and because she can accomplish exploits that are inaccessible to ordinary people.

In *Bewitched*, Samantha's magic allows her to influence and affect the world around her as she pleases. By a simple twitch of the nose, she can get

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<sup>6</sup> Sylvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Sylvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*, 32.

rid of boring domestic tasks such as doing the dishes or cleaning the house, she can make things appear or disappear at will and can even transform her husband's appearance. Truly omnipotent, Samantha, being a witch, finds herself to be superior in many ways to her husband: there is nothing she can't do, she is much older than him, she is also well-traveled while Darrin hardly ever left America, and this superiority is precisely why the use of magic is forbidden when it is not put to use at the husband's service. Indeed, in the Stephen's household few exceptions are tolerated regarding the use of Samantha's powers: as long as magic is performed in the domestic sphere, it is accepted, even though frowned upon. If Samantha wishes to use her powers outside of the limits of the home, their use has to be approved by the husband or they must be explicitly used to help him because in *magicoms* such as *Bewitched*,

seemingly normal-looking female characters possessed magical powers which men begged them not to use; if women did use them, their powers had to be confined to the private sphere. Whenever women used these powers outside the home, in the public sphere, the male world was turned completely upside down. Business simply could not be conducted as usual, and logic and rationality were often overthrown and rendered useless. Men were made impotent by these powers, and the husbands ... of such women were stripped of their male authority and made to look foolish and incompetent in front of their male superiors.<sup>9</sup>

This use of magic the service of man is another way of reinforcing the power of the feminine mystique: the role of the woman, as magical and powerful as she might be, is to take care of her house and of her husband. The home is her kingdom in which she can do as she pleases so long as it doesn't interfere with the outside world. Relegating the witch to the confines of the house is way to neutralize her or even harness her power in order to submit it to men. It's precisely because she's scary and superior to her husband that Samantha has to promise not to use her magic, which amounts to her denying, at least in appearance, her potential.

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<sup>9</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Book, 1994), 126.



However, the similarity between Samantha and the American housewives doesn't stop there. *Bewitched* also replicates the relational schema between the housewives and their mothers for the relationship between Samantha and her mother Endora is, most of the time, tense – to say the least. The only difference between the mother-daughter relationship portrayed in *Bewitched* and the one described in *The Feminine Mystique* is that Endora, contrary to the 1940's American housewives, is not unhappy and miserable. This can be explained by the fact that she is impervious to the entrapments of the feminine mystique due to her being a witch. She then appears as a fully emancipated woman: divorced from Samantha's father – or at the very least, single – always travelling and enjoying life at its fullest. She also isn't the type to stop herself from using her magic whenever she sees fit. Resolutely feminist, Endora will not hesitate, for example, to force men to experience the symptoms of pregnancy in order to make them see what their wives are going through every day. Even though Endora is not in the same position of submission as the mothers described by Friedan, she nevertheless borrows their discourse of disappointment since she openly and repeatedly denounces her daughter's marriage to a mortal. For Endora, this union is the symbol of a submission she can't understand, and this is why the mother and the daughter are arguing most of the time: both represent what the other does not want to become.

Thus, Samantha has, in almost all respects, the appearance of a typical housewife. Not only does she choose to deny her potential or submit it to the whims of her husband, she also remains deaf to the grievances of her mother. This resemblance between the viewers and Samantha is part of the process of identification at work in the series and contributes to making the witch a viable model of emancipation for the housewives at the time.

### **The Witch Within**

In order to fully grasp the importance of Samantha's influence on housewives at the time, it is important to look carefully at how this identification process works. In the series, there are three recurring female characters, which are Samantha, Endora, and Gladys Kravitz – Samantha's nosy neighbor, a pathetic and comical character, stuck in a loveless marriage with her husband

Abner. When placed along an axis, these three characters represent three distinctive types of women, made of two “extremes” (Endora and Gladys Kravitz) and a more nuanced character represented by Samantha. Of course, Endora is the fully emancipated woman while Gladys Kravitz is the middle-aged frustrated housewife, prisoner to the feminine mystique. When thinking about this schematization of the female characters, one question comes to mind: why do women identify more with Samantha than with Gladys Kravitz whose life seems to be way more similar to theirs? Besides the obvious considerations of the diegetic importance of Samantha – naturally much more present than Mrs. Kravitz – the answer to this question lies in the representation of the characters.

In truth, the two older women are represented in a more grotesque way than Samantha. On that matter, Susan J. Douglas argues that “with her overly bouffant, bright red hairdos, two-inch-long [sic] false eyelashes, and thick eyeliner that shot up at a forty-five-degree angle to her eyes, Endora made gestures of femininity that were exaggerated, like a Mardi Gras mask. ... The other grotesque female character is the baggy-faced, chinless, relentlessly nosy neighbor Mrs. Kravitz”<sup>10</sup> Thus, no viewer can identify with these women straight out of the world of caricature, a fact that does not prevent viewers from enjoying them anyway. They liked Endora’s “dismissive assessment of Darrin as an impotent doofus, took great delights in her outrageous transgressions, and in her unmovable loyalty to Samantha”<sup>11</sup> whilst they still enjoyed Gladys Kravitz, mostly because of her comical potential. Facing these two extreme – albeit enjoyable but not all-together desirable – options, viewers are left to identify with Samantha. Women will then admire her: they will want to be this witch who seems to be able to so effortlessly balance the multiple natures that oppose her, that of a wife and mother, and mostly that of a woman.

In other words, it is precisely because she is not scary and does not go to extremes that the character of Samantha speaks to women: she looks like them. However, just because she is moderate does not mean that she is not emancipated. Walter Metz, in his book *Bewitched*, explains that when analyzed episode by episode, it is easy to see the show as a glorification of patriarchy

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<sup>10</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 132.

since at the end, everything is back to normal, that is to say that the rupture of the initial balance caused by Samantha disobeying and using magic is repaired: Samantha becomes obedient again and authority of the husband is restored. However, "Samantha's rupture of Darrin's patriarchal control is seen to forever continue, being temporarily resolved in one episode but then immediately reactivated in the first minutes of the next."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the emancipation of Samantha, if not immediately visible, is still very present and is manifested by the use of her magic, which expresses a desire for freedom on the part of the witch, but which but also make her an active agent in the world.

This emancipation is also seen through the fact that Samantha *chose* her life. She made the conscious choice of refusing to use magic and to be obedient to her husband. This promise of submission is, however, quite contradictory because she does not surrender by necessity, but by choice. This transforms her act of surrender into an act of self-determination. This might have been hard to see for earlier feminist critics of *Bewitched* because

to love fully, one must be able to surrender – to give up control. If we are to know love, then we cannot escape the practice of surrender. In patriarchal culture women who love men take a risk that our willingness to surrender may create a space of vulnerability where we can be wounded, violated. This is why there was such a critique of romantic love in early radical feminist discussions and why it was believed that it was difficult for any woman to fully realize feminist practice in a heterosexual relationship.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, it remains a way for Samantha to manifest her emancipation, especially since her submission is not really definite: she promises to stop using her powers, not to get rid of them. If the situation deteriorates, she can always use magic to save the day or to punish her husband, should he deserve it.

One might wonder what motivates the decision to represent Samantha's emancipation in such a subtle way when it would have been easy to represent her as a potential Endora. Furthermore, if she is to serve as a model

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<sup>12</sup> Walter Metz, *Bewitched*, (Detroit : Wayne State University Press, 2007), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Bell Hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class In the Movies*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21.

for emancipation, should it not be a more explicit and clear one? Admittedly, such a strategy would have the merit of clearly announcing its intentions but would hardly have had the desired effect. To understand the forces at play, it is necessary to come back to Friedan for a brief moment. In *The Feminine Mystique*, she recalls that when she was writing for women's magazines, one of the imperatives she had to comply with was that women should be able to identify with the character. She adds that at the beginning of the 1960s, a study found that women under thirty-five were unable to identify with the character of a career woman but that they could, on the other hand, sympathize and react to the plight of a paralyzed young man. Thus, Friedan writes that in order to speak directly to women, it is better to create characters who look like housewives, but are not really one: "You could sometimes get away with writing about a woman who was not really a housewife, if you made her *sound* like a housewife."<sup>14</sup> Ironically, this is one of the critics received by Friedan about her book: her sometimes too blunt posture had shocked some women who did not like that their life choices seemed to be questioned by the author, as explains Gail Collins in her introduction of the most recent edition of *The Feminine Mystique*. However, in *Bewitched*, no viewer is fooled since if Samantha seems submissive, each episode proves to us that in reality, it is she who dominates. Using her magic outside of her established codes of conduct serves as a plot point for all episodes, but it conversely makes Samantha the only one who has the power to resolve the situation, which makes her not a typical housewife, but a woman who *has the appearance* of a housewife.

Nevertheless, in order to speak to women of the time it was necessary to tread carefully, which the creators of *Bewitched* understood. Indeed, each episode is punctuated by small acts of rebellion on the part of Samantha who, if they seem very innocent because tolerated or ignored by Darrin, speak to women. Take for example the well-known sequence from the first episode where Samantha tries to prepare her husband's breakfast: unable to do this with mortal techniques, she resigned herself, almost reluctantly, to use magic. The result: what would have taken several minutes to prepare is done in a few seconds. On that matter, Susan J. Douglas argues that "it is hard to imagine a woman watching who did not identify with the fantasy of cleaning the kitchen

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<sup>14</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 47.

or preparing dinner just by twitching her nose."<sup>15</sup> Thus, to see Samantha refuse to use magic when it would make her life easier shocks viewers - both those of the time and more contemporary viewers - and all of them say they would like to be in her place. For them, such an attitude amounts to spoiling one's potential, which subtly reminds them of their condition and might inspire them to change.

Such a conclusion may seem far-fetched. Indeed, how can a TV series have so much power among an entire group of people? Because numerous studies, notably those of Jennifer L. Barnes, show that the fictional characters with whom we identify are perceived by our brain as real friends. This is what we call parasocial relationships: "the term parasocial relationship has been defined as a one-sided relationship formed with a fictional character or real-world celebrity via the consumption of media."<sup>16</sup> Studies also show that these relationships have the same benefits for our brain as real relationships. However, these relationships need to be nurtured and there are multiple strategies for doing this: "individuals engaged in parasocial relationships may talk to the character ..., daydream about the character ..., or, in the case of fanfiction writers, write elaborately imagined stories in which the individual and the beloved character(s) interact."<sup>17</sup> All of these strategies show a certain commitment on the part of viewers to the object of fiction that they consume and guarantees an in-depth analysis or even a decoding of the text. This ensures or at least asserts that, contrary to what one might think, viewers of so-called popular culture think about and interact as much with the cultural object as if it were more "serious" one.

It is all the truer that films (and by extension TV series) almost always assume an educational role in the lives of people who watch them (whether or not it is the avowed goal of creation). At least that is what the feminist critic Bell Hooks thinks when she asserts that it is by their fictionality that

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<sup>15</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 130.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer L. Barnes, "Imaginary Engagement, Real-World Effects: Fiction, Emotion and Social Cognition," *Review of General Psychology*, vol.22, n°2, (2018), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer L. Barnes, "Imaginary Engagement, Real-World Effects: Fiction, Emotion and Social Cognition," 130.

these objects allow an incursion into a universe different from ours: “movies remain the perfect vehicle for the introduction of certain ritual rites of passage that come to stand for the quintessential experience of border crossing for everyone who wants to take a look at difference and the different without having to experientially engage ‘the other’.”<sup>18</sup> This incursion into “the other” is thus completely safe since one engages with this universe without risking really doing it: watching a film or series, or reading a work of fiction is a bit like living through a proxy. More so, Jeanette Winterson argues that “strong texts work along the borders of our mind and alter what already exists. They could not do this if they merely reflected what already exists.”<sup>19</sup> By being put in front of this witch character who seems to live the perfect life, viewers thus reflect on their own condition, even after the television is turned off and they return to their own lives of submission.

Samantha therefore appears as an emancipated housewife, but in a “moderate” way since this emancipation is not radical: rather, it’s noticeable in the balance that Samantha seems to maintain between her life as a woman and her life as a witch, a balance which is explained by the fact that being a housewife is her choice. As a housewife she is of course submissive, but it is not a violent submission since it is done voluntarily, and especially since her witch powers remain a reliable means of escaping and balancing the scales. Samantha is the personification of a true reconciliation of the ideals of the liberated woman and the housewife, which speaks to the viewers who identify with her; partly because they are forced to do so and partly because Samantha represents an ideal, a model to aspire to. In Samantha women have certainly found a friend, but above all they found a mirror which, if it reflects back to them what they are, also shows them what they can be.

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<sup>18</sup> Bell Hooks, *Reel to Real*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 21.

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