

Witchology Part 2 with Fio Gede Parma

Ologies Podcast

October 11, 2023

Oh hey, it's still your ex-boyfriend's bandmate who did not recognize you at the DMV, Alie Ward, and I'm here with the conclusion to the most controversial episode in *Ologies* history, it's witches. So, y'all had begged for an episode on witches for many consecutive Spooktobers and it's such a tough topic for me to cover because unlike Demonology and Vampirology and monsters, there are real witches in the world! Practicing, very alive witches with spiritual beliefs. This expert was born into this culture, has written numerous books on the subject, is a peer with high-ranking figures, and can also speak about intersectional witchcraft, the perfect guest. Now, unlike featuring a removed academic on the lore of the fictitious topic, these two episodes are a little different than we usually do because we're learning firsthand about the faith and beliefs of people who have been made into tropes and caricatures and suffered unspeakable acts because of their volition. Okay, so this Part 2 addresses all of your burning questions and we cover so much pop culture, history, flimflam, and more.

But first, thank you to all the patrons who submitted questions for this episode. You can join for as little as a buck a month via Patreon.com/Ologies, we have some new Spooktober merch, exciting, at OlogiesMerch.com. And then for zero dollars, you can just leave us a review because I read them all including this light slap on the wrist from OrcaLover2468, who wrote:

Witchcraft... really? Love the podcast but can we please stick to true science?

OrcaLover2468, again, as I disclaimed at the top of Part 1 and Part 2, this pair of episodes approach a topic a little differently and contain faith-based views of a real witch with lived experience. So, I love you all, I love you all, but please do chill.

Okay, onto Part 2 with a guest who has authored most recently the book *The Witch Belongs to the World*. As promised, we cover everything from witch trials to cats to commercialization, gender, environmentalism, myths, witch fashion, witches in media, hallucinogenic tinctures, broomstick legends, sex-positive witchery, celebrity witches, if you're a witch, or what to do if you think you might want to be one. And just a warning, we do touch on some of the historical brutality suffered by those outside of dominant religions and the stigmas faced by those worshiping or observing religions that are considered fringe. Opinions and spiritual or religious beliefs are those of the guest and may conflict with yours, but the rich history and the conflicts are discussed. So, cradle a cup of tea, stare into the mist, bask in the moonlight, and enjoy this conclusion, with the wonderful, informed, and charming author, speaker, expert, witch, and witchologist, Fio Gede Parma.

Aside: Okay, let's see what questions you have a'bubbleing and brewing.

Alie: Addie McBaddie, Abby Mandris, Earl of Greymalkin, ConnieConnieBoBonnie, and Lyssa Mercier all want to know, essentially: What's the line between appreciation and appropriation? And Earl of Greymalkin wanted to know: What do you recommend people do to explore witchcraft during the spooky season while avoiding capitalist traps?

Fio: Mmm! Oh my god, this is a whole other ology. [*Alie laughs*] And because I'm a Balinese person, I am often... A lot of witches are white but there are several brown and Black witches and Indigenous witches and we're often talking about cultural appropriation.

So, for instance, let me break that down. So, a lot of people go, "Can I study yoga?" And I'm like, well number one, Western forms of yoga are deeply, deeply depleted and watered down anyway. Western yoga is very different to what we call yoga in Hindu societies; you know, the idea of stretching and stuff, that's the tip of the iceberg of yogic philosophy. But if you are drawn to yogic philosophy and understand that it's about ritual and mantra and mudra and understand what a chakra actually is and don't just, kind of, bandy the word around and understand that there are myriad systems of chakras, energy centers in the landscape of the human body. If you are drawn respectfully to Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and you find a teacher who has authority within the context of those traditions then you can, mindfully – always tracking your impact, always trying not to center yourself – study, in the same way, that you can study anything if the door is open to you by someone who has the authority and the context and the relationship to open that door. But then you still have to question yourself, "What is my responsibility as a guest?"

I think Western capitalist society, imperialist society really embroil us with entitlement, so we think we can have whatever, but we can't. And relationships need to be built because colonization still happens and it's deeply fucked up, a lot of the kind of ways of respectfully relating. A lot of us in witchcraft communities, we talk a lot about what does it mean to practice European or other forms of magic on stolen land? I live in so-called Australia, I live on stolen, occupied land. That's a fact. So, there are initiates of mine who are First Nations Aboriginal people so it's up to me to figure that shit out. And it's also up to me to listen to elders, to the elders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations here and when I'm in Turtle Island, or so-called North America, to listen there. A lot of witches are getting better at that and maybe more broadly a lot of Pagans are getting better at that. Maybe a lot of humans are getting better at that. But it's still too late, too little, I would say.

I would also say, especially if you're a white-bodied person, try not to come in with an, "I can offer. I can fix. I can save." No, no, actually don't. The best thing you can do is come in and just listen... That's it. And then maybe there's redistribution or resources or maybe there's mutual aid. But first, actually, there's listening. First, there's listening and always there's listening.

I would say that's true also for the spooky season. Listen to the land. One of the first things I say to someone who wants to begin a witchcraft practice is, if you can, if you're able-bodied enough, go outside, lay down, listen to the land. [*"Grass." "Touch it."*] Or if you need to, go to your nearest window, listen to the wind; build an ancestor shrine, and that can be as simple as having one candle and one bowl of water and then begin to connect to your ancestors of blood, your ancestors of breath, the human and more-than-human.

I know that ancestor work can be deeply problematic for some people, but the fact is, we are composed of them, and you actually don't have to deal with the bigots, you don't have to. There are all these kinds of rituals we do to, not avoid them, we do have to contend with them, but to focus on the ancestors who are, you know, helpful and inspiring and we all have them in our line, we really do. Maybe it takes a few generations to get them, but we do have them. And then there's the ancestors that are an inspiration. If your genetic bio-ancestry is really not good for you, there are all these other ancestors of wonder and joy. There's bell hooks, unfortunately, who died, she's a powerful ancestor of inspiration, all these people.

Aside: Okay, so here's the quickest crash course, in case you're not familiar with bell hooks. She was an author and professor and activist who just passed away a year or two ago. She wrote a lot about race, capitalism, and intersectional feminism and her most known works are *All About Love* and *Ain't I a Woman?* The title from the latter was plucked from a famous speech by the formerly enslaved abolitionist, activist, and feminist, Sojourner Truth.

Now, Audre Lorde in the early 1990s served as the New York State Poet Laureate up until her death in 1992 from breast cancer. Lorde described herself as a “Black, lesbian, mother, warrior poet.” The YouTube account Audre Lorde in Berlin features the poet’s 1984 reading of her work, “A Woman Speaks” and here’s an excerpt from it.

[Clip from YouTube video, “Audre Lorde ‘A Woman Speaks’ – Reading at Amerika Haus Berlin 1984]

*I have been woman
for a long time
beware my smile
I am treacherous with old magic
and the noon’s new fury
with all your wide futures
promised
I am
woman
and not white.*

Also, in case you enjoy name games... So, Sojourner Truth was actually born Isabella Baumfree and as a child was called Bell. And bell hooks used the name bell to honor her grandmother of the same name. Now bell hooks, the author, was actually born Gloria Jean Watkins and Gloria Joseph was the partner of Audre Lorde who was born Audrey Geraldine. And I thought all of those were connected and they absolutely weren’t. And I thought maybe Lorde, the singer, whose real first name is Ella, named herself after Audre Lorde. But no, turns out that the pop star just has had a lifelong fascination with the aristocracy. My point is, you can choose your own name and which legacies you honor.

Fio: You can also contact ancestors who aren’t your biological ancestors. I would start with the land and with the ancestors and practices of grounding and practices of beginning to sense the life force moving through the trees, your breath, color, light, darkness, and being still, and paying attention. I would say the witch’s prime MO is to pay attention, to observe patterns, and to work with patterns.

Aside: Speaking of seeing patterns, Ted Hamilton asked: How much of what we associate with magic and witches is connected to some kind of hallucinogenic medicine? And...

Alie: Misses Fishes, first-time question-asker, wanted to know: What was really going on with the Salem witches? Was it ergot poisoning? How much is, maybe, medicine of the Earth or compounds that occur in nature, is that used in rituals or to connect with ancestors, or is that, kind of like, “No, you’ve got to do it stone cold?”

Fio: Yes, some witches do work with psilocybin, absolutely, but there are actually entire traditions of witches who will only do things, so-called clean and sober, right? And certainly, most training of a witch is not done with the help of chemical compounds external to you. You really need to learn the magical technology without that and then once you’ve got that in you, you can add that because it’s a whole other skill. It’s a whole other skill to add these entheogens to your practice and to be able to ride them rather than them taking over.

Alie: Right.

Fio: That's a whole other practice. And certainly, it is amongst some witch traditions and covens to do that. That's why we teach a lot of breathwork; once you've got a few techniques of rhythmic, dynamic breathwork, you can actually take yourself into an altered state pretty quickly.

Alie: Augh! I did that recently. I did that a couple of weeks ago and it felt bonkers.

Fio: Yes, yes.

Alie: It's really, really wild. I'd never done it and my therapist was, "Would you ever do breathwork?" and I was like, "No." Which means I should do it.

Aside: Okay, just a side note, I thought breathwork was learning to take deep breaths when you're stressed out but what I encountered involved lying down on a yoga mat and intentionally hyperventilating, which was more scary than I anticipated. I felt pretty stoney and for some reason, I started [*soft and high-pitched*] crying. But I also think I just had kind of a bit of a crying backlog in general.

So, what is up with breathwork? Okay, so the history is, this guy Stanislav Grof, a psychiatrist, pioneered it in the last 1960s after his LSD studies started getting kind of dicey with the law. He also at one point hypothesized that near-death experiences involved tunnels of light because of natal trips out of a cooter. Other scientists were like, "Hold the phone Stanislav, that's not possible." Anyway, they fought about it. But he popularized breathwork, which has been involved in many ancient traditions around the globe.

So, after my recent – surprise! – trippy huffing/puffing, I dove into the archives and I found a 2005 paper in the journal *Clinical Psychology Review* titled, "Voluntary hyperventilation in the treatment of panic disorder – functions of hyperventilation, their implications for breathing training, and recommendations for standardization," which introduces the topic by explaining that "Voluntary hyperventilation is a way to expose patients with panic disorder to sensations associated with panic and to activate catastrophic cognitions that need restructuring." Kind of like, "Hey man, you can get into a physiological panic state and not die. Check it out, it's all good."

So, how does this all work? So, voluntary hyperventilation decreases carbon dioxide in the blood and induces a state called hypocapnia and this can elevate the body's pH to more than its usual 7.45. That's called respiratory alkalosis. Symptoms of altering your body's CO₂ and pH can include breathlessness, dizziness, your hands can cramp up like claws, nausea, twitching, muscle spasms, dizziness, fainting, confusion, and paresthesia, which is kind of a fancy term for pins and needles. But you can, you know what, also get pins and needles just from wearing tight shoes, or Spanx, or from sitting on the toilet too long.

But what is the hyperventilation doing up top, to the dome? I found this 2014 journal of *BioImpacts* paper called, "pH of the soul: How does acid-base balance affect our cognition?" And that said that respiratory alkalosis can constrict blood vessels in the brain, and it lowers the amount of serum-ionized calcium and which can affect your thinking and your "Sense of self." It also explained that any emotional arousal states can affect the body's pH from fear, to getting stoked about something, to stress, to love, even anger. So, like, traffic or a Tom Cruise movie can affect your pH balance and your brain. But in terms of hyperventilation, it continues that hyperventilation-induced respiratory alkalosis can cause confusion and perplexity. Self-induced hypocapnia through hyperventilation can provoke giddiness and euphoria, feelings of depersonalization, and visual hallucinations.

I once shot this TV segment at an Air Force base and alongside all these aspiring fighter pilots who are training for airborne combat, they locked me into a chamber to induce hypoxia. People, I was triiiiiippin' balls, in a flight suit, and I thought a piece of wood next to me was a lemon, I couldn't stop giggling. Everyone else was laughing at me. I was out of my damn mind because my brain

didn't have its usual levels of oxygen. But I was also in a pretty good mood, something that can also occur in hyperventilation.

Now, on that note, there was a 2017 study titled, "Measure of significance of holotropic breathwork in the development of self-awareness," and it found that perhaps due to those cognitive experiences in self-induced hyperventilation, both novices and experienced subjects in the study experienced positive temperament and self-awareness changes and reduced hostility, neediness, interpersonal problems, and insecurity. There was another 2007 study, "Holotropic breathwork: the potential role of a prolonged, voluntary hyperventilation procedure as an adjunct to psychotherapy," and it found that when used alongside ongoing therapy, voluntary hyperventilation "may facilitate generalized extinction of avoidance behaviors, resulting in therapeutic progress," especially in overly accommodating chicken shits who tell their therapist they're totally fine when they're not, which can happen to the best of us.

However, self-induced hyperventilation, and just the general fucking around with your blood oxygen levels, can be dangerous. A trend of this called "The Blackout Challenge" swept TikTok a few years back and it resulted in 20 kids dying. So, there is the hows on breathwork. And really, whoof, talk to a doctor, take it with a big grain of CO₂. People try all kinds of stuff to journey into their subconscious such as drinking four beers every day after work. I'm not here to judge. But please talk to your doctors, understand the science of what you're getting into, and be safe.

Now, when it comes to other ways of working your breath, plenty of studies have found [*takes a deep breath*] that just slowing your breathing in times of stress is helpful because it reduces hyperventilation that comes from these quick, shallow breaths of anxiety. Breathing deeply and slowly can reduce your heart rate, it can lower your blood pressure, and that tells your brain, "Don't worry, no bears here to outrun. We are calm as fuck and you can tell from my breathing in a chill manner." And that feedback then helps calm the brain even more. So, there you go. [*inhales*] Deep breathing [*exhales*] can help you chill out. And if you're really determined, you can put the high in hyperventilation but you're lowering your CO₂, you're alkalizing your body, cutting off oxygen and blood to your brain, and you are risking a stroke or a blackout. So, maybe don't. I am not a doctor or a witch, I'm just here to spend several hours researching this one aside.

Okay, onward. And we will talk about wheat rust in a bit.

Alie: I thought Kelli Brockington had a great question, wanted to know: Is there a witch uniform? It just seems like a lot of work with the black nail polish and goth makeup and long, flowing black skirts and such. [*Fio laughs*] Am I too lazy to be a witch if that's required?

Fio: [*laughs*] I love that question. I mean, that sounds like a really fun outfit, but I will tell you that vast percentages of witches don't wear black. You know, I just walked down the street to get a coffee in really short shorts and, like, a Kali T-shirt [*both laugh*] and my Birkenstocks. Maybe a lot of witches have Birkenstocks, maybe that's true.

Alie: I think that's probably true. But not all goths are witches and not all witches are goth.

Fio: Oh, that is so- Yes! That is so...

Alie: I'm sure the Venn diagram is broad but that's one of them.

Aside: Okay, so black... Flimflam! But what about the mossy glow of witches' skin? So, Cicely Taylor, SonjaBird, and Average_pi needed to know...

Alie: Green witches, what the fuck? Why green skin in pop culture?

Fio: Yeah... I've heard different things, I don't know if they're true. So, green is a color that has long been in the European, and in Celtic countries especially, associated with the fairy people and that's a whole other thing too. Now, a lot of people assume when I say that word, they might see small, winged creatures like Tinkerbell [*"If you believe, wherever you are, clap your hands and she'll hear you."*] That's so not what I'm talking about. [*laughs*] Most traditional societies are terrified of the fairy people and historically, the fairy people – or the good people, we like to call them to not piss them off – they and the witches have been linked. So, in certain countries if it wasn't a witch who was blasting the harvest and souring the milk, it was a fairy; that's the traditional idea of a fairy. And witches and fairies have long worked together. Fairies can look as tall or taller or maybe a little shorter than an average human so that's the other reality there. But... Oh my god, I wove off the question, why did I bring up fairies? Can you remind me? [*laughs*]

Alie: Green. The greenness.

Fio: Green! Because the color green is connected to the fairy people. The other reason, I've heard, and I can't attest to this, but this is a pretty horrifying answer, there was a lot of torture of suspected witches– And most of these people weren't even witches, they were like good Christian people, or maybe they were shitty Christian people but they were not witches. And some people were so tortured that when they were brought out to be hanged or burned, they would look pretty green because they hadn't eaten, they were starved, and their hair was shaved off their body because hair was believed to be a source of power, especially long, feminine hair. So, you'd be looking pretty, honestly, gross and nearly dead.

Alie: [*softly*] Gosh.

Fio: So, that is said to be one of the other sources of it.

Alie: Augh!

Aside: It should also be noted that *The Wizard of Oz*, Wicked Witch had a lot to do with popularizing this trope. So, the actress playing her, Margaret Hamilton, wore chemically toxic makeup because this was 1939 and at that time, half the houses in the United States didn't even have toilets so people did all kinds of wacky stuff, like paint people with poison. *The Wizard of Oz* makeup artist was Jack Young and he once explained that:

Green makeup is toxic because it's made with copper. Every night, when I was taking off the Witch's makeup, I would make sure that her face was thoroughly clean. Spotlessly clean. Because you don't take chances with green.

And on set, I read that Margaret Hamilton had to adhere to a strict liquid diet, enjoyed through a straw, so she didn't ingest any particles of the paint. Also, she suffered second and third-degree burns to her face and hands when an explosive misfired and a trap door under her failed to open. And then her stunt double was burned in the crotch and the thighs during the surrender Dorothy skywriting scene! You're like, "Gosh, isn't that enough trouble for one set?" No, it's not because the guy who played the Tin Man inhaled the aluminum powder he was painted with, was in critical condition and hospitalized, and never fully recovered his lung function. That's enough. [*hushed tone*] No, it's not. The snow in the poppy field scenes were pure asbestos and the horses were a rainbow of colors thanks to gelatin-based paint, which is like being coated with the boiled bones of your friends.

Why did they do this? Because from the green skin to the fiery bombs and the silver men, they were aiming for a technicolor cinematic mind trip. Oh, and the young Judy Garland was forced on a diet of just black coffee, chicken soup, cigarettes, and amphetamines. Your great grandparents' generation was just runnin' and gunnin', little goblins who were like, "That's entertainment, baby."

Alie: And as long as we're on the topic of pop culture, a bunch of people, Katie Hultman, Deanna DePietro, Andrew McAdams, Kristin, , Katie Murray, Saira Louise, Lee Lawlor, Cassie Chatwin, TheWhollyGhost, EdNoGG, and [phonetic] Melaris Brand all wanted to know about TV and film depictions of witches and essentially if you have any representations of witch in cultural media that you're like, "Hey, that was pretty good," or, "That fuckin' sucked so bad."

Fio: Oooh!

Alie: Like, *American Horror Story*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, any of those?

Fio: Most witches love watching all that stuff. [*Alie laughs*] There were moments, there are moments in *Practical Magic*, that gorgeous movie with Nicole Kidman and Sandra Bullock, there are moments in that that are like, "Oh yeah, that's what we do." There are moments in *The Craft* that are drawn right from witchcraft practice, again, these people had witchcraft technical advisors. Even in the movie *The VVitch*, the one that you mentioned, that kind of horror film, I mean, most of that is drawn directly from folklore, most of that is truly folkloric. It is true that many witches know how to curse and if pressed and needing to defend themselves from attack or assault, that is a technology we have. So, witchcraft is not all like, yummy and healing and light and you feel good. Witchcraft is a very serious, intense practice. So, some of those representations actually hint at a broader historical and folkloric reality.

Sabrina the Teenage Witch, I mean that new chilling tale, that new kind of spooky one... What's it called, *The Chilling Tales of Sabrina*? [*"In the town of Greendale, where it always feels like Halloween, there lived a girl who was half witch-half mortal, who on her 16th birthday would have to choose between two worlds."*] I know some of the writers are actually witches and they did pack a lot of really cool folk magic and witchcraft into that. There's a lot of really cool, true authentic folklore and folk magic in the first season.

But yeah, 99.9% of witches, I'm not telekinetic, we cannot throw things around the room. [*Alie laughs*] But we do see spirits or work with spirits, and we do spells, and we do rituals and we read cards and we dream and we know things, that's true.

Alie: Hm! Well, on the topic of spells, we have a ton of people...

Aside: Patrons Shelby Reardon, Ange Percy, Brenna Wing, Abraham Livingston, Sarah de Jesus, Figment, Annmarie Everhart, Andrew McAdams, Breanna Segovia, Lyssa Mercier, and...

Alie: Rayna's words: Hexes and love spells – can they be done ethically?

Fio: Well, that's a big question. Look, I always believe, again I mentioned something about the magic of the oppressed and the marginalized. Interestingly, the spells of almost every culture that I'm currently thinking of, that continue through the generations are love spells, protection spells, and curses. That's because they are common necessities in human life. You can do love spells ethically but a lot of people... My advice to you all: Never do a love spell on a specific person because that's coercive. [*"Not cool man, not cool."*] You can, if you're experiencing in your partnership, a lull in harmony, you can do harmony magic to try and restore but then you'd also have to go to couples' counseling and actually talk to each other, [*Alie laughs*] that's the other reality.

You can do... I've done several love spells in my life where I've written pages full of qualities. You know, there are billions of humans on this planet, someone's going to fulfill them. So, I've been very specific, to the point where I have three A4-size pages full of qualities. You never name a person but you're asking for a person to fulfill, you know, "They're kind, they're a clear communicator, they can drive a car, they are employed." [*Alie laughs*] I kid you not. And whenever I do love spells for clients I'm just like, "I want you to be so specific and I want you to write down all of the

qualities you actually feel you need.” Some people come back with ten qualities, some people come back with pages, as I said. And then you can do those spells to attract a partner who fulfills those qualities.

Love spells actually end up working really well for most people, maybe too well because to get a spell to work, you have to put a lot of desire and intensity into it and a lot of people want love. But a lot of people do spells and they’re not trained in how to raise power, they’re not trained in how to approach the spirits so those spells backfire. And often, they’re doing love spells on specific people which is a bad idea because you’re engineering love and it’s not love.

Aside: So yes, be creepy but just not too creepy because at some point you’d have to admit, “Hey, heads up, you’re in love with me because I chanted some stuff under a full moon with a hair that I picked off your hoodie at work,” which might be called a tag lock. Some witches call items that align intentions toward a certain person a tag lock, like if they were doing a spell of protection for someone that they dug. But again, specific love spells, bad idea. What about hexes on exes?

Alie: What if you suspect someone has hexed you? Is there anything that you could do to make amends out there into the universe?

Fio: Yeah, there are many hex-breaking rituals and there are many, many witches and spirit workers and Hoodoo practitioners and shamans who you can go to. If you live in a town or a city with humans, there are witches and spirit workers. Again, you can google us. I break hexes. But the thing is, hexes are rare. Like, the evil eye is common, this is a common phenomenon. This is when people are kind of unconsciously, semi-consciously wishing you harm because they’re envious of you. In different societies, people are terrified of the evil eye. It’s usually not someone walking around consciously ill-wishing you. It’s usually deflected, the person has unresolved angst or envy about something good in your life and they’ve kind of poured that toward you, semi or unconsciously. So, a lot of cultures have ways of breaking the evil eye. [*“I’m sorry that people are so jealous of me, but I can’t help it that I’m popular.”*]

But true full-on curses on people are rarer than you’d think and if they are there, most of them are easy to get rid of. It’s very rare for me to come across a curse that I’m like, “Oh shit, that’s going to take a lot of work.” Although recently, I did come across one of those and it’s been years and years since I’ve come across a curse like that. [*Alie sighs*] Yeah.

Alie: Oy-oy-oy. How’s the person doing?

Fio: Not well.

Alie: Oh no!

Fio: But they’ve got a lot of good people on their side and we’re working it out.

Alie: That’s good to hear. I wish them well; I wish everyone well in that situation.

Aside: Let’s talk concoctions, brews were on the brains of patrons Ted Hamilton, Kelsey Lore, Antonia Clark, Otto, Willow Beller, and first-time question-askers, Isabelle Newman and Johanna Burr.

Alie: What about potions? Why do we associate magic and witches and small tinctures, little bottles of beautiful tinctures?

Fio: Well, you said something earlier about, and a lot of people connect witches to herbs, it’s not all we do and some of us are really shit at it and some of us are really great at it. [*Alie laughs*] Not all witches are good at every witch thing. So, the word that we translate as witch in Ancient Greek is *pharmakós* and what does that word now exist as? Pharmacist.

Alie: No way! [*gasps*]

Fio: Yeah, and it means what we think of today as a witch. So, this was applied to Kirke or Circe, or Medea; these were sorceresses or witches who knew how to work with the secret intelligences of plants or herbs. So, certainly, a lot of the early witches would have been pioneering chemists. I mean, a lot of science actually originates in occult ideas, and certainly, before the Church was persecuting scientists, as it did witches or accused witches, most of those scientists would have considered themselves deeply mystical. But I think that the persecution by the Church created that division.

Aside: I was like, well, that may be a matter of opinion. So, I looked it up and within 15 seconds stumbled upon a 2011 article in the journal *Inquiries* titled, “Copernicus, Galileo, and the Church: Science in a Religious World,” and this paper read that:

During most of the 16th and 17th centuries, fear of spreading teachings and opinions that contradicted the Bible dominated the Catholic Church. They persecuted scientists who formed theories the Church deemed heretical and they forbade people from reading any books on those subjects.

So, Copernicus and Galileo landed on that list because they were like, “Hey, crazy theory but we think the Earth might revolve around the Sun and that our planet is not in fact the center of the entire universe.” And the Church was like, “Okay, not only are you crackpots, but also sinners. And you’re ugly.” I made that last part up, but Galileo was on house arrest until his death for a decade.

And for more stories on this, you can see any book about the history of science. And there’s this professor of religion and the Chair of Science and Technology Studies at Williams College, his name is Dr. Jason Ananda Josephson Storm, and he authored a 2021 book *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory*, and he’s written on the myth of disenchantment that scientific knowledge didn’t displace faith but that the two were actually really intertwined in history. And 16th-century cosmological theorist, Giordano Bruno, thought that the cosmos was chock-a-block with “Magical forces, demons, and spirits,” Josephson Storm writes.

So, geophysicist and the so-called father of modern science, Francis Bacon apparently thought the natural world was all kinds of magical and that science was like conducting the orchestra of spirits. You may know Sir Isaac Newton as a physicist, an astronomer, and mathematician. But also, he was like, “Heck yeah, I believe in the occult,” and thought that without the supernatural there would be no gravity and without occult forces, gravity would just cause everything to collapse on itself. So, it goes on and on.

I like this guy who was a pioneer of wireless communications, Sir Oliver Lodge. He wrote this bestseller of a book after learning through a medium that his beloved youngest son Raymond, who died fighting in World War I, was enjoying the spirit world. Raymond reported to the medium that the afterlife was full of flowers and trees but no illnesses and that World War I casualties were greeted with special treatment of cigars and whisky. So, Sir Oliver Lodge went on to invent a machine to chat with Raymond but unfortunately, trials of that phone yielded nothing. But maybe Raymond was just out having a bourbon and a smoke and missed his dad’s call to the Great Beyond, we don’t know. Either way, Sir Oliver Lodge knows what’s up now, wherever he may be because he’s very certainly dead. So, what does modern academia think of all this balderdash?

Alie: We had a dark matter expert, I asked him if dark matter was ghosts and he said dark matter so outnumbers baryonic matter that if anything, we are ghosts in the dark matter universe. And I was like, “God damn, we don’t know anything!”

Fio: Yes! We are ghosts in the dark matter universe!

Alie: There's so much that we think is mystical that we just don't know if anything is. Also, that makes me wonder if working with tinctures and herbs and being a chemist, like if you cooked crystal meth, if that would make you a modern-day witch. If later, they'll be like, "Yeah, they made these potions." [*Fio laughs*] But actually, speaking of crystals, we had some great questions about that.

Aside: Like this one from Lyssa Mercier and...

Alie: The Ren You Know asked: How much of the power of witchcraft comes from crystals? TJ Mckenna, Saira Louise, Crystals Crystals Everywhere want to know: Do you have little chairs for each of your crystals to sit on? [*Fio laughs*] I'm not sure if that's an inside witch joke or if that's just a question. [*Fio still laughing*] Good questions!

Fio: Those are the best questions ever. No, I do not. So, lots of witches actually loathe the crystal world.

Alie: [*softly*] Good to know.

Fio: Just so people know. However, I do want to say that there is a person called Nicholas Pearson who is an amazing, amazing gem and crystal person who lives in the States and his books about gems and crystals are ethical, marvelous, and solid. The thing is, stones having power is not a New Age idea, it's an ancient and Indigenous idea, it's truly old. My father, a Balinese man, they ascribe or experience that stones have virtues just like plants have virtues. When you're an animist you understand or experience everything as having virtue, everything as having inherent magical power.

Aside: For more on animism, you can see Part 1. Why are you here without Part 1? What are you doing here?

Fio: And so yeah, some of us do work with stones and gems and crystals in order to do certain things. And yes, we would say that yes, they have power but so do I, so does the tree, so does the sun and the sky. So, we're all working together, it's not that you need crystals. But I would say, please treat crystals respectfully and also consider the fact that most of them are being ripped out of the earth and in really highly fucked up scenarios by, you know, basically enslaved labor. So, you kind of have to consider that.

Aside: So, I addressed this in the Gemology episode and again in the wonderful Geology two-parter but I'm going to repeat myself again. The psychology of crystal beliefs is interesting scientifically. Straight up, your brain is just this jiggly mess of nerves and wires and memories and there's a lot that our brains don't fully understand about our brains and one of those things is the placebo effect. According to my doctor, www.WebMD.com, one of the most common theories is that the placebo effect is due to a person's expectations. So, if a person expects a pill to do something, then it's possible that the body's own chemistry can cause effects similar to what a medication may have caused. So, crystals can kind of be a sugar pill for the soul.

Now, for more on this, you can see the paper, "Top-down and bottom-up mechanisms in mind-body medicine: development of an integrative framework for psychophysiological research." Now, that explains that neural top-down control of physiology is the direct regulation by the brain of physiological functions, affecting stuff like the immune system, metabolism, stress and even kidney function. It continues that mind-body therapies like progressive muscle relaxation and meditation and yoga have been clinically effective for reducing depression and insomnia and anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and even chronic pain. So, why is this? They think our perception is controlled by cognition and some of your experience is filtered through feelings that rely in part on our thoughts and our expectations. Even the prominent neopagan feminist author Starhawk writes that it's not the green candle that you burn that holds power but it's the intentions that you're focusing through it.

So, does your crystal have powers or do you feel healthier and happier or more empowered to make different choices because of the reminders to make behavioral changes or maybe even the placebo effect? Science says the latter. Does it matter? To some people. To others, not so much. But if you pick up a rock, any rock, and say, "This rock will get me to stop procrastinating" and you let yourself believe it, then that rock may fix your life, or you will fix your life because of what you think that rock can do for you. Either way, it's good to have rock friends, superficially, because all rocks are pretty.

Now, off of the soap boxes and onto the broomsticks. So many people had this sweeping curiosity including Lorri Fishman, James Nance, Deanna DePietro, Olivier Calas, Lizard Queen, Holly Giorgio, Heather Livingston, Melissa Croce, Asia Matthews, SonjaBird, Average_Pi, Erik K, Mx Artemisia, and first-time question-askers, Isabelle Newman, and The Joyful Spitfire...

Alie: Broomsticks. Everyone wants to know: What's the deal with magic broomsticks?

Fio: Yeah, they're a thing. So, broomsticks have... They're a domestic tool, right? If you look again at the old images of witches, you'll see pitchforks and things that you'd use in agriculture. You see ladles and pots. So again, these are women's things, right? But magic can be done with everything.

There's another story, and it may be true, broomsticks have long been used in different forms of magic, there's another story of witches jumping around on broomsticks in a field to show the crops how high to grow. This is a common witch legend so potentially someone came across this and were like, "Oh my god, witches are flying on brooms." Because if you start to really go for it and someone is looking at a hill across a bunch of crops, they're like, "What are those people doing hovering on brooms over there?" [*Alie laughs*] So, there is that idea. I don't know how much veracity that has but it is a common witch legend that we tell each other.

And then, this is more interesting, there's the idea that witches slather poles and staffs and pitchforks and broomsticks with the flying ointment, which there are various lists of ingredients for. The flying ointment is an age-old kind of idea that witches would cover themselves with while naked or cover something else with, and then they would press it against a mucous membrane and enter a trance state to fly. [*Oh okay. Wait.*] So, when you're seeing these naked witches in these images, straddling poles, have a look at that, you can find many woodcuts of this and many interesting images. Basically, the idea is that there are witches fucking broomsticks and poles that are covered in ointment that send them into an ecstatic trance. And witches fly, which is a witch's form of flight.

Alie: Wow. I never knew that. This makes sense because Scott Sheldon asked: I heard the reason that witches are associated with flying on brooms is that they would put on a psychedelic salve on a broomstick that got them high...

Fio: That's correct.

Alie: ... and then use the broomstick as a way to get said salve up into their nether regions. There you go! Boom! Scott Sheldon, why even ask the question when you know the answer? Way to go.

Fio: You know Scott. [*Alie laughs*]

Aside: Let's loop back to ergot, the fungal infection of rye and other grains. Okay so, ergot poisoning can cause all kinds of bummers such as muscle spasms, convulsions, states of mania, hallucinations similar to LSD dosings, bleeding, miscarriage, and a feeling that the limbs are engulfed in flames. So, the witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts happened in the 1690s; 200 people were accused of using the Devil's magic, 20 were executed. And then, nearly 300 years later, a theory arose that those suffering the effects of these suspected witches were actually possessed by

this grain fungus. Witchcraft or really bad food poisoning? Anyone who had ever DoorDashed Imodium and Pedialyte would have trouble figuring it out too. So then, this “Holy shit, it was grain rot, y’all!” spread as the golden explanation.

But then other scholars years later say, “Hey, hold those horsies,” and in an article published in the journal of *Clinical Toxicology* in 2000 titled, “Witchcraft or Mycotoxin? The Salem Witch Trials,” academics poured over a bunch of research and using tree ring data brought into doubt the weather conditions that would have supported a rye outbreak of ergot and the age of the girls afflicted were older than typical ergot victims and their symptoms changed depending on their audience. They also had no lingering symptoms. I enjoy that this paper also included a delightfully casual bullet point, “A few cows die; so what?” Then it concluded that “When the evidence is weighed carefully, both pro and con, it seems unlikely that ergotism explains much of what went on in colonial Salem.” So, it’s been chalked up to impressionable teens following trends which is its own danger.

Now, with the shroomy brooms. An *Atlantic* article titled, “Why Do Witches Ride Brooms? (NSFW)” explains that these tinctures may have included deadly nightshade, jimsonweed, and two plants I could have sworn were birds, henbane, and mandrake. And yes, taking these by mouth might cause barfing so other orifices it is.

Alie: Okay, a bunch of people asked about cats and the bubonic plague. Megan Duffy, Elyce, Sydonie S, and Brenna Wing wanted to know: Cats and witches, and also is that how the bubonic plague and witches were related? Because they killed all the cats and then the rats went nuts.

Fio: You know, I’ve heard that. because I don’t know enough about the bubonic plague, I actually cannot answer that question.

Aside: And apparently, neither can astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson who recently went on comedian Theo Von’s podcast and spread this unfortunate bushel of flimflam. I looked into it and apparently, historians and archaeologists haven’t found enough evidence to convince them it was even rat fleas. There was more data to conclude it was just plain old people fleas. You can enjoy the 2018 study, “Human ectoparasites and the spread of plague in Europe during the Second Pandemic,” if you’re hungry for more on human lice and people fleas. And also, the witchcraft hysteria really picked up in the 1400s and the Black Plague was in the 1300s.

So, the cat is out of the bag, but cats are still in the game which is good news for all the patrons who asked about kitties and witches including Kelli Brockington, Otto, Mushroom Morgan, Megan Duffy, Sydonie S, Brenna Wing, Melissa Croce, Merryn Lush, Megan Conrow, and first-time question-askers Elyce and Kathleen Lenz.

Fio: It is true that cats and witches are connected and several goddesses, a lot of witches are very goddess-oriented, several goddesses from pre-Christian European Pagan societies have feline associations and the one I’m thinking of right now is Freyja. Freyja is a Norse goddess of beauty, sexuality, fertility, and witchcraft and she was depicted often or thought of as being drawn through the sky by cats. So, maybe that’s it. But definitely cats and dogs, both of them, in most cultures people have this idea that dogs and cats can see spirits. That’s an established and cross-cultural idea. Witches are also said to keep familiar spirits and sometimes the familiar spirits, especially in English trial records and folklore are depicted as or thought of as to be a physical animal that houses an imp or a spirit. Sometimes it’s a toad or a dog or a cat, it’s actually more than a cat but for some reason, the cat got linked in and one could argue that there’s the whole trope of the crazy old cat lady.

Alie: Oh. Toxoplasmosis maybe.

Fio: *[laughs]* Yeah. But the idea of an old woman off on her own with a cat, that's suspicious. So, potentially, that is also contributing to it. I'm a fan always of the multiple-reason answer because I never think it's a monolithic answer.

Alie: Right. It kind of coalesced into one gelatinous blob of a reason.

Fio: Exactly.

Alie: That makes sense.

Aside: It also makes sense to take a quick break. Before we do each episode, we donate to a cause of the guest's choosing and a double donation for these episodes went to Mudgin-Gal Women's Group, a leader in family violence prevention which is completely staffed and managed by Aboriginal women, and they provide early intervention and vital services for vulnerable women in the Sydney community. We will link to their site in the show notes and that donation was possible by sponsors of *Ologies*.

[Ad Break]

Okay back to your questions including an astute query from Adam Foote as well as...

Alie: I loved this question from Alex Vangelatos, first-time question-asker, wants to know: Where does the idea come from that witches melt upon contact with water? *[laughs]*

Fio: Well, doesn't it come from *The Wizard of Oz*?

Alie: I know, I wonder where they got that.

Fio: Well, I'll tell you that some people who are accused of witchcraft were dunked, which was horrible. They would be tied to this wooden lowering device and the idea was that if they were a witch, they would be rejected by the water because the water would be considered holy from God. Therefore, a person who was innocent of witchcraft would just drown.

Alie: Ahh! What the fuck!?

Fio: Yeah.

Alie: What kind of acquittal is that?

Fio: Yeah, I know. It's really stupid, awful logic. In general, with trying to find out if someone was a heretic, there were some really brutal, awful ways of figuring it out that when you think about it— Even then, people would question it, many people questioned the witch trials at the time. People were like, "What are you doing? This is ridiculous." So yeah, witch dunking, dunking witches is a thing and it's pretty horrible.

Alie: Oof. I never understood how they could think a mole was the mark of the devil because like, who doesn't have a mole somewhere? You know? I found one in my butt crack recently and had to get a doctor to check it out. Turns out it's fine. *["Keep this to yourself."]*

Fio: I will say, I think that's a bit blown out too though. I think the witches' mark is definitely an idea but witch hunters, especially in England got really ridiculous. They ended up becoming very ridiculous and it was, for some of them, a money-making scheme actually. They would charge a lot from different village to different village to do it and they would whip up a frenzy and a fear of witches to do it.

Alie: Augh. Also, making money to search womens' nude bodies, interesting.

Fio: Exactly. Exactly. It's pretty horrific.

Alie: A lot of people had questions about nomenclature.

Aside: Hi first-time question-asker Edward Mills, Yngvi, Scarlet P, and RJ Doidge.

Alie: Cian Verbridge wanted to know: What's the difference between witches and wizards? And Saira Louise wants to know: What's the difference between a witch and a sorceress? And from what I understand, a wizard is kind of like, "Don't call anyone a wizard." And what's a warlock versus a wizard versus a sorceress versus a witch? Which ones should we not use?

Fio: Most modern witches will prefer "Witch," of any gender. It's the term we consider holy, beautiful, and powerful, and has meaning in our traditions. The word wizard, yeah, don't call anyone that, probably. Especially don't assume that because someone might be a male witch or look male to you and be a witch that they're a wizard or a warlock although there are some modern male witches who have reclaimed warlock and there are some interesting etymologies of warlock. [*I'm ready.*] Apparently, it's Scottish for "oath-breaker" and this was considered to be that they broke their covenant with God.

Sorceress, I would just argue... In French, they call a witch, like, their translation of witch or any magical practitioner is *sortière*. So yes, they're a witch. A sorceress is a witch, a witch is a sorceress or a sorcerer. Sometimes people think they're a little bit different, but I would argue that they're actually really the same and people would argue with me on that. Wizard, I know of at least one tradition of witchcraft that is quite old here in Australia, where they might assign the term wizard as a respectful term for a male elder in their covens, but that is the only tradition I know of where that is the case. Because wizard literally just means... It comes from wise.

Alie: Oh!

Fio: So, wizard, that's why we say, "Oh you're such a wiz, you're a wizard," because it means, "You're very expert at that, you're technically skilled at that, you're wise." So, that's also in our vernacular and then, of course, the word witch because of the... you know, people use that differently.

Alie: I'm just realizing the Wizard of Oz was like, "Oh, this guy's a wizard, this is amazing." But the witch was like, "Kill it!"

Fio: Yeah. Except the Good Witch.

Alie: Right, there was a Good Witch, I forgot, who was pretty and blonde, which isn't loaded or anything.

Fio: No. [*laughs softly*]

Alie: A lot of people want to know...

Aside: Marisa, EdNoGG, and maybe a bunch of you who didn't realize you wanted to know this.

Alie: As a professional witchologist, what's your opinion on Stevie Nicks, is she a witch or what?

Fio: Well, she... [*stutters and chuckles*] She denies it.

Alie: She does!

Fio: She denies it. But you know what? I'd deny it too if I was Stevie Nicks. [*laughs*]

Alie: Right. Let her keep it to the vest, to the flowy, bohemian vest...

Fio: She is witchy AF; she is witchy AF and she sings witchy-AF songs but she denies it.

Alie: Augh, and who doesn't love her? Who doesn't love her?

Fio: Yeah, who doesn't love Stevie Nicks?

Alie: Literally I'd like to talk to that person in a corner.

Fio: Yes. *[laughs]*

Alie: I've got a word to say. My friend who is very sex-positive, Skella Borealis wrote in to say: Were witches slutty? Or are they slutty? And she means that as a compliment. Trust me, I know her.

Fio: Of course. And most witches would agree that's a compliment.

Alie: Any sex rituals that you feel deserve to shine a little light on, in a good way? Or yeah, are witches slutty?

Fio: You know, I want to say this, but I think you can be an asexual slut, I think slut is a broad term. I have several friends who are witches and asexual. But yes, witches are slutty. *[laughs]*

Alie: I love it.

Fio: And we know that you can not have sex and be slutty, we know that you can have multiple consenting partners and not be slutty, we know that you can be monogamous and be slutty. We know that's true, right? I hope people know that's true. But yes, witches are deeply- I kept using the word sensual before but a lot of witches would say that our craft is deeply erotic but that is often, you know, eco-eros, eco-sexuality; like, the eros one feels between oneself and a tree. And no, don't run off with that to a place *[Alie laughs]* but just the erotic charge that you can feel in the rest of nature in the ocean, with the moon, that's truly erotic stuff. And that's the source of a lot of the power we raise. Witches talk about collecting and raising power to do our magic and we draw it from the eros and the desire that swells up in us. Yes, there are sex rituals in witchcraft, but if anyone ever tells you- And this is unfortunately an issue because a lot of people can masquerade as witches, and there can also be asshole witches.

Alie: Mmm, I bet.

Fio: So, there has been abuse. This is true in any group. So, if anyone tells you that they need to have sex with you in order to initiate you, it is a lie and run very far away. *["For that reason, I'm out."]* So, that is not true. But there are sex rituals between consenting initiates of the craft, if they want to do it. And that's up to them, you know? But if someone is telling you that you need to have sex to be initiated, run away from them and you know, report them because that's just not true.

Aside: Although there are some sex rituals in modern witchcraft like Wicca's Great Rite but that's typically performed by a high priestess and a priest, if at all. Usually, it seems to be done symbolically by plunging a knife into a chalice.

Did you know that vagina means sheath? Such a visual, I don't like it. Anyway, sex magic goes way, way back. In some occultist movements in the early 20th century, it was kind of like a proto-sex-positivism like, "Hey, you can wank your noodle or diddle down there all you want. It's sacred, it's not sinful," was kind of the vibe.

Fio: But yes, sexual mysticism, sexual sorcery is definitely a part of witchcraft.

Alie: Same thing as if someone wants to check you for moles, I bet. *[laughs]*

Fio: *[laughs]* Yes, they're a witchfinder, run.

Alie: Right. You're like, "Unless you're my dermatologist and this is my once-a-year check, you get out of my butt crack!"

Fio: Exactly.

Alie: Oh man. And on that note about the Earth, last Patreon question. Marisa, great question, wants to know: Could you briefly cover the wheel of seasons which explains the connection with witches and Halloween?

Fio: Yes. So many witches, we have four to eight festivals. Some of us only work with the Celtic holidays that we call *Samhain*, *Bealtaine*, *Imbolc*, and *Lúnasa*, which are Irish words, and in Ireland, they still honor these. In Irish, the word for November is *Samhain*. *Samhain* is the origin of Halloween. The Irish festival of *Samhain*, which has cognates in other Celtic cultures, it happens on November 1st, the end of October, or the beginning of November in the modern calendar, in your hemisphere. Obviously, in my hemisphere, it's the opposite. For us, it happens at the end of April or the beginning of May because we are experiencing opposite ends of the seasonal cycle. But basically, Halloween is from that Celtic holiday. But the word Halloween comes from All Hallows Eve which is I believe a Catholic liturgical feast that was based on this. So, basically, for us, for witches, it's the time that we understand that the tide of winter has initiated.

Aside: By the way, we recorded right as the air was theoretically turning crisp. But I live in LA, and it was 96° last week. But yeah, this conversation took place on September 19, 2023.

Fio: Actually, in two days for you is the autumn equinox so that's equal day and equal night and that's when, for you, the darkness will wax over the light hours so that sends your side of the world, your hemisphere of the world, into the winter tide. And then *Samhain*, or Halloween, marks the beginning of what we consider winter in that sense of the term. It doesn't mean it's cold yet, in some places, but it means that the darkness is definitely stronger and it's about to get colder. And in some places, it's quite cold already, obviously in Ireland that's true.

And that's when we honor the dead, witches are probably always honoring the dead, but we have a big feast of the ancestors and the mighty dead and the beloved dead at that time. And depending on your tradition, other things will be going on, like other deity veneration or customs. But yeah, the apples, the pumpkins, obviously pumpkin is from the Americas but through colonization it was passed around. But the pumpkin, the Jack-o'-lantern, in Ireland, it was actually not pumpkins, it was turnips. They would carve turnips.

Alie: [*through laughter*] I've seen a picture of it and it's horrifying.

Fio: Yeah, it's truly horrifying. If you look at old black-and-white pictures of Irish Halloweens, oof, it's really harrowing. [*Alie laughs*] Like, in a marvelous way.

Alie: It's scarier than anything you could buy at a craft store.

Aside: Okay side note, we did mention these in the legendary Cucurbitology episode about pumpkins, which I will link in the show notes. But yes, the short of it is, a carved turnip head looks like a dehydrated Martian fetus that you do not want as an enemy. And Halloween costumes back in the day were just a lot of dead-eyed plaster masks looking like haunted mannequins or these ragged burlap sacks with eye holes chewed out by rats. The children in these grainy photos could be the victims of ghouls or the perpetrator, no idea, which is just as Halloween should be.

Alie: [*laughs*] It's truly haunting. Questions that I always ask here at the end, I always ask the hardest part about what you do but maybe if you could tell me the piece of flimflam that boils your blood the most about witches? Do you have something that you just hate the most that people think about witchery?

Fio: I don't know. Weirdly, I don't know if I do. Well, I think the thing that I would hate the most is the idea that we're New Age-y. We're not. Witches are not that. We're practicing pretty established things and most of us are very, we don't really like the New Age, we're not really into it. So, that kind of correlation really pisses me off because it shows a lack of understanding of what witchcraft actually is.

Aside: Okay, but what is defined as New Age-y? I don't even know. Is it sound baths or smoothies? Is it that book *The Secret* or just subscribing to the Goop newsletter?

Fio: Well, the New Age comes from the new thought movement, and I believe that came from the early 1900s and I believe the new thought movement began in the States actually. But basically, the New Age basically comes down from that. Most New Age can be typified by cultural appropriation, to be honest, and an ascendancy model, an idea that you must self-individuate and ascend into your masterhood and leave planet Earth into the whatever, whatever, whatever. Whereas witchcraft is all about the down and the dirty and the embodied and the somatic and the ancestral— They're so far apart. So, you know, the idea of, "Oh, I'm going to sing to my crystals with my Tibetan singing bowl..." And again, crystals in their context and Tibetan singing bowls in their context, absolutely fine. But suddenly, you put a white lady from Topanga in like... You know what I mean.

Alie: [laughs] I do. I literally just went to a rock shop in Topanga last week to look around!

Fio: We all know what we're talking about.

Aside: It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me. I'm here to learn.

Alie: What about the best thing about being a witch? I know it's going to be hard to pick one.

Fio: I actually think the best thing about being a witch is constantly being in awe. Like, I can't tell you the things I've seen and done. I'm a 35-year-old, I'm young, I have already seen... I've seen some shit. I have seen what other people would call miracles and that has kept me in awe. I am in awe, and I love that witchcraft, the more I practice it, the more I don't know. Yes, I can say this, that, or the other but the more I practice the craft, as we call it, the more I surrender into the mystery. And really, most things are the mystery.

Death will ever remain mystery. No one knows, no one knows. We can have these experiences... I read Tarot for clients, and I speak to some of their dead people, this is a thing, right? I have complete strangers come in to me, either on Zoom or the stalls that I read at, I couldn't know them from a bar of soap, I always have a practice of, "Don't tell me anything. I don't want you to tell me anything. I'm going to read for you without you telling me anything." And then, how the fuck do I know the name of their father who just died, the date they died and the song he loved, and also exactly the nickname they called this person? How do I know that? I don't know. I can't answer that. But what I do know is that that has happened so consistently in my life, that's one of the things my father's family is known for, talking to the dead. That has happened so consistently in my life, to the point that I am unnerved and that I am in constant awe at the power of magic.

I was once interviewed for a documentary about what happens after death. The person was so refreshed because she'd interviewed all these religious and spiritual people, whatever, and then she came to me, the witch, [Alie laughs] and she thought I'd have all these metaphysical ideas and I said, "You know what? I don't know. I don't know. But I can tell you what I experience because I talk to the dead, but I can't tell you what that means, I can't tell you how it happens. I just know from 22 years of doing this that it's a thing." One of my favorite things is to read for people who are convinced skeptics because always, they leave a bit shaken. ["That was weird, right?"] These people, they'll give you nothing as well, they're like, "I'm not saying anything." And I'm like, "Great, please don't." I try to stop people from saying things. Weirdly, a lot of people who sit down for readings, they want to tell you their life because they consider you like a proxy counselor and it's like, "Please know I'm not a trained counselor, I'm a reader." [Alie laughs] Very different.

But yeah, I guess it comes back to the awe. Witchcraft keeps me in this dynamic awe, truly, it really, really does. I can go walk down to the ocean like I did yesterday with a witch friend of mine, and

we can cast the circle, we can invoke the spirits, we can watch dolphins pop their heads up and be like, "Oh my god, how marvelous is the web of life? How marvelous is this?"

Alie: I think it's great that witches are also kind of ecologists, you know?

Fio: You kind of have to be.

Alie: They notice things like scientists do.

Fio: Yeah, you kind of have to be. Witchcraft has a lot to offer to the world actually. Witchcraft will always be on the edge, that's just the nature of it, it actually can't be... People try to make it mainstream but it actually can't be. It's always going to be the edge walkers, it's always going to be the magical pioneers, it's always going to be the fierce provocateurs. Witchcraft is always going to be uncomfortable but it's powerful.

Aside: If you want to know more about Fio, their thoughts on witchcraft, history, modern perspectives, poetry, and more, they have written several books including *Elements of Magic*, *Magic of the Iron Pentacle*, *Ecstatic Witchcraft*, and their newest release, which is titled *The Witch Belongs to the World*. And we're going to link those in the show notes for you as well.

Alie: Any other books that you recommend people pick up?

Fio: Oh wow, a friend of mine, Lee Morgan is a brilliant, brilliant occultist and witch scholar and he's written several books. A really good book of his is *A Deed Without a Name* through Moon Books. I would recommend people read Starhawk. Starhawk is an amazing ecofeminist witch, historian, and permaculturalist. Her first book came out in 1979 called *The Spiral Dance* and it really, really changed the face of modern witchcraft in the West. So, her book, *The Spiral Dance*, read it, it's poetry, it's gorgeous, it's beautiful. There's a 10th and 20th-anniversary edition and they have notes in the back which, they're really priceless, especially the 20th-anniversary notes, the 1999 book, it's brilliant. Also... Oh god, now I'm blanking. There are so many books, I'm looking at my shelf.

There are literally so many books, I can't, like... Courtney Weber is an amazing author, Ian Chambers is an amazing British author. Mhara Starling is an amazing, her book *The Welsh Witch*. And also, follow Mhara's—I'm not on TikTok but I've watched her TikToks through Instagram. Mhara Starling has quite a big TikTok following and she's just so, like, fun and rambunctious and theatrical and I just love her. She's a Welsh witch who speaks Welsh and she's so proud of being Welsh and her witchery and I love her. She's great.

Alie: Witch talk, right?

Fio: Yes, apparently that's a thing.

Alie: Oh my gosh. This has been such a joy. I can't tell you how thankful I am that you popped on and talked to me. I know it's early where you're at and you haven't even gotten breakfast yet. [*both laugh*] So, thank you for starting the day with me launching a thousand questions at you.

Fio: Thank you, it's been so much fun.

So, ask willing people, well-meaning, witchy questions because that's how we learn about each other. And thank you so much to Fio for being on twice. Links to their latest book *The Witch Belongs to the World: A Spell of Becoming*, as well as their social media and website are linked in the show notes as well as the charity of choice this week.

We are @Ologies on Instagram and Twitter. *Smologies* are shorter, kid-friendly versions of classic episodes and those are linked in the show notes as well. Thank you, Zeke Rodrigues Thomas and

Mercedes Maitland, for editing those. Thank you, Erin Talbert, for adminning the *Ologies* podcast Facebook group. Thank you to Emily White of The Wordary who makes our professional transcripts. Noel Dilworth is our scheduling producer, Susan Hale is our managing director, and Kelly R. Dwyer makes the website. And our lead editor with the magic touch is Mercedes Maitland of Maitland Audio. Nick Thorburn did the theme music.

And if you stick around until the very, very end, I tell you a secret and this week it's that I have certain things that if I die, I really don't want anyone to find and I think about them, maybe a couple of times a week. Old journals, just embarrassing writing. I feel like I need to put them all in a box that's like, "If I die, burn." And I know that I also still need to get my will in place, and this is not an invitation to come and kill me but I do think hey, what does it take to do a little Swedish death cleaning and get those things in order that's just like, "If you find this and I am a pile of dust and bones, just throw this in the ocean will ya?" I really don't want anyone's last memory of me to be what I thought of the school play in 7th grade. Okay, berbye.

Transcribed by Aveline Malek at TheWordary.com

Links to things we discussed:

[Netflix's Witchcraft & the Dark Arts genre landing page](#)

[Cultural Appropriation in Contemporary Neopaganism and Witchcraft](#)

[Irish-American Witchcraft: Acceptability Politics and Being a Goth Witch](#)

[So what's so offensive about green faced witches?](#)

[A Bewitching History: Why Witches Ride Broomsticks](#)

[Documentary: The Burning Times \(1990\) an in-depth look at the witch hunts that swept Europe](#)

[Why do we still use the image of witches created by the inquisitors?](#)

[Why Do Witches Wear Pointy Hats? The History Behind the Costume](#)

[The primacy of the image in Northern European art, 1400-1700 : essays in honor of Larry Silver](#)

[Mercury crater named for Audre Lorde](#)

[Audre Lorde "A Woman Speaks" - Reading at Amerika Haus Berlin 1984](#)

[I Tried to Trip Using Only My Breath](#)

[Voluntary hyperventilation in the treatment of panic disorder—functions of hyperventilation, their implications for breathing training, and recommendations for standardization](#)

[The Toxic Reason Margaret Hamilton Couldn't Eat While on the Set of 'The Wizard of Oz'](#)

[The Wizard of Oz: a horror show in the making](#)

[Copernicus, Galileo, and the Church: Science in a Religious World](#)

[Persecution of Noted Physicians and Medical Scientists](#)

[Science, Medicine and Witchcraft](#)

[The science of magic and the magic of science](#)

[Telecommunications And The Occult](#)

[Human ectoparasites and the spread of plague in Europe during the Second Pandemic](#)

[Creepy and nightmarish vintage Halloween photos from the 1900s to 1950s](#)

[The History Of Jack-O'-Lanterns + Make Your Own Dippy Jack-O'-Lantern](#)

[Galileo to Turing: The Historical Persecution of Scientists](#)

[The Wiccan “Great Rite”— Hieros Gamos in the Modern West](#)

[Stanislav Grof](#)

[Respiratory Alkalosis](#)

[pH of soul: how does acid-base balance affect our cognition?](#)

[Hypocapnia](#)

[Hyperventilation Syndrome Clinical Presentation](#)

[Holotropic Breathwork: the potential role of a prolonged, voluntary hyperventilation procedure as an adjunct to psychotherapy](#)

[Chronic hyperventilation syndrome associated with syncope and coronary vasospasm](#)

[Voluntary hyperventilation in the treatment of panic disorder—functions of hyperventilation, their implications for breathing training, and recommendations for standardization](#)

[Top-Down and Bottom-Up Mechanisms in Mind-Body Medicine: Development of an Integrative Framework for Psychophysiological Research](#)

[Witchcraft or Mycotoxin? The Salem Witch Trials.](#)

[A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials](#)

[The History of Plague – Part 1. The Three Great Pandemics](#)

[Creepy Vintage Halloween Photos](#)

[The Wiccan “Great Rite”—Hieros Gamos in the Modern West](#)