

Protocols for Magic

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Abstract

The following thesis aims to outline and discuss three critical points of concern within the Western contemporary practice of Magic. Namely, the pervasive focus on Magic as being “in opposition” to Science, the environmental impact of Magic as a Capitalist commodity, and, the political implications and pitfalls of contemporary Magic movements and beliefs. These three subject matters represent, what I believe to be, the major obstacles to a positive development of sustainable, inclusive and progressive Magic practices within the Western cultural sphere.

Building on the outline of these concerns, the thesis analyses how these topics are impacting contemporary beliefs and practices, and how these topics connect to wider societal contexts. In addition, each chapter aims to suggest one, or several, concepts and approaches to Magic — Derived from existing movements, or sub-currents, within Western Esoteric and Occult culture — That seek to address, and/or construct alternative modes-of-practice to the problems laid-out. Each chapter concludes with a reflection on how the discussions and insights produced have informed and were incorporated in my material research project.

The material project, *Protocols for Magic*, is an art-based inquiry into the practice of Magic. It seeks to construct accessible frameworks and resources for the practice of Magic through creative expression and craft-based methodologies. Its primary aim is to facilitate constructive, yet critical, dialogue on the concept and perception Magic.

Research question

In what ways can alternative currents and subcultures form practices of resistance against the pervasiveness of fascist, neo-colonial, and extractive ideologies within Western Magic culture? — An art-based inquiry towards more sustainable, progressive and ethically-grounded Magic practices.

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Introduction

★ *How would you define Magic?* ★

Maybe as an invisible power able to overcome all natural laws and scientific reason? Maybe the use of rare magical artefacts that connect to supernatural planes? Or maybe, it is secret arcane knowledge that allows you to see the truth of the world?

Or maybe, it is all just silly superstition..

According to professor Wouter J. Hanegraaf (2016), there is no conclusive academic consensus on what Magic is and how to define it. However, he argues that most common definitions tend to fall into one of three categories. The first is what Hanegraaf (2016) refers to as the "intellectualist" approach, which defines Magic as a form of primitive proto-religious belief, that lacks the depth of Religion, and all the rational logic of Science. The second "functionalist" approach largely perceives both religious and magical beliefs as equally irrational, but distinguishes Magic from Religion through its perceived lack of organised social infrastructures. And lastly, the third approach defines Magic as a world-view based in "participation", and as a counterpart to the more scientific world-view of "instrumental causality". (Hanegraaf, 2016) All three of these approaches Hanegraaf (2016) correlates with the so-called "magic-religion-science" triad; An academic framework that developed over the past few centuries, and that has inextricably linked our conception to Magic to that of Religion and Science. (Hanegraaf, 2016)

In the following chapter, I will outline how our conception of Magic, as existing in opposition to Science; *Our* scientific world-view; is deeply intertwined with our overall concept of Western modernity and scientific rationality. And how this narrative framing has perpetuated neo-colonial ideology and the idea of the "primitive other". I will also discuss the third approach of defining Magic through the idea of "participation", or more commonly

referred to as *Participatory Consciousness*. A concept that is gaining ground in the academic study of Anthropology and Religion, as well as, contemporary practices of Magic.

As Hanegraaf (2016) mentions, Magic tends to resist singular definitions. As a human concept it exists in *flux*; Our relationship to it ever-changing, and, inherently experimental. In the view of archaeologist Chris Gosden (2020), the *idea* of Magic continues to persist throughout human history due to its capability to constantly renew itself. And, because as a practice, that is to "do" Magic, it can take on an infinite amount of forms, depending on time, place and context. (Gosden, 2020)

However, as we will see in chapter two, the survival of Magic into our modern modes-of-living has lend it a new and more destructive side. While Western interest in Magic has risen, popular culture has turned many of the more religious and spiritual aspects of Magic into an aesthetic eager to be consumed by the masses. (Castle, 2025) In *The Commodification of Wicca: Capitalism's Impact on Spiritual Authenticity* (2025), using the example of Wicca, Ellie Castle describes how: "A belief system rooted in reverence for the Earth is now complicit in practices that degrade it." In the second chapter, I will discuss how a supposed "Magic revival" of the past two decades, has led many previously "niche" belief systems and Magic★¹ sub-cultures to become the object of mass-consumption and cultural dilution. With drastic but often disregarded social and environmental impacts. (Castle, 2025) And I will analyse how modern practitioners are seeking more sustainable and environmentally-conscious practices through DIY-methodologies.

Yet, consumerism and environmental concerns aren't the only pressing political en-

¹When using the terms "Magic★" and "magic-adjacent★" with the asterisk, I am referring to an extended understanding of Magic, to include associated topics like Esotericism, Occultism, Witchcraft, Wicca, Paganism, New Age, and etc.

tanglements of contemporary Magic. As Jamie Sutcliffe writes in his introduction to *MAGIC* (2021), it is Magic’s apparent malleability, to fit any and all narratives, that has made it popular within fascist ideologies just as often as it has progressive ones. As such, in the third and last chapter, I will outline the ways Western Esoteric and Occult movements are inadvertently recreating supremacist neo-colonial dynamics through cultural erasure and extraction. (Hale, 2019a; Zwissler, 2025) And, detail how compatibilities between Western Occult and Pagan beliefs, and the ideology of the Alt Right are creating fascist pipelines based on shared political agendas. (Hale, 2019b) And lastly, I will speculate on how the concepts of *Anarcho-Occultism* and *Magic Resistance* offer frameworks for Magic practices that aim to counter these concerns.

With all these points in mind, I would like to acknowledge that each of these subjects are extremely complex and contain nuances that I couldn’t possibly cover all within this thesis. However, I hope to provide sufficient insight on each concern to illustrate why I believe these topics are relevant to my overall goal of forming more progressive and sustainable Magic practices.

1. Do you believe..?

To begin this chapter, I give a brief introduction to how the dominant academic view of Magic developed. And, how Magic’s strict separation from Religion and Science has influenced Western contemporary Magic, Occult and Esoteric culture. Then, I look at the ways in which emergent sub-currents are, once again, reconstructing their magical practices through the lens of Science and Psychology by adopting terms such as *Secular Witchcraft* and *Sceptical Occultism*. And, how the concept of *Participatory Consciousness* is gradually (re)gaining ground in the academic, as well as my own, approach to Magic.

Beginning with the relationship between

Magic and Religion, it is important to understand that, for most of human history, the line separating the two was blurred. As Gosden explains in *The History of Magic* (2020), what we have come to identify as “Magic” is one of humanities longest enduring “world views” (meaning belief systems), dating back to at least 40,000 years ago. Whereas, what we consider to be *formal* or *organized* Religion only emerged alongside humanity’s first civilizations (e.g. Mesopotamia, 4500 BCE). Within these ancient societies, and the many that followed, Magic formed an integral part of religious belief, and societal and cultural customs at large. (Gosden, 2020)

A more definite distinction between Magic and Religion, within the Western canon, truly emerged during Medieval Europe’s mass conversion to Christianity (c. 300–1050). Through Christian cultural and ideological expansion, the idea of Magic became largely associated with pagan and anti-Christian practices, that ought to be eradicated. The cultural repression and legal pursuit against supposed Magic practitioners further increased during the Reformation period (c. 1517–1648), in which Protestant Christian theology reframed the belief and supposed practice of Magic as a sign of demonic delusion and improper religiosity. A period of history that is most often epitomised by the European witch trials (c. 1450–1750). Following the Reformation came the Enlightenment period (ca. 1685–1815) and another pivotal shift in Western attitudes towards Magic. Forming the foundations of the Western academic framework of Magic today. (Middleton et al., 2026)

As explained by Randall Styers in *Magic and Social Control* (2004), during the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment period, the Reformation’s narrative-framing of Magic as an acute threat to social (and religious) order was transposed to the new ideological frameworks of its era. The concept of Magic came to be increasingly defined through the lens of science and psychology. “Magic” became synonymous with superstition, disordered thinking and an “in-

ferior capacity” for logical reasoning. (Styers, 2004)

At the same time, the Christian religion, in particular Protestantism, became the applied comparative norm for judging the “respectability” of other religious beliefs and customs. In other words: Any form of *deemed* magical belief was categorically redefined as *the* sign of “primitive” cultures, and, “archaic” pre-religious belief systems; Often simply used to mean non-Christian, and, non-Western. As such, Magic became the antithesis of the “rational” Western scientific world-view. And hence, now wielded as the ideological enemy of modernity, this new definition of Magic became an important narrative tool for the advancement of Western colonial and political interests. (Styers, 2004)

However, despite the many centuries-spanning efforts to erase it, Magic never did disappear from the Western cultural landscape. To the contrary! The adverse reframing of Magic in opposition to Science may have been a key contributor to what Pádraic E. Moore, in his essay *Art and Magick in the 21st Century; Reflections of a Neophyte* (2019), calls “the magical renaissance of the late 19th century”. This *turn-of-the-century* period saw the formation of copious new esoteric and occult movements. Many of which came to adopt borrowed scientific terms and language to (re)construct new systems of belief and magical practices. Partly in a critical response to the rigid scientific doctrines of their time, but most notably, as a result of newly emerging theories in the field of Psychology. (Moore, 2025; Bever and Styers, 2017) Which Moore (2019) describes as “the psychologisation of magick”. With one notable influence being, Carl Jung’s work on the *Phenomenology of the Self, Psychology and Alchemy* and Symbolism. To name a few. As described by occultist and writer Joseph Mounts (2025), Jung’s influence runs deeply within contemporary Western occult philosophy. Among others, his ideas on archetypes, the collective unconscious, and synchronicity have remained ever-present in modern Esoteric and Occult frames-of-thought.

(Mounts, 2025)

Many of the most influential occult and esoteric movements of the late 19th and early 20th century still exist today. (Or, evolved and contributed to similar or adjacent off-shoots.) Altogether, they kept the Western cultural interest in Magic alive, and significantly influenced the later “Magic Revival” of the 1950’s and 60’s; A time during which a variety of new religious movements established themselves in Europe and North-America. Most notably, Wicca, Neo-Paganism and modern Satanism, as well as, the West’s “New Age” spiritual movement. (White, 2026)

But why is *all this* relevant?

Throughout this research project, questions regarding the “rationality” and “scientific legitimacy” of Magic kept coming-up, in a number of ways. Albeit that artistic studies leave room to explore more subjective topics, wanting to explore Magic in relation to practice, rather than theory or metaphor, created reoccurring tension in discussions with tutors, peers and others. This lead to an ongoing urge to formulate “my own” exact definition of Magic and a constant need to clarify; I do believe in the scientific worldview! In search of a definition that I could apply to my practice, and that could satisfy my and my surroundings rational academic perspective, I first came to truly learn of the historic context that created our academic urge to pit Magic against reason. This put my own preconception into much-needed perspective. And maybe it will do that to *you* too.

It was also during that search that I stumbled upon the terms “Secular” and “Sceptical” Witchcraft; Compiled from various sources, my understanding of the terms is as follows:

Secular Witchcraft is a form of witchcraft (practice) that is non-religious and non-dogmatic, and largely excludes any sort of belief in the supernatural or a higher power. Secular Witchcraft is open to people of any religious faith, as it acts more as a conceptual framework to the practice of Magic, rather than a set of rules. (Burgess, 2022; Wrekk; Em)

Sceptical Witchcraft, similarly, focuses on applying a rational and science-based approach to the practice of Magic and Witchcraft. And, is “sceptical” to any form of superstition or supernatural definition of Magic. Sceptical Witchcraft is mostly aimed at an atheistic, agnostic or “sceptic” practitioner. (SASSWitches; Obscure Clouds, 2019; Em)

I have sometimes come across both terms used interchangeably, or in tandem. I believe that there probably is a significant overlap of people who use and identify with these two terms. — Since both emphasise the practice of Magic through the lens of modern Psychology, and a scientific world-view. From my own personal observation, and statements read online, these communities predominantly exist as an “online phenomenon”, and are not much represented in the “mainstream” Witchcraft-culture, yet.

At a first glance, a so-called “secularised” or “sceptical” approach to Magic sounds compelling.

Especially when applied to the material research! Where, focussing on exploring and experimenting with magical concepts through analogy and creative expression; Rather than resting on a set belief or definition of Magic; Can open the project up to a wider audience and allow a more diverse range of experiences and interpretations.

However, when it comes to formulating a concrete understanding of Magic, they remain quite vague. An aspect that may be inherent to the concepts themselves, but for the objective of my project, seem insufficiently precise. Yet, although the Secular/Sceptic communities, as a whole, do not adhere to one conception of Magic in particular, one concept reappeared frequently: That of “Participatory Consciousness”.

Participatory Consciousness, also sometimes referred to as the *Participatory theory* or *theory of participation*, is a term that developed in the field of Anthropology during the first half of the 20th century. (Hanegraaf, 2003) As

described by psychiatrist and anthropologist Simon Dein (2025), *Participatory Consciousness* posits consciousness as existing in two modes; The “world-causal”, which assumes a perception of reality based in analytical, logical and scientific reasoning. And, the “participatory” approach, which is described as a more holistic and interconnected view of reality. (Dein, 2025, p.2) In his own terms, a participatory mode of consciousness “is intrinsic, analogical” and “it includes all the senses and emotions and involves a worldview in which the boundaries between the subject and object and between the individual and the external world are less distinct.” (Dein, 2025, p.1) In practice, participatory consciousness can take the form of meditation, rituals, sensory play or other methods designed to heighten ones engagement with the world. (Dein, 2025)

Although the Western academic sphere, and society more generally, has put much effort into defining itself through *the former*; And has continuously employed *the latter* as a justification, a rationalisation, for the social and cultural “othering” of peoples marginal to Western “modernity”. (Hanegraaf, 2016) — Dein (2025) explains that these two “modes of perception” should not be viewed as opposites to each other, but rather, as co-existing in intersecting ways, within all cultures, and across history, including the West. (Dein, 2025)

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Within my own project, I have incorporated a similar understanding of Magic to that of Participatory Consciousness by breaking down the principles of “doing” Magic into the expression

of intent and symbolic transformation.

In the workshops and exercises I conducted, I encouraged the participants to explore a variety of simplified magical concepts (e.g., spell-writing, symbols, talismans, etc.) through creative experimentation, intuitive association and personal interpretation. Often incorporating collaborative elements as a way to interrogate the participants individual and collective perceptions and preconceptions. And, to encourage dialogue and the exchange of differing opinions in regards to Magic and beyond.

To summarise; Our modern conception of Magic is inextricably linked to our idea of Western modernity, rationality and how we perceive Magic’s relation to Science and Religion. The need to perceive Magic through a scientific world-view is also a sentiment shared by some Magic and Witchcraft practitioners. Which is why concepts such as *Participatory Consciousness* are increasingly popular within contemporary Magic beliefs.

To conclude; What Participatory Consciousness offers to practitioners, who similarly to myself, are looking for ways to “reconcile” their practice of Magic with Science, and concurrently, the reason why it presents a fitting and relevant concept within this research; Is threefold.

First, a participatory theory of Magic can mitigate the emphasis put on empirical truth, and effectively co-exist with a scientific world-view. Through emphasising an experiential, analogical perception of reality, the focus on quantifiable metrics and empirical truths is lessened.

Participatory theories of Magic are not just popular in secular/sceptical circles, but has become widely incorporated across Western occult and esoteric movements. (Dein, 2025) Which speaks to the aforementioned “psychologisation of Magic”, also put forth by Hanegraaf (2003), wherein our general understanding of Magic is increasingly turned “inward”, into the realms of individual subjectivity. “Doing Magic” be-



Figure 1: *Protocol for Collective Correspondences*: The participants collectively assigned colours to a range of terms and concepts. Then used the colour map to craft talismans.

comes about enacting change through internal, psychological, processes, as opposed to, creating a (im)material outward effect. (Hanegraaf, 2003; Dein, 2025)

Second, the concept of Participatory Consciousness itself is gaining scientific consensus. According to Dein (2005), a growing amount of scholars are starting to adopt a participatory framework within their research. In particular in the fields of Anthropology and Religion, participatory theories are changing the ways we are discussing the persistence of Magic in our post-secular age, and the rise of new religious and spiritual movements, like Wicca, Neo-Paganism and New-Age Spirituality. Dein (2025) describes this as a general shift in the epistemological research of Magic towards a more experiential understanding, compared to a continued focus on rational thinking.

And third, in light of the historic context outlined above, the theory of *Participatory Consciousness* can act as a useful tool to challenge our common Western associations held towards

Magic. Recent studies are showing that participatory oriented world-views have persistently survived, in-and-outside of the Western sphere, throughout, and in spite of, global modernisation and Western ideological expansion. (Dein, 2025) Effectively disrupting and eroding the notion of a “purely rational” and “logically superior” Western modernity.

2. Buy into it!

In this second chapter, I outline how the continued survival of Magic within Western culture has evolved into what is being called a 21st century “Magic revival”. Then, I present how modern practitioners are perceiving and being impacted by this notable shift in attitude towards Western Esoteric and Occult culture. I explore how the commodification of Magic and Witchcraft-inspired aesthetics has contributed to the exploitation and so-called consumerist dilution of religious and spiritual movements. Finally, I discuss the ways in which modern Witches are incorporating DIY-methodology and anti-consumerist attitudes in their practices, as a means to address rising concerns regarding sustainability and the environmental impact of overconsumption.

The previous chapter described the West’s centuries-spanning adversity towards Magic. First, from the side of Religion, then, from Science. Nonetheless, Magic has survived into our Western *modernity*, and remains alive and well today! Many academics, including Hanegraaf (2016), Dein (2025) and Gosden (2021), are arguing that it is because, and not in spite of, Magic’s tumultuous relationship with *modernity*, that contemporary beliefs and practices of Magic are continuing to evolve and diversify, faster than ever before. (Which I will address again in chapter three.)

For example, studies of the past two decades are reporting that more and more people, across Europe and North-America, are identifying themselves as Wiccans, Neo-Pagans and/or practitioners of New Age spirituality. (Romero,

2024; Zwissler, 2026; Gomes, 2011) Or, have started adopting and expressing an overall more spiritual world-view than was common in past generations. (Evan et al., 2024) Although, anthropologist researcher Laurel Zwissler (2026) explains that the fragmentary nature and lack of institutional organisation inherent in these modern religions (especially in Paganism and New Age), can make it difficult to obtain exact numbers (e.g. through census studies). (Zwissler, 2026)

This represents a noticeable shift in popularity of magic-adjacent★ ideas in recent decades. That is often described as a “revival”, or, a “revived” interest in traditions and beliefs of the past. (Castle, 2025; Charlesworth, 2022) This, putting religion aside, has become most notable through popular culture, especially online.

As Ellie Castle explains, in *The Commodification of Wicca: Capitalism’s Impact on Spiritual Authenticity* (2025), the arrival of the internet, especially social media and online platforms, significantly contributed to this surge in interest in Magic, Witchcraft, and other esoteric and spiritual movements, over the past two decades. Using the example of Wicca, Castle (2025) explains that, for the first time, new online spaces enabled practitioners of all kinds to more easily connect with others. And, share their beliefs and practices with the world. Because of the internet, ‘Witchcraft’ and ‘Wicca’ became searchable terms. And as a result, modern Witchcraft practices became more accessible, and more popular, than ever before. Which in turn, inspired a pop cultural obsession for anything “witchy”, magical and occult; Expressed in a wave of movies, series and games featuring loosely Wicca-inspired characters and fashion. (Castle, 2025)

This cultural shift, the “mainstreamification” of Magic, has had a significant impact on the communities and practices it is most often associated with. One such notable impact has been the aestheticization and concurrent commodification of everything Magic-related. Castle (2025) believes that, following the introduction of modern Witchcraft into mainstream

culture through the internet, it is especially sites such as *Instagram* and *Tumblr*, and later, *TikTok*, that have added a more “pronounced visual element” to online Witchcraft content. (Castle, 2025) This gradually shifted the public’s image of Magic and Witchcraft from having spiritual and religious significance, to being foremost perceived as an aesthetic; Now far-removed from its original meaning, consumable and mass marketable! (Castle, 2025)

To give some concrete examples; author of the blog *wolfpeach.com* (2024) describes how today’s Neo-Pagan communities (including Wicca and modern Witchcraft) encourage overconsumption. In part, as a result of the aesthetisation of “witchy” subcultures. But mostly, because we all live in “a golden age of overconsumption” (meaning late-stage Capitalism) ruled by online algorithms engineered to constantly serve us hyper-personalised advertisements with the sole purpose of enticing us to “buy into” superfluous trends and symbolic material goods. (Wolfpeach, 2024) A widespread issue that Witches and Pagans, who tend to self-identify as nature-worshipping environmentalist, are not immune to either. Which Wolfpeach (2024) describes as a somewhat contradictory aspect of modern Pagan culture, with drastic environmental consequences. (wolfpeach, 2024) In the context of these subcultures, mass-consumable goods often come in the shape of tools, ingredients and accessories to use in one’s practice and rituals, or simply as a means to adopt a certain aesthetic, as a visual marker of religious/spiritual identity. A lot of these items, like crystals, herbs, statues, clothes, etc, are mass-produced, unethically sourced or of “questionable origin”, and often made of unsustainable and poor quality materials. All sold by both big sites like Aliexpress and Etsy, as well as, small Pagan-owned businesses. (Wolfpeach, 2024)

Although at first glance, the abundance of products targeted to “witchy” consumers may feel like cultural representation, Wolfpeach (2024) urges the larger pagan community to be

more critical when choosing what to include and purchase for their craft. (Wolfpeach, 2024) And I wholeheartedly agree!

Being enticed to purchase a lot of “witchy” goods is something that I personally experienced as a young teenager (over a decade ago), when I first started consuming a lot of Witchcraft content, online. Being completely new to and uninformed about the belief-side of these movements, the growing amount of businesses offering affordable Witchcraft-themed items, felt like an accessible entry-way into these subcultures, and a substitution to actually engaging with these belief systems. I saw this consumerist approach to Witchcraft frequently being reinforced by the Wiccan and Pagan influencers I watched, who actively promoted these items through “witchy” themed hauls, or, as direct brand deals with these businesses.

Addressing this “consumerist dilution of spirituality”, as Castle (2025) calls it, is one of the pressing issues I see in modern Magic and Witchcraft culture that I would like to address in this project.

And throughout my research, I have come across many practitioners who share this concern and are seeking ways to “solve” these issues within their own practices.

One of these methods I have come across frequently is that of “DIY-Magic”, or “DIY-Witchcraft”.

DIY-Magic, or “Do-It-Yourself Magic”, is an approach to practicing Magic that prioritises the use of tools and materials that one already owns, are locally sourced and/or self-made. It seeks to reduce overconsumption, and aims to avoid buying ready-made things as much as possible. DIY-Magic encourages practitioners to grow or forage herbs, craft and repair ones own tools, and overall, incorporate more sustainable and creative methods into their practice.

(Combined from several sources: Wrekk; rebelsister, 2024; Castle, 2025)

DIY-culture is a subculture in itself, and an

integral part to many other countercultures. In past years, it has regained popularity in a variety of cultural and artistic sectors, as shared environmental concerns continue to escalate. A DIY-like approach, also sometimes called *Bricolage*, is considered common in Magic, Witchcraft, Esoteric and Occult culture in general. (Bellisario, 2025; Moore, 2019) However, I think the fact that an increasing amount of practitioners are explicitly turning to and incorporating DIY-methods demonstrates how normalised consumerist practices have become. And how many people are becoming aware of this problem and would like to change it. Although, I also think it is very important to not think of DIY in solutionist terms or frame environmental concerns as a matter of individual responsibility. But more so, see it as a methodology that encourages critical discourse on overconsumption and Capitalist modes-of-production, and supports a more pro-active, ecological and sustainable approach to life more generally.

Ideas and discourse on how to implement and experiment with DIY-Magic and Witchcraft are abundant online, across all types of platforms. For example, the site Echo Zines/echopublishing (fn) specialises in sharing and providing links to a variety of zines that bridge the topics of DIY, feminism, witchcraft and punk culture. The Tumblr-blog DIYWitchery.com(fn), run by Alex Wrekk, is an expansive collection of resources on DIY-practices, secular witchcraft, activism and more, both written by Wrekk themselves, or gathered from across Tumblr’s witchcraft community. And when searching for DIY-Witchcraft or similar terms on other popular platforms (i.e. *TikTok*, *Instagram* or *Pinterest*), a lot more content can be found that promote sustainability, artistic crafts and anti-consumerist behaviours.

To quote Castle (2025) once more; “Where commerce prioritises disconnection and ease, the craft insists on rhythm, labour, and presence. Growing herbs, watching the moon, learning your local seasons; these are not instant acts. They are rituals of deep noticing that cannot



Figure 2: *Little Workbook for DIY-Magic*: Each protocol follows one “type” of Magic, including protection magic in the form of salt-dough talismans, banishing magic in the form of stickers, spell-work through home-made seed paper and energy magic with stones or found objects.

be scaled or rushed.”

Within my own material research, I made an effort to only incorporate DIY-methods as much as possible, or highlight the importance of artistic crafts, as the primary mode the project explored Magic through.

Both in workshop settings, where participants were tasked to work with found objects, paper, clay or collage, and in my personal practice research, where I experimented with recycled objects, paper-making, and accessible, low-cost materials such as salt-dough.

Some of that material research was included in a small zine, the *Little Workbook on DIY-Magic*. It includes four “Protocols for Magic” that offer simple and creative methods to practice Magic through a craft or DIY-project.

As this project progresses, I would like to further explore DIY-methods in combination with self-publishing practices. While I’m not entirely sure of the details, I think that involving participants or fellow collaborators into the process of creating a DIY-zine on Magic, or collective publication of some sort, for example, could be a relevant angle to take. Much of the project so far has been

centred on providing or presenting my work to an audience, but I believe that it could be enriching to the project’s aim to shift towards a more collaborative approach. And find ways to combine DIY-methodology and active knowledge-sharing with the practice of Magic as the overarching topic.

To summarize the main points of this chapter; Magic and Witchcraft-related beliefs and practices have become increasingly normalised and destigmatized in Western culture. However, the so-called “mainstreamification” and “aesthetisation” of Magic has lead to many parts of modern practices and belief systems to be absorbed and exploited by our modern consumerist culture and Capitalist modes-of-living. Through what Ellie Castle (2025) calls the “consumerist dilution of spiritual practices”, practitioners and non-practitioners alike are contributing to the environmental degradation and socio-economic impacts caused by Capitalist overconsumption. While this



Figure 3: All the materials needed to make seed-paper at home: Scrap paper, water, a blender/mixer, fine grain strainer, kitchen towels, rolling pin and seeds

issue is very complex and nuanced, and I had to leave out a lot of intersecting problems for brevity’s sake, a general shift in attitude can be observed in modern practitioners. Through the example of DIY-Magic, contemporary Witches, and Magic★ practitioners more generally, are seeking to form more sustainable and ecologically-minded practices. And a growing amount of practitioners of modern Witchcraft, Wicca and other movements, are using their online platforms to actively share their concerns and offer alternative modes-of-practice to address them.

The problems outlined above have strongly impacted the methodology of my project and my own personal position on modern Magic practices. While DIY-Magic cannot possibly solve the greater systemic problems on its own, by incorporating an explicit anti-consumerist attitude throughout my work, I hope to positively contribute to the ongoing discussions regarding the sustainability and environmental impact of Western Magic★ culture.

3. But be aware..!

In this final chapter, I return to analyse the idea of Magic’s survival and its connection to Western ideology in more detail. I discuss how movements like Wicca, Paganism and New Age are perpetuating neo-colonial attitudes. And how environmentalist concerns, as the ones discussed in chapter two, are being used to entice Western Pagans and Occultists to join a new radical right. And finally, I look at Anarcho-Occultism and Magic Resistance as potential tools to counter these concerns.

To begin with, I would like to come back to the idea of a 21st century “Magic revival” mentioned in the previous chapter, and discuss important points made by academics critical towards this concept.

For example, anthropologist, writer and specialist in occult history, Amy Hale (2019a) argues that simply using terms such as “revival”

creates a potentially damaging misrepresentation of the actual history of Western Magic. She explains that a general interest in occultism, esotericism or witchcraft-like practices, never waned within Western populations; Regardless of whether academics, the media, or pop culture, payed it any mind. Hale (2019a) also expresses critique towards people often characterising Wicca or Neo-Paganism as the only vanguards of modern Magic practices making it into the 21st century; Pointing out that things such as tarot, astrology, or other forms of divination, have long, and continuously, been practiced alongside traditional religions. But that they are often overlooked, for the simple fact that many people do not always perceive such practices in religious terms, or as being esoteric or occult in nature. Despite their new-found associations with modern Witchcraft and “revived” Magic practices. (Hale, 2019a) In other words, things we frequently categorise as “Magic” today, in actuality, are often a broad range of disconnected traditions, practices, and ideas. As Hanegraaf (2016) puts it, our concept of Magic (and adjunctly, Esotericism and Occultism) has become a sort of “wastebasket” for all types of associated ideas and practices that do not neatly fit the category of religious tradition, but still in some ways include aspects of spirituality, superstition or supernatural belief. (Hanegraaf, 2016) I think this is a very important point to keep in mind, in regards to our overall definition of Magic so far. (And the reason I have included the asterisks to signal when I use “Magic” as an umbrella term, i.e. “magic-adjacent”) Which brings me to Hale’s (2019a) main point: The idea of a supposed “revival” of Magic potentially hides a very white-centric and Westernized view on the magical practices that did survive into modern era Europe and North-America. This reflects in the way most media outlets, reporting on a supposed revival of Magic, only feature white people, or specifically include examples of white women engaging with or expressing interest in Magic. Hale (2019a) argues that this often ignores the ethnic, racial and cultural minorities, within Europe and

North-America, who have continued to practice magic-adjacent traditions, and contributed to Magic’s survival in their own right, despite forced Western hegemonisation. A tendency that in turn, has continued to devalue and erase the impact and cultural contributions of marginalised communities to Western cultural production. (Hale, 2019a)

This is one of the reasons I tend to disagree with ideas such as Charlesworth’s (2022), who, in the article *The Return of Magic in Art*, frames today’s “magical revival” as something of an act of solidarity with marginalized indigenous cultures and beliefs, and, as a conscious critique towards Western politics and “modern” modes-of-living. While I agree that this may be true to a certain extend, or should be the norm, I also think it is a bit of a romanticised interpretation of a phenomenon that is shrouded in, what Laurel Zwissler (2026) refers to as, an “inherited colonial gaze”.

In *New Age, Wicca, and Paganism* (2026), Zwissler describes how these three movements, which tend to draw a majority white and middle-class audience, often inadvertently recreate Western colonial dynamics and extractive attitudes when constructing their beliefs and practices. A phenomenon that she attributes to the fact that, due to the long history of cultural repression of pagan and non-Christian traditions, across the Western colonial world, a lot of contemporary neo-pagan and spiritual movements rely on reconstructed and/or “borrowed” cultural practices. Often either basing themselves on archaeological records, religious and anthropological studies, or existing traditions from cultures around the world. (Zwissler, 2026) The mix-and-matching of cultural practices and religious beliefs is something that can be observed in New Age spirituality in particular. Characterised as a combination of a wide range of beliefs, often freely taken from non-Western cultures, the New Age movement is frequently criticised for its penchant for cultural appropriation. (Zwissler, 2026) Although Pagans and Wiccans are guilty of it, too. (Zwissler, 2026;

Gottlieb, 2017)

To name just four widespread examples of cultural appropriation, common in the aforementioned movements and all of Western esoteric and occult culture, are the use of white sage and palo santo, as well as, the idea of dreamcatchers and spirit animals. All four examples stem from different indigenous North and South-American cultures that are considered “closed cultural practices”. In short, they should not be practised by “outsiders” or the uninitiated. Meaning that extracting and simply adopting these practices, removing them from their original cultural context, constitutes cultural appropriation and is highly offensive to the cultures they stem from. (Gottlieb, 2017) In addition, the white sage (*Salvia apiana*) that is sold across the globe as a spiritual good, is a wild plant that can only be found along the coast of Southern California and Baja California, Mexico. And its existence is being threatened by over-extraction, urbanisation and illegal poaching. The use and popularity of white sage in Western culture is actively impacting the spiritual and cultural practices of the indigenous populations that are fighting to preserve it. (Ramirez and Small, 2020) One more ironic example of how Western Magic★ claims to revere nature and ancient traditions while doing the opposite.

The few examples I listed represent a general trend in which Western practitioners often view other non-Western cultures as an available resource ready to be mined for personal gratification and profit. (Zwissler, 2026) And instances of cultural appropriation fittingly illustrate the power imbalances that are actively upheld by Western Esoteric and Occult culture — An entire economy build on overconsumption and the Capitalist exploitation of stolen beliefs, practices and traditions of non-Western cultures. (Gottlieb, 2017)

However, the rampant consumerist and neo-colonial attitudes within Western Magic★ currents are just one side of the coin of how these contemporary movements are re-enforcing racist and white-supremacist ideology. The other side

of the coin is the pervasiveness of right-wing and fascist ideology within Western Esoteric and Occult culture.

As Amy Hale details in *The Pagan and Occult Fascist Connection and How to Fix It* (2019b), there exists an “uncomfortable compatibility” between today’s Pagan and Occult movements, and the fascist ideologies of the Alt Right. (Hale, 2019b) This compatibility in ideology, Hale (2019b) directly connects to the past decades emergence of a new radical right. Described as a sort of mass rebranding campaign spearheaded by an offshoot branch of the Western right-wing political sphere, proponents of the “New Right” (or Alternative Right) sought to distance themselves from traditional conservative and neo-liberal politics by rebranding the movement as a modern, progressive and intellectual version of right-wing ideology. (Hale, 2019b) This image change was, to a large amount, brought about by the New Right’s adoption of ideas and political agendas that are more commonly associated with progressive and/or left-leaning politics. Some relevant ones being anti-capitalism, identity politics, environmentalism and the critique of modernity. (Hale, 2019b)

And yes, all of these represent many of the concerns I have voiced so far. That is why addressing the following problems is important.

A large portion of what is considered “traditional” Western Occultism already tends to lean towards more conservative ideas and values. In her text *Occulture: Secular Spirituality* (2020), Patricia MacCormack explains that although many contemporary occultist groups often claim to be anti-religious, they still end-up reproducing the same hierarchical structures and power relations found in religious institutions. Including the stereotypical white-heterosexual-male leading figure. At the same time, their beliefs and practices often reflect, what MacCormack (2020) calls, “abstract semiocapitalistic ideologies”, i.e. a stark focus on self-oriented rituals for the pursuit of dominance, wealth and sexual control. And while publicly presenting as politically neutral

on the surface, many of these groups are full of machismic and nihilistic nationalists, who either claim no apparent political affiliation, or openly promote right-wing neofascist ideas. (MacCormack, 2020) The conservative right-wing sphere already has one foot in the door. But the politics of the New Right may align even more. “Occultism”, derived from the Latin word “occultus” meaning “hidden” or “secret”, is often considered the more academic and intellectual counterpart to Western Esotericism. (White, 2026) And this notion of “the intellectual in search of hidden knowledge” is often reflected in the way many Occultists tend to perceive themselves as part of some special underground elite in possession of the world’s covert truths. (MacCormack, 2020) All of these characteristics make the overall concept of Occultism highly compatible with the New Rights image as the more “edgy” intellectual and anti-establishment version of traditional right-wing ideology. (Hale, 2019b)

However, the New Right does not just appeal to the “edgy” Occultist, it also draws in the Pagans! By adopting talking points common in climate change activism, the New Right presents itself as anti-consumerist environmentalists and cultural protectionists. (Hale, 2019b) This aligns well with the nature worship and revivalist traditions of Western Neo-Paganism. But the alt-right’s new “green front” disguises their deeper agenda. As Hale (2019b) describes, right-wing environmentalist narratives form an “entryism” to their more radical ideologies. In other words, they act as a right-wing pipeline “paving the way for compassionate sounding anti-immigration arguments couched in the rhetoric of heritage, environmentalism, nationalism, protectionism, and small-scale local development.” (Hale, 2019)

All of that, combined with the already established predisposition for racist rhetoric and antisemitic conspiracy theories, has made Western Paganism, Occultism and Esoteric culture at large, a fertile breeding ground for fascist right-wing ideology.

But how can these pervasive tendencies be countered and addressed?

For one, Hale (2019b) incentivises everyone to learn to recognise how and when these narratives can creep in, and to get into the habit of reflecting on ones own beliefs and perceptions. Once you become familiar with these right-wing tactics you will be able to spot them all around.



Figure 4: *Ward Magic sticker* next to a sticker that reads: Fascisme is for losers!

In light of everything previously discussed, I would like to expand this approach to all of the concerns I have addressed so far!

In this project, my foremost biggest motivation has been to try and understand how the problems I perceive in modern Magic culture were created, what their connections are to each other, and how they are perpetuated. To grasp the intricacies that inform our beliefs and practices is crucial before any underlying concerns can even be addressed. Much of the information I have compiled so far is but a fraction of a complex web of intersecting factors. Therefore, all alternative approaches to Magic that I am presenting must come secondary to a fuller comprehension of the context they exist in. They are mere suggestions that should come with the un-

derstanding that a progressive practice of Magic also needs to be an informed one.

And this leads to my last and final suggestions, the concepts of *Anarcho-Occultism* and *Resistance Magic*.

Anarcho-Occultism as the name suggests, combines the main principles of Anarchist thought with the concept of Occultism. It superimposes and recontextualizes the idea of occult knowledge and practice through the lens of anti-authoritarianism, non-hierarchical organization, mutual aid, self-sufficiency, autonomy, sustainability, and social justice. Merging the concept of Magic with political ideology. (Babcock, 2013)

It is difficult to find direct mentions of *Anarcho-Occultism* outside of Jay Babcock’s (2013) article I’m referencing, who links the overall concept to the work of *The Center of Tactical Magic* (short: *CTM*). In short, Babcock (2013) describes how past Occult movements could be assigned anarchist tendencies. They frequently challenged institutional power, societal norms and the overall notion of modern materialist hierarchies. And, they sometimes promoted egalitarian, self-validating networks, and alternative forms of social organization. (Babcock, 2013) This, Babcock (2013) connects to the work of the *CTM*, an influential American organisation that merges art, political activism and magic in what they call *tactical magic* practices.

However, I would like to diverge a bit from Babcock’s or the *CTM*’s conception of Anarcho-Occultism, and instead, combine it with a second concept; *Resistance Magic*.

Resistance Magic can broadly be described as the employment of Magic and Witchcraft as a tool for political action. (Lazoroska, 2020)

In *Magic For The Resistance — Rituals & Spells for Change* (2025), Michael M. Hughes describes Magic Resistance (or alternatively, *Resistance Magic*) as a type of Magic that uses magical concepts and techniques “to resist or

impede dangerous or oppressive political and social movements”. (Hughes, 2025, p.9) He continues to explain that Magic for Resistance does not just act as a tool for self-defence or the defence of others, but directly promotes “progressive, inclusive, liberating, and empowering political, environmental, economic and social causes” (Hughes, 2025, p.9) However, Hughes (2025) does not explicitly assign supernatural power to Magic, but defines his view of Magic in similar terms to that of Participatory Consciousness. As such, Resistance Magic finds its effectiveness through engaging with the self and the world around you. And Hughes (2025) is critical towards the idea of viewing Magic as a fix-all to any political issues. Clearly stating that any form of Magic is useless without also engaging in political elections, organising or real-world action. (Hughes, 2025)

What interests me in both concepts is their explicit use of political language. Most definitions of Magic, and adjacent concepts, I have come across in my research, have feigned some degree of political vagueness or neutrality, even when discussing explicitly political subjects. While this may be common and acceptable in the realm of academic research, it does frequently bother me when it comes to actual practitioners. Because it often dilutes the specificity of language that is necessary to discuss these issues in their entirety. And that is something I would like to avoid in my own project’s definition of Magic.

In conclusion, whilst a general “revival” of Magic practices has taken place within Western culture, much of today’s Esoteric and Occult movements are inadvertently recreating and re-enforcing the very ideology of Western supremacy and neo-colonial extractivism that sought to erase them. At the same time, the “New Right” is actively taken advantage of shared environmental concerns to construct right-wing pipelines that is increasingly taking hold of Europe’s and North-America’s Pagans and Occultists. Whilst no Magic could possibly solve these issues on its own, concepts such as *Anarcho-Occultism* and *Magic Resistance*

can offer a framework to merge the practice of Magic with more explicitly political and actionable goals. Both concepts represent fitting and relevant examples in my project's search for Magic practices that can counteract many of the concerns I have discussed throughout this thesis.

Anarcho-Occultism in particular, represents a potential subversion of the traditional understanding of Occultism. In my own terms, applying an anarchist lens to the practice of Occultism, and Magic overall, can broaden the meaning of "hidden" knowledge to include the more covert aspects of social, cultural and political systems. Hence, to practice *Anarcho-Occultism* could represent the breaking down of obscured hierarchical power dynamics, and to rebuild a just and equitable distribution of means. Wherein the elitist intellectualism and gatekeeping of Occult theory is transformed into shared access to knowledge and resources. Through the potential of *Anarcho-Occultism*, and *Resistance Magic*, the false myth of political neutrality could be shattered and replaced by the realisation that the most threatening occult forces are the ideas we propagate without knowing.

Conclusion

★ *How would you define Magic now?* ★

A concept inherently linked to our subjective and participatory perception of reality? Or, a mere aesthetic that is used to sell us the symbolic idea of an enchanted world-view? Or rather, a virulent pipeline that draws people into fascist conspiracy theories?

Since beginning this research, I have had to reconsider many of my own preconceptions and beliefs regarding Magic. Learning about the historical context that has created *our* common notions of Magical belief has led me to realise how deeply embedded the so-called magic-religion-science triad and the idea of a "rational modernity" are in my personal world-view. However, in order to progress with this project, I have had to let go of some of my implicit "rationalist" urges. I had to let myself be re-enchanted by the idea of Magic.

Where I have had to disenchant myself, however, is my own tendency for overconsumption. As I am writing this, on my couch late at night, I keep looking up at my bursting book shelf dedicated to my interest in Magic, Folklore, the Occult, and all of their adjacencies★. Many of which I have bought over the course of the last year, in an obsessive eagerness to immerse myself in my study of Magic. A majority of which I have not yet gotten to read. I tell myself that at least, there are worst things to buy than books.

One thing that has stayed relatively the same, is my disdain for the rampant right-wing conspiratorial attitudes weaved throughout Western Esoteric and Occult culture. If anything, I've become more aware and able to deconstruct these ideologies. And, discussing it here has made me more keen to dedicate a future project to the subject matter.

To come back to the concerns outlined in the thesis, my conclusion is as follows; The most effective way to counter the many nefarious social and political facets of today's Magic★ culture, is to categorically refuse to uphold Western neo-colonial and fascist ideology. And to achieve this, we must become drastically more cognisant and critical towards our shared and own implicit biases and perception of Western and non-western cultures, beliefs and traditions. We must both initiate and encourage discourse, and, form actionable alternatives to counter these problems. All of these points must be considered and incorporated in the practice of Magic. Even if all of these points exceed the subject of practice and belief. Because all of the concerns modern Magic culture faces today transcend the matter of Magic itself.

Based on these conclusions, I am proposing the following framework for a progressive and future-oriented practice of Magic: The practice of Magic should be of explicitly leftist, anti-fascist, anti-Capitalist and anti-consumerist nature. The applied definition of Magic should not claim to offer direct solutions nor should it falsely attempt to provide universal truths. Instead, Magic should be viewed as a tool for the practice of self-reflection, of creative expression and transformative gestures. The symbolic and aesthetic potential of Magic should be used as a source of personal meaning-making, but never be exploited for nefarious means. This Magic practice should employ the power of personal subjectivity as a conduit to generate compassion and care for others. This practice of Magic should encourage participation, collaboration and deep connection. As much as it should allow for confrontation, disagreement and silence. This approach to Magic should allow for multiplicity and diversity, but still be capable to hold on to its deepest convictions, with empathy. Always.

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