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How Modern Witches Enchant TikTok: Intersections of Digital, Consumer, and Material Culture(s) on #WitchTok

Chris Miller

Religious Studies Department, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1, Canada; chris.miller@uwaterloo.ca

Abstract: WitchTok describes a sub-section of the social media platform TikTok, which caters to Contemporary Pagans and other practitioners of modern Witchcraft. Through short micro-videos, users share snapshots of their lives, providing a window into their religious identities and practices. Through a qualitative analysis of videos and comments, this exploratory study examines how modern Witches engage with religion through this digital space. Although this platform is wholly virtual, WitchTok is also eminently material. Through sharing and commenting on videos of spells, potions, altars, and other practices, users engage with a range of material objects. By announcing the magical properties of materials, instructing how to use certain objects, and advising where items can be found, WitchTok reveals how Witches conceptualize materiality and magic. The promotion of products, businesses, and personal brands in this space also reveals how Witchcraft is shaped by consumerism. In contrast to scholars who distinguish between "traditional" Witchcraft and "consumerist" Witches, I argue that WitchTok highlights the complex entanglements of Witchcraft with consumer capitalism.

Keywords: Contemporary Paganism; Witchcraft; social media; digital religion; TikTok; WitchTok; material religion; consumer capitalism

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1. Introduction

Used by over 3.6 billion people worldwide (Statista 2021), social media re-shape religious identities, practices, and communities (Campbell 2012). From chat forums to virtual rituals, Contemporary Pagans have long embraced technology (Grieve 1995; O'Leary 1996; NightMare 2001; Fernback 2002; Berger and Ezzy 2004; Lövheim 2004; Cowan 2005). The "mediatization of neo-Paganism" (Renser and Tiidenberg 2020) continues on such platforms as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (Fine 2019; Downing 2019; Magliocco 2020; Warren 2020). Embracing the "media turn" (Engelke 2010), which approaches religion as practices mediated through objects, technologies, and other middle grounds, this exploratory study analyzes the material engagements of modern Witches through the social media platform TikTok.

Although "WitchTok" describes a digital subculture of self-identified Witches from various backgrounds, I situate this study within broader research on Contemporary Pagans, an umbrella term for traditions including Wicca, Druidry, and Heathenry. In digital spaces, lines between Pagan traditions—or between Pagans and other groups—are often blurry. Renser and Tiidenberg (2020) note that on Facebook, for instance, Witches interact with posts representing New Age, Indigenous, and folk beliefs, monotheist and Eastern religions, and non-religious self-help teachings (p. 4). Similarly, posts on WitchTok may reference several hashtags, including #PaganTok, #NorsePaganTok, #BrujaTok, or #CrystalTok. These hashtags might align with Wicca, Asatru, Brujeria, or New Age spirituality, groups which may contest that they are even related. However, divisions are collapsed within digital subcultures.[1] To discuss Pagans, New Agers, and other often-overlapping groups, Possamai (2002) employs the term perennism, which "attempts to respect the local reality" of practitioners, while still offering "a heuristic tool for describing alternative spiritualities"

(p. 199). I similarly acknowledge that some members of the broader Pagan community might dismiss the idea that all Witches on TikTok resemble each other, or even that Witches on TikTok are "real" Pagans. However, particularly through the practices observed, all users display important similarities, thereby meriting comparison.

Promey (2014) identifies several distinctions which have shaped how religion is understood, including between primitive and modern forms of religion (usually separated by sensuous practices and rational beliefs), and between material culture and more refined "art" (p. 5). Distinctions between "traditional" outlooks and the more "popular" forms of Witchcraft—generally treated as passing fads (Coco and Woodward 2007; Berger and Ezzy 2007)—similarly shape Modern Paganism. Although Paganism represents an already expansive umbrella, reservations persist concerning those with seemingly less sincere commitments. For example, some scholars distinguish "commercialized" from more "serious" or "traditional" Witchcraft (Ezzy 2001; Waldron 2005; Ezzy 2006; Cush 2007). Teens especially are often critiqued by fellow Pagans for their inauthenticity (Coco and Woodward 2007; Mathews 2021). Further, scholars distinguish Pagans and New Age practitioners (Harrington 2007; Berger 2019), conflating the latter with consumerism and insincerity. "Baby Witches" (shorthand on TikTok for novice practitioners) might have different motivations for participating, different lengths of involvement, or use spells to achieve different ends than some other Pagans. However, differences are less apparent in practice. Despite intra-community critiques, Witches on TikTok perform similar practices, worship similar deities, and use similar products and symbols as Pagans more broadly, making such distinctions unhelpful.

The similarities among Witches on TikTok and Pagans more broadly prompt a reconsideration of the role of consumerism within Witchcraft. Although Witches traditionally seek to distinguish themselves from commercialization, Lofton (2017) urges an expanded understanding of religion, which includes consumption as an important social practice. Hoover and Echchaibi (2021) similarly note that, reflecting the larger project of neo-liberalism, attempts to separate commodification from authenticity have been "swept away" (p. 10). Finally, Abidin (2016) argues that dismissing "frivolous" users as being unworthy of scholarly attention can overshadow important findings (p. 1). This study therefore explores how the activities of Witches on TikTok can deepen understanding of Witchcraft in the modern age.

2. What Is TikTok?

Every social media platform has unique demographics, conventions, and styles (Hjarvard 2011, p. 123). For instance, Facebook has older users, and more who share their "offline identity" compared to YouTube (Neumaier 2020, p. 405). TikTok, in contrast, is the youngest platform, popular with Millennials and Gen Z (Kaur 2020). Because TikTok—created in 2016 and boasting over one billion users (Wallaroo 2021)—may be unfamiliar to readers, a description of how TikTok "works" might be helpful. Users can record, share, and view "micro-videos" ranging from several seconds to three minutes. Users can access many editing functions, including filters, music, and captions, or "stitch" their video together with ones from other users. Videos can use a person's original recording, sounds from other videos, or from popular songs and other media. Importantly, a "non-complicated user interface" (Zhu et al. 2019, p. 2) allows people to easily employ these techniques.

After one has created an account, TikTok includes a "Following" page (displaying videos from accounts that one is following), and a "For You" page (displaying videos that TikTok suggests you might enjoy). One can also consume content through the "Discover" tab, allowing users to search for videos by username, hashtag, or "sound". Based on TikTok's algorithms, interacting with certain users, sounds, or themes of video will shape the content that one encounters.

Recommending content based on consumption patterns fosters subcultures. On Facebook for example, Renser and Tiidenberg (2020) share, "algorithms hone in on witches' interests" in a particular practice, region, language, or tradition (p. 5), thereby shrinking

what information users encounter, and offering more of the same. Much as Warren (2020) defines “Pagan YouTube” as videos about Pagan topics within a larger platform (p. 289), WitchTok describes a sub-section of, or within, TikTok. Although technically anyone can see these posts, through views, likes, follows, and comments, WitchTok facilitates and encourages “an interactive ‘participatory culture’” (Burgess and Green 2009; Keating 2014; Warren 2020). By sharing content and interacting with posts about Witchcraft, users are further drawn into connected discourses with other Witches.

3. Methodology

TikTok does not yield to analysis in the same way as other studies which explore specific hashtags (Giglietto and Lee 2017; Evolvi 2019). For starters, TikTok does not display how many times a hashtag is used, only the number of views on any videos using that tag. As of August 2021, videos with the hashtag #WitchTok amassed 17.8 billion views, which grew to 19.8 billion by October 2021, and 20.9 billion by November. Variations, including #WitchesOfTikTok (2.2 billion views), #WitchTikTok (410 million views), and #VvitchTok (402.2 million views) are also highly active. Finally, users often manipulate hashtags to circumvent restrictions, subvert intended meanings, and boost views (Greenhalgh et al. 2019). Rather than analyzing all posts marked #WitchTok, I employed a staged approach to analysis (Weimann and Masri 2020; Logrieco et al. 2021) from May-September 2021, allowing for a nuanced understanding of this subculture.

Over this period, through daily monitoring, I viewed over 1500 videos pertaining to Witchcraft on TikTok. Videos ranged in length from fifteen seconds to three minutes (the maximum video length permitted on TikTok). I also analyzed the comments sections on videos. Some videos had zero comments (usually when this feature was disabled by a video’s creator), although most had between ten and one hundred comments. In rare cases, videos had several thousand comments. At present, TikTok limits comment length to 150 characters, meaning lengthy discussions through comments requires a user to reply to their own comment several times.

Studying hate speech on TikTok, Weimann and Masri (2020) found that simply watching videos filled their “For You” page with relevant content. Algorithms foster subcultures, and become a useful tool for researchers. Over the span of four weeks, I searched for #WitchTok daily, watching videos that used this hashtag, “following” users posting these videos, and “liking” any videos foregrounding material objects. Doing so populated my “For You” page with videos from Witches discussing Witchcraft. For the next six weeks, I watched videos on my For You page daily, again following users employing #WitchTok and liking videos that overlapped with material religion.

The overarching question guiding my inquiry was essentially, what are Witches doing on TikTok? What type of content do users share? Is there a supportive community, or infighting? Are there in-depth discussions of theology, or merely a surface engagement with religious ideas? More specifically, I was interested in how Witches engage with material and commercial culture through TikTok. What objects do Witches use to perform magic? Are these objects inherently magical, or do Witches mediate magical outcomes *through* these items? Further, how has commercialism shaped the material practices among Witches? Is Witchcraft presented as something which can be purchased? If so, what are the rules around who can buy or sell it?

Although I began by searching for a single hashtag (#WitchTok), the content on my ‘For You’ and ‘Following’ pages soon contained a range of hashtags. Some of these were specific to Paganism, including #Pagan, #Witch, #PaganTok, #WitchTikTok, or #JustWitchyThings. Other popular hashtags were potentially related to Witchcraft, but were not (necessarily or solely) specific to this community, such as #SpellWork, #Spirituality, #Celtic, or #SmallBusiness. Finally, because users are adept at navigating TikTok’s algorithms to boost their visibility, many posts about Witchcraft use irrelevant hashtags, such as #ForYou or #FYP (which help videos appear on other users’ For You pages). Because the use of hashtags is

often inconsistent across videos and users, my analysis primarily focuses on the content of videos and comments.

After building a Following list saturated with relevant users (roughly 350 accounts), I spent the next eight weeks watching videos on both my "Following" and "For You" pages. Following a "long preliminary soak" (Hall 1975, p. 15) in this digital subculture, I was able to recognize patterns in the types of posts and general outlooks that users express. Having familiarized myself with patterns of discourse, I began to select videos which were representative of my primary research concerns—the material and commercial engagements of Witches—and applied systematic textual analysis (Wodak and Bush 2004) to the visual and discursive elements of videos and comments. Adopting Critical Discourse Analysis, which considers texts to be illustrative of sociocultural practices (Fairclough 2013), this method uncovers how Witches construct outlooks (Evolvi 2020). The sample of videos subjected to in-depth analysis grew over time, to reflect changing trends on WitchTok, but totals 376 videos at the time of writing. Qualitative content analysis eventually produced inductive categories of videos (Neumaier 2020, p. 402). In what follows, I describe examples from this larger sample to discuss broader trends in how Witches engage with material and commercial culture on TikTok. Throughout, I refer to usernames directly as they appear on TikTok. Because, similar to YouTube, TikTok "is a platform on which content is explicitly produced for public consumption" (Warren 2020, p. 291), and not a site for personal communication with intimate friends, it was deemed unnecessary to seek consent from users whose videos and comments were analyzed.

4. Material Religion

One benefit of studying materiality, or "focusing on stuff", as Engelke (2010) describes it, is "getting beyond that nastiest of religious-studies bugbears: belief" (p. 374). Hoover and Echchaibi (2021) argue that in a diverse, interconnected world, ideas of "'essential' religious forms" should be replaced by studies of "practices, materialities, and identities" (p. 4). Lofton (2017) defines religion as "what humans do when they harness—or talk about harnessing—material means to access immaterial power" (p. 31). Hüwelmeier (2016) explains that although religious practices in general mediate between transcendence and immanence, interactions with objects further extend religion as a "'practice of mediation'" (p. 298). Because Witches share many "beliefs" with religions throughout the world (York 2003), belief makes it difficult to meaningfully delineate between Pagans and other religions. Focusing on what Pagans 'do', and more specifically, what Pagans 'do' with material objects, offers insights into the cosmologies of this community. Michael York (2019) calls Paganism "the quintessential material religion" (p. 1). Morgain (2015) adds that for Pagans, matter is "imbued with life" and is "capable of participating in and mediating relations" (p. 179). Exploring materiality and practice reveals the 'stuff' through which Witches mediate their religious lives.

Puckett (2009) suggests that through magic, Witches "re-enchant the world" (p. 128). Conceptions of magic among Pagans generally reflect Aleister Crowley's definition, as "the Art and Science of causing change to occur in accordance with Will" (Reid 1996, p. 150). In some cases, deities help facilitate these changes, as Witches ask (or work *with*) a deity to bring about a particular outcome. Cornish (2020) notes that in addition to deities, Witches engage with "an inspirited landscape . . . populated by more animistic and less anthropomorphic inhabitants" (p. 425). Although Cornish describes natural landscapes, this outlook also applies to physical objects populated by animistic energies.

Discussing the power of enchantment, Morgan (2018) writes: "to be enchanted means to lose control at the hands of a device or feeling or experience that places one in the service of another" (p. 2). Witches recognize the "power within things" (p. 7), and give themselves over to the power of different deities, objects, or energies.

Matter plays a crucial role in magic, through objects that can mediate relationships with deities, or objects that are themselves inspirited. Magic in Witchcraft asserts that there is "correspondence between the natural and celestial worlds" and that various cosmic energies

"are reflected within the properties [of] certain plants, stones, and colours" (Wilson 2012, p. 49). Reflecting the concept of "material agency" (Knappet and Malafouris 2008), or properties that emerge through human interactions with material culture, Witches engage with materials based on their associated properties and one's desired outcomes. Campbell (2021) adds: "the notion of a witch using inanimate objects to cast spells is incorrect. Instead, the witch must see spellcasting materials as co-wielders of magic" (p. 40). Objects possess certain potentialities, and Witches interact with objects (and other forces) to manifest specific outcomes.

Morgan (2021) outlines processes by which religious "things" acquire agency, including supernatural beings giving power to an object, ritual performances giving an object power, objects which possess intrinsic power (often due to relationships with sacred people or places), and objects or tools which enable the human body to transform (pp. 9–10). These modes of acquiring agency can also be observed on TikTok. Witches reveal how to consecrate objects, discuss which objects can interact with supernatural beings, or identify objects which intrinsically possess power.

Espirito Santo and Tassi (2013) suggest that "material things are generative and creative ... of cosmology proper" (p. 8). Examining Andean Catholicism for example, Ferraro (2019) notes that the coins and beads with which practitioners interact are considered "apt" ornaments based on their association with light (p. 592). This association imbues objects with their power. Witches make similar evaluations, asserting that certain symbols correspond to womanhood, or that certain herbs offer protection. By suggesting that x object has y properties, Witches demonstrate what Bennett (2010) calls a politics of vital materiality, or the "capacity of things ... to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (p. viii). Not only does WitchTok demonstrate that Witches possess this understanding of materiality, but videos in which Witches evaluate or interact with objects reveal how the universe is understood, what powers different objects possess, and what outcomes Witches are capable of conjuring.

Although the internet may seem "intangible", Pagans online still "embed materiality" (Evolvi 2020, p. 2). Evolvi (2020) highlights such strategies as links to online stores (where materials can be purchased), rich descriptions and pictures (to help vividly imagine materials), and text that 'magically' appears at a cursor's touch (making a webpage itself 'enchanted') (pp. 9–11). For Pagans, matter matters (Morgain 2015, p. 179), and this persists online.

This article explores the "'thingness' of things" (Ferraro 2019) on WitchTok, or how interactions with materials reveal their meaning. As one example, many Witches use cinnamon in the rituals they demonstrate on TikTok. Even using powdered cinnamon may connect Witches to nature, something they consider important. For others, using cinnamon might connect with a folk lineage where cinnamon historically holds a particular meaning. Finally, one might use cinnamon simply because it smells warm and comforting. Elaborating on 'thingness' in the study of religion, Morgan (2021) notes that a statue may be purchased or displayed due to its artistic references, an aura of fine culture, its religious connotations, or simply decorative value (p. 2). Some of these meanings seem more obviously religious than others. Some may seem more sincere or authentic. However, whatever the specific meaning, objects hold value for people. The thingness of things attends to how and why Witches justify their use of different objects, and how this constructs and expresses a religious worldview.

5. Religion and Social Media

WitchTok reinforces that religion has become integrated with media practices and infrastructure (Hoover 2006). Explaining how mediatization—the process through which institutions become dependent on media logics—has transformed religion, Hjarvard (2011) first notes that media becomes a significant source of information (p. 119). Possamai (2002) argues that the internet offers "a library of myths (or narratives) to be consumed and idiosyncratically reconstructed" (p. 208). Online exchanges contribute to the stock of knowledge that shapes the outlook of Witches. Although many might balk at the notion

that people consider social media trustworthy, the accessibility and repetition of certain claims influence what knowledge people trust (Staemmler 2011). On WitchTok, one can learn how to cleanse a space or when and why festivals are celebrated; WitchTok therefore becomes a place where Witches encounter seemingly authoritative claims.

Mediatization of religion also involves media shaping experiences (Hjarvard 2011). Most obviously, practices that Witches demonstrate on TikTok are subject to the medium and time constraints of video. Revealing how mediascapes shape communities, many videos from Witches reflect broader "trends" on TikTok, while hashtags literally sort content.[2] Hashtags such as #WitchTok provide "portals" (Greenhalgh et al. 2019), where people with similar identities can connect.

Social media also fosters belonging, whether one posts, comments, or simply lurks (Illman and Sjö 2015; Renser and Tiidenberg 2020; Foster 2021). Because many Pagans are already solitary (Berger 2019), WitchTok has not replaced traditional structures. However, the searchability and visibility of social media helps people connect with others more easily (Brubaker and Haigh 2017, p. 2). WitchTok also empowers individuals to choose their "preferred authorities" (Hammer 2010, p. 55). Rather than needing to seek out training from a mentor, one can simply "follow" an influencer. Further, anonymity allows people to experiment, explore, and express alternative identities with comfort and privacy, which is especially helpful for curious teenagers (Berger and Ezzy 2007). For novices seeking guidance, WitchTok and a series of adjacent hashtags (e.g., #BabyWitch, 2.2 billion views; #BabyWitchTips, 350.5 million views) offer a convenient resource to explore this religion and connect with other Witches.

Mediation at times describes how material culture, such as a statue, connects someone to a deity (Meyer 2009). Mediation also describes how practices are transmitted through technologies such as the Internet. Pagans online therefore experience "double mediation" (Evolvi 2020, p. 12). A wand, for example, is an object that mediates supernatural experiences, but is *doubly mediated* by being discussed and displayed online (p. 12). Because material goods and their meanings are wrapped up in larger systems of media, commercialism, and community (Morgan 2021), social media discourses help to construct and spread these understandings of what objects mean. By discussing objects that connect to religious experiences, WitchTok fosters double mediation.

WitchTok finally highlights how authority and socialization operate in Paganism. Despite claims that Paganism privileges individuality (Clifton 2006), online spaces reinforce vertical authority structures. On Pagan Facebook pages, administrators control what content appears or who can belong (Renser and Tiidenberg 2020, p. 6). On YouTube, popular creators influence the 'best practices' for constructing altars (Warren 2020). Although people choose in whom they invest authority, popular users and patterns of intra-group consensus create a horizontal–vertical "axis of authority" (p. 296).

In addition to possessing knowledge about Witchcraft—a typical marker of authority—one's "ability to navigate media logics and communicate effectively with other users" also shapes authority (Evolvi 2020, p. 12). Tech-savvy users who can create appealing videos can claim and sustain authority online (Cheong 2013). For instance, in a video explaining what certain candle colours represent, @thehexbaby suggests that white candles represent peace (and can be substituted for any other colour), while red candles represent courage and strength.

Comments include Witches thanking @thehexbaby for sharing the information, or reminding people that meanings might change depending on tradition. The information that @thehexbaby provides is condensed into a 41-s video, and comments discussing alternative meanings are also constrained by character limits. Despite this brevity, the visual and aural style this creator has cultivated contribute to them amassing nearly 100,000 Followers (and 160,000 views of this one video). WitchTok, in association with larger trends, facilitates the spread, debate, and validation of particular practices, objects, and meanings.

6. Witchcraft and Consumerism

Although Witchcraft is occasionally framed as being averse to consumer culture (Ezzy 2006; Berger 2019), many WitchTok videos fetishize consumer goods. From products that Witches promote, to seeing (then coveting) objects that other Witches use, consumerism is present throughout WitchTok. By encouraging material consumption, one auxiliary function of WitchTok is reinforcing a "Witchy aesthetic"—involving dark colours, particular symbols, plants, candles, and crystals. Although these aesthetics predate social media, users encounter others with whom they share "stylistic affinity" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 168), making WitchTok another place where users display and encounter this visual and material aesthetic.

Consumer culture is most obviously present through accounts promoting businesses. This includes formal stores, Witches who run Etsy shops, or who charge money for tarot readings. Businesses post videos that highlight new products in their store or satirize customer interactions. Business owners answer questions while casually sitting at home. Although such posts technically function to promote a business, they reflect "persona intimacy", cultivating an emotional, relational attachment between consumers and businesses (Abidin and Thompson 2012, p. 472). Through relational approaches, users "soften and mask" these "otherwise clinical and commercial transactions" (Abidin 2021, p. 2), allowing Witches to relate to consumerism while still reflecting Witchcraft's proclaimed anti-capitalist outlook.

Beyond selling products and services, users monetize their TikTok presence in various ways. Some are compensated for having a certain number of Followers and Views. Many users also drive attention to their other monetized platforms (e.g., YouTube). Many Witches promote Patreon accounts, where people pay a subscription (ranging from USD 1 to 40/month) to access "premium" content. Some users also include links to a CashApp or Venmo account (allowing people to send money to them directly) or an Amazon Wishlist (allowing people to purchase items and send them to that user). Complicating the idea that social media is a place where Pagans altruistically support each other (Downing 2019), many users also extract economic benefits. Exploring female spiritual entrepreneurship, Ganga Kieffer (2020) observes: "these sellers argue that helping others is more fulfilling than simply getting rich or even making a living" (p. 90). Similarly, Witches position themselves as serving their community first and foremost. However, there is perhaps a strategic approach behind this positionality. By foregrounding commitment to Witchcraft, and downplaying the economic motivations behind one's social media interactions, users can appear more authentic.

Consumption practices often reflect deeper outlooks. Featherstone (1991) argues that people define and distinguish their socioeconomic status via consumption habits. Lipovetsky (1993) similarly argues that individuals construct identities through consumption. Finally, Lofton (2017) argues that one central component of religion—how it organizes people—is similarly facilitated through consumption, adding: "we distinguish ourselves from others the minute we decide to join others in their liking" (p. 5). On WitchTok, "liking" takes on literal and metaphorical meanings. People express who they are, what they represent, with whom they are aligned, and of what they are capable based on the accounts one follows, actions performed in videos, opinions expressed in comments, and objects discussed. These activities organize a subset of TikTok users (and a subset of Witches, who are active on TikTok) into a digital Witchcraft community. Just as Ganga Kieffer (2020) argues that the rhetoric of women's spiritual entrepreneurship functions to "feminize" capitalism (p. 83), in a similar manner, Witches "enchant" capitalism by identifying certain products and symbols as magical.

7. What Witches Do on WitchTok

Before exploring how Witches engage with material religion online, I should note that many videos on WitchTok are simply entertaining. Such content, ranging from songs, dances, skits, and rants on various topics, is important to solidifying identity and fostering

community. However, the most relevant videos for this study involve what Brubaker and Haigh (2017) call "faith-based information" and "spiritual enlightenment" (p. 5). As the most potent examples of how Witches perform and understand magic, the following sections explore different categories of videos through which Witches engage with material, consumer, and digital culture.

7.1. Magical Recipes

7.1.1. Spell Jars

Generally made by combining ingredients in a container, spell jars are used to achieve particular goals. With #SpellJar amassing over 255.8 million views, WitchTok is replete with instructional videos geared towards such purposes as love, good grades, or weight loss. The following section explores what items go into spell jars, and how materials facilitate magic.

A "protection jar" posted by @mysticalcrystalgirl begins by "cleansing" (opening a jar, and waving incense around and inside),[3] before adding salt, lavender, sage, and a bay leaf, putting on the lid, and cleansing again. A protection jar from @fookinbread follows similar steps, but contains salt, eggshells, sage, cloves, pine, rosemary, "a bay leaf with your intentions", peppermint oil, and a clear quartz crystal. This jar is also "sealed" by dripping black candle wax over the lid. Mirroring the replication of similar items throughout YouTube altar videos (Warren 2020), WitchTok replicates common patterns. Most spell jars use 5 mL glass vials with cork lids. Taper candles (in various colours) are used to seal jars. The aesthetics of what a spell jar "looks like" is perpetuated implicitly (noticing the same materials) and explicitly (announcing where to source items).

Beyond cultivating aesthetics, spell jars highlight what meanings Witches ascribe to materials. Spells directed at different purposes vary mostly in their ingredients. An "anti-anger" jar from @crystalsforyou1111, for instance, includes salt, sage, lemon balm, amethyst, lavender, rosemary, and chamomile, and is sealed with a white candle. A "love" jar, demonstrated by @babywitchtok111, includes Himalayan salt, cinnamon, basil, chamomile, red rose petals, rose quartz, and sugar, and is sealed with a pink candle. A sub-genre of spell jars is those designed to cause harm. To perform a "jinx",[4] @coko_thewitch cleanses a jar, before adding lemons, a piece of paper with the target's name, and seven screws. An outright hex or "sour jar", demonstrated by @pisceswitchbitch, begins by cleansing the jar, adding red pepper flakes, several drops from two vials of pre-made oils, a piece of paper (presumably containing the target's name), two nails, and apple cider vinegar, and ends by sealing the jar with a black candle.

Discussing Heathens on Instagram, Downing (2019) notes that even when users do not explicitly debate theology, users are nonetheless "setting out a series of assertive and effective epistemological statements" (p. 190). That one can mix ingredients to facilitate a given outcome reveals the assertion that Witches can cause change in accordance with Will. Listing what ingredients are required to bring about "good grades" reveals what properties Witches considered to be embedded in matter. Comparing baneful magic to more neutral or positive spells highlights that attributions often rely on intuitive associations, with sweet, sour, or bitter ingredients producing corresponding effects. While love spells include such "sweet" ingredients as sugar and cinnamon, baneful spells use lemons, spicy peppers, and vinegar. While love spells might use crystals, hexes include rusty nails. While one seals positive spells with red or pink candles, hexes use black wax.

Witches *re-purpose* many objects to perform magic, especially household herbs. Weinryb (2017) defines votives as objects which are "charged with meaning, meaning that is sometime divorced from that given at their inception" (p. 102). Witches first alter the meaning of household spices, by using them in spell work. Further, Pagans assert that certain objects have particular, though shifting, numinous qualities and meanings (Wilson 2012, p. 41). Promey (2014) offers the reminder that "material agency itself [is] relational and contingent, as a matter of people and things in specific encounters and contexts" (p. 15). Revealing the social lives of objects (p. 9), while items such as salt have established

meanings (always for protection), other ingredients are more variable. For instance, in recipes geared towards protection, weight loss, and good grades, lavender is associated with prosperity, beauty, or stress reduction. Luck is variously attributed to peppermint and thyme, while purification is associated with both basil and thyme. Recognizing numinous objects as "arbitrary, social constructed phenomena" (Wilson 2012, p. 42), WitchTok is one space where meanings are constructed and transmitted.

The use of herbs also reveals how Witches connect to certain values they consider important. Paganism is often described as a nature religion (Pike 2001; Clifton 2004; Davy 2007). For many Witches, encounters with "inspirited landscapes" offer connections to other-than-human persons (Cornish 2020, p. 416). Although such interactions are partly present on WitchTok, as Witches describe walks in nature or visits to enchanted sites, encounters with nature are frankly limited for urban-dwelling Witches. Using herbs (sometimes fresh, but often poured from packages you might find at a grocery store) helps sustain Witchcraft's engagement with nature. Witches harness these 'natural objects', either drawing on their intrinsic properties or consecrating them through spell work, to help achieve their desired results.

Both eclectic and reconstructionist Pagans also use folklore from pre-Christian cultures to shape their practices (Magliocco 2004; Strmiska 2005). The purported meanings behind different herbs help sustain connections to these ancient or pre-modern traditions. During instructional videos, Witches advise viewers to "do your research" and discover the properties ascribed to plants. Research generally implies that one discovers what Celtic folklore, for example, has to say about the properties of mint. Although users reference "research", this is usually only in passing. More often, a user simply says, "cinnamon, for prosperity", without any further explanation. Even more recipes simply list ingredients, then encourage viewers to "do research" so that they know the meaning(s) behind each herb.

Possamai (2002) argues that among Pagans and other perennists, "reappropriation of the past is not objective historicism, but subjective interpretation and sometimes invention of something about which perennists know little can be said or proved but which feels right to them" (p. 202). Claims of research help Witches substantiate their engagement with history. Folklore and ethnic lineages are alluded to, through claims that an herb is "associated" with particular properties. Lack of concrete references, however, suggests only partial engagement with the type of "research" that users so often encourage. As Possamai notes, Pagans draw on claims about which they know little can be proven, affording space for individual creativity. Although time constraints on videos or diversity across folk lineages can explain the shifting meanings of herbs, this also highlights the generally eclectic nature of Witchcraft. From person to person, objects have constantly shifting meanings, yet each person's practices and identities are rooted in a longer lineage.

Beyond the ability to "cause change" (protecting oneself or attracting love, etc.) through magic, WitchTok demonstration videos reinforce the importance of "will". That most spells begin with cleansing, for example, demonstrates that beyond just mixing items possessing intrinsic properties, Witches also have agency, such as making a jar conducive to facilitating magic. When mixing ingredients, Witches advise to "stir with intention". Witches may also write their intentions onto a bay leaf or piece of paper. Through such actions, Witches interact with matter, making objects conducive to facilitating certain outcomes.

By sharing recipes, Witches also construct norms. Several comments on @mysticalcrystalgirl's post, for example, advise sealing spell jars with wax to "lock in" the magic". Exchanges in the comments—where some reiterate the importance of sealing jars, and others retort: "no one has to do anything they don't want to"—represent disputes over proper Witchcraft. Disputes need not necessarily be resolved. Indeed, there is still variation across videos on how to cleanse, whether to seal jars, or as mentioned, what a particular ingredient represents. Rather, TikTok allows users to assert their expertise, and allows observers to conduct their own form of research. Baby Witches are especially visible in comments, often seeking clarification. For instance, @babywitch777444 asks: "what do you cleanse your jar with??" After two commenters answer "incense", they respond: "does

it matter what incense?" Another commenter asked whether the direction in which one waves the incense has any particular meaning. In response, @mysticalcrystalgirl writes, "clockwise is to attract positive energy ... and counterclockwise is to repel negative energy". Again, WitchTok rarely creates consensus over proper form, and other posts reveal different understandings of what each direction means. However, responses are both sites to demonstrate expertise and sources of "research" for curious novices. Through such discourses, Witches engage in scientia ritus (Lofton 2017), or outlining proper ritual conduct. Seemingly minor issues, such as the best ingredients to use, potential alternatives, or how to dispose of a completed spell jar, reflect understandings of how magic works in Witchcraft. WitchTok represents an outlet where conventions are fleshed out.

7.1.2. Magic Liquids

Another popular magical recipe on WitchTok is "moon water". As of October 2021, #MoonWater has 108.8 million views, while #MoonWaterSpells and #MoonWaterTips have 2.2 and 1.1 million views, respectively. As @thecrystalpatch explains, moon water has many uses, from being added into spell jars, used in bath rituals, or to make intention sprays (which @thecrystalpatch sells through their Etsy shop). Although making moon water can be as simple as exposing water to moonlight, "harvesting" can also become a formal ritual. Sharing her "famous moon water ritual", @hothighpriestess fills a jar with water, writes down their desires on a piece of paper, and places the paper underneath the jar. Overnight, the water absorbs power both from the moon and from the written manifestations, and its power can be released, this user explains, by drinking the water. In another ritual, @caraloren_ surrounds a jar with several crystals, which "make your moon water even more powerful". Different times of the year are considered especially suitable for making moon water, and demonstrations become popular before a full or new moon. Finally, water can be "charged" by different celestial bodies. In a "sun water" demonstration, @_.witchythingz creates a circle of salt, then places their jar inside. Whether using salt (offering protection), crystals (lending additional "power"), or paper and pencil (manifesting specific desires), Witches interact with nature (and other materials) to achieve certain objectives.

Highlighting intersections between material religion and consumerism, @crystalcleankat both demonstrates how to make, and advertises that they sell "storm water", a related natural ingredient. Critiquing the practice of selling what is essentially rain in a jar, one commenter writes: "You wrong for this", adding: "Ok lil miss capitalist do your thing". Defending their business, @crystalcleankat stresses financial, practical, and magical factors. First, noting that they sell jars for only USD 1, they imply that they likely do not make *much* of a profit, and therefore are not *truly* exploiting the environment (or other Witches). Answering critiques that anyone could collect their own water for free, @crystalcleankat responds that on the contrary, they offer a much-needed service to people experiencing drought, or who live in apartments. Finally, although most people can collect rain, @crystalcleankat adds, "most cant get HURRICANE force water". Implying that the force of rain affects its power offers a magical justification. Because @crystalcleankat lives in an area with more potent magical energies, they charitably share this with others.

Exploring the branding behind bottled water, Wilk (2006) suggests that marketers "have become magicians who transform mundane and abundant things into exotic valuables" (p. 305). Although he uses the term 'magician' metaphorically, Wilk offers an apt comparison to WitchTok. Witches believe that seemingly mundane goods such as water intrinsically possess magical power. Through the actions that Witches perform (collecting water in a jar, surrounding that jar with salt) Witches transform "mundane and abundant things" into "exotic valuables". Wilk (2006) adds that although water is "an abundant substance—which falls from the sky for free", countries such as Fiji have capitalized on an image of a "'virgin ecosystem'" to make its exports seem more valuable (p. 306). Some Witches capitalize in a similar manner through how they position their expertise. Through

videos demonstrating rituals, or explaining potential uses to novices, individuals raise their profile on WitchTok, marketing their goods (or services) in the process.

Another popular liquid—simmer pots—are made by combining fruit, herbs, and other ingredients into a boiling pot. Simmer pots have both magical uses (bottled as a room spray, or dried and placed in sachets) and mundane ones (making your home smell nicely). As with spell jars, Witches attribute specific functions to different ingredients. For example, @boujie_loochie suggests that lemons offer happiness and purification, lavender offers luck and calmness, and rose petals offer passion. Another user, @astralwitch, aligns juniper berries with protection, sage with cleansing, and cinnamon with home protection.

Revealing engagements with commercialism, a simmer pot from @thewoodlandwitch combines everyday ingredients with herbs from a pre-assembled "Witchcraft Herb Kit" from Holy Santo (n.d.). Beginning with a pot of water, @thewoodlandwitch adds oranges (for positivity and good fortune), lemons (for cleansing and purification), rosemary (for protection), sunflower (for happiness, and to honor Apollo), and white and red rose petals (for purification and love). Next, drawing from Holy Santo-branded packages, they add lavender (for calming, peaceful energy) and hyssop (for warding away negative energy). This spell involves both natural ingredients and magical intervention (stirring "with intention" and reciting a blessing). This spell therefore presupposes that magical properties are inherent in matter, *and* that people mediate with supernatural forces. Using Holy Santo herbs reveals that specific vendors can also enhance magic. Although herbs from this kit *could* be found elsewhere, one benefits from the supposed care and attention that Holy Santo invests into these items.[5] In addition to this video (which explicitly promotes Holy Santo products), @holy_santo reposts many similar videos on their official TikTok account. Implying that certain herbs (and certain vendors) are better than others, nature and commercial consumption thereby intertwine on WitchTok.

7.2. Altars

Altars represent focal points for practices in Witchcraft. They are spaces where magic is performed, where items are stored, and where Pagans connect with and express their identity (Furth 2017). Sharing altars online is also a way to connect with other practitioners (Warren 2020). Although often dominating a table or shelf, altars can also be fairly small, as @ragingvenus shows through a windowsill altar, or even impermanent, with @babywitchtok111 highlighting how to pack a "travel altar". Beyond just arranging objects, building altars involves performing magic, such as cleansing the space and each object added, scattering salt, or tracing sigils.

WitchTok helps establish the essential items required in any altar. Showcasing an altar they created for Hecate, for example, @astralwitch includes a candle, lavender bundle, cauldron, mini broom, keys, goddess statue, and chalice filled with moon water. Although items such as the statue, keys, or lavender might vary by deity, candles, cauldrons, herbs, and chalices are fairly standard.

Revealing further ways that Witches connect with nature, many of the objects on altars are natural. Reflecting how Witches connect with nature in the Anthropocene, many altars also contain found items, including shells, rocks, and twigs, or man-made items, such as the key in the above altar. Campbell (2021) uses the term "abject objects" to describe "artificial objects which are discarded, unloved and unwanted" (p. 32). Campbell argues that such objects "are as much a part of magical reality as the trees or the moon" (p. 33). Abject objects are visible either implicitly, by seeing the random assemblage of objects sitting on altars, or explicitly, in videos where Witches discuss finding different items over time. Abject objects reveal creative adaptations by Witches to honor nature in the Anthropocene.

Altar videos also reflect and reinforce aesthetics. The cauldron on @astralwitch's altar, for example, is three inches tall, black cast iron, and adorned with a pentacle. The chalice is five inches tall, brass, with the Triple Goddess motif etched into the front.[6] The five-inch-tall corn broom is adorned with a silver charm depicting a "Tree of Life". As Warren (2020) discovered across altars on YouTube, similar items are often replicated in the altars that

Witches construct. A general aesthetic is similarly reinforced on WitchTok. Even though Witches may not always use the exact same cauldron, for example, the symbols above mark their similarity as "Witchy" products. Constant exposure reinforces the importance that Witches ascribe to common objects and symbols.

Reinforcing stylistic affinities in a more general sense, a video from @antleredcrown scans a table messily scattered with statues, candles, herbs, and incense, as a voiceover announces: "If your altar is messy ... then good. It means you're doing the work. You're a Witch, not a bloody office worker". This voiceover became a "sound" that over 100 others used in videos displaying their own messy altars. This trend reinforces what basic items altars should include, distinguishes Witches from mainstream society, and (via messiness) establishes "sameness" (Foster 2021) with other Witches.

Reflecting the "ever-changing, multifaceted, often messy" blend of religion in everyday life (McGuire 2008, p. 4), magical objects occasionally transcend formal altars. In one video, @theredheadedwitch displays objects around their home that connect to Witchcraft, including a bell hanging from the front door handle, two small brooms on the wall, and a candle in a bowl of salt on their desk. Highlighting helpful protections that they use, @inkedgoddesscreations displays a broom near the front door, and quartz crystals in four corners around their house. Finally, offering "Witchy mom tips", @sybilthewitchbitch displays a shelf in their child's room that includes cinnamon sticks (for protection), orange peels (for good energy), crystals (for good sleep and dreams), and pinecones (for further protection). These videos first highlight advantageous spots for magical objects, often near the front door (to keep out negative energies) or creating a literal perimeter around one's home. Keeping magical items at one's bedside or workspace demonstrates that Witchcraft is often not compartmentalized. Rather, the homes (and presumably, the lives) of Witches are saturated with magic. Finally, while certain objects such as brooms have strong connections to Witchcraft in folklore (Clifton 2019), other objects such as cinnamon sticks or pinecones are more vaguely associated with "protection", while some Witches keep objects simply for their aesthetic appeal.

Objects and Mediation

As mentioned, although many Witches interact with more subtle energies throughout the universe, many also interact directly with deities. As sites of mediation, altars reveal how Witches encounter deities. In one video, @tragedyjones describes three altars they use that correspond to different deities. Hekate's altar, we learn, contains tea, a candle, a key, cards representing her "animal familiars", and a pamphlet. Morrigan, who "just wants to be left alone", has an altar with feathers, a skull, a knife, and a "Crow Spirit" card. Finally, @tragedyjones breaks out laughing, exclaiming: "Loki on the other hand, wants jewelry and Pokémon cards! What?!".

Objects which mediate between Witches and deities include both natural items and "consumer goods". Of the latter category, some objects may come from a craft store (and are then assigned a religious purpose), or from a vendor who intended that it be used for rituals. Products intended for general ritual use (but then given a specific purpose in Witchcraft) demonstrate the fuzzy borders between Witchcraft and other traditions. In @tragedyjones's altar, for example, the cards corresponding to "animal spirits" come from a 68-card deck that matches animals with different symbolism (Colette Baron-Reid n.d.). The online shop which sells these is not affiliated with any particular tradition, but broadly references oracles, mediums, and spirituality. Recalling the sour jar from @pisceswitchbitch discussed above, the pre-packaged oils (from a company called Art of the Root) highlight similar consumer entanglements. The "Hot Foot Oil", for example, is advertised as being specifically for "Hoodoo, Conjure & Voodoo" (Art of the Root n.d.). However, @pisceswitchbitch has no clear affiliation with any of these traditions.[7] Similarly, the Holy Santo herbs used in @thewoodlandwitch's simmer pot are presented as being specifically connected to Wicca (Holy Santo n.d.), yet are used by Witches affiliated with various traditions. Underscoring Witchcraft's eclectic nature, Witches buy products and perform spells that blend magical

traditions, often without delineating the different inspirations at play. Marked primarily through the generic hashtag #WitchTok, videos facilitate further blending, as commenters from various backgrounds admire and ask where to buy different items.

Returning to @tragedyjones's altar, objects both mediate relationships with deities, and also legitimize that a user interacts with deities. Whether one found an object in nature or bought something from a store, every object validates that a deity made a specific request (Warren 2020, p. 300). Comments further legitimize this relationship. One user asks, "how do you know what they want?" to which @tragedyjones responds: "best way to describe it is intuition. Words or images appear in my mind's eye". For novice Witches, this video becomes a source of information, revealing how to know what a deity wants. For @tragedyjones, their video and response affirm their numinous connections.

A video from @icarusie, which shows a candle dedicated to Loki burning out of control similarly highlights double mediation. Among Concheros in Mexico, Rostas (2013) describes the "spiritual agency" of candles, with flames reflecting transcendent interactions with supernatural forces. The dancing of the flame in @icarusie's video highlights a relationship with Loki. Because other candles on the altar (offered to other deities) burn without incident, this "wild" behaviour reflects mediation with this trickster deity. Frantically pleading with Loki to calm down, @icarusie finally pours water over the raging fire. In addition to @icarusie legitimizing her transcendent experience, some commenters establish "sameness", sharing their own interactions with Loki. Others claim insights to how Loki affects objects through what they saw in the video, writing: "I swear [I] heard laughing in the sizzling". The candle is first an object of mediation, facilitating an encounter with Loki for @icarusie. It is doubly mediated as this object (and encounter) is shared online, and as viewers claim to see how Loki affected this object.

7.3. Consuming Witchcraft

7.3.1. Witch Kits

Materiality and consumption explicitly intertwine in videos where business owners pack kits that they sell. Highlighting a basic "Beginner Witch Kit," @pixiewitchstore fills a wooden box with vials of herbs, taper candles, a cauldron, crystals, bay leaves, orange slices, cinnamon sticks, and a sage cleansing stick.

Another "Beginner Kit" from @thecottagegreenwitch includes incense, candles, herbs, crystals, rune stones, moon water, a "self-love bath ritual", and several pre-made spell jars. As with altars and spell jars, assembly videos reinforce key items and a general Witchy aesthetic. Herbs, candles, cauldrons, incense, and crystals represent the basic items required for Witchcraft. The pentacle, Triple Goddess, and Tree of Life symbols, present across kits, are also reinforced as important. Concerning the non-magical containers which hold these magical ingredients, almost all kits include herbs in glass vials and crystals in glittering drawstring sachets, all packed inside clasped wooden boxes. Through exposure and repetition, WitchTok reinforces certain aesthetic trends.

A more personalized "Baby Sea Witch Kit"[8] from @the_grounding_stone highlights eclectic practices and identities in Witchcraft. Many Witches describe themselves as Green, Cosmic, or Kitchen Witches, denoting specific inspirations for their practices. Kits from @the_grounding_stone correspond to these different "types", through special ingredients or the aesthetic sensibilities of a particular sort of Witch. Embracing such customization, commenters request kits catering to even more types, allowing users to assert their unique identities. Recalling Paganism's horizontal–vertical axis of authority (Warren 2020), the list of "types" is extensive, but not infinite. Popular discourses expressed on TikTok, through shops, and in Witchcraft more broadly constrain the available options and therefore the variances in how Witchcraft is performed. From a business standpoint, these semi-customized kits (along with comments such as "stay tuned for new creations") also cultivate loyalty among clients, by demonstrating sensitivity to Witches' eclectic needs.

In luxury handbag "unboxing videos", Foster (2021) finds little to no discussion of cost, "revealing a curious (albeit contorted) 'reticence to display one's wealth' in any concrete

terms” (p. 10). Although products displayed on WitchTok are considerably less expensive, this mirrors my own observations. Videos in which owners assemble kits, for instance, rarely discuss how much the kits actually cost. Although @pixiewitchstore responded to one commenter who writes: “YOUR PRICING IS AMAZING OMG”, other comments asking “how much do they cost” went unanswered. Witchy businesses promote themselves on TikTok, yet often elide their own commercialism. Obviously, customers eventually discover the price if or when they try to buy something. However, as owners peel back the curtain on their lives and identities in their videos, but shy away from openly discussing prices, they cultivate a persona intimacy and subtly position Witchcraft as separate from commercialism.

7.3.2. Budget Witch Tips

Digging deeper on the costs associated with Witchcraft, kits promoted on WitchTok range between USD 20 and USD 60. Spell jars also offer a helpful guide for the costs of Witchcraft. Jars, candles, and incense sticks can all be bought in bulk, for roughly 50 cents/unit, while most herbs cost around USD 6/jar. Although not exorbitant, these costs add up, especially considering the number of jars that a Witch might make to address different outcomes. Reflecting the outlook that Witchcraft does not *need* to be expensive however, many videos outline budget-friendly alternatives. Displaying “Witchy stuff” that one can buy at Dollar Tree for example, @thecelticsbrew highlights candles, mirrors, incense, and essential oils. In a similar video, @pandora20122015 recommends shells, twine, and herbs. Although positioned as “budget-friendly” tips, these videos highlight how Witches “legitimate their wealth and relative privilege” (Foster 2021, p. 3). Stores such as Dollar Tree (or pricier craft stores such as Michael’s and Five Below), are positioned as places where Witches creatively re-purpose goods, spending less than they would at metaphysical stores. However, this framing elides that Witches spend considerable money on semi-regular trips to purchase objects for their practices.

Recommending “Witchy things” that one can find at Goodwill, @thefarmhousewitch lists candles, candle holders, bowls, and trays. Such videos encourage others to view thrift shopping as a viable option. Further, although jars or candles have fairly obvious applications in Witchcraft, thrift shopping videos also spur creativity, showing how a coat rack can take on the Witchy purpose of drying herbs. Some videos also proffer useful advice, such as which objects are heat safe.

Thrift shopping may reflect the desire among consumers to help the environment, avoid large corporations, or support local causes (Ayres 2019, p. 123). Another possible motivation is suggested by @mybloodygalentine, who displays a “DIY Magickal Cupboard” of jars adorned with stylized labels. Explaining that they spent weeks finding every jar, they add: “I felt like if I found them one at a time I would only find the ones I was meant to have”. This suggests that shopping itself may partly rely on magic and intuition, and a connection to each jar can make one’s rituals more powerful.

In contrast, thrift shopping may also reflect that Witches use lots of consumer goods. Many witches have multiple altars, for multiple deities, crowded with candleholders, statues, and other objects. Thrift stores simply make it feasible to buy more “stuff”. Thrifty shopping videos also highlight fascination with consumer goods. Highlighting how Witchcraft and consumerism overlap, users obsess over finding the right products and constantly expanding their collections.

In a series of videos titled “Budget Witch Tips”, @coko_thewitch makes a slight departure from most other demonstrations. Her “protection candle” video for example, ends by announcing that this spell (which involves sprinkling herbs onto a candle from Walmart) costs roughly USD 4.50. This series started in response to a video titled “WitchTok Hates Poor People”, in which another user (@theboofysystem) aired grievances with WitchTok, citing expensive crystals, “cool aesthetic altars”, and “filled-to-the-brim spell jars” that users position as necessities. Explicitly discussing the “cost” of a spell, @coko_thewitch seems to partly address this user’s complaint. However, considering suggestions from other

Witches that one must "re-charge" spell jars monthly, or make new ones whenever its power wears off, Witches must commit to spending roughly USD 4.50 on a semi-regular basis, just to ensure "protection". Achieving other purposes through magic would seemingly require even more candles and herbs, and hence, more money. Discussing craft activities, Luckman (2015) notes that although such practices are historically rooted in discourses of austerity, "crafting can also be an expensive and leisured practice" (pp. 22–23). Discourses of "budget Witch tips" demonstrate a similar framing. Although positioned as frugal ways to practice magic, these videos also reveal that Witchcraft is an outlook (at least partly) expressed through consumption practices.

8. Reconciling Tensions

In the original video in which @theboofysystem complained about WitchTok "hating poor people", some commenters offered suggestions that truly come without costs. However, highlighting the complex entanglements between materiality, consumerism, and Witchcraft, many tips still involve commercial engagements. For example, some commenters suggest using herbs grown in one's backyard. As other commenters note however, this recommendation poses barriers to people without access to green space. As a proffered solution, recommendations to shop at Walmart or similar stores, were incredibly common. At least to some, Witchcraft does require spending money, and magic requires commercial goods.

These suggestions also reveal tensions concerning how Witches relate to capitalism. Many users trash the "Witchy aesthetic" found at "overpriced" metaphysical shops, proudly sharing that they buy their products from Amazon instead. Large corporations such as Walmart and Amazon therefore become, in a strange turn, more "authentic" than businesses that directly target Witches.

Although resisting consumerism and revering nature are sometimes cited as "traditional" values of Witchcraft (Cameron 2005), WitchTok reveals that this may not always be the case. Indeed, it may not even always be possible. Morgain (2015) calls one Pagan community's "desire to create a different way of living from mainstream commoditized US life" one of its central features (p. 175). However, despite these aspirations, members also confront such everyday realities as food and rent (p. 186). In the context of WitchTok, addressing everyday realities may involve performing tarot readings for a fee, or asking Followers to simply send money as a "tip" for the content one produces. For some, everyday realities involve buying candles, incense, glass vials, and herbs in bulk, packaging these as a "kit", and then selling this at a profit. Everyday realities might also mean shopping at whatever business is cheapest and most convenient. Regardless of the ethical or ecological implications of supporting Amazon, Walmart, or large craft outlets, if religious practices offer people a means of reclaiming agency (Gregory 2012, p. 273), then being able to buy more herbs (and conduct more rituals), can help Witches claim agency. Witches who patronize such businesses—and even recommend them to others—highlight the complex entanglements between Witchcraft and consumer capitalism.

It must also be recognized that some Witches desire consumer products. Gregory (2012) describes an informant who used tarot to attain "a 'fabulous life'", which involved feeling spiritually fulfilled, but also owning a Manhattan apartment and a country house (p. 275). Witches interact with deities and universal energies, but are not always working towards such lofty goals as restoring ecological balance. Simply put, some Witches want money. Whether using magic to make a "money spell jar", becoming a Witchy entrepreneur, or fetishizing consumer goods, such users belong to the broader Witchcraft community. Representing a challenge to scholars who position Witchcraft against capitalist commodification, WitchTok encourages a re-evaluation of who Witches are, what they do, and what they value.

A further tension concerns the difficulty of "revering nature" amidst capitalism. Recalling spell jars, which often involve pouring dried herbs directly from plastic bottles, a commenter on one video remarks: "you should grow your own herbs it's so much better".

It is unclear whether this recommendation reflects an environmental or magical perspective, but they highlight a tension between celebrating nature and using mass-produced goods. Given the ecological costs of farming, harvesting, packaging, and distributing these herbs, one might suggest that spells jars actually damage the environment rather than honour it. Although an imperfect analogy to dried herbs, Jaffee and Newman (2013) observe that the production and distribution of bottled water consumes roughly 1–2000 times more energy than tap water (p. 10). Discussing another industry, Wilk (2006) locates bottled water in the intersection between nature and technology (p. 310). Although standing water is unclean, technology has the capability to render it safe for consumption. When the modern technological world becomes impure, companies assure us that we can escape these perils through a sip of this natural resource. Many Witches use herbs to connect with the pre-modern natural world. Ironically however, many Witches can only connect to nature after driving to the grocery store, or opening a shipment from Amazon. Indeed, even Witchy Etsy shops who sell natural herbs rely on systems of global shipping. Spells on WitchTok represent the "neoliberalization of nature" (Castree 2008), as packaged herbs (among other commodified goods) are promoted as ways to connect with nature.

9. Conclusions

This exploratory study highlights how Witches engage with material and consumer culture through the social media platform TikTok. In the same manner as other platforms, TikTok represents a space where Witches find likeminded others, express outlooks, form community, and deepen their knowledge. Reflecting the general openness and visibility of all social media, WitchTok represents an accessible space. The specific infrastructure of TikTok, which provides gateways through the visible tag #WitchTok, promotes informative content through such tags as #BabyWitchTips, and has algorithms that funnel users from adjacent tags (#Spirituality, #Crystals) into deeper engagement with Witchcraft, also fosters this digital subculture.

WitchTok has the potential to represent a gateway for many to at least experiment with Witchcraft, though how many will actually become long-time practitioners remains to be seen. Although there is a long history within Paganism of younger practitioners being critiqued for their inauthenticity (Coco and Woodward 2007; Mathews 2021), with information and products being directly presented to Baby Witches by more senior practitioners, WitchTok could potentially bridge gaps within the community. Although there are ample instances of debate and hostility between users on WitchTok, many also express gratitude for the supportive community they have found. How this digital subculture continues to evolve, and the reception of novices especially, represents an important trend to track.

TikTok also foregrounds how Witches engage with material culture. Many videos make materiality a central theme, highlighting, for instance, what objects are needed on an altar and where to buy them. Even when Witches are not explicitly discussing theology (though this is indeed the topic of some videos), engagements with materiality represent vehicles for discussing (or learning about) magic and its workings. In spells for example, Witches rely on many natural ingredients. WitchTok reveals what intrinsic properties are associated with which materials. Witches collaboratively establish the meaning behind objects, such as the (variable) energies associated with lavender, or the (many) potential uses of water. In addition to discussing the inherent magical properties of objects, Witches also share how one can intervene in the magical performance, and how Witches can consecrate objects through cleansing, sealing, or manifesting one's desires in various ways. Through instructional videos, Witches both assert their expertise and learn from others. Finally, even when objects are not a central focus, users can see what a Witch wears or how their home is decorated, reinforcing a general "Witchy aesthetic". In all cases, Witches understand material objects as things which can mediate supernatural interactions with numinous forces.

Through videos of Witches shopping at thrift stores, promoting their own businesses, or comments asking where someone bought their cauldron, WitchTok demonstrates how

Witchcraft is deeply intertwined with capitalist consumption. In contrast to those who describe Paganism as a religion that rejects capitalism (Palaga 2016), WitchTok highlights the need for an expanded understanding of this community. Ezzy (2006), for example, suggests that "white" Witchcraft differs from "traditional" Witchcraft because the former is "consistent with consumer Capitalism" (p. 15). However, all forms of Witchcraft are seemingly consistent with consumer capitalism in some way or another. Believing that matter is imbued with life necessitates that Witches interact with objects, many of which must be bought. As a set of practices that one must learn, many Witches also position themselves as teachers, whose expertise comes at a cost. Through these figures, knowledge of Witchcraft itself is shaped by capitalist consumption, as the most appealing teachers attract the most followers.

The magic that Witches perform and share on TikTok might also explain the increasing appeal of Witchcraft. Through easy-to-follow steps shared on social media, one can discover how to satisfy a range of emotional needs, from feeling secure to finding love. Reflecting broader trends in religion, or rather, spirituality, consumers select from commodities to complete a broader project referred to as 'self-care' (Jain 2020). These commodities range from dietary and fitness regimens to religious practices. Indeed, even the smells that practitioners purchase and absorb have "spiritual applications" (Ganga Kieffer 2021, p. 298). Witchcraft offers handy tools to fulfill specific purposes. On WitchTok, 'tools' can assume both metaphorical and literal meanings. In the broadest possible sense, Witches turn to ritual practices as a tool to bring about comfort or fulfillment. In another sense, Witches also draw on physical objects—jars, herbs, incense, oils, and statues—as tools that will satisfy specific needs and desires. Branding Witchcraft in this manner, as something which can be consumed to solve particular issues, helps religions succeed in a modern, consumer-driven society (Rinallo et al. 2016; Ringvee 2017).

Another possible appeal of WitchTok is its breadth. Users share an identity as Witches, yet draw on a range of traditions and tools for inspiration. Jain (2020) notes, "consumers of neoliberal spirituality have a tendency to appropriate freely from different cultures and religious traditions, resulting in products meant to help them meet their personal goals" (p. 19). WitchTok demonstrates this eclecticism, as practitioners with various affiliations (or none in particular) borrow from across Pagan traditions and beyond. Users are exposed to diverse products, practices, and outlooks, and are encouraged to pursue that which 'feels right' or which will help satisfy a particular desire.

WitchTok's complex engagement with capitalism reveals an issue with which many religious communities are still wrestling. Pushing back against critiques that self-spirituality is vain or market-obsessed, Watts (2018) suggests that religious seekers have an ambivalent, rather than congenial relationship to late capitalism. Witches often elide, downplay, or legitimize their commercial interactions. Much as Watts stresses the need for nuance in understanding self-spirituality, WitchTok suggests a re-evaluation in how scholars position Witchcraft relative to commercialism. Rather than dismissing 'consumerist' Witchcraft as inauthentic, one must make room for this messiness and recognize that important outlooks are revealed through consumption. Lofton (2017) argues that in American Christianity, rituals were not supplanted by commodities. Rather, debates about rituals (what is needed, what steps to follow, and the desired outcome) "became articulated through the marketplace" (p. 64). Debates about proper modes of Witchcraft are similarly expressed through discourses about where to shop, what to buy, how to use products, and which teachers to trust.

As an emergent religion, Paganism is still negotiating the relationships between material culture (and consumer culture) and its cosmologies. Many Witches reinforce that certain consumer goods are requirements for Witchcraft. On WitchTok, this happens explicitly—stressing that particular items are the most effective for certain kinds of magic—and implicitly—replicating similar objects across videos. In contrast, some users challenge the suggestion that one needs specific tools—or any tools at all—and assert that Witchcraft and consumerism are (and should remain) separate. As mentioned however, even those

who reject certain 'fancy' items as requirements still accept that *some* commercial products are necessary. WitchTok is a space where these important debates will continue to play out. Similar tensions concerning the intersections between religion and capitalism are also playing out in other religions. The fact that modern Witchcraft is witnessing these debates during what is still a relatively early phase in its development makes WitchTok an all the more important space to observe this discussion.

Future Directions

Although WitchTok is a broad space, with many participants, activities, and outlooks, the present study exclusively explores engagements with materiality. Because people tag many types of videos using #WitchTok, including skits, dances, and rants, future research can hopefully expand understanding of how Witches use this space. Another aspect of WitchTok that invites deeper exploration is the importance of gender. Popular social media practices such as selfies are often coded as female (Abidin 2016, p. 4). More broadly, many platforms have higher percentages of female than male users (Khoros 2021). Roughly 60% of US TikTok users are female (Wallaroo 2021), and I believe this is higher on WitchTok. Concerning further ways that religion and capitalism intersect, scholars have also addressed the gendered nature of spiritual entrepreneurship (Ganga Kieffer 2020). Because females make up over 70% of Pagans (Berger 2019, p. 21), TikTok offers an important space for women to navigate identity, construct community norms, and build businesses.

A final area for future research concerns the importance of authority. In the examples provided here, I intentionally selected videos that ranged in terms of views, likes, and comments. For instance, a simmer pot from @calendulacrow was viewed 6000 times, while a similar one from @boujie_loochie had almost 400,000 views. Among the users that I followed for this study, some were bona fide influencers, with over a million followers, while others had a few hundred followers. Future research can explore the impact of popular videos, and the relationship between authority online and offline. Authority also intersects with business and commercial interests. Among Wiccan "religious entrepreneurs", although economic success sometimes translates into increased religious authority, this occasionally backfires, and delegitimizes that individual (Rinallo et al. 2016, p. 438). This narrow line that entrepreneurs must navigate reflects the prevailing resistance among Pagans to consumerism. The relational means of promotion that WitchTok enables may allow entrepreneurs to become successful while maintaining acceptance among Witches. The dynamics of becoming a successful influencer, in both the literal and figurative sense, represents a topic to monitor.

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Notes

1. Granted, while WitchTok is a broad space econompassing many traditions, algorithms *slightly* refract online spaces (Abidin 2021). TikTok feeds are *partly* open (periodically exposing Pagan Witches to Indigenous religions), but also self-selecting (*predominantly* exposing Pagan Witches to fellow Pagans), meaning that individual users have a somewhat curated experience that mostly puts them in contact with likeminded others.
2. More abstractly, Torang X. Asadi (2021) adds that digital concepts such as connectivity become "epistemological tools" shaping how practitioners understand cosmologies (p. 42).
3. Although incense is the most common way to cleanse, "sound cleansing" (ringing a bell over or near a jar or object) is also common.
4. Suggesting a hierarchy of baneful magic, this user explains that jinxes are intended to only cause "minor" inconveniences, while hexes are more severe.
5. Perhaps for some, another advantage is supporting a business owned-and-operated by Witches.
6. This symbol comprises a full moon flanked on either side by a waxing and waning moon.
7. Indeed, the only clue to this user's affiliation is several videos displaying Norse runes.

[8] This kit includes certain herbs (seaweed, "Jamaican pepper") with *suggestive* ties to the sea, as well as coral, sand, and shells, but beyond this, resembles other kits.

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