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ancestral hauntings and utopian conjurings: a fool's journey into COVEN-19, or Magicks for Unprecedented Times

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**ANCESTRAL HAUNTINGS AND UTOPIAN CONJURINGS:
A FOOL'S JOURNEY INTO *COVEN-19, OR MAGICKS FOR UNPRECEDENTED TIMES***

A Thesis Presented

By

MAEGAN CLEARWOOD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

ANCESTRAL HAUNTINGS AND UTOPIAN CONJURINGS: A FOOL'S JOURNEY INTO *COVEN-19, OR MAGICKS FOR UNPRECEDENTED TIMES*

Conceived in the wake of a global pandemic and the unanticipated need to create digital theatre, *COVEN-19, or Magicks for Unprecedented Times* as a devising project consisted of two witchcraft-inspired performances: a fall 2020 Samhain ritual and a spring 2021 Beltane ritual. The company of undergraduate and graduate theatre witches explored decentralized, iterative, slow, caretaking, queer forms of devising over digital platforms. The written portion of this thesis takes the form of a digital tarot blog: 22 (plus a bonus) interconnected essays and spells that interrogate feminist and queer theories as they pertain to the Coven's devising process. This digital format not only reflects the malleable nature of the creative process, but it is also a kind of praxis that invites the reader to take an active role in meaning-making and resists an objective, singular narrative. Woven through these tarot cards are threads of utopian futurity, situated subjectivities, and anticapitalist temporalities. The essays and spells are primarily in conversation with adrienne maree brown, Judith Butler, Audre Lorde, Jose Estaban Munoz, and Starhawk – engaging with these theorists as thought-ancestors in order to activate rather than regurgitate their knowledges of radical hope and nonlinear process. The tarot deck takes a situated, backwards glance toward these ancestors as it grasps at seemingly impossible utopian horizons of collaboration and creation.

Key Words: devised theater, digital theater, tarot, witchcraft, queer temporality, utopia

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DIGITAL THESIS LINK

This thesis was written as of 22 (plus a bonus) tarot cards, published digitally via Wix.com. Form and content are deeply intertwined with this project, so I have opted to present the thesis in its blog form rather than as a PDF.

These links are not accessible via Internet Explorer.

Please [access the written thesis here](#). If it is your first time navigating the website, select “start your fool’s journey”; otherwise, you can “jump back in.”

If the above link is broken, the archived version of this digital document is available via [the Way Back Machine](#). There are three tabbed links at the top of the page: The Deck, Appendix, and Little White Book. I recommend selecting the Little White Book if it is your first time reading the thesis, then moving on to The Deck.

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