

Multi-Media Magic:

**Further Explorations of Identity and Pop
Culture in Magical Practice**

Taylor Ellwood

Megalithica books



Stafford, England

Multi Media Magic

By Taylor Ellwood

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Foreword: A Question of Authority

I have to confess that this book is a personal one for me. It's an answer to the criticisms of *Pop Culture Magick*, but it's also a way of bringing closure to my time in academia. I started writing this book as I was processing a lot of the internal issues that had built up while I was trying to get my Ph.D. in Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice. I ended up leaving the program before I got the degree, stressed out from the politics and fed up with continually finding my creative voice blocked in favor of adhering to standards that I found to be dogmatic and overly conservative. I actually have to thank my advisor, who one day sat me down and painted in broad terms the life ahead of me as an academic. He knew better than I that my dedication was wavering, and explained the realities of academia to me. I realized at that time I had no idea what I really wanted to do with my life, besides writing. What I did know was that I didn't want to be in the academic lifestyle, spending eighty hours a week in academic pursuits, and with little time for writing the books I wanted to write. When I failed the exams a few months later despite extensive preparation, I took that as a final sign and left the program.

At the beginning of this project there were some feelings of bitterness over the academic experience. But as I continued to process and accept my own responsibility for my actions during that period of time, I started to find resolution in the writing of this book. I have drawn on a lot of the academic studies and topics that I continue to cultivate an interest in. Being able to utilize those resources left me feeling that I hadn't wasted three and a half years of my life. I could write this material without dealing with the bureaucratic tedium of academia, or the need to conservatively protect my claims with lots of citations and theory, but little of the practical application that I favor.

The result is a book I'm comfortable with that reflects some of my academic interests, but continues to focus on a rigorous application of practice over theory.

This book is a hybrid. The first four chapters are heavy on theory and discussion, though they include ideas that may be applied to your understanding of your practice. (Or, as Lupa teases, "Taylor's getting academic on your ass!") The rest of the book follows my usual style of developing practical techniques to practice magic. The first chapter provides my definition of what multi-media is and ties together the rest of the book (which, at first glance, may seem to be composed of chapters that have little to do with each other. On the contrary, there is a common theme among all the material). Chapter two examines symbolism, text, and the semiotic theory of multimodality as a way of fleshing out my definition of multi-media and how it can be applied to magical practice. The next two chapters deal with accurate and inaccurate definitions of magic from both academia and occultism. I won't pretend I've covered everything on that subject, but I have tried to present some of the theories that are available as well as critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of those theories. The fifth chapter addresses the criticisms that were leveled at my work *Pop Culture Magick* (which incidentally is being re-released with corrections and updates), while also providing some new directions for pop culture magic to go in. Chapter six presents some definitions and variations of evocation. Chapter seven focuses on using paintings to do evocations. Chapter eight examines the evocation of corporate egregores and offers my own approach to that. Chapter nine presents a fleshed-out examination of my concept of invoking the self into gods and people. Chapter ten explores concepts of invocation and identity in depth. Chapter eleven deals with the magic of clothing and its impact on identity. Chapter twelve examines the definition of the astral plane and how fandom interactions can impact

it. Chapter thirteen ends the book with an essay on banishing through detachment. The appendices feature a guest essay and some further essays from me on forms of magic that could also be considered explorations of different media. Some readers will probably be familiar with some of the essays that are republished from articles I wrote, but the material has been extensively revised to reflect ongoing experiments and a more detailed approach to some of the principles I've applied to magic.

Theory provides a foundation for the practices we engage in, but conversely those very practices lead to the needed experiences that inform the validity of theory. The real literacy of magic is found in the practices and applications of magic by a person to the world around him. It is also found in the evolution of magic. Magic evolves by utilizing not only the traditions of the past, but also by drawing on and incorporating the contemporary disciplines around it, such as new biology, quantum physics, and literacy. Authority is found through understanding the history behind a particular discipline, but more importantly being able to practically apply that understanding toward the evolution of a given discipline and the personal practices that one engages in.

In finishing this book, I can say that my authority (such as it is) is vested not in writing this book, but in actually practicing what I write about. It's fairly easy to come up with a theory that explains something away, but instituting the practice that goes with that theory into daily life is much more demanding. Expertise in a subject and even in the synthesis of different disciplines involves a lifetime of practice and may never be attained. When you feel certain you're an expert in a given subject, take a step back, for you are surely about to fall off a cliff that will reveal just how much you didn't know.

A final note: In this book, multi-media is approached from the perspective of utilizing different forms of

representation such as writing, symbolism, painting, identity, technology, etc. in the act of magic. I realize many people think of multi-media in a somewhat different way, generally involving news- or entertainment-based electronics. What I present is my own unique concept based on a broader definition of multi-media, particularly how it might be used in magical practice.

The citation style for this book is APA format. I have tried to draw on a wide variety of sources to present a diverse range of views. I also have my own perspective, which has its attendant biases. The reader is cautioned to take everything written with a grain of salt, and come to his own conclusions as to the validity of the arguments presented here. Most of all though, take the ideas and experiment with them, until you've made them your own.

Taylor Ellwood
Portland, Oregon
October 2007

Introduction by Vince Stevens

I had the pleasure of meeting Taylor Ellwood after reading his book *Pop Culture Magick*, an interesting work that looked at the concept that characters, ideas, and even jingles from popular culture were useful in magic and held power for magicians to explore. Such an idea was interesting to me as I had seen how pop culture had an effect on people, an effect often brushed off or even ignored by others. To see a magician write about it in such a serious and sober manner had me intrigued.

This book can be thought of as a sequel to that work, expanding on both modern multi-media's use in magic, and magical theory as well. This may seem rather unusual, even

in this high-tech age, and such pop culture magic may seem to be a new kind of discipline. Magic is rarely associated with video games, anime, or your old Lite-Brite from your childhood----it is more thought of as a discipline of old books, intense meditations, blended incenses, and anything but modern multi-media.

In short, pop culture magic may seem a little odd or weird to many magical practitioners----which is certainly saying something in an age of Chaos Magic, body modification rituals, and reconstructionism.

However, magic has always been about multi-media and the culture of the time. Magicians, shamans, and the rest have filled their senses with scents and images, related natural phenomena to complex webs of associations, and worked with many forms of information. Workers of sorceries didn't work as a separate culture but within their cultures, or as a subculture to their own culture.

Today, we often don't take our popular culture seriously. Seen (at times justifiably) as shallow, over-commercialized, and throwaway, magicians and regular people alike tend to not see it as anything worth pursuing. Yet our popular culture often has deeper roots (even if those producing it aren't aware of the references and archetypes that inspire them), and it does invade and inform our lives. You can't have a conversation about modern culture without having some knowledge and participation in it, and there are few of us who haven't heard of Anime, American Idol, or the Playstation 3--even if we complain about them.

If we're going to live in an age of multi-media and pop culture, then we might as well apply it. It's using up enough of our time, enough of our brains, and enough of our lives because we can't avoid it. Magic, as Ramsey Dukes noted in *SSOTBME*, is about wholeness, and we get nowhere by cutting off part of ourselves or our lives. We limit our magic when we decide parts of our life don't

apply to it, and magic is about achieving possibilities, not limitation.

Even our meanest pop culture derivations still come from the world we live in---and the world contains its gods, its magic, and its archetypes. The images of today and of yesteryear come from one source, whether you consider that to be human imagination or something beyond us. The images of our culture are our gateways to the powers in this world; as Patrick Harpur notes in *Daimonic Reality*, idolatry is not the worship of false images for no images are false--it is just false worship of images.

So, relax a bit, take some time off, and see where today's culture and media can lead you. You may find you have a lot of tools and ideas you can apply that you never thought of.

In a way, this is not a book about multi-media magic--it's a book about magic, which just uses tools and opportunities of our modern age. Magic is a living thing, and we might as well let it live with us right now--even when we're putting a DVD in the player or reading a comic book. Such engagement with our lives only strengthens and deepens our magic, and opens up new frontiers--or old ones we'd forgotten.

Vince Stevens, 2007

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Chapter 1: What Do You Mean by Multi-Media?

When I was nearly finished writing the first draft of this book, I faced a conundrum. For once, I didn't have a title for my book. I thought about calling it a pop culture grimoire, but that didn't seem to fit the concepts or practices I was discussing. I then thought I would call it *Media Magic*, until Lupa pointed out that most people probably defined media as "the news". In desperation, I put a poll on my LiveJournal, asking people what they thought when the word media was brought to mind. Needless to say the results of that poll confirmed what Lupa had said, and I realized that using the word media, without some qualifier, would only confuse people when they looked at the title of the book. I decided on the title of *Multi-Media Magic*, because that seemed to cover the wide variety of topics I'd focused on for this book.

If you'll briefly turn back to the table of contents and glance at the chapter headings, you'll quickly realize that I'm dealing with some disparate topics. You might wonder how academic and occult definitions of magic relate to pop culture or clothing magic, or how identity fits in with corporate entity evocation. Let me assure you that despite the casual appearance of difference with these topics, there is a lot of connection underneath the surface, which applies to what I think of as multi-media.

If you're a reader of my books, you know that this is usually the time I bust out a quote or two of what someone else has to say about the subject I'm writing about. You will find a lot of citations and some quotes in this book, but otherwise I'm simply going to offer my own definition of what I perceive multi-media to be. My means of backing it up will be found through your choice to read and explore the concepts found throughout this book.

First, though, I have to define the root word media. When I think of media, I don't think of a newspaper or Fox News with its nightly news report. Or, to be more precise, I think those are *forms* of media, but they don't accurately represent what the *concept* of media is. Another *form* of media is the clothing you wear to work, school, or play. Most of these clothes will have designer labels and sometimes images and symbols that represent a university, a sports team, or a corporation (Jenkins 2006, Kress 2003). A video game is yet another *form* of media (interactive media at that!), but once again doesn't necessarily encapsulate what media *seems to be* (Gee 2003). My definition is that *media is the mediation and presentation of information that is filtered into a specific format*. You are holding a form of media in your hands right now, which mediates information into a format of text (and some images) and presents that information to you in this form of a book (Kress 2003, Kress & Leeuwen 2001). Along with format, mediation also provides a perspective on the information presented, while filtering other perspectives out. I have mediated this text by providing citations and quotes which give you access to other perspectives on the subjects we're exploring, but those perspectives are filtered by my perspective to some degree, serving a specific purpose in my presentation of information. This kind of filtering occurs all the time in both obvious and more subtle fashions.

Now that we know my definition of media, we need to focus on multi. Multi is short for multiple; multi-media then is multiple forms of media. (Ironically media is the plural of medium, i.e. the form in which something is presented. Frex: the medium of television.) While I'm presenting information in a very specific medium, it's my hope that you'll be able to apply the concepts in this book to the different forms of media that you use each and every day. One of those forms, as I mentioned above, is clothing.

The clothes you choose to wear can denote your choice to favor one brand or subculture over another, but can also communicate that you have a position at a company with specific dress requirements. At the same time your clothing can also tell people something about the identity you present to the world, or it can serve as ritual tools that allow you to invoke or evoke an entity (depending on what your goal is). And these are just the ideas I've come up with off the top of my head. Just one form of media, clothing, has multiple uses and possibilities of mediation that it provides a person.

Still, my focus isn't just on working with forms of media individually. I also want to encourage you to explore the combination of different forms of media. In fact, the choice to mix magic with video games is a combination of two forms of media. Magic is a means of mediating information and presenting it to reality. So we mix that form with clothing and suddenly we have multiple media interacting together. By learning how to not only access and use different forms of media, but also combine them, we can make the magic we work more effective and practical. Modern technology and media provide innovative methods to direct the consciousness as it manifests its will into reality. We can integrate both contemporary and older forms of media together in a manner that maximizes the benefits of all of them, while also allowing more interpretations of reality to come into play and make this world a much more fun, and hopefully better place. As such the chapters in this book focus on a variety of media which may seem to be unrelated, but in fact can be related to each other meaningfully through the interaction and medium of the magician. Additionally, you have free rein as far as introducing forms of media that I haven't mentioned in this work.

You might, at this point, say, "Alright Taylor, I buy your definition of multi-media, at least while reading this book,

but why focus on defining magic? What does that have to do with multi-media?" Those are good questions to ask. My choice to define magic, and examine other definitions of magic, is done to show how mediated magic can be by a variety of people, while also showing what I perceive to be both some of the benefits and dangers of relying on such definitions to understand magic. As I mentioned above, magic could be understood as a form of media. Another form of media, though, one we mostly ignore each day, is definitions. I realize that when most people think of definitions, they think of a dictionary, which provides a brief explanation of what a word seems to denote about reality. But the dictionary itself is just a form. The activity or interaction that definitions provide, i.e. denoting what different forms of reality *seem to be*, is an activity that isn't focused on enough in everyday interaction. We ignore how often we limit ourselves by relying on what are often unexamined definitions for what words seem to denote. Magic is one such word, and even though I'm drawing on a variety of sources that actually attempt to critically examine what magic seems to be, there's a risk of falling into a tunnel vision by relying on any definition (mine included). As we'll see in chapters three and four, definitions provide an easy way of explaining away different forms of reality, without critically examining those realities.

At the same time, while it's easy to get stuck in your tunnel vision, it's also important to have definitions and rely on them. They help provide form and limitations to reality. Without those limitations we might have unlimited freedom, but we'd really have no way of doing anything. With absolute freedom there is no definition, no boundary, and no rules and thus no means to manifest possibility into reality. Ironically, perhaps, limitations free us far more than freedom itself does. Limitation provides boundaries and rules, but within those boundaries and rules we can actually manifest potential into reality (which is just what I'm doing

by writing this book). So definitions can be helpful, but they do need to be examined critically. They are perhaps the most subtle form of media, because they don't appear to be media and yet every day we use them. My choice to examine the definitions of magic isn't just a critical examination of magic itself, but also how we define it and incorporate that meaning into our lives.

I end this very brief chapter (a first for me) with the thought that multi-media is just another interpretation of reality waiting for the right people to make full use of the potential within it. My hope is that my definition of multi-media makes this potential clear to all of you, while also guiding you through the seemingly tangential nature of this book. Think of those tangents really as an interconnective web. Each point on the web is supported by other points, and together they form a pattern for interacting with reality and manifesting potential into your life and the lives of others around you.

Exercises

1 What are your definitions of media and multi-media? Do you agree or disagree with my definitions? Why?

2 Without looking through the rest of this book, make a list of some forms of media you interact with everyday. What do those forms of media provide you with, and are you passively or actively interacting with them? In other words are you just watching television or are you critically comparing your perceptions and knowledge with the information you're viewing?

3 Take a look at your list and ask yourself how you might combine different forms of media together and use them in your magical practices.

Chapter 2: Words, Symbols, Multimodality, and Magic

In *Space/Time Magic* and *Inner Alchemy*, I've written a fair amount about words and magic and how they interact. I take a different approach in this chapter, focusing first on what I perceive to be problematic aspects of overly relying on words and symbols in magic. My second focus, however, is to show how words and symbols can be used with other modes of meaning in a manner that effectively focuses on how they are used without diminishing the wonder and mystery of magic.

Problematic Aspects of the Use of Words and Symbols in Magic

For many different people in many different cultures, words have power. They are often perceived to provide both a connection to spiritual power and a form for it to inhabit. The way words are used can constitute a beneficial or negative act of magic. An example of how a non-Western culture approaches this shows in the following:

So in Gapun, certain words uttered in certain contexts are seen by the villagers to have the power to bring about certain outcomes. Words constitute direct links to spiritual powers, who will respond in desired ways if the proper words are said in the proper manner. The power of words is thus a creative power; those who have obtained verbatim knowledge of a chant, for example, can utilize the power of those words for their own purposes. Words are, in themselves, 'roads': ways of obtaining desired results. (Kulick & Stroud 1993, p. 40)

The description above, particularly the last sentence, sounds very similar to the process of magic that occurs in

Western occultism. The word becomes another technology that is used to shape reality and construct new meanings for people using them.

The word is acknowledged by academics as something which has power, but that acknowledgement primarily occurs in relation to social and economic settings, and so it's not a power which is tangible in a direct experience. Instead the power is felt indirectly in the social policies and circumstances that affect people on a daily basis, which in turn impact the psychological processes that govern how words are used and how their meanings are interpreted (Luria 1976). In other words, the meanings of words and the uses conceived for them vary from culture to culture, depending on how sophisticated the culture seems to be, which in turn affects the psychological (or cognitive) processes that govern the use of words. We see the process of changing word use and meaning at work through the practice of memetics, which is used to subconsciously control how a person reacts to words and symbols. (For an in-depth review of memetics, please see the chapter "Textual Alchemy" in *Inner Alchemy*.) The use of images and carefully selected words in politics, education, advertisement, etc. has certainly proven that the meanings people take from a message can be shaped for better or worse. Without critical and conscious awareness on the part of the people, it's much easier to have our realities shaped for us. This is evident in the rampant consumerism that most, if not all, people engage in (at least in postindustrial societies and particularly in America).

In another sense, the power of the word (and other forms of media) is denied by academics when it's applied to the concept that a person can use words and other media to directly shape reality. Many academics would argue that the people in Gapun are primitives who lack the sophisticated awareness to realize that words and symbols supposedly can't be used to directly alter reality. However,

the concept is embraced in many cultures, including Western cultures, and is a major component of occult practices (Dunn 2005, Ellwood 2005, Ellwood 2007, Gray 1970, Morrison 2003). Yet the claim that words and symbols can be used by the individual to shape reality is one perceived as a mistake of observation:

Few still mistake the observation that realities are symbolically constructed for the notion that any individual can construct any reality he or she chooses. The power of the symbolic construction might be logically in the hands of the people, but that does not put it practically in the hands of an individual. Symbolically constituted realities are just as much a part of the environment that a given individual must adapt to as are physical realities. (Rothenbuhler 1998, p. 58)

While Rothenbuhler is correct that symbolically constituted realities are part of the environment, he's incorrect in assuming that a given individual can't shape symbolic reality or reality in general. Adaptation doesn't just involve being shaped by an environment. It also requires shaping that reality with the tools that are available, including words, symbols, and magic. The fact that someone writes a text indicates that s/he believes s/he can have a direct impact on his audience, which is a manipulation of reality. By extension, walking up to someone and telling that person you hate his will also produce a new reality for you and that person (Though you might not like the results!). A person can construct any reality s/he chooses with symbols and words. But s/he has to contend with other people and corporations doing the exact same thing. The real question is, can someone sell their version of a desired reality to other people, and to reality itself?

Words, symbols, and images shape the reality of people every day, including physical reality. Images, symbols,

diagrams, graphs, and other pictorial symbols provide ways for us to interact and derive meaning from an event that words alone can't fully provide (Gee 2003). Advertisers and corporations in general have no problem exploiting other media resources besides words to perpetuate their messages: The picture of a flamebroiled hamburger will do more to stir up the hunger and imagination of a person than the words describing said burger. Greer explains that symbolic meanings provide a method for connecting with situations, people, etc. (2006). Symbolic meanings embody emotional, intellectual, and physical connections that people have with each other, the activities they engage in, and the meanings they create and negotiate with in their daily and specialized interactions (Magliocco 2004). People use symbols and words (as well as other forms of media such as music, film, and art) to change physical, mental, and spiritual reality, and not just on a social or economic scale. Physical reality may also be shaped by the practice of magic when combined with words and other media. However, to understand how that occurs we need to consider what is meant by the word physical.

Many people, when they think of magic, expect that the physical will be obvious and filled with special effects. However, magic is much more subtle in its effects on reality. The coincidences that seem to happen at just the right time are examples of magic aligning a possibility into reality (The difference between coincidence and magic is subtle. I feel coincidence only occurs when you haven't actually done any actions to produce a result. If you have done actions to produce a result and a seeming coincidence happens to fit to help you produce the result, it is magic bringing everything into alignment.). The manipulation of words, symbols, and other media are methods for accessing magic and forcing the hand of chance in the favor of the magician. A magician uses different forms of media to impact and influence the psychological aspects of the mind.

This is done by imprinting on the magician's consciousness symbolic associations (through visual symbols, sound, texture or other forms of media), which in turn shape the perspective of the magician and how s/he acts in a given situation. The symbolic associations provide triggers in the consciousness that can be used to evoke specific responses to a situation. We see this all the time with commercials. A commercial usually has a song, and certain visuals, all of which are used to create specific associations that trigger a response in a person (ideally that you'll buy whatever is being advertised). At the same time, the variety of media that is used also influences and impacts the external environment around the magician; because it provides the magician a means of manipulating that environment to manifest specific desires into reality (A good example would be using the symbolism of money to attract more money into your life, by either changing internal attitudes about money, or using the symbolism to create associations where more money came to you.).

The mistake that is often made by magicians who focus exclusively on symbolism is that of investing too much power into the symbols, without realizing that the real source of that power comes from within. Frank Herbert recognizes the problem that lies in words, and for that matter any form of media, when he notes that words have been used to explain away the meaning of a transcendental experience, and consequently control any iterations of that experience (1981). When you can explain away what occurred by pointing to words and symbols that only represent what occurred you've effectively castrated the magical act. That is the trap of defining magic as a symbolic act only, as I will discuss in further detail in chapter 3. Academics try to pass magic off as just a symbolic, repetitious act of ignorant primitives who invest power in forces that can't possibly be real. But do they have proof that the spirits, powers, etc. aren't real? For that

matter can the magicians who just view magic as a symbolic or psychological act really be sure that it's just that?

Herbert makes another point, one that all magicians should consider carefully, when he argues that words distort the ideas they represent by framing those ideas into systems. Systems, while providing routine and a sense of social order, can also create ignorance if people don't examine the beliefs they adopt when they rely on that system to structure their perceptions of the world (Herbert 1981). Words, symbols, and any other form of media or mediation can be powerful tools, useful for aiding the magician in what s/he does, but we shouldn't make the mistake of making the tool more powerful than the magician or replacing other paradigms of practicing magic with the symbolic one, at least not without a thorough examination of the underlying principles. Words have power because we give them power. We give them power consciously and unconsciously. We do the same with other forms of media. But remember that we give that power and those meanings to what we use to mediate reality; all of those tools only have the power that is given to them and only for as long as it's given. The reality of any connection with a spiritual force is that the real power is the acceptance of that connection on each end, as opposed to the mediation of the symbol used to aid the connection.

To illustrate my theory, let's take this discussion to a practical level. The calling forth of different magical forces/entities is an acknowledgment of the reality of those forces and the way they shape us. That we use media to mediate them doesn't mean that the entities/forces are symbolic or psychological aspects in and of themselves (as some magicians claim). What it means is that in order to interact with these entities symbols can be useful in helping the magician (and possibly the entities) process the experience. However, those entities, like the magician, can

exist in their own right and be an experience in and of themselves that can't be explained away as a symbol. One time, a friend did an invocation of an entity into another person. She thought the entity was just a psychological/symbolic state of being that the person was acting out, until to her horror she found out that the person didn't remember anything that had occurred and insisted that the entity had put him under while possessing him. He also told my friend that he believed in the objective existence of the entity. At that point, she realized that the psychological/symbolic paradigm couldn't explain away the experience as something that was subjective and easily labeled. At least for him, it was an experience that went beyond the symbolic level, into the spiritual level.

Webb makes an excellent point about shamanism that relates to the matter at hand:

Instead of seeing the bees as important only in terms of their greater underlying meaning; the shaman sees the symbol itself as the problem and the resulting anxiety (such as feelings of powerlessness) as the *byproduct* of the symbol, not its *cause*. Because of this, in the shamanic way of working, removal of the symbol and its energetic imprint from the psyche through ritual is required...through this model, a healthy emotional or physical state can be achieved instantaneously through the energetic extraction of the intruding symbol within the psyche. (Webb 2003, p. 155)

The symbol is treated as a problem, which actually fits into memetic theory. The replication of memes into a person's psyche necessarily brings a lot of psychic garbage and can in turn feed into a person's negative experiences and neuroses. The commercials we hear or see each day are memes. We get bombarded with messages of what we should buy and what we need, while also having pressure

put on our mental and emotional health which in turn impacts the physical health. The subconscious communicates through symbolism, but communication is a two-way street, so the anxiety a person feels can actually be the result of the symbol. In my own internal work, I've found that I've had to dissolve symbols to undo the emotional responses they can prompt. By doing so, the meanings are also dissolved, and the mental anxiety fades away. Another point Webb makes in the quote above is that we sometimes need to appreciate an experience such as seeing bees for the experience itself as opposed to underlying meanings. If we get wrapped up in the meanings of a particular event we may forget to enjoy the moment for what it offers. Contemporary culture is so saturated with symbolism that it's easy to forget that symbolism isn't the only kind of reality a person can experience.

We've invested so much effort into words and symbols and the different ways they allow us to construct reality that we sometimes forget the other resources we have available to us. Relying on words and symbols alone suppresses the potential a person has to evolve. Other modes of expression can offer different perspectives that expand our consciousness and understanding of the universe:

Investigating the subtleties of synaesthesia in oral cultures and exploring the multimodality of the new, globalised communications media can both be part of the process of recovering wasted human possibility. And to take another example, it is simply knowing that other cultures have resources for scientific and personal meaning very different to the genres of report and narrative in their classical modern forms that allow us the possibility of a science that makes human interest and the sources of the self visible. (Cope & Kalantzis 2000, p. 223)

To ignore other ways of knowing is to cut ourselves off from the full range of our magical abilities. This applies to exploration of other cultures, and to subcultures within our own culture. One of the reasons I integrated pop culture into magic, for instance, is that it offers different perspectives than more traditional approaches to magic. It's not a better approach, just a different one. The same principle applies to how we practice magic in general. Symbols and words are powerful, but they are only tools, and constantly interpreting everything we do or experience as symbolic takes away from the actual experience we're in.

Multimodality: Where Words and Symbols Intersect With Other Modes of Knowing

While much of the contemporary usage of words and symbols in magic is problematic, it's also important to acknowledge that words and symbols are effective tools that can be used quite potently in interpreting and shaping reality. However, that shaping usually occurs in conjunction with other modes of knowing. Multimodality, which is a sub-discipline of semiotics (Semiotics is the study of symbols.), offers some answers on what exactly is meant by other modes of knowing. Besides the obvious modes of speaking or writing words to express yourself, there is the use of physical gestures and noises, as well as interaction with the environment around you, which all have an impact on the meanings expressed. When you combine those modes and others together the experience is the processing of a multitude of expressions and perceptions (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). Even a mode such as reading actually contains much more than just the visual, linguistic, and cognitive decoding of meanings in words. Reading can also involve the reactions of the reader to the different sensations, such as turning a page, or holding a

book in the hands (Ormerod & Ivanic 2004). The point is that acts we primarily associate with symbols aren't just about the symbolic meanings, but can in fact be much more meaningful. For example, in *Pop Culture Magick* I had readers do an exercise where they compared a tarot card to a book. Besides the obvious ability to derive linguistic and symbolic meanings from both objects, the actual shape, weight, feeling of holding the card or book in the hands, the smell of the card and book, even the sounds of them, were all meaningful experiences that could shape how the chosen objects were interacted with. People have learned to discount the more subtle experiences for the most obvious experience of reading the text, but in that discounting they've also lost some of the finer appreciation for experiences of reality that are outside of symbolism. As an example, people generally prefer reading paper books over e-books, partially because there isn't screen glare, but also because an essential component of the experience is holding the book in their hands. Additionally, many people are conditioned to prefer the momentary breaks in the text that physically turning pages offers. Multimodality brings that kind of awareness back by reattuning people to those other forms of meaning making that allow them to negotiate the world around them.

Perhaps one of the best examples of multimodality is a novel way of reading land as text. Land may not be traditionally thought of as text, and yet it's fair to say that people interpret and "read" the environment around them all the time. Land is something we often take for granted and yet it's something that we are all intimately connected to. Blain and Wallis note the following about land, "People read the text – the landscapes, the stones – from their own location within layers of meanings, mythologies and a diversity of spiritualities. Yet the multiple meanings, a magical place, a place of conception, a place about freedom and resistance or ancestral memory – reflect a sense of

sacredness, and the recent exclusion appears to intensify this” (2004, p. 248). Land, in general, has a diversity of meaning associated with it dependent on how people think of it. A real estate agent might think of it as a potential sale, while an architect imagines the house that will be built on it, and a social scientist views it as a legacy of cultural heritage. No one meaning is fixed, and yet a variety of meanings can change how a person conceives of land and/or his attachment to it (Blain & Wallis 2004). The meanings we read into it are ones that occur as a result of interaction with it. Not all of those meanings are easy to reduce to words, and yet still the land has an effect on us that can only be appreciated fully in a multimodal reality. That appreciation involves opening the self to other senses, to other ways of knowing and allowing them to impact our consciousness in just as meaningful a manner as words and symbols do.

My point in referring to the article on land as text is that words and symbols can productively be used with other modes of knowing, when those other modes are recognized as having an impact on a person. The recognition of those other modes necessarily changes the relationship people have with symbols and text, but in a manner which makes the use of them more productive and recognizes that the power doesn't reside in the symbols or words, so much as it resides in the choices people make when using them. This is a very important distinction, because it recognizes that the use of a resource by a person is an agential, transformative, and motivated use to provide form and meaning that suits the interest of the person (Kress 2003). This is similar to magic, where a practitioner organizes resources and uses them to shape reality to his will. The power that informs the magical act resides in the process the practitioner uses to meet his agenda.

Words, Symbols, and Magic in a Multi-Modal Context

The way we construct a physical space sets up the way we construct its energetic, mental, and spiritual equivalent. For example, the use of punctuation and fonts in writing isn't only used to structure the physical reading experience of a person, but also how the reader processes the concepts mentally. When I use a comma in the writing, I'm signaling a pause in the flow of the sentence, but also signaling the need for attention. The use of italics, bold, and other graphical features can also change the context of the words (and are a good example of multimodality at work). The way we construct a physical space dictates how the attention is directed (Kress 2003), but in turn the mental space must redirect that information to make it effective, which is where symbols and words come in. Perhaps one of the most obvious forms of this restructuring is the use of definitions and entitling, i.e. the labeling or naming of something.

Schiappa notes that entitling allows a reader to locate a set of beliefs about the world that structure the existence of reality and the essence, qualities, or attributes of said reality (2003). Entitling and defining usually occur through the use of words and symbols as a way of setting the beliefs a person has about the world into a system that can be used to interact with the world. Other modalities can also be included and usually are; these include ritual, artistic endeavors, music, but also instinctual responses. Entitling allows a person to make sense of the meanings that are derived from other modes of knowing. But it also reduces those meanings into words and symbols as a way of bringing the abstract into concrete reality. Definitions, which are an extension of entitling, further reduce other modes of experiences into words and symbols, but also into what those modes of experience ought to be for a person. A definition has power when people come to a consensus about it and incorporate it into their social conventions (Schiappa 2003). The peril of that action is that it limits the

mindset of the person toward a particular view of reality which isn't open to other perspectives that could be relevant to a situation the person is dealing with. Mace also points out this danger when he notes that texts and tools arise from human intention, but are specific to the particular purposes they are used for. When they outlast those purposes, but are perceived as a dogmatic version of truth, both text and tool can hold back human evolution. The evidence of that in action is found in the repressive attitudes displayed toward scientific progression during the medieval era (Mace 1996).

To get around the static nature of words and symbols involves learning to use them innovatively, and with a degree of understanding that involves learning to let go of any preconceived notions of how the world *ought* to be. Magical uses of words and symbols offer such a degree of adaptability, in large part, because magic recognizes that reality is a variable experience, and any tools used to work with it are part of the variability of it and can be changed at a moment's notice. Both Bardon and Gray suggest that it's possible to incorporate a symbol into your consciousness by identifying with it to the point that you project yourself into it or externalize it in your behavior (1970, 2001a).

One of the very first methods used to make words and symbols into a more adaptable tool was developed by Austin Osman Spare, who created the contemporary usage of the sigil and the Alphabet Of Desire (AOD). Many readers are undoubtedly familiar with what a sigil is, and for those who aren't there are introductory texts (particularly on chaos magic) that can tell you everything you desire to know. The AOD, on the other hand, is a technique less widely known. I've used it in my own workings quite extensively and favor it as a linguistic-semiotic magical technique largely because it's a personalized system. The magician may not share his alphabet with anyone else, because it dilutes the power of

the symbol and exposes aspects of himself to other magicians. Each letter represents a connection a magician has to an internal or external force. The letter designates and defines the nature of the force, as well as the exact connection it has with the magician. In turn, this allows the magician to control what is worked with. S/he can use it to deprogram reactions, create emotional moods, obtain information, or use it for whatever other purpose strikes his fancy (Mace 1984). The AOD is adaptable to multimodality because of the personalization it offers. Instead of using a simple visual symbol, a sound, body posture, art, or some other form of expression can also be used, all with the intent of creating the highly personalized connection. Many of my paintings function as letters in my AOD. Although there can be symbols in the paintings, not all of them are overtly symbolic, but can and do represent the feeling I have in working with a particular force.

Another extension of the AOD is the development of magical languages. Dunn advocates creating your own magical language for similar reasons as I mentioned with the AOD. He notes the form of the language is shaped by the purpose it's put toward, so that a ritual language might require only a few phrases, but a communication language will require much more (2005). My experiences with helping to formulate the Wraeththu system of magic (Dehara) supports Dunn's assertion. In the process of creating a magical system, we had to also consider some of the linguistics. We did come up with a few phrases for ritual purposes. I developed Astale, which means "I invoke/evoke" (Depending on the context of the situation.)

My reasoning for using it, beside the fact that I liked the sound of it, was also that the Wraeththu probably wouldn't speak English. I did a spiritual journey where I met up with my patron deity and asked him if there was a phrase he'd like me to use when I invoked him or other Dehar and he told me this phrase. When I shared the phrase with the

group, we tried it and the standard English version of “I invoke/evoke” and noted a stronger response with Astale.

Video game developers of *Final Fantasy X* also had a similar experience developing a language for the Al Bhed people. Some of the designers of the game even took up using some of the phrases in their everyday activities as a way of helping them develop a better understanding of the characters they were developing. The designers had to create grammatical rules, so that the language would have enough structure that it could be used (Birlew 2002). The creation of a magical language is a useful tool. Dunn makes an excellent point when he notes that we need language to mediate our experiences, but the creation of a magical language allows us to mediate those experiences on our own terms, as opposed to consensual reality (2005). I’ve occasionally created my own phrases, sometimes to evoke entities, and sometimes just as a way of expressing a concept in a way that makes sense to me alone. Another practice you can use is to mix words from different languages together. While it may sound gibberish to some, this practice is similar to creating a magical language and can be effective as a way of turning linguistic rules and semiotic meanings on their heads, similar to the cut-up method Burroughs and others have used.

Burroughs’ work with cut-up is another excellent example of the intersection of magic, symbols, and words as modalities that can be used with other modalities. Two famous examples come to mind. In one case, he was insulted by the service he received at a café. He took a bunch of recordings of sounds a person might associate with bad service or negativity and spliced them with his voice muttering curses. He then walked by the café, several times a day, playing the recording on a portable tape recorder. Within a few weeks the café had closed down and a new business didn’t start there until a year later (P-orridge 2003). Another example was a cut-up of newspaper

headlines and some of his writing for *Naked Lunch*. One of the cut-ups was about a captain Clark who lost his life when his ferry sunk. Apparently, sometime shortly after he wrote this, an actual ferry captained by a man with the last name of Clark sank off the coast of Tunisia, with all hands lost (Odier 1969, Burroughs 1985). Like Burroughs, I've used cut-ups (and collages) to shape events and I've also noted that sometimes the cut-ups/collages predict events successfully (Ellwood 2007). Burroughs theorized that cut-ups actually allowed non-linear space/time moments to slip through: "I've made many cut-ups and then later recognized that the cut-up referred to something I read later in the newspaper or in a book, or something that happened... Perhaps events are pre-written and pre-recorded and when you cut word lines the future leaks out" (Odier 1969, p. 28). Burroughs felt that cut-ups revealed the nature and functions of words (Odier 1969). I'd extend that further and say they can also reveal the nature and function of symbols, images, and any other materials used in the cut-up. In utilizing cut-up techniques, I've found that taking anything out of its original context will alter the meanings and how reality is shaped. Future possibilities leak out when images, symbols, and words are taken out of their static meanings and placed in different locations. New meanings unfold, possibilities manifest, and consciousness is touched so that the future is no longer locked away but revealed and played with using the very tools that might otherwise lock it on a particular course. In this way we are able to use the basic tools of communication to rearrange the way reality unfolds for us.

Both Burroughs and I have also noted the parallels between the writing an author does and the events that occur in that author's life, or the predictions of future technology, years before that technology is available (Odier 1969, Burroughs 1985, Ellwood 2005). Some of that can be chalked up to writing what you know about, but some of

the “coincidences” in the lives of the authors or the successful predictions of future inventions are likely related to what I would consider magic. Burroughs, in seeing this phenomenon in action, with the cut-up and with his writing, consciously chose to steer his future, using writing as a medium to express what he wanted for his life (Burroughs 1987). He focused on creating a future for himself where he could have what he wanted, describing it in terms that allowed him to fully express how his future should manifest. I’ve taken a similar approach. I’ve used my personal journals to help me be aware of behavior patterns, but also as a way of writing desired possibility into reality (Ellwood 2005). Even in the non-fiction books, some of the writing has been purposely chosen to direct me toward a specific possibility. One activity that I picked up from D.J. Lawrence was to actually invoke my future self and have it write a letter to my present self, in order to create the events I wanted to manifest over the next ten years of my life. I read the letter, after my future self wrote it, and then put it in a time capsule and gave it to someone else to hold for me for ten years (Lawrence 2007). By having my future self write a letter to me, I could consciously steer myself toward a desired future, while hopefully avoiding some of the bad situations I might have otherwise brought into my life.

We are always connected to the overall consciousness of humanity, but creative activities enhance that connection, manifesting a bleedover effect. The author could be channeling information from other people or from future events. Presentiment or precognition isn’t unheard of and has actually been proven in scientific tests (Radin 2006), but I suspect that creative activities heighten that awareness, letting the consciousness of a person connect with the universe in ways that everyday interactions don’t allow. Creative, non-linear activities connect the artist with other people doing similar activities, even if those activities

occur at a different moment in space/time. When we open ourselves to our creative side, we are tapping more than just our own creative abilities. We are connecting to the consciousness of the universe, and it will respond in kind by giving us inspiration, as well as the means, through such modalities as we use, to manifest possibilities into reality. Because symbols are used to communicate with the subconscious they are an ideal method for expressing potentialities. Art, words, music, and other forms of communication utilize symbols and so provide the universe a way to connect with the magician.

Another example of this principle can be found in some interactions I'd had with a couple other magicians who I see very infrequently in person. We correspond with each other occasionally about our approaches to experimental magic. We're always astonished at the similarities we find in our approaches and can't fully explain how we've come to similar conclusions except to consider that in the process of doing magic, we were on some level connected to each other's consciousness. I'll usually find out what the other magician is doing when s/he happens to mention his latest experiment in email and find that it's similar to a project I was working on that I hadn't divulged to anyone. Each time this occurs it shows me that the universe is communicating with more than one person to get the information out there.

We can't escape symbols or words and I'm not suggesting we should. But even as we can't escape, nor should we give these tools too much power. They are tools we use to negotiate through internal and external reality, much as other modes are. But focus on only one mode of awareness inevitably atrophies the ability to work with other modes successfully. And just as this is true with how you express yourself to the world, it is also true in magical practice. Focusing on only one approach to magic is foolish, because it doesn't expose you to the full scope of what magic can offer. We may never learn all we can about

magic, but what we can learn is adaptability, as well as differing perspectives on how and why magic works.

The Multimodalities of Reality

Multimodality mainly deals with the modes of media, and how they overlap to produce multimedia events, “and in which it is therefore quite possible for music to encode action, or images to encode emotion” (Kress & Leeuwen 2001, p. 2). While multimodality is nothing new (just look at industrial music for instance to find music that encodes action), the realization that there are certain principles in common through various modes of communication is one that is often taken for granted. I’ve already noted the correlations that symbols and words have with magical activity, but a further exploration of how all this directly applies to magic is warranted.

For a person to be multimodal s/he needs to be able to use and integrate together various modes for interacting with the environment and the self. This involves obtaining access to the discourse (i.e. the socially structured knowledge) of a given mode. To use the mode effectively involves using the discourse to display that you know how to use it and insert it into appropriate events (such as a ritual). Those events sponsor interaction on your part and the part of other participants (Kress & Leeuwen 2001). Magic provides access to a variety of modes associated with it, provided we understand that those modes are different paradigms or belief systems used to structure how we interact with magic. To become a multimodal magician involves learning more than one modality of magic and can involve learning other disciplines and the modalities within them. In fact, I encourage readers to learn as much as possible about other approaches to reality, so that magical practice can be integrated into those approaches. Still, multimodality doesn’t begin or end with learning different

paradigms. Even the body itself can be a modality, and the culture a person lives in can profoundly affect how that person understands the world, which in turn impacts the modalities s/he uses (Kress & Leeuwen 2001). In other words, the magician needs to recognize that modalities don't just draw on accepted magical practices such as the Golden Dawn or the OTO, or on accepted labels, such as witch, shaman, or ceremonial magician. Rather, the modes of action draw on everything from our bodies (and the processes that our bodies go through), to the colors we see around us every day, to the spaces we inhabit and work in, to how we mediate the sensations around us. A mode is an intersection of attitudes, approaches to magic, and the ability to adapt everything around the magician to fit the circumstance. The multimodal magician uses the body, uses color, uses the senses, uses everything as a way of not only understanding what is happening, but also acting on it, to make reality manifest.

This is why the concept of working with the physiology of the body on a conscious level is a distinct possibility. Physiology is more than just a map in an anatomy book. It is also a system, a mode to be explored and experimented with. We may think of the body as a physiological vehicle that has a variety of automatic processes, but if we complacently agree to this notion we are ignorantly denying ourselves the opportunity to work with a mode of magic that does exist. Likewise when we sneer at the modalities of Otherkin or psychic vampires as being overly fantastic, fluffy, or unbelievable we ignore the potential possibilities that can be utilized by taking on such roles, even if only for a temporary time. (It should be noted, for the record, that I'm not saying that Otherkin in general only temporarily identify with whatever their nonhuman essence is.)

To bring it down to a more mundane level, even your clothing choices can be a mode of expression. Dressing up

in a three piece suit will get you a different reaction than wearing slashed pants and a colorful shirt. Clothing choices can denote the subculture a person belongs to. Even the choice of colors can indicate a lot to the informed observer, indicating anything from sexual lifestyle to membership in a gang. Our clothes speak for us in ways we may not recognize, but which surely impact the interactions we have with other people.

A multimodal magician realizes that identity is a temporary phenomenon. The labels we use to identify ourselves as this type of magician or that kind of worker are labels of convenience. We can take back the power behind these labels and use them interchangeably, switching from mode to mode, acquiring the abilities behind such modes through study of the available material on the role. By actively employing the social and magical practices for a given mode the magician can integrate that mode into his personality and call it up at any time to use it as needed. This is not to say that this is easy to do. You can't fake it until you make it. A person needs to be dedicated, spending some time learning and experimenting with the skills of a given mode. If you don't you might acquire some skills, but you still won't necessarily fully understand that modality. To illustrate that, I use myself as a good example.

My own experiences in academia involved assuming an academic role. This wasn't something I could accomplish in one day or even after several months or a year's time. A person really can't fake it to make it as an academic. Learning to be an academic involved learning to write as academics do, argue as they do, and incorporate myself in their practices to the point that I could identify myself as an academic. But I found the assumption of this role wasn't easy. It involved many hours of study, debate, and also trying to make myself into what an academic should be. I ultimately gave up, because I had to make a choice between

letting that role take over completely, or continuing to stay in the role of a magician and writer of my work. I chose the latter choice. Even though I didn't succeed in fully assimilating academia I did get some benefits from the experience that continues to impact how I approach situations.

While I was in academia I was exposed to the writing, practices, and expectations that surround taking up the academic lifestyle. All of these variables impacted my life and the modes that I was already using. My writing style changed, my stress level went up, and I had to learn a new modality of expected behavior and etiquette. Academic writing somewhat compromised my ability to communicate with non-academics. But I also had the advantage of not being stuck in that role. I've learned many of the skills that the role offered, but when it appeared as if that modality would consume my life, and it also appeared that I hadn't quite mastered some of the skills, I had to choose between continuing to attempt mastering that modality or continuing with the modalities of magician and author. The modality of magician, in particular, helped me find myself again. That is the one downside of attempting to learn a particular mode. If it's not compatible with your other modalities it can threaten to consume those parts of your life. One of the current modalities I've been assimilating, technical writer, is a much easier mode to work with than academia, because I still have time for my other modes.

Still, the skills I gained from academia have proven useful for the other modalities I'm a part of. I've learned the importance of citing sources through using a proper style guide. My experience teaching classes has helped me become a better presenter for workshops. My written language skills have improved because of the intensive work I've had to do on my writing and editing while in academia. The acquisition of skills from the academic mode will continue to inform my other modalities, even as

the tech writer modality has started to impact my modalities of writer and editor, providing me even more skills to improve what I can do. When skills have been acquired it's entirely possible to move from one mode to another or to create a new mode which is a synthesis of other modes that have been explored. My own work as a magician has been to synthesize other modes of knowing and action into how I do magic, which is why my approaches are only partially derived from standard magical theory. Other disciplines, such as literacy and media studies and the sciences, don't fall into the traditional mode of magic, but in becoming involved with them, I've found that they inform how I practice magic and open up many avenues I might not have explored otherwise.

Different modalities can transform the perspectives we have about life and the choices we make. Magic is an act of will, a choice to shape reality, and by using multimodality we don't let reality define us. Instead we slip from mode to mode, using our will to not only acquire a variety of skills and approaches to life, but also choosing those modes which are most useful for manifesting the will and achieving the desired realities we want. We can define the modes we work in, but in order to do that a lot more than just fake it until you make it has to be done. The mode has to be adopted, the rules learned, and then once understanding is achieved the rules can be bent, broken, or applied to other modalities. The use of cut-up as a magical technique is an example of combining the modality of a writer/artist with the modality of the magician. The magician who cuts hir hair in a corporate-friendly style, wears a suit and has a cubicle can still make that workspace into hir own magical space. The magician is in the mode of the workplace, but also inhabits other modes, such as the mode of having a professional look, or the mode of customizing hir workplace to hir comfort level. The

magician sculpts his identity to the environment around him, and changes that environment by doing so. We become the identity we have taken upon ourselves for that time and space, even as we shift out of that identity, to other identities, other modes of doing, when we move out of the moment when we needed that identity. Just think of how your personality changes when you go to work and then you go home. Are you the same person at work as you are at home, or do you act even just a bit differently? Does your energy change to fit the environment? If you answer yes, what you're experiencing every day is multimodality.

What multimodality ultimately calls for is a reshaping of our consciousness, recognizing that we all too often limit ourselves to a monomodal reality, identifying strongly with one label or role while sacrificing others. It's entirely possible to be all things and none, depending on need and desire. It requires a shift of perspective, however, so that the magician doesn't get so caught up in one role that s/he allows himself to be identified solely by that role. At the same time the magician must be able to assume any given role so that the interaction is genuine. It isn't enough to say I am this or that. Anyone can say that s/he is a magician, but this doesn't mean the person is a magician or understands the practices associated with magic. The person must actually comprehend the practices involved, as well as how to successfully apply those practices to the world around him. Without that understanding the person isn't capable of becoming anything beyond a dilettante. When mastery is accomplished, the mode that represents that mastery becomes another tool for the person to utilize as s/he sees fit, though even when mastery isn't realized, a person can still learn from the experience, as I did with academia. The difference however is that I failed to master that mode. I didn't fully understand it and I didn't embrace it to a point where I could understand it. I understood aspects of it, but not the totality.

This is why it's essential for the magician to expose himself to as many different styles and practices of not only doing magic, but realistically anything and everything that is done by other people. By learning as many skills and practices as possible, the multimodal magician is able to become anything (For example, I could become an academic at some point if I were to return and choose to stick through the rigors of academic humiliation tactics.), to assume any role that is necessary to accomplish the job at hand. Also, by simply having the knowledge on hand about a particular mode, the magician can use that knowledge to understand why other people act the way they do, and then use that knowledge for his advantage. We might call this tactical magic (No relation to *Tactical Magic* by Seth.), being a magic that takes into account all the circumstances at hand and adapts those circumstances to achieve the most effect. But to gain tactical skill does mean learning more than just one set of skills. It involves incorporating as many skills as possible and then learning to use them selectively, when and where they are most useful. By doing this we become multimodal in our approach to life.

Conclusion

Multimodality extends beyond words and symbols, and so it provides us a way out of the trap of reducing magic to mere symbolism. While it's true that language and symbols play an integral role in communication and in our experiences, it's also true that other modes of knowing can also convey something that words and symbols alone can't quite explain away. The different modes that people engage in every day provide experiences that go beyond what language can define. It is in multimodality that we have not only the social evolution of humanity, but also the evolution of magical practice into a methodology that uses

disciplines and modalities to effectively shape reality to a person's will.

Exercises

1 Try to create a magical language of your own. You could base it off of an existing AOD you've developed or come up with something new. Dunn's book, *Postmodern Magic*, has some useful exercises which complement this exercise.

2 Do you consider yourself a multimodal magician? If you do, in what ways have you incorporated the various modes into your magical path?

Chapter 3: Definitions of Magic I

Magic, as both a word, and as a spirituality, discipline, field of study, media phenomenon, and a force has been defined in many different ways. Magic isn't an officially recognized discipline or field of study within academia, though it has been consistently studied and wrestled with by academics for as long as academia has existed. It isn't a religion in and of itself, but it can be utilized in religious ceremonies. It has traditionally been an underground field of study, but the resurgence of interest in the mid-twentieth century and the advent of online schools at the turn of the twenty-first century have brought it into more of the public awareness, for better or worse. Magic as a multimedia phenomenon has ranged from stage magicians doing tricks, to the debunkers trying to disprove paranormal activity, to pop culture shows such as *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* which offer sensationalistic renderings of what magic could be. Finally, magic as a force has continued to pervade the superconsciousness of humanity as a

worldwide phenomenon; there is a word for magic in pretty much every culture (O'Keefe 1984, Bonewits 1989). It continues to exist in contemporary cultures that have sophisticated technology. In that context, it provides alternate perspectives on reality.

So why yet another definition of magic, and one in a book titled *Multi-Media Magic*? Aren't there enough definitions out there? There's a funny aspect to definitions that is rarely realized: Just because something is defined doesn't mean the definition is true, though it may be valid. Any person, me included, who defines magic has his own agenda for that definition. A definition represents a specific perspective on an issue and is laden with all the bias and subjectivity of the person offering it (as we'll see further throughout this book). In other words, a definition is just an opinion. Edward Schiappa explains that definitions are linguistic propositions situated in history and dependent on social interaction to have validity. They're based on beliefs and as such are always subject to change (Schiappa 2003). Because definitions are shaped by belief they aren't really facts. They are situated in the exigencies (i.e. problems) that create the need for them, but also reside in the context that informs the agenda behind the definition. Even a definition of water that states that water is wet and composed of two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule is a definition based off a perception of what water seems to be, and a belief that the perception is objective and correct. A good point to remember about objectivity and science is the following,

Science can never establish absolute, objective truths because, on the one hand, it is itself a product of mental structures which are themselves relative; and...its method of observing produces that very 'objective reality' it is trying to explain... There are no facts independent of the

perspective from which the mind views them. (Harpur 2003, p. 200)

Because we mediate reality through our perceptions there will never be entirely objective definitions. Instead definitions become fact by consensus, wherein everyone agrees that each other's perception and belief seems to mesh with everyone else's (until someone disagrees and the definition needs to be tested to verify if it still holds water). This is illustrated in the many scientific "facts" that have been revised or completely overturned over the centuries that science has reigned supreme.

The exigency and context need to be considered carefully in choosing to accept a definition about something, especially a subject such as magic. What is the problem that magic represents (or is related to) and how does the definition remedy that? What is the context, i.e. who is offering the definition and how does the background of that person affect the validity and/or truth of that definition? These are questions that need to be asked because they inform not only how we define something such as magic (and who accepts those definitions), but also determine the uses we put magic to. By employing critical thinking, which involves questioning what is presented to us, we can consciously determine our own definition(s) of what something seems to be. The reason why many people don't consider the bias and subjectivity of definitions is because they focus on one word, *is*, which denotes essence. So if I tell you magic is this or that, I'm telling you the essence of magic--or am I? Perhaps instead I'm telling you what something ought to be. Consider the word ought and the implications of it.

Ought involves what something should be, as well as why it should be that way, "Definitions put into practice a special sort of social knowledge – a shared understanding among people about themselves, the objects of their world,

and *how they ought to use language* [italics are mine]” (Schiappa 2003, p. 3). A definition is also based on the context of the person doing the defining (i.e. is this person an expert? Does this person have knowledge others do not? etc.), yet rarely do people question and ask themselves if something really ought to be defined the way it’s defined. However, this is because definitions are treated like facts, as opposed to being treated as value statements. A fact is supposedly situated in objective reality, whereas a value statement is a subjective proposition about reality (Schiappa 2003). The problem with objectivity and subjectivity is that such distinctions are arbitrary (and subjective!) when we rely on people to determine them. A question I often ask myself is if I can really perceive an objective fact. The answer is invariably to this day a solid no. I have yet to perceive or experience an objective fact (though perhaps some of you have). My experiences of reality have been subjective, filtered through my perceptions and conditionings. While those experiences are impacted by other people, I still interpret them based on my perspective (though changing reality tunnels can broaden that perception). Even the ability to sense the physical world is based on a subjective interpretation of the information I receive from what I sense — hence why I may see a particular ambivalent shade as purple, while another perceives it to be blue.

Another problem with definitions that is rarely focused on is that definitions are labels or names. When you name something you can control it, or at the least control the perception others have of it. So if someone tells me what magic is, they are naming magic and also using that name to categorize it in a way that makes it controllable. In turn, this limits the perception of what magic can be. This limitation is good because it provides a structure for understanding magic, but it’s bad because it can be very hard to evolve that understanding into new ways of

thinking/practicing magic. When people grow comfortable with a way of understanding the world, they resist change because that change can threaten their understanding of themselves and the way they live.

In reality, I doubt any definition of magic, mine included, is really accurate. Such definitions can describe aspects of magic, but they can't measure it, "All the measurements in the world will bring us no closer to understanding the true nature of the world, or tell us how to behave responsibly, spiritually, and properly within it" (Heaven & Charing, 2006, p. 5). Words have a reality all their own, but they don't fully describe the other realities we experience. They offer ideas and concepts, but we must be wary of accepting those as wholesale truths. As I mention in the first chapter, magic is mediated by the different definitions we use to explain it. The words that are used impact the understanding a person has of what magic seems to be. This is important in the sense that words can never fully convey a concept and can in fact limit apprehension of it.

The following advice is useful in considering the impact of words and definitions:

All words are plastic. Word images begin to distort in the instant of utterance. Ideas embedded in a language require that particular language for expression...Danger lurks in all systems. Systems incorporate unexamined beliefs of their creators. Adopt a system, accept its beliefs and you help strengthen the resistance to change. (Herbert 1981, p. 342)

To some degree Frank Herbert is correct in noting that words can distort ideas and experiences. Words are representations of an event, though in another sense they are experiences in and of themselves. I've included the reference to systems because magic is often described in terms of systems or paradigms. Sometimes by participating

in a system we don't think to critically question it. We are so involved in it that we can't see the problems with it. The same applies to the language we use to describe those systems. Learning to question the systems that we use to structure and define the world provides all of us opportunities to grow beyond the limitations that those systems can impose on us.

I want to focus on showing some definitions of magic that I feel aren't accurate (as well as explain why they aren't) and then provide, in the next chapter, some definitions that I find workable. Please note that all I am really offering is my opinion about the definitions. I think all of the definitions in this chapter are valid definitions and I highly recommend that readers read the sources I reference to form their own opinions. Take a lick of salt along and stay skeptical. My conclusions aren't necessarily yours, nor do they need to be. The one mistake I want to avoid is using criticism only as an end to itself. When this happens, the opinion of the critic is treated as if it's a fact, instead of being examined carefully for how and if it applies to the world and to the person reading the work (Cleary 1994). Criticism, when done for criticism's sake, has no use in these discussions. My goal, in presenting these criticisms, isn't that you treat them as fact, but that you question why I came up with these criticisms and if they are really valid in determining and understanding the definitions of magic.

Note: The use of the word magic, in this text, is contextual. When I refer to magic in context to paganism, I refer to a religious use of magic, where magic, in itself, is used primarily for working with deity and for some internal transformations. Magic, in paganism, is not as important as the actual religious beliefs. When I refer to magic in occultism, I'm referring to the practical use of and experimentation with it, to help the person evolve and to create practical changes.

Academic Definitions

There's been a lot of theorizing about magic in academia. Some of it is accurate and some of it isn't. The accurate theories tend to come from people who've actually decided to observe and/or practice magic, even if only for a short time, while the inaccurate theories come from academics that haven't really done any magical work and aren't qualified to come to the conclusions that they came to. Worse, the work they've done isn't based on any actual texts of occultism, but instead is either based off of random theoretical propositions that illustrate no familiarity with magic (O'Keefe 1983, Vygotsky & Luria 1993), or on previous theoretical work (often dated to the early twentieth century) by other scholars (O'Keefe 1983, Vygotsky & Luria 1993), or on studying newspaper horoscopes, which although astrological, bear no real relevance to occult work (Covino 1994). In many cases, no actual occult texts have been examined within the academic literature on the subject of magic. It's also important to note that until recently most anthropological work focused on "primitive cultures," where magical practice is more overt. I suspect that the anthropologists held the mistaken belief that Western "civilized" culture had no belief in magic. The definitions offered in this chapter are flawed by the lack of familiarity with the subject. This creates a serious flaw in the research because source material isn't being used, with no explanations offered as to why it's excluded (I have tried to cover a lot of the academic material that is inaccurate, but there is a lot more that could easily be drawn on from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth century, such as Emile Durckheim's or Levi Bruhl's works.)

Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria and Magical Thinking

Vygotsky and Luria's work is a good example of what is ultimately an uncritical attempt to define magic (Note: Vygotsky and Luria wrote in the early twentieth century. The book I referenced was a translated version of their work.) The focus initially is on magical thinking. Vygotsky and Luria's definition argues that magical thinking is the result of an insufficient development of technology and reason, which results in a need to gain control over nature (Vygotsky and Luria 1993). In other words, magical thinking doesn't recognize the reality of the world, but tries to impose the practitioner's thoughts on the external environment. The practitioner seeks to gain control of both the internal and external world and utilizes magical thinking (and magic) as a method for accomplishing this purpose.

Vygotsky and Luria defines the term magic as,

Magic reflects not only an attempt to dominate nature, but an equally strong attempt to control one's self. From this point of view, we find in magic the embryo of another, purely human form of behavior: an attempt to gain control over reactions. In principle, magic produces an identical effect on the natural elements and man's behavior: an attempt to gain control over reactions. Magic, to the same degree, casts a spell on love and rain. That is why we see in magic in its undeveloped form both the future technique for controlling nature and the cultural techniques for controlling man's own behavior. (1993, p. 134)

For Vygotsky and Luria, magic is the same as magical thinking; there is little difference in the definitions. They associate magic with primitive cultures, but also perceive it as an indication of psychological development on the part of these people, so that through the use of magic the people become somewhat sophisticated. The people aren't fully aware of laws of science, believing that casting a spell

causes rain to occur. According to these researchers, these people are uncritical thinkers. They rely on supernatural forces to effect changes, believing that the laws of nature parallel the laws of thought. Vygotsky and Luria also argue that magical thinking is the result of the lack of technology and that control of nature involves real, logical, and technical thinking and skills, as opposed to the irrationality of mysticism and the imagination. Rational, logical, critical, and technical thinking is privileged over magical consciousness or thinking, which while somewhat sophisticated, nonetheless doesn't have the magical thinker in touch with the realities of the world, let alone the sophisticated, psychological processes that categorize a critical thinker. With further development of technology, magic and magical acts are left behind, while the development of writing, language, and other technologies serve to push the culture forward into critical thinking (Emig 1981, Vygotsky & Luria 1993).

The first problem is the association of magic with uncritical thinking. In opposition to critical thinking Vygotsky and Luria have used the terms "magic" and "magical thinking" to describe primitive or unsophisticated thinking. Magic is seen as something which is only present in a culture that doesn't have sophisticated technology or literacy skills. (Literacy isn't just the ability to read and write, but also involves making meaning, critical thinking, and increasing reliance on multiple forms of media beyond text.) Magical thinking (or magical consciousness) is perceived as encouraging ignorance and enforcing a circumstance as opposed to accepting a truth based on critical examination (Covino 1994). The assumption that magic indicates an uncritical approach to life doesn't work, given the purpose that magic is used for, i.e. to solve a problem. Clearly there is some kind of critical thinking occurring if a person finds a need to use magic to solve a problem. The practice of magic isn't an instinctual response

to a situation. It is a thought out response, and the recognition of a methodology that can be used to obtain specific results. When a person consciously chooses to do a magical ritual for resolving a situation, s/he is consciously aware of why this is being done and why it will work. This understanding is based off previous experiences, but also a critical understanding of how and why magic is a viable solution to a problem.

The other issue with the primitive thinking argument is the idea that only certain types of thinking and values are civilized. A lot of the focus in Vygotsky and Luria's work was on cognitive psychology, and specifically the cognitive thinking functions that denoted, according to them, a civilized person. The use of technology, including literacy skills such as reading and writing, is an indication of highly developed cognitive thinking. Unfortunately, their definition of magic implies that people that practice magic—or, for that matter, have oral rather than written traditions-- don't have higher cognitive thinking.

Vygotsky and Luria were evidently not aware that people in their own “civilized” culture and time continued to practice magic (See Groberg 1997, Carlson 1997, Rosenthal 1997, Young Jr. 1997, Hagemester 1997, Vanchu 1997). Anthony Vanchu makes the following point,

In fact, the occult proved a curiously palpable presence in early Soviet culture. It manifested itself, however, not in a distinct set of esoteric beliefs per se, but rather as a *belief system*; that is, a way of relating to science and technology...Occult beliefs and scientific thought are, in fact, generally related: both function as cosmologies, systems of knowledge and belief through which humans seek to understand the material world, in some cases, to comprehend or gain access to what lies hidden from everyday perspective [*italics are his*]. (1997, p. 203)

Vygotsky and Luria made the mistake of ignorance, assuming that magic was only part of a primitive mentality, as opposed to a force that was still alive and well in their own culture. In doing so, they ruled out the possibility that magic could be used by people that were more “civilized”.

Vygotsky and Luria’s work occurred in the early nineteen thirties, but it would have a profound effect on the association of literacy with cognitive thinking functions. Later research focused on their work would disprove their theories on how cognitive thinking is learned. Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole went to Africa and examined the Vai, English, and Arabic literacies of the Vai culture to determine whether literacy had a role in the development of cognitive thinking. To their surprise, they found that it had a much smaller role than expected. Illiterate people didn’t significantly differ from literate people in the memorization and problem solving tasks that Scribner and Cole had them do. They displayed similar cognitive abilities to literate people, even though they didn’t have literacy skills like reading and writing (1982, p. 252). The sophisticated cognitive processes of critical thinking aren’t based on literacy alone. Additionally the cognitive perspective of literacy as indicative of critical thinking ignores the social values that define literacy. What is literacy for one person isn’t always literacy for another, in large part because the social values that define literacy vary from person to person, with one person valuing the ability to write a letter, and another person valuing the ability to be literate in technology or doing specialized reading/writing (Brandt 2001, Grabill 2001).

By not acknowledging the social values that people place in literacy, the perspective that it goes hand in hand with the development of critical consciousness and cognitive thinking ignores the damage those social values cause. When scholars refer to magic and equate it with uncritical thinking and primitive mentality they are judging

the social values that are embodied in a culture that utilizes magic, without necessarily attempting to understand that culture. Consequently the argument that magic or magical thinking/consciousness is uncritical and primitive is in error, and worse, is an uncritical and ethnocentric social value judgment. That alone is reason enough to question the validity of the definition Vygotsky and Luria offer on magic.

A related problem involves the definition they offer on technology. They argue that the development of advanced technology will separate the laws of nature from the laws of thought, which in turn will cause magical practices to die out (Vygotsky & Luria 1993). Language and writing are two forms of technology that Vygotsky and Luria associate with the development of culture from primitivism, and yet these two advanced technologies are used by people who call themselves magicians (as is evidenced by the prolific literature on the subject of magic). Magicians have also developed their own technologies as well as adapting other forms of technology to their needs. For instance there are technologies that involve the manipulation of symbolism. An ability to read and comprehend those symbols is essential to the critical thinking skills (as Vygotsky and Luria define such matters).

One example of a symbolic technology is tarot cards. While originally used for the purposes of gaming, eventually they were appropriated into an assortment of magical practices (Dummett 1980, Decker, DePaulis, & Dummett 1996, Decker and Dummett 2002). These practices include divination, which is the ability to “read” the future, psychoanalysis (Greer 1988), and even to cast a spell by using the symbols on the cards that represent specific influences (Renee 1992, Ellwood 2004).

People adapt technology to their own needs. The icons and symbols of pop culture are a form of technology by Vygotsky and Luria’s standards. The adaptation of pop

culture into magical practice is a case where people have taken available technology and applied to it specific circumstances and needs. They do this with the supposition that use of this technology in a particular way will make their lives better or will allow them to accomplish specific goals. That people can do this indicates an application of critical thinking skills and cognitive functions. The difference is that this application involves shaping both internal and external reality through manipulation of these technologies.

The continued application of magic in contemporary times and in contemporary cultures suggests that it is still a useful form of cognitive activity that enables a form of empowerment for people that goes beyond internal management of the self. That some people consistently choose to believe that external reality is manipulated by magical actions indicates that at least for those people magic works; otherwise, why would they persist in their actions? In other words, it's valid to consider that magic actually has an external effect on reality and that it is used for that purpose as well as for internal management.

Daniel O'Keefe, Social Practice, and Ritual

In *Stolen Lightning: A Social Theory of Magic*, O'Keefe argues that magic is a social practice and argues that rigidly scripted symbolic performance and linguistic symbolism are central to the use of magic (1983). I disagree with both of O'Keefe's postulates. Some occult practices emphasize a spontaneous approach, which may or may not employ symbolism. Others have scripted rituals, but these rituals are open to interpretation and change. When symbols are used, they are used in a variety of ways that don't involve a strictly scripted action, though there can be some scripted actions that occur, depending on the system of magic a

person works with. For now, let's move back to what social practice is.

A social practice is defined as:

By a practice we mean a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge. We use the term 'skills' to refer to the coordinated sets of actions involved in applying this knowledge in particular settings. A practice, then, consists of three components: technology, knowledge, and skills... Whether defined in broad or narrow terms, practice always refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge to accomplish tasks. Conversely, tasks that individuals engage in constitute a social practice when they are directed to socially recognized goals and make use of a shared technology and knowledge system. (Scribner & Cole 1982, p. 286)

Social practices are engineered to guarantee entry into a community, are created by the consensus of the community, and involve all acts of communication that occur toward socially recognized goals (Wenger 1998, Barton & Hamilton 2000). Communication involves using a specialized discourse (i.e. technical terms and specialized uses for some words) that must be mastered by people seeking to join the community. Finally the social practice a person has mastered is demonstrated by the technology that the person must become proficient in. Technology varies from community to community. In a computer programmer community knowledge and ability with different programming languages is essential for belonging to that community, but in the magical community that technology may not be as important as compared to knowing how to use runes or an athame.

Magic can be considered a social practice. It has a specialized usage of language, i.e. discourse. In fact, it has

several discourses because of the diversity of magical practice. Practitioners can and do utilize different forms of technology in their practices. This technology ranges from language and computers to the use of ritual tools, all of which are used to complete tasks that in some circumstances meet socially recognized goals. In other circumstances the goals might not be socially recognized, but may still be valid for the magician. Community and group rituals do occur, which bring magicians together, but a lot of them occur in what is considered the pagan community rather than mainstream society at large. Pagan festivals are also events which bring magicians together for the purpose of practicing magic, as well as other purposes (Pike 2001).

However, magic doesn't always fit the definition of a social practice. Many magicians are solitary. They practice magic alone, though they may discuss it with other knowledgeable practitioners. Not all magicians identify with paganism as a subculture. Paganism tends to be viewed as a religious activity, which puts magic second to religious work with deity. Magicians, on the other hand, put magic first, and so might associate with pagans, but don't necessarily identify themselves as such. There is a lot of variety in magical practice in terms of why it is practiced, and the goals it is used for. For instance, I am an experimenter of magic. My main reason to practice magic is to experiment with it, to create new techniques and improve existing ones. Other people have other reasons for practicing magic, which range from being a part of a person's spirituality or religion to the simple reason of wanting to achieve a particular goal and using magic to achieve that goal. Finally a lot of magic is not done on a recurrent basis. It does, however, involve a specialized discourse, acquisition of skills, and adaptation of technology, but the magical community is much looser than a religious community and doesn't rely nearly as much on

patterned, repetitive approaches as O'Keefe and other scholars believe.

One reason it is assumed that magic is so scripted is because of the word ritual. While ritual is used in magic, what it means to a magician and what it means to a scholar are very different (which illustrates my point about definitions again!). To get a sense of these differences some definitions of ritual are provided below:

Ritual is sacred space. Mircea Eliade discusses how the creation of sacred space is equivalent to the creation of a world, "Revelation of a sacred space makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity, to 'found the world' and to live in a real sense. The profane experience, on the contrary, maintains the homogeneity and hence the relativity of space" (1957, p.23). Sacred space is the creation of a world, a mythology for the person to interact in. The world in sacred space is removed from the mundane world by the use of ritual to mark the entrance into a world where reality can be changed.

"Ritual is then described as particularly *thoughtless* action-routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic and therefore the purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expression of logically prior ideas" (Bell 1992, p. 19). This particular definition of ritual would mechanize it. It fits in with O'Keefe's idea of magic as rigidly scripted action (1984). Catherine Bell also points out that rituals involve practices, i.e. cultural activities and that through these practices cultures are renegotiated (1992). In her paradigm, rituals are used to signify cultural standing and reinforce particular approved patterns and beliefs.

"In ritual, it is probably safe to say that no act is purely manipulative or purely disinterested. Ritual acts of offering,

exchange and communion appear to invoke very complex relations of mutual interdependence between the human and the divine. In addition, these activities are likely to be important not simply to human-divine relations but also to a number of social and cultural processes by which the community organizes and understands itself” (Bell 1997). Ritual is a way of connecting with the divine, the past, the environment, the community and the sense of self.

“Obviously, ritual is a formal mode of action; obviously ritual emphasizes symbolic action over technically instrumental action; usually, ritual has something important to do with social relations and social orders” (Rothenbuhler 1998, p. ix). Rituals are symbolic actions constituted by social communications and an affirmation of social hierarchies. Eric Rothenbuhler also explains that body movements are central to ritual and have significance and meaning independent of the actual utility of the movement being done (1998). In other words, the meaning of movement in ritual is symbolic.

But is ritual really all of these things? It depends on the definition that’s accepted. For Bell, the definitions apply to what she thinks ritual means and to a degree she’s accurate. If her definitions of ritual and O’Keefe’s definition of magic are applied strictly to religion, then those definitions are accurate. Religious rituals are strictly scripted repetitive rituals that seek to reinforce social values and beliefs, while also creating a sacred space for a person to feel connected to the divine. But if you apply that definition to magic, it’s mostly inaccurate except in cases where magic and religion are mixed together.

Rothenbuhler’s definition relies on what he thinks is obvious: that ritual is about symbolic action. He even assumes that movement in a ritual is symbolic. But is his definition as obvious to other people as to him? Rituals can

be symbolic actions that reinforce social values and hierarchies, but not all rituals are used for that purpose. Not all symbolic action is focused on achieving a social goal, or reinforcing social values. Some rituals are even driven by a desire to break social values. Movement also needn't be symbolic in a ritual. When people dance around a fire, with drumming, they are enacting a ritual of some sort, but to read meaning into their movements is to take away from the power of the ritual. When we assume that movement has meaning we take away from the mystique and power the movement may have, by boiling it down to a symbolic action that can be clinically explained away *as opposed to appreciating the movement as an experience for its own sake*.

Eliade's definition allows for a broader interpretation of ritual and is somewhat more accurate to magic, in the sense that sacred space does apply to rituals when it's used as a way to help create a connection with the mythology that a magician can work with. But not all magical rituals focus on creating sacred space for that purpose. And a lot of magic is spontaneous and not concerned with the trappings of what is considered ritual, and may not even use the word ritual to describe what is done.

A definition of ritual, just as with magic, needs to be qualified carefully, "Do we treat something as ritualistic because it is formulaic? Because it is repetitive? Because it is religious? We need to assume the responsibility for specifying what definition of ritual we are implying by our claims. Further, we need to ask not just *whether* something is ritual or ritual-like, but *what kind* of ritual it is [italics are his]" (Grimes 2006, p. 10). By assuming that ritual is defined by only certain characteristics, it's limited to those characteristics, but not all actions a person takes that utilize those characteristics will always fit a ritual. Chances are you have a morning routine that you follow. You brush your teeth, shower, eat breakfast, etc. But just because you

follow this routine doesn't mean it's a ritual, unless you choose to make it into one. In fact, a ritual is defined more so by the participants than by someone who is only studying the ritual.

Magic as Symbolism

O'Keefe chiefly identifies magic as a scripted and repetitive symbolic activity, while ignoring other aspects of it. Too much focus on just the symbols causes a tunnel vision that fails to fully acknowledge the full scope of what magic is. William Covino offers a similar definition to O'Keefe's, noting that it's a process creating community and belief in a rhetorical community. Covino treats magic primarily as a persuasive discourse which uses communication, interaction, invention, and composition to share its message with people using it (1994). He concludes with the following: "Thus magic becomes a term through which we can address the ways in which words make real things happen" (Covino 1994, p. 11). This focus on the way that the word makes things happen shifts magic toward using the word as a technology to merge the laws of consciousness and thought with the laws of nature. The magician appropriates the word and all of the technologies associated with it for the purpose of shaping reality.

One problem with Covino's work is that the main textual artifacts that he focuses on are horoscopes found in the newspaper. These horoscopes are only superficially related to magic and the practice of it. They appear in the newspaper and offer a generic "future" written in vague and general language. The only relationships horoscopes have to the occult are the zodiac symbols, which can sometimes be used in esoteric workings. Horoscopes aren't artifacts or symbols that enable an effective study of what magic is. Without access to literature and artifacts that are focused on magic, much of Covino's argument is based

more on the stereotypes that mainstream culture associates with magic, as opposed to a genuine understanding of what it really is. When he actually focuses on works written by a magic practitioner he uses only Starhawk's work, which is primarily a pagan perspective on magic, as opposed to an occult perspective. His argument about occultism is somewhat flawed, because he hasn't drawn on enough resources to make the determination he makes. The use of only one person's writing isn't representative of the diversity or full range of work that can be found on this topic.

Covino isn't the only author who makes this kind of mistake in doing research. O'Keefe doesn't draw on occult texts at all in his work. His primary citations are based off the work of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, French academics from the early twentieth century. Mauss, in particular, has views on magic which are suspect, because they seem to be based on a perception of magic that demands social acceptance for magic to work, "If the whole community does not believe in the efficacy of a group of actions, they cannot be magical. The form of the ritual is eminently transmissible and this is sanctioned by public opinion. It follows from this that strictly individual actions such as the private superstitions of gamblers, cannot be called magic" (1972, p. 19). This perception of Mauss's is faulty. While it's true that many magical acts occur in social settings and that a community consensus can inform the success of those acts, it is equally true that the individual can do successful magical acts without anyone in the community knowing, at all, or after the magical act has been successful. Mauss's focus on the gambler's superstition also ignores the fact that magical actions aren't based on superstitions, but rather are based on actions that have well-thought out meaning to the practitioners. In other words, the actions aren't based on a superstitious belief that breathing on the dice will let you win. The actions are

based on an understanding of the relationship that the practitioner has with magic and its use in manipulating the internal environment of the magician, as well as possibilities in the external reality, so that they align and manifest specific results. I mention that point, because O'Keefe's use of Mauss as an intellectual predecessor highlights his own inability to approach the subject of magic outside of the safety of the academic conventions he uses. Those conventions provide him a certain safety in terms of engaging magic on an intellectual level, but ignore other key components I mention in the next paragraph that are necessary to undertake a study of magic.

Both Mauss's and O'Keefe's work comes from a post-enlightenment rationalism, which is defined as follows,

Early sociological and anthropological theories of religion stem from postenlightenment rationalism that cannot explain spiritual experiences on its own terms...All these approaches deny the reality of spiritual experiences. Religious beliefs are understood to be a product of incomplete knowledge and errors of logic, or a product of a 'primitive mind' that does not comprehend the importance of indirect sources and effects of religious beliefs in social experiences. (Ezzy 2004, p. 115)

O'Keefe doesn't demonstrate familiarity with occult texts, or with the people that utilize magic in their lives. He doesn't explain or engage the spiritual experiences of magic in its own terms, and regards the practitioners of it as irrational primitives, incapable of the vaunted critical thinking processes. He demonstrates awareness of other academic works on the subject of magic, but he privileges those works over any other available information. This is problematic only in the sense that he's made certain judgments about magic and the people who practice it as covered above (O'Keefe 1983). When such judgments are

made further inquiry in different directions is potentially closed down.

What is really ironic, however, is that both Covino and O'Keefe do touch on a lot of what magical practice is about, *within the context of symbolic usage*. O'Keefe notes the following:

MAGIC works with symbols, as does almost all human action, but magic puts a special accent on them... Magic combats the uncertainties and dangers of this symbolic universe by giving man control over some of the most potent of the symbols. Man uses this power in his first efforts to get control of his own attentionalities and emotions and hence organize and direct his behavior and the behavior of others (O'Keefe 1983, p. 39).

It is true that control of symbols is part of magic. The ability to manipulate symbols can prove to be highly useful for managing internal behavior, and for that matter directing other people. But symbolism isn't the only medium of magic, and the full range of how symbols are used isn't fully explored. We might question for instance how this symbolism is used to manage internal behavior, or why people think that using symbolism will also manifest external results. But these questions aren't asked in these works. It's just assumed that magic does all of this, without any critical inquiry occurring as to why these methodologies are being used.

Covino also argues that magic is a subversive force. While he demonstrates this understanding in the following quote, he is also quick to fall back on the notion that magic is a patterned, scripted action that promotes un-thinking compliance:

Magic retains its traditional function as a subversive, antisocial force, enacted by an individual who is capable of

materializing multiple selves and playing multiple roles... to practice 'aligning' oneself with the power to control consciousness the initiate must take full responsibility for her life...*But at the same time that this magic promises alternatives to damaging conventional life-states, it adapts itself to the management of critical attitudes and promotes automatism by identifying improvement with quick, patterned behavior* [italics are mine] (1994, pp. 120-121).

If magic is a subversive force that promotes responsibility and yet also creates conformity then there's a contradiction at work in this passage. The problem again is a tunnel vision focus on what magic is. The need to define magic so strictly strips away what it actually is and focuses on *one* of its many uses. To Covino's credit he explains that the subversion is used to encourage self-responsibility, while also portraying the corruption of that subversion, which is conformity. Covino isn't incorrect in portraying magical practice as both subversive and conforming, but that is no different than any other belief system. Even Christianity can be subversive, as is evident by the evangelical movement's efforts to subvert the U.S. Constitution and government. But what isn't focused on is what magic actually seems to be. Instead what is described is what it does. You can't define something as intangible as magic if you focus only on the effects of it, while ignoring the process.

Bill Ellis also associates symbolism with magic, noting that, "magic provides a potent symbol for individuals' desire to take control of the religious world" (2004, p.7). But Ellis also leaves room for other aspects of the occult when he notes, "that one motive for becoming interested in the occult is to participate directly in the mythic realm... allowing individuals access to divine beings allows them to resolve their doubts about religious beliefs through direct experience" (2004, p. 12). Symbolism alone cannot provide

a direct experience to the divine. This isn't to say that symbols don't have their uses. If nothing else, symbolism is the most obvious gateway into magic. It's just not the only gateway, and shouldn't be the only standard used to define magic. There are other aspects to magic, such as experiencing altered states of consciousness, which also help define magic.

Joshua Gunn: A Rhetorical Perspective on Magic

Were Gunn to read this text, he would likely argue that I was a typical occultist engaged in competitively arguing against other versions of occult secrets, while promoting my own version and seeking to establish my authority in that process (2005). He would not be entirely inaccurate in making this claim, though his argument that scholars in academia are less competitive than occultists is one I'm not inclined to buy, given my own time and experiences in academia, where I experienced both firsthand and through reading academic texts the competitiveness involved in making a scholarly name for one's self. In fact, the use of citations in academia is often wielded as a way of establishing authority, while subtly disparaging the previous authority of other academics. My point in mentioning this is that I find it rather odd that Gunn performs a rhetorical move where he essentially attempts to argue that academic scholarship is not about presenting secrets to a specialized audience with a specialized language that discriminates who can access those secrets, but yet argues the following: "Occultic discourse discriminates among groups or kinds of people with strange or difficult language; and second, its strange or difficult languages designed to better apprehend or understand something that is, at base incommunicable" (Gunn 2005, p. xxiv). It seems that in making this claim, Gunn is trying to legitimize academic discourse, while marginalizing occult

discourse. In fact, academic writing is specialized discourse written for a specialized audience. Academic writing is discriminatory and designed to determine who can or can't access it and sometimes what is written about in academia is also at base incommunicable. In Gunn's definition of occult, academic writing is occult, because it involves secret lore for a specialized audience and in many cases is an attempt to write about experiences and situations that can't be entirely encapsulated in words, because those experiences are ineffable in the sense that they have to be experienced in person, as opposed to just imagined through writing.

The reason I mention the above issue is because it also highlights other problematic issues with Gunn's definitions of magic and the occult, in terms of the potential bias that may inform his arguments. Gunn's approach to magic involves examining different occult "texts" from a rhetorical perspective. He defines the occult in terms of the practice of magic, but also the study of secrets, and who has the authority to present information on those secrets (Gunn 2005). He defines rhetoric in terms of how representations are used to influence people consciously and/or unconsciously to believe or do activities they might not normally do (Gunn 2005). He defines representations as linguistic or otherwise, but doesn't really clarify what "otherwise" means. His primary focus is on analyzing occult books, though he also focuses on one movie as a form of text. He also makes a point of providing a specialized term, which describes fully what he conceives the occult to be. This term is occultic and is defined as, "One kind of theological form is the occultic, which manifests itself in any discourse that, first, discriminates among groups of people on the basis of difficult or strange representation, and second, suggests that its representational strategies are better routes to some incommunicable human experience or more primal reality"

(Gunn 2005, p. 7). As I mentioned above, I am not sure that academic discourse could *not* be considered occultic itself, as his definition can easily be applied to it.

If there is a difference between academic and occult discourse, it is a difference that Gunn places into the metaphysical aspect of magic, arguing that esoteric language is focused on presenting something outside of human language, and in that process claiming authority to represent it (2005). But while Gunn is accurate in arguing that the ineffability of the metaphysical presence can't be fully encapsulated within the language, he misses out on an essential understanding of occult texts, which is not surprising, because that understanding necessarily involves actually practicing magic. Gunn argues that occult language utilizes a rhetorical antimony, "To understand an antimony as 'rhetorical' is to recognize the contingency of truth and the social construction of reality, and hence to read contradictions about the 'nature' of reality as epistemological or linguistic problems, not ontological or metaphysical ones" (Gunn 2005, p. 49). The problem with this argument is that Gunn is so focused on the language of the occult that he fails to recognize that the language does more than attempt to describe the ineffable. It provides access to techniques and practices that allow the occultist to engage with the presence of what is "out there" as a means of negotiating with both the metaphysical and epistemological issues within the life of the occultist and the social construction of reality. Occult practices are meant to do more than just provide an answer. They are designed to help practitioners manifest their own answers through magical methods. In short, they are designed to provide the occultist the agency s/he consequently uses to shape reality to his will. And while some of that agency deals with metaphysical forces "out there," some of it involves drawing on internal resources that each person has, but not everyone uses. The point is that occult

linguistics and writing is only one piece of the puzzle. By focusing only on the texts, but not on the actual practices, Gunn's argument about occult writing suffers, because in the end he can only bring his own interpretation based on text, as opposed to including and evaluating actual practices. It's not necessarily his goal to deal with those practices, but given that they are an integral experience and part of the occult, one has to wonder if he has really captured the ineffability of the occult, based solely on its texts.

Gunn also makes a good point about intention which is rooted in how academia traditionally treats intention and agency:

Although it is difficult to discern the mental states of a given rhetor or author on the basis of a given text, intention and agency nevertheless exist. The distinction that needs to be made is that while individuals tend to do things (and intention is always implied by action, rhetorical or otherwise), the motives structuring intent may be unknown to the individual. In other words, intent may be scripted by ideological forces or unconscious motives and desires (Gunn 2005, pp. 149-50).

He makes a very good point in noting that the motives which inform intent aren't always consciously recognized and can be socially constructed. Even though magicians practice magic to shape internal and external reality, they nonetheless are shaped by the culture they live in, which means that a lot of the motivations which structure the intent that goes into magic can be unconscious. While Gunn's definition of intentionality and agency is a conventional academic answer, there is some wisdom to it, which should be carefully considered by magicians. I include it here, because while I disagree with some of Gunn's arguments, I think the points he makes should be

examined. What is outside of our experience often provides a lens by which we can improve what we do, and Gunn's work is an outside perspective which can help us refine our process.

Tanya Luhrmann: Avoiding Going Native

Luhrmann is an anthropologist who studied neopagans and magicians in the U.K. in the late nineteen eighties. In her attempt to define magic, she held back from embracing an experience that might have significantly impacted her research and how she perceived it:

The only reason I continued to think of myself as an anthropologist, rather than as a witch, was that I had a strong disincentive against asserting that rituals had an effect upon the material world. The anthropologist is meant to become involved, but not native. The very purpose of my involvement – to write an observer's text – would have been undermined by my assent to the truth of magical ideas...*I stood to gain nothing by belief except power which I was told that I could exercise unconsciously even if I had made no explicit acceptance, but I stood to lose credibility and career by adherence...*the process of becoming involved in magic makes the magic believable and, and makes explicit belief in magical theory quite tempting unless there is strong discentive against it [italics are mine]. (Luhrmann 1989, pp. 320-321)

Luhrmann didn't want to go native (as she validly felt it would impact her research), but the question arises as to whether she was ever really involved. Observation can involve analysis and studying a subject, but it doesn't mean that understanding has been achieved. Even if she were only to get engaged (i.e. believe that magic rituals could affect reality) for the time she studied magic practitioners, and then stop believing in magic after she stopped her

research, then it could be said she'd achieved understanding in her involvement, as opposed to just observation. It's true she participated in magic workings, but any effects that occurred as a result of those workings she wrote off as just weird coincidences.

Ironically, she's made some accurate descriptions of what magic seems to be (these can be found in the next chapter), but she never tested those descriptions. Some will argue that it wasn't her goal to do that, that she maintained a proper distance from what she was involved in studying these people. In a sense, they have a point and she is upfront about this goal in her ethnography. Yet she chose to insert herself into the lives of the people enough to take part in their practices and also have an impact on them. What she didn't allow herself to do was engage in the experience:

Engagement is more than participation, and something other than pretending. To allow oneself to become engaged is to take the intent of ritual seriously. It is to be willing to let the trance induction take you into trance, to be willing to be emotionally moved, as is intended by certain ritual elements, and to go with what then happens. Distance, on the other hand, means observation, remembering the lyrics and symbols used in trance induction, remembering the ritual proceedings step by step, seeing what happens to other participants and noticing the social interaction, the symbolism, the artifacts and the movements (Salomonsen 2004, p. 51)

In choosing not to admit to the possibility that magic really worked for her during that time of research, Luhrmann didn't really come to an understanding about the beliefs and approaches to life magic offers people. She observed what other people believed, observed the rituals that she participated in, and made observations that were sometimes

accurate, but she didn't allow any of that to have an impact on her during the time she studied these people. Obviously she doesn't need to accept magic as a reality for her entire life, but *accepting the possibility that it was real for the time that she studied the practitioners was something she was unwilling to do*. That unwillingness damages her research in terms of presentation and objectivity. Note that I argue only that she should've accepted the *possibility* that magic was real. She didn't need to agree that magic existed, but by being open to the possibility that it was real she could have represented her research in a way that was more objective.

One of the reasons Luhrmann didn't entertain the possibility that magic and its impacts were real was because of her fear of loss of credibility in her academic career. For her studying modern pagans was a way of advancing her career, but admitting to the possibility that their beliefs had a real impact on her would damage that career. Luhrmann's concerns about loss of credibility aren't entirely without warrant. Jenny Blain, Douglas Ezzy, and Graham Harvey note that, "Paganisms within Western society are still seen as marginal, and those who research them may feel pressure to 'objectify' communities and practices researched and distance themselves from their experiences" (2004, p. 2). Yet that need to objectify her research in order to make it more acceptable for academia ironically also damages the work she's done, and this is evident by the responses of other academics that have done research on the same subject. Ezzy notes that her rejection of belief wasn't due to her experiences, but rather because of what is deemed socially acceptable by academics, and the threat of potential social sanctions for deviating from those norms (Ezzy 2004). In other words, Luhrmann denies the experiences she had because of the need to be socially acceptable, as opposed to taking a risk and writing and presenting an accurate picture of what magic is and the

effect it had on her as well as the other participants. Ezzy later argues that spiritual experiences need to be taken at face value and treated as genuine social experiences in their own right (2004).

Ronald Hutton summarizes her attitude as follows:

One was that it [he's referring to 1980's anthropology] retained the assumption that the beliefs and attitudes of the people studied were valueless in themselves, and that the anthropologist would accordingly suffer no loss in shaking them off at the end of the project. The second was that it turned the researcher into a form of impostor, an undercover agent for a different culture who acted out membership of a group before leaving it and throwing off the disguise (2004, p. 178).

She may have "joined" some magical groups and been a "member", but she never joined the group. She was only a member so long as it was convenient for her to be a member and get the kind of data she needed to complete her research. That alone would have been fine, if she'd allowed herself to do more than just observe, by actually engaging in the beliefs of those members and entertaining for the time she did research the validity that magic might be real.

Nor is that the only result. At one point, Luhrmann mentions that people she interacted with forgot about her outsider status as an anthropologist (1989). Instead of reminding those people of her goals for attending their meetings, she ended up using that forgetfulness in a way that ended up being harmful to the people she studied: "Indeed, by not being upfront about her academic agenda with her subjects, Luhrmann's research had a serious negative impact on some of them, who claimed their traditions had been damaged by her release of initiate-only knowledge in published form" (Wallis 2004, p. 205). If it's

true that she has released such material without permission she's exploited and violated the beliefs and values of those people, all for her career. If it isn't true then it may simply be a case of sour grapes, where some people were displeased with how she represented their beliefs and practices and decided to make trouble by making such a claim.

In the end, some of the criticism regarding Luhrmann is valid, but some of it also seems to be blown out of proportion. I present some of the issues surrounding her work in this chapter (and the viewpoints others have on those issues), but I also want to present the insights she offers because they are accurate observations of how magic is used. To ignore the insights or criticism would be to ignore the impact that this person has had on the academic study of magic.

Is Research Exploitation?

I leave this foray into academia with some thoughts on recognizing that while scholarly research is never meant to be overly exploitative, academics do come into research with a particular agenda and approach, which affects how they research their subjects. This agenda isn't always acknowledged to the research subjects or even fellow colleagues, but when it is the agenda takes the form of a reason such as the following: "I knew that I needed a new research project and publications if I were to ever get a tenure-track position...I *needed* a research project, and I was a little curious about how Witchcraft could be considered a religion [*italics are hers*]" (Griffin 2004, p. 60). Wendy Griffin isn't alone in this agenda (as is evidenced by Luhrmann above), though rarely is such a statement written or spoken in such an overt manner.

This doesn't mean that the research done on magic is all bad or unethical. However, the scholars I quoted above

were also undoubtedly motivated by the same reason as Griffin, to some degree or another. That motivation can cause sloppy research methodology and less attentiveness and sensitivity to research subjects, which does raise the specter of ethical treatment of subjects. And such a reason as mentioned above *is exploitive*, particularly when it's evident that the scholar didn't do a thorough investigation of the subject matter. The inaccuracy of their work shows that academic scholarship needs to be much more rigorous when studying such a subject as magic.

Scholarship should be guided by the following: "When creating or reviewing theories it might be preferable to have some insight into what has attracted the researcher to undertake the study and to choose particular theories as a foundation for their own research. It may be desirable for a researcher to question why they found those theories and that piece of research attractive, and how they and their own belief systems influence the data collection and analysis" (Harrington 2004, p. 75). It's not that I or any anyone else in the occult/pagan communities asks that the scholar be sympathetic to the subject of magic, but by the same token leave your biases out of the scholarly work or better yet admit them. Be open to the possibility that the external views of the subject you're examining (in this case, belief in magic is irrational) are inaccurate. To do less than that produces sloppy scholarship that doesn't effectively address the subject material or present it. There are examples of effective academic work on magic, as we'll see in the next chapter.

I want to emphasize that some academic scholars do respect the subject matter, "Without being a coparticipant guided by empathy and compassion I would not have been able to conduct my doctoral studies as intended" (Salomonsen 2004, p. 54). It's not that this scholar has chosen to join the magical community permanently. She may very well have only joined it for a time, but when she

joined she allowed herself to participate in a manner that was sensitive to the subject material. Griffin, in the same article, later mentions she decided to stay in the field she was studying because it touched something deep within her, which shows that even with the original motivation she had above, it was possible to make a deeper connection to the subject she was studying and the people she was interacting with (2004). She was willing to let herself go just a bit native, because in doing so she could reach a better understanding of the subject she wanted to research.

Ronald Grimes makes an excellent point about academic research: “Scholarly research is a form of hunting, predatory, even parasitic, upon whatever it studies. Things studied are soon deadened, rendered corpse-like. Scholarship necessarily, not accidentally consumes what it studies” (2006, p. 99). This doesn’t mean that academic research is wrong, but we as magicians and pagans must be wary of how other people attempt to define what we do when we practice magic or do a ritual. Luhrmann asks how practitioners continue to do magic in the face of constant failure, when to anthropologists it seems obvious it hasn’t produced an effect (1989). In that question lies an assumption built into many academic definitions of magic that magic must fail. What I don’t see is a critical awareness or questioning of the biases that seem to be present in many of the works I cited above. Yet these biases show up both subtly and not so subtly, as is evident by Luhrmann’s question. While her question is a valid one to ask, another question she might have asked is why anthropologists assume magic will fail, when practitioners continue to use it and report results. She instead favors only one form of criticism, one directed away from her research. This tendency of avoiding self-criticism isn’t in her work alone, but pervades much of the work discussed above.

Scholarship seeks to consume a phenomenon that can’t easily be defined or explained away. The wariness we must

cultivate is for those scholars who already think they have the answer and try to dismiss our beliefs in magic as something primitive or irrational. Some academic scholarship (as will be seen in chapter four) can be helpful in understanding and even broadening what magic seems to be, but when a definition assumes the failure of a process, then it's a definition that should be tested carefully.

Occult Definitions

Academic scholars aren't the only people to produce definitions about magic that need to be questioned carefully. Some definitions are overly vague, while others are too narrow. Still there are others that attempt to reconcile science and magic or make magic into another form of psychology. While there can be, to my mind, some useful connections made between magic and science, psychology, or other disciplines, it's important to question and test the definitions to avoid potential problems in the processes we use to work magic. Magic involves discipline and practice, but also an understanding of why and how things work. This understanding isn't to "prove" that magic is real to skeptics. Rather it involves knowing how and when to use magic to make opportunities happen. In other words, it's learning to be strategic in your use of magic so that a little effort yields a lot of result.

Remember that what I'm writing here is opinion only. Even though I disagree with the definitions offered by the practitioners below, I do find that their writing is insightful. (In a sense, the very fact that I disagree with them shows that they have something meaningful to write and share. In disagreement lies the potential for change.) They've influenced my understanding of magic and how I practice it, for the better, in part because they've provided me a foil with which to test my definitions of magic. I've cited them elsewhere in this text in the context of showing how what

they do is useful for magical practice. As with the academic work I urge you to read the source texts I draw from, to determine what you think of their definitions and practices. A definition that I don't find useful could be workable for you and a definition of magic I disagree with might be one you like.

Traditional Extremism

One trend I've run into is what I term as traditional extremism. These are the people who argue that the older the magical tradition is, the better it is. They label anything that deviates from their narrow perceptions as "fluffy" or "new age," sometimes with an uncritical perspective on what they label. I've experienced this criticism personally many times while trying to get my ideas out to other people, but I've also seen these criticisms creep into some of the writing being produced. On the other hand testing the results to see if they really measure up to the process is something these people also do.

In one respect I agree with traditional extremism. It's important to have a rigorous, disciplined approach to magical practice that allows you to measure the results against the process. What I don't agree with is telling people you can only practice magic one way, because that narrows the potentialities that a person can access, and can create problems for the magician. It's true that having the discipline to follow instructions and learn techniques from the past is important. A magician needs a solid foundation in magical theory and practice before developing his own systems, but arguing that any approach that doesn't follow the old traditions by rote is wrong blocks the evolution of magic with contemporary times.

One author rants in his books about the "new age" approaches to magic, saying that any approach that isn't traditional won't work (Lisieswki 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

Joseph Lisiewski has some excellent observations to make about magic. I respect his work a lot and have found it very useful for making my own work more effective. That said, I don't agree with all of his conclusions and have found what I consider to be contradictions in his approach. For instance, his argument that medieval forms of evocation are more effective than newer approaches to evocation is faulty. Those grimoires were likely based on even older magical traditions and as such would probably fall under his definition of new age because they don't fit the oldest known approaches to evocation. Remember as well that the so-called "demons" in the medieval grimoires were usually deities and other entities appropriated from non-Christian cultures. As such, by using this author's standards, the medieval grimoires would be contextually inaccurate and ineffective methods of working with these entities because the techniques were based on "new" approaches that weren't culturally accurate.

Lisiewski's central concept is the subjective synthesis, a compilation of both the internal attitudes and beliefs a magician has, and the external experiences, influences, and stimuli s/he encounters in the course of life. Note that it is the subconscious mind that directs the outcome (Lisiewski 2004b). The magician can learn, through magic and other resources, how to consciously work with the subconscious mind and make it work for hir so that s/he is successful. The subjective synthesis is a brilliant idea, because it effectively encapsulates how the internal dialogue the magician has with hir subconscious affects the success of the working. Lisiewski also explains that a subjective synthesis is the result of the methodology that a practitioner uses to make sense of the material and process s/he is working with (2005). In other words, it is created not only through understanding the concepts being worked, but also through the methodology that is used to approach those concepts.

What's contradictory in his approach is that Lisiewski never seems to realize that some of the problems he has with doing evocation or with the fact that he needs to approach magic a particular way is a result of his own subjective synthesis. While his methodology helps to construct it, it also shapes how it impacts his work. In his first book, he describes the slingshot effect. For him, this occurrence involves gaining money, having a catastrophe occur, losing the money, and gaining a small amount back (Lisiewski 2004a). He assumes that his readers will experience the exact same effect, but never critically questions that assumption! Despite telling readers of the subjective synthesis and the major role it plays in magic, he doesn't question the impact his own subconscious beliefs would have on the magic he works. This lack of critical awareness is evident in the following quote:

Whether occult or hidden influences are actually a part of the tapestry of daily mundane or sporadic critical events, or are strictly part of our subconscious belief systems or most probably a combination of both does not really matter. What matters is that at some level we *think* and *act* on the supposed existence of these external and internal influences, treating them with all of the respect and caution we grant any of the physical forces that effect us every day, such as electricity and gravity [italics are his]. (Lisiewski 2004b, p. 10)

It *does matter* how you approach the concept of magic and its influence on your life, and not only in how you think or act in regards to it. Lisiewski, in fact, argues that's it essential for creating an effective subjective synthesis (2005). For instance, if you think the influences you work with are only part of a subconscious belief system, then that will make your approach to them quite different than if you think they have an objective existence outside of their

interaction with you. Yes, it does matter that we think and act on the internal and external influences, but what also matters is our understanding of the role those influences have in our lives and how they impact our methodologies. For instance, I can treat the influence of wealth as a psychological entity, or a real entity. If it's a psychological entity, it's primarily an internal aspect of myself I'm working with. If it's an external entity, then the relationship involves dealing with an actual entity outside of my control. Until I consciously determine and understand whether wealth is a psychological or external entity (or both!), I can't effectively make changes with how I interact with it. In other words, my methodologies in dealing with wealth will fail so long as I have an inadequate understanding of the influences and roles that wealth manifests within my life. If we don't know those roles or are unclear on them the potential for the subjective synthesis to sabotage the work is greatly multiplied. The magician is not in control of his resources in a manner that allows him to know how to use them effectively.

The magician should always employ critical awareness and strategy when it comes to magic. If you don't know your resources, if you don't question why you failed, then you don't have an effective grasp of the principles of magic involved in your working. Knowing the system of magic you work with involves knowing how you conceptualize magic so you can minimize failure. This includes knowing how you define the occult forces you work with. To be fair to Lisiewski, he does take a very rigorous approach to magic that seems to factor in the need to know your resources. He does an excellent job of explaining every step of a given process and illustrating the preparations the magician needs to take to make the magical working effective. It puzzles me, however, that he sometimes seems to contradict himself on the practical implications of his theoretical work. And because he takes a very traditional

stance on how magic should be practiced, he's limited himself to one approach, which may work very well for him and others, but nonetheless doesn't allow the practitioner to find some answers and processes from alternative perspectives that could be equally useful. (But in the end, it is important to remember to respect each person's choice in how s/he does magic. Even though I think Lisiewski may be limiting himself in his approach, I respect that his approach clearly works for him and may be all he wants to do. Remember that the efficacy and satisfaction that your magical practice brings you is more important than what other people think of it!)

Magic can't evolve in such a situation because it becomes overly focused on rote dogma, as opposed to genuine innovation. When we only look for answers in the past, we are ignoring the present and future and all the possibilities they offer. It is important to acknowledge the past, but never to the point that we dismiss new approaches out of hand. It's not wrong to question new approaches. We need to test and determine the validity of any given approach to magic, but that means doing more than just labeling the approach as new age or fluff.

It's also useful to remember that for many of the traditionalists, the reaction is born out of a fear that their religious beliefs could be changed by newer approaches to magic. For many people magical practice only occurs in the context of religion and by any religion's nature such practices tend to be rote practices, done in a specific manner and context, though not necessarily the exact same way every time. Newer approaches, which are more experimental, can be viewed as threats, especially when they seem to turn religious beliefs and practices on their ears.

I've had the occasional debate with one of my reconstructionist friends as to whether pop culture magic can be a religious form of magic. She maintains that while

it can be, the older deities have more power because they've been around longer. I also maintain it can be religious in nature, but I disagree that older automatically equals better. While she and I can disagree good naturedly, for some pagans and magicians the mere thought that pop culture could be religious is blasphemous and something only a flake could develop. As such a "flake", I will only say that each person's spiritual and religious path is his own...as long as s/he isn't harming others or himself by practicing his beliefs, what does it matter? And of course if you get results and understand the process that speaks better for your practice than what anyone else has to say.

Just Do Magic

Another approach to magic is the "just do it" crowd who argue that you don't need to know the particulars of magic--all you really need to do is just do it. They claim that as long as magic works it doesn't matter if you don't know how it works. This particular attitude is a symptom of a subtle form of ignorance that pervades society in general. It is the ignorance of only caring about the process when the process isn't producing the result you want. It is an attitude each of us experiences each day. When the car doesn't work, suddenly then it's important because it not working threatens the capacity for us to travel from place to place. Most people will say that they just don't have time to care or find out why the car isn't working and I can accept that, because for most people a car is just a way to get around. It's not a passion or driving force in your life (except for on the road!). But the question I have is whether the same rationale can be applied to something like magical practice.

On the one hand, for many people, magical practice is specifically about obtaining a result. In that same sense the ability to drive a car is also about obtaining a result. In each instance what matters most is that the result is obtained.

The process involved doesn't seem to be that important, except for when the process doesn't work, at which point the result that is obtained indicates that there is a problem. You don't need to know how or why something works until, in fact, it doesn't work and even then you can just go to specialist (at least with the car). The problem is that you really can't go to a specialist when it comes to magic. You can only go to your fellow practitioners and if they all share the same belief that it doesn't matter if you don't understand the process involved in getting the result, then you and they are SOL when it comes to actually dealing with a snag in that process. When it comes to magic, the magician is the specialist, and if the specialist doesn't know what's going on, who does?

Of course because it is magic we're speaking of we can resort to the excuse that it's unknown or unconscious influences we're dealing with and they are why the snag in the process has occurred. One of those unseen forces has refused to cooperate and the whole process has been gummed up as a result. But this begs the question that if you can't identify the forces you work with how you can really be sure that you actually obtained a result? For all you know it was a fluke or a coincidence. But, you might say, I get these coincidences every time I do certain actions...at which point whether you realize it or not you are telling me about a process that explains how and why those actions get that result. Even if you don't have a full understanding of that process you have moved beyond the paradigm of it just works, by pointing to specific actions you do as a way of explaining how you got your results. This, in fact, is the contradiction that this paradigm of ignorance has within it. You can never just do something. Practitioners in this paradigm ignore one of the most basic laws of magic, which argues that the more you know about a given subject, the more control you have over the practice of that subject (Bonewits 1989).

Even when you drive a car, there is a process you use to drive that car. You may not consciously think about that process, but you are using it, and if you have to you can actually explain it to someone else (or why else would there be driving schools?). You can even improve on that process by gaining experience and learning how to become a better driver. And again you may not consciously think about driving, when you do it, but you still follow a process, and if you need to you can explain that process to someone else.

The difference between not knowing why a car broke down and why your magical process didn't work is quite simple. You likely have little control over the different parts of the car and the wear and tear they get (unless you know how to fix cars and even then you still have to fix it). You can take actions to minimize that wear and tear, but inevitably the car will break down and you will have to take it to the mechanic or fix it yourself. But in a magical act, you are the actual person acting on the universe to obtain a result. So if the process doesn't work, you had better know why it didn't work or you'll never get your result. You may not have complete control of the various forces you work with, but you do have control over how you work with them and how that influences their willingness to aid you. The car (unless you're an animist or technomage) isn't alive. The external forces you work with are presumably alive and independent and the unconscious or internal forces are ones you have control over, provided you're willing to face them and come to an understanding. In fact, if you conceive of the external/internal forces as only symbols (as many of the just do it crowd do), then you have a lot more control of them than if they are living beings, and consequently very little excuse for why you didn't get a result. What it really boils down to is that if you have a process for doing something, then you already have an explanation for how and why something works, and if you want a specific result you had better know how to

adjust the process to get it...instead of just assuming it will work without understanding what's involved in obtaining it.

Perhaps one of the most contradictory statements of this paradigm is the following: "Applied Magic is about making things happen and performing the necessary experiments. In these endeavors we do not need to know HOW magic works, only that it does. We prove this by doing the work, recording the results and sharing our information" (Morrison 2004, p. 17). If you are to share your information, you necessarily *must know HOW magic works*, and to understand the underlying dynamics of a process you're engaged in. If you can't explain that to someone else then it's likely that the magic won't work for the person. In fact, writing a book on magic involves telling the reader how you think magic works. The just do it crowd advocates a push button approach to magic, the idea being that you just do the spell or ritual and something will happen. But what do you do when pushing the button doesn't get the result you want? Knowing how magic works allows you to solve the problem, because you know the process by which you came to that result and can then adjust it as necessary. Additionally it allows you to experiment and test the definitions as opposed to just sticking with conventional knowledge.

The other problem with the just do it approach is that it attempts to reduce magic to symbolism and psychology, arguing that the forces we work with are just symbols we manipulate, "Ultimately it doesn't matter why magic works, because magic does work...magic is in itself very, very easy. It simply consists of doing what the human brain does every day, that is perceive and manipulate symbols" (Dunn 2005, p. 54). When we reduce magic to symbols, we ignore its full potential. Symbols play an integral role in magic, but they don't define magic. The use of symbols in magic has provided a variety of techniques, but not every

technique relies on symbols. When the argument is made that magic is symbol based, we run the risk of making O'Keefe's mistake of defining magic as scripted action (which it is not).

We also need to be wary of defining magic as a completely psychological phenomenon. The argument that an entity is just a symbolic construct that represents internal pressures is a rather dismal and depressing argument, because it attempts to reduce magic into materialism, causing it to lose what makes it magic. The spirituality of it is denied in favor of a mechanical approach that puts the power of magic into the symbols (as opposed to the practitioner).

A similar argument is made about alchemy: "Alchemy, like magic, is above all the transformation of objects, colours, and actions into signs and symbols of progress on the inner journey of spiritual transformation" (Versluis 1986, p. 105). This approach to alchemy ignores the practical laboratory work that can occur. While there is a lot of symbolism in alchemy and it can play an integral role in what occurs, the symbolism doesn't define the entire system. When we boil a discipline like magic or alchemy down to one of its components, such as symbolism, we stand to rule out experiences that don't fit our definitions, but are a necessary part of the actual work involved in those disciplines.

Conclusion

I've presented definitions to magic that in my opinion are problematic. You can disagree with me and that's fine. Likely there are other definitions offered on magic by magicians (me included!) that you find problematic. I know, for instance, that some people think the equating of magic to science is inaccurate. I partially agree and disagree. I don't think science can fully explain magic or

legitimize it. I do think though that we can and should integrate scientific principles into magical workings. Choosing to disregard scientific principles or other approaches ends up closing doors for the magician, reducing avenues of possibility--hardly what we want to do. I feel that if a principle or approach helps you understand how magic works then it's valid and true for you. Certainly the authors I've cited in the occult section of this chapter have all contributed meaningful texts and ideas that have helped push magic forward, and as I said in my introduction to this section, I highly recommend you read their works and form your own opinions, based on that experience.

Exercises

- 1 Do you agree or disagree with my criticisms of these various definitions of magic? Explain why you agree or disagree.
- 2 Is it really important to define magic to understand its processes? Explain why or why not.

Chapter 4: Definitions of Magic II

In the last chapter, I presented definitions of magic that in my opinion are problematic and represent specific agendas that run counter to what I think magic optimally functions as. In this chapter, I have my own agenda and it's to show definitions that I feel are accurate or semi-accurate, while also presenting my own definition of what magic seems to be. But these definitions are just as subjective as the rest. The value that any definition has is determined only partially by its acceptance and more so by testing it. I also

remind you that what I write here is my opinion, and only my opinion. Just as with the last chapter, I highly recommend you read the works I cite and test their concepts out on your own.

Academic Definitions

As I wrote above, a definition represents what something *ought* to be and also the *agenda* of the person/people making the definition. I found that the most accurate definitions provided by academics were mainly from anthropology, rather than sociology and other humanities. The anthropologists have a lot invested in researching the pagan/occult community and need a good reputation with the people they research to continue to have access to them. Most were offered by people who were in both the academic and occult communities. By actually being part of the community they study, the researchers were more invested in presenting an accurate definition of what magic is to people outside of that subculture. They have more exposure to the community and know the challenges faced in interacting with people who don't believe in magic, or think it's wrong to practice it. Finally, they have experience practicing magic, as opposed to just observing it or coming up with off the cuff theories.

I'm not, however, just favoring academics that happen to also be part of the occult/pagan community. I've also included some definitions and ideas on magic presented by academics that are outside of that subculture. I don't believe that you have to be a part of a community to understand what the people in it practice or believe. I DO think that actual practical experience with magic makes a difference in how magic is defined by academics. Since experience and the inclusion or lack thereof in a community is rarely critically examined, it's not surprising that there hasn't been more focus on these criteria in

determining whether a particular definition of magic is accurate or not. Actual access to a community or a particular practice of the community makes a big difference in the formulation of the definitions used to explain what that community does.

Magic as Altered Consciousness

The definition frequently offered by the anthropologists is that magic involves inducing an emotional or affective reaction that alters the state of consciousness, which in turn allows the magician to alter both his internal reality and the external reality around him:

Extraordinary experiences, within the context of Neo-Pagan ritual, should not be seen as aberrant, but rather as the product of a particular set of cultural, social, and religious circumstances that encourage, channel, and perhaps even create them...the goal of much magic is to bring about an emotional or affective reaction that effects a change in consciousness. (Magliocco 2004, p. 100)

This definition doesn't fully explain the connection between altering consciousness and having extraordinary experiences. The connection may seem obvious, but I'd suggest it's not as overt as taking an entheogen and tripping. You can have extraordinary experiences with altered consciousness when you taken an entheogen. However, whether you're able to fully take advantage of that state of mind is subject to debate. The magician might use an entheogen to alter his state of mind, but s/he also has a variety of other methods that can be used to alter consciousness and still retain a coherent sense of control, which is necessary when working magic. It's important to note that altering the state of mind isn't the goal of magic, but rather the methodology; you can't reduce the definition of magic to altered states any more than you can limit it to

the tools on the altar. Sabina Magliocco is correct in noting that an emotional and affective reaction occurs through the change in consciousness. But she doesn't explain what that means. An emotional change involves more than changing the emotions. It's also a change in attitude and thinking patterns. In other words, the magician changes his entire psyche. That kind of change opens him to more possibilities than s/he might otherwise notice.

The affective change involves manifesting a physical effect in reality. This effect won't be as dramatic as throwing a physical fireball at someone, but it does involve establishing a causal relationship between seemingly unrelated events, which moves those events in the favor of the magician. A good example of this kind of working involves a collage I made one month before meeting my future wife online. In the collage there was a picture of a goddess and a woman wearing a wolfskin. I got the goddess picture from a calendar and the picture of the woman from a pagan newspaper, which didn't print the name of the woman. Along with those pictures were some phrases and words I put on the collage, including "Walk the walk, talk the talk" and "share her life." I created this collage as part of an ongoing working to find my future mate. I met my future wife online one month after making the collage and met her in person a half a year later. Imagine my surprise and astonishment when the person I met turned out to be the wolf-woman in the picture. A year after that we were married. Some people would argue that the making of the collage and meeting her was just a coincidence, but they would be wrong. The intention that went into the collage affected reality and brought her into my life (Ellwood and Lupa 2007).

Entering an altered state of consciousness is one of the keys to successful magic. Magliocco hints at this in her definition. However there are other definitions that provide further clarification on the dynamics involved in altering

your consciousness to affect reality. Susan Greenwood provides explanations that further flesh out Magliocco's definition: "Magical thinking forms part of a whole collection of knowledges in the process of consciousness; it creates connections between phenomena and events through forces and influences unseen but real" (Greenwood 2005, p. 92). Magic involves creating connections and for many magicians those connections are made with spirits, gods, forces, etc. that have their own reality. Those realities can be represented by symbols, which serve as connectors to those realities, but the alteration of consciousness doesn't always involve symbols.

Some forms of meditation focus less on symbolic reality and more on experiential reality. As I talked about in the last chapter, while a symbolic reality can be useful, it also tends to focus on a more intellectual and distant approach to magic. The result is the argument that magic is primarily a symbolic activity, which fails to take into account how non-symbolic experiences impact a person's consciousness. We can't boil everything down to symbols, because not all experiences are symbolic:

A magical state of mind must be experienced; it has an intrinsically subjective and sensory quality that is embodied and intuitive rather than purely reflective and intellectual, although the reflective and intellectual may be engaged *with* the intuitive and the embodied as there is no radical opposition...It is the development of this type of expansive awareness--one that actively develops the imagination in making connections between other things both seen and unseen--that constitutes the basis of magical practice. Above all, magical consciousness concerns the interrelatedness of all things in the world. (Greenwood 2005, p. 7)

The symbolic activity can happen as a result of experiences. Symbols help us make connections and make

sense of what it was we experienced, but we should never assume they encompass the entire reality of magic. Some experiences can't be fully explained by symbolism, but can be experienced and accepted as an alternate way of knowing the world. In fact, magic offers multiple ways of knowing the world, which includes symbolism, but also such approaches as meditation, trance, ecstatic ritual, etc. What's really important to note is that all of these ways of knowing are interconnected. Every day I take in raw stimuli with the five senses and translate them into meaningful reality. When I meditate, the experience of an altered consciousness will still rely on symbolism to help convey what that experience is like to someone else. We don't think entirely in words, but we do rely on words to convey our ideas. Magic is a synthesis and integration of these ways of knowing into the consciousness of the magician, so that s/he can use them to manipulate reality and accomplish his goals.

Magliocco and Greenwood are both involved in the pagan/occult community. However other ethnographers who have studied magic, and yet don't consider themselves part of the pagan/occult community, have made similar observations as they have, albeit with a different way of phrasing those observations.

Magic as an Interconnective Experience

Magic is also defined as a way of knowing that involves finding patterns and connections, and using what is found to create possibilities. To some degree Magliocco and Greenwood touch on this in their definitions, but a more explicit explanation is useful in understanding how magic is utilized by its practitioners. Luhrmann, who I mentioned in the last chapter, made an astute observation when she noted that magicians discern what events relate to their magical workings, and establish meaningful patterns to

explain the manifestation of them in their lives (1989, p. 115). Magic is partially results based. While I think the process is the most important aspect of magical practice, results allow a magician to determine if the process has been successful. Without results, you can't affirm if the process works. Learning to see connections is a part of determining results. When you can find connections between events, you can verify that the magic is working, "Magicians use this conception of dynamic interconnectedness to describe the physical world as the sort of thing that imagination and desire can affect. The magician's world is an interdependent whole, a web of which no strand is autonomous" (Luhmann 1989, p. 118). With magic, the magician connects the world and creates causality where previously there was none.

Interconnectedness is a central theme of magic. We rely on being able to establish connections so that we can understand the nature of the world and make it work for us.

Sarah Pike doesn't focus on interconnection in the same manner as Luhmann does. Instead she argues that:

The process of being transported to a different reality and changing states of consciousness is made possible by magic, an important factor of self-transformation at festivals...magic is essentially a method of consciously separating oneself from the world of the everyday and moving into a realm where possibilities are open for physical or psychological transformation. (Pike 2001, p. 13)

While it's true that possibilities are open for physical and psychological transformation, the magician doesn't remove himself from the world, even that of the everyday. Rather s/he views the world from a different perspective and uses that perspective to become aware of possibilities. We are never removed from the world around us, but participate in

it, regardless of what environment we are in. It is by being hyperaware of the world that we can make possibilities into realities; we can see the observations that would otherwise be hidden.

Because magical practice involves an interactive and interconnected approach to understanding the world, it's sometimes viewed as an irrational activity. What is often ignored is the fact that rationality is itself a cultural construct (and thus limited by cultural bias) and a way of knowing as opposed to a concrete objective reality. A belief in magic is another way of knowing and organizing the world, which may challenge the logic of rationality, but not be less valid for that challenge (Magliocco 2004). The magician utilizes faith and belief to work with magic, but also critically seeks to understand the world and work with it through the medium of magic. By finding patterns and organizing them, the magician is able to recognize the windows of opportunity as they are presented. More importantly s/he realizes that the natural laws of reality work in ways that can't be fully explained by rational means, but can be understood from other perspectives. Some of these other perspectives are actually being accepted in academia, most notably in research centered on multimodality.

Magic as a Modality

Multimodality is an approach to learning that recognizes that learning occurs through multiple perspectives and experiences and can't be limited to the traditional concept of learning as an exercise in memory retention. While not overtly related to magic, it utilizes concepts that magical practitioners also draw on. I'll provide a more in-depth look at multimodality in chapter 4, but for this chapter we can understand multimodality as an approach that advocates using multiple ways of knowing to understand the world.

Mode is a word that summarizes what multimodality seems to be. A mode can be understood as both a paradigm/system for understanding the world, and also a particular behavior that embodies the paradigm/system:

Mode is the name for a culturally and socially fashioned resource for representation and communication. Mode has material aspects, and it bears everywhere the stamp of past cultural work... The *materiality* of mode, for instance the material of *sound* in *speech* or in *music*, of *graphic matter* and *light* in *image*, or of the *motion of parts of the body* in *gesture*, holds specific potentials for representation, and at the same time brings certain limitations [italics are his] (Kress 2003, p. 45).

The materiality of the mode is the materials, technology, and physical expressions used to convey an idea to other people, or, via magic, to reality. Kress is correct in noting that there are limitations to the materiality of a given mode, but with a creative approach many of these limitations can be bypassed. Testing the limitations of a given system and its forms of expression is a useful way of determining what possibilities are present within the system.

Magic, in general, already does something that multimodality seeks to introduce into education. It utilizes all available forms of meaning-making and creates new forms in order to manipulate reality. Magic incorporates the body, the senses, and cognitive functions into a critical restructuring of the world, while also utilizing the tools and technology that can enhance the process of that restructuring. Kress and Leeuwen provide questions to ask, which can be applied to magical practice as well as multimodality:

Several issues need attention here: what modes are used and therefore what materials are invoked, and therefore

what are the senses which are involved? What differential possibilities of perception and cognition are invoked through the uses of different materials and modes? What differences in kinds of meaning is produced in the use of different modes and materials? (Kress & Leeuwen 2001, p. 28)

These are excellent questions to ask for the practice of magic. Granted, they are unusual questions to ask, but this is where it's useful to draw on unconventional sources. Asking questions such as the ones above can inform our understanding of the process involved in practicing a particular act of magic. We learn to question whether we really need these resources or can come up with other resources or even another mode/system that can still accomplish the same goal.

Multimodality has always been incorporated in the practices of magic. Pascal Beverly Randolph, Isaac Bonewits, Franz Bardon, and William G. Gray (to name a few) deal with various modes of expression, including the physiology of the body, experiencing elemental energy work, ceremonial tools, etc. There is within magical literature a rich plethora of modes/systems that a magician can use to understand and alter both the psychological reality and external environment.

Why People Practice vs. the Methodology of Practice

I haven't focused as extensively on academics with definitions of magic I consider to be valid. This is because as of yet there isn't a lot of academic literature out that actually engages the subject of magic that isn't dismissive of the practice of it. Two academic journals, *The Pomegranate* and *The Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, are producing some academic work which does a credible job of presenting research on magic.

While the academic work is useful for providing a perspective on what magic seems to be or could be, it's important to note that the study of magic in academia is not so much a study of refining methods as it's an examination of why people practice magic. To get into the creation of new techniques, and refinement of old techniques, the actual literature of occultism needs to be consulted. In that literature we see less of why people practice magic and more focus on how magic can be used to accomplish specific goals. This approach changes the perspective on what magic seems to be, as the focus is on technique and how technique makes magic possible. Multimodality is the only academic mode that's focused on a practical examination of techniques (and not so much of magic as semiotics, the study of symbols).

The academic and occult concepts of magic are useful in terms of comparison to each other, in part because magicians can learn from such comparisons. The academic sources, even the ones with inaccurate concepts of magic, provide new viewpoints that we need to have in order to continue evolving magic. By examining these new perspectives, we can continue to critically analyze the different traditions in magic, as well as consider how magic is developed to address the exigencies of the times we live in. Academic perspectives challenge the comfortable definitions we have and force us to consider if those definitions are really relevant anymore. With that said, let's move on to accurate definitions of magic made by magicians.

Definitions of Magic from the Occult Perspective

While the definitions of magic by magicians are focused on the practical application of magic, there are still some similarities to the definitions offered by the academics above. It's the manner in which the definitions are phrased

that we find the differences. For instance, Whitcomb offers the following explanation: “Magic is a method of taking advantage of the relationship between consciousness (knowing), information (being), and energy (doing)” (2002, p. 5). This definition is focused on the utilization of magic, identifying key elements that make it work. Consciousness involves knowing, which can mean understanding an experience, but also can mean achieving a state of mind that allows you alter what you know. Information involves being, which involves existence. In a very real sense, all of us are made up of information. A lot of it is biological information (like DNA), but there are other forms including psychological and spiritual information. All of these contribute to a sense of existence. The personality each individual exhibits is a construct of information. The consciousness we exhibit involves knowing that information and allowing it a medium (the human body and other forms of media) to display itself. Finally there is energy, which involves doing. Magic is only worked successfully when a person chooses to move past the particular situation s/he is in.

Another definition of Whitcomb’s is one I like even better:

Everything that exists can be described as the interaction of forces through space and time. Viewed as strands...running through the space/time continuum, they form knots which human beings think of as objects, events, other people, etc. We judge that a thing is an individual entity (conceptual or otherwise) by its continuity of pattern...Magic may be described as a body of techniques used to consciously alter the perception of identity. (Whitcomb 2002, p. 7)

The forces Whitcomb mentions are the people, places, things, etc. that a person interacts with every day. All of those interactions can create patterns that define your

existence. For example, the need to go to work to make a living is a force and an interaction that impacts your identity. Magic is a force that allows us to change those patterns. They can be changed through other means as well, but magic involves conscious change through both the natural resources a person has, and the supernatural forces the person can call upon to help hir make changes manifest. This definition takes the academic viewpoints and boils them down to a practical level. We are connected to everyone, but how we affect and change those connections is what the methodology of magic is concerned with. Magic is a motivator of action through a variety of media, some of which can be mundane, and others which are anything but.

Another perspective on magic and its relationship to our connectivity with ourselves and others is offered by Louv: “Magic is an aspect of the human experience that has always been with us. It is a way of living that involves interacting with the universe *as if it were alive and intelligent* [italics are his]” (Louv 2006, p. 9). Magic is a form of communication with that universe, and while the magician uses magic to achieve what s/he desires, there’s something significant about magic which isn’t always recognized, which is even as we use magic to shape the universe, so too are we shaped by the universe via magic. Think of the various experiences you’ve had that can’t be explained in any other way than through magic. Certainly those experiences have confirmed magic’s existence to you, but they’ve also changed you, and changed how you perceive the world. Magic is an alternate way of understanding reality, but it’s also another way for reality to understand you. The interaction that occurs is a two-way street, with energy going in both directions. The communication that happens, as a result, is such that the magician might achieve what s/he desires, though not always in the manner expected.

The goal of communicating with the universe, when it comes to magic, is to induce change. The magical act is done to change the circumstances the magician is in. Hine explains that magic is a doorway to change and mystery, and a way to develop personal responsibility (1995). Magic changes reality. It's a critical action, because magic is employed as a means of changing an environment that would otherwise keep the magician powerless. The magician changes the circumstances around hir to *generate possibilities* that allow hir to move beyond the original situation. Hine's definition emphasizes personal responsibility, with the magician claiming for himself the power of choice, as well as dealing with the consequences thereof. This philosophy is different from a contemporary religion such as Christianity, which ultimately emphasizes the placement of judgment through the offices of a deity. The magician's choice to be responsible for hir decisions is a choice to accept freedom and its consequences, with no one holding hir hand. S/he must be aware of not only the intention, but also the impact, of hir choices.

Hine also argues that while language is an essential tool for the magician, s/he should also be wary of overusing it:

But no, magic has become obfuscated under a weight of words, a welter of technical terms, which exclude the uninitiated and serve those who are 'eager' for a 'scientific' jargon with which to legitimize their enterprise into something self-important and pompous... The mysterious has been misplaced. We search through dead languages and tombs for 'secret knowledge', ignoring the mystery of life that is all around us. (Hine 1995, p. 11)

Language (and by extension symbolism) should never take the place of the practice of magic. It's just one tool for exploring the mysteries of life. The experience of life is a mystery of its own and one that magic can help us

appreciate more, but only if we're willing to free ourselves of overly relying on language as a way of describing reality.

Technology and Magic

In the last chapter, one of the arguments was that with the development of technology the relevance and use of magic faded. This argument is wrong, as is evidenced by contemporary, postindustrial usage of magic. However, magicians also actively use modern technology in magic and this necessarily changes how they think of both magic and technology. A striking example of the use of contemporary technology can be found online, where magical practices are enacted through the medium of cyberspace. Such practices occur on message forums, instant messengers, chatrooms, and even online games. In some cases cybercovens are formed so people can work magic with each other even if they rarely (or never) meet in person. Instead of physical contact, daily communication through e-lists and ritual becomes essential for making an online group work (McSherry 2002). Lisa McSherry emphasizes that it takes active communication to keep the cybercoven together. The stories, practices, and communication connect and bond people who may have never met in real life.

Magicians make technology an integral part of the process of how they work magic. Additionally though they recognize that technology should never take the place of communication with the universe or with each other, they also recognize that it can be used to facilitate that communication. Besides communicating and working magic with other people, technology also has been used to achieve altered states of mind. The Dream Machine and mind machines are examples of technology that use the flicker effect with strobe lights and sound to produce

altered states of mind. Interested readers should consult *Space/Time Magic* and *Inner Alchemy* for more information on this technology and how it's used in magical practices.

Magicians have also used tools such as video games, computers, and cell phones to do magic. In *Pop Culture Magick*, I covered some uses of video games in magical applications. For instance, you can charge and fire a sigil playing a video game. Because so many people put so much energy into games, it's easy to take that energy and direct it toward a specific purpose while playing them. Every push of the buttons is a projection of energy. Visualize a sigil on the back of the character you are playing and with each button push you will charge your sigil more. Finish the game (with a win) and the sigil is fired. (When my characters die, I just start over again...it gives me more incentive to get the sigil fired successfully.) You can also apply this principle to work. If you have to type a report or create a program, every push of the button is putting energy into your work. But you can redirect some of that energy for your magical purposes as well. For instance, I do technical writing. I created a sigil to collect the energy I put into my typing and related tasks and keep it in reserve for whenever I needed it. The energy was redirected so that I could use it for other pursuits when I wasn't working.

Some magicians even work with technology as spirit guides and familiars. Most of us probably know someone who names his car (and may even view the car as having a personality or spirit). Technomages work with the spirits within vehicles, computers and other machines in the same way others work with demons, totem animals, god-forms and other entities. Laser pointers may serve as wands, home security systems as wards, and the sounds of the keyboard as a rhythm to guide one into altered states of consciousness.

My point, for the moment, is that magicians are capable of using contemporary technology in novel ways for the purposes of working magic. Many magicians show a sophisticated awareness and appreciation of technology's benefits that other people don't have. Generally the use of technology is confined only to the obvious uses that the technology is for, but the magician may subvert technology and put it to use in ways that weren't conceived of when it was invented.

The Colors of Magic

One of the other approaches to defining magic involves defining different techniques of magic by color. This isn't the clichéd moralistic black and white categories of magic, but rather categorization of magic by function. Peter Carroll and Isaac Bonewits have both taken this approach, albeit in different directions.

Carroll defines magic by eight categories and uses the eight arrowed star of chaos as a symbol of those disciplines, each of which has its own color. Yellow magic is ego, red is war, blue is wealth, black is death, green is love, purple is sex, orange is thinking, and octarine is "pure" magic. Various disciplines of magic can be placed in these categories. Necromancy, for instance, would fall under death magic (Carroll 1992). Carroll's approach is useful because it boils magic down to eight essentials. His approach is focused more on pure mechanics, as opposed to an approach that's more fleshed out and filled with specific value judgments. This isn't surprising because chaos magic is partly about paradigmatic piracy, mixing and matching different paradigms as needed to get what you need out of them. A system of magic that can boil all the theory down to eight elements is useful when you want to determine what type of magic you're working and what paradigms may be useful for that system.

Bonewits's association of magic with color is different from Carroll's, as is his system. He attempts to provide laws that explain how magic works. He doesn't associate the laws with colors, but the laws are useful for defining magic and how it works. The most basic law, the law of knowledge, operates on the concept that understanding creates control, or the more you learn, the better off you are (Bonewits 1989). It provides a good foundation for other laws, which are focused on specific activities of magic. As an example the laws of invocation and evocation are focused on two specific techniques of magic: "The *Laws of Invocation* and *Evocation* say that you can conjure up from, respectively, the inside of and outside of your metapattern, real entities. These entities are only personifications of patterns...but so is every entity, including your friends [italics are his]" (Bonewits 1989, p. 16). As can be seen Bonewits offers varying degrees of specificity with his definitions, depending on the subject. While I think his laws of invocation and evocation are somewhat accurate in terms of the personification of patterns, I'd also offer one modification, namely it's entirely possible the entities have objective, external existences, and any personification pattern is just a subjective imposition by the person doing the magical act to help hir maintain hir sanity. Overall, his laws are excellent explanations of how magic can work, though modifiable as well, based on the experiences of a person.

Besides providing laws, Bonewits also color codes magic types, though his correspondence is different from Carroll's. Red is associated with the body, orange with ego, yellow with the mind, green with fertility, blue with emotions, indigo for weather and space/time, purple with passion, ultraviolet with psychic power, and brown with earth magic (Bonewits 1989). Again these color types are used to break magic down into a pragmatic correspondence system that anyone can use.

The only problem I have with color coding magic is that it seems to be very subjective. These two authors have different correspondences for the colors. The subjectivity of such a system can be useful, but it also brings with it the risk of reducing magic to symbolism by using colors as symbolic representations of magic, as well as of taking the author's correspondences as holy writ. While it can be useful to create correspondence systems to help us initially understand the principles and dynamics of magic, we need to be wary of coming to overly rely on such systems. The real power of magic doesn't lie in the symbols, or even the manipulation of them; it lies within the person. This isn't to say that symbols can't have meaning, as it's obvious that symbols garner reactions from people. However those reactions aren't really a result of the symbols, but rather a result of the unconscious patterns of behavior and associations we create as we experience life. The symbols can evoke those patterns, but only until we consciously change them. Once a person is consciously acting the symbols have no power over the person. Note that the power entirely resides with the person. Any power and meaning a symbol has is given to it by the person reacting to it.

Yet it's also fair to say that some symbols have a cultural power. In other words, their power is derived from the cultural belief in the symbol. A flag, for instance, isn't just a flag. It can embody the patriotic feelings and emotions that a lot of people put into it. Nonetheless that power is still derived from those people and their belief in the cultural meme that the flag embodies. If those people were to someday decide that they no longer wanted to believe in that symbol, it would cease to have power.

Color coded systems of magic can be very useful. Both systems mentioned above pragmatically break magic down to the essentials by using color. In at least one case, there's been some fruitful experimentation with Carroll's system,

where the person created eight versions of herself that represented each type of magic (Ceilede 2005). She was able to use each version to work with each area of magic and develop a better understanding of the roles they have in her life. More recently, a magical group devoted eight weeks to exploring the eight colors of magic, with each week being devoted to one color. This intense focus on one color/type of magic per week can be useful for interacting with the influence of that given category of magic.

William G. Gray's Definition of Magic

Gray has one of the best perspectives to offer on definitions of magic. He points out that any definition is a matter of opinion, because magic can mean so many different things. He also notes though that magic involves establishing a relationship between the internal and external state of being for each person (Gray 1970). I agree with both of these statements. As you can tell by now, there are many definitions of magic and opinions will vary as to which ones are valid or invalid. At the same time all of them (even the ones I think of as inaccurate) have noted this activity of establishing harmony between the internal reality of the magician and the external reality s/he interacts with.

Gray does say something else about magic which is often ignored in other books, or perhaps taken for granted, "Real Magic is only worked with the efforts of a whole heart, whole mind, and a whole soul" (Gray 1970, p. 114). I interpret this passage to mean that the magician must be willing to give of himself in order to make magic work. I once mentioned this to a post-modern chaos magician and s/he expressed surprise, saying that magic doesn't need anything from us, that it's only a set of tools and techniques to be used to get what is desired. I disagree with that approach to magic, for the simple fact that it takes magic

for granted. To achieve what you want effort must be made and part of effort is giving of yourself in order to make a specific reality manifest. Even after it's manifested you still must give of yourself to make that manifestation successful. For instance, I do magic to find a job, and then I find the job I want. The desire has been manifested, but to keep that job, to make that manifestation truly successful, means that I still have to put effort into the job itself. Magic is a process, but it's not a push button process. It's a dynamic, interactive process that asks for the effort of the magician to make it really work.

My Own Definition of Magic

We've looked at other definitions of magic and now I offer my own. With it I also offer my own agenda, which in this case is to promote a different perspective on magic and what it can be as opposed to how it has been defined. In a very real sense, the rest of this book (and my other books) can be summed up as my definition of what magic is or could be (as it applies to this book! It could change for the next one, as I continue to practice and evolve as an individual magician). I don't ask that you agree with me, but rather that you test and experiment with all of the definitions, and then come up with your own. Whether you draw on any elements of my definition doesn't really matter. In the end, what is important is that the magic works, and that in your personal model, you understand why it works. Definitions, whether offered by others or derived from your own experiences, offer you a framework to understand and construct your experiences, while also conceptualizing magic in a manner that's most effective for you.

Magic involves making the improbable possible. It's learning how even the slightest change you make can have a radical effect on the internal system of your

psychology/spirituality, and the external system of the environment and universe you live in. Magic is the realization of an interdependent system of life that needs every part to bring forth the hidden potential. It is also a methodology that can be used as a stress on the interconnected system, to manifest change in it. It's not the only pressure, though, and we need to recognize that different forms of stress can either make or break the system at a given time. While intent is important in magic, impact is equally vital. Recognizing how the impact of your working will affect yourself and other people can be very important in determining if the magical act is worth doing. (Refer to appendix 6 for an analysis of the role of impact in magical acts.) What stands out to me, in dealing with many people, is how much ignorance is cultivated about various aspects of life, while focusing on one particular aspect as a specialty. For instance, some people choose to focus on magic, or politics, or religion, or some other aspect of life to the exclusion of anything else. This can prompt ignorance of other areas of interest and study outside the pale of their specialty, the antithesis of a cosmopolitan outlook. Later these same people rail against the way of the world, failing in the meantime to contemplate how much they have reinforced their own positions and the positions of others by closing themselves to other possibilities, and more importantly new experiences. Specialization can only take a person so far.

I prefer a general knowledge of subject material that can be specialized as needed. The reason is that I end up having a variety of life experiences that can help me adapt to new situations as they arise. To be able to step outside the boundaries of society and move where you will, as you will, you first need to learn what the boundaries are and how they can be surpassed. To put it another way, if you want to make new rules, first you need to know what the current rules are. As a personal example, I am learning

more about finances and money, both in business and personal models. I'm learning how finances work and in doing so, learning more about how this society functions and runs as a system. While none of that may seem very magical, understanding leads to the ability to manipulate and move through the system. In fact, this brings us back to that very basic, but often ignored law of magic: The more you know about a given subject, the more control you can have over the processes that involve that subject (Bonewits 1989).

Ignorance about other areas of life inevitably leads to less than effective magic. The process of exploring a subject such as finances not only allows you to learn about it, but also about the attitudes and beliefs you have in regards to it. It also puts you in touch with the perspectives of other people and what they know about the subject you're learning about. You can trace how your internal reality has impacted your external behaviors and choices when it comes to a specific subject. If, using the finances example, you believe money is bad it probably won't be a surprise that you don't handle it well. (That said there are situations where people are dealing with circumstances that financial literacy alone couldn't solve, though it could still lower the overall negative impact.) You might even find yourself in debt, constantly trying to get away from money. A better attitude would be to consider the possibility that having money is necessary in modern society and knowing how to make it work for you is better than complaining about the system. You might then go on to figure out how to maximize the money that you do have while living a more responsible life. For example, you may use improved financial knowledge to get out of debt and then invest in environmentally sustainable companies or work donations to nonprofit organizations into your budget.

What many people fail to realize is that every experience is a transformation. Any experience can offer change and

evolution, and to limit experiences to a particular dogma is to think only in the short term, selfishly of the self, while limiting human potential and growth to a path that could be a dead end. However if you opened yourself to the notion that any experience, any culture (including pop culture), could be adapted toward magical practice you might just realize that human potential can't be limited to one path or one view, but must be open to all avenues, to increase the probability of evolution. Magic, when it's properly worked with, is a methodology that pushes you to explore all of the avenues and walks of life so that you have a variety of perspectives and, more importantly, experiences that allow you to achieve what you want, when you want it.

As a methodology, magic isn't limited to the traditional ceremonial tools of the altar, sword, staff, blade, and other equipment. While these tools are used by some, others like me prefer more contemporary tools (which include, but are not limited to, various forms of media, psychology, and technology) such as what I mentioned above. Regardless of what tools you use, they should be tools that help you, but don't embody the entirety of your magical practice. Likewise magic isn't limited to a particular paradigm. Explore all paradigms if possible. When I started out I explored shamanism and hermeticism, and then ceremonial and chaos magic. Even now I'm continuing to broaden my knowledge of different paradigms and tools so I can use all of them effectively. Even if you specialize in a particular paradigm, that paradigm will touch every part of your life.

Magic is the method and practice of manifesting change through intent and an understanding of the dynamics that inform the situation you want to change. Art and science are only as applicable as you need them to be for the matter at hand. While your will fuels your intentions, without action nothing will happen, so it's important to supplement magical action with mundane action. Magic is a stress and connection to the interdependent system of life we all exist

in. It can help us or hinder us, but it depends on us to do either. The most essential element of magic is you; without you magic can't exist. The most effective system of magic for you is the personalized system you create for yourself as a result of the initial experiences you have with the various approaches of magic, and other disciplines you've studied. If it's primarily based on a particular paradigm, even something as complex and (relatively) rigid as the Golden Dawn, that's still okay, as long as it meshes with your view of reality.

I also define magic as a process. While results can be important in magic, they don't define magic as much as a good process does. Results are like road signs. They tell you where you're going, but they don't represent the entirety of an experience. Even when your magic hasn't produced the result you wanted, you still have a result. That result may indicate that you need to change your process or that you didn't factor in certain variables. At that point you change the process so that you can achieve the desired result. The reason that process is so important is that it provides structure and reveals patterns, all of which are useful for understanding how to make your magic workings more effective. Like results, process can't embody the entirety of the magical experience, but unlike results process insures that you have methods for approaching and resolving situations. With a good process, you can take any system of magic and work with it effectively because you can map out the steps you took and determine what was or wasn't successful. A process informs you of how and why magic works. It can't fully explain magic (I don't think anything can), but it can provide a guide to working magic—and magic that works.

Examining the definitions of magic is important. When we fail to recognize how our approaches to the world are shaped by others we give away our power, and thus our magic. Never questioning leads to ignorance, which

(contrary to partial platitudes) is never bliss. Relying on the knowledge of others doesn't mean we've learned anything if we never question that knowledge or try and find our own way. Learning involves experimenting and questioning. Nothing is sacred to the experimental magician and this includes any definitions we rely on. Even my own definition of magic is something I question and test and change. If I didn't do that I would stagnate. I have no doubt that the definition I offer in this book will change as my experiences change. Change is necessary for personal growth and the evolution of what you study and how you work with it.

I leave this chapter with a quote by one of my favorite magicians: "Magic is the most difficult knowledge on earth, which must not only be mastered in theory, but above all in practice. It is easier by far and much more possible to gain intellectual knowledge than to become a true magician" (Bardon 2001a, 352). This quote embodies the reality of magic. We can intellectualize it and talk about it, but the reality is that until you practice magic, you will never really know the experience that it is, the journey it provides, or the challenges it creates. It's in the practice of magic that you'll discover what your definition of it seems to be, which is better than any definition offered in a book because it's one you've formed yourself.

Exercises

1 Do you agree or disagree with these definitions of magic? Why or why not?

2 How, if at all, do these definitions contribute to your understanding of magic?

Chapter 5: In Defense of Pop Culture...

When *Pop Culture Magick* (PCM) was published the criticism I received about it dealt with three issues. The first issue was my definition of what pop culture is. Many people felt that I was making an unnecessary argument that pop culture resists mainstream culture. They also claimed I was engaging in overly dualistic thinking by arguing that pop culture and mainstream culture were opposed to each other. Nonetheless these people tended to ignore that pop culture often espoused values and beliefs that mainstream culture didn't agree with. Pop culture is often a sounding board and a cultural approach for integrating radical concepts into mainstream culture. It may not so much be in opposition of mainstream as it's a forum for anything that isn't considered mainstream.

The second issue dealt with reactions from neopagans to the idea of pop culture magic. There are some pagans who feel that the idea of using deities and other entities from pop culture to do magic (or--worse yet--as part of personal spirituality) is insulting to ancient deities or to more traditional forms of doing magic, or that it's pure, ineffective fluff. They argue that pop culture is made up and fictitious, and has no validity because it doesn't have its origin in ancient cultural religions. This response displays a typical attitude that infects many people with the assumption that they know better than anyone else how everyone should incorporate magic and belief into their lives. They ignore the principle that if it works for you in a constructive, healthy manner, then that's what should matter. They also believe that because something is older it's automatically better and more valid. Given that many modern pagan beliefs (though not all) are based on inaccurate appropriations of older cultural and religious practices, I find it odd that pop culture magic would be

treated as blasphemous. It may actually stand to reason that pop culture magicians are working with a more culturally accurate system of magic. The context of the times we live in is equally as valid as any belief system that originated thousands of years ago. That being said, I won't deny that older systems of magic and older forms of religion (regardless of historical and/or linguistic accuracy) are efficacious and meaningful for people. The work done in reconstructionist Greek, Celtic, and Norse belief systems shows a dedication to those traditions that carefully and critically examines the accuracy and presentation of those beliefs in contemporary times. Clearly the reconstructionists are onto a very meaningful and powerful belief that spiritually nourishes them and is something which should be respected. I just fail to see why there's such a vehement intolerance, on the part of some, of the idea of using pop culture as both a way of doing magic and as a religious medium, for those who want it to be that. This intolerance is especially odd given that many pagans and magicians prefer for non-pagans to be tolerant of their own beliefs.

An experimental magician ideally seeks to be flexible, drawing on everything around hir. *Multi-Media Magic* challenges the view that magic should be an unchanging, static tradition, offering instead a more flexible approach that allows a person to test the definitions and systems of magic in order to create a personal system of magic that works for hir. Pop culture is just one medium of testing what magic can be for a practitioner. There are other media (such as the hard sciences, social sciences, etc) outside the traditional domain of magic which can offer insights into our practices, while allowing us to customize those practices further.

An additional complaint I received was that I didn't draw on pop culture works by people like Grant Morrison or Neal Gaiman. This particular nitpick came from a

reviewer who evidently hadn't closely read *PCM*. If s/he had, s/he might've realized that I stated throughout that book that whatever a person considered to be pop culture would work because pop culture magic is a malleable system of magic that fits an individual's preferences. In other words, do what works for you. The goal of any of my books is to present techniques that a person can work with and adapt to his own needs. Any personal examples included are based off my experiences. If I don't mention a particular mainstay of pop culture, it may be that I haven't had access to it. And lest anyone gasp in horror and bemoan the fact that I haven't read Morrison or Gaiman, I'll just point out that I'm not always interested in what everyone else thinks of as pop culture. I have my own interests and it's those interests that I work with. This is true of anyone who works magic. Use what works for you, not what someone else thinks should work for you.

This also ties into the third issue, that many people wanted a more focused development of a particular pop culture magic system, as opposed to the diverse examples I used in the book. *PCM* was primarily intended as a book that explained the general theory of how pop culture magic works, mixed in with some practical exercises that could demonstrate the efficacy of the theory. I also wanted to avoid the common epidemic of the "spell" book, with little or no actual explanation of theory and/or process behind what makes the spells work. Even for this book, I have no intention of providing a bunch of prefabricated rituals. What I'm offering are some extensions of the concepts in *PCM*, as well as more personal experiences and an explanation of the fundamental dynamics that inform the magical workings I've been doing. I'm providing techniques and ideas you can use, but regardless of what I provide the only limitation you have is your own imagination. My ultimate goal, as always, is to inspire YOU in your own magical workings by giving you ideas.

The techniques, rituals, and other magical processes presented in this book are made to be interchangeable with whatever paradigm you draw upon for pop culture magic, and also help you understand why and how it works.

For people who want an example of an extended and focused development of a pop culture magic system, I point you in the direction of the Deharan system of magic that Storm Constantine, with the help of me and other experimenters, created out of her *Wraeththu* series of novels. Currently *Grimoire Dehara: Kaimana* is available from Immanion Press (<http://www.immanion-press.com>) and details the various rituals and workings that were developed over the course of several years. We are continuing to develop this system, and there are two more volumes planned. Like Storm, you can create your own developed system of pop culture magic in whatever way is most effective for you. The ideas in PCM are good starter techniques, but I wanted to avoid a prescriptive approach to doing pop culture magic. *Multi-Media Magic*, while developing approaches in pop culture further, is still intended as a medium that presents descriptions, not prescriptions!

A related critique to the second issue was the argument that my justification of using pop culture and magic was superficial and that I didn't explore potential hazards of such a system. I have included in this work what I consider some problematic issues of working in pop culture magic, but as to the overall validity of such a system I have only to say that people have used pop culture in magic and made it work. That is validity enough. While I draw on some academic resources for their commentary on pop culture, it's usually because I think those resources offer a way to extend the techniques and concepts of pop culture magic further. Although I'm addressing some of the critiques about pop culture and magic, my overall goal for this book--or any of my books--isn't to justify what I do or why

I do it. Justification isn't found in armchair theorizing, but is instead found in practice. Practice, in my experience, generates theory, but it's also my experience that if there is no practice being done, any theory will be insufficient because there is no experience that can back it up or really demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental dynamics that make the theory work.

Refining the Definition of Pop Culture in Magical Practice

I want to address the first issue I raised above in further detail. My definition of pop culture in *PCM* is as follows: "Pop culture resists the mainstream blah culture. It possesses and represents different value systems, which clash with the values of mainstream culture. However the value system of a pop culture icon can and usually is consumed by mainstream culture, unless the pop icon changes" (Ellwood 2004, p. 14). While it's true that much of pop culture gets consumed by mainstream culture sooner or later, there's some pop culture which resists mainstream culture and stays on strong, such as *Star Trek*, though some people will argue that since the corporations make *Star Trek* and it's found on corporate cable channels and in corporate-owned stores, it's mainstream. Compared to reality T.V. though, *Star Trek* still has a very niche following. Whether *Star Trek* is or isn't pop culture depends on how you choose to perceive it, which means that what pop culture seems to be is different for each person. Though it may seem that pop culture is tied to industrial, corporate desires, it's important to remember that it is also based on what the people like (and corporations will capitalize on that...though we can also capitalize on them), and how they choose to incorporate it into their lives:

Popular culture in industrial societies is contradictory to its core. On the other hand it is industrialized--its commodities produced and distributed by a profit-motivated industry that follows only its own economic interests... To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people. Popular culture is not consumption, it is culture, the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system. Culture however industrialized, can never be adequately described in terms of the buying and selling of commodities. (Fiske 1989, p. 23)

What gives some people a hangup about using pop culture in magic is its connection to the corporate, mainstream world that pushes its values into the pop culture it produces. And yet pop culture is ultimately separated from the corporations. They may try to commodify it, but even as they make such artifacts, it still maintains its intangibility, being more a product of the imagination than any plastic toy a kid could play with.

Some people argue that pop culture is tied to spectacle, to the mass production of images, illusions, and other forms of entertainment that desensitize people to what is actually happening around them. However, this understanding is quite incorrect in the sense that pop culture is never overtly out to desensitize people, but rather through different forms of media it presents situations that call for the resistance of mainstream culture norms and values (A good, if dated, example of this is the show *Xena*, which deals with issues of pacifism vs. war, bisexuality, reincarnation, abuse of power, etc. A more recent example is *The Dresden Files*, which focuses on using magical practices to solve cases). Mainstream culture, on the other hand, does set out to desensitize people through spectacle and we see this most notably in the news, which focuses on increasingly garish and gaudy forms of sensationalistic violence, which people

gradually tune out in an effort to continue their insulated lives. Popular culture isn't mainstream culture, because there isn't a dominant type of pop culture. Pop culture is formed in reaction to mainstream culture and offers criticism of it, while providing outlets for activities not sanctioned in mainstream culture. When people who are considered mainstream get involved in a pop culture they change their allegiances for that moment so that they can be part of that culture (Fiske 1989). This reformation of allegiances involves shedding the corporate and/or mainstream identity and taking on the identity of a person participating in a social event or venue, which allows hir to exist outside of the mainstream mentality. How s/he chooses to participate in that venue determines how, and if, s/he chooses to resist the dominant culture.

Pop culture is different from counterculture because it doesn't completely reject corporate or other variants of mainstream culture. Counter culture has the expectation that people who are involved in it reject any hint of mainstream culture. Pop culture, on the other hand, parodies mainstream culture, but embraces it as well as a source of inspiration and continuance. Through that very embrace pop culture continues to resist mainstream culture by defining what is different from it, and providing a space where those differences can be played with.

However, even this definition may prove problematic for some readers. The idea that a person can shed hir mainstream identity and take on a pop culture identity could also suggest the person wasn't really resisting mainstream culture and that pop culture isn't really a form of resistance, but instead an escape from mainstream culture. We must consider that resistance can take many forms and one such form is escape or evasion: "Other resistances are those of evasion, of getting around social control, of dodging the discipline over self and others that those with power attempt so insistently to exert" (Fiske

1989, p. 69). The ability to slip out of one form of identity to another is a form of resistance, escaping the hold (even if only temporarily) of the mainstream world and existing in another identity via pop culture. The ability to don a Star Trek uniform and physically assume an identity as a character from that universe is also the ability to work with the energy behind it to subvert any ideologies that inform the other identities the person assumes in the course of working at a job or otherwise interacting in mainstream culture.

Assuming another identity also includes sharing the values and beliefs that the cultural community for that identity endorses. Fan communities, which are forums for people who like a particular type of pop culture, are also knowledge communities. Knowledge communities provide fans ways to negotiate with media producers, including corporations. At the same time such communities often incorporate pop culture into their lives, critique it, write about it, and even create new stories for various favorite characters (Jenkins 2006a). To assume that all interest in pop culture is a corporate interest is to assume that the fans have no power. Fans often create resistance to corporate interests by providing different perspectives that deviate from the sanctioned perspective offered by corporations. As an example, when the Warner Bros studio tried to get Harry Potter fan sites shut down, the fans reacted by hiring lawyers and eventually got the studio to rethink its policy (Jenkins 2006a). In this case, mainstream culture was forced to conform to a subculture. Granted this occurred because the financial interest of the corporation was threatened by fan reaction, but this example proves that pop culture isn't entirely a mainstream phenomenon and that people involved in it aren't sellouts.

Resistance occurs through the production of meanings which usually focus on social identity and connections and how those are used to resist hegemonic mainstream values

(Fiske 1989). In other words, each person forms his own definition and meanings for what pop culture stands for. Each person doesn't succumb to spectacle, so much as resists it, when s/he chooses to invest meaning into pop culture. The combination of pop culture and magic is an expression on the part of the magician, which subverts the dominant ideologies and does so by sarcastically using the very production of commodity that both resists and is a part of mainstream culture. Naturally the tension that exists between pop culture and mainstream culture is rife with enough energy for the magician to draw upon, along with the added momentum of belief and attention given by the masses to their entertainment.

The Impact of Culture on the Magician

The methodology of the pop culture magician is shaped by the opportunity to circulate the pop culture magic into different forms of media that serve as tools. These media enable communication and connection, while also providing new venues through which reality can be manifested:

This circulation of media content — across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders — depends heavily on consumers' active participation... convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content... Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday life (Jenkins 2006a, pp. 3-4).

The personal mythology that is created is highly individualized in some contexts, and yet in others is shared via knowledge communities the magician participates in. In knowledge communities the personal mythology can be tested against other people's experiences and/or available cultural material to verify if the personal mythology is valid for more people than just the person who experienced it. This verification also demonstrates an important aspect of culture that is sometimes ignored in our zealotry to be individuals.

Examining the underpinnings of culture and how it affects people shows that what is culturally drawn upon to practice magic isn't as important as acknowledging the fact that culture has an impact on people. Even the choice to resist a particular form of culture is a result of such an impact. What we choose to do with that impact and how we choose to accept it determines the empowerment we get out of it. This principle is illustrated in the example below.

One magician I know is currently doing an intensive ritual working with the character of Tyler Durden. He has made collages with pictures from the movie and random writings that still pertain to the idea of *Fight Club*, as well as making sacrifices of his blood, spit, nails, etc. to Tyler Durden. And he's had a response from the entity of Tyler, and consequently has acted differently than he normally would. In other words, his devotion has caused Tyler to have more of a presence in his life, and change it for the better. What you work with will have an impact on you, and this applies to not only pop culture magic, but also to more traditional approaches. This happens because you shape the context of your workings with what you find personally and culturally meaningful; that context establishes the efficacy of your magic. The specifics vary from person to person, because although all of us exist in a cultural collective based around a particular society, what is

most meaningful to an individual is based on the values that s/he chooses and/or is raised with.

This means that even though culture has some impact on our chosen values, each person still decides what values work for hir. This occurs through testing the validity of those values. Pop culture presents alternatives and raises questions, and also presents new cultural interfaces for people to use as they interact with each other and the archetypal entities that people happen to believe in. So, as an example, the character of Tyler Durden is an interface for not only the attributes and characteristics that Tyler Durden represents, but also the cultural force that embodies the concept of the trickster. He is another form of that archetype, just as Loki and Coyote and Bugs Bunny are.

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that you make everything up and manifest reality to your will, to the point that nothing else exists unless you created it. But such a solipsistic view of the world is unreal and delusional. After all, can you really justify getting hit in the face by another person as something you created entirely on your own? It's true that you participated in making that happen, but the other person involved also had to do something to make that reality manifest. Culture of any form has an effect on you. When you choose to dress up in a business suit and go to an interview, you are agreeing to certain cultural norms and societal expectations that you will fulfill a particular role at the interview and, if chosen, the job. The very choice of wearing a business suit, as opposed to something less formal, is a choice that you may not even knowingly make, beyond having an awareness that wearing a bathrobe would cause you to look less professional and in most places cost you the job. And when you add to the mix the various entities/forces that you interact with, those also have an impact. Such an entity can be the pet you have at home, but can also be a nebulous concept such as "god." Both of these entities will have an impact on you. The pet

provides a source of physical and emotional (and perhaps spiritual) contact, and likewise “god” in whatever form can provide a spiritual, emotional, mental, and even physical contact. The people you choose to interact with have an impact on you, and while this may seem very obvious to you, how those people have an impact isn’t always as obvious. The behavior patterns that a person exhibits are often based on similar patterns their parents, siblings, or friends demonstrated. That person might not even realize that s/he is acting a particular way because it’s a way s/he has been indoctrinated to behave.

At the same time, we need to recognize that we have agency. Agency is both the assumption of responsibility for yourself and the awareness that you knowingly and unknowingly have an impact on reality. For the majority of people the impact is, for the most part, unconscious. These people haven’t assumed agency and are directed by the cultural influences in their lives. For a minority of people agency is assumed and used to not only be aware of being shaped by culture, but also become aware of how culture can be shaped to their purposes.

Culture isn’t wholly shaped by humans, but is also shaped by the various mythologies, beliefs, etc., that are integrated into it. While these mythologies come from humans, they do take on a life of their own that lasts beyond the original context and explanations that were first used to create them. You have some control over those archetypal forces and you exert that control when you make associations and connections and invest meaning into the cultural paradigm you choose to believe in and use.

Part of that control is brought about by choosing the entities you work with. Working with pop culture entities is a choice that draws on what is current, but comes with a recognition that you are working with the latest cultural aspect of something more primal. In my earlier example, Tyler Durden is both the entity Tyler Durden, but also a

representative of the trickster. (It's important to note that archetypes are just one theory to explain the prevalence of the different types of patterns in mythology. For some people, the mythology of a given culture is perceived to be a literal truth about literal entities. They would argue that Tyler Durden is a separate entity from the trickster. I personally believe that while an entity like Tyler Durden can be an individual entity, it can also be an aspect of the concept of the trickster. I think it really depends on the paradigm that an individual practitioner adopts when working with such entities.) The choice to work with Tyler Durden occurs on a number of conceptual levels. The first level is your perception/understanding of that entity. The second level is the entity's awareness of itself and you. The final level is that of the trickster, which inspires the connection made via a person's choice to work with Tyler Durden. This inspiration occurs as a result of looking for particular characteristics that embody a need you have to change something about your reality, which may be found in that particular archetype. Of course, my perception of Tyler Durden as a trickster is subjective, which means other people may associate other archetypal forces with him, or perceive him to be a singular and separate entity from the trickster. Regardless, choosing to work with him is acknowledging that he will have an impact on you, even as you work with him to have an impact on reality. He will affect you in ways you don't expect from him because he is not limited to your or my perceptions, just as we are not limited to his. By consciously acknowledging that you aren't only shaping reality through culture, but also are being shaped in turn, you can purposely direct the way you are shaped toward what's most useful for you. You claim agency for yourself.

The reason it's important to note this aspect of culture and how you interact with it is so you have a much more conscious approach toward what you use for your magical

workings. Pop culture may not be what you want to use, but it does have an impact on you, and noting that effect allows you to determine whether or not it should carry over into your magical and spiritual lifestyle. At the very least, by realizing that you are not the sole arbiter of reality, you come to realize that magic is much more than just about shaping reality to your will. It's also about interacting, learning, and evolving with an open mind. It's an understanding that though you can't escape culture, you can choose how to purposely mediate it. Magic involves learning from the reality you shaped and accepting that you will be shaped by it as well.

With a clearer explanation of the theoretical underpinnings that affect pop culture magical work I turn your attention to another form of pop culture magic I've developed called retro magic.

Retro Magic

Retro magic is a form of pop culture magic that is focused on past pop culture that hasn't died out, but instead flourishes secretly in the omnipresent shadow of mainstream culture. This form of magic is powered through nostalgia, the sentimental feelings that you may feel if you look at a game of Candy Land you used to play, or a G.I. Joe "action figure" that you imagined shot rays of light at C.O.B.R.A. commandos and miraculously always emerged victorious. This feeling of nostalgia, of memories past, can be used to empower your pop culture workings with treasured items you may have once invested energy in. That energy isn't gone, but can be recalled through the memory, and even your own choice of playing with said item once again. There is no reason you can't reconnect with your childhood and use the pop culture of that time to inform your magical workings.

Some pop culture is forgotten and consequently never absorbed into the mainstream. This pop culture sometime takes the form of a cult interest, with a dedicated group of people retaining interest in it (as an example, *old school* Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) or it can be a pop culture technology such as the original Lite Brite or Atari 2600, which brings back nostalgia for those who had such toys as a kid.

However, despite being lost to the mists of time these forms of pop culture still have power, whether you choose to use them for your personal practice or just to subvert mainstream culture. They are no longer overtly tied to any form of corporate sponsorship. Admittedly new forms of Lite Brite, G.I. Joe and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles exist, but the pop culture magician who is picky doesn't need to work with the new forms (Not to mention that the newer versions just may not quite capture the spirit of the original versions.) The use of older, more established forms of pop culture is a way of steeping yourself in power structures that have a bit more permanence than current pop culture has. Hardcore fans of the original Transformers cartoon series, for instance, will write fan fiction about characters from that show (ignoring the other series), in a continuation of the tradition of the Transformers. However, even a continuation of older traditions mutates and changes, being more than meets the eye. Fan fiction writings deal not with the black and white universe of the Transformers series, but rather gray issues, giving more depth to the series and fleshing out the development of the characters. Naturally fan fiction such as this is useful to plunder when creating pop culture entities as it enables you to see how the fans (the believers in the entity) perceive said entity. Being a fan also helps and may create some intriguing interactions for you, particularly because as you change the pop culture entity, it will likely respond and interact with you on a deeper level.

Besides steeping yourself in pop culture past, there is also the advantage of raising nostalgia in the everyday person. People who happen to have an original Lite Brite can easily incorporate it into pop culture workings. Create a sigil or evoke a goetic demon using Lite Brite. To empower your working, place it in a window where people can see it and watch as people stop to look at the design, reminiscing over the past, giving attention and power to the magic you've employed with the aid of old technology. Or if you're doing a group ritual, put the symbol at the center of your working. The nostalgia that people who remember Lite Brite feel will help power the ritual.

Take old action figures and dolls and use them as housing units for entities that are empowered by people noticing them. Old action figures stand out; they are perceived as collectibles. Consider using them to house entities. The entity can be derived from the actual character the action figure depicts, but alternatively the entity could be one you made up. For instance, there are a couple of G.I. Joe characters who are doctors. You could create a health entity and house it in one of these. When I create an entity and bond it to an action figure I think of the character's attributes and purposes and try to relate those to the entity, and synthesize the associations I have about the entity and character. One exercise that can be really fun is to use the action figure to challenge common assumptions about reality. Dressing a G. I. Joe figure in Barbie doll clothes and summoning an entity that represents subverting the dominant gender paradigm is a creative way of using pop culture to challenge mainstream ideas.

Put pictures on your website of "classic" pop culture that you've chosen to use in your workings, perhaps an altar you've created to warrior gods with Transformers and G.I. Joes. (Make sure you pay attention to copyright law when putting pictures up on the web. While most companies generally don't care about a few pictures on a

noncommercial website, some, such as Disney, have been known to go ballistic over small details.) Use whatever you feel is appropriate for your goal. The pictures can be used to evoke a sense of nostalgia from other people when they view your site, which will feed the intent of your working. At the same time, creating such an altar can also be useful for working with a particular entity, or just honoring the feelings of nostalgia you have.

Write a fan fiction hypersigil that blends your favorite retro pop culture into your magical practice using a combination of words and images, or just words alone. Hypersigils are narrative stories that also function as magical workings by incorporating the magician's desire into the story or other creative process being used. William S. Burroughs is probably the most notable user of hypersigils (though the term wasn't in use at the time he used writing for magic). He would create cut-ups and write stories that manifested possibilities into the world and into his life directly, using phrases, characters and events that evoked what he wanted. A fan-fiction-based hypersigil allows the writer to interact with characters in a meaningful and magical manner, manifesting the characters and motifs into the life of the writer. One person I know writes Dr. Who fan fiction extensively and has, as a result, interacted with the numerous incarnations of the Doctor through his writing. S/he has encountered them as entities that can be worked through the medium of her writing. S/he's even noted that the people s/he tends to date usually have a similar clothing style to a particular version of Doctor Who and adopt similar mannerisms in their actions and words.

Fan fiction is a lot like fans in that it ranges from some interesting and creative approaches to writing about the characters to unhealthy obsession. As a hypersigil it allows the writer to create a narrative working with the character(s) and setting and plot that s/he wants to use. With a retro magic hypersigil you'd want to be fairly

creative and focused on mixing in the purpose of the hypersigil with the story. While some authors try to adhere to canon (i.e. established protocols about the history of the character(s) and the universe they are in.), others are more speculative, so feel free to push the boundaries as needed, though not so far as to lose all connection to the pop culture in question. Post it on an appropriate fan fiction site and let people reading charge the hypersigil up.

Retro magic allows us to access the fun of being a child again. The sense of humor and fun that goes into creating a magical working with a Lite Brite sigil or an action figure entity can bring back memories of more innocent times. When I see a G.I. Joe action figure I'm always reminded of the hours I'd spend setting up battle lines and creating a story around them. While I probably wouldn't do that now, working with the G.I. Joe character allows me to tap into those memories of the enjoyment I experienced when I did play with those toys.

We should never rule out the power of emotions and in particular the initial reaction a person has to an experience. Reactions are automatic triggers, with a lot of built-in emotion to them. That emotion (energy in motion) can feed the magical working. I make substantial use of emotion, both my own and others', as well as attention and belief. The impact that these have on reality can never be underestimated. Emotions equal involvement on some level, because they are prompted by what the person is experiencing. Attention is the choice to direct energy toward something notable (for instance, you are giving attention, and as such energy, to this book right now). Belief is an investment of faith. When I believe in something, I help establish its existence, both in my personal subjective reality, and in the larger consensual subjective reality I participate in. Belief also involves reciprocation. The choice to believe in a god also involves

that god's choice to believe in you. In other words, you validate each other's existence.

It should be clear that using pop culture in your magic does not mean you are selling out as a magician. On the contrary you are rising to the challenge of learning how to use contemporary culture and technology in a creative way to manifest your own spirituality and whatever else is meaningful to you. We cannot escape pop culture, but we can use it and whether you choose to use contemporary or retro pop culture you'll certainly be adding a valuable methodology to how you conceive of magic, one which fits with other methodologies of magic, but is unique enough in its own right to offer many unique opportunities. And if nothing else, taking pop culture and using it in your magical approach is fun. Couldn't we all use a little magic in the culture we live in?

Exercises

1 Identify a form of retro magic and incorporate it into your magical practice. How effective, in your opinion, is nostalgia as a form of empowering this version of magic? What makes nostalgia effective or ineffective?

2 What other technology (besides Lite Brite) that is "old school" could you use for retro magic? For instance, could you an Atari or Nintendo game system (or whatever counts as old school for you—Pong, anyone?)? What advantages might these systems have over using contemporary technology for your pop culture magic?

3 These days you can sometimes find t-shirts and other items with retro pop culture characters on them, such as a My Little Pony or a Care Bear. How might you incorporate these symbols into a pop culture working? What advantages and/or disadvantages do you think would occur

by using these retro images as opposed to more traditional symbolism?

Chapter 6: Evocation I

Evocation is traditionally thought of as a pursuit that involves elaborate rituals, chalk diagrams and entities summoned from another plane of existence that can harm you if the appropriate safeguards aren't taken. It also involves the outward manifestation of the entity, as opposed to invocation, bringing the entity into you. Kraig defines evocation as: "Its purpose [he's referring to evocation] is to allow you to communicate with other intelligences, powers, or entities which do not exist on our physical plane" (1997, p. 376). While communication is one goal of evocation, there are also other goals. In this chapter, we'll explore traditional and contemporary approaches to evocation as well as the various uses that evocation is put to.

Traditional Evocation

It's more accurate to call traditional evocation "medieval evocation", because the majority of grimoires and the overall approach come from the medieval time period and may actually be derived from more ancient practices. Traditional evocation usually involves calling upon daimons (Note: I use the word daimon over demon because demon is a Christianized word and a corruption of the word daimon and its meaning.) and spirits in order to acquire information, order them to do tasks, or work with the realm of influence the spirits happened to represent. Most, if not all, of the entities dealt with had specific spheres of influence and tasks (or if you will specific forms of media)

they could help magicians with. As an example, the goetic daimon Ronove is skilled in rhetoric and linguistic skills. A magician would evoke Ronove in order to acquire these skills or improve upon them.

To summon a spirit, the magician needed to know the sigil (Sigil, in this context, is a seal or symbol that represents the spirit and can be used to call it.) or seal of the spirit and would also need to know the appearance of the entity: “In Taoist magic, as in European, the key is to be familiar with the forms and features, the characteristics of that daimon, or celestial being, for without that familiarity, one cannot summon – or visualize it” (Versluis 1986, p. 27). The magician used the characteristics and form of the spirit in conjunction with the sigil/seal to summon it. Knowing all of this information was also important in order to determine if the spirit called forth was really the spirit you wanted. In the medieval grimoires, the spirits were considered to be dangerous entities that would try to deceive and trick the magician in order to get free of the evocation.

Although knowing the features and characteristics is important, the sigil/seal is even more important. Bardon lists three types of seals the magician can use for evocation: traditional, universal, and personal. The traditional seals come from the entities themselves and the magician must be able to project himself in their realm in order to get this seal. The universal seals, found in the grimoire, represent the attributes, quality, and sphere of activity for the entity summoned and it must react to the seal. The personal seals are ones made by the magician that must be accepted by the entities being worked with (Bardon 2001b). I prefer the last approach for reasons I’ll explain in more detail in the next chapter.

The sigil/seal is placed into the magic triangle, which acts as a gateway to the home plane of the entity (Bardon 2001b). The magician also constructs a magical circle that

could be used to protect himself from the entity called forth. The protection is needed because it is summoned against its will and is usually constrained to do as the magician commands. The magician might call on yet other entities to help accomplish that task.

The other detail that needs to be attended to is the creation of a sustainable atmosphere for the entity. One reason Bardon lists for the magician creating the atmosphere, as opposed to letting the entity generate it, is that if the entity generates the atmosphere, it may put the magician entirely under its influence (Bardon 2001b). A second reason is that most entities can't exist in this plane of reality without some medium to channel them. Incense is used in the traditional approach because it can embody the plane of existence the entity is in. The entity uses the smoke to assume a shape for the magician to interact with. We can think of the incense smoke as a medium which provides both smell, and a material for forming an appearance.

Traditional evocation involves ceremonial magic, which incorporates lots of props and tools. The dynamic behind using these tools is best summed up by Bardon: "When one directs his attention to a particular instrument, this triggers in the consciousness the particular ability or power symbolized by that particular instrument. Once a magician takes one or another magical instrument into his hand during the evocation, he immediately comes into contact with what this instrument symbolizes" (Bardon 2001b, p. 20). The ceremonial tools are mainly meant to help the magician reach a state of mind that allows him to successfully work the magic. As each tool represents a specific trigger in the consciousness, the activation of each trigger pushes the magician toward the ideal state of consciousness and empowerment that allows him to do the evocation (Gray 1980).

Lisiewski adds another important caveat to traditional evocation when he says, “The most important views of evocation or any magical act are those internal views held by the practitioner...the *unconscious beliefs* and *conscious expectations* of the practitioner will combine to have a direct bearing on the extent to which the promises of the Grimoires are fulfilled [*italics are his*]” (2004a, p.86). In other words, the mindset of the magician, or the subjective synthesis as Lisiewski calls it, is a vital factor for the success of evocations. Without a proper mindset the success of any act of magic will be sabotaged by the magician, creating a slingshot effect. Lisiewski’s slingshot effect is a result of an inadequate subjective synthesis. The achievement of an altered state of mind can leave the practitioner vulnerable if there is any doubt in the subjective synthesis (Lisiewski 2004a). I fully agree with Lisiewski that the beliefs and expectations of a magician determine whether or not a given act of magic is successful. The use of ceremonial tools and other props comes second to the internal reality the magician is working with, though these tools serve to align and direct the mind toward the projected goal.

What’s written above is an explanation of the fundamental dynamics of how traditional evocation works. It provides an essential grounding in the roots of evocation, though it’s not necessary to use this approach for every evocation you do. In fact, I rarely use traditional evocation or the ceremonial tools. I dislike the concept of forcing entities to do my will, as I think that such constraints can only come back to haunt the magician down the line. I’ve mainly used this paradigm of evocation to understand the roots of where evocation came from. Aside from the issue I have with constraining an entity to do something against its will, I also find that one of the reasons traditional evocation doesn’t work for me is that it involves having me be afraid

of the entity. Fear is a saboteur, because it raises doubts in the mind and undermines the working.

As I mentioned earlier in the book, Lisiewski argues that any other approach to evocation is New Age and doesn't work nearly as well as traditional evocation (if it works at all), but I disagree with his assessment (2004a). I agree with him that the forced visualizations and artificial emotional states of contemporary ceremonial magic tend to distract the practitioner from the task of directing the energy that's brought about by the actual ritual and the internal reality of the magician (Lisiewski 2004a). But I'd extend his argument further and say that the majority of ceremonial devices and props are unneeded, provided the magician has a solid understanding of what s/he is doing and what forces internal and external s/he is working with. I don't visualize a rod when I do evocations, but I can call up the internal presence a rod represents as long as I know what function that presence has in the working I'm doing (Gray 1980).

An alternate approach you can take, if you want to modernize your ceremonial props, is to use today's technology for your toolset. A T.V. remote control can make for an excellent wand for evocation, particularly, if you choose to use the television as the mirror for summoning the entity. Unplug the cable (if you have it) and then push the numbers on the remote that correspond to the entity's name. Press enter when you're finished and summon the entity into a channel on your television. You can also use a Nintendo Wii for the same purpose. Unlike other video game platforms, the Wii is built to be more interactive, to the point that people can use it as a wand, or sword, or to mimic specific actions. If Nintendo ever produces a way for people to create games using their Wii, it would be an excellent opportunity to create a ritual space for evocations. Even if that doesn't occur, you can still use the Wii as a wand or similar tool for evocation purposes.

Evocation, like other techniques of magic, is customizable to a person's preferences, provided that person isn't deluding himself. I've used modern media, non-traditional approaches to evocation, very successfully, right up to evoking my wife into my life (which is as physical a result as you can get!). I still use some ceremonial instruments because they do serve to aid and guide my consciousness to the state I need to be in to make the magic work, but I also find that the customization of my techniques firms up the subjective synthesis I'm working with. Some magicians may find that traditional evocation works for them. It may mirror the internal reality and perceptions they have of dealing with entities, and so be needed in order to deal with the beings they work with. But just because this approach works for some doesn't mean it works for everyone. The subjective synthesis a magician has determines the success or lack thereof of a given technique.

Psychological Evocation

Psychological evocation argues that the spirits that are worked with are wholly summoned from the subconscious mind of the magician, "More modern developments in sorcerous thinking hold that the human personality is a cluster of spirits more or less under the control of a central column of awareness and will" (Mace 1996, p. 10). For instance, some magicians would argue that the goetic daimons are just psychological aspects of the mind that we've given a different figure and form so that we can work with them. By personifying these aspects as daimons we give them a medium to communicate with, as well as a way for us to gain power over them. All of the spirits are related to that central column of awareness and will, i.e. the ego of the person.

In the psychological paradigm, ceremonial magic might be used, but there are also other techniques: “The act of writing is a magickal act of evocation. Evocation is the art and science of summoning spirits; in this case the spirits are elements arising from the author’s subconscious mind” (Packwood 2004, p. 48). The writer or artist utilizes the media of writing, paint, or whatever form of expression is available to provide the psychological aspect a physical form by which it can be worked with. For example, the medium of clay could be sculpted to create a statue that represents the entity.

Packwood also refers to these entities as memes, thought viruses that perpetuate themselves in the subconscious mind (Packwood 2004). (For a thorough analysis of my approach to memes and their role in magic see my book *Inner Alchemy*.) The meme transmits a specific concept to a person, and also seeks to replicate itself as much as possible. Commercials are the most obvious forms of memes that re-present a company as well as the services of the company in a concrete form. The problem with the meme is that the technique relies far too much on other people to sustain its existence. The meme is only meaningful if people can understand it. Furthermore, the real power of the meme can only occur when people respond to it and evoke it into their behavior (for instance going out and buying fast food after seeing a fast food commercial). This evocation gives the energy within the meme a means of manifesting into reality and allows it to replicate.

I don’t agree with the psychological paradigm for evocation. I think that a magician can work with aspects of himself, and even do evocations of those aspects (Lupa 2007). I also think that arguing that every entity is a psychological aspect of you is solipsistic and quite problematic because it can lead to delusions. Many contemporary magicians, when confronted with a

phenomenon that can't be explained in terms of psychology, get freaked out because they suddenly realize the universe is much larger than they thought. A psychological view of magic is unreliable because it attempts to explain everything away and in the process ends up creating a rather cynical perspective of magic. There's no mystery when you think you have everything figured out (at least until the mystery comes along and bites you in the ass). In addition, the purely psychological approach is concerned more with visualization and generating artificial states of emotion as a way of demonstrating the effects of evocation. However, these effects are more or less internal and as such fall into invocation, as opposed to evocation.

Once again, it's a matter of determining what works for you, but I'll admit that that I would take up traditional evocation before I utilized psychological evocation in dealing with entities. I do use painting and writing and other artistic mediums for my evocations, but I also know that I'm working with an entity that is just as real as I am. The psychological approach denies such an existence in favor of making it into either a psychological or symbolic aspect (i.e. the entity is just a symbolic representation of the attributes it represents). Still, it may work for some people. Knowing how you approach the world around you necessarily defines the techniques you use and how you conceive of the results that occur. If you use this paradigm or it makes the most sense to you, it may be what you need.

My Approach to Evocation

My approach to evocation as it applies to entities is one that's based on the following principle: "Sorcery works on the assumption that each definably distinct bit of psychic energy is a separate, self-aware 'spirit', an individual entity with whom the sorcerer enters a personal relationship"

(Mace 1996, p. 9). This approach could be called animistic, in that for me spirits can be in anything. For example, I personify my car, give it a name, and in doing so interact with the spiritual energy within it. Is that car now an entity? Some magicians will say yes, while others will say no. I fall into the yes camp. I think that anything can have a spirit and that it's very important to treat the spirits with respect and honor. The personal relationships I create are ones focused on working with the entities toward goals that are beneficial to all. I've found that this approach has been the most successful one for me. The entities I work with respond much more favorably if respected than if I try to force them to do something.

However this doesn't mean I worship them. I do daily prayers to some entities, but the majority of relationships I have aren't based on devotion or worship. Instead they're based on an acknowledgement of equality and a desire to work toward mutual ends. I also create entities, when I can't find an entity that suits my needs or just want to make one to deal with a very specific situation. (See my co-written book *Creating Magickal Entities* for more information.) The benefit of creating an entity as well is that there are some contemporary issues that we deal with that there are no existing entities for. Creation can be useful for addressing that issue; for example, in Appendix 1, I discuss the creation of my entity that helps me with driving.

One of the benefits of creating an entity is that you can give it a physical residence to live in while you work with it. That residence could be as simple as the programming symbol you created for it, or it could be more complex. I put some of my entities into statues. My speed limit entity actually resides in a little medallion hung over the rear view mirror. The benefit of housing such entities is that they are given a permanent residence and as such don't need to be evoked every time you work with them. Because you program an entity when you create it, you also create the

parameters by which it's activated, so it's never released in a situation where it's not appropriate for it to be there. Remember that you do need to feed an entity you've created. However, that detail isn't really different from evoking an entity, as usually to evoke it you have to provide the means for it to exist here. Feeding works on the same principle. Give the entity a means to sustain its existence so you can work with it. Lupa, for example, often programs her entities to feed on ambient energy (Lupa 2006).

My overall approach with any entity is to work with it in an equal partnership. Even with the entities I create I focus on creating a relationship where they get just as much out of the relationship as I do. I work with entities for several different reasons and in several different ways. The first reason is that sometimes I'm too emotionally invested in a situation to resolve it personally using magic. By creating or evoking an entity, I can allow it to handle the situation for me, without my personal biases interfering. I've used this approach in job hunting. By having an entity work on generating potential job opportunities for me, I can focus more on the applications, resumes, and interviews when they occur. The entity pushes potential job opportunities to my awareness, and then I apply for them. I also created my car entity to help me improve my driving and keep me from going over the speed limit. Again I chose to use an entity because I was too emotionally attached to the results and would have sabotaged my working if I had tried to attend to it personally.

Another reason I create or evoke entities is to learn something new. Because entities embody specific characteristics and attributes, they are ideal for teaching specific skills related to those qualities. I created a financial entity in 2006, after I realized I didn't know much about finances. Though I could manage money day to day, I didn't have a long term plan of action. The financial entity

began to teach me about money, steering me toward buying particular books on finances, lecturing me about my attitude regarding money, helping to generate interest in my products at vending events (which thus brought in more money) and pushing me to write about my experiences, partially to educate others, but also to educate myself. It's fair to say that this entity was my teacher in the sense that it motivated me to learn more about finances and where I wanted to be in life. In another case, to learn more about divination and hone my divination skills, I worked with a pop culture entity, Miss Cleo. While the real Miss Cleo might have been a fake, the persona or entity of Miss Cleo was a being who could tap into all the energy being put toward it and so had some knowledge and power. By choosing to work with her, I learned how to improve my skills, and eventually was even pushed toward learning a lot more about space/time magic.

My latest teacher entity is the goetic daimon Purson, who is a potent space/time entity, having knowledge of the future and past. I decided to evoke him after I did a group ritual where he was worked with to help some friends of mine. My first solo working with him occurred on New Year's Eve, 2006-7. I wanted to get a feeling for him and determine if he was an entity I should consider working with, while researching and writing my next book on space/time magic. What I found out was that Purson would be an excellent teacher and inspiration for one of my later books. Since my initial working, he's already pointed me in several directions and helped flesh out some experiments I've been doing.

A final reason I create or evoke entities has to do with the fact that they exist in different dimensions and have different perceptions than I do. They can also provide intuitive flashes to help steer me in a specific direction that I might've missed otherwise. One of the first entities I created was a space/time entity called Cerontis, whose sole

role is to make me aware of opportunities I might miss. He doesn't make those opportunities manifest--I do that. But he helps expand my awareness of opportunities. I have to admit I've found a lot more opportunities as a result of creating that entity, because I know he's always looking for them. In fact, when I programmed him, I incorporated his method of feeding into what he did for me. Every opportunity he presents to me also gives him energy to continue finding more opportunities. It creates a domino effect, one opportunity chaining into another, with him feeding from the opportunities, but also feeding them.

Evocation is a powerful technique. I think the reason my evocations have been successful is because I treat the entities I work with respect and equality. I've never had to command an entity or use the various levels of protection that other magicians feel they need to use. If anything by choosing to treat an entity with respect, my relationship with it has produced far more in the way of results than forcing it to comply with my desires. Remember that the mentality of traditional/medieval evocation came out of Christian fear of dealing with beings that didn't fit into the Christian metaphysical universe. If that mentality fits you, use it, but if it doesn't, take a different approach. I have, and as of yet in my dealings have not had any harm visited upon me.

Evoking Behavior Patterns

Evocation is primarily associated with entities. But the technique of evocation can also be used in other ways. Often entities are identified with specific attributes or behaviors that people indulge in. The entities become archetypal beings in the consciousness of humanity that embody those attributes. However, what is rarely asked is if the entity in question actually perceives itself in the same way that we do. For instance, Belphegor is identified as the

daimon of sloth, but does he perceive himself that way? He might have a very different perspective on what sloth is, compared to my understanding of it.

While I do think that daimons have some jurisdiction over areas of behavior and influence that they've been assigned, I think a lot of that jurisdiction is man-made and used as a way of distancing the self from behavior patterns we might not like. A person is lazy and slothful, but to distance himself from that s/he identifies it with a daimon. Suddenly that daimon is personified as the entity of sloth through the perceptions of the person. When I work with entities I try not to focus too heavily on the particular behavior pattern they can represent. To me it's not important that an entity represents a particular behavior. I'm concerned with what they can teach me or work with me on. When I want to deal with a behavior pattern or a raw concept I still do evocation, but not of an entity.

Instead I prefer to use an approach that evokes the behavior or concept. In fact, it's in this particular angle that I actually find psychological evocation useful, with the distinction that I'm not working with spirits, so much as I'm working with a particular behavior pattern and distancing myself enough to get some kind of closure with it. With that distinction in mind, memetic evocations become very useful. A meme isn't a spirit, but it is a behavior pattern that replicates itself in other people. While we pride ourselves on being individuals, it's fair to say that we're connected to each other and that most of our behavior is also interdependent. The identity a person has is constructed in large part by the connections s/he has with other people. Memes are part of those connections and embody particular behaviors that are acceptable or unacceptable, depending on the community a person is involved with. They also embody the influences of various cultural artifacts that we use to communicate with each other.

Writing, painting, and other art forms are forms of media that we use to represent the desires, possibilities, and behavior patterns we seek to manifest into reality. The key word to remember is re-present. We re-present the desire in a concrete form so that we can give the energy we are evoking a conduit through which to manifest into reality. That energy is not necessarily subconscious. Were it to be wholly subconscious then we'd be working within a solipsistic model of magic, where everything originates from the magician. While it's true that the magician plays a key role in manifesting a desired reality, s/he tends to interact with that reality and is shaped by it, even as s/he shapes it. That shaping from reality may affect the subconscious. A good example of this would be a person watching TV and after seeing several commercials about food, deciding s/he is hungry. The commercials have evoked a feeling of hunger and consequently that feeling will likely get the person to go to a fast food restaurant (if that's what was advertised) where s/he will spend money and get food. One desired result for the restaurant is accomplished and at the same time the person has also accomplished his desired reality by eating the food. The evocation is the desire to eat. The payoff is the money exchanged as energy for the manifestation of food. Usually what has really happened is that the subconscious has been infected by a meme.

When I do memetic evocations I like to use word and image collages. I cut up the memes of other people, breaking their power, and reforming it into my own message. I then place that collage into a public area where other people can see it. The act of seeing the collage gives the memes I've put within it power, evoking them into existence. The people pay attention to the collage and donate that energy to the probability the meme evokes into reality. The meme infects them with its message and any thought they give to that message lends itself to the

possibility being evoked into reality. In this approach it isn't a spirit that is evoked, but rather a possibility or a behavior pattern which the meme embodies. One of the most effective meme collages I made was the one that evoked the possibility of finding my mate. (For a more detailed explanation refer to the article: "Evoking Lupa" found in the *Magick on the Edge Anthology*.)

A memetic evocation allows the magician to isolate a particular pattern of behavior and determine the influence of it on his personality. The magician can evoke the meme that represents the behavior and work with it or alter it in order to change the influence on his personality. In the example I used above, the memetic collage helped me identify specific behavioral patterns that I was looking for in a partner. When I met that person I was able to realize that her behavioral patterns aligned with what I was looking for in a mate. In a similar fashion I've also used memetic collage evocation to promote certain types of behavior that I desired. When I was a resident assistant for a dormitory I created collages that subtly emphasized some of the rules such as the need for quiet. The students read the collages and must have on some level paid attention because the floor I lived on tended to be much quieter than the other floors and most of the students weren't the type to be quiet otherwise.

One of the most essential ingredients of evocation is the response that occurs when something is evoked, because when you evoke you are calling out to some entity, possibility, or behavior pattern. The response is the establishment of the link between yourself and what you want to manifest into reality. Once the response has occurred the link is in place and the manifestation of reality can begin. How a person or entity responds shapes the effectiveness of the evocation. A response indicates a willingness to interact and be shaped by that interaction. If the response is one of fear and hostility then that energy is

invited into the working. For example, if I treat an entity as a hostile being then I'm inviting that response from it which will shape how effective the magic is. The same is true with evoking personality aspects. I use myself when doing evocations because I can control my response. I can't control another person's response completely and as such this lack of control can throw off the effectiveness of the evocation, unless everyone has agreed beforehand on that particular detail. When you control your response, you control the manifestation of reality, because you've consciously chosen the kind of energy that is invited into your working. This allows you to ensure that whatever is evoked is working with you, instead of against you.

Evocation of the Heartless and Nobodies

I want to conclude this chapter with an example of an unorthodox, yet effective pop culture evocation I've used based off the video games *Kingdom Hearts* and *Kingdom Hearts II*. In those games the enemies that the characters fight are called Heartless and Nobodies. The Heartless come from the darkness of the heart and are created when a person loses his heart. The Nobodies are made from the remains of the person after the Heartless has taken form. I found the explanations to be useful in getting a sense of how to evoke something that didn't fall into a traditional paradigm, but still had enough presence to be evoked.

In the video game, the Heartless and Nobodies embody different aspects of negativity. A person can use the Heartless, but they feed off the negative emotions the person feels. Likewise the Nobodies can be worked with, but they feel no emotion, and are viewed as empty husks. I definitely draw on the feelings of despair and unhappiness when I work with the Heartless, as well as the feeling of emptiness when working with Nobodies, but I see them as recyclers of those emotions. By allowing them to draw on

that energy to take form, I can recycle those feelings and then banish them when I'm finished with the evocation. I think of the Heartless as absorbers of negative emotions. On the other hand they can also be treated as the externalized form of your internal demons, representing those emotions and issues that you need to deal with. The Nobodies are husks, which makes their usefulness less evident. However since they embody emptiness of emotion, they can be thought of as a void of sorts, used to (temporarily) separate a person from his emotions.

When I do evocations of these entities, I usually use the tesser-act board. This board is used as a container that functions outside of conventional space/time. With it a magician can evoke an entity and place it into a container where it's outside of our conventional reality and therefore not affected by its laws. At the same time, the entity can be interacted with, while using the device, "Any object inside the tesser-act is bound in that 'otherness,' thus any entity is evoked completely separated from the Magickian, but able to communicate with the Magickian. In this function the tesser-act is a Magickal prison, like the triangle of art" (Shaughnessy 2004, p. 46). Because the device creates its own spatial/temporal reality, the laws that govern that space are decided solely by the magician, which makes the tesser-act a nice work around for magicians who don't have all the incenses and other materials used for ceremonial evocation. While I don't use it as a prison, per se, it is a good medium for interaction with the entity I'm evoking.

These entities already have convenient symbols, found in the games, which can be used to evoke them. I'll usually draw the symbol for whichever one I'm evoking and place it in the tesser-act board. When I do the evocation for the Heartless, I draw on emotions such as anger or sadness that would be useful for creating them. When I evoke the Nobodies, I focus on the feeling of emptiness, numbness, or the void (i.e. nothingness). In each case, I take those

feelings and put them into the symbol, using it as a connection to the actual Heartless/Nobodies. When either type of entity is evoked, it can then be worked with. The uses that such entities are put to will vary. I mainly use the Heartless to embody those emotions that I need to temporarily distance myself from. By placing those emotions into something else, I can dialogue with them and approach them in a more objective manner. I use the Nobodies to work with the feeling of the void and emptiness. In Western culture the feeling of emptiness can create discomfort. By embodying emptiness as a Nobody the practitioner can personify that feeling and interact with it, hopefully becoming more comfortable with it.

Exercises

1 What approach to evocation do you tend to favor in your workings? Why does that approach work for you?

2 Do evocations utilizing the traditionalist approach, the psychological approach, and my approach. Note similarities and differences.

3 Evoke a pop culture entity of your choice to see if it will respond or not to the energy being directed toward it. Do the same with aspects of your personality.

Chapter 7: Evocation II

One key component of a successful evocation (according to several authors) is the use of incense as a way of creating a substance the entity could use to give itself form. (Bardon 2001, Lisiewski 2004a). Although I've done a fair amount of ceremonial magic, I'm not really a fan of getting lots of

ingredients together to do a ritual. While in Seattle, I lived in a small cramped house and there wasn't a lot of room to put down a traditional circle, break out all the tools, and light the incense. And while I'd have loved to do a ritual in my backyard, somehow I don't think the neighbors would have appreciated it. For that matter I wouldn't really have appreciated explaining what I was doing, if the authorities had been called in to investigate.

At the same time, as I read these books, I'm told by at least one author that any evocation I do that isn't by the book is inauthentic and not a real evocation (Lisiewski 2004a). So I'm left in a quandary. I want to evoke, but I don't have the physical space or materials and it's not authentic if I don't follow the instructions. And if I want to do an evocation to get help finding a better ritual space and proper materials, I'm kind of stuck. There's no allowance for experimentation here, is there? The answer to that question depends on the perception you cultivate about the magic you practice.

As it turns out there is room for experimentation and your evocations can be effective, even if you don't pursue the traditional route. The symbol does not make the reality, it just denotes it. If that's the case, and from my experiences it has been, then it's possible that it's not so much the particular act in and of itself that works, as it is what the act is supposed to do for all parties involved. If evocation is about creating a link and a space for an entity to use so that it can interact with this reality safely, then tools and the rest of a ceremonial ritual compose only one method among many that can be used to accomplish that task.

The tesser-act board I mentioned in the last chapter is a good example of a nontraditional, but effective evocation tool. To create the tesser-act, I took an ouija board and put the flower of Kairos (which is the programming symbol for the tesser-act) onto the board.(A drawing of the flower of

Kairos can be found at <http://www.chaoscurrent.com>.) Since ouija boards are treated as gateways to other planes of existence, I felt that characteristic would enhance the workings I did with the tesser-act. The one difference is that the planchette isn't moved around. Instead it's placed in the center of the Kairos symbol. The sigil or symbol of the entity is placed underneath the planchette. When the magician wants to evoke the entity, the fingers of both hands are placed on the planchette, and then the entity is evoked.

I used this method of evocation to work with Ronove, the daimon of rhetoric. I evoked Ronove to help me improve my writing and speaking skills. I kept a pad of paper and pen beside me to write down impressions. When I did the evocation, I felt Ronove's presence and saw an image of him with glasses on his face and a feather pen in one hand, and in the other a piece of paper. He showed me a personalized symbol I could use to work with him more closely. He also offered advice on my writing and speaking, providing some suggestions on how it could be changed to meet difference audience expectations. I wrote all my impressions and his advice down and followed the advice so I could start improving my skills. The entire time the evocation was done I felt as if my head was being stroked by a current of electricity. When I took both of my hands off the planchette the feeling faded away. I've since used the tesser-act for other evocation workings and each time it's been successful in establishing contact with the entity, and evoking it so it can accomplish the working.

I've also used my own derivation of the tesser-act, which is a space/time memory box. The memory box is an old wooden chest I have had for a number of years. The inside of the chest is painted with a silver web that has a similar appearance to the Kairos symbol, but has a different function. The reason for the difference is that the memory box doesn't function as a container removed from our

conventional reality. Instead the space/time memory box acts as an interconnected web. The magician uses the web to access other space/time moments or nodes, which can include working with an entity, but most often has involved working with other versions of the self. It can also involve evoking a memory to live through again. (More information on the memory box will be available in the sequel to *Space/Time Magic*.)

As an example, I've used the memory box to create a space/time reference point in Portland for me. I did a ritual to Purson, the Goetic demon of time, and put the sigils he gave me into the box. The sigils were placed there to gather up the necessary time energy needed to help me shift from Seattle to Portland in a quick manner. I also put some of my hair in the box as an offering to Purson. When the time was right, late in March, I opened the box, burned the sigils and hair as an offering to Purson, and proceeded from there to pursue my plans to manifest myself in Portland. In less than three months I had successfully moved into a larger home in a better neighborhood in Portland and had a full-time job.

Another evocation method involves taking several principles from Bardon's work and applying it toward creating a gateway that allows the practitioner to evoke the entity, while at the same time keeping the entity safe so that it can interact with the magician. Bardon uses an approach called impregnation, where he puts into an object a specific meaning/energy that can then be evoked from that object. In the case of working with an entity, the magician would carve or put the seal/sigil (i.e. the symbol) of the entity on the object in question and use that symbol as a focus. The focus on the symbol impregnated the meaning, and access to the entity, into the talisman. Then the magician would evoke the entity, show it the talisman, and get it agree to using the talisman as a portal. After that the magician could use the talisman to evoke the entity whenever s/he pleased

(Bardon 2001a, Bardon 2001b). The second principle involves Bardon's technique of using a magic mirror. The mirror is painted with the symbol of the entity, and then impregnated with the particular vibration or energy the entity identifies with. The mirror can then be used to evoke the entity, with it appearing in the mirror (Bardon 2001b).

Something which is important to note for this technique involves Bardon's definition of entities,

The beings and principals which he will perceive there are not personified beings. Instead, they are powers and vibrations which are analogous to the names and attributes. Should a magician...decide to materialize one of these powers, or if he were to give this power a form that is accessible to his receptivity, then his power would appear to him in the form which corresponds to his symbolic abilities of perception (2001b, p. 96).

While I treat entities as real beings that exist in their own right, I also agree with Bardon's idea that the appearance of them is likely only a symbolic embodiment created to represent the particular power/vibration/concept being worked with. In other words, the entities are real, but they know that to effectively work with someone they need to interact with hir in a way that makes sense and yet still accomplishes the goal at hand.

Along with Bardon's approaches I also use personalized symbols (based on the principle of Spare's AOD) with entities, to work with them (Mace 1984). In the last chapter, I mentioned that Bardon had discussed three types of symbols that could be used to evoke an entity. A personalized symbol system emphasizes a personal relationship with the entity being evoked. It embodies and explores the growth of relationships and is more effective to use in evocation than using more universal symbols. Universal symbols are used by many magicians, which

dilute the power and connection of those symbols. While it's true that attention and energy can invest a symbol with power, if many magicians *use* that symbol they are spreading that attention and energy out, diluting the power and taking away from the efficacy of the workings. A personalized symbol is one that only the magician who created it knows. The power and connection of the symbol isn't diluted, because while other people may see it, only the magician can access the meaning that is within it. Additionally, the relationship between the magician and entity works because it's based off the magician's personal parameters (as set in the symbol) as opposed to someone else's parameters.

My particular approach to evocation is a synthesis of Bardon's impregnation/mirror techniques and Spare's artistic work. I use water color paints to create a gateway/portal/mirror to the particular entity I want to work with. The landscape of the painting represents both the native environment and the particular vibration or energy of the entity. I paint the personalized symbol that represents that entity, incorporating it into a representation of the body of the entity I'm working with. This serves as a key to activate the gateway.

To actually get the personalized symbol, I'll set up my paints and the canvas and then invoke the entity. I let the entity guide my hands in creating the painting and the symbol that is used to contact it. The benefit of the invocation is that the painting is also being impregnated with the entity's energy. Although the entity guides my hands we share consciousness equally, entering into a dialogue that allows for a mutual agreement to be formed about the nature of the painting and the symbol that's created.

When I do my evocations, I usually touch the symbol and mentally call the entity to me. I know the entity has arrived when the painting "comes to life". The landscape

and representation of the entity will seem to move as I look at it. (Genesis P-orrige noted that Spare's paintings also seemed to move. I've seen this occur in other paintings as well. It feels as if you could fall into the frame and land in the painting.) I can then interact with the entity and do whatever magical working I've planned on. This form of evocation can be used with any sort of entity.

I've also used this type of evocation to work solely with planetary energies, evoking their vibrations into my life and then making an offering of the vibrations/energy to the Earth. In that particular case I didn't work with specific entities, just the raw energy of the planets. I did a guided journey to each planet and put a symbol that represented the planet's energy on a painting. Once I had each planet's symbol, I did a sex magic consecration ritual, adding my own energy to the painting and then making an offering of the collected energy to the Earth in return for taking away some obstacles in my life.

This can also be done with elemental energy. Remember that entities embody only one form of interaction with a particular type of energy. In some ways, many entities can be thought of as personifications of a planetary or elemental energy, but a magician can work with a much more raw form. A painting enables that kind of working because it can be very abstract in what it presents, much like dealing with a raw elemental or planetary force. The painting will still channel the energy being worked with, but the magician works with that energy directly without having to rely on an intermediary. In the case of the planetary energy working, the painting helped me work with the energy/vibration associated with each planet. I channeled the planetary energy into the painting and then made that painting into an offering to the Earth, in return for having some obstacles removed from my life at the time.

I've also applied this concept of working with raw forces in evocation to dealing with personality aspects/emotional blockages of the self; I essentially evoke myself. I've painted several different versions of my internal landscape, complete with a symbol, and used them to evoke my internal personality aspects in order to work with them more closely, while dissolving energetic blockages. That approach has greatly helped me in that internal work, and allowed me to get to know parts of myself I don't consciously interact with otherwise.

The evocation of the self can also be used as a snapshot of that particular moment in time that it was created and to my consciousness at that time. I evoke my past self using the painting and then instruct that self. I give him information that will allow him to organize his choices to make my current life easier. I imprint in the earlier self experiences that are yet to come, providing déjà vu and showing what not to do in that situation, in order to change the situation into a favorable outcome. In this way I can change my past by influencing the as of yet future actions of my past self. The déjà vu experiences I've had over the years have always been warnings about what not to do in specific situations and every time I haven't followed those warnings I've regretted it. The déjà vu experiences usually show me the result of an action taken that shouldn't be taken, so I have full warning and it's up to me to decide if I'll change that moment and avoid a problem I'd have experienced otherwise.

Below I've included website links to some of my paintings with explanations of the type of evocation being utilized in the painting. (I apologize for the links. I would have preferred to put the paintings in, but they would be in black and white, which wouldn't begin to capture the totality of the artwork and magic.) When I paint, my wand is my paint brush and the paints are the magical energy I use to manifest reality. I've never gone to classes, but I

don't feel you need to be a trained artist to make this evocation technique work. You just need to be connected with what you want to evoke so that the art that is created can be used to evoke that force.

The first painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting1.jpg>) is an evocation of two of my animal spirit guides for the purpose of protecting my home and well-being. The guides "nudged" me to do a painting to evoke them so I could also get to know them better. Bear has been helpful in teaching me healing work, while Fox has continued to show me how to be more social and blend in more with my surroundings. This painting was also an offering to them. I offered my talent and energy to give them something that shows them honor and also provides a medium for continued interaction with them.

The second painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting4.jpg>) is the housing for Cerontis. The entire painting describes and embodies his nature and abilities and how he finds possibilities for me. Note the DNA spiral at the bottom of the painting and the eyes at the top, both of which are used to help him find the possibilities he's seeking. I've included my own sigil in the painting to show him where to send the information on possible opportunities I might not be aware of.

The third painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting2.JPG>) is Thee Womb Dream ov Shinma (tainted love). This was an entity I created for an e-list I moderated. It also represented the tainted love I felt toward the occult community at the time. The e-list stopped working shortly after the entity was created. In retrospect I realize that the entity acted on the feelings I had about the occult community and so attacked the nearest manifestation thereof. The lesson from that experience is to make sure you know what you feel and how it will impact the creation or evocation of an entity.

The fourth painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting3.JPG>) is a Self Evocation. It shows my internal environment at a particular moment in time. I painted this one in June 2004, just after a stormy period of my life had ended. It wasn't until 2005 that it occurred to me that I could work with the images in the painting and that they might represent emotional blockages and issues that I was dealing with at the time. The erupting volcano and ashes represented the anger and despair over several occurrences in my life. The serpent with the large fangs represented my gossiping, venomous aspect, one that I was able to work with and get under control in 2005 and beyond. The ocean with the plants represented my ability to still continue to grow and flourish. When I evoke this version of me I meet a much more chaotic and confused person that's displayed in this picture as well. Working with my younger self has been helpful for dissolving blockages and coming to peace with some situations in my life at that time.

The fifth painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting5.JPG>) is an evocation of Love/Aphrodite. A fellow magician suggested I work with Aphrodite as a way of evoking love for myself. The goddess quite rightly suggested that in order to love another person I had to love myself, and at the time I didn't have much love for myself. This evocation helped me to start opening myself up to love, using Aphrodite as the messenger of that emotion. This painting has since become part of a shrine to the love I share with my wife. The DNA spiral represents the concept that love is genetic, or in other words that is an essential part of the evolution of a person.

The sixth painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting6.JPG>) is an evocation of the Phoenix. I've had a close relationship with the spirit of the Phoenix since the late nineties, when I worked with a shaman who told me it was my power animal. Each time I've had a near

death experience the Phoenix has guided me back to my body. I did this painting right after I chose to leave graduate school. The period after that choice did represent a cycle of death and rebirth. Later, I got my first tattoo, which is of the Phoenix. Both the tattoo and painting are symbols I've used to work with Phoenix, but also a way of honoring that energy in my life.

The seventh painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting7.JPG>) is the evocation of planetary energy I mentioned above. It was painted in May of 2000 during a planetary alignment in order to evoke the different planetary energies and then give them to the Earth as a gift for a safe trip and also to inspire me toward finding my true calling in my spirituality. Shortly after that I did indeed find my true calling in life as it was around this time that I co-wrote *Creating Magickal Entities*.

The eighth painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting8.JPG>) is the evocation of a relationship I was involved in, in 1999. As I mentioned above, a painting can capture a snapshot of a particular moment in a person's life. The chaos in the picture accurately embodies that particular relationship, and the problems that were occurring in it. I haven't done much work with that particular moment in my life, but the painting has been useful for providing perspective on the problems in the relationship, and how to avoid them in later ones.

The ninth painting (<http://www.thegreenwolf.com/paintings/painting9.JPG>) is the evocation of the pop culture entity Miss Cleo. I used this painting whenever I did divinatory readings and wanted to interact with the pop culture persona of Cleo. I would call on her divinatory powers to aid my own attempts with divination. This painting was also useful in my meditative pathworkings with Cleo. I would visualize the painting as a doorway through which I could meet her. Those pathworkings would lead to a lot of foundational work in *Space/Time Magic*.

My paintings are done by going into a trance and letting the entity/experience/emotion or particular moment in space/time take over and inspire the painting of the picture. This might be why the evocations have been successful. I allowed what I wanted to evoke to express itself in the best possible way using me and the canvas as a medium. As such what was worked with knew that it had a voice in the process and wasn't going to be constrained against its will. As I mentioned earlier, you needn't limit your magical art workings to just painting. I've used collages and writing for evoking entities, situations, and even people into my life. Other artistic mediums such as sculpture, music, wood carving, etc. can also be used with potent results. The only limit is your imagination and your talents at using unconventional mediums to work effective magic.

I suggest that evocation isn't such a strict discipline that creative innovations can't be used or invented to make this act more effective. To argue that a magical technique must be done only one way is to retard the evolution of magic. Treating entities like antagonists creates a dualistic Us vs. Them mindset with the accompanying tension sure to disrupt the evocation. Working with them as partners creates a lack of tension and a focus instead on meeting the goals at hand. Remember that the attitude and perception you adopt necessarily impact the subjective synthesis that is used when doing a magical working. Success in magic can be found by attending to the internal details so that when they affect your external workings, they do so in a favorable manner. An evocation will work for you provided that you know your subconscious and conscious emotions and work with them in a mindful manner, even as you approach what you evoke with respect.

Exercises

1 Use art, music, or some other form of media to do an evocation. The evocation can be of you, an entity, or a type of energy. Ask yourself if the medium by which you evoke something makes that evocation more effective than if you tried a different medium.

2 Come up with your own form of evocation, either a variation on tradition or an entirely new method. Then compare your results to those you get from preexisting systems.

Chapter 8: Evocation III: Corporate Magic

Corporations are mass producers of specialized media which represents the corporate egregore. Intel, Microsoft, Vesta, Boeing, etc., are not just names of companies. They are corporate labels used to embody specific types of economic goods and services. The various logos, slogans, and symbols that corporations use, such as Nike's Swoosh, are symbols which embody a specific culture that is developed by corporate egregores to continually produce media and other goods, so that they can not only stay alive, but thrive in the minds of people. In this chapter, we explore how the corporate media can be used in magic for more than just perpetuating the corporate egregore.

The corporate world has its own reality and culture, reflected in the cartoon *Dilbert*, which simultaneously makes fun of and celebrates the corporate environment. The characters in *Dilbert* are pop icons that embody the terminal frustration that any white-collar worker feels, because s/he knows that s/he is giving away his life to work for someone else, and often deal with the sometimes meaningless and petty politics that occur in any business setting. It's a sad fact that the cartoon, while probably

meant to be a parody, is often an accurate reality of the corporate world and the lack of empowerment it offers to many, if not most, workers.

For some occultists the way to deal with such disempowerment is to strike back at the corporate world, devising memes that sabotage the corporate advertising, or using subversive magical practices that undermine the stated focus and goal of a particular organization (Arkenburg 2006). Undoubtedly these practices work and can provide a means of regaining empowerment, while also sabotaging the corporate machine.

On the other hand, there's also something to be said for using the corporate system for other purposes beyond subversion. In a few different cases, I've used corporate media and the systems they represent for purposes that aren't necessarily at odds with the corporation, but nonetheless benefit me and the causes I believe in. The use of such a system can be beneficial in other ways, and you don't even need to sell out to work with the corporate systems and what they represent.

I presume that most of my readers work at a job in a corporate system. When I define such a system, I'm not merely referring to big businesses such as Microsoft, or media empires such as 21st Century Fox. Although those companies are legally incorporated, that alone, to my mind, doesn't make a company a corporate system. A corporate system is any business, small or large, that employs people and expects specific behaviors and norms to be followed. An academic university is a corporation. Employees are expected to publish and present papers, teach classes, work on committees, and train other workers for other university jobs. There's an expected code of behavior and each person that works at a university is giving some of his time away for this entity they work for. Government organizations such as the post office are also corporations in their own right, for similar reasons as I described above. A person

who works at a power company is also a corporate employee. The same applies for any fast food worker. A corporate system incorporates a person into its structure in order to sustain itself. There are several other definitions of corporations, which are useful in understanding the exact nature of what we're dealing with:

Despite their non-corporeality, corporations are able to display a wide range of behaviors in a conceptual framework of legal reality. Disconnected from the material plane, except in the way their influence is manifested, these entities grow, absorb each other, competing, altering their identities, renaming themselves, creating and losing capital, sway political parties, own and oversee property, pay taxes, sue, and be sued. Yet because of the nature of their existence, they cannot be imprisoned, physically coerced, or killed. Immortal legally, corporations as they are currently, are something of an egregore brought into being through the collective vision of the founders, an egregore that manifests through the collective will of the governing body and given qi, given energy through the financial investment of its stockholders. (Wu 2004, www.technoccult.com)

The perspective that a corporation is an egregore is fairly accurate in the sense that large pools of people give their time, energy, and resources to the corporation in return for jobs and/or financial security. Although stock holders invest in the egregore they don't own it. If anything, it owns them, because they rely on it to sustain their financial security. Certainly it's not in the interest of the egregore that they withdraw their resources from it, but in the end the egregore will likely outlast the stockholders and/or find new stockholders to sustain it.

A different perspective on corporate egregores is that they are multi-dimensional beings comprised of the resources and ideas of the people that sustain it:

The modern corporation is far more than a building full of people that creates a product or manages resources. It exists in data space and aetheric space as well as physical space. It is an amalgam of will and imagination committed to self-preservation, growth, and profit. It wields media to establish its presence and identity in our age of global trade. The corporation is unified in its focus, and manipulates resources in accordance with that intent. It is, in many ways, an individual composed of many cooperative cells that are continuously recycled. The structure persists by its own intent and inertia. It can move, disperse, and distribute itself through data networks. It behaves with a single will, informed by the will of the corporate collective, bent towards the same end: maintaining the existence and continued growth of the corporate entity (Arkenburg 2006, p. 203).

This definition is similar to Wu's in that the egregore is identified as a being that acts to preserve itself and uses its resources to do so. The various people, places, etc., that are associated with it are all part of the lifeline that keeps the egregore alive. At the same time, Arkenburg makes an interesting distinction, namely that the entity works with data. This distinction is important because it acknowledges that corporations are intimately tied to the dispersal of information, especially information that increases their presence. Information is an essential reality of everyday life and corporations capitalize on that in a variety of manners. The commercials we hear on the radio and see on TV and the internet are just the most obvious method of interaction for corporations. Other forms of information dispersal involve charity work, construction of property in the name of the corporation, and of course just having products from the corporation in your home.

The downside of corporate reality for every worker is that s/he is giving the corporate entity his life energy and

time. For some of us this isn't an ideal reality. When you factor in that most, if not all, corporations also vie for our free time, the situation gets worse. All the advertising in different forms of media is created to constantly put us in touch with these corporate existences and the brand products they offer. Even an academic institution is offering a brand product, namely the education that people go to receive with the rather vague promise of a job at the end of your time of studying. Jenkins makes an excellent point about corporations:

Successful brands are built by exploiting multiple contacts between the brand and consumer. The strength of a connection is measured in terms of emotional impact. The experience should not be contained within a single media platform, but should extend across as many media as possible. Brand extension builds on audience interest in particular content to bring them into contact again and again with an associated brand (2006a, p. 69).

The result is advertisement bombardment, but also an attempt to get the energy and life of a person focused on feeding the corporations vying for your time and life. The more contact you have with corporations, the more you give your life over to them. Your life is a resource and corporations need resources to exist. But where does that leave you and what can you do about it?

There are several different ways to deal with corporate reality in order to get something from it, as opposed just giving everything you have away to it. The first way to deal with corporate reality is to sabotage it. To sabotage Fox News, Arkenburg adopted the idea that information is available everywhere and that all entities are information patterns and its possible to access and modify those patterns: "I would reprogram my own local relationship with the spirit of Fox News, magically assault the

corporation and inject a love bomb into its memestream, inspiring truthful awareness and rebellion in its acolytes” (Arkenburg 2006, p. 205). By injecting a love bomb into Fox News, it was his hope that he could sabotage its inner workings. Arkenburg notes that the culmination working coincided with the O’Reilly lawsuit (2006). However, any gains he made utilizing that working didn’t last for very long. While a small café like the one that Burroughs shut down has fewer defenses, Fox is still running strong and O’Reilly still has his own program. A corporation will protect its own resources, so long as those resources can continue to make it strong.

The problem with the subversive approach is that the magician is dealing with an entity that can draw on its own resources and is an expert on drawing on others’ resources, including people who work against it:

Working with corporate egregores with the intent to subvert and/or otherwise disperse that manifestation is toxic magic, and certain steps are important in such work to protect the worker. Egregores such as these that are purely profit-driven are a kind of energy vampire, existing through the energy put forth both by those that work within the corporation, its investors, and its consumer base. If called into a hostile environment into a spiritual presence, it would not hesitate to drain an attuned magician of all available energy as well, for that is in its nature. (Wu 2004, www.technocult.com)

A person who chooses to attack a corporate entity is dealing with a being that’s used to being attacked by other corporate entities that have much more power than a magician might have. While a sustained subversive magic attack can do some damage, the corporation can heal quickly.

I've also tried to subvert corporations, although my technique has been more subtle. I usually take the spam I receive in emails and cut it up into spam sigils. I'll also take advertisements found in magazines or even soundclips from radio and T.V. advertisements and make them into new cut-ups with the intent of turning the corporate entities against each other. A magician who's talented in technology could also create DVD cut-ups which take advertisements and other corporate materials and sample them in random manners, while putting sigils in the background (Unsane 2007). Spam sigils tend to be more passive. They still infect the memestream, but don't directly attack the corporate entity, so much as subvert the messages it sends out.

The second approach to dealing with corporations is the approach I favor. It involves taking corporate resources and appropriating them for my use. The reason I prefer this approach is that it involves working with the corporate entity in a manner where you don't attack, so much as take its resources and use those resources for your benefit instead of just giving your own resources away. Some occultists who tend toward the more extreme left might consider the second approach to be a sellout approach, but I consider it to be more realistic. (I refer the extreme left occultists to William S. Burroughs' response to a question of selling out: "There's no contradiction to subverting something and profiting by it at the same time. I say, you gotta play the cards you got" (Hibbard 1999, p. 223).) Instead of throwing energy at the entity to attack it, why not just subvert its resources and get something from it? After all, just because you get a paycheck from a corporate entity doesn't mean that you have to then put that money back into a soul-sucking company. If you're going to be stuck in the corporate world, you may as well utilize the payoff to the best of your ability.

As an example of this principle in action, I took the corporate logo from one of the companies I contracted with and slightly altered it, to personalize the logo into a sigil that represented the company, but also represented what I wanted the corporate entity to do for me. In this case, I wanted it to protect me from any office politics, but also from prying eyes in the cubicle. Because most people can look over your shoulders at what you're doing, it can be quite frustrating to get work done that isn't official corporate work during downtime. On days where there isn't much work, but you still want to be paid, it's equally frustrating to pretend to work and constantly worry that someone will report you for surfing the internet or working on a personal project. I turned the corporate logo into a watchful eye that would help me be aware of what other people were doing, while shielding me from them noticing what I was or wasn't doing. While I do focus on getting a job done when the work is there for me to do, I don't want to be penalized when there's no work to be done. The corporate eye logo protected me from that fate, while at the same time putting the resources of the corporation to work for me.

Another technique I've used has involved getting training to do the job well. At my first contract position as a tech writer, I had very little experience doing tech writing and because I was a contractor, my boss had no interest in investing time or training for me for any of the related duties I might have to do. I was expected to learn while doing the job. However, this approach was frustrating for both him and me. He had documents he wanted to have published, but the writing he was receiving wasn't up to his standard. I wanted to write the way he wanted, but the feedback I got wasn't really useful. To get around this problem, I decided to use magic to create an entity.

I took the acronym of the project I was working on and created a sigil out of the acronym that would serve as a

programming symbol for the entity of the project. The role of this entity was to help me improve my understanding of the goals of the project, improve my technical writing ability, and improve my grasp of the technology I had to use. Shortly after I created this entity, both my boss and I noted a dramatic improvement in my skills and in my participation in the group. For the duration of my contract that entity continued to help me learn new skills that would be useful for me to have not only at that job, but also future jobs. At every other job, I've since taken the acronyms of the projects and turned them into sigils. The entity of a given project connects with me and helps me do really well at my task.

Another way I've used corporate entities is to help smooth out issues between myself and other workers. While I get along with most of the other workers, there is the rare case where personalities conflict. In one case the team lead I worked with tended to get very stressed out due to other circumstances, but would end up taking that stress out on the rest of the team. To alleviate that, I put some energy in his cubicle that would cushion and dissipate his negative energy and also had the project entity smooth obstacles in his path, which consequently made him much easier to deal with. This was a case of making the corporate entity actually help its resource out, which was useful because then the entity was working for us instead of just using us. The energy I used also helped the entity understand how it could remove obstacles for the team lead.

The example above illustrates how you can take the resources the corporation has and put it to work for you. I learned a lot about how to do layout at my technical writing jobs, which helped me with the publishing business I help run. In each case, my goal has always been to do a good job, but also to take the corporate resources and use them to my advantage, instead of just being used and discarded by

the corporation. I've continually focused on creating an entity that won't so much do my job for me, as teach me how to do it better and acquire skills I can use in other parts of my life.

The second approach to working with corporate entities emphasizes an approach of working within the corporation and working with it. As heretical as it might sound, not all corporations are evil or bad. Indeed, when we place them in an adversarial relationship we give them more power than they might otherwise have. However, it's also true that many corporations aren't really doing what they could be doing to minimize their impact on the environment or people. There is a way we can change that. Instead of focusing on attacking the spirit of the corporation, why not try to make it more mindful of the negative impact it has? Create a collage of positive new stories about the corporation, but insert in that collage messages that program the corporate egregore to be more environmentally conscious. Then send the collage to actual employees in the company, so that the company is infected through its workers. The egregore may be more open to accepting such a magical working, because the vector is a benign approach.

Whatever approach you take for dealing with corporate egregores, remember that you are dealing with entities that have a lot of power and intention behind them. Corporations don't have boundaries and in many senses are more powerful than a government is. Plan your workings with that reality in mind so you can make your workings effective.

Exercises

- 1 Do you think it's possible to work with corporations as opposed to subverting them?

2 Try working with a corporate entity to gain new job skills. Do you find that you learn the skills quicker?

Chapter 9: Invocation I

In the anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Evangelions (aka Evas) are mecha (giant robots), replicated from the angel Adam Kadmon (in Kabbalah known as the quintessential man): a combination of flesh and machine. The pilots have to enter an entry plug, termed the throne of the soul, before they can actually get into the Evangelions. (Author's Note: This article was originally published on the Disinformation website on May 24, 2004. This version is updated to reflect new research and experimentation.) The pilots are actually souls and the entry plug serves as the housing for the soul within the Evangelion. For the Evangelion to operate, the pilot and the Eva must synchronize. This synchronization is achieved partially through technology; specifically the pilot's neural signals become the central nervous system for the Evangelion. But sometimes it's also achieved by the pilot's will power, so the soul of the pilot is essential for the Eva to work. The synchronization of Eva and pilot creates a god that not only fights the angels, but can also serve as a medium of evolution for humanity. And all of this is achieved through the pilot being invoked into the Eva, as opposed to a more traditional approach toward invocation.

Invocation is traditionally treated within magical workings as a process where you call a god/goddess or other entity into you. Donald Michael Kraig defines invocation as, "The magickal act wherein you allow your body to be temporarily shared by another entity" (1997, p. 377). When you invoke an entity, you invite it into yourself. Depending on how strict you are with the

invocation, the entity can even use your body as a medium, or can simply be in the ritual to share its consciousness with yours. An invocation allows it to “ride” in your body, though generally not to the point of being ridden (possessed) in the Voodoo paradigm or similar cases of trance possession. Another definition of invocation is William G. Gray’s definition, where he argues that invocation involves calling inwardly. This means internalizing the invocatory call to mesh the person’s internal sense of self with the force s/he is invoking. In other words, an invocation is successful when you can align your internal reality with the reality of the entity you seek to invoke. When that alignment occurs, the connection is made and the invocation successfully occurs (Gray 1980). This definition of invocation is one that closely resonates with how I approach invocation, namely using it as a way of connecting or strengthening existing connections between myself and others, be they entities, godforms, or people. I also find that Bardon’s energy impregnation technique helps with this connection. With each inhalation of breath, vital energy is absorbed and then exhaled and returned (Bardon 2001a). A magician can isolate a particular energetic frequency and infuse that frequency into his own energy, in order to invoke the entity.

The ultimate idea of an invocation is to build up a resonance of energy between yourself and what is invoked so that you not only channel the force you’re calling, but share energy with that force. In fact, invocation is a synthesis or synchronization of the person and the entity being invoked, so that the energy created by the connection is a melding of the caller and the called. Gray also takes invocation a step further when he argues that the invocation not only affects the invoker, but is linked to the other people who are doing the work with that person. In other words, those people are also drawn into that invocation and to a lesser degree invoke the entity into themselves in order

to relate to it and the work it's doing through the invoker (Gray 1980). It's not just a single person doing the invocation, but ideally the group of people. A truly effective invocation creates a synthesis of energy between all the participants and the entities called. Versluis agrees with this approach to invocation, but fleshes it out further by explaining that the spoken word is pure vibration and energy, which penetrates through time and space (1986). What's really incredible, though, is that if a person hits the right vibration (vibrato) s/he can actually synchronize his mind to the theta wave state of the brain. This altered state of mind is a liminal zone between waking and sleeping, and as such is devoid of the censorship the subconscious mind would exercise over the conscious mind: "The waking dreamer...sometimes seems to have access to all the wells of memory and creation, perhaps to some sort of group consciousness" (Leonard 2006, p. 16). This access is perfect for invocation workings, because it's an optimal opening of the mind of the magician to another force and vice versa. With a vibrato tone of the voice the magician can consciously put himself into that state of mind, making both invocation and any space/time activity easier to manifest. The penetration of time and space occurs when the entity invoked is in two realities at the same time, its own reality and this reality, through the medium of the invoker. The harmony of this occurrence is established through the sounds and vibrations which create a sympathetic resonance so that the entity can exist in both places.

Invocation can be used with more than just the traditional method. In the example above the invocation that is achieved is manifested through a merging of the Eva and the pilot, but the merging occurs as a result of the pilot being invoked *into* the Eva as opposed to invoking the Eva into himself. So what ends up happening is that the invoker "rides" the invoked godform, a reversal of the usual

process. Or in the case of Eva, s/he meets the godform halfway so that the invocation is mutual. The actual invocation won't happen until the conjoining of the pilot's soul with the Eva's essence occurs. It's possible within magic to do such invocations and more.

The invoker does need to resonate or have a form of sympathetic connection to make this kind of magic work. You can invoke yourself into godforms, entities, or for that matter, people. Pathworking is a form of invocation, but instead of the invocant calling the godform to hir, s/he goes to the godform, essentially invoking hirself into the godform as a way of knowing it better. The pathworking is simply a reversal of energy flow, or, if you will, linkage. When a person does invocation s/he is creating a link for the entity to travel to hir or for hir to travel to the entity. The key aspect of invocation is the link itself and the value you place in it, which acts as a road or a bridge. The value is the effort you put into maintaining the connection. Any relationship you have needs effort to sustain itself. When you stop calling a friend, the value you place in that relationship is diminished, because the effort is lessened. The same applies to the entities you work with. How much do you value the connection you make with something else? The value shows in the relationship you establish with others. If you don't make the effort to keep the connection going, then the entity or person will likely not make that much effort either. Value shows even with the connection you establish with yourself, in terms of how you take care of your needs and present yourself to other people. If you have low self-esteem, other people will know it and treat you accordingly. Value sets the tone of the resonance you share with another person or an entity.

These interactions you have with people every day are a form of invocation. You invoke the reality of the people you interact with. You even have a version of that person inside of you (i.e. you have a perception of who that person

is, how s/he acts) and so every time you see or hear from that person, you invoke the reality you know. And by extension the people you know also have a version of you within themselves. You even have your own version of yourself within you, the observer observing the person who acts. All of these versions contain an aspect of the truth about you. The invocation of you is achieved every day through the rapport and connection you build between yourself and a person, and even between yourself and the version of yourself within that person.

We use invocation in our lives to help us navigate through the various situations we encounter in life. For instance when I taught my students while in grad school, I invoked a persona of myself that was an effective teacher. Likewise the various other functions I'm engaged in inform the invocation of the various roles I adopt to fit the expectations of the people. For instance, when I do a workshop on magic, I'm expected to be at least somewhat knowledgeable in the subject I'm discussing. As such when I'm doing my workshop I'm bringing forth the various magical experiences and knowledge that I've had so that I can provide all of that in the workshop.

It may seem that I'm blowing invocation out of proportion, but it's important to understand that a magical concept/tool such as invocation is used every day in ways we don't expect, and that if we are aware of invocation in this way, we can begin to appreciate how it can be used outside of the formal settings that it's traditionally used in. We can make invocation into a very practical and flexible form of magic. But we have to apply it beyond how it's normally considered.

Part of this application is the invocation of the self into the godform, entity, or other person. By learning to work with the connection we have manifested we can come to a greater understanding of the forces we work with and how the interaction affects us and them. The benefit is that you

also get a sense of the god's perspective, how s/he perceives and understands you. The limitation is that you are visiting where the entity exists. In other words, you are visiting that god or spirit's actual environment or plane of existence. This principle of invocation is the same as pathworking, except that instead of creating the environment that you'll be visiting, the entity has created it. I have not noted any dangers in doing this kind of invocation, but I have always done it with the permission of the entity I'm invoking into.

A technique for invocation that may be useful in maintaining the connection with the entity, whether you invoke yourself into it or vice versa, is to come up with a costume that represents the godform. This works particularly well with pop culture personae, though with enough creativity and research you can likely come up with a costume that represents a godform from any period of history. When you put on the costume, which represents your connection to the godform, invoke yourself into the godform. What'll you be doing is using the costume as the medium for the godform. The costume will act as a shell or housing for the entity. If you take the costume off, the invocation ends. Lupa has a similar process with the wolfskin she dances in. When she ties the back legs to her ankles, she feels as if she now has the hind legs of a wolf. When she ties the forelegs and head on, she has fully invoked herself into the wolf spirit in the skin.

Another aspect of invocation that can be useful with godforms is exploring the archetype associated with the godform you're invoking. An archetype represents a particular behavioral trait/consciousness or pattern of existence that continually appears to the human consciousness. It can take many different forms, and as a result you can work with godforms that have similar attributes to the one you invoked, but are from a different culture. Even in our modern society we can use a pop

culture godform such as Bugs Bunny and through him connect with the other godforms associated with that archetype, such as Coyote or Loki. It's worth exploring them all, and exploring how the energy one of the godform you work with is strengthened by the appropriation of others.

As an example of this principle, in Egypt the Islamic fourteen day holiday for Mohammed actually falls on the fourteen day original holiday for Osiris. On some level Mohammed has appropriated the energy of Osiris, because he's taken over the holy days directed toward Osiris (Personal Communication with Halim El-Dabh). This kind of appropriation happens all the time. Christianity has assimilated many pagan holidays and deities into itself, turning them into holy days and saints. By doing this practice, Christians were able to absorb pagan cultures into the Christian faith by incorporating the energy of their gods and practices into the Christian energy. By the same token, this kind of work can be done with egregores. If the egregore shares common characteristics with other deities, it can be useful to model your work with the egregore on the practices associated with those deities. In this way you can direct power associated with those deities into the egregore. Some people will find this approach blasphemous, and yet it's happened throughout history and will continue happening again and again. If you can invoke one entity into another, I think in the end you can help both entities out. One benefits from the pre-existing energy of the other, by assimilating some of the qualities of the older god form, while also providing some energy to that god-form.

I mentioned earlier that sometimes I invoke myself into a person. This kind of invocation happens due to the connection you have to the person and specifically to the version of you that exists within that person's conceptual

mind. Pentilian has argued the following in regards to this kind of work,

First, as with standard invocations, the more information that is available to conceive of an entity, the easier it is to do the invocation. The better you know a person, the more information you have about them. Potentially, if a person really observes someone else, there is a wealth of information they could gather. Secondly, the stronger your emotional tie to the person is, the greater the link is to do this type of kind of magick. (2005, p. 30)

You don't need a strong information connection to do this kind of work successfully, though it can help. Nor do you need a strong emotional connection, but again it helps. What you need is a solid understanding of how energy works, and specifically how first contact already enables you to do this kind of invocation regardless of how well you know a person or are emotionally invested in said person. In the initial contact with anything you establish an energetic connection, and it's that connection by which invocation occurs.

I've done this form of invocation with a number of people in varying situations. For this chapter, I will draw on four case studies. One person lives in the U.K. and she and I are doing magical workings with the Dehara system of magic. Because I live in the U.S. it is naturally hard to meet in person. Sometimes when we have synchronized rituals, we have invoked each other. We've both noted the strength of presence we feel in doing this technique as well as how intimate such invocation becomes. In one sense, you're sharing your soul with the person you invoke yourself into. The phrasing I've used when invoking myself into this person is Astale (name of person or "I invoke myself into the person" or both). The actual physical distance has not been a significant detractor in the strength of the

invocations and we've only met once in person. Numerous online conversations have helped to create a link between us, as well as creating the Dehara system of magic. But for all intents and purposes, though we know each other well, what has really created the link between us isn't the physical proximity, but rather the desire to use invocation as a medium of connection that enables us to flesh this magical system out further.

More recently I used this technique of invoking myself into another person who was one of my lovers. Because she and I lived some distance from each other and I saw her rarely, I used this technique to close the gap, as well as gain a better appreciation and knowing of her. However my invocation with her was different from that of the person in the U.K. I wasn't actually involved in ritual when I did this invocation. Instead, I used meditative trance, taking one hundred breaths to synchronize myself and then saying: "I invoke myself into (name of the person)." These journeys into her psyche had been intriguing, giving me glimpses of magical workings she'd done, entities she worked with, and even past lives she may have lived. In one journey I even found myself in a place where I looked into file cabinets and saw various ritual tools in the cabinets. In these journeys there were walls or partitions which represented the mental boundaries that she had in place. I wisely respected those boundaries. When I told her of the journeys she verified the details I gave her. Since we broke up, I don't do the invocations into her anymore, beyond one last journey I did, which I used as a way of closing the connection and saying farewell. I think that this kind of invocation goes past the surface of the soul and into the true essence of the person you work with.

In the third case study, I decided to work with a fellow magician. However, this person lives in the Ukraine. My initial contact with her was through the medium of LiveJournal and subsequent contact with her occurred

online through IMs. I know very little about this person and have virtually no emotional investment in her. Nonetheless, the first night we chatted online, I decided to try and invoke myself into her and have her invoke herself into me. The connection was instantaneous for both parties. As a test we decided to describe each other to the other person. I had never seen a picture of her, but was able to describe not only what she was wearing, but the color and length of her hair, as well as her eye color. Likewise she was able to describe me. Although we don't chat often, we've continued to use this technique as an effective way of teaching each other magic. What's enabled the success of this invocation has been the focus on feeling the energetic signature of the person. The communication through IMs served as an effective focus on her energy as well as a pathway to connect with her. The variables of knowing and having emotional feelings don't seem to be significant in this case, in terms of the strength of connection. What matters is that you resonate on some level with the person. Resonance isn't a factor of emotion or information, but of connection. Can you connect with the person, even a little? If you can, then invocation can occur.

The fourth case study involved an accident of a friend of a friend. I don't know this person and in fact mainly got involved in healing him because one of my best friends was very distressed about this, and I wanted to help him by helping his friend. In the healing ritual I did, I used Reiki as well as working with Verrier and Verrine, two demons of healing from the demonolatry tradition. These demons, along with the Reiki, guided me to the person in question, allowing me to connect with him and start the healing. I actually felt like I was in his body, made contact with him, and was even given advice by him for a couple of my own situations. Subsequent healings directed toward him have followed the flow of energy first established by the demons and Reiki. I will admit I used external help (i.e. the two

demons) to make this connection occur, but again, the fact that external help can enable this suggests that the process of invoking oneself into another person is not determined by emotional investment or how well you know a person. Rather it's determined by how well you can synch yourself to that person's energy, emotionally or otherwise, using whatever available methods you have at hand.

This kind of invocation can easily be expanded upon. For instance, you and a person you trust can invoke yourselves into each other at the same time and then report to each other what you find, in terms of information, or even personal blind spots. Similar experiments in hypnosis have been done as noted in *The Holographic Universe*. One person hypnotized the other person and then the hypnotized person likewise put the first person into a hypnotic trance. Both people, now under hypnosis, experienced the same reality with each other (Talbot 1991). It stands to reason that if two people were to go into meditative trances and then each person invoked himself into the other person, each would likely have experiences of the other person's mind.

Something that's helped me in doing this meditation is choosing an object that reminds me of the person I'm invoking myself into. The object is a focal point for the connection you have with the person. With one person, I used a ring with the symbol of a scarab on it because this person did a lot of work with that particular symbol. The ring symbolized the connection between us at the time. I often rubbed the ring and thought of him when I did my invocations into him. I placed the ring on my belly and held it between my thumbs, using it as a focus for the connection we had between us. Later, when we stopped working together, I purified the ring and eventually made an offering of it to the land.

I've also used invocation into another person as a way of doing energy work, meshing my energy with the other person's energy. In Taoist sex magic techniques, the

emphasis is on circulating the energy through the bodies of both partners. While this cycling is occurring you merge your partner's energetic pattern with your own. You'll probably feel warmer or cooler, or a tingling sensation, which means the energy work is occurring. Both people can adjust the energy of the other person as well as their own to harmonize the synchronization. This refinement increases the output of the energy for both people, because while they are drawing on each other, they are also temporarily increasing the amount of energy available to each. When sex magic is practiced this way, the people aren't exhausted, unless the energy is directed away from them (see Chia 1984, Frantzis 2001 for more details). I've used this technique with several different partners. The way you mesh the energy with the other person involves coordinating your breathing with that person's breathing so that when you breathe in (drawing your energy to you) that person breathes out, pushing his energy toward you and vice versa. The use of breath to coordinate the energy work, also can help coordinate the sexual actions, whether penetrative or oral. The energy work also serves to invoke the other person into you, because you are cycling that person's energy through you, as well as your own.

You can also work with invocation to surf the space/time probabilities for yourself or another person. By invoking yourself into another person, you're getting access to not merely the present individual, but all the probable pasts and futures of that person, and can verify the information you find with him. This may be used as a form of divination to help the other person determine what his options are. Upon invocation, you will find yourself in that person's mental landscape. In the case of one person I was led through a maze to an open field, encountered him at a table by a train station, and proceeded to talk at length about a past situation. Another time I was led to a file cabinet that held different objects that had meaning to him.

When I came out of the rituals the person later verified the details I gave hir. You can also use the invocation to focus on an event you know might occur in a person's life, using hir present situation and energy as a guide. Although you are limiting yourself to a single situation, you look at all the probable outcomes in as great detail as possible, which can involve a lot of options! You can "live" through those outcomes and then relay that information back to the person, as a way of helping hir make the best choice.

Recently two friends of mine used this invocation technique to go on a vision quest. They were both writers who sabotaged their own respective successes at business and writing, by making bad decisions that on reflection they knew not to make. The goal was to identify this sabotage chip in each other and then help the other person get rid of it. This demanded complete honesty from both people. They had to examine all the situations in their lives where they'd sabotaged themselves and missed out on an opportunity. Both of them picked a physical object to represent the sabotage chip. They put into or onto that object sigils that represented each moment they'd sabotaged an opportunity in their lives. Then they invoked themselves into each other and found the sabotage chip within and destroyed it. After the meditation the two people took the physical objects and destroyed them. This kind of invocation can be used as a general healing technique, because it allows both people to help each other cooperatively, without co-dependently relying on the other person.

If a person has a health problem, the invoker can try some healing work by finding the problem and describing it to the other person; this information can then be taken to a doctor to verify if it's correct. Additionally, the invoker can work some healing magic that will help the ill person resist the health problem or heal it all together. The invoker does this by adding hir own energy to the sick person's energy,

or s/he can choose to take the sickness from the sick person when s/he leaves. The latter approach is similar to sin-eating and other shamanic techniques, which involve taking the illness out of the patient's body and putting it into the practitioner's body. The problem with the latter technique is that there's a good chance you'll have to fight the sickness off, especially if you don't ground or banish the illness from yourself soon after the ritual. On the other hand, it can also be a useful method for assimilating the memory and energy of the sickness into your body, so that if you ever need to call that experience forth you can simply invoke that energy and then use the feeling of sickness in whatever way is appropriate. I've used to it as a shield to keep people away from me—nobody wants to be around someone who has the air of illness around them whether there are actual germs about or not!

Exercises

- 1 Try out all of the experiments I've detailed in this chapter and record your results.
- 2 Is sound essential to invocation? Do a silent invocation and record your results.

Chapter 10: Invocation II: Identity, Invocation, and Aspecting

Identity is central to the practice of magic. In choosing an identity, a person provides himself a foundation. The identity may change as a result of the magic, but it gives magic something to act on and from. It is the basis by which a person forms an agreement with the universe as to his place within it. Magic is used to not merely change

circumstances, but also the actual identity of the person. For example, when a person focuses on spirituality, above anything else, and has a belief that the body is not part of spirituality, the identity that s/he takes on is not merely that of a spiritually focused person, but likely also someone in poor physical health, because that is the identity s/he has manifested with the universe. It anchors a person's connection to other places, people, events, etc.; and yet, as we'll see, identity is fluid. What we cling to with identity is not so much who we think we are, but rather the behaviors and patterns that are reactions to situations and experiences (Epstein 1995). Identity is related to media, in the sense that different forms of media can be used to change the identity of a given person.

Often our identities are dictated to us by the various circumstances we're in, without us fully realizing it. When a person goes into work s/he is expected to modify his behavior to conform to the workplace, by being cheerful and punctual, and suppressing signs of resentment. Likewise parents are expected to be patient, firm, and nurturing (Williams 1990). These personality traits are created by expectations, which tell us the ideal reaction to have to a given situation. Even a person's ego, which is usually thought of as identity and individuality, is a construct formed by cultural and social pressures which, dependent on the culture, can make the conception of ego and identity radically different from one culture to another. Nonetheless, no matter the culture, the ego serves a common goal in upholding the status quo of the social consensus. The social consensus is comprised of custom, convention, and the range and structure of language (Leonard 2006). To protect a social reality, the identity of ego is important, for it constrains the person to fit into social norms, "Ego is not a structure within the brain, body, and senses, but rather a particular way of structuring the relationships among brain, body, senses, and environment.

Ego ensures that the individual apprehends him or herself as a separate, self-aware, volitional entity who acts upon the world and is acted upon by the world” (Leonard 2006, p. 93). The ego isn’t really identity, so much as a façade of identity, full of expected reactions and triggers that serve to define and control a person, while also judging everything around it to determine if it’s suitable to that person. Gray notes the following,

A personality is an effect of power-projection from Inner sources and appears to be what it is because of the way its primal pattern of energy is arranged, and because of various filter-screens interposed between the personality and its source. It is a long way back to our original undifferentiated Energy appearing like pure light, but we may make temporary alterations to our personalities by the voluntary assumption of pre-set characteristics. (1970, p. 125).

What Gray describes could be invocation. When an entity is invoked into you, your behavior is temporarily altered. However, I’d suggest as well that even without invocation a person can temporarily or even permanently alter his personality. As we will see later in this chapter, video games offer one form of media for altering the behavioral patterns. There are other media, some of which I’ve covered in my previous works. What’s important to remember is that the filter-screens or barriers in our personality are constructs of the reactions and triggers I mentioned above.

When we consciously examine these reactions and triggers, we can change the underlying behavior, which in turn dissolves the ego boundaries. At that point our identities have changed, no longer wrapped up in previous behavior patterns, or societal norms. We can consciously choose the identity we wish to manifest into reality.

Invocation plays into this work, because it invades many of the ego boundaries with the presence of another being, that when called on, can impart its own sense of self, which can radically alter the ego's understanding of what is and isn't acceptable. Invocation plays an integral role in the formation of identity, as ego is left behind.

For many people, identity can be extended to the media of technology, which offers new forums and ways of presenting yourself to other people. Increasingly, the multi-media of technology are coming to shape identity. We need to acknowledge that identity isn't about being separated from the world, but is about connections. The connections that technology can offer can radically change a person's relationships with other people and even how s/he conceives of himself. One of the most pervasive technological influences on identity is the internet, which offers virtual universes where a person can remake reality and himself to his whim.

One of my major interests in the internet is the capacity to retrieve information. Type in a phrase, click a button, and information is found. Even better, you can disseminate your own information on the internet as well, though such information may be counted more as opinion than anything else, unless you can back it up with cold, hard data (whatever that is). Regardless, the internet offers boundless opportunity, as is evidenced by the profusion of online stores by entrepreneurs out to make some money, and the rise of online journaling, which offers everyone a chance to be a read writer, regardless of how well (or not) s/he writes.

What's really fascinating is how much the potential for the internet hasn't been exploited. We have an internet that caters to capitalistic commercialism and free speech by one and all and yet what we don't have is an evolution of the human mind and how it can process and pick out information. Nor, for the most part, has the application of online or video games been fully examined, by magicians,

in terms of how they can be used for magical rituals. I don't refer to just creating a character, but rather to the creation of an entire game, with specific magical purposes in mind that will not only entertain but also provide useful magical experiences for the path of the adept.

Design and Identity in Video Games

In *Pop Culture Magick*, one of the video games I referred to was *.hack*. In this console game I played a character who was trying to solve the mystery behind why his friends had become comatose while playing a Multi-Player Online Reality Game (MPORG). This was a simulated world that the character played in, but which (for the player in this reality) didn't have the online capacity of a real MPORG. Still, I saw in this game real potential beyond just entertainment. The entire purpose of the MPORG in the story that *.hack* was centered around was to basically act as a host for an online A.I. that would eventually be born. Different information from players was used to help in the birthing of the A.I. Your character eventually helps with this matter as well, because the MPORG itself also obtains a level of sentience and doesn't want the A.I. to be born. Your character helps defeat the MPORG to allow the birth to happen.

What's so exciting about *.hack* is that the actual purpose of the game isn't really about the playing of it, but is about helping in the creation of this A.I. With the creation of Xaturing, (Xaturing is an online entity created by the Temple of Set. Visit

<http://www.waningmoon.com/xaturing/> for more information.) the pop culture entity Lain (Lain is an anime series about a goddess of the internet.) and even the computer Deep Blue (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_Deep_Blue for more information.), it could be argued that an A.I. has already

been created (though not necessarily in the concrete form science requires). But an intriguing challenge for the magician is to create a virtual world with objectives that are different from just playing a game. Play is only one of the obvious methods for how these virtual worlds can be used. There's a lot of potential such as ritual work, sigil casting, creation of online personae that virtually house you, and the design of certain virtual conditions that when met, prompt a real world magical change.

It's already possible to create synthetic worlds like this through games where you can devise your own RPG. This includes creating virtual systems of magic, defining how that magic works, and what the effects of it are. These games teach you the importance of detail, and show you how to devise a game for more than just entertainment. They can be teaching games, or can serve a specific function of creating conditions that the player fulfills. The accomplishment of those objectives and the energy put into achieving them goes into triggering the events in the real world that lead to the manifestation of the goals. While the game is being played, the gamer is also programming his subconscious to work toward manifesting the real world goals into reality. The player directs his energy to the game, but is also exchanging energy. The exchanged energies carry the goals into the subconscious and from there into the real world actions of the player.

In *Starcraft*, *Command & Conquer*, and other strategy games, there is always the possibility of building your own maps. I've built sigil maps for *Starcraft* with the sole purpose being to charge a specific sigil up and fire it. This is done by beating that board. I try to make these boards as difficult as possible so that I have a real challenge, investing a lot of effort in order to fire the sigil. Every time I don't beat the board, that energy is still stored in the map, charging the sigil until it is beaten. I personally prefer to win every time, but I also figure if you lose, you at least

aren't wasting that energy. That said, I wouldn't lose on purpose, as it defeats the entire point of the magic you're attempting to work, because you're focused on losing instead of actually charging and firing the sigil.

Alternatively you can make a map of resources arranged in specific sigil patterns with the goal being to gather up those resources, firing the sigil off by destroying the patterns and incorporating the resources into your base. You can even use the construction of the base as a correlation of building a particular reality you want to manifest. The base represents the goal you seek to achieve and when that goal is achieved in the online world, you then target the result into the real world, by successfully ending the level.

Consider interactive MPORGs such as *Everquest*, *World of Warcraft*, *Second Life*, and even shooter games like *Halo 2*. One of the reasons these games have been so popular is because of the ability to customize identity. In such worlds, a player can actually be who they wish they were in real life. They offer escapism and a different life to the player who wants more than real life is offering. It's fairly easy to create an online persona that's an archetype of yourself. This persona can be customized in appearance with colors, clothing, facial features, and even species. In at least one game, *Second Life*, the users can actually exchange online currency for real currency, and hold virtual jobs. Some real world companies have even opened up virtual stores in that game that sell virtual items for real world profit. Universities (and at least a few magicians) have also started teaching classes in *Second Life*. Perhaps the best feature of *Second Life* is that you can buy virtual land and design it in whatever way you see fit. The ability to build different tools and other objects is also useful. *Second Life* has a lot of potential to offer those who'd prefer to meet up with other magicians online to do magic. At the same time, it lives up to its name, offering players a chance at a different life than the one in the real world.

In other games, such as *Everquest*, users can control guilds of players who go out and accomplish missions. These leaders become virtual CEOs and have the respect of the other players. It's no surprise that some people get so obsessed with these games that they lose touch with their family and friends in real life. Those people remind them of what they don't have in the real world, which the online reality offers them if they stay in it. However, this can also be applied to people who obsessively play console games, or even traditional pen and paper or live action roleplaying games. There is an element of escapism in becoming another identity within all such games. When it's extreme, this can be a problem, but if moderated it can be a useful exercise in identity work.

The reason such escapism can be useful is that it teaches the player to be fluid with hir sense of identity. S/he can even take on personality aspects from the identity s/he assumes. This is again related to that exchange of energy mentioned above. In the process of playing the game and assuming the identity of the character, the player studies the character and also incorporates some of hir personality and abilities into hir own. Think of a game which you've really enjoyed. Chances are that part of what you enjoyed was the character. Maybe the character could do things you couldn't do, or acted in a way that you normally wouldn't act, but wish you could. When you play that game you give yourself permission to temporarily become hir and do things s/he does. Because of the psychological and energetic link established by the playing of the game, some of the personality of that character is imprinted into your personality. Don't be surprised either if you find yourself mimicking how s/he moves or acts outside of gameplay. Partially this is a result of the playing of the game, which teaches your body, to some degree, how to move and act like the character. I've done this with stealth games, finding myself mimicking the walk and movement of the character,

usually right after I've played the game. I gravitate toward the stealth characters partially because I find the focus on movement to be intriguing, and this form of low-level invocation gives me a chance to explore that. On another level, games in general can have an impact on the kinesthetic awareness, or body image, of the person playing the game. The human body is capable of interfacing with what's observed and then implementing that into how it moves. Your body's kinesthetic awareness is what allows you take what you observe and mimic it. Kinesthetic awareness is the awareness of the motion of the body, but also the conceptual image you maintain of how your body appears and how it moves. When you play a game, you are imprinting into your kinesthetic awareness the movements of the character in the game. You might identify with the character enough that you unconsciously take the stance of that character, or move the way the character moves. Actors consciously employ similar techniques for helping them get in different roles they play (More on this later in the chapter).

The use of skill sets for virtual characters is one way that identity is shaped. Depending on the skills a person chooses s/he will thrive in certain situations and in others won't do as well. The act of playing the character involves learning conventions and social roles that occur while interacting with other people in the virtual world (Gee 2003). The skills give each virtual character abilities, but also a back story of how that character got those skills and why. Sometimes that story is told in the course of a game, but sometimes it's left up to the player's imagination. S/he can come up with a history about the character that explains the motivations of the character and even the player's motivation for being the character. As a result, the imagination shapes not only the person's concept of the character's identity, but also his own identity, because it blends the character's story into the life of the player. Gee

argues that video games encourage reflection on what identity is and presents a model for a tripartite identity, which is a formation of the identity of the player, the identity of the character, and the projective identity, which involves both the projection of one's own sense of values onto a character, and also the sense of the character being an ongoing projection or creation of the player (2003).

The projective identity is of particular interest here, as Gee illustrates in the following passage, "In my projective identity I worry about the sort of 'person' I want her to be, what type of history I want her to have had by the time I am done playing the game. I want this person and history to reflect my values, though I have to think reflectively and critically about them...but this person and history also reflect what I have learned from playing the game and being Bead Bead in the land of Arcanum" (Gee 2003, p. 56). On one end there's the projection of the values of the player and how those values shape and are shaped by the virtual identity of the character. But on the other end, there's also the effect that playing a virtual character has on the identity of the player. It isn't just the virtual character who learns skills, but also the player, and indeed the player is able to "safely" explore behaviors that s/he might never indulge in, in real life--at least until after the player has played the game and allowed the play to imprint on his psyche. (On the other hand, this substitute learning only goes so far--it's probably not a good idea to try and learn CPR through a *Second Life* seminar.)

Whether a player realizes it or not, his identity is impacted by playing the virtual character. A person feeds energy into the creation of the virtual identity and also the various activities the virtual character engages in. This opens a two way link between the player and the character. Invocation of a video game god form is an obvious example of this two way interaction, as is the video game sigil magic I discussed in *Pop Culture Magick*. The

advantage of video games, when it comes to working with identity, is that the virtual settings are active worlds that have their own rules and demand interaction between the character and the player. Once the character parameters are created, they impact the potential actions of the player (Gee 2003), and not just in the virtual world. They can easily extend into the real world, in terms of how a person applies the experiences gained from video games to real life (for example, problem solving skills learned from games can be very useful in real life interactions).

The impact of playing the character can be thought of as a form of shape-shifting. The video game character not only allows a player to act in a different manner than s/he normally would, but also dissolves the ego identity of the player, allowing hir to adopt a metaphorical identity instead, “For us to recapture this sort of identity requires an act of imagination as...when we put ourselves in another’s place (the essential movement of compassion). Daimonic shape-shifting is precisely a metaphor for the transformation of self that begins with such acts” (2002, p. 84). A video game serves a similar purpose of putting a person into another’s place, albeit in a virtual world. The game breaks down barriers that the player’s ego normally erects to monitor the everyday behavior. The breaking down of these barriers enables the changing of identity temporarily or permanently (Gray 1970).

To fully understand why this is, I turn to Lisiewski’s concept of the subjective synthesis, which can be applied to more than magic, and indeed plays a role in identity. Yet while it has much potential to offer the subjective synthesis is incredibly limiting as well in the sense that it *is* subjective. Buying too much into an established set of rules on how to do magic can negate potential creativity and innovation. Lisiewski notes that the first requirement of a successful subjective synthesis is the conscious realization and acceptance of the beliefs a person has. It also provides

a conscious understanding of the fundamental rules or dynamics that make a ritual work for the practitioner, based on those beliefs. If a practitioner knows what his beliefs are, s/he can purposely alter them to make the subjective synthesis always work for him, as opposed to against him (Lisiewski 2004a). Of course, we needn't limit this to rituals. The subjective synthesis can also be a conscious understanding and integration of desired identities and the tools used to assume those identities. The virtual world is one such tool and involves a conscious integration and understanding of how to play a character and assume his identity. But as the game is continually played and choices are made, the identities of the character and player are molded and shaped. The subjective synthesis of identity comes into play, so that subconsciously the virtual identity inserts itself into the player's identity and merges with it, creating multiple avenues of potential aspects or new identities. In other words, a person is changed constantly by his interactions, and a conscious awareness of this change can allow for an integration of a subjective synthesis that is helpful to the process of working magic, as opposed to sabotaging the working. Note the word *conscious*. In order to really use the subjective synthesis, the magician must be conscious about how s/he approaches situations and/or sabotages them.

As a practical demonstration of what I'm writing about, consider this example from my own life. One meme I've had to work with is a fear of success. When I was a child I was taught that even if I was successful promises wouldn't be followed through on, or if they were, shortly thereafter what had been given as a reward was taken away from me. This early negative behavior led me to believe that even if I was successful the success would just be taken away. Later imprinting led me to also believe that any success I gained would only be gained through lots of struggle and obstacles. As a result I had a deep fear of success ingrained

into me until I decided to consciously transform those behavior patterns into healthier behaviors.

One of my methods for changing this behavior involved using video games. By adopting the identity of the video game character temporarily, I leave myself open to whatever I charge that identity with. Playing video games, for me, involves a state of no-mind, of receptiveness. By playing a game and winning, my character embodies success. I used that principle to reprogram my identity and subjective synthesis. I mentally chanted a mantra in my mind while playing, stating that “I am successful”. By using that approach in conjunction with some meditative approaches, I was able to deprogram my old pattern of thinking, and put in a new pattern that allowed me to not only feel more comfortable with success, but also find more opportunities for it in my life.

The best way to illustrate this is to think upon your own life and specifically the actions you have done that have sabotaged situations for you. Inevitably a person will sabotage himself when s/he isn't fully aware of how s/he has integrated certain aspects or attributes from prior experiences. The reactions a person has are usually due to a past situation, as opposed to the present. Something happening now reminds a person on a subconscious level of how s/he acted in a similar, previous instance and s/he draws on that behavior to deal with the situation, even when it is no longer warranted or appropriate. It could be argued that these reactions are part of the person's subjective synthesis, but even if that's the case there are ways to change that. Personality aspecting and invocation offer several ways to become consciously aware of how your identity is shaped by other influences. In turn you can consciously change those patterns so that you don't sabotage yourself further.

Technique One: Uploading the Self

Uploading the self is a variation of my technique of invoking yourself into another person or a godform. Invocation shapes the identity through assumption of another presence, and can be used consciously to work with and shape your identity in particular directions.

In *The Matrix*, for people to enter the computer world, they had to upload themselves into the computer world. At that point, they could download information and skills into their virtual persona. They could also die there and the bodies would die if the persona did, because so much of their personalities were invested in the archetype. Your personality isn't nearly as nebulous as it may seem. It's this fact that's essential to really understanding the full potential of invocation or uploading the self into cyberspace. Your conscious sense of identity is limited, and that limitation often causes you to miss out on the potential that an aspect of your identity can offer you. An example of a personality aspect that many people take for granted is the body. We all have one, but we don't necessarily pay as much attention to it and how it shapes our perceptions of the world.

The body you inhabit is a reality in and of itself, but it's also a reality you've constructed through your perceptions of it. In other words, your perception of your body creates a residual self-image that you use when visualizing yourself. This self-image may not be accurate to the actual reality of your body. However, a person's perception can shape reality, and this includes the body consciousness. In fact, how you feel about your body, or how you imagine it appears, will affect how you present yourself to other people. If you think you are beautiful then you will act beautiful. The body consciousness has its own input and personality aspect that interfaces with the ego. The survival instincts that most people have are an example of the body consciousness taking an active role. We don't think about it when the body consciousness takes over, but it's a part of our personality wired to protect the mortal existence of the

body. Unfortunately many people aren't consciously aware of the body consciousness.

The residual self-image is an identity point, a way of anchoring your personality to something familiar to you, such as your body. The self-image is the ego of the person, and it filters out whatever doesn't fit it. At the same time this self-image, and indeed all aspects of your personality, rely on the physical body to establish a sense of reality. One of the functions that the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste have is the ability to help the person construct a sense of reality and self:

Touch is every bit the creative process that vision is. When you run your hand over marble and feel its cool hard smoothness, you construct that feel. When you put your hand in your pocket or purse, fumble for your keys, and finally find them, you carve your world of touch into distinct tangible objects such as keys, through a process no less active than when you carve your visual field into distinct visible objects. (Hoffman 1998, p. 176)

Touch is used as the example in the quote above, but this concept is applicable to all the senses. We rely on our senses to provide us perceptions, but they also create our ability to sense, and make sense of, reality. Sight, as another example, allows a person to construct an object, its depth or dimensions, its surface appearance and texture, and even the movement, or lack thereof, of the object (Hoffman 1998). At the same time, our senses also help in the construction of identity a person has. They are the medium through which we experience the self and the personalities of other people. In fact, I think that the reason people personify objects is because of the need to find identity in what is around them, as a way of constructing and grounding the self.

What this means is that some people will have a self-image that may only partially use the body as an anchor for the reality of the personality. Other residual self-images may be used that don't draw on the body you live in, but may draw on archetypes you identify with. These archetypes could include an animal, ancient god forms, or even modern pop icons. The body is only one facet of the self-image, but regardless of what your self-image is based on, your body will influence how you conceive of yourself when you invoke yourself into another person, upload yourself into cyberspace, play video games, or any other interactive activity. The body plays an integral role in allowing you to identify as something, because of the kinesthetic sense. This sense is your awareness of your body, and yet it also seems to extend outward toward whatever you connect with. In the process of playing a game, our senses extend to the character we play, to some degree, enough that a person can feel like s/he becomes that character. When I play games, I feel connected to the character to the point that I can feel the movement the character is engaging in. It's a subtle sensation, but identification with the character is imparted by it. Consequently the kinesthetic sense is not just responsible for our awareness of our body, but also anything else we happen to identify with and can be helpful for invoking yourself into another person.

The variety of media that many people have access to allows us to radically change the self-image. For instance, with LiveJournal and other blog technology you can use any image as your icon, and for many of the online games it's entirely possible to create your own avatar that represents how you perceive yourself and/or your body. Nor are your options limited to online games. Zac Walters has used a console wrestling game to actually modify his body image. He's created characters that represent the ideal body image he's going for and invoked himself into those

characters, and along with exercise and other mundane efforts, used the game to modify his own body so that he eventually creates the body image he wants for his physical body. The game character acts as a mirror, storing up the energy of his intent and slowly molding his body into the shape that he wants it to be in (Walters 2007).

There are dangers with uploading (invoking) yourself online or into a game. It's entirely possible to get so caught up in the "reality" of such games that it ends up taking over your life. A good example of this is the people who obsessively play MPORGs such as *Everquest* or *World of Warcraft*. Not only are some of these people willing to sell their very families to someone else just to get a precious object in the game, but in *Everquest 2*, Pizza Hut actually made a deal where people can order pizza while playing the game and will be reminded of this every so often in the game itself. In other words, people get their identities so enmeshed in the reality of the game that they forget the needs of the physical body. Obviously if you neglect your body long enough, it will get sick and/or die, and so will you. The recent deaths by several gamers are illustrative that as with anything else the online realities and identities that go with them should be dealt with in moderation and with recognition of your body's physical needs.

It's not too surprising that some players immerse their own identities into the virtual world, to the point that eventually the virtual character is the real person and the person in the real world is just a game being played to get by so that the person can once again return to the virtual reality s/he would rather live in. When this occurs the self-image of the person is so distorted by the online reality that s/he has lost touch with the grounding anchor of the body. The body signals get lost in the midst of the signals of media that are dealt with on a daily basis. The one point I wish to make is that while psychologically the virtual world can be as real as the real world it's important to keep

yourself grounded and realize that however much you shape and change your identity as a result of the virtual interactions you involve yourself in, there's still the need to live life in the physical world around you. Escaping the real world isn't a solution, and any identity work done through the virtual world should be done for the improvement of the overall person.

With that being said, it's time to consider how to actually upload yourself into cyberspace. The most obvious way is to create an archetypal figure that embodies, at least partially, how you conceptualize yourself. Whether you do this through icons on LiveJournal or another blog, or create a game avatar, you can use what you create to house your personality. In the case of the blogs, Photoshop or another image editing program is useful for creating an icon, but you can also use your own artistic skills with traditional media, scan whatever you make into an image, and then upload it (and yourself) into the blog's server.

With the game archetype, you'll usually be given some options on how you want the character to appear. Customize the character as much as possible and either use your name or one you come up with which represents your identity. The name is particularly important because you'll use it as a signal, or, if you will, a specific resonance of your energy, that guides you to your character. The *Final Fantasy* series is excellent to study in terms of archetypes. Although the individual games differ from each other to some degree in terms of design and character archetypes there's still a lot of crossover. The job system, for instance, is used in multiple *Final Fantasy* games. Characters take on different jobs with specific skill sets. These jobs represent archetypes; for example the knight job represents the archetype of the knight. The skill sets are specific attributes associated with the archetypal position; some of the skills of the knight, for instance, are the ability to protect other characters by taking the wound intended for them or the

ability to hold a weapon in two hands (remember this is a video game so the abilities are action specific to that class of character). When the character chooses a job class the job is integrated into his personality and allows him to use specific skills that wouldn't be available in other jobs. In *Final Fantasy XII* this is expanded upon further. The characters purchase licenses that allow them to unlock skills and equipment they can use. The customization is limited in some ways, but it does mean that you can change not only what the characters can do, but also to some degree the identity of the characters. In a sense, what we do does define who we are and the *FF* series plays with that concept quite a lot.

Second Life is another game that has become increasingly popular not only as a medium to interact with, but also as a way of changing the character archetype that a player uses for interaction. Most people who use this program prefer to create a character who is similar to them, or a character who looks the way they'd like to look. Some players will choose a character who represents the desired gender they might wish to be. Others create a non-humanoid character by experimenting with its appearance. This could involve creating extra limbs or changing the appearance by adding scales, etc. If you have the programming skills you can become a bunch of floating orbs that aren't even attached to each other or something else entirely different.

My own experiments with my character were fairly tame. I chose a cyberpunk character and lengthened the arms until they were very thin. The legs were thick, while the body and neck were elongated. I chose these changes to see what they'd look like and I mostly wandered around and explored the virtual worlds. I didn't find *Second Life* to be as useful as some people have. While the ability to fly or create different tools and land modification was fun, it just wasn't something that appealed to me. But I could see that

the creation of homes and different tools would be very useful for a technomage and that the ability to change the appearance of the character could be a useful invocation/identity exercise for someone who wanted to externalize a personality aspect of himself.

Both the *FF* job aspects and some of the features in *Second Life* would be very useful in entity creation. The job aspects give the entity specific skills and parameters to perform the task, while the modification of the appearance allows for a unique method of housing the entity in a cyber reality. In invocation, the attributes, parameters, and job provide structure to the act of invocation, setting up boundaries, as needed, for working with the entities, when they possess you or you possess them.

Generally the different godforms a person can work with are situated in domains of specific activity. Aphrodite is a goddess of love and beauty and concerned mainly with that task. If she were to go to war, she'd probably get hurt, because that's not in her skill set (In fact, the *Illiad* tells the story of just such an occurrence during the Trojan War). Ares, on the other hand, is a god of war and can handle the tasks associated with war easily, but would probably have a rough time performing the task of spreading love in the world. Job tasks in games are similar; they provide set domains to work in. This can be useful in understanding the kinds of entities you invoke. What kind of skills does the entity have? How are those skills relevant to the situation you're dealing with? Learning to recognize the "job" of the entity can help you determine how to customize your character to fit specific needs you have. To upload yourself into your character, use the monitor/television as your astral tunnel leading you to the construct you've created. The keyboard and mouse/console controller are terminals for your energy to flow into, and ritual tools to direct the action of your character. Each push of any button is an act interfacing with the identity you are creating. You can also

vibrate/vocalize the name of your character, using it as a mantra to focus your attention on the invocation and draw you into the virtual reality.

First and foremost you should feel as if you exist in that virtual world, as if it's the only reality you're in. At this point your body is (temporarily) just a shell continuing to supply the actions needed to keep your presence online. In accepting the reality of the virtual world you will have successfully uploaded yourself into your character or blog. There's no reason then not to use those virtual worlds for a variety of different purposes. Your virtual environment conveys advantages a real environment doesn't have. For example, you could kill a monster as a sacrifice of pixels to the gods. In the real world sacrificing an animal could bring very real legal (and ethical) problems into your life, but in the virtual world, where the violence is only simulated, the legalities aren't an issue. You'll still be sacrificing a being that is alive in a certain manner. You can direct the energy toward a specific purpose, such as offering it to the gods.

You're not just limited to acts of violence, though, depending on your choice of games. Build a house, or create a city. Design a game within a game. Take a class. In the process of doing that, construct the real world objectives you want to manifest in your life. When you stop the invocation and come back to your body, bring the energy you drew on to create the virtual world and project it into the real world to fulfill your goals. The advantage a virtual environment offers is ready access to the energy that people put toward a given virtual world. The belief that people put into such worlds makes those worlds into reality and gives them the means to be more than just a collection of pixels. Other advantages include an environment where you can interact with other people that you might never meet in person. In this way you can still work magic with them and form a close-knit community, while establishing connections all over the world.

Another way to upload yourself to the internet involves transforming yourself into pure information. This is much more abstract as you're not relying on an avatar to embody you. Instead you become a stream of information. I don't think of this as a collection of 1's and 0's. It's more like a stream of information comprised of words, images, and various other forms of information about you that is directly merged into the flow of information on the internet. Think of this as a direct form of online divination, with your intuition playing a large role in where you direct the information stream. Google or other search engines are useful as a tool for channeling that intuition, and consequently channeling the information flow of the internet. As you type in different words to call up image searches or word searches, you can also use those searches to simulate a sense of travel. The searches can be completely random, done for no other reason than to patch yourself into whatever information you might find. The goal is to streamline your consciousness so that it can process information more quickly.

Another online venue is the blog, which is used by a diverse group of people to write on diverse subjects. Some blogs, such as Key64 ([http:// www.key64.net](http://www.key64.net)), are specialized blogs, using the internet and other media to accomplish specific objectives. Key64 utilizes the skills of the members that post to the blog, with each person offering unique perspectives and objectives for other people. Chris Arkenburg (LVX23) for instance, offers new insights and magical practices for combating the corporate world, while Nick Pell (Lucifer Benway) offers chaos linguistics and meme warfare. Other members have their own perspectives and experiments, not just for each other, but for the entire occult community. This online blog serves several purposes. It isn't just a conveyance of information, or even a sounding board for experimentation. It also involves the spreading of a meme, and a purpose and

approach to occultism that transcends the online world into the real world. The objectives go beyond playing a game or chatting, and yet they are ever-changing, in part because each person who contributes has his own approaches and interests. These objectives, met in an online media, take magic beyond just the programming of a sigil or creation of an entity...magic becomes a group online effort, becomes part of the internet through the work of people who come together not just to write, but really to perform a ritual and practice magic through the identity of Key64.

LiveJournal and other online blogs are also useful for more than just the personal rantings and bitchiness that is exhibited on them, or even for information and marketing that some enterprising individuals use them for. These blogs also embody the magician and act, if you will, as an online archetype. The icons chosen to represent users are the faces of the journal, but also the faces of the magician. Some people use them for specific moods or blog post themes. The intriguing aspect of these icons is that regardless of how they express you, they can and do embody not just the archetype of yourself, but also a part of who you are. In some cases, people will design the appearance of their blog to embody their personalities or reflect ongoing magical work. The written words also represent you, electronic print carrying out not just your thoughts, but part of your life itself to the web and to eager eyes that might consider you friend or foe. The real point here, however, is that people invest themselves, invest their identity in the internet, in the electronic characters they play, or the blogs they write in.

Uploading yourself into a character, or into the internet itself, raises questions as to the nature of the mind. Can the personality be constrained to a body? If we can accept that the act of invocation is a reality that allows contact between the minds of humans and other entities, then it stands to reason that invocation as a form of uploading can be used

to access virtual worlds and inhabit virtual bodies. While I don't advocate escapism into virtual reality, I nonetheless think it's time we challenge what the internet and these games are used for. Do we continue to focus only on entertainment or accessing information, or do we do more? Do we put these virtual realities to use beyond entertainment? Do we take control of these virtual realities that have a very real effect on us, or do we let them control us? Uploading yourself into the internet or game is the first step of many we can take to shape the virtual reality as we shape mundane reality. At the same time reality and identity are interwoven, and so alteration of reality is also a change of identity. The choice really, to evolve, to grow, to experiment, is your own. Where will you take yourself? That question can only begin to be answered when we start experimenting further with uploading the self into a virtual reality and question consequently what really defines reality, our notions of it, and how we want to shape all of it to accomplish our goals.

Environment and Identity

We are intimately connected to the environment around us. Even though people will often get caught up in the I of the ego there is no denying that a person's very identity is anchored in the environment around himself. By environment I'm referring to the physical locations that you live in and visit on a regular basis; your environment can consist of your home, a favorite park you visit, a restaurant you like, or where you go to work. Your environment also incorporates forms of media into it. The different posters you see, the billboards, even the objects you keep in your home are media that impact your environment. Other people are also part of your environment and could be viewed as an environmental factor. The familiarity that you have with those people and their perceptions of you can

influence your sense of identity. The self-image of the ego is connected to environment which both buffers and sustains its existence with the reminder of what's familiar. Take a person out of a familiar environment and place him into a totally new one and you will likely find that s/he gets depressed and feels disconnected from everything s/he has known, at least initially.

I certainly felt disconnected when I moved to Seattle in early 2006. I knew almost no one there and had never visited the Pacific Northwest. I had no easy frames of reference to draw on and consequently felt as if I was out of my environment. Even a year after the move I still felt fairly disconnected and uncomfortable. I felt crowded, depressed, and lost. I gradually felt better as I met people and became accustomed to the area, but every time I visited the Midwest I felt a wave of homesickness, because the environment in Seattle just isn't what I consider home. Home for me isn't lots of hills and traffic and mountains and seas. Home is rolling fields, lots of space, less rain, etc. That experience helped me realize that identity is intimately tied into the environment. Some of my friends in Seattle who love living there confirmed it for me further when they talked about the geography of the area. For them, there was something essential about Seattle's environment that appealed enough to make it feel like home. A job alone wasn't enough (as is evidenced by the fact that I moved to Portland, when I already had a fairly stable job in Seattle). The place itself made sense to those friends, and they also had a connection to other people who also resonated with the area and supported the perspectives my friends had about Seattle (perhaps also supporting the perspectives they had about each other as well).

Since moving to Portland, I have felt much more comfortable. It's much easier for me to get out of the city and get closer to the natural environment. I'm still getting used to the mountains, but I feel much more at home

because I can actually visit them easily. I also feel more comfortable in Portland, because of the variety of parks and overall smallness of the city. It's much easier to get around and visit people and I don't feel nearly as isolated as I did in Seattle. There's still a lot of rain, and not so many rolling fields, but I can visit other parts of Oregon where at least some of those rolling fields are present. As for the rain, I'm more comfortable with it now, but it also helps that I'm living in a place that I like.

Many people don't fully realize how important environment is to identity because there is a lack of conscious connection with what's around them. Instead, at least in American culture, there's an emphasis on being independent, alone, and otherwise unconnected to everyone and everything. This philosophy toward life has unfortunately harmed the environment, as is evident by the rising concerns over the greenhouse effect and the realization that we have less and less resources available for more and more people. Obviously humanity isn't independent of the environment. Without air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, or any number of other resources that this environment provides we couldn't even survive, let alone have a sense of identity. Yet with the industrial era, the recognition of this reality has been forgotten. While the advent of machines and science has been a boon to humanity in many ways, it has also changed how we treat this world. No longer do people feel as connected to the environment, because they are removed from it by jobs, entertainment through diverse media, and other distractions now available to us. Compared to cultures where food had to be grown or hunted we don't rely on the environment in an overt manner. Our reliance is more subtle (though no less crucial) and so more easily ignored.

Your identity is shaped by all of the influences in your life. Every T.V. show you watch has an effect on you; so

does every walk in a park or time spent being physically active. When I want to quiet my mind and feel connected to my environment I go outside and walk around my neighborhood, or a park. I meditate in the grass and feel underneath my bare skin the life I'm a part of. By doing these activities I can ground myself into the environment and feel more of a connection than I had before. Doing these activities reaffirms my connection with the environment, while also reconnecting me to my identity. I'm going away from distractions to a place in my mind where what exists is only myself and the connection I have to nature.

It's important to remember that our perceptions about anything can deceive us. People get so caught up in how they perceive the world that they forget there are other perceptions of life and identity, and not just the human kind. For instance, get in touch with the consciousness of a tree or a plant. They have their own consciousness, though it's different from our own. There have been at least a couple of scientific experiments to determine how plants react to the emotions and thoughts of humans with noticeable results when electrodes were attached to the plants (Heaven & Charing, 2006). What would it be like to be a plant or even momentarily share its consciousness? How would it feel to not be able to move in the way a person does? Try, if even for a moment, to consider what its reality might be like. You don't even need to hug a tree to be able to experience an alternate form of consciousness, thereby breaking you out of your tunnel vision.

Another reason to consider the existence of a plant in your life is to get a sense of how your identity is shaped by what's around you. If you like to sit under the shade of a tree, consider what it would be like to not have it there. You could go inside, but maybe you wanted to be outside, to enjoy the fresh air. Only now the air isn't so fresh and the haze you see is a result of the pollution from cars,

cigarettes, factories, and all kinds of human made objects that disregard the need for fresh air in favor of having the latest gas guzzling car or some other commodity. And yet none of those commodities can replace trees or animals or any of the other aspects of the environment we have and take so easily for granted. We can't invent the precise balance of Nature on a worldwide scale.

Even when we consider environment in a more manufactured sense of the word, what you have access to still has an effect on your identity. If you come home to a messy apartment and you happen to be a neat freak you may not feel as if you were at home. Your sense of identity may feel disconnected, simply because your identity, while a subjective experience, is interconnected with everything else. Your sense of self arises from being able to place yourself into an environment that embodies who you are. If your environment doesn't embody you, the self-image isn't sustained, which can lead to depression and unhappiness.

Why else would people buy music, art, books, and other cultural artifacts if not to in part embody externally what it is that they feel contributes to making them who they are? Yes, people enjoy all of these artifacts, but part of that enjoyment involves recognizing how they contribute to a sense of self. And we use these artifacts to interact with other people and entities in a meaningful manner that allows for connection, but also establishes who is who. It shouldn't be a surprise that when something is stolen, the person stolen from feels violated. A part of himself was taken away. It wasn't just that the object was taken; it's that part of the person's identity was also stolen. To put it another way, your environment is how you show who you are. From the clothes you wear, to the music you listen to, to whatever you put in your environment, all of it is used to interact with and also define your identity.

The real challenge is being able to dissociate the objects you have with your actual identity. Sentimentality is often a

reason used by people for keeping something and yet the sentiment is directed more toward the memory than the actual object. The question is can you maintain the memory without the object? I've made it a habit to periodically go through all my things and either donate or recycle anything I no longer use. I primarily focus my identity around usability. I will admit that this makes it much easier to get rid of books and comics I no longer read, and other artifacts that I might otherwise keep and yet never use. Many people have a harder time letting go of an object. They are attached to the memories or sentiments they associate with it, and yet when they do get rid of the object the identity isn't harmed. Identity constantly changes, and for me, attachment is primarily a tool that can be useful for identity workings. Attachment to objects can be detrimental if not controlled, because it leads to obsession and a narrowing of the awareness of opportunities. Know when to let go and you will find that your identity will adapt to any external situation as needed, though the internal reality may need more time to have a truly effective change.

Acting and Identity

Acting is another way that identity can be shaped. The phrase "getting into character" is an excellent denotation of invocation and personality aspecting. In fact, in some cases, acting out a character can take over the life of an actor, as in the case of Tom Baker, one of the Dr. Who's that (according to at least one fan of the show) stayed in character even when he wasn't on the set. He knew that people wanted to interview Dr. Who, not the actor, so he let that identity completely take over the core personality of Tom Baker every second of the day (Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO85nFZ2pvI> on 11-18-2006).

Even when acting doesn't go that far, it still has useful methods for helping people come into character. Michael Ironside, the voice actor for video game character Sam Fisher from *Splinter Cell*, explains that when he tries to get into character he focuses on "six to eight levels of emotion. If it's a violent character I base the emotions on fear." (*Splinter Cell* interview 2003). He further divides the spectrum of emotions into two principles, love and fear (*Splinter Cell* interview 2003). Emotions are important in aspecting and invocation for two reasons. First, e-motions are energy in motion, which means they are a source of energy directed by the person toward a particular goal. Additionally, emotions can represent different personality aspects that people have, but haven't necessarily communicated much with. Most people, for instance, are probably uncomfortable with the emotions of hate or anger. How many times have you walked up to someone and said you hated that person? Probably not often, if at all. As an experiment I once walked up to someone I did hate and told her I hated her. It was a liberating experience. It felt good to honestly tell her how I felt. And having expressed that emotion, it no longer bothered me to feel it. I had acknowledged it and in doing so taken the power from it, reclaiming it for myself. But many times people will avoid uncomfortable emotions. Personality aspecting and invocation can help people come to terms with those emotions by bringing out the parts of the self that specialize in them.

Both in video games and in movies, there's a need to identify key traits of a character. In *Final Fantasy X*, the character designers were given key words to describe different characters: "For example, there were some key words describing Tidus: Main Character, 17 years old, cheerful, profession related to water, athlete, unique look." (Birlew 2002, p. 266). All of these key characteristics defined this character and how the voice actor would give

him a way of expressing himself. The word cheerful describes the ideal emotional makeup of the character, while athlete provides an idea of the body type. Each attribute adds to the personality, which in turn brings life to the character. Even though Tidus is in a video game, people still get caught up in the story he tells. In the mind of the player, for as long as the game is on, Tidus is a real person.

Kratos from *God of War* is another example of a character with specific attributes and behaviors. He has life in the mind of the players. The game developers intentionally did this because they wanted a character that could let the players release their darkest violent fantasies:

The main goal for the character in the game was to always create someone who looked really brutal, nasty, and violent, instead of going down the traditional route of an iconic Greek hero with the plume, helmet, skirt, toga, and sandals. We wanted someone who really made the player feel like he was being able to unleash his dark side. So the idea was always: How can we make him look more brutal? How can we make him look more violent... So while you look at this guy and he may not totally feel at home in ancient Greece from a costume standpoint, I think he achieves the greater purpose, which is to give players a character who they can play and really does let them go nuts and unleash the nasty fantasies they have in their heads (Guess & Seraphim 2005, p. 203).

In addition to creating a believable character, the developers of the game also made certain that the players knew they were playing a game set in ancient Greece. The various mythological monsters, while interpreted by the designers, were still recognizable as part of the Greek myths. The best aspect of this game is that it drew on Greek mythology, but it also got inspiration from the series of 20th century movies such as *Jason and the Argonauts*,

which depicted modern retellings of Greek mythology. In a sense, the Greek mythology was remade into pop culture, with Kratos as the central character. For Hellenic purists Kratos and other aspects of the game wouldn't fit what they considered accurate of Greek beliefs and magic (of course, neither would *Clash of the Titans!*). Nonetheless, the game is a good example of how older beliefs can be taken and represented in contemporary contexts. Kratos is an archetype that can be worked with, though carefully, given that he was created to channel the violence of people playing the game.

Real life actors also have to make the characters they portray realistic enough to have a presence in the mind of the viewer. When viewers see Tom Cruise in a movie, ideally they won't think of him as Tom Cruise. Instead they'll think of him as the character he's portraying. This applies to all actors. If the viewers don't believe the actor is the character, then s/he hasn't done hir job. S/he needs to play the role of the character to the point that s/he becomes that character. In effect s/he invokes the persona of the character so that it supersedes hir own reality. A good way to find out how actors do this is to watch the documentaries and commentaries on the movies and TV shows the actor is in. If you're like me and prefer owning (or at least renting) DVDs, the special features will usually include interviews that may include the actor explaining how s/he gets into role and becomes hir character.

One thing I noticed in my research was that for the duration of the filming many actors tended to put their own lives and personalities on the back burner and assume the identity of the character, even when offstage. The actors will also spend hours a day just acquiring skills that the character would have. Tom Cruise regularly spends hours learning the particular skills his characters have so that those skills come naturally to him. Likewise the actor studies the mannerisms and behaviors the character might,

usually by living or interacting with people who have similar behaviors. For instance, Leonardo DiCaprio spent time with OCD patients so that he could understand Howard Hughes better, in order to play him in the movie *Aviator*. Zhang Ziyi spent two months with a blind person to learn how she moved so that she could play such a character in *The House of Flying Daggers* (Note: Check the extra features in the named movies to see interviews where these issues are discussed.) In each case, the actor spent a lot of time observing and/or acquiring skills, and in some cases changing their bodies, to become the character. Another fact I learned in my research was that actors would develop the character's history. They would get pictures of where s/he was from and what s/he did before the actual movie. The idea is to know enough about the character so that even though the viewer doesn't know those things, the actor can still use them to enhance the character's personality. S/he will provide some contextual clues about the past of the character, but even if the viewer never knows the entirety of the character's history, the actor will still be able to make the viewer feel like the character has more of a life than just two hours (or less) on a silver screen.

Another aspect that is played with in media is color. The character of Vincent in *Collateral* is dressed in a gray suit, and speckled white and black hair and a beard, denoting his status as a liminal and amoral character. In the movie *Hero*, color is used even more ambitiously. Depending on who is telling the story, the costumes of the characters are different colors. The only character whose costume color is the same throughout the story is the unnamed character (*Jet Li*). The color of his clothing is always black, and represents both his mission, and the other characters' perceptions of him. The color changes for the other characters denote the changing of the seasons, but also the emotions of the characters as perceived by whoever is telling the story.

Color is used in a similar way in comics to signify the archetypal force the character represents; if we see the colors blue, red, and yellow we'll likely think of Superman. This is useful for us, because we can use those colors and costume to connect with the character in question. In fact, actors use colors and costumes to help themselves get into character. The colors and costume represents a gateway into the character.

I don't think magicians doing invocation need to go to quite the extreme that successful actors do when getting into character. However, there's something to be said for studying what actors do and learning from it. For an actor to be successful s/he must be disciplined in hir training and in being able to subsume hir own personality to that of the character. Additionally, the actor deals with emotional states and uses them to invoke a character. These skills are useful to the magician who must be comfortable with hir own emotional states and be able to use them to create a sympathetic connection with a person or entity in order to do successful invocation.

The next time you watch a show or a movie and you really like the acting, do some research about the actor. Find out how s/he approached and became that character. Then incorporate hir approaches into your own magical work. Chances are you'll find it to be a useful exercise that'll help you achieve better results with invocation. Rule no possibility out when it comes to getting inspiration for how you do magic.

Technique Two: Aspecting

Another way to get in touch with different perspectives of your identity is through aspecting. I was first introduced to aspecting as a magical act through Lupa's experiment with creating four aspects of her identity that drew on different parts of her personality. She based these aspects off the

Leary-Wilson model of the eight circuits of the brain, as described by Wilson in *Prometheus Rising*. Her four aspects drew on Wilson's observations on the four personalities of transactional analysis. She combined this experimental psychology with animal totemism. Two of her aspects were wolves, one representing hostile weakness and the other friendly weakness. The other two were a cougar representing hostile strength, and a cat that represented friendly strength (Lupa 2007). She used these aspects to explore facets of her identity that she knew existed, but hadn't felt fully comfortable exploring. This allowed her to experiment with different personality traits and get a sense of how those traits fit into her life. She based the animals off of totemic entities that could guide her in creating believable personality aspects that she could use in getting to know herself better. Mace also suggests that the creation of entities based off of alienated behaviors can also be useful for coming to grips with those behavior patterns (Mace 1996). By distancing the behavior from the sense of self, the magician can comfortably deal with it and make peace with it, before integrating it back into himself.

Likewise, in hindsight, I realized that my interaction with different pop culture characters allowed me to explore facets of my personality. I would use the aspects of them to safely explore those personality traits until I felt I could integrate my understanding of those traits into my identity on a conscious level. When I'm playing a game I'll find myself identifying with some of the characters I really like. Later on I'll think of those characters when I'm facing a difficult situation and end up invoking them to draw on the characteristic traits that I feel will help me face the situation. By invoking Guan Yu (the Chinese god of detectives and just wars, but also a character in a video game and actual historical personage) for instance, I could draw on his ability to be a commanding presence. This

allowed me to enhance my own presence, so that I stood out more and had control of the situation.

I use pop culture entities as masks for my aspects. The character provides a familiar face and enough distance from my own personality that I can observe a particular behavior in the character and find similar points of reference in myself. At that point, I use the character to either enhance the behavior pattern or I can banish the behavior into the character. I then banish the character, removing its energy and sustainment of the behavior from me.

Even though the pop culture character is invoked and acts as an aspect there is always a distance between yourself and the entity. Invocation, even when it involves possession, can also involve keeping some level of awareness of your own consciousness. (Though not always. People who are ridden by the loa generally don't remember what happened and there are the occasions with other invocations where a person's consciousness is submerged too.) In the case of the actor Tom Baker, though the persona of Dr. Who had taken over, his core personality was still aware and conscious to some degree.

The most important feature of aspecting is that it allows you to shape your identity through conscious work via invocation of different entities and working with them as aspects of yourself, as you simultaneously call on both the entity *and the corresponding part of yourself*. The entities serve as references for a personality aspect you create, or you interact with them directly. In a psychological model, you make a conscious choice to understand and work with the personality traits of yourself that exist on a subconscious level and bring them to a conscious awareness so that you can determine how they fit into your life. The best way to do aspecting is to determine first what personality traits you want to work with. Then pick an archetype that resonates with those personality traits. Find out as much information as possible about the specific

manifestation of the archetype you work with as well as similar entities (i.e. ones who'd fit the same archetype. As an example Loki and Coyote would both fit the trickster archetype, though in different ways). You may find that one of those entities resonates with you better than your initial choice.

Once you have all the information in hand, it's time to actually work with the entity. Neopagans routinely dress as the deities they invoke during ritual. In fan culture, costumes are used all the time to help the fan become the character s/he wants to be (Lancaster 2001). Therefore you may find costumery to be useful. You might also want other artifacts about the entity on hand, such as pictures, comic books or books on mythology. Also any incense, music, etc. that is associated with the entity is a nice touch. All of these artifacts can help you integrate the identity of the entity into your own identity.

When you treat the entity as a separate being, you'll need to carefully consider how you want this entity to work with you as an aspect. The first invocation is the establishment of the connection you share with the entity and your opportunity to explain what it is you want to do and how you want to do it. You'll want to be respectful, but also firm. You'll work with the entity directly while invoking it, drawing on its personality traits to influence your personality and drawing forth the corresponding parts of yourself. You'll need to identify traits within your personality that correlate with the entity. For instance, if it's a trickster entity, you would want to look at your sense of humor and how it will be impacted by working with the entity. If it's a warrior entity, you might want to examine your current martial skills, or how you handle emotions such as anger, as these can be impacted by the entity. Because you don't want it to have an undue amount of influence over your personality or behavior, you'll have to make sure that the connection can be stopped at any time. I

usually choose to link the invocation to a specific object, so that when I want to aspect I can just wear the object and channel the entity into me, while at the same time retaining enough control to actually appreciate the effects of working with the personality traits I want to discover. When I want to stop working with the entity, I take the object off and the invocation ends.

Once I've worked with the entity long enough to get a sense of how its personality traits mesh with my own, I can create an amalgamation of myself and that entity which becomes my personality aspect. Basically I create a splinter personality which embodies specific behavioral traits, which I can use to help me deal with situations where it's needed, but still provide me some distance from the personality trait until I feel ready to integrate it into me fully. I no longer need to call on an external entity to accomplish this goal, because I'm using the personality aspect I've created. For example, instead of calling on Guan Yu to help me enhance my presence, I would call on a personality aspect inside me that took traits from Guan Yu and melded them into my behavior traits which also embody a commanding presence. By being able to call on and visualize a personality trait that embodied myself, but also had some of the skills that I'd previously perceived I didn't have, I could gradually integrate those skills into my psyche, while still providing myself enough internal space to get fully comfortable with those personality traits.

Identity is a fairly flexible concept. It gets shaped and altered all the time. Who you were one moment ago is different from who you are now. But you can consciously shape your identity and it behooves us all to do so, instead of letting our subconscious impulses rule over us. Invocation, in all of its many forms, is one of the ways we change identity. Most people think of invocation as doing that particular function, but they ignore the reality that invocation necessarily involves allowing your personality

to be compromised with that of another. The questions are what can we learn from that experience and how will we use it to change our identity to get the most out of it?

Technique 3: Breaking the Delusion of Success

The final technique is one based on a brilliant article by Jozef Karika. Karika argues that success in magic creates an abstract form that in turn shapes the identity of the magician:

Through success the magickian can fall into the trap of letting the abstract form of success define him or herself... it can be created by any success achieved (not only) by magickal means. As a consequence of fixating on the results of one's efforts, the surface and borders of the magickian's self-image are formed. After a time these become a limiting influence with a tendency to imprison the magickian within their boundaries (2005, p. 4).

Success can create its own limitations, particularly when a person gets caught up in using that sense of success to define his sense of self. We have all at one time or another taken pride in an accomplishment, only to later have that very success turn into failure. The first successful magical working may make a person feel very powerful and full of himself, until a situation occurs where the magic doesn't work or the situation that was thought to be resolved by magic doesn't quite turn out the way one expected it to. The delusion of success is suddenly shattered as the person realizes that s/he isn't the next big magician of the century.

The shattering of success is also a shattering of the sense of self and the belief system that sense participates in. This is good because while belief can help establish a sense of self, it can also limit that self by excluding other aspects of reality (and personality aspects of the self) that could be quite important to a person's interaction with reality as a

whole. Unfortunately, we are taught to filter and exclude perspectives that may, on the surface, seem to counter how we perceive reality. As long as these perspectives are unexamined and untested, the belief system a person has will lock hir into a tunnel vision of how the world ought to be, while causing the person to ignore potential opportunities that offer a different, but valuable perspective that hir own belief system may not offer (Gallegos 1992, Karika 2005). In other words, keep an open mind, and test your beliefs constantly with other perspectives! This can occur through inadvertent experiences, but we can also do this on purpose by destroying the one belief we always rely on, namely the sense of self we have cultivated for ourselves. For a mindful, conscious shattering of the delusion of the self, Karika suggests invoking a demon to destroy the illusions of success by taking down the boundaries that the results created.

At the beginning of July 2005, I decided to take Karika's concepts and turn them into reality. I invoked the goetic daimon Marchosias, who is known for being a strong fighter and one who I felt would be useful for destroying any delusions of success I believed in (Mathers 1995). My invocation was for a partial possession and was done with the understanding that the possession might last for a while. "A while" ended up being the entire month of July, during which I ended one relationship with a partner, managed to offend a good number of people and also started to confront the fact that graduate school and academia weren't quite the realities that I wanted to be involved in, and any success I felt in them also made me feel very trapped. When Marchosias left, many of the delusions of success that I'd once entertained no longer obscured my perceptions. The rest would be dissolved over the course of a couple years. I was no longer trapped by what I thought of as success and could focus on working magic that wasn't limited by the expectations built up by achieving previous results. In other

words, I no longer had those expectations obstructing me from recognizing new opportunities.

While that's one method of invocation for getting rid of such delusions, there's another approach I created based on some exercises that Bardon developed in his hermetic work (which incidentally are highly useful for mastering the basics of invocation). One of the first exercises that Bardon has a magician do is transfer his consciousness into the exact center of a chosen object, to the point that the magician loses physical awareness of his own body and becomes that physical object, with all of its limitations. He also notes that it's possible to transfer your consciousness to an animal or another human being (which is similar to my technique of invoking yourself into another person). While this initial technique is useful for projecting your consciousness, it doesn't let you shatter the delusions of success (or anything else you need to rid yourself of) in yourself. However a variant technique of his involves placing your consciousness into a mirror image to the point that you feel as if you exist in that mirror image (Bardon 2001a).

When I was much younger, I was fascinated with my image in the mirror. I enjoyed looking into the eyes of the mirror Taylor and imagining myself in that mirror staring back. Sometimes I could swear that I could feel a presence in the mirror version and could see in those eyes a spark of consciousness that was and wasn't me. When I read about Bardon's technique, I realized that I had been doing it for a long time. I now use it sometimes as a way of shattering the delusions of success that I might have. I stare into the eyes in the mirror, projecting my consciousness into them, until I feel my consciousness in two places. The reflection then acts as a jester, pointing out inconsistencies and other issues in my behavior. As this occurs, the mirror also develops (nonphysical) cracks in its appearance. These cracks grow longer and deeper until the mirror version

shatters. With that shattering comes the shattering of the self's belief in successes that limit it. What is left after that shattering is nothing but the raw potential that demands you do more with it than idly dream of your past ventures. The actual shattering releases all of the pent up energy and belief that went into the previous successes. Because that energy is no longer caught in those successes, it can now be used for other endeavors. The magician is no longer trapped by the past, but must face the present and future with only raw potential initially until it is shaped by both external circumstances and internal pressures into what the magician needs to succeed (and yet ironically what might also trap him in those successes).

An alternate approach is to bring up all the negative conditioning you believe about yourself, while having the mirror double refute the criticisms. Every time you say a criticism, the double will point out the inconsistencies of your criticisms. And again, as this occurs the mirror will develop nonphysical cracks, until eventually the energy you've put into the negative conditioning shatters the mirror version and internally shatters the hold of those negative criticisms on your life. At that point, it will be up to you to choose to make a new you, with healthier beliefs about yourself.

Conclusion

I've developed in this chapter an approach to invocation that deals with a thorough analysis of identity and its role in invocation. I do think that identity can be extended even further into other aspects of magic beyond what I've talked about here. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter identity is the agreement a person makes with himself, other people, and reality in general. Precisely because of that, identity is much more malleable than we realize and is only as limited as we allow it to be. Magic provides many

methodologies for changing identity, and consequently changing reality. I'd argue, in fact, that a person's identity is central to what makes magic work or not work for hir. It's also central to the perception of reality in general. And sometimes what defines someone is how hir identity is created to hide and protect the very issues s/he is afraid to face.

Regardless of what identity might be for any person, it is something which is part of the core of everyone. It is sadly not something which has been fully examined in terms of its relationship to the underlying processes of magic. This chapter is only the start of my own work in exploring the concept of identity as it relates to magic and other concepts a person deals with in everyday life. Future writing will deal with the question of identity in even more detail than has occurred in this chapter. In the meantime, I encourage you to take my ideas and expand on them as you will.

Exercises

1 Try out each of the techniques discussed in this chapter. Feel free to vary them as you see fit.

2 How important do you think identity is to the act of magic? Answer this question both before and after you do the exercises in this chapter.

Chapter 11: Clothing, Magic, and Identity

The saying that clothing makes the person may be clichéd, but there's still some truth to it. The way a person dresses can tell you a lot about how attractive s/he feels, and even the attitude s/he has toward hir surroundings. Imagine going into an interview with torn up jeans and a t-shirt. It's

almost a guarantee you won't get the job, because no matter how professional you sound or how good your resume looks, the interviewer will take one look at your clothing and likely think that you aren't serious about getting the job or that you'll be a slacker at work. Dress in a clean suit, on the other hand, with hair tied back or otherwise tamed, and you have a better chance of getting the job. The impression the interviewer will have is that you want to work there, that you're willing to put effort into the interview, and that you'll be professional.

The sad fact is that image does govern a lot of people's perceptions of others, and clothing is an integral part of that perception. In our media saturated culture, we are bombarded with brand-new fashion media that's considered in, even as we are told that last season's fashion is out and destined for the thrift store. Of course, for the average person, there are also the widely varied ideas of what fashion is to contend with. In one social circle slashed up jeans, leather jackets, and t-shirts might be considered in, while baggy pants and misaligned hats are important for another. To fit into most groups, though, it's expected that a person will dress in a certain manner.

But clothing isn't limited to just the clothing racks themselves. In television and movies, we find actors who dress in clothing that fits established stereotypes that the actors embody. The nerd who has goofy glasses and clothing that doesn't quite fit, the farm boy that wears plaid shirts and jeans, or the prep who wears stylish clothing are all archetypes that rely in part on the clothing to denote what they are. In other words, the costume is a symbol that signifies the expected behavior that those roles will fulfill. Additionally a lot of the clothing also denotes the sexiness or attractiveness of the character.

Clothing can be fetishized as well, with an emphasis not only on how a person appears, but also on what the clothing displays or doesn't display of the person's body. It's no

coincidence that some fashion ads focus on the appearance of the clothing as it relates to the person's sex. For example, with many ads for men's clothing the focus is on the washboard stomach, the top button of the pants undone and a picture of muscular arms that demonstrate male strength. Ads for women tend to focus on skin tight clothing that shows off the chest and butt of the woman, and sometimes focuses on the face, but only to highlight jewelry, hair or makeup.

With all of these images of how we should dress, it can be intimidating to actually wear clothing for the purpose of your enjoyment and sense of self-image. One person I know wore warm-up pants and sweaters every day. She felt that any time she dressed up the only purpose was to advertise sexuality, as opposed to feeling comfortable and attractive. Rather than risking unwanted attention, she hid her body under layers of baggy clothing. Her desire to feel attractive was taken away by the cultural emphasis that attractive clothing always denotes sexual receptivity. Obviously, people don't always wear clothing that makes them feel sexy in order to find a one-night-stand, but because our culture emphasizes sex it can create an association in the mind of the person that the only purpose for wearing certain kinds of clothing is to accomplish particular goals (as opposed to wearing clothes for simple enjoyment). Sometimes people who have low self-esteem will wear clothing they think is sexy as a way of marketing their bodies, in order to feel appreciated and wanted. The attention, however, rarely boosts their confidence.

So how do we get over our conditioning and become more comfortable with what we wear and the image it portrays? Magic is a good place to start. In the example above, the person *unconsciously* wore the warm-up clothing as a protective shield against unwanted advances. There's nothing wrong in choosing to wear clothing for a specific purpose, so long as you are conscious of that

purpose. If you wear certain fashion styles, but don't know why you wear them, try and think about the reasons. Ask yourself how you feel when you look at yourself in the clothing. Usually your feelings can tell you a lot about how your attire makes you feel and why you might've chosen to wear a certain outfit.

Dressing the Part

I personally find it useful to have a conscious purpose for wearing clothing, so that I can act on that purpose. In other words, I purposely cast a glamour with my outfit. This involves consciously being aware of why you are wearing the outfit in the first place. You then externalize that conscious choice into the clothing, by visualizing it becoming imbued with the characteristics that you feel embody your choice. What I usually do is project into my aura the reason I'm wearing the clothing and then visualize the aura merging into my attire.

There are a few factors to consider when preparing to do a clothing glamour. The first factor is attitude. What is your attitude toward the clothing you are wearing? Who are you wearing it for? What is your purpose/goal for wearing it and what will it help you accomplish? For instance, if you're wearing a business suit to an interview, you know that your purpose for wearing it is to help you land a job and also look professional. You are wearing it for you, but also for the interviewer. The accomplishment you hope the suit will help you achieve is making a good impression on the interviewer. You want your attitude toward the business suit to reflect these purposes. When you look at your clothing do you feel a good attitude toward the idea of wearing it? If not, why? What would you rather be wearing?

The second factor is comfort. Are you comfortable in the clothes you wear? Comfort is always foremost in my

mind when I choose clothing to wear. I want to feel comfortable and relaxed. I don't want my outfit to distract me because it itches, or is too hot or not warm enough, or is so tight I can't breathe or move. If anything, it should feel like a second skin.

The third factor is attraction, specifically attraction to you. Ideally clothing you wear will make you feel not only comfortable, but attractive, for the sake of feeling attractive (as opposed to just getting laid). I wear clothing that makes me feel good about myself and my appearance. And if I feel good about myself, chances are that other people will notice this and be drawn to me. The principle of attraction, as it applies to clothing, is that you don't seek to please other people first, but rather you please yourself first. When you feel comfortable and attractive in your clothing it's visible to other people. When you feel uncomfortable and unattractive that's also visible.

What I've learned, by keeping these three factors in mind, is that a purposeful choice can make a world of difference in my presentation, appearance, and overall feeling of self-esteem. It's a glamour. When I want to feel protected I visualize my clothing as part of my protection and imprint my aura into it. When I want people to notice me, I also imprint that into my outfit, by visualizing my energy shining on what I'm wearing.

I've been told by some people that I have a unique dress code and that if anyone else tried to pull it off they would fail. I dress in flamboyant colorful flowing shirts, torn up jeans, pantaloons, harem pants, work boots or sandals, and a fedora. This style works for me, but the reason it works involves a few different factors that anyone can use when it comes to casting a clothing glamour.

It's possible that when you first get up the last thing on your mind is what clothing you will wear for the day. You might even throw on anything that's close by and then just head out the door. Or you might plan out your outfit, but

not think about why you're wearing the clothing, beyond meeting the initial practical needs that your choice gives you. The problem is that without consideration of the three factors mentioned above you may not feel as good as you could or make the best impression. A clothing glamour involves those three factors and knowing how you can use your clothing to fulfill the purpose you have in mind for it.

When I get up I consider how I'm feeling emotionally-- am I feeling attractive, bummy, protective, etc.? I then choose clothing that reflects the feeling. For instance when I feel attractive I'll choose pantaloon harem pants or ripped up jeans. I'll choose a colorful shirt that makes me feel sexy. And once I've put the clothes on I'll evaluate how they feel. If they don't feel comfortable they come off, because it'll be obvious to anyone that I feel uncomfortable. Worse, I'll be the one feeling uncomfortable and not really enjoy the experiences the day has to offer me. I'll know I've hit jackpot when I look and feel good about myself.

I then take that feeling and put it into my aura. I basically consider my clothing part of my aura and my feelings as the director of the aura. So when I feel good I'll seem to glow, because my aura is charged with the feelings of comfort and attractiveness I feel about myself. Those feelings are anchored into my clothing. This brings us to a less energy dependent way of working a clothing glamour, through neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

NLP has several concepts that are useful for creating a glamour. Anchoring involves associating an emotion or mind set with something that isn't directly related to it. For instance, you might have a physical gesture that you use and don't even think about, such as putting your hand on your chin. If you wanted, you could associate a state of mind with that gesture, so that every time you did that gesture you would evoke that mental state. But anchoring can be applied to clothing as well.

Are there certain colors you associate with your moods? If so, wearing those clothes will probably bring those moods out. Is there a style of fashion you associate with work, or with having fun? Likely wearing one style or another will condition how you approach a situation, as the clothing will remind you of work or play. What happens as well is that you anchor the associations of work or play or happy emotions with physical features of the clothes. The clothes don't actually have the associations fabricated into them, but because you invest meanings with the associations, you can anchor those meanings into the clothing. In turn when you wear that clothing, you can invoke those meanings into yourself. You can always deliberately evoke a particular feeling for the clothing you wear, changing the anchor at will. Simply choose a different perspective or attitude than you normally adopt with the clothing choices and bring yourself to see the clothing fit that new perspective.

Another NLP technique is called modeling, in which you observe a person's actions, clothing choices, speech and other traits. You can then use these observations to assimilate that person's mannerisms into your own. This can include learning that person's sense of fashion, so that you feel confident in what you wear. Just don't imitate the person to the point where you wear the same types of clothes on the same day, to avoiding being accused of exhibiting creepy stalker behavior.

If you don't want to model yourself off of a person you encounter every day, there's still another way to get what you want out of your clothing. Invoke a spirit of the fashion sense you want for yourself. Find images of people you associate wearing the type of clothing you'd like to wear and try to see if you can imitate that feeling and sense of style. Evoke the clothing sense of the model, by dressing up and modeling yourself in front of a mirror, becoming for a time that model. When you are ready, focus on being a

version of you that is wearing those clothes. Look at yourself again in the mirror. What, if anything, has changed about your appearance? Do you feel as confident as before? If you don't, ask yourself what precisely is different. Try this exercise each day until you get to a point where you're confident and comfortable without needing to draw on the model to make you feel that way.

You can also choose clothing to get a specific reaction out of people. For instance, if you want to be intimidating wear lots of leather and spikes, or go with black clothing. Then gauge people's reactions to your appearance. The next day go with a style that is sensual or with a professional style and again gauge differences. I always found that people were always put off when I dressed in clothing that was opposite of what I'd usually wear. I made it a point to dress in clothing opposite of how people perceived me, for my own enjoyment, but also to see the reactions of people. This practice taught me a lot about how easily people can be stereotyped.

Sometime, as an experiment, try dressing up in different styles of clothing. How does dressing in a different style feel? Do you notice any changes in your mannerisms or behavior? If you do, note what they are and ask yourself why that particular style brings those mannerisms. What does that clothing represent to you? Look at your current wardrobe and then study the wardrobe of your friends. Does the clothing look similar? If it does, as an experiment, dress in a different style for a couple days to observe how your friends and other people react to you. Then switch back to your regular wardrobe and note the responses again. What you will likely find is that clothing, in part, dictates how people respond to you, because they associate certain styles with certain behaviors and cliques.

At the same time, this type of practice can also be useful for personality aspecting, which I discussed in the last chapter. The clothing you wear is often associated with

your personality. For instance, I like to dress in loose, flowing clothing, a lot of it very colorful. More than once my friends have affectionately called me a hippie. But when I had to get a real job, that particular aspect of my personality and the clothing that went with it wasn't going to be helpful if I wanted to land a job that was better than minimum wage. So I decided to do some personality aspecting, calling on an aspect of my identity I hadn't really developed before. I wanted to appear professional and businesslike. To help myself connect to those aspects of my personality, I used business suits, which helped me feel very professional. I certainly looked different and I acted different as well, connected to a part of my personality that was focused on getting a successful job. The professional clothing gave that personality aspect a sense of confidence and a feeling of professional power, which came in handy with job interviews.

Another way to experiment with character aspecting involves working with deities or pop culture personae. For example, if one of the Greek Gods, Athena, was walking around in the modern world, how would she dress and act? What kind of clothing would you associate with her? If you have a patron deity, invoke hir and ask hir to give you an idea of how s/he would dress. In this way you can even find clothing that you can use in ritual to help you work more closely with that deity. After all, the gods want to be stylish too. In the process, however, you can also work on assimilating attributes from those deities that help you draw out aspects of your personality that you want to get to know. Want to be more sensual and attractive, work with Aphrodite or a similar deity. The same principle applies to pop culture personae that you want to work with. Find a celebrity whose clothing style and personality is one you want to emulate and work with that persona in the same way you would with a deity.

You can always create an entity to guide you in buying clothing. Base the entity creation off of what you consider stylish. Make the entity out of some spare clothing and jewelry, perhaps creating a pouch to house the entity. When you go to the mall or the thrift store have the entity direct you to the clothes that'll fit your requirements. Call the entity's name and then let your intuition take over. You can make a name for the entity. Take a sentence such as, "I want to have better fashion sense" and get rid of the repeating letters. The result is WBVRF. It may not seem pronounceable, but chances are you can make a name out of the noises. It may sound a little silly, but the benefit is that the name will be unusual enough that it will stick out in your mind. Take your fashion pouch and go shopping, asking WBVRF to aid you in your clothing search. When you find clothing you want, which it's led you to, thank it and buy the clothing. You might even ask the entity for help finding sales and other good bargains.

Conclusion

The clothing you wear can, in part, dictate how you act as well as how others perceive you. Making your clothing work for you involves learning how to make yourself feel comfortable with who you are no matter what you wear. Finding a sense of style involves finding a sense of comfort in how your clothing reflects your personality. Embrace your own style and let your inner self express itself in your clothing choices. You'll weave a glamour that'll dazzle even yourself!

Chapter 12: The Astral Marriage

The astral plane is usually depicted in terms of duality, of good vs. evil or lower vs. higher planes of existence. (Original article published in *Konton* 1, 2004. Revised with new material.) It's not surprising that dualism is prevalent in how people conceive of the astral plane, when we consider the cultural beliefs that many people have been raised with. Dualism is found in many world mythologies and religious paths. The Christian religion has heaven and hell, while shamanic beliefs have versions of the upper and lower worlds and Norse mythology provides Valhalla and Hel. The following quote is an example of dualism applied to the astral plane:

The astral realm is a spiritual reflection of the physical realm. While much of the realm is identical to the physical realm, the energy resonance of places is tangible in the astral. The infernal realm is a distillation of the negativity and more evil or demonic elements and denizens of reality, many others refer to this realm as the lower astral. The celestial is a realm of ideals, positive energy, and is the repository for most of humanity's higher spiritual aspirations. (Seth 2004, p. 19)

This perspective also maintains that the astral plane is a linear spatial reality, attempting to "place" parts of the astral either lower or higher in relation to each other. The problem with this assumption is that it's primarily based on a cultural perception of what the afterlife might be, with the astral plane representing the gateway to other planes of existence. The various levels and sublevels of the astral plane, where different influences and polarities reside, seem to come more from the cultural imagination than actual reality. In fact the astral plane is a medium shaped by

the information, media, etc., that we project into it. I'd argue that the astral plane isn't so much a gateway to other planes of existence as to the mass human consciousness and how that cultural consciousness perceives spiritual reality. Various attributes are often associated with the astral plane, including the division of the upper and lower planes. The upper plane is connected with guided meditation, lucid dreaming, the common arrival place, and also a place of positive energy. The lower astral planes are places of negative desires, vampiric forces, and nightmares (Nema 2003). The attributes that are listed are ones we all experience. They aren't exclusive to the astral reality, though they could partially be derived from it, if the astral plane is based on the consciousness of people *and* other entities. However, whether the astral plane is seven layers or not and whether it's good on top and bad on bottom is something we need to question critically in order to determine what we can and can't get out of working with the astral.

When I initially experimented with astral projection I did encounter these lower and higher planes of the astral. But after a time I realized that this was just a convenient paradigm created by humans to explain the astral plane. They expected it to have seven layers and to be neatly divided into realms of good or bad influences, so that's what they saw. What was never questioned was whether this depiction of the astral plane was accurate. I began to wonder how an alien or an animal or someone from a different culture might experience the same place. I suspect that what really shapes the astral plane isn't just our consciousness, but also the impact of cultural consciousness which creates this subconscious belief in good vs. evil that has been hammered into us for two-thousand-plus years. (By cultural consciousness I refer not to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, but rather to the concept that each culture shapes the consciousness of

the people in it and those people project that overarching cultural consciousness into the astral plane.)

Nema does make a very important point:

I suggest employing the nature of the astral planes to create a base for yourself, a second temple that echoes and is linked to your physical working/sacred space. This will provide you a refuge from intrusions and a means of directing your attention to the work at hand; it can be a place of rest and recreation, which are important to transformation. (Nema 2003, p. 89)

We can create/shape the astral realm we experience. Now it's true that we will still share this astral realm with other beings (with their perceptions of its reality), but my point here is that the paradigm we apply to it doesn't have to be the dualistic model mentioned above. The astral plane is a very flexible reality that can, to a degree, be shaped by the consciousness of the practitioner. I also suspect that if the majority of the people in the West stopped believing in the dualistic good vs. evil the astral plane would change to reflect the new cultural beliefs that were prevalent.

Other people who practice astral projection have realized this. Sylvan Muldoon is one such example. His approach to astral projection was rigorous and scientific, as opposed to the new age perspective. He acknowledged it could happen and had it happen to him frequently, but he found that the astral plane was different for different people, noting that everything in the astral plane comes from the mind of the projector (Muldoon 1969). The dualistic model espoused by so many people is just that--a model. Approaching dualism as an objective representation simply doesn't reflect the myriad experiences that people have had. Rather, it only reflects the experiences that some people have as a result of applying cultural expectations to

the astral plane, whether consciously or subconsciously. Muldoon aptly points out,

A few mediums claim to have been projected into various planes and sub-planes of the astral world, and give specific information concerning each of the planes and sub-planes. But I have never had a conscious projection when I was not upon the Earth-as much so as I am in the flesh, yet intangible to all Earthly things. Some tell me that I am not ‘developed’ enough; that if I were I should not be in such a condition, when projected. To hear some mediums talk, one would think they were so perfect that, at death, they would at once awaken on the Twentieth Plane! (1969, p. 288).

Muldoon hasn’t had the exact same experiences that some other mediums have had. But these differences don’t invalidate his experiences, or theirs. What they suggest is that people have different concepts of what the astral plane is. We need to be wary of any person who claims to “know” what the astral is or embodies. S/he is, at best, describing hir own model, as well as the social and cultural conditioning s/he’s been raised with. These models may work or even fit into a particular magical system (For instance, Nema’s model fits a Kabalistic paradigm of the astral plane), but they shouldn’t be mistaken as objective reality. Whatever the objective reality of the astral plane is, we experience it through our own subjective perceptions. In a way, we are responsible for creating the astral plane with our thoughts and preconceived notions about reality in general. We need to examine the models we apply to understand how our own motivations and fears are projected into the astral plane. That way when we encounter these projections we can consciously face them and choose to keep them or banish them as needed. I suspect that many of the so-called psychic attacks that occur on the astral plane come from the projector’s

subconscious mind. With conscious realization of that, the projector can dismiss or confront the subconscious issue for what it is and then move on to the original purpose of the projection.

You are responsible for the astral realm you project into (for the most part). By being aware of this you can fashion your own models to project into. In fact, the reason there are so many versions of the guided meditation is that each person can and will likely shape an internal or astral reality with what s/he is interacting with as a paradigm and/or spiritual reality at the time the guided journey is occurring. For instance, my favorite model to project into is a rising spiral of DNA, with access to other planes of existence on each point on the DNA ladder. I find this model the most useful because DNA and genetics currently intrigue me, but also because I think of the universe as a giant DNA helix. Another model I've used in the past has been a hallway of doors to different parts of what I've perceived as the astral. Sometimes this hallway has also led me to explore other planes of existence outside the astral. Again this is a model I've superimposed on the astral planes for my own use. Other people undoubtedly have their own models as well.

A good example of that would be the work of Robert Bruce who argues that the astral planes are a generation of the universal consciousness (1999, p. 365). Yet he also acknowledges that *perception* varies from person to person. We aren't limited to one universal model, but rather the astral realms we experience are ones that we at least in part help to create. Bruce's model for the astral realm is the following:

Astral planes are complex, multilayered, energetically generated dimensional environments with variable perception-based aspects... The way the astral planes and their contents are perceived, experienced, and remembered can be extremely *variable*, depending greatly on the

projector's level of energetic activity at the time of the projection, and on the state of their belief system, their level of consciousness at the time of projection, and the state of their base level of consciousness. (1999, p. 366)

This model factors in variability and in fact encourages a generative approach to astral projection and what is perceived there, as opposed to an arrested approach which limits us to only one paradigm of astral reality. With such variability it's still possible to encounter other people on the astral plane. Sometimes this occurs when the projector focuses on finding a specific person, and occasionally it occurs by accident. Also the medium of guided journeys allows purposeful interaction with people projecting into the "same" environment. Subjective realities bleed into each other forming a collage of beliefs and concepts. The various paradigms and beliefs create in the astral plane various realities that are real for the people who experience and accept them as real. If we allow ourselves to be limited by what others tell us the astral plane is, we choose to accept their subjective realities over our own. But as always a magician can consciously choose to change what is experienced. In the end the astral plane isn't so much about reality as it's about endless possibilities to explore and work with. It's up to each of us to determine just what is useful to believe in when we project.

Only in challenging the limitations of the past can we move forward into the future and keep magic at the forefront of innovation and creativity within not only magical practice, but society in general. The work of the past can be relied upon as a reference, but to solely repeat what others have done is to become trapped in their ideas and concepts. Draw on prior work where it's useful, but critically question it and your acceptance of it as well. Apply this to the astral realm and ask yourself this: What is YOUR model of the astral realm?

Fan Culture and the Astral Planes

Even as we need to challenge and experiment, we also need to recognize the potential shortcomings that occur with working on the astral plane. Just recently I read an account where a woman believed she was married to Sephiroth from *Final Fantasy Seven* (See <http://sephiroth.blogdrive.com/> and <http://mrs-sephiroth.livejournal.com/> for more details.) Another person claimed she was married to Severus Snape from the *Harry Potter* universe. (See http://www.journalfen.net/community/fandom_wank/1015949.html for more details.) In both cases the marriages occurred on the astral plane or through dreams. The people involved didn't have a relationship with another person in everyday life. These aren't the only cases either. There are other cases where people have "married" pop culture characters. In almost each of these cases its characters that exhibit negative behaviors and actions, and seem to feed off of the obsessiveness of the fans. Are these marriages real? Perhaps, perhaps not. As I'll show further down there is a case to be made for having a healthy astral marriage with a pop culture (or other) entity, but in some situations, it's a case of taking an interest to the extreme, to the point that it becomes unhealthy for everyone involved. In such cases the entities seem to insist on monogamy over polyamory and the actual person involved with said entity is obsessed to a point that little else seems to matter to hir, including maintaining relationships (romantic/sexual, or otherwise) with other people in hir life. The pop culture entity that the person's obsessed with is fed power by the belief and devotion of the person. And that's the real danger of this fixation, because when a person fixates on an entity to the point that s/he thinks it's married to hir there's the possibility that the entity is feeding off the person. It's similar to the legend of the succubus or incubus who comes

at night and feeds on its lover, while tantalizing the lover with fantasies.

Sephiroth is a good example of this. He's a vampyric entity that wants to destroy the world and become a god. He may not exist physically in our reality, but the belief in him creates enough energy for him to take form on the astral plane. Now add someone in who believes s/he is married to him and what you get is an entity drawing on that person's life force and at the same time isolating hir from the people who could probably help hir. If it seems far-fetched, just consider that some fan forums are obsessive enough about how their favorite characters are treated that they form cults (as is evident by several different LiveJournal communities devoted to the literal worship of Sephiroth (See

<http://community.livejournal.com/sephyism/806.html> and

<http://community.livejournal.com/sephirothism/profile> for more details. On an aside these communities could be parodies, but it does seem like they take their beliefs fairly seriously.)). In other cases, some fans actually claim that they have become the character or have bonded with the character to the point that the character has an active presence in their lives (See

<http://community.livejournal.com/soulbonding/275290.html?thread=2951770#t2951770>) These fans treat a character such as Sephiroth as an active entity that is also part of their existence, to the point that they sometimes let him encompass their existence. As someone who's invoked pop culture entities, I find it very important to recognize that while it can be a very fulfilling relationship to work with such an entity, it's also important to not let yourself obsess over it. Moderation is key in magic...otherwise you can end up fairly delusional.

Fans are rather unique because their interests in particular stories or characters can sometimes provide enough energy to make what they focus on come to life:

Fans appear to be frighteningly ‘out of control,’ undisciplined and unrepentant rogue readers. Rejecting ‘aesthetic difference,’ fans passionately embrace favored texts and attempt to integrate media representations within their own social experience. (Jenkins 2006b, p. 39)

This integration can be positive and negative. It allows fans to find other people who are part of their subculture and the social experience can even include very spiritual and magic intensive experiences (See appendices 6 & 7 for more details), but it can also lead to such occurrences as the examples mentioned above.

While pop culture can be used as a medium for magical practice, there is the danger of buying into it too much, and this danger is most apparent on the astral plane. As my good friend D. J. Lawrence said, “That’s why I recommend against beginners doing astral stuff. It often just becomes fantasy games” (personal communication, September 7, 2005). The astral plane is a subjective reality, which means that it can take what’s in your imagination and give it form, especially if you don’t have the training needed to control your thought processes. When creating your own model of the astral realm, or for that matter interacting with an entity there, you have to question whether it’s a wishful fantasy or reality or a mixture of the two. The way this can really be tested is found in the effects that such interactions have on the physical plane and I’m not talking about finding love hickies on you after a particularly hot and sweaty astral journey with Sephiroth.

Still, while it’s evident that some of these relationships can be dangerous, it’s also true that others can be healthy, particularly when balanced with relationships with other people and interests in other hobbies, spiritualities, and life in general. The key is to not get obsessed to the point that only the entity matters. A precedent for this can be found in Voodoo. Sometimes the Lwa will demand that a person

marry one of them. That person could already be married to a person, but may still have to also marry the Lwa (and sometimes not just one, but at least several in order to provide balance to the relationships). Additionally, there are definite benefits for both/all participants, rather than the Lwa being a parasite in the life of the human being. When such a marriage occurs, the person has specific days on which s/he is devoted to the Lwa alone, but s/he is not expected to give his entire life to the Lwa-marriage (Filan 2007). While it's not the only religion where marriage to a god or other entity occurs, it's the best-known to Western occultism. This approach can be applied to a pop culture entity.

Let me provide an example of what a healthy astral marriage with an entity can entail. I've worked with the character of Thiede or Aghama quite a lot in the Deharan system of magic created by Storm Constantine. One of the workings I frequently did to contact him is called the gateway ritual. The practitioner astral projects into the astral plane and then rides a spirit beast or Sedim to a palace. In the palace there is a series of mirrors, which act as gateways into the Wraeththu universe. I would usually project myself into that universe and "ride" the body of a Wraeththu so I could interact with Theide.

My workings with this particular god form were focused on an astral marriage with the goal being to create another entity from the union. Over the course of several months I met with Thiede and had what might be considered astral sex, but with the purpose of impregnating the Wraeththu I rode with a pearl or baby. Once this was achieved, my astral workings changed, focusing more on the pregnancy process and eventual birth and hatching of the pearl into a new Dehar, Kiraziel, who became the Dehar of wishes. At this point I began to work with Kiraziel and prepared him for another working I had in mind, which he would help me fulfill. I was and am still married to Thiede to this day and

still set aside time which is specifically for him, but at that time the work with Kiraziel took over a lot of my focus, as is often the case with children.

At this point, you may wonder if I'm deluded. However, you will know something is really occurring in the astral when there is a resonance that occurs in the physical realm. As an example, my workings with Thiede were also driven toward learning more about space/time magic and from him I learned the DNA meditation technique (as detailed in *Space/Time Magic*) that I and others have used with good results. This technique was grounded in the physical world when probabilities evoked via it manifested in the physical realm. Likewise my workings with first Thiede and then Kiraziel would also produce resonance (with them) and manifestation of several desired results into my life.

I created Kiraziel with the specific purpose of granting a wish in my life, in this case to find a magical partner. This occurred on the winter solstice of 2003. Shortly after I created him, I met someone who I thought might be my magical partner, but was not. At first I wondered if I had deluded myself, if the astral projection work had just been a fantasy. But then I considered as well that finding such a partner would not occur on my schedule, but would occur in a time and place that was right for finding the person. In the summer of 2005 I met Lupa, who became my magical partner and wife. About eight weeks into the relationship, Kiraziel visited me and indicated this was the person I'd been looking for and that he considered the wish fulfilled. It was now up to me to follow through on what I wished for.

Granted it was almost two years before this wish came true, but when I consider the time span of the ritual to create Kiraziel, it took approximately just under two months for the working to occur. I think that the time spans correlated with each other, in the sense that one month of ritual work could represent one year in a person's life.

(Note: I should mention that from my personal experiences the time span of a ritual usually is echoed to a greater degree by the time span of the results coming from that ritual. 2 months to do a ritual, 2 years of experiencing the results.) Kiraziel knew that it would take time and effort to find my magical partner. However what really told me that Kiraziel had manifested in my life was a death-rebirth ritual I did shortly after he'd been created. This ritual was focused on inducing a state of near death for several days and then bringing me back to life on the third day. Kiraziel played a role as one of the rebirthers. When the final stage of the working was completed, a witness to it felt his presence very strongly and asked who he was. I explained my previous ritual (which she didn't know about).

It should be borne in mind that I told Kiraziel that I wanted him to find me a magical partner who fit what I was looking for, no matter how long it took. I didn't do other specific rituals afterwards for this purpose, beyond being guided one night in January 2005 to make a collage. Even though that collage was random and unfocused it ironically (or magically) ended up having an unattributed photograph of my magical partner that was printed in a pagan newspaper in it (before I ever met her), as well attributes central to what I was looking for. The guidance I felt was an inspired guidance, a voice that said to make a collage and see what would happen. I made the collage to foretell events in my immediate future, but now I suspect that Kiraziel was working through me to use the collage to help with his search.

Although astral projection can be a useful skill to learn and work with you need to keep yourself grounded and focused on living in this reality. An astral marriage is fine and well, if the purpose is to do more than try to live your dream boat fantasies with the entity in question. In Voodoo, as well as in my example, there are some expectations of

devotion and focus, but there is also an understanding that the entity doesn't overshadow the life of the person.

It's easy to get caught up in the feeling of being loved by such an entity, but if it doesn't exist in the physical realm and is keeping you focused on itself, chances are it's using you as a source of energy. Certainly Sephiroth would have no problem using a person foolish enough to be in love with him as a sort of battery. And as such you should be doubly careful with who or what you choose to work with on the astral plane, because not only are you giving form and life to such a being, you are also inviting it to that place, where it has some power. If that occurs such a being could easily create problems for you. I recommend banishing in the astral plane using your preferred technique (and if you don't have one yet then you probably shouldn't be doing this sort of work!) and then banishing in the physical world, followed up by getting rid of any paraphernalia associated with the entity. For someone in love with Sephiroth this would mean getting rid of any *Final Fantasy* material associated with him. If that seems extreme, just remember that an entity can and will use any vector that allows it to have a connection with you. By getting rid of the physical objects you cut off the connection.

A better route though is to work with such entity in moderation. I don't work with either Thiede or Kiraziel often. My workings with them are occasional, done with respect, but with an awareness that I also need to attend to matters (including my marriage to Lupa) in this world. By moderating the time I spend working with them I can get what I need from my workings and maintain those relationships, but without compromising my life in other ways. Remember to test these workings as well. Look for physical manifestations of the work and make sure it's goal oriented, as opposed to supporting a non-existent love life that becomes the entity's cash cow. Finally, keep your

emotions on a tight rein. Work with the entity, but keep yourself grounded on what you need to accomplish in your everyday life. Remember that the astral plane you work with is your model of that reality and as such can be changed if you so choose. But also remember that because the astral plane is your model of that reality it can become such an ideal model that it sabotages your purpose. (This is similar to the obsession some people can display with online games.) Who wouldn't want to live in an ideal world where everything goes right? On the surface, such a reality in the astral plane might seem ideal, but carefully consider that it could also be a delusion fashioned by your desires, but one that doesn't help you meet those desires. Want someone in your life? Sephiroth might seem like the perfect boyfriend on the astral plane, but it's not like you can introduce him to your friends or family or do any of the other fun things you can do with a person on the physical plane. Whatever astral marriages you have are in the end a combination of the product of your mind and your consciousness interacting with other consciousnesses. Recognize that and you will recognize whether what you are doing is a delusion or a means to an end that can help you manifest what you really need in your life.

Astral Temples

The final thought I have is that the astral plane, and whatever model it is for you, is one that's useful for mapping out your consciousness. An astral temple is an excellent example of this principle. The temple is created on the astral plane by the practitioner. It's a home away from home. You shape the environment with your thoughts, creating a building, which becomes your temple. You also place whatever you feel belongs in that temple. It can have as many rooms as you need it to have, and whatever symbols, statues, or what ever else you feel belongs in the

temple. When you form an astral temple, you might want to ask yourself why you chose some of the symbols and other materials in the temple and if any of it correlates to your perceptions of everyday reality. While the astral temple is primarily used to do magical workings, it's also a gateway to your subconscious. You could even fashion doorways in the temple and use them to access parts of your consciousness that you normally wouldn't interact with. That particular kind of working is useful for meeting with aspects of yourself that you want to integrate into your core personality.

What might even be more useful is using the doorways to access a problematic situation. You may wish to work with someone else and do an astral pathworking. In such a case you would astral project, and have the person read from a script that would help you create a relatively neutral astral reality you could work with. S/he would guide you through a scenario that would allow you to address the problem in a manner that resolved it (Farrell 2004). I've used pathworking techniques to help me overcome subconscious triggers and issues and permanently change the behaviors in a manner that's beneficial. There are other ways to accomplish those goals (as I've covered in *Inner Alchemy*), but this technique is one you can use in the astral plane and a way of healthily exploring its potentials. The person that's with you can always bring you back and ground you afterwards.

The astral plane is what you make of it. Rely on no one model too much, but don't dismiss them either. Even the seven plane dualistic model has its uses, but what really matters is that you recognize that the astral plane is in large part comprised of your subjective experience of it and so while it's useful, it can also be misleading.

Exercises

1 How real is the astral realm? Is it just a state of mind, a shared consciousness, a reality we can easily manipulate, or all of the above?

2 Construct your own model of the astral realm. What will you find when you go there? Who will you meet, if anyone? How will you ground yourself?

Chapter 13: Banishment through Detachment

When the concept of banishing is considered within magic, it's used to indicate a cleansing and/or clearing out of space. This can involve physical objects, but also includes spiritual energies that may have been worked with, but are not part and parcel of you and your environment. Phil Farber's example of a magician doing a banishing is an excellent example of the traditional approach:

Before beginning s/he unplugs the telephone, turns off the television and locks the door. S/he then makes sure that anything contrary or unnecessary to his work is removed from the circle. This may also involve very basic cleaning, sweeping out any dirt or dust, cleaning the floors, walls, ceiling. To our hypothetical magician even the slightest imperfection may disturb the ritual, for you never know what will cause a distraction. (1995, pp.15-16)

This traditional approach does work for some people. When I banish, before and after working magic, I sometimes visualize the energy being cleaned away and will even do some of the things mentioned above. Even the act of cleaning the house is an act of banishment and purification; Lupa, for example, will use the common neopagan technique of sweeping the ritual area with an actual broom to get rid of both physical and energetic dust. Unwanted energy is removed in the act of cleaning, while the desired energy is emphasized.

However, there are times when a different approach to banishment is needed. Sure, you can take the phone off the ringer and physically clean your space, but what if you have some current magical workings in the room you're doing the banishing in? What if you work with an entity and that entity is housed in an object in the room you work magic in? And finally what if you just want to challenge your discipline? There is another way to do banishing...if you're willing to learn detachment.

I have on the walls of my home sigil paintings I've created. These sigil paintings are always being charged and fired by the attention given to them by the residents and visitors. Traditionally sigils are gotten rid of soon after they are created. The energy of the sigil is banished by way of destroying it. At the same time the act of banishing is also the means of getting the energy to work, to manifest the desire. However, I find that sigil workings are intensified, not through a destruction of the sigil, but through the retaining of it and the keeping of it in a place where I see it everyday.

Although some would argue that by seeing the sigil every day I'm preventing the manifestation of the desire, I find that after a couple days I have forgotten the purpose of the sigil. The physical shell of the sigil becomes part of the background and also part of my subconscious. I banish the sigil by detaching myself from the physical reminder of it; it no longer has meaning despite the fact that it continues to exist in a material form. I find that this kind of practice is good for discipline purposes, because if you can learn to block out what is around you and make it meaningless you can work magic under circumstances where you might otherwise easily be distracted and not have the benefit of doing a traditional banishing.

The principle of detachment works through finding no meaning in what's around you. If nothing has meaning to you, then it has no power to affect you. You (temporarily)

detach yourself from the meanings you invest in the physical objects you own, the relationships you have with other people, and in the magical projects you're involved in. Any of these factors could distract you from focusing your mind in order to achieve your goal. When you banish through detachment, the distractions might still exist, but you ignore them through a focused application of the mind, where everything around you ceases to have meaning. This is an effective way of disciplining yourself when doing magic and also realizing that meaning is a constructed reality as opposed to an inherent reality.

I also approach banishing through the concept of zeroing. This discipline of banishing involves a high level of discipline. To become something you first have to choose not to become something else, which means that you have to banish from yourself every other possible thing you could be, so you can focus on the matter at hand (Gray 1980). You don't necessarily have to use the traditional approach of banishing to do that. For example, you might not have the time to physically clear everything out. Instead you must focus on what you wish to work with and block out everything else, making it part of the background, as opposed to being relevant to your reality. Although everything else is in the background it doesn't exist for you. Your focus is on is the magical act instead.

To develop this ability to detach ourselves, we want to do an exercise with our senses. Because it's our senses that bring us stimuli and information, we must first learn to quiet them, so we can focus our energy elsewhere. It's best to do this exercise in a highly distracting setting. If you can banish all the distractions in such a setting then your home or wherever you work magic will be a breeze in comparison. And believe it or not, you probably have done this kind of banishment before; you just may not have realized it. If you've ever found yourself really engaged by a T.V. program you watched, or a book you read, to the

point that nothing else seemed to matter, you've banished all other reality except for what you were engaged in.

I recommend some place outdoors where there's a lot of activity, such as a plaza in a city or a mall. Regardless of where you go, what you want to do is focus on one of the five senses, blocking the other senses out. For instance, touch everything around you and really feel the texture; ignore everything you see, hear, smell, and taste (other than what you need to avoid, say, walking into a tree). The idea is to learn how to focus your attention on one specific sensation, while detaching yourself from the rest. If you get distracted, start over. If you feel self-conscious about doing this activity, remember that detaching yourself doesn't just include physical sensations, but also emotion. Examine why you feel self-conscious and then detach yourself from that feeling.

Another way to do this exercise is to pick an object and look at it as intently as possible. Begin writing about that object, describing it in as much detail as you can. Again the key is to focus to the point where nothing meaningful exists but that object. If something distracts you, bring your attention back to the object and start over. By learning to focus like this, you discipline your mind and at the same time banish what is around you by choosing not to regard it as meaningful.

Starting this exercise with some physical stresses can help you achieve an awareness of how your body can distract you through sensation. The key to taming the mind is found through taming the body. Once you've mastered focusing on a physical level, apply the detachment principle to the mental level. Detach yourself from the physical sensations you are feeling and focus on a concept you desire to bring into reality. Visualize the concept in concrete terms. How will this concept manifest into reality? How do you fit into this concept? Ignore any stray thoughts, focusing only on becoming the concept you wish

to manifest. Everything else does not exist. All that does exist in this moment of manifestation is you and the concept you seek to bring forth.

This exercise is somewhat similar to some of Bardón's work I mentioned earlier, where he has the magician focus on projecting himself into an object. The goal is to shift the consciousness into the object and experience reality through its filter while detaching yourself from the awareness of your body (Bardón 2001a). Bardón's exercises are excellent supplementary material to the exercises mentioned here because they show the magician how to control his consciousness, one of the hardest tasks of magic and also one of the most important.

Another thing to remember about detaching yourself is that it does require discipline. I favor discipline in my approaches to magic, because learning how to focus and concentrate under any circumstance allows me to be on top of any situation I'm in. Discipline is essential for organizing how you approach life and deal with situations. A lack of discipline will defeat you every time, whereas having it will help you concentrate on what is and isn't important to each situation you're in. By learning how to detach myself from what is distracting me, I can negate any power the distraction has on me, and in fact take that power and add it to the focused manifestation desired. Once the meaning is taken from something, I also channel its energy into whatever is currently relevant to my efforts.

Sometimes you may find that the traditional approach to banishing won't work because of the environment. For instance, how do you banish a pesky co-worker? I've found that by learning to detach myself, learning to no longer put meaning into the co-worker, that the situation changes. The co-worker is banished, becoming part of the scenery, and I'm free to focus on more important matters.

Continued work with detachment doesn't lead to less of an interest in what's occurring around you. The most

important thing to remember about this type of banishing is that you determine the meaning of everything in your life. It's up to you to decide the degree of importance that a person, object, event, etc. has in your life. Just remember not to get stuck in a detached perspective. It can be easy to stay detached, because you're focused so much on a particular goal. When I'm focused on magic, nothing else matters, but once I'm done with the magical act I re-invest meaning in what matters to me, the people in my life and what I enjoy doing when I'm not practicing magic. I imagine color coming back into everything around me, which in turn brings back the meanings I associate with everything.

The goal of banishing is not merely to remove distracting influences, but also to help center you so that your efforts can be directed toward what you seek. Clear out the distractions from your life and you will find that you can accomplish anything and meet any problem head on in a successful manner.

Exercises

1 Try out the technique discussed in this chapter. If you have difficulties with it, try to determine what the difficulties were. Was it a sound? Or a smell? When you feel you're proficient with this technique, try it with the radio and television on in the background.

Conclusion

At the end of the first chapter I asked you to make a list of media you interact with every day, and to determine if the interactions you had with those forms of media were passive or active. Finally, I asked you to think about how

you could combine and use those different forms of media to practice magic. I'd like you to look at your answers again. Would you change your responses now? Do you think of media any differently than before? How about your magical practice?

My hope is that your answer is yes. I hope, more importantly, that I've inspired you to do some experiments of your own, to develop some new approaches using multi-media that I didn't cover. There's a lot of potential waiting in the combination of media and magic. While I believe that this book takes at least some of the principles of pop culture magic a step further, expanding into multi-media itself, it still can only provide one person's perspective on media and magic. I've provided my perspective and my examples of media and magic. (And remember that the examples are just examples. If you didn't like my examples, I challenge you to come up with some of your own.) Certainly, I don't currently have some of the technological skills that I believe would be necessary to take media magic workings to some impressive heights. Maybe I'll get those skills someday and maybe not. There is only so much time, and I have so much I want to do, but whether I'll get to all of it...well if I don't I hope someone else will.

My challenge to you, dear reader, is to become that someone that writes about his own experiments with these concepts and develops new theoretical and practical work. In the last couple of years, I've been heartened to see some new, quality intermediate to advanced occult literature being written. I hope to continue seeing a lot more, as time goes on.

I also hope that I've gotten you to consider carefully how you define magic. I hope you don't go with my definitions, or anyone else's, without testing the veracity of them as they apply to you and your work. No definition is completely accurate, and by testing a definition, you can

learn quite a lot about how you really understand and work with magic.

My own work continues apace, but I've come to a point where I need to let it steep for a while. There's so much to explore, but it all deserves some depth, some fine tuned appreciation of what it can offer. Quality is more important than quantity.

I leave you with some appendices to read that further discuss forms of media that may be used in magical practice, and also the thought that no matter where your journey takes you, as long as it brings you happiness and joy, friendships and love, and satisfaction with who you want to be and what you want to be doing...all of that is the most profound form of magic there is. Blessings to you on your journey, and may we meet again soon!

Taylor Ellwood
Portland, OR October 2007

Appendix 1: The Ley Line of the Roads

When most people mention ley lines, they usually think of natural lines of power that connect reservoirs of natural energy, known as power spots, to each other. These ley lines act as spiritual roads for the energy within the Earth. Both animals and people will gravitate toward the pathway of that energy. But rarely are the streets or highways you drive on, or the sidewalks you walk on, considered potential ley lines. These roads and sidewalks are made by humans, and don't complement nature. Instead they impose humanity's will on it. Yet that very imposition can't keep nature from eventually reclaiming what has been taken (as evidenced by grass that will opportunistically sprout in any

sidewalk crack). At best, the imposition can only create a temporary pattern of existence and energy.

All the same such patterns have intent and power behind them. That intention leaves its own mark on the energy field of the Earth. Consequently what is created is a network of ley lines that is used by all the human traffic. Penczak aptly notes: “All pathways, whether natural paths or man-made are usually conductors of energy” (2001, p. 183). The intent to travel, to go to work, or somewhere fun leaves an imprint on the roads and sidewalks, creating a network that you can use, provided you recognize that these paths of energy exist.

I recently realized they existed when I decided to do an exercise. I walked on a sidewalk with my eyes closed, because I wondered what it was like to be blind. I must admit it was hard to keep my eyes closed. But I managed it and I slowly walked, uncertain of where I was going or what I might run into. At first, physically all I felt was the wind. I heard more sound than usual, but nothing seemed different. Suddenly I felt the energy of the walkway. I felt it rise up and constrain me. When I opened my eyes, I saw that I had almost stepped into the grass.

I centered myself on the sidewalk and closed my eyes again and started walking. A few moments later, I again encountered a feeling of a wall of energy, and once again found myself very close to the grass. I decided at that point to try another experiment. I stepped over to the grass and closed my eyes and focused on feeling the grass. The energy for the grass was wild, with strands reaching up and caressing me. I stepped back to the sidewalk and again closed my eyes, focusing on feeling the energy from it. I noted that the energy was smooth, circular and concentrated on the path, unlike the wildness of the grass. I stepped in and out of the sidewalk several times and noted these sensations each time. Finally I positioned myself so that half my body was on the sidewalk and half was on the

grass. I noticed a difference in the sensations of energy I was receiving from the grass as opposed to the sidewalk. The grassy side had feral energy and the sidewalk was a smooth progression of cylindrical energy, which was more focused and filled with intent. That intent wasn't something I had ever realized on a conscious level. I doubt most people realize that the roads and sidewalks are filled with intent. Yet it had always been there, driving the energy of the sidewalk into networks of connection and direction, establishing a ley line grid of the human need to go places.

I think we actually do notice the difference between natural and wild energy, but we block it out. We never really question why we stick to the sidewalk, as opposed to just walking on the grass, even when the weather is good. It was only when I had my eyes closed, and consequently was blocking out a lot of visual information, that my other senses (including the psychic) were sharpened. Just as our physical senses can improve if one sense is not being used, so can the psychic equivalent of those senses be improved. When my eyes were closed and I was focused on feeling the ground, my attention was on both the physical and energetic sensations. I could feel how the sidewalk tried to keep me contained within its boundaries. A part of its task, the meaning that lies within a sidewalk, is that it provides passage for the person and the intent of that person to journey somewhere. The intent to journey creates a path of power to the places that are meaningful in the life of the person. The places that have meaning are the places that are power spots.

Your home is an example of a power spot. Within it are the majority of physical artifacts and objects you associate with your life. Your home is your haven, a place where you are presumably safe from the world at large. It is also the place which contains many of your memories as well as your spiritual energy. You could even call it a temple to yourself. The sidewalk that takes you to your home or

anywhere else is the ley line that connects you to the world and all those other places that you invest your time and energy in.

The sidewalk isn't the only kind of constructed ley line. The roads we drive are also ley lines that take us to the power spots in the web of life we inhabit. I travel a lot on the road and because I drive for long hours I've found it useful to think of the highways as ley lines, similar to the sidewalks. The ley lines of the roads even have a contemporary goddess associated with them, Asphaultia. She's not a pop culture icon, but she is an entity created as a result of the use of the roads. I've never worked with her myself, but other people have evoked her, asking her to provide safe journeys wherever they go. I've come up with a different solution, which is more personal but has worked effectively.

The average driver on the highway, even if speeding, will certainly see a speed limit sign and on some level acknowledge it. When cops are spotted, every car on the highway seems to slow down, even if the driver is already driving in the speed limit. The slowdown is both an acknowledgment and feeding of the cop's power to pull you over and give you a ticket, or search your car. My response has been addressing this situation in a way that's more favorable to the driver, as opposed to the cop.

I've created an entity named Sped Limt, which I use for several purposes. Sped Limt keeps me aware of speed limits, and at the same time enhances my intuition when it comes to spotting cop cars. Cop cars have a natural chameleonic presence on the highway, hiding, ready to roar onto the road as mighty predators that hunt down hapless speeders who are in too much of a hurry to focus on arriving safely at the destination of choice. Sped Limt shreds their chameleonic presence, revealing them to all, so that people can avoid being caught and ticketed.

Ironically, Sped Limt's very function is to ensure that I'm driving around the proper speed limit. But for Sped Limt to function it needs to feed. The source of energy it feeds on is the cop cars that enforce the speed limit and any other government vehicles such as ambulances and fire trucks that can affect road conditions. Speed limit signs are also fed on, but they serve an additional purpose as silent reminders of the expected behavior on the highway. Sped Limt ensures that the driver is consciously aware of the speed limit signs and the actual speed s/he is driving. The purpose of Sped Limt is to take the cop's power away, and subvert it, so that the driver benefits from the very energy the cop both projects and feeds off of, namely the energy of driving an expected speed. I house my Sped Limt entity in a dragon amulet that hangs on my rear view mirror. When I see a cop car, I briefly touch the talisman and thank Sped Limt.

The results I have noted since I made Sped Limt have been very pleasing. Whenever I start to speed too much, Sped Limt pulls my attention to the speedometer or to a speed limit sign. I also have a much higher awareness of where cops are hiding. Sped Limt has upped the potency of the psychic radar, so that as I drive I'll feel an intuitive urge to look ahead and slightly to the left or right and will consequently spot the cop car, usually well hidden, but easy to see with a bit of magic. Even as Sped Limt feeds off the recognition of a cop car, it also takes away the power of the cop which is the ability to hide in plain sight, and cloaks my car in that power. An entity like Sped Limt is also created specifically to surf and navigate through the ley lines and can impart that ability on the consciousness of the driver.

Besides being able to spot cop cars, I've noted that I've had an uncanny awareness of the dangers of the road. I've been able to avoid a lot of construction areas and traffic jams, finding the best possible path to drive. Construction

on any road, while ultimately improving the energy of the road, is a temporary bottling up of flow of the ley line. Traffic jams are less beneficial, but also a much more temporary blockage of the ley line energy. But neither construction nor traffic jams have to stop you from reaching your destination in a timely fashion. For instance, if you receive an intuition that it might be better to change routes, chances are that the road entity of your choice is notifying you of construction or an accident scene (or possibility) further ahead. These entities are able to read the energy of the ley line highway and know where that energy is disrupted. Usually, when a person drives, s/he is able to achieve a state of no-mind (a meditative state of consciousness) and consequently is more open to subconscious or intuitive communication. The driver zones into the energy of the road, which allows him to meld his consciousness to the entity's consciousness. Whenever I ignore the intuitive urges that Speed Limit imparts I always get stuck in traffic, but when I listen to him I always get home at a decent time.

This melding can be enhanced through the very vehicle you use to navigate the ley line energy of the roads. The vehicle has a presence of its own, but it must be directed by you. Have you ever noticed when you're driving that you can "feel" the road beneath you, as if you were actually the car? If you've had that feeling before, it's likely that you've merged your energy with the car. This isn't as far fetched as it seems. Look at the front of a car sometime. Notice how the car has head lights, which function as eyes. Notice how the bumper of the car could be a mouth. If you notice these features and put a face to the car, you are anthropomorphizing the car, which in turn gives it an identity of sorts. This is why people give their cars genders or names. The very act of doing that personifies the car.

Once the car is personified, every time you turn the ignition and put your hands on the wheel, you interface

with the consciousness of the entity that inhabits your car. When it seems that you feel the road as you drive, it's due to this relationship you've created. The benefit of such a relationship is that it allows you to connect to the ley line of the roads. That energy can be used by you to insure a safe journey or to create a power spot grid where you live.

When I drive, I often feel as if I'm not driving on asphalt but a wave of energy built by human intent. Each city, village, home, or business is a power spot along a grid of streets that hum with the electricity of intent, the need to go somewhere, to meet some need. That energy can be mined by you. You drive on specific roads, specific routes to fulfill your intentions. The car directs the energy of the ley line to manifest the safe arrival to your goal. You can also use that car to channel the ley line energy and build it into a specific pattern, which feeds the power spots that you create and use as storehouses of energy. The roads already connect to a lot of power spots, the places where people live and work. The work you have to do is personalize some of those power spots. Your home is the best place to start. It's the place you reside and already has a lot of your personal effects. David Blank notes, "The sorcerer will have numerous sites that are *places of power* or *power points*; however the lair is a special case for it is the feral sorcerer's *earth*, their *ground*, the *burial plot*...the *nexus*. It is the centre of the spider's web and is connected with all those other places of power or power points that the sorcerer has identified [*italics are his*]" (2007, p. 17). Your home is your center of power.

I'll usually put together a sigil that represents my desire to turn my home into a personal power spot. I'll vibrate the sigil, and/or paint the sigil on my walls. I'll sometimes use a personal fluid, such as saliva, as well to enhance the working. The sigil sets the intent of the energy of the place. It becomes a protected environment, but also a reservoir of energy that can be drawn on. The best aspect about this

creation of a power spot is that it draws its power through the memories in the place and the direction of intent. The more you live in a place, the more powered up the reservoir becomes. And the more magic you do, the more you feed into the power spot, creating a cycle where ultimately no energy is wasted.

It gets a little trickier picking out power spots for your grid, when they aren't your home. You can share power spots with other magicians, using each other's homes, as the network. The problem though is that you also have to trust each person. If even one person is not to be trusted, it's better not to create a power spot network with the group. That one person could create a lot of tension and problems in the power structure, not to mention pollute the energy in your home.

The other solution is to create your network around the different public buildings and parks that people frequent. While these places don't have as much personal energy or resonance for you, they are frequented by people every day and accumulate the intention of those people. Naturally that intension can be transformed into raw energy, minus any negativity. Again, I use sigils for this kind of work and usually I'll use spit for these sigils, something which won't be very noticeable and dries fast. If it's a public building I'll go in the evening, or if during the day, I'll go somewhere I won't be noticed. If it's a park, most people won't notice anyway. The power supply for the power spot is again based off memories and intension. The occasional magical working helps as well, but again be cautious and careful. Your workplace can also be made into a power spot, and the advantage there is that you do live at your workplace for a good part of the day so there is more resonance there.

Another approach you can use, if you don't want to use sigils, is to actually create physical altars at different locations in your city. Several members of Portland

Occulture set up an altar by a graveyard, with various personal effects, and then left the altar. Some people came and took some of the objects, but often left something else behind. (See http://community.livejournal.com/occult_portland/76668.html#cutid1 for more details.) Collages can also be used as altars of sort, albeit two dimensional altars. I created a collage altar to Portland, to use as a way of getting in touch with the spirit of Portland, while also providing a map of the power spots I wanted to work with. Because Portland has a variety of different local magazines and newsletters, it was possible to get material from those different newsletters and tap into the spirit of Portland overall. This helped me get a better feel for the area so that I could set up my ley line and power spot network.

Once you have your power spot network set up, learn as many routes to the different spots as you can. Walk and drive on the routes, get a feel for the ley line energy and once you have that feel connect it to your power spots. You connect the ley line to your power spots by tuning yourself into the energy of the road. Visualize the energy of the road merging into each of your power spots. You should feel a click, a surge of energy that runs through you when you do this successfully (I say click because that's the best way I can describe it). Once your power spots are connected they will also draw energy from the ley lines to power themselves.

The best aspect about this technique is that you can extend your grid beyond your local area. Use the highway as a ley line and go to another city and set up some power spots. Even though you don't reside there, those power spots will still accumulate energy for you and can be used and directed by you in magical workings. Also such workings can allow you to create a sigil out of the streets and indeed the cities or even roadways of a nation(s). Penczak, as an example, creates sigils out of city roads, by

using maps: “Start by getting a map of the city where you live...Once you have the map, pick places and streets strongly associated with your goal. Decide your intention and, instead of reducing it to simple letters, reduce it to points on the map. Once you have decided what parts of the city can aid you, connect them” (2001, p. 183). The connection creates a sigil or power spot grid. You don’t even have to just use a map of a city. Use a map of a state or a country. Trace the routes you need to travel on and create a ley line network that stretches from state to state or country to country. You can use those ley lines to also insure safe travel for yourself. I know that I feel much safer on a road that actually is connected to my network, because I’m able to tap into my energy reservoirs anytime I need extra energy.

Another technique that can tap into the ley line and power spot structure that you’ve built was introduced by Jason Fenderson in a response to a rough draft of this article:

I experimented last year with using activity at an intersection as a means of divination. The first intersection I came to each day would indicate how that day would go, by giving me signs to interpret. For example, if the light changed so that I didn’t have to wait or even slow down before crossing, the day would hold few problems or obstacles. If the drivers seemed to be especially impatient that day, I would watch for that behaviour in people around me. One could take this idea so far as to read the types of vehicles, the colors of vehicles, or apply numerology to license plates. (personal communication, July 3, 2005)

This approach to using the lights and/or vehicles as a system of divination is another way of tapping into the ley line energy. When you create a grid in your city you are connecting your energy to it and so it’s not unreasonable to

think that the status of the ley line will reflect the status of your own energy and/or potential situations that you could face. If you narrowly avoid getting hit by a car, pay attention to your own behavior in other situations and see if there are any other patterns of near misses for that day. If the lights turn red frequently as you drive, you don't necessarily need to expect that you'll have obstacles in your way that day, but be on the look out for patterns that could lead to them; once you recognize the patterns change them, not so much in the ley line, but in the energy of the place you happen to be at. Because you are attuned to the ley lines and power spots, this is easily done in several ways. First you can ground yourself. Although you might not be able to do a full-fledged banishing ritual at your office, you can nonetheless come up with a quick mantra to say, or if you have your office set up as a power spot draw on the energy there to calm you and smooth the energy out around you. Second, you can take the energy of your environment and shape it so that when you have encounters with people in the workplace, the aggressiveness of their energy is toned. Basically you make the energy in your workplace "friendly." Because the energy in the workplace is a power spot for you, it's easy to draw out specific concepts and characteristics such as friendliness or cooperation. Imprinting those concepts into the energy and allow it to circulate. In this manner you can change the pattern that you divined for the day toward something more positive.

What is most important is how you choose to use the resources you have around you. The streets and sidewalks are a resource brimming with energy. The buildings and parks, the homes and workplaces all have energy waiting to be worked with. Go out there and embrace the city. It will surely offer you something in return.

Appendix Two: Citational Pop Magic

One of the aspects about the occult writing industry that often puzzles me is the lack of internal citations. There's usually a bibliography in the back of each book, but in the actual text there are rarely any internal citations to show how the author has drawn on the material from the bibliography. Instead the reader finds a book where the author is essentially claiming all the ideas for hir own, and in a way is essentially plagiarizing the works of other authors that s/he draws from. The bibliography is a token gesture; all the references are placed in the back of the book where few readers will likely bother to look at them. If a person does decide to look at the bibliography to get an idea of where the author got hir ideas from the problem that's encountered is that without the specific internal cite reference, the person has to buy every book on the list to find out where the author got hir ideas from. Not everyone can afford to do this, nor does everyone want to.

In my own writing, I prefer to quote authors and use internal citations to show readers where I've gotten my work from. It's important to note that if you go down this route, you need to know copyright law and what it entails. Depending on how much material you quote and how relevant it is to the work you quote from you may need to request permission from the publisher, and will possibly have to pay a fee in order to use the quote. I know one well known author who actually had to get permission from one of his previous publishers to quote material from his own book. (It strikes me as both ironic and sad that someone had to get permission to quote his own work.) Personally, if I think I could end up quoting that much material, I'll paraphrase instead and still cite the author at the end of the paraphrase. When quoting, I prefer to use brief quotes that I believe would belong in what is termed "fair use" which is

a section of copyright law that stipulates that you don't need to get permission if you quote only a small amount of material. Even in that case, though the purpose for the quote, the amount quoted, the nature of the work (i.e. if its non-fiction or fiction), and the impact that your work has on the work you quoted are factors to consider. I personally believe that it's important to uphold fair use, because it can encourage both artistic development and scholarly work. I tend to focus on the latter use, as a way of providing readers a means of understanding how previous work has informed my own work. (<http://copyright.iupui.edu/> is a useful site for learning more about copyright law and issues.)

Besides the copyright issues there is also the ethical issue of plagiarism, an issue that both publishers and writers should be held accountable to. In my opinion, the publishers should enforce and demand that an in-text citational style be used by writers who draw on sources, and at the same time the writers should be ethically responsible enough to put the in-text citations in. There is no excuse for laziness on the part of any writer who draws on the ideas of other people. There is no recommended style of citation as yet for occult works. I prefer to use APA citation, but that's a result of my academic schooling.

Ironically the choice to not do in-text citations not only detracts from the credibility of the writers and publishers, but also cuts down on potential sales. If I put a quote in here and you find the concepts in the quote intriguing, you might actually consider buying the book I cited. If I don't, and claim the idea as my own, you might see the book referenced in the bibliography, but with no in-text citation, you'll have no reference or reason to even consider exploring the ideas within that book further.

Besides the publishing and writing issues, however, there is a magical side to using citations that most people never even consider. Using citations can be a form of

literary necromancy, when you cite the works of authors who are dead. It's also a form of contemporary magic when you cite a living author. Let's consider each of these ideas separately.

When you're citing an occult book, you're investing in the ideas and concepts that went into it. You put more life into the concepts that the book embodies, and to some degree into the persona of the author. The persona is a construct, not quite the actual person, but having an existence of its own. Yes, I'm a real human being, but I also have an author persona that people imagine when they think of me in context to my writing. Whether it's accurate to the real me or not, this persona exists and it's to that persona that the attention, the fandom and interest of people (all of it energy) goes. This process still continues even for a writer who is no longer contemporary (or alive). So long as a book is owned, read, and even glanced through, some energy is going to the book and author. And when that work is cited, awareness is brought to the reader and consequent potential interest arises that can be directed toward the cited source.

Likewise a form of literary necromancy is performed in the case of authors that are dead. Though these authors are dead, the books they wrote and indeed the personae of the authors live on and can be invoked, to be worked with. I frequently invoke such authors when I start to write a book, to show respect to them, but also to draw inspiration from them. Every citation of a book by a dead author is an energy gateway to the ideas of that author and indeed an offering to hir that hir ideas will be respected and drawn upon and that people might buy hir works to further honor them.

By extension, in taking this perspective and invoking the different authors you choose to cite, you are also getting their blessings, which in turn can help you improve your ability to write. It may even help you with the presentations

you make, if you do workshops, as again you're drawing on their blessings. Even if you disagree with their ideas, by citing other writers, you essentially are not only giving them credit, but also making sure other people acknowledge their work. Usually my invocations involve taking a bit of text by the author that I'm citing and saying at the end that I invoke [name of author]'s blessing on my writing that it might draw attention to his works as well as my own writing. This seems to work and is respectful to the author.

However you can make this more elaborate, right up to making an altar to the author, with a picture, copies of his book (autographed copies are even better), and any other relevant information you think will help with the blessing of the author. I use my book cases as altars, since that taps into their purpose of holding the books. While writing a book, use the book case as an altar and when invoking the writer you can even leave out some food and wine.

Using in-text citations is in and of itself a magical act, and with the invocation becomes even more so such an act. As writers, we stand to lose nothing by acknowledging the shoulders we stand on and can even get some magical aide. As readers we learn more about where a given author is getting his ideas from, specifically, and this can be used by us to learn more about a given subject.

On the other hand, not using internal citations disrespects the author you drew the ideas from and also disrespects the writing industry you're in. You're pissing in your own drinking water when you don't responsibly cite another author. To apply this principle to magic, by not citing an author, you corrupt the energy you put into the writing, harming your own efforts and the efforts of others.

It's important to use citations, regardless of whether you perceive the use of them to be magical or just important for literary purposes. It's your responsibility as a writer (if you write) to acknowledge where you got your ideas from. To

not do so is an act of theft and as such taints the energy of your writings, stains your name, and also does dishonor to occultism. While we should never take ourselves too seriously, we should make the effort to respect the work of others. It's my hope that more authors will use internal citations or footnotes so that interested readers can benefit fully from the effort of their work.

Appendix Three: Push Pin Sigil Magic and Thumbtack Tattwas

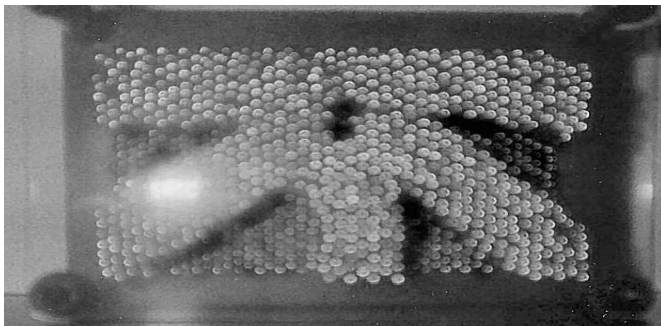
A few years ago I received a pushpin container for a holiday present. I'm always on the lookout for technology and toys that can be put to different uses than what they are intended for. You can get these containers at Spencer's Gifts and likely at any equivalent novelty shop. With this pushpin container, you can push your fingers or your face into the pushpins and when you look on the other side you'll see the shape and contours of fingers or face. You can also use this device with objects. Put it on a video game controller so that an impression of the controller is created, for example. This device is mainly intended for entertainment, but as with any device it's entirely possible to use it for magical purposes.

You can create symbols using the pushpins utilizing fingers, but also other tools such as pens, brushes, erasers, video game controllers, etc.; any object small enough to make an impression. The goal, though, is not just to create an impression, but to make sure it stays. If you set the pushpin device upright, the impressions that are made will stay. They only disappear when you put the device on its front or back.

I create sigils with the pushpin container. For instance, I formed my signature sigil of a T/psychic cross by first

placing one finger at the top of the push pin device, creating an indentation of the first cross bar of the T. Then I created the stem of the T and additional cross bars with the finger. If you wanted to form a curve, you would need to use your finger tip, pushing up one spot and then a spot diagonal to it, so the curve can be formed.

You might wonder if it's worth it to use the pushpin device to make sigils, but the benefit is that if you mess up making the sigil, you can simply put the pushpin device on its front or back and start over again. Additionally the act of making the sigil, carefully putting the finger or tool on the pins to form a specific shape, is a good way of charging the sigil you're creating. Visualize the end of your finger or tool encased in energy that goes into the pins. When the shape is fully made the sigil is charged. It can be charged further by leaving it out for other people to see. Attention is a form of energy and when they look at the sigil they'll be charging it for you. When you wish to fire the sigil simply put the pushpin device on its front or back. The pins will go back into a uniform position. The energy will be pushed outward as the shape no longer exists to sustain the energy. Instead the sigil will be fired off to manifest the new reality you seek to create. You don't need to destroy the sigil by burning it. You've done that by simply getting rid of the shape when you pushed the push pin box on its front or back.



Thumbtacks are another way you can work sigil magic. (Penczak also makes a brief reference to using thumbtacks in his book *City Magic*, but my technique was derived independently of his work.) You just need a wall that you're not particularly attached to and some of those multicolored thumbtacks. The colors can be useful if you want to associate each with a particular meaning, or if you use them to create a symbol such as an Indian tattva, with alternating colors. You can use the symbol to connect with elemental energies or as a meditational aide. Stare at the pattern you've created on the wall; by focusing and unfocusing your eyes you'll cause the patterns to become a 3D optical illusion. This is useful for meditational purposes as it stimulates an altered state of consciousness.

Depending on how long you want to work with the tattva, you can keep the symbol for months or even years. You can even create all of the tattvas on different walls in a specific room so that you can work with all of the elemental energies, moving from one to the other whenever you choose to. You want to create the symbol as large as possible as well, maybe even encompassing the entire wall. The alternating colors can easily be created by choosing two colors of thumbtacks. When you want to meditate or do elemental magical workings you can simply use the symbol to access the elemental energy. Also, because each wall becomes a portal to a different elemental energy, you can store up that elemental energy for specific purposes. Naturally you should make sure that the portal created by the tacks is closed when not working with the tattva. I'll usually take some of the center tacks out of the wall, enough to turn off the portal of elemental energy the tattva creates and restore the tacks when I wish to work with it again.

The thumbtacks can also be used to create the sigil that summons an entity such as a Goetic demon or an angel, or for creating an entity of your own. The tacks make the sigil

and act as a physical house for the entity itself. With this technique it's best to create a sigil you'll work with for a while. However the one problem you might have with that is the pattern of holes that is left over after you've finished working with the sigil. That pattern can remind you of the sigil and you'll want to banish the entity entirely before moving out. A fresh coat of paint covers the holes and also banishes any lingering energy from the entity.

For this technique, it's really just a matter of being creative and taking a common everyday tool and using it for a magical purpose. It can be a great way of doing some subtle magic, especially if people visit and happen to look at the patterns you've created in your pushpin box, or on your wall. Tell them its art and let them feed your magical workings with their attention, if they choose to notice it.

Appendix 4: The Magic of Feasting

Maryam (my partner at the time of the original working) and I were asked to do a general prosperity ritual for a friend of mine. She didn't want the ritual directed at her, but at people in a specific apartment complex so that those people would become very successful and in one form or another create an open apartment for her. I found the idea of doing such a ritual intriguing, but wasn't sure how to go about it.

I could have, for instance, done some wealth/money magic, but although I think that's part of prosperity, there are other indicators as well. Moving in with someone you love can bring prosperity to your life, which can be an increase in finances, but also the feeling of love and companionship that you share with the person. Prosperity can also be moving to a new location, or going on an

adventure. So with these thoughts in mind I wanted to do a ritual that reflected all of that.

We decided that for this ritual we would do something a bit different from how many people might approach a prosperity ritual. We also decided we'd call on a being from the Deharan system. The Dehar we chose to call upon is named Pelfazzar and is the Dehar of wealth, prosperity, and pleasure. We felt that working with him would exemplify what we wanted to achieve.

A description of Pelfazzar involves long, colorful robes, with coins of all the nations bound in long hair. His face is always cheerful, his cheeks just a bit filled with fat, but the kind of fat that represents being fulfilled and content. His eyes are gold, and his skin is whatever color(s) a person associates with prosperity. For me that color is purple. When he talks, his voice is soothing, but there is always a hint of laughter and joy in it.

We invoked Pelfazzar into us. We dressed in clothing that we felt denoted success and prosperity. I wore very colorful clothing, a pair of black pants with red and orange stripes and a shirt with the same color scheme. My partner wore a dress that she felt was classy and at the same time sexy. After we dressed the part we set out a meal. We had fish, rice, vegetables, even a few sweets. We also set out a jug of hot sake (rice wine). Our approach was that we would offer Pelfazzar a feast that indicated what we felt prosperity was. We'd also engage in any other activities that would share prosperity in one form or another. To invoke Pelfazzar we both said: "Astale (I invoke) Pelfazzar" and then explained the purpose of the ritual. We felt that if we gave him a taste of prosperity, grounded him through eating and other activities, that he could then spread that energy. We asked him to do it in his own time and fashion, but also indicated the apartment complex that we specifically wanted to target for prosperity.

After we invoked Pelfazzar we proceeded to eat and drink. My partner noted that the sake tasted bitter and said that sometimes prosperity can bring bitterness. I think that's an important point. Often times when people think of prosperity they only think of the advantages, but don't realize that there can be disadvantages to being prosperous. People can become jealous of your prosperity or distant because they don't feel you understand them any more. Naturally we didn't want to project that bitterness on to anyone, but we also acknowledged, through the sake, that it could be a possibility. We focused the spell on realizing prosperity, but also considered the need to be mindful and thankful for what you already have.

While we ate, we watched a show that we enjoyed and talked about our day, things we'd done or laughed about and enjoyed. Now I realize that it might seem odd that we would indulge in everyday activities in ritual, but I like to think that any activity can be ritual and be part of sacred space. You just have to focus on the attitude that you bring to ritual. Everything we did was designed to accentuate prosperity, but also acknowledge the setting it occurs in, how it might occur, and with whom. We wanted to bring a family atmosphere to the ritual, give Pelfazzar an idea of how his target audience might behave or act, or what they would do. So we watched television, ate and drank, and talked about the activities and experiences we had that day. We talked about some of our friends, and even called a couple up. I wanted to convey to Pelfazzar the following: I am very rich for the friends and family I have in my life.

We chose to end the ritual doing sex magic. We wanted to give Pelfazzar a taste of the physical pleasure of the flesh and the prosperity of love, the connection that can be felt through sex. Each of us focused on finding Pelfazzar in each other and then made love to each other and the Dehar, focusing the energy of the act on giving him the necessary

energy he needs to not only bring prosperity to others, but also to appreciate prosperity in all of its permutations.

After the sex magic, we cuddled with each other and bid Pelfazzar farewell, asking him to bring prosperity to other people, knowing as well that in giving prosperity to others we would increase it for ourselves. We realized that in giving this gift to Pelfazzar, we'd also created a sacred connection. Any time you give a gift to another person or being you create connection and a sense of prosperity. Though this point may seem self-evident, it's very important to appreciate the connections we make with others, how we make those connections and what those connections say about the prosperity we have.

One final note: You can use this ritual with any god form that you associate with prosperity. I used Pelfazzar because that's the system I work with, but a bit of tweaking for your own preferences is likely all you'll need for this ritual.

Appendix 5: Seventh Sanctum Entity and Magic Creation

An excellent website for random entity generation is <http://www.seventhsanctum.com/>. Seventh Sanctum offers the user a chance to generate a random character description. The generators include anime, art, characters, beings, magic, superheroes, skills/abilities/traits, organizations, names, and even corporate name generators.

In each generator, you can pick a certain number of descriptions to generate (the number varies for each generator). You will get a description of the entity, such as the following one I got from the Legendary Creature generator: "This creature is formed from the souls of people who died feeling pessimism. It slightly reminds one

of a spider, and it is covered in apricot-colored tentacles. Strange, misty forms swirl around it constantly.” The generators are random so you’ll get different descriptions, and some are more detailed than others. Even with only a few details a person can take that information and use it to create an entity. The strange misty forms that swirl about my entity could be the souls of the pessimistic people, with the tentacles keeping the souls in place so the entity can power itself up. If the explanation seems overly fantastic, remember that part of creating an entity is about creativity. I’ll admit I likely wouldn’t create the above entity, as I’m not sure it would help me accomplish any goals and could be detrimental. I might, however, use the following description (obtained from the general people generator) to create an entity that would help me stay on schedule or enhance my professional qualities: “This man puts you in mind of a precise mechanism. He has beady indigo eyes. His luxurious, wavy, white hair is worn in a style that reminds you of a complex device. He is tall and has a boyish build. His skin is black. He has thin eyebrows. His wardrobe is businesslike and flattering, with a lot of black and violet.” The descriptors for this character are useful for providing an appearance to the entity, as well as how it might act. Also, any of these descriptions could just serve as base descriptions, with further details being developed by the magician.

Another useful facet of this site is the art contests that occur on it. These give an aspiring artist a chance to get his work rated by judges and s/he can win awards. This is useful for a magician because it also provides an opportunity to artistically bring the entity to life. The various media of art provide excellent opportunities to create housing for the entity and the basic description that’s provided is useful for starting the conceptualization of the entity and what tasks it will do. In addition, while the act of creation will help charge the entity, the chance to have it

viewed by other people can be equally useful for charging it up so it can accomplish its tasks.

If you don't want to create an entity, there's still another useful generator that can be used for other practical approaches to magic. The magic generator lets the user generate abilities and spells, items, and miscellaneous. While not all of the sub-generators and their descriptions will fit with what people want to do magically, they can prove useful. The tarot card generator is excellent for devising and personalizing your own tarot theme. The magical style generator can occasionally come up with some intriguing style approaches.

In the end perhaps what I like best about the Seventh Sanctum generators is that it encourages some humor. Laughter is one of the most potent forms of magic (not only for banishing, but also for inducing happiness) and the different generators can provide some amusing imagery. I personally find the site to be mainly useful for entity generation, but the imagination is the only limit a magician has, so you may find other aspects of the site useful for your work.

Appendix Six: The Peril of Solipsism in Magical Practice

In a blog post, I was writing about a personal issue and how previous choices I'd made as well as influences from other people had impacted my reactions to this personal issue. A good friend of mine responded and said that my understanding of the situation was wrong, that no one else was responsible for how I acted, or for my reactions. While I knew my friend meant well, her response bothered me a lot.

It wasn't that I was trying to duck out of responsibility for my responses. I am certainly responsible for my reactions and whether or not I choose to act them out, or make a conscious choice and deal with whatever situation is at hand with mindful awareness. And yet while it's true that I am responsible for my reactions and actions, I couldn't help but feel that there was something missing from his response.

I realized that what bothered me about his response was that I didn't feel that the impact that other people had on my reactions was acknowledged. Not too surprisingly I wasn't alone in feeling this way. One commenter pointed out that the argument was flawed by using the example that if a four year old had just been raped and was experiencing a devastating emotional impact, you wouldn't tell that four year old that s/he was responsible for his reactions to the rape. And indeed that child would not be entirely responsible for his reactions, because those reactions would be a response to the impact that someone had on him. There would also be a question of whether she had the emotional and mental capacity to be fully responsible for her emotions.

The example fully illustrated a problem I've written about before, namely that occult practices sometimes advocate responsibility to the point of solipsism. Solipsism argues that anything outside the mind of the person doesn't exist because it can't be known. What this means is that even the people around you might just be a figment of your imagination. You can never know if someone is real in a solipsistic paradigm.

Now you might wonder how being responsible equates to solipsism. Ideally it wouldn't, but when taken to an extreme, where the impact of others is not registered, responsibility can become solipsism. Worse, if you don't fully recognize the impact that you can have on other people, then no matter how responsible you may act, that

very act of responsibility can become an act of self-obsession, focused so much on claiming responsibility for what happens in your internal reality that you ignore the impact your actions have on others and on external reality in general. When we claim that we are responsible only for our own reactions, and not anyone else's reactions we ignore the principle of connection.

Particularly in U.S. culture it's not hard to ignore this principle. We are raised on the belief that we are all rugged individuals, self sufficient, not needing anyone or anything. This illusion is a façade, yet all too easily it's bought into. Self-sufficiency when taken to the extreme leads to a detachment from other people and the environment.

At least in my magical paradigm everything is connected. The choices I make each day do have an impact on me. And the reactions I have to situations are mostly my responsibility. I am, after all the final arbiter in allowing myself to react or consciously act. But in all of my choices and actions there is also an impact on other people around me, and on the environment I am a part of. My choice to commute by bus as opposed to driving by car has an impact on the environment and other people. On one level that impact is simple. If I commute by bus, it's one less car on the road, and also that much less pollution going into the air. If I choose to drive my car to work I could have a shorter commute, but I also put one more car on the road and I'm also polluting the air with the fumes from the car.

On another level this choice is complex for it involves weighing and recognizing the impact my choice has on myself and on others. It involves deciding if I'll drive my car for the sake of convenience, or if I'll take the longer commute of the bus and know I've made a choice which is environmentally sounder. It involves acknowledging not only the responsibility to myself in the choices I make, but the responsibility I have to others for the impact of those choices.

I'll tell you a secret, something which has fascinated me about occult texts and indeed discussions. There's a lot of talk about intent and manifesting intent and being responsible for intent, but almost nothing is said or written about impact, about consequences, about knowing that what you did has a life beyond intent made manifest. When nothing is said about impact, when impact isn't acknowledged how can we claim responsibility for our actions or reactions? The answer is that we can't.

To claim true responsibility doesn't just involve mindfully acknowledging that you are responsible for your reactions...it is to recognize that you have an impact on others. Sometimes the hardest responsibility to claim is acknowledging that impact on others, especially if the impact has been harmful. The clichéd saying about the road to hell being paved with good intentions is still an apt saying for it shows that no matter how much we intend good, we can still manage to do a lot of harm by not recognizing the consequences of that intent made flesh.

I also look at this issue from another perspective, namely that any person (no matter how consciously aware s/he claims to be) can be manipulated by someone else. If the manipulator knows the right buttons to push it can be easy to spark a reaction. Are you then still responsible for that reaction? Yes, you are responsible for it, but that manipulator is also responsible in the sense that his actions had an impact. A reaction is a choice to do an action again as a way of answering the stimulus that sparked it. There is connection here! Take the connection away and you have nothing to react to, because nothing has impacted you.

Connection is one of the most important principles of magical work. If you don't have a connection, magic won't happen. Taking responsibility for that connection means being mindful not only in your reactions, but in also acknowledging the impact you can have on others. When magic is worked with the recognition of the impact as well

as the intent then it can be said that the magician is knowingly responsible for what occurs. The magician knows there will be consequences and accepts those consequences as worth dealing with in order to manifest reality a specific way. S/he recognizes that responsibility isn't simply a function of maintaining awareness of internal attitudes or even reactions to situations; rather responsibility is an acceptance that connections can and will be made and how those connections manifest is the responsibility of all involved. This responsibility doesn't just involve the self, but is a responsibility to the other people involved as well, a shared responsibility.

This kind of responsibility doesn't create co-dependence, but does it create interdependence, a mindful awareness that we are connected to each other and to the environment we live in. This connection in turn fosters awareness that reality is much larger than just the self. This doesn't lessen the magician, but ideally fills hir with recognition that even as s/he shapes reality, s/he is shaped by it as well. In other words, we can own our reactions, but we must also own the consequences of those reactions. We gain control and awareness of our reactions when we acknowledge that they have an impact on more than just the self. With that understanding comes reflection wherein a person can acknowledge how hir choices shape the internal and external reality.

I also think it's important to add that mindfully acknowledging that your actions have an impact on others doesn't make you less authentic in your choices. If anything it can make you more authentic because you really have to face a difficult choice when you know that what you do will displease other people, but you know making the choice is what is best for you and your future. You still acknowledge the impact, but you also acknowledge that the choice is worth the impact and you make it, choosing to live with the consequences in order to

be true to yourself. You know the price for your actions and you settle with that price and find in all of this a true sense of responsibility to yourself and other people. You balance your intent with the impact and you make a mindful, conscious choice. There's magic in that.

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