

What is Traditional Craft?



**A Brief Discourse regarding the nature of Traditional Witchcraft
and allied forms of Magical Practice**

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I

“The Traditional Craft is the Nameless Way of the Arte Magical. It is the Path of Wytcha, the heart’s calling of avocation to Cunning Man and Wise Woman; it is the Hidden Circle of Initiates constituting the Living Body of the Elder Faith. Its Ritual is the Sabbat of Dream-made-Flesh. Its Mystery lies in the Land, below the feet of Those who tread the crooked track of Elphame. Its Scripture is the Way of Wort-cunning and Beast-charming, the treasury of lore re-membered by Those who revere the Spirits; it is the gramarye of ear-whispered knowledge, beloved of Those who hold sacred the secrets of the dead and entrusted to They who look ever onward..... If any ask about the Traditional Craft, their answers lie in its native land: the Circle of the Arte of Artes!”

Such are my own thoughts to this question and as such they are but mine own, but nonetheless they are the thoughts of a man who has walked the Circle of the Cunning-folk many times round.

To the question: “What is Traditional Craft?”, there are as many useful answers as there are practitioners of this mysterious persuasion. There is no single straightforward answer to such a query, and it is the wonderful diversity of possible responses which genuine practitioners may offer that is, for myself, most enthralling. The scope of practices and beliefs which may be encompassed by the name “Traditional Craft” is unknown and shall ever remain so; and yet if a sense - an ambience - of this diversity can be gained through discourse, we may then perhaps intuit the hidden nature which unifies all.

When referring above to ‘useful answers’, I mean specifically those responses which may be of direct use and value to fellow practitioners. For the spirit in which this discourse is intended is that which may be of service to each and all of us to whom the very question is addressed. Although there exists a certain number of people who can give first-hand account about the nature of the Traditional Craft, such adherents are, in truth, few and secretive. During recent times there has been an evident surfacing of the Old Craft into the public domain of published literature, books and articles.

This public activity is an echo of an inner resurgence of knowledge. The wellspring of the Elder Faith is letting forth its vital lifeblood, effusing the underground streams of magical practise, granting its power to the veins that thread throughout the land, nourishing and nurturing the verdant earth of Albion anew. For we who partake of the Elder Faith’s Mystery are the guardians of the land: our knowledge is the arcanum of its heart and our own. To this troth we must be true!

The public manifestation of the Elder Faith has not appeared in a uniform manner, but has exhibited a stimulating variety of forms. These various forms or streams of the Tradition, one may refer to as ‘observances’ or recensions of the Old Rite; each differing according to the Master or Mistress responsible for the dispensation of its knowledge. One might think that the very existence of publically available literature would indicate a tendency towards a weakening - a watering-down of the spiritual essence of the Tradition, but this has not been the case. In fact, the very opposite is true: the direction is toward a broadening and deepening in the spiritual wealth of the Elder Faith. The Old Craft is emerging as a Path possessing a diverse array of aspects, ranging from the practical spell-craft generated at the level of folk-magic - the artes of wort-cunning and animal encharming, through a learned spectrum of magical techniques, reaching in apotheosis to the heights of genuine mysticism.

In order to clarify this diversity it is useful to cite and give brief resumé of specific exemplary observances which are at the forefront of our present resurgence:-

The Way of the Eight Winds, - this is an East Anglian recension of the Nameless Arte propounded by Nigel Pennick. In essence, it represents a specific school of magical practise derived from, and continuing the Tradition of Cunning-folk indigenous to the general locus of the Cambridgeshire and Fenland regions. It is derived from the initiatory stream of 'Sigaldry', a runelore tradition incorporating both pagan and christian elements in a coherent magical synthesis. Its manner of succession is, according to Pennick, passed down from Master to pupil and is perpetuated by both oral and textual transmission of knowledge. It is of importance to note that in his book, "Secrets of East Anglian Magic", reference is made to the Antient Order of Bonesmen, to the magical fraternity of the Horse-whisperers and to the solitary mysteries of the Toadsmen and women. These are other forms of magical practise still operative in the selfsame regions and which may be referred to, in broad terms, as 'Traditional Craft'.

Via Nocturna: the Spirit-hunt Covenant. This is the initiatory stream of Wisdom-teaching propounded by Nigel Aldcroft-Jackson, the Magister Janus ben Azazel. His teachings are derived from both textual and oral transmissions of knowledge and, in their entirety, constitute a synthesis of many diverse aspects of witch-lore. In brief, the central core of the Covenant is enshrined within the state of magical gnosis in which the seeker undertakes the nocturnal spiritual pilgrimage to the Sabbat. The Via Nocturna is therefore the invisible conclave of initiates conjoined through parity of experience within trance-ecstasy. Its wisdom is accessible to those whom have passed through the transliminal gateways of this world and whom have undertaken the initiatory night-journey to the oneiric realms of the Sabbatic revelry. This particular stream of Traditional Craft is notable in its contribution to what may be called 'Witanic Mysticism', the corpus of lore derived directly through the gnostic experience of Sabbatic formulae. In its contribution to this field, the Covenant has been instrumental in extrapolating the inner mystical essence from the teachings of various other Craft observances, most importantly perhaps from that of the Clan of Tubal-Cain.

The Clan of Tubal-Cain, - this is the Tradition of Craft Observance perpetuated by late Robert Cochrane. According to Cochrane, the Clan was a body of initiates deriving their myth and methods of occult practice from old Norfolk witches. It is notable in that the components of its mythic construct show evidence of influence from late medieval daemonological sources, especially with regard to the Teachings concerning the descent of the Watchers, the role of Tubal-Cain and the reverence paid to him as the preceptor of initiatory genealogy or Witchblood. The importance of the Clan's contribution to the on-going evolution of the Traditional Craft is evidenced in the creative influence which it has brought to bear upon those who were directly involved within its work. The foremost example is Evan John Jones, who has done much service in expounding various aspects of the Clan's Teachings, especially those surrounding the mythic forms of the Castle, the Skull and the Rose, and the Roebuck in the Thicket.

Cultus Sabbati, - this is a name adopted for purposes of communication and identity by an otherwise nameless body of Traditional Craft initiates. In its present form the Cultus is served by the author of this discourse in the role of its Presiding Magister. As such I shall seek to describe its nature and function with suitable objectivity.

The Cultus operates as the vehicle for the transmission of the Quintessential Magical Current and is active in the evolving recension of magical practice referred to in oral, ritual and textual transmissions as 'The Sorcery of the Crooked Path'. Within the Cultus several observances of the Craft are in concurrent operation; this is reflected in the structure of its constituent groupings. These incorporate the working contexts of both covines and smaller working cells; the emphasis throughout all being upon the autonomy of each initiate. An important function of the Cultus is to serve as a meeting-ground for various initiatory streams of the Elder Faith and thereby to act as the medium for the confluence of their magical forces of empowerment. Although its field of operation is presently centralised within the county of Essex, the Cultus is informed by a number of trans-cultural initiatory lines of succession from around the country and farther afield. The core wisdom-teachings of the Cultus Sabbati are passed down, both orally and ritually, through the Transcendental Sorcerie and Gnosis of the Sabbatic Mysteries.

These are only four expressions of the Elder Faith, but their diversity is testament to the rich texture of British Magical Spirituality. The historical validity of these four examples as 'Traditional Craft' is not wholly mine to affirm or question, but nonetheless the sheer creative impulse which they generate is, for myself, the worthiest form of authenticity, irrespective of aught else.

There is a notable impression of creative insight and syncretism imparted by the published work of these exemplars and this lends itself to the further 'answering' of my initial question. It is typical of genuine Cunning-folk to utilise whatever is closest at hand and to turn all influences, irrespective of religious provenance, to the secret purposes of the Arte. It is therefore that the Old Craft embraces for itself an array of attitudes and methods, ranging from the simple matters of spell-craft to the highest ceremonial forms of conjuration. In all contexts one may find pieces of magical lore and belief from many disparate times and places, but all are brought to function within the trans-historical arena of the sacred dimension, whether it be the magical circle of Witcherie or the ninefold plot of Sigaldry. From out of its roots in folk-magic, in all of its many aspects, the form of the Traditional Craft is continually evolving, and it is in this respect that one may perceive the trajectories of its own possibilities. The spiritual landscape of the Arte is being moulded, through the power of its own current, by a potent aesthetic of mythopoetic eclecticism; its rich variety of ancestral lore is achieving a new definition of form, culminating in the refinement of a profound metaphysic of ecstasy: the true wisdom-teaching of magical gnosis. This may be seen as a natural evolvement from one stage of religious practise to another more sophisticated level, or yet - from an initiatory stance - one may perceive the emergence of Witanic Mysticism as the timely unveiling of knowledge which has always been at the heart of the Tradition. For even as the fire has always burned brightly at the circle's centre, so we and the circle must eternally turn around its axis through the many seasons of Time and Fate; and through the sacred

dimension of the Arte, we are brought ever closer to the timeless centre amidst the changing whirl of aeon and hour.

It is possible that one might perceive a development towards the seemingly abstract heights of mystical thought to be occurring in rejection of the simple heritage of the 'good folk of Elphame' that have lived before us, but this is not so. For myself and in example, the basic skein of witcherie - the knotted cord - may be used for both healing and hurting, and also for the mystical task of contemplating the stations of the soul. The horizon of the circle is boundless and the extent of our real initiation is measured solely by our own Self-delimitation within its infinite compass.

II

To return to the initial question of this discourse and to follow another spoor through the maze, let us consider the Traditional Craft, its names and their significance in general discussions about magic, and also the means by which its Path is perpetuated.

In general terms and throughout this discourse 'Traditional Craft' refers to pagan magical and religious practices which have been passed down from at least before the beginning of the twentieth century. Geographically, the term herein applies to past and contemporary British folk-magic, but this may be extended to embrace beliefs and practices of European, mainly Northern, provenance. Despite the spatial demarcation assumed for the purposes of this discourse, the Elder Faith has innumerable forms and can be seen in many far-flung regions of the Earth. Furthermore, the cultural influences bearing upon past and modern forms of Traditional Craft in Britain are many and diverse, bearing marks of knowledge which testify to a distinctive admixture of initiatory streams from around the world.

In esoteric, historical and anthropological literature of the latter half of this century the term 'Traditional Craft' is generally used to refer to the forms of folk-magical practise which predate, or run in concurrent distinction to, the modern or 'reformed' recensions of Craft practice. The modern form of Witchcraft is known generically as 'Wicca', although it should be noted that many variations of this modern movement exist and are called by many other terms. In distinction to 'Wicca' the Old Craft is sometimes referred to by its adherents as 'Weikka'; this is often pronounced in the parlance of Arte as 'Wytcha'. The common root of these variants is held to be the Indo-european WEIK - said to signify 'The religion of the sorcerers'. Other useful connections and derivations are as follows:- Anglo-saxon *wicce/wicca* 'witch'; *wiccian* - 'to cast a spell', *witte* - 'wise', *wittan* 'to be wise'; Old German *Wikkerie* - 'Witchery'; Icelandic - *vita* - 'To know', *vitki* - 'a wizard'; Swedish - *wika* - 'to bend, to turn'; Norwegian - *vikja* - 'to turn aside; to conjure away, to exorcize'; Anglo-saxon - *wikken* - 'to make evil', hence *wicked* - 'to be evil' and thus to be *yfel* - beyond the edge of the mortal consensus of perception.

Much discussion is made out of such words and names; this can be made useful to the practitioner since it may encourage new perspectives about the path, but when this cannot be done such discussions are irrelevant to those engaged in the practise of the Arte. One should pay heed to what is of use within the circle and what is not.

Certain scholars of conventional academia have claimed that the word *wicca* was originally used solely in a pejorative sense, that is, as a term of abuse or slander against

anyone disliked or suspected of *maleficia* or black magic, and that it has, in fact, been out of use in any form whatsoever until the modern witchcraft movement. One may nonetheless cite the non-pejorative use of connected derivations such as *witan* - "to know" - in various historical instances. However, irrespective of such claims, it may be stated that the derivant word *Wytcha* has been in use during the twentieth century amongst certain contemporary descendants of the Cunning-folk Traditions in Essex. Whether the term has been passed down through centuries of secret practise or resumed as a identifying name only yesterday, it is pertinent to state some of the reasons for its present use. From the perspective of one practitioner the adoption of this term is a self-conscious means of stating identity as one of the Cunning-folk, as a 'Knowing One', a bearer of wise-blood and thus as an initiate of the true witch tradition. Also *wytch* being 'to bend or turn' is appropriate in regard to the 'crooked' nature of the sorcerous path. If the pejorative use of *wicca* is accepted, then the present use of *Wytcha* embraces this. The Man of Arte moves at the edge of society; he walks within the world of Mankind but is truly 'outside' of it. A path of blame and slander will be trodden out of necessity when one moves beyond the normative parameters of society. Furthermore, one could say that 'Wytcha' is simply the correct pronunciation of the Anglo-saxon word *wicca* and that it is used self-consciously by contemporary Cunning-folk as a deliberate reclamation of unique and distinctive identity amongst the scope of modern magical religion. This being said, it is a customary preference of such practitioners to use the self-identifying terms of 'sorcerer' and 'sorcery' for themselves and their Arte, and more often than not to use no name at all.

Other epithets in use for the Elder Observances of the Craft are, as mentioned above, 'The Nameless Arte', 'The Via Nocturna', 'The Sabbatic Craft' et alia. All such epithetical names may be used in discussions of magic in order to give a name to 'something' which by nature has no name: names are functional for the purposes of communication and self-identity.

Whilst it is useful to define and therefore distinguish the various modes of the Old Craft from one another and from their modern counterparts, it should be borne in mind that in certain instances the Old Craft has merged with or adopted beliefs and practices from such reformed observances. Given the natural inclinations of the magical practitioner toward

syncretism, there is constant cross-fertilisation between those who interact in and out of the circle; consequently we have all borrowed ideas from one another. However, the various forms of modern Wicca are not the matter in question and although they have an important role within the history and development of magical practise in the twentieth century, it is the purpose of this discourse to enquire into the nature of those streams of the Craft whose provenance is of greater antiquity. For within such streams will be found a syncretism which has simply been operative for a longer period of time and is thus likely to have absorbed more influences and to have integrated these within a body of greater spiritual maturity. The integration of modern Wiccan influences into older magical streams is but one aspect of confluential development; there are many other influences upon Traditional Craft practices which could also be cited. In speaking about such integration, I must, for courtesy's sake, give full respect to those practitioners of the Old Craft who view their own observances as pure and distinct. The fact of influence from other sources is no blemish nor is it a necessary act of compromise; it can be a

conscious part of an ongoing creative spirituality. Within the context of my own path I have had direct contact with initiates of other notable magical traditions and have always learned greatly from such interaction. Such contact has led me to active involvement within the Paths of the Uttara Kaula Tantrikas and, upon a subtle level, with the Sufi Tradition of the Ovaysiyya. This involvement has only served to enrich my work within the Conclaves of the Sabbatic Mysteries. Both through the Cultus Sabbati and as independent practitioners, myself and other initiates of the Essex Cunning-folk Tradition have pursued trans-cultural initiatory connections and through such endeavours many important influences have been brought to bear upon the present-day recensions of our practise. A deeper consideration of such influences I shall leave aside for another occasion. Fundamentally, it is the motives which underlie the purposes of such interaction which, for me, distinguish the various streams of the Craft. In Belief, we are all driven by seemingly similar motivations, but amidst the Breed of Cain there is a distinctive methodology of Believing which has arisen out of natural disposition toward a sorcerous mentality. It is not for nothing that they are called 'Cunning-folk!'.

When talking of Traditional Craft there is often much mention of it being something 'passed down' or 'passed on'. What is meant by this turn of phrase? From my own experience as an initiand and initiator within the Sabbatic Cultus, I can recount several ways in which the Tradition is transmitted from one person to the next over the generations. The most obvious way is that of oral transmission: the spoken word. This is the 'ear-whispered knowledge' that is related from one practitioner to the next, whether from Master to apprentice, or in the manner of knowledge shared in discussion amongst contemporaries in a circle or clan. It is often in this context that the most precious pieces of lore are preserved and it is around such unwritten wisdom that an aura of taboo exists. For in being untranslated to the written word the oral teachings of the Craft exist in the realm between Thought and Text; they dwell with the spirits in the shifting realms of memory and re-membrance. When should such lore be written down? - this is a question I have often asked myself. In answer, I conclude that one should write down such things when there is a danger of their being lost or forgotten. Nonetheless, I believe that nothing is truly forgotten about the Arte, for within its own domain - the Circle - the spirits will speak to those with ears to hear. It is by word of mouth that the true and invisible grimoire of the Cunning-man is carried through the ages; it is a book whose leaves are scattered amongst many hands and yet is bound in a common cloak of skin and blood.

In certain instances, the oral transmission of the Tradition is performed in the formal context of instruction. This is where the spoken mode of transmission is operative within the specialised context of ceremonial initiation. This leads us to the most important manner in which the Tradition is passed down: the ritually transmitted genealogy of spiritual power. This is a complex matter due to the variety of procedures involved, but basically the process to which I am referring is the fulfilment of an aspirant's initiatic induction via the ritual point known as 'the passing-on of power'. This is the magical act whereby the entire power of the Tradition is transmitted directly from an Initiator to his/her pupil, as from Master to apprentice. Within various bodies of the Craft, and also within Guild fraternities affiliated/derived from Freemasonic Orders, the act of the 'passing-on' is fulfilled thus:- the aspirant kneels upon one knee before the initiator, the

left knee directly touching the ground and the right leg forming a square with the earth. The candidate holds in both hands the gramarye or Holy Book of the Order/Covine. The initiator in turn places his right hand atop the candidate's head and his left hand upon their right foot, forming a greater square. The initiator then 'wills' all of the power of the Tradition into the receptive body of the candidate. This act, performed in many variations of the manner stated, is executed in order to 'seal' the teaching process through which the candidate has passed. The teaching process lasts for different periods of time and is constructed in accordance with that which is being taught. Within the Sabbatic Tradition, the teaching process is divided into two parts. Firstly, a nine month probationary period is undertaken, during which the aspirant is simply assessed for various requisites of character. When this is completed, the aspirant is invited to take a rite of dedication; this avows them to the path of the Tradition and begins the formal phase of tuition which lasts for one year and one day. During the initiatory year, the candidate is literally led around the circle in a complete circumambulation of mind, body and spirit. At the fulfilment of this circuit, the formal rite of initiation takes place; the central aspect of which is the act of aforementioned 'passing-on'. The act of 'sealing' the tuition process effectively creates the truly autonomous stance of the new initiate. For within the act of the passing-on the entire knowledge of the Tradition flows into the candidate in a state of gnostic transmission. It is then up to him or her to re-member the body of the Tradition according to their own predilection. It will be noted by those acquainted with this mode of transmission, that there are many variations to its execution; these are all equally valid, for it is the initiatic significance encrypted within the ritual gesture which is of sole importance.

A third form of the 'passing-down' is the textual transmission of lore; this is somewhat akin to the manner of perpetuating *shastras* or verses of holy scripture in Tantrism. Within the Craft there are a number of manuscript books or gramaryes of the Arte which are handed down from one initiate to the next. Such books are the repositories of lore belonging to specific streams or observances. Various names are known for such tomes: *The Secret Granary*; *The Bonesman's Bible*; *The Devil's Plantation*; *The Dragon-book*, et alia. Alongside these is the '*Book of Shadows*', the generic name for the hand-written book of Wiccan observance. This name has, in some cases, been adopted by certain members of the Old Craft; its poetic resonance often being the main reason for this. In some forms of the Craft, each candidate must make their own hand-written copy of their Master's book, for each initiate's book of Arte is burned after their death. The essential nature of all such texts is that they are the personal/lineal collections of magical knowledge accumulated through direct experience and understanding of the Arte. It is thus that their contents is the sole preserve of their owners; this is their natural taboo and rightly so. The Circle of Arte is cast on many levels and on all it must be cast without a flaw.

Akin to the manner of textual transmission is the handing down of magical artifacts. For instance, the passing-on of the wand or stave from Master to apprentice is a form of this custom active in Essex Craft. This establishes a link between initiates over successive generations and endows such objects with a distinctive numen or spiritual aura approximating personality. Such objects often bear names which testify to the belief that they have become the dwelling-place of a spirit. It is worthy of mention to note that transmission of magical knowledge can occur solely through the medium of such objects.

This may be because of their talismanic nature and also because their appearance may encode certain arcana through sigaldric markings. From an initiate's perspective, I believe that a magical object can convey knowledge through the activity of the spirit dwelling within it. This form of transmission can operate independently of any other means and can bridge the divide of both time and place. One might, for example, obtain a old scrying-glass from an antique shop or a carved wooden image from a foreign tribal source such as West Africa. Working cautiously with such an object may permit the initiate to engage in communication with the indwelling spirit and derive therefrom, in trance or dreams, untold wisdom without any physical contact from the object's previous custodians. Such a method of working can bring new influences into the praxes of the Traditional Craft initiate and can activate deep strata of ancestral wisdom which have lain dormant within both the circle and the body. Although a magically-empowered object partakes most obviously of the material plane, it can serve as a conduit for transmission of the most subtle and intangible kind.

The passing-on of magical artifacts is in itself a potent means for the continuation and accumulation of magical knowledge and power. It can occur through the seemingly chance acquisition of such, or else can occur in the formal context of the ritual initiation or may even be a matter of family inheritance. This latter form can operate through the initiatory kinship of spiritual descent and/or through the blood-line of an hereditary tradition.

This brings us to the next form of the 'passing-on': Hereditary Craft and Family Magical Traditions. This type of lineal transmission occurs within the context of familial descent: the knowledge, customs and/or magical possessions of a pagan magico-religious belief being preserved within the confines of a close-knit and insular kinship group. Such forms of belief can vary greatly from one instance to the next. Examples with which I am familiar range from the Traditions of American Hex-craft to the British Christo-pagan faith (sometimes referred to as a dual observance) in the power of saints as spirit-guides.. Such beliefs can be cited as belonging, although not exclusively, to Hereditary Traditions; for they can also be found transecting and becoming operative within other streams. I am at liberty to relate from personal contact, an instance where a family preserved an interest in magical and occult matters to the point of collating material from classical sources, such as might be useful in conjurations of the old gods. When a daughter of the family became involved with more modern witchcraft, she then began to use the material passed down to her. The folk-magic, or whatever you might call it, of her family interest became directly operative and moved outside of its original parameters. Through subsequent initiatic generations such 'hereditary' magical material has become integrated with other observances and has developed into its own stream of succession. Such an example contains elements of both familial descent and ritual initiatory succession; as such it must be regarded as a part of Traditional Craft distinctive in its own right.

The manner in which Hereditary Traditions are perpetuated varies from family to family and may be handed down using certain of the ways cited previously. Family Traditions are a rarity and can be highly secretive. In some cases they do not wish to be seen as part of, or as having any connection with, other forms of paganism or magical practise. This has to be respected as an intrinsic facet of their path, but nonetheless such survivals of pagan belief are all part of the spiritual essence which informs the Elder Faith. In

instances where a Family Tradition interacts with Crafters from outside the family fold, there can be a mutual enriching of practical knowledge and an assurance of old lore surviving with integrity. Such interaction is, therefore, to be commended.

Aside from the previously described ways in which the Tradition is passed down, there are other ways of transmission such as those belonging to the subtle realm. The primary means is that of oneiric induction.

It is at this point that I shall cease to write about magic and begin to write through and in magic. It is folly to persist in discussing contexts without contents: the Mystic need not express his heart's revelation in any terms other than those of the heart's native tongue and neither should an artist spend so much time building his own picture-frames that he neglects to paint the picture. Translators and frame-makers will always follow after!

There is a manner of spell-craft which I shall relate and by it seek to invite the reader, irrespective of his or her standing, to step *outside* and thus *within* the mysteries of which they are reading.

For this deed of Arte a leather thread and a hagstone are required; the latter being a stone thorough which there is a hole naturally worn through: a gateway graven by the hands of earth and charmed to open by the tongues of the river. Taking the hagstone in one's grasp, one should contemplate its opening and entreat it to be a doorway for your going-forth in dreams. One should then take leathern thread and, holding it in one's hands, should phantasise about the ways of the magical night-procession. Consider the spirits. Think of She who flies forth out of the body and into the freedom of the darksome midnight. Ascend with the spirits through the openings of the flesh; take leave of your mortal abode and roam abroad with the unseen companie of the aire. Step upon the wind and lay yourself into the arms of the sky. Hear the sonorous beating of bird-wing and spirit-wing; hear the rhythm of their flight echoing words of enchantment, patterning the nocturnal plains with sigils of forgotten desires. Behold the gateways to the *Other* : silhouettes glimpsed against the vault of the stars. Be at one with them; be at one with the night-wandering host of the sky. Let the coolth of the star-river enliven your soul and lead you to the scent-trail of the pathless path. Hear the wing-beats of the spirit and feel your heart-beats; hear the heart's drum and count your steps into the boundless dance of god, man and beast. Behold the companions of the round dance. Behold!

With each poignant atmosphere of phantasie, knot the thread and thus create a rosary of dreaming potentials. When the thread has seven knots, pass it through the mouth of the hagstone and tie to form a loop through which one's hand may be placed. The stone and thread should be entreated with a final prayer for the spell to work. Then, at the end of one's waking day, the stone should be held in one's hand (generally the one most seldom used) and the cord wrapped around the wrist. The stone should rest within the hand like a child in its crib. Then I bid you forget about it 'til morning. Perchance in dreaming your spirit shall pass through the stone-mouth and wander abroad in the night-walkers' procession, flying freely to the place that some have called 'Sabbat'. Where-ever the dreaming takes you, the thread of knots shall guide and bring you home, once more to waken at the edge of day.

If no dreams befall you by night, then recall the deeds of the spell - for there in phantasie

are the fore-echoes of that which is not yet remembered.
Such is a spell to enter the Dream of the Sabbat.

It is held by some practitioners of these mysteries that the true Sabbatic Rite or Circle-feast of the Arte is celebrated in a state of lucid trance. The Sabbat is believed in as a hidden realm beyond-between the worlds of waking, sleeping and normal dreaming consciousness; it is a secret domain to which the initiates of the Cultus can travel, passing through the crack in the worlds which opens at dawn, dusk and at the moment of midnight, to participate in the Convocation of Arte. The road to the Sabbatic trance is accessed by means of an array of procedures, often incorporating complex divertive and obsessional praxes of sexual magic and narco-aesthetic induction. The gnosis of the Dreaming Sabbat derives specifically from those initiatory streams of the Craft whose work is focused in Wytchan or Witanic Mysticism (Spirit-hunt Covenant and Cultus Sabbati). Therein, the Sabbat is perceived as the prototypal form of all magical workings and as the unifying circle of a living and vital symbolism, integrating all aspects of witch-lore and magical technique. These aspects are re-interpreted via personal mythopoesis and thus re-vitalised by the direct experiential dreaming of the initiated practitioner. From the experience of the dreamer, specific elements are extracted and utilised as the bases for ritual procedures in the waking. The converse can also be useful: aspects of waking ritual can be translated into dream and therein can assume new and deeply significant meaning. It is thus that the Sabbat of the Witanic Mystic operates as the crossroads betwixt the worlds and as the arena for the reification of a primal magical power from its source *beyond*.

Initiation into the Dreaming-sabbat is unlike other forms of transmission within the Craft; it occurs outside of the context of temporal linearity and permits the en-trance of anyone possessing sufficient magical ability. Although oneiric transmission is frequently a part of the tuition process within the formal mode of the ritual passing-down of knowledge, it is nonetheless a manner through which any true aspirant can attain entry to the sacred mysterium of the Arte. One might therefore suppose that anyone could claim initiatic status via this means, this may be so, but genuine contact with the inner current of magical gnosis is always apparent and cannot be simply assumed. One must be called forth by night, to leave the carnal house of the body and fly outwards with the Companie of the Spirits. The call from the otherworld of the Sabbatic Convocation leads the aspirant directly to the source of initiatory power. Some may interpret this as a fanciful expression or an elaborate re-interpretation of controlled imaginal path-workings, but I can assure one and all that the Dream of the Sabbat - the Spiritual Convocation of the Night-wandering Souls - is a reality through and beyond all Imagination! It is the very secret of the Great Return, whereby we may attain congress with the Arcanum of Primordial Being and thus with all and aught we may call the Tradition of Magical Wise-craft.

To return to our beginning: 'What is Traditional Craft'. If we have gained a sense - an ambience by aught in this discourse, then perchance an 'answer' has been given through nostalgic re-assemblance of truth. For we may seek through many ways, but it is often through the atmospheres of magic that its essence may be apprehended in a manner most conducive to the realisation of its substance. I have therefore sought to give brief

intimation of the spirit pervading the Old Craft and allied forms of magical practise. With this intent in mind I have made reference to exemplary forms of the Tradition, together with an outline of their range of activity and a précis of five ways in which their knowledge attains perpetuation. All of these aspects transcend the limitations imposed by name and all are often interwoven in a profound contexture of living mythology - in a halo of mystery which surrounds the reality of the Cunning-folk. Some might say the question ought to be 'Does Traditional Craft exist?'. The fact of the title-question and the nature of this discourse are an assertion in the affirmative. The real answers are bound in books of skin and blood.

Now, who are the 'Cunning-folk', and has the initial question of this article really been given any form of answer whatsoever? Well, let each reader decide for themselves. As to who the Cunning Folk are, well...They are amidst the procession of They who walk by Night, whether they be called Witch, Sorcerer, Cunning-man, Wise woman, Wart-charmer or Old Mother Red-cap - they are all part of the magical and mystical heritage of Albion's Craft of the Wise.

